

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS IN HOUSING TRANSITION IN IRAN

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Abstract

In the half century since World War II, patterns of housing have been transformed by rapid political social and technical change. Housing has been the center of political and cultural controversy, not least in Iran where tradition and modernity have been juxtaposed in conflicting world views and traditions. Teheran has experienced an ongoing process of economic and social transformations which has seen major change to the fabric of society and its long held traditional values. The present study of the Iranian home analyzes its development trajectory in some historical detail and explores the process of Iran's modernization by examining the nation's interior design in the context of a specific regional background in the context of broader currents of change.

In this regard, the socio-cultural characteristics and lifestyles of inhabitants provide a significant impact on the design of the house and settlement. This shows that it is not possible to separate a house design from the owners because house design is centered on and around the house owner's characteristics. The inquiry into the correlation between socio-cultural and morpho-typological factors in shaping residences demands a methodology that can weigh factors holistically. To reach this target, a both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to analyse the changes over time of the modern house.

1. Introduction

According to Perkins(2002) [1], an awareness of social and cultural factors will enrich the conventional design perspectives of architects and may assist sustainable and ecological development, provided that this is reflected in the conceptualization of housing design. Sustainability in these two fields can result in the development of social and cultural impacts that can transform the end product or, as in this dissertation, the dwelling unit.

Architects in the early 20th century suggested that a new architecture was needed in response to new industry, technologies, mobility, and changing social and cultural orders.". The consequent radical alteration in typology of new housing projects was concomitant with conspicuous change in lifestyle of residents. Change in the usage of new furniture, new public spaces, increasing independence of residents and so on, were mostly the results of new lifestyle which in its turn has been affected by new housing.

The social requirements of inhabitants as the end users of houses embraces their needs, habits and demands. In consequence there is a need to study the social life and culture of residents as two major factors in shaping the living area.

In terms of the social unit residing in a single or extended family house, developing countries have faced important changes in household composition, and extended families have been replaced by nuclear families composed of 4 to 5 members. As a result, important changes have occurred in the physical form of houses and households, while simultaneously striving to preserve their cultural values. An ideal house form, in this regard, should respect the needs of a new generation, while at the same time it should accommodate cultural values and traditional lifestyles (Mirmoghtadaee, 2009) [2] .

2. Context of Study

This study will embrace the broader context of Mediterranean world through the lens of the transformations of Iranian society, especially the middle class people which can be viewed as an example of a developing city in a developing country.

The changes It can be observed that the impact of increasing living standards on the level of lifestyle and standards of living space has been affected by the growth in the economy, industry and welfare.

In Tehran, the analytical approach taken is to consider the changes in lifestyle in the twentieth century in their regional and cultural context as the genesis of a pervasive architectural typology rather than the examination of architectural history. With this approach, the immediate needs of residents are found to be those ones that form the spaces and places of residences.

To reach this target, the main variables determining the socio-cultural factors are narrowed to those that are discussed in terms of the lifestyle of the sample population. This accords with the fact that in most countries, housing policy has been subject to noticeable change in recent decades. The shift from supply to demand and from government-dominated social housing to a more market-oriented approach has emerged since the 1970s (Smith and Oxley, 1997 ([3]. In the case of Iran the impulse for this work has been the process of change from the introduction of modern housing projects by the central government to their democratization through spatial planning the application of modern and postmodern styles by private sector.

3. Methodology

In order to trace the process of interaction and transition, this study will utilize the archival records of the building approvals of municipal authorities to examine the sequential changes in the service areas of dwelling over a thirty year period. The specific areas examined will be for food preparation and bathing, which reflect directly family relationships and internal arrangements. This data will allow the cataloguing of change in spatial planning of residential interiors to look at transitions in the social arrangements implicit in the architectural provisions of apartment and detached housing developments. It will enable the observation of the changing structures of the family unit, the position of women and the relationship between dwelling and workplace.

4. Modernism and residences

The modern movement in architecture which evolved in Europe in the First World War, (Sudjic & Beyerle, 1999) [4], resulted in the emergence of the 'Modern houses' that had plain unornamented walls, large areas of glass, internally separate rooms and a continuum of space made possible by a structural frame.

This kind of space organization could reflect a new openness in living and the facture of old social hierarchies, and a reduced dependence on servants. Despite to some conformity to climatic and cultural requirements, this type of modern house has become commonplace in the whole world (Weston, 2002) [5]. Although neither the structure nor the typology of modern house did not support the way of living a traditional society this new house fulfilled the new vision of living and the new aesthetic, social, and political principles of an industrial society. (Sani & Mahasti, 2013; Weston, 2002) [5] [6].

One of the construction rules that dominate Iranian cities is construction of the building in 60% of the land; this rule defines the new organization of houses and new image of cities in Iran (Sani & Mahasti, 2013) [6]. In the early Pahlavi state and foreign capital contributed heavily to nationwide housing project that, for the first time, divided communities along the line of status and professional degrees, thus eradicating the old ascribed status distinction. Most of Iranians looked up to the lifestyle of the class above them and tried to emulate aspects of it.

Many residential neighborhoods in Tehran as well as those in newer industrial areas were all built by professionals in the early Pahlavi period and all divided based on profession and status line (Karimi, 2012)) [7]

5. Land parcel and typology

This new housing type in Tehran introduced concepts of function, modularity and the international style based on applying open plan concepts, avoiding ornaments and reducing detailing aspects to a minimal amount. In the first master plan of Tehran, which was prepared with the assistance of French companies, it was explained that one storey houses are the consequence of poor construction techniques, and central courtyards are the reflection of old social conventions. Women's freedom would eliminate the need for introverted areas and add to the prevalence of apartment living. Balconies would substitute for courtyards, and elevators would increase the number of building stories (Farmanfarmaian & Gruen, 1968) [8].

For the newly emerging middle class of society, the governing regime commissioned some housing projects to companies and consortia. In addition, strategies were devised for economic and low cost housing all around Tehran. Typical prototype blocks were scattered in available unoccupied lands within and around the periphery of Tehran.

In the transitional period, neighborhoods lost their mixed use of social and economic functions and changed to strictly residential districts. Land parcels were reduced in size and shaped more geometrically, mostly in rectangular forms. The rectangular lots influenced the spatial characteristics of the houses. As the lots became narrower, the built area had to be located in the northern and southern parts of the land, with the courtyard in the middle. When the house faced south — which was the case in most examples — the northern part, facing the sun, was the main two-storey residential area, with the ground floor allocated to living

areas and the first floor to guest rooms. The other section usually had one storey above ground and one below. The kitchen and service areas were located in the basement, below ground level (Soltanzadeh, 2005) [9].

6. Conclusion

The impact of typology and morphology on social aspect of houses is the axis of this project. This impact can be the subject of study from the opposite view; in other words, social life can affect the typology and morphology of residences. The latter one is evidenced in historical studies on architectural documents. In this dissertation, the attempt has been to collect some samples that can reflect the general typology and morphology of houses in Tehran; so instead of choosing some eminent architectural projects, the sample projects has been chosen according to the criteria that they could reflect the tendency in construction, advertisement and buying houses.

At a glance, the transition in morphology and typology of apartments and the impact of social and cultural factors on the formation of the living spaces can be mapped. In this analysis, the changes in typology or morphology of the houses on one side, and on the other, the changes in social and cultural attributes may lead to the finding of correlation between the two sides.

The correlation between the spaces of the house and type of social aspects like the behavior, texture of population living in the house and their lifestyle can be read through the quantitative and qualitative method. Tehran under the Qajar and Pahlavi were in the forefront of early change from established tradition to twentieth century modernity. The Iranian experience as expressed in the development of Tehran can provide a foundation for the socially sustainable housing patterns and development in the complex social and political milieu of the Eastern Mediterranean

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