

Abstract

In the last century, Public Spaces have been one of the most studied elements of urban design by both architects and designers as some of the most used and impactful places that shape public life. Unfortunately, the necessity of public spaces for public life is not a focus everywhere. In places that have continuously experienced war and instability over the years, like Burundi, the public realm is often perceived as a source of problems rather than a promoter of the city's well-being. Public spaces are seen as settings that contribute to an increase of death rates, rapes and other insecurities in the city. This project, however, seeks to harness the possibility of redesigning an existing public space using design principles and pattern language to shape a well-designed space and help promote public life in the city. The creative project will consist of redesigning Bujumbura's public park "Jardin Public", as one of the underutilized parks in Burundi, in the hope to help promote a peaceful and community-oriented neighborhood in Bujumbura.

Introduction

Burundi, located in the heart of Africa, is now one of the poorest nations in the world. One of the reasons for Burundi's current poverty is the ongoing strife from years of ethnic-based tensions and civil instability. Since its independence in 1962, it has been overwhelmed by the tension between the usually dominant Tutsi minority and the Hutu majority fights. The official civil war that sparked off in 1993, was never resolved and led to more war outbreak. I remember growing up in a city that was never safe to walk in at any time of the day, where no one ever knew that they will make it to the next day because of the unpredictable gunshot and bombing at any time of the day.

One of the streets that I used to walk through while going to school every morning was on the side of our neighborhood's public park. This park, Jardin Public de Bujumbura spread over six hectares of land had become a no-go place for people, especially children. This park was historically a public amusement park in Rohero that was established during the colonial time but is now a public-private park, owned by the government, where access has been restricted (with an entry fee) for various reason. One of the reasons is that potential developers see the park as containing lots of land that could bring in revenue, contributing to the country's economy. However, as a designer, I see the park as a space if intentionally designed would have the opportunity that could contribute to the healing of Bujumbura's community.



Neighborhood Analysis

Another core reason to why I chose to base my project in Jardin Public de Bujumbura in Rohero I is that it is to date one of the safest neighborhoods in Bujumbura yet closer to all the other neighborhood that are not as safe. It is situated close to the downtown of Bujumbura and close to Kiriri, the presidential neighborhood (where the president lives). This makes the park a geographical liaison between the two world of Bujumbura's upper middle class community and lower class community.

Jardin Public is located in Rohero, one of the safest neighborhoods in Bujumbura while close to the city center and other diverse neighborhoods. In order to better understand the urban design and planning of the place as well as the neighborhood density, a study with the use of a figure ground diagram enabled me to further identify the traffic density around the park as well as the type of activities that take place around the park. It would also enabled me to understand the land use of the urban development in the neighborhood. This analysis will help me to understand who I am designing for and how the project will be relevant to the neighborhood.



Methods and Studies

"We are never going to save the rural places, or wild places or scenic places unless we identify the human habitat, and then strive to make it so good that humans will voluntarily inhabit it". - James Howard Kunstler

The method used includes an investigation of public spaces, their success and failure historically in addition to an application of the concepts found in their design theory. I conducted a study in various African cities and inn cities on other continents where I analyzed the effectiveness of these public spaces in various geographical locales. I then chose to use specific squares, parks and plazas as precedent studies that will inspired different principle to consider while redesigning Jardin Public de Bujumbura. After collecting and then studying the various reasons why some public spaces are successful and why others are not, a site documentation of the existing Jardin public was created in order to get an insight of the likelihoods of the project to succeed.

Investigation and Analysis

In addition to literature reviews, I studied specifically different public spaces in three different continents namely: Africa, Europe, and the United States. I chose to study different spaces in different locations around the world not only because it would enable me to think outside the box when redesigning the park and will also help in reduce the limitations that I could present themselves when consulting precedent studies. These measures would include but not limited to the difference in weather and climate, the economy of the places, its history, the population density and so on. The ultimate goal is to select diverse criteria, principle and value from the precedent studies to inspire my design. Below are the selected precedent studies:

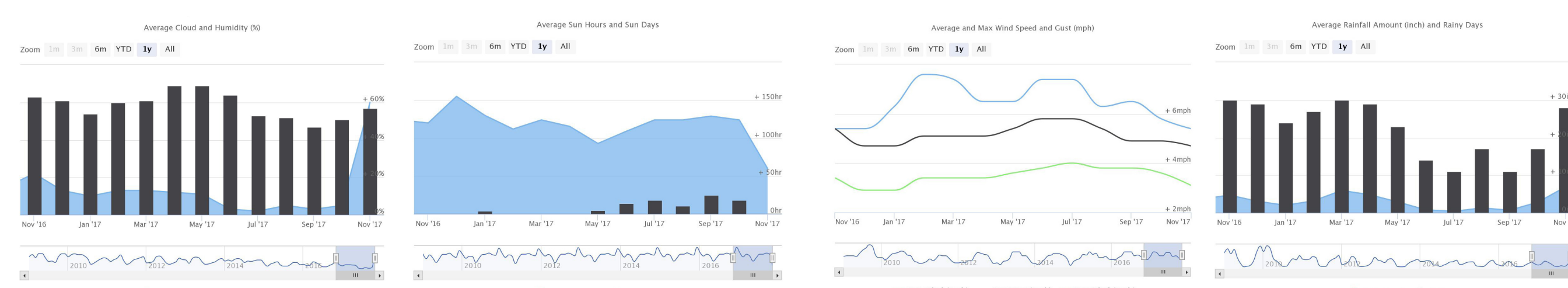


In addition to Precedents studies and literature review, I will use a proposed plan by the people who are currently taking care of the park, the ACVE (Action de la Ceinture Verte pour l'environnement) as well as recommendations from researches that have been carried out about the park. Below are the concepts drawn from the above precedent studies and different studied sources

From Precedents	From Literature review	Research recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inviting entrances - Spaces vs paths - Transparent edges - Private vs public - Pedestrian friendly - Hierarchy and zoning - Diversity of activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From Jane Jacobs (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Centering - Intimacy - Enclosure - Receiver of users - Choices of places - Diverse opportunities From Jan Gehl (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Senses and Scale - Eye level and Safe spaces - lively and sustainable spaces - Sences and communication - Healthy Spaces - Self- expression/identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From publication (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accessible parking - Eye level - scale - lively and attractive spaces - Diversity of activities - Safety - Self-sustainable (financially)

Climate Design Factors

Burundi, a country located just south of the equator with a mild or warm climate. The maximum temperature is around 84 °F all year round, except from mid-August to October, when it reaches 86/88 °F. Much of the country is occupied by a plateau, at an altitude of around 5,000/6,000 feet above sea level. Bujumbura is located along the shores of lake Tanganyika.



Street view photos

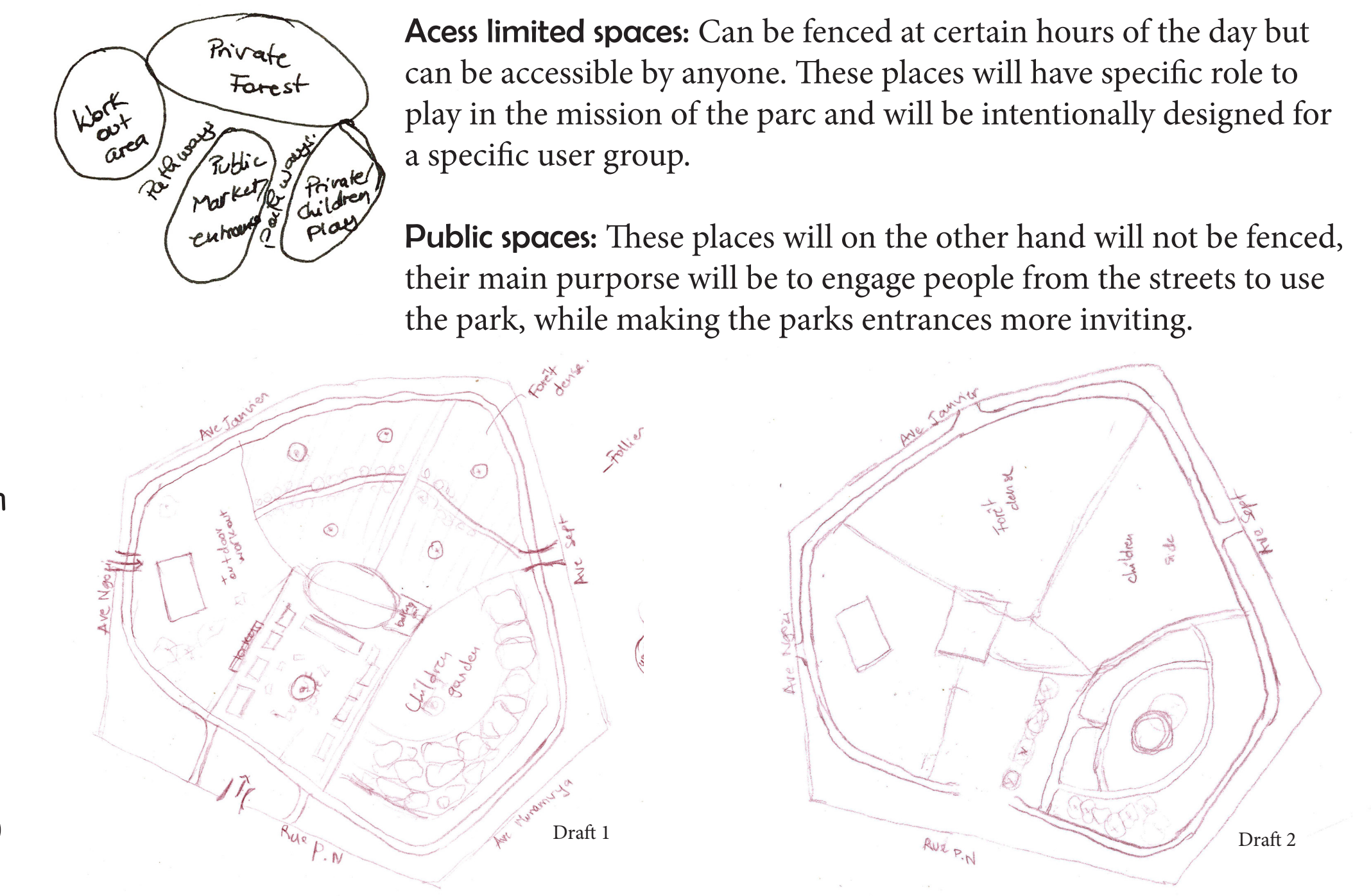


Discussions and Limitations

My experience as an architecture student and researcher about the effect of public space in a community made me believe in design as a potential contributor to solving social problems. This was supported by the different studies of public spaces that proved to have a positive effect and contribution to the wellbeing of the community that they are in. The limitations involved the culture difference, the physical and environmental characteristics that might hinder the expected result. Although not studied, it may be inferred from this study that the existing architecture and urban design of the city might have a big impact on the current tensions and civil instability in both in the city and the country as a whole. Therefore, further studies should examine the outcomes that urban development could have on the healing of Burundian communities.

Results

Results shows that there is a significant chance of redesigning Jardin Public de Bujumbura to its potential. The project would consist of what I termed **Access limited spaces** as well as **public spaces** that would serve and be used hand in hand in the Jardin Public to make it not only an enjoyable place for people of all ages but also a safe one. It will include a work out space (public) that will be a place of working out and recreation for the users. It will also have a private forest or wood to provide a breezy the outdoor space that will promote connections and encourage community-based activities and enjoyment. In addition to the healthy living program of the project, the project would also have a private children spaces where children games would be to entertain kids and would accommodate families bringing their children in the hope to bring back a sense of community to the place. It is by redesigning this park using this analogy of intentionality that the project's vision of community connection and growth can be promoted. Below are some process work and draft plans of what the public could look like.



Access limited spaces: Can be fenced at certain hours of the day but can be accessible by anyone. These places will have specific role to play in the mission of the parc and will be intentionally designed for a specific user group.

Public spaces: These places will on the other hand will not be fenced, their main purpose will be to engage people from the streets to use the park, while making the parks entrances more inviting.

Conclusions

Based on the study and analysis conducted, Jardin Public park has proven itself to be a highly valued recreation facility among Bujumbura residents irrespective of age, class, and distance together with the fact that it is located within a five-kilometer radius to most of its users; which makes it the best candidate for this project. And even though some users are satisfied with the current condition of the facility, there is a need for diversity in its recreation programming and activities to accommodate wider variety of users. Therefore, this project fulfill this need by finding the possibility of intentionally designing the space for greater use.

Lastly, since safety and security is the major concern for most users, my project took this into consideration and made the design more intentional so to make the park as safe and as efficient as it can possibly be. With this, my project incorporated two sections in the park that works hand in hand to fulfill the expectations of the park as a tool that can strengthen bonds in the city of Bujumbura starting by influencing the neighborhood of Rohero I.

References

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