

HEAD-TURNING SITUATIONS: A STREET WALK IN THE CITY OF OLD DAMASCUS

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Abstract

Human curiosity never has a limit. It always occurs as people observe, stare at, and listen to whatever exists in the surrounding. In Old Damascus, as rich as a traditional city could be, sceneries always represent a verity of head turning situations, caused by attention-grabbing stimuli where the essence or spirit of the place comes to mind. The spirit of the place is defined in this research as the expectation, unpredictability, surprise, attraction, invitation, or illusion that one experiences or perceives in streetscape. That is simply ascribed to six defined causes: observable urban elements; configuration of patterns; spirit of place; street layouts; the presence of sound; different light/dark alteration. These causes are explained and illustrated in the first part of the research. In the second part of this research, those causes had helped to understand head turning situations in examples from Old Damascene streetscape. Accordingly, classification of streetscape is possible with various attentive responses of a stroller's reaction to different compositions of urban elements and street layouts.

Keywords

Streetscape, attention-grabbing stimulus, head turning situations, spirit of place, configuration of patterns

Introduction

In the Old City of Damascus, a pedestrian faces a dynamic visual street life as well as a number of stimuli. The street contains urban elements, complementary features (light, shadow, gossiping bargaining, noise, smell, etc.), and natural items (trees, flowers, water, etc.), all of which form an urban context. It is a place that connects between different areas and buildings. However, the street is not a simple environment. Streetscapes are not just a presentation of the various functions, but for the manifestation of symbolic, aesthetic, emotional, and historical dimensions. All of these dimensions tie the user to the past, present, and connect him/her to other people and other things. In a way, streetscapes act as necessary factors for a successful interaction between people and their surroundings. A good city streetscape is "richly diverse, its parts have distinct, identifiable character, they are marked by visible differences that allow choice, and they give a sense of place and home" (Lynch, 1960).

A walk through old streets engages the

observation of place, time, human interaction, and the street life, seen through possible encounter with reminiscent objects or scenes. Observation of streetscape and its urban elements restrain a sequence of urban tales that move from eye contact to an admiration of the detailed elevation, and to a head-turning situation.¹ Streetscape proves to be an important issue for our urban habitat. That is evident in the uncountable number of studies related to street environments. Some studies were actual applications and others follow a more theoretical approach.² Following the theoretical approach, the objective of this study is to explore the sensuous experience of a stroller cruising through the streets of the Old City of Damascus, and highlights the significance of urban elements and compositions that are most likely to affect the pedestrian's perspective in different streetscape settings.

To achieve this objective, literature review helped to indicate the possible causes of head turning situations that are reviewed by a number of premises. First, elements with different intensity, size, and combination have different degrees of visual domination. Second, there is an effect of road layout and the number of accesses on the pedestrian's observations. Third, the alteration of dark and light and their intensity is a significant factor that catches the attention of the observer. Finally, sources of sound are a determinative factor of the observer's level of attention and informative attribute (i.e. approximate location). In light of these premises, a few steps are followed in the next section in order to comprehend the complexity of the streetscape and seek causes that are responsible for the attention-grabbing strength of urban elements.

Attention-grabbing Strength of Urban Elements

Once one strolls in a street and perceives its components, he will experience an aesthetic emotion. "Aesthetic emotion, pure and simple, the pleasure given to us by certain lines and masses, and combinations of colors and sounds, is an absolutely sensational experience, an optical or auricular feeling that is primary, and not due to the repercussion backwards of other sensations elsewhere consecutively aroused"³. The visual and auricular perception should be well thought-out with reference to the attention one pays to the streetscape elements. The more we see and hear, or let's say, pay attention to details and present of what is there, the richer the environment would be, and consequently one will have a significant aesthetical emotion. "The problem of the richness of visual experience is that of finding principled grounds for claims about how much of the world a person actually sees [or hears] at any given moment" (Coates, 2004).⁴

With regard to the above premises, the strength of an attention-grabbing stimulus is instigated according to the following causes: observable urban elements; configuration of patterns; light and dark manipulation; sounds; street layout; spirit of place.

Observable Urban Elements

Searching for the image of the city, Kevin Lynch introduced two important terms: imageability and legibility (1960). **Imageability** is how easy it is for a dialogue between the person and the environment to build into a good mental image, while **legibility** is the capability of the object to be easily understood or recognized.⁵

The premise here is that the observable object is both imageable and legible. But what are the factors that make an urban element more observable than other?

To answer this question, Ferwati (1993) carried out a study on 86 inhabitants of Old Damascus to determine the degree of observability of the existing urban elements in their neighborhood. He indicates that people perceive each street element to various degrees, especially those which have a low profile of visual observability or domination (imageability and legibility). Table-1 indicates the result, showing urban elements ranked from the most observed to the least (Ferwati, 1993, p. 170).

According to Ferwati, the differentiation in the degree of observability of urban elements is attributed to several factors, summarized in six points:

- 1) Intensity of Signs: When the number of an element is high, the possible interaction with the element increases.
- 2) Functional Landmarks: People pay attention to and remember places that serve their needs.
- 3) Scale: The relative size of elements in respect to their surroundings affects the legibility of such features.
- 4) Aesthetics: This factor is a subjective issue, however, a number of cases can be, to a certain degree, agreed upon in aesthetic evaluation, such as distinctive building styles, clean and dirty streets, blight and new structure, and tidy or messy places.

- 5) Materials: Materials used for construction affect one's mental image since they are characterized by color, texture, and touch.
- 6) Natural Elements: Trees, parks, and fountains are necessary natural elements for shade, cool air, and relaxation. They stand in contrast with the built environment; they are, therefore, legible.

These six factors affect one's observations and mental images of what constitute places. It is an important step to gain information from the environment that is prior to the spatial tendency or appreciation of streetscape. (Bjorklund, 1983)

Table-1: Five categories of urban elements exist in the Old City of Damascus, ranked from the most observed to the least. The frequency means the number of people who recorded the existence of each urban element in their neighborhood.

			Urban Elements in the Old City of Damascus				
			Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5
Rank Order High to Low	Frequency of Observations	Percentage %	Commerical Area	Public Building	Street Pattern	Street Characteristics	Building Materials
1	86	100				Minaret	
2	84	98	Grocery Store				
3	83	97	Bakery	Mosque Church			
4	82	95	Barber Shop				
5	81	94	Butcher Shop Pharmacy				Wood, Stone
6	80	93	Fast Food Rest Clinic				
9	79	92					Adobe
10	78	91			Wendy, Asphalt Road		
11	77	90	Strip	Elementary School			
12	76	88				Drikning Fountain	
13	74	86		Secondary School	Narrow, Medium Width		
14	72	84			Not Covered		
15	69	80				Cultural Poster	
16	68	79				Painted Sign	
17	67	78		High School			Concrete
18	62	72			Straight, Dead-End		

19	61	71	Public Bath				
20	60	70			Covered		
21	55	64			Stony Road	Arch	
22	53	62				Neon Sign	
23	52	60		Kindergarten			
24	51	59	Coffee House				
25	50	58			Pedestrian Road	Bus Stop	
26	45	52			Sidewalk		
27	40	47				Dome	
28	36	42		Library		Parking Lot	
29	36	40		Museum	Large		
30	27	31				Fountain	
31	21	24			With Trees		
32	13	15	Plaza			Stairs	
33	9	10				Gate/Door	
			Means = 57	Median = 68			

The Theory of Configuration of Pattern, the Gestalt Law

The essence of the Gestalt theory is that people perceive objects as wholes, because they tend to “group,” or interpret a visual field or problems in a certain way. Grouping is explained by six factors that play a role affecting our visual perception (see figure 1): 1) proximity (closed elements) such as the door elements; 2) similarity (similar in some way) such as the ceiling joist; 3) closure (complete a pattern), such as the total view of the *zokak* entrance; 4) simplicity (symmetry, regularity, and smoothness) such as the wall of the *zokak*; 5) common fate, such as walls and path; and 6) continuity such as the arrangement of ceiling joists. Here, presumably



Figure 1: Dead-end Street, *Zokak*, in Alamin Quarter, Old Damascus. (Source: M.S. Ferwati).

one visually perceives urban elements as organized patterns whereas the relationship among the parts contributes to the whole *zokak*. The "whole" that we see is something that is more structured and cohesive than a group of separate particles. (Kleine-Harst, 2001).

Visual Effect of Light and Dark

Here are two facts to keep in mind: 1) "...visual perceptions are generated according to the empirical significance of light stimuli, rather than the characteristics of its stimuli as such" (Laboratory of Dale Purves, 2005). 2) Our perception of light source depends on the amount of light reflected by its surroundings; "the black line appears darkest in the bottom part of the illustration whereas the white line appears lightest in the middle" (McNeil, 1975) (See figure 2). In the first case, the weaker the light, the less detail one will pay attention to. Therefore, what one will see tends to be an abstract form, which complies with the Gestalt Law.

The spatial location of both light and dark has two significances: it affects the degree of one's visual attention, as the eye easily defines the object; and it is informative (the case of sun casts on a wall). Here, the change in the size of the lit area or the shadow whether vertical or horizontal becomes an indicator of the time of the day.

Source of Sound

Sound is a determinative factor of the observer's approximate location. It forms a spatial ear mark as one verifies the distance of the sound source, whether it is close or far, such as in a busy strip commercial area. Mainly, sounds¹ are caused by cars, solicitors' cry, gossiping, church bells,

azans, or school building when children are in recess. In some cases, stroller will pay attention to an auditory stimulus, while ignoring any visual stimuli (Eimer, van Velzen, Forster, and Driver, 2003).

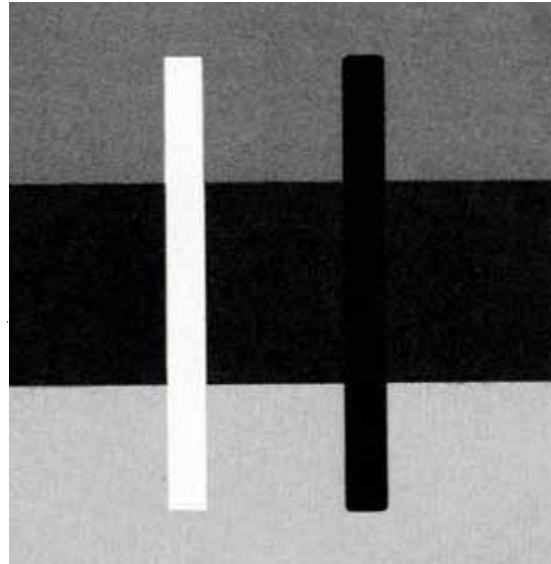


Figure 2: Mc-Neil, 1975.

Street Layout

Different space layouts result in different perceptual experiences. In fact space layout determines the time and distance needed to observe and contemplate surroundings¹. A pedestrian's moving-behavior in space has three possible actions; standing, turning, and moving ahead while his/her vision, as well as the other sensing faculties (olfactory, auricular, and tactile), searches or observes the space (Golledge and Stimson, 1987). The pattern of

anyone's moving-ahead follows the pattern of streetscape. Moving ahead has a start point and a destination; however, it is not always straight forward because a street may be curvilinear or of broken lined organization rather than simple straight form. In addition, a street might have different widths. When looking at a broken-line street, each segment stands by itself as a straight street preserving its own story. Each has its own start point and end point that forms a start point for the next connected segment. Here, every start point introduces the observer to different a streetscape with a different geographical direction, day light, and characteristics. In other words, every segment always forms a start point (or a new start) that creates new and fresh perception. **Four types of simple street layouts are possible:**

A- Straight Street: Moving from (A to X) as a direct connection has one start (see figure 3). The simple connection occurs when the observer is able to perceive the entire road at once, assuming that the street length does not exceed the range of human perceivable distance.



Figure 3: Straight Street: clear destination, predictability, and certainty.

B- Straight Street with Exits: Moving from (A to X) requires passing by one exit or more such as 1, 2, and 3 as in figure 4. Exits providing side views that entertain the beholder.

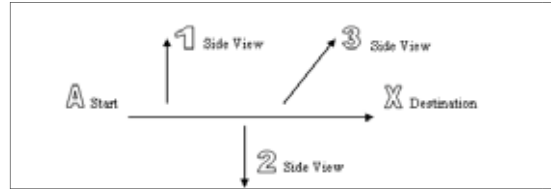


Figure 4: Amazing and entertaining experiences occur as one glances at the side road or opening, creating a break of the continuous straight-street view.

C- Curvilinear Street: A curved line is transformed to a broken line. (See figure 5)

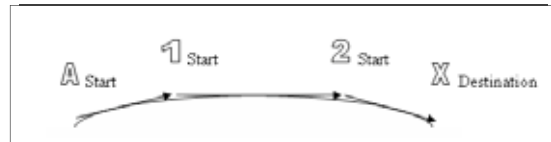


Figure 5: Curved road offers manipulated views or a stretched view that is always partially hidden. As one moves ahead, the view will gradually unfold creating excitement, unpredictability or uncertainty.

D- Segmented Street: This case is formed by a number of connected-segmented lines. Moving from A to X requires going through more than one connection such as 1, 2, 3, and X as in figure 6. The total line of segments is equal to $(1 + 2 + 3 + X)$. The perception of the street has a number of starts since every move from one segment to another requires a change in direction and exposition to a new streetscape.

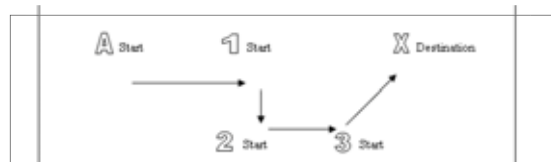


Figure 6: Every turn is a new start as surprise, unpredictability, uncertainty, and a fresh feeling start.

Various combinations of all the above are common layouts in streetscapes in Damascus. It is to be noted that the various urban layouts and synthesized elements are a result of human needs, attitudes, and spatial behaviors. Thus, the street layout manifests social dimensions that relatively affect one's expectation and consequently one's attention to the place. The social logic of place reflects the potentiality of the space to involve certain activities and different levels of privacy. In other words, it means that more access leads coincidentally to low controllability of space and farther integration with the rest of urban spaces (Hillier & Hanson, 1989).

The Spirit of Streetscape

The essence or spirit of streetscape triggers the attention of the stroller that will be demonstrated by the way people behave in different places (Lawson, 2005; Day, 2006). Different street layouts produce different sensational aspects that are: 1) the predictability (pertaining to street type one (the straight street), this type of street makes it possible to view clearly the scene ahead); 2) unexpectedness and surprise (pertaining to segmented street type, we turn or enter from one urban area or street type to another with uncertainty); 3) regularity (it is a combination of street layout type one and three, producing a street-grid system); 4) quiet (as the semi-private, private, and dead-end street, or *zwkak*); and 5) active or busy area (as in public areas and commercial streets). 6) Amazement and leisure place (pertaining to street layout type two and three, or irregular street widths as well as the commercial strip street). (See table 2).

Street Walk

In an application for these six causes of street-grabbing attention, this section proposes tales of a moving stroller in various examples of street layouts in The Old City of Damascus.

1. An Alley Contains Unexpected Components

This section introduces three examples of street layouts type 2 and 4.

A- Al Darwishiea Street, as an integrated street with many accesses, is a highly commercial attraction to people from all over the region. Figure 7 shows the beholder moving from north to south. Al Darwishiea mosque's façade is highly noticeable with its black and white stripes (common in Ottoman Architecture). These stripes illusively hide the uneven width of the street caused by the uneven recess of the mosque's façade. The stripes also amalgamated the façade parts, the most important of all are the two gates: the mosque's main entrance and the alley's entrance to the south of the first gate (in the center of the picture). The latter gives the impression of another main entrance to the mosque. The scene dominates this setting, since the beholder unexpectedly can not figure out the real width of the street or the use of the alley entrance unless he/she is very close to the building. It is a form of illusion as the alternation of the black and white stone course bonds the elevation as a whole, reducing the importance of the details. In fact the ambiguous presentation of the configurative pattern of the alley entrance is deepened by the joined architectural elements of the vault and the *sibat*¹ nesting above it.

Table 2: Street layout types and their forms, observation, spirit, and other characteristics.

Street Layout Types	Forms	Observation	Spirit of place (Each street type will have different spirit as a result of light & dark, color, width of the street, functions, urban elements and their compositions.)	Other Characteristics
1	Straight Street	Clear view	1- Certainty, predictability, 2- Invitation, leisure (with irregular width & commercial activities)	1- Regularity, rigidity 2- When dead-end, the street is semi-private, controlled, and quiet.
2	Straight Street with Exits	Clear view with side views	Amazement, entertainment, leisure (depending on the function of the exits)	1- Regularity, rigidity 2- With significant number of exits, the street is public or semi public, integrated, and noisy. Expect to meet strangers
3	Curvilinear Street	Manipulated view	Excitement, uncertainty, unpredictability	1- Natural or organic 2- Easy to loss orientation 3- When dead-end, the street is semi-private, controlled, and quiet.
4	Segmented Street	Change position and direction creating a sequence of views	Surprise, unpredictability, fresh feeling, uncertainty	1- When dead-end, the street is semi-private, controlled, and quiet. 2- Every segment represents a new start and, as a result, it gives a fresh feeling.

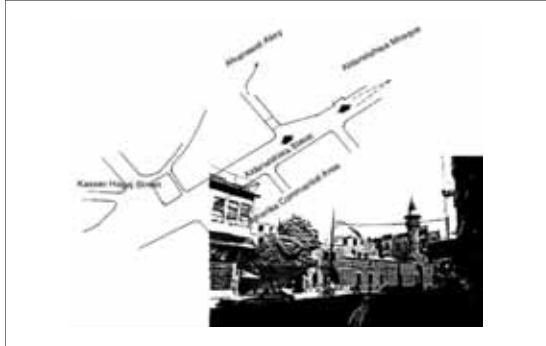


Figure 7: Aldarwishiea Street and the unexpected alley's entrance, Damascus, 1986 (Source: M.S. Ferwati).

Tip: Distortion of reality, as the black squares shift in positions, one may or may not be able to tell if the lines are parallel (Source: Internet, Can You trust Your Visual Perceptions?)

B- Sunlight has an informative effect. In figure 8, the beholder perceives the architectural alphabet differently according to the sun's position during the day. If the sun is on the left side, the beholder will not expect the existence of the right side alley. However, if the sun casts the light into the street from the right side, the beholder will assume the existence of either a hidden alley or a gap in the façade.

C- A sharply lit spot in a dark background unexpectedly reveals a skyscape. Figure 9 is taken from Souq Al Souf, a narrow alley in the commercial area. The beholder moves east-west, marking three significant scenarios-stages. In stage one, the view of the alley is clear. The beholder perceives the differences in light and shadow areas caused by the *sibat*. In stage two, the shaded area is cool. The darkness opens the pupils to the weaker light, and the following area is clearly perceived. Once approaching the last stage, three scenes

appear: left, right and above. But, curiously the beholder's eye will be drawn to a light source since light attracts the eye away from the dark. He will be delighted by the unexpected view of the minaret (as a narrow vertical element) that quickly directs his eye to its highest point soaring within the skyscape.



Figure 8: Kasser al-hajjaj street, surprise situation resulted from the hidden façade and the sun's position becomes informative. Damascus, 1986. (Source: M.S. Ferwati).

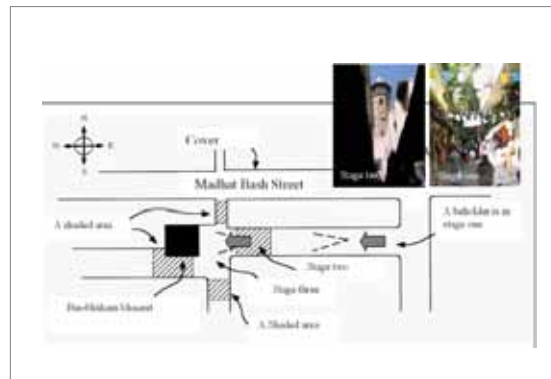


Figure 9: Souq Al Souf, the visual surprise occurs because of the effect of light and shadow and the attraction of the beholder's eyes to the minaret, Damascus, 1981. (Source: M.S. Ferwati).

2. An Alley That Contains Diversity: A Selective Experience

Here one experiences entertainment, expectation, leisure, invitation, and so on. The Straight Street (Al-Shareh Al-Mostakim), 1.5 km long, connects the western side of the Old Walled City with the eastern side, starting with Bab Aljabia (Aljabia Gate) and ending up with Bab Sharki (The Eastern Gate). The stroller will distinguish three different configurative portions of the street with almost equal lengths. The first is the western portion, which is called Madhat Bash Street. It is a covered street, crowded with people, traffic, and shops that are filled with fabric and Arabic traditional goods. Narrow covered alleys located on the right sides lead to a parallel narrow street called *Souq* Alsouf, while on the left other moderate-width alleys connect to other commercial streets. Just before the end, the stroller will notice a number of caravansaries (Khans) marked by their huge wooden doors, such as Khan Suliman Bash and Khan Alzit. Then, two impressive exits facing each other compete to attract the stroller's attention. The right side exit contains at its end the imageable Iron Gate (Bab Al-Hadid or Bab Al-Sakir), leading out of the Walled City. It has a short minaret that reveals the Damascene-Ottoman unique style. The left side exit is covered. It is called the Spices Bazaar, filled with strong fragrances and spicy smells that change with every step the stroller takes. It unavoidably grabs the attention to the exposed variety of herbs, spices, candy, and other similar items.

The middle portion of the street is uncovered and noticeably contains shops that sell various goods that are different from Madhat Basha's shops. They sell groceries, sweets, meats, toasted watermelon seeds, Turkish coffee, and

so on. As selective as one can be, the Straight Street is unlikely to make a pedestrian feel bored or over loaded. How does it work? Accesses to neighboring buildings, for example, provide additional pleasant views. These accesses, whether are expected or unpredicted, encourage the pedestrian to joyfully continue his/her way through. For example, Alsferjalani mosque forms the end of the exit and orients the eyes quickly from the horizontal components to a vertical one. Such a shift will unconsciously refresh the pedestrian's mind (see figure 10).

Side streets are a turn-head situation for the curious stroller to know what lies ahead at the end of the street. Each exit leaves a different impression¹, for example, crowded place is inviting. Function tells. (See figure 11).

This middle portion ends up at the Roman Victory Arch (or Koose Alkarab), with the nearby conspicuous Christian and Muslim historical architecture. As one keeps strolling, the Christian presence increasingly starts to dominate the scene through, for examples, churches' towers, people's life style, posters of cultural events, and Christian icons hung on shop windows. The number of shops in this area is significantly reduced, while house entries become prominent in the street facades. The shops offer traditional handcraft works such as carved wood with ivory and silver inlaid works, cooper wares, and carpets. The street becomes wider before Bab Sharki (the Eastern Gate) with its white minaret.

In these rich and diverse architectural and urban elements (voice of bargaining, spices' smell, sunlight beams penetrating the street from open spots in the metal vault cover, khans'

big gates, side alleys, and the list goes on) ought to be selective and to pay attention to the noticeable stimulus. No doubt the

observable street elements are not only related to the visual elements but also to the ear and smell marks.

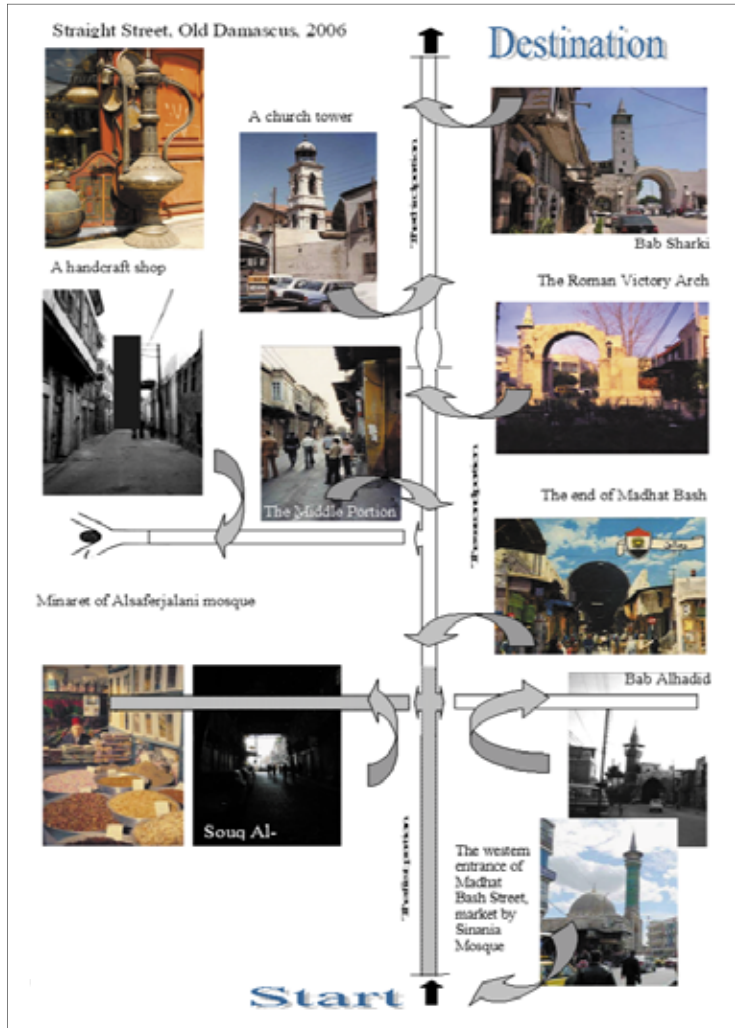


Figure 10: The Straight Street with some of its landmarks and the components of the three exits mitigating the pedestrian's feeling of boredom. (Source: M.S. Ferwati).



Figure 11: Five sceneries for exits taking from different areas of the city: 1. *Zokak*, cul-de-sac. 2. *Harat* Alftatia, side road. 3. *Hara*, neighborhood road. 4. Stairs in a *zokak*. 5. Open market, Alamin Road. (Source: M.S. Ferwati).

3. An Alley That Has A Manipulating Scene

The alley can have a manipulating scene because of a curved road and a setback mosque. Unpredictably, the street layout type 3's "perception seems to be a matter of looking up information that has been stored about objects and how they behave in various situations" (Gregory, 1968, p. 75). This is exemplified by moving north-south along Babmosala Street, where Babmosala mosque is located on the left side¹. At a distance of about 50 meters, the pedestrian has a view of the alley that includes the mosque's minaret; but, as he gets closer, the minaret disappears. His mind gets busy with the shops on both sides of the street and the busy traffic causing him to overlook the mosque. Getting even closer, the recessed mosque with its minaret unpredictably appearing once again, invites the stroller to contemplate its beauty and the sound of the praises to God comes quickly to mind. (See figure 12).

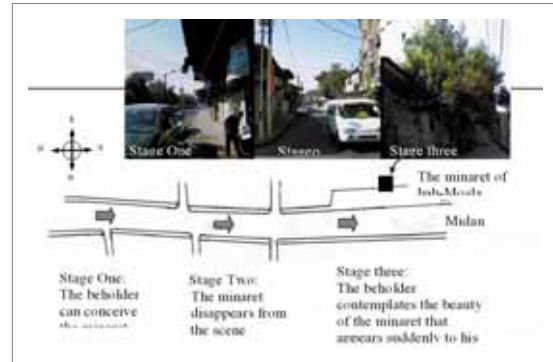


Figure 12: Babmosala Street's shape and the mosque's location create unpredictability as a result of a manipulation of the overall scene according to the beholder's position, Damascus, 2006. (Source: M.S. Ferwati).

4- A COMPOSITE ALLEY is an alley that contains two choices or more. Here, the proposed example in figure 13 embodies two choices, the first manifests an INVITATION and the second manifests an ATTRACTION.

The first choice follows the street layout type 1. The beholder moves east-west. He experiences

the notion of an invitation to the site that stretches out ahead. This invitation is a result of four urban features: 1-the location of the alley at the Umayyad Mosque's East Gate; 2-the transitional zone from the commercial area to a dwelling area; 3-the different levels presented by a set of stairs, and 4-the urban elements

composition; one of the most prominent elements is the coffeehouse on the south side of the alley.¹

The second choice represents street layout type 3 where the stroller will turn right to Alkallasa alley that provides ATTRACTION. A beholder

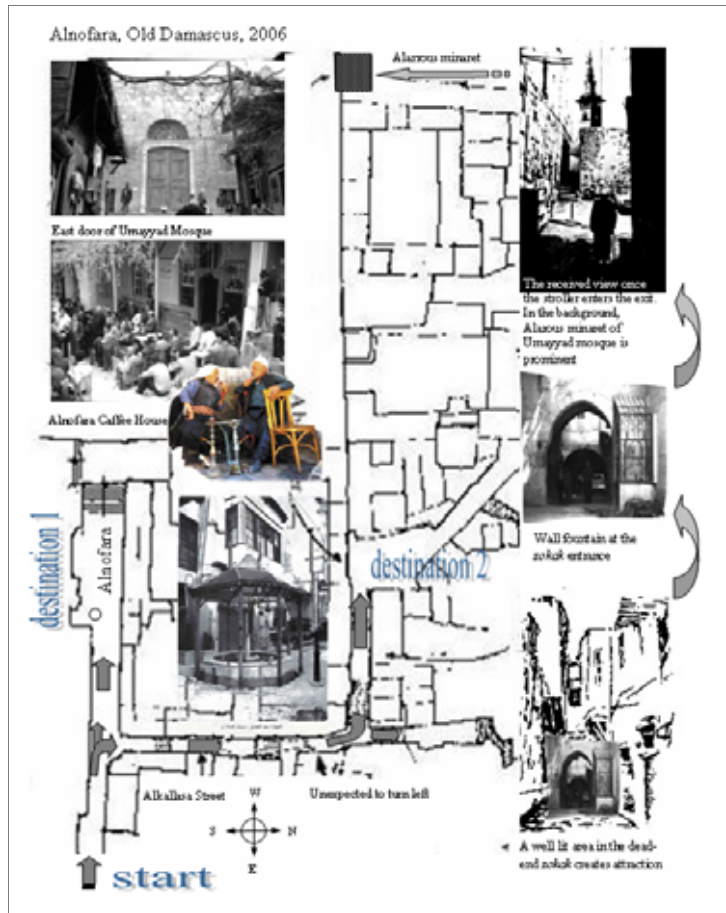


Figure 13: Two moving options: Option one to go ahead facing Alnofara with its components such as direction, location and activities that create the invitation of the site. Option two to turn right onto Alkallasa street that with four *sibats* all along the street create dark and light alteration causing a misleading sensation making it difficult to know the location of the exit that is hidden on the left side with small recession and darkness of its *sibat*. In this case, the pedestrian is attracted to continue ahead even though he is approaching a dead-end. (Source: M.S. Ferwati).

will highly enjoy the urban composition while moving through the quiet and peaceful alley. The attraction occurs in this example as a result of the light and shadow manipulation. The gradual arrangement of the *sibat* drags the stroller ahead onto the dead-end street, *zokak*. However, once reaching stage two (near the wall-fountain, which is on the corner of the *zokak's* entrance); the beholder will discover the actual continuance of his way that is situated on his left side. In this example, the beholder will be first misled by the streetscape composition, and later he will be able to read his way out of the maze because of the width and alphabetical composition of the exit. Once he turns left, he is facing a new view, in other words a new start.

The aforementioned examples are not the only ones that exist in the streetscape of Old Damascus. Further study is needed to determine the environmental head turning situations that make people feel attached, oriented, and enjoy. In reality, any street setting contains more than one cue or attention-grabbing stimulus. The invitational aspect of Alnofara stands side by side with the attraction notion. Cues are mostly found overlapped, interrelated, or in different degrees of observability.

Conclusion

Different syntheses of urban elements have produced different street layouts and streetscapes. Streets are not only veins through which people, like energy, move to conduct their activities (such as going to work, school, places of entertainment, or worship), but also places through which people go from beginning to end by a sequence of perceptions

that if rich, creates divergent sensation. This research looked at the possible streetscape perception or attention-grabbing stimuli that result in head turning situations. These situations were explained by six causes:

1. The presence of urban elements in an observable manner;
2. The configuration of patterns as one sees the whole or the main components of street scenery;
3. The feeling of the spirit of place as one experiences different impressions and reactions to different places;
4. Street layouts as one reads one's way through the manipulated streetscape caused by changes in the street's width, geographical direction, and street exits presented in clear or unexpected scenery;
5. The alteration of dark and light as one's eye adjustment mechanism plays a role in the perception of the whole or the details beside the manipulation of what lays ahead. As a spatial stimulus, dark and light direct one's attention from horizontal to vertical planes in such a way that significantly occupy the pedestrian mind, his spatial reactions and changing mood; and
6. The presence of sound, regardless of its source and type, can imply the presence of some nearby functions.

These six causes implicitly highlight several crucial perceptual aspects that were shown in a number of examples of Old Damascus' street layouts with various compositions of urban

elements. This study can provide guidance for designers to ensure a certain degree of success and enjoyment of the streetscape while designing a new area or evaluating an existing one. In this regard, the following questions can be used as guidelines:

1. Does the space give the feeling of invitation, attraction, unpredictability, and/or illusion?
2. Is there manipulation of light and shadow on the street level?
3. Do the proposed urban elements require a horizontal to a vertical scan of motion?
4. Is the presence of sun clear and indicative of time of the day?
5. Are there smells (such as perfume of roses or spices) spreading out from the adjoining buildings, gardens or shops?
6. Is the presence of people likely to create attractive sounds through for example the immediacy of their presence, the sound of voices or footsteps, or even the cicada hum that enrich the whole visual experience?

Just like the Old City of Damascus, it is nice to have new urban areas where one can spend hours walking around without being conscious of time or feeling tired. Such a joy, it is argued here, can be reached through head turning situations and various observable urban elements or streetscape stimuli. Streetscape stimuli evoke the resonance of urban space through the experience of walking, and in an encounter with ordinary objects. While contemplating spatial perceptions, the stroller explores the capacity of ordinary objects to activate his or her image while enjoying his/

her surroundings. This spatial structure by itself is unlikely to create the conditions necessary for socially meaningful environments. It, however, offers a structured container-like environment in which we can act and interact. Through human interaction and behavior, a space earns its quality. As Harrison and Dourish (1996) nicely put it, "space is the opportunity, place is the understood reality".

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Notes:

¹ ID Magazine, 1998. PEDESTRIAN, <http://annetteweitraub.com/pedestriancontent/pedestrian.html#>

² In the former case, designers, planners, landscape designers, and architects carry out site improvement in order to attract people to CBD, historical sites (Neff Andre P. 1978), or new urban layout to be functional, beautiful, diverse, meaningful and far from monotony. Here, the solution concentrates on the physical appearances, whereas, street furniture, façade renovation, pavement finishing, and plantations were carefully studied. See both the implementation of "Downtown Redevelopment of the City of Austin", 2006, at <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/downtown/default.htm>, and the study of Neill, W.J.W. and Fitzsimons, D. 1995.

In the latter case, various studies have emphasized different aspects of urban environments. Some of the significant works are: 1- In 1960, Kevin Lynch applied a mental mapping technique to search for the image of the city. His study helps determine the strong and weak aspects of streetscapes (see also Lynch 1972). 2- In 1977, Christopher Alexander published his famous book, "The Pattern Language" that is used as a guideline for urban designers, architects, and landscape designers. 3- Other studies dug into urban social issues in order to find out design consideration that helps decrease urban crimes and vandalisms (Newman 1972, Jacobs 1961). 4- Additionally, some analytical studies worked on comparisons among different street pattern as a manifestation of social aspects by applying space syntax techniques (Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson 1989). 5- In the field of psychology researchers look at various situations where crowdedness, noise and stress as urban issues perceived in different degrees, affecting the users' behavior. (Stockle and Altman, 1987). Finally, 6- The rapid increase of applications of the advanced computer aided programs to study, compare, and analyze visual perception, of the real or virtual situation is notable. (See Chris Tucker, et al. www.spacesyntax.tudelft.nl/media/longpapers2/christuckerea.pdf)

³ Theory of emotion, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_James

⁴ This study does not search for the attention difference between man and woman, however, it is worth while to know that "woman may take longer shift attention from one object to another because objects hold their attention relatively more than men. (Brown, J. M., Morris, K.A., & Srinivasan, N. 1999).

⁵ According to Lynch, there are five basic urban physical elements that are collectively indicated in the mental mapping survey done on three American Cities: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. Refer to this internet site for definition: http://interconnected.org/notes/2003/12/The_Image_of_the_City/Typology_of_image_elements.txt

⁶ Sound becomes noise or noise pollution when it is unwanted or undesirable (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noise>).

⁷ In his designs of the prairie houses, Frank Lloyd Wright avoided access to the building from the main elevation facing the street. Doing so, he enhanced, in one hand, a high level of privacy, and on the other hand, he added a sacred meaning to the residence. Some extra moments to reach the entrance, the observer faces extra number of successive views of the building. Here, time, distance, and the pattern of movement are crucial to the observer to find his way in while enjoying the scenery. Such movement gives the feeling of unpredictability. (the author)

⁸ A room above the alley.

⁹ In 2005, Bjorklund, a professor at The University of Western Ontario, Ontario Canada, told me that "when I visited a traditional city in Afghanistan, I felt scared to enter dead-end alleys, fear from the unexpectedness".

¹⁰ On the same street heading south in Almidan street, the case repeats itself with Almanjak mosque that is located on the right side of the road.

¹¹ The direction of an east-west alley also gives the area both a morning and an afternoon attraction.