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Investigating the Effect of Pedestrian-Oriented Spaces on the Culture and Identity of Urban Spaces

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Abstract

The presence of people in the city follows many cultural and social effects. The pedestrian-oriented spaces result in the presence of more pedestrians and hence increase cultural and social values; however, today with increasing cars, pedestrians are not considered more which significantly reduces the number of pedestrians walking in urban areas as well as cultural and social values. Pedestrians can also affect the urban identity. In this paper, the effect of pedestrians on the culture and identity of the city had been discussed. By investigating the current academic literature, studies concerning the pedestrians, urban space, culture and urban culture, identity and urban identity have been collected and finally, the effect of pedestrian-oriented spaces on the culture and urban identity have been discussed. Since, the historic fabric of the city is the symbol of identity, part of this study discussing successful pedestrians that had been made in historical context.

Keywords: Sidewalk, Pedestrian-Oriented, Culture, Identity, Urban Space.

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1- Introduction:

In this paper, the effects of pedestrians on city culture and identity have been discussed. Pedestrian-oriented spaces are of great importance and considered as spaces that are merely responsive to pedestrian's needs; while ambulance, police and some motor courier could enter these spaces only in emergency situations. The importance of the culture and urban identity is very obvious; therefore, this paper addresses the effects pedestrians have on the urban culture and identity. Considering identity is a quality matter that affects the structure of the city; it refers to the three categories of human, environment and culture (Naghizadeh, 1999: 25). Characteristics of each city under the influence of geographical environment, including cultural, historical structures of that geographical region are formed. Cultural structures such as ideology and policies governing each geographical region strongly influence the identity of the city; therefore, it can be said that the identity of each city is a manifestation of culture in the medium (Goudarzi Soroush and Goudarzi Soroush, 2013: 101).

2- Definition of pedestrian:

The streets especially designed for pedestrians are streets which entering passenger cars in order to give superiority the environment are forbidden and other motor vehicles entrance to it is also regulated (Design Codes of Urban Routes, 1996: 1). In other words, the pedestrians are the locations for presence all citizens and their participation in collective life; these spaces are designed for all people of the city and receptive to different groups of citizens. In addition to the role of communication and access, pedestrians provide convenient and secure place for social entertainment, excursion, watching and ... (Abbaszadeh and Tamri, 2012: 96).

3- Definition urban spaces:

Madanipour recognized urban space including two physical and social spaces and defines urban spaces as: Urban space as a subset of space concept is not exception from the space concept which means, the physical and social dimensions of the city are in dynamic relationship with each other. In fact, the urban environment is including both physical and social space (Madanipour, 2000: 48). An urban space could be studied based on different environmental, geographical, architectural approaches. Urban space is the stage of playing actors that each one as the actors of their own community considered. They have positive but

sometimes negative roles, pale but sometimes bold roles, and general but sometimes specific roles. Urban space means a scene which public activities of urban life taking place in it. Streets, squares and parks of a city form human activities. These dynamic spaces against fixed and sedentary spaces form workplace and residence of main and vital components of a city. Movement networks, communication centers and public spaces ensure playing and entertainment in the city (Bahraini, 1998: 313).

4. Culture:

In their study of the meanings of "culture," the anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) centered their attention on this last field. They collected an incredible number of academic definitions of culture, most of them by other anthropologists. Although there was a good deal of overlap between the various definitions, they managed to identify six main understandings (Smith, 2001: 2);

1. Descriptive definitions tend to see culture as a comprehensive totality making up the sum of social life and to list the various fields making up culture. An influential starting point for this understanding was a definition by Tylor from 1871. He suggested that (Smith, 2001: 2), "culture or civilization... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, laws, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: 43). Notice how this definition includes both ideas (art, morals, laws) and activities (custom, habits) (Smith, 2001: 3).

2. Historical definitions tended to see culture as a heritage which is passed on over time through the generations. For example, in 1921 Park and Burgess wrote (Smith, 2001: 3), "The culture of a group is the sum total and organization of the social heritages which have acquired a social meaning because of racial temperament and of the historical life of the group" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: 47).

3. Normative definitions. These could take two forms. The first suggested culture was a rule or way of life that shaped patterns of concrete behavior and action. For example (Smith, 2001:3), "The mode of life followed by the community or the tribe is regarded as a culture... the aggregate of standardized beliefs and procedures followed by the tribe" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: 50). The second form emphasized the role of values without reference to behavior. W. I. Thomas, for example, suggested in 1937 that culture was (Smith, 2001: 3) "the material and social values of any group of people, whether savage or civilized" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: 52).

4. Psychological definitions of culture emphasized its role as a problem-solving device, allowing people to communicate, learn, or fulfill material and emotional needs (Smith, 2001: 3).
5. Structural definitions pointed to the "organized interrelation of the isolable aspects of culture" (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: 61) and highlighted the fact that culture was an abstraction that was different from concrete behavior. In this respect, such definitions could be contrasted with those which simply listed the things that were culture and made no distinction between the ideal and the behavioral (Smith, 2001: 3).
6. Genetic definitions defined culture in terms of how it came to exist or continued existing. These had little to do with biology, but rather explained culture as arising from human interaction or continuing to exist as the product of intergenerational transmission (Smith, 2001: 3).

5- Urban culture:

Culture could be composed of specific group values and norms which people follow it and create material goods. Culture developed with urban life and passed the evolution way. Real city regardless of time and place without culture is meaningless. Urban culture is an old and secret phenomenon that every day becomes new and with dramatic changes of the twentieth century has been so transformed that is equal with developments of this concept in the history. All urban elements directly and indirectly affected by culture, and in some cases also affect it. To find a logical and methodical way to respond the questions such as (What is human culture in the urban context?), three-level analysis model could be used. This new model except macro and micro level has middle level as well. Static interpretation of urban culture places it in the middle level that is devoted to social organizations and groupings. The micro level addresses the individual behavior and macro level addresses collective structure. In the dynamic interpretation of urban culture, the interconnectedness of three levels is required. Urban planners when dealing with the urban culture addresses the relationship between values, norms, human relations, structure of the city as well as urban planning. Urban sociologists seek urban culture in the sense of living in the city. Many people know being non-personalized as the most important features of urban culture that is a mediated relationship not face to face. The struggles of social group's especially poor social movements are the main part of urban culture (Piran, 2001: 6).

Mumford asks himself (What is a City?) and this is a question that he was dealing it from 1922 to 1970. His answer shows the depth of his attention to urban culture (Piran, 2001: 10). The city, he writes, is "a theater of social action" and everything else –art, politics, education,

commerce— only serve to make the “social drama... more richly significant, as a stage-set, well-designed, intensifies and underlines the gestures of the actors and the action of the play” (Mumford, 1937: 91).

6- Identity:

According to theoretical view, identity is a mechanism that is more reflected as a form of consciousness and creates coherence and solidarity in society. This mechanism includes values, attitudes as well as the way person identifies the world. This mechanism acts when identity factors are not in contrast with each other and without fundamental differences create a dominant discourse (Nazari, 2007). In simple terms, identity means what lead to the person recognition. It is clear that the term identity leads to understand truth, nature and the universe (Al-Taie, 2003: 34).

In Latin vocabulary, identity has two meanings:

1. Represents absolute similarity concept.
2. Means distinction that finds adaptability and compatibility over time.

Therefore, identity on the one hand represents similarity and on the other hand represents distinction (Al-Taie, 2003: 39).

7- Urban identity:

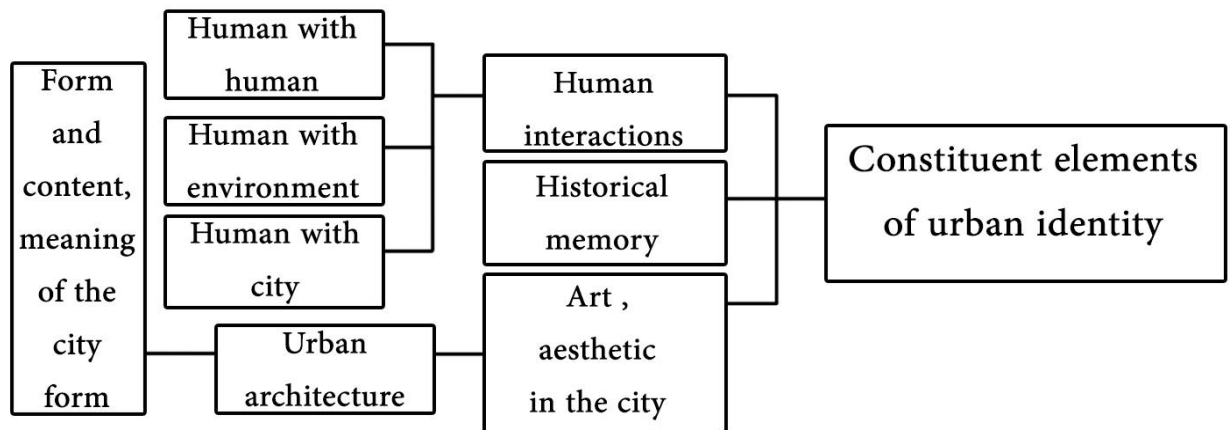
Identity is identifiable and readable. In the all cultures, readability of architecture is its advantage, because it helps human in the space identification. Lack of identity lowers the architecture and urban level and lead to people confusion because it cannot be read (Goudarzi Soroush and Goudarzi Soroush, 2013: 101).

Any space with different intensity and weaknesses possess identity and the ultimate identity of space is the resultant of functional, physical, environmental, cultural and semantic identities (Naghizadeh, 2006: 17).

Since the "identity" is a collection of traits and characteristics that makes possible the "diagnosis" of an individual or community from other individuals and communities; the city also following these criteria, finds identity and become independent (Nofel and others, 2009: 57). Revealing the history of a place plays an important role in giving identification. Public places that become associated with the history and culture of the city make possible communication between the users and places in the mind (Hatefi Farajian and Ali Abadi,

2014). Efforts towards architecture with identity are a respond to the spiritual needs of humans as well as to all their material needs (Mahdavinejad and others, 2010).

Deterioration is the most important issues of urban space which causes disorganization, imbalance and disproportion and helps erasing the collective memory, declining real urban life and forming everyday urban life. On the other hand, it should be considered that identity is not an attribute, but also as part of the core components of vivification which should be considered (Nasr, 2014: 13).



Factors shaping urban identities (Nasr and Majedi, 2013)

8- The effect of pedestrian-oriented spaces on culture and urban identity:

One of the major shortcomings of contemporary urban world is excessive devotion to the needs of people with cars and neglect maintenance and organization of pedestrian space and pedestrian movement. This is one of the factors reducing the quality of the urban environment and declining social, cultural and visual values in urban areas. As a reaction and a solution to the situation during the past two or three decades, trends and new perspectives in the field of world urban planning is addressed that is referred as "*pedestrian movement*" (Hosseinpour and Gharib, 2012). The expanding movements of pedestrians not only have changed the physical appearance of cities; but also have created new changes in the quality of urban life, social behavior and people culture (Farrokhi, 2010: 2).

Another benefit of creating pedestrian is that the habits of citizens walk along the pedestrians changing and growing over time, citizens gradually become accustomed to the presence in the city and doing civic activities, spend more time in urban spaces, which in turn help improving and promoting culture and urban habits such as respecting the rights of others and responsibility for community (Pakzad, 2012: 278).

What is remarkable in today's cities is that; removing history and eliminating collective memories in order to increase roads and official pay attention only to meet the needs of the roadway caused the decline of visual values; therefore, when the city is built only for roadways, pedestrians in urban space only have feeling of confusion, lack of security and identity (Pakzad, 2012: 271).

Asadollahi sees pedestrians as one of the ways to revitalize civil life of urban centers where he says: The presence of pedestrians in the streets of network access has a living effect in the city structure, and has two main aspects: 1) Urban inter-transportation system, 2) Space for communication and social face to face interactions; so that, one of the ways of revitalizing civil life are pedestrians and urban centers which have significant role in the discovery and understanding of the physical and social environment of the city and are symbol of civilization, identity and civility of the city (Asadollahi, 2004).

It is clear that planning and designing pedestrians have not only purely physical or traffic aspect and considering this issue while reducing traffic problems have broad social and cultural influences (Hosseinpour and Gharib, 2012). In other words, pedestrians are one of the places that affect the formation of the identity of an urban space (Lashkari and Khalaj, 2011).

9- Identity and the historic fabric of the city:

The historic fabric of the city is the sign of authenticity and identity of the city. According to the Saadati, identity and culture of each city is existing in its historical context (Saadati, 2015: 20). With reviving historical context by eliminating traffic, even former social classes return to that place and social identity of the place is also restored (Pakzad, 2012: 278).

9-1-Examples of successful pedestrian-oriented spaces based on the historical context:

9-1-1-Tarbiat pedestrian of Tabriz- Iran:

Tarbiat Street is located in the center of the city of Tabriz and in the area of Tarbiat within the old fabric and the south side of the old market (Fig.1,2).



Fig 1



Fig 2

Among the strengths of Tarbiat pedestrian physical context some characteristics such as, the presence of architectural valuable monuments with cultural, historical and identity signs, strong decoration, dominant brick textures in buildings due to climatic properties and harmony in view of all valuable structure can be mentioned (Farrokhi, 2012: 14) (Fig. 3 and 4).



Fig 3



Fig 4

The characteristics of Tarbiat district in the central part of Tabriz: (Table.1) (Summarizing from the detailed plan studies of historical, cultural center of Tabriz, 2005)

| Potential | Role | Area | District |
|---|---|------|----------|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proximity to the city old market 2. The presence of historical and cultural elements 3. Residence of medium income groups 4. The high average area of residential lands | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commercial with extramural performances 2. Workshops with municipal, residential and district performance | 26.6 | Tarbiat |

Table.1(Summarizing from the detailed plan studies of historical, cultural center of Tabriz, 2005)

9-1-2- Ladadika- Thessaloniki, Greece:

Ladadika, as been a touristic center, is located on the most popular street of Thessaloniki, in Greece. With its favorite destinations and beautiful walkable area, Ladadika attracts both local and foreign visitors for entertainment. The strcuture of buildings completes its spirit with their colorful paints, two-story shapes, rectangular windows, and paved alleys; in which, the old merges with the modern (Fig. 5). (<http://www.inthessaloniki.com/en/food/by-area/ladadika>)



Fig.5

Ladadika had hosted numerous shops and stores until the Great Fire of 1917. Following, shops had been closed gradually in decades but only the oil selling shops remained open until the late 1970s. In 1985, the Ministry of Culture declared the place a historical monument. Hence, the entire area was protected by law in order to preserve its original style and character. Ladadika soon came back to life, when small taverns, bars and restaurants opened and reoccupied the once abandoned and now renovated old buildings and welcomed the locals and tourists of all ages. (Fig. 6) (ibid).



Fig.6

Since the 1990s, the local restaurants and taverns used to be well known for their cheerful, friendly and vibrant atmosphere. (Fig.7) (ibid)



Fig.7

10- Conclusion:

Considering the culture and urban identity, they are issues that cannot be ignored and are highly regarded. One of the ways increases urban culture and affect urban identity is construction pedestrian-oriented spaces. Pedestrian-oriented spaces with inviting different kinds of people from different parts of the city cause the presence of numerous people leading social encounters and intimate meetings which in turn, influence on urban culture. In this study, the effects of pedestrians on the urban identity also had been discussed. Considering the pedestrians along the road routs makes pedestrians feel confused, lack of security and identity. As well as, creating pedestrian-oriented spaces in the historical context of cities which is a sign of city identity and authenticity enables users to have a trip, entertainment and activity.

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Pictures References

Fig 1: <http://tadjdini.persiangig.com/image/Tabriz/Tarbiat%20Street/DSCN5696Tarbiat%20stbr.jpg>

Fig 2: <http://tadjdini.persiangig.com/image/Tabriz/Tarbiat%20Street/DSCN5700%20tarbiyat%20ST.jpg>

Fig 3: http://m8.tabriz.ir/uploads/30/CMS/user/file/72/%D9%86%D9%88%D8%A8%D8%B1/IMG_8165.JPG

Fig 4: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tarbiat_street#/media/File:Nowbar_Gate.jpg

Fig 5: <http://habibisair.com/images/Pictures/Thessaloniki/City-Center-Shopping-District.jpg>

Fig 6: http://www.inthessaloniki.com/images/The_night/Valaoritou/Thessaloniki_Valaoritou_Area_Nightlife.jpg

Fig 7: <http://www.newsbeast.gr/files/1/2013/09/12/thessaloniki18.jpg>