

PAINTED PLAYLAND: DESIGNING ‘WITH’ THE COMMUNITY, ‘FOR’ THE COMMUNITY.

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ABSTRACT | This project was part of the ten-week course ‘Design for Social Change.’ The design inquiry began with questions about access to public spaces in the city. How can public spaces be transformed into equitable and fair spaces? How do different communities perceive the city and its spaces? We investigated how factors of religion and class affect the usage of public spaces in the western city of Ahmedabad, India. Our study focused on how religious communalism has led to the segregation of Ahmedabad’s neighbourhoods into ghettos. The area of focused study was the neighborhood of Juhapura, an urban ghetto that has predominantly residents of the Muslim faith (a minority community in India), and developing an understanding of how communalism affects their lived reality (Rajagopal,2011). The insights from our study indicated an overall need for better access to public spaces (Bobbio,2022), and we felt that directing our action toward children was essential since their play spaces are neglected. The demographics include women who have been discouraged from working and are asked to stay home. Still, they show resilience and work out of their homes with jobs like tailoring and catering (Wahid,2019).

The central question we addressed became: Why is there a lack of access to public spaces for people belonging to a specific community? The project aimed to create space for all stakeholders involved in a neighbourhood by converting an open ground used by multiple stakeholders into a shared, equitable, and inclusive space. Inclusive public spaces are essential for marginalised and underserved neighbourhoods, as they often do not have equal access to other paid services and commodified spaces in the city. This is true for Juhapura, where the community does not have access to public spaces such as parks that function as play areas. (Mahadevia, 2007, pp 27-30)

We studied how Juhapura’s residents have shown resilience and how the city can change if it is planned with children in mind as vital users of space (Danenberg, Doumpa, and Karssenberg, 2018). Working with children as our primary focus group, we aimed to create a habit of equitable sharing and inculcate ownership of the space. The children of today will go on to become the voice of the future, and we felt it was pressing to address issues of discrimination from the bottom up. Parwaaz, a women-led organization, facilitated our access in the community. We used participatory action research while working with the community, and their input was crucial to designing the solution. The final design solution developed was a ‘Painted Playland,’ using the floor as our canvas to demarcate space in the area. Throughout the process, the project was constantly grounded by the question- whom are we designing for and why?

The community came together to clean the space and help in the execution of the painting of the ground. The paintings immediately activated the space and attracted many people. Children from other neighbourhoods came to play, and older adults joined in. The issue of vehicles taking over the space was tackled by painting parking lines. This behaviour change resulted in a shift in the attitude toward space among the women of the community, who then took charge of cleaning areas where construction debris was dumped to convert them into parking spaces. The design intervention became a blueprint for the community to show themselves that they are capable of change and can adopt small measures to make their space more inclusive.

How can *young designers* tackle convoluted, systemic problems?

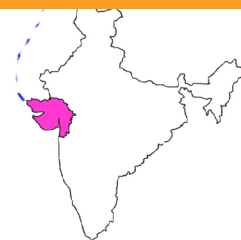
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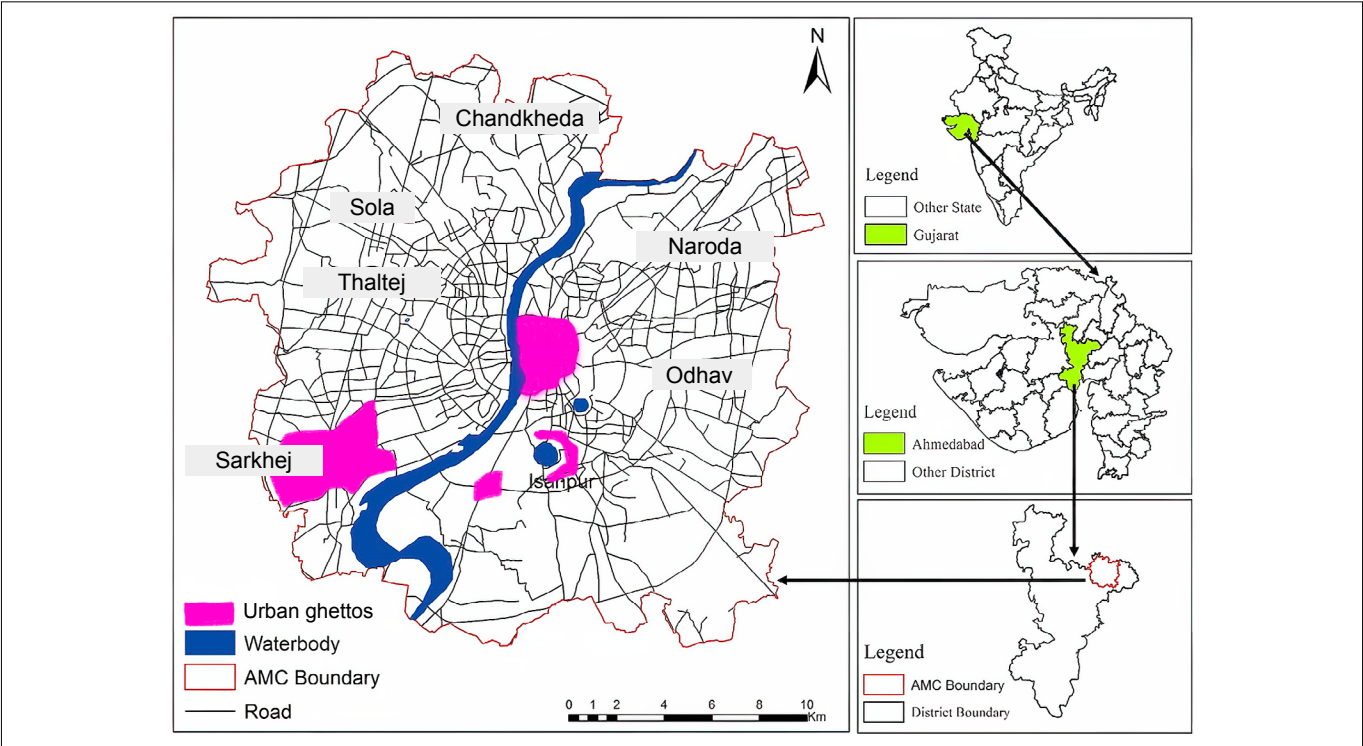
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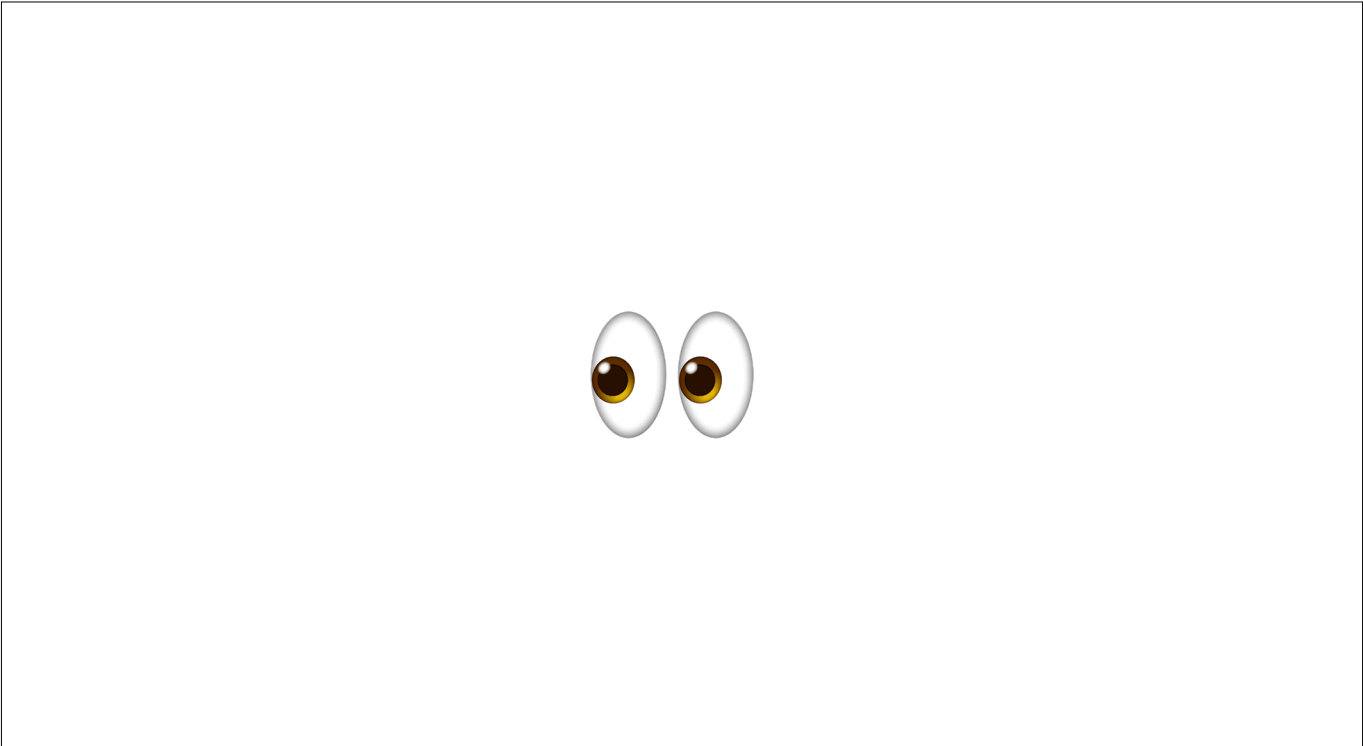
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11

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES







safety, *play* and *happiness* in urban spaces





How can we divert attention towards kids to create ownership and responsibility of the shared space?



“How can we transform the existing common ground to be *equally accessible* to all the stakeholders with the community?”



How can we design with, within and for the community?

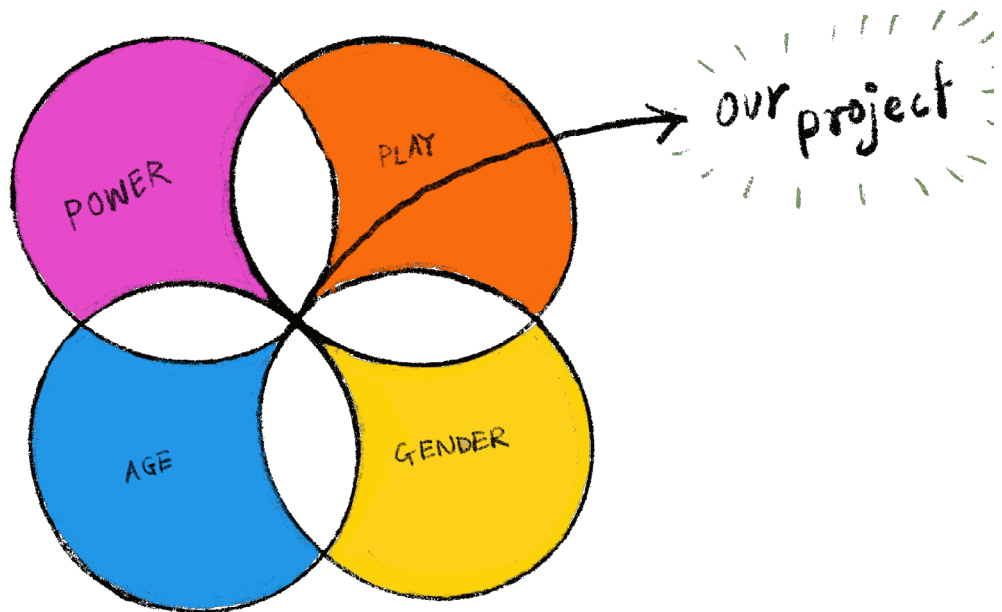


How can we dismantle existing hierarchy that functions on power and age in shared spaces?

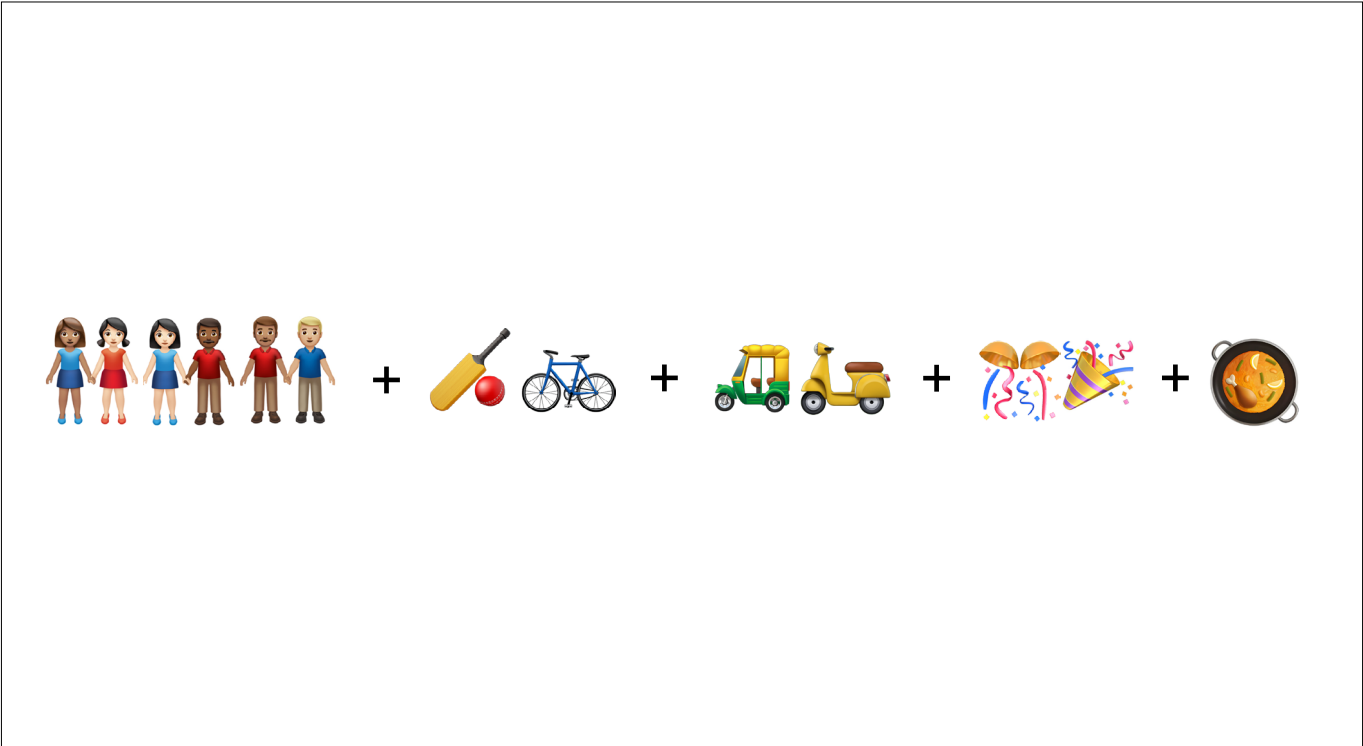
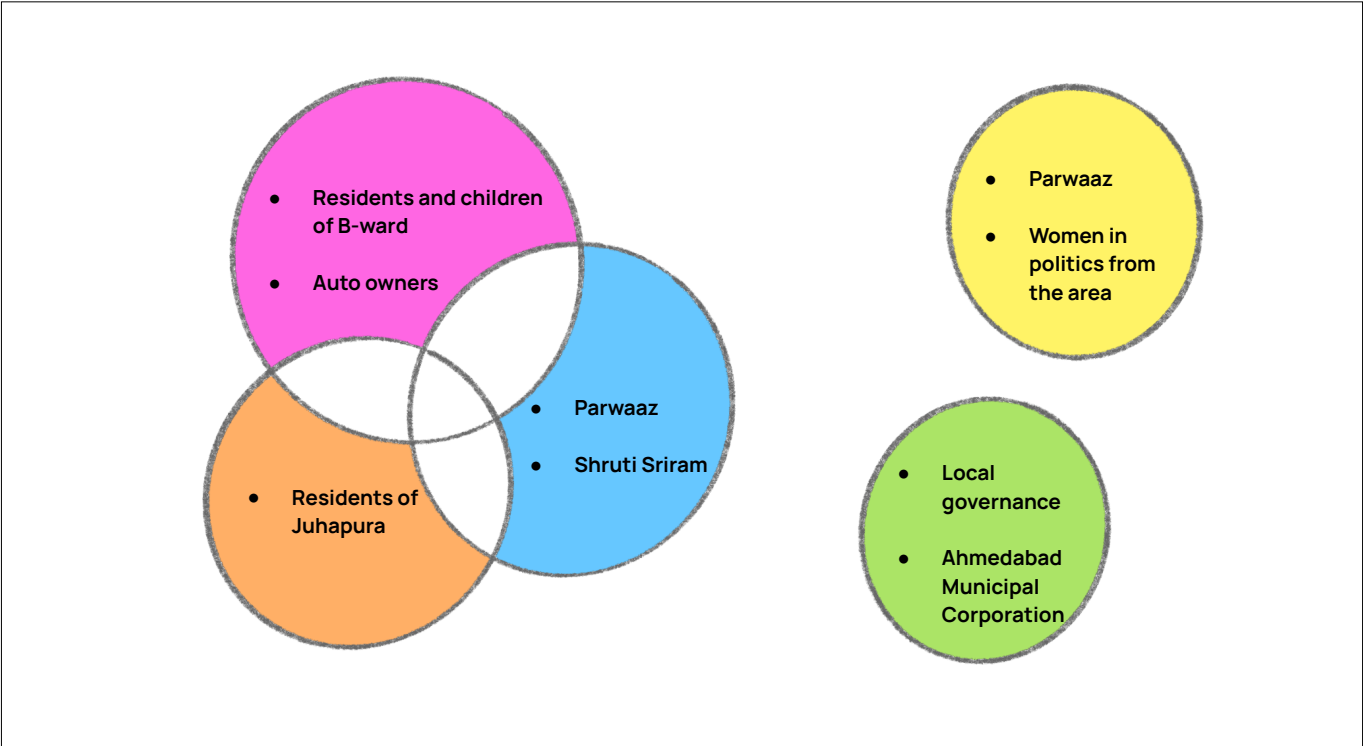


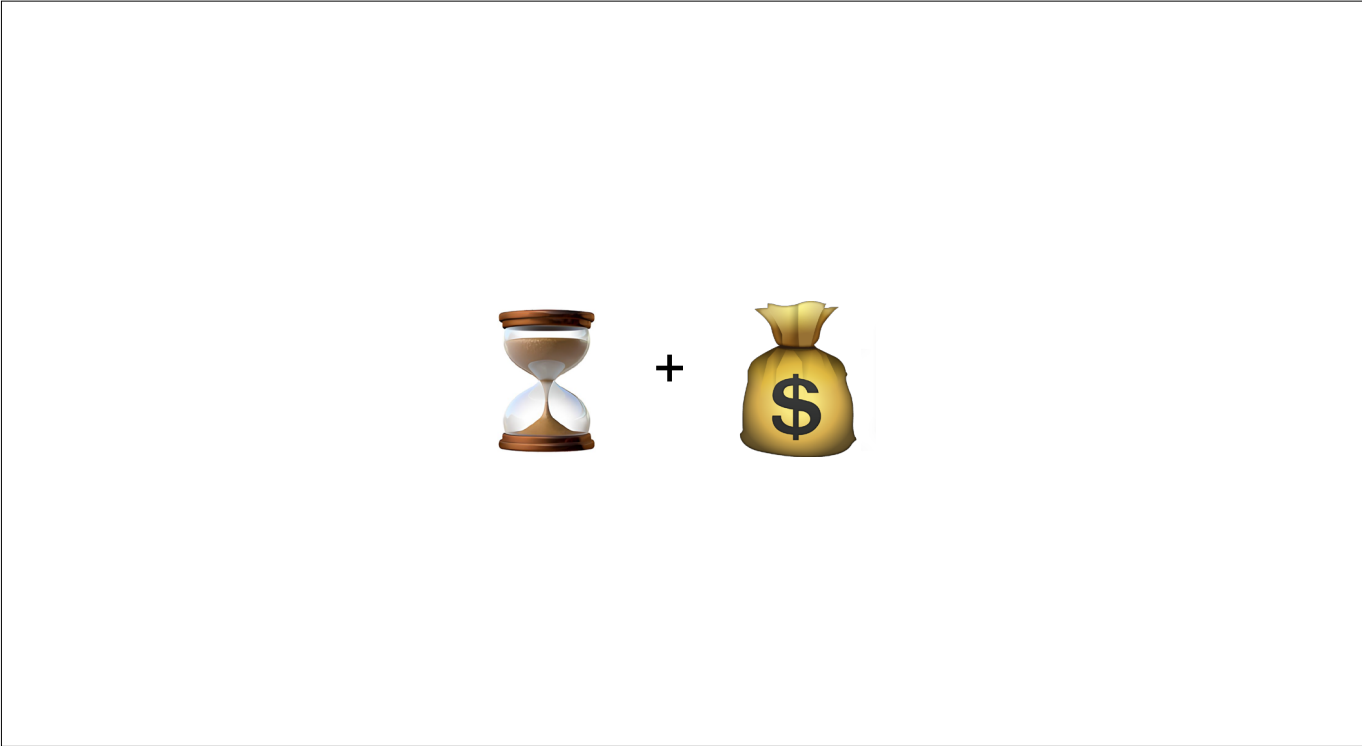
How can we empower communities to take charge of their spaces and make them realise that they can create change with small actions?





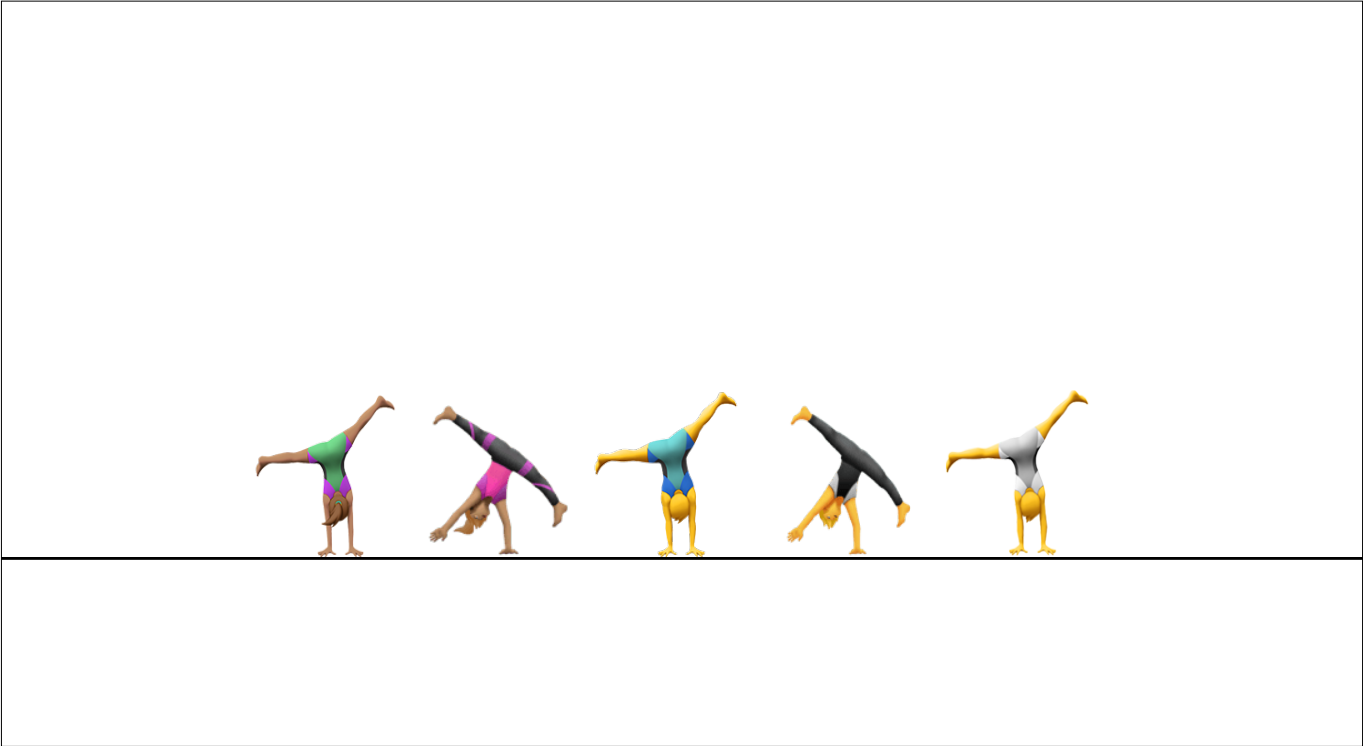
Finding answers to these questions





How can children take
ownership of space?

What are the ways of *reorganizing* existing power
structures through *spatial interventions*?







THE BEFORE



THE AFTER



THE BEFORE



THE AFTER



CREDITS

Organization: **Parwaaz**
Community leader: **Hajra Apa**
Ward councillor: **Ashrarbeg Mirza**
Sanitary Inspector: **Manish Rathod**

Asian Paints
Shruti Sriram
Aaromal
Anustin
Aakash

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Banju Jobu

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P/REFERENCES OF DESIGN

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Conference Website

cumulusbudapest2024.mome.hu

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