

A STUDY ON LALEHZAR STREET TO BE CHANGED TO A PROPER WALKING STREET WHILE FOCUSING ON LOOSE SPACES

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the quality and attraction of public urban spaces has been one of the most crucial features for a city to be called developed and manageable. Pedestrian walkways have a key role in social interactions in today's virtual technology age, economical impacts on the areas around and multi-functional dimensions encompassing a wide range of activities. Historical texture and pedestrian walkways have an important role in people's quality of living, therefore, different factors affecting pedestrian walkways should be recognized and the loose spaces should be used as a parameter to develop the pedestrian walkways qualitatively. Having studied the related theories and concepts, and also Lalehzar street which has lost its livelihood, the mentioned theories have been tried to be proven right. This research tries to find strategies to make Lalehzar a successful urban pedestrian walkway. Since the concept of Loose space has not been utilized for similar places in Iran, and it is an effective factor in lively spaces, utilizing it along with historical Lalehzar pedestrian walkway can be considered an innovative approach. Therefore, the research model is prepared which covers the general model affecting factors on practical pavements and proper urban spaces. Furthermore, the loose spaces are used for comparison and, finally, the loose spaces are mentioned as a progressive development factor along with the pedestrian walkways.

Key words : Loose Space, Lalehzar Street, Pedestrian Walkway, Urban Space

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pedestrian walkways are the free spaces, with multi-purpose functions, encompassing a wide range of activities like recreation, resting, pastime, games, hobbies, artistic and cultural occasions, and business center unique to the cities in the new millenium which are studied in this paper. The results show that people can make the pedestrian walkways filled with joy, if the streets have a safe and proper space and if the activities and hobbies are organized in a well-developed way, peoples' attendance and also its viability and livelihood increase.

The urban loose spaces have complex symbols of functions and possess a variety of principles and concepts whose understanding can affect the process of designing the civil pedestrian walkways. Safety, livelihood and flexibility are the parameters considered, while focusing on the designing of pedestrian walkways to be changed to a successful urban area on Lalehzar Street and the loose spaces are introduced as a symbol having all the factors of successful urban areas, proper pedestrian walkways and a useful area to do a variety of functions. According to the above ideas and in order to determine the research domain, the following questions are given: 1-what strategies and guidelines should be used to change Lalehzar Street to a proper urban pedestrian walkways? 2-what are the parameters for a successful pedestrian walkway and what are their common qualities with the loose spaces?

This paper focuses on the mentioned goal in four parts. In part one, the crucial viewpoints about a successful pedestrian walkway will be studied as one of the most important urban spaces. Part two deals with qualities and practicalities of the loose spaces. In part three, Lalehzar is named as a pedestrian walkway with the potential to be changed to a successful urban place based on the qualities of loose spaces. In concluding part, the results are given.

2. SUCCESSFUL URBAN SPACES

Urban spaces or public ones are the main living places for citizens; therefore, they have a key role in the environmental livelihood and social life. The urban spaces quality depends on many factors dealing with different individual understanding and cultural values (Kashanijoo 2006). Car et.al, have made a list of people's needs to have the optimum joy of a public space, including: "comfort, resting, non-active presence in the place, active presence in the place while exploring, and proper places." in figure 7 these factors were compared with the characteristics of Loose spaces.

3. VARIOUS FUNCTIONS OF PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS

People walk for different reasons and studies show that passersby walk to go shopping, run errands, or have fun. Walking affects us both on body and mind. In figure1, some of crucial functions of the pedestrian walkways are given (Shahidi 2002). Pedestrian walkways are multi-purpose which differentiates them from other open and public urban areas. Dr. Pakzad in his book entitled 'Designing the urban

spaces in Iran' summarizes the most crucial goals and qualities of a walkway named livelihood, flexibility, and security (Pakzad 2005) (figure2).



Figure1. Various functions of pedestrian walkways

Figure2. Three characteristics of a proper pedestrian

4. FEATURES OF LOOSE SPACE

In urban public spaces around the world people pursue a very rich variety of activities not originally intended for those locations. Accessibility, freedom of choice and physical elements that occupants can appropriate all contribute to the emergence of a loose space, but they are not sufficient. For a site to become loose, people themselves must recognize the possibilities inherent in it and make use of those possibilities for their own ends, facing the potential risks of doing so.

1-Flexibility: Many of the activities that generate looseness are neither productive (like traveling to work) nor reproductive (like buying necessities), being instead a matter of leisure, entertainment, self-expression or political expression, reflection and social interaction- all outside the daily routine and the world of fixed functions and fixed schedules. As importantly, loose space is a space apart from the aesthetically and behaviorally controlled and homogeneous "themed" environments of leisure and consumption where nothing unpredictable must occur (A.Frank 2006).

2-Livelihood and social interaction: The sense of freedom and the inclination to engage in actions one might not elsewhere arise partly from the anonymity of urban public space. For many people, the sense of being free from judgment is one of the main pleasures of being out in public (Lofland 1998). Others may also approach us and force us into engagements: foreigners who are lost, drunks, charity collectors, as well as those who merely bump into us in crowds.

3-Safety: People's frequent presence in loose spaces helps them have peace of mind. Homeless people find shelter in loose spaces. If limiting the comings and goings is necessary, then using obstacles is required. Then these obstacles can be used for relaxing, leaning against, and other leisure activities. And by this the obstacles make the space loose (A. Frank 2006).

5. VARIOUS FUNCTIONS OF LOOSE SPACES

Some of the activities that make a space loose are, in Gehl's (1987) terms, necessary while others are optional. People address their economic need to make a living when, for instance, street vendors sell fresh produce and prepared foods in public urban spaces on sidewalks and in squares. Or they may be selling art works, handicrafts, "designer" watches, jewelry and sunglasses, souvenirs or handbags. Musicians and mimes give street performances.

Physical recreation is one broad category of voluntary action that characterizes loose space like climbing up lampposts, dirt biking in empty lots. Games may also be more sedentary, such as chess. People find places for reading, drawing, sun bathing, dancing, gardening, chatting, having a meal or a snack or just relaxing, lost in their own thoughts or studying the passing scene (Lefebvre 1991). Art installations and art festivals may gather many people, stimulating spin-off events and vending. Expressive and political activities are also common in loose space (figure3).

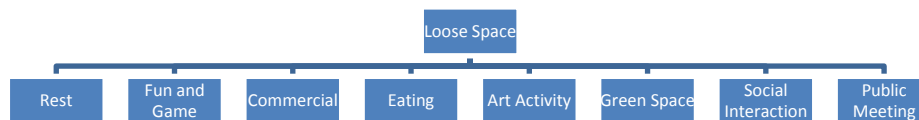


Figure3. Various functions of loose spaces

6. CASE STUDY: LALEHZAR STREET

Lalehzar Street is one of the most brilliant streets of old Tehran built in Nasereddin Shah's age and with undeniable visual values. Lalehzar street was chosen due to the following criteria: 1-The area should have the least attraction for people. 2-There should be a public place in the area.3-It should have the needed capacity. 4-The livelihood of the area should be on the decline. 5- It should have the potential to be improved.

If Lalehzar Street is changed to a pedestrian walkway, we can stop its being destroyed and correct the wrong activities happening in the area through social and cultural actions. It has been tried hard to achieve wider and more detailed information by collecting data and also based on peoples' viewpoints. In fact, the neighborhood quality control is done dealing with safety, livelihood, social acceptance and flexibility through proper techniques and methods. Survey and investigation methods are used to analyze what the inhabitants believe and also their needs. To do so, different techniques are used as the following.

6.1. Questionnaire

One of the methods used is to fill in questionnaires. This questionnaire is prepared based on pedestrian walkways criteria and through Placemaking method. The questionnaire is prepared in three parts. In part one, there are some general questions about the neighborhood for which one can answer freely about his neighborhood, living place and commuting to work. In part two. There are 10 questions focusing on a number of factors like safety, pastime, livelihood, and flexibility and in part three people recommend what activities they like to do in Lalehzar pedestrian walkway in future. This questionnaire is prepared for two groups. The first group are people like passersby who are not always available in this space, but witness whatever happens in the area. The second group are the ones like shopkeepers always spending time in the area being affected by the events in the area. 120 people were chosen as the case society of which 70 were men and 50 were women (Figure 4-6).

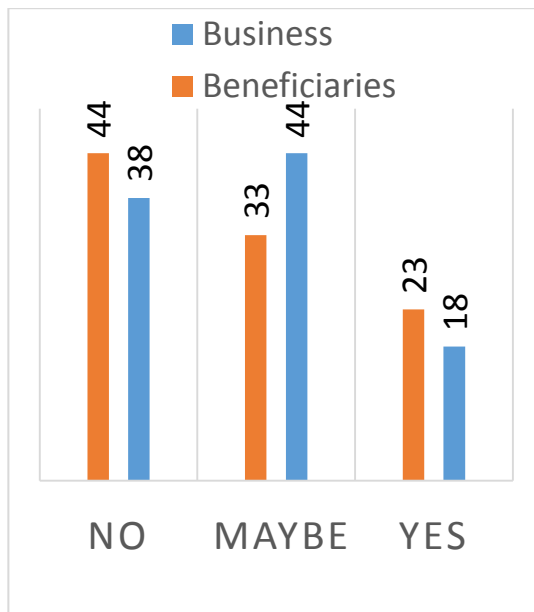


Figure4

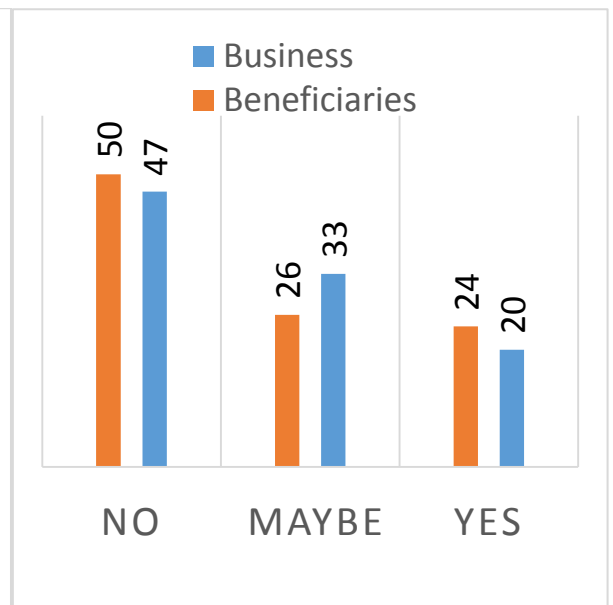
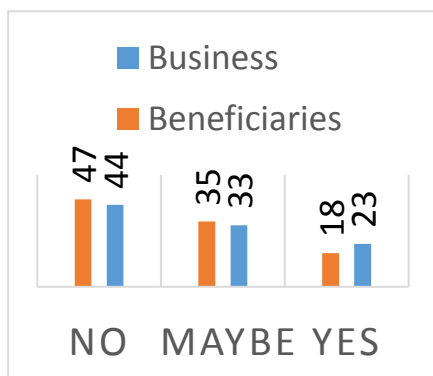


Figure5



Do you find opportunities in Lalehzar Street to do your favorite activities?

Figure5. Do you find Lalehzar Street a lively place?

Figure6. Do you find Lalehzar Street a safe place?

In part three, the interview were to answer what makes them go to Lalehzar street the most whose results and given in continue: 1. coffee shops and restaurant 2. Specific cultural construction 3. Street ceremonies and parades 4. Seating spaces 5. Social security for pedestrians 6. Vendors 7. Social interaction 8. Presenting artworks 9. Meeting friends 10. Different individual and group activities.

6.2. Interviewing Some Trustable Citizens

Some trustable residents were interviewed to have more detailed and correct information. This method is not that much scientific, but it renders proper qualitative information to better know the area. The interviews focused on problems and priorities of the neighborhood, the taken actions to improve the area, and the interviewees' opinions and suggestions to renovate the whole neighborhood.

6.3. Data Analysis

The results for the last part of the questionnaire show that when the majority of people in the area attend Lalehzar Street, they are interested in different functions of pedestrian walkway, like artistic jobs, rest, fun and individual and group activities. Based on the achieved results, the following suggestions are made to improve the overall conditions in Lalehzar area. 1-Constructing business centers along with some locations for vendors. 2-Making enough green areas. 3- Providing some places to hold ceremonies and street parades. 4-Considering pedestrians' need. 5-Having the feeling of freedom, comfort and safety. 6-Proper environmental condition to have people participation along with people supervision. 7-The importance of edges in designing and their being joined to walking spaces. 8-Specific areas for games and fun. Having compared the results with the parameters related to free and loose space, we can conclude that more than 75% of needed features are available to change Lalehzar to a proper pedestrian walkway (Figure.7).

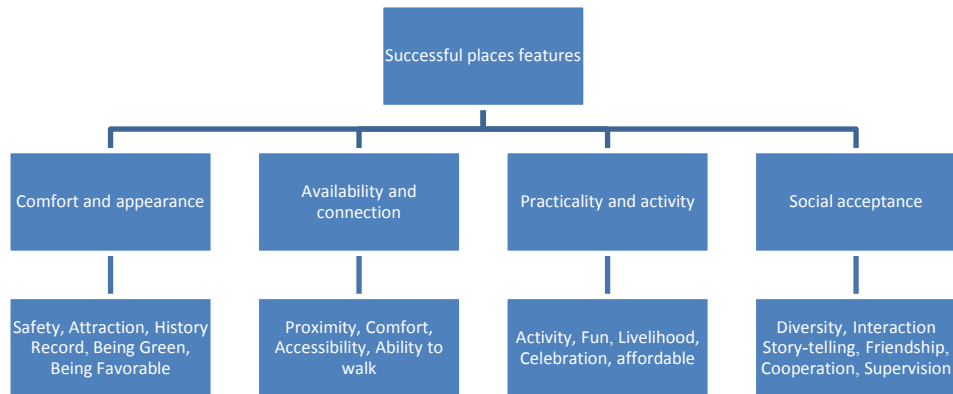


Figure 7. Comparison of successful places features with those of loose space.

7. CONCLUSION

According to the studies done about the loose spaces, these spaces have all these three qualities of pedestrian walkways called safety, livelihood, and flexibility. The results achieved based on the comparison of different functions of pedestrian walkways with the loose spaces show that the loose spaces have all the needed features to provide us with a multi- functioned community in which people at different ages can meet their own needs related to walking activities and finally possess more than 75% qualities of a proper urban area. Therefore, these areas can be considered as a qualitative development factor which leads to the progressive development of pedestrian walkways which increases the safety and flexibility of pedestrian walkways. It further promotes the livelihood factor in pedestrian walkways by making spaces like walls for graffiti, skating area, street music and theater, children's games, multi-purpose spaces and the like.

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