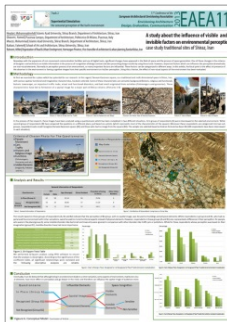




A study about the influence of visible and invisible factors on environmental perception: case study traditional sites of Shiraz, Iran

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Abstract Nowadays with the expansion of non-movement communication facilities and use of digital tools, significant changes have appeared in the field of space and the process of space generation. One of these changes is the reliance of designers and architects on visible information in the process of recognition of design context and also presenting design results by using these tools. However, important factors which can influence the perception dramatically are non-visual elements.

Normally in perception process of an environment, so many important factors are influential. These factors can be categorized in different ways. In this article, the focal point is the effect of presence of the observer in the environment or having cognitive images from that specific environment on his/her perception. Using this criterion, the effect of non-visual aspects of the environment has been evaluated.

In this regard, Darvaze Kazeroon square, as a traditional and multi-dimensional space in Shiraz, Iran, with various spatial, functional and imaginative characteristics, has been selected. Some of these characteristics are semantic background (historic, religious and functional), historic townscape, an important traffic node, visual and functional disorders, and bad smell originated from activities (fishmongers and groceries). These characteristics have led to formation of a spatial image for a major part of Shiraz citizens.

In the process of the research, these images have been analyzed using a questionnaire which has been completed in two different situations. First group of respondents (A) were interviewed in the selected environment. While second group of respondents (B) have answered the questions in a different place, just based on a photo (which represents most of the characteristics of the square). Moreover these respondents are categorized into two sub groups, respondents who could recognize Darvaze Kazeroon square (B1) and those who had no image from the square (B2). The sample size selected based on Kukran formula has been 96 (100 respondents have been interviewed in each situation).

The results based on three groups of respondents (A, B1 and B2) indicate that the perception of group B2, with no spatial image, was focused on buildings and physical elements; While respondents in group A and B1, who had experienced the environment with richer sensations, were focused on more functional aspects instead of physical elements. However, respondents in these groups (A and B1) also represented a difference in their perception; for people, who were in the place (group A), some invisible disorders like bad smell and insecurity were ignored in comparison with other disorders like traffic jam or pollutions. While for those respondents whose perception was based on their imagination (group B1), invisible disorders have had more importance. Eventually, it can be deduced that although being in an environment leads to a richer sensation, some aspects of environment, mainly non-visual elements, have more effect on perception and go deeper in the mind; and therefore can influence the spatial image of audiences more.

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