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IMMIGRATION SOCIAL CHALLENGES IN PUBLIC SPACES IN JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA

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Abstract

After the economic rise in Saudi Arabia in 1938, workers migrated from across Saudi Arabia seeking better work opportunities. Statistics from the General Census of Population and Housing in 2010 reveal that the total number of international immigrants increased from 0.7 to 1.73 million between 2002 and 2010 (from 29.4% to 50% of the Population), coming from different countries, cultural, social and religious backgrounds.

Over recent years, a perception has developed by some citizens that there are too many Immigrants, which has exposed increased feelings of insecurity. Anti-immigrant attitudes and social exclusion have become more prominent, Saudi nationals have become concerned about diminishing national identity, in addition to believe that expatriates take available work and economic opportunities away from nationals, main cause of crime, and moral corruption.

Immigrants have brought with them new ideas, skills and practices from their home cultures, which add to the new urban cultures in Jeddah. This has helped to create a culturally vibrant urban environment.

The study will discuss the challenges faced by immigrants in Jeddah, in terms of interaction and social harmony with Saudi citizens in public spaces, and the underlying causes of those challenges. Qualitative method is used in this study, through discuss and analyse general literature review about the objective of the research (Public space and Immigration social challenges in Jeddah), then propose general recommendations that contribute to the improvement of the immigrants social life in the public space.

Introduction

In 1938, when oil was discovered, workers migrated moved to Saudi Arabia, and this phenomenon of workers seeking better work opportunities continued (Mandeli, 2011). Immigrants in Saudi Arabia have been uprooted from their origins and create new social lives, practicing some actions of their original. However, these immigrants cannot be described as integrating within the community, due to different ethno-national origins, clans and languages. Huo states that immigrants play a critical role in shaping the city's planning and landscape as they create new cultures within neighbourhoods and within the city urban context (Huo, 2013).

Society has been seen to change in response to foreign migrant workers who have made their homes in various residential areas of Jeddah. However, these immigrant workers have brought with them new ideas, skills and practices from their home cultures, which add to the new urban cultures in Jeddah. This has helped to create a culturally vibrant and cosmopolitan urban environment (Mandeli, 2011).

The social relation has changed between citizens and immigrants, because of the social and economic changes in last two recent decades in Jeddah. Saudi nationals have become concerned about diminishing national and regional identities, as well as an increased awareness of the potential threats caused by too many international immigrants. Residents are often concerned about their personal safety from migrant workers that have lost their jobs or who have entered the country illegally, and often turn to crime to meet their basic needs of food and accommodation. Although there has been a traditional acceptance and tolerance of foreigners living and working in the city, over recent years, a perception has developed by some residents that there are too many foreign migrant workers, which has exposed increased feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and insecurity (Mandeli, 2011).

Cities in Saudi Arabia have had design practices, has contributed to problems with the built environment. This has interfered with the social harmony found traditionally in these cities, and has had a negative influence on social status, children's activities, women's activities, social interaction. Nagy (2006) suggests that patterns of use of public open spaces are influenced by the large numbers of migrant workers in this region that often produces social distinctions for specific open spaces based on feelings of affiliation, strategies and behaviours of individuals and attitudes towards social diversity that are complex, so that official policies and discourse tend to overlap and interact (Nagy, 2006).

Because of this apparent deterioration in social relations (especially for immigrants) in public spaces in the city of Jeddah, emerged the idea of the study of Immigration social challenges in public spaces in Jeddah.

The reason for choosing the city of Jeddah

Jeddah city is selected as the geographical setting for this paper for a number of reasons. Significant developments have taken place in the city over many decades, due to the impact of expanding commercial activities, and the improved economy in Saudi Arabia. Jeddah presents a typical example of a city in the Middle East region, but is also unusual as many migrant workers are based there, and its position as a seaport means that many pilgrims from other

countries pass through the city. There is also urgency in providing such research, because of the rapid development of social isolation, especially for immigrants in Jeddah.

Saudi Arabia

Within the region of the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is the largest country, and when compared to Arab countries it is the third largest in terms of land area (2,149,690 square kilometres). The Red Sea lies to the West and the Arabian Gulf lies to the North east, and according to 2010 statistics (Central Department of Statistics and Information, 2010), the population is estimated to be 29,994,272, and the number of non-Saudi residents are estimated to be 9,723,214.

Saudi Arabia mostly has a desert climate, apart from the south west of the country, so that day temperatures are high (around 36ºC) during the spring, summer and autumn, and moderately high (around 17ºC) during the winter. Temperatures at night are low across the country.

Jeddah

The Municipality of Jeddah is located within the Makkah (Mecca) region, which is on the central western coast of Saudi Arabia (Figure1). This is an area of 5,460 sq. km and situated on the Red Sea coast, which stretches from the settlement of Thuwal in the North, to near Mastabah in the South and covers a distance of approximately 160 km Jeddah City is the main settlement of the Governorate, and this is situated 65 km west of Makkah, with which it has been historically linked as the gateway to the Two Holy Mosques for over 1300 years (Adas, 2015).

Figure 1 Map of a Saudi Arabia.

Source: (Addas, 2015)

Demographics and social life in Jeddah

The population of Saudi Arabia has a high percentage (39.92%) of people aged 15 years and younger, and this significant youth population is also reflected in Jeddah, but with a slightly smaller percentage (32.2%) (CDS 1992; 2004; 2007).

Jeddah Municipality in 2002 reported that Jeddah had an older population when compared to other Saudi Arabian cities due to the large number of mainly middle-aged foreign immigrants, in addition to Jeddah's lower birth when compared with other Saudi cities. Therefore, the male population of Jeddah has historically risen faster than for females (Mandeli, 2011); however, these population differences have never been substantial, because the families of immigrant workers tend to join them at a later time.

The population of Jeddah has grown more than 115 times between the unification of the country in 1932 and 2014. Jeddah's concentration of power, together with an accumulation of wealth has attracted many newcomers to the city, and increased its population. The national census has revealed that Jeddah's population has risen from 2.8 million in 2004 to 3.98 million in 2014 (CDS 2004; 2010).

The Central Department of Statistics and Information reports that the current level of unemployment across the country is about 5.50%, but the IMF reports that over the previous four years non-Saudis were employed in 1.5 million new jobs, compared to 500,000 Saudis gaining new jobs. Therefore, the unemployment rate for Saudis is 12%, but the unemployment levels for specific groups of Saudis is much higher, such as those under the age of 50 (30%) and females (35%) (IMF, 2013).

The family, as a social institution, remains the main meeting place for family members. Even in cities, such as Jeddah, where there are plentiful options for recreation, sport and religious support, the ties with family members remain of high importance (Adas, 2015).

Immigration in Jeddah

According to a report by Jeddah Municipality (2004), between 1971 and 1974, foreign workers increased to become around 37% of the population of the city. This percentage of migrant workers remained broadly similar and in 2002 this had decreased slightly to around 30%. The number of Saudi citizens in the total Jeddah population increased rapidly from 47.7% in 1978 to 70.6% in 2002 (Jeddah-Municipality 2004). However, the percentage of internal immigration declined and the numbers of foreign workers increased over the period from 1978-2002 (Mandeli, 2011), most of them are Arab and Middle East countries, as well as those from the Philippines, India, Pakistan and Indonesia

Saudi nationals were unable to provide the skills and expertise that expatriate workers were able to offer since the economic boom of the 1970s, so their numbers continued to grow due mostly to a heavy reliance upon the work of expatriates that was essential for Saudi economic development (Mandeli, 2011). Statistics from the General Census of Population and Housing for the year 2010 reveal that the total number of international immigrants increased from 0.7 to 1.73 million between 2002 and 2010, with a 11.9% annual rate of growth. During the same period, their proportion to the total population also increased from 29.4% to 50% (CDS 2004; 2010).

Migrant workers in Saudi Arabia come from Egypt, Lebanon, Philippines, Indonesia and other developing countries, and Western countries, such as the USA and the UK.

The national background often plays a significant role in the distribution of immigrants, and especially low-skilled workers. Immigrants representing different nationalities may be found living together in a particular area, which is similar for highly skilled professionals from western countries that are often isolated within gated communities (Mandeli, 2011).

The relationship between the Saudis and immigrants

Negative attitudes towards foreign migrant workers and the consequent racial discrimination reflect citizens' desires to remove the source of threat and competition (Yamni 2000). Berry (2008) suggests that attitudes towards foreigners can differ, according to the status of the incomers, such as whether they are asylum seekers or refugees, as well as others who are foreign migrant workers in Jeddah. Attitudes towards immigrants differ according to the status of citizens, as well as their social and religious inclinations.

Citizens who have foreign-born parents or grandparents and have been assimilated into Jeddah society tend to have neutral attitudes towards immigrants. Mutual acceptance and harmony between ethno-cultural groups has been encouraged by these people who have possessed citizenship for many years. Although immigration has contributed to the development of the city of Jeddah, attitudes of these citizens towards migrant workers can vary according to the status of ethnic group members, their professional skills, or if the foreigners are required for work (Yamni, 2000, 2009).

Traditionalist groups, who originally moved from the surrounding rural areas to settle in the city and became a majority group, tend to have more negative attitudes towards immigrants. This is unlike most of Jeddah's native residents, whose ancestors came from outside the Arabian Peninsula. Traditionalist groups consider themselves to be superior citizens due to their tribal origins and nativist sentiments. They support the concept of hierarchies among Saudi nationals and often express prejudice against others in order to maintain their social dominance, Guimond, Oliveira et al. (2010) and Esses and Wagner et al. (2006) comment that traditionalists create damage to existing group-based social hierarchy, because as they view those native residents who have historical origins outside the Kingdom as second class citizens.

Most citizens who have negative attitudes towards immigrants believe that expatriates take available work and economic opportunities away from nationals, who are unable to find work. Saudi nationals, such as the traditionalists, consider the presence of low-skilled foreign workers, especially from Africa, Pakistan and India, to be the main cause of Saudi unemployment, as well as the main cause of crime, moral corruption and serious social divisions. Concerns about anti-social behaviour and changing social norms have contributed to more negative attitudes towards expatriates, which are often xenophobic (Yamni, 2000; Fakeeh, 2009).

Recreation and leisure in Jeddah

According to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, citizens have "the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holiday with pay, and

the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits" (United Nations, 1985, p97). Al-Hijji (1989) explains that in 1984 the Saudi Government adopted this UN Declaration and passed legislation relating to hours of work, time for leisure, holidays and relating to leisure activities themselves, which has increased growth in leisure time.

According to Pigram (1983), more flexible work patterns with staggered leisure times require effective management of recreation resources. Traditionally in Saudi Arabia, the growth in leisure time was the privilege of the elite, which is now enjoyed by everyone. The advent of modern lighting has led to a shift in most social and some work activities to the hours of late evening, which has helped to avoid unsuitable climatic conditions, and also allows more people to visit outdoor recreational areas, and particularly women who might have safety concerns in dark areas.

The statutory regulation of time in Saudi Arabia is partly overshadowed by the impact of environmental and religious factors upon leisure patterns and the planning of time. The working day for the government sector runs from 7.30 am to 2:30 pm, and until 5:00 to 6:00 pm in the private sector. Leisure time usually after 6 pm, to spend with the family or as a social time for people to gather (Hammadi, 1993). The pattern of leisure activities is very different to European and North American leisure activity norms.

The Saudi Government has recognised the importance of providing opportunities for outdoor recreation, and most Saudi residents are able to spend some of their money, time and effort on outdoor recreation. However, currently, the demand for recreation in Saudi Arabia is greater than the supply of facilities (Figure2).

According to Pigram (1983), increased demand for recreational activities has been accompanied by the increased availability of disposable time, the choice of leisure activities, and the demand for outdoor recreational space. Such choices are influenced by users' expectation, and linked to age, family status, social group, personal taste and education.

Figure 2 the demand for recreation in Saudi Arabia is greater than the supply of facilities

Source: (Riyadh newspaper, 2015)

Open spaces in Jeddah

The last four decades have seen rapid growth in both natural and migratory populations, which has coincided with the Kingdom's rapid increase in wealth. As a result, Jeddah City has grown physically and at a very rapid rate, which was partly because of the limited success of regulatory frameworks and spatial planning that tried to restrict development to certain parts of the city. Consequently, the urban areas of Jeddah grew beyond the capacity of its infrastructure (Khalil, 1994; Eben-Saleh, 1997).

The current practice and organisation for the planning, design and management of public open spaces in Jeddah involves public departments of the municipality of Jeddah and private contractors, which has contributed to poor standards of maintenance. Mandeli noted that the clearance of traditional neighbourhoods and the destruction of traditional urban spaces by public sector agencies and private investors were encouraged, which led to the emergence of a series of dispersed exclusive and depersonalised residential areas and segmented urban spaces that limit public access, which has undermined community cohesiveness (Mandeli, 2011). Therefore, projects led to social heterogeneity and polarisation, and also caused the displacement of people from their traditional communities. Al-Madhadji (2010) recognises that implementing environmental legislation exposes problems, as citizens are often insufficiently aware of how these factors could be applied in their day-to-day lives.

Al-Fahad (2008) finds that few people use local gardens and parks in Saudi Arabia due to their poor design and management, and that the softscape and hardscape features of these public open spaces were described as poor quality, because they often fail to meet the needs of individuals and families.

Research findings reveal various factors influencing heterogeneity and urban fabric, such as increased distances between buildings as a result of building wider streets, creation of barely accessible and widely dispersed outdoor spaces, failure to provide protection from very hot weather and a lack of public services facilities and services. Other factors include the lack of a sense of community, security, privacy and responsibility that are responsible for the reduction of social interaction between residents, and undermine a sense of identity and collective activities such as the maintenance of community public open spaces. These have prevented people from participating in social experiences and physical activities in outdoor spaces, and enjoying urban spaces (Al-Hathloul and Mughal, 1999; Eben-Saleh, 2002; Mandeli, 2011).

Discussion

Ulrich et al. (1991) report that natural settings restore positive effects and reduce fear, anger and aggression based on attention restoration theory and stress reduction theory. From that, the lack of open spaces of high quality in the communities that would increase stress in the community. Grahn & Stigsdotter identify a connection between stress and visiting open spaces, as when people spend more time in open spaces, this contributes to reduced levels of stress they experience in their daily life (Grahn & Stigsdotter, 2003).

A diverse society can enhance social capital by having open spaces, such as parks, for common use. Social well-being, including social inclusion and integration are facilitated by

public open spaces, as they provide settings to promote 'social capital' and good health (Amin, 2002; Valentine, 2008).

In modern societies, people are heading to public spaces, to ignore the pressures of life, and recreation, so they are the best platform to form social relationships, and the melt of Ethnic differences. According to Morris (2003), social interaction, as well as improvements in the quality of life, may be enhanced by outdoor recreational activities. Outdoor activities can also help people to meet new people and make friendships. Kathiravelu (2013) suggests that social interaction and friendships in outdoor spaces can be seen as a ritualised forum. The urban context is structured in ways that promote residents' friendships and socialising, especially for immigrants and cities with diverse communities (Kathiravelu, 2013).

Societal benefits from using the public spaces may not promote positive interaction, but may prevent negative social interactions. Kuo and Sullivan (2001) suggest that the greater use of public spaces increases surveillance, as well reducing factors that lead to aggression.

Especially for immigrants, important role of public space, to integrate into their new communities, because of the lost of their families and friends, making them to use the public space often, to form social relationships. Immigrants often use public open spaces to become more familiar with everyday activities, rather than specifically to build social networks; however, these spaces offer forms of contact that could be culturally specific (Rishbeth and Finney, 2006).

Immigrants behaviour in public space does not depend on the quality of public space, and social interaction with the natives only , but also depends on their ethnic origins, and original cultures. Those from different ethnic origins using parks were researched by Payne et al. (2002) in the USA, where the views of different ethnic users often differed from Caucasian respondents, such as showing a greater preference for activities that were organised, and were usually more interested in recreational activities than conservation. Another study by Tinsley et al. (2002) suggest that there are differences in the frequency of visits to parks and preferences for specific activities that cannot not be explained by proximity. Caucasian and African American respondents tended to identify natural features, such as trees and flowers, which they enjoyed more than Asian or Hispanic respondents. African American respondents were more likely to visit the park with friends, whilst Caucasian respondents usually visited the park alone or with close family members.

Sullivan et al. (2004) suggest that people are more attracted and engaged socially in the areas between buildings in comparison to barren spaces. Distribution and design of public spaces in Jeddah, in addition to the lack of activities and elements that promote social interaction, leading to increased immigrants social challenges in Jeddah. Users of open spaces in Jeddah also have concerns about safety, particularly for areas with poor lighting at night, so that women seldom use some open spaces during night periods. In addition, many areas of open spaces in Jeddah have poor maintenance, which reduces their restorative effects (Adas, 2015).

The people in Jeddah using public spaces at leisure, despite the poor quality, and lack of diversity of activities. The social and cultural traditions of Jeddah also mean that Saudi citizens often use public open spaces as centres for recreation and social interaction between families and within groups of friends (Adas, 2015).

Responding to social exclusion imposed by the Saudi society towards immigrants, immigrants resorted to the formation of their own communities in the public spaces. Addas says: Jeddah has a high percentage of migrant workers that also use public open spaces, where migrants also demonstrate similar patterns of use to meet with others of the same ethnic background and same language (Figure3), as well as forming attachment to specific open spaces or softscape features within these areas (Addas, 2015). Over recent years, a perception has developed by some residents that there are too many foreign migrant workers, which has exposed increased feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and insecurity (Mandeli, 2011).

Figure 3 Immigrant workers in public space in Jeddah.

Source: (Middle east confidential magazine, 2013)

Conclusion

The promotion of social interaction between citizens and foreigners in the public space is linked to improve the environment of public space, because it is the platform where social interaction happens, thereby forming the right conditions to attract users to the public space, in addition to find activities that increase the chances of interaction between users (such as playground), thus removing immigrants' social challenges.

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