The Qualitative Evaluation of Urban Spacecs

Application of the Holistic Landscape Approach in the Evaluation of Mashhad Shohada Square Project*

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Abstract | The organization and renovation of Shohada square in Mashhad, entitled as the urban regeneration project has been in progress for the last two decades and now this project has been almost completed. However, it has failed to achieve its goals as it has witnessed the absence and involvement of people. This failure is caused by the perspective in which urban space is considered merely an object. Previous studies on urban regeneration and related projects show that the focus has just been on the functional and physical aspects of urban spaces rather than meaning. The negligence of the meaning could be the main barrier to developing a sense of place in cities. To address this gap, the current study employed a qualitative and holistic approach to evaluating the Shohada square landscape. The study included three phases: The first phase involved a detailed field study and data collection on the physical attributes, activities, and meaning of space by the researcher. In the second phase, data about Shohada square was collected from available research papers, newspapers, reports,etc.and were further analyzed. Using the content analysis the role of the square was scrutinized from the citizens' perspectives. To this end, in-depth interviews were conducted with urban users. The findings revealed that the people's perceptions of Shohada square fall into five categories: "city center", "shrine threshold", "public urban space", "cold and soulless" and "identityless". These factors reflect the meanings of Shohada square in the citizen's minds. The study further drew upon the data from three phases to evaluate Shohada square through the lens of its citizens and then attempted to identify the factors threatening the role of this square. Based on the findings, the study concludes that for the revitalization of Shohada Square, three main aims and relatively policies and strategies must be taken into account namely: increasing the space vitality and its transformation to a civil space, reproducing and adding meaning and keeping the identity of space as well as the spatial reorganization of space for bringing people to space.

Keywords | *Public space, Vitality, Shohada Square, Mashhad, Landscape.*

Introduction | Urban spaces have long been an important part of Iranian architecture and urban planning, including avenues, urban squares, mosques, and Takaya. Such spaces, in addition to providing a platform for social interactions, had multiple functions and served the specific needs of people while maintaining a sense of place.

A number of these spaces are canonized in their sphere of influence or even in the city scale for their diverse economic, social, cultural functions, or their historical identity, spatial organization, as well as their semantic layers. The urban revitalization projects that solely concentrate on the physical and aesthetic aspects of an urban project while ignoring the needs and perceptions

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of the citizen can demolish a place's historical identity. In other words, the rapid physical changes in recent decades have created the homogenous urban spaces devoid of identity and have reduced their role in the city. One of the most critical challenges contemporary cities face is the design and organization of urban spaces, due to their complex and multi-aspect nature.

Failure to consider the various factors influencing urban environments and depending solely on simplistic design decisions may even contribute to the destruction of urban space. This is evidenced by the revitalization plan for the surrounding areas of Imam Reza (PBUH) holy shrine and Shohada Square in Mashhad.

While Shohada Square has had always a special place for citizens and has been used actively due to its central urban location, the recent revitalization project has reduced its vitality. Modification of social fabric and attempting to regenerate the character of the square through proper planning, urban design, and landscape design can be considered an important attempt for the revitalization of the square. The current study aims to study, evaluate and understand the effective factors contributing to the regeneration of urban life in Shohada Square as an integrated system. Citizens are socially tied up with urban environments and have mutual connections with the social aspects of the city. Mansouri (2011) defines urban landscape as the power of understanding the meaning of city through the lens of citizens that historically have lived in an environment and have created a semantic connection with its natural and man-made physical attributes. These meanings have played a vital role in sustaining their urban space lives (ibid.). The study attempts to answer the following questions:

-How have the perceptions of the citizen of the role of Shohada square change from the past to the present?

- What factors have destroyed the vitality of Shohada Square? The structure of the study is divided into five sections: the first section examines the theoretical framework and various aspects of the subject by focusing on data gathered through the library research method and then based on this information, the questions for in-depth interviews are formed. To this end, a review of literature on public and communal space, vitality, meaning and sense of place and the impact of landscape design in the creation of vitality of urban spaces is discussed. The second section deals with the introduction of Shohada square, followed by the sections on research methodology, findings conclusion, and discussion.

Theoretical framework

The current section discusses the theoretical framework and presents various aspects of the subject namely the definition of communal, urban and public spaces as well as place and sense of place. This also stresses on the perspective of landscape architecture approach to urban design and its impact on the vitality and sense of place.

• **Urban, public and communal spaces**

Despite its common translation in Farsi, public space is not equal to communal space. Public spaces were canonized in the 1980s, especially in Europe, to serve as a solution to the social and urban crisis of the time, namely the diminution of values, the isolation of social groups, and behavioral violence aiming to improve social relationships and enhancing people's sense of attachment to place (Mansouri, 2016).

There is a significant difference between urban space and communal space.

Urban space deals with the physical attributes of the environment. By quoting from Madanipour (2001), Kulkohn considers urban areas as social and man-made spaces. The social space is the spatial perception of social institutions which is the main concern of sociologists and geographers. The man-made space, on the other hand, is concerned with the physical attributes of the environment. From their perspective, the man-made space needs to be considered as a "meta-phenomena". Architects mostly pay attention to the physical attributes of urban space, canonizing the role of space morphology, the way that space affecting people's perception, the way that it has been used and the meaning that can create. According to Madanipour, merely concentrating on the physical attributes of urban spaces leads to separating form from function or defining form based on the function (ibid.).

While communal spaces, share objective and subjective attributes with the public space, they have priorities as well. The creation of communal spaces is not just a product of occupation of space by people but the intentional presence of them and their activities. Unlike public space users who are of various separated groups, people in communal spaces form a common and have similar interactions with the place (Mansouri, 2016).

• **Vitality**

Vitality as the quality of urban space can significantly contribute to its success and attractiveness. To grasp the meaning of vitality, the word quality must be properly understood. Quality determines the logical or emotional impact of anything (e.g a phenomenon) on the human being (Pakzad, 2007). It is used for describing the degree of perfection of objects and phenomena, a concept with contradictory aspects: simple but complex, comprehensible but unpredictable. When it refers to tangible qualities such as hardness, softness, speed, it has a clear and understandable meaning, but when it is applied for the description of intangible qualities such as beauty, splendor, effectiveness it can be rather multifaceted (Golkar, 2002). The word of quality has

been taken equal to attributes and state of something in the Persian encyclopedia of Amid and the English language has been taken equal to nature, type or attributes of something.

The crowd and quantity of people in urban space can not determine the vitality of space. Vitality is rather a quality matter that depends on the landscape of the place, where various people of society present and perform voluntary and social activities more than compulsory activities (Mortaz Mehrabani, Mansouri & Javadi, 2018). The vitality of urban spaces depends on the quantity and the type of activities conducted in a place (Khostou & Sa'idi Rezvani, 2011). Among the contemporary scholars, Ian Gold, Kevin Lynch, Jane Jacobs, and Ian Bentley have greatly referred to the concepts of activity, form, and function, as well as the vitality of urban spaces. Now the question is that what the term activity means? According to Pakzad (2008), it includes all human being's actions that are performed for meeting any needs. According to Ian Gold, walking activities in public space can be divided into three groups:

A) Necessary activities: They are day-to-day activities such as going to school, work, shopping, etc., that are performed mainly on foot, and in all conditions. Accordingly, these activities receive the least impact from the physical environment or influenced by the public spaces conditions.

B) Selective activities: These types of activities are only performed if the outdoor climate is suitable, time and space are favorable and people have a desire for doing them such as hiking or walking around for leisure.

C) Social Activities: These spontaneous activities require people to be present in a public space, they add to the quality of place, increases face to face relations such as playing games (Mo'ini, 2012). A vital communal space is a generally open urban space (including street, sidewalk, plaza, and park), to which all strata of society have access daily and most hours of the day regardless of their age and gender. It is a place for recreation, spending free time, social interactions and overall, they refer to activities that contribute to its vitality and dynamism. The presence of commercial units and more specifically stores that meet customers' daily needs seem to encourage them to get more involved in buying and selling activities and accordingly, it can contribute to higher vitality of urban spaces. In terms of enhancing social interactions, the small place in front of a bakery can be as effective as a large market (Mardani, 2018).

• Creating vitality through a sense of place

The sense of place is fundamentally linked to one's diverse set of experiences with a place, forming a strong bond between the individual and the place over time in the extent to which the person's' identity is defined with the place he belongs to it (Lennard & Lennard, 1984; Stedman, 2002, 568 cited in Mortaz Mehrabani et al. 2018). The concept of vitality has developed in recent years and involves more factors comparing the past. While some space used to be considered vital based on the previous research criteria, they are no longer vital based on new standards in the recent studies (Norberg-schulz, 1971, 75; Cullen, 1961, 26; Relph, 2009, 49 cited in Mortaz Mehrabani et al. 2018).

• The meaning of place and sense of place in urban space

Several scholars have attempted to provide a model for the explanation of the meaning of place. (Relph,1976; Canter, 1977). Relph (1976) in his book place and placelessness seeks to understand why and how some places become meaningful for people with a phenomenological perspective. Relph (1976) relates place identity to (1) physical setting, (2) activities and events and (3) the meanings created through individual and group experiences with the place. He believes that among these three components, the meaning is more important than and more difficult to achieve (Tuan, 1977). According to Canter (1977) basic elements of the urban place include activities, physical attributes, and perceptions, he further concentrates on the individual differences in perception of place. Relph and Canter each have a different perspective toward the components of urban place. Relph through a phenomenological lense within the realm of human geography focuses on the specific aspects of place more specifically on the meaning of place, in the other hand, Canter rather has a positivist and psychological approach to the concept of place (Canter, 1977, 1988; Relph, 1997). However, both of them consider the meaning activity and physical attributes as the main components of urban place (Canter, 1977; Relph, 1976). Accordingly, the meaning becomes very important in this regard (Lak & Jalalian, 2018).

The meaning of place could be unique for each individual based on his personality, the context of activity and his experience with a place (Stewart, 2008). Placemaking and sense of place creation have also defined as the continuous process of interaction between an individual with the social and physical environment.

This process is the result of giving meanings to a place and the sense of place that is constructed individually and socially (Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Stokowski, 2002). The given meaning hence depends on an individual's identity and his relation with a place and determines information such as "who are we or not?", "how we have changed" and "what is changing within us". Giving meaning to a place transforms an unfamiliar or unknown place to a very well-identified place in an individual's mind (Tuan, 1977). Besides, some scholars

believe the creation of place in the people's mind is affected by their intention. Space might turn to a place in individuals ' minds as a setting for achieving goals, as a destination or center of activity (Relph, 1976). Punter (1991) and Montgomery (1998) have presented components of urban design perspectives regarding the place making concentrating on physical attributes, activity, and meaning in models entitled Relph-Unter model of sense of place and Canter-Montgomery model of place (cited in Golkar, 2002).

Adding ecological dimension to the Canter model, Golkarcame out with a new model so-called "sustainable place model", his model components comprises physical attributes, activity, image as well as an ecosystem (ibid., 33) (Figs. 1 & 2).

Based on the place theories it can be suggested that people various perceptions of a place or different experiences can create different meanings (Lak & Jalalian, 2018).

Landscape as recent contemporary disciplines propose a new definition of place and city (Mansouri & Farzin, 2017) and seeks to find an appropriate solution for the creation of a sense of place and vitality in urban spaces. Even though there are various approaches and disciplines to study the place and urban spaces such as environmental design, urban design, urban restoration and architecture, the current study has applied a landscape approach due to its holistic perspective.

Landscape approach

The landscape as a kind of place (Mansouri, 2011) is the product of human-environment interaction in the outer space (Burque, 2009). The landscape is an objective-subjective, dynamic and relative phenomenon that interacts is the product of human being experience in space and interaction with nature and history (Mansouri, 2005).

The field of landscape, as a new branch of science that examines and analyzes the human living environment. It has a non-cartesian interpretation of the world, systematic perspective, and the changing meaning-definition of "intrinsic content of matter" resulted from revising the way of the human being thinking (Mansouri & Farzin, 2017).

The most important aspect that distinguishes the landscape approach from the others and makes a more clear distinction among them is the holistic perspective of the landscape to various issues. In considering phenomenon as a 'whole' the components are the means of interference. A clear explanation of the "landscape approach to urban space design" is made easier by comparing different approaches to each other and identifying their differences. The holistic approach of the landscape is precisely comparable to the comprehensive approach.

The comprehensive approach in comparison to the noncomprehensive is straightforward and modernist, intends to achieve a unified design and decision for the city by integrating all attributes that form the city. The similarity of the comprehensive and holistic approach is that both at the understanding of the project and making decisions believe that each context is made up of different subjective and objective layers. In both approaches, social relationships, historical context, physical attributes, transportation and traffic issues and other aspects of the city are identified and are taken into account for city planning. To this point, both approaches are similar, identifying the advantages of a comprehensive approach over the other approaches. The distinction begins when the components or layers are examined concerning each other. While the affective factors in urban planning or design in the comprehensive approach are only considered in terms of function, as it is the emphasis of the comprehensive approach, the holistic approach takes into account their role as a part of a system.
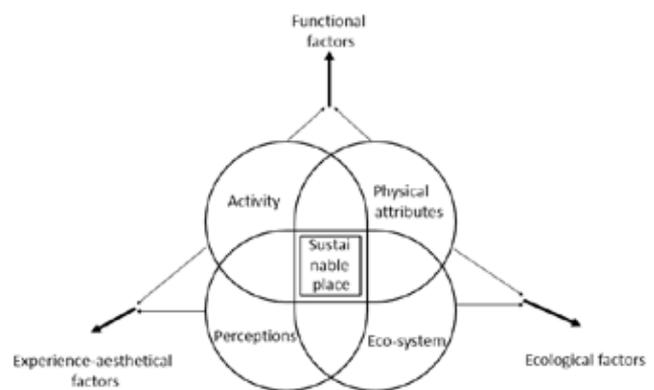

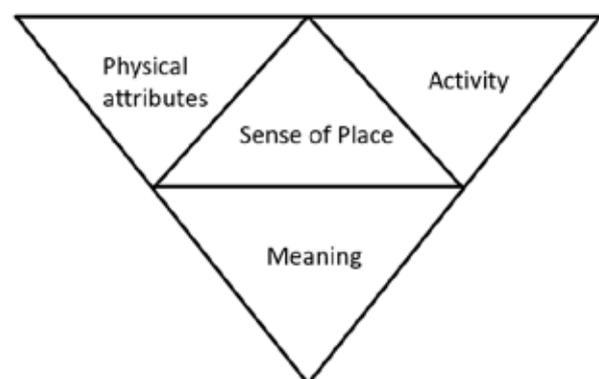Fig. 1. Sense of place. Source: Golkar, 2002, 138.

Fig. 2. Sustainable place model. Source: Golkar, 2002.

The relation between the two components of the landscape (objectivity and subjectivity) implies a cohesive relationship, similar to that of the body and soul, that the transformation of physical attributes directly, affects the meaning. The body is controlled to direct the soul. This relationship signifies the indivisible unity of body and soul in the human being even though any of them have various characteristics to be examined (ibid.). Fig. 3 presents the subjective (Black) and objective (White) approaches separately and subjective-objective (grey) approaches in grey color which symbolizes their inseparable nature in a conceptual model.

A landscape perspective on vitality components with an emphasis on creating a sense of place
The city as a living being has the body (objective dimension) and soul (subjective dimension), and staying alive depends on both at the same time. In the absence of each, there is no longer a "living". For identifying the components of vitality from a landscape perspective, the objectivity and subjectivity of the urban landscape as well as making sense of place, physical attributes, as well as meaning, and function Table 1 cannot be considered separately. It is because these components are considered as part of a coherent whole not separatable and with the failure or elimination of each, there is a disturbance in the vitality of the city and street as a system where meaning is intertwined with function and physical attributes of urban space (Mortaz Mehrabani et al. 2018).

Mashhad Shohada Square
The current Shohada square is located near the former historical gates of Quchan and Sarab two of six old gates of Mashhad and "Howz-e Soltan" and "Bagh-e Shotor" roads were passing through that (Fig. 4). In the early years of the first Pahlavi regime, affected by the western countries construction of the linear street design became common, first, the north-south street
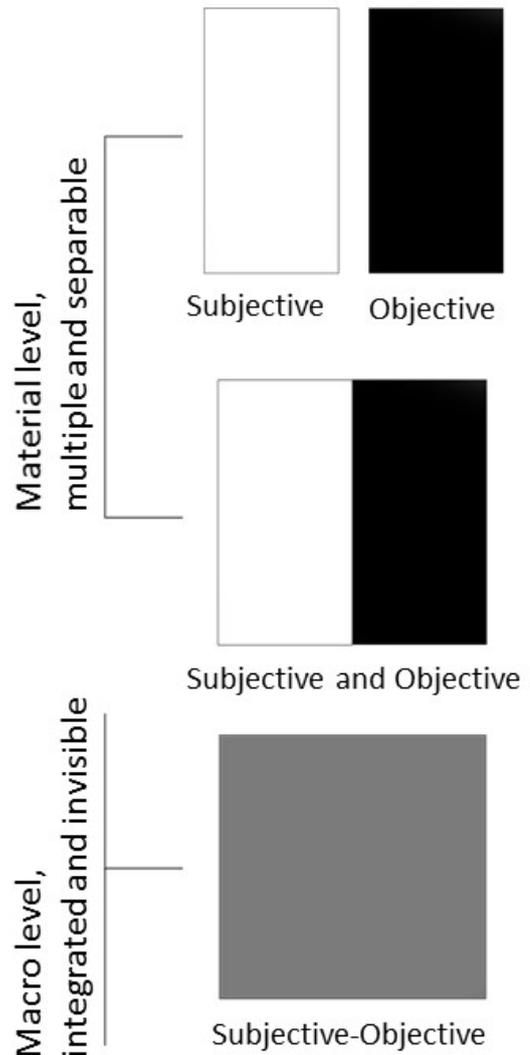

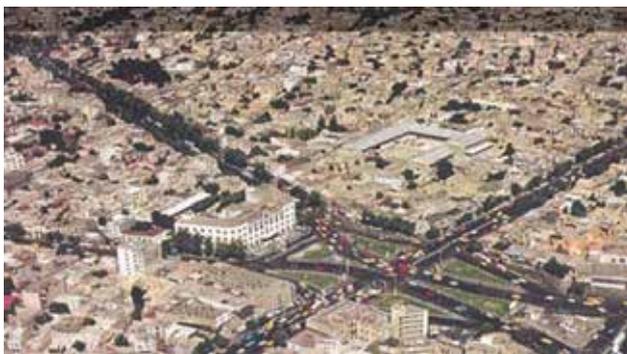Fig. 3. Model of the holistic perspective. Source: authors

Fig. 4. Left: Shohada Square in 1975. Right: Shohada Square in 1996. Source: www.mashhadenc.ir.

Table 1. Components of landscape vitality with emphasis on creating a sense of place. Source: Mortaz Mehrabani et al., 2018, 12.

Components of landscape vitality with emphasis on creating a sense of place	Subjective	Semantic criteria	Indicative elements (historical, symbolic, etc.)
			Existence of collective memory and strong historical background on social events
			Key role in the spatial structure of the city in relation to city events (social, political, etc.)
			As a landmark or symbolic role in the city landscape
			Public events and celebrations to enhancing the role of space
			Social participation
	Objective	Aesthetic and physical criteria	Proper edges and active facades
			A human and rational scale
			optimal Place finding and design requirements
			Attention to lighting, wall coordination, and coloring, type of materials and architectural style
			Innovation and Creativity According to Iranian Culture
			Sustainability and vernacular ecology
		Activity and function criteria	Mixed-use activities suitable for space
			Planning for all
			Spatial definition of voluntary and social activities according to climatic conditions and by semantic domains
			Security and safety of urban space
			Slow traffic and provide the potential for stopping and roaming the urban space

of Shahreza along with the Bagh e Tuliet and then a parallel street named Pahlavi was constructed that became the city's most important new street. During the early ruling of the Second Pahlavi regime, at a distance from the Pahlavi intersection, the Shohada Square gradually was developed. Fuziah street (currently called Daneshgah Street) was formed from Bala street to Sarab gate, along with the Pahlavi (Imam Khomeyni). Also, Khaje Rabi Street along with Fuziah street, Eshrat Abad (now Hashemitezhad) Street was created. Accordingly many of the old buildings and facilities, such as bathhouses, and caravansaries were demolished. At the intersection of the Six Roads, two rectangular urban squares were built through which the stream of water continued to pass. Instead of an abandoned cemetery, a fire station was built and on the southern part of the square, the municipality building was constructed with a reinforced concrete structure. In the last two decades, many changes have been made to the square for improving the traffic that led to minimizing green spaces. Later a junction was created in the middle of the square where kiosks and u-turns caused spatial and functional chaos (Bavand, 2012, 16).

Shohada Square is located entirely in the physical center of Mashhad, it is the most important urban square to which the most important traffic axes are connected. At the beginning of its formation around a hundred years ago, Shohada Square was a symbol of an unconventional urban space that was formed at the intersection of six new avenues.

The construction of new institutions such as the municipal building, the fire station and some office buildings around the square made it a symbol of new developments in Mashhad (Fig. 5). Over time, the concentration of activities in the downtown area, coupled with the growing urban population, and especially the widespread use of cars, diversified the role of the Shohada Square as a major hub in the city.

Research methodology

The current study with a qualitative and holistic approach attempts to evaluate Shohada square from the landscape discipline perspective. According to the definition of landscape as an objective-subjective phenomenon, it is not possible to separate the physical actions in the urban landscape from the actions based on the mental aspects of the landscape, due to the unified nature of the landscape, which results from the unity of subjectivity and subjectivity. Given this unified nature, among the three physical, functional, and semantic dimensions of the city, it is not possible to control the

Fig. 5. The bird view of the current situation of Shohada Square.
Source: www.bazafarini.mashhad.ir.

landscape with a purely physical view. It is Because this perspective has neglected some aspects of the city. History of urban development studies and plans shows that their approach is mainly focused on its functional and physical dimensions and the semantic dimension of space is not properly addressed. Neglecting the concept of meaning in urban spaces leads to placeless cites lack of diversity and identity.

Qualitative research deals with text and written materials. The data collection method in qualitative research involves interviews and observation which are presented in detail for analysis. The gathered data then are translated into the text to be interpreted. The research process can be approached in a deductive way (as a path from theory to the text) as well as inductively (a path from text to theory). The common part of these two paths is the collection of visual and verbal data and their interpretation in the form of a specific research plan (Fleick, 2018). Therefore, in this study, qualitative evaluation is carried out in three steps:

The first phase involves analyzing field observations at the particle scale, including the presence of the researcher at the site and collecting physical, activity and semantic elements, as well as examining the forces that have shaped the existing design. Given that various studies have been conducted for the evaluations of the functional and physical dimensions of Shohada

Square, the second phase involved the review of related literature from various sources such as research articles, books, and newspapers. But one of the major problems in contemporary urban projects that often lead to their failure (such as Tehran's Imam Hussein Square and Isfahan's Imam Ali Square) is that despite extensive studies and examination of various aspects of space the semantic and subjective dimension of space is neglected. As a result despite the people's satisfaction with the new look of the square they call is cold and soulless and the absence of people in the space is another witness for the failure of the project. Therefore, considering the importance of "meaning" and the subjective dimension of space in the urban landscape, in the third phase, using the qualitative approach, the meaning of Shohada' field was explored, to understand the role of the square in the city and its meaning from the citizens' perspective. In this regard, their personal experience about Shohada'ssquare was extracted using content analysis and interpretation and in-depth interview analysis.

Content analysis is a proper analysis method in anthropological research. Content analysis is a research method for interpreting textual data through the process of regular classification, coding, and identification of themes and patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Therefore, the possibility of analyzing data and understanding the experiences and perspectives of citizens and users of

Shohada Square and identifying the themes and concepts underlying the semantic experience of the square has been possible.

Accordingly, the interviews were transcribed through repeated readings of the texts, it was attempted to analyze the underlying themes in the data to extract concepts based on people's experiences of place meaning. In the next step, after identifying the concepts, the related concepts are extracted as the main themes of the research.

To achieve a comprehensive conclusion from the perception of the citizens' from the Shohada Square, the convenience sampling was conducted to collect data from the citizen of different age or gender. Interviews and selection of the interviewees were repeated until getting similar answers and not idea perspective was presented. The interview hence was conducted with 9 volunteers considering them as the representative of the place users. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the number of respondents was limited

As Morse (1994) suggests when the purpose of qualitative research is to understand the nature of experience, there must be at least 6 participants.

The in-depth interviews were conducted face-to-face using 6 questions. The purpose was to discover the nature of meaning in their minds regarding location.

The first four questions were regarding the place check method and technique[2] and the next two questions were about users' expectations of the space.

1. What do you like about this place and Why?
2. What don't you like about this place and why?
3. What would you say if you wanted to describe the Shohada' Square to someone who has never seen it?
4. What does the Shohada square mean to you and how do you feel about it?
5. How often do you use this space?
6. What needs to be improved in this square

All respondents answered each of the 6 open-ended semi-structured interview questions. The interviews lasted between 5 and 15 minutes and were recorded with the permission of the participants. In this study, a content analysis technique was used for data analysis.

Thetranscribed interviews were read separately to identify the items and categorized based on their similarities.

For example, the repeated concepts such as using space for transition, stagnation, not being an important destination, confusion in wayfinding, getting lost in the space, lack of resting and recreation facilities, loss of greenery and former freshness, water, and trees scarcity were extracted from the interviewees' responses (creating a pool of items) and were classified into 3 categories based on their meaning similarities.

Thus, the first three concepts fall into one category, namely, "lack vitality", the other two concepts, "reducing environmental readability comparing to the past, and the last three concepts, in the category of "reducing visual values and Space refreshments. It must be declared that the title chosen for each category is a more general concept that represents each of the concepts in that category. Then, by adapting the three concepts of non-vitality, reducing environmental readability, and reducing the visual values and freshness of space, a category called "Cold and soulless" representing all three concepts was selected. Likewise, all responses were examined to extract other concepts and categories, and finally, the meaning of the Shohada square around the five main components was identified and introduced (Fig. 6).

Research findings

This stage involves organizing data (conceptualization), classifying concepts (data reduction), explaining categories (categorization), and relating to each other. The process of extracting themes from the third step confirms that citizens have generally experienced the meanings of Shohada Square in the form of five general concepts, as illustrated in Fig. 7. The concentration of various social, cultural and economic activities, as well as historical setting for public events as well as public protests and hubs of access to public transport in the Shohada' Square, has made the square a central focus in the minds of its citizens. The proximity, physical and visual connection of the square with Imam Reza Jolly Shirinehas highlighted the role of the square as a pre-entrance to the shrine. The demolition of historical
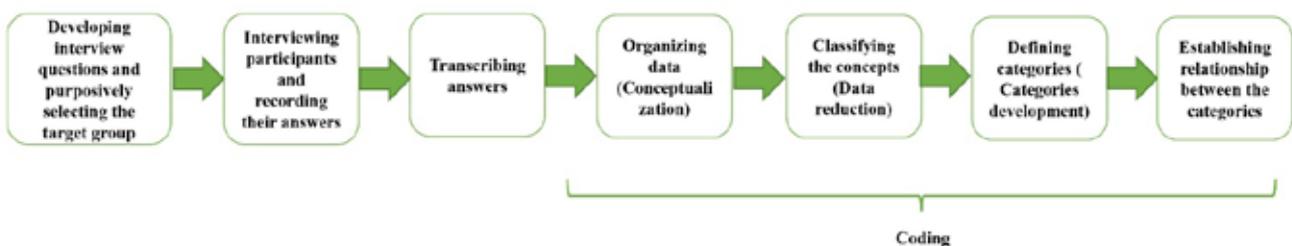

Fig. 6. Qualitative method of extracting the meanings of Shohada square through interviews. Source: Lak & Jalalian, 2018.
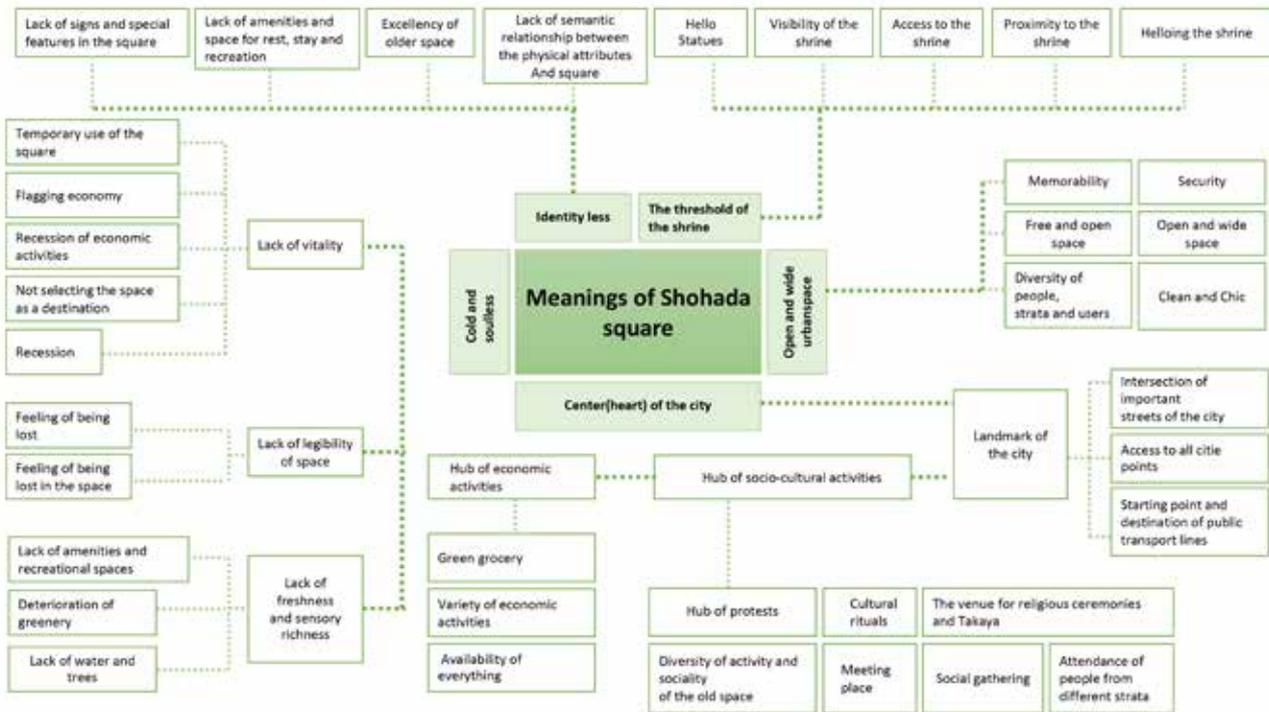
Fig. 7. Model of the meaning of Shohada. Source: authors.

contexts and the disregard for historical events and memories in the design of the new square make this place without identity. The urban open space and the commercial and administrative activities made it be perceived as urban and public spaces. Also, the stagnation of the square, the inability to read due to overloads and the segmentation of visual field stretches have made people call it a cold and soulless.

The urban landscape is defined by the audience's perception of space, which is shaped by symbols and landmarks. By understanding the meaning of urban space in the minds of citizens and the structure of the city, interventions can be tailored to the personality of the space. In other words, audience experience and perception can be used as a tool in the hands of designers to create and enhance the semantic quality of today's meaningless urban spaces, and it can make sense of place as a product of successful design in public spaces of Iranian cities.

To enter the design phase, the first step is to evaluate and identify the perspective of the Shohada square. One of the most important reasons for the failure of the current project of Shohada Square is the lack of attention to its landscape. Focusing more on the semantic dimension of place five concepts of centrality, shrine threshold, urban public space, cold and unhealthy space, and identity space (See Fig. 7) that reflects the meaning of space for people.

• Centrality

The meaning of centrality in the minds of the Shohada of the square formed as a result of their interaction with space over time encompasses various dimensions that fall into three general categories: the center of economic activity, the center of activity And social and cultural milestones in the spatial organization of the city.

- Economic Activity Center: Active economic activity on the paths leading to the field before and after the renovation project, as well as focusing on a variety of activities and economic activities from distribution centers and workshops to direct fruit delivery and Before the renovation project, the site has become one of the centers of cheap and thorough economic activity in the minds of the city's audiences. It is worth noting that the economic identity of Shohada Square and its economic activities have been severely stagnant since the renovation project.

Center for Cultural and Social Activities: Shohada Square has always been a gathering place since its inception. The historical memory of space has contained many events and memories in this space. Besides, in recent years, and especially after the renovation project, the square has become a place for religious, religious activities and gatherings due to its proximity to Imam Reza (PBUH) holy shrine. .

Milestone in the City Spatial Organization: The location and construction of the square at the intersection of the main

arteries of the city from the outset point out its important location in the City Spatial Organization. This will then become one of the turning points in the urban transport system as public transport is needed in such a situation.

• **Shrine threshold**

The connection of the Shohada Square with the shrine of the Eighth Imam as the main and most important element of the city's landscape is carried out physically through the main axis and the high street index (Shirazi Street) at a distance of approximately one thousand meters. Many pilgrims have to cross this path to reach the shrine. Also, the strategic view of the shrine on the Shohada Square is one of the most prominent features of the square that is manifested in citizen behavior. "Saluting" from the axis leading to the shrine, such as the Shohada Square, has become a behavioral feature of the adjoining pilgrims. A reading of this important concept and behavior is found in the Salam Kurd sculptures, one of the project's strengths.

• **Urban public space**

In the interview taken with the use of space, there are numerous references to the openness and breadth of Shohada square. The purpose of the design of the new project of the Shohada Square, which was an urban civil space, was formed in a physical form, but for many reasons, including functional and semantic problems, could not be largely achieved. More precisely, Shohada Square has the potential to become a collective space through the formation of a wide-open and free arena, but because of the problems mentioned above, the semantic relationship and the continuous interaction between the beneficiaries, It does not form and is used solely as a commuter route. This has caused this space to act as a public urban space at present, which means, as already mentioned, there is a great difference between urban space and communal space. People in the public space, unlike public space users, are separate groups of people.

• *Cold and soulless*

Almost all interviewees directly or indirectly referred to this feeling and meaning in the martyrdom field. Several factors have given rise to a sense of audience that exploring and removing their sources can gradually change the negative meaning of space audience perception:

- Space is not alive: According to interviews, many users are only in Shohada Square due to forced activities and use it purely for their purposes. In one-on-one interviews, only one person refers to the use of space as a destination and location, and the rest found no factor in the field to use as a destination. Also, the downturn of economic activity as one of the important factors in the vitality of a space has an impact on creating a sense of stagnation and inertia.

- Unreadable: Overload, inhumane scale, lack of symbols and signs, lost and confused audience in the field are all reasons for the field not being read.

Low sensory richness and freshness of space: Limited use of water element, despite being seen in design, very limited use and lack of greenness and vegetation in space also lowers the sense of freshness and thus induces a cold and unhealthy environment in Becomes the audience.

• **Without identity space**

The identity of the city means a set of features that have a constant presence in the definition of the city over time and that a city is in addition to responding to new changes and needs throughout its history. This concept of city identity is a dynamic one and does not necessarily lead to the consolidation and repetition of specific city components. According to popular opinion, it is generally seen that the project of the Shohada Square has been ignorant of its historical preservation and historical continuity and is almost devoid of any color or smell of its originality, name or title.

Discussion

From the citizens' perspective, the recent revitalization activities in Shohada Square have lead to the occupation of public space by middle- and lower-income groups in favor of local power, the elimination of vitality and the transformation of historical identity as well as non-readability, creation of an inhumane scale.

The current study attempted to evaluate the square based on the theoretical framework of landscape and related literature review on enhancing the positive attributes and meanings of the square and decreasing the negative attributes and regeneration of its role in the mind of citizens. In conclusion for the revitalization of Shohada Square, the study defines three main aims and accordingly offers the related strategies and policies namely: increasing the vitality of space and its transformation to a civil space, adding meaning and keeping the identity of space as well as the spatial reorganization of space for bringing people to space. Besides activity diversity, (for different socio-economic groups), adding more space increasing and sustaining the presence of different socio-economic groups and promoting the role of the square concerning the Imam Reza holy shrine are some of the strategies that should be taken into account for the improvement of its conditions. For achieving these policies, these strategies are required to be implemented:

Improvement of visual elements and components, utilizing strategic views toward the holy shrine, identifying and emphasizing on landmarks, using media and urban art as tools for delivering messages, providing conditions for new activities appropriate to the role of the

square for the voluntary presence of people in the square, anticipating flexible and interactive spaces for displaying public participation, resolving disorganization and creating harmony and synergy in urban facades, fixing the traffic, integrating the square spaces with unified (the type of materials, colors, furniture, sculpture, light, water, trees, etc.).

Conclusion

In addition to the management flaws in the design, the project has problems in term of implementation and operation as it was described earlier. the findings of this study assessing the Shohada' field as a whole based on the framework. Discipline theory has put a parallax. Because most studies and interventions have so far neglected the semantic dimension, this study focused more on studying the subjective and semantic aspects of space. But in assessing the perspective of the objective and subjective part of space, one cannot examine them separately, and in fact, these two are always reciprocal. Therefore, the three stages of the study and evaluation are as follows:

The decorative interventions with ornamental approach have taken place regardless of the audience's desire and subjectivity of space and place identity. Therefore, the identity and meaning of place in the audience's mind have been seriously disrupted and largely destroyed due to major changes and without regard to the historical memory of space. gone.

The limited use of water and vegetation elements, as well as the lack of attention to climatic comfort in various climates, especially sunlight, have negatively impacted the audience's sense of place, making the audience a place to cross rather than stay. Uses.

One of the most important drawbacks to the design is the lack of attention to the human scale and its needs in the project and due to overloading as well as the lack of use of cue elements on the site has caused some kind of missing and reduced readability.

Disregard for and elimination of genuine uses of the field and its genuine activities, including retail, despite the potential of attracting and centralizing the space agency in the city, has caused a severe economic downturn in the complex and even destroyed its former vitality.

Disregarding the temporary park space for activities that require self-catering has reduced access to the field. Also at the edges of the square, there is still the problem of interfering with horse riding and pedestrians.

Space does not properly and properly communicate with the shrine as the main element of the landscape and the most iconic symbol of the city, and as a result, the goal of creating a civic and civic space has not been achieved by reducing the presence of people in the square.

The lack of significant and symbolic elements in the field is remarkable, although, in the field of the erection of Hi sculptures which is a semantic and indicative sign of the concept of pilgrimage as the identity of the city of Mashhad, it is one of the positive parts of the physical land.

Endnotes

1. The ancient Romans, using the term "genius loci", believed that some urban spaces had a unique sense and spirit that could not be found elsewhere.

2. The place check method assesses the qualities of a place and shows in what areas need renovation. It brings people together to work together and achieve their goals. The place check method can be used for an urban space, a neighborhood, a city center, or a city. (Guidelines on how to use the place can be downloaded from www.placecheck.com. See also Golkar, 2002).

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