

The Role of Public space in Iran

Since open public spaces have the most actual and potential facilities for the presence of the citizens, these spaces have a significant role in the citizens' social lives (Lawson 2004). The meaning of public space has changed during the past few decades; historically, it referred to "Open Space", meaning the streets, parks and recreation areas, plazas and other publicly owned and managed outdoor spaces. However, with recent changes in form of urban settlements, due to the change of ownership from public to private partnerships, public spaces refer to a space that is accessible to public (Tonnelat 2010). In (Molavi and Jalili 2016), it is mentioned that more life occurs when people move slower in public since there is a higher chance for interacting with the environment and experiencing. Yet, this interaction should not be because of compulsion; in order for an urban space to be considered as vital, people need to stop and stay for the space desirability. "Public Life" is mentioned in (Banerjee 2001) as a broader concept in comparison with "Public Space" and he encourages designers to pay more attention to it. In the public domain of the city, there are three primary criteria that identify urban spaces:

1. The space is public
2. The space is open
3. Existence of social interaction (Molavi and Jalili 2016)

Also, in every neighborhood face-to-face human interactions has positive correlation with livability of that neighborhood (Singh, 2016). In order for each neighborhood to be defined as great, it needs to be attractive, active, open, walkable, entertaining and full of people (Sousa and Rosales, 2010).

In particular, there are few studies about public spaces in Iran which is an Islamic country. The function of public spaces of Iran were always influenced by the political, economic, religious, and ecological changes (Sohrabi 2015). Historically, there were many public spaces with the role of gathering places which became neglected in the modern era. Before modernism, there were two significant ages of public space: Hellenic and Islamic Iranian-Iranian age. After Seleucid Dynasty conquered Iran, the Greek tried to restructure cities according to their own architecture with agoras, forums and other Greek model public spaces. During Islamic age, new components such as bazars, streets and squares were introduced. At the beginning of Pahlavi dynasty, European methods and patterns were integrated in Iran. In the beginning of modern era, the introduction of motor vehicles caused a separation between public spaces and people. Streets became the symbol of modernism and most of the public spaces such as shops and stores were moved to roadsides (Charkhchian and Daneshpour 2009). The youth population of Iran uses public spaces as place to "see and be seen". They usually prefer relationships with the opposite sex, connect with friends, travel and fun, sports and entertainment (Sohrabi 2015).

Youth Culture in General Versus Iranian Youth Culture Activities

Just like all marginal groups, youth also have different cultural values, perception and demands. All these differences should be acknowledged and be taken into account in design of public spaces (Malone 2002). In public spaces, this group of people is looking for social integration, safety and freedom of movement (Chawla 2016).

However, general studies about this group of people does not represent Iranian youth culture completely (Zokaei 2015). During the last two decades, there has been a significant change in the cultural values of the youth in Tehran. As a developing country, youth population of Iran seeks to improve their culture and lifestyle (Jafari, 2007). In some cases, this young generation perceives their identity in a way that is different from their parents and society and some of them want to be exactly the opposite of what their family wants them to be (Jafari, 2007). One of the major problems of this generation is that they feel isolated because of the theocratic government and the restriction that is imposed on them. This is one of the reasons that some of them tend to live the country in hope of living a better life (Mahdi 2007). Also, in (Sheykhi, 2016), it is mentioned that many young men and women in their 20s are financially supported by their parents. With these changes, absence of sites in which youth can discharge their tensions is sensed in Tehran (Zokaei 2015).

Social Taboo: Religious and Political Boundaries in Iran

Since the revolution of 1979, gender segregation of public leisure spaces has always been a major policy in Iran. There have been some efforts in creating mono gender spaces for women to increase their participation in urban spaces but real social interaction can only happen in mixed gender places where men and women with different social backgrounds interact with each other (Zokaei 2015). As a result, we are witnessing illicit gatherings of Iranian kids at a film festival in an improvised gallery inside a basement parking garage (Effendi 2010).

One of the other religious boundaries that should be considered is the choice of clothing [hijab] for women and contacts with the opposite sex in social encounters (Zokaei 2015). Women and even in some cases men are worried about the morality police that usually patrols in the streets and is seeking for deviation from religious laws (Effendi 2010). Since these traditional and religious values are sacred, there should be a redefining in design of public spaces that allows the social interaction of both genders within the boundaries of religion.

Role of Streets for the Youth in Iran

Street can be defined as a dynamic and live element which can be used for many municipal and aesthetic purposes (Rehan, 2013). According to (Fyfe 2006):

“Streets are the terrain of social encounters and political protest, sites of domination and resistance, places of pleasure and anxiety.”

Impact of streets will be undermined and distorted, if it does not meet the requirements of a citizen and if it is not standard in terms of functions and features (Molavi and Jalili 2016). Streets should give reasons to people to come to a place and make them return to that place over and over again(Whyte). (Malone 2002) describes an ideal street as an inviting environment with acceptance of differences between people and it should also be unoppressive.

When it comes to young people, street plays an important role for their social activity (White 1994). For this group of people, streets are used for constructing their social identity and it can also act as a stage for performance (Malone 2002). In Iran, gender and class differences influences the choice of type of entertainment in the streets. As an example, girls choose Valiasr Street as a fun shopping attraction (FOTOUHI, LICHAEI et al. 2015). There is also a new “car culture” emerging in Tehran wherein many youths use cars for dating and showing off as a way of discharging their tensions (Zokaei 2015). Street provides the motivation and opportunity to social experiences for many of these young people outside the home as well as formal and informal interactions in forms of facing with friends, finding new friends, meeting people of the opposite sex or strolling to watch people (FOTOUHI, LICHAEI et al. 2015).

Crowdsourcing as a Method of Gathering Information

The name crowdsourcing consists of two words: crowd, which is referring to the people who participate in the initiative; and sourcing, which makes reference to the practices that aim at finding the intended results (Estellés-Arolas and González-Ladrón-de-Guevara 2012). There are many definitions for crowdsourcing but in this study we can define crowdsourcing as:” one way of accessing external knowledge” (Burger-Helmchen and Pénin 2010). Since the author does not have access to the location under study, this method is used as one of the ways of gathering information. During the past few years, Instagram has become one of most widely used social networks (Boy & Uitermark, 2016) and it has proven that in some scenarios, pictures and short videos can speak louder than words (Lee, Lee, Moon, & Sung, 2015). A study shows that the level of engagement for Instagram is 57% which means this amount of users check this website at least once a day and also 35% of users visit Instagram multiple time a day (Zolkepli, Hasno, & Kamarulzaman, 2015).

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