

AN INVESTIGATION ON THE FACTORS LIMITING WOMEN'S PRESENCE IN URBAN SPACES

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The urban open space is the context in which the human activities and behavior takes place and the socio-cultural relations of people happen in it. Public spaces are places responding to the daily needs and public life in cities. These spaces throughout time and based on the socio-cultural and economic conditions would transform. Urban spaces also are places for various activities. In a simple classification, the outdoor activities in public spaces are classified into three categories. These are the necessary activities, the optional activities and the social activities. Use and fittingness of public spaces is an important issue that must be undertaken in any study considering the everyday life of both men and women in cities. The need of presence in urban space and facilitating this presence for all groups regardless of gender, age, occupation and income level, is unquestionable. The present article investigates the factor limiting the presence of women in urban spaces. The pre hypothesis of this article is the necessity of women's presence as a social group having equal civil rights in the society. In other words, presence of women in urban spaces as a citizen is an issue which must be considered in all design and planning of urban spaces. In this perspective, urban open spaces must also provide the possibility of women's presence as a prerequisite in a civil society. It is possible to examine the limitations of women's presence in Iranian open spaces related to the socio-cultural norms. These norms consider the house and its intermediate vicinity as the

women's prototype space, in a way that the protected zone for women in the past and even now in some more traditional Iranian cities, are the private domain of home, the semi-private domain of few neighboring housing units, as well as the semi-public domain of cul de sacs' and dead end allies surrounding the home. In some Arabian Muslim countries, this space segregation is even more prominent. In these countries, women's presence is limited and they cannot claim their own rights without the presence of a male relative.

This issue was also seen in the western world, in which prior to the industrial revolution, despite the need of all groups for presence at urban spaces and enjoying its milieu, due to some traditional viewpoints women were mainly related to home or its neighborhood. But today, it is well accepted that in order to respond to the needs of women for socialization and participation in civil society, a level of equity must be considered in spatial planning and design of public spaces. This article studies the restricting factors including limitations through design and planning of urban spaces as well as limitations imposed through socio-cultural norms which decrease the presence of women in urban spaces. At the end some recommendations are proposed to create flexibility between home and urban space domains in order to increase the presence of women in urban spaces.

KEYWORDS: Limitation, women, urban space, presence, citizen rights.