

Persian translation of this paper entitled:

نقش فضای جمعی مکان محور در توسعه منظر روستایی
(مورد پژوهی: روستاهای شهرستان کوهدشت)

is also published in this issue of journal.

Original Research Article

The Role of Place-based Social Space in the Development of Rural Landscape (Case Study: Villages of Kuhdasht County)*

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Received; 25/01/2024

accepted; 15/06/2024

available online; 01/10/2024

Abstract

The village experiences a different type of social life due to historical, identity and meaning interactions. This local relationship doubles the need to pay attention to social spaces in the villages. Since the social space is a valuable platform for experiencing the place in the village, it becomes important and necessary to investigate this issue and analyze examples in the rural development plan. The purpose of this research is investigation the role of place-based social spaces in the development plan of the villages of Kuhdasht. And the main question is; What is the role of place-based social space in rural development plan? This research has been done by descriptive analytical and qualitative method and based on library studies and a significant part based on field studies and observations. Hadi's plan is a small version of the city's comprehensive plan, which by ignoring the concept of social space and reducing it to physical and functional features in planning, has weakened the dimension of place and meaning in these spaces. According to the findings, the social space of the village is formed on the basis of meaning, and then it goes in the direction of function and fabric, contrary to what is expected in the city. In addition, ignoring the unique features of the village, removing local patterns, ignoring people's participation are other problems that are expected to be seen in future development plans. In addition, re-creation of rural social spaces is required to recognize and consider place-based characteristics.

Keywords: *Social space, Place, Rural development plan, Hadi plan, Kuhdasht villages.*

Introduction

What comes from the social space to the mind, is a dynamic stimulus that has long been a place for social interactions especially in the center of the village. What determines this dynamic, undoubtedly is not alien to the identity and location of the village, but today, with the change in the shape of the villages and the change of

goals in the development plan, the village experiences a different form of social spaces. Historical, cultural and social characteristics and economic and political forces, through the evolution of limiting and compelling structures of social and civil action, have an impact on this issue and limit citizens to a certain level of communication with space, other and others, in such a way that a person may interact with the public space in different ways; sometimes in the position of passive observation and sometimes in the position of active action (Abarghouei Fard et al., 2023). In this insufficient comparison, the

* This article is extracted from the Research Project entitled "Place-Based Development: Rural Landscape Reading in Kuhdasht County" which was conducted under supervision of Dr. "Seyed Amir Mansouri" by the research team of NAZAR Research Center in Lorestan province in 2023.

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location and characteristic of rural spaces and the contexts of its emergence are not identified as the most important features of the village that give it heritage value. And the problem of this research is whether there are place-based components in the definition of social spaces and in the rural development plan over time? And the main question of this research is what is the role of place-based social space in the development of the village landscape? Since social life and spaces are the beating heart of the village, it becomes important and necessary to investigate this issue.

Research Question

The main question of this research was explained as follows: What is the role of the place-based social space in the development of the rural landscape? Also, the sub-questions of this research: What is the difference between the nature of the social space in the village and the social space in the city, and how can such spaces be effective in the spatial development of the villages of Kuhdasht?

Research Background

Paying attention to reinterpreting place-oriented collective spaces and providing a model for its re-creation in the village is a topic that has received less attention from researchers. In the field of attention to the development program, in the book "Protection and Development in Valuable Rural Contexts" (Hanachi & Kushshgaran, 2012), he explained the concepts of rural protection and development from the perspective of several theories, and finally rural development plans were criticized. In a research entitled "Life between buildings, using public space" (Gehl, 1987), the author has discussed the necessary conditions for planning in creating urban collective space. "Exploring Concept of Collective Memory and its Retrieval in Urban Areas with Semiotic Approach (Case study: Hasan-Abad square)" (Hasani Mianroudi et al., 2018) and researches focusing on the function of collective space have also recognized it, for example in the article "Hangout, the urban and architectural public space for social and cultural interactions (Case study: Borazjan city)" (Torkaman et al., 2018), the authors have studied

the role of different parameters in the construction of public urban space and have come to the conclusion that environmental factors, Social and physical have a good influence on hangout space. In the field of attention to place in architecture, many studies have been done. In an article entitled "Conception of place for architects and non-architects" (Heidari & Behdadfar, 2017), the author has extracted and measured the elements affecting the perception of the meanings of place based on case studies. According to the reviewed cases so far, the issue of place-oriented collective space and its place in the rural development program has not been addressed from the point of view, therefore this research can be a thoughtful redefinition in the direction of the place-oriented development of the village.

Research Methodology

This research has been done by using a descriptive analytical method, with a qualitative nature, and its applied research in purpose. In addition to library studies, a significant part of it has been conducted in the field. In the first step, the theoretical foundations have been investigated, then with a holistic view and detailed observations in the sample society, the knowledge of the social spaces of the village in comparison with the city has been discussed. In the next step, rural development plans are reviewed from the point of view of place and the role of the social space. And considering the direction of Hadi's plans, pathology has been done in order to achieve the goal of the research. The stages of recognition and criticism of this research have been done based on the examination of case samples in Kuhdasht city.

Theoretical Foundation

• Place

In his book "A theory of good city form," Lynch (2012) sees the meaning of place as the result of the relationship between the elements of space and the mental structures of the observer. In this definition, the elements and components of space are the factors by which the physical environment is defined. Mental patterns in Lynch's definition include all the concepts and values that include

the culture, character, position and experience of the users of the space. Relph (1976) in the book "Place and Placelessness," with a phenomenological look in search of how and why Places are meaningful for people. He defines place in three aspects: body, activity, and meaning, and he believes that among these three aspects, meaning is more important than the other two aspects. Gustafsson is among other people who studied the meaning of place. In his research, he presented a three-dimensional model consisting of "person", "others" and "environment" and believes that the meanings of different places are not only the result of the interaction of these three aspects, but can also be inferred from the relationship between these aspects (Gustafson, 2001, 12). According to Schultz "Place is a general and qualitative phenomenon that cannot be reduced to any of its characteristics - for example, spatial communication - without losing its true nature" (Norberg-Schutz, 2013, 144). On the other hand, the result of various political, economic, social and psychological forces with influence over time is considered in the environmental psychology of place. A place can be transformed by the change and evolution of each of the mentioned forces, it can change in nature and take shape (Partovi, 2013). According to Auge (2008), a place has three characteristics: identity, communication and history. A place whose scope is clear, users protect it, stories of the past, anecdotes and meaning are present in it, thoughts, signs and stories related to its roots are called a place. Place "is not a stagnant container for biological-physical characteristics, but a phenomenon resulting from a set of cultural and social mechanisms that attribute special values and meanings to it." (Madanipour, 2008). Placement or sense of place is a wide range of communication between people and place, which is built based on the meaning of that place and human dependence on this environment (Rajala et al., 2020). The mind of the people living in an environment is one of the indicators of location and the creator of the sense of place. Placement in rural spaces is deeply related to the natural environment, historical heritage and traditional life of the people (Tan et al., 2021). The following theories that were presented confirm and expand each other, and

based on them and in a simplified definition, "place" is the link between the environment and elements of space, along with mental and semantic structures. In the phenomenological view of the contemporary critic, "place" is the missing aspect of today's architecture. This point finds different dimensions when the place, community, space and character are known. Today's architecture, which intentionally or unintentionally puts the character and the fields that provide it into the architecture, reflects only the mathematical space. At the same time, the architecture of the village is full of places. According to Christian Norberg-Schutz, the concept of place is the most characteristic feature of rural architecture. The integrity of the village means the ability of the environment along with human action as a main and original factor of native architecture is a special aspect of the world image. An image that presents the environment in which life "happens" not in an abstract form but in a poetic and perceptible configuration. Native architecture, the origin of art and art, is an answer to the question of living or settling down. According to Norberg-Schutz, the architecture of the village is known as the best example for the concept of "art of place". Norberg-Schutz 's place has its own special interpretations. In one place, he calls the place "space plus character". In this interpretation, he is too close to the literature resulting from modern thought, which sees the world as both subject and object. From his words, it can be concluded that the character aspect of the place depends more than anything on the geography of the environment, thus the place will be a composition of space and character in the interaction of man and the geographical environment (Hanachi & Kusheshgaran, 2012).

• Social space as a place

social spaces as a basic element of the spatial identity of villages, which are a set of indoor and outdoor spaces and operate in different public, private and semi-public scales, have been formed in a process originating from the influence of natural, economic and social factors (Alalhesabi & Negareh, 2010, 37). Today, the rural space, as a space with the characteristic of cultural and ethnic diversity and interaction with

the natural and human environment both in the past and now, has attracted the attention of many experts (Sharifinia & Hagh Nazari, 2021). Public space has symbolic importance and contains collective values. Citizens create meaningful public spaces by using space for their purposes. As a result, space becomes a public resource containing dynamic and negotiable meanings (Goheen, 1998). The collective space is a common platform for functional activities and popular ceremonies such as festivals, rituals and cultural customs and expressing political and social opinions (Golany, 1996). Based on this, the duties of the public space can be described as a tool for communication and social network relations or a place for civic encounters and ceremonies and the management and coordination of civic activities. In other words, the urban space is considered as a container for urban activities and a platform for social interactions and a foundation for the formation of social capital (Gehl, 1987). The social space itself, as a background for people's social life, is one of the prerequisites for the formation of a place for the people of a society, and it shapes their social life (Cruz et al., 2018) social space is a more semantic form than public space. A much more immediate platform for creating social interactions. According to the theories of experts, the importance of the place of collective space in today's society is obvious and it is necessary to create a collective space with appropriate quality in villages, neighborhoods and cities in order to increase social interactions between people in society and to prevent individualism in society. Based on the reviewed theories, the place-based social space indicators are given in Table 1.

The Role of Social Space in the Rural Development Plan

The definition of social space, in contrast to concepts such as urban space and public space, includes concepts such as location and meaning. The urban space, which is only a physical look at the space and includes the mass between the buildings, and the public space, which has indicators such as the public access of people and its functional aspects. But the collective space, in addition to including all the concepts of public and urban space, has a spatial

and meaningful whole for the local community whose bio-social flows in this space (Abarghouei Fard et al., 2020). Hadi rural plan in Iran has been formed and implemented in order to improve the social, economic and physical conditions of villages. This plan has a rationalistic approach based on the example of the comprehensive urban plan. This form of planning, with emphasis on rationality, has placed specialization as one of its principles, which has caused the interests and needs of certain social groups to be neglected (Azizpour, 2013). This means that the development of rural areas takes place outside the understanding of the observer, that is, the people of the village, and apart from the historical and cultural understanding of the people. In this modernist view of planning, the world is a collection of independent particles and the connection between these components is mechanical (Barati, 2004). Development must be indigenous and rely on the individual, that is, it must be in harmony with the environment and rely on the strength and power of the society that undertakes the advancement

Table 1. The characteristics of the rural place-based social spaces.
Source: authors based on Ralph's theory.



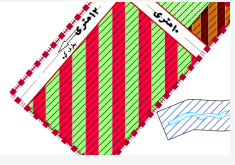
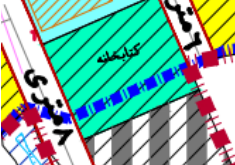
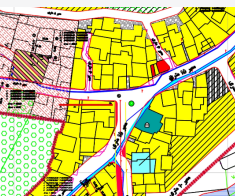
Components of rural social space	Place-based development indicators
Physical component	Permeability
	Environmental comfort
	Local scale
	Link with context
	Paying attention to the core of the origin of the village
	Convenient location
	Pause and move together
	Vegetation Information symbols and signs
Functional component	Variety of uses
	Economic self-reliance
	Security
	Native participation Legibility
Semantic component	Identity, sense of place and belonging
	Strengthening the rural character
	Preserving indigenous lifestyle
	Narration Vitality

of development (Motiei Langroudi, 2012). Development literature, as it is customary, was formed based on economic indicators. The authors of the idea of development, first place it in economic prosperity and providing the chain of human physical needs. Provision of food and then other human welfare needs were ordered. In the next step, human social needs also became the criterion of development. Equal opportunities, social justice and their positive indicators entered the development literature. A more advanced stage, the protection of nature and land was exposed to the attention of development. In this stage, sustainability was called the most important attribute of development in order to preserve and transfer nature's heritage to the next generations (Mansouri, 2023). By studying Hadi's design literature, there is no mention of collective space in terms of meaning and content, and the proposed spaces are reduced to function and body. Also, the location of these spaces is not clear, and factors such as villagers' view of their living environment and the meaning of these places in the minds of the audience have not been given importance. Treating the village and the city alike in the form of development and understanding the development of the village as the development of a small city has caused the local features specific to the village to disappear (Zarei, 2017). The location of green spaces and local fields in the studied development plans are generally assigned to barren and ineffective lands. This location has been done without considering the needs and pastures around the villages, which are considered as indicators of the location of a village. A part of the development program of social spaces taken from Hadi's plans is given in Table 2.

Sample Community

The sample community of this research is the villages of Kuhdasht city in Lorestan province. Although some plans have been considered for the development of the social spaces in this area, due to the lack of adopting a holistic approach, it has not been a significant success. According to the research trip and according to the research purpose, Khosro Abad village and Abulofa village have been selected for case study (Fig. 1). The social spaces in these

Table 2. social space in the rural development program.
Source: Authors based on rural Hadi plan.

Social space in Hadi plans	Indicator	Location on the map
Park	Physical/ Functional	
Public green space	Physical	
Sports - entertainment	Physical/ Functional	
Cultural	Physical/ Functional	
New square and the center of neighborhood	Physical	

villages, in contrast to what was observed in the social spaces in Kuhdasht, are the subject of this research, which are analyzed and evaluated based on principles and criteria derived from theoretical foundations.

Discussion and Analysis

After passing the era of one-sided approaches to space, in recent years, public space has been considered in the framework of a more complete concept of "place" and adopting a holistic and relational perspective as a kind of public process. According to the many definitions of this term, the emphasis of the review is on the definitions that pay attention to the place as a whole consisting of all dimensions. By reviews the process of rural development plans, which are mostly derived from urban

comprehensive plans and are formulated and implemented with the view of a small and degraded city, it is necessary to focus on the word “place” and based on observations in the sample community to answer the main question. In the first step, it is necessary to examine the nature of the social space of the village comparing with the city. Based on the studies conducted about the social space in the city and based on the samples of the urban social space observed in the cities of Kuhdasht and Darb Gonbad, it can be said that the most important factor shaping the social space is the function and economic demands. As the market in every city is the most known social space for people, and in the next step religious spaces and mosques define the social space in the city based on the function in a developed body. Examples of images of public spaces in the city are shown in Fig. 2.

• Khosrowabad village

Khosrowabad is a village in Kohnani district of Kuhdasht

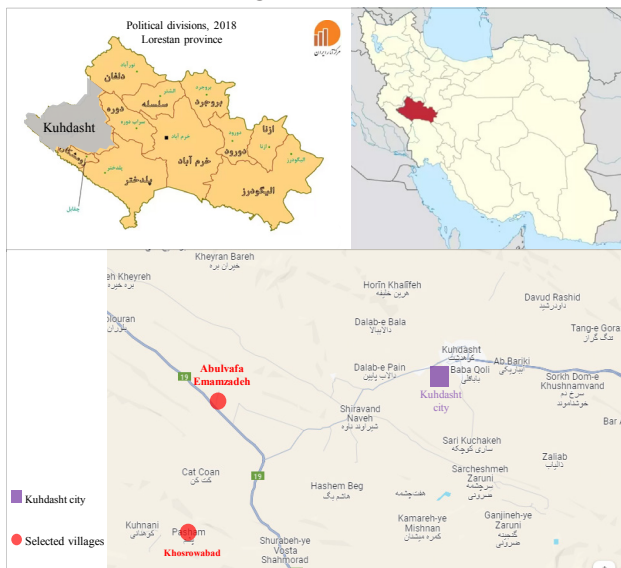


Fig. 1. The location of the selected villages in Kuhdasht city, Lorestan province. Source: Iran Statistics Center.

city in Lorestan province of Iran. From the past, the communication of the region has been from this village, which is evidenced by the guide towers of the fire temple, the great prosperity of the region, many ancient artifacts and tools found in this village before Islam. According to the discovered evidence and documents, the civilization and history of this village reaches the Elamian period and before the Aryans (Khosrowabad, Kuhdash, n.d.). The social space in Khosrowabad includes the gathering of several people in Pirmeshin in front of the houses to spaces such as Mil Square, which is left over from the village’s past, and the new square, which is the result of changes in the village following the development plans, which are further compared These two square together in terms of body, function and meaning. Since the Mil square is derived from a symbol, its physical features such as having the appropriate human scale of the village, the use of local materials creates a sense of kinship with the villagers and indicate its local formation. In reviews the physical characteristics of the new square of the village, the use of non-native materials, symbols such as a memorial in the middle of the square and the large width of the passageways for horses instead of pedestrians are seen. One of the factors of place-based development in the social space of the village is the existence of various uses and also the economic self-reliance of these spaces. The social spaces of this village are only readable places for the gathering of the villagers, which has a suitable platform for the formation of social participation, but is devoid of other uses. From a semantic point of view, it can be said that what is known today as Khosrowabad mill square was formed due to the Safarbeg Mill, which is one of the oldest and most unique memorial Mill in



Fig. 2. Social spaces in the city. Source: Author’s archive.

Lorestan, which was used to a grave sign. Based on the evidence, this building probably belongs to the Zandiye period (Kuhdasht County, n.d.). The formation of a social space in this place is a sign of the importance and meaning of this symbol for the villagers. Following the implementation of the Hadi plan of the village, the new square has been formed with the mosque of the village, which, although it seems that the collective perception has been formed in it to some extent, but it could not act as a substitute for the Mill square. In general, the lack of proper understanding of the features and capabilities of the social space of this village has led to the creation of dual spaces. Fig. 3 shows the location of two squares on the map.

• Abulvafa village

Imamzadeh Seyyed Mohammad Abovafa is one of the recreational and tourist attractions of Lorestan province and Kuhdasht city (Emamzadeh Abovafa, n.d.). Along the main axis of Imamzadeh, there is a fountain that defines the first social space upon entering the village. The presence of Imamzadeh Abulvafa is a social space, but its development and scale in the development plan is beyond the scale of the village and the needs of the local community. A spring along Imamzadeh, although it continues to exist on a local scale, but physically it is not in a good condition and the lack of proper space design has turned it into a garbage dump. From the functional point of view, Imamzadeh Abulofa hosts many people of the province every year during Arba'in, and in order to meet the needs of these pilgrims, other uses such as a pilgrim's house have been built, but the income generated does not act as a stimulus for the economy of the village and the

local community. This space is the meeting place of the village people on different days of the year and is readable due to its physical characteristics. And from the point of view of meaning, religious places have had a special importance and meaning for local communities from the past until today. Naming the village of Abulvafa after its imamzadeh also proves this. Therefore, understanding the history and importance of this space has led to the formation of the social space of the past village in this place and today it is strengthened by the expansion of the space. Water and its manifestations have been a place for the gathering of people since the past due to its great importance and meaning for humans, which is also true in the modern age. The spring of the village and its local treatment indicate this. The location of Imamzadeh and the spring on the map is given in Fig. 4. According to Table 2, which is taken from many Hadi plans, the social space in the rural development plan is limited to parks, green spaces, sports and cultural places, and the creation of neighborhood centers and new squares. Although the creation of such spaces can be very valuable for social activities, but the result of the implemented plans shows that the creation of these uses and spaces is more based on a function and defined body, and what is neglected in creating a social space is paying attention to the place-based meaning in the development plans. As these plans are presented in imitation of their urban counterparts, the village considered as a small city, without identity, it is not saved from the same plans for everywhere. Wide roads and squares at the entrance of villages are another sign of not paying attention to the structure and scale of the village

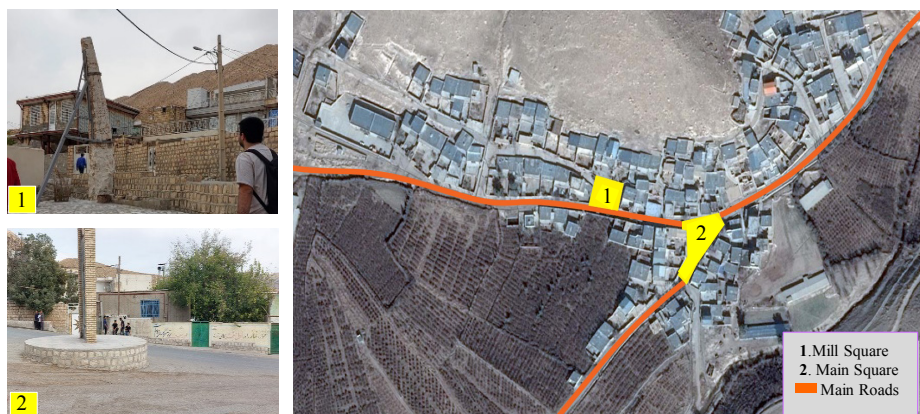


Fig. 3. The location of social spaces in Khosrowabad village. Source: Authors.

. Development plans ignoring the identity and place-based indicators in the village and the lack of local participation, although they appear to be a step towards the development of the village, but this action, perhaps unknowingly, has not had a favorable result for the village. According to the findings of the research, the pathology of social space in the studied villages are given in Table 3. Based on observations, it seems, what creates a social space in the city is the existence of an activity that acquires body and meaning over time, such as markets and mosques, which are mostly based on economic and religious activities, but the village experiences a different type of social space. The social space is often the center of the neighborhood and the main core of the village without having a specific body and function. The social space in the village can be a spring, a tree, a part of the alley and the neighborhood, and

according to the researches, the social space in the village starts from the houses, guestrooms, entrance platform called Pimeshin to the neighborhoods that belong to kinship relations (Figs. 5 & 6). The mentioned examples prove that the social space in the village is formed with the focus on the meaning and the components of the place. According to the findings of this section based on the experiences and studies, a conceptual model of the social space of the village comparison with the city is presented in Fig. 7.

Conclusion

Today, with the change in villages and the change of goals in the development plans, the village experiences a different form of social spaces. If the social space is considered based on the three components of body, function (mainly economy) and meaning, according to the

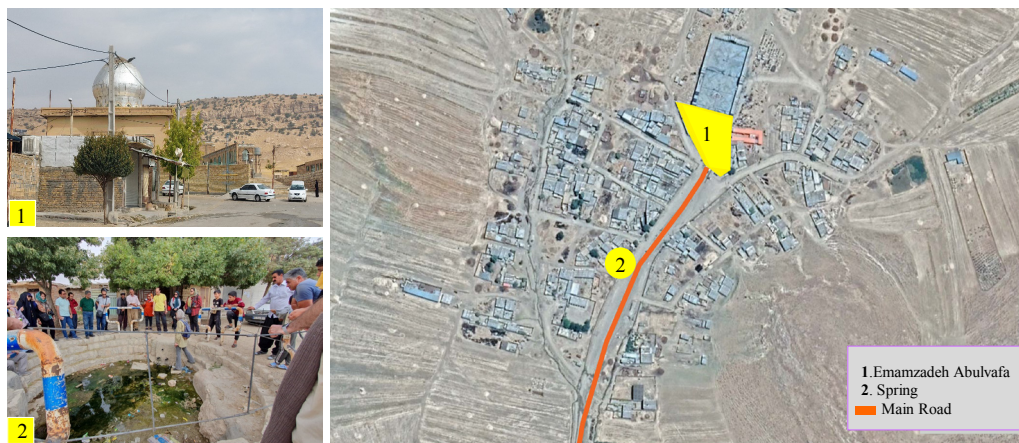


Fig. 4. The location of social spaces in Abulvafa village. Source: Authors.

Table 3. Pathology of the Hadi plan. Source: Authors.

Village	Development plan	Damage	Picture
Abulvafa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing the width of the main street of the village - Moving the fountain away from Imamzadeh - Expansion of Imamzadeh on an urban scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of attention to the local scale in the village - Existence of Pilgrims is an economic stimulus, but not for the residents - Incoherence and spatial confinement - Decreased readability, decreased sociability - Lack of suitable vegetation 	
Khosrowabad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating a new square at the entrance of the village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ignoring core, historical aspects - Nonlocal scale - Incorrect positioning - The result of weakening the field of desire 	

findings, the social space in the city is often influenced by activities and functions, which acquires body and meaning over time. such as markets and worship spaces, while the formation of rural social space is based on meaning. The social space, which starts from the houses and continues to the alleys and neighborhoods, can be attended without the need of a specific body or function. Therefore, the nature of the social space in the village is fundamentally different from the social space in the city, and the most important issue in development plans is this difference, which does not accept the same plan for all places. The lack of a holistic approach in the plans implemented in rural social spaces means that the body, meaning and function are not aligned, separating the social space from its function as a “place” and from social life experience in the village landscape. Hadi plans are often one-dimensional plan and the same for everywhere. In criticizing the development plans, it should be said that the Hadi plan is a reduced version of the urban master plan and the top-down view that does not recognize the values of the village and sees the village as a small and degraded city actually turns the village into a clumsy version of the city, where development is an unsuccessful process. According to



Fig. 5. Rural social spaces. Source: Author's archive.



Fig. 6. Social spaces in local houses. Source: Author's archive.

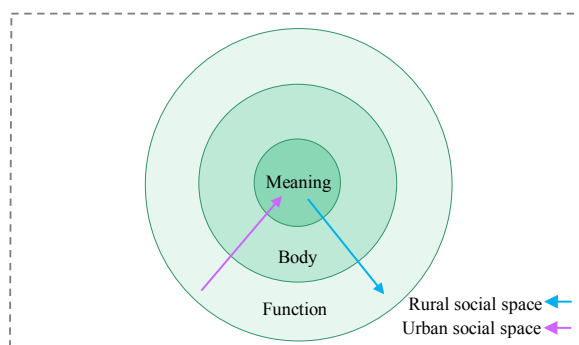


Fig. 7. Conceptual model of the process of formation of social spaces in the village compared to the city. Source: Authors.

this urban view, the priority in the development of social spaces is also reduced to function and body, and what remains neglected is meaning. Another point in criticizing Hadi's plans is the lack of people's participation in the development plans. Not only in implementation, but also in decision-making and evaluation, people's participation is the main part of sustainable and successful development. Based on the studies and observations, the main indicators for recreating the place-based social space are paying attention to the semantic aspect and historical identity, paying attention to the local scale, paying attention to local patterns and strengthening the original core and center of the village, as well as paying attention to participation of residents. With the hope that redefining social space in this research will be an effective step for recreating place-based social spaces at the village scale.

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Babazadeh Saloot, S., Sharifiyan, A., & Honarvar, K. (2024). The Role of Place-based Social Space in the Development of Rural Landscape (Case Study: Villages of Kuhdasht County). *Journal of Art & Civilization of the Orient*, 12(45), 44-53.

DOI: 10.22034/jaco.2024.477437.1424

URL: https://www.jaco-sj.com/article_206106.html?lang=en

