The Impact of Social Interactions in Urban Spaces through Approach of Improving Urban Vitality: A Case Study in Julfa district of Isfahan

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Abstract. The achievement of urban spaces is harmonized with the use of the space and human presence in it. Indeed, Architecture should increase social interaction and correlation between human instead of differentiation and separation. In this regard relationships and social participation of the residents are reduced in these areas, this is what the today’s world has been encountered to it. The main objective of this article is the study of social interaction in urban space and in particular, the Julfa district in Isfahan. What involves the researcher’s mind in this research is how to find the answer of the question by applying descriptive analysis, data collection with documentary and analytical studies. This research has miniced the argument of social interaction in the urban space in Islamic texts and teachings, but how to apply and use of the productivity are allocated to specific time and space of any age, which all should be scrutinized by the architects. In this study with respect to the main research question about low levels of social interaction in Islamic cities and the lack of attention to vitality of urban spaces. It’s been tried to look for the right solution for this matter through the identification and evaluation of the different components by applying field studies.

Keywords: Social Interaction, Urban Spaces, Urban Vitality

INTRODUCTION

In today’s modern society due to the dense population, poor quality of urban neighborhoods and lack of appropriate environments for fulfilling the needs of individuals which can be regarded as the cause of crisis in various aspects of environment, society and the construction of the city. New perspectives like urban livability and field-oriented architecture in case of recognizing the architecture and urban planning demonstrate strategies in order to full exit from crisis. Therefore by using the principles and standards of urban community, it can design the residential area with the exploitation of the capacity of the neighborhood and new approach for enhancing environmental quality in urban neighborhoods. Also with the respect to history and culture of cities over time, it should be taken into account, former architects should consider around the neighborhood context and create spaces for dialogue, cooperation and face-to-face contact. Not only it responds to the needs of individual life, but also it removes anxiety and stress from the shoulder of mass communication and participation, and heartens the life and vitality of the community and its collections. Julfa district is located in the fifth region of Isfahan. It is one of the old neighborhoods that can be regarded as the most prominent urban context, and it is the important source for the study and capacity utilization in this regard. This research aims to study environmental quality assessment of Julfa district based on what is regarded as the standard model, vitality and life in urban environments. It can be obtained among the various theories, especially in view of livability, socialization and field-oriented architecture. Accordingly, the above-mentioned views are examined. Furthermore following community standards have been defined, and based on these criteria the quality of Julfa district should be assessed.
Social Interaction

Social interaction means the establishment of a relationship between two people or more, which leads reaction between them. This kind of reaction was recognized for both sides. Therefore significant relationships do not include this kind of definition. Moreover there are other definitions for social interactions. For example, social interaction and communication can be a physical topic, a regard, a conversation and the relationship between people which require the definition of events and appropriate activities, It is the result of the role of the people in space and their membership in group and social networks. (Daneshpour & Charkhian, 22, 186). But these days what can be observed, is the reduction of the level of communication with each other. In this regard through increasing size, urban area, speeding, density and so on, civilization and social affairs were undermined as the basic principles of urban. Different people tend to have different levels of social interaction. The definition of the desired level of interaction has been obtained mentally by the people’s statement and objectively by the normative stance towards the good life. Both of the definitions had high value and social and political orientations (Langue, 2002). Observations show that social interaction at lower levels occurs between different generations. Public spaces allow people to involve different generations. In other words, to achieve coherent and stable social relations, promote interaction and presence in public spaces, it requires that we expand our own knowledge about different patterns of socialization. This matter requires wide range of studies in various fields such as examining the interaction between races, ages, genders, and classes. On the other hand, it needs spatial analysis of constituent elements of the formation of this type of relationship. In the following a number of issues affecting social interactions are briefly mentioned. Also the wide range of social interactions are described summarily and they involve from perceptual and conceptual elements to physical and objective characteristics. They include overcrowding and congestion, norms and social relations, belief and ethics, social classification, privacy and physical camp and so on. ...Jean Jeokubes, prominent Journalist and expert on urbanism emphasizes on the role of public space to create more mental interactions in his book (which is called the death and life of great American cities). The city’s public spaces, especially streets and sidewalks increase the take-off and pedestrian safety. It has reverse impact on separation and segregation (Kashani Jou, 2005 based on Pakzad’s quote). Public open spaces have particular importance in collective life of citizens. They have been used the actual and potential facilities for the presence of the citizens, which have no time, size and control limitations (Pakzad, 2005). Public open spaces provide motivation and free choice between behaviors, movements and the next discoveries for significant number of people and citizens (Lynch, 102, 1972). In other words, the regular spaces which can easily be adapted to the different behaviors, provide neutral and inducer background for spontaneous activities. There are several opportunities in public spaces; Some social boundaries were broken; Predetermined incidences have been occurred, and also individuals mix up together in new social environment. Therefore the basic condition for a public space which can be regarded as an urban space, creates the interaction and social conflict in it. So those kinds of soft and hard spaces which they’re not the context of social interaction, can not be entitled urban spaces (Pakzad, 2010).

Socialization and Collective Life

Collective life is an opportunity to get away from the daily stresses, leisure, social interactions and meeting people from different group and the basis for the presence, freedom of expression and express them in spaces. Collective life in the public open space depends on promoting social interaction and meeting people from different group and the basis for the presence, freedom of expression and express them in spaces. Collective life in the public open space depends on promoting social interaction, recruiting of different individuals, groups and social security. Consequently it can be considered to reinforce the level of tolerance of different group in space,
increase more sociability, and create active and lively atmosphere (March and Francis, 1998)(Figure 1, principles of urban space).

Activity

Vitality and dynamism of urban space take place in space, on the contrary its dismal of reflecting the number and in particular types of activities and events. Therefore to identify vitality, first consider activities (Pakzad 41, 2006). Activities are divided into three categories in terms of their compulsion and option. They are such as necessary activities (compulsory activities) like going to school or work, waiting at bus stop and shopping. Also optional activities (excursions) are like going to the park, and generally recreation and social activities are such as watching, talking and attracting the others.

Vitality and Livability

There are several concepts for the vitality in the west. They can be noted such as liveliness, livability, viability and vitality. Other words are closely tied to the concept of livability and viability except “vitality”. In the Robert Kuan’s urban dictionary, vitality and viability have come together. They have been defined as it mentioned earlier. Other features of small cities and big ones are successful, while livability is an appropriate gauge to measure the degree of capacity, raise funds, survival, improve and adapt with the changing needs.

Lively Urban Space

According to the definitions provided in relation to activity and vitality, “lively urban space” is an urban space where the presence of a significant number of people and their diversity (in terms of age and gender) is possible in the vast expanse of time in a day which their activities are mainly seen in the form of social choice. Charles Landry has examined the concept of vitality differently. He has defined vitality and livability separately and has dealt with the subject by the four main approaches. He enumerates nine effective measures to identify a lively and viable city, effective density of people, diversity, accessibility, safety and security, identity and distinctiveness, creativity, communication and collaboration, and organizational capacity of competition. He has studied vitality in the form of thematic review with a wider view in comparison with others and has referred to main influencing factors.

Theoretical framework

In the research topic, first the sources were reviewed by the subject and then the records were compiled by library research. In order to conducting a case study of Julfa district in Isfahan, field research method was used. In this research social interaction has been studied in urban areas and architecture with related views, components and theories on the subject.

Identity

Identity is not identified as a characteristic of a phenomenon, rather It is the result of an agreement between the individual and the evaluated phenomenon. Accordingly identity is a related concept. Surprisingly, a series of them are related to human, and other side of it has been defined in the environment. Therefore it can not be fixed and stable; Of course observer’s perspective to the phenomenon has been involved in it.

Phantasm

Our approach to the environment strongly influences our perceptions. We are at the point where the receiver is placed in front of a phenomenon in this moment. The key thing is, We do not react to it facing with the phenomenon. But every thing which had relation to it, strikes out in our mind
from the past to the present. For this reason, we bring to our everyday physical environment in the general and gross form. Rather than focus on details, in the first place we remember the environment based on what we and others have done in it and what we feel about it, then how it looks in the final stage of that. That means, besides its physical form, it can be said that we have schema of a phenomenon or event in our mind and with respect to them we can remember such that phenomenon or event.

Sample

Julfa, historic district is located in the central part of southern area of Isfahan as the single scope including buildings with historical value. It consists of multiple locative, spatial, social and cultural advantages. Historic Julfa was built in bare lands or in agricultural plain and gardens in south of ZayandehRoud for the Armenians were driven from Armenia during the Safaviyeh period. Hence it has been based on principles of Safaviyeh urban planning. The use of sacred order (water, air, soil and plant) has constituted one of the pillars of urbanism in Isfahan during the Safaviyeh period. In fact the sacred order harmonizes to built environment with the religious beliefs and rituals. It reveals itself by apparent signs and symptoms or by the structure with the changes to buildings towards the sacred direction (Armenian church altar towards the East) or by using symbols and natural and artificial sign which it is noted that the above order. Furthermore, other principles of urbanism in Isfahan including combination, establishment, balance, proportionality, territory, hierarchy, and the unity. They are fully evident in the remaining buildings and texture of that period. This analysis will yield result that this texture is not such that wasted texture with lack of design and aesthetic principles. Therefore historical elements and buildings have remained from the past. It differs from the other existing structures in terms of architecture, facade, used materials, color, geometry and spatial composition.

Analysis of the structural system of the Julfa district

In this study historical texture of Julfa district has been analyzed based on components derived from studies with the socialization approach on the basis of dynamic, functional, perceptual systems and environment.

![Network Structural system of Julfa District (Source: Negarandeh).](image)

Dynamic System

Assessment itself includes various dimensions such as the feature of main tracks, the entrances of the city, recognizing the importance of their role, how to access, checking the permeability of the tracks, moving in the neighborhood for the various purposes. The main difference between the movement and access in the scale of neighborhood comparing to the larger units such as area,
city and country, its tangible and direct communication has relevance to life and family. Not only accessibility in the district is for community, but also it creates space with a variety of functions such as convenience, accessibility, security, social space, economic aspects and balance. Accessibility can be regarded as the space to enjoy the process of moving. There is an important quality in the tracks of neighborhood and that is concept of the permeability. In this model, a set of tracks and main roads makes possible several routes such as Mehrdad Street, NazarSharghi Street, Sangtarashan and Khaghani for pedestrians in and out of the piece. In addition to possible physical permeability, the ability to move move and travel can be ascertained through measures such as buildings of the churches, historical school. They can be seen from different angles during visual permeability transition.

Figure 2. Vanak Church in Julfa district (Source : Negarandeh).

Figure 3. Julfa district in Isfahan (source : Negarandeh ).
Functional System
The historical center of Julfa has implied its own values and tips, which can be addressed in the following:

Conceptual vision and perspective
One of the key features, which magnifies the recognizing of dynamic networks and traffic in the neighborhood, is the visual appearance of the side tracks and inside texture. Sub corridors of the tracks provide the ability to penetrate into the texture. This matter leads to create various sequences of the scene for pedestrians. The sample of checking the sequences of the scene in the visitor’s viewpoint are classified such as:

Corridors
(Alleys of the Mehrdad Street to Sangtarashan and Chaharsogh alleys)

Corridors unveil the angles and various perspectives of dome and building of churches, specially Vanak church, and it redoubles its attractive and inviting effect. For example, By crossing the Alfred Alley near the Pardis University in short distances, every few steps which can be traversed, it reveals a different picture of Vanak church for the viewer.

Figure 4. Visual Corridors in Julfa District (Source :Negarandeh).
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**Figure 5.** Entrance of Vanak Church in Julfa District (Source: Negarandeh) (Considering to visual necessities leads to increase vitality).

**Figure 6 :** Julfa Square (source: Negarandeh)

**Conclusion**

According to the survey, the life of the urban space depends on the presence of human and active communicate with the environment whether in the present time or during the history. In this area that city will be responsible which can fulfill the human need to participate in the city and between human beings for leisure time, excursion, shopping, relaxation, and even every day occurrence and traversing route in the safe space. It will not be fulfilled unless in a city where serves to supply the security, stability and social interaction from the smallest detail to the main monuments. A city which can be walked and paused in it with pleasant and integrated atmosphere; A city which is shaped based on the urban climate. A well-built city which aids to navigate the directions with specified elements for organizing the spaces. A city which underlies urban actual activities and makes social and cultural exchanges possible. Spaces having facilities of sitting and dialogue.
provide the public and intimate situations. Among those basic approaches of the research which outline underlying social interactions in the urban environment, They come in sight more or less in the historic texture of the Julfa. The items that keep alive this texture over the years, They have been respected for the travelers and historians during the life. These days they can be the basis for the daily life of many citizens as well as memories of the pedestrians. However, some problems and deficiencies can be overcome by providing solutions as more people would be encouraged to participate actively in the neighborhood. They are such as the developing of road network, improving the quality of the pedestrian route, avoiding the interruptions in movement in sidewalks, reducing the traffic of vehicles, providing sitting services and short stay in anywhere in context, establishing a good relationship between scenery and the river, improving the quality and perspective of the edges of the ground, imposing appropriate criteria for the construction in the texture, monitoring the proper implementation of them, create a safe and joyful environment at night, creating a good mix of different annoying users in the body of the Hakim Nezami Street, establishing municipal solid events such as street festivals and exhibitions. Hope today architecture should take it into account what traditional architecture has left a legacy for future generations. All these factors enhance the social interactions and create vitality for citizens.

REFERENCES

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