

THE “PEDESTRIAN REALM” AS A GENESIS OF COMMERCE: BAZAARS OF THE EAST AND MIXED-USE CENTERS OF THE WEST

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1 ABSTRACT

Commerce is an ancient economical framework that enables establishment of social ties, improving cultural relationships, and trading values (Edgu et al., 2012). The products typically has reached its destinations (customers) through pedestrian spaces such as Bazaars in the East and commercial centers in the West. The presence of people has been a key to successful urban public space (Marcus and Francis, 1998; Gehl, 1987) and commerce has been the primary activity of such spaces for over centuries. Yet increasing vehicular and transportation activity and changing commercial dynamics of contemporary cities have been adding more pressure to pedestrian spaces (Morgan, 1996), requiring further examination.

This research is to document and assess the physical make up of the pedestrian realm in mixed-use settings in both the Eastern and Western cultures. The paper aims to gain greater understanding of the role and characteristics of pedestrian environments by drawing lessons from case studies to inform future commerce oriented mixed-use settings. The paper utilizes qualitative methods and case study analysis techniques to investigate the relationship between pedestrian realm and commerce. Interviews are conducted with three stakeholder groups in each setting: pedestrian, designer and developer/planner from (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). The research also utilizes evaluation and observation techniques (Francis, 2001; Marcus and Francis, 1998) as well as map analysis techniques (Wheeler and Koo, 2011) in order to further examine the spatial configurations and characteristics of these settings.

Research illustrates that commerce oriented centers of the East and West may illustrate changing visual characteristics, serve varyng transportation modes but carry similarities in the way how pedestrian realm and street networks are designed to create as a central organizing element to activate commerce. Whether the “pedestrian realm” is the genesis of commerce or not still remains somewhat as an ambiguous question but the interviewees points out diversity of land uses, utilization of human scale, the presence of pedestrian spaces and amenities, and presence and the diversity of people as the noticeable positive characteristics of such settings contributing to their vitality. Research also highlights various physical qualities that are unique to each setting reminding that design and planning of such environments require critical understanding of regional parameters while exploring cross-cultural references.

1.1 Keywords

pedestrian realm, commerce, mixed-use centers, bazaars, urban design, public spaces, urban landscape