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Professional paper

STRIVING FOR INCLUSION: ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF URBAN PUBLIC SPACES IN TETOVO

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Abstract

In the last few years, the number of people living in the city is constantly increasing, due to ongoing migration from rural to urban areas. The increase in population is followed by an increase in diversity within the city, which results in a large number of people with different characteristics and needs that must be accepted, fulfilled, and respected.

Therefore, one of the current challenges in city planning is the design of inclusive spaces that are welcoming to all citizens regardless of their gender, age, nationality, economic circumstances, disability identity, or religion. It is time that urban design revolves around the needs of residents, and the built environment allows everybody to enjoy equal rights and access to every part of the city.

Considering that in terms of inclusion the unbuilt environment is as important as the built environment, this paper will focus on the research of public open spaces, as an important part of the urban landscape which should be enjoyed by all.

Through field observations in Iliria Square, this research aims to expand how we evaluate the capacity for inclusion in public space, find out whether users in public spaces experience these spaces as inclusive, and if contrarily, find out why so and how to fight exclusion, how these spaces can be changed and improved.

This paper will hopefully raise awareness for the design of inclusive spaces in the city and serve as a stimulus and valuable knowledge base for future research on this topic.

Keywords: Inclusive cities, inclusive urban development, public space, public participation, urban planning.

1 Introduction

Living in the city is attractive to many people because there are more job opportunities, a variety of events and cultural activities, and richer social life. However, not everyone can enjoy these benefits because some groups face challenges living in the city. (Micek & Staszewska, 2019)

Urban development has brought many benefits, but it also has created inequalities that need to be addressed. Different groups of citizens face different problems, but they all are the results of policies and planning that did not have inclusion in mind. Policymakers need to consider the needs of all people and create cities that are livable, sustainable, inclusive, and supportive of the community. To promote social inclusion across cities, it is crucial to recognize and assist all the individuals who make a difference. (Antunes, Barroca, & Oliveira, 2021)

In the book “The Just City”, Susan Fainstein talks about how local policies can make the city more integrative or more divisive, which means that everyone can feel more included or excluded depending on the rules. Some people like those with disabilities or the elderly, may have a harder time in the city because they cannot move around as easily or do not have access to some places. Due to limited options, they feel isolated and insecure, which affects their physical and mental health. Therefore, it is important for people who make decisions about cities to think about people with disabilities, the elderly, women, and children, what different groups need and want, for facilities in the city to be for everyone not only certain groups. (Fainstein, 2010)

Cities have different areas that are more expensive and attractive to wealthy people, while poorer people are often left with less desirable and neglected areas. In 2013, Secchi published his last book, "The City of the Rich and the city of the poor", where he mentions that people often encounter injustice due to their economic situation and according to him, this is a problem that must be solved by city planners who are responsible for addressing these inequalities and making cities more sustainable and fairer. All the advantages that a city offers, such as good jobs and education, attract people to move to the city, but creating a positive image, equality, and identity for the city, so people want to live there or come visit is also important. (Secchi, 2013)

An inclusive city is a place where everyone can be included and have opportunities, no matter their social status, ethnicity, race, gender, or religion. According to this definition, equity and accessibility are seen as the most vital elements for sustainability. It is important, when making decisions about the city, to do so together, by including everyone, we can use citizens' knowledge and skills to make the city better. (Singru, et al., 2022)

2 Public spaces and inclusion

Public spaces present multi-functional areas that provide a variety of activities, such as social interaction, economic trade, and cultural expression among different groups of people. These spaces must be established and organized by urban planning and design, to enhance a sense of identity and belonging while facilitating and encouraging their use. Public spaces are places that belong to everyone and where all people exercise their shared right to the city without showing how much money they have or what social class they belong to. These spaces, like parks, playgrounds, and squares, are the embodiment of equity, made for everyone to use and enjoy. In an equitable city, everyone has access to nice places for free, no matter their background. (Un-Habitat, 2018)

These places help define what a city looks like and how people use it. In an ideal city, everyone's basic needs like housing, education, and health are taken care of. But public spaces go beyond that and provide a place for people to come together, work together, and make their city better. They are also a great place for people to get involved in planning and improving their neighborhoods. (Efroymson, Ha, & Ha, 2009)

It is important to remember that public spaces are more than just physical locations, their use and atmosphere also have an impact on their image and the people who use them. These spaces promote a sense of community, help the economy, and have many other benefits like improving the environment and public health. A good public space should make people feel at home, physically and emotionally, because if one group dominates a space, it can make others feel left out. A successful public space generally needs to offer four qualities: (Madden, 2021)

- it should be accessible,
- it should be comfortable and have a good image,
- people should be able to engage in many activities, and,
- it should be sociable.

In general, an inclusive public space is commonly seen as a "public space for all". It indicates that while using a public space, people should not be discriminated against by their gender, age, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, cultural background, socioeconomic status, and/or personal values. These spaces are the center of public life and an important part of our unbuilt environment. For marginalized populations who do not have access to paid services or private spaces in the city, open public spaces are significant. When people use a public space, a built form is transformed into a meaningful location with shared memories and the synthesis of identities. Being in an inclusive space is both a physical and emotional experience. (Zhou, 2019)

3 Inclusive public spaces around the world

Many cities in Europe, are working hard towards inclusion, and making sure that citizens and tourists of all ages and abilities can enjoy their cities. Below we present some cities like London, Barcelona, and Amsterdam as good examples of inclusive urban development.

3.1 *London-Trafalgar Square:*

Trafalgar Square in London is a big, popular and lively square in the middle of the city, which fulfills all the requirements of being a successful square. Mainly because of its location, it intersects with the most important streets of the city, one of which is the road that leads to Buckingham Palace and every activity that happens passes through this square, which makes the square function as a node of social activities. (Major, et al., 1999)

Trafalgar Square is accessible to people with disabilities. The square has been adapted to provide accessibility for visitors with mobility impairments, visual impairments, and hearing impairments. Here are some of the accessibility features of the Square: (Major, et al., 1999)

- Accessible transportation: There are several bus stations near the square, and many buses and trains have ramps to provide access for people with mobility difficulties.
- Accessible pathways: The square has accessible pathways that are flat and wide, making it easy for visitors with mobility impairments to navigate around the square.
- Tactile paving: The square has tactile paving to aid visually impaired people to move around. The paving is designed to alert people with visual impairments when crossing the road or facing elevation changes.
- Sign language interpretation: Sign language interpreting is available for some events and performances in Trafalgar Square for the hearing impaired.

Figure 1. Accessibility and inclusion in Trafalgar Square, London. (source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333601392_In_with_the_Right_Crowd_Crowd_movement_and_space_use_in_Trafalgar_Square_during_the_New_Year%27s_Eve_celebrations/figures?lo=1&utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic)

Overall, Trafalgar Square is accessible to people with disabilities. The square has been adapted to provide accessibility for visitors with all disabilities. (Major, et al., 1999)

3.2 *Barcelona:*

Lately, Barcelona has made great progress in improving accessibility and inclusivity for people with disabilities. One of the biggest advances has been the implementation of accessible transportation. The city's metro system has been adapted to accommodate people with disabilities, including wheelchair users.

In terms of accessibility in public spaces, Barcelona has also made significant improvements. The city has installed tactile paving to aid visually impaired people in navigating the streets, and many sidewalks have been widened to make room for wheelchair users. Many of the city's tourist attractions, such as museums

and galleries, have ramps and elevators installed to allow people with disabilities to access all areas. (Versteegh, 2020)

3.3 *Amsterdam:*

Amsterdam is a beautiful city with a rich history and culture. However, it is also a city that is committed to making itself accessible to all people, regardless of their physical abilities. This means is a great example for other cities to follow. Here are some examples of accessibility measures implemented in Amsterdam:

- Public transport: One of the main ways in which Amsterdam has made itself accessible is through its public transportation system. Buses, trains, and metro lines are designed to be accessible to people with disabilities, they are equipped with ramps or lifts, and there are designated spaces for wheelchairs on all public transportation vehicles. Additionally, all metro stations are equipped with elevators and tactile paving to help visually impaired individuals navigate the system.
- Streets and sidewalks: The city has implemented a program called "Amsterdam Without Barriers," which aims to make the city's streets and sidewalks more accessible to people with disabilities. This program includes actions like constructing more accessible parking spaces, widening sidewalks, and installing curb cuts. Additionally, the city has implemented a system of tactile paving that helps visually impaired individuals navigate the city.
- Public buildings and facilities: All public buildings in Amsterdam are required to be accessible to people with disabilities, and many of these buildings have been retrofitted with ramps, elevators, and other accessibility features.
- Assistive technology: The city has a system of audio beacons that provide information to visually impaired individuals about their surroundings and there are also apps available that provide information about accessibility features in the city.
- Inclusive design: Finally, Amsterdam has also embraced the concept of inclusive design, which involves designing products, services, and environments that are accessible to everyone, regardless of their abilities. This approach is reflected in the design of public spaces, buildings, and transportation systems in the city, and has helped to make Amsterdam a more inclusive and welcoming place for everyone. (Tidley, 2023)

4 Practices and methods in assessing and evaluating public spaces with a focus on inclusivity and equity

When designing inclusive public spaces, it is important to learn what has worked well in the past and what challenges still exist. There are some studies and guidelines related to public space inclusion, however, there is a lack of research on how to evaluate public space. After analyzing several studies, guidelines, rules, and policies, it was concluded that the most frequently used approaches and methodologies can be summed up as follows: (Zhou, 2019)

- Context research
- Observational research
- Qualitative information

4.1 *Context research:*

Contextual research is important because it enables knowledge about the surrounding environment, and the history of the place, and provides information about the people who use and visit the place, the environmental conditions, etc. During this type of research, data is collected at the relevant institutions about the city demographics, income, health, as well as public resources. How people use spaces will

depend on the local population's features. An area's ethnic diversity, and age distribution, will affect how public spaces are used. A complete analysis of all the historical plans, policies, and procedures that impacted the public space, is also advisable. (Ercan & Memlük, 2015)

The history of Iliria square began years before when Macedonia was part of the Republic of Yugoslavia. At that time, the square had a different urban design, which changed under the influence of political and historical circumstances. The biggest changes can be seen in the 1960s and 1970s when the square was given a more modern look. A walking area, a variety of sculptures, and artistic elements were designed to give the square a special character.

Near Iliria Square are located some of the most important buildings, including the Centre of Culture, New Shopping Centre, Museum of Tetovo, and several other institutions. The square is frequented by residents and tourists, especially during the summer when there are many cultural, and musical activities, It is where people meet, relax, and enjoy coffee, restaurants, and the atmosphere of the city.

1933 1969 2004 2023

Figure 2. Iliria square in Tetovo, from 1933 to 2023 (source: Tetovo virtual museum)

Research continues with the collection of data from the State Statistical Office, for the population in Tetovo. The collected data are based on the 2021 census, while the categories that have been researched are: gender, age, ethnicity, religion, social status, disability status and others.

TABLE 1. TOTAL RESIDENT POPULATION BY GENDER (SOURCE: STATE STATISTICAL OFFICE)

Male	Female	Total - Gender
41663	43107	84770

The needs, aspirations, and safety of women and girls are rarely, if ever considered when most cities are built by men, for men. Women who live in the cities may suffer from violence, poverty, a lack of job prospects, and a lack of influence over public and private decision-making. According to Tetovo gender statistics, 51% of the population is female, so while designing public spaces, not only the needs of women but also their thoughts and perspectives should be considered.

TABLE 2. TOTAL RESIDENT POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS (SOURCE: STATE STATISTICAL OFFICE)

0-14	15-65	65+	Total - Age group
16421	57921	10428	84770

The information is divided into three primary age groups: 0-14, 15-65 and over 65 years old. Statistics show that 68% of the population is between the ages 15-65, young people represent 20% of the population, while people over the age of 65 make up only 12% of the population. However, as the population grows,

the population of adult age also increases. To put it more accurately, we can see the diagram below from the Center for Statistics, which shows the growth in the population of those over 65.

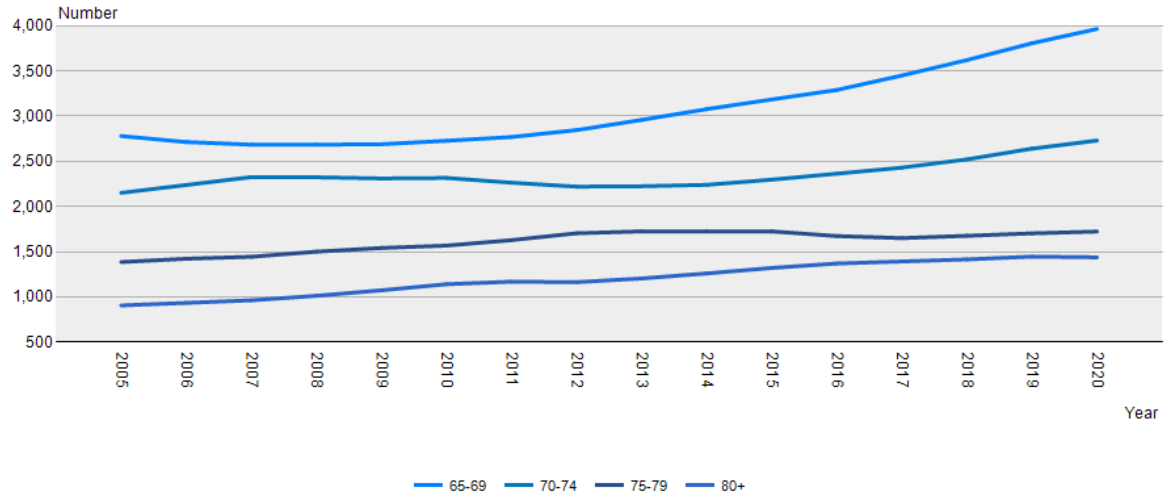

Figure 3. Population over 65 years in Tetovo, from 2005 to 2020 (source: State Statistical Office)

The data on religion and ethnicity notably reflect the diversity of the population, 72% of the population identify as Albanians, 18% as Macedonian, while 2% have Turkish and Roma representation; typically, people of Roma ethnicity are more discriminated by society due to prejudices. As for religion, 76% identify as Muslim, 16% as Orthodox, while the remaining 3% are members of other religions. This diversity, on the one hand, is positive as it enriches public spaces with different cultures, but caution must be taken to ensure that any disputes that may develop between various groups do not jeopardize the peace and safety of these areas.

TABLE 3. TOTAL RESIDENT POPULATION BY RELIGION (SOURCE: STATE STATISTICAL OFFICE)

Religious affiliation - TOTAL	Orthodox	Muslims (Islam)	Catholics	Christians	Protestants	Evangelists	Jehovah's Witnesses	Other	Atheist	Not declared	Unknown	Persons for whom data are taken from administrative sources
84770	13187	64468	191	2370	38	8	10	13	75	28	14	4368

TABLE 4. TOTAL RESIDENT POPULATION BY ETHNICITY (SOURCE: STATE STATISTICAL OFFICE)

Ethnic affiliation – TOTAL	Macedonians	Albanians	Turkish	Romans	Vlachs	Serbians	Bosnians	Other	Undeclared	Unknown	Persons for whom data are taken from administrative sources
84770	15529	60460	1746	1885	11	256	189	303	16	7	4368

The data on the working population aged 15 and over show that out of 68349 residents for 47012 residents there is no data on whether they are employed, meaning the income from this population group is undefined.

TABLE 5. TOTAL WORKING POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER (SOURCE: STATE STATISTICAL OFFICE)

Economic status for people over 15 y- TOTAL	Employed	Employer	Self-employed	Unpaid family worker	Other	Unknown
68349	20019	361	672	43	242	47012

TABLE 6. ACTIVE POPULATION AGED 15 AND OVER BY OCCUPATION (SOURCE: STATE STATISTICAL OFFICE)

Employees by occupation - TOTAL	Armed forces	Legislators, senior officials and managers	Professionals	Technicians and associate professionals	Clerks	Service workers and shop and market sales	Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	Craft and related trades workers	Plant and machine operators and assemblers	Elementary occupations	Unknown occupation
21337	234	1097	5773	4393	1042	3686	71	2158	756	1790	337

People with special needs, who make up 3% of the city's population, are another group that is crucial to this study. The limitations that are encountered more often are moving, seeing, hearing, communicating and others.

TABLE 7. TOTAL RESIDENT POPULATION BY DISABILITY STATUS (SOURCE: STATE STATISTICAL OFFICE)

Disability status - TOTAL	Yes, With disabilities	No, Without disabilities	Undeclared	Persons for whom data are taken from administrative sources	Unknown
84770	2916	74119	522	4368	2845

TABLE 8. TOTAL RESIDENT POPULATION BY TYPE OF DISABILITY (SOURCE: STATE STATISTICAL OFFICE)

Type of difficulty - TOTAL	Moving	Seeing	Hearing	Communicating	Other difficulties
2916	1064	400	151	108	1193

From the data obtained, we can conclude that the population in Tetovo is diverse, and during the design of public spaces, care must be taken while considering the needs and demands of one group, not penalizing others.

4.2 *Observational research:*

Watching and taking notes on how people use public spaces is a common way to study them. We can count how many people are in the space, or we can watch and write down what are they doing and how are they interacting with each other. Some people even take time-lapse videos to see how the space is used over time. Different researchers have used different methods to gather this kind of information, like counting

how many people are walking or biking through the space, mapping out what people are doing, or taking notes on what the space looks like. (Lorenzo, Ríos-Rodríguez, Suárez, Hernández, & Rosales, 2023)

TABLE 9. COUNTS AND FLOW DURING DIFFERENT TIMES AND DAYS – PEDESTRIAN, CYCLISTS, ETC.

Age group	0-14		15-65		65+		Vehicles			
Gender	F	M	F	M	F	M				
Wednesday 22.02.22023										
15:00-15:10	7	10	36	24	12	6	/	/	9	/
15:30-15:40	20	13	40	20	7	7	2	2	8	/
Thursday 23.02.2023										
14:50-15:00	17	10	32	16	9	10	1	5	7	/
15:20-15:30	18	12	43	18	5	9	/	/	6	
Friday 24.02.2023										
15:30-15:40	33	28	53	23	9	14	/	2	4	/
15:50-16:00	24	29	38	32	4	5	4	1	5	/
Saturday 25.02.2023										
15:20-15:30	20	19	49	33	4	3	/	2	8	/
15:40-15:50	17	28	62	21	7	9	2	3	2	/
Sunday 26.02.2023										
14:50-15:00	8	11	15	20	2	6	1	/	/	/
15:20-15:30	7	12	11	14	3	3	/	4	2	/
Monday 06.03.2023										
17:10-17:20	34	20	105	33	6	16	1	3	/	/
17:30-17:40	40	17	113	62	9	15	/	/	1	/
Tuesday										

07.03.2023										
12:30-12:40	24	19	139	54	34	17	1	3	7	1
12:50-13:00	27	21	160	67	44	19	/	/	7	2
Thursday 09.03.2023										
14:30-14:40	24	11	57	32	24	8	/	2	6	/
14:50-15:00	20	18	77	22	14	9	/	4	7	/
Friday 10.03.2023										
14:00-14:10	5	2	29	19	2	11	/	1	1	/
14:20-14:30	3	4	36	18	3	7	/	1	1	/

Field research was carried out during February and March, at first the measurements were taken at the same time for a week, then measurements were carried out at different times, morning, noon, afternoon, and evening. During the observations, the counts and flow of pedestrians were noted, and the same were recorded according to gender, age group, and the presence of disability. Then the collected data were analyzed and compared with the data from the statistical center according to gender, age, and the presence of limited ability.

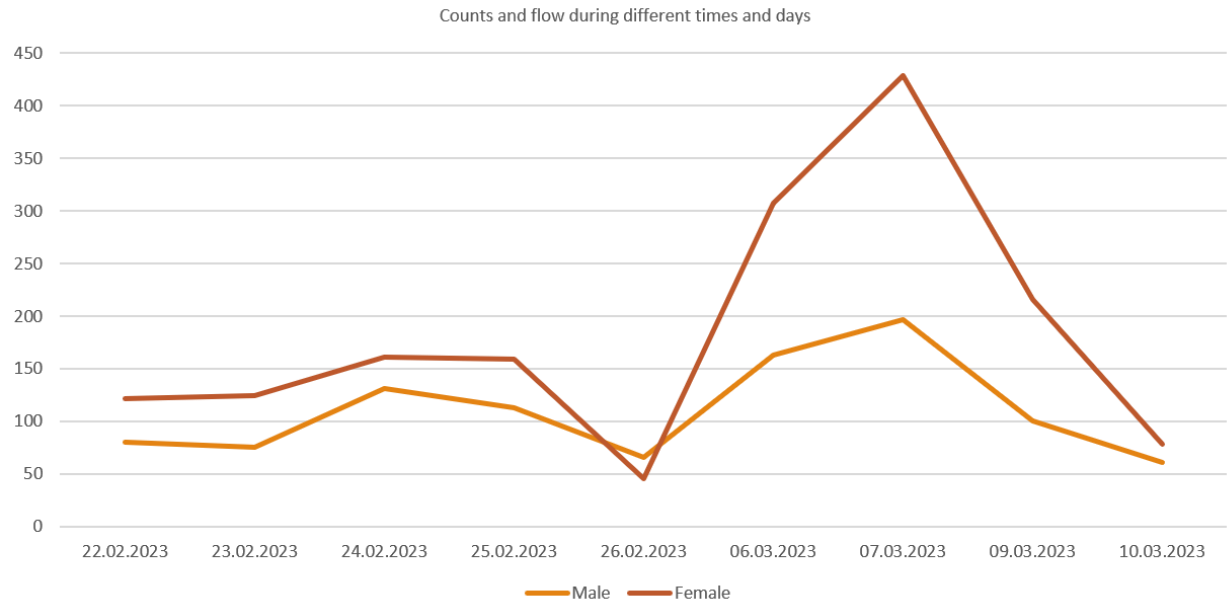

Figure 4. Counts and flow according to gender

According to Tetovo's gender statistics, 51% of the population is female, and field observations show that women are more likely to visit square than men are-with the exception of Sunday, February 22, 2023, when there were more men on the field. A noteworthy aspect of this observation is that although it was anticipated that fewer women would attend the plaza in the evening, field study has revealed that women still frequent the square more often even then.

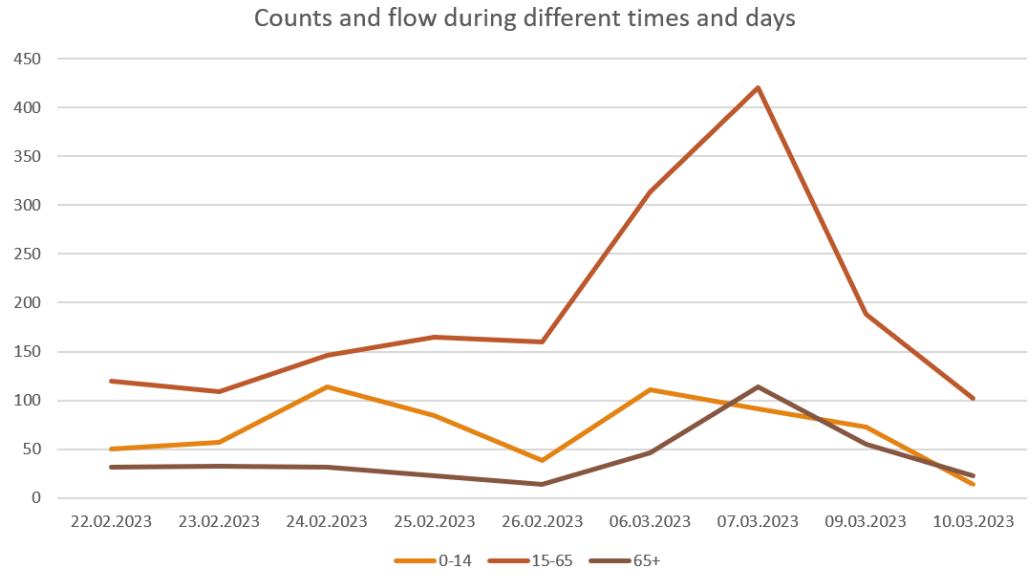

Figure 5. Counts and flow according to age groups

According to statistics, 68% of the population is between the 15-65 age group, and on the field, this age group was the most frequenters of the square, although the younger age groups were also present in significant numbers mainly due to the activities that take place in the square that are appropriate for their age. Elderly people were quite uncommon, their number was especially small during the weekend.

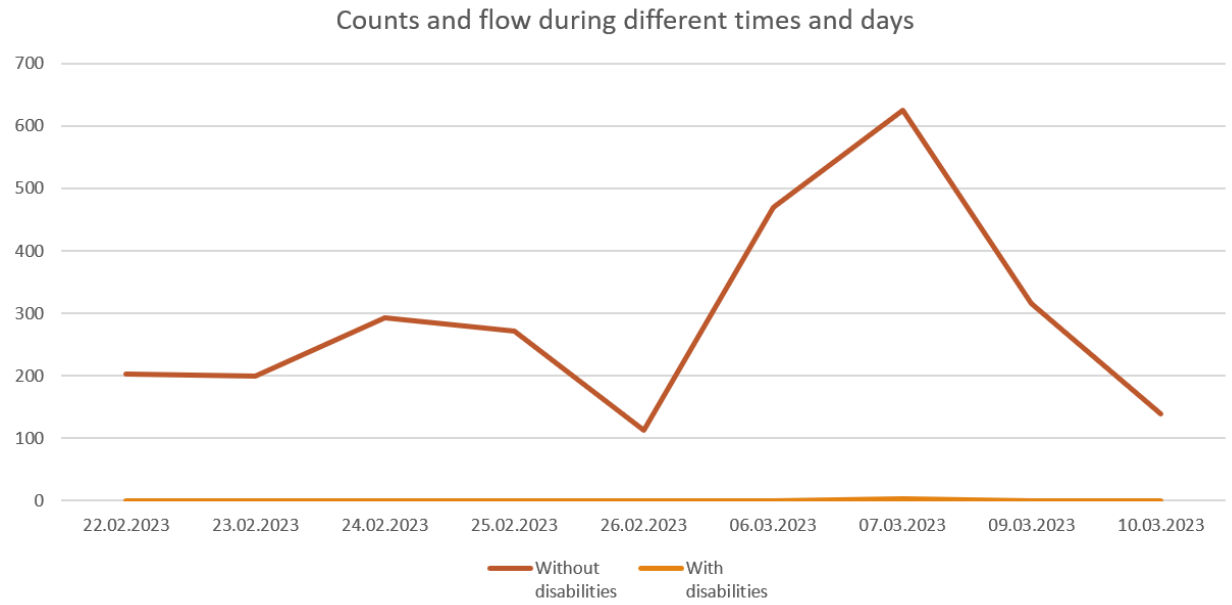

Figure 6. Counts and flow according to abilities

According to the statistics of 2021 in Tetovo, about 3000 residents have disabilities, but in field observations, the number of people with limited abilities was extremely low, more precisely during the measurements only 3 people with restricted movement were identified. These three people were all observed on March 7, when there were a variety of activities taking place in the square, including the sale of gifts and flowers in honor of International Women's Day and the teacher's holiday.

In addition to the number of visitors, their behavior and movement were also analyzed. These data are presented through the diagrams below. As can be seen, people tend to congregate around the seating areas along green spaces or in the cafes close to the square, while the central part, due to the lack of shadows,

usually does not serve as a gathering point. As for movement, the most frequented axis is the one that leads from Ilindenska Street to T.C. Street. Merdzan.

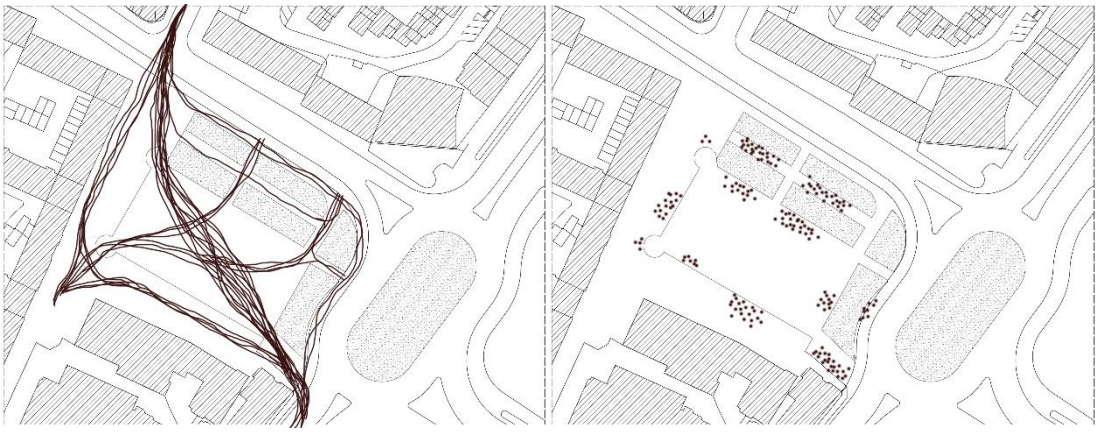

Figure 7. Movement and gathering points

4.3 *Qualitative information:*

Since inclusivity is tied to individual experiences, it is challenging to measure it using quantitative methods. Qualitative techniques can aid in the interpretation of a person's subjective perceptions of their experience in a public setting. Surveys and interviews are the most widely used techniques for collecting qualitative data from users of public spaces. (Zhou, 2019)

The possibility to collect qualitative data was severely limited due to the small number of individuals with special needs present in the square. Despite the fact that their perspective would have been useful in this research, we were unable to obtain information from visually impaired citizens.

Despite the fact that there are ramps and a large flat surface inside the square, people with mobility issues rarely visit because getting there is challenging due to a number of obstacles. This is according to the limited information that could be obtained from these individuals. They claim that because of the difficulties they face parking and crossing the roads on their own, they feel the need to be accompanied often. In addition to physical obstacles, people expressed that social prejudices were a very important reason for their low attendance at the square.

5 Factors affecting public space inclusivity

As we mentioned earlier, inclusion means equal rights for all citizens, not only the inclusion of disabled persons. But, since observational data indicate that people with disabilities have more limited access to public spaces and services, we must examine the causes that contribute to their exclusion.

Akkar Ercan and Oya Memlük (2015) in their paper, "More inclusive than before: The tale of a historic urban park in Ankara, Turkey," note that inclusion in public spaces is challenging since such concerns are "multiple," "site specific," and "interrelated." As a result, there are a variety of elements that can influence inclusion in public spaces. (Ercan & Memlük, 2015)

After extensive study and analysis, it was concluded that the majority of factors influencing inclusion in public spaces fall under three distinct but related dimensions: (Zhou, 2019)

- The Physical Environment
- The Personal Experience
- The Process & Context

Since personal experience and context were addressed earlier, in this part we will focus mainly on the physical environment as the main element that can enable or hinder inclusion. The way a space is designed can affect our health and mental well-being. Factors under this category are mostly tangible and can be measured or observed objectively, which means it is easier to evaluate if a place is good or not. For example, we can see and measure ramps and decide if they are accessible, or we can observe if the place has things that make us feel safe and comfortable, like art and cultural elements. A good space should be able to accommodate different activities and have public washrooms and seating nearby. Public spaces' inclusivity can be influenced by how easy it is to walk there and how good the transportation options are. The design of a space and how much it is watched over are also important. (Pancholi, Guaralda, & Yigitcanlar, 2017)

5.1 *Accessible routes:*

It is crucial to ensure that public places and cities are accessible to everyone. One way to do this is by making sure that paths leading to them are wide enough for wheelchairs and people to pass each other (1800 mm). The path also needs to be level with no steps or obstacles in the way. The ground should be firm and not slippery or cracked. The passage needs to be much wider if two wheelchairs need to pass one another (2400 mm). (Singru, et al., 2022)

Figure 8. Paths leading to Iliria square

According to field research, the majority of the paths leading to the square are wide enough to enable the movement of people with wheelchairs, but there are no relief lines that will help the navigation of people with visual impairments, and often the paths are not level, cracks or different physical obstacles such as parked cars, garbage and others can hinder movement.

5.2 *Pedestrian Crossings (Crosswalks):*

Crosswalks need to be easy to identify. The ground around them should have a bumpy texture that helps people with disabilities know when they are getting close to the crossing. There should be curb ramps on both sides of the road where the pavement meets the crossing, ramps should be easy to use for people with wheelchairs and other devices. The ramps and crossings should be clear of obstacles that could get in the way. If there are traffic lights, they should provide audio signals to tell people when it's safe to cross the street. (StudioArch & Foundation, 2016)

Figure 9. Crosswalks in Tetovo

Street crossings do not satisfy the requirements for movement of individuals with disabilities. The difficulty is present even when these people are accompanied, while independent movement is impossible, especially for blind people because there are no relief orientation lines or acoustic traffic lights. The white lines do not have a harsh texture and sometimes, they are completely absent. At the edge of the road, there are no curb ramps or they are damaged. Often the difference between pavement and the road is too high (over 5 cm) and hinders the movement of people with mobility difficulties.

5.3 Parking space:

Parking spaces that are accessible are crucial because many disabled people are dependent on cars to get somewhere. There ought to be access aisles between parking spaces for the disabled. To give a safe area to retrieve items from the back, it is advisable to leave clear space at the rear of a parking space. A common access aisle can be shared by two parking spaces. To connect to a pedestrian access route, there must be a ramp or an access aisle. (Singru, et al., 2022)

Figure 10. Parking spaces near Iliria square in Tetovo

There are three parking spaces near the public space, but none of them are designed according to standards.

5.4 *Public Transport:*

To ensure that the residents of various locations within the city have equal access to public transportation, the locations of its hubs, stops, and stations should be dispersed throughout the city. There shouldn't be any steps or obstacles toward the stops. Outdoor shelters are a crucial component of the transportation infrastructure because they protect waiting passengers from the elements while also guaranteeing their safety. Benches and seats for resting should be provided in shelters, as well as enough floor space for wheelchair users. Wide aisles and extra floor space should be included in the interior design of buses and trains. (StudioArch & Foundation, 2016)

Figure 11. Public transport in Tetovo

Public transport is one of the main problems that people with disabilities face every day in Tetovo. They have difficulty using public transport because there are no ramps, acoustic signals and navigation boards near the stations. Some of the urban transport vehicles are equipped with a ramp, but in most cases, the people in charge do not pay enough attention to open it, which makes it impossible for wheelchair users to use public transport. While visually impaired people have difficulty in perceiving their location, in the absence of acoustic systems.

5.5 *Ramps:*

The following are prerequisites for ramps: the slope must not be steeper than 1:12. The clear width must be at least 900 mm wide. Ramps must have level landings with a clear width of at least 1,500 mm long. Handrails should be present on both sides of ramps higher than 150 mm. (Singru, et al., 2022)

Figure 12. Ramps of public buildings near Iliria square

In most cases, public buildings near the square have ramps for access, however, their width, slope and safety remain to be discussed.

5.6 *Wayfinding and Signage:*

A safe environment is created with the help of effective, understandable signage. The fonts used should be Arial-style and easily readable. Italic, highly decorative, or other unusually formatted text should not be used. The background and the characters shouldn't have a reflective finish, and they must stand out against one another (light text against a dark background or dark text against a light one). Pictograms or symbols are recommended because they are more helpful for those who speak different languages. Braille signage put in convenient and predictable areas is beneficial to those who are blind or visually impaired. (Singru, et al., 2022)

Conclusion

Communities need public spaces because they represent key locations in the city that belong to all. These areas serve as gathering points for citizens. When public spaces are designed and taken care of well, they can provide individuals with a sense of belonging and give them chances to make new friends, enjoy and participate in cultural activities, or engage in sports and have good health. These places must be designed to allow the participation of people of all abilities and needs. When designing public open spaces, some rules and guidelines must be followed, but the emotional aspect, the experience of the square, must be considered, to make sure everyone feels comfortable in the space.

In theory, public spaces are designed to bring together people with different needs and abilities, but in reality, most public spaces do not meet this criterion, designers or urban planners are facing many difficulties when trying to make these places more accessible and inclusive.

We need to think about how different people use the space and try to make it fair for everyone. One way to evaluate inclusion is to seek an understanding of the diverse problems, conflicts, tensions, competing interests, and dynamics in a public space, and this is usually achieved through contextual research, field research, and the collection of qualitative information. In addition to seeing who is using the space, it is also crucial to note who is missing and then try to figure out why.

From the research conducted in the city of Tetovo, it was noticed that people with special needs are the ones who least visit the square. After analyzing the causes and reasons for this phenomenon, it was found that in addition to social prejudices and personal experiences, the physical environment is also a very big obstacle. The biggest problem is not the design of the square but the environment that leads to the square, starting from the roads, transport, parking spaces, and so on. The need for intervention and improvement of public spaces in Tetovo is evident, and hopefully, shortly these problems will be examined and solutions will be offered. Some of the main issues and possible interventions are addressed in this paper, but further analysis is needed for an inclusive design solution. The inclusion of people with disabilities in decision-making on the square and the design process is considered positive since trying to look at the square from their point of view can help towards better and faster solutions for the problems they encounter.

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