

The Socio-Spatial Meaning in Traditional Houses of Arak*

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ABSTRACT

The pattern of social interactions and performing main activities is two aspects of lifestyle. Therefore they are considered as cultural features. The aim of this research is to clarify the role of Pattern of activities to make meaning of spaces in traditional houses. This research is based on Rapoport's theory about the meaning of the built environment. Hence, the pattern of the main activities is studied a selection of traditional houses of Arak (a central city in Iran), and is evaluated by different indicators of social meaning: stranger/familiar, individual/collective, male/female, and daily/nightly. Each of these indicators is equivalent to these following socio-spatial meanings of the spaces: formal/intimate, public/private, male/female territory, and daily/nightly domain. Then, socio-spatial meaning of spaces is compared with physical features of the spaces. Finally, research indicates that this following factors: space dimensions; space position in regard to the yard; entrance, ground; the internal and external decorations are caused the various activities to be performed in special spaces, and consequently be created different socio-spatial meaning of spaces.

KEY WORDS: traditional houses of Arak, pattern of activities, lifestyle, social-spatial meaning, Iranian traditional architecture, environment.

INTRODUCTION

Human being has overcome the nature by culture, then passed the barbarism and finally reached to a modern civilized society. British anthropologist Edward Burnett Taylor (1871) brought up the term of "culture" as a new academic terminology in the anthropological domain by publishing the "primary culture" book [1]. However, this knowledge has not been used until 1920 [2]. In traditional concepts, culture has been used as civilization and people's cultures were recognized by their behavior, food, music, art and literature which had special characteristics. while Taylor has introduced the culture as a general concept including science, religion, art, morals, customs and any abilities and habits that join people to a special groups of community. The new concept of culture appeared when there was necessary to recognition of meaning and quality of life and the human behavior; because the concepts that nature science has presented for explaining natural and biological phenomena by nature and also the phenomenon of human behavior were not so expressive. As human behavior cannot just be explained based on needs and biological requirements such as the necessity to food or shelter for the individual survival. Because his vital needs is the same as his animal needs, but the needs in the human world which are blending to human values, ideals, expectations, morals, customs and traditions are complicated [3]. Many definitions have been presented by various researchers that made subject of culture so complicated. But on these definitions have been paid attention on three main cases and these cases can distinguish the main objective of using culture which are lifestyle, human mental aspects, habits and compatibility with different environments. Lifestyle refers to the way of living that human chooses, and it is based on ideals, rules, regulations, daily behavior and so on [3].

Culture and its components

Great varieties of our activities make numerous setting based on cultural needs. This means that the meaning of the built environment is not something that is added to the function, but "meaning" itself is the most important factor that must response to the environment. Therefore quality requirements often are more important than quantity requirements that most of the times users behave differently in their selections, because quality requirements play a major role in their evaluation and preferences. So "semantic aspect" plays an important role in creating different spaces. It means some of the spaces that have similar usages; rules and standards are different from each other because of differences in users' lifestyle. For instance evaluating the environmental lighting levels, volume, environmental temperature, type and shape of stairs, creating identity in residential and

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business environments, aggregation and crowding in the residential environment are examples of issues that are different in many points [4].

Cultures can play different rules through different mechanisms. Inclination or disinclination to socialize and interact with relatives, or strangers depends on social culture. The kinship meaning in cultures is different. Also the spatial privacy, discipline and the behaviors during the period of time, and also customs and interactions are different in cultures. So the personal privacy instruction is cultural variables also. Aggregation and crowding negative effects lead to tension and internal pressure. Tension and stress typically are the evaluation result or undesired conditions result rather than acceptable condition or it is the meaning that occurs in any condition. For instance, having visibility into the open or closed residential areas that occurs due to the high aggregation and crowding is related and depends on the stranger definition of visibility and methods type to prevent visibility. The causes of stress is depends on people expectations, their customs, lifestyle and more intellectual schema that all these conditions originated from cultural factors. Different cultures consider different indicator for their evaluating. Indicator can be formed based on the individuals rank and dignity, schemata and mental images, ideals, legalistic, customs and lifestyle that differences in indicator declares cultural differences between different groups and their environment [3].

Rapoport (1969) with the aim of understanding the culture overall structure and its influence factors on the built environments divided it in to some components. He presented his proposal with this awareness that analysis of culture in overall levels still is not communicable with the environment. He states that this method enhances in some limit the public understanding of the culture holistic nature and its constituent components any way. In this method some portions of environment can be closely related with parts of the culture such as world outlook, values, ideas, norms, life style and activity systems (Figure 1).

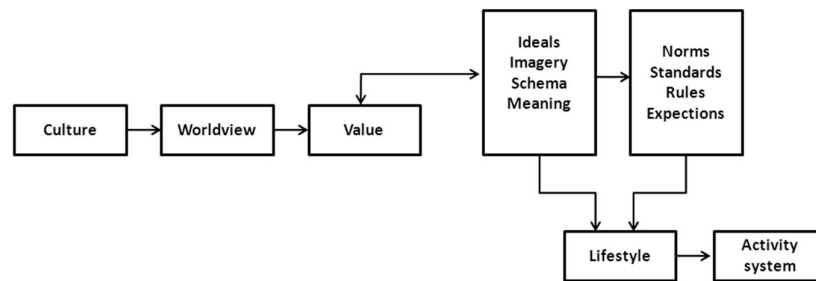


Figure 1. Culture Analysis in response to its holistic nature [4]

Lifestyle

Lifestyle concept particularly leads to selecting environmental and life quality, activities its method that related to lifestyle in environments. Lifestyle is a concept that forms in the built environments based on values such as Ideals, imagination, Schema and appears in the societies. Whatever in lifestyle nature of the built environments gets importance is that lifestyle is not restricted to one spatial. But it happens in different scale and various environments. Therefore it gets a large variety [3]. Lifestyle in any spatial different cultures is different. Cooking methods is a cultural manifestation. Because preparing different foods in different cultures does not have the same conditions. Also lifestyle in a set of spaces that are considered with a specific goal in a building finds different conditions. So in the built environments, lifestyle can be classify in to a lifestyle in a space, or set of spaces in a field, life style in different buildings with different application, and social lifestyle in a massive space. The social life itself is divided into two groups. One is kinship social life including interactions with family basis and other relatives, and another is public social life that includes social networks, institutions and so on [3]. The necessity attention to the qualitative aspects of activities, means "meaning in the built environment" is because the residential environments specialty is related to their inner activities which determines the interaction between culture and environment. It means lifestyle and activities in residential environments are very important. So the culture reanalysis is essential in the built environment design, because groups' lifestyle have its own specialties. Membership Factors in social groups such as age, gender, generation, class, race, tribe, clan, religion, education, profession, ideology determine these specialties that can form different lifestyles [3].

Lifestyle and meaning of house

House is not a structure only, but also it is an "entity" which made for a complex set of goals and because it is also a social phenomenon, discipline, spaces type and also its physical forms affects from culture, social, economic factors, and so one. Primitive's house was not only a shelter; on the contrary its life concepts were more than its beneficial or its physical [5]. The "house concept" does not put as internal spaces organization, but the "meaning" gets important in its design. In daily life the "meaning" lies in the usage of spaces. The places have meaning and the house is the main place for daily activities [6]. People spend in most of their life time and it is a place that social customary intercourses take place in it. The fact that humans how use the house spaces is

a cultural phenomenon also [7], because targeted uses in residential spaces create manners that make the difference between house and home [8]. Home is a safe place that provides human's comfort and expectations and also reveals his identity. So the manners that exist in a house environment are a process that can convert the house into a home [9]. Therefore such environments in an acceptable rate provide the user's value. So, in designing attending to various issues and their meaning gets more important than function [10].

The "lifestyle" concept that describes activities types their reason and meaning that take place. Lifestyle specifies using various ways of materials, places and times consuming. In the other word, it defines using daily life circumstances. Whatever human does in its daily life is disciplining using spaces methods. The following are some of the more important aspects of the lifestyle which affect built form: Some basic needs, family, position of women, privacy and social intercourse [5]. In other Rapoport's theory environment ordering is to adjustment four factors: space, concept, communication, and time [11]. The meaning of the activity one of the components that any activity can be analyzed, distinguished between user's meanings and designer's meanings. The environmental meaning can be studied in three major ways in cultural and social approach [12]: the semiotic approach, the symbolic approach, and the nonverbal communication approach. Rapoport (1990) considers enculturation and environment, social communication and context, and mnemonic function of environment as three preliminary considerations for a nonverbal communication approach. These are analyzed in fixed, semi-fixed, and non-fixed feature elements. Classification of living patterns was based on several variables: the type of activity (work, entertainment, socializing, meals, sleeping), the nature of space (extended public [the city]), local public [shared alley], semi-private [space in front of the house], semi-public [guest space inside the house], private [domestic family space], and sacred [sleeping space]), and the time of day and year (night, evening, day, weekend, season and occasion). The diagram shows in dark gray the dominant everyday activities that were observed, at what time, and who participated in them (Figure 2). This investigation was particularly helpful in highlighting the social-spatial traffic and the spaces of greatest social significance [13].

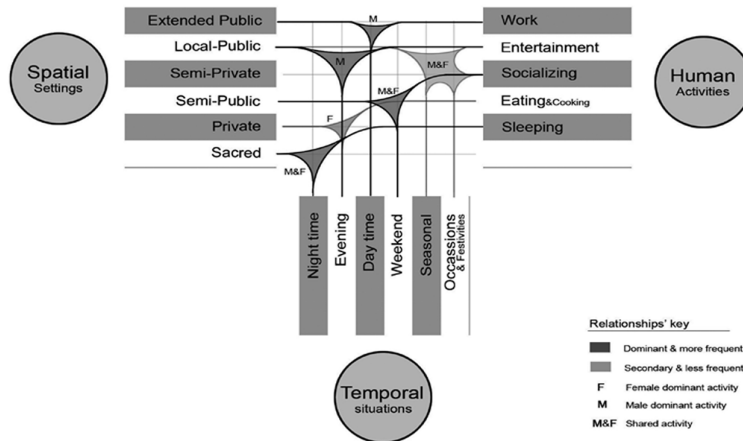


Figure 2 .The interdisciplinary methodologies as developed in the form of socio-spatial models [13]

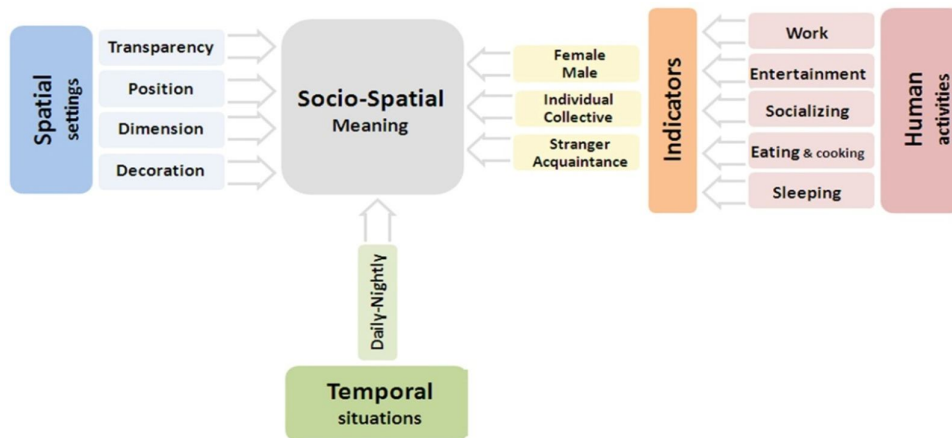


Figure 3. Productive factors of socio-spatial meaning

Socio-spatial meaning is created of following factors (Figure 3): spatial setting (transparency, position, decoration, dimension), temporal situations (daily-nightly) and social indicators (stranger/acquaintance,

individual / collective, female/male and daily/nightly). In addition to Indicators are created of human activities (work, entertainment, socializing, eating). In figure 3 are investigated relation among those factors.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Memarian, classified the residential architecture of Iran into extrovert and introvert types [14,15]. The famous types of Iranian traditional houses are divided into following types: *chahar sofeh*, *Miansara dar*, *Kushki*, and combination houses [16]. *Chahar sofeh* type is four cross rooms in center of house, introverted type, in very hot and dry climate in center of Iran and mountainous and high plateau region in very cold climate. *Miansara dar* type is central courtyard house, introverted type, in center of Iran and hot and dry climate. *Kushki* type is like belvedere, open around of house, extroverted type, in mountainous and high plateau region in cold climate and northern coastal region temperate climate. Combination house type is extroverted and introverted type, central courtyard with veranda around it, in southern coastal region Iran, in hot and humid climate. Arak has both type of houses but dominant type is introvert type. Specifically in Arak five different types of traditional houses can be found: the central courtyard and four sides building, three sides building, two sides building, one side building, and central building like belvedere [17].

In constructing the traditional houses of Arak, climate and religious issues have been followed. Houses generally were in the form of rectangle. Rooms were built face to Mecca that shows their extreme religious beliefs on those days. Because they believed facing and sleeping to Mecca has great heavenly reward and turning back to Mecca is a big sin. In respect to climate, It has been tried to have enough light in all rooms and set in a direction that have enough light in winters due to light direction change. Old houses dimensions were different and were depended on people economic situation or social class. Rooms' number in medium social classes was limited to a living room, a guest room and a kitchen located beside the yard. Other services such as WC, stable for sheep and cows were built in beside the yard also. The same as all the Iranian houses building bath inside the house was not common. But the wealthy houses had more bedrooms, a corridor like hall with 4 to 6 bedrooms beside each other located on the west side face to east, and an entirely roofed corridor was placed in front of them called "*Mahtabi*". Upper classes houses were always consisting of two parts, outer and inner. Outer had less rooms and smaller yard than inner. These houses length and width were generally greater than low class house. Each house had a big guest room called "*Panj dari*" or "*Haft dari*". Among all the case studies, the highest percentage were belonged to houses with central courtyard, then one side buildings and the last buildings like belvedere. What was common in all these traditional houses of Arak is their symmetry. This topic has been observed in some of house plans. In some others, despite of asymmetry in plan, facades are designed symmetrically. This symmetry, in some schema, has emphasized in axis too. In fact four types of space organizing are seen in the traditional house of Arak: three rooms and a porch, relatively closed spaces and vertical connecting between ground and first floor inside the building, row spaces with interconnecting relation, and a room in the middle and two corridors on both sides (Figure 4).

The social-spatial meaning analysis of space in the traditional houses of Arak base on indicators in Figure 3 were studied in six houses that are different in scales and typology with anthropology method: *Hassanpour's* house, *Bayat's* house, *Maleki's* house, *Zamir Roshan's* house, *Zardosht's* house, *Emad's* house (Figure 5). But in this article because of the limitations just *Hassanpour's* house has been analyzed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Case study: the Hassnpoure's house

The *Hassanpour's* house (Figure 6) is one of the old building is located in old texture of Arak and in the first pass at left side after "*Chaharsogh*" market, in front of pass of "*Sepahdari*" school. The building founder is Mr. "*Ali Moshiri*". After several generations, came into the possession of Mr. *Hassanpour*. The House consists two parts, North and South, The southern part belongs to the "*Qajar*" era, and the northern part of it belongs to the year 1911. Its building is surrounds with yards from three sides. Several stairs connect two floors. The staircases are in the northern, eastern and western of the inner building.

Service spaces such as WC, foodstuff storage and closet are in east face to the west of the yard. The northern part of the building is winter living area. The entire first spaces floor has inner connection with each other. In the ground floor, southwest part of the building does not have any direct connection with the other parts, and the yard is their connector. The building is used as a handicrafts museum now. Social-Spatial meaning is evaluated by some social indicators in following figures and tables (Figures 7-10 ;Table 1-3).

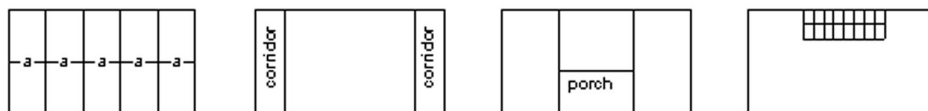


Figure 4. Types of organization of Space in traditional houses of Arak

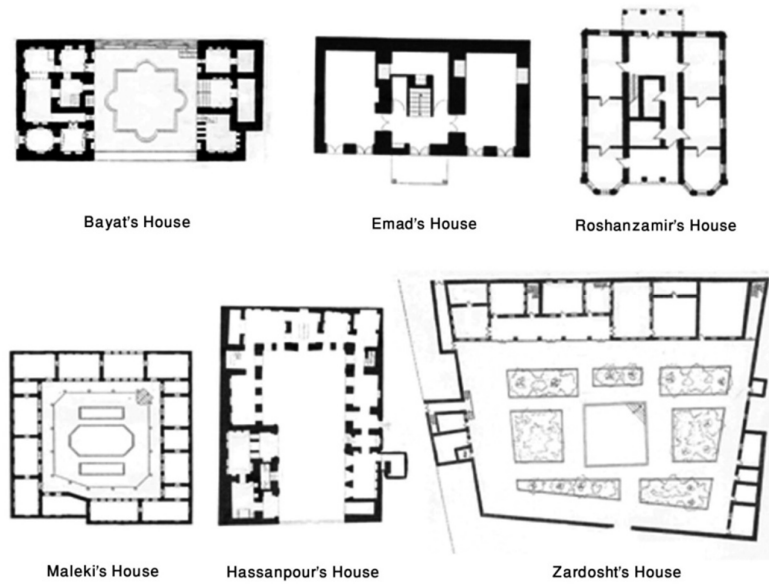


Figure 5. Plan of traditional houses of Arak [17]



Figure 6. Hassanpour's house photos



Figure 7. Daily-Nightly spaces in *Hassan Pour's* house

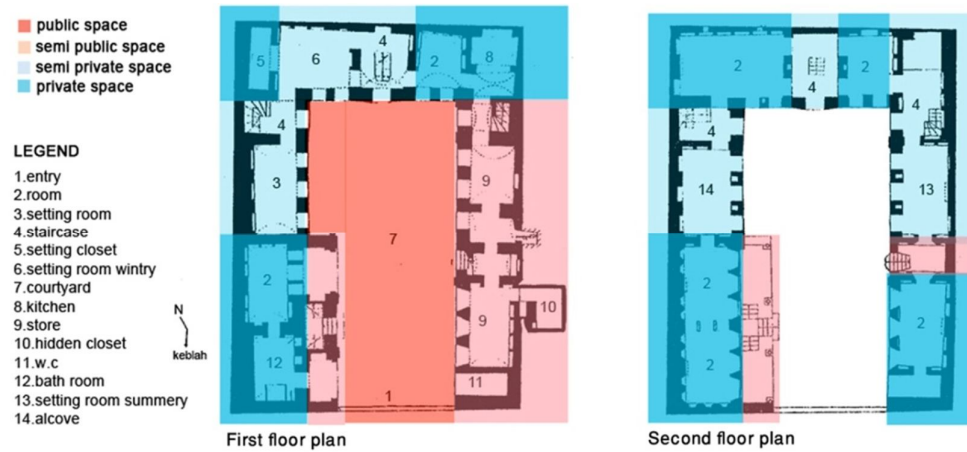


Figure 8. Public- Private spaces in *Hassan Pour's* house

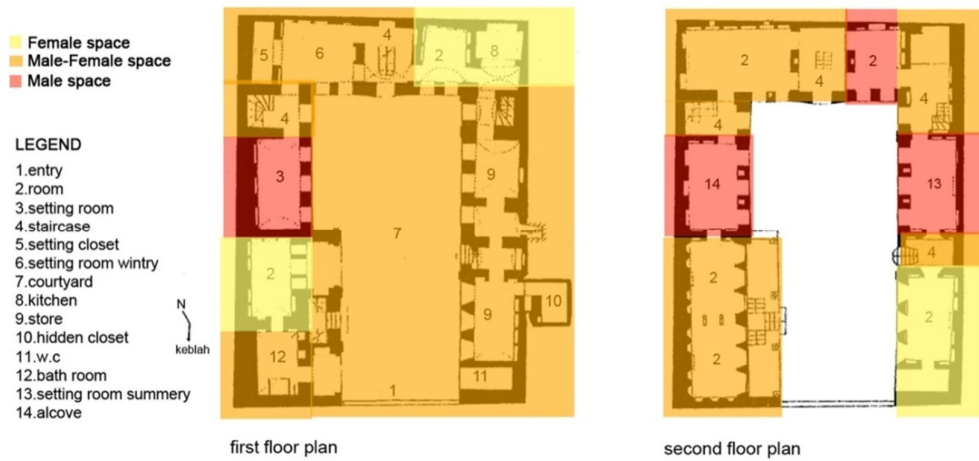


Figure 9. Female-Male spaces in *Hassan Pour's* house

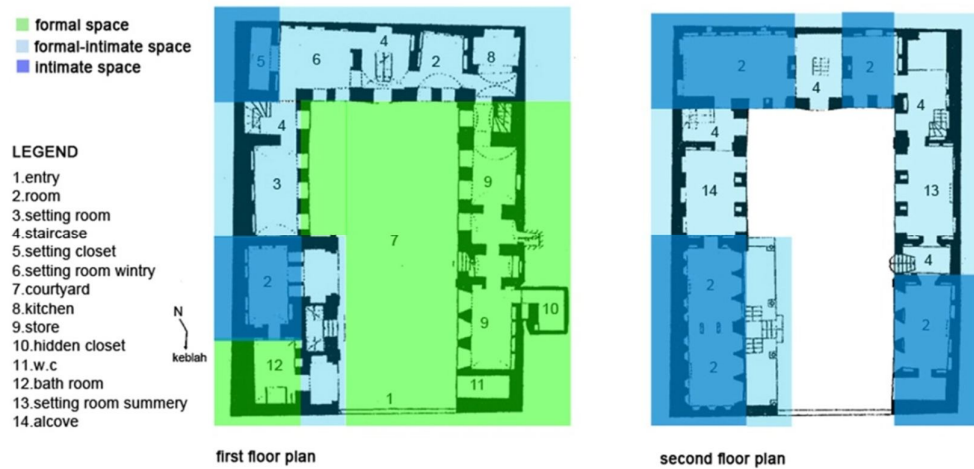


Figure 10. Formal- Informal spaces in *Hassan Pour's* house

Table 1. Searching socio-spatial meanings: "Formal/Intimate" in *Hassan Pour's* house spaces

Stranger / Acquaintance	Indicator	Hassan Pour's house spaces
Formal / Intimate	Socio-spatial meaning	
Entrance is a place for entering into the house in connection with the yard. And strangers stop in front of entrance to get permission from the owner of the house	Entrance "Vorudi"	
Typically, strangers have no way to enter the rooms, because rooms are family's private spaces for. Relatively ground floor rooms are for public activities, are located in ground floor, and first floor rooms are for private activities.	Room "otagh"	
An ornamental and relatively larger space than others entertaining the guests and mainly family's father uses this space.	living room "neshiman"	
It is an opportunity to get together around the brazier kursi and narrating memories in winter. Strangers can enter this room in parties only.	Winter living room "neshiman zemestani"	
This living room is very useful in summer. It is the father's resting and eating place. Because of its location on the first floor, is mostly used by family and acquaintance.	Summer living room "neshiman tabestani"	
Servicing the room spaces, living rooms and also access to stores. strangers have no way to enter the kitchen.	Kitchen "ashpazkhane"	
Due to the privacy, It is located beside room in a corner of house. Strangers are not allowed to enter the bathroom.	Bathroom "hamam"	
It is located near the entrance door to ease of transporting the equipment and feed the livestock. It is used by all the family members, specially the father.	Store "anbar"	
Enclosed space to put things and foodstuffs on the back of store and special house members has access. Strangers are not allowed to enter the closet.	Closet "pasto"	
Due to healthcare, infrastructural and cultural problems, toilets are built in the yard and in the corner of store far from other areas. On the other hand to ease the strangers' access, it is near the entrance door.	Washroom "mostarah"	
A semi-opened space used as a filter for strangers to enter the house. A place for eating and sitting together with family members and acquaintance.	Veranda "eyvan"	
The yard is used as a waiting space for strangers and an access to the other spaces. Also it is used as a children play space, family members daily activities and celebrating.	Courtyard "hayat"	

Table 2. Searching socio-spatial meanings "Male/Female Territory" in *Hassan Pour's* house spaces

Male/Female	Indicator	Hassan Pour's house spaces
Male/Female Territory	Socio-Spatial meaning	
To identify the visitor gender person, before his/her arrival to the house, two different latches were mounted on the door. Women have been using the latches with the shrill voice and men bass voice.	Entrance "Vorudi"	
Boys and girls had separate rooms (The southwestern room belonged to girls only) Ladies gathered in separate rooms from gentlemen in the ceremonies and parties. According to higher status of men than women particularly the family father room often has better space quality than the others.	Room "otagh"	
Father present in this space, and women and girls are except for services, but sometimes the mother is present. The living room is a space in male rule ornaments, and its spacious shows the high degree of patriarchal male (god father or father) in the society.	Living room "neshiman"	
Due to the lack of propionates heating devices, necessarily woman and girls were in the winter living room beside men. The male place is upper than the other in living room.	Winter living room "neshiman zemestani"	
It is a resting place for the family man (father) and a place to the services for women only.	Summer living room "neshiman tabestani"	
This space is appropriate to women and girls. According to the privacy principle, it is absolutely protected to be on seeing from outside. Preparing food and other common women activities take place in the kitchen.	Kitchen "ashpazkhane"	
According to being a bathroom in this house, women use bathroom in certain and different times from men. According to being a bathroom in this house men use bathroom in certain and different times from women	Bathroom "hamam"	
Women mainly deal with the storeroom that related to kitchen stuff. Sometimes they contribute in the livestock barn too. Men deal with the food storage and livestock barn.	Storage "anbar"	
In this house, closet response to two cases for women: 1. Doing their appropriate activities, and their comfort beside their family and close relatives. 2. Place for married activities (sexual activities)	Closet "pasto"	
In this house, closet response to two cases for men: 1. For storing special items 2. Place for married activities (sexual activities).		
Different time for using toilet by men and women has been considered	Washroom "mostarah"	
Activities like talking, cleaning vegetables and etc. are done in this place. Also activities like sleeping specially in summer is take place in porch.	Veranda "eyvan"	
For women yard is a place for socializing with neighbors and friend and also doing daily activities such as housework, washing, vacuuming, cleaning vegetables and etc. It is a good place to play for baby girls. For men, courtyard is a good place for socializing with neighbors and familiars in various occasions and is a good place to play for baby boy.	CourtYard "hayat"	

Table 3. Searching socio-spatial meanings “Daily/Nightly Domain” in *Hassan Pour's* house spaces

Daily/Nightly	Indicator	Hassan Pour's house spaces
Daily/Nightly Domain	Socio-Spatial meaning	
Regarding the lifestyle and activities hours, the arrival and departure amount is far more than the night during the day.	Entrance “Vorudi”	
Actions like eating, playing, reading, talking and common activities in the rooms were according to the Possibility of benefiting the day light. Actions such as sleeping, getting together and talking, and narrating memories were some common activities in room at night.	Room “otagh”	
During the day, living room is on father control and he does his activities like eating and sleeping in it. Activities like getting together, conversations, men's narrating memories, entertaining male guests, were some of common activities in living room at night.	Living room “neshiman”	
During the day Winter living room on the extreme cold temperature and Inability to perform daily activities is a place for family to gather together. Winter living room at night is a gathering place and the main space for living, so activities like eating, sleeping, conversation, quoting memories and so on take place in it.	inter living room “neshiman zemestani”	
Because this space is on the northern side, it is possible to be protect from direct sunlight, and enjoying the breeze , so it is a appropriate place to use in the day and night.	Summer living room “neshiman tabestani”	
During the day, kitchen is main women activities. Space Activities like cooking, baking bread, and food preparing is done in it. Due to lack of proper lighting and the waking time, nights activities are less than the day in the kitchen. Its function is transferring the storing heat to the other spaces at night especially in winter.	Kitchen “ashpazkhane”	
Due to Possibility of profiting the warmth and the day light, this place is used in day more than night. Due to Poor lighting and heating facilities and the waking time, it is used less at nights.	Bathroom “hamam”	
Due to the waking time and men activities, this place is used in the day more than the night. it is limited to essential uses at nights.	Storage “anbar”	
Closets have silence, comfort and convenience, Due to the distance from the wall, the light intensity is less. So they are suitable for activities like resting in summer. Closet is a place for sleeping, and doing private married activities at nights.	Closet “pastro”	Hassan Pour's house spaces
Due to waking time and activities, and also not having lighting facilities this place was used in days more than nights. At nights it is limited to necessary uses.	Washroom “mostarah”	
In days this space is active as a semi-opened and shade space and at nights in summers is a god place for sleeping due to possibility of enjoying breeze and looking to sky.	Veranda “evvan”	
Due to waking time and activities, and also not having lighting facilities is used in days more than nights. A nights courtyard is used for dividing and also in summers it is a god place for sleeping due to possibility of enjoying breeze and looking to the sky.	CourtYard “hayat”	

Table 4. Searching socio-spatial meanings: “Public / Private” in *Hassan Pour's* house spaces

Individual / Collective	Indicator	Hassan Pour's house spaces
Public / Private	Socio-spatial meaning	
It is considered as a public space connecting inside to outside of the house. From inside the house we can reach the yard too.	Entrance “Vorudi”	
It is considered as the most private space in the house. First floor rooms are more private than ground floor rooms. Due to connection with kitchen, ground floor rooms are used for collective activities.	Room “otagh”	
In collective regards, it is a place to entertaining the guests and chatting with others, and in individual point of view. It is a rest place for and father's sleep room.	living room “neshiman”	
In winter, it is substituting as a main living the house, because it does not need much heat. Closet in this space is used for more private activities.	Winter living room “neshiman zemestani”	
Often family father uses it more. Sometimes all family members use it too.	Summer living room “neshiman tabestani”	
This space exclusively belongs to women and activities like preparing and cooking foods are done In kitchen. Due to women's low social status at those ages, kitchen was located in a corner of house.	Kitchen “ashpazkhane”	
Public bathrooms had been common. Few houses had bathrooms. Bathrooms in these houses were connected to room only. Bathrooms were used individually, except when father and sons, mother and daughters have a bath together.	Bathroom “hamam”	
Due to their nature, storages are used individually and have minimum space quality.	Store “anbar”	
Very private space and it is third space related to the yard, and after porch (semi opened), room (closed) and closet is completely closed. Women attend there with their intimates.	Closet “pastro”	Hassan Pour's house spaces
Toilet is an individual and private space. According to Iranian association behavioral schema toilet, it should be placed out of sight and must be used shortly.	Washroom “mostarah”	
Veranda is a semi-opened space that is used for collective activities like eating, chatting and collective and individually sleeping place in summer's days.	Veranda “evvan”	
The house heart is the yard and it is used for many community activities, including kids' games, celebrating and neighbors visiting and etc.	Courtyard “hayat”	

Table 5. Searching physical feature in *Hassan Pour's* house spaces

Physical Features of Spaces		Hassan Pour's house spaces
Entrance is on the main axis of the house. Entrance stairs is divided to two parts by two arms. The entrance is on the southern front. The entrance is distinguished from outside and inside by adornment and decorating.	Entrance <i>Vorudi</i> "	
The rooms are on in the two sides, western and northern. Rooms are nested and have strong links with other adjacent spaces. They are aligned toward Mecca (" <i>Qible</i> ").	Room <i>nagh</i> "	
Living rooms are on western side in two floors. First floor living room called "dais" has more ornamentals and decorations.	living room <i>"neshiman"</i>	
Winter living room is on northern for benefiting the south sunlight. Has a hole to put brazier " <i>Korsi</i> ". Has access to both sets of stairs on either side.	inter living room <i>'neshiman zemestani'</i>	
Is located in the northeastern corner of the house and there is no possibility to have sun light. Due to its service functionality, it does not any ornamentals and decoration.	Kitchen <i>"ashpazkhane"</i>	
Located in the southwestern corner. Has limited intercourse with its adjacent rooms. It has minimum space quality.	athroom <i>iamam</i> "	
Due to its service functionality and no need to suitable sunlight, it is on east and uses the west light. Is on the ground floor and the lower than of yard level. It has minimum space quality.	ore <i>inbar</i> "	
It has indirect sunlight. It is a lateral space for the main space.	oset " <i>pasto</i> "	
Due to its service functionality and no need to suitable sunlight, it is on east and uses the west light. It has minimum space quality. It is connected only with the yard and is located in lower level than the yard and near the house entrance.	Nashroom <i>'mostarah'</i>	
It is a semi opened space that is in connection with the rooms and the yard. This part of the building is older and its architecture is different than the others.	eranda <i>'yyan'</i>	
It is an open space on the house center and feasible the spaces connection with each other. There are some kinds of broadleaf trees in the yard. It has northern- southern elongation.	ourtyard <i>"hayat"</i>	

CONCLUSION

This research is indicated that the under mentioned factors is caused different activities occur in special spaces, and consequently it is conduced different social meaning.

- Space position in regard to the yard;
- Space position in regard to the entrance;
- Space position in regard to the ground (up and down);
- The internal and external decorations of space;
- Space dimensions;

Therefore the following relationships between physical feature of spaces and socio-spatial meaning factors have been seen:

- Spaces are located along the main axis of yard such as summer and winter living rooms have public, male and daily meaning.
- Formal spaces are located near the entrance.
- Spaces on the lower floors are daily, public, and intimate, and spaces in upper floors are more private, formal and nightly.
- More formal and public spaces are more decorated.
- More formal and public spaces are broader and private spaces have smaller dimensions.
- More formal and public spaces are opened, and more intimate and private spaces are closed.
- More formal and public spaces are opened, and more intimate and private spaces are closed.

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