

An Analytic Study on Evolution of Social Spaces

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Abstract

Social spaces have confronted huge changes through ages but they date back to the history of social life of man. Due to social characteristics, human being in his life demand for social life based on exchanging thoughts, culture and ideas. Therefore, with respect to massive changes, man familiarizes himself with concepts such as society, gathering and reunion and can benefit from a community spirit. With regard to the important role of city halls in social spaces, it is worth mentioning that the history of these spaces and also the necessity of their creation, with respect to current social demands and using new methods to help people participate in city affairs and taking responsibility for cities issues should also taken into account.

Keywords: Civil city, participation, social spaces, community

Introduction

Space in architecture is the place that can protect man from natural factors and include all individual and social activities. Man provides himself materialistic and spiritual needs. The main essence of architecture is space and man can live in it. But, this kind of living does not mean he just fulfills materialistic needs but he also considers spirituality as well. Bernard Tschoumi believes that the essence of space is descriptive and a subject to philosophical, math and physics. Space is an essence of urbanism and architecture (Madanipour, 1996).

Given clear definition of space by Grouter, space is vacuum and it can include or exclude a particle. Space is not an existence with precise and clear definition but it is measurable.

Space itself does not present any specific characteristic but immediately after taking place an humanistic activities, a symbolic meaning of space emerges, afterwards, space is a bedrock of expressing humanistic activities and behavioral, a place for imagination and reality.

Different spaces in architecture

There are different spaces in architecture as follow:

- Private space
- Public space
- Semi private and public spaces
- Enclosed and open spaces
- Private spaces

Private spaces are used by a specific group. Activities taking place in private spaces are absolutely different with activities in public and semi spaces. Residential houses are private spaces.

Semi-private and public spaces

These spaces are related to apartments with private and public aspects. In other words, due to their functions, they are not used by all individuals in the neighborhood as residents can use yard spaces freely.

Open spaces

Open spaces are those covered by ceilings and also walls (if they are some) that surround them in all directions. Open spaces are mainly part of semi and public spaces and only balconies and private yards are considered as open spaces. Open spaces are the most important basis for creating social interactions. Each type of architecture is formed in bedrock that is known as naturally opened spaces before construction. Nobody can tolerate staying in enclosed and artificial space for a long time.

Enclosed space

There are many factors such as architectural hierarchy and the current relationship between an individual and a group, environmental issues (such as light and ventilation and physical condition of a city) interfering in creating volumetric composition. There are always some spots as focal points or some paths as special axis in enclosed spaces of vernacular architecture. These axes drive people from very beginning and final stages and help people reach heart of plan.

The space of vernacular architecture during a person's movement in space presents the changing of space formation in such a way that each person is aware of next moment in space. Not only can this be done through special introduction, but it also can be done by presenting elements along the movement.

Mumford, the post modernism thinker believes that the urban spaces are representative for organic goals of man (Mumford, 1961). Spaces are specifically fundamental principles, transmitting cultural heritage from past. Therefore, he claims that the form of city space was functional and space has cultural dimension.

Rapaport mentions that city spaces contain a collection of communication (Rapaport, 1977), but Castelles adds that space does not represent the society because the space itself is a physical dimension of the society and if it is detached from society and social relation, then it is as if the nature is removed from body and ignore the main principle of social science. Soul and body have a mutual relationship and the spatial shapes of earth like others are formed by man's function. (Castelles, 1977)

Space and identification

Environment can help perceive the architecture. Even in the city, not only does architecture join the reality, but also in our memories it plays an important role. As a result, the role of environment in perceiving architecture and related spaces is inevitable (Grouter, 2007). In architecture, the involvement of space is one of the fundamental elements in analysis and vicissitude of the society. Man is facing with space actively and always exchanging information for it. In this regard, space has identification if it is independent and man as an objective creature is active in it and finally he is spending so much effort on adapting himself with his mentality. In this situation, man has a feeling toward an object and presumes that it would be part of him. (Pakzad, 1996)

Therefore, man continuously and constantly create a relation and feed to space and in reverse is fed by it, he accepts probable changes and try to adapt or in some case improve it, he moves in space and with this movement creates meaning in space. He turns components of space to meaningful icons or adds more icons from outside (Fakouhi, 2003). It is worth mentioning that interior and exterior confrontations as a ground for urban presentation are not counted as universal and inflexible confrontations and cities can be perceived and felt by different shapes and forms (Fakouhi, 2003)

Although urbanism could not enhance the materialistic and spiritual fundamentals of cities and non-city and non-urbanism are huge parts of cities and towns. This non-city evokes discrete spaces (Auge, 2008).

This emphasis on the changing nature of space converted the humanistic style to encounter space and time. The interaction between metropolitan and mentality replace collective solidarity with loneliness. This big change does not seem to be disappointing. Also, it can produce creative freedom (Ward, 2004).

The influence of changing a space

At the end of Gothic period with formation of individualism and substantiation of person's inner world, house became spatial reflection of individualism and architects were asked to work on elevations on specific spaces and it resulted spatial concepts of housing became various.

Rybczynski in his book named "Home" mentioned dominating rationalism over society and the emergence of technological progress and presents its influence on the form of changing the concept of comfort. New concepts are playing vital roles in houses and replace with various cultural and spiritual concepts. The obvious effect of this theory is the function has become more important in housing. Additionally, Rybczynski declares the changing of family pattern from big families to smaller ones and as a result big houses to small ones (Rybczynski, 1987).

In some countries, housing faced a decreasing role of spaces. The process of eliminating space and not paying attention to creatively special arrangement is fast and impacts on the concept of house. The lack of punctual interfering in historical textures and coordination over restoration and using vehicles cause inevitable damages to cities and replacement was given priority to restoration. Some architects graduated under different school of thoughts in vernacular spaces presented new spatial patterns and designed houses, equipped by plumbing; electricity and telephone that were hugely welcomed by people. In other words, comfort and calmness were sacrificed and new spaces were emerged (Mazandarani, 2008).

Therefore, the shape and role of objects in the house have become more important. Their arrangement and importance in special organization of contemporary architecture is fundamentals in such a way that they can attribute identification to the space (Mazandarani, 2008)

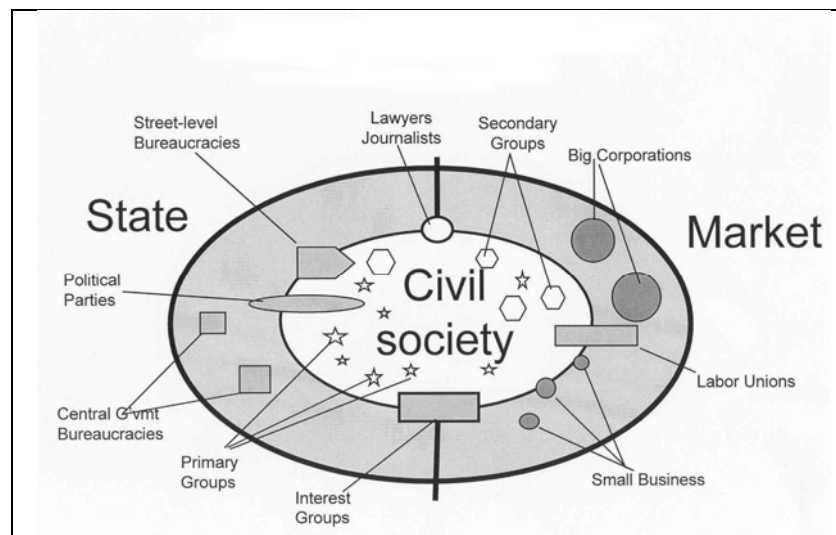


Figure 1. A civil society

The history of building social spaces

In order to review the history of social spaces, at first, we should mention the ancient Greece, the founder of first democratic government and civil society.

Agora is the most popular public space in civil structure of ancient Greece. The main square was used for gathering but it was mainly a trade center. Aristotle believed that in each city, there must be buyers and sellers to fulfill each other's demand and that is the most profitable part of life's comfort. Additionally, agora is used for governmental affairs, exchanging products and services. (Figure 1)

Agora was in center of Greek cities (Police) with temples and amphitheater. It is where residents can meet each other and has some icons that accompany visiting the city by cultural and historical experiences. On other side of square, city hall or bouleuterion was located in there. (Schultz, 2002)

The description of Greece cities proves that the function of place depends on determined quality of their position. Schultz claims that each place is located precisely in a proper position. The existences of agora for helping people meet each other in a space containing objective items, such as theater, sculptures and bazaar have found cultural and historical dimension. The presence of city hall among these items made the importance of social spaces double.

Social Spaces in Iran

Public spaces including agoras are in all traditional and civilized cities and it is different based on culture and social characteristics in each region. Analyzing Persian cities specifically Sassanid cities proves that there are civil and social elements in cities as a parliament was constituted by people (Behzad far, 2007).

With the advent of Islam, the physical appearance of cities have not dramatically changed and although the penetration of Islam ended up to establishing religious organizations and mosques played an important role in the social system of cities, After invasion of Mongols to Iran, cities were demolished and caused irreparable damages to cities such as Neishabour and Ray. But after this period urbanism boomed and two cities Isfahan and Shiraz as capitals for Safavi and Zandiye benefited from economic boom.

In reviewing Iran's traditional city, it is clear that many social spaces are being formed based on Iran cultural characteristics such as squares and mosques.

Squares as defined by Sultanzade in "urban spaces in Iran's historical textures" are open and vast with surrounded or determined areas and roads and intersections and have communicative, cultural, sport and military or multifunction (Sultanzade, 2013).

One of the common squares in traditional cities was a place for gathering people and some public spaces such as mosque, ponds and water reservoirs and relatively in comparison with the area of settlements, there are some bazaars and commercial spaces as well.

The activities occurring public squares in hierarchical point of view include public and urban activities such as Mosque and other commercial spaces. But allocating some spaces for leisure time or governmental spaces were built with respect to proper function.

Social space in contemporary period

In contemporary time, due to revitalization of public spaces, many actions and efforts were taken. Specialists apply cultural and social usages to public spaces in old textures and spend so much time on reviving these lost spaces. (Habibi, 2003)

What seems more important in reviving public spaces is included identification to city and citizens that can create sense of spirit and stimulate citizens to participate in city affairs. Nowadays, establishing related centers have civil characteristics and what is important is the importance of residents' presence for participating.

One of the fundamental places which can promote residents' participation is convention centers. These places can substantiate the principles of civil society in cities and in fact a civil society is formed in convention centers, a space that can authorities can communicate with people, familiarize themselves with current issues and improvements in the cities, none profit organizations in form of syndicates, political parties and social communities begin to work and the concept of participation is formed.

The definition of conventions

Defining conventions and their usages are essential as they are part of social places and gives services to people unlimitedly. The main purpose of these centers are institutionalize of civil society elements and creating proper condition for communication among people and city authorities in such a way that attracts people attention for participating in city affairs and people discover the sense of place through it.

The responsibility of conventions

Based on aforementioned definition, the tasks below are parts of conventions responsibilities

- Helping formation of groups and enhancing the civil city elements
- Creating a place for making people aware of city's condition and meeting each other.
- Conventions are places that people take share in their destiny and authorities in order

to help people try to create a mutual relationship with them.

The characteristics of conventions

Creating a place for promoting civil society seems to be vital for cities and towns because it can help people participate in governing the city and share a role with government. In other words, it can act as a buffer against current issues. Additionally, conventions can help residents communicate with each other and improve their cities.

City hall

In order to design the convention or a city hall, it is worth mentioning that city hall contains official bureau and governmental places and it can be defined as a regional government and sometimes it means an official building of a city state or a collection of provision related to the city.

A city hall in its volumetric and physical meaning is an official building, contain offices and related bureau. But in general, a convention is a governmental-none governmental space, including walking area and official places. These centers try to create a comfortable atmosphere for people and create increasing participation and facilitate for people to express themselves.

The usage of conventions (city hall)

Establishing the city services including official, cultural and commercial activities proves that this complex basically is related to each other but each of them has a very specific function. Apart from it, the durability of these spaces depends on users' participation.

Cultural and commercial activities can increase the popularity of other spaces and the whole complex. It resulted in building a complex close each other. In total, a space with a unique form and emphasis on architectural style and all valuable elements that can respond cultural, social and commercial spaces is the main purpose of building these spaces. Probably, bazaar was a trade center and it could cover all needs. A city hall in all industrial big cities with some small differences has ceremonial functions and it is specifically used for reunions and conferences.

These centers are regional spaces for presenting and submitting governmental services to the residents of a big city and according to applied patterns, city services are established in certain distances. Of course some factors such as population and building density, the quality of access, historical characteristics and specifically, social, cultural of residents play essential roles on site planning (Adanipour, 1996).

In fact, a citizen center is always a part of city or city center for specific offices such as city hall, governmental offices, courts and promenade and buildings with cultural purposes. During the history, emphasis on aesthetics and architecture of a city citizens presents a city hall as a guiding elements in physical aspect of the city and it maintain the combination of work, leisure time and life nights.

City hall has two main functions as follow:

- A collection of city services for responding the residents' demands
- A place for gatherings and exchanging ideas. In some cases, city hall and some cultural and commercial activities (exhibition, library, spaces for religious activities) are adjacent to each other.
- A city services center can adjacent to city council and it depends on what offices are operating on it
- Activities depend on the formation of city system and what kinds of activities are needed

Conclusion

The analysis of city spaces is required to gather information for places and users and their relationship with each other. Space has an essential importance in architecture as many activities are formed in space, this space can be open or closed. Therefore, space can provide bedrocks for emerging activities and there is a direct relationship between space and residents.

When the area of space and shape changes and the diversity of space reduces, the impact can be clearly seen in culture and life pattern of families, and decreasing spaces changes the pattern of expanding family to core family and also family gathering reduces. When the spatial changes become common, the life style becomes common as well.

Space includes all aspect of individual life such as interactions, life pattern, identity, and it impacts on thoughts and quality of thinking as well.

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