UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

REINFORCING SOCIAL INTERACTION AMONG PERSIAN NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITIES IN NEW HIGH-RISE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

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By

SHAHAB ABBASZADEH

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, In Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2009

UPM

“IN THE NAME OF GOD”

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study:

To my lovely wife, I will never forget your companionship, patience, spiritual support, encouragement and love.

To my loving parents, who have a special place in my heart, thank you for your unconditional support to my study. I am honored to have you as my parents.

Finally, to my country, Persia, I hope the future brings a better place to live and love to each other.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

REINFORCING SOCIAL INTERACTION AMONG PERSIAN NEIGHBORHOOD COMMUNITIES IN NEW HIGH-RISE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

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June 2009

Chairman: Associate Professor Dr. Rahinah Ibrahim

Faculty: Design and Architecture

Neighborhood communities are losing their social interactions when residences are stacked into high-rise residential buildings (HRBs) complexes in Mashhad metropolis, Iran. The houses would become mere physical shelters, hence lowering the quality of modern neighborhood communities. This study conducted a mixed-method case study research in search for "How can architects adopt traditional Persian spatial principles of neighborhood communities in developing social interactions in neighborhood communities of HRBs complexes?" After a rigorous literature analysis, the study develops two theoretical propositions. The first posits that social interaction among residents will occur successfully when HRBs complex provides *secured, supportive, collective*, and *responsive* spaces for them. The second proposes that HRD (high-rise residential district) is a neighborhood community consisting of several HRBs that encourages social interactions through well-integrated *secured, supportive, collective* and *responsive* spaces.

The study utilizes mixed-method data collection to support the proposed propositions. It considers a HRBs complex in Mashhad as the qualitative unit of analysis while considering a family living in one apartment as the quantitative unit of analysis. Data were obtained from semi-structured interviews with selected experts, non-participant observation of three selected HRBs complexes, and survey of residents' opinion. Validation of propositions is obtained using triangulation in data collection of qualitative part of the study and statistical analysis.

Interview reveals that experts support the needs for *secured*, *supportive*, *collective*, and *responsive spaces* in improving the quality and quantity of open spaces in contemporary HRBs complexes. They also agreed to redefine the concept of current spaces to support residents' socio-cultural behaviors. Field observations at the three selected residential complexes reveal that residents do not appreciate open spaces for the sake of having open spaces in their living area. They prefer to spend their time in better quality spaces even when that open space is further away from their residential complexes.

Although this study have identified the four influential constructs in the establishment of social interaction in traditional Persian neighborhood communities—secured, supportive, collective, and responsive spaces—it also found differences in the level of priority of those constructs. Thereby, the study established HRD as a neighbourhood community consisting of several HRBs that encourages social interactions through well-integrated responsive, supportive and secured spaces in a collective context. It recommends architects to design hierarchical spaces at three territorial levels: single unit neighborhood community, a group of neighborhood territories, and a residential district. The study believes that these principles could promote unification of the neighborhood communities.

In summary, the study contributes in developing social interaction as the contributing factor for maintaining values of traditional Persian neighbourhood communities in the design of HRBs complexes in Iran. It merges socio-cultural behavior in physical spatial features of the built environment for improving social interaction in non-western HRD developments. Moreover, it redefines Newman's Defensible Space Theory on secured spaces where they are, in fact, the hierarchical spatial structure that provides security by increasing the sense of familiarity and responsibility among residents through informal interactions in Persian HRD. This study helps to sustain the indigenous socio-culture of a developing nation as its population and built environment evolve to follow western-inclined lifestyle.

PENGUKUHAN INTERAKSI SOSIAL DI KALANGAN KOMUNITI KEJIRANAN DALAM PEMBANGUNAN KEDIAMAN BERTINGKAT BAHARU

Oleh

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Komuniti masyarakat akan kehilangan interaksi sosialnya apabila perumahan di bina dalam bentuk komplek bangunan perumahan bertingkat (BPB) di metropolis Mashhad, Iran. Rumah-rumah cuma akan menjadi pelindung fizikal, yang mana akan merendahkan kualiti komuniti masyarakat moden. Kajian ini telah mengadakan sebuah penyelidikan kajian kes pelbagai kaedah untuk mengetahui “Bagaimana para arkitek dapat menerapkan prinsip tradisi ruangan Farsi sesebuah komuniti masyarakat yang tinggal di komplek BPB?” Setelah analisa literatur, kajian telah membangunkan dua cadangan teori. Yang pertama mencadangkan bahawa interaksi sosial di kalangan penduduk akan berjaya dilakukan apabila komplek BPB menyediakan ruangan yang selamat, yang mendokong, yang tertumpu dan responsif untuk mereka. Cadangan kedua menyatakan bahawa DPP (daerah perumahan bertingkat) ialah sebuah komuniti masyarakat yang terdiri dari beberapa BKB yang mempunyai integrasi ruangan yang selamat, yang mendokong, yang tertumpu dan responsif yang baik.

Kajian menggunakan kaedah pelbagai dalam pengumpulan data bagi menyokong pernyataan cadangan. Ia menggunakan sebuah komplek BPB di Mashhad sebagai unit analisa kualitatif manakala menggunakan sebuah keluarga yang tinggal di dalam sebuah apartmen sebagai unit analisa kuantitatif. Data dikumpulkan dari interbiu separa-struktur bersama pakar-pakar terpilih, pemerhatian tanpa-penyertaan tiga komplek BKB yang terpilih dan survei pendapat penduduk. Validasi pernyataan cadangan didapati melalui kaedah triangulasi bagi bahagian kualitatif kajian dan statistiks.

Interbiu menunjukkan bahawa para pakar menyokong keperluan untuk ruangan yang selamat, yang mendokong, yang tertumpu dan responsif bagi mempertingkatkan kualiti dan kuantiti ruangan terbuka di komplek BPB komtemporari. Mereka juga bersetuju akan pendefinisian semula konsep ruangan yang dapat menyokong perlakuan sosio-budaya penduduk. Pemerhatian tapak di ketiga-tiga komplek perumahan yang terpilih menunjukkan bahawa penduduk kurang menghargai ruangan terbuka kerana tempat tinggal mereka mempunyai ruangan tersebut. Mereka memilih untuk meluangkan masa lapang di ruangan yang berkualiti lebih tinggi walaupun ruangan terbuka tersebut lebih jauh dari komplek kediaman mereka.

Walaupun kajian ini telah mengenal pasti empat konstruk yang mempengaruhi interaksi sosial dalamk komuniti masyarakat tradisional Farsi—ruangan yang selamat, yang mendokong, yang tertumpu dan responsif—ianya turut mendapati tahap keutamaan yang berbeza di antara konstruk tersebut. Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian ini telah menetapkan DPP adalah sebuah komuniti masyarakat yang terdiri dari beberapa BKB yang menggalakkan interaksi sosial melalui intergrasi ruangan yang responsif, yang mendokong dan yang selamat di dalam sebuah kontek yang tertumpu. Ia mencadangkan kepada arkitek untuk mereka bentuk ruangan yang berhieraki pada tiga peringkat kedaerahan: sebuah unit komuniti masyarakat, sebuah kumpulan yang terdiri dari beberapa komuniti masyarakat dan sebuah daerah kediaman. Kajian mempercayai bahawa prinsip-prinsip tersebut dapat mempromosi kesatuan di dalam komuniti-komuniti masyarakat.

Sebagai kesimpulan, kajian menyumbang di dalam pembangunan interaksi sosial sebagai factor penyumbang untuk mengekalkan nilai-nilai tradisional komuniti masyarakat Farsi di dalam reka bentuk komplek BKB di Iran. Ianya menyatukan perlakuan sosio-budaya ke dalam cirri-ciri ruangan fizikal persekitaran alam bina bagi mempertingkatkan interaksi sosial dalam pembangunan DPP di luar negara Barat. Tambahan pula, kajian memberikan maksud ruangan yang selamat yang berbeza dari *defensible space theory* Newman kerana sebenarnya struktur ruangan berhieraki menyediakan keselamatan melalui interaksi tidak formal di BKB Farsi. Kjian ini membantu melestarikan sosio-budaya tempatan sesebuah negara membangun bila mana populasi dan alam binanya bertukar menurut cara hidup kebaratan.

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Thank you all!

APPROVAL

I certify that an Examination Committee on _____ to conduct the final examination of Shahab Abbaszadeh on his Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled "Reinforcing Persian Neighborhood Communities in New High-Rise Residential Development" in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher degree) Act 1980 and the Universiti Putra Malaysia (Higher degree) Act 1981. The committee recommends that the student be awarded Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree in Universiti Putra Malaysia or at any other institutions.

SHAHAB ABBASZADEH
Date:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Porteous (1976), home is “the territorial core”, “a preferred space and a fix point of reference” for daily activities. The basic unit of a house is a physical place that merely consists of spatial dimensions. It fulfils the human psychological and social needs, portraying the identity of spaces with distinct individual and identifiable characteristics. We note in today's home trend, a shift from single homes with private courtyards in metropolitan cities to vertical living in high-rise residential buildings (HRBs) complexes. We are concerned about losing the individual distinctions as homes become mere physical shelters that lack the psychological resonance and social meaning that grounded homes provide. Nowadays, one question evokes the mind. What is the result of evolution in the quality of current dwellings and residential environments? Responses from experts and general public strikingly reveal an increasing sense of dissatisfaction. The fact is that common people still love and like traditional spaces. They feel a sense of attachment and peace of mind by being present in such places. People unknowingly take refuge in these spaces yet housing marketing do not allow them to think of the quality of spaces and instead push them to new unpleasant and unqualified shelters (Hashemi in Tavassoli, 1998). Moreover, new global order need more consideration and understanding of “traditional settlements” to encounter globalization issue in current situation, (AlSayyad, 1995). Therefore, Persian traditional neighborhood communities can become a rich source of modern refuge to city dwellers.

The family privacy, protected by houses that are not overlooking each other and the potential for integrating residents in central collective spaces within residential districts are important issues in our traditional architecture (Tavassoli, 1998). Current socio-spatial changes are not in accordance with traditional architecture and there is no logical relation between these changes and the architectural background of our life environments. This means that traditional architecture and urban design principles are missing in current architecture caused by rapid development in metropolises today, influenced by western patterns and culture. Coupled with this is the strong influence of western principles and styles on Persian architectural schools. Educational institutions are not putting enough attention and effort to introduce Persian architectural culture (Tavassoli, 1998).

Because of the hot market for housing (construction and resale), architects give more importance to their financial benefits and less to research, discovery and application of traditional architectural values. One of the reasons of disorder in architecture and urban spaces in current situation is the interference of fashion architecture and personal beliefs. Such interference is brought about by limited experience of graduates from both local and overseas institutions. Rapid and hasty development of cities and copying from western architectural patterns without any consideration to our socio-cultural background exacerbate the chaotic architectural environments (Tavassoli, 1998). In addition, the majority of experiences in design of residential areas and urban districts failed. Most of the new products of urban and architectural design in Iran are devoid of any architectural values and we should stop repeating them. Supporting AlSayyad (1995) statement that "in the era of globalization the forms of settlements are likely to reflect rising levels of awareness of the ethnic, racial and religious associations of the communities within which they exist" we are

arguing copycatting western HRBs complexes patterns are simply having products that reflect western societies' socio-cultural behaviors as opposed to Persian. Therefore, there is a need to redefine the concept of current HRBs complexes in our society to fit better into the Persian traditional culture.

We agree that utilizing western architectural styles and principles and applying them in Persian society should be done prudentially. We support other scholars (Esfahani, 2004; Tavassoli, 1998) who posit that western styles and methods are provided based on its thought, socio-cultural values and climatology, hence, those principles are most appropriate for its society alone.

Nowadays, when architects and urban designers describe space as agreeable, pleasant, comfortable, friendly, organized, pleasing and desirable, majority of them refer to traditional architectural and urban spaces. This is due to the unpleasant experiences in renovation in the 60s after Second World War in western countries. Current situation and experiences are worse in Iran; therefore, it is high time to investigate the traditional architectural spaces in order to realize its worthy concept (Tavassoli, 1998). Traditional architecture in Iran was not formed rapidly and hastily but has gradually grown in time with respect to its great historical background of a few thousand years (Tavassoli, 1998). The methods of traditional architects in organizing urban and architectural spaces are still informative and relevant. Today, the new urban spaces and residential areas include low quality, boring, and similar spaces that neither address residents' socio-cultural needs nor support their social interactions and communications. Desirable urban spaces and pleasing residential districts are situated in old areas and traditional cities where residents' social interaction was supported due to high quality built environment and well- designed spaces (Esfahani, 2004).

Advanced technology is enabling architects to create complicated and convoluted materials and forms impossible for building decades ago. While acknowledging the new feats, we also question how much these products actually meet the users' requirements particularly concerning their socio-cultural needs. This study's concern is the increasing duplication of western high-rise residential buildings (HRBs) complexes in the metropolises of Iran. By stacking houses, the home has now become mere physical shelter lacking the socio-cultural meaning that Persian traditional homes provide. The households' quality of life—improved through social interactions and enhanced by traditional homes—is lost in today's modern residences. Our goal is to look for those missing features with the intention of reinforcing the socio-cultural connections and interactions that are endeared by traditional Persian households in new HRBs complexes. The socio-cultural behavior and social interaction of residents are supported in three different social levels in Persian traditional homes: 1) personal space and privacy requirements within the boundaries (e.g., family territory of a home); 2) semi-private and semi-public spaces related to the home environment (e.g., neighborhood communities surrounding the home) and; 3) Public spaces that includes all passageways and pause spaces inside residential districts.

Mashhad metropolis has been selected as our case study due to its status as the second metropolis, being the first holy city in Iran, due to the location of Imam Reza holy shrine. This city has a total population of about 2.5 million as well as receiving over 16 million pilgrims per year (Rezvani, 2005). The population growth encourages many HRB developments, but unfortunately, these structures are devoid of any sense of familiarity and warmth that residents experience in traditional neighborhood communities. It is in this aspect that we hope our study could

contribute enriching modern communities with the traditional social-cultural values, and eventually, we hope that the findings could be generalized to other metropolises in Iran.

Finally, recent scholars (such as(Adham, 2008)) are involved in incorporating some form of heritage for simulating an authentic experience based on their traditional urban spaces. For instance, Memmott and Davidson, (2008) are thinking to develop a theoretical framework to comprehend interactions between the socio-cultural and architectural values and traditions of various cultural perspectives. In this regard, several scholars are concerned purely about traditional spaces and architecture, such as (Marcuse, 2006; Qian, 2007; Vanderbeek & Irazabal, 2007) while others are about reinventing urban spaces, such as (Kowaltowski, Wartin, & Pina, 2007) when considering thermal performance of traditional spaces and architectures. However, this research is believed to be among the first concerning applying traditional socio-spatial spaces and socio-cultural and behavioral values in Persian traditional neighborhood communities in current HRBs complexes.

1.2 DEFINITION OF TERMS

We explain here abbreviations and terms that are frequently used in this study:

- **Home:** Home is “the territorial core”, “a preferred space and a fix point of reference” for daily activities. It is a place for protecting the household from daily life pressure and stress. It is a place with psychological resonance and social meaning (Porteous, 1976; Saegert, 1985).

- **House:** A basic unit of a physical place that consists of spatial dimensions. Its function is more like a shelter that protect households from physical disasters.

- **Neighborhood:** It is a physical boundary, which is created based on several common factors such as common social and cultural background or common predisposition and motivation for residents towards supporting residents' socio-cultural behaviors and social interaction. The concept of neighborhood community provides an opportunity for meeting resident's psychological needs based on their socio-cultural activities.

- **Place:** Place is an undifferentiated space evolves into space as we come to know it better and endow it with value and meaning (Manzo, 2003).

- **HRBs Complex: (**High-Rise Residential Buildings) complex - It refers to a group of several identical multi-story housing blocks in a demarcated area.

- **HRD:** (High-Rise Residential Districts) - It refers to integration of some HRBs that are creating a residential district including housing blocks as well as secured, supportive, collective, and responsive spaces.

- **SI:** Social interaction- It refers to continues informal communications between at least two residents that will eventually lead to a resident's accessibility to social and economic sources and supports.

- **I.Vs: (**Independent Variables) - It refers to derived influential collectively construct (*secured*, *supportive*, *collective*, and *responsive spaces*), on residents' social interaction of the study.