THE IDENTITY OF OPEN SPACE: ADAPTING FROM THE MODEL OF TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

V. Ahmadi, A.I. Che-Ani, H.Farkisch, M.Surat
Department of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering and Built Environment,
University Kebangsaan Malaysia
vahmadi@eng.ukm.my

ABSTRACT

The City form consists of some different elements, which have been joined in the functional and spatial form. If these elements have an appropriate spatial organization the strong coherence is created among them. In the traditional urban spaces, most of the times, this spatial regularity among city elements is the result of thoughtful developed urban patterns. Many non-local agents influence on the form of new cities while the forming of traditional urban spaces depends on the morphology of the site, the historical background and the culture of local people. In this way, we were looking for some of the important researches by focus the open spaces and exactly neighborhood centers in Iran. We also choose the analysis literature review for our methodology. All our attention was on two case studies in Iran (Tehran and Shiraz). In this paper, we tried to find ways to evaluate the value of neighborhood centers in the traditional urban for fulfillment to sustainable development urbanism. Urban planners and designers should find out the secret of the traditional cities' sustainability and the factors which make the responsive environment, and think that what the reasons prevent using them in contemporary cities. And then they should find a way to update those factors based on today demands, and design new patterns according to old one.

Keywords: *Identity, Iran, Neighborhood Centers, Open space, Traditional Cities.*

INTRODUCTION

People need for associations with significant places. If we choose to ignore that need, and follow the forces of placelessness to continue unchallenged, then the future can only hold an environment in which places simply do not matter. If we choose to respond to that need and transcend placelessness, then the potential exists for the development of an environment in which places are for man, reflecting and enhancing the variety of human experience.

The City form consists of some different elements, which have been joined in the functional and spatial form. If these elements have an appropriate spatial organization the strong coherence is created among them. In this case, a right connection is formed between the urban space and city dwellers. Urban design is the result of thoughtfully development process. This process as Alexander and the others said is the reason of traditional city integration. In the traditional urban spaces, most of the times, this spatial regularity among city elements is the result of thoughtful developed urban patterns. "Old trees, old houses, and old places urban places as well as parks are all symbols of survival. They remind us of those who lived before and those who will live after us..." (Berglund, 1998).

Public space is regarded as "the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or in periodic festivities" (Oktay, 2002). Basically, the urban experiences are the collective experience of places and spaces. It is the experience of places, and spaces conceived to link people and to create a vital social life. As Leon Krier said "Res Publica "[public area] includes all the public memorials and buildings, which form

the skyline and vertical façade of the city. They are connected by streets and squares. Public areas are placed into the private area (Res Economica Privata) and create one appropriate environment for living, working, commercial relationships, health and security. These private areas create the horizontal form of the city. All the public spaces do not have the same value and in the historical cities with the traditional form, the private space follows the public space (Mahmoudi and Fanaei, 2009).

The public domain extends from the streets, squares and parks of a town or city into the buildings which enclose them; it makes the most important part of our towns and cities (Madanipour, 2008). A combination of public and semi-public spaces includes a hierarchical system, which begins at the city gate and ends in the entry hall of houses. The traditional pedestrian system of the city is the main part of this system. After entering the bazaar through a gate, a quick and direct access to the neighborhood centre is possible.

Public open spaces are the most fascinating parts of historic cities. Open spaces in historic areas are based on the hierarchical movement from the central part of the city, the main streets, alleys which lead to neighborhood (Mahalle) centers, secondary alleys, 'Hashti' (the traditional entry halls to several houses) of the houses, entry halls and the court yards (Figure 1). This hierarchy is a movement from public space to private space. The needs of the people and function of these spaces determine their order and compositions. Main access and streets are wider and alleys, which terminate at houses, are very narrow (Figure 2). In this hierarchical system, the most important urban spaces are the covered semi-private spaces between groups of houses called 'Hashti', and the central square of the neighborhood. The central space of the neighborhood is the most excellent manifestation of urban design in a period of time by the people who used it.

Figure 2: The 'SABAT' (simple and beautiful half covered passageway) as a public space. Boshrooyeh city (Author)

The square is the most distinct element of the urban structure. As a clearly delimited place it is most easily imaginable, and represents a goal for movement. The square is determined by the same formal factors as the street, with the difference that the buildings should form continuity around the space. The 'Maidan' (Square) is the main public space in each neighborhood (Figure 3). Normally every neighborhood has a square, which is surrounded by cultural and service elements. This squares mostly located in the centre of

each neighborhood. Therefore, traditionally in Iran's gates were separate semi-private and private parts of the network from the public spaces.

Figure 3: The 'MIYANDEH' neighborhood centre
as a public space. Boshrooyeh city (Author)

This is particularly obvious in cities in the Middle East, where single buildings are an integral part of the general fabric, and where urban neighborhoods have traditionally organized their functions and services in relations to the whole. Large cities have changed from their original cultural aspect, and have become places that more easily unite them; they produce isolation rather than cultural diversity. Perhaps the best evidence for the vital importance of public urban spaces is historical. From the times of the earliest cities, there is evidence of a basic human impulse to govern streets and open spaces, to make them more useful in the necessary and desired activities of the old city and to make them more beautiful and restorative to the citizens of the community (Ghosh et al., 1996).

Looking at these traditional cities, it can be found out those issues such as social interactions, ease of transportation routes, the role of a square as a place for gatherings and celebrations (even as a landmark) and the role of the bazaar and small shopping center around it have always been considered by city constructors of those periods. Most of the time people think that traditional cities appeared and developed in an organic way, but there are many factors, which cause the appearance of those cities (Figure 4).

In 1960, Lynch studying the urban landscape and view values discovered the meaning of image, the interactive effects of the body form and people's perception of this form. He pointed out the most characteristic urban elements of these mental representations: 'paths, nodes, edges and landmarks' and considered five basic criteria for designing: Vitality, sense, fit, access, control, efficiency and justice. These characteristics contain a certain skyline, a specific spatial structure, developmental pattern and special use of the places. A "good" city, at least in the part of the world which has a history, contain a permanent elements, form, and construction that make a mental picture and image in addition to their capability of being changed along the socio-economical changes (Mahmoudi and Fanaei, 2009).

The total context of the city's skeleton area is often consistent and organized. Its vicinity with various contexts and its increase spatial quality leads to more balanced access of inside the city to the skeleton area, in comparison to all other places of the city in terms of distance. Moreover, city region access to the vertebral column of the city directly or through the main rows and connect to all other elements. Since the main open space and skeleton of the city are effective in its different spatial and functional characteristics, and it is important as a focus for the human activities'

gatherings and sometimes it counts as an element of the city's skeleton. The pattern of the city's use combination and their vicinity with one another in terms of their effect on the quality and functional efficiency of the main skeleton of the city is very important (Mahmoudi and Fanaei, 2009).
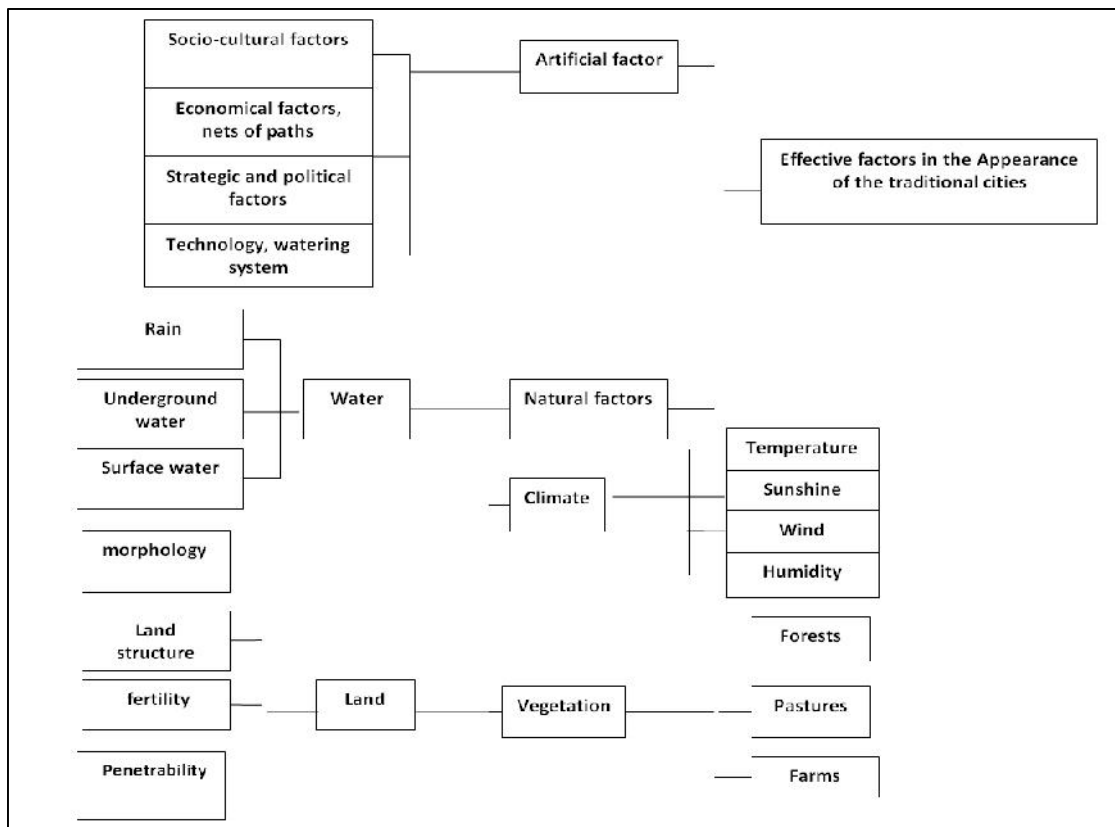

Figure 4: Mahmoudi and Fanaei`s view, 2009

Lefevre in 1991 recognized the three spatial dimensions of receptive, thinking, and biological as the social space with dialectic relations. At the first moment is the place procedure which refers to the organized method and use of the space within the routs and connecting nets of the places existing for the routines, city realities and the leisure time. The second is the representations of the space, which refers to the conceptualized space of the planners, city constructors, and separated technocrats and social engineers. This space is usually in the society, and therefore, it is worked rationally (its orientation is towards a system of lingual representations). Third, are open representation space, which is lived in directly with its images and symbols and therefore, it is the space for the residents and the uses. A space must be understood by non verbal means.

We cannot see our environment as a nonrelated set of material things, in a way that the inclination for knowing the cities equal to their buildings (Madanipour, 2008). The linking spaces such as the main routes and square-like spaces that link different elements of the city in its center and involve static and dynamic characteristic conditions. In this case, squares and mini-squares are static, and routs and streets are dynamic. Feeling surrounded in the space is fundamentally based on the relation of the distance of the watcher's eye from the height of the surrounding body of the space (Mahmoudi and Fanaei, 2009).

Prime spaces are different in terms of width, height and their surrounding elements. Actually, the value of the prime spaces is because they decrease the monotony of the linking spaces. Two major characteristics of the prime spaces in the old context of Iran's cities are a change in width and in being open or closed. Moreover, change in the form of the surrounding body, the amount of being surrounded (half surrounded or completely surrounded), change in the surrounding elements and change in space scale (the square becoming bigger or smaller) can lead to the creation of the prime spaces (Mahmoudi and Fanaei, 2009).

In a sustainable city, in addition to considering ecology, environment, energy, and the other above mentioned items, feeling of belonging to the place, should be created and increased by maintaining the density, healthy relations and forecasts, adequate size for residence, desirable social relationships, should be developed and a new concept of urban life would be created.

ISSUE

It is very unfortunate to see that in similar climatic zones, and not very far from each other, the new cities, or even new residential areas of the old cities develop without learning from traditional settlements. Although they were built for the same people with the same cultural background, they are not able to care for the simplest needs of their people. Cultural characteristics and activities of people in each climatic zone are much more important than just designing beautiful houses. Urban planners should always remember that people make spaces and although they may change these spaces, their culture will always remain the same, no matter where they are (Ferdowsian, 2002).

The new cities form rapidly and usually follow many unconnected concepts that cause confusion in urban spaces while in historical cities formed gradually according to accepted patterns and corrected rules. Moreover, many non-local agents influence on the form of new cities while the forming of traditional urban spaces depends on the morphology of the site, the historical background and the culture of local people. Damages in the pedestrian network result from the establishment of new streets have affected historic relationships and traditional social links. Any kind of interference with existing open spaces, or the development of new ones, should happen in view of the climatic dimensions and architectural criteria (Mahmoudi and Fanaei, 2009).

Scholars have done lot of research in different dimensions of sustainable development up to now such as in Europe and America. All last research has done in environmental sustainable. Sustainable development in burgess and civic life are distressing of scholars. Indeed, the last research is not enough about urban identity by open spaces in Iran. The term should be used in a broad sense, to encompass all the buildings, spaces and objects in an urban environment, as well as the people, events and relationships with them. Most architects, town planners, and urban designers do not have the opportunity to design entirely new towns or villages. More often, the designer will work within existing urban areas or within changing or expanding settlements where the legacy of the past is still useful. Finally, in this way would assist in maintaining the quality of historic cities, and should help to create new towns who respect the social needs, cultural values, and hierarchical organization for fulfillment to sustainable development urbanism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The urban environment has to be considered from a historical perspective, not merely understanding historically significant buildings, but rather understanding the evolution of the local urban context, with respect to human activity, built form, and nature. Some of the recent approaches to the concept of district, quarter or neighborhood take certain themes as ordering themes for its analysis, such as management, healing, welfare, association, order, participation, meaning and identity (Kallus, 1997). Public urban spaces are major functional and visual factors in determining the urban quality, and they show our culture, time and reflect the well being of the dwellers. However, the term public domain or public space should not refer to the spaces between buildings merely.

According to Norberg-Schulz's symbolic definition of a path, "on the plane, man chooses and creates paths, which give his existential space a more particular structure. Man's taking possession of the environment always means a departure from the place where he dwells, and a journey along a path which leads him in a direction determined by his purpose and his image of the environment… The path, therefore, represents a basic property of human existence, and it is one of the great original symbols" (Oktay, 2002). This article follows a case-study research, with in-depth analysis of literature review (Groat and Wang, 2002).

Azizi (2006) in his research of Narmak neighborhood chose factors with a similar identity, vitality, dynamism, variety, a provider of services, and suitable availability for framework theory. He also used questionnaires. His methodology was analysis, exploratory, and field research. His research has located in 8 sectors of Tehran, capital of Iran, (Figure 5). He chose 15 domains of Narmak neighborhood area. His team filled 100 questionnaires. His hypotheses were "Narmak neighborhood is sustainable and had identity".
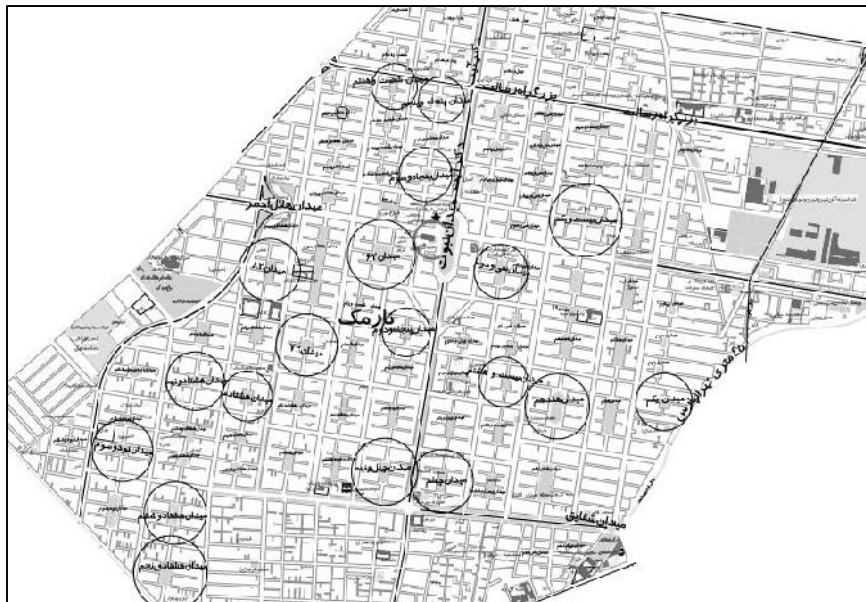

Figure 5: Narmak neighborhood (Azizi, 2006)

Data analysis accepted his hypotheses, for example:

- %35 of dwellers had more than 30 years reside.
- Identity neighborhood was the first factor with %36.
- %55 of dwellers had to place dependents.
- More dwellers to consider neighborhood centers, for example, identity, space to remember, dependents, spent leisure times, element, vitality, neighborhoods connection, and place for public ceremonies.
- %59 of dwellers did not like to change their neighborhood. %78 of dwellers said "their houses are good for needs social, cultural, and society.
- Inside the neighborhood supported %95 educational spaces, %60 health-curative (hospital), and %57 sports.
- %67 of dwellers said "Narmak neighborhood is safe".

In conclusion, Narmak neighborhood was sustainable, but bearable capacity of neighborhood was full. Addition of population density and buildings was the seriously problem.

Mahmoudi and Fanaei (2009) in their research chose a case study of a street in one of the Iranian historical cities. It was located in Shiraz, Iran and had been built about 80 years ago. Shiraz is one of the historical cities of Iran, which is located 940 KMs from capital of Iran (Tehran) in south. They said its traditional urban elements, which were forgotten in that time and mention that these elements, by some changes, had the potential to create an appropriate urban space. In Figure 6, shows a map of Shiraz recent form and location of its old fabric.

The street has two main characteristics directly related to forming; it is, at one and the same time, both path and place. For many generations, the street has provided urban communities with public open space right outside their homes. A second element basic to any public open space plan is to recognize the importance of streets as the framework of public open space (Barnett, 1982, Moughtin, 1992). The Street which was selected as their case study, located in a boundary of new and historic fabric. In the past, this street has been the most important and main street of Shiraz and therefore there were a lot of shops there. Suitable width of route had affected running traffic, but because of increasing number of population and individual cars, this part of the city suffers from heavy traffic. Almost 10 years ago, Shiraz Municipality by constructed an underground street and disallowed entrance of cars to some parts of this street. By doing that, there was only a pedestrian way to Vakil Bazaar.
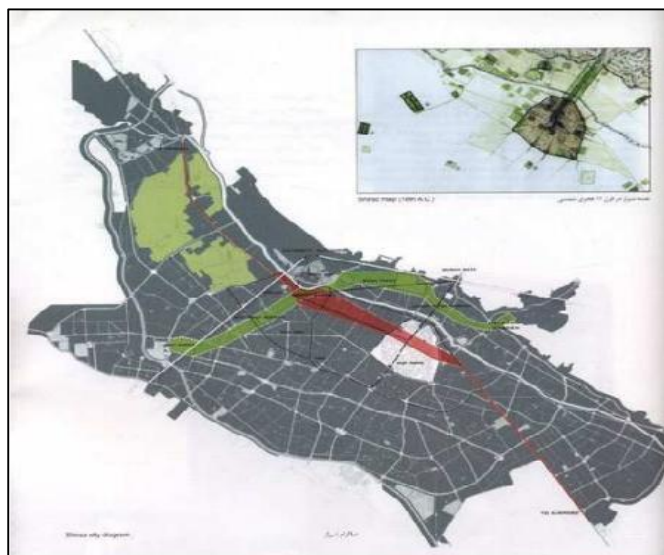

Figure 6: Old fabric in Shiraz (Fanaei, 2009)

Figure 7: Sample of square in Shiraz (Fanaei, 2009)

In Figure 7, a square is shown, all streets that lead to this square are all constructed during 50 to 70 years ago and nowadays its width is not sufficient for heavy traffic, which is caused by public transportation and individual cars. They said this street was in the middle of old fabric and because of lots of shops, had become a shopping centre. Although this street located in old fabric, but new constructions had damaged its façade and its spatial harmony. All these positive points without paying attention to its culture and the historical values caused designing new buildings with a heavy contrast to its texture. Although they did not say that making contrast is a negative point, but it was better than all buildings become consonant like a chorus.

They also said Shiraz was located in hot climate, so the streets need tree and green area to decrease the temperature and create shadows for pedestrian or people who were waiting for taxi or bus. These trees could be useful to reduce the air pollution, especially in this era that had a polluted air because of its location (city center) and the automobiles. The street also gradually changed to Commercial Street, and it was dangerous to walk or pass in the nights or weekends.

The conclusion was it is better if the access to this street is limited to public transportation and also at the end of the road leading to the square, vehicle access should be stopped and allow to pedestrians only. Successful examples of this approach could see in historic cities of Europe. By limiting and disallowance of car access to the old and historic parts of the city could preserve them in their original form.

Their suggestions were:
- Encourage proprietors to preserve and repaired their old buildings by giving them a long-time loan or giving the tax discount.
- Paying attention to the roofs as the fifth elevation.
- Planting trees in the edge of streets.

- Encourage shopkeepers and residential proprietors to plant in front of their buildings.
- Changing streets from one functional element to the places with various functions.
- Limiting the arrival of personal cars by improving Public transportation systems.
- Most of the times some functions, such as coffee shops, bar or restaurants create a pleasant urban space, and because they are opening up to the middle of the nights, they can be helpful for the increasing the streets' immunity.
- Following the successful urban patterns, and translate it to own language.

Indeed, the five samples that they said in that article (district, street, squares, shops and arrival points) were not stable, since the planners could add or subtract some Items to them.

ANALYSIS

This paper is going to find ways to evaluate the value of neighborhood centers in the traditional urban for fulfillment to sustainable development urbanism. We should start measuring the city by analyzing public urban spaces. The traditional design system of historic cities in Iran has never allowed a direct connection of private and public spaces.

The purpose of the current study was to determine agreed these Azizi`s suggestions. First, more dwellers need to be consider as neighborhood centers, for example, identity, space to remember, dependents, spent leisure times, element, vitality, neighborhoods connection, and place for public ceremonies. Second, neighborhood should be good for needs social, cultural, and society. Third, we must have attention about bearable capacity of neighborhood.

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study was that also agreed with Mahmoudi and Fanaei. At first, new constructions had damaged its façade and its spatial harmony. Then, for cities are located in hot climate, we need tree and green area to decrease the temperature, create shadows for pedestrian, and reduce the air pollution. In addition, by paving and defining the pedestrian ways, could support presence of people in the city. After that encourage shopkeepers and residential proprietors to plant in front of their buildings. Limit the personal cars to entering the public spaces. Most of the times some functions, such as coffee shops, bar or restaurants create a pleasant urban space, and because they are opening up to a middle of the nights, they can be helpful for the increasing the streets' immunity.

Urban planners and designers should consider that "*planning a new urban space*" does not guaranty its function and people satisfaction. Of course no one can ignore the effect of creativity in urban design, but we should consider that urbanism is a combination of old experiences and new techniques so the designers should consider about identity of the past and don't reject them just because of their oldness. First they should find out the secret of the traditional cities' sustainability and the factors which make the responsive environment, and think that what the reasons prevent using them in contemporary cities. And then they should find a way to update those factors based on today demands, and design new patterns according to old one. Planners must notice that each culture and society have a different definition from the meaning of "*pleasant and satisfactory urban space*" in their beliefs, so that it is not logical to follow the urban patterns which are not definable in one society. It's better than refer to old patterns of their own cities. Of course the designers should search the successful urban patterns all over the world and then find similarity and contrast between them and their site and finally start planning (Mahmoudi and Fanaei, 2009).

Surely, we cannot say that the structures of a traditional city can be used for today's cities. Some of these structures have been destroyed as a consequence of changes in the way of living and some have been changed through the passing of time. From the structure elements there are some, which can be used in urban areas by making some changes in their forms or finding the efficient and elegant use for the citizens

CONCLUSION

Public open spaces are the most fascinating parts of historic cities. Open spaces in historic areas are based on the hierarchical movement from the central part of the city, the main streets, alleys which lead to neighborhood (Mahalle) centers, secondary alleys, 'Hashti' (the traditional entry halls to several houses) of the houses, entry halls and the court yards. A "good" city, at least in the part of the world which had the history, contain a permanent elements, form, and construction that make a mental picture and image in addition to their capability of being changed along the socio-economical changes.

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