

## Research Paper

# Analysing Vali-Asr Street Changing Trend in Meaning from the Users' Perspective, from 1925 until Now

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**Received:** August 2023, **Revised:** December 2023, **Accepted:** December 2023, **Publish Online:** December 2023

### Abstract

The significance of urban streets lies in their role as the fundamental structure and framework of a city. Streets acquire extraordinary power as they endure the passage of time, accumulating special meanings and memories. This inherent strength is so influential that proper organization and utilization of existing streets can render the construction of new ones unnecessary. Valiasr, spanning 18 kilometers, stands as the longest street in Tehran and the Middle East. Beginning at the railway square in the south of Tehran at an altitude of 1100 meters above sea level, it extends to Tajrish square in the north, reaching an altitude of 1600 meters above sea level. The street boasts wide sidewalks, a sizable pond, and a line of ancient plane trees, enhancing its aesthetic appeal. Originating during the Qajar era (1785-1925), various segments of Valiasr were constructed to link the capital with city gates. In the early Pahlavi period (1925-1979), it was further developed to connect summer palaces to the city. The street's design, implemented without strict adherence to existing buildings, aimed to establish a direct connection between the north and south of Tehran. During this era, significant government and public structures, royal residences, and palaces were constructed along both sides of Valiasr in adherence to established construction regulations from 1928. This period also witnessed the construction of cultural buildings, public parks, gardens, universities, and medical centers. Following the Islamic Revolution of Iran (1979), Valiasr Street evolved into one of Tehran's traditional shopping centers and promenades, reflecting the city's dynamic cultural shifts. Each historical period of Iran has profoundly impacted Valiasr Street, shaping it into a symbol of Tehran's historical and cultural evolution. To delve into the changing trends and meanings associated with Valiasr Street from 1925 to the present, a comprehensive approach was adopted. A total of 100 street users, encompassing residents, pedestrians, traders, and various stakeholders, were interviewed on-site within the study area. Subsequent to these interviews, a meticulous analysis of the gathered data was conducted, facilitating the synthesis and preparation of a comprehensive diagram. The findings reveal that a multitude of factors, including functional, economic, social, political, and cultural elements, have contributed to the evolving mental imagery associated with Valiasr Street across distinct epochs. In its early existence until 1925, the perceptual influence of the observer led to Valiasr Street being conceived as a narrow garden alley nestled among the Qajar city gardens. Transitioning into the period between 1925 and 1979, the passage of time transformed its role into a communication route connecting newly constructed palaces. Moreover, the increasing influence of temporal dynamics, coupled with cultural and social components, elevated Valiasr Street into the consciousness of the populace, turning it into a cherished urban space among the residents of Tehran. The period from 1979 until the present marks a notable phase in the urban life of Valiasr Street. Following a period of stagnation, the street has undergone a revitalization, and the impact of all four meaning-forming components, with a particular emphasis on the temporal aspect, has led to its designation as a cultural heritage site of the city of Tehran in 2011. This recognition culminated in its inclusion in the list of national heritage sites.

**Keywords:** Street, meaning, Government laws, Technology, Valiasr Street, Tehran.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The city, regarded as a fundamental human need and desire, is a living entity sustained by human mobility. Time plays a pivotal role in shaping the identity of a city, stemming from various factors such as spiritual, cultural, and economic elements that manifest in the physical and social activities of its inhabitants. These factors, evolving over time, contribute to the creation of spaces at the core of a city that mirror its identity and distinctive character. Urban spaces, beyond their physical attributes, geometry, and aesthetics, encapsulate meanings embedded in the collective memory of a society.

In this context, the city is considered a "context" encompassing signs, meanings, and indices (Lanot, 2000). Lynch emphasizes the readability and comprehensibility of the "city context," regarding space as a crucial component of the city—a part of a larger whole that, as a "context," holds meaning and is comprehensible (Lynch, 1960). Among the vital elements within urban space are the streets, whose network structure derives extraordinary power from the passage of time, retaining special meanings and memories. This power is so profound that the effective organization of existing streets could render new urban streets unnecessary in contemporary conditions (Pakzad, 2004: 137).

The evolution and expansion of streets, along with the transformation of their meanings in the perceptions of local inhabitants, are influenced by a multitude of factors, encompassing climatic, political, economic, and more. This study seeks to assess the historical trajectory and the impact of urban regulations and technology on street formation as perceived by its users.

To achieve this goal, the investigation focuses on Vali-Asr Street in Tehran, a street of paramount importance within the city. Vali-Asr Street stands as a unique exemplar of a deliberate and knowledgeable construction, mindful of the historical, cultural, and natural facets of Tehran. Often regarded as the "memory of Tehran" in the collective consciousness of Iranians, this street has undergone significant and impactful changes throughout various historical periods, owing to its strategic importance and its location in the capital of Iran.

The term "meaning," as per the Oxford Dictionary, is synonymous with an idea or something representing a word, sign, etc., or a quality that validates life. In Robert Cowan's *The Dictionary of Urbanism*, "meaning" equates to a special value that a place holds for people; it encapsulates the significance of things pertaining to the social and cultural aspects of the environment. Within this framework, meaning can be

considered as the complementary figure of any phenomenon, inseparable from each other. In this symbiotic relationship, the figure of each phenomenon serves as a vessel for meaning (Naghizadeh, 2005: 104). Umberto Eco places "meaning" as a cultural unit that classifies it in both denotative terms, referring to the form of life, and connotative aspects that imply the perspectives of residents and users of space (Eco, 1992).

Kevin Lynch regards "meaning" as one of the seven criteria for the desirability of a location, alongside vitality, adaptability, access, control, efficiency, and equity. He defines it as a "sense of significance and subjective motivation." Additionally, Ian Bentley et al. in the book *Responsive Environments* discuss two components, emotional richness and the color of belonging, wherein these elements represent the existing meanings in the environment and their impact on a viewer. In the book *By the Help of Designing*, identity, or meaning, is highlighted as a physical quality crucial for the success of designing the physical environment in the plaything system. Moreover, in Kanter's location model, imaginations and the body of ideas and activities are intertwined components shaping the environmental element. In the book *Place and No-place*, Ralph introduces the concept of location in three dimensions: "Physical, activity, and meaning."

Meaning encompasses all the mentalities that serve as stimuli for observers when compared with their experiences, objectives, and intentions. In this process, the subject and object form a unified mind, giving rise to the universal mind, which perceives in the process of perception (Habib, 2006: 7). Consequently, human beings persist in socially living within semantic networks, interpreting signs, and being interpreted as signs themselves. It is through this symbolic action that they find a sense of self in the city and, consequently, navigate through it (Fakoohi, 2008).

The exploration of meaning and its manifestation in the environment gained considerable attention in the literature of Architecture and Urbanism, particularly in the realm of architecture, from the latter half of the twentieth century onward. This surge in interest followed the waning of rational ideas within modernist artistic tendencies, marking a shift toward postmodernist approaches. The discourse on meaning often unfolded in the context of debates surrounding normative theories and perception analyses (Kazemi, 2013).

Urban planning assumes a pivotal role in the meaning-making process, contributing to the creation of social and cultural signs that are intelligible to other users. The city's designer plays a crucial part in

generating meaning and crafting social and cultural symbols that users can decipher. In this context, attention to the physical environment as a space for the occurrence of activity systems facilitates urban

planners in establishing meaningful urban boundaries. However, a key aspect in this discussion lies in comprehending the influential factors in creating meaning for the environment.

**Table 1.** Viewpoints of different experts on the concept of meaning and factors affecting its formation

Scholar's name	Source	factors and Indices of the Formation of environmental meanings
Kevin Lynch	"Good City Form", 1984	Form components (identity, structure), non-space properties (consistency, clarity, readability)
Amos Rapoport	"The Meaning of the Built Environment", 1982	Cultural backgrounds and traditions, social interactions, cognitive conditions, time, climatic and natural factors
Christian Norberg Schulz	"Architecture: Meaning and Place", 1988 & "Genius Loci Towards A Phenomenology of Architecture", 1979	Memory, sense of identity, phenomenological approach to issues
E.C.Rolph	"Place and placelessness", 1976	Readability, culturally appropriate cognitive functions (the culture, interests, and different viewpoints of the people), attraction
M.M.Degen	"Sensing Cities", 2008	Cognitive differences, mental organizing of the environmental cues
William Whyte	"How do buildings mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture", 2006	Experiences, differences in people's perceptions

To comprehend and acquaint ourselves with the concepts, a thorough examination of previous articles, books, works, and research is imperative. Consequently, we have extracted relevant items for the current article, presenting them in a tabular format akin to the following:

**Table 2.** Background

Authors	Year	Research title	Results
Lynch, Kevin	1960	The Image of the City	The study delves into the meaning the city's form holds for its residents and explores ways in which city planners can enhance the vividness and memorability of the city's image for its dwellers. The research's expansive scope results in the development of an original and crucial method for evaluating city form.
Rolph, E.	1976	Place and Placelessness	The book demonstrates how the concepts of place have evolved while remaining crucial in understanding a world transformed by travel and commerce since 1976. It emphasizes that the "sense of place" has the potential to serve as a practical foundation for addressing contemporary challenges, including climate change and economic disparity, in the present century.
Bentley, L.A., Alcock, P., Murrain, S., McGlynn, G. Smith	1985	Responsive Environment: A Manual for Designers	This book illustrates the distinctive features that contribute to creating environments that are understandable, welcoming, and controllable – termed as 'Responsive Environments.' In contrast to the often alienating environments prevalent today, the book employs sketches and diagrams to showcase how these characteristics can be incorporated into places or buildings.
Takmil Homayoon, N	1990	Social & Cultural History of Tehran	This book comprehensively delves into the political, social, cultural, and economic history of Tehran from ancient times up to the era of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, often referred to as the "Naseri Caliphate" (year 1284 AH). The exploration is organized into six sections:

Authors	Year	Research title	Results
			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Tehran from its inception to urbanization (in the Safavid era)</li> <li>2. Tehran's transition to the capital city</li> <li>3. Tehran as the capital of Iran in the Qajar era</li> <li>4. Human geography of Tehran</li> <li>5. Culture and religion</li> <li>6. The prominent cultural figures and celebrities of Tehran.</li> </ol>
Lynch, K	1998	A Theory of Good City Form. (Bahreyni, S.H. Trans.).	The central part of the book introduces a novel normative theory of city form, delineating the qualities that exemplary human settlements should embody. This comes after a thorough examination of three existing normative theories – those portraying the city as a model of the cosmos, a machine, and a living organism. The analysis reveals the inadequacies of these theories under sustained scrutiny.
Eco, Umberto	1992	La Production des Signes	The book explores the challenges of communication and interpretation, providing insights into the complexities of these processes.
Hamidi, M.	1997	The skeleton of Tehran	The study aims to explore the main framework of Tehran city and understand the general principles and methods for reviving and organizing the city's framework.
Mahdizadeh, J	2002	City & History	The research investigates the formative and developmental period of Tehran.
Norberg-Schulz, C.	2003	Architecture, Meaning and Place.	This study delves into the intrinsic meaning and language embedded in architecture. The analysis is centered around representative works from various architectural styles, including Baroque, modern, and post-modern architecture.
Naghizadeh, M.	2005	Principles of Religious Art in Islamic Culture	This research explores the underpinnings of religious art in Islamic culture. The author delves into the theoretical foundations of religious art, examining its realms of symbolism, meaning, and beauty. Furthermore, the intellectual framework, identified as the creative generator in religious art, is thoroughly elucidated.
Rapaport, A.	2005	The Meaning of the Built Environment: A None-verbal Communication Approach	Rapaport focuses on the meanings emanating from buildings, their contents, and their inhabitants, and the implications these meanings hold for architectural design processes aimed at meeting the needs and satisfaction of the eventual occupants of these buildings.
Habib, F.	2006	Searching for the Meaning of Urban Form	Concepts such as meaning, the process of meaning creation, the hierarchy of meaning, city form, city landscape, the mental image of the city, and the meaningful city form have been introduced and examined in the research.
Whyte, W.	2006	How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in The History of Architecture,	Buildings can serve as historical sources, but historians must consider the specific challenges they pose. In essence, architecture should not be examined for a singular meaning, but for its various meanings.
Fakoohi, N.	2008	Urban Anthropology	The primary objective of this paper is to explore the concept of "urban space," followed by an examination of the fundamentals and impacts associated with the utilization of technology in urban spaces.

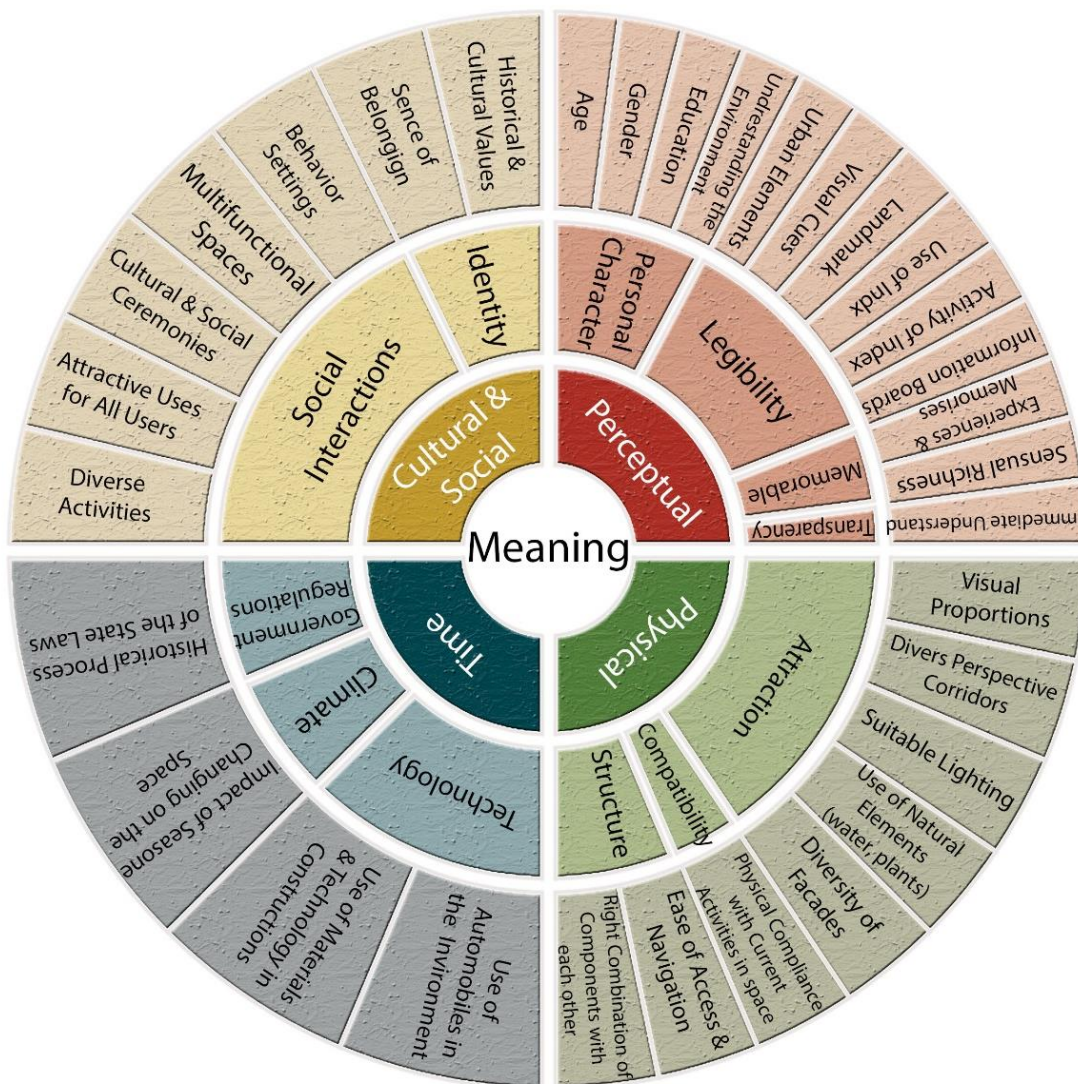
Authors	Year	Research title	Results
Degen, M. M	2008	Sensing Cities	Through a synthesis of meticulous ethnographic analysis and interviews with participants engaged in planning regeneration processes and those directly experiencing them, the book contends that a transformative sensuous landscape plays a pivotal role in reshaping individuals' social practices, attachments, and experiences within specific locations.
Pakzad, J.	2010	An Intellectual History of Urbanism (2): From Quantity to Quality	An anthology of articles authored by scholars and experts in the realm of urban design has been compiled, addressing various facets of urban planning.
Eskander Mokhtari Taleghani - Mohammad Hasan Talebian - Seyed Ahmed Mohit Tabatabai - Pirouz Hanachi	2010	Vali E Asr Avenue.	The book is organized into seven overarching sections, namely, "Natural Setting," "Historical Setting," "Vali Asr Street: A Symbol of Modern Tehran," "Islamic Revolution, Collective Memories, Continuity of Civil Life," "Vali Asr Street: A Historical-Cultural Work," "Gradual Erosion," and "Summary of Records and Protection Measures for Vali Asr Street."
Kazemi,A., Behzadfar, M.	2013	Recognition of reasons continuity or diversity of meaning in historical contexts.	This study investigates how the audience perceives environmental meanings and assesses variations based on differences in their levels of social development.
Martina Löw	2013	The City as Experiential Space: The Production of Shared Meaning	Sociologically, this distinction becomes noteworthy when the objective is to determine the impact of local factors in a globalizing world or comprehend processes of societal differentiation. To achieve this, researchers in the fields of urban and regional sociology, community research, and local policy can refer to various theoretical and empirical studies focusing on cities, municipalities, or, in a broader sense, the local setting as societally formative entities resistant to global influences.
Mehrdad Karimimoshaver, Philipp Winkemann	2018	A framework for assessing tall buildings' impact on the city skyline: Aesthetic, visibility, and meaning dimensions	The influence of tall buildings on cities can be assessed from various perspectives. One such aspect is the visual impact of these tall structures on the cityscape, where observers evaluate them based on their three-dimensional presence in the urban environment. Criteria such as visibility, significance, and aesthetic qualities of tall buildings play a role in shaping this evaluation.
Flora Gatti, Fortuna Procentese	2021	Experiencing urban spaces and social meanings through social Media: Unravelling the relationships between Instagram city-related use, Sense of Place, and Sense of Community	Positioning social media community-related practices as catalysts for the revitalization and reinforcement of local social dimensions and connections holds promise. This suggests that these practices could serve as a viable avenue to address the social and spatial limitations of local communities, fostering bottom-up initiatives for the reclaiming and rejuvenation of urban spaces and sociability.
Lachin Namaz, Klaudia Klára Tvergyák	2023	Uncovering deep place meanings in the context of urban well-being: The case study of Budapest	Current trends in human-environmental relationship research emphasize exploring place-related human experiences to enhance our understanding of pro-environmental behaviors. Examining the processes influencing residents' place-related self-expression and meanings aids in comprehending potential citizen support for sustainability. The authors contend that delving into profound place meanings can contribute to enriching human-

Authors	Year	Research title	Results
			environment relationships, fostering personal and collective growth towards the development of a sustainable habitat.
Jingyu Li, Arie Stoffelen, Erik Meijles, Frank Vanclay	2023	Local people's sense of place in heavily touristified protected areas: Contested place meanings around the Wulingyuan World Heritage Site, China	Nature conservation plans are progressively incorporating the place meanings, or landscape values, of local communities. Yet, in Indigenous and ethnic minority contexts, there is a tendency to perceive place meanings and underlying cultures as static over time. This perspective hinders the inclusiveness and appropriateness of governance strategies for protected areas.
Somayah Rafiei, Robert Gifford	2023	The meaning of the built environment: A comprehensive model based on users traversing their university campus	This study formulated a comprehensive model of the meaning of the built environment by surveying students and staff members of a university. Their experiences of the campus's built environment were explored through interviews conducted as they walked along their habitual paths.
Lachin N, Klaudia K	2023	Uncovering deep place meanings in the context of urban wellbeing: The case study of Budapest.	This research aims to assist practitioners in comprehending the role of place meanings related to well-being in enhancing the overall well-being of residents. Additionally, it seeks to identify potential obstacles that could impede this process, ultimately influencing sustainability.
Iqbal Y, Wahda A, Sabeeh L	2023	The role of historic building information modeling in the cultural resistance of liberated city	The study uncovered the significance of Historic Building Information Modeling (HBIM) in safeguarding heritage from decline. It serves as a collective external memory, preserving the rich, resilient history of a nation, preventing it from fading into oblivion. HBIM establishes a robust connection, bridging the present with the past, laying a foundation for the nation's future development.
Christopher M, Richard S, Niki F	2023	The role of nature-based solutions and senses of place in enabling just city transitions	Planning for Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) should intentionally initiate both structural and emotional transformations through experimental approaches to amplify procedural justice. The co-design and implementation of NBS ought to take into account the dynamic interplay between recognition and distribution justice, actively involving multiple senses of place.

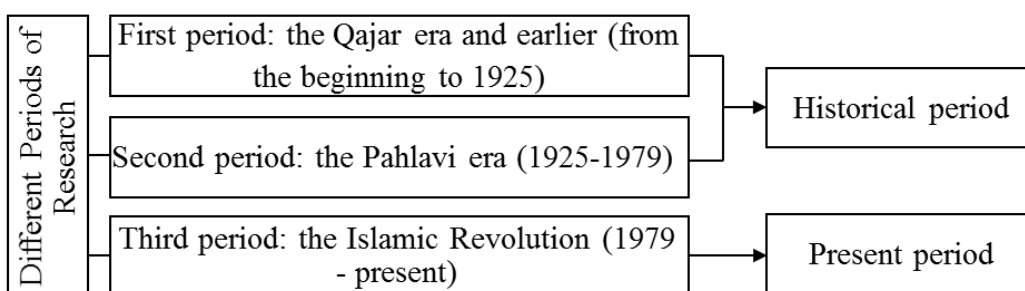
In summarizing the perspectives of experts, it is crucial to emphasize that environmental meanings emerge from the interplay of non-space values, cultural and social characteristics of the society with people's mental perceptions, leading to a meaningful environment within the framework of the perceptual process. The common thread in the various viewpoints is the significance attributed to perception and the diverse situations influencing people's perceptions of the environment, which is essential for imbuing urban space with meaning. Additionally, socio-cultural and physical factors, along with the dimension of time, are identified as shared elements in the expressed views on the formation of meaning. Therefore, these two factors are also incorporated into the temporal component (see Figure 1).

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, an analytical-descriptive method was initially employed to establish a theoretical framework for the research. This involved developing a conceptual model through a review of concepts and theories pertinent to the issues of meaning. To fulfill the research assumptions, it is imperative to comprehend the meanings associated with the environment in the specific space under investigation (Vali-Asr Street, Tehran) during both historical and contemporary periods for comparative analysis. The study was structured to encompass three distinct periods:



**Fig 1.** Components and parameters affecting the formation of meaning in urban space



**Fig 2.** Periods of Research

The initial phase involves employing a historical-interpretive research method to comprehend the historical system of the designated space and clarify meanings based on the conceptual model of that specific period. Subsequently, to understand and expound upon the environmental meanings of Vali-Asr Street in its current state, a qualitative research approach is employed. This involves on-site

observation, interviews with various community groups, and in-depth interviews with 100 users of the space to extract their perspectives on the forming components of meaning in the present era. Ultimately, the research assesses the effectiveness of the study in each period based on the obtained results.



*Introduction of case study*

*Getting to know Vali-Asr Street in the historical periods*

✓ *First period: the Qajar era and earlier (from the beginning to 1925)*

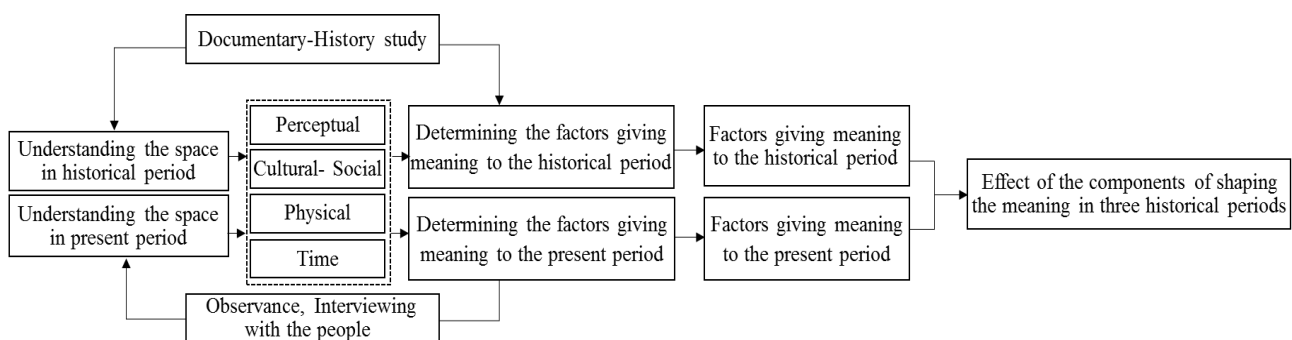
Tehran existed as a subordinate village to the prosperous city of Rey until the 7th century AD. Following the Mongol invasions and the subsequent dissolution of Rey, Tehran began to thrive as an independent settlement (Mahdizadeh, 2002, p. 15). Additionally, Shemiran served as a mountainous residential retreat during the summer months for the residents of Tehran. Even before Tehran's formal establishment in 1553 AD, individuals residing in Tehran would migrate to Shemiran during the summer due to its favorable weather. However, Shemiran, at that time, did not hold the same significance as Tehran and functioned primarily as a summer destination for Tehran's inhabitants (autonomous, 2014).

The elevation of Qazvin as the capital of Iran during the Safavid era under Shah Tahmasp brought increased attention to Tehran. In 1553 AD, following the directives of Shah Tahmasp, a protective wall was erected around Tehran, featuring four gates and 114 ramparts. This marked the formal establishment of Tehran as a city. The foundational elements of Tehran, including the government citadel, the main market, and the mosque, were enclosed within the Tahmasp fence. This enclosure became the core of the main city, surrounded by various neighborhoods, shaping the overall structure of Tehran during that period (Hamidi, 1997). Notably, Vali-Asr Street had no existence in its current location during this era. It primarily lay outside the city fence in undeveloped terrain. The connection between Tehran and Shemiran was facilitated through Shemiran's road via Darvazehshemiran. Upon Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar's ascension to power in 1765, Tehran was designated as the capital of the Qajar dynasty in Iran. However, due to the wars involving Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, the city's development was limited, focusing primarily on intra-city constructions. The period from 1797 to 1847

AD, during the rule of Agha Mohammad Khan's successors, witnessed significant changes in the city. New constructions, such as gardens and palaces both inside and outside the fence, emerged. There was a growing influence of European civilization, and new institutions, including factories, printing houses, railroads, telegraphs, and more, were established in Tehran. Additionally, there was a trend towards gardening and creating a countryside around Tehran, particularly in the northern areas. During this era, Vali-Asr Street had not yet been established.

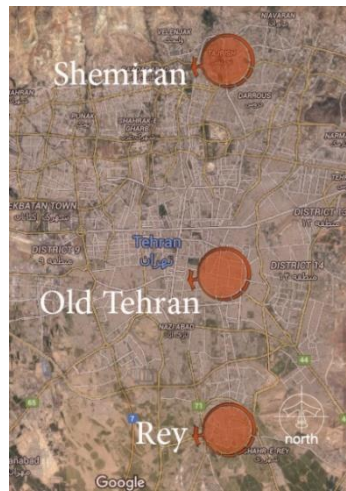
With Naser al-Din Shah Qajar ascending to the throne in 1847 AD and his 50-year rule, significant changes occurred in the dynamics of urbanization and the urban system in Tehran. This period witnessed an unprecedented development in the three main factors of city development: economic mobility, political and administrative centrism, and communication. The city's physical expansion followed this development, expanding from the four directions, particularly from the north. The previous fence around Tehran was dismantled, and a new fence was constructed around the city, leading to the formation of Naseri Dar-al-Khilafa. According to Najm al-Mulk Abdul Ghaffar's map, the areas outside the walled city were dominated by gardens and open grounds. This city map also depicts the street system within the gardens, showing the early signs of Vali-Asr Street.

The use of lands around Vali-Asr Street is depicted well on Abdul Ghaffar's map. In Fig. 3, it can be observed that the first urban development plan in Tehran portrays Vali-Asr Street as a path cutting through the gardens. This path, in the south, led to the gardens and fields in the southeast corner of Qajar City, and in the north, it terminated in personal lands. There were few residential neighborhoods along this path, surrounded by vegetable lands. Military lands around this axis included barracks and armories. Service lands, such as bathrooms, stables, and caravansaries, were also present. Notably, the streets connecting the core of the city with the gates of the newly established fence held particular importance during that time.



**Fig 3.** Stages of Research





**Fig 4.** Location of Tehran, Rey, and Shemiran



**Fig 5.** The current position of the Vali-Asr Street to the Tahmasep fence in Abdul Ghaffar's map



**Fig 6.** Location of land use of the Vali-Asr Street in the map created by Abdul Ghaffar

In 1907, under the reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah, the municipality law, adapted from the rules of French and Belgian municipalities, was established to "preserve the interests and needs of urban residents." This marked the beginning of a new era in Tehran's urban management, bringing structural changes to Vali-Asr Street (Takmil Homayoon, 1990, Volume II), (Mokhtari, 2014). The axis of Vali-Asr Street underwent transformations with increased population and the development of residential areas. Gardens were replaced with new houses, and new gardens were created in arid lands, shaping the city around the street (Mokhtari, 2014). During this time, mosques and the Monir al-Saltneh school were built, along with houses for nobles in European architectural style. Fkhriyeh mosque was constructed around the axis. In 1923, when Reza Khan came to power and Karim Agha Khan Bouzarjomehri was appointed as the president of the municipality, significant measures were taken in Tehran, continuing into the Pahlavi Regime.

✓ *The second period, Pahlavi era (1925 – 1979)*

In 1925, with Reza Khan coming to power, his ambition to build numerous palaces, including the

construction of Sa'dabad in Shemiranat, played a role in the extension of Vali-Asr Street. The creation of Vali-Asr Street was more a result of political will than a necessity in urban design. The motivation to construct an avenue connecting the new royal countryside in Saad Abad to the New Palace (Marmara) led to the establishment of a new road named "Pahlavi Road," named after its founder (Mokhtari, 2014).

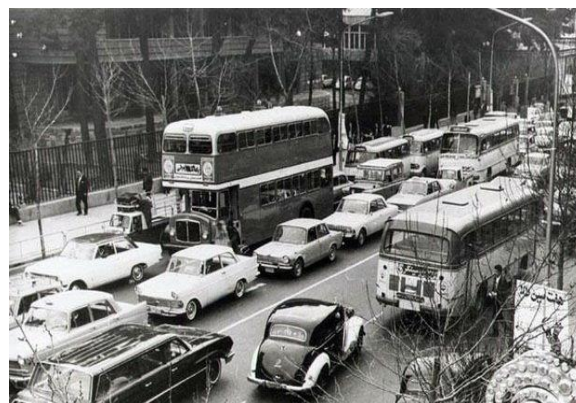
A report from the Journal of the Municipality of Tehran in 1931 suggests that the municipality of Tehran initially constructed a path between the northern ditch to the Tajrish bridge in 1927. Subsequently, in 1928, the existing street underwent reorganization with varying degrees of intervention. The construction of the railway near the South ditch in 1937 led to the formation of the South part of Vali-Asr Street, marking the beginning of this avenue.



**Picture 1.** Vali-Asr Street Under Construction



**Picture 2.** Vali-Asr Street 1953



**Picture 3.** Vali-Asr Street 1970

With the rise of the Second Pahlavi in 1940, the city of Tehran experienced development to the north, and Vali-Asr Street (former Pahlavi Street) gained increased attention as one of the main urban streets connecting the old city to the new city. The street saw the formation of various residential and functional uses, including administrative, educational, healthcare, and services, making it not only a transit route but also a desirable residential area. From 1971 onwards, the street evolved into an integrated structure, serving as a road link between Tajrish and the Railroads, establishing a cohesive connection between the city and the Shemiran countryside.

Vali-Asr Street has become a shared space for all city residents, characterized by its tall plane trees, spacious sidewalks, and a vibrant atmosphere. It serves as a hub for both work and leisure, creating a green tunnel that leads to the Tajrish Bridge. Tajrish, in addition to being a place of pilgrimage and tourism, is noted for providing enjoyment to the poor more than the affluent residents in the area (Mokhtari, 2014).

Vali-Asr Street has evolved into a symbol of the new era, adorned with charming and attractive recreational destinations such as restaurants, parks, malls, zoos, shopping centers, hotels, cinemas, the City Theater, Tehran Mahdieh, amusement parks, and railways. This transformation has contributed to the overall satisfaction of the residents along this iconic street.

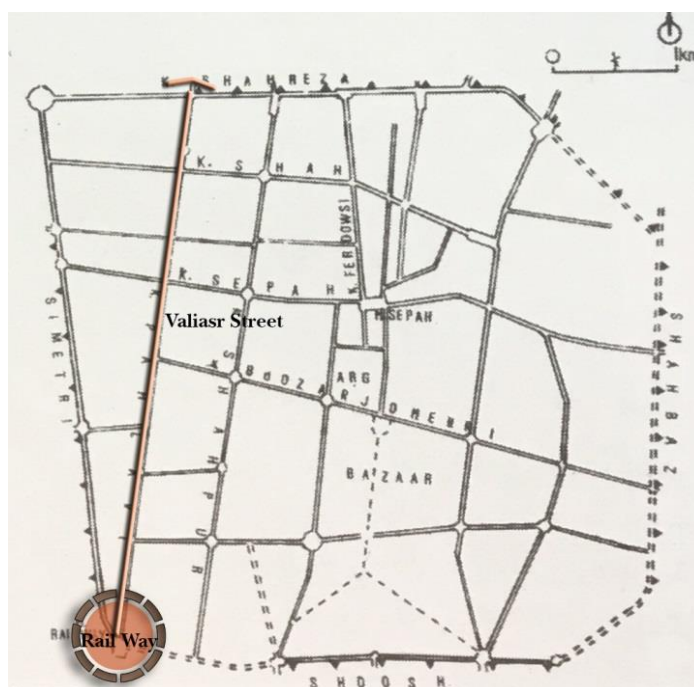
✓ *Summing up the historical eras*

Based on the examined research framework, the elements influencing the development of significance in Vali-Asr Street during the two historical periods can be consolidated in Table 2.

*Getting to know the Vali-Asr Street in the current period*

✓ *Third period: the Islamic Revolution (1979 - present)*

The advent of the Islamic Revolution in February 1979 inevitably had repercussions on the dynamics of life along Vali-Asr Street. The street's inherent qualities as an urban space with a distinct identity contributed to the strengthening of cultural and educational activities as predominant features on the street. The expansion of public areas and the growth of business service centers introduced a new atmosphere, necessitating new construction projects. The establishment of a new government center at the intersection of Vali-Asr Street and Imam Khomeini Street resulted in the emergence of a fresh governmental focal point. Over the past decade, Vali-Asr Street, recognized for its natural, historical, and cultural values, has garnered attention, leading to the initiation of specific projects aimed at its preservation.



**Fig 7.** Location of the railways and the Vali-Asr Street in Tehran's map in 1937



**Table 2.** Influencing factors on the formation of meaning on Vali-Asr Street in the first and second periods of history

component	index	measure	First period: The Qajar era and earlier (from the beginning to 1925)	The second period: Pahlavi era (1925-1979)	
Perceptual	Legibility	important Urban Elements		Railway Square, Imam Zadeh Saleh, Dafineh Museum	
		Visual cues	Mountains, fence, fruit trees	plane trees, Toochal peak	
		significant buildings and structures	Moshir al-Sataneh school and mosque, Fakhr mosque, nobility houses	Government palace, cultural and modern monuments	
		important uses	Private gardens, residential places	Park, office, commerce	
		important activities information boards		leisure and recreation	
	Memorability	Bittersweet memories and experiences		A memorable performance as a space for leisure and recreation	
		Sensory richness (odor, color, and ambient sounds)			
	Transparency	Immediate ability to understand social activities and natural processes			
	Cultural-Social	Identity	existence of historical and cultural values		Monuments remaining from the Qajar period (Paradise Garden, house of Anis al-Dawla)
			sense of belonging to the place		
Social interactions		behavior settings		Cultural centers, restaurants, bars, parks...	
		Multi-purpose spaces	Moshir al-Sataneh school and mosque, Fakhr mosque	Mahdieh of Tehran, park, and the City Theater	
		Performance of social and cultural ceremonies		Daneshjoo Park and the City Theater, the Safavid bazaar	
		Attraction use for different groups		Business and leisure (theme parks, zoos, parks, malls)	
		Conducting different activities for different groups			
Physical	Attraction	Visual properties			
		Diverse perspectives corridors		the landscape of the mountains and Shemiran, adjacent gardens, and street	
		Suitable Lighting			
		The use of natural elements (water and vegetation)	Construction of gardens in arid lands, river water for irrigating gardens	Planting plane trees on both sides of the street, wide water canals	
	Diversity of facades	Making use of European styles in the upper house	Construction diversity by employing architects educated in Europe		
	Structure	Ease of access and navigation		Construction diversity by employing architects educated in Europe	
The right combination of components with each other					

component	index	measure	First period: The Qajar era and earlier (from the beginning to 1925)	The second period: Pahlavi era (1925-1979)
Time	Compatibility	Physical compliance with current activities in space		
	Climatic and natural factors	The impact of changing seasons on space throughout the year		Color changing of plane trees in different seasons
	Advancement of technology	The use of materials and technology in the construction of space Urban development of policy managers		The use of modern materials such as concrete Driveway and paving the street
	Government regulation	Physical compliance with current activities in space	passing the law of the municipality and use of the gardens for residential use	Widening of roads, construction of new government buildings



Picture 4. Vali-Asr Street 1990



Picture 5. Lighting in Vali-Asr Street 2015



Picture 6. Theatre Shahr on Vali-Asr Street



Picture 7. Baghe Ferdos on Vali-Asr Street



Picture 8. Railway Station



Picture 9. Plane tree & Aqueduct

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As outlined in the research methodology, to elucidate the factors contributing to the contemporary meaning, the study relied on the findings obtained

from interviews with 100 users of Vali-Asr Street. Responses that were more commonly expressed were selected. Table 3 illustrates the perceptual indicators that play a role in shaping the meaning on Vali-Asr Street.

**Table 3.** influential perceptual factors in shaping contemporary meaning on Vali-Asr Street

Perceptual indicator	
Legibility	
Signs and information kiosks	50% effective
Memorable	
Existence of historical and cultural values	80% effective
Sense of belonging to the space	85% green, 70% smell of nature, 80% traffic noise
Transparency	
Immediate ability to understand social activities and natural processes	60% effective

Table 4 shows the socio-cultural factors influencing the formation of meaning on Vali-Asr Street.

**Table 4.** Socio-cultural indicators influential in the shaping of meaning on the contemporary Vali-Asr Street

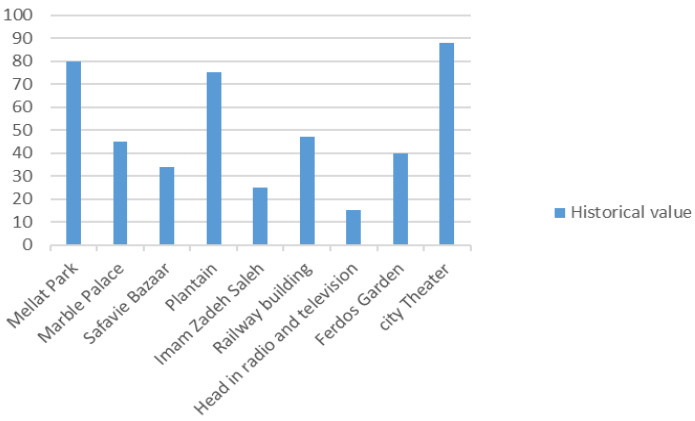
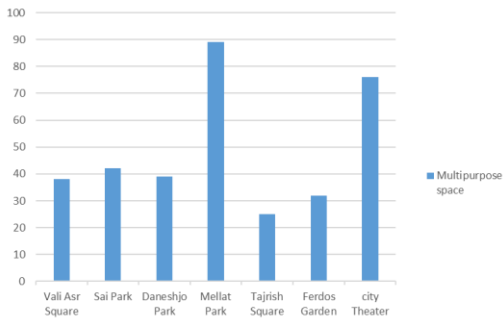
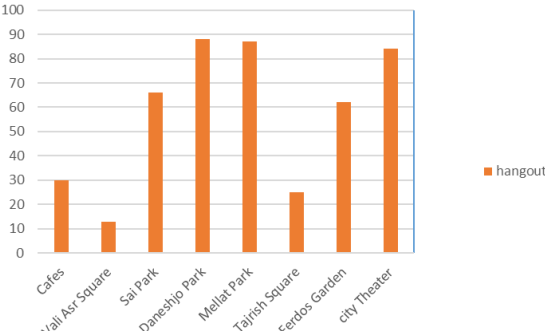
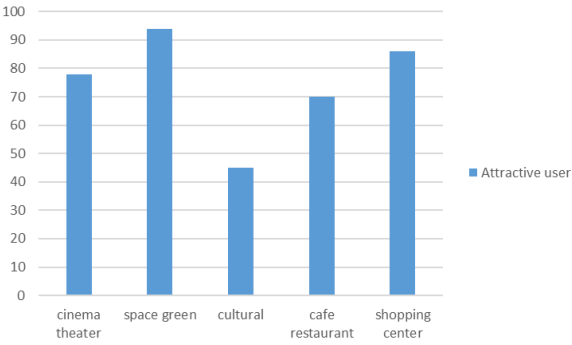
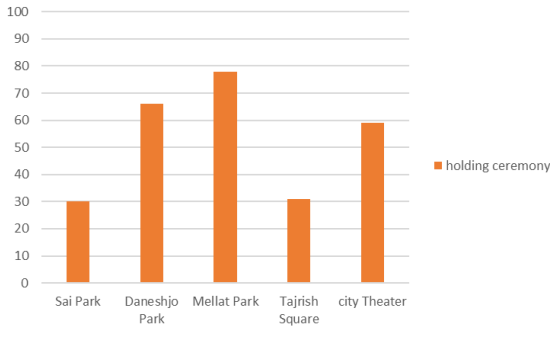
Socio-cultural factors	
Identity	
	
Sense of belonging to the place	75% sense of belonging to the historical identity of the street, in particular the sycamore trees
Social interactions	
	
	
Doing different activities for different groups	Without effects



Table 5 shows the physical indicators that are influential in the formation of meaning on Vali-Asr Street.

Table 6, shows the influential indicators in the formation of meaning on Vali-Asr Street.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Vali-Asr Street, serving as the backbone and layout of Tehran, underwent formation across three distinct historical epochs. According to research findings, the impact of the constituting elements of meaning varies across these historical periods. Consequently, different meanings have been attributed to the street during the three examined periods. Figure 4 illustrates the influence of the components in shaping meaning across these three historical eras.

In the initial period, the predominant influence of the perceptual component resulted in Vali-Asr Street

acquiring meaning as a narrow garden alley amidst the gardens of Qajar City. Transitioning to the first Pahlavi era marked the commencement of the second period, where the temporal component played a significant role in positioning the street as a connecting route between newly constructed residences. During the second Pahlavi era, the heightened influence of both the temporal and socio-cultural components contributed to Vali-Asr Street being recognized as an urban space, earning appreciation from the residents of Tehran. The third period aligned with the Islamic Revolution saw Vali-Asr Street entering a new phase of urban life after a period of stagnation. The combined impacts of all four meaning-forming components, particularly the temporal element, led to its designation as a cultural heritage of Tehran in 2011.

**Table 5.** physical indicators influential in the formation of meaning on the contemporary Vali-Asr Street.

Physical component	
Attraction	
Visual proportions	Without effects
Diverse perspective corridors	80% effective
Suitable lighting	90% effective
Use of natural elements (water and vegetation)	80% effective
Diverse façade	70% effective
Structure	
Ease of access and navigation	70% effective
The right combination of components with each other	Without effects
Compatibility	
Doing different activities for different groups	60% effective

**Table 6.** physical indicators influential in shaping the meaning of the contemporary Vali-Asr Street.

Time component	
Climatic and natural factors	
The impact of changing seasons throughout the year	They knew spring 100% effective
Technology advancement	
The use of materials and technology in the construction of space	40% effective
Entrance of automobiles in the space	100% effective (causing traffic jams, noise and air pollution)
Government regulation	
Development policies of urban managers	90% effective (procedures such as one-way streets, construction of BRT, cutting the plane trees, pedestrian paths, and taxi stands)

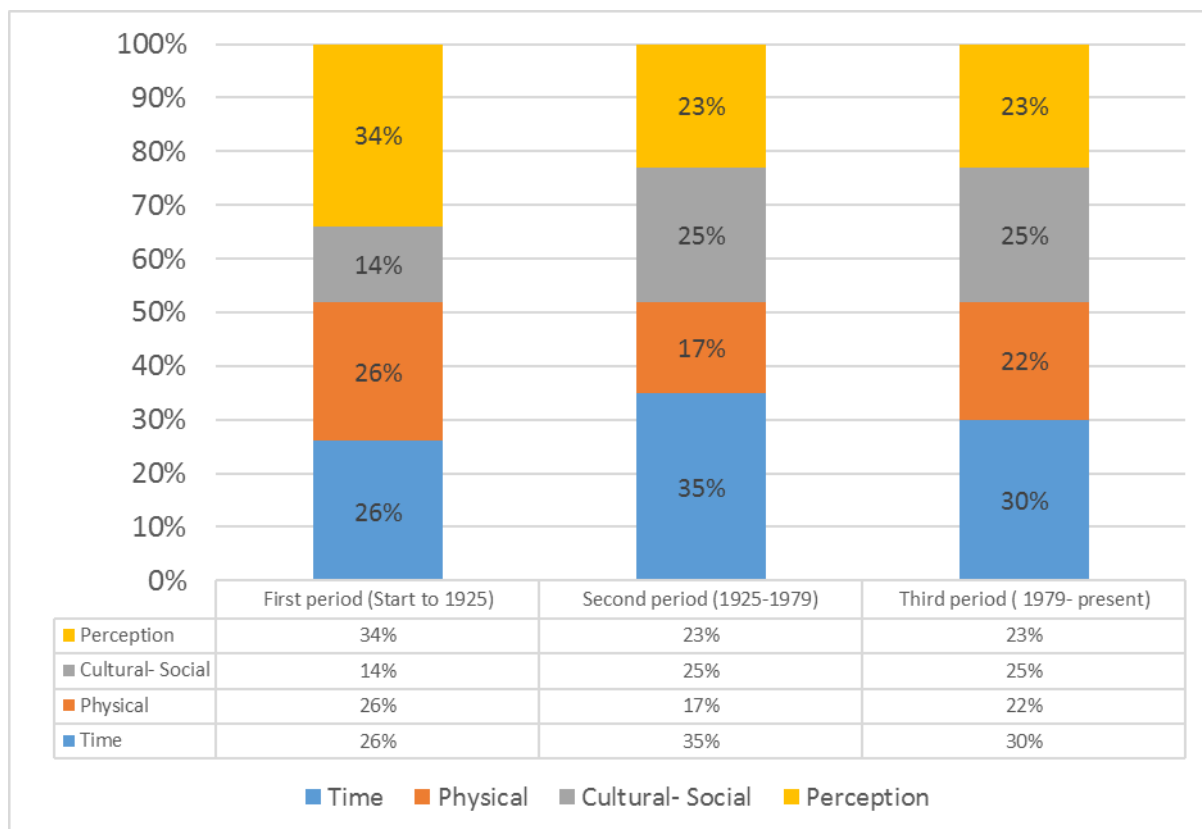


Fig 8. The effect of the components of shaping the meaning in three historical periods

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#### **HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE**

Jaliliasdrabad, S., Tabaeian, A., Parhizgar, SH. (2023). *Analysing Vali-Asr Street Changing Trend in Meaning from the Users' Perspective, from 1925 until Now. Int. J. Architect. Eng. Urban Plan*, 33(3): 1-19, <https://dx.doi.org/ijaup.810>.

URL: <http://ijaup.iust.ac.ir>

