**Urban Design Framework for Mollā Sadrā Avenue in Shiraz (Iran) with an Approach to Social Interactions**

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Nowadays the role of street as a convivial urban space that could manage many of social interactions, group events and optional activities has been dramatically deteriorated in Iran. In the other hand, the concept of street is downgraded to be merely a transit corridor used by automotive modes and filled by different pollutants which would cause number of problems for people who would like to use the space in a more tranquil way. It also makes a situation of human discomfort. Molla-Sadra Avenue in Shiraz is one of those potentially well-defined spaces that could be reasonably transformed to a vital and vibrant public space, ideal for people and their numerous social and optional activities. Unfortunately this Avenue has been deteriorated through a quasi long period of time and today it just acts like an artery with a considerable low level of service. The first aim of this research project was to engage the urban design process as a catalyst to the improvement of urban space by considering a vast variety of characteristics which this Avenue bears with. As it could be seen in many contemporary public spaces, it is not only the quality of urban form and physical aspects which makes an urban space vibrant and integrally 'useful', but a minimum provision of services plus a spatial re-design and re-arrangement does the job perfectly.

To prepare a conceptual framework, three convergent issues have been taken to account. First, is the method of social meaning transmission and propagation in an urban and public space; second, is a list of characteristics for a Sociable street; and third, is a list of factors which have an impact on social interaction in public spaces and especiallyin the street (fig. 1).

In the research process, after examining the characteristics of a livable street in the case study of Molla-Sadra Avenue, it became evident that this Avenue has a great deal of attractions which even in the actual condition, absorbs a large number of people with different motivations, daily. In the absence of a planned space, people enjoy themselves by window-shopping, promenading, seeing each other, flanneurie and many other modalities of presence which could be assessed as spontaneous outcome of the social process. Even though a number of essential shortages makes the space suffer: the limited width of sidewalks, lack of some spaces to gather and to halt, scarcity of street furniture and seating amenities, lack of activities in holidays and night-time, low level of service for vehicles and a quasi permanent traffic jam, and many physical defections have lead to a mediocre overall state. This makes the space to become a non-favorable context for social interactions. As such, after extracting a comprehensive list of these shortages and possibly doable interventions, an urban design framework has been drawn up by arranging all design strategies in three distinct directions which would be 'Functional', 'Empirical-Aesthetical' and 'Environmental' qualities. This framework has been applied to the process of public space re-design and the result is expected to be a more livable space suitable to the improvement of social interactions and optional activities. As it could be seen in the table below, the main orientation of the framework is to prepare a more pedestrian-friendly space by widening the sidewalks, calming the car traffic and providing a better access to public transport.

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| **Urban Design Framework**  **for MollaSadra Avenue, Shiraz, Iran** | | |
| **Functional Issues** | | |
| Quality | Aspect | Strategy |
| Behavior Settings | Active Involvement | Proper physical settings for cultural and artistic activities; Gathering and chat; Walking and promenading without physical rupture and by good pavement; Places to eat and to rest; Spatial sequences and shortening the long path by creating new spaces all along the street as new sequences. |
| Inactive Involvement | To see and to be seen; Walking, talking, listening without bothering; Attractive views. |
| Interactivity | Different ages and gender; Interacting with people and new acquaintances; Increasing the number of people present in the space; Social groups shaping. |
| Flexibility of Activities | All day long activities; Night-time activities; Annual events; Activities for all; Porosity and set in of activities. |
| Land-use | Mixed land-use | Horizontal and vertical grain; Various uses to avoid evening inactivity; Residential use related to street life. |
| Attractive uses and Third place | Attractive setting and venues like movie, brand shops, confectionary, library and book shop, café, art galleries and educational centers. |
| Accessibility | Permeability | High degree of permeability to adjacent blocks; Ease of access to the street and the upper floors of frontage buildings; Sidewalks linkage to public transport amenities. |
| Continuity | Continuity of movement; Supporting quick stops and low speed mobility; Sidewalk continuity. |
| Control | Parking control and limitations; Car movement restrictions. |
| Transport System | Cycling and bikeway design; Public transport promotion; Pedestrian access to public space. |
| Safety and Security | Psychological and Physical Security | Visibility of space (street eyes); Night-time activities and residential use; Spatial and temporal overlap of activities; Lighting and decreasing the number of non-secure places; Space monitoring (Instrumental (CCTVs etc.), Natural (CPTED) and Institutional (Police Patrol etc.)). |
| Safety | Pedestrian buffer zone created by tree lanes; Traffic calming; Conflict point reduction; Creating medians. |
| **Empirical-Aesthetical Issues** | | |
| Quality | Aspect | Strategy |
| Physical Environment | Physical Setting | Attractive forms in facades; Fine grain and small scale frontages (10-20 openings in every 100 meters); Ground floor façade improvement; Visual attraction for pedestrians; Distinctive architecture for important buildings; Welcoming entrances; Provision of seating amenities; Vernacular materials. |
| Main Structure  +  Figure Ground | Well defining entrances and exits for the street; Rhythm and harmony in building facades; Placettes and space openings for staying; Adequate building density; Spatial Continuity; well-defined set-backs and cantilevers. |
| Visibility | Frontage porosity and inter visual contact; Inner and outer space linkage; Visual and physical accessibility. |
| Physical Flexibility | Using soft spaces as space definer; Inclusive design; Continuous pavement and mobility facilitation; Spatial Hierarchy. |
| Perceptional Environment | Physical Structure Analysis | Increasing the legibility; Human scale design; Continuity of skyline and frontages; Unity and harmony in building facades; Order and harmony in the streetscape design. |
| Vibrance and Vitality | Presence perpetuity in public space; Vitality of events and activities; Encouraging people and merchants to beautify their own environment (shops' front door). |
| Mental Environment | Linked Meanings | Historic conservation; Identity in elements; Readable history; Characteristic design; Meaning promotion; Memory making. |
| Mental Landscape | Landmarks and distinctive buildings; Self-orientation; Space distinctiveness; Pavement as an orienting element. |
| **Environmental Issues** | | |
| Quality | Aspect | Strategy |
| Climatic Aspect of Urban Space | Physiological and Mental Tranquility | Sun in cold season; Shade in hot season; Wind and breeze as natural ventilation; Trees and plantations; Sun-shades all along the street; Using natural elements to vivify the space. |
| Sounds and Smell | Fragrances; Food, Beverages and other comestibles that smell good to be available in surrounding shops; Sounds such as music performance etc. |
| Pollution Reduction | Pedestrians' priority; Cycling and Public transport; Recycling. |

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