

Analysis of the Spatial Qualities of Arbaeen Hussein Walk Route Based on the Pilgrims' Needs (Najaf-Karbala Case Study)

¹Mahdi Taleb Elm, ²Ali Izadi and ³Sina Arabi

¹Ph.D.candidate in Urbanism, Department of Urbanism, Islamic Azad University of Mashhad, Iran

²Ph.D. candidate in Urbanism, Department of Urbanism, Islamic Azad University of Mashhad, Iran

³MA, Urbanism Department, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University of Mashhad, Iran

1. Abstract

Arbaeen Hussein is one of the significant, deep-rooted Islamic occasions and has become the subject of special attention from people and researchers in recent years. The Arbaeen Walk is considered an optional social activity and such activities depend on the quality of the desired site or urban space components. This research executes a descriptive-analytic method. Document and library studies have been chosen as data gathering tools. The purpose of this research was to reach environmental quality components that influence the desirability of the Arbaeen Walk route, in a way that would aid the improvement of this process. Results suggest that considering the high attendance and the variety of activities taking place on the route, it has a great deal of liveliness. It has appropriate readability. Moreover, considering the various accessibilities to the destination, Karbala-Ye-Mo'alla, there is suitable penetrability on the path. The Arbaeen Walk route is sufficiently safe and an appropriate setting for social interactions.

Keywords: Arbaeen Hussein, spatial quality, Walk route

2. Introduction

Religious rites and rituals are forms of human behavior with a certain original belief that often happen collectively as a description for what is sacred, to strengthen faith, express a communal identity, and ultimately, spreading solidarity and sympathy between the members of a society (Erfani Zadeh, 1393). Holding various rituals and ceremonies can fortify the social ties in communities. Understanding pilgrimage events rely greatly on their objective, especially when the studied event is of a religious and spiritual nature. There are a group of rites in the Shia denomination, as is in other orders and religions, that have arisen from religious ahkam and commands, as well as certain events (e.g., martyrdoms and births, Eid and other occasions in the religious calendar) (Bod, 1395:3). The mourning rituals in Muharram and Arbaeen have significant spiritual prestige in Shia culture and are the cornerstone for a collection of customs that have

gradually gained diverse social functions and became a part of the public culture (Yousefi, 1396:37). Arbaeen Husseini is one of the significant, deep-rooted Islamic occasions and has become the subject of special attention from people and researchers in recent years. The Walk is more than behavior; it has roots seated in spirituality (Doroudian, 1397). Pilgrimage, as the first purpose of Arbaeen Walk with a religious intent and tendency, has always been accompanied by hardships and issues. The combination of these with spiritual wishes and intents has created a unique experience. The Walk is a symbolic and sacred measure that takes place annually on specific routes towards Karbala, on the fortieth day after the martyrdom of the third imam from the Shia denomination and for reviving and reminiscing the martyrs' message (Doroudian, 1397). The Walk is a symbolic and sacred measure that takes place annually on specific routes towards Karbala, on the fortieth day after the martyrdom of the third imam from the Shia denomination and for reviving and reminiscing the martyrs' message. Although security misfortunes in recent years have caused heavy concerns for pilgrims and their families, their desire to undergo this experience has not lessened; in other words, compulsion and obligation or religious interest, decreases the elasticity of demand for this trip and the pilgrims' behavioral pattern exits the normal supply and demand diagram (Doroudian, 1397:56). Arbaeen Walk is a form of mourning that depicts the story of a holy family's oppression against a wicked clan. Even though this depiction has been affected by cultural differences and the spiritual experiences of subcultures throughout history, but its roots have stayed unchanged (Doroudian, 1397:57). As a religious path, especially in Arbaeen days, the Arabian Walk route is the setting for a variety of social and religious activities which require suitable environments. The main pillar of said activities is the presence of afoot pilgrims and walking in different routes that lead towards Imam Hussein Holy Shrine and can therefore be said that this walking path, as a space with favorable design, can be an appropriate context for the occurrence of these religious activities. Several routes have been selected for walking to Karbala-Ye-Moala but usually, the chosen route for Iranian pilgrims is the first route (Najaf-Karbala) which is the shortest, busiest, and most famous access route from Najaf to Karbala. The fundamental question this research intends to answer is that what components of urban spatial quality have an effective role in the desirability of Arbaeen walking routes, in a way that would meet the needs of pilgrims in the environment? Therefore, the research executes a case study on the Najaf-Karbala route, aiming to present components to improve the spatial quality of this route and also identify and prioritize them, based on their criteria and sub-criterions.

3. Research Method

The method of this research is qualitative, with a descriptive-analytic approach. Document and library studies have been chosen as data gathering tools. In the first step, the texts published by theoreticians are studied and analyzed. Then, important criteria and general points regarding spatial qualities on the Arbaeen Walk route are defined. Inferential findings of the research have been tested and analyzed by SPSS software. Furthermore, this article mentions examples of the variety of ceremonies related to this religious walk around the world, to match Arbaeen Walk and other religions.

4. Problem Statement

Walking on foot is one of the few human activities that has maintained its primal image, despite many advancements in technology and the production of different communication tools. Since walkers move slowly and can easily halt and decrease or increase the speed of their steps, therefore, can understand the environmental happenings that take place around them. Thus, it'll be accepted by all that this is the best reflection of the interaction between man and urban space. In this interaction, both the environment and the afoot person are significant. Recognizing the concept and characteristics of the two will aid the creation of favored social interactions and identifying the walking route as a desirable urban space. Moving on foot is man's most natural, ancient, and necessary form of transportation in the environment and walking is still the most significant chance for observing places and activities, experiencing the excitement and motion of life, and discovering the hidden attractions in one's surroundings (Rasooli, 1388:103). Walking is the best opportunity for observation, activity, and feeling spirited and has a remarkable role in the conception of spatial identity, the sense of belonging to the environment, and the perception of spatial qualities of walking (Chelongrian, 1395:75).

Based on the division done by Gehl, the activities that take place in urban spaces can be categorized into three groups; mandatory, optional, and social. Mandatory activities are people's daily functions such as going to school or work, shopping, waiting for a bus, or meeting. In other words, users of urban space have an unconditional obligation to perform mandatory activities (Gehl, 1987:9). Optional activities are those carried out by the users of urban space in case of the availability of some features in the body of the environment and the favorability of the weather (Gehl, 2010:21). Social activities include a wide range. Some of these require passive connections with the environment, such as watching people and events, but active communication with space is associated with other people's presence in the environment and fundamentally, is not possible outside of a group (Gehl, 1987:9). Arbaeen Walk also counts as an optional social activity. The occurrence of optional-social activities is conditioned by the quality of the components of the designated place or urban space. Ergo, an urban space with improved quality can include and maintain optional activities, followed by social ones. Urban space quality consists of social, cultural, economic, and bodily-spatial conditions of the urban environment which shows the rate of citizen's contentment or discontentment with the urban space (Shama'ei and Pour Ahmad, 1384:274). As a product of the process of interaction between man, activity, and the body of the city, the urban environment depends highly on the quality of its visual components (Heydari et al. 1392:325).

5. Background

Various themes regarding pilgrims have been the subject of empirical researches with different approaches and various domestic and foreign articles have been compiled about tourism and pilgrimage. In one research, Makri Zadeh (1389), has dealt with the empirical phenomenology of pilgrimage for Imam Reza and the analysis of the concept and meaning of pilgrimage from the pilgrims' point of view and the pilgrimage has been regarded through two dimensions in this research, namely objective and subjective. Analytical results have identified four main categories for the pilgrimage which include an emotional context, wish, antiquary, and justification for a pilgrim and the researcher states that all pilgrims share the wish and the minimum adherence to

etiquette, as well as the fact that each of them perceives certain qualities which make Imam Reza befitting for visitation; furthermore, the most differences between the pilgrims were found in their heed to customs and the manner with which they fulfilled their pilgrimage. In research aimed at presenting the pilgrims' experience in an on-foot trip to Mashhad, Vershoy (1398) uses the phenomenology method and Moustakas analysis, and the findings of this research suggest that an on-foot journey forms itself on its material and spiritual aspects. Unlike the domestic articles mentioned above, foreign researchers study different dimensions such as identity, learning to travel, experiencing and on-foot trip, etc. ** Pilgrims begin their visits to Camino de Santiago as tourists and finish it as pilgrims. From the participants' point of view, pilgrimage is interpreted as follows: pilgrimage on foot, starting from home, walking, separation from modern technology. ** believes that motions in pilgrimage include religious and nonreligious intents. The pilgrims' motivations include vows, promises, oaths, thanking the lord, praying for one's health, seeking God, etc. Harrigan (2010) heeds pilgrimage as a place-specified walk. Harrigan illustrates the pilgrims' experience during the trip, their emotions concerning this experience, their responses in a wider context, and concentration on mental changes and dynamics in three frameworks, in the first of which, combining elements of persons are reflected on their trip. Using this framework is a response to the symbols of the pilgrims' experience in traveling in place and time. In the second framework, the pilgrims' real experiences are focused on. The researcher demonstrates the holiness of the pilgrims and how this route has shown them new ways of life.

The above researches have been carried out through a phenomenology method, deep interviews, and walking along the pilgrimage route but what has been neglected, is the spatial quality of the route, based on the pilgrims' needs.

6. Theoretical Basis

6.1 Spatial Quality

Spatial quality is a complex subject and includes groups and persons' intellectual perceptions, perspectives, and values (Porteous, 1971). Spatial quality is the resultant of the quality of all components in a specific area, yet it represents the general perception of a place, rather than the summation of its constructing components. The elements that make up the environment or space (nature, open space, infrastructures, artificial environment, facilities of the bodily surroundings natural resources, social ties, etc.) each have special characteristics and qualities. Nevertheless, spatial and environmental qualities can be defined as the following:

Urban spatial quality can be finalized as the resultant of the three components of functional, empirical aesthetic, and environmental quality in cities.

On one hand, the functional quality component of urban design includes the provision of motion and easy access to appealing urban centers for those on foot and vehicles, and on the other, unlike the teachings of modernism that reduces the functional role of urban spaces to a mere channel for commute, it includes other functions such as passive entertainment, watching people and various ceremonies, eating and conversing, reading the newspaper, meeting with friends, etc., to ensure the liveliness and richness of experiencing the urban environment (Golkar, 1379).

The empirical aesthetic component of urban design quality deals with people's conceptive and cognitive perceptions and spatial preferences regarding urban environments (Golkar, 1379).

The environmental component of urban design quality includes subjects such as adjusting the minor climate of urban spaces (sunlight, air current, shading, etc.) on its minor level, and its major

dimension is concerned with environmental sustainability and deals with the quality of balance based on urban environment ecology and how natural resources (e.g., soil, water, etc.) are used (Golkar, 1379).

7. Analysis of the Spatial Qualities of Arbaeen Walk Route

a) Environment

The present world is faced with a set of economic, social, and especially environmental dilemmas which grow more and more complicated every day. Therefore, the subject of protecting the environment has become the center of universal attention as one of the most important issues and problems of the world (Environment Planning Council, 1393). Nowadays, heeding to environmental issues in planning, activities, and developmental measures in all spaces, can be an effective step towards the improvement of environmental conditions and consequently, elevating the qualities of those spaces. Factors such as hygiene and cleanliness, heat comfort, light, vision, wind comfort, acoustic comfort, improving the quality of environment and scenery, and also using vegetation to decrease pollutions and gentle the ambiance of Arbaeen Walk route. Hygiene and cleanliness in the route will enhance the possibility of attendance and utilizing its space. The route has very low hygiene and one of the pilgrims' fundamental problems, if not the main problem, is disregard to cleanliness and sanitation along the path; this matter is one of the pilgrims' basic concerns (Sa'eedi, 1395) (Figure 1-2).

b) Social Interactions

Social interaction and communication can be a physical manner, glance, call, or connection between persons which requires the definition of events, suitable activities and as a result, people's imprinting in space and their membership in groups and social networks (Daneshpour and Charkh-chain). Based on Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, a person's needs are divided into two groups; the first category is material/physical needs whose fulfillment, proposes another spectrum of needs regarding the spiritual/mental aspect of human life. Accordingly, one of man's natural needs is to form social connections. Thus, social interactions and connections are considered both an innate requirement and a means to satisfy other needs; ergo, man cannot continue living without forming social ties (Rafi' pour, 1382) (Figure 3).

c) Safety and Security

Feeling safe is one of the pillars of tourism and its absence will drive tourists to change their destination. Feeling safe is more important than safety itself; because tourists make decisions based on their feelings towards genuine facts (Doroudian, 1397). People's active presence in the city is one of the factors that increase safety and security in urban environments; safety and security are highly effective on the continuity and survival of said environments and in their absence, the quality of a city will decline and the meaning of urbanism will be diminished. Intense control of vehicles on the walking route is also of importance and must be put into consideration (Sistani, 1387) (Figure 4).

Since the Arbaeen Walk route is located on an intercity road, there is heavy traffic on many parts, both by vehicles and pedestrians, which can threaten the pilgrims' safety. Considering the activities and commotion that happen round the clock, the presence of several security forces along the way, and also the spiritual atmosphere of the Walk has managed to ensure the safety of this route.

d) Pedestrian Orientation

Pedestrian orientation includes creating streets or spaces free of vehicle commotion (Saffari-E-Raad, 1395:187). Pedestrian orientation is defined as the walkability rate of a place (King et al, 2003). Walkability is the desirability rate of an artificial environment for people's presence, living, shopping, meeting, spending time, and enjoying the said environment. The variety of people and specifically, the presence of children, elders, and disabled people demonstrates the quality, success, and safety of a pedestrian-oriented space (Nosal, 2009). It is in these spaces that watching sceneries and activities, feeling the liveliness and motion of life, and discovering the values and attractions of an urban environment will become possible for citizens through walking on foot. Pedestrian orientation of space can bring life and liveliness to the central parts of a city and encourages citizens to participate actively in it which improves economic, social, and hygienic statuses and also the environmental quality of a district or a city. On sidewalks, the pedestrian has immense free will to halt, wait, divert and form direct connections with others (Abbas Zaade, 1392:2). Neglecting to organize and plan for strolling on foot is one of the faults of modern urban design which harms the qualities of urban spaces of today. Pedestrian-oriented environments are a combination of various forms, spaces, and functions which create a sole whole in the center of cities and give them identity through close connections with each other in providing for a wide range of human-urban needs. Moreover, pedestrian routes are one of the ways to revive the urban vita of city centers, have an effective role in discovering and understanding the bodily and social environment of a city, and are the embodiment of civilization, identity, and civility (Asad-O-Llahi, 1383:83).

e) Route Readability

Readability is a term that has found its way into the literature of urban design by Kevin Lynch. If put simply, readability means that an environment is not confusing, can be read easily and in other words, will be located effortlessly. In a readable environment, it is easy to find places which haven't been visited before. Readability is the distinction that enables the observer to understand and/or categorize the contents of a scene; high levels of readability equal better function (Lynch, 1376). Readability helps people find themselves in the environment, feel safe in it and be able to lead their bodies through it. It should be possible for a person to enter a building (the entrance) easily and locate and identify the destination and the path, in addition to knowledge about the beginning (Moradi, 1396:3). Several routes have been designated for walking to Karbala, but between all of these, there are three main ones by which most Iraqi pilgrims traverse and have the

appropriate capacity for hosting these pilgrims. These are as follows: Najaf-Heidarieh-Karbala, Hillah-Hindiyah-Karbala, Bagdad-Musayyib-Karbala.

Kufa-Hindiyah-Karbala is also of Arbaeen Walk routes, known as Tarigh-Ol-Olamaa, Tarigh-E-Sabayaa (Asra') and Masir-E-Shatt-E-Foraat. However, Iranian pilgrims' chosen route is the first route (Najaf-Karbala) which is the shortest, busiest, and most famous access route from Najaf to Karbala. The number of pillars on this route, from the start of Najaf-Karbala highway to Al-Abbas Holy Shrine, is 1452 and the distance between each two is 50 meters, with their numbers are written on them. It is important to note that pillars in Najaf start from number 1 and reach number 182 on the starting point of Najaf-Karbala highway; then the digits on the pillars begin from number 1 again. Therefore, considering the number of pillars on the path which is 1634, walking from Najaf to Al-Abbas Holy Shrine will be 80 kilometers long. The time required for traversing this route on foot will be 20-25 hours; thus, considering the time that is needed for resting, performing *salah*, and having meals, the trip will take about three days (IRNA News Report, 1398).

f) **Liveliness**

Liveliness (سرزندگی) is defined in *Dehkhoda* Dictionary as a state or manner of being lively and merry. There are many equivalents for the concept of liveliness between Persian words; terms such as شادی (happiness), شادابی (vivacity), نشاط (cheerfulness), حس حیات (feeling alive) and رضایت (fulfillment) are the most used equivalents for the liveliness (Kooshali et al, 2015:256). Thus, liveliness is an interdisciplinary keyword that can have different definitions in different fields (Mohammad-Khaani, 1395:8). In urban design vocabulary, liveliness has been defined about life and as a provider of quality of life. Nowadays, urban life, as a comprehensive paradigm with various contextual ranges, has earned special attention in discussions about urban and political planning, to improve conditions concerning life (Hedayat Nejad Kashi et al, 1398:75). Urban liveliness is both the cause and effect of other urban design qualities. The purpose of creating urban liveliness is to develop the citizens' life quality and it correlates with social, economic, cultural, and bodily dimensions (Habibi et al, 1395:163). Ultimately, it can be said that the existence of a lively environment is important for having mental peace, health, function, and also success in different periods of life such as success in personal life and the quality of social networks (Samadi Toodaar, 1394:36). Creating various and relevant uses for each scene on the sidewalk, establishing service uses which are followed by presence continuity and also establishing recreational uses, variety of furniture along the path, lighting harmony of the path and emphasis on the lighting of elements and buildings are a few factors for liveliness and variety on sidewalks (Pakzaad, 1386) (Map 1).

8. **Area of Study**

The length of the Najaf-Karbala route is 82 kilometers which take about 2-5 days to traverse. The Walk begins from Share'-O-Rassul and ends at pillar number 180 in Najaf city. After that, the Walk starts again from pillar number 1 in Najaf-Karbala Road; there are 1452 pillars left until Al-Abbas Holy Shrine. The Walk must start after morning Salah and a *Mowkeb* (rest stop for pilgrims) is found along the path on 3-5 p.m. for nightly rest (Figure 5).

9. **Findings**

One-Sample T-Test

If the results of this test, either high or low, are positive, it means that the mean of the population about that variable was more than the tested value. Since the level of significance for the intended five criteria is less than the supposed error (which is 0.05%), it can be concluded that satisfaction with different components of life quality, except for readability, is less than the mean considered for this assessment (which is 3). In the meantime, the environmental criteria with 2.26% mean have the highest rate of dissatisfaction among the people of this population; Also, the pedestrian orientation criteria with 2.61% mean achieved second place in dissatisfaction and the safety and security criteria with 2.68%, the liveliness criteria with 2.84% and the social interaction criteria with 2.98% mean acquired the remaining ranks. Considering the found results, the environmental component of the Arbaeen Walk route (Najaf-Karbala) has the highest rate of dissatisfaction (Table 1-2).

10. Conclusion

The great gathering of Arabeen-E-Husseini Walk has various great dimensions like its original event and it requires comprehensive analysis. In this research, the spatial qualities of the Arbaeen Walk route have been analyzed as the biggest religious-humane gathering. Since an enormous group of pilgrims from different nations and races participate in this walk, it is an appropriate context for creating suitable spaces for these pilgrims' use. Arbaeen Walk is quite ancient and a spontaneous gesture but little attention has been paid to the improvement of its spatial qualities. In this research, spatial qualities such as environment, liveliness, readability, pedestrian orientation, safety and security, and social interactions have been analyzed and suitable spatial qualities for the Arbaeen Walk route have been achieved through considering people's material and spiritual needs and also the benefits and disadvantages on this walk. In short, the Arbaeen Walk route has lots of liveliness based on the high presence and various activities taking place on it -one of the key points of this path- but this crowdedness, the presence of a wide group of people along the way, and insufficient heed to hygienic and environmental issues have caused the highest rate of dissatisfaction on this route. Considering the signs planted along the way for identifying spaces and paths, this route has acceptable readability. Since pilgrims and security forces are present on the path round-the-clock, the Arbaeen Walk route has a high level of safety. Concerning social interactions, with the presence of pilgrims from various nations and races and the length of this route, a suitable context for social interactions is formed, but the lack of appropriate halt sites for these interactions is of the issues of this route. Bearing these findings in mind, the following can be suggested as tips on improving spatial qualities of the Arbaeen Walk route:

- **Liveliness**

Increasing functional variety in pedestrian areas will enhance desirability in using the environment and revive the spirit of the pedestrian space and suffuse urban life in the city.

Various uses of a place or space; in other words, creating different abilities in a building or space for adapting to varying conditions and diverse avails.

- **Route readability**

Heeding to aspects of design and creating visual sceneries along the pedestrian path.
Establishing software and applications for demonstrating important centers (e.g., therapeutic and health centers, etc.) along the pedestrian path.

- **Pedestrian orientation**

Creating infrastructure on the walking route such as collecting surface water and sewage channels.
Concerning tourism and providing facilities required for the tourists' use in the pedestrian space.
Adopting management methods accompanied by consultation and discussion, and also decisiveness in execution along the pedestrian path.

Using sunshades and shading along the route for the pedestrians' comfort (roofed sidewalks)
Setting suitable and enough urban furniture such as trash cans, benches, and lights.

- **Safety and security**

Providing better safety on the route by appropriate lighting, improving nightly access
Routine management and use of suitable and up-to-date tools and equipment for security (e.g., closed-circuit television camera, etc.) to ensure peace and safety, especially during nightly hours.
The necessity of collaboration between various organizations such as town hall, bureau of properties, security forces, cultural and tourism organizations, guilds, etc. in regulating laws and terms concerning crime and danger.

- **Social interactions**

Using the properties around the pedestrian route for creating halting spaces to enhance social interactions.

Holding religious ceremonies along the way for the pilgrims' utmost benefit.

- **Environment**

Planting vegetation adapted to the climate of the area and increasing green spaces in this environment for shading and better air ventilation and the pedestrians' comfort.

Emphasis on spatial decoration and environmental improvement by enhancing green spaces.

Eliminating acoustic and visual pollution by planting trees.

Managing health centers.

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Tables

One-Sample Statistics

| | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|------------------------|-----|------|----------------|-----------------|
| Environment | 190 | 2.26 | 1.071 | .078 |
| Social Interactions | 190 | 2.98 | .900 | .065 |
| Safety and Security | 190 | 2.68 | 1.021 | .074 |
| Pedestrian Orientation | 190 | 2.61 | .996 | .072 |
| Route Readability | 190 | 3.04 | .884 | .064 |
| Liveliness | 190 | 2.84 | .918 | .067 |

One-Sample Test

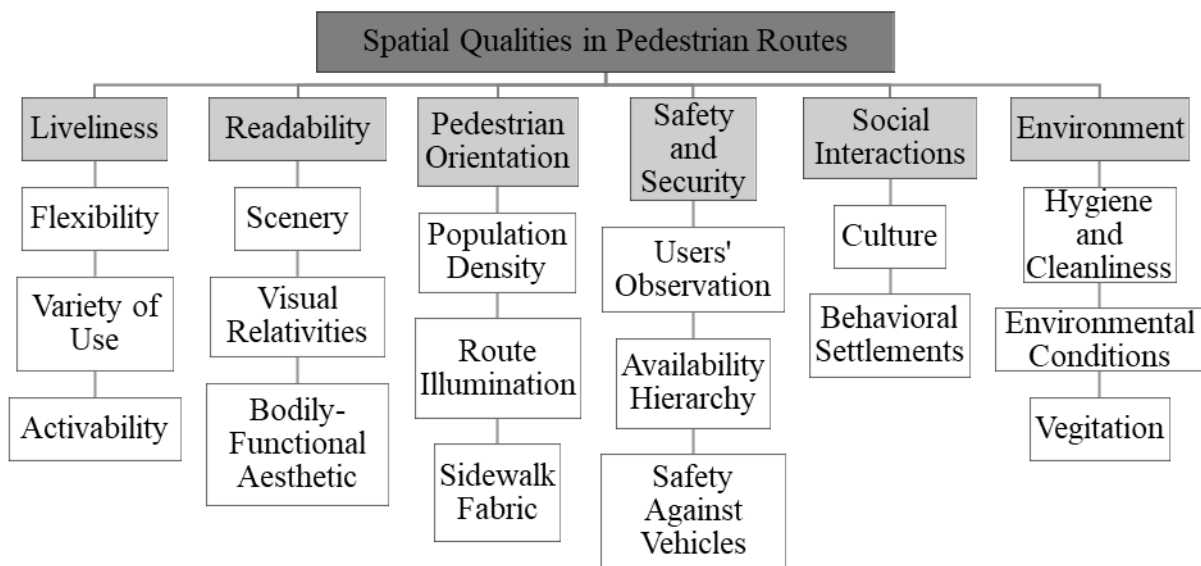
Test Value = 0

| | t | df | Sig. tailed) | (2-Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
|---------------------|--------|-----|--------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Environment | 29.124 | 189 | .000 | 2.263 | 2.11 | 2.42 |
| Social Interactions | 45.726 | 189 | .000 | 2.984 | 2.86 | 3.11 |
| Safety and Security | 36.235 | 189 | .000 | 2.684 | 2.54 | 2.83 |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------|-----|------|-------|------|------|
| Pedestrian Orientation | 36.065 | 189 | .000 | 2.605 | 2.46 | 2.75 |
| Route Readability | 47.440 | 189 | .000 | 3.042 | 2.92 | 3.17 |
| Liveliness | 42.677 | 189 | .000 | 2.842 | 2.71 | 2.97 |

Table 1-2. One-Sample T-Test.

Figures



Map 1. Spatial qualities in pedestrian routes, (source; authors, 1400)



Fig. 1-2. The environmental component of the Arbaeen walks route.



Fig. 3. Social diversity of the Walk.



Fig. 4. Arbaeen Walk route.

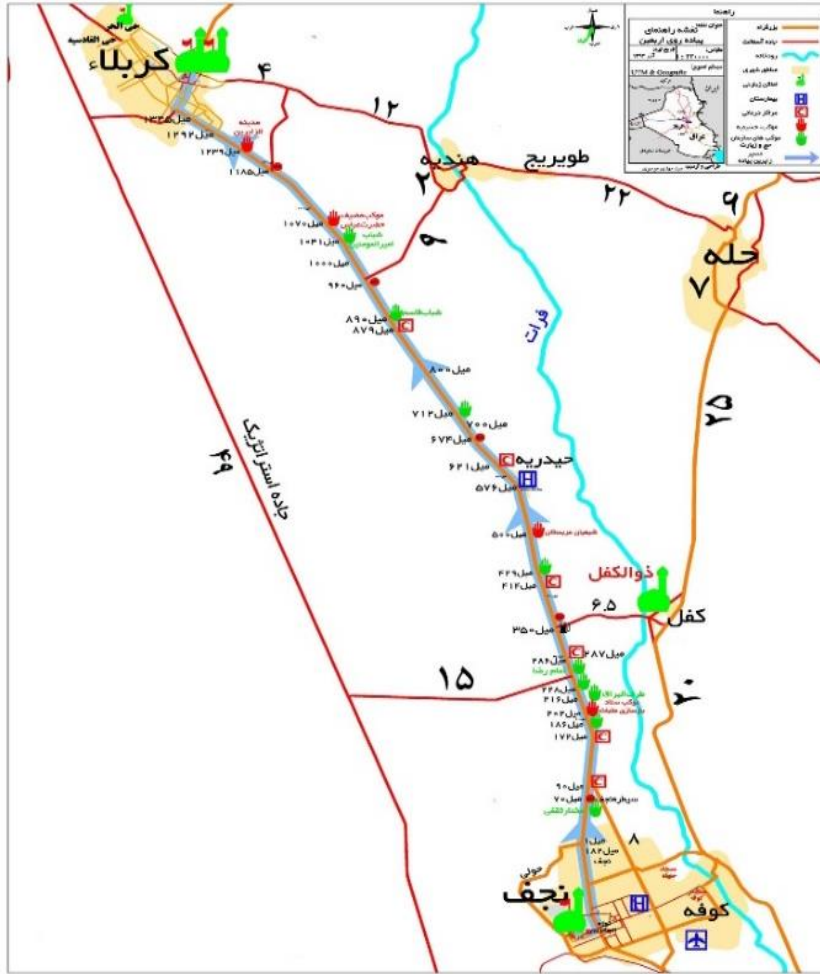


Fig. 5. Studied area.