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Master Thesis Defense

Entitled

THE ASSESSMENT OF WALKABILITY AS A SOCIAL ASPECT OF SUSTAINABILITY.
THE CASE OF DUBAI NEIGHBORHOODS, UAE.

by

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Abstract

In an attempt to reduce car dependency, the process of planning, mainly on neighborhood level, has recently been directed to focus on the accommodation of walkability as a significant factor of planning development. This approach contributes not only to improving urban patterns but also majorly to addressing issues of sustainability (Singh, 2016). The social aspects of sustainability have not received much attention and is considered the least described pillar. The positive association between aspects of the human behavior and built environment, specifically walkability, suggests that measuring the social aspect of sustainability may be conceivable, especially in the context of community development.

Sustainable neighborhood offers livability and combines environmental aspects, balanced social characteristics and economic considerations. The concept of walkability is a major factor contributing to a sustainable city (De Cambra et al., 2012; Andrews et al., 2012; Wheeler, 2013). Focusing on walkability, this research intends to assess the social aspect of neighborhood and its performance in Dubai neighborhoods, UAE. In so doing, it aims to provide insight on the achievement of walkability principles of the urban form in selected neighborhoods as well as the perception impact of the users.

This research applies mixed methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative methods on selected case studies in Dubai. The qualitative methods apply tools of observations, questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews. Whereas, the quantitative part of the research applies depthmapX software.

The findings of walkability assessment suggest major principles that identify the relationship between walkability as a strong aspect of social sustainability in the selected neighborhoods in Dubai, which may also be generalized to other neighborhoods with similar urban typology and spatial characteristics. Also, this study concludes actual challenges in guiding, and coordinating, the involved institutional vision in implementing walkability principles in the different neighborhoods in Dubai.

Keywords: Walkability, neighborhood, walkability principles, social sustainability, Dubai, UAE.