

IDENTIFYING PERSIAN TRADITIONAL SOCIO-CULTURAL BEHAVIORS FOR APPLICATION IN THE DESIGN OF MODERN HIGH-RISE RESIDENCES

**Shahab Abbaszadeh, Rahinah Ibrahim,
Mohamed Nasir Baharuddin, and Azizah Salim**

Abstract

Our concern is the increasing duplication of Western high-rise residential buildings (HRBs) complexes in metropolises of Iran. By stacking houses, the home has now become mere physical shelter but lacking the socio-cultural meaning that the Persian traditional home has provided. The socio-cultural values of traditional homes that support the households' life quality by supporting their socio-cultural needs are lost in today's modern residences. This is a position paper about those missing features with the intent of reinforcing the rich socio-cultural connections and spiritual aspects that are endeared by traditional Persian households in new HRBs complexes. The socio-cultural context in Persian homes emphasizes the behavioral needs at two different social levels: 1) personal space and privacy requirements within the private and semi-private boundary (e.g., family territory of a home), and 2) semi-public and public spaces related to the home environment (e.g., neighborhood communities surrounding the home). Later, the paper discusses the Persian socio-cultural behaviors in contemporary neighborhood communities in HRBs complexes. It concludes with recommendations for future studies to support the development of strong neighborhood communities in non-Western metropolises in contemporary society.

Keywords

Persian traditional home, HRBs complexes, socio-cultural contexts, neighborhood communities

Introduction

Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of human needs states that the mental and psychological needs will emerge when the basic needs of humans have been met. Therefore, addressing the residents' mental and psychological needs is more complicated than basic and preliminary needs. It should be given priority in order to improve their quality of life, and we propose to meet them through the architectural design process.

Here, we would like to describe how the quality of life could be improved by providing qualified spaces to meet residents' psychological needs manifested by their socio-cultural behavior. To achieve this purpose, the rich spaces and atmosphere of district will be described and analyzed from Persian traditional residential fabrics. The Persian traditional neighborhood communities are good evidence illustrating the strong spatial territory of privacy hierarchy

that dates back one hundred years ago. These communities were connected by a blind alley, or Kucheh, a spatial semi-private semi-public territory for a few neighbors leading to passages considered as public spaces (Pirniya, 2005; Tavassoli, 1998). In comparison to Newman's (1996) application of hierarchy of privacy in his theory of defensible spaces applied in residential areas, this concept has long been applied in Persian architecture—as inward-looking typology—from six thousand years ago (Memariyan, 1996; Pirniya, 2005). With this in view, establishing and controlling the boundaries among residential areas in traditional Muslim cities are highlighted as mechanisms towards transforming the physical environment over time (Akbar, 1997).

Mashhad metropolis was selected as a case study in this research due to its status as the second metropolis in Iran. It is the first holy city in Iran due to the existence of the Imam Reza Holy Shrine. This city has a total population of about 2.5 million as well as over 16 million pilgrims per year (Rezvani, 2005). The population growth encourages many HRB developments, but unfortunately, they are devoid of any sense of familiarity and warmth that residents experience in traditional neighborhood communities. It is on this issue that we hope our study could contribute to enrich modern communities with the traditional socio-cultural values with a hope that eventually, the findings could be generalized to other metropolises in Iran.

This paper is a position paper within a larger study attempting to develop methodologies to revive Persian traditional neighborhood communities' values and constructs in modern property developments. We divide this paper

into five sections. It starts by providing selected literature review introducing some theories from social and behavioral studies that establish the roles of society and culture on human. The following section describes the development of critical constructs concerning Persian socio-cultural behaviors and experiences in traditional neighborhood communities. Section 4 discusses the degradation of traditional values and their impacts on contemporary Persian HRBs complexes caused by direct duplication of the Western approach in developing modern HRBs complexes. The paper concludes with recommendations for the revival of lost intimate spaces from Persian traditional neighborhood communities into modern HRBs complexes.

Literature Review

Considering beneficial values and principles of traditional spaces in architecture, the quality of current living spaces can always be improved. According to Hakim (2007), extracting lessons and values of past and traditional architecture can enhance the quality of contemporary built environment. This process "allows a culture's identity to be reflected in its architecture and overall built environment (Hakim, 2007). Socio-cultural needs are among the crucial and salient factors that should be scrutinized to better understand architecture and the basis of creating architectural products (Hakimi & Kaveh, 2007). Contemporary researchers have investigated the relationships between human behaviors and built environment in their studies by utilizing the functional theory in sociology (Parsons, 1966). The functional theory focuses on social, cultural, personal, physiological, and environmental characteristics as basis for

analyzing people's behavior (Lang, 1987). The influential characteristics are: social and cultural dimensions as a fundamental basis for residents' behaviors; the meanings of behaviors based on socio-cultural dimensions; the role of the society in human behaviors; the role of culture in human behaviors; the role of the environment and individual competences on human behaviors; and the role of predisposition and motivation on human behaviors.

Social and Cultural Dimensions as Fundamental Basis for Residents' Behaviors

The concept of fulfilling residents' physical and socio-cultural needs is one of the famous principles in Persian traditional architecture (Pirniya, 2004; Vakili & Boussabaine, 2006). However, the built environment spaces in Iranian cities today are almost devoid of socio-spatial meaning, leaning towards providing simply a physical and material meaning of space (Esfahani, 2004). Through this definition of Persian spatial meaning, the socio-spatial activities and cultural predispositions are highlighted as special characteristics in the structure of Persian traditional neighborhood communities. The way of using and designing houses have been introduced as a reflection of cultural and social conventions and values (Altman & Gauvain, 1981; Ardener, 1981), the instillation of positive effects by socio-cultural characteristics are sadly diminishing from today's residential design process. We support and posit that these values are critical in Persian social cultural establishments. Prominent housing scholars such as Lawrence (1987) expounds that these characteristics are habits, practices, and predispositions of people in relation to their home. They are, in fact, the very reflections of a society's socio-cultural behaviors.

Some scholars interpret the mutual relationship between the culture and physical environment (Jabareen, 2005). While others mention that the "culture expresses itself in both physical objects and subjective responses to the environment" (Fan NG, 1998). Therefore, not only the concept of culture plays a meaningful role on behavioral values and norms that Lawrence (1987) mentioned, but the influence or mutual relationship of culture and built environment that appears in houses and neighborhood communities is equally important (Jabareen, 2005; Malkawi & Al-Qudah, 2003; Ozaki, 2002). Therefore, the design process is an important stage that should consider many factors. It is on this position that researchers need to pay attention, the resident's socio-cultural background and behaviors within the design process of a HRBs complex. However, in order to achieve the objective above, it becomes necessary to analyze the meaning and effects of the Persian socio-culture prior to its application in new HRBs complexes. Several scholars frequently argue that ignoring the social dimension can negatively influence the psycho-cultural improvement of residents particularly in HRBs complexes, (Hedayat nejad, 1996; Part, 2001). We cannot simply imitate the Western design of HRBs complexes in our cities when those are designed for different psycho-social and cultural contexts.

The Meaning of Behavior Based on Socio-Cultural Dimensions

Lang (1987, p. 104) argues that "motivation is the guiding force behind behavior" whereas, behavior is directed towards the satisfaction of needs. We agree with Lang (1987) that people's needs indeed influence their behaviors. For instance, when people want to meet their

needs, they conduct some form of activity to achieve their needs. Lang (1987) explains that the state, mood and shape of these activities are construed as behaviors. Since human needs cover a wide scope, this study proposes that it should be classified into themes and constructs that could help us better understand the Persian socio-cultural context. According to Maslow's (1950) hierarchy of human needs, needs are divided from the most basic to the loftiest. It is not surprising that Maslow (1950) identifies psychological and spiritual needs as the highest level of residents' needs, and meeting them should be the fundamental basis of analyzing a community's socio-cultural behaviors. Although human behavior is formed based on human needs, it could not be identifiable if it does not refer to a social system as well as a specific cultural predisposition. Lang (1987) argues that human behaviors can be interpreted if they are attached to a community along with their interconnections with others in a particular cultural predisposition. For example, all architectural products are produced to meet people's needs; hence, there are always mutual relations between these products and people's behavior and their inclination. People meet and control their needs through their behavior and their inclination. Therefore, we posit that people's inclinations should be considered in the design process. Based on this argument, we now discuss the Persian traditional social and cultural behaviors and inclinations.

The Role of the Society in Human Behaviors

We can categorize Persian behaviors into two social levels: personal and private spaces; and semi-private and semi-public spaces. The latter is derived from the concept of society where the society is organized based on the communities'

concept. Furthermore, communities are formed by specific social interrelationships between the members depending on the "... social stimulation and response (Lang, 1987, p. 80). A reciprocal relation is maintained between them that one stimuli will arouse another response (Lang, 1987). While the social relationships support and form social behaviors, these relationships are arranged and supported by a "social system" or a social structure (Lang, 1987, p. 80). In other words, a change in individual behavior will affect the social system and vice versa. We are positing that the meaning of the Persian social system has always been nurtured in the Persian traditional neighborhood communities.

The Role of Culture in Human Behaviors

Even though culture has direct influence on architecture and urbanism (Raji, 2002), the concept of culture and cultural predispositions in architectural design process is difficult to achieve because of its wide domain. What people inherit from their ancestors and previous generations in a society in addition to their daily activities and their opinion towards each other are all covered by culture. Lang (1987) posits that our beliefs and attitudes towards others, the terrestrial environment, our roles in society, and the way we carry out daily activities are all parts of our culture. Moreover, he argues that arts such as "writing, painting, and architecture are all means of communicating ideas about a society and are culturally-bound" (Lang, 1987, p. 107). People's opinions and ideas towards the world and each other can be understood from the artifacts and architectural products that a society produces. Hence, cultural values and conventions are successfully conveyed through many generations (Lang, 1987). In general, we support Lang's (1987) claims but

we are positing that contemporary Iranian designers are practicing selective transmissions of these rich socio-cultural values specifically, by limiting the transmission of those artifacts and architectural products useful for contemporary Iranian modern living.

On the contrary, we would like to extend Lang's position that due to a biased perception of modern living that acclaim Western socio-cultural style, contemporary Persian designers are systematically disengaging norm customs of traditional Persian cultural values from its own community. Some scholars (Attari, 1996; M. Tavassoli, 2001) believe that current HRBs are not suitable for Persian residents because they are designed for Western residents where cultural values and norms such as responsibility and close family relationship between neighbors are less appreciated. The similarity of culture and the way of thinking of residents in HRB complexes are recognized as an influential characteristic towards improving the residents' social interactions and relationships (Part, 2001; M. Tavassoli, 2001).

In summary, addressing socio-cultural needs and activities of residents is one of the important and influential characteristics affecting residents' interactions. However, there are other important characteristics such as the role of environment and individual competencies on human behaviors; and the role of predisposition and motivation on human behaviors.

The Role of Environment and Individual Competencies on Human Behaviors

Scholars (Dieleman & Mulder, 2002; Jabareen, 2005) mention that once households decide on their house type, simultaneously they are

concerned of the context and type of residential area that they want to be associated with. They mention that the choice of a house is normally interwoven with the choice of a residential area. Therefore, the context of our dwelling area is as important as our house. Lang called it the built environment, which covers residential areas and neighborhoods. He states that the built environment provides some "affordances" for residents in terms of "potential environment" in relation to a particular place (Lang, 1987, p. 103). Affordances and potential environments refer to the capacity and capability of environment towards addressing residents' various needs. Although, built environment affords people's needs, they do not receive the affordances equally. The competencies and personal characteristics of residents are effective on receiving those affordances. Effective receipt of affordances means that behaviors and activities of residents will normally take place in a common environment. However, residents with high abilities can act properly in a high pressured environment. If the pressure to react differently increases, a resident may act solitary and unable to act normally. For instance, if the pressure from the built environment increases causing undue restrictions to residents from normally going about their daily activities in their residential areas, we can expect counter effects emerging from the changing socio-cultural values of that particular community (e.g. residents retract their socio-cultural activities in HRBs complexes society and be isolated). Based on that example, we support Lang's (1987, p. 103) argument that "if [the] built environment demands less competence from [such] an individual possesses... it can lead to the atrophy of a person's ability". We posit that the effect of diminishing affordances will gradually become

distant and eventually dissolve the very socio-cultural values of the society. Residents will start losing the sense of traditional residential familiarity and place attachment.

The Role of Predispositions and Motivations on Human Behaviors

Lang (1987, p. 102) states that "... it is highly questionable to claim that a design will have particular behavioral outcomes without first taking into consideration the predispositions and the motivations of the population concerned." Predispositions and motivations refer to the favorite inclinations of residents supported by their socio-cultural background. Although contemporary architects do have some degree of expectations about changes in behavior and activity among residents stemming from their design, we are positing that it is high time to place emphasis on the predispositions and interest of the residents. We support Lang's (1987) argument that designers could assist in maintaining socio-cultural sustainability through preserving the habits and behaviors of residents. This can be achieved by being very sensitive towards their cultural backgrounds and predispositions. Therefore, we posit that households will gravitate towards destroying the very artifacts and products that designers produced when built-in socio-cultural values are missing, hence causing residents to gradually change their behavior. Although we appreciate traditional socio-cultural values and predispositions, we note the need for awareness of the dynamic concept of culture and society. Culture and society are active phenomena, so we cannot expect to solve the current situation just by relying on traditional values (Zeyn-O-din, Afshari, & Sadri, 2001). Therefore, we believe that

it is important to understand and evaluate the traditional values of Persian residential design so that a contemporary HRBs complex design could meet the motivations and predispositions of its residents in the current context.

Missing Traditional Persian Socio-Cultural Behaviors

In this section, we discuss traditional Persian socio-cultural behavior and the factors that are influential in the design process based mainly on selected scholarly opinions of Esfahani (2004), Pirniya (2004), and Tavassoli (1998).

Cooperation and Responsibility

Interlocking social interrelationship between residents similar to interweaving physical fabric is an outstanding image evoked in the mind of Persians when they think about their traditional districts. The sense of cooperation and collaboration is greatly endeared by people living in traditional neighborhood communities in Iran. They are sensitive about the quality of their relationships with each other as well as the quality of the place they are living in. Each person assumes the responsibility of keeping his/her living environment clean. He/ She not only takes care of the inside of his/ her house, but also takes care of the external spaces such as alleys and neighborhood communities. This behavior stems from the person's sensitivity towards the quality of his living environment. In addition, everyone has an interlocking relationship between each other as well as a sense of belonging to the district where they live. This allows them to be responsive to their neighbors' situations and help them in their difficulties. Unfortunately, such coherent relationships and

behaviors are difficult to achieve in today's cities (Esfahani, 2004).

Since decades ago, people have respected and considered the neighborhood as a factor in unifying residents in shared spaces within a district community. For instance, the neighbors form a bigger family, while the district is envisaged as the second bigger house. The collective spaces in neighborhood communities are used by residents as pause spaces for discussion (Esfahani, 2004). Here, the concept of neighborhood communities provides an opportunity for meeting residents' psychological needs based on their socio-cultural activities.

Strong socio-cultural interconnection between residents in traditional districts builds a strong sense of attachment to their place. When the socio-cultural needs of residents are met, there is an opportunity to meet their spiritual and psychological needs (e.g. sense of belonging to a place, place attachment, and rootedness). Towards this end, Gulliani (1991), and Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) investigated "place attachment" to residential places such as HRB complexes. In this regard, place attachment refers to the sense of belonging to the spaces and the feeling of being familiar to the spaces by evoking memories. Taylor (1996) states that place attachment is measured in terms of rootedness in a neighborhood community based on length of residency, satisfactory degree of familiarity, etc. Therefore, other psychological patterns such as place attachment will be formed when psychological needs (e.g., comfort, peace of mind, and tranquility) are met. Other literature also focuses on place meaning as a "source of rootedness, belonging, comfort and peace of mind" (Manzo, 2003, p. 48). Place meaning refers

to the meaning that a particular place brings to residents' mind. The proximity of those meanings to residents' socio-cultural background can enhance the sense of belonging to the spaces and place attachment.

It is clear that the structuring and positioning of spaces in the right way can provide opportunity for residents to improve their interactions and cooperation. The issue of cooperation and social interaction in general is a broad concept depending on several factors and disciplines. However, through manipulation of current spaces from architectural perspectives (specifically rearranging or redefining the meaning of current spaces in HRB complexes) these spaces may function appropriately in motivating residents' cooperation to support their social interactions as much as the traditional counterpart.

Socio-Spatial Neighborhood Communities

This section discusses the firm relationships between residents in traditional neighborhood communities. Scholars believe that a house can play many roles. A house shapes the internal atmosphere of households and can play a negative or positive role in supporting its occupants' cultural values (Bochner, 1975; Jabareen, 2005; Ozaki, 2002). Houses should not be considered as just internal spaces but their external role in and effect on the neighborhood should also be considered.

As explained earlier, the sense of cooperation and responsibility is widely practiced by people in traditional residential districts in general. This behavior emerges at a strong level in small places in neighborhood communities within a district. Interlocking connections and relationships

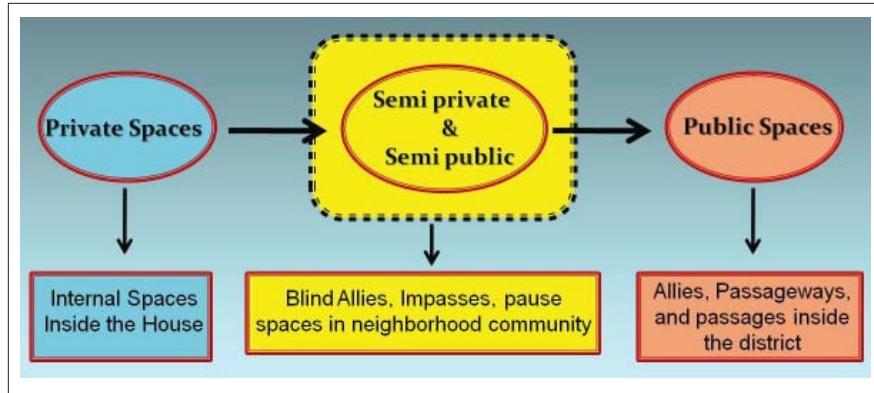


Figure 1: Spatial discipline in traditional neighbourhood communities (Source: Authors).

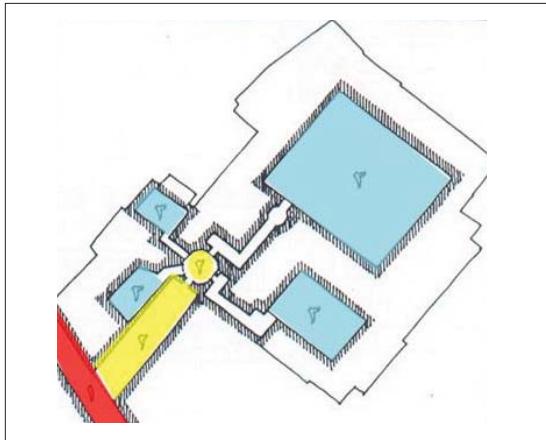


Figure 2: Hierarchical accessibility in traditional neighborhoods (Source: Tavassoli, 1998).

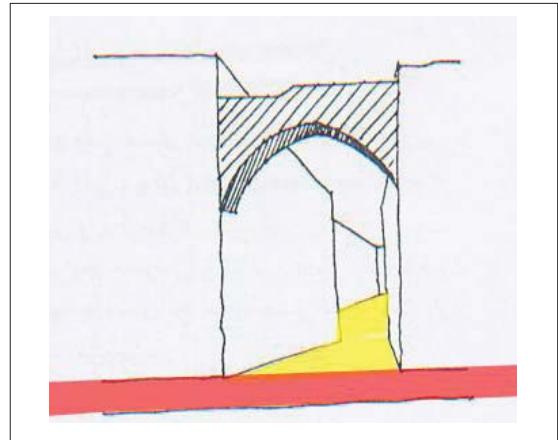


Figure 3: Entrance to a blind alley creates a territory for a few neighbors (Source: Tavassoli, 1998).

exist between neighbors, supported by a blind alley as a shared space between three or four neighbors. Tavassoli (1998) describes how the interlocking relationships occur. The alley is considered as semi-private, semi-public space for neighbors. Three alleys are joined together at one junction resembling a collective

passage termed as Gozar (Pirniya, 2005). The duplication of several Gozar further organizes several neighborhood communities. It allows residents to establish a strong social relationship with each other and allows the inside of their houses to remain independent and private spaces. This small community offers a supporting

atmosphere for many socio-cultural behaviors. Most importantly, it maintains a high degree of familiarity and connection between neighbors, eventually creating a collective territorial sense. Figure 1 shows the spatial hierarchical territories from private spaces (inside houses) to semi-private and semi-public spaces (blind alleys) to public spaces (main passage ways). This spatial hierarchy is illustrated in Figures 2 and 3.

A neighborhood community has a semi-private, semi-public territory for a few neighbors who are living in a blind covered roof or open roof alley (Tavassoli, 1998). The presence of a stranger is obvious since he will not let himself intrude into this community unless he wanted to meet the residents. Many activities and socio-cultural behaviors initiated by neighbors in a community involve the use of this blind alley as second courtyards for themselves (Esfahani, 2004). For example, regular discussions are common amongst women in the evenings as well as a playground for children. On a bigger scale, family ceremonies and celebrations are commemorated in these alleys.

The explanation above reveals that hierarchical spaces or arranging the spaces according to hierarchy (private to public) play a crucial role in spatial discipline in traditional neighborhood communities. It supports their social relationships providing them a socio-spatial and territorial environment like a continuum from private spaces towards public space (as shown in Figure 1). However, current HRB complexes suffer from chaotic and undisciplined arrangement of spaces bringing negative impact on the social relationships of its residents.

Family Position in Persian Culture and Islamic Ideology

The sacred position of family in Persian culture and Islamic ideology is very important. The position of family in Persian culture has always been respected historically. Respect for family evolved upon the acceptance of Islam in the Persian civilization. Islam accords a holy and divine position to respect to family. Residents compassionately protect the privacy of family and keep them away from prying strangers (Memariyan, 1996). The evolving housing typology allows residents to keep a hierarchy of privacy of their relationships and behaviors by having physical and spatial hierarchical supports. Families develop two or more courtyards inside their houses: one for families' activities, and another for the owner when dealing with non-family members and strangers. Privacy is further enhanced by the creation of a behavioral change space at the entrance of the house. The entrance has an attached space called Hashty (vestibule) where visitors are required to change their walking directions before entering the courtyard. This housing feature promotes the sense of a protected territory while increasing the sense of impending private area specifically designated for women and children in the household. The Hashty exemplifies the linkage between the semi-private and semi-public spaces, and we can observe the similar concept applied at public spaces in the form of public open spaces linking different levels of neighborhood communities within a district.

However, spaces like these are neglected in current HRB complexes. Now, the linkage spaces are ignored in design processes. The most important goal for developers is to accumulate the residents in congested buildings. We argue

for the need to reconstruct the design intent by reviving the spatial principles of traditional neighborhood communities to provide worthy spaces for residents living in future HRBs complexes.

Communal Activities

In traditional neighborhood communities, residents perform their communal activities encouraged by a sense of familiarity, cooperation and responsibility. Residents would hold ceremonies like weddings where different households cooperate. Rituals and vow ceremonies by residents who had made vows to God would distribute free food to people in communal spaces (Rezvani, 2005). The atmosphere and shape of the neighborhood communities inevitably engage the residents to many open interactions in their daily activities. Those strong interactions and relationships permit them to hold ceremonies and celebrations inside each other's houses as well as in their neighborhood community.

However, those relationships, cooperation, and responsibilities are diminishing in current HRB complexes. We believe the main reason for this problem is the inaccurate architectural perspective that translates inaccurate communal spatial structure in current HRB complexes. In traditional neighborhood communities, the structure and shape have inevitably provided opportunities for more interactions among residents during communal activities. Regretfully, communal advantage is not supported by the current design of neighborhoods in HRB complexes.

Discussions

After a brief explanation of scholars' opinions about socio-cultural dimensions as a fundamental basis for residents' behaviors), as well as traditional Persian socio-cultural behaviors, the paper is going to discuss about them from two points of view: the first view describes Persian socio-cultural behaviors in contemporary neighborhood communities living at HRB complexes; the second one discusses the impacts of a Western approach on Persian contemporary HRBs complexes.

Persian Traditional Socio-Cultural Behaviors in Contemporary Neighborhood Communities in HRB Complexes

The study now explains the position of those socio-cultural values in traditional Persian neighborhoods in contemporary HRB complexes. We divided the discussion as follows: 1) the position of cooperation and responsibility in today's neighborhood communities in HRB complexes, 2) the position of neighborhood communities' socio-spatial structures in today's HRB complexes, and 3) the position of the family and communal activities in today's neighborhood communities in HRB complexes.

The Position of Cooperation and Responsibility

Even though many studies have been done regarding socio-spatial focus in urban spaces, more in-depth research is still needed in the field of housing. For instance, scholars such as Duncan & Goodwin (1998), Duncan & Savage (1989), and Sunders (1990) highlighted the importance of spatial dimension and socio-spatial field in urban spaces. Kenemy (1992) argues that space is one of the pivotal factors of the physical dimension of dwellings related to

social interactions.

Nowadays, the HRB complexes neighborhood communities have changed compared to traditional districts. Globalization influenced current urban spaces drawing a new socio-cultural condition and atmosphere for residents in a global world (Salama, 2007). The interactions and interconnections between residents who live in one residential area are largely eliminated by shirking their duties and responsibilities towards other residents (Mirgholami, 2007). They ignore social relationships. They are only physically close, yet very distant emotionally and spiritually. The situation is compounded with the fact that people do not feel any sense of belonging to the place where they live (Esfahani, 2004). In addition, there is a growing sense of alienation between residents in HRB complexes neighborhood communities that are increasingly occurring in HRBs developments. According to Akbar (1997, p. 164), "massive intervention in complex urban systems shifted elements of the traditional environment from a unified form of submission to other forms, changing territorial organization, social relationships ..." He also mentioned that this issue, reduced the shared responsibility and communications, as well as altered the social interaction and organizations among high parties and residents in current situations (Akbar, 1997).

We posit that this problem is caused by a weak socio-spatial and non-hierarchical design of neighborhood community specifically the failure to provide the semi-public spatial linkages and connection for supporting neighborhood activities among residents for the sustenance of a successful neighborhood community.

The Position of Neighborhood Communities' Socio-Spatial Structures

Currently, residents in contemporary HRB complexes react negatively by retracting into their home units due to the inconveniences caused by travelling vertically instead of through intricate horizontal movements. Travelling in an enclosed space, such as a lift, does not allow children to play. Instead it allows casual eye contact or physical touching between different genders due to very close proximity that the lift provides. New HRB complexes do not have the semi-public spaces such as the blind alleys due to structural or economic restraints imposed by property developers. None saleable spaces would be considered wasteful when land prices dictates premium selling spaces. For vertical movement, residents need several corridors, vertical connections (elevators) and lobbies so that they can connect to open spaces. Due to the lengthy (and dull) vertical path, residents do get out of their homes only when very necessary.

Reduced connections and linkages on a floor level additionally deprive residents of the opportunities for casual contacts, therefore, reducing bonding activities among residents outside their home units. Today's HRB complexes lack spatial structure in providing semi-private and semi-public spaces so commonly provided in Persian traditional neighborhood communities. The lack of this provision deprives residents of the traditional spaces to develop contact with each other (of same gender) as well as with their living environment. We propose to revive these intermediate linkages between private spaces (e.g. home) and public spaces (e.g. districts' collective spaces) to permit opportunities to develop neighborhood

communities with constant presence of residents in open spaces. Their presence in open spaces promotes familiarity towards each other and their built environment (Gehl, 1996; Newman, 1996). As we also know, becoming familiar with individuals in the neighborhood also increases security in these spaces.

The Position of the Family and Communal Activities

Further analysis of modern HRB complexes reveals the weakening outward connections with the neighborhood district. Some intermediate spaces are lost in this reductionist design approach causing residents to develop familiarity with their living environment inward within the confinement of their homes (Esfahani, 2004). However, when they leave their homes, they are suddenly confronted with unfamiliar space they share with unfamiliar neighbors. As a resident moves further from his home, the space he moves through becomes more alien, lacking neither homely affiliation nor intimacy. In agreement with Newman's (1996) hierarchy of privacy in the defensible space theory (1996), Persian scholars are arguing for emphasis on the spatial hierarchy similar to neighborhood communities in Persian traditional districts (Pirniya, 2005; Tavassoli, 1998). In particular, the missing linkages and intermediate spaces as buffer spaces in today's HRB complexes' living spaces. We posit that this missing feature contributes to the diminishing of the respected position of the family in Persian culture.

Due to these changes, the predispositions in which cultural behaviors could flourish are missing. For example, when residents arrive in their living areas in HRB complexes, they go to the parking area to park the car. Then, they

will continue to move to higher elevations by vertical connections (elevators). The vertical movement to their respective floor is minimal because of the use of minimal interconnections and communications from one space to another. It is unthinkable for any lift passenger to get out of the lift cab to experience a pause space. In fact, the passenger usually wants to reach his specific floor as soon as possible. Eventually, due to the lack of pause spaces for a neighborly contact, they will immediately arrive in their homes. The minimal movement is slowly depriving residents the sense of familiarity and psychological control of their living environment, and the space will gradually become alien to them. This new vertical living behavior supports Newman's (1996) proposition that if residents could control their living environment, it can encourage a sense of familiarity and intimacy with the spaces. The most critical issue is the fact that this minimal movement is retracting the larger defensible space for households to meet their psychological needs. The defensible space may end up being limited to their home units on a certain floor level only. Evidences of this defensible retraction are obvious with the rising crime rates in residential areas.

In summary, we discussed that the interactions and interconnections between residents who live in HRB complexes are largely eliminated because social interactions are ignored. We posit that this problem is caused by a weak socio-spatial and non-hierarchical design of neighborhood communities in HRB complexes. Moreover, we discussed that new HRB complexes do not have the semi-public spaces such as the blind alleys found in traditional neighborhood communities due to structural or economic restraints imposed by property developers.

Further, we argued that today's HRB complexes lack spatial structure in providing semi-private and semi-public spaces so commonly provided in Persian traditional neighborhood communities. The lack of this provision deprives residents' of traditional spaces to develop intimate contact with each other. Due to this problem, we finally propose to redefine the spatial structure of current HRB complexes by reviving intermediate linkages between private spaces (e.g. home) and public spaces (e.g. districts' collective spaces) to permit opportunities to develop neighborhood communities with constant presence of residents in open spaces.

Impacts of the Western Approach on Contemporary Persians' HRB Complexes

This section discusses the Western approach to HRB complexes. We divide it into two areas: 1) the role of the environment in contemporary neighborhood communities in HRB complexes; and 2) the position of motivations and predispositions of residents in neighborhood communities in HRBs complexes.

The Role of the Environment

This study argues that contemporary HRB complexes in Iran are becoming mere physical places, far from embodying the socio-spatial principles that supported the traditional Persian neighborhood community. A social space is defined as a space characterized by (I added the highlighted part) "spatial implications of social activities" (Colquhoun, 1989, p. 223). The "physical space" or "built space" means the surrounding space of the city between the masses comprised of components such as street, square, and its forms (Colquhoun, 1989 in Madanipour, 1998, p. 10). We argue that the lack of social activities and the weakening

presence of residents are challenging issues in today's Persian neighborhood communities at HRB complexes. Nowadays, residents no longer have the sense of familiarity and affiliation with their living spaces and they do not have the sense of place attachment or belonging to their living areas and residential districts as well (Manzo, 2003 from Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Stokols & Shumaker). Retracting defensible spaces results in a reduced sense of possession and ownership (Newman, 1996). In contrast, the strong feeling of protectionism is very much present in traditional neighborhood communities and keeps the residents in their living areas. Nowadays, residents are strangers within their external home living spaces whereas; they could utilize those spaces as extended shelter and physical protecting spaces outside their homes. Any change to the sense of familiarity and intimacy of residents towards their living spaces would eventually lead to changes to the meaning of that space (Manzo, 2003; Tuan, 1974). Manzo (2003, p. 49) explains that "what begins as undifferentiated space evolves into place as we come to know it better and endow it with value".

The Position of Motivations and Predispositions of Residents

Behavioral patterns will occur when there are enough predispositions and interests by residents. It will occur when the environment affords the facilities for people, otherwise, people will be atrophied even if they are competent of receiving such affordances (Lang, 1987). Predispositions and interests of shaping the behavior of residents are embedded in Persian neighborhood communities. A strong spatial design for neighborhood communities are supported and reinforced by the

inclusion of physical planning connections and interrelationship making the residents symbiotically linked with their built environments. Therefore, we posit that if the built environment can support these behaviors through a strong spatial design for neighborhood communities, these socio-cultural behavior and values can be revived again.

Finally, current Persian HRB complexes as imitation of Western designs failed in addressing residents' activities and needs. We argue that the socio-cultural needs and behaviors of residents should be given priority in order to improve their quality of life, and we propose to realize this through architectural design processes. We posit that this problem is caused by a weak spatial design that fails to provide semi-public spatial linkages and connections to support neighborhood activities in sustaining a successful neighborhood community. This flaw slowly diminishes the sacred position of family in Persian culture, causing the retraction of defensible spaces around home units in HRB complexes. This study proposes the development of an HRB complex design that integrates spatial linkages and connections such as semi-private and semi-public spaces to support traditional Persian culture.

We argue that the weak socio-spatial design of current HRB complexes (as imitation of Western HRB) to address residents' socio-cultural activities compared to Persian traditional neighborhood communities. By reviving the spatial principles of Persian traditional neighborhood communities, architects will be able to support residents' socio-cultural activities.

| Location Neighborhood communities' characteristics | Persian traditional neighborhood Communities | Current HRBs complexes in Iran |
|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| High cooperation and responsibility | ✓ | ✗ |
| United neighborhood communities (socio-spatial structures) | ✓ | ✗ |
| Strong family position | ✓ | ✗ |
| Active communal events | ✓ | ✗ |

Table 1: Comparison between Current HRBs Complexes and Persian Traditional Experiences (Source: Authors).

Conclusion

We argued that the socio-cultural needs of residents should be given a priority in order to improve their quality of life, and we propose to meet them through the architectural design process. We posit that this problem is caused by a weak spatial design that fails to provide the semi public spatial linkages and connections for supporting neighborhood activities amongst HRB complexes' residents for the sustenance of a successful neighborhood community. This feature is slowly diminishing the holy position of the family in Persian culture, and causing the retraction of defensible spaces around a home unit in HRB complexes. Future studies are required towards the development of an HRB complex design concept that integrates spatial linkages and connections in semi-private and semi-public spaces for supporting the traditional Persian socio-culture. This study initiates the integration of traditional socio-cultural needs in HRB complexes that would support the development of strong neighborhood

communities in non-Western metropolises.

Acknowledgements

This work is part of the first author's doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia partly sponsored by the Graduate Research Fellowship. We acknowledge the contributions of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ahmad Hariza Hashim in this study. This is an extension of a paper presented in International Conference on Zagros Traditional Settlements (ZTS) 2008 organized by the University of Kurdistan and International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture, and Urbanism (INTBAU) at Sanandaj, Iran on 30 April – 2nd May 2008.

References

- Akbar, J. (1997). *Crisis in the built environment: The case of the muslim city*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill Academic Publisher.
- Altman, I. a., & Gauvain, M. (1981). *A Cross-Cultural and Dialectical Analysis of Homes*. New York: Academic Press.
- Ardener, S. (1981). *Women and Space*. London: Croom Helm.
- Attari, A. (1996). *Importance of Dialectic Relationship between Dwelling and Culture*. Ministry of Housing and Urbanism.
- Bochner, S. (1975). *The House as a Cornerstone of Culture*. *Topics in Culture Learning*, 3, 9-20.
- Colquhoun, A. (1989). *Modernity and the Classical Tradition*: MIT Press.
- Dieleman, F. M., & Mulder, C. H. (2002). *The Geography of Residential Choice*. London: Bergin & Garvey.
- Duncan, S., & Goodwin, M. (1998). *The Local State and Uneven Development*. Polity Press.
- Duncan, S., & Savage, M. (1989). *Space, Scale and Locality*. Polity Press, 21(3), 179-206.
- Esfahani, M. G. (2004). *Where We Are Belonging?* Tehran, Iran: Rozaneh.
- Fan NG, C. (1998). *Canada as a new place; The immigrant's experience*. *Environmental Psychology*, 18, 55-67.
- Gehl, J. (1996). *Life Between Buildings*. Copenhagen, Denmark: The Danish Architectural Press.
- Gulliani, M. V. (1991). *Towards an analysis of mental representations of attachment to the home*. *Architecture and Planning Research*, 8, 133-146.
- Hakim, B. S. (2007). *Hakim's work on traditional Islamic and Mediterranean urbanism*. *International Journal of Architectural Research*, 1(2), 100-105.
- Hakimi, A., & Kaveh, A. (2007). *Identity, Personality, Globalization. Regional Architecture and Identity in the Age of Globalization*(3), 1331-1341.
- Hedayat Nejad, M. (1996). *Psycho-cultural Hygiene of Apartment Living*. Ministry of Housing and Urbanism.
- Hidalgo, M., & Hernandez, B. (2001). *Place attachment: Conceptual andempirical questions*. *Environmental Psychology*, 21, 273-281.
- Jabareen, Y. (2005). *Culture and Housing Preferences in a Developing City*. *Environment and Behavior*, 37.
- Kemeny, J. (1992). *Housing and Social Structure*. SAUS Publications.
- Lang, J. (1987). *Creating Architectural Theory: the Role of the Behavioral Sciences in Environmental Design*. New York: Van norstrand reinhold.
- Lawrence, R. J. (1987). *What Makes a House a Home? Environment and Behavior*-Sage Publications, 19(2).
- Madanipour, A. (1998). *Design of Urban Space; An Inquiry into a Socio-spatial Process*. UK: Liverpool University.

Malkawi, F., & Al-Qudah, I. (2003). The House as an Expression of Social Worlds. *Journal of Housing and Built Environment*, 18(25-48).

Manzo, L. C. (2003). Beyond house and haven: toward a revision of emotional relationships with places. *Environmental Psychology*, 23, 47-61.

Maslow, A. (1950). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396.

Memariyan, G. (1996). Iranian Residential Architecture (Inward-looking typology). Tehran: University of Science and Technology

Mirgholami, M. (2007). Local/Global Dialogue and Transformation of Local Places. *Regional Architecture and Identity in the Age of Globalization*, 3, 1059-1075.

Newman, O. (1996). CREATING OF DEFENSIBLE SPACE. U.S: Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Ozaki, R. (2002). Housing as a Reflection of Culture. *Housing Studies*, 17(2), 209-227.

Part, A. U. d. E. C. (2001). Zoning and Demarcating Potential Areas towards Building High-Rise Buildings in Mashhad: Municipality of Mashhad.

Pirniya, K. (2004). Architectural taxonomy of Iranian Architecture Tehran: Memar

Pirniya, K. (2005). The Islamic Architecture of Iran. Tehran: Sourosh Danesh

Raji, K. (2002). Influence of Culture on Urbanism. *ABADI*, 34.

Rezvani, A. (2005). In Search of Urban Identity of Mashhad. Tehran, Iran: Ministry of Housing & Urban Development of Iran.

Salama, A. M. (2007). Navigating housing affordability between trans-disciplinarity and life style theories. The case of the Gulf state. *International Journal of Architectural Research*, 1(2), 57-76.

Stokols, D., & Shumaker, S. A. (1981). People in

places: A transactional view of settings.

Sunders, P. (1990). *Social Theory and the Urban Question*. London: Hutchinson.

Tavassoli. (1998). *Principles and Techniques of Urban Design in Iran (Vol. 1)*. Tehran: Ministry of Housing & Urban Development of Iran.

Tavassoli, M. (2001). Analyzing the Politics of Creating New High-rise Residential Buildings in New Contexts of Mashhad Metropolis. Tehran.

Taylor, R. B. (1996). Neighborhood responses to disorder and local attachments: The systemic model of attachment, social disorganization, and neighborhood use value. *Sociological Forum*, 11, 41-74.

Tuan, Y. F. (1974). *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*. New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Vakili, A., & Boussabaine, A. H. (2006). Quality Concept in Persian Precedent Architecture. *PLEA2006*, Switzerland.

Zeyn-O-din, H., Afshari, G., & Sadri, B. (2001). Culture and Architecture and Urbanism. *ABADI*, 34.

Shahab Abbaszadeh

Shahab Abbaszadeh, Ph.D. received his doctoral degree in architectural studies from Universiti Putra Malaysia in 2009. He was conferred the M.Sc. in Architecture from the Azad Islamic University (AIU), Mashhad branch in 1997. Abbaszadeh worked for three years as architect in a private firm and was involved as consultant designer for housing projects. He also had two years experience working with the Mashhad municipality on various housing projects. His experience also includes the design of the Law and Economic Universities in Harat Afghanistan. His research interest is on retaining socio-cultural factors in the design of high-rise residential buildings in metropolitan cities.

Rahinah Ibrahim

Rahinah Ibrahim is Associate Professor in Architecture and Deputy Dean of Research, Postgraduate Studies and International Affairs at the Faculty of Design and Architecture, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). She received her Masters of Architecture from SCI-ARC, U.S.A., and completed her Ph.D. degree in Construction Engineering and Management at Stanford University, U.S.A. Dr. Rahinah has extensive project management and architectural practice experience in hospitality developments and large-scaled residential projects before joining UPM. She had led the establishment of UPM's architecture program that emphasizes socio-culture and sustainable architecture when she was the Architecture Program Coordinator. Dr. Rahinah is one of the patent-holders for Putra Block, a Gold Medal winner at the International Exhibition of Invention 2001 in Geneva. Her research interests include developing theories and emerging computer-integrated applications for enhancing the movement of knowledge in complex design and construction processes using industrialised building systems (IBS). She can be reached by email at rahinah@putra.upm.edu.my

Mohd Nasir Baharuddin

Mohd Nasir Baharuddin is a Masters of Fine Art graduate from Savannah College of Art and Design, Georgia, U.S.A. Mohd Nasir has been involved in many national and international exhibitions, and has won numerous awards in many local and international art competitions. He has taught art and design at various colleges and universities, and was an art director for the Gallery Shah Alam, Selangor before joining Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). He is currently a senior lecturer at the Architecture Department, Faculty of Design and Architecture. His teaching concentrates on socio-cultural environment and visual culture study that focus on design knowledge and culture. He is active in collaborative art projects, international conferences, forums and art activities. His current research interests include developing design theories

which emphasize the process of design meaning and socio aesthetic.

Azizah Salim

Azizah Salim, Ph.D. received her doctoral degree from University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK with specialization in housing. She is a professional architect with the Ministry of Works for fifteen years and was seconded to the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for ten years before joining Universiti Putra Malaysia as Associate Professor in the Architecture Department, Faculty of Design and Architecture in 2001. Her current focus is on housing and socio-cultural studies.