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SIDEWALKS; FORGOTTEN AREAS IN THE CITY (CASE STUDY: KERMANSHAH, IRAN)

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ABSTRACT

Sidewalk is an area in the city for pedestrian movement and considered as a place for different activities in cities. These activities, whether for shopping, social or pleasure, are influenced by the quality of sidewalk because sidewalk is considered as a main proportion of area in cities but the design of sidewalk has not been paid attention to much based on engineering principles. Most of sidewalks are designed after the shapes of streets. A lot of damages on the surface of sidewalks can be seen and because of that old or disabled people cannot use the sidewalks comfortably. The sidewalks must be designed to offer comfort to civilians, but some of sidewalks just cause distress for people of cities; since the design of sidewalks has not been based on regularities. This paper has tried to show the significant role of sidewalks on the view of cities as well as the problematic factors on the design of sidewalks in Kermanshah city and also some solutions also have been proposed.

Keywords: *Sidewalk, Pedestrian, City, Kermanshah, Role*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, traffic jam, high expenses, population, economical problems and environmental hazards are not the only problems of cities. Cities encounter bigger problems such as behavior disorders, social problems and stress which can be considered as adequate reasons to impose problems on the modern life in big cities.

Surely, the exterior architecture of the city has a lot of impacts on the peace of mind of the citizens. This peace helps the tired people relax after doing so much hard work. The peace and beauty of the architecture of the city helps people have a better family relationship. The designation of city sidewalks and their impact on the architecture of the city has been considered as an important action (Locorbosieh, 2003). Using new designs in sidewalks, charming lights at night and beautiful colors make the cities more attractive than before. Sidewalks and pedestrians are considered as inseparable parts in a city life. Sidewalks as places to spend some of people's free time have a great role in big cities in the world. One of the valuable things being done these days in Mashhad and Tehran is the special sidewalks for pedestrians (Bahraini, 1999). In cities, these days, the sidewalks have been chaotic passages for people. Although sidewalks should be the safest places for pedestrians, riding motorcycles and other obstacles are threatening the people passing by. In current paper, sidewalks of Kermanshah city are inspected.

Sidewalk, Public Area of the City

Walking is considered as the most natural and the oldest way of commuting from one place to another. Walking is still the most significant way to see the places, do different jobs and even discover hidden values of the environment. Walking is the most significant action to identify the new places and to feel the qualities of our environment. We can feel the architecture of a city while walking in different places. Creating special places for pedestrians has not only a great role in rebuilding business centers in cities but also allows the citizens to socialize in peace and security not being worried to hit a car. Generally, the functions of sidewalks include; walking, standing, lying, running, playing and watching.

Role of the Sidewalks in the City Identity

Many people think that sidewalk is considered as a crowded place for walking and being bumped by other pedestrians' or a path for motorcycles passage with a lot of holes and uneven surfaces. We consider the

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value of studying the sidewalks in many respects. We consider the roles of sidewalks in many viewpoints. As mentioned before, we have studied the significant role of sidewalks from several viewpoints. Though, we admit that this study has not been done perfectly, and a more perfect research can be carried out in future with other titles such as (Saeidinia, 2004):

- The role of sidewalks, the need of citizens and the architecture of the city
- Sidewalks , disabled people, old people, and people disabled because of war
- The relationship between city facilities and the peace of people's mind
- The effect of sidewalk color and facilities on people
- The quality of designing sidewalks and the existence of stairs on sidewalks
- Placing the city facilities on the sidewalks inappropriately
- The use of sidewalks inappropriately by citizens

Role of the Sidewalks in the City Architecture and Citizens' Needs

Undoubtedly, one main important part of any city is the sidewalks of that city. The most important obstacles on the sidewalks include; holes and canals being dug along or across the sidewalks, riding motorcycles on sidewalks, the electric bars on sidewalks, garbage bins on the sidewalks, some news stands on the sidewalks, some street signs on the sidewalks, the stairs on the sidewalks, overpass bridges on the sidewalks, the moving sellers on the sidewalks, some building being built on the sidewalks, cars parked on the sidewalks and some cases causing distress in citizens. The designers of sidewalks and civil engineers should consider the pedestrians as citizens and should think about providing their needs (Shabazib, 2005).

The Relationship between Sidewalks and Psychological Peace of Citizens

Unfortunately, a lot of sidewalks in big cities do not have the required standards of a good sidewalk (Figure 1). On the sidewalk, there is not enough room suitable for the number of pedestrians. Furthermore, there are a lot of obstacles on the sidewalks, causing even worse conditions for people passing by. These problems sometimes even force the citizens walk along the streets creating dangerous situations for pedestrians. It is obvious that sidewalks should have a great role in people's peaceful life in cities. Sometimes the different obstacles on the sidewalks neither help the peace of mind nor inspire a kind of disorder and distress among people of cities. These conditions cause people not to walk on the street after a long day of work. Unfortunately, we have not paid much attention to the relationship between the peace of mind and sidewalks in cities.



Figure 1: Design Problems of Sidewalks

Problems and Solutions of Sidewalks

There are many problems that cause inappropriate condition for the users of sidewalks for which a questionnaire was designed and people were asked to score it between 0-5. The results are shown in Table (1).

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Table 1: Results of Questionnaires

ITEM	Percent of Each Score (%)					
	0	1	2	3	4	5
The surface quality of sidewalks	0	20	30	25	10	15
Inappropriate placing of city facilities on the sidewalks	5	25	15	15	20	20
The inappropriate use of sidewalks by citizens	10	10	20	20	25	15
Ramps and stairs in the sidewalk	20	15	5	30	15	15
Lack of enough width of the sidewalks	10	10	20	35	15	10
The use of sidewalks has not been defined at night	0	5	5	10	35	45

The Surface Quality of Sidewalks

Since sidewalks have been formed and designed in a long time during many years of city management, the color and the materials being used are so different. Some parts of the sidewalks have been destroyed during long use in years. So, while walking, we can see a bad condition of sidewalks in cities. A good solution is that those in charge of city management should present a suitable plan to build and design the sidewalks and perform the plan with the help of citizens (Figure 2).



Figure 2: The surface quality of sidewalks



Figure 3: Inappropriate placing of city facilities on the sidewalks

Inappropriate Placing of City Facilities on the Sidewalks

One of the most significant problems related to sidewalks is the existence of city facilities such as buses, stands, electricity bars and signs on the sidewalks. These facilities have been put up on the sidewalks without a scientific plan by the city authorities or offices such as the municipality or the electricity office

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or the telephone office. A scientific solution is putting up these facilities based on the capacity of the sidewalks (Figure 3).

The Inappropriate use of Sidewalks by Citizens

Many citizens do not use the sidewalk appropriately. Some citizens park their car on the sidewalk, or some of the shops display their goods on the sidewalks. Some of the workshops also use the sidewalk, so people's traffic will be distorted. Some of shopkeepers use the sidewalk as a personal property, or some people park their motorcycles on the sidewalk. Based on the laws made for cities, Article 96, cluse 6, from the book called 'The laws of municipalities', the sidewalks, streets and alleys of cities are considered as public properties. Therefore, the personal use of these places will be illegal and is confronted with punishment (Figure 4).



Figure 4: The inappropriate use of sidewalks by citizens



Figure 5: Ramps and stairs in the sidewalk

Ramps and Stairs in the Sidewalk

The other important thing being ignored in building and designing the sidewalks are the uneven surface of the sidewalks which is not suitable for old or disabled people to walk on. Most of the room in sidewalks has been occupied by stairs or parking ramps. This can be considered as one of the big problems in big cities causing the architecture of the city distorted. In addition to that, the elderly or the disabled are not able to walk on the sidewalks. It is necessary for the authorities to remove these obstacles from the

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sidewalks. The authorities must not allow putting up these obstacles on the sidewalks any more (Figure 5).

Lack of Enough Width of the Sidewalks

Most of the sidewalks have not enough width for pedestrians to walk on. Even the limited width of the sidewalk has been occupied by stairs, small gardens or ramps, so the pedestrians cannot walk on the sidewalks. In designing new cities in future the width of the sidewalks should be appropriate to the number of the pedestrians (Figure 6).



Figure 6: Lack of enough width of the sidewalks

The Use of Sidewalks has not been Defined at Night

Unlike what imagined, the city centers have been unfamiliar at night. As there is not enough light for night life, they have limited use at night, and are only usable when the shops are open.



Figure 7: The use of sidewalks has not been defined at night

Sometimes we are not sure to design the place for night life and this fact caused the place so dark that it has been changed into a frightening or a no-go area at night. However, with enough light, these city centers can be changed to attractive places for night life (Figure 7).

Conclusion

The quality of sidewalks should have a beautiful architectural design and surface.

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The city services and facilities should be put up orderly in such a way that they can provide services as well as calmness and peace for citizens. Sidewalks should be designed in such a way that all people from children to old and disabled can use them easily.

In order to have beautiful standard sidewalks, we can use local material, and artistic as well as local experts. In designing the sidewalks, we have to pay attention to the color, material and ecological principles.

Also, some suggestions to enhance the condition of sidewalks are presented below:

- Preparing enough light at night
- Using suitable barriers to prevent the motorcycles
- The surface should be made of best quality materials
- Paying attention to the safety of the sidewalks in cities
- Putting up the facilities in such a way not to be obstacles
- stairs or ramps should not be permitted to build on the sidewalks
- The use of suitable steepness to lead the water to flow into the canals
- Selecting enough width for the sidewalk based on the number of people
- Improvement of safety of the sidewalk especially for the old or disabled people.

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