



A Study of the Urban Nightlife of Delhi and its Impact on Safety

Sobia Ahsan

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Abstract

Delhi, the capital of India, has many facets as an urban space. It is a city that attracts a vast number of people for better job opportunities, for quality education; Delhi has a rich heritage that attracts tourists from all over the world.

Digitalization and current working trends have transformed the concept of working hours in the city. Many MNCs give provision of flexible working hours to their employees, while in some cases, long working hours are required. This has created an opportunity for the nighttime economy to grow. But the opportunities that the nightlife provides are counteracted by the various challenges it faces. People's safety is argued to be most compromised in the spaces at nighttime.

It is in this context; the paper attempts to represent active nightlife as an approach that acts as a driving force for the city in terms of livability and safety. It argues that spaces that are vibrant with nightlife establishments are comparatively safer than the spaces which do not account for any such establishments. One of the objectives of the study is to explore how nightlife establishments contribute to the social capital and public life of cities. Another objective is to identify the actors involved in the production of active nightlife spaces.

The study elucidates the argument by reviewing theoretical evidence and secondary case studies. The relationship between nightlife and urban safety is explored, and various reasons for an active nightlife culture are identified using

secondary cases from around the world.

The inferences are then applied to various urban spaces in Delhi. These urban spaces are selected based on the extent of activities happening in the nighttime. Through fieldwork, material and immaterial structures of the nightlife establishments are documented and then dismantled to understand the nature of these areas and how they operate and function among their people.

The paper unfolds the potential of government regulations to enhance the nightlife of the city. The paper concludes with specific suggestions for the improvement of nightlife in a public space where required.

Keywords: Urban Nightlife, Safety, Working Hours, Diverse Activities, Social Inclusion, Government Regulations.

1. Introduction

Every city has a lifestyle prevalent that includes its people, place, and creativity, which defines its character.

Delhi is a cosmopolitan city where people are open to embracing new ideas and lifestyles. It is a city of professional business careers and foremost of the upper and middle class with endless opportunities. However, in the last few decades, the crime rate in Delhi has increased, and the city has received a label of an unsafe city. As per National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, Delhi recorded 13,892 cases of crimes against women in 2021. The data showed that, on average, over two girls were raped every day in Delhi in 2021. The national capital also recorded the highest number of kidnapping cases among the 19 metropolitan cities last year. With the rising cases of crime, safety has become an important factor for determining the well-being of its people. Delhi recorded 36% of the robberies during the nighttime from 8:00 pm to midnight. (Singh, 2022)

It has been observed that apart from various metropolitan cities in India where a night culture exists and functions as an urban space, Delhi is somewhat an example of a sleepy city. However, with the quickening tempo of modern life and prolonged working hours, i.e., with the coming up of BPOs and other job-related activities, there is a development of nightlife culture in Delhi. Social activities after daytime are a common nighttime venture for people. Some of the options available to the public are a number of bars, pubs, discotheques, eateries, and coffee shops. This provides an opportunity for research to revisit the concept of urban safety through the lens of “time”.

It is difficult to identify the reasons for such crimes unless we look at the correlation of safety with people, place, and time. Around this discourse, in this research, “urban safety” is studied and juxtaposed with the parameters of space and time (nighttime).

1.1. Concept of “Urban Safety”

The study revolves around the concept of Urban Safety; thus, a range of pieces of literature have been examined. Theories on human cognition and safe public spaces are discussed to deal with the conceptual understanding of the concept of safety.

O.A. Rastyapina and N.V. Korosteleva, in their research article titled ‘Urban Safety Development Methods’, define Urban Safety as a built environment that ensures the safe life of the population on the basis of a combination of factors. These factors forming local urban safety are divided into groups: natural, architectural, social, environmental, technogenic, infrastructural, and urban. They argue that an analysis of urban safety factors allows one to assess the level of livability and safety of an inhabited area. (Rastyapina O.A, Korosteleva N.V, 2016)

Making cities safe is one of the aspirations reflected in **Goal 11 of the Agenda 2030** and the New Urban Agenda. The United Nations guidelines on Safer Cities and Settlements provide a conceptual framework for safety and security. There are two aspects of safety and security mentioned: actual and perceived. The perceived component describes how people see insecurity via the prism of fear and anxiety, while the actual dimension pertains to the possibility of being a victim.

...The concept starts with the observation that inadequate urban development and local governance, along with patterns of social and territorial exclusion, can result in crime and violence. Given this perspective, ensuring urban safety and security requires a citywide and participatory process to address the multiple causes and risk factors for crime, violence, and insecurity in cities and human settlements and to put in place the factors that protect against those causes and risks... (UN-Habitat, 2012)

In the above statement, local governance and social and spatial inclusion are identified as the essential components of maintaining safety and security in cities.

The theory of the Hierarchy of needs by **Abraham Maslow** is a representational diagram in which human needs gradually rise up to the highest need of “self-actualization”. In this theory, safety occupies the second level from the base. Thus, this theory ascertains the importance of the factor for human living conditions.

Jan Gehl, in his work ‘Quality of Physical Environment’, establishes that the ‘opportunity’ increase in the environment can create more comfort, delight, and protection. It also established that rather than necessary activities, it is the alternative choices or options that create lively urban spaces.

The concept of “eyes on the street” was given by **Jane Jacobs**, a writer, and an activist, in her book ‘The Death and Life of Great American Cities’. This book helped in formulating a basic understanding of the concept of public life, safety, and urban space.

Oscar Newmann’s literary work “Defensible Space” is based on the research conducted by him to investigate the reasons for crime and social isolation in housing areas. In this research, a set of parameters were identified that are linked with crime and disorder, making the place “unsafe”. He outlined; five factors that would need to be present to make a space safe. (HRF, n.d.)

1. **Territory.** There must be a sense of belonging with the space.
2. **Surveillance.** The physical characteristics of a space must offer a person the ability to know what is happening around them.
3. **Image.** The space must be structured in such a way that it can provide a sense of security when it is being used.
4. **Milieu.** Features of the space must provide a sense of security, such as its proximity to a police station or a busy commercial area near a police station.
5. **Safe Areas.** There must be a secure adjacent area that offers higher-level services in the other four important points that can be accessed if the primary space is occupied.

From these theories, certain parameters are drawn that can be used to identify the safety condition of the place. Those parameters are **active surveillance, social inclusion, territoriality, diverse activity, image, visibility, and uses of the place**. All these theories, however, do not reflect the component of time in measuring the safety of the place. In this research, evening time has been taken to examine the level of safety in the capital city, Delhi. It is argued in this paper that a healthy nighttime culture helps in improving the safety of a city.

2. Reading the Urban Nightlife

The night is a part of us and influences our social, cultural, and economic life. From the early 1990s onwards, the evening and nighttime economy and, more broadly, the 24-hour city started to develop with many metropolitan cities, including the nightlife sector, in their regeneration plans in various countries. Just like the daytime economy, the nighttime economy has become vital for the regeneration of cities. Active night spaces are amongst the city's urban cultures that possess a rich source of everyday life. This can be regarded to be an important part of establishing a city's cultural identity and improving the well-being of the city.

As a result, nightlife districts with a variety of restaurants and clubs have started to develop in various larger cities providing jobs and attracting tourists and visitors. There is, however, a pervasive culture of fear surrounding nightlife districts which makes the nightlife different than the day. People who go out at night are usually seen as problematic in discourses that involve negative cultural signifiers such as drinking, making noise, and hanging out in groups. (Ilse van Liempt et al., 2014)

Urban environments are created by a complex range of *'social, cultural, legal, spatial and temporal dimensions'* and characterized by particular *"physical infrastructure of buildings, roads, transit systems, land uses, design and architecture"*. In studying urban nighttime spaces, it is imperative to understand the complexities of these dimensions. This paper attempts to shift the narrative of nightlife being a weakness to an opportunity for city spaces.

2.1. Growth of Nightlife in Cities around the World

(Miyakubo, 2009) in her paper, reviews the work of Biachini on Night cultures and Night Economy. The author pointed out that the 1970s and 1980s brought about an increase in public demand for nighttime activities in many cities around the

world. The author mentions three important reasons that contributed to this phenomenon. Democratization of access to universities in the aftermath of the civil rights movement created an expansion in higher education, bringing students for nighttime activities. The post-1968 emergence of urban social movements, such as community action, spurred cultural events that encouraged groups to go out in large numbers. The third factor was the increasing availability of disposable income and leisure time.

The growth of nighttime activities over the past few decades has driven the entertainment economy around the world. In recent years many governments across the world have crystallized around the vision to create the '24-hour city'. Such initiatives focus on extending the working hours of the day and integrating them with the nighttime economy, thereby stretching the 'vitality and viability' of urban areas across a longer time span. (Hadfield, 2011) There is a growing range of commercially-operated venues available after hours in most places, and late-night attractions are dominated by eating and drinking.

There are many cities around the world that can be called '24-hour cities'. In 2011, a study of the world's 24-hour cities was conducted; Cairo, Egypt, was ranked the "most 24-hour" of all. Other cities on the list were Montevideo, Beirut, six Spanish cities (Malaga, Zaragoza, Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and Seville), and Buenos Aires. London was ranked 17th, Paris 18th, and New York 32nd. (Sood, 2012)

In recent years, cities around the world have recognized the value of nightlife to a city's economy and culture. One such city is Manchester, UK. Manchester defines the nighttime economy as

operating between the hours of 06:00 pm and 06:00 am. The concept of the 24-hour economy was seized upon initially as a way of combating the negative effects of major economic change.

The nighttime economy encompasses all activity taking place between those hours, from shift workers, taxi drivers, residents and families, students and travelers, and those attending cultural venues across the city region. This busy and diverse nightlife is one of the city's main selling points for visitors and potential residents.



Figure 1. Nightlife around Deansgate Lock, Manchester

Source: (Andrews, 2020)

Together with late shopping hours and special family-friendly events, this means that a wider range of people use the city late into the evening. (Lord, n.d.)

Another example of an active nightlife culture is seen in Mailbox, Birmingham. Mailbox is a mixed-use development in a converted industrial building beside the canal. The development is made up of shops, bars, restaurants, offices, and apartments. Shops and services are aimed firmly at wealthier visitors - selling luxury goods such as designer clothes, flowers, and jewelry.



Figure 2. Nightlife around Deansgate Lock, Manchester

Source: (Freeman, 2017)

The development includes many quiet restaurants and sophisticated cocktail bars, open until about midnight. These venues are mainly upmarket chains aimed at a relatively wealthy and aspirational market, including families and older visitors.

Strong management, secure parking, private security, good lighting, and tidy and permeable public spaces make the Mailbox a very appealing place to socialize at night.

In the above two cases, the nightlife culture is driven by either the aspirational values of the city or the economic benefits. Diversity of activity, good place-making, and strong government regulations act as the drivers of safe nightlife culture.

2.2. Situating the Urban Nightlife in The Indian Context

Although the concept of nightlife culture is not new to Indian society, the pattern of nightlife utility is changing in light of the contemporary environment due to changes in working culture and an increase in the availability of disposable income and leisure time. This section looks into the current status of nightlife culture in Delhi, which requires attention with respect to the safety of its citizens.

With a high crime rate, Delhi is regarded as the most unsafe metropolitan city for women in India. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), there were 445.9 crimes reported per lakh people in 2021. The number of crimes against women reported in Delhi, according to the NCRB, was 32.20 percent of the total number of offenses in this category across all 19 metropolitan areas. In an industry chamber Assocham survey, a majority of 65 percent of women in Delhi interviewed said they felt insecure working in night shifts, while the figure was the least for Mumbai at 26 percent. (PTI, 2008) According to the survey by Delhi police on women's safety conducted in March 2006, 40% of the women felt unsafe between 08:00 am– 10:00 am and 05:00 pm – 07:00 pm, and 31% felt unsafe in the mid-afternoon.

For the purpose of this study, four urban areas of varying typologies are investigated for their nightlife culture. The objective of the study is to identify the parameters which can promote healthy and active nightlife in the city. The activity pattern of these spaces has been studied with respect to the services, time of use, connectivity, participant profiling, and government regulations. Urban spaces with inactive nightlife are also analyzed to draw a comparison between the active and inactive spaces. The first area of study is the street of Matia Mahal in Jama Masjid, which has a mix of activities during the nighttime. The second study area is India Gate. It is an urban public space that attracts tourists and is a site for picnics and weekend hangouts. The third area is Connaught Place, and the fourth area is Nehru Place which is a commercial and financial district center of Delhi.

The underlying hypothesis is that; a more varied pattern of overlapping activities and attractions involving a more diverse range of participants is likely to be better for public order, for sustaining essential public services, and for the long-term viability of the place.

2.2.1. Times of use

To identify the nighttime activity pattern, various time slots were identified during which the activity of the space usually changes. The time period ranges from 08:00 pm to 12:00 am. Each case study area was analyzed on the basis of the dominant practices.

2.2.2. Dominant practices

The spatial distribution of dominant practices

- Where is it happening
- What is happening
- Participant profiling: who is involved

- Governance and regulation: signage and zones of illegality, visible police, and private security practices

3. Case Studies

Delhi is fast developing into a huge nightlife hub. The major nightlife venues in the city are either in the central or the southern part of Delhi. The major activities happening in these venues are related to entertainment, leisure, or food.

3.1. Matia Mahal, Jama Masjid

Old Delhi, popularly known as “purani Dilli”, has few streets which are wide awake during the night time. Matia Mahal is one such area, exactly opposite Gate No. 1 of Jama Masjid. The place gets its name from an actual palace that once existed in the area. Today, the area has a presence of many restaurants and hotels that functions beyond midnight. It is a high-density area and encounters huge footfall throughout the day. The visitors are both locals and tourists.



Table 1. Time of Use versus Activities – Matia Mahal

Source: Author

Time of Use	Activities
06:00 pm – 08:00 pm	Shopping
08:00 pm – 11:00 pm	Shopping, Eating, Loading, and Unloading of Goods
11:00 pm – 12:00 am	Eating, Loading, and Unloading of Goods

3.1.1. Factors influencing nightlife

- Matia Mahal Street is famous for its late-night makeshift eateries and restaurants. The street has a mixed-use typology with shops and eateries on the ground floor and residential space on the upper floors. There are a few guest houses and hotels along the street. It is observed that most of the eateries close their shops post-midnight.
- The road abutting Jama Masjid is known as Urdu Bazaar. This road has a presence of publishers and calligraphers and many eateries. Other than eateries, most of the shops shut by evening. It is the informal hawkers that continue their business till late at night.
- The activity pattern shows that the loading and unloading of goods also keeps the place quite active during the night.
- Contrastingly, there is an area very close to Matia Mahal, just across Jama Masjid Gate No. 1, occupied by street peddlers. This area remains quite inactive with no activity post 09:00 pm.

**Figure 4****Figure 5**

Figure 4 and 5. Figure 4 shows the late-night activities on Urdu Bazaar Road and Figure 5 shows the vibrant street of Matia Mahal at midnight

Source: Author

- **Connectivity:** The street is well connected with the main road. As far as public transportation is concerned, the metro provides an affordable and convenient mode of travel.
- **Policing and Crime:** Since this area is in close proximity to a monument, it attracts tourists. There are many constables posted in the area. CCTV cameras are installed at multiple locations. There is ample lighting in the area which provides a sense of safety. However, the situation is grim, just a km away. The area along the Jama Masjid Road is occupied by street peddlers, who are usually involved in drug peddling. They occupy the porches of the buildings as night shelters. It is noted that the streets which have public activities are comparatively safer, as these

activities keep the place active, and there is a sense of “eyes on the streets”.

3.2. Nehru Place District Centre

Nehru Place is an important commercial, financial, and business center in Delhi. It was planned in the 1960s by Delhi Development Authority as a local community center and was originally called Kalkaji Complex. By the 1980s, it was renamed as Nehru Place. Over the years, it has started functioning as Regional Commercial Centre and is now widely considered to be a major information technology hub of South Asia. It is a confluence of informal and formal sectors, with a footfall of nearly 1,30,000 people daily from all corners of Delhi. However, only 7% of visitors come from a 2km radius. The main complex is a 4-story with many offices, computer retailers, printing shops, eateries, and hundreds of informal hawkers occupying the open spaces of the complex. (Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation, 2017)

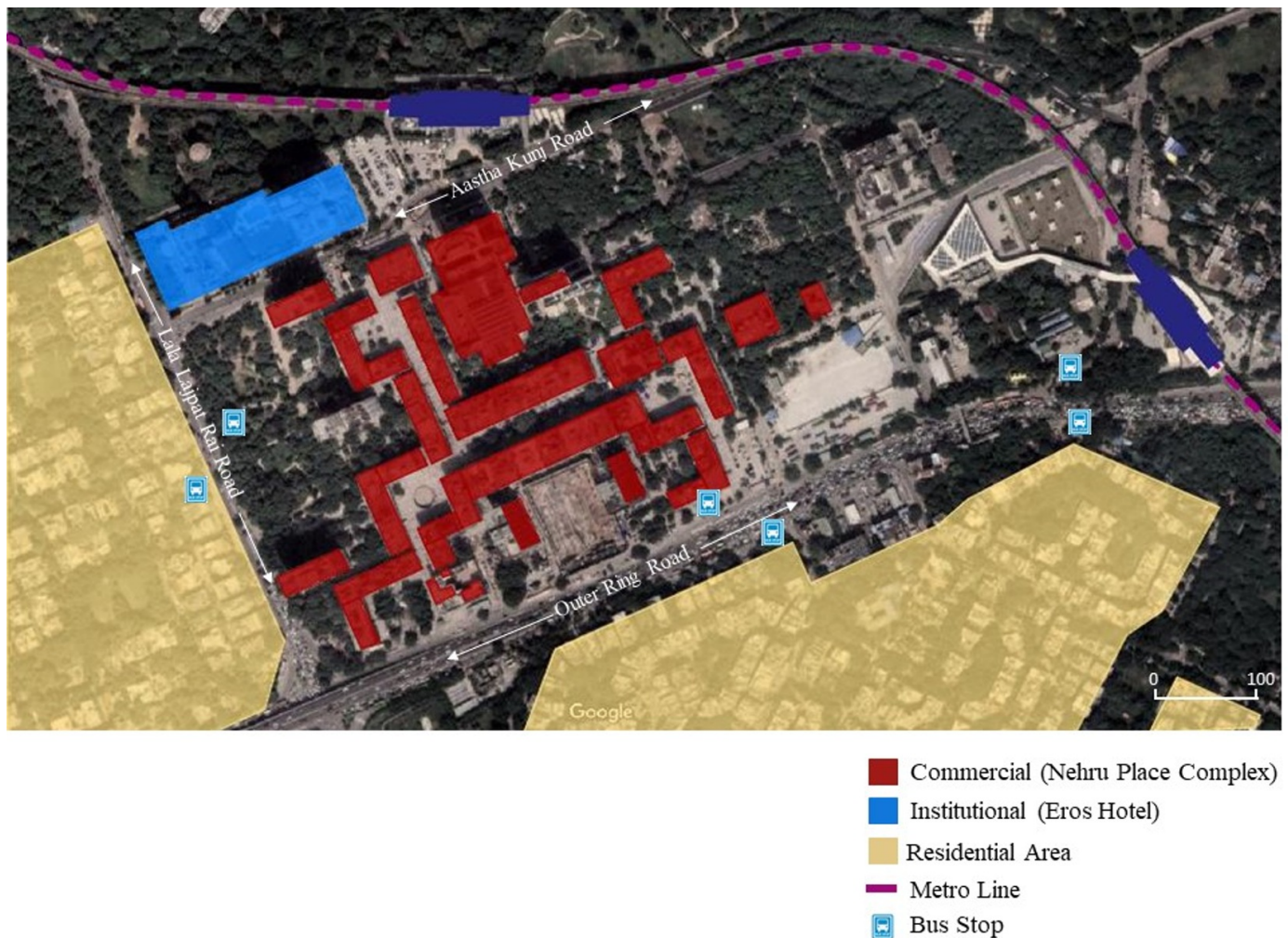


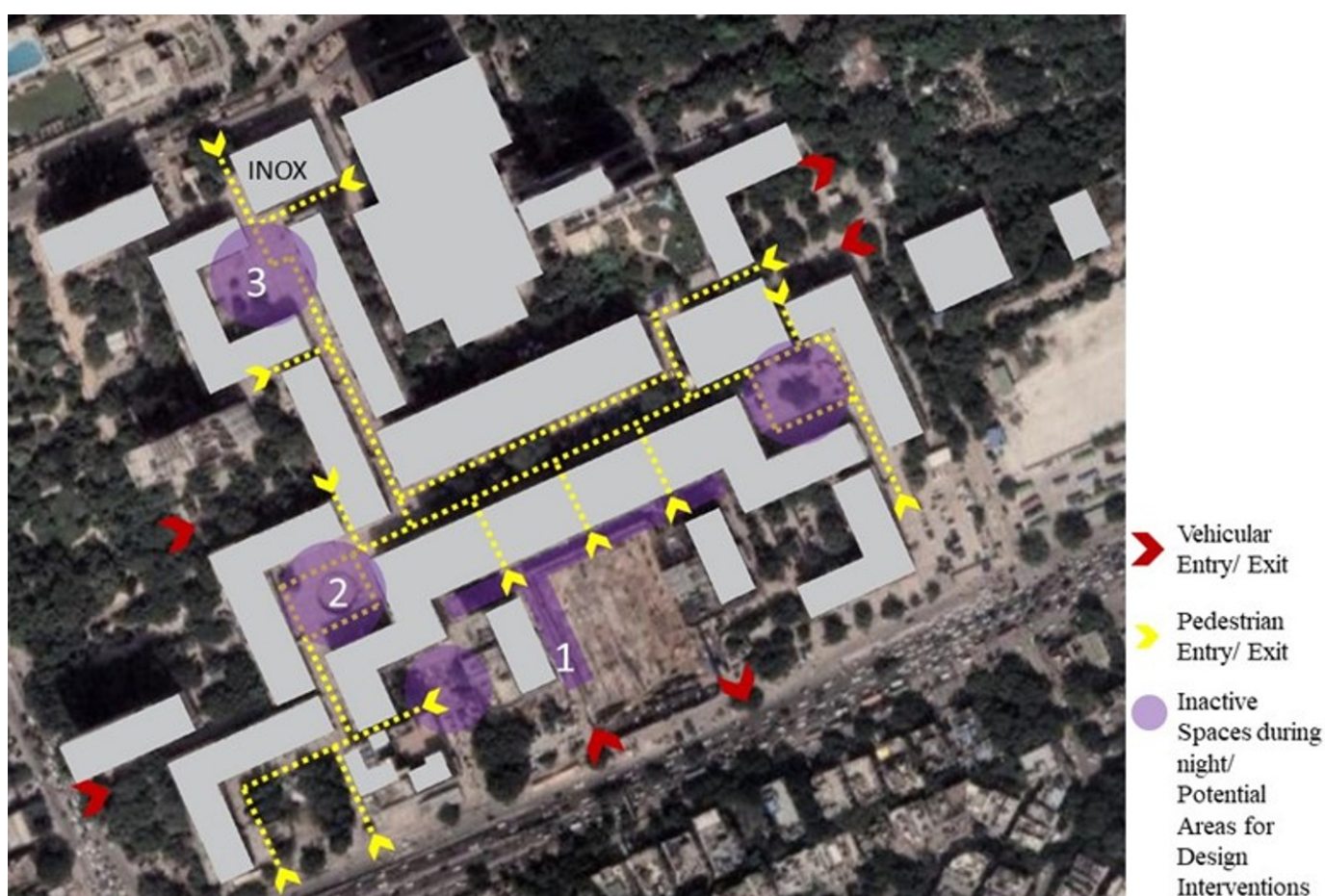
Figure 6. Map showing Nehru Place and its neighborhood

Source: Author

Table 2. Time of Use versus Activities – Nehru Place

Source: Author

Time of Use	Activities
06:00 pm – 08:00 pm	Office Crowd, Shopping (Electronic goods), Eating
08:00 pm – 11:00 pm	Inactive
11:00 pm – 12:00 am	Inactive

**Figure 7.** Map showing Entry/ Exit to Nehru Place Complex and Inactive Spaces during the NightSource: Author

Factors influencing nightlife

- Nehru Place complex shuts down at 08:00 pm, after which the area becomes completely inactive. There are no regulated nighttime activities in the complex, making the place extremely isolated and secluded.
- There are several entry and exit points to the complex. But they are inconspicuous and unwelcoming. There is no clear physical axis for visual connectivity. At night, there is not enough street lighting which again creates a sense of fear, making it a dull space during late evenings.
- The northern edge of the complex facing Astha Kunj Road attracts few visitors in the late evenings due to the presence of Inox Insignia. Both men and women can be seen using this public space.
- The arterial and sub-arterial roads offset the complex in such a way that it creates a non-physical boundary between

the complex and the residential colonies in close proximity.

- **Connectivity:** Nehru Place is well connected with the other parts of the city through the Outer Ring Road. It is easily accessible by metro and buses; however, the operating time of these public transport services is only before midnight.
- **Policing and Crime:** There are many negative/inactive spaces in the complex that invites illegal activities and increases the risk of crime, especially at night. Over the past decade, various cases of robbery and a case of terrorist attack on December 28, 2005, have been noted in the Nehru Place area. A rape case was reported on April 27, 2012, and another terror attack happened on September 25, 2009.



Figure 8. Activities in front of the entry at (space 1)



Figure 9. Plaza at 8:00 pm (space 2)

Source: Author



Figure 10. Plaza at 11:00 pm (space 3)



Figure 11. Complex entry from the Aastha Kunj Road

Source: Author

3.3. Connaught Place

Connaught Place, 'CP', is one of the largest financial, commercial, and business centers in Delhi. It is a vibrant recreational and institutional space that attracts local, regional, and international visitors throughout the year.

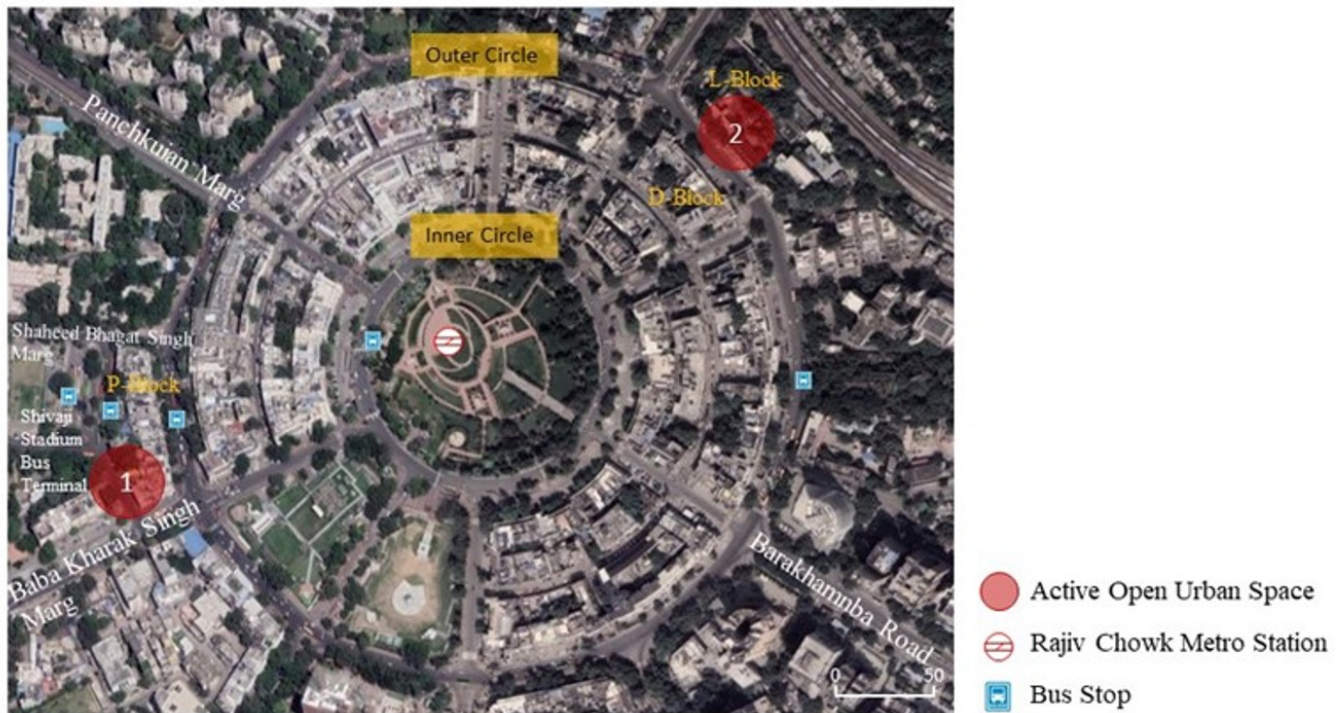


Figure 12. Map showing Connaught Place

Source: Author



Figure 13. Connaught Place at 11:00 pm

Source: Author

Table 3. Time of Use versus Activities – Connaught Place

Source: Author

Time of Use	Activities
06:00 pm – 08:00 pm	Shopping
08:00 pm – 11:00 pm	Mostly Inactive (Eateries only at a few locations)
11:00 pm – 12:00 am	Mostly Inactive (Eateries only at a few locations)

Factor influencing nightlife

- The closing time of most of the formal establishments at CP is 09:00 pm. Being a low-density area with a low residential profile, this area mostly remains inactive during nighttime. The only active places are the bars and pubs, and a few eateries and street dhabas.¹ The P and L-Block of the outer circle continue to operate till 11:00 pm – 12:00 night. Urban Space-1, marked in Figure 12, represents an active night space due to the presence of an eatery (Jain Chawal Vale), and Urban Space-2, in the same figure, represents an entire edge of L-Block lined by eateries.
- There are enough street lighting and CCTV surveillance. Still, the activities are concentrated only in and around a few eateries and restaurants. These spots are identified as potential nodes which can be further redesigned to make the area vibrant and safe during the night.
- **Connectivity:** This area is the heart of Delhi and is easily accessible from every part of the city. There are many modes of public transportation available for people. Apart from auto-rickshaws, cab, and bus services, the metro provides an affordable transport facility.
- **Policing and Crime:** The majority of the reported robberies and assaults in and around Connaught Place are purportedly carried out by vagrants and addicts who squat on the pavements of CP. Most of the victims are women and party crowds who frequent late-night clubs and eateries. In 2012, a notorious gang targeted and robbed customers who were using ATMs after hours. After a Sashastra Seema Bal jawan was fatally stabbed in 2015, it sparked worry from the Ministry of Home Affairs, who claimed that the ragpicker was to blame. (Sharma, 2016)

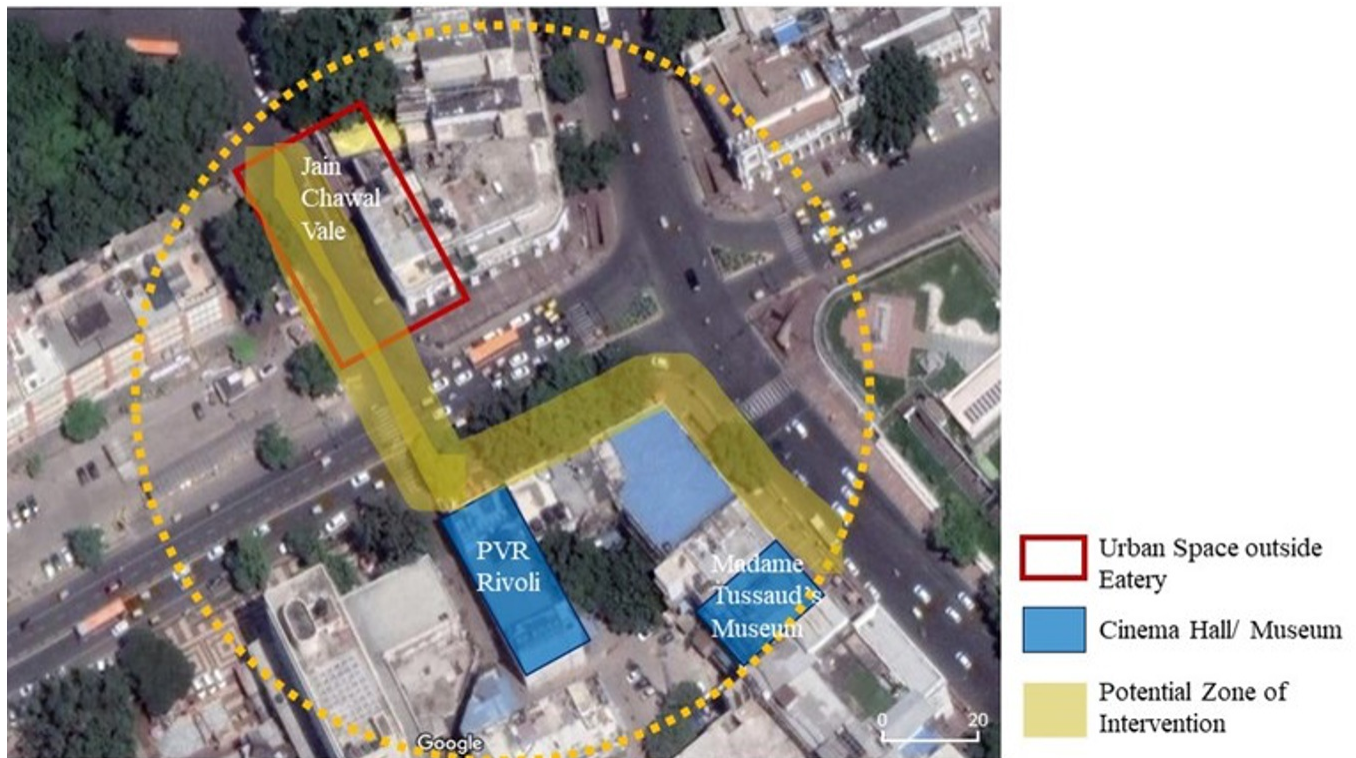


Figure 14. Map showing Urban Space-1 at CP

Source: Author



Figure 15

Figure 15. Active space outside an eatery in P-Block, CP



Figure 16

Figure 16. Area close to the active space in P-Block with a cinema hall across the road

Source: Author



Figure 17. Map showing Urban Space-2 at CP

Source: Author



Figure 18

Figure 18. Active space outside eateries in L-Block, CP.



Figure 19

Figure 19. Restaurants and cafes in front of the eateries across the road

Source: Author

3.4. India Gate

India Gate was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1931. It is situated in the heart of New Delhi, is a prominent landmark, and commemorates the 90,000 soldiers of the Indian Army.

India Gate is a part of Central Vista, a 3.2 km stretch that houses Rashtrapati Bhawan, India Gate, Parliament House, and

North and South Block, among others. It is the monument that celebrates India and its achievements and is a venue for mass celebrations. In 2019, the Central Government announced the redevelopment of Central Vista to give a new identity to the place. After three years, on September 08, 2022, the area was inaugurated by the PM and was thrown open to the public. The revamping comprised the re-organization of public spaces and the strengthening of recreational facilities. For better connectivity, a pedestrian underpass has been developed to manage public footfall and smooth transit for the public. There are defined parking spaces for visitors and tourists, and for surveillance, 300 CCTV cameras have been installed.

Table 4. Time of Use versus Activities

– India Gate

Source: Author

Time of Use	Activities
06:00 pm – 08:00 pm	Active Public Space
08:00 pm – 11:00 pm	Active Public Space
11:00 pm – 12:00 am	Inactive

Factor influencing nightlife

- India Gate is a public space that caters to all age groups. India Gate is one of the most visited public spaces in Delhi at night. It is a place for social interactions, casual meetings, and family picnics. The informal vendors occupy the space, selling go-to snacks; and toys for the children.
- The activity pattern of the area shows high public footfall during the day till 11:00 pm at night. Earlier, the space was less regulated, and the India Gate precinct was open to the public till late at night. However, after the revamping, the space gets closed at 11:00 pm, and heavy police surveillance is seen in and around the area. Once a vibrant space, this regulatory move has reduced it into an inactive and dull space post-11:00 pm.
- **Connectivity:** India Gate is accessible by Metro, Buses, and Private Vehicles. However, the nearest metro stations and bus stops are within 7-10 minutes' walking distance from India Gate. The last bus service is at 09:00 pm, which is again a 10-minute walk from the area.

Policing and Crime: There is ample surveillance in and around the area, making the space less prone to crime. Yet, due to heavy regulations, the inactivity post 11:00 pm makes the space extremely dull and beyond the reach of people.

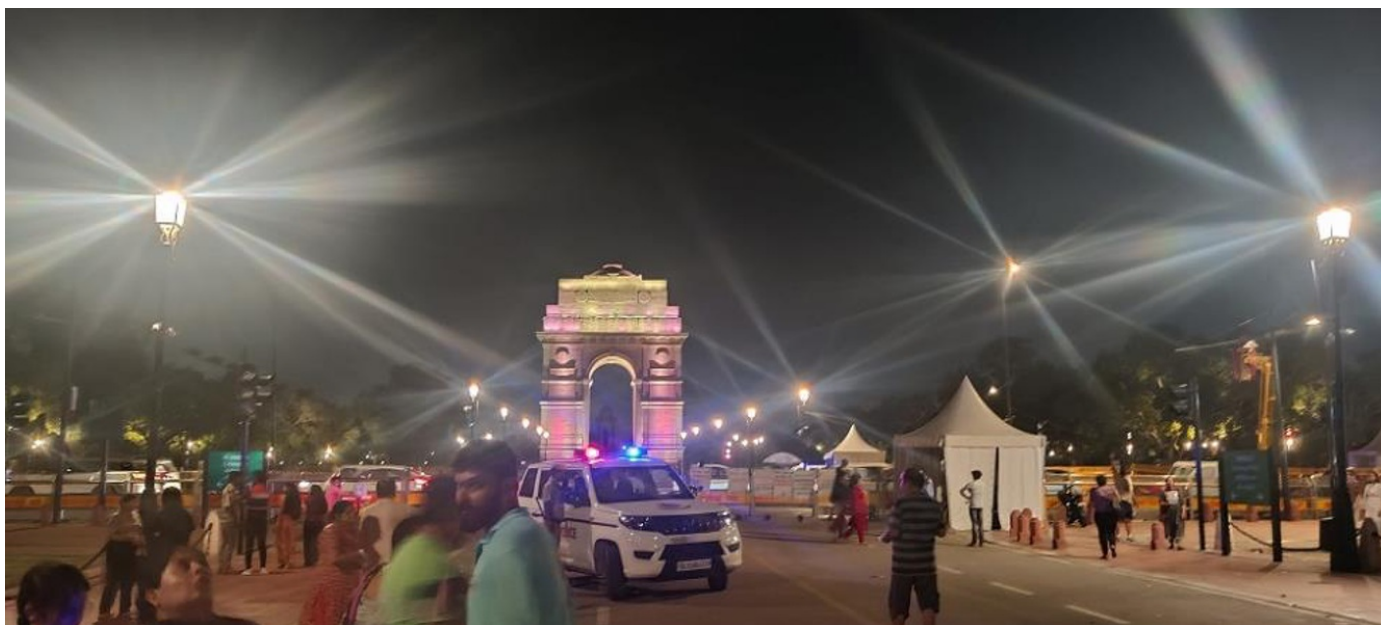


Figure 21. India Gate at 11:00 pm

Source: Author



Figure 22



Figure 23

Figure 22 and Figure 23. Active public spaces at India Gate at 10:30 pm

Source: Author

The safety component is analyzed based on the observations and personal interviews conducted in the study areas. The following five parameters have been taken into consideration to draw a fair understanding of the level of safety and sense of belonging in all four case studies.

	Active Surveillance		Social Inclusion				Diverse Activity	Permeability & Visibility	Territoriality
	CCTV	Police	Male	Female	Elderly	Children			
Matia Mahal	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nehru Place	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
CP (eateries)	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✗	-	✗
India Gate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 5. Safety Parameter Matrix for the Study Areas at Night

Source: Author

It is observed that Active Surveillance is present in all four case studies except for Nehru Place, which requires police surveillance post 08:00 pm. The debates on urban nightlife scarcely discuss the impact of social inclusion in urban safety. This, however, is one of the key factors responsible for healthy and vibrant nightlife. Places that are gender inclusive are comparatively safer than their counterparts which only attract male visitors. Matia Mahal and India Gate experience a mix of public footfall, including men, women, and children, owing to a range of activities. The eateries at Connaught Place attract a young crowd, both men and women. However, in Nehru Place, only men could be seen. This is apparent due to the mono-functional typology of Nehru Place, with no or minimal areas for public use during the late evenings.

Another factor responsible for bringing a sense of safety is the level of permeability and legibility. It is observed that apart from Nehru Place, all three areas have some level of permeability. In the case of Matia Mahal, a clear axis exists that runs from Jama Masjid and continues along the street. The active public space at India Gate is part of an axis that is clearly visible and accessible. The identified areas in Connaught Place behave as active nodes where the activity is concentrated and limited. Nehru Place Complex is the only case among the four that happens to have impermeable spaces within the complex as well as at the entrance of the complex.

A sense of place and belonging can only be seen and felt at the Matia Mahal, which is not just a tourist attraction but

represents cultural values and community bonds. India Gate is unique as it brings the idea of India into the urban space, instilling a sense of territoriality and belonging among the visitors.

4. Regulations on Nightlife in Delhi

The Government of Delhi governs the working hours and hence the closing time of “commercial outlets” in the city. One of the objectives is to identify the role of government in regulating the nightlife culture. This paper also attempts to analyze the rationale behind the regulation of closing hours of nightlife venues in Delhi. For the purpose of this study, the regulations for Eating Houses and Shopping Areas have been examined. This is done keeping in mind the prevalence of nightlife activities around these spaces.

4.1. Eating Houses²

Laws regarding closing time

Opening and Closing Timings differ during the summers and winters by half an hour or so. In addition, a coffee shop in a hotel is allowed to stay open for 24 hours, while discotheques are allowed to open until midnight. Tea stalls are required to close their outlets by 11:00 pm. Mobile hawkers selling eatables are allowed to enter any area according to the directives of the concerned Resident Welfare Association (RWA). (Daga, n.d.) Any eating house has to acquire a trade license from the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD). These licenses state the working hours according to the zone of operation, whether it is conforming or non-conforming.

The police regulate the closing hours of eating houses because these are places where the public assemble, and so there arises the question of public security. They govern the activities to keep a check on the crime rate.

4.2. Shops and Shopping Areas

Laws regarding closing timings

All shopkeepers and occupiers of establishments carrying on any business or profession or rendering any service are required to be registered under the Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954. Thus, this Act stipulates the closing time of shops. Section 15 of the Act says that-

1. No shop or commercial establishment on any day be opened earlier than such hour or closed later than such hour as may be fixed by the government by general or special order made on that behalf. (The Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954, n.d.)
2. The Government may, for the purpose of this section, fix different opening hours and different closing hours for different classes of shops or commercial establishments or for different areas or for different times of the year. The timings as per Sec 15 are as follows: (The Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954, n.d.)

Table 6. Shops Opening and Closing Timing

Source: (The Delhi Shops and Establishments Act, 1954, n.d.)

Nature of Establishment	Opening Hour	Closing Hour
Shops (during summers)	9:30 am	7:30 pm
Shops (during winter)	9:00 am	7:00 pm
Commercial Establishment	8:00 am	6:00 pm

The closing time of shops is regulated in order to make sure that the employees do not have to work overtime; they reach home in time and get to spend some quality time with their families. In the case of women, the question of their security assumes greater importance. So, it is mentioned in the Act that no women shall be put to work after 9 pm during the summer season and after 8 pm during the winter season.

In 2004, changes were made to the Act to boost employment generation and promote a positive and favorable business environment that is a prerequisite for economic growth, and the opening time of the establishments was extended to 11 pm. This, however, was not mandatory. According to the new norms, exemptions under Sections 14, 15, and 16 were provided. This makes it possible for businesses to be open 24X7 as long as certain requirements for the security of the workforce are met. (Express News Service, 2022)

In the 2022 budget of the Delhi government, Former Finance Minister Manish Sisodia announced the preparation of a policy that would allow food trucks to operate at designated places in the city from 8 pm to 2 am.

4.3. Master Plan of Delhi and Its Take on Nightlife

The Master Plan 2041 provides various approaches for the development and strengthening of economic centers. One of the approaches mentioned in MPD-2041 is Fostering Night Time Economy (NTE). It provides a brief mention of the concept of a '24-hour city' as per Model Shops and Establishments (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Services) Act 2015, as well as the NTE policy at the national level. The MPD provides suggestions to attract tourists and locals by identifying nodes, precincts, or circuits for continuing work, cultural activity, and entertainment at night.

5. Conclusion

Cities must be seen as attractive, accessible, safe, and unthreatening places to be in at all times of the day and night. The development of urban nightlife is a tool for regeneration. Active night spaces are amongst the city's urban cultures that possess a rich source of everyday life and play an important role in establishing a city's cultural identities.

The growth of safe nightlife is a major challenge for the cities, and we have to learn how to manage this activity in the interests of all the many stakeholders involved and the whole community. Many cities around the world have adopted a

24x7 city concept to boost their economy, and in turn, these cities have become safer for their citizens during the night.

In this paper, theories on urban safety provided a starting point to investigate the relationship between nightlife and urban safety. The intent was to break the notion of a 'city being unsafe associated with nighttime'. Delhi presented itself as an interesting case with a multitude of spaces to examine. In the case of Delhi, both the State Government as well as the DDA Masterplan have advocated for a "24x7 Delhi".

Four areas in Delhi were selected based on the level of activities during the late evening hours and the typology of the space. The first case study of Matia Mahal, Jama Masjid, showed a strong community bond and diverse range of activities making the area relatively safer. The transportation and offloading of stock take place at night. This results in eating houses staying open for a longer time as well. Connaught Place was more vulnerable as the entire market closed at 09:00 pm. Only a few eateries remain open, which attracts the crowd.

In spite of good connectivity and provision of public transportation in Nehru Place Complex, it is considered unsafe due to the disconnect from the residential colonies and its inactive nature after 08:00 pm.

Isolated places were found to be more vulnerable to threats as compared to lively, active places. According to the personal interviews conducted in the study areas, people felt comfortable and safe in the presence of hawkers.

One thing that emerged clearly from the study is that the ratio of females to males during the night is limited in all the study areas. The areas are largely male-dominated, and women's presence is negligible. The same applies to the elderly population and children. There is a sense of fear amongst the women to litter at night for recreational and leisure purposes. It is fair to say that social inclusivity is required to make a city safe and vice-versa. Another factor responsible for a safer and more active nightlife is the presence of diverse nature of activities.

India Gate, with a mix of activities and a genuine share of women and children, acts as an active, vibrant space. Matia Mahal does have a mix of activities, but still, the majority of visitors are men. Although Matia Mahal could be placed under the category of safe places, it still doesn't provide social inclusion in totality. This is possible if the women are employed at the local shops or, at least, they become stakeholders in some way or the other. To improve the nightlife at Matia Mahal, a street revitalization project should be considered, which will also promote tourism.

Connaught Place market shuts at 09:00 pm and becomes completely inactive. However, the paper analyzed a few areas in Connaught Place that remain open till midnight. These are late-night eateries that are visited mostly by young crowds or families. There are both men and women at these places.

These spaces can be designed as active nodes in the city center, which can operate for longer durations.

The most inactive space of all the case studies was Nehru Place Complex. There were issues of legibility, negative spaces, and a lack of activities. This area requires more rational use of space. Certain inactive areas are identified in the paper, which can be redesigned by connecting them with the outer edges of the complex and by introducing new activities like cultural events that can operate till 11:00 pm. Entry and Exit points should be legible, and clear signage should be

added.

Apart from the case studies, Delhi has a few other areas which remain open till midnight. Most of them are restaurants or open cafes. Looking at the situation of Delhi, it is important that the government should become more involved in licensing and use licensing conditions both regarding opening hours and design/layout of venues to work towards the licensing objectives and improve the nightlife. Government should build on the examples of best practices to develop a more sustainable and safer nightlife. It should promote a range of culturally diverse activities in the nightlife, which encourage a range of populations to use the areas at night.

Late-night shopping must be made permanent in the interest of both shoppers and shopkeepers in selected areas where there are no residential colonies. But it must be ensured that the security setup is effectively beefed up so that the criminals do not use the situation to their advantage.

Cities should be for everyone to enjoy. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Rapid socio-cultural trends have changed the way we use our towns and cities after hours. To summarize, the future of the cities lies in its nighttime economy that would not only bring economic growth but will create a safer place for its citizens.

Footnotes

¹ As per Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, Dhaba is a small cheap restaurant where Punjabi food is served, with basic furniture and facilities, and often with an open front and tables outside.

² The Delhi Police Act, 1978, defines “Eating Houses” as follows: eating house means any place to which the public is admitted and where any kind of food or drink is supplied for consumption on the premises by any person owning or having any interest in managing such place.

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