



Identifying environmental-cultural elements effective on development of social interactions (case study: Rasht)*

Morteza Yousefi Pirbasti^{1*}, Morteza Seddigh², Reza Parvizi³

^{1*}Student of master of architecture, Deylaman University of Lahijan, Iran. Email: m.yousefi@deylaman.ac.ir

²Assistant professor and member of the professors' committee of architecture faculty of Deylaman University of Lahijan, Iran.

³Trainer and member of the professors' committee of Deylaman University of Lahijan, Iran.
itecture, Mahshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mahshahr, Iran.

Abstract: *Since human beings have always been social creatures and have shown a tendency to be connected to their fellows, obtaining solutions to create a suitable context for this goal is one of the concerns of many intellectuals and thinkers in human science, sociology, urbanism and some other related domains. But considering the industrialization and mechanizing the life today and prevalence of virtual connections, social interactions and cultural communications are being reduced.*

The first step to solve this problem can be the existence of suitable and sufficient context or framework in cities and all human habitats. The method of this research has been descriptive-analytical and for gathering data, questionnaires have been used. The population includes 160 people in Rasht who have been randomly chosen among those who visited cultural centers, the passers-by and some people familiar with the customers and ceremonies of the area. The data have been analyzed in two stages, then the information from the questionnaire has been analyzed using SPSS and finally the result has been derived. The result shows that first the standardization test has been done on the variable by Kolmogorov-Smirnov which shows that the signification levels of all the variables are not standard and Spearman correlation test showed that all of the research hypotheses have been accepted including framework and urban spaces and using specific elements can help increasing social interactions. Architectural framework and urban spaces can help attracting visitors and transferring cultural concepts. Creating public spaces in metropolitan can turn into a context to increase public interactions. Therefore, what is obtained from this research is the impact on environment on creating and promoting the interaction among people and citizens. Locating and the existence of pavement, applying local and traditional architecture, the existence of open area and finally the existence of cultural centers along with interaction, association, the feeling of belonging and securing are the main findings of this survey and they are important in designing; so, what is being formed would be in line with the goal of project.

Keywords: *Social interactions, Culture, Symposium center, the municipality of Rasht*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings in scurry of today's cities are seeking new fields with special identities; so in addition to obtaining relief and interacting with their fellows, reach their optimal perfection in the context of social dynamism. The increasing development of urbanization and the formation of a new scale of urbanism in recent decades have caused urbanism some new challenges such as the increase of social abnormalities, fading of identity, sense of social belonging and generally the decrease of quality of life (Abdollahi, 2010). From this aspect, applying and assigning public places is a matter which should be studied in daily life studies of people who live in towns. From the view of experts, public places are defined as open and available areas.

1.1.1. Statement of the problem

Considering that in modern area the development of science and technology and the high speed of life in towns have caused a lot of old social interactions' decrement and affected by today's advanced facilities, finding suitable solutions to solve this problem has always been an important issue in today's human societies.

Hence, considering public places of development in urbanity has been quite important. These places have been spaces to have social interactions, holding urban public ceremonies and attendance of people from different classes. For instance, the well-known squares in cities, or places such as Greek Basilica which has been an area for lots of interactions among people or streets such as Chahar-Bagh in Isfahan which has not only been applied to transmit but also to spend time in. Another example can be the Naghsh-e-Jahan square in Isfahan that has been an area for social and business interactions and holding special ceremonies.

The urban habitats before modernism, public places such as urban squares and markets have been arenas for social activities of plenty of people who made these interactions possible (Madanipoor, 2005). During the years of the emergence of transportation equipments such as cars, urban areas have impressively affected. With the industrial revolution in cities, the designing of them has been defined in advance and the important, main, determinant factor in these designs is the transmission by the public transportation; so, the formation factors of urban elements such as bridges, squares and even buildings with different applications have been overshadowed by the streets related to the concerns of life.

Streets are only used to transmit and pass and social interactions among people have been significantly decreased in them and therefore the mental effect of that has been totally forgotten. These factors have made urban spaces to be only used as pathways. Speed is the main element in towns and there is no motive to stop and interact. All these have caused interactions in urban areas fade. Art (1958) considers the public domain as the main factor of extroversion and political and general life. Fading face to face connection and directing people to virtual connections resulted in cooling down of social relationships and therefore reductions, it is reasonable that environmental psychology is being developed every day and more effort is being done to identify the effects of environment on human and vice versa to find a suitable solution to get help from the environment to increase the quality of life. Pakzad (2005) considers the determination and accretion of space, dimensions, congruence, flexibility, form, geometry, materials, enclosure, frameworks and frame cohesion as effective on human's perception.

Therefore, since the high speed of life has made some changes to people's lifestyle and the way of interaction in family and society, creating cultural spaces and strengthening historical places in towns to create and increase social interactions among people seems to be a suitable solution for interaction and using the elements and advantages of local culture by introducing the ethics and customs.

Research Questions

- 1) How can the architectural or urban framework help social interactions and the strengthening of citizenship relations?

- 2) What are the ways to create social interactions in public places?
- 3) How much can the designing by using these factors increase social interactions?

Research Hypotheses

- 1) The environment created by specific elements can help increasing social interactions.
- 2) The architectural framework of the design can help attracting visitors and transferring cultural concepts.
- 3) Building new structures in metropolises can present contexts to increase public relations.

Research Objectives

- 1) Architecture basing on identifying and measuring parameters would be able to fulfill the design.
- 2) Finding and presenting a suitable context to encourage citizens to have social and public connections.
- 3) The architectural structure in spatial architectural combinations should transfer cultural and architectural concepts and meanings in abstract statement.
- 4) To reach a designing method in accordance to local culture of the zone.

1-1-2- The importance and necessity of social life research is among the most important concerns of a society which presents that human atmosphere, movement and dynamism, and urban spaces are among those spaces in which the social life, incidents and events take place.

Incidents and events invert civil life to real life and cause memories to form. Therefore, urban spaces are the main places for incidental life and the space to gather individual and public memories. Regarding the increase in urban population in Iran and its increasing trend, it looks necessary to have information exchange and cultural interactions in order to develop the management of urban affairs.

In this research, we are to present suitable items for designing cultural and conventional centers and suitable urban role and use it as a place for social dynamism, creating social interactions and connections and introducing and transferring culture and custom to citizens.

1-2- Literature Review

Rafieyan and khodaei (2009) in a research in Tehran by identifying effective variables on citizens' contest about urban public spaces, have introduced these three variables, the availability of the services, social security and location identity as the most effective factors on citizens' contest about public spaces.

Rafieyan et al. (2008) measured the effect of urban-public spaces on the amount of socialization and participation of women. The results show that from women's point of view, sociability of the spaces and their social monitoring has the most relation to desirability of urban-public spaces. According to the studies in North Minnesota which has been done to measure the quantity of residential environment, the three elements: sense of the location, sense of belonging and identity of the place are the most effective factors on the quality of the environment.

Daneshpour and Charkhchian (2007) in their survey have known the process of sociability and development of public life in public spaces based on acceptability of the space on behalf of individuals of different social groups, providing mental and physical comfort enjoyment of people and social groups from being in the space and active constant attendance in the space. And considering the factor, they have mentioned calling, security, desirability and response as key elements in order to reach their goal.

Kashanijoo (2010) in his survey lilted that recognizing theoretical approaches to urban public spaces is considered as the third place which has the main role in having social interactions. After the industrial revolution to 1960, the main emphasis was on spatial and virtual perception; in the second era from 1960 to 1990, it was on reinforcing social interactions, expanding pavements and behavioral-environmental effects of urban spaces; and in the present era from 1990, the most activities and hypotheses have been based on bioenvironmental-stability consideration, creating security and human based views in public domains.

Torabi (2012) has identified the effect of framework characteristics of public spaces on increasing social behavior, interaction, availability and hierarchy effective on increasing social interactions.

This research was done to recognize the effective factors on reinforcing social interactions among the habitants of the neighborhoods. And finally regarding the result of this survey, it has tried to introduce the effective elements on development. In order to this, some studies have been done on previous hypotheses about social interactions and the possibility of the happening of incidents and also the surveys were done on both in and out of the country. With the studied mentioned above, the experts emphasize on the role of public spaces in creating social interactions and they believe that the presence of other people in each spaces is the most important factor to attract people.

On the other hand, social aspects and current activities in each space along with the dimensions and beauty by which the experience of human movement can be felt in, is an effective element in forming social interactions among people.

The participation and accompany is one of the other factors in increasing social interactions. Also considering the conducted studies which in fact have formed the theoretical bases of the survey, the effective elements on the formation of social interactions are: domain, population, privacy, sense of belonging, social-environmental security, sense of place, community in the space, social trust and association in the space. Religious ceremonies, social classes and economical base, existence of different public spaces and hangout in the neighborhood, availability distance and type and amount of habitants' reference have been derived from different sources which according to the outcomes consist of a considerable range of factors in three main groups: the social-political structure of the city, the frame-spatial structure and the social-psychologic factor of the users.

1-3- Methodology

The method of this survey was descriptive-analytic and was done in both qualitative and quantitative. First a review was done on the literature of the topic. It was done as searching books, articles and surveys both internal and external and the data from them was collected. Some field information is obtained from the interviews with citizens and the people who were seen in cultural, business, educational and recreational buildings around the site and also by visiting study zone. This information was used as a base to adjust the questions of the questionnaire.

This way the questions were formed and classified in an ordered and comprehensible form. The statistical population was from around the site in Rasht and they were 160 people who were chosen from the passersby randomly. In order to gather the data needed to reach the goals of the survey, 160 questionnaires both open-ended and close call in Likert scale including very much, a lot, average, a little, very little were distributed among people. Gathering the filled questionnaires, raw data were analyzed in two stages and then the information was analyzed using SPSS and at the end, the results were derived.

1-4- Analyzing data

Introducing the district

Guilan province has been addressed for cultural aspects since the past.

This characteristic can easily be found in traditional houses, decoration of buildings, hand crafts, etc. In this province, cultural centers can help tradition developing and teaching people besides cultural reinforcement. The city of Rasht as the center of the province and considering its potentials such as historical context, old buildings, etc. which have been recorded in the Organization of Cultural Inheritance, can be considered as a milestone in the province.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

1-4-1-The statistics of demography of the respondents

The statistics of demography of the respondents in shown in Table 1-1:

Table 1-1

MARITAL STATUS	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION
85 :SINGLE	90:FEMALE	25 :LESS THAN20	53:DIPLOMA
74 :MARRIED	70:MALE	56 :20-32	71 :BA OR LESS
-	-	52 :30-45	36:MA OR MORE
-	-	27 :MORE THAN45	-
160 :TOTAL	160 :TOTAL	160 :TOTAL	160 :TOTAL

1-4-2-The data normality test

In this section using Kolmogorov-Smirnoff test, the analysis of data normality was studied.

Kolmogorov-Smirnoff test:

The data normality hypotheses of the studied cases are as:

H0: The sample is normally distributed

H1: The sample is not normally distributed

Decision making: In this case the probability (sig) is smaller than 0.05, the null hypothesis which means the hypothesis of distribution normality would be rejected for the 5 percent level of error, otherwise the null hypothesis would be accepted and this means that the distribution of the studied case is normal.

Table 1-2: The result of Kolmogorov-Smirnoff test for studying data normality

COMPONENTS	KLOMOGROV-SMIRNOFF		
	Statistic	DEGREE OF FREEDOM df	INDEX OF SIGNIFICANCE sig
INTERACTION	105	160	0.000
ASSOCIATION	114	160	0.000
SENSE OF BELONGING	140	160	0.000
SECURITY	165	160	0.000

Considering the amounts of obtained sig in Table (2-1) which are all smaller than 5 percent, the null hypothesis which is the normality hypothesis at the level of 5 percent error is confirmed, which means there is no significant difference between the distribution of the samples with the normal distribution. It can be concluded that none of the variables of the survey is normal.

It should be mentioned that if the variable which is being studied follows the normal distribution, for testing the statistical hypothesis related to that, parametric methods would be used and otherwise nonparametric methods.

It means that to measure the correlation coefficient between variables, if both of them are normal, Pearson correlation coefficient will be used; but if even one of them is not normal, some nonparametric methods such as Spearman correlation coefficient or Kendall Tau correlation coefficient will be used.

1-4-3-Hypotheses Testing

1-4-3-1-Testing the first hypothesis: framework environment and urban space can help developing social interactions using some specific elements.

To test the mentioned hypothesis considering that the distribution of the samples is not normal, we will use Spearman correlation coefficient significance testing. The null and the research hypotheses can be defined as:

$$\begin{cases} H_0: \rho = 0 \\ H_1: \rho \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

ρ : is the correlation coefficient between the two variables. In other words:

H0: There is no significant relation between framework environment and urban space.

H1: There is a significant relation between framework environment and urban space.

The outcome of the calculation is recorded in the following table.

Table (1-3): The result of Spearman correlation testing for framework environment and urban space

			URBAN SPACE	FRAMEWORK ENVIRONMENT
SPEARMAN	URBAN SPACE	CORRELATION COEFFICIENT	1000	.143
		LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE NUMBER	.	.041
	FRAMEWORK ENVIRONMENT	CORRELATION COEFFICIENT	160	160
		LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE NUMBER	.143	1000
			.041	.
			160	160

The correlation coefficient between the two variables i.e. framework environment and urban will be accepted and the outcome of correlation testing shows that the research hypothesis will be accepted and as a result with a probability of 95 percent, there is a significant and direct relation between framework environment and urban space. Therefore, framework environment and urban space using specific elements can help developing social interactions.

1-4-3-2-Testing the second hypothesis: Architectural framework and urban space can help attracting visitors and conveying cultural concepts.

To test the hypothesis mentioned above regarding the non-normality of the distribution of samples, we use Spearman's correlation coefficient significance test. The null and the search hypotheses can be defined as:

$$\begin{cases} H_0: \rho = 0 \\ H_1: \rho \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

ρ is the correlation coefficient between the two variables. In other words:

H0: There is no significant relation between architectural framework and urban space.

H1: There is a significant relation between architectural framework and urban space.

The conclusions are shown in the following table:

Table (1-4): The outcome of Spearman's correlation test for architectural framework and urban space

			ARCHITECTU RAL FRAMEWORK	URBAN SPACE
SPEARMAN	ARCHITECTU RAL FRAMEWORK	CORRELATION COEFFICIENT	1000	.189
		LEVEL OF SIGNIFICNCE	.	.011
		NUMBER	160	160
	URBAN SPACE	CORRELATION COEFFICIENT	.189	1000
		LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE	.011	.
		NUMBER	160	160

The correlation coefficient between the two variables i.e. architectural framework and urban space is 0.189 and the level of significance for that is 0.011 and because the level of significance is smaller than 5 percent, the correlation between the two variables will be accepted and the outcome of the correlation test shows that the second hypothesis is confirmed. So with a probability of 95 percent, there is a significant and direct relation between architectural framework and urban space. Hence, architectural framework and urban space can help attracting visitors and conveying cultural concepts.

1-4-3-3-Testing the third hypothesis: Creating public structures in urban space can make a context to increase public connections.

To test this hypothesis regarding the non-normality of distribution of samples, we use Spearman's correlation coefficient test. The null and the research hypotheses can be defined as:

$$\begin{cases} H_0: \rho = 0 \\ H_1: \rho \neq 0 \end{cases}$$

ρ is the correlation coefficient between the two variables. In other words:

H0: There is no significant relation between metropolis space and public connections

H1: There is a significant relation between metropolis space and public connections

The outcome of calculation is shown in the following table:

Table (1-5): the outcome of Spearman's correlation test for metropolis and public space connections

			METROPOLIS SPACE	PUBLIC CONNECTIONS
SPEARMAN	METROPOLIS SPACE	CORRELATION COEFFICIENT	1000	.213
		LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE NUMBER	.	.007
	PUBLIC CONNECTIONS	CORRELATION COEFFICIENT	160	160
		LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE NUMBER	.213	1000

The correlation coefficient between the two variables i.e. metropolis space and public connections is 0.213 and its significance level is 0.07 and because the significance level is smaller than 0.05, the correlation between the two variables is accepted. The outcome of correlation test shows that the third hypothesis is confirmed. Therefore, with a probability of 95 percent there is a significant and direct relation between metropolis space and public connections. Creating public structures in metropolis space can make a context to increase public connections.

1-5 Conclusion

In this section, first the normality test was done for the variables and from its outcome which was done by Kolmogorov-Smirnoff method, the amounts of significance level for all the variables can be considered as non-normal and also Spearman's correlation test showed that all the hypotheses of the research are accepted which conclude that framework environment and urban space using specific methods can help developing social interactions. Architectural framework and urban space can help attracting visitors and conveying cultural concepts. Creating public structures in metropolis space can make a context to increase public connections.

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