

Original Research Article

A Qualitative Assessment of the Peripheral Texture Development of a Holy Site (Case study: Imam Reza Street)*

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Abstract | Since old times, religious places have played a key role in the development and configuration of cities. However, the rapid development of cities, especially big cities, has led to widespread structural, operational, and functional developments. These developments have turned the public urban arenas, once the scene of the most pleasurable public memories and large-scale events and the most important places for citizens' gatherings, into unfamiliar, spiritless, and harsh environments, which have eliminated the human power of discovery and involvement with space. Imam Reza's religious axis [street], which acts as the entrance into the holy site, is considered an active urban axis located in the traditional texture of the city. This axis, characterized by spatial placeness values, has defined the quality of accessibility to this central site since the Pahlavi era. In the meantime, structural developments, together with the rifts in the historical past of the street, have disrupted the spatial identity of the axis. This article aims to explain the factors affecting the discontinuity of the place identity and investigate the components that need to be redefined in space to create placeness in the Imam Reza axis. The research used a descriptive-analytical method based on documents, library sources, and field observations. The findings revealed that structural continuity in the Imam Reza axis preserves identity characteristics, prevents the historical disruption of the axis with its past, and can also resolve communication-functional problems. That said, the continuity of the axis's placeness requires these characteristics, and the loss of each undermines placeness and the religious landscape of the axis as a whole.

Keywords | *Holy place, Religion, Non-place, Imam Reza Street.*

Introduction | The meaning of "place" as a concept is of paramount importance today, which deals with the loss of the place. Searches for the meanings of place and urban spaces have gained the attention of many in recent decades. The place has its own identity, relations, and history. Thus, non-place is void of identity and history formed inside homogenous spaces (Augé, 2008). Following the historical discontinuity and weaning from what is considered to be a past heritage, and as a consequence of the dividing of cities into functional areas with fluid and endless spaces and simple forms

as well as pure cubic volumes, the ensuing outcome is placed with no dissimilar quality or codes, dissipating diversity, vivacity, and dynamism from the urban spaces (Norberg-Schultz, 2004). The problem with most cities today is that urban spaces are losing their real senses and creating a phenomenon called "non-place." One key point in pilgrimage cities is the effect of the religious function on the placeness of the urban space, which is deemed to have greatly contributed to the physical expansion and development of cities. Today, however, developmental, reconstruction, and rejuvenation measures in peripheral religious sites are simply structural, as myriad economic-commercial land

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uses have undermined the placeness of religious spaces in some pilgrimage cities. Mashhad, which is home to the shrine of Imam Reza (AS) and enjoys some historical, cultural, and spiritual values, has failed to maintain its developmental trend and protect its historical texture in the face of new demands, with emerging construction sites leaving negative impacts on the Holy Shrine as the main component of the city of Mashhad. Some studies which have been conducted in this domain, have highlighted problems such as the failure of introducing Islamic-Shiite meanings into the axis (Banaei Manesh, Biooki & Haseltalb, 2014). Failure to consider the category of meaning and the creation of spiritless and no-identity spaces in the Imam Reza axis confirms this. This article investigates the role of key components in the place-making process of the Imam Reza axis, which is one of the most important religious axes in the city of Mashhad, and seeks to answer the following questions:

What factors contribute to the placeness of a religious space?

What strategies can be adopted to improve the meaning of place at the Imam Reza Street, called non-place in a religious texture?

Literature Review

Two levels of studies are reviewed in this research to investigate the placeness of religious spaces. First, concerning religious spaces, Javadi (2013), Farzin (2010), and Abarghouei Fard, Saboonchi and Farzin (2018) emphasized the continuous naturalism in all eras as a constant formative paradigm and the social role of the religious landscape in the Islamic era as a common subjective outcome, arguing that steps should be taken to re-read the role of these landscapes in the identity structure of Iranian cities. Nattagh and Mokhles (2019) investigate the immediate relationship between the Imam Reza Harem and its adjacent texture to conclude that the shrine sits along other urban foci and components that constitute a part of the identity of the two landscapes of the pilgrimage site and the residential land use. Also, Hussein (2013) studied changing social values in pilgrimage cities and their impacts on the developmental paradigm of Iraqi pilgrimage cities. He stresses the effects of changing social values on pilgrimage cities and describes predominantly stable spiritual values in the development paradigm. Concerning the meaning of place and spatial placeness, Habibi (2008) has described factors causing identity, place, and their impacts on humans, maintaining that two salient components of humans and place and their interactions have an effective role in forming place. Yeganeh, Bemanian, Eeinifar & Ansari (2014) also believed placeness to be the citizens' critical causal condition of the

city and the building of integrity. Alem, Vaziri and Rezaei Sharif (2013) also investigated the factors affecting place attachment and provides guidelines in two activity and structural dimensions to create a sense of attachment, which entails strengthening identity in Islamic-Iranian city spaces. However, the present article emphasizes the values affecting the religious space placeness and shows how these factors affect the Imam Reza axis placeness.

Research Method

Because the research aims present components that make the feasibility of improving a religious space into a placeness-oriented space achievable, library studies and descriptive methods were first used to describe concepts of place and non-place and investigate the city's religious landscape development. This research suggests that religion is a space-place phenomenon. This case study focused on the analysis of formative, subjective, and communication dimensions a) to explain the relevant physical developments, b) to investigate the functional characteristics affecting space placeness, and c) to use the content analysis method and review subjective values and processes affecting the quality of place to describe the relationship between development and identification of the peripheral texture of the Imam Reza shrine. Thus, the research is a descriptive-analytical method. Data were collected through written sources, articles, maps, and data available on websites and field observations.

Theoretical Basics

• Theory of place and non-place

The concept of "place" has been studied in various bodies of knowledge, including Architecture, Urban Planning, Geography, Psychology of the Environment, etc. There are different definitions of "place," which are sometimes ambiguous and complicated (Creswell & Clark, 2011; Sime, 1986; Mobini Dehkordi, 2011). A place refers to an area where one can live and stay for five minutes; thus, it should be linked with living. In other words, a place is a confined space with a semantic load, though not all spaces can be regarded as places. Below, Table 1 presents various definitions of place.

In contrast, there is the concept of "non-place," which Marc Augé introduced in his book "Non-Places." A non-place is a space where identity, relations, and history are not formed. It refers to a space where concerns about relationships, identity, and relations are erased. The growing number of these spaces characterizes the modern world. A non-place world is confined to individual isolation, fleetingness, and instability, allowing for no organic community. Like a place, a non-place exists in a

Table 1. Perspectives of thinkers regarding the concept of place. Source: Authors.

Theorists	Concept of place
Harrison & Dourish (1996)	It is a meaningful space for an individual or a group of individuals (Place=space + meaning)
Norberg-Schultz (2003)	It is the spatial and temporal stability of the living world.
Logan & Molotch (1987)	It is part of the space characterized by social ties.
Lynch (1993)	Every place has its own identity which distinguishes it from others by its uniqueness.
Madanipour (2001)	It refers to a physical space with all its social and spatial qualities that, despite embracing continuous development, defends its material totality and retells its reciprocal relationship at a point in time
Habibi (2008)	It is defined by a physical structure and the activities performed in it and takes on meaning and spirit as its image and memory are formed in the human mind over time.
Relf (1976)	It is a combination of space, landscape, rites, path, other people, and personal experience, giving importance to protecting the home and serving as a context for other places.
Augé (2008)	It is characterized by identity, relationships, and history and has specified boundaries protected by the residents.

pure and absolute form where places are re-formed and relations are re-established. In other words, place and non-place are like opposing poles, with the former **never fully eliminated** and the latter **never fully materialized**. In the best-case scenario, **non-places** are sites for public gatherings without conveying to the citizens' specific meanings **outside** of their functional-structural domains. Thus, one would say that the conversion of non-places to places is not achieved only by the passage of time and history; they no longer represent the culture of their society and will not preserve the citizens' memories by producing a simple physical sign in the city. For example, one can refer to such non-places as commercial centers, accommodations, hotels, etc., which, due to the loss of their placeness features, are simply a repetition of no-identity and imitated patterns of Western examples in the urban space, thereby producing a delusive and non-insider identity (Augé, 2008).

• Role of Religion in Space Placeness

- Role of Religion in Urban Spaces

Religious spaces have long played a pivotal role in forming urban landscapes and the cultural and ideological basics of the human community. Historians maintain that one of the main reasons for establishing a city is its spiritual and religious functioning. This is because religious sites contribute to the historical analysis of urban spaces in different ways. The first role of such spaces is revealed in the history of the religion itself, which indicates the long history of that nation and society. The second role

they play refers to characteristics each religion reveals about humans and is established to make the space conducive to its establishment. Another role of religious sites is to enliven memories and establish collective social memories over time, which, in addition to the time when religions are established, can attract people at other times (Naghizadeh, 2010). Collective religions as social actions have always been associated with cities and their space structurally, they create or form specific components and spaces that can entail structural-spatial coherence when established in urban spatial configuration. From a semantic perspective, collective religions create memorable, meaningful, and symbolic spaces, which greatly inspire the identification of spaces and senses of attachment (Alalhesabi & Paikan, 2013). Regardless of religious sites, the key point is the inherent and instantaneous human behaviors around a holy and appealing site because it is the humans' behaviors that define the place and turn it into an arena of memories, leading to the creation of a religious landscape (Khorramrouei, Mahan & Farzin, 2019).

- Factors constituting place in religious spaces

Various cultural, functional, social, and structural factors contribute to the space's placeness. If the place is defined as an identity-giving, relational and historical "position," one would claim that a religious place has a potential sense of place for enjoying a valuable historical and spiritual background, taking on a specific identity by bringing together formative and content factors and

increasing popular participation over time (Khakzand & Teymoori Gordeh, 2015). The factors which affect the creation and improvement of space in a religious place are categorized as follows:

Structural component: Structural components create a sense of attachment through environmental differentiation and internal and external relations in spaces. Form characteristics, including size, color, texture, and scales, greatly contribute to forming a sense of attachment, much like organizing and arranging structural components are also pivotal (Javan Forouzandeh & Motalebi, 2011). Religious places play a significant role in upgrading space due to their location in the center of the neighborhoods, appropriate access positions, semiotic signs, and other structural characteristics. In an Islamic city, a holy place appears as a part of a whole in an urban structure, though this part has been a point of beginning and a primary core of that whole, which has constantly played a determinate role in the development (Etezadi, 1998). Therefore, readability, centrality, and the creation of a physical totality characterize the major structural indicators in the placeness of a religious space.

Functional-communicative component: A successful place is one where the space provides mental and physical comfort, helps people engage in the space, and enjoys the opportunities to do social action (Daneshpour, Sepehri Moqaddam & Charkhchian, 2009). To increase participation and social interactions in religious spaces, the space needs to provide socialization, a pivotal issue (Sarmast & Motavaseli, 2010). Because of their experience of participation and spatial synergy, religious spaces serve as one of the strongest experiences gained in a collective space. In our culture, close relations with natural elements such as water, trees, and collective and religious nature provide a positive setting for strengthening social relations and forming a uniform mindset of the residents in the city (Abarghouei Fard, Saboonchi & Farzin, 2018). Thus, the effective social-functional indicators contributing to creating space include enjoying various formative-activity characteristics, collective life, and vitality.

Historical-identity component: Identity and historical elements foster attachment and excitement, promote identity, and create meaningful signs rooted in culture and society to shape people's perceptions and make spaces meaningful. In this connection, religions in traditional religious spaces assume significance over time, as they create specific meanings for the people and thus turn the space into a place. At the beginning of the Islamic era, religious landscapes developed in a special way in Iranian cities, which laid the ground for developments in the structure, social life, citizens' perceptions, and the Iranian city identity (Ibid).

Therefore, the link between pilgrimage and residence and the continuation of citizens' perceptions through the preservation of valuable and meaningful elements constitute the most significant historical and identified indicators of space placeness.

- Viewing religion as a spatial-place phenomenon

As Catherine Bell (1992) suggested, religious studies focus on several specific domains. Classical studies are more oriented towards religious approaches. Functional approaches in sociology serve to analyze social phenomena, while symbolist anthropologists focus on religions as the basis of cultural dynamism. In the meantime, spatial analysis of religions lacks a well-established research background. Religions focus on physical activities and spatial aspects because understanding religion as physical activity is impossible without considering space. Richards' definition indicates a direct relationship between religion and space; however, it does not elaborate on the relationship between religion and its spatial characteristics (Masoudinejad, 2010). Parkin also maintains that ceremony placeness is a key principle of religion. Thus, the relationship between religion and space can be described in two ways: first, religions are associated with specific spaces and places. Second, religion is fundamentally thought of as a spatial phenomenon depending on the physical mobility in the space. Thus, religions constitute the core of social identity and are inherently spatial subjects (Parkin, 1992). Because of the space definitions, urban space as a subset of the space concept is not excluded from the space category because it serves as an arena to display collective life. The physical and social dimensions of the city are dynamically interrelated, and the urban space includes two social and physical spaces (Salehi, 2009; Madanipour, 2001). Therefore, one would say that the collective or public arena as part of the urban space can hold collective and communal religions in proportion to their specific characteristics. As a social activity, religion requires space and leads to creating space. Religion has a reciprocal relationship with space, i.e., it affects it and is affected by it (Fig. 1). Second, religion as a social-cultural phenomenon conveys some social and cultural ties. On the other hand, because collective spaces are regarded as a specific kind of organized social life directly associated with the social space as a structural space, religion can be considered a spatial phenomenon in interaction with the city. Third, in view that the identity and placeness of an urban space depend on the concordance of three components of the human-space relationship, meaning in space, structural continuity, and religion, can help create placeness for space and make it meaningful over time (Fig. 1). Thus, religion can be thought of as a spatial-place phenomenon.

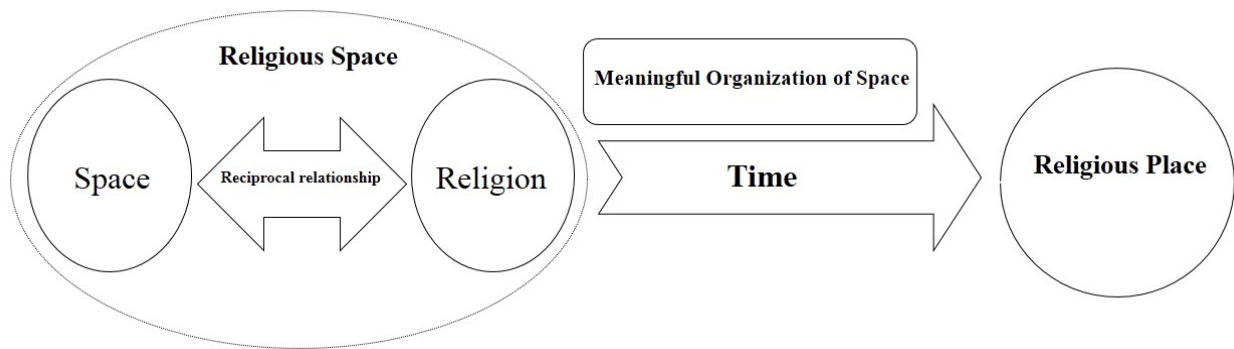


Fig. 1. Effect of religion on the space placeness. Source: Authors, 2021.

Case study: Imam Reza Street (Tehran Street) Using Space Placeness Indicators

• Areas Understudy

Imam Reza Street is one of the most important channels in the central texture of Mashhad, which constitutes one of the four main routes of access to the holy shrine. This street connects three main nodes of the city (Beit Ul-Moghaddas, Basij, and 15 Khordad Squares) and leads to two major land uses in the city. From Beit Ul-Moghaddas Square, the street leads to the holy shrine, and from Khordad Square, it leads to the passenger terminal (Fig. 2). As the main connecting chain between the holy shrine and the city, the Imam Reza axis has been the main component of the city's backbone since the old days. However, the main street configuration has expanded since the late first and second Pahlavi eras but faced problems that persist today.

• Structural developments

- Before Pahlavi

Following the construction of the Imam Reza Shrine, followed by the bazaar formation, the settlement of Sanabad and relevant neighborhoods in the Teymourian era, and the creation of mosques and government facilities in the Qajar and Safavid eras, the city of Mashhad gradually took on an urban configuration. A straight street was constructed to link the upper and lower streets, improving the space and urban place (Fig. 3) (Sarkheyli, Pourjafar & Rafieian, 2014).

- Pahlavi

With the advent of modernism in the first Pahlavi era, two Tabrasi and Tehran streets were built along with Hazrat Square. When Tehran Street was constructed in 1930, Eidgah Cemetery was demolished and replaced by Bargh Square (Fig. 3). In the second Pahlavi era, Tehran Street served as the major axis to enter the Holy Mashhad, which saw its meta-urban role strengthened when streets were widened and specific criteria were specified for the newly-founded buildings. Later, following the destruction

and renovation agenda on the pretext of constructing appreciated passageways for drivers and resolving the traffic problems of the downtown Mashhad city, the Harem Square and Imam Reza Axis were converted into a circle and a street with a traffic nature (ibid.).

- After the revolution

Following the revolution, attention was directed again at serious criticisms against the marginalization of the shrine relative to the city and undue emphasis on the centrality of the shrine in the entire city (Fig. 4). In this period, despite the suggestions for renovation and reorganization, the main problem with Imam Reza Street was the lack of bonds and elements linking the peripheral texture of the shrine with the city (Erfanian Salim & Asgharzadeh, 2014).

A review of the history of the peripheral holy shrine texture and Imam Reza Street reveals four periods of change and transformation as follows (Table 2).

As stated, structural changes and the advent of modernization factors, which caused rifts with the historical past of the city, led to the decline of social, functional, identity, and cultural values, with the city growing but constantly distancing from its spirit.

• Communication-functional developments

Located between Beit Ul-Moghaddas Square and Basij Square, Imam Reza Street plays a pivotal role. The shorter route, direct access to the shrine, and restricted riding access (odd-even traffic scheme) to ease the traffic have led the passengers to go through the path on foot. On the other hand, because the shrine is a tourist area and a rising number of pilgrims tour that area, this street has economic value and is recognized as the most important commercial-accommodation axis. In addition, round-the-clock activities have led people to spend more time in public spaces. This street, which serves as a religious site, is regarded as one of the main channels leading to the shrine, which takes on a different character when special religious ceremonies are held. In sum, following

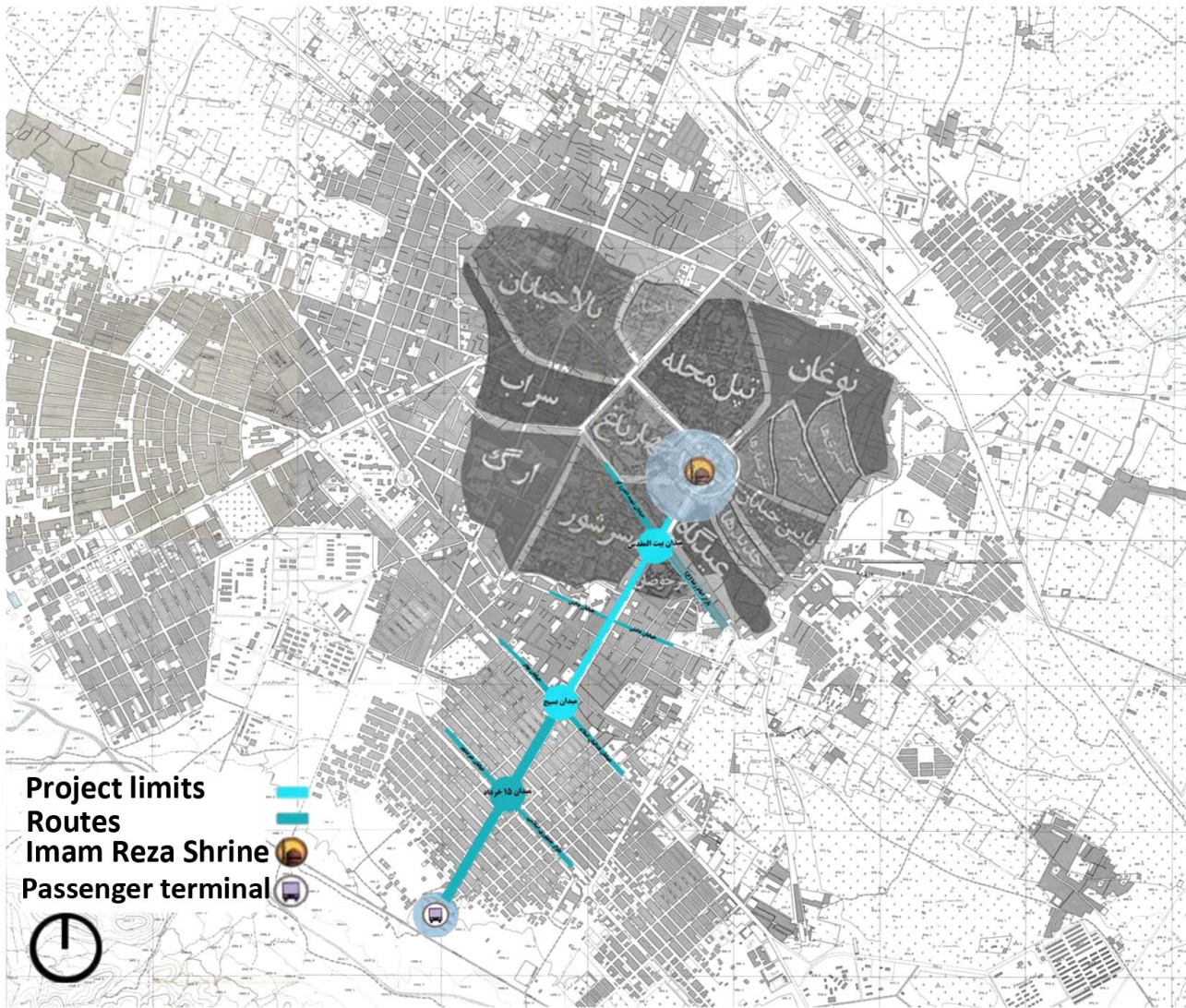


Fig. 2. Location of Imam Reza Street in Mashhad. Source: Authors.

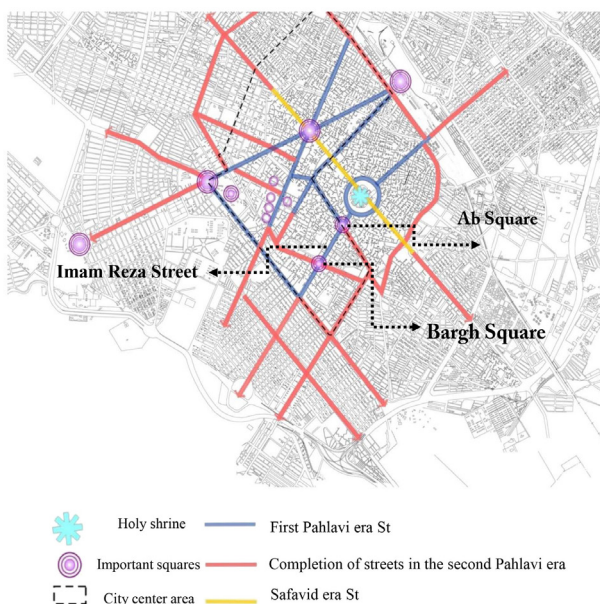


Fig. 3. Structural changes from the Safavid to the Pahlavi eras. Source: www.zibasazi.mashhad.ir.

a spike in land prices and the conversion of the area into potential areas for capital and investment attraction, we are witnessing transforming land uses (e.g., commercial, accommodation, recreational, and service centers), the immigration of residents to the suburban areas, and a competitive space between two elements of the economy and religion.

• Identity-historical developments

Discordance between structural elements and religious-cultural values and the elimination of subjective-historical texture bonds dealt a devastating blow to the cultural heritage and civil and spiritual background of the axis. This unfortunate incident, compounded with the hasty and unsystematic renovations and speculative measures in the axis in recent years, caused the religious site to lose its spiritual identity, thus hurting its public relations. Concordance between the name and space and the reason for selecting the new name could help urban residents adopt or refuse it in their daily activities. For



Fig. 4. Tehran Street over time. Source: www.zibasazi.mashhad.ir.

Table 2. Examination of structural measures and their outcomes on the peripheral texture of the holy place. Source: Authors.

Development period	Historical era	Structural measures	Outcomes	Scheme
First	Before the Pahlavi	Organic development around the holy site Emphasis on the situation of the holy site and its centrality Bazaar development towards the periphery emphasizing the pilgrimage in the city	Centrality of the shrine in the main urban area Originality of the bazaar identity and the main communication route of the city Strengthening the role of the holy site because of its location in the functional intersection of the city	
Second	First Pahlavi	Development and renovation of the courtyard Development of sight axes and entrances to the holy site (geometric order) Bazaar and caravansary development	Emphasis on the centrality of holy site complex Emphasis on the new accessibility channels Dynamism and emergence of economic and social functions around the shrine and Ab Square	
Third	Second Pahlavi	Changing the peripheral texture to meet services and facilities related to the residents and pilgrims Transfer of commercial uses around the shrine to the newly renovated bazaar (Rajab Bazaar) Construction of cruciform and radial streets in the peripheral texture Emphasis on sight axes and cultural development of the city	Emphasis on the grandeur and glory of the shrine complex Separation of the complex from the peripheral texture Flow of investment to new commercial, administrative and educational centers and development of the city towards the west	
Fourth	After the revolution	Worn-out peripheral texture and beginning of destruction and renovation processes High tendency to invest in accommodation and commercial buildings following spikes in land prices and a rising number of pilgrims Destruction of historical buildings and construction of commercial and accommodation sites on the pretext of meeting the needs of the pilgrims Physical development of the holy site in the city Prosperous markets for foreign goods Land and building speculations	Competition between the shrine complex and high-rise buildings and competition between commercial and accommodation uses Presence of non-local investors instead of old economic activists in the regional texture Limited participation and marginalization of the residents Creation of conflicting spaces with pilgrimage and historical sites	

example, changing the axis name from Tehran to Imam Reza and adopting it by the public could signify the religious power and potential of the axis. This is because the spatial holiness of the shrine and the Imam Reza area will affect the Imam Reza axis's identity, with both focused as turning points for urban traffic, population concentration, and religious ceremonies. Also, the 87-year-old Beit Ul-Moghaddas, which serves as one of the critical urban channels and the main area leading to the shrine, is still recognized by people as Ab Square, despite going by six names (e.g., Ferdowsi, Rusha, Daghighi, etc.).

Results Analysis

When analyzing the **axis**, a lack of attention to the meaning is a major reason behind the failure of the existing project. Thus, more attention was paid to the semantic dimension of place, and the qualitative approach was used to discover the meaning of Imam Reza **Street** to explore the role of the axis in the city and its meanings in the minds of the users. In this connection, the content analysis method and a review of users' interviews **were used to extract** their experiences **from** the axis. Then, to arrive at a conclusive result about the users' perception of the axis, attempts were made to randomly select a representative group without any age or gender limitations for interviewing the subjects who could constantly be present at the axis. The interviews and selection of the interviewees continued until the theoretical **saturation point**. In the end, ten people helped achieve the research data saturation level. The qualitative interview **for** this research was semi-structured and used open-ended questions in a face-to-

face format that could reveal the nature of the meanings users thought of the place. The interviews consisted of 5 questions that explored people's general feelings about this axis.

- Where are your favorite places on the axis? Why?
- Which factors do you not approve of in this axis? Why?
- How do you define the Imam Reza axis identity? How do you feel about it?
- What are your purposes for using this axis? And
- How can the axis be improved?

This research uses content analysis for data analysis. Upon rereading all the interviews to discover the meanings and subjective perceptions of the citizens, the texts were analyzed, and the researcher's take on the respondents' statements was determined. For example, the subjective perceptions of the residents of Mashhad revealed that the nature and centrality of the city were predominately confined to the shrine, its periphery, and the routes leading to it. However, with the beginning of the Imam Reza axis renovation operations from the 1930s onwards, we have witnessed developments that can determine the continuity and cessation or redefinition of the citizens' subjective perceptions of space. Below, **Table 3** gives the weaknesses and strengths of the space from the point of view of the users' subjective perceptions, which may serve as a tool for designers to create a sense of place in modern urban spaces that mainly lack meaning.

As stated, religion greatly affects the placeness of the axis. Conceptually speaking, space placeness is achieved through structural, communication-functional, and identity-historical qualities (Yeganeh et al., 2014). Thus, neglect of the religious role, which

Table 3. Analysis of the current situation of Imam Reza Street over time. Source: Authors.

Strong points			Weak points		
Main axis of access to the shrine	Active urban axis		Tourism and no-identity axis	Lack of vitality	Lack of spirit and meaning
	Social-religious activities center	Economic activities in tourist centers			
Proximity to the shrine	A place for protests and demonstrations	The better situation of the shrine (e.g., the presence of hotels and commercial centers)	Dominance of concrete spaces	- removal of residence	Crises of separation of objective and subjective spaces
Shrine landscape (pilgrimage landscape/ saying salute to the shrine)	Holing religious ceremonies	Easy access (subway lines, bus, and taxi stops)	No-memory spaces (weakened social capital)	- Separation of holy pilgrimage and customary residence	Separation of religious elements and peripheral texture
			Integrity of power and business	- lack of water and vegetation	A contradiction between place and non-place
			Contradict of economy and pilgrimage	Lack of collective arenas	
			Failure to pay attention to the right of culture and people's identity		

has a pivotal effect on residents' perception of the city, could increase non-places and undermine the functionality of collective spaces. These qualities can play a more effective role in creating non-place phenomena within the development, renovation, and improvement processes. Policies adopted for the axis tend to involve a tourist-oriented approach rather than considering the history, identity, and mindset of the residents because the axis, as influenced by the two opposing forces of religion and economy, is associated with progress and prosperity owing to the pilgrims' visits and attention by the rulers. Consequently, the dominance of the economy over religion and community has resulted in the disruption of the urban landscape and the religious axis, as pilgrims are preferred over residents. This has decreased the possibility of creating physical, social, and semantic communications in the axis compared to the past and we are only dealing with a commercial axis in the service of pilgrims with the dismissal of the residents, does not allow the formation of a common history and identity (Fig. 5).

This led to the pilgrims' adoption of the non-places with a mindset void of urban memory, causing the sense of belonging to the place and the urban memories of the former and current residents to decline in the process of consecutive developments and transformations. Citizens had no role in defining the formation of the city and the transformation of

the most important and oldest urban area. The rising number of pilgrims, the physical development of the city, the expanding construction and renovation, and modernization measures increased the financial values and investment in the lands around the holy places, directing an influx of investors and traders' financial capital into these areas. Thus, following the continued destruction of the spiritual identity of the texture through objective-mental inconsistencies, we have been witnessing a non-objective transformation of place into non-place, followed by a rift between the city and the shrine, pilgrim, and adjacency, and loss of history and identity in the axis. This ensued from the fact that place and non-place can replace each other (Fig. 6). The following diagram summarizes the factors affecting this process from three physical, functional, and semantic perspectives.

Studies have suggested that for space to connect material space with the spiritual dimensions of the city and vice versa, it must have enjoyed specific living requirements. It must also strengthen the sense of spirituality as the dominant sense in this axis by changing economics and capitalism into a religious situation. Thus, this street, serving as an active urban axis that also meets economic and transition roles, needs to be regulated to provide religious ceremonies for the pilgrims and the residents. Table 4 gives strategies on the structure, activity, and meanings to improve the street's role in relation to the holy shrine.

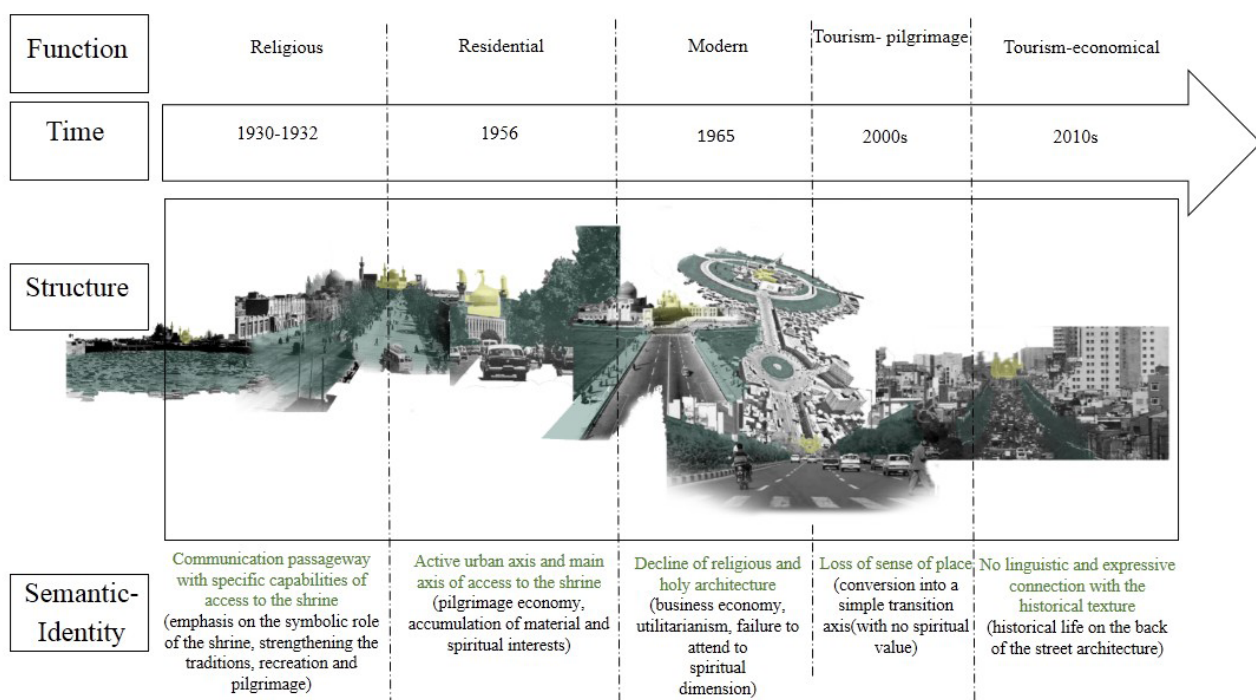


Fig. 5. The functional-identity changes trend in Imam Reza (AS) Street over time. Source: Authors.

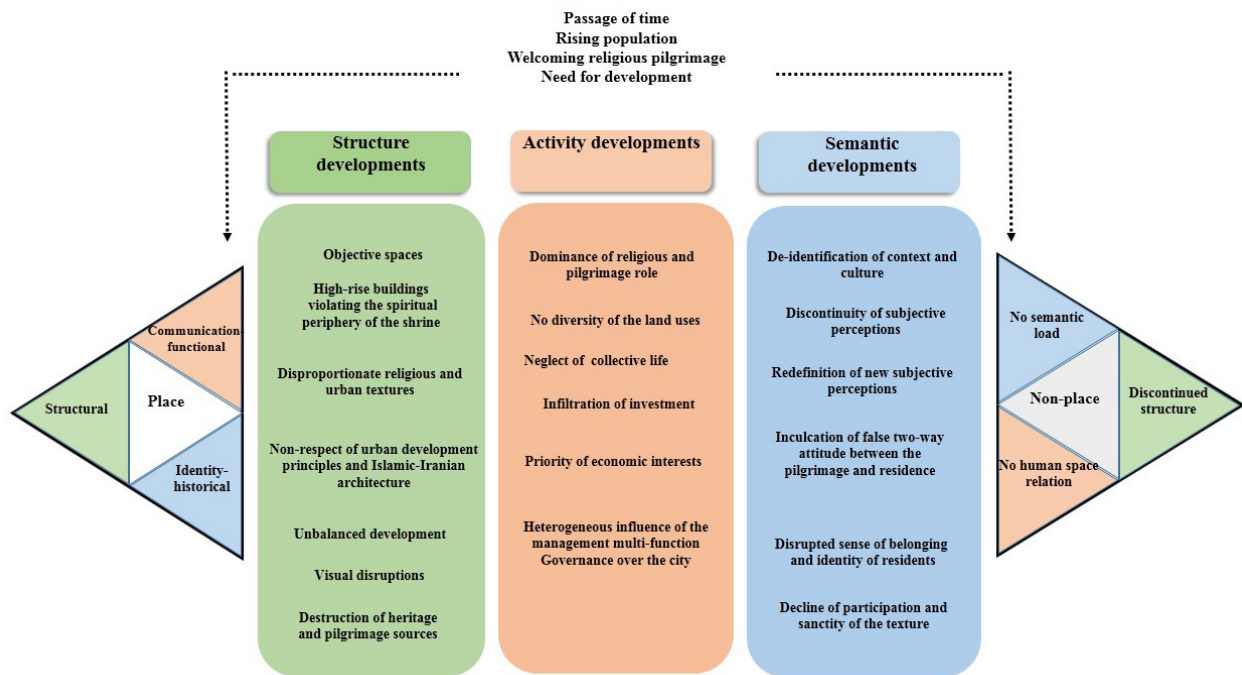


Fig. 6. Evaluation of effective physical, activity, and semantic factors on the process of turning a place into a non-place in the Imam Reza axis. Source: Authors.

Table 4. Investigation of measures for space placeness in the holy peripheral texture. Source: Authors.

Goals	Measures		
Vitality and appeal	Structure	Activity	Meanings
Memorability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of spaces allowing for seeing the surroundings Setting up facilities for climatic convenience Use of natural elements (fountains, trees, etc.) Observance of scales and human proportions, balance, hierarchy, centrality, maintaining sightlines Use of aesthetic elements and religious landscape views use of traditional and local elements in line with the historical texture of the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention of single-functionality of the street arena Deployment of diverse uses along the path which could attract peoples Deployment of leisure and open space uses among the street and strengthening their social roles Growth of activities and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of identity-making indicators in architecture and Iranian-Islamic urban development Maintaining subjective collective signs and revealing old street names Protection of the old and memorable buildings Reproduction of semantic layers of the street to maintain the identity
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of link between religious place and city Prevention of universality of the places and spaces Place-making and revival of urban life 		

Conclusion

Structural, communication-functional, and identity-historical continuity are effective factors that contribute to the placeness of a religious space. Failure to consider any of these indicators in urban development could reduce the tendency for such spaces and make them

single-functional, one-dimensional spaces. In the Imam Reza axis, these factors serve as a religious route that constitutes one of the most important axes in the communication networks for pilgrims and the local population, thus directing its identity towards non-places and traffic streets. A variety of factors such as the

dominance of economics over religion, power integrity, neglect of the role of man and his relationship with space, neglect of semantic dimension in most studies and interventions, and lack of control over the development process have resulted in the domination of objective spaces and the discontinuity of structure and society in this historical axis as well as the irreparable damages to the identity and location of the Imam Reza axis. For this, it is critical to re-read the identity and revive

the meanings using citizens' perceptions to achieve placeness and strengthen bonds with the historical past. This requires attention to physical qualities, activities, and multi-functional systems. Therefore, maintaining and supporting the traditional, life-inspiring structures, increasing social interactions, preserving identity, and strengthening the role of memory and perception are the strategies that should be taken into account to improve the placeness of this religious axis.

Endnote

*This paper is an excerpt of Somayeh Sabouri's M.A. thesis entitled "Redesigning the pilgrimage landscape of Imam Reza Street in Mashhad", which was supervised by Dr. Seyed Amir Mansouri at Faculty of Architecture, College of Fine Arts, University of Tehran in 2021.

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