Evolution of Informal Trade in Old Hyderabad: Investigating Resistance to Acquired Western Urban Planning Interventions
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**ABSTRACT**

Street vending has been a dominant occupation among migrants since the inception of urban migration in Hyderabad, India. For a long time, street vending has been considered an intrusion into the city’s urban fabric, causing stringent efforts to exclude it. Historic evidence shows the existence of public markets –called bazaars– that run alongside shops. Nevertheless, the urban transformation of Hyderabad was influenced by Western urbanization paradigms and foreign interference under British rule and sustained by volatile policies after independence, jeopardizing historical identities and pushing marginalized populations away from the city. This study examines the impact of volatile policies on urban informality and argues that peripatetic trade in Hyderabad is native to the city. Today, while street vending is considered an appropriation of public space in the Old City, results indicate it is a form of resistance to acquired Western planning models and modernization induced upon the city.

**Keywords:** Urban Informality; Peripatetic Trade; Public Space; Socio-Spatial Equity; Urban Placemaking.


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Introduction
According to UN-Habitat, global informal populations will triple by 2050 without drastic action (Samper et al., 2020; UN-Habitat, 2013). Meanwhile, informality remains the fastest-growing form of urban development in cities. With growing prospects for informal economy, informal housing and urban informality are thriving globally. Urban studies estimate that two out of three billion global workforces are sustained through earnings from the informal sector, accounting for a prominent majority of 61% (Turnbull, 2022). Meanwhile, India remains a significant contributor to the informal economy, with surveys conducted in 2012 indicating up to 75% of urban residents accounted for their contribution to the informal economy (Turnbull, 2022). These numbers were significantly higher at 88% when urban-rural informality was assessed (ILO, 2018).

Economic theory has played a significant role in the informal economy debate (Charmes, 2012). The optimism of modernization theory led scholars of the 1900s to believe that informality in developing countries was transient, and that it would subsequently be absorbed into mainstream formality and converge with broad formal opportunities (Potter, 2008). The issue was reduced to blame cultural backwardness in comparison to its urban counterparts. This confidence, however, was quickly unsubstantiated. Investigations indicated that these traditional informal habits not only persevered but expanded to encompass new territories of the city (Singer, 1972). Over a few decades, scholars began accepting the persistence of this sector, and the term “Informal Sector” was coined by Kevin Hart – a British anthropologist (Hart, 1985). Subsequently, this brought renewed interest in exploring the informal economy globally, at both an academic and practical level. Today, urban informality sits at the confluence of interdisciplinary research, bringing together various diverse fields (Chen, 2012). Although the evolution of urban informality transpired over decades, there has been a surge in intricate policies being pursued by international agencies and governments in developing countries to manage urban informality (Roy, 2005). Contemporary urban studies continue to emphasize the socio-spatial implications of the informal economy while focusing on street vendors as the largest contributors to the informal economy in urbanizing cities. While vast studies and literature (Bhowmik, 2012, 2003; Kim, 2015; Labbé, 2016) have explored the diverse concepts within urban informality in Asia, belonging and resistance to power dynamics have seldom been the focus of empirical research. The debate of informality and resistance to formal reform is often brought up to explain their covert operations, and authoritative disobedience to emplace belonging. While recognizing existing scholarship on regulations, unlawful evictions and retaliation from informal groups in the cities (Hermawati et al., 2018). This study examines the cruciality and persistence of peripatetic trade and the evolution of its definition, especially in the geographic context of Hyderabad’s Old City, which refused to accept modernizing global urban planning interventions. Peripatetic traders are typically peddlers moving within a geographic region, engaging in petty trade, craft-making, etc. However, the meaning of peripatetic trade changed over time in Hyderabad due to fear of authorities and new regulations. Despite extensive work being carried out to understand and document urban informality, analyzing street vending in a specific area at any given time is challenging due to uncertainty and volatility (Samper et al., 2020).

Street vending is ubiquitous in all Indian cities, but the group of vendors, their activities and their impact on public space vary across diverse urban fabrics. In the Old City of
Hyderabad, narrow road networks have made the city inaccessible to customizations for street vendors for decades. The regulations that authorities apply to the Old City vendors are often stringent to help ease traffic congestion and prevent hindrances to government facilities in proximity, like the High Court etc. It is for this reason that the Old City occupies a particular symbolism among users and decision-makers, who see it as a place of representation, as well as a place where an activity like peripatetic trade is regarded as widely unruly and is hence subjected to constrained reform. But going back to the ancient history of the city of Hyderabad, its Old City has housed these open-air markets called bazaars, a work of Persian origin meaning marketplace. Bazaars are at the heart of traditional urban culture in Hyderabad’s Indo-Saracenic (1858 – 1948) societies (Das, 2014). They are intimately related to Souks, commonly found in Arab societies. Bazaars were once closely associated with the city and its development, organization and architecture (Awad, 1984). Bazaars and souks have been subject to intensive scrutiny and researched extensively, revealing the unique forms that have impacted socio-spatial interactions largely in urban cities (Hmood, 2017). In the Hyderabad context, this study of bazaars can be dated back to the Nizam era (1724 – 1948) of heavy Indo-Saracenic influence (Richards, 1975), conducting these activities in the intriguing public squares, playing a crucial role in daily socio-economic activities; three main central bazaars dictated the public urban realm by the eighteenth century (Haynes, 2020). At the core of these central bazaars, artisanry and craftsmanship were highly regarded. Various artisans and craftsmen from neighboring cities frequented the central bazaars in Hyderabad to display and trade handmade goods and crafts (La Niece & Martin, 1987). The bazaars quickly became a hub of cultural exchange, allowing for the fusion and intermingling of styles and practices from different regions. The independence and liberation from British rule and the Nizam era in 1948 created new models of urban planning as the city expanded. The traditional bazaars began changing and altering within the urban fabric to accommodate evolving planning models. Today, bazaars and street vending are addressed and considered diverse activities. Existing literature seldom discusses the progression of street vending and peripatetic trade from historic bazaars in Hyderabad. An activity that once helped shape the core city of Hyderabad is considered an encroachment on to public space today. While most traditional and historical aspects and artefacts of Old City are respected and preserved, the vendors and traders promoting native artisanry are actively excluded from public space. Through a comprehensive analysis of the development of Old Hyderabad’s urban realm and space, this study argues that street vending and peripatetic trade is an evolution of trade in traditional bazaars of Hyderabad, upon undergoing distinct alterations over a period due to modernizing policies. Over time, these policies and regulations have overlooked important components of local architectural practices and altered local life and public space.

Study Extent: The Old City of Hyderabad:
To examine the spatial-temporal development and analysis of the peripatetic trade and vending in the Hyderabad context, a part of the city – The Old City of Hyderabad, once the walled city of Hyderabad – with its oldest traditional practices and culture where the urban transformation from acquired Western policies has influenced the local life has been considered. When the city began urbanizing outside the extent of the once-walled city, the existing old city began receiving special urban attention. The first policies and regulations demarcated missing design
elements within the public realm; marking a new revolution in the design of urban spaces in the
city. However, the modernization of the new city brought international and national audiences
to the city. This additionally led to criticism and scrutiny of the dense urban fabric of the
traditional old city of Hyderabad. With strong Indo-Saracenic roots, the historical and political
identities developed over time were perpetual, while the collective appropriation of its new
urban residents shadowed its historical prominence and identity. Although historic data and
spatial evolution of Hyderabad’s bazaars over the decades are sparse, there is abundant
documentation of urban sprawl and the master plans. Initiating spatiotemporal analysis through
existing documentation can help explore the links between historical and current trends of
peripatetic vending and trading traditions in the city.

Research Methodologies and Materials
To investigate the paradigms of spatial evolution in Hyderabad over time, and the peripatetic
trade, it is crucial to define peripatetic trade, superpose and examine cartographic, historical,
bibliographic and pictorial evidence to draw targeted details and scrutinize underlying
interdependencies. The purpose of this research is to examine the proliferation of street vending
in the Old City of Hyderabad. To emphasize prospective connections between peripatetic
activity both in its current urban form and in its historical traditional counterpart, this study uses
qualitative methods to analyze the spatial and temporal changes undergone by bazaars since the
urbanization trend began.

Traditional Bazaars of Hyderabad before Urbanization
The Old City of Hyderabad: An Overview:
Before the downfall of British rule in 1947, Hyderabad was once a walled city composed of the
now-known Old City of Hyderabad (Suryanarayana Murthy & Bari, 2014). The traditional
organization of urban space was heavily impacted by British colonialism; moreover, it has not
only impacted urban form but also social constructs within the city (Haynes, 2020). Outside the
walled enclosure, the city mainly comprised a lush green agricultural landscape: which would
later mark today’s old city of Hyderabad and its remnant gardens. The first phase of
Hyderabad’s development is seen in the move of the rulers of Golconda to the new city of
Hyderabad between 1591 and 1687. The location of the city of Hyderabad was widely chosen
along the Musi River which not only fulfilled the water and sanitation needs but also added
beauty (Siddiqui, 2019); additionally, the rich Musi Delta provided the city with fertile land.
After a transient period, from 1687 to 1725, the Asaf Jah period – named after the family of the
Nizams – began from 1725 to 1798. During British rule, the ideal geographic location led the
British to appoint Hyderabad as one of the princely states of British India in 1858 (Das, 1949).
French and British forces were heavily involved in Hyderabad politics towards urbanization by
the late eighteenth century, bringing residents into the city between 1798 and 1874. During this
period, British forces – with the help of the French – promoted foreign trade in the traditional
bazaars of Hyderabad by encouraging local traders to sell European goods (Datla, 2015). By
the nineteenth century, the walled city and its immediate boundaries were marked by residential
compounds and bazaars surrounding them (Cohen, 2011). The occurrence of catastrophic
floods of the Musi River in 1908 changed the urban form and urbanization paradigms of the
city of Hyderabad. While the central old city confined within the walls – where the nomadic trade occurred – remained unharmed, the riparian boundaries of the river where informal settlements dotted the riverbanks faced devastation. As Hyderabad city grew, marking the end of a phase and the beginning of another (Alam, 1965).

**The Configuration of Traditional Bazaars of Hyderabad:**
Although the notion of an “informal economy” did not exist before 1975 (Hart, 1985), the practice of self-sustaining occupations was widespread in the early city of Hyderabad, regardless of its political development and governmental evolution. Bazaars were one of the dominant manifestations of this form of economy in the early walled city of Hyderabad. Bazaar is a word of Persian origin (Pourjafar et al., 2014), referring to both transient open-air peripatetic markets held daily in the central city – and often weekly in the residential locales – and the covered and more formal bazaars built within houses like traditional stores. These markets have not only shaped traditional urban structures of cities but have also influenced social identities and a city’s cultural practices (Pishqadam & Bahrami, 2019). As a result of this historic evolution brought by bazaars and their activities, the movement of people progressively changed, over time altering the typologies of bazaars in the city of Hyderabad. While cartographic evidence on the evolution of these markets is limited, “In the Bazaars of Hyderabad”, by Sarojini Naidu (1879 – 1949) – known as the Nightingale of India – is a poetic documentation of everyday life in the nineteenth-century bazaars of Hyderabad and the political interferences within these markets (Naidu, 1912). This poetic composition was a contribution to the Swadeshi Movement of freedom, during British rule: a freedom movement boycotting and denouncing European trade and merchandise (Salman, 2019). The Indo-Saracenic influence brought the bazaars to India, however, they underwent tremendous alterations under the influence of secular populations in Hyderabad. Under Indo-British rule, Hyderabad was not subject to direct imperial control unlike a few cities in the North (Marks, 1999), thus causing the city to experience a conflicting urbanization pattern. As there was no direct control over the city, residents developed distinct urbanism paradigms, which led to customized practices, while conflicting British and French policies of modernization left their mark on the city’s urbanization pattern.

The Old City of Hyderabad comprised a large bazaar at the central conjunction of the walled city, namely surrounding the historic Charminar [monument], constituting an intrinsic element of its socio-economic and cultural life. Spatially, the bazaar is in the form of commercial strips around a central monument; whose initial function has continued today. This spatial configuration is common to most Islamic cities, with the central element being a mosque; except for cities acquired later by Islamic forces that present different forms resembling classical planning patterns (Correia & Taher, 2015). Besides the central bazaars of Charminar, open-air markets were held outside the grid – mostly along residential compounds – for several years before the urbanization of the city. These markets and shops are often depicted in most pictorial evidence (Fig.1) that exists today from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The following map intends to provisionally situate the location of bazaars based on the pictorial evidence to achieve the research goal of this study. While it represents the historic layout of the walled city in 1914, the bazaars and traditional vending zones are mapped to present the urban configuration and functioning of the city. As a methodological approach
adopted by this study, the spatial-temporal analysis presented in this map aims to understand better the socio-spatial implications of these open-air markets and bazaars (Fig.2).

The beginning of the twentieth century marked dramatic changes in the structure of Hyderabad’s bazaars under British rule and its French influence. The British rule and administration brought the commercialization of these markets causing them to modify their urban forms to collect taxes and control the population of the city. To better control movement and activities within the walled city, areas around the bazaars were exclusively commercialized by moving residential compounds away from them, which encompassed shops, authoritarian offices like the High court, the State Secretariat, and the Police Commissionerate. The commercialization of the Old City created a centralized mobility pattern in the city. This introduced new urban forms and land use paradigms into the traditional city. While the exact timeline of these changes and evolution cannot be mapped, most existing bazaars in the Old City of Hyderabad are comprised of historic shops and stores run by descendants of those families; representing their lives intertwined and linked to the transformation of the urban form and fabric of Hyderabad; both under British rule and under Indian urban governance through acquired foreign policies after independence.
The Urban Transformation of the Old City of Hyderabad and its Bazaars:

The Urban Transformation of Hyderabad:

The catastrophic floods in 1908 brought rapid change in the urban transformations of Hyderabad. Being a princely state [an entity under the indirect rule of the Indo-British governance] under Nizam’s control, this flooding caught the immediate attention of the Hyderabad government. While the British had already incorporated French policies, under Nizam’s rule, the city was a hybrid model, creating an identity of its own. While other states under the Indo-British regime began incorporating European views on design toward cleaner and better-planned layouts (Spodek & Srinivasan, 1993), Hyderabad retained its historic urban fabric for a long time, as evident through cartographic records. At this time, the authorities engaged Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya to outline solutions to prevent further flooding of the Musi River (Visvesvaraya, 1951). With his experience in British India, his suggestions were accepted by both Indian and British officials, which subsequently led to modernization through acquired Western planning paradigms and maintenance (Cohen, 2011). The City Improvement Board of Hyderabad (CIB) was set up in 1912 with a directive to improve the socio-economic, cultural and political conditions of its residents (Beverley, 2015). The first directive to design was the improvement of streets, laid to represent a pleasing plan with abundant air and light ventilation, with stringent care to health standards, aesthetics of parks and play areas and easy reach to most residents of the city (Visvesvaraya, 1909). The Musi riverbanks were first developed with the construction of the High Court, Osmania General Hospital and the Public Library between 1916 and 1932 – designed by English Architect Vincent Esch – on the South and North banks respectively: which mark the historic precinct of Hyderabad today. The design layout outlined by CIB (Fig.3) also incorporated elaborately planned commercial districts, bazaars and shopping markets, including the famous Moazzamjahi market (1935) – considered one of the first shopping centers in Hyderabad (Naik, 2018). For over four decades, the CIB worked toward accomplishing the design plans and suggestions delineated by Visvesvaraya, creating the first wave of modernization in the city’s planning practices.

After the Great Floods of 1908, as a part of the CIB’s plan, slum rehabilitation and riverfront revitalization were added to the agenda. Soon, the increasing trading opportunities in the city caused rapid urban migration. To manage urban agglomeration, the CIB acquired land outside the walled city to move informal settlements along the river out of the central city. The new configuration of the walled city erased the existing multimodal model prominent in the Old City of Hyderabad, which encouraged interlinked roads, active streets and vending activities in the traditional

The introduction of the main central node formed the core of the entire walled city, confining formal commercial and institutional activity to the central city while consigning informal vending activities out of the city walls. The main axis within the walled city developed in the 1940’s, leading all corners of the city to Charminar and the Mecca Masjid. Supporting infrastructure and activities to facilitate the proper functioning of the government led to institutional buildings with unique Indo-Saracenic architecture. While they represented the distinguished part of the city, existing activities were disrupted. The CIB dissolved in 1957, right after Independence (Naik, 2018), which propelled the uncontrolled dominance of Western planning practices, altering Hyderabad’s urban form and fabric.
Political, economic, and socio-spatial factors have historically shaped urban cities regardless of context, but global design paradigms have changed spatial configurations, particularly in developing countries (Santos, 2017). After the CIB dissolved in 1957, the impact of Visvesvaraya and the understanding of his work was taken over by rapid urbanization and modern planning patterns in Hyderabad (Naik, 2018). After British rule ended, most princely states remerged into a Union, however, vast sociocultural disparities complicated the reintegration of Hyderabad into the new Independent India (Beverley, 2015). When the Nizams held Hyderabad from coalescing during the 1947 Independence of India, the city began developing as an all-encompassing entity. After Independence, the abandoned infrastructure of the former princely state accelerated technical and technological progress in Hyderabad (Suryanarayana Murthy & Bari, 2014), resulting in significant changes in its spatial organization and functions. However, a lack of a planning committee post-independence led to the application of elitist policies and the acquisition of foreign planning practices from the West. The existing institutional infrastructure within the confines of the walls of the city – left behind by the British – created a significant shift in the territorial organization of developing Hyderabad and the inception of urban sprawl. The expanding city with a strong institutional base in the center, resulted in rapid rural migration into Hyderabad, benefitting from the infrastructural and organizational progress introduced by the British. Most of these immigrants and the city’s resident population – mostly agrarian and illiterate – lived impoverished lives; fearing economic and socio-cultural traditions to retaliate and protest their rights to the city (Benichou, 2000).

In the city center, Hyderabad, a neatly planned and limited city under British colonialism, on abruptly losing walled boundaries witnessed a demographic surge outside its fortification, drawing its neighboring city of Secunderabad in its wake. Moreover, the influx
generated by this rapid demographic growth was accentuated by unsupervised planning practices, over time evolving into a fragmented urban fabric. Rapid urbanization following independence was not considered a problem worthy of attention until the first plan of Hyderabad addressed the need for more authoritative control to manage haphazard growth (Dutt, 1991). Although this narrative saved the architectural identity and integrity of the city, it gradually assured the separation between the colonial walled city and the developing zones of the city. Residents and migrants of Hyderabad were faced with stark changes where they no longer occupied the center both spatially and politically. Sudden changes in access to services and urban space created a distinction, emerging as an entire city out of the walled confines of the colonial city, lacking planning regulation, elementary hygiene and sanitation. Having been excluded from the center of the city, the population wandered to the outskirts looking for places to settle and establish dwellings along the river Musi while remaining close to the central traditional city. Meanwhile, the authorities focused their planning on attracting more businesses and commercial activity into the walled city to promote economic growth and faster capital accumulation after Independence (Shaw, 1996). The exclusion of residents from the formal planning policies encouraged traditional self-governance and uncontrolled sprawl, while the post-colonial part of Hyderabad remained under authoritarian control, and residents gradually lost rights to the walled city. The capitalist style of governance distinguished the spatial configuration of Hyderabad into two types: the walled city with restrictive and post-colonial authority, and the organic organization of residents dictated by indigenous and traditional practices. Uncontrolled urban sprawl soon gave rise to stringent objectives of decentralizing urban development to promote the development of smaller cities and urban centers to ease the concentration of urbanization around the central walled city. However, the polarization of these stark planning practices within the city collided. While the walled city encouraged and brought in more formal economic activity, the peripheries began flourishing informally. Soon after independence, informality in Hyderabad spawned as a result of colonial intrusion and lack of post-colonial recognition; pushing the resident population to fend for housing and occupation away from the official walled city they once called home; now restricted to them from accessing.

**The Bazaars of Hyderabad after Independence:**
The existing literature and documentation on the evolution of bazaars in Hyderabad lacks the details and events leading up to their adulteration. However, a critical analysis of the spatial modifications undergone over time gives an interesting outlook on the changes induced by Western planning practices and commercial structures. It is important to distinguish between the two types of bazaars in Hyderabad: the commercial boutique shops, and open-air markets at the nodes. While the shops were retained and preserved to this day, open-air markets have slowly disappeared and have been altered over decades. Though the shops in the bazaars remained mainly unchanged spatially and architecturally, they underwent major alterations to adapt to the new socioeconomic system. The introduction of Western practices and technologies also brought various new goods to the markets and increased vehicular traffic, changing commercial dynamics in and around the walled city. The function of these bazaars also evolved with time, as new products and the needs of diverse migrants brought modifications to commercial activity, while the spatial orientation and organization remained unchanged. While peripatetic trade has existed in the walled city (Fig. 4), subsequent designs and plans have disregarded their existence, essentially removing them from the central city. Adding to the existing British infrastructure in the central city, colonial policies and practices continued in independent Hyderabad without an effort to adapt toward the inclusive participation of the residents. The evolution of the city took an exclusionary direction with residents being consigned to the interstices that once marked the urban fringe. Despite the conspicuous presence
of peripatetic trade in Hyderabad – and all the changes in urban function, flow and dynamics it engendered – in addition to its socio-economic importance in the everyday lives of the population, the inclusion of itinerant vending was disregarded in various planning models proposed by CIB and authorities after independence.

No spaces were allocated to shelter the people in the bazaar activity, nor were they integrated officially into the modernizing city; instead, they were actively driven away from the city. By the mid-twentieth century, urban planners recognized the limitations of adopting Western planning practices and began incorporating indigenous approaches (Shaw, 1996); infusing regional sensibilities, idiosyncratic practices, urban dynamics such as evolving urbanism paradigms and integrating them into foreign policies to help cater to local needs. As a result, the peripatetic traders had to make their own decisions regarding where to conduct business without official approval from the authorities.

Fig.4: Street vendors and bazaars around Charminar in 1918. Source: Unknown.

**Peripatetic Trade in Hyderabad after Independence:**

The dichotomy of urban planning configurations in Hyderabad post-independence: the existing colonial infrastructure of the walled city and the expanding modern city, created a distinct divide in the layout and functioning of the city. While the British colonial architecture and infrastructure used modern planning ideologies, they retained local architectural idiosyncrasies. However, the post-independence urban interventions continued to develop design strategies and layouts taking from colonial practices, disregarding the urban life and eccentric local practices before implementing these foreign urban concepts. Street vending and peripatetic trade continue to be overlooked, leaving informality as a way of responding to an over-regulated economy; lacking access to public markets and infrastructure (ILO, 2014).

The walled confines of Hyderabad – The Old City – retained its functions designed and implemented by the British until today. As the urban fabric expanded all around, Old City activity maintained its commercial dynamic. Progressively, over the decades, with increased urban migration and population, pedestrian and traffic flow increased (Bhowmik, 2012), thus attracting more street vending and informal activity to the streets in and around Old City. Since the British administration left behind a legacy of historical prominence and political power, the walled confines of the city were heavily controlled, resulting in forced evictions of informal activity. The central parts of the city were not only valuable through historic pertinence but were assets for local development, revitalization of the national identity (Steinberg, 2008) and a quest for international recognition and globalization. While the urban interventions following
independence were aimed at commercial and institutional expansion, they attracted both formal and informal activity. Many open-air markets continued to operate until the 1980s and were then evicted without providing alternatives to absorb the rapidly expanding peripatetic vending activity (Fig. 5).

Fig.5: [A] Mozamjahi Market in 1935, exclusively for vendors. Source: Unknown [B] The market today is taken over by formal stores, parking and vehicular traffic. Source: Sakshi, 2019.

An ethnographic, observational study (since 2019) of peripatetic trade and its evolution in and around the old city of Hyderabad helped document changes in spatial paradigms of vending and organization and assess changes in spatiotemporal paradigms. It helped identify major street vending zones — their cyclic evolution in the city — and preferred locations for itinerant vending. While street vendors have mastered evading authorities, their movements are volatile; and dictated by ongoing socio-political repression.

A periodic pattern was observed in the vicissitudes of street vending success, where a high flourishing period of street vending activity is followed by authoritative recognition and control, causing a sudden decline in informal activity; creating a period of quiescence and development of informal activity and movement again until subsequent reform occurs. The vending activity takes up a significant part of the city’s streets at the pinnacle of peripatetic informality, drawing various street vendors around the city to these spots during the epitome of activity. Moreover, a cartographic comparison drawn (Fig. 6) indicates that itinerant activity did not deplete with urbanization in the city but thrived and proliferated within its confines over the years. Today, street vendors prefer the sidewalks along the Musi River and streets within the walled city, namely Charminar, Madina, Lal Bazar and Nizam Bagh - collectively called the Old City of Hyderabad. Most public spaces in the Old City along the northern and eastern walls have become a hub for peripatetic trade, with significant clusters of vending activity in Charminar and Lad Bazaar (Fig. 7). During the last few decades, the city underwent significant urban transformation, primarily affecting socio-spatial access and mobility in the area. As the city expanded with rapid urban sprawl, intricate transport systems flourished - several new buses and bus stops, more taxis and cabs - assuring connectivity to all parts of the city. This meant Old City became a central node where tremendous flows of pedestrian and vehicular
users met. As a result of improved connectivity, the city's commercial values increased, stimulating more street vending activity (Pivo & Fisher, 2011).

Fig. 6: Proliferation of Street Vending before independence (around 1935) and in the last year (2022).
An increased number of street vendors now access the area from distant neighborhoods because there is a significantly wider area affected by the activity surge. No action was taken despite the visible proliferation of informal activity, other than periodic evictions. Since the emergence of commercial activity in the Old City before independence, its identity and function have never changed, adding to its rapid growth and adaptability. As street vending grew and expanded, it remained resistant to interventions, adapting and self-constructing solutions to broad urban issues, remaining a key part of the Old City of Hyderabad (Fig. 8).

**Peripatetic Trade in the Old City of Hyderabad today:**

**The Steady Evolution of Bazaars into Peripatetic trade:**

Over the last few decades, the definition of bazaars changed drastically. Although the intent remained the same, the way they were conducted saw a heavy change since the inception of the authoritative regime and international planning interventions in the Old City of Hyderabad. While bazaars were initially open-air markets at the heart of the city, they have undergone drastic changes and have morphed into peripatetic trade today. Charminar remains the only central cluster in the Old City that has some semblance of the historic bazaars that it once hosted. However, they are taken over by formal stores today, which started changing the concept of bazaars in Old Hyderabad. The historic forms of bazaars that once shaped historic Hyderabad cease to exist today. The nearest activity resembling that of bazaars are peripatetic traders that move around the city setting up bazaar-like vending zones on a weekly or monthly
basis in each location before moving onto another. While the pandemic disrupted activities in the city, street vending continued to thrive and flourish. Even though bazaars have taken many forms in the informal sector today, they continue to exist and thrive.

**Resistance and Ambiguous Vending Regulations in Old Hyderabad Post-Covid-19 Pandemic:**

Most street vendors in Hyderabad turned to peripatetic trading today, fearing authorities and harsh regulations. The pandemic followed, causing waves of disruption that have interrupted the lives of many vendors and itinerant traders. Heavy social distancing and quarantine measures produced empty streets, making informal vendors and peripatetic traders susceptible and more visible to authoritative regimes and regulations. Since most of these street vendors live near the Old City - along the Musi riverbanks - they morphed these empty streets into active vending zones along the riverbanks (Tallavajjula, 2020).

The end of the pandemic marked a heavy shift in the economic activities in the city. Public space usage policies continue to be precarious by rapidly evolving and changing, making it inaccessible and nearly impossible for informal vendors to comply with the law enforcement amid active exclusion attempts (Batréau & Bonnet, 2016). Legal regulations pushed the tolerant extent of these groups, resulting in acts of protest causing mobilization of these groups and ensuring the confrontation and negotiation of rights to space with officials (Kamalipour & Peimani, 2019). One such mass protest led to the formation of the Street Vending Act in 2014, which prompted the national and state governments to reconsider hostile regulations and accommodate the demands of the informal population. While the act continues to be inconsistent with its regulatory ordinances, the formal acknowledgement of street vendors and the informal economy remains volatile, with no substantial change in the ways their visibility is viewed in the city (Cannon et al., 2019). While the informal economy, street vendors and the livelihoods they rely on were heavily disturbed by the pandemic, the corporation and authorities are yet to reimburse the marginalized as per the Street Vending Act through the PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme (Government of India, 2019). Moreover, the non-regularization of street vendors – although illegal according to the Street Vending Act of 2014 – has left several vendors unable to reclaim their earlier vending areas after the public space encroachment drive in 2018, followed by the pandemic in 2020 (Deekshith, 2021). The PM SVANidhi scheme was launched in June 2020 as a facility which aims to empower street vendors to recover losses incurred as a result of the pandemic. It is common for street vendors in the city to be evicted and persecuted in the city, but many street vendors claim that PM SVANidhi scheme contradicts those principles (Narasimha, personal communication, 2021).

**A overview of Urban Planning Inverventions:**

Various urban planning strategies proposed today by the government are exclusionary and chase Western models of a modern city. One such project close to the Old City is the Musi Riverfront Revitalization Project (MMRP). The MMRP was launched twice over two years and remained unsuccessful during both attempts. At its peak, the project altered public space in the Old City while it pushed its marginalized populations out of the city. The Inclusive Heritage City Development Plan (IHCDP) followed the MMRP to protect historic/heritage precincts in Hyderabad (The Old City). The IHCDP - a World Bank initiative - commenced in 2011 to contribute to cultural heritage management within city development. The aim was to promote the integration of the historic cultural heritage into the city through an integrated approach rather than sectoral development towards a broader city-wide socioeconomic and physical design development (Cities Alliance, n.d.). While the project intended to integrate diverse populations and prioritize cultural heritage, the approach targeted urban poverty reduction (Saswat Bandyopadhyay & CEPT, 2014). However, authorities continued to move the
marginalized population away from the historic precinct without appropriate rehabilitation. Most urban planning interventions proposed by the government through similar programs and projects excluded the marginalized from the city.

The heritage precinct or the historic precinct gained its identity from different traditional activities the population engaged in. Today, informal settlements along the boundaries of Old Hyderabad belong to descendants of the inhabitants that shaped culture in the Old City – nearly a century ago. While most urban planning interventions proposed have respect for the culture and heritage of the city, it has typically been through the preservation of cultural artefacts, knowledge and processes. While traditional goods and handicrafts rest in museums like the Telangana State Archaeology Museum, the conservation of art forms and artisans is seldom recognized. Most artisans preserving traditional culture today are peripatetic traders like their predecessors, who travel from place to place, selling handmade art and goods. However, they are severely discriminated against and evicted from the Old City.

While a few schemes tried redesigning the layout of street vending zones and locations to move street vendors away from the Old City, they often disregarded the cultural pertinence and importance of socio-spatial aspects. This led to the failure of most rehabilitation drives due to the absence of socio-spatial relevance. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) intervened with various solutions to stabilize peripatetic traders and move street vendors away from the Old City, but they failed. Taking from the Western concept of kiosks and boutique stalls, GHMC installed vending zones (Fig. 9) away from the Old City to encourage relocation of vending from the historic precinct.

![Fig. 9: [A] Street Vendors zones along Masab Tank. Source: Telangana Today, 2022 [B] Street Vending Booths that remain unoccupied in Vijay Nagar Colony Source: Telangana Today, 2022.](image)

Conclusions

The history of urban transformation in Old Hyderabad explains the lack of socio-spatial equity in the city, which is evident through the repeated attempts at eviction of street vending activities. It can be concluded that peripatetic trade never disappeared despite multiple eviction attempts over the decades, regardless of legal status or spatial perspective. As observed, it evolved – avoiding modern planning interventions – and incongruously turned from being integral to the history of Old Hyderabad into an intrusive activity in the eyes of policymakers and city users. While these modernizing policies have left bazaars and their people behind, current regulations and policies seem to consider street vending as an intrusive activity that disturbs the urban development of Hyderabad. There is a need to reconsider existing regulations, interventions and planning policies that glorify foreign urban planning interventions and layouts at the expense of the local population. Efficient urban interventions should depend on critical placemaking rooted in local urban design derived from local urbanism.
The street vendors of Hyderabad – especially in the historic precinct of Hyderabad – continue to create space for their living despite being subjected to hostility daily - risking fines, detention and evictions. The city is not just a space with exclusionary regulations but also a convergence of various human geographies and resistance. While authorities continue to promote Western planning strategies to keep up with the international trend, street vendors continue asserting their resistance and revolution by identifying scarcely used public spaces and occupying them – eventually appropriating and exercising belonging. While peripatetic trade and street vending are considered an appropriation of public space in the Old City, it is evident that today, it is not only native to the city but also a form of resistance to acquired Western planning models imposed upon the city.

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