

International Journal of Human Capital in Urban Management  
(IJHCUM)

Homepage: <http://www.ijhcum.net/>

CASE STUDY

Does NIMBY work in Iran?  
The unexpected case of Danesh Pedestrian and bicycle path

M. Sattar zad Fathi<sup>1,\*</sup>, N. Jahed<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Urban Design, Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Department of Architecture, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey

ARTICLE INFO

**Article History:**

Received 29 July 2019

Revised 11 September 2019

Accepted 09 December 2019

**Keywords:**

NIMBY (Not in my back yard)

Local power

Nontotalitarian projects

Environmental qualities

Public satisfaction

ABSTRACT

“Not in My Back Yard”; people shout this when they feel something deleterious and nonlocal will be sprung into existence in their territory by top-down powers. Some believe that NIMBY syndrome provokes parochialism, but parochialism itself can bring many beneficial consequences. Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path- a recent project established on the south rim of Bagh-e-Sib (a vast historic apple orchard) in the Mehrshahr neighborhood- is one of the cases that has been crystallized through NIMBY syndrome. The municipal authorities’ decision on devastating this aged green area and turning it into a mega-scale market place or, who knows, into a highway, faced with radical protests of locals and eventuated the construction of the path. One can call it a win-win situation or maybe a social failure, but regardless of pessimistic and extremist views, it is well known that pedestrian and bicycle accessibilities are two indubitable realities of contemporary urbanism. Therefore, the evaluation of abovementioned path turned to a necessity to realize whether NIMBY is worked in this case, and generally in Iran, or not. This article delves into the subject in two phases, including 1) environmental qualities, 2) public acceptability; and originally follows several questions: has the voice of locals been heard or it was a compulsive decision just for protecting the garden? Is it a social setting or a fraudulent totalitarian exercise of municipal power? Does it meet the needs? Do people like it? How can it be over-promoted? What type of strategies are needed for further development of it?

DOI:10.22034/IJHCUM.2020.01.08

©2020 IJHCUM. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

*“[...] in good planning, citizens, not planners or politicians, take the driving seat in developing policy ideas and project briefs”. (Patsy Healey, 2008).*

In the year 2014, folks of Mehrshahr neighborhood noticed the municipal officials in Bagh-e-Sib area (a vast historic apple orchard), who were suspiciously

doing something. After a while, the trees of this garden disappeared one by one, left and right. Local residents who realized the malicious intention of the municipality, gathered in front of the garden to make a protest; fortunately, the die was cast and reconsideration got inevitable. Municipality could not do further damage to this garden. Finally, people succeeded, and officials decided to build a pedestrian and bicycle path along the southern edge of the

\*Corresponding Author:

Email: [m.sattar zad@edu.ikiu.ac.ir](mailto:m.sattar zad@edu.ikiu.ac.ir)

Phone: +98 930 7432178

Fax: +98 263 3409223

garden without cutting down even a single tree and wasting the invaluable land of it, rather than building something huge and artificial throughout the garden. In the same year, the construction of the path began and got ready to use two years later. The public protest was originally a political movement, partly achieved its main purpose in the way of saving the garden, using local power against totalitarian and selfish municipal action, and also creating a beautiful and people-friendly urban space. But it is the fact that NIMBY only works where there is political strength, actually in the hands of the public, and yet there is still a lack of it in Iran. Just because an urban space is beautiful and charming, it cannot be said that people completely like it. There are so many environmentally fascinating spaces that have been constructed erroneously by deteriorating something urban and significant, and just because of that they are shockingly unacceptable.

Well, let us take a few steps back and review some more comprehensive issues in this direction. In Iran, most of the urban projects are "Vertical" and "Procrustean" in nature and it is near impossible to do something "By" the people and "For" the people. Now, it is opaque whether the Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path was created through the participation of local people and was purely materialized through the public objection against demolishing this precious old garden or not? The posed questions can only be answered by examining the environmental and social dimensions of this path. Now, it is noteworthy to point out the required general environmental and social qualities of the pedestrian and bicycle pathways. In majority of current urban areas, the motorized transportation is jeopardizing the pedestrian accessibilities and eliminating the most effective human-based values. Despite this situation, most locals, mainly, tend to bike and walk, which are considered increasingly as viable methods of transportation and at the same time as a way of reclaiming local territories (Shinkle and Teigen, 2008). Besides, in the light of wide scientific research works in this realm, it is proven that the "walking around freely, looking around, and cycling" is a vital component of the quality of urban life; specifically, in producing a public platform to get more involved in the process of urban participation, which empowers the citizens to intervene in shaping the public spaces, providing a free walking environment account as the key indicator

(Behzadfar *et al.*, 2014; Anciães, 2011; Forsyth and Krizek, 2011). Moreover, it is an irrefutable fact that pedestrian and bicycle accessibilities can substantially reduce the pollutions which nowadays are growing at breakneck speed, and can also play an effective role in bringing the urban vitality and dynamism (Ranjbar and Rais Esmaili, 2010). There should be a range of desired environmental qualities available at the pedestrian and bicycle pathways, e.g., open and landscaped spaces, benches and places for sitting and resting, sense of security, etc. (Hawthorne, 1989). An appropriate environment for walking and bicycling must be relatively calm, creative, and in good terms of lighting (Burden *et al.*, 1999; Untermann, 1984), and in line with increasing public satisfaction, it should have also some vital elements such as trees, bushes, gardens, and a wide range of natural views, which can extremely increase public satisfaction (Appleyard *et al.*, 1976; Jacobs, 1993; Untermann, 1984). Besides the environmental values, a pedestrian and bicycle path should acknowledge the social factors as well. To put it another way, it should provide a nontotalitarian context containing human interactions, and it must be accepted by the people, right before doing any kind of implementations. A project will be publicly accepted if just different classes of society get involved in their surrounding spatial and environmental urban events to reach a sense of belonging and interacting with each other, and that will be the way of urban ascendancy (Lynch, 1984; Carmona, 2010; Wates, 2006; Leyden, 2003). In the progress of making a great community, prioritizing the social aspects must be set as the key criterion, and hereof, promoting this criterion can partly become possible through the transportation network. Since, it is clear that injustice in access to places, where urban opportunities are located, leads to the lack of public participation (Toth *et al.*, 2008). The pedestrian accessibility always in good condition, strengthens the social and political ties; this is because of the face to face communications, street conversations, and training in human relationships with the active attendance of citizens (Whyte, 2001). Therefore, it should not be forgotten that a pedestrian and bicycle path is such a public platform, rather than its transportational role, which teaches the people how to have more social attendance (Naghbi *et al.*, 2015).

It cannot be denied that the ability to make community-based decisions upon the existing and

future urban spaces, always requires the impartial presence of the people to progress the project in the way they want it to. And if this progress leads to a pedestrian and bicycle pathway, it will be an attractive place for further public presence, leading to some vital factors, such as general health, life satisfaction, equality, belongingness, identity, creativity, and etc. (Booher, 2008; Sanoff, 2011; Craig *et al.*, 2002; Burke *et al.*, 2009). Now considering all these issues, there is a necessity to figure out that is the Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path just a car-free and beautiful lush path, or does it really bring something socio-political, like "Local solidarity" and "Throwntogetherness"? Does it really extracted from the voice of community or it is just a picturesque output obtained from municipal complicity? Did people really win the fight in both social and environmental terms? Can it be called a NIMBY-based efficient urban space for all? Therefore, the main objective of this study, which has been afoot from 2016 until 2020 in Karaj in Iran, is exactly to answer these questions; to check the actual status of this unexpectedly upheaved path, to address the "Real Reality" of it.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article has both qualitative and quantitative dimensions, and follows the field study method, which is clearly defined by Nielsen (2002) "as a general way of collecting data through observation and interviewing". It delves into the subject in two phases: In the first phase, the environmental and physical qualities of the path are evaluated to reach a common decision upon the level of its environmental attractiveness and vitality; to see if the NIMBY has led to something beautiful, attractive, creative, and calm or not. To this end, the required information is achieved through environmental observation and photography, like a qualitative investigation. Afterward, the images and observations are explanatorily evaluated through analytical descriptions to identify the positive and negative points. Finally, these points are analyzed in a SWOT matrix to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the path, and also as Weihrich (1982) has mentioned, to get the WO, WT, SO, and ST as the attacking and defensive strategies, just to minimize and maximize the internal and external features. After that, in the second phase, the social qualities and public acceptability of this path are analyzed to catch that is this a public space

or just a top-down reform and ordinance; to see if the NIMBY syndrome has led to something social, publicly accepted, and originally extracted from the locals itself or not. Therefore, the public opinion regarding the overall features and acceptability of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path is taken under evaluation. This is done by filling the questionnaire by local people through an impartial way to define and validate the path from the viewpoint of the users. This brings the consultation with users, declaring any positive and negative features of it, and also helps to think about possible future changes in plans and designs based on public opinions. The questionnaire begins with demographic questions to identify the general personal information (i.e. please write down your age and gender). The main structure of the questionnaire consists of two main parts, including six questions for assessing the status of overall qualities and public acceptability, and six questions for determining the reality and nature of the project from a critical point of view. The questions are as following parts:

### *Questionnaire; part 1:*

- Q1) Do you think that the construction of this path was necessary?
- Q2) Do you feel any comfort and vitality on this path?
- Q3) Do you believe that this path meets all the needs and tastes?
- Q4) Do you have any security and safety on this path?
- Q5) Does being here improve your creativity and mental health?
- Q6) Do you allow your children to come here?

### *Questionnaire; part 2:*

- Q1) Have your opinion been surveyed before constructing this path?
- Q2) Have you participated during the construction of this path?
- Q3) Do you know the real designer of this path?
- Q4) Do you think that the construction of this path prevents Bagh-e-Sib from being destroyed?
- Q5) Would you like to see this path to be expanded and developed in the future?
- Q6) Would you like to participate in the future development of this path?

These questions were answered over three months by 1200 people, which consisted of Yes and

No options, as well as Non-response in part 1. In the early stages of the current article, the questions are sorted based on age and gender through a cross-tabulation, and also the pie charts. After identifying the participants, the total percentage (PCT) and count (CT) of each answer are calculated by averaging the total responses; these pieces of information are sorted through cross-tabulations, as well as column charts. Afterward, by analytically describing the questions, according to their respondents, is tried to understand the public opinions upon Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path, as well as its flaws. Also, the improper actions and policies of the municipal authorities are criticized too in this process, and some recommendations are offered in each part, to enhance both the subject and future development of the path.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Case study

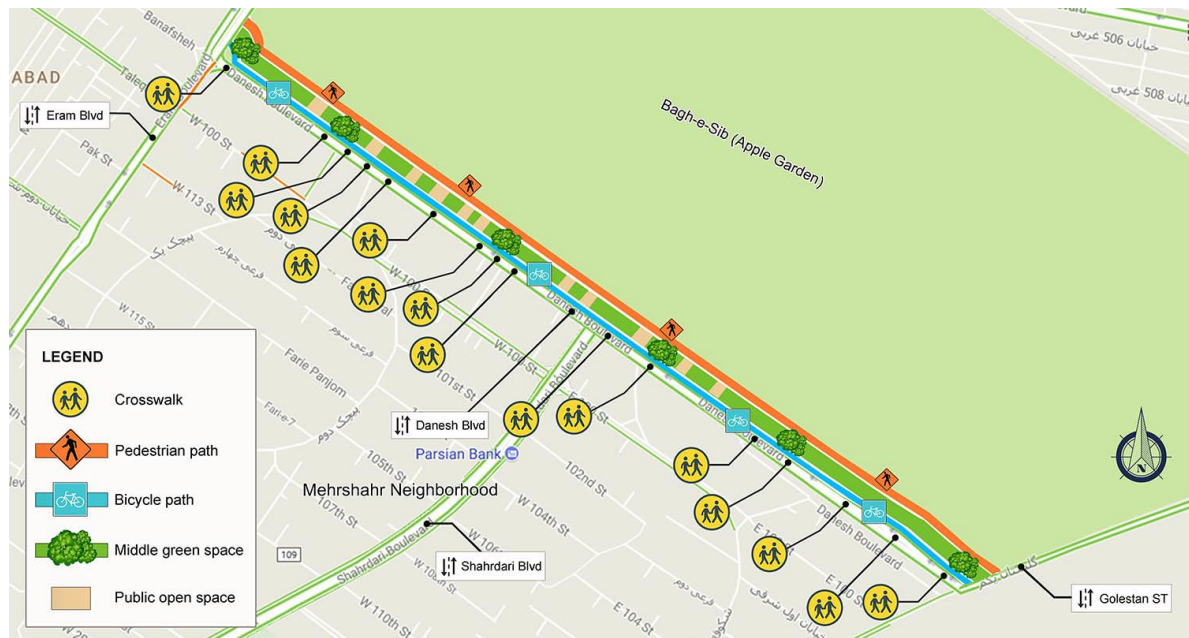
Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path is located in Mehrshahr neighborhood, in Karaj County of Iran. As illustrated in Fig. 1, this path is placed between Bagh-e-Sib (with an area of 400 hectares) and Danesh Blvd. Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path is enclosed on three sides by the roadways and on the other side

by Bagh-e-Sib. Enclosing by the roadways account as an obstacle, however, the existence of Bagh-e-Sib can positively affect several conditions of this path. This path includes three sections; a main pedestrian pathway, a middle green space that contains several public open spaces along the path, and finally a bicycle path. This path has a width of 17 m and a length of 1800 m (1.8 km).

Due to the Mehrshahr residential neighborhood in the south region of the path, there are several in-street pedestrian crosswalks, which offer a clear visual cue to drivers to slow down and expect pedestrian traffic. This path makes it possible to walk and relax beside Bagh-e-Sib and this advantage is doubled by creating the middle linear green space parallel to the pedestrian and bicycle lines. This project was completed in approximately two years ago, in 2016. Fig. 2(a) and (b) clearly show the changes during and after the construction.

### Assessing the environmental qualities

Here, the multiple dimensions of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path are assessed in terms of environmental qualities. It begins by taking the physical features into consideration, like the path segments and divisions and after that continues by evaluating the more perceptual and mental aspects





(a)



(b)

Fig. 2: Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path: (a) during construction, 2014; (b) after construction, 2016

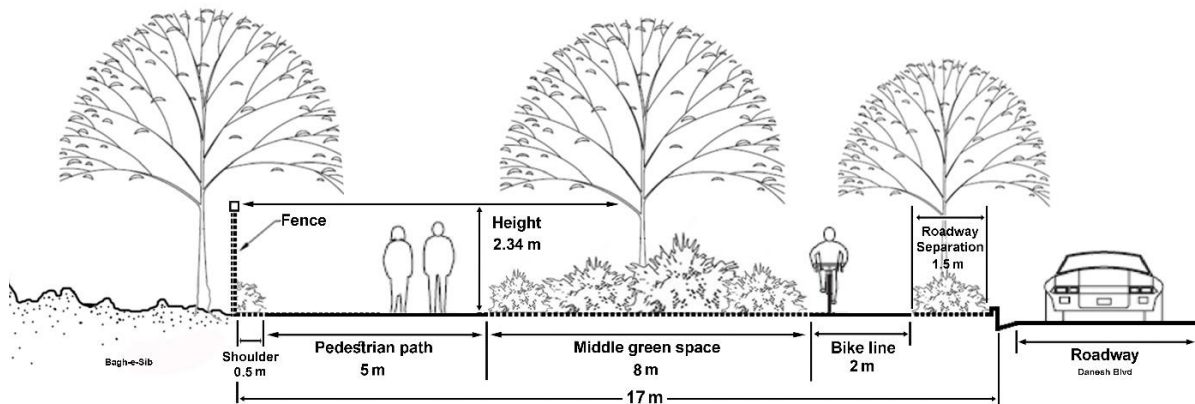


Fig. 3: Cross-section of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path illuminating its segments and dimensions

of the mentioned environment, such as the level of creativity, natural ethics, vernacular senses and so on. After that, we will attempt to evaluate the overall qualities of urban furniture, lights and public platforms and spaces too. In the end, a SWOT analysis is provided to shed light on this topic that how efficient and acceptable is this path in terms of environmental qualities and also how it can be improved by some simple strategies towards future redevelopments.

#### Physical proportions; path segments and dimensions

As shown in Fig. 3, Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path is almost 17m wide with three main sections, including the walkway, middle green space, and bicycle path; also there are secondary sections too, such as the shoulders and separation lines. Middle green space has a width of 8m in which some places it opens up and creates some potential spaces. The

walkway has been constructed near Bagh-e-Sib and the bicycle path has been created near Danesh Blvd. This type of design brings two advantages; the first is creating tranquility and rural feelings for those who walking around Bagh-e-Sib at the pedestrian walkway; the second is the easy access of bicyclists to the bicycle path from Danesh Blvd. The main part of this path is dedicated to green spaces and pedestrians. Generally, the balanced geometric divisions have appropriately been applied to separate the lines and sections on this path from each other. Walkway line, with 5m wide, provides a reasonable breadth for the ordinary people. Moreover, it turns up to 14m at its intersections with those potential spaces. Regrettably, the needs of disabled people have not been considered. In fact, the existing obstacles along the walkway and lack of standard tactile paving are ignoring the rights of disabled



people. This is one of the main defects of the path. Another defect of it is its excessive straightness, which can be somewhat boring (Fig. 4 (a)). On the other hand, the two-way bicycle path with 2m wide and mastic asphalt pavement can greatly encourage the people to bicycle, but this could be designed more in wide. This bicycle path is appropriately separated from the roadway (Danesh Blvd), by using green spaces, flowers, and bushes instead of fences or artificial and nasty materials (Fig. 4 (b)). But there are some defects in the bicycle path too, such as the lack of traffic signs, bicycle parking, and insufficient safety for cyclists who want to enter the Danesh Blvd. Additionally, the bicycle path has vertically been disconnected and restricted by two other roadways (Eram Blvd and Golestan ST; take a look at Fig. 1) and not been developed in adjacent fabrics. Indeed, it

would better to have a path designed continuously and came to an end by the open spaces rather than roadways.

#### Environmental attractiveness and creativity

Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path has been generally designed in a proper environmental shape, in comparison to its surroundings. This matter can be obviously seen in both green spaces and physical components, as well as in the spatial arrangement of these two (Fig. 5 (a)). This point is one of the main strengths of the path, which attracts the people for spending their leisure time in this place. The attractiveness, creativity, and beauty of this path are satisfactory due to different types of plants in a variety of colors and species (Fig. 5 (b)). On the one hand, this path puts the user in between two green areas (Bagh-



(a)



(b)

Fig. 4: (a) Main pedestrian walkway with 5m wide; (b) 2m wide bicycle path with colored and mastic asphalt pavement



(a)



(b)

Fig. 5: (a) A statue resembled to flower in white colors in the middle of the green space; (b) An attractive greenery landscaping, resulting in beautiful and creative environment

e-Sib and the middle green space), which absolutely brings positive mental and environmental senses, such as vitality, identity, and visual beauty. On the other hand, these green spaces purify the air, which empowers environmental qualities. Another issue that greatly enhances the creativity and curiosity of users, is the existence of several low wide secondary paths within the middle green spaces, along Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path. By using these secondary paths, people can discover the space. This matter increases citizen creativity and also makes it possible to penetrate into an exciting atmosphere of the existing middle green spaces (Fig. 6 (a)). Along the bicycle path, many curves can be seen that provide a creative sportive environment. In fact, some of these curves have been designed due to preserving the old trees, and also some others have been created

to deal with the visual exhaustion, to get rid of the excessive straightness in the environment (Fig. 6 (b)).

#### Respect for nature and environmental ethics

Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path is one of those which have completely preserved the existing green spaces, such as old fruit trees of Bagh-e-Sib that were on the path (Fig. 7 (a)). Old trees are considered as environmental capitals. Through the contextualism, many of the environmental qualities have been maintained and enhanced (Fig. 7 (b)). This matter can even have educational and cultural benefits by reminding people to respect nature, as well as environmental ethics. It cannot be denied that the original identity of this path certainly comes from its surrounding green spaces, such as Bagh-e-Sib. Bagh-e-Sib and the walkway line have unfortunately



(a)

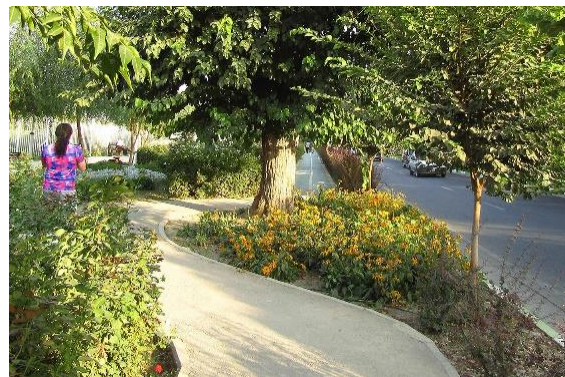


(b)

Fig. 6: (a) A creative low wide secondary path inside the middle green space; (b) Making the path more natural and attractive by curving the bicycle path



(a)



(b)

Fig. 7: (a) Some of the old fruit trees throughout the path; (b) The compatibility of bicycle path with existing field and old trees



been separated with inappropriate and ugly metal fences, but even a branch has not been cut in vain and the valuable existing trees have been preserved (Fig. 8 (a)). However, it should be noted that in order to improve the visual characteristics, it would better if more proper materials, adaptive with the surrounding environment, were used. For instance, wooden fences with more curves and natural shapes could be an alternative. In addition to preserved green spaces, many newly created green masses have been planted along Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path in relative coordination with existing green spaces, and are irrigated with methods such as drip irrigation (Fig. 8 (b)). New green spaces are great potential to reduce air pollution and generally the emissions. It is also quite clear that this issue has provided an appropriate environment that brings calmness, comfort, vitality,

identity, etc. Furthermore, it is necessary to control the pedestrian users and motorized vehicles in order to avoid harming the environment.

#### The Localism and vernacular senses

Existing green areas, such as Bagh-e-Sib, are valuable opportunities to improve the environmental qualities of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path. The visibility of this garden, through the fences, ties rural and urban senses to each other (Fig. 9 (a)). This issue brings tranquility and frees the people from the busy and partly industrial atmosphere. Regarding some inadequate policies of the authorities, some parts of Bagh-e-Sib might in danger of being destroyed, but anyway, the garden still provides a context for many rural and agricultural activities due to its land use. Thus, doing these kinds of activities strengthen the current identity of the environment and



(a)



(b)

Fig. 8: (a) Preserving the trees during the process of constructing metal fences; (b) Newly planted shrubs are watered through drip irrigation



(a)



(b)

Fig. 9: (a) Clear visual view of Bagh-e-Sib; (b) Doing agricultural activities in Bagh-e-Sib



its natural components (Fig. 9 (b)). For some seasons, people buy many products from farmers who work in Bagh-e-Sib, such as vegetables and fruits. Attendant qualities of rural activities can greatly improve the sense of social solidarity and localism, and bring the rural and rustic senses. This is such a value that partly takes the Mehrshahr neighborhood away from its crowded and industrialized atmosphere, as well as an opportunity to people for recognition of positive points of naturalistic and rustic life.

#### Lights and furniture

Along Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path, there are several numbers of lights, which are suitably matched with the environment in terms of shape and color (Fig. 10 (a)). But the number of lights is not sufficient and the path is almost dark during the

night hours. The insufficient number of lights reduces the security and safety of the path. On the other side, the furniture has not been designed with good materials, mainly in terms of color and beauty, and have relatively low comfort (Fig. 10 (b)). There is also no ceiling for the benches to protect the users from rain or sunlight in bad climatic conditions. In fact, the urban benches should have clear and unobstructed ceilings, both in order to maintain the quality of the vision, as well as protecting them from the different seasonal and climatic changes. Within the Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path, there are some options for doing collective activities. For instance, there can be found several chess tables as well as sporting equipment within the middle green space. This matter plays a positive role in attracting people to the path and creating suitable spontaneous activities.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 10: (a) Two-headed street light, existing in the path, in a good shape; (b) A metal bench that made of unsuitable and uncomfortable materials



(a)



(b)

Fig. 11: (a) An opening in the space, suitable for gatherings and sporting activities; (b) A public stone platform

### Public open spaces and platforms

Throughout the path, there are many public open spaces and stone platforms. These public spaces can be used as meaningful places for social gatherings and spending leisure time (Fig. 11 (a)). Sitting on the platforms located in the green spaces can greatly enhance the sense of vitality and tranquility (Fig. 11 (b)). The locations of these open spaces and platforms are great and perfectly suitable as it should be, but the quality of their construction is not very interesting. In fact, more appropriate and varied floor covering could be used to improve the quality of the environment and also to make them more distinct and heterogeneous.

### SWOT analysis of environmental qualities

Now after doing an analytical description of the environmental qualities of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path, through images and environmental observations, the negative and positive points of it should be examined in an impartial manner. As illustrated in Table 1, the assessment of this path is summarized in two internal and external categories. Accordingly, by adopting a SWOT matrix it is tried to reveal the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the path. This matrix also contains the overall goals, objectives, strategies, and tactics. The SWOT matrix poses many useful suggestions for getting short-term and long-term policies for the future development of the project. The contents of it show us that this path is in good environmental and physical shape and it seems that this path can be counted as an acceptable and attractive place, regarding appearances and physical and environmental qualities. But it is still necessary to go beyond appearances and assess the acceptability of environmental qualities from the viewpoint of local people, as well as its real social nature, which will be dealt with in the next section.

### Assessing public opinions through questionnaire

This part of the study has more social and political quiddity and is concluded in three sections. At first, an effort is made due to introducing the demographic information of respondents. Secondly is tried to assess the public acceptability of the mentioned path considering part 1 of the questionnaire. Thirdly is attempted to criticize the nature of the project through part 2 of the questionnaire, which carries a more

political nature. In actuality, following the total answers of respondents is tried to clarify many invaluable key points about the mentioned path and decide how much acceptable is it from the viewpoint of people? And did NIMBY work in this dimension or not?

### Demographic information of respondents

Most of the participants were males, and females were relatively less participate; this is because of the religious and cultural condition of Iran's society. Table 2 clarifies the gender and age of respondents. Between 1200 people (the respondents), 742 people (62%) are males and 458 people (38%) are females. Young adults (25 to 44) are among major age domain, who are participated in answering the questions, compared to the rest of the ages. Fig. 12 (a) and (b) briefly illustrate the percentage (PCT) of the gender and age of respondents.

### Public Acceptability of the Path; Part 1 of Questionnaire

The questions and answers are seen in Table 3, which summarizes the people's opinions about the acceptability of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path. Here is tried to provide only a few main questions, which can mainly reflect the public opinion about the path to a large extent. In this regard, the percentage (PCT) and count (CT) of each question have been calculated and finally, the total amount has been summed up through averaging each section.

Frequency percentages for the number of respondents to part 1 of the questionnaire have also been shown and figured in Fig. 13 in a clearer graphical vision. Now, an analytical description of public opinions can be presented verbally and explanatory due to the distribution of answers to each question and the general nature of them. In most cases, the total average of respondents reveals that the major part of people have confirmed that the construction of this path was a basic necessity and this decision was properly taken. Indeed, 70% of people are satisfied with this path, 20% are dissatisfied, and 10% are unresponsive and inattentive. However, it can be explained that some people believe that this path does not cover all the needs which is probably due to the lack of sufficient facilities and ignoring the rights of disabled people. A few have said that there are low security and safety which are probably due to insufficient lighting along the path. Creativity and mental health as two important factors somewhat

Table 1: SWOT analysis of environmental qualities of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path

		Strengths (S)	Weaknesses (W)
External factors	Internal factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Good environmental identity, vitality, and visual beauty of this path encourages the people to inhabit near of it;</li> <li>2. This path evokes the people to do sports and healthy activities which bring mental and physical health;</li> <li>3. It has a suitable and acceptable width, spatial dimension, and pavement;</li> <li>4. The visibility of Bagh-e-Sib produces environmental naturality and calmness;</li> <li>5. There are many valuable old and new green spaces along the path;</li> <li>6. There are several high potential public spaces along the path;</li> <li>7. There are several crosswalks for pedestrians along Danesh Blvd;</li> <li>8. Drip irrigation was used to water the green spaces.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The path is limited by roadways and not continued in adjacent fabrics;</li> <li>2. There are insufficient required daily facilities for users along the path;</li> <li>3. The path is so straight which causes visual exhaustion;</li> <li>4. Disregarding the importance of the community of disabled people;</li> <li>5. Conflicts of bicyclists and motorized vehicles, causing low safety and security;</li> <li>6. Lack of bicycle parking and signs;</li> <li>7. Lack of comfortable and suitable furniture;</li> <li>8. There is no suitable ceiling for benches to protect the users from seasonal changes like rain or sunlight;</li> <li>9. The number of lightings and their quality is low that reduces safety and security of the path at the night hours;</li> </ol>
Opportunities (O)		<p><u>SO Strategies</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Using open spaces along the path for public gatherings in the form of NGOs to strengthen the civil society and promoting citizen participation (S6,O1,O4);</li> <li>2. Developing an inclusive environment to create more lasting memories and civic culture for all users (S1,S2,S4,O2);</li> <li>3. Utilizing the open spaces to create some multifunctional attractive places, and therefore, bringing more economic and social benefits (S6,O3,O5);</li> <li>4. Using clean energies like solar panels and emphasis on natural resources for providing and boosting the environment and its sustainability (S5,S8,O6);</li> <li>5. Improving the safety and security of pedestrians and bicyclists to increase the public presence (S3,S7,O2).</li> </ol>	<p><u>WO Strategies</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Developing cultural and artistic activities on this path can be used as a source of economic profitability for redesigning and improving many of the physical and environmental deficiencies (W2,W6,W7,W8,O3,O5);</li> <li>2. Economic benefits and public enthusiasm for participation can be used as the essential factors for developing this path in surrounding fabrics (W1,O2,O3,O4);</li> <li>3. Economic investments and strengthening the civil relations can improve the level of public presence and safety of those who have disabilities (W4,O3,O4);</li> <li>4. Focusing on sustainability can encourage people to bicycle, thus the rate of using motorized vehicles is reduced and safety of path is automatically provided (W5,W9,O6).</li> </ol>
		<p><u>ST Strategies</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The environmental qualities and public activities of the path can be preserved through general culturalization and education in a disinterested fashion of popular participation between specialists and people (S2,S4,S5,T1,T2,T3);</li> <li>2. Several clear urban laws can be enacted for preserving the valuable lands and spaces of this environment from corrupted officials in municipalities (S6,T5);</li> <li>3. This path, as well as other similar paths, can be developed in surrounding fabrics to balance the economic and social conditions of future times (S1,T4);</li> <li>4. Equal distribution of the economic funds and urban facilities in other adjacent neighborhoods must be observed to prevent irregular constructions and excessive demand for living near the path (S1,T6).</li> </ol>	<p><u>WT Strategies</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Providing favorable circumstances and eliminating the environmental flaws for pedestrians and cyclists (even some opportunities like holding cycling competitions on this path) can reduce the traffic congestion caused by motorized vehicles, and also can redress the noise and air pollution as well (W5,W6,W7,W8,T2,T3);</li> <li>2. The creation of a series of small-scale facilities along the path can avoid undesirable commercial developments in the adjacent fabrics (W2,T6);</li> <li>3. Further development of the path in the surrounding fabrics can improve the environmental qualities and also can control the centralized urban developments around the path (W1,T1).</li> </ol>
Threats (T)		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. This path might face with environmental degradation in the absence of a controlled process for the adjacent urban developments;</li> <li>2. Noise and air pollution caused by Danesh Blvd can decrease the path;</li> <li>3. Congestion and traffic jams may appear due to likely commercial developments and inefficient public transport in the future of path;</li> <li>4. This path is the only one in Mehrshahr neighborhood and can increase the land prices and lead social detachment without a doubt;</li> <li>5. The authorities may want to abuse the path and the garden again in the future;</li> <li>6. High probability of growing the construction rates and building densities in adjacent fabrics.</li> </ol>	



### Does NIMBY work in Iran?

Table 2: Frequency percentages and counts for the number of respondents by gender and age

Age	Gender				All	
	Male		Female			
	PCT	CT	PCT	CT	PCT	CT
Up to 17 (School Age)	8 %	98	3 %	37	11 %	135
18 to 24 (College Age)	16 %	192	9 %	106	25 %	298
25 to 44 (Young Adult)	18 %	221	15 %	184	33 %	405
45 to 64 (Older Adult)	14 %	163	7 %	85	21 %	248
65 plus (Older)	6 %	68	4 %	46	10 %	114
Total	62 %	742	38 %	458	100 %	1200

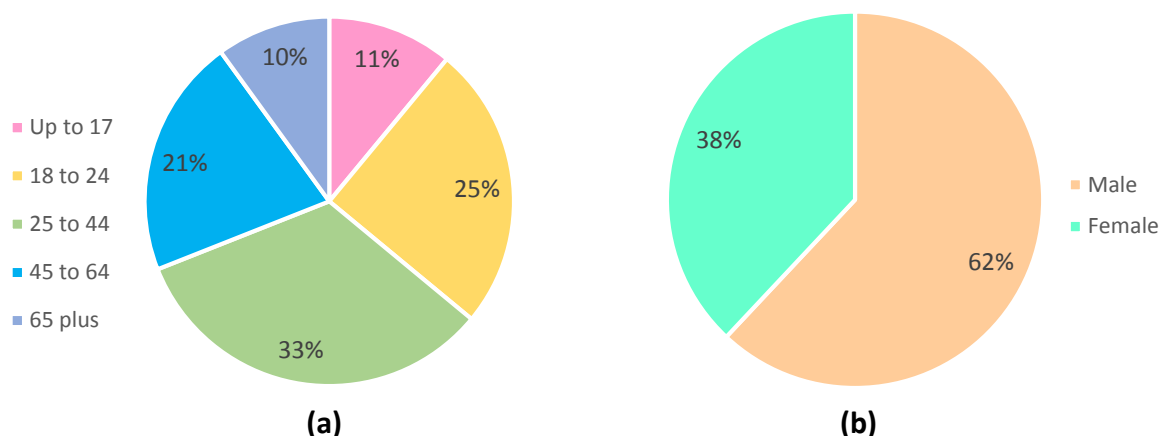


Fig. 12: (a) Percentage of respondents by age; (b) Percentage of respondents by gender

Table 3: Frequency percentages and counts for the number of respondents based on questions and their answers

Questions	Answers					
	Yes		No		Non-response	
	PCT	CT	PCT	CT	PCT	CT
Q1) Do you think that the construction of this path was necessary?	73 %	876	19 %	228	8 %	96
Q2) Do you feel any comfort and vitality on this path?	81 %	972	19 %	228	----	0
Q3) Do you believe that this path meets all the needs and tastes?	65 %	780	28 %	336	7 %	84
Q4) Do you have any security and safety on this path?	74 %	888	26 %	312	----	0
Q5) Does being here improve your creativity and mental health?	62 %	744	27 %	324	11 %	132
Q6) Do you allow your children to come here?	67 %	804	2 %	24	31 %	372
Total average of respondents	70 %	844	20 %	242	10 %	114

have been criticized by the public which is probably due to the overcrowding of traffic congestion on Danesh Blvd right beside the path. A high percentage of respondents who did not answer the last question probably did not own a child, and a small percentage of the answers to this question is negative; this means that this path almost provides an acceptable environment for children too.

### Real nature of the project; Part 2 of questionnaire

This part is to examine the nature of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path deeper, based on public opinions to uncover the fallacies and dilemmas hiding behind the beautiful appearance of it. Unlike the previous part of the questionnaire (part 1), this part carries more conceptual questions with a critical viewpoint in order to be able to comment on the

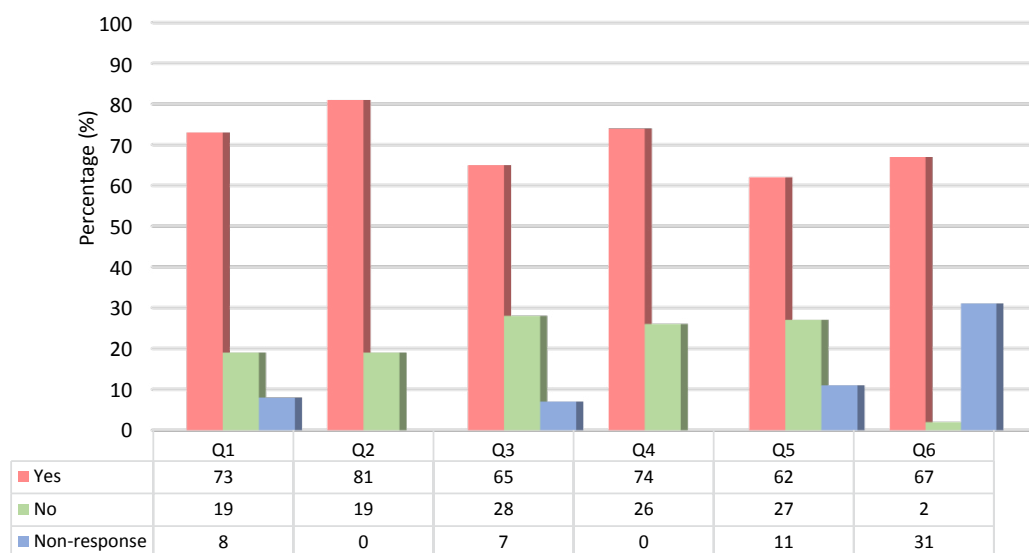


Fig. 13: Frequency percentages for the number of respondents to questions based on answers; part 1 of questionnaire

general acceptance of the social and political nature of the path. As illustrated in Table 4, the percentage (PCT) and count (CT) of each question have been calculated; after that, the analytical descriptions are provided based on the public answers. Considering the critical nature of the questions and their differences (some are negative and some others are positive), the total amount of approximation has not been averaged. Moreover, the option of non-response has not been provided in order to force the people to express their own comments without ignoring the questions. In this regard, the nature of the path can be critically examined by integrating the contents of the questions with the public replies.

After comparing the Figs. 13 and 14, it might seem confusing and perplexing that rather than

public acceptance of the environmental qualities of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path, there are many public criticisms against the nature of it. This matter originates from the political and social problems in Iran. This is very interesting that when the attention comes to deeper issues rather than sole appearances, more substantive problems are revealed. According to the contents of the questions and the answers given by the people (Table 4), this path is totalitarian and deterministic in nature despite the general acceptability of the environmental qualities of it. As mentioned previously, the construction of this path was carried out in a response to public protests against the destruction of Bagh-e-Sib, and now it is revealed that this path probably built up just to put an end to public protests; but rather than all these

Table 4: Frequency percentages and counts for the number of respondents based on questions and their answers

Questions	Answers			
	Yes		No	
	PCT	CT	PCT	CT
Q1) Have your opinion been surveyed before constructing this path?	0 %	0	100 %	1200
Q2) Have you participated during the construction of this path?	3 %	36	97 %	1164
Q3) Do you know the real designer of this path?	7 %	84	93 %	1116
Q4) Do you think that the construction of this path prevents Bagh-e-Sib from being destroyed?	11 %	132	89 %	1068
Q5) Would you like that this path to be expanded and developed in the future?	98 %	1176	2 %	24
Q6) Would you like to participate in the future development of this path?	91 %	1092	9 %	108

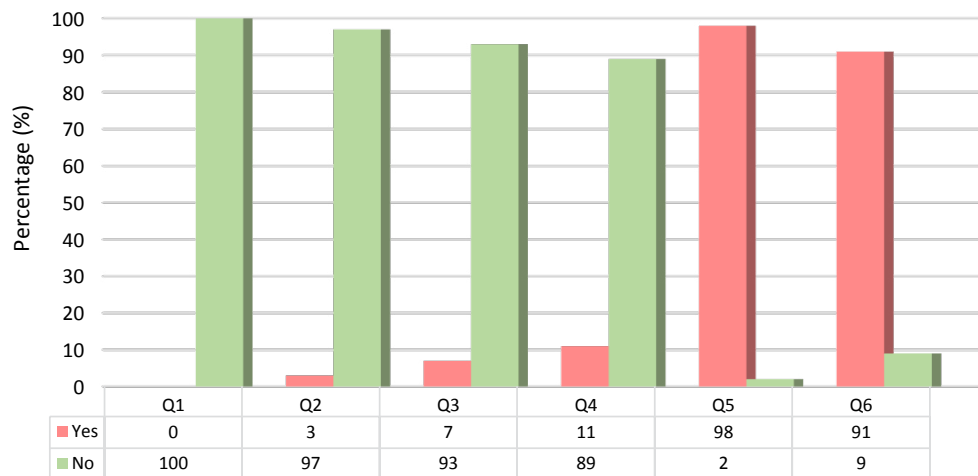


Fig. 14: Frequency percentages for the number of respondents to questions based on answers; part 2

issues, the beauty and singularity of this path cannot be denied, but locals are still unhappy because they failed to participate in the construction of the path. Here two issues arise: the first one is that the urban plans and projects should not be taken into consideration after public protests and it must be done through direct participation of people, right before the public objections. And the second one is that the government should not present unjustifiable policies that make people suspicious.

## CONCLUSION

The overall results of this article showed that the environment of Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path is acceptable and all but good from the public and expert viewpoints, while its nature publicly got many criticisms. After considering all the environmental assessments, it can be seen that the physical attributes and appearances of the path are in good shape and carries acceptable visual identity and vitality which ostensibly strengthens the public presence. Yet it also bears several flaws within this dimension: it is surrounded by roadways, not continued in adjacent fabric, disregards the community with disabilities, all but a few. Yes, it is a fact that these things can go beyond the limits and negatively affect many social and economic features of the path, but at the same time, they can be solved easily. Initial observational results and the first part

of the questionnaire revealed that public objection, greatly worked toward materializing a beautiful, charming, partly efficient, active, and dynamic path. However, it strongly recommended that this path needs to be developed in future plans and should be expanded all over the Mehrshahr neighborhood, in real continuous shape. The vital and compatible land uses and facilities should also be provided inside and outside of the path. The rights of disabled people must be reconsidered and the bicycle path must be improved with appropriate signs, special parking lots, and whatever is needed.

On the other side, the second part of the questionnaire showed that despite the public acceptance of the environmental qualities, people carry a deep criticisms about the nature of this path. The public opinions revealed that this path is totalitarian in nature. Public participation was not done and people are only passive users. People do not trust in authorities and they are afraid that the Bagh-e-Sib will be threatened again and something exotic will be erected. For this reason, it is proposed that a number of NGOs should be set up for socially empowering the locals to participate in future developments, as they showed their interests during the interviews. Moreover, the officials should be honest with people and inform them about the plans and designs. This is a fact that people must be active participants in the process of development



through a disinterested fashion. Incapability of the authorities makes the people suspicious. People testify the necessity of constructing the path but they think that it may be for future deceptions and abuse. Nevertheless, the anonymity of the real designer of this path make the situation as skeptical as possible; people only know that the budget and process of construction of this path has been provided and guided by the municipality. This matter certainly deteriorates citizen responsibility to a large extent. Through a more specialized look at the structure of this path, its artificiality cannot be ignored which partly stems from the discontinuity of the path in the surrounding urban fabric, resembling an island that restricted in the middle of the ocean. Therefore it must be further developed as an urban continuum.

Now after all these statements, the role of NIMBY syndrome in provoking parochialism must be partly affirmed.

It said "Partly" because although NIMBY did not work in our case in a complete manner, but people did not let officials demolish the Bagh-e-Sib. Yes, unfortunately the local people focused on small sections of the issue rather than considering it in a wider and shotgun context, but at the same time they courageously prevented an urban disaster. It is noteworthy to mention that NIMBY vaguely comes to reality with a high degree of confusion in Iran. Somehow it works, and somehow it doesn't. The Danesh Pedestrian and Bicycle Path offers a good environment but still there is a lack of real social characteristics. People just use and enjoy what municipal authorities gave to them. But here there is a good acceptable urban setting that people can use it to reclaim the context again, to participate in the future development of it, to turn it into something really social and publicly accepted; something profoundly against the shibboleths of unreasonable.

#### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The two paper authors; M. Sattarad Fathi and N. Jahed have participated equally in all aspects of preparation and writing.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to thank Professor Henry Sanoff who was always inspiring and advisory at all stages of our scientific researches. Also, the Faculty of

Architecture and Urbanism of both Imam Khomeini International University and Middle East Technical University are appreciated.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancy have been completely observed by the authors.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

%	Percentage
<i>Bldv</i>	Boulevard
<i>CT</i>	Count
<i>ha</i>	Hectare
<i>km</i>	Kilometer
<i>m</i>	Meter
<i>NIMBY</i>	Not in my back yard
<i>PCT</i>	Percentage
<i>Q</i>	Question
<i>ST</i>	Street

#### REFERENCES

- Anciães, P.R., (2011). Urban transport, pedestrian mobility and social justice; a GIS analysis of the case of the Lisbon metropolitan area. Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Geography and Environment, University of London.
- Appleyard, D.; Gerson, M.S; Lintell M., (1976). Liveable urban streets: Managing auto traffic in neighborhoods. Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, Washington.
- Behzadfar, M.; Abdi, F.; Mohammadi, M., (2014). Evaluating the physical and psychological indicators effective on promotion of the pedestrian-based capacity of major urban spaces of Farahzad village of Tehran. Int. J. Architectural Eng. Urban Plann., 24(1): 45-55 (11 pages).
- Booher, D., (2008). Civic engagement and the quality of urban places, Plan. Theory Pract., 9(3): 383-394 (12 pages).
- Burden, D.; Wallwork, M.; Sides, K.; Trias, R.; Rue, H., (1999). Street design guidelines for healthy neighborhoods. Centre for Livable Communities, Sacramento, CA.
- Burke, N.M.; Chomitz, V.R.; Ríoles, N.A.; Winslow, S.P.; Brukilacchio, L.B.; Baker, J.C., (2009). The path to active living: physical activity through community design in Somerville, Massachusetts. Am. J. Prev. Med., 37(6): 386-394 (9 pages).
- Carmona, M.; Heath, T.; Oc, T.; Tiesdell, S., (2010). Public places urban spaces: the dimension of urban design. Architectural Press, Oxford.

- Craig, C.L.; Brownson, R.C.; Cragg, S.E.; Dunn, A.L., (2002). Exploring the effect of the environment on physical activity: a study examining walking to work. *Am. J. Prev. Med.*, 23(2): 36-43 **(8 pages)**.
- Forsyth, A.; Krizek, K., (2011). Urban design: Is there a distinctive view from the bicycle?. *J. Urban Des.*, 16(4), 531-549.
- Hawthorne, W., (1989). Why Ontarians walk, why Ontarians don't walk more: A study of the walking habits of Ontarians. Energy Probe Research Foundation, Toronto.
- Healey, P., (2008). Civic engagement, spatial planning and democracy as a way of life. *Plan. Theory Pract.*, 9(3): 379-382 **(4 pages)**.
- Jacobs, A.B., (1993). *Great streets*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Leyden, K.M., (2003). Social capital and the built environment: the importance of walkable neighborhoods. *Am. J. Public Health*, 93(9): 1546-1551 **(6 pages)**.
- Lynch, K., (1984). *The theory of good city form*. The MIT Press, Cambridge.
- Naghbi, E.; Habib, F.; Shabani, A., (2015). Pedestrian area design to promote social interaction (case study: Isfahan Khajoo neighborhood). *Int. j. archit. urban dev.*, 5(2): 31-42 **(12 pages)**.
- Nielsen, J., (2002). *Field studies done right: Fast and observational*. Nielsen Norman Group.
- Ranjbar, E.; Rais Esmaili, F., (2010). Quality assessment of pedestrian streets in Iran; case study: Saf (Sepahsalar), Tehran. *Honar-Ha-Ye-Ziba*, 2(42): 83-99 **(17 pages)**; (In Persian).
- Rezaei, M., (2014). Walk ability criteria; the role of walk ability in improving the sense of place. *Honar-Ha-Ye-Ziba*, 18(4): 15-24 **(10 pages)**. (In Persian).
- Sanoff, H., (2011). Multiple views of participatory design. *Focus*, 8(1): 11-21 **(11 pages)**.
- Shinkle, D.; Teigen, A., (2008). Encouraging bicycling and walking: The state legislative role. *The National Conference of State Legislatures*, Washington.
- Toth, G.; Volk, H.; Walljasper, J.; Singer, A., (2008). *A citizen's guide to better streets; how to engage your transportation agency*. Project for Public Spaces, Inc, New York.
- Untermann, R.K., (1984). *Accommodating the pedestrian: Adapting towns and neighbourhoods for walking and bicycling*. Van Nostrand Reinhold, New York.
- Wates, N., (2006). *The community planning handbook; how people can shape their cities, towns and villages in any part of the world*. Earthscan, UK.
- Wehrich, H., (1982). The TOWS matrix a tool for situational analysis. *Long Range Planning*, 15(2): 54-66 **(13 pages)**.
- Whyte, W.H., (2001). *The social life of small urban spaces*. Project for Public Spaces, New York.

#### COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with publication rights granted to the IJHCUM Journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



#### HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Sattar zad Fathi, M.; Jahed, N., (2020). Does NIMBY work in Iran? The unexpected case of Danesh Pedestrian and bicycle path, *Int. J. Hum. Capital Urban Manage.*, 5(1): 69-84.

DOI: 10.22034/IJHCUM.2020.01.08

url: [http://www.ijhcum.net/article\\_38900.html](http://www.ijhcum.net/article_38900.html)

