

“Revision of urban spaces to make it accessible for disabled people in order to achieve the aim of “city for all “

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1 ABSTRACT

In these recent decades the sociologists find out that one society can't achieve its goals unless the governments encourage people to participate in the process of decision making. This participation can ensure the society's growth and development. But there is a question here, if this participation limited to a special group, e.g. educated people or the ones who belong to the specific race and social level? It should be considered that one of the great items in the improvement of societies is that every person, in every age, sex, race and range of ability, must have equal rights. If we know city as a little society this theory can include it either. In this process the meaning of "equality" is that a society, we can call it a city, belongs to everyone .So a good city for every one is a city which all the facilities and opportunities for the better life are accessible to everyone.

According to the United Nation convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities, around 10 per cent of the world's population, or 650 million people, live with a disability and they are the world's largest minority.

Michael Bednar in 1977 noted that the functional capability of all people is usually enhanced when environmental barriers are removed and reply to all users environmental needs. People with disability should not be placed in one specific group .It will cause solitude and segregation. They should work, act, walk and do their daily work among normal people. The city doesn't belong to one, it is like a body and every people are its cells. If every cell does its best, then they can create a healthy body.

About Eighty percent of persons with disabilities live in developing countries. In addition to the problems that caused disability, such as age, or sickness, Iran as a developing country was faced to a serious problem. During 8 year war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988) many people injured and the rate of disability rose sharply. There are two problems they are faced to at the same time, first, their disability suffering and second the problems they have in public spaces so it will decrease their public appearance gradually. Most of the streets and generally urban spaces design need to be revised since as a public space it should have the potential to gather all the people with every ability but it doesn't. After twenty years from the end of war and many lows sanction about the disabled, they still have their difficulties.

In this article, we want find a definition for "City for All", and then point out the disables, not only the handicapped, problems in Tehran, Iran. One of Tehran's districts has been selected for case study. Its urban space will be analyzed and then some Urban design methods will be suggested in order to increase the disabled appearance in public spaces.

Keywords : disability , Public space , Urban Design , equality , facilities

2 DISABILITY

Disability is a comparative term (an obstacle to human's activities to be done in a natural way). The word handicap was mostly used rather than the word disability until 1980. (kamali, 2003, 97). The main reason for the definition of disability comes from the lack of merit and independence in daily activities, occupation, education and life of the disabled one. Sometimes disability and handicap are defined according to the functional restrictions too. These restrictions are described as significant decreases in daily activities compared to previous level of activity one had before. (Mirkhani, 1999).

In 1980 World Health Organization defined disability and handicap in a specific process according to their studies and researches. In this classification three concepts of deficiency, disability and handicap have been used. Deficiency is defined as any loss or abnormality in the body or functions of a person physically and mentally. (babaie ahari, 1993).

Along with that, disability is defined as any restrictions in activities done by normal people. (Mirkhani, 1378). Handicap is related to privations a person experiences as a result of disorders and disabilities. Therefore handicap reflexes one's adaptation and interaction towards his/her environment (Salehi, 1993).

Header 2 According to the definition of United Nations “handicap” is an obstacle in the way of participating the social life in a level like most people do in the society, therefore differentiating this group of people who cannot gain urban gifts and suffer from being inappropriate with the frame of urban spaces due to their own privations, from others is essential and this necessity makes the weaker groups of the society such as people with poor physical disabilities a priority. Because the restriction of opportunities leads to lack of participation and happiness in those who are being discriminated and it can be an obstacle itself toward a prime and full of varieties city.

3 SOCIAL JUSTICE IN URBAN LIFE

“The fact of equal rights for disabled people means that all the need of the members of the society has equal importance and it is the meeting these needs that must make up the foundation of the society.” (Act 25 of the 37th UN’s general meeting, 1994)

The concept of providing justice in urban life is focused on modification to the benefit of groups of people who on the same circumstances of time and place with others have more limited opportunity of gaining the facilities. Handicap as a biological and social phenomenon, it is a reality which all societies, apart from the degrees of development, including industrial and non-industrial countries have to face it. The phenomenon of being handicapped appears according to its reasons and kinds and the meaning that society gives to. So that social events such as wars and revolutions cause handicap and on the other hand, occurrence of handicap, has lots of social consequences. (Adam and the colleagues, 2006-7).

Equalization opportunities can be defined as a process by which the general system of society such as physical and cultural environment, residence and transportation, social and health services, sport facilities and entertainments can be provided for everyone. Not only it is necessary that a disabled person be adapted with the environment but also general organization of the society should be adapted with such people (Iravani and Tajbakhsh 2004-5).

From the theoretical point of view, everyone has a right of gaining the urban spaces according to the law of justice and by the radicals of creed, individual rights and the human possession in order to interact and restore equilibrium in the society.

Noticing the circumstances and need of the physically disabled people in urban public areas, and considering those needs in developed countries after World War II and in our country after the imposed war has risen up. And since then the engineers and researchers and city planners take this issue into account that in drawing urban areas they have to consider disabled people needs and requirements as part of the society. (24, 2003, Nasabadi)

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4 LIMITATION AND PROBLEMS IN URBAN SPACE

As Oliver (1990) notes, disabled people have been perceived as dependents, or individuals with a specific problem which marks them out as different from the rest of the ‘normal’ population. An important part of disabled people’s lives relates to their ability to gain access to particular places. However, various features of contemporary cities—including physical design, institutional policies and mobility systems— have prevented disabled people from participating in the mainstreams of urban social life. Evidence suggests that the physical construction of urban space -including both macro land use patterns and the internal design of buildings- often (re)produces distinctive spatial ties of exclusion for people with a range of physical and/or mental impairments, and it serves to reinforce their ‘incomplete citizenship’ (Imrie, 2000; Imrie and Hall, 2001).

According to Gleeson (2001: 256), the ‘disability discrimination’ takes the form of:

- (1) physical barriers to movement for disabled people, including broken surfaces on thoroughfares streets, guttering, paving) which reduce or annul the effectiveness of mobility aids (such as wheelchairs, walking frames);
- (2) building architecture that excludes the entry of anyone unable to use stairs and hand opened doors;
- (3) public transport modes which assume that passengers have a common level of ambulance.

In addition to the problem of inaccessibility within public urban spaces, disabled people also experience barriers to choice in their preferred living and working environments. Disabled people are often denied employment opportunities because of inaccessible workplaces (Imrie and Hall, 2001). Considering all of these dimensions it can be concluded that, inaccessibility and exclusion define a city of enclosurement, a social space marked by institutional and physical barriers that separate disabled people from the mainstreams of social and economic life (Gleeson,2001).

Suiting urban areas is a major base for reaching equal opportunities for all the people and citizens to transport and move across the city and providing access for everyone to every urban area and public space – which is a requirement for growth and development of the society (9, 2005, Taghvaei & Moradi).

Movement limitations, city and architecture obstacles are factors that affects disabled people's social participation in the society. This will lead to separating the link between this group and the society. In general the relation between the human-disabled and normal -and his environment does not only state his place of residence (Oliver, 1975, 22). And also in cities it is not limited to a specific group of people. But it is indicating the spiritual matters, thoughts and beliefs, common ceremonies, urban planning and emotions of all the people of the society. (Moeieis, 1968, 9-10). The significance of this science is realized when the human requirements gets physical- spatial aspects and its goal is to achieve an environment which suits the human needs (ghaem, 1997, 14)

In this part one of the Tehran districts will be analysed. This district has been located in the west of Tehran. Its dwellers have moderate income and about half of them are more than 50 years old. Most of them are old men and women that go shopping for their daily demands every day and every afternoon gather near the shopping centre while chatting to the neighbours or walking slowly in the park with their grandchild. Although the elderly are the majority inhabitants of this place, but its urban design is not appropriate for them. These pictures below show some of these deficiencies:



Figure 1 and 2

Figure 1-The Street has a gentle slope. So we are faced to many levels which are connected to each other by something like stair, instead of using ramps. These platforms for both children and elderly are not suitable.

Figure 2-Two sides of street are not in the same level. Same as mentioned above, it must to use ramp. Since it is not applicable for wheelchairs .more over the white lines which show the pedestrian way, can not be recognized by a people who suffer from sight illness. It must be made by some specific materials which can be found easily be blinds white cane. Also it can be equipped to a sensor which reflects as soon as white cane knocks it.



Figure 3 and 4

Figure 3 -As it is shown in the picture, the bus station is located on a platform, and there is no ramp or another way for people who use wheelchairs. However it would better if the front of station covered with a specific material that can be found by blinds people.

Figure 4- The junction point between pavement and street should have a gently slope. It can make the elderly and disables walking easier.



Figure 5 and 6 (All photos have been Taken by Author, Tehran, March 2010)

Most of the shops in this street are locate in a higher level than pavement . Mothers with prom, elderly people , someone who uses Wheelchair can not enter. The important point is,there is a channel under the street,so it can be one of the reason why all the shops are located higher.but this solution have caused another problem !

Today’s life needs of a disabled citizen, requires him to travel every corner of the city. Encountering the city and architecture obstacles across the city, is itself a burden to his physical disabilities and finally will make him a reserved and introvert person. But they do not have any intention to become such a person (Meyghani, 1994, 1-5).

In Phen Berner’s view (1979) human’s interaction with the environment will lead to his growth (sHallaji, 1386, 5). Today the most important discussion regarding the suiting urban areas for disabled people; is to remove the obstacles in the pavements and roads for these people.

Rafieian and Mrs. Seyfaee in their article named “public urban areas; a qualitative revision and examination” reached the conclusion that the major factors in examining public urban areas’ quality in citizen’s view (specially disabled people) are : 1- cleanness 2- access to urban areas 3- attractiveness 4- relaxing 5-integrity

(universality) 6- being active and dynamic 7- performance 8- distinction 9- safety and security 10- power and health. (Rafeian & Seyfaee. 1384,40).

Miller & et al. in 2009 conducted a research titled measuring the amount of satisfaction of people in relation to disabled people. First they categorized disabled people (both mental and physical) in degree and severity. Findings show that the disabled people with lower degrees and with greater contact, people had meaningful satisfaction of their actions; in a way that they made a friendly and intimate relationship. But disabled with less contacts suffered depression and mental and physical disorders (Miller & et al, 2009).

Rafia Hanniff and Rabia Kheder in an article named “women with disabilities in Canadian urban areas” concluded that women with disabilities are important members of the society and cultures of the Canada. And with inappropriate urban areas they will not be absorbed to the society and will be pushed to the margins of the urban economy and will suffer a sort of multiple personality in the inappropriate urban area.

They found out that access to city facilities is under constant change by factors like disability, sex, urbanism level, culture and heritage, age, economic conditions, and social position. So a complete care must be taken for them in social and economic issues by designing and making suitable urban areas in order to allow them participate in social activities effectively. (Khede and Hanniff , 2007, 4-1)

Valerz (1986) calls ‘urban areas’ as places that strangers share. Lynch (1960) calls the ‘street’ – an element of urban area – as a public, social fact. Kaleen (1976) points out: stresses out the people life in the streets. Jicobes (1961) people enjoy the urban areas by looking and moving around them. Dosciyadis (1976) believes: the first human need, is the freedom to move (Habibi, 2006, 2-4).

Ghaem in a research has concluded that the part of the society with physical disabilities have lost access of urban areas, search the reason in “being disable themselves” not “city being disabled” and abandon those areas. (Ghaem, 1997, 1)

5 CONCLUSION

According on the points which was mentioned above, Disable people doesn't suffer their disability as much as their solitude. All the urban facilities should be accessible for everyone. If urban managers want to achieve the aim of „city for all”, should not neglect the minority. This minority, itself, divided to many groups such as women ,low income people, migrants and disables. As Laurence Halprine describes the concept of the city: city as a base for human activities is a living being in interaction with itself and the people in the society.

In this article we tried to consider the disables problems and re say all the rules which are approved in many international committees. Also it is not deniable that in many countries, urban designers try hard to create an urban space which can be used for everyone and by some

Connivance they are really successful in it. the pictures that were shown are just some little instances from Tehran ,Iran Capital city ,streets. In 2006 the number of disabled people in Iran was estimated to be 1012222 persons.

It seems that accessibility to urban areas, association or being in the society, being active and dynamic, and safety were very important for the disabled people. Considering the fact that disabled people has a share in their cities past memories, for reasons like unsuitable urban areas, have rare opportunities to be present in urban areas. This fact reflects the urgency of fitting and arranging urban areas that act as a base for creativities and capabilities of people with disabilities to develop.

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