

## The Impact of Urban Elements on Creating a Sense of Social Solidarity

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### Abstract

With regard to the interaction of environment and human, meaning transition occurs in a two-way relationship. Since correlation is a social issue which a number of people involved in that and it occurs within location, an effective relationship can be observed between the environment and social solidarity. This means that social solidarity can lead to the creation of places that are rooted in the social belief of people. Conversely, a place with these features can create a sense of social solidarity. This study investigates the impact of urban elements on social solidarity in a communicative process. Initially, the impact of urban symbols on memorabilia, then the relationship between memorabilia and identity and finally on the relationship between identity and social solidarity are studied. Therefore, through the existence of significant relationship among these elements, it can be proved that the urban elements can be effective in creating a sense of social solidarity. In this way, the descriptive and analytical method and library studies other sources are used to collect data.

**Keywords:** social solidarity, identity, memorabilia, urban elements

### Introduction

Urban elements are one of the basic elements of the urban landscape making which bilateral relationship between humans and the environment creates humans' mental image from surrounding environment. This element, because of its special visual characteristics can affect the users of the environment more than other elements. Since the registration process is the most important issue in creating mental image, urban elements have a positive impact on accelerating the image registration process. Since collective memory requires spatial reference, memorabilia in the place of a social process occurrence is influenced by environmental characteristics of place. This means that reminding the social event can manifest the desired place in the mind and conversely, reminding the desired place can evoke the collective memory of the social event. Therefore, creating elements that are rooted in the history and past of certain people can be effective in making social solidarity because they are considered as a part of people's identity.

### Urban elements

Kevin Lynch considers signs along the way, edges, nodes, and the neighborhood as one of the five factors that makes the urban landscape. According to him signs are impervious and signified points that most people understand them from outside (Lynch, 1996). Elements are a kind of urban symbols and signs. Symbols and signs were the oldest, most complex, influential and interesting tools that have been employed to emerge and reveal the hidden issue of the material and spiritual world. Human could reveal his thought and imagination through these tools as art. Urban elements are important components of urban furniture that can have a significant impact in promoting a sense of place and identity of citizens. Urban element or symbol is a combination of statue-like that the characteristics within the volumes, the geometric and structural shapes and generally anything with

decorative aspects are used in its construction. These compounds have stable geometric and equilibrium system in a way that after presenting in the city they attract people to themselves and are symbolically considered as a characteristic in order to recognize the city. Urban elements after attraction and acceptance of urbanites are regarded as the main characteristic of city (Eizadbin, 2013). Urban elements can appear in variety of forms. Qualities that distinguish urban elements from other urban landscape are able to make apparent themselves from their surroundings environment, the characteristics that give direction to viewers and create a sense of civic pride and identity in them. They are the most memorable part of the urban landscape especially for visitors who come from other cities and places (Pamir, 2013). Due to the specific visual characteristics of urban elements and their effects on urban identity, it can be concluded that the urban elements are as the most important and influential elements on the mental image of city. Urban elements like any other symbol have two functions including "expression of meaning" and "creating identity sense". Any sign expresses a deeper meaning and a sense of belonging to a particular society. These symptoms repeat certain sense of meaning and identity because they are repeated in everyday life (Maziyati, 2003). It should be noted that if urban symbols and elements in the streets, parks and gardens to be based on Islamic principles and beliefs, in addition to attracting citizens provide area for their tendency to the spiritual (Karimiyan, 2011).

### **Types of urban elements**

Various types of urban elements are as follows:

**Dramatic elements (art):** Dramatic elements have merely the presentational, artistic and beauty aspect and without any purpose and mission to inspire or convey a message to the viewer. There are some abstract compounds of the collision of masses, volumes, structural components and pages (a play with the line, volume and page according to the geometric features and their interconnections) that only in terms of aesthetic features and visual and artistic balance can communicate with a specific group of people.

**Expressive elements (Memorial):** The goal of designer from creating this effect is to express a special issue. In other words, a concept certainly lies behind it and designer follows apostolic effect in transferring a specific message. However, this can be the registration of a particular event in the desired place or conveying a specific concept to viewers due to the name and characteristics of the region. An important feature of expressive elements refers to their universality. This means that they should be able to communicate with the general and ordinary public who do not have artistic competence. Therefore, the precision of designers in readability and fluency of expression of content and at the same time abstract forms and utilizing architectural array has utmost importance.

**Functional elements (urban furniture):** This type of element is different from the above definitions because the element of function will create limitations in terms of the rules of form and in this stage we encounter to the space creation through the same arrays and elements. Elements can be a combination of two or even three of the above issues namely, the dramatic-expressive element (Moayeni Far et al., 2014)

### **Collective memory**

Memory may be collective or individual. Whatever the number of people who are able to recall a memory to be increased the memory goes to be collective. The term collective memory for the first time is used in 1925 by Maurice Halboaks in the book of social context of memory which refers to the memories that a group of people share them and transfer them to others and are involved in its formation. He focuses on the social nature of memory in this study and declares the social causes of memory as follows. First, memory has social content because most of the memories

of an individual are formed in the presence of others in the place of collective life. Second, temporal and spatial reference is used to express and cherish the memories that have social aspect. Third, people recall memories with each other. For this reason, collective memory is also called social memory (Iewicka, 2008, 15). As mentioned the temporal reference is needed for recalling a memory. Therefore, there are many elements in the urban area with spatial reference such as monuments, architectural style of building, wall posts and place names. The element with its specific characteristics is one of the most important issues.

### **Collective memory and urban space**

Memory has social nature and associated with the city's public spaces and the formation of memories occurs in the collective territory and settlements namely the city and its neighborhoods. As a result, if the collective memories have had the social nature, their formation bed (city) should also be the place of social interaction. In this case, the experience of living in the city is a factor to strengthen the collective memory (Mirmoghtadae, 2009). City can be considered as the place of collective memories of its people, various urban areas by keeping alive the memories will keep alive the history of events and consequently shape an important aspect of the collective memory of a nation, people and culture of a land. It is important to note that the passage of time gives identity to the framework of city and citizens through urban space which is filled with the collective memory associated with the cultural past and acquire social identity (Habibi, 2000).

### **Urban symbol and collective memory**

Urban symbols are elements that make the human's mental image of cities, and therefore they play role in registration and recalling the collective memory that mental image creates a graphic of environment in the mind of individuals. The issue of giving orientation to the collective memories by urban policy-makers and planners in line with the policies of creating collective identity in many literatures relevant to the memory, culture, identity and everyday life has been criticized. Sensitive issues in this area include the possibility of the formation, registration and transmission of collective memory in the city (Mirmoghtadae, 2010), manipulation and policies of selecting collective memories (Huyssen, 1997 & 2003, Ladd, 1997), globalization and the elimination of uniqueness of memories of cities (Assmann and Conrad, 2010) and determining historical identity and the process of creating the ideal identity (Crimson, 2005) that are studied not separately, but in very close relationship with each other by researchers of the fields of sociology, polity, planning, architecture, history, philosophy and culture. It can be noted that the method of the dialogue of city and memories beam on all temporal dimensions of the city. The interpretation of the city and citizens from the past inevitably influences the future prospects of the city because the memory in the city was not a copy of the past events and it is the mechanism of interpretation, reading and selection in a Palymsty metaphor (Busa, 2010: 159). Examining the interaction of city in relation to its past to construct urban identity is essential and it can be said that memory is achieved from manipulation of the past through the election process (Huyssen, 1997: 58). In urban policies, identifying building strategies and collective memory manipulation such as the creation of place, landscaping, city marketing and festival actions are done through the process of policy making and intervention in the collective memory of the city by highlighting certain moments in the history of the city by physical and activity emphasis, and branding its signs and elimination of trauma of events and adverse events by cleaning or major physical changes of obvious signs, which makes possible the reading of event. Urban symbol or element is one of the elements that has a significant influence on creating the collective memory and subsequently leads to the creation of identity in a specific urban area and if these elements are derived from identity elements which are rooted in the belief of a society, they can be effective in the memory creation process in the best shape.

### **Collective memory and identity**

Urban identity by creating and evoking collective memories in citizens provides attachment and dependence for them and generates the concept of citizenship which is beyond the dwelling (Kashmiri, 2009). Having no place in today's urban structure has a major role in the loss of identity in the social structure. Namely, the loss of identity in the urban places creates a sense of lack of identity in personality structure and even in social formation. Actually, identity is a place where entails the meaning and memory and authentication creates memory to the city and make places meaningful and gives them a sense of place and the spirit of the place. When city becomes meaningful, consequently the created meaning and memory influence the social formation of people and their collective memory. Memorial elements are one of the issues that give meaning to the city and can be classified in several categories like the geographical location of city in which space, rivers and natural landscapes can be as a monumental element. There are also other monumental elements that join man and society together and these elements can also be divided into social and human categories like religious, cultural or economic and political elements, or these elements can get the international or national aspect to be entered into the history. Cities get identity due to these memorials. As human gets a trait or identity by his behavior and personality or expression or race, for these reasons the city may also acquire a character that is called urban identity. Every man has a memory of buildings, universities and parks that remain in his memory and the continuity of this memory converts it to the memories and history. Humans memorize many places by events that occur in their life and these memories are not only views and monuments but what happened is important like events and incidents that occurred in that town (Humayon, 2014)

### **Identity and social solidarity**

#### ***Social Solidarity***

Allen Peyro in the Social Sciences Culture argues that "mutual responsibility sense is among several people or groups who have the knowledge and will, generally solidarity can include the humanistic and brotherhood links between people or even interdependence of life and interests between them. Solidarity has a moral meaning that requires the existence of thought, a duty or mutual obligation". Also, it has a positive meaning which indicates the interdependence of functions, components, or creatures in a structured call. Durkheim believes that solidarity is completely a moral issue and on the other hand, solidarity can be a need for both society and individuals but social solidarity is different in various communities. According to the book of the sociological theory emergence "This question is raised that as Durkheim emphasized in the book of labor division, foundation of solidarity is changed from one society to another. Thus, a specific definition of "good" is offered for a modern and organic, while other definition is offered for a mechanical society. In modern and organic societies solidarity requires a) coordinating components, b) individual authority and liberty, c) democratic governance, d) high correlation between talent and inequality, e) the diversity of collective centers (diversity of centers) of power, f) commitment of individuals to the collective values and goals, and g) connecting people to social groups (Turner, 2006)

Collective consciousness is the foundation of social solidarity and in order to express its quality in separate units, the role of the ideas, values, beliefs and norms should be determined in that or in other words, it can be said that the ideas, values, beliefs and norms can be indicators of social solidarity. According to Durkheim, the question of integration with social solidarity changes the direction of several relevant issues: 1. How people are made to have a sense of belong to a bigger social collection? 2. How their desires and demands lead to their participation in public? 3. How the

activities of individuals and other social units are coordinated and matched with each other? (Turner, 2006, 425)

Durkheim in the social labor division book writes: "Everybody knows that there is a kind of social solidarity that its reason should be sought in conformity of all individual consciousness with society's soul. In such circumstances, in fact, not only all group members because of their resemblance tend to each other individually, but also become dependent to the community that emerges from their alliance. Citizens of a society not only love each other and compared to foreigners socialize with each other, but also they also love their homeland and are interested in their own homeland' flourishing (Durkheim, 118). In this regard, Loulis Kuzar, in the book of thought and life of great sociologist writes "According to Durkheim, one of the major elements of integration is the area of group members' interaction together, for example, subscribing to the ritual leads religious groups' practices to the common linking activities, in another level, work activities that are based on the distinct but complementary functions will join workers to the working group, the frequency of patterned interaction demonstrates the degree of value integration of the group. This indicates that group members share the values and beliefs. Durkheim knows the ways to strengthen the social solidarity that, in this regard Turner says "Durkheim has observed the existence of new constructions that should be emerged to avoid the confusion". These constructions strengthen the social solidarity in several ways such a professional expertise to organize a collection, the constructions are a bridge between the crevasse of government out of reach and particular needs and demands of individuals, the supplier is a substitution function for loyalties that were created by religion, regionalism and kinship (Musazadeh, 2004). Durkheim believes that social solidarity is an absolutely moral phenomenon that is not measured by precise observation, so for classification and division of labor, instead of internal issue which is not observable, the external issue which is its entity should be focused and studied.

Where the social solidarity is strong, it is a powerful factor in bringing people together, intensify their contacts and increase their relationships with each other. At this stage, it cannot be easily judged that whether people because of strong social solidarity are so close together or social solidarity is strong because people are close together (ibid, 2004).

### **Social identity and solidarity**

Social identity refers to the recognition of oneself as a social being. People in the social processes draw a picture of themselves that shape the basis of their social identity. Social identity pays attention to the ways through which individuals and communities are distinguished in their social relations from other individuals and communities. Human social identity can be defined at two levels: individual and collective. The first level considers the socialization process of the individual and the second level reports the formation of social groups based on the knowledge of common interests (Esmaili, 2007). Every social group has limits which is defined accordingly and is distinguished from other groups. Social solidarity is the result of collective identity that determines the limits of the group. Social science scholars describe social solidarity based on the social relations in which a sense of belonging to a group and interests play a major role. They believe that social solidarity is formed when the shared interests, shared values and shared concepts are created. At this level, common interests of members as the main factors shape the social solidarity among them. Therefore, we can talk about a type of "consensus, a set of social principles and rules and interaction between people" that correlates them with each other (Esmaili, 2007)

### **Conclusion**

As mentioned, the impact of urban elements on the creation of a sense of social solidarity by a communicative process is evaluated. This study at first examined the impact of urban symbols and



social events, registration and creating memory and it was declared that environment which its base is particular social event can be placed in mutual relation with solidarity sense. Then, the relationship between identity and memory was investigated. Many architectural scholars have worked on this area and have proposed various theories that this sentence of Mohsen Habibi can be regarded as the common point among all comments that the city with no memory is the city with no identity. Therefore, memory and its registration, recalling and transmission process are one of the identity creation elements in urban space and in the social space of the cities that is full of interactions that occur every day. Many elements influence the memory, which physical factors are one of them. Physical factors include natural elements such as the mountain and so on and man-made elements that the symbol is one of the most effective elements which through its symbolic features can accelerate the transfer of meaning and creating memory. Therefore, a quite significant correlation can be found between the identity and memory. Then, the relationship between identity and social solidarity and whether the elements and concepts of identity could provide the conditions for the creation of social solidarity were examined and it was observed that the identity and specially collective identity which is rooted in the deep beliefs of particular people and in their history is one of the most effective factors on social solidarity. Language is one of the best examples for this issue especially Persian language that links people of a particular region. Sometimes, in the discussion of symbols by portraying a mythological character like Rostam who is a part of the collective identity of the people can make possible the creation of social solidarity. According to the above-mentioned issues and the relationship between these concepts it can be stated that urban elements that matches the collective belief of people of a particular country or area could be a factor in creating social solidarity.

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