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designers as a way to understand their potential perceptions and expectations of places. Although the semantic field of space and place is not the only semantic field which must be studied, this includes the most important words associated with the concept of place. However, a more thorough study can be included other semantic fields like "residential spaces", "artificial green spaces", etc. It must be noted such a study will not result in design guidelines, rather it would suggest

that what should be the main qualities of places in a given culture in order to provide a meaningful environment which users can communicate with. In this paper, the semantic field of space and place in Persian language was studied as a case study. According to the results, place, for Iranians, is a sacred and spiritual phenomenon which they can experience their beings through time. It must be discovered by users and is not perceptible at once.

Endnote

1. For example, adding or removing an element, like a fountain, can make some variations in the meaning of a place and can influence the "sense of place".
2. Some theorists differentiate between perception and cognition. From their point of view, 'perception' is the process that occurs because of the presence of an object, but 'cognition' includes perception as well as thinking, problem solving and the organization of information (Downs & Stea, 2011: 314). In this article, however, 'perception' refers to the both definitions.

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be more specific, if you are in a space, it must be a place. Thus, the human being is one of the defining elements of place. The most important word in this regard is Makaan (place) with the root Kown which means "being" and "the location of being". The latter is associated with the spirituality mentioned above.

Another crucial aspect that involves some of these words is their relation to space and time simultaneously. The word 'Gaah' is one of the most interesting terminologies. By using these terms, a sense of place and time is created for a native, while considering the fact that connecting the space with the time is a complicated modern scientific issue. Space and place are not just physical and single-dimensional phenomena, devoid of any relation, but closely related to time, as an indispensable component. Thus, in this culture, a user expects to experience not only his/her being, but the passage of time. That is why most places in this culture have been designed in such a way that is not perceivable at once. Experiencing and understanding places need movement and consequently the passage of time. In other words, places must be discovered over time.

These qualities show designers the most important expectations of places people have in Iranian culture. In fact, their perception and expectations of places have been accumulated and retained in their languages throughout their history. If we accept that the built environment in ancient cultures, like Iran, has been sustainable, we therefore cannot ignore the pivotal role of language in this regard. Conversely, the experience shows that in modern time, the connection with the built environment and the Persian language has largely faded away and people no longer have a sense of belonging in their environment. Undoubtedly, the enhancement of the man's perception of his environment cannot solely be formed through utilization of the complicated architectural and urban forms. But, this, to a major extent, depends on the interdependencies of the established forms and environmental interaction with the language. In fact, the stability and continuity of a planning pattern, in postmodern era, ultimately goes back to the degree of mutual understanding of those, who are the end users of the products of these patterns.

Conclusion

According to the semiotic-cultural definition, place is a multi-layered text in which various signs are involved. The production and interpretation of texts, for communication, depends on the existence of codes or conventions. The meaning of signs is heavily dependent on these codes. Place, as a text, is not a definite phenomenon because layers may constantly enter into exit from it. In the same way, the identity of a place and sense of place is relative, and there is no a certain sense of place. In fact, the identity of a place is defined by users' interpretation of its physical elements and its activities, events and situations, through cultural codes and social conventions. In this regard, the connotation attached to the signs has a

major impact. The sense of place, in other words, is made through users' cultural perceptions based on social as well as cultural codes; so, it is not an inherent quality of a place and may be different for people with different cultures. In the case of the intercultural communication, it can be argued that people always communicate with places at some level between full understanding of signs' meanings —especially connotation— and the lack of understanding, according to the differences and similarities between cultural codes.

Finally, regarding the fact that people's language —as a semiotic system— mainly reflects their perceptions, habits, desires, and cultural values, this paper introduced studying vocabulary for

where certain events occur, or things exist. Other words like location, place of dwelling, house and ranking are among the synonyms.

Gaah (Time duration): The meaning of this word varies widely, covering the concepts such as the king's citadel, seat, haven, place, location, special seat or throne, time span (night time, dawn etc), period or era, season and finally the weather changes.

Aastan (The threshold): Meaning the door panel, crossing, and also the front part of the house which is connected to the entrance door, acting as a vestibule.

Baargah (King's court): This word is applied to king's court, where he receives the subjects, emissaries and the VIPs, whether indoors or in outdoor erected tents.

Pishgaah (a VIP sitting place): This term is applied to the sitting area opposite the entrance, at the far side of the room or the hall, where a revered person sits.

Tahkt (Throne/Resting place): This term refers to a citadel or a raised platform, where the king rests or usually sits during the day to deal with the affairs of the country. This part that is a purpose built section, not connected to any part of the building, used for sitting, resting or lying down. This term also refers to the place or city that the king rules from.

Hazrat (Presence): In description of this term, the reference is made to the word presence (opposite absence) and being the town where the king is holding an audience.

Dargaah (Entrance): This term is applied to the opposing side of 'Pishgaah', meaning the entrance door, vestibule, front of the door, the palace and the king's court.

Saahat (Yard): It has the meaning of the courtyard of the house, field, area or region and the compound. This also is applied to any setting, where it is based on justice and benevolence.

Sahn (Platform): In description of this word, we come across a wide hard platform with a suitable height to face the garden, adjacent to a big pool, with a wide arena. Similarly this word is also applied to space and field. Public places of holy shrines are also called Sahn.

Arsh (Heavens): A place for ascending, the king's throne, the sky above all the skies, and a shelter from the sun.

Mahal (Neighborhood): Synonym with the terms like a landing place, place of dwelling, the ranking and the standing of VIPs, the time due for an event or occurrence, a place of falling, and time for an event, similar to the word 'Gaah'.

Meydaan (Field/Square): A plot of land without a building, large open land, a battlefield, a wrestling ring in an open field and an open market for trading with shops and buildings in close proximity.

Regarding this semantic field in Persian language the following are noteworthy.

First, most of the terms related to the concepts of space and place, simultaneously point to earthly and terrestrial beings on the one hand, and spiritual world on the other, with words like 'Dargaah' and 'Arsh'. In fact, throughout Iranian history, it has been believed that kings have supernatural powers and they rule over this country on behalf of God. In other words, kings have been God's representatives on Earth. Therefore, places, which are related to the kings and they are also the real owners, are sacred in their nature and the sanctity of places is not accidental; so, we do not have sacred places in Iranian culture, rather places themselves are sacred. This belief has been pursued in Islamic periods. The words "Sahn", "Arsh", and "Dargaah" are among the common words in these periods to refer to places. In these cases, places have been usually located near the mosques or holy shrines; so, the sacredness of places has been further strengthened. Thus, the spiritual and sacred aspects of places are crucially important in Iranian culture.

Another important area, where distinct relation is of paramount importance, is the difference between space and place, as a hotly debated issue among the professionals. In fact, the difference between the concepts of space and place in Persian, and Iranian culture, is the question of existence and sacredness. The former is very close to Heidegger's view being-in-the-world. To

important to differentiate between what is possible to think and what people habitually think. Whorf states that the former is in principle unlimited for speakers of any language, and the latter may be strongly influenced by their language (Leavitt, 2006: 65).

In this article, in order to understand people's cultural values and their perceptions and expectations of places in Iranian culture, we study the words related to the concepts of space and place in Persian language; and to do so we chiefly take advantage of structuralism. Structuralism is "the belief that phenomena of human life are not intelligible except through their interrelations. These relations constitute a structure" (Blackburn, 2008: 353). Briefly defined, a structure is a network of relations connecting interdependent elements (Johansen & Larsen, 2005:16). Saussure (1983), in this regard, raises the concept of "value". What Saussure refers to as the 'value' of a sign (in linguistics: word) depends on its relations with other signs within the system as a whole (Saussure, 1983: 112-113).

He argued that "concepts … are defined not positively, in terms of their content, but negatively by contrast with other items in the same system. What characterizes each most exactly is being whatever the others are not" (Ibid: 115). This is the system and the words in the system which helps us to recognize the types of category distinctions. For example, every day we see a variety of houses in our cities; however, despite all differences between them (e.g. their form, height, etc.) they are classified under the category of house. It seems the meaning of a word is the product of the semantic relations which hold between that word and others in the same language-system (Lyons, 1981: 222). Thus, one of the best ways to understand these differences and people's perception is to study vocabulary in structuralist point of view. For this purpose, the "semantic field" of space and place will be studied in this article.

The Review of the Semantic Field of 'Space and Place'

Before dealing with our intended "semantic field", it is better to define the 'semantic field'. "One traditional approach to describing concepts is to define them by using sets of necessary and sufficient conditions" (Saeed, 2003: 35). Suppose our concept refers to 'woman'. This concept should include information that is necessary to distinguish a certain concept from others. How could the information be organized? Perhaps through a series of distinct characteristics which gives a meaning to the word; maybe through identifiable dispositions such as being a human being, adult, female, etc. In this case, all the particular dispositions that allow a distinct concept to be formed are considered as necessary conditions. Similarly, if we can find a right set that defines a woman, we can identify them as sufficient conditions (Ibid).

Having said this, we can now go back to "semantic field". This theory has mainly evolved from Saussure's concept of meaning and value (Safavi, 2011: 189). In a simple term, we can say that a common feature in a necessary condition leads to the classification of words in a "semantic field". For instance, the words 'home', 'hut', 'shack', and 'villa' could all be categorized as the semantic field of 'residential spaces'.

Indeed, the author believe that by studying the semantic fields in each language we can understand the connotative meanings of words in different categories and subsequently people's perception of concepts and things who speak that language. This is not accessible except study all words in one category as a whole.

The Words of the Semantic Field of 'Space and Place'

Following the above-mentioned points, we review some of the words used in Persian language (according to the Dehkhoda Encyclopedia) for the semantic field of "space and place".

Faza (Space): This is a noun, meaning field, square arena and usually a large place. In description of this word, an empty place, sky and the galaxy, weather and the courtyard have also been included.

Makaan (Place): Meaning a distinct place,

depend on cultural codes, the most effective communication will result when both designers and users use exactly the same codes. Therefore, it seems very important for designers to be aware of the values related to the culture of people who live in, which are developed throughout history and consequently shape their expectations of the built environment –especially places. In other words, designers first should be aware of users' desires and then infuse meaning into their built work. This research proposes studying users' language –especially vocabulary– as a way to understand their desires and expectations of the built environment. This will be discussed in the next part.

Culture, Language, and Perception
This research intends to introduce studying users' language as a way to understand people's cultural desires and expectations of the built environment. But, what is the relationship between language, culture, perception, and the built environment? Human language –the so-called natural language– is usually referred to as the most important semiotic systems. Language is, of course, not the only semiotic system that we use in order to construct and maintain the human culture. Yet the particular semiotic competence that forms the basis for our human culture is created only when all other semiotic systems cooperate with language (Johansen & Larsen, 2005: 151). From a different angle, the results of the researches and experiments have already determined to a certain degree that the language plays a pivotal role in perception of the human beings. Evidence from the world's languages suggests that the organization of external reality is dependent on the language being used to talk about it. Hall (1966: 2) points out that people from different cultures not only speak different languages but inhabit different sensory worlds. He further states that selective screening of sensory data admits some things while filtering out others, so that experience as it is perceived through one set of culturally patterned sensory screens is quite different from experience perceived through

another. The architectural and urban environments that people create are expressions of this filtering-screening process (Hall, 1966: 2). In this regard, Sapir-Whorf hypothesis asserts that the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one thinks and behaves, and also filters his/her perception (Kramsch, 1998: 11). This hypothesis contains two parts: "linguistic determinism" and "linguistic relativity". Linguistic determinism refers to the concept that a language determines nonlinguistic cognitive processes (Carroll, 2008: 396). Therefore, our perceptions are determined by the limitations of our language (Yule, 2006: 218). Linguistic relativity, on the other hand, relates to the comparative process and degree of understanding of a phenomenon or an event in different languages. According to this theory, the speakers of different languages think differently due to the differences that might exist between them (Carroll, 2008: 396). In fact, it seems that the structure of our language must have an influence on how we perceive the world (Yule, 2006: 218). Different languages comprise different lexicons and also use different syntactical structures. These differences often reflect variations in the physical and cultural environments in which the languages arose and developed (Sternberg & Sternberg, 2011: 403). In this research, the lexicon will be adopted in order to study people's cultural values and desires. Regarding vocabulary, Markus and Cameron (2002: 37) mention the connotations that attach to different words, are likely to affect people's attitudes to and experiences of certain kinds of buildings.
Similarly, we can say that, the words and terminologies of a given language is a way of reflecting the environment of a society. In fact, all the words that are contained in a language are the indication of the extent of the thinking capacity of a nation. It also reflects the nation's thoughts, perceptions, interests, habits and mental occupations that capture their imaginations (Henle, 1993: 18). Norberg-Schulz points out that "it is the name which makes what is perceived part of a world, and hence makes it a meaningful percept" (Norberg-Schulz, 1975: 111). Nonetheless, it is

of various codes. When we place the word 'semiotics' behind a concept, it seems that we have declared in advance that we have regarded this area as a cultural system which provides the stage of texts generation and those texts are "readable" (Sojoodi, 2009: 230). Text is a physical, but not definite, phenomenon. It is physical because it can be received by the senses such as vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. And it is not certain because other layers may constantly enter into it (Ibid: 254).

The Concept of Place from the Standpoint of Layered Semiotics

In this part, we do not intend to discuss the relationship between space and place, rather we accept Relph's dichotomy (space and place) and strive to give a semiotic-cultural definition of "place". In other words, the differences between space and place will not be discussed here.

Place, based on what was mentioned, is a cultural phenomenon which must be studied in the framework of a given culture. Places, in a particular culture, reflect and at the same time are affected by the interests and values of people who live in that culture/society. This phenomenon (place) in its totality is a "text" in which different layers are involved. These layers are composed of signs that are understandable and interpretable by cultural codes or conventions. From this point of view, "place" is not a definite phenomenon with the fixed meanings. Place, like other texts, is a dynamic phenomenon and its meaning may change over time through entering and exiting different layers . Thus, place is not a close system. Signs, as previously mentioned, have denotative and connotative meanings. Thus, if we regard every element of a place as a sign, each of them has both denotation and connotation. Denotation in architecture and urban design is mainly related to the function of a sign. Eco, in this regard, states that denotation is a primary function of architectural signs –a domestic residence, for example, denotes its utility (Nöth, 1995: 436). Connotations, however, have an undeniable and substantial role in people's perception of

urban elements and may affect their behavior and attitude toward places. They also define the "identity" of a place and influence the "sense of place". In fact, the "sense of place" is determined by the interaction of different layers composed of signs. These layers are not restricted to physical urban elements. For example, people who are in a place at any one time, usual and everyday users, time of day, and holding special events are some layers of a place. These layers may have a temporary or permanent impact on "spirit of a place".

But, what happens in the case of intercultural communication? The connotative meanings of signs chiefly depend on people's cultural codes and personalities and may differ from one culture to another. Despite these differences, sometimes we are able to find some similarities. Columns, for instance, in various cultures connote stability, resistance, perseverance, persistence, and strength. Thus, when a person with a certain culture is placed in a particular place –in a different culture–, a level of communication is always established. That is why different places in different countries interest tourists from different parts of the world. In these situations, three types of communication may happen: 1) perceiving the meaning of urban elements correctly –as their designers have intended and as is common among people of that culture– because of the similarities between cultural codes; 2) perceiving a totally different meaning from signs because of the differences between cultural codes; and 3) failure to notice meanings and the lack of communication because there is no cultural codes for some signs in user's culture.

Regarding what was mentioned, it can be argued that it is not always possible to divide the modes of place experience into insideness and outsideness as Relph asserts. In fact, sometimes there is a situation between insideness and outsideness which is the result of both cultural similarities and differences between an individual and a place. However, since the production and interpretation of texts –for communication– and also the meaning of a sign, especially connotations,

based place-making. He implies that humanist place-making must not be chaotic and unstructured, "but rather that its order must be derived from significant experience and not from arbitrary abstractions and concepts as represented on maps and plans" (Relph, 1976: 146). This view is close to Dovey's opinion on the relation between meanings and places. He argues that "the play of meaning and the constructions of place in built form are neither arbitrary nor innocent, and that they must be seen as a dialectic of the social and the universal" (Dovey, 1999: 45).

Norberg-Schulz is another influential phenomenologist in the field of architecture. His main focus in understanding how places are shaped is on understanding the symbolical meaning as well as the functional aspects of the building process (Van Nes, 2008: 114). All places, in Norberg-Schulz's view, typically have a ground or a floor; a ceiling, roof, or sky; and walls, trees, hills or other material –known as optical arrays (Van Nes, 2012: 7); and they shape the basic elements for describing places

For Norberg-Schulz, architectural space is the concretization of man's being-in-the-world (Shirazi, 2013: 46). He states that to be rooted existentially, human beings must open themselves to the particular typology of their surroundings. One must live with the "place spirit" –the genius loci– which, in part, is determined by the things of a place (Van Nes, 2012: 10). He also emphasizes that "place" is a geographical entity which gives human beings their identity (Moystad, 2012). In other words, –as is stressed in Genius Loci– human identity springs from the "identity of place".

It seems that we can now discuss the intended semiotic-cultural definition of place. But, first we should define some important concepts related to the semiotics.

"Layered Semiotics" Theory and the Concept of "Text"

One of the broadest definitions of semiotics is that of Umberto Eco who states "semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign". He also remarks that "a sign is everything which can be taken as significantly substituting for something else. This something else does not necessarily have to exist or to actually be somewhere at the moment in which a sign stands in for it" (Eco, 1979: 7). In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, objects, etc. All signs have a meaning which includes both denotation and connotation. 'Denotation' tends to be described as the definitional, literal, obvious or common-sense meaning of a sign. The term 'connotation', however, is used to refer to the socio-cultural and personal associations of a sign (Chandler, 2007: 137).

"Contemporary semioticians study signs not in isolation but as part of semiotic 'sign-systems'. They study how meanings are made and how reality is represented." (Ibid: 2). In other words, they are interested in studying the formation and exchange of meanings through texts and discourses. For semioticians, a "text" can exist in any medium and may be verbal, non-verbal, or both. From the standpoint of semiotics, a text is not necessarily verbal and any assemblage of signs in a multi-layered physically perceptible message, which is constructed and conceived (and interpreted) with reference to some social conventions (codes), is a text (Sojoodi, 2005:1-2). In fact, codes are those socially accepted conventions upon which production and interpretation of texts depend (Sojoodi, 2005: 2). "A code is a set of practices familiar to users of the medium operating within a broad cultural framework" (Chandler, 2007: 148). Culture, thus, includes the whole human meaningful behavior and the codes which grant value to the same and make them understandable (Sojoodi, 2005: 2). Thus, it seems that semiotic analyses are textual analyses; that is, a sign cannot be examined independently and separately from codes that make it possible and from the text in which it has been represented and has been converted into one of its layers (Zandi & Sojoodi, 2013: 1134). Semioticians are constantly dealing with text and the resulted text is companionship of different layers which has been created by performance

Introduction

One of the apt descriptions of the importance of places is that of Edward Relph who states places are a fundamental aspect of man's existence in the world, and they are sources of security and identity for individuals and for groups of people (Relph, 1976: 6). He argues that without a thorough understanding of place, "one would find it difficult to describe why a particular place is special and impossible to know how to repair existing places in need of mending" (Seamon & Sowers, 2008: 45).

Although thus far many definitions of the concept of "place" have been presented, there is no holistic, comprehensive definition which can include all involved dimensions and each of them has addressed some specific aspects of the main subject. Another major deficiency in recent theories of place is the lack of cultural or rather cross-cultural view. Thus, this paper intends to give a holistic definition of place as a framework within which all cultures are able to define and study their places. Regarding this main aim, the primary questions are as follows: how we can attain a holistic definition of the concept of place which could embrace both human experience and social and cultural dimensions? How we can understand people's potential perception of meanings and expectations of places in a given culture before designing places and infusing meaning? Because the study of meanings and cultures is the central focus of the semiotics, it seems the best approach to these questions is to employ semiotics. Thus, the methodology deployed for this article is to approach the concept of place from the standpoint of semiotics with an emphasis on layered semiotics and with the aim of understanding places as texts. The second approach is to study the meaning of places in Iranian culture through Persian language as a case study.

The Concept of Place and its Transformation

The question of space and place has been discussed by philosophers, geographers, and architects throughout history. Regarding their expertise, each of these groups has addressed this issue from a specific standpoint. In this article, some of them will be mentioned according to the objectives.

In the ancient Greek philosophical tradition, the geographical meanings of space and place are dominant. Plato speaks of space (chora) as a three-dimensional field in which the created universe may subsist, a field that Timaeus initially calls the "receptacle" of all becoming (Zeyl, 2013). Plato emphasizes the extensiveness of space, "conceived as providing a situation for all things that come into being" (Perdikogianni, 2007:6). For Plato, space is perceived without the senses. He believes, however, there is a linkage between "place" (topos) and the body; in other words, his experience of "place" is based on belief involving perception (Perdikogianni, 2007: 6). Space, according to Aristotle, determines the motions of bodies, and thus, space and matter are causally linked. Aristotelian "place" is part of the definition of the being of a physical thing. For Aristotle, the "place" and the being or the sensible thing are separable and are bound to their identity. So they both keep their identity even if the being moves to another "place" (Ibid).

Although such a difference between space and place exists from the standpoint of human experiences, these two terms have sometimes been used interchangeably. For instance, Certeau (1988: 117) states: "… space is a practiced place. Thus the street geometrically defined by urban planning is transformed into a space by walkers." It must be noted that Relph emphasizes the difference between unstructured and experience-

Semiotic-cultural Definition of "Place" (Case Study: Persian Language)*

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Abstract

Phenomenological and poststructuralist approaches in the field of architecture are among the latest considerable efforts to define the concept of "place". Phenomenology, however, by emphasizing the static ontological nature of places, fails to consider socio-cultural aspects in the production of places. On the other hand, poststructuralist relativity and endless chain of signification are more confusing for designers rather than useful. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to introduce a holistic definition of the concept of "place" which gives more attention to the socio-cultural aspects of places –in addition to considering human experience– so that it can be applicable for designers. In order to achieve this purpose, the article mainly takes advantage of the semiotic approach. The article concludes with a discussion of the concept of place from the standpoint of layered semiotics and the study of semantic field of "space and place" in Persian language to understand people's desires and expectations of places in Iranian culture as a case study.