

## Human Presence and City Squares in an Iranian Context

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**Abstract:** In spaces of cities in Iran that have been formed during long years. They have influenced from artistic and mental patterns and teachings of Islam. The physical and semantic factors can be considered as the main factors of its formation alongside the qualities related to human activities and behaviors. In this regard, urban squares play an outstanding role as the most important place of collective living in open space of cities. They appeal people presence and enhance the quality of human presence in cities. This article has obtained analytical approaches to this literature and analyzed the structure of concepts and components of this issue. The shortened outcome of these subjects has been used to determine the relation between three main topics of urban space (square), human presence, and the Iranian traditional city. The dominant rules in formation of squares have been focused. It should be noted that presentation and selection of these materials has been mostly directed into offering a prescribed solutions. Although this text does not propose any strategy or policy regarding human presence in urban squares, the grounds and directions have been provided in this regard.

[Amir Tayyebi, Jaber Danesh. **Human Presence and City Squares in an Iranian Context.** *J Am Sci* 2012;8(8):276-285]. (ISSN: 1545-1003). <http://www.jofamericanscience.org>. 41

**Key Words:** Human presence; Urban Square; Iranian traditional city; urban spaces

### 1. Introduction

The subject and building of urban space have experienced a long history. Its background can be estimated to ancient era. The study of urban space history shows that this subject has been regarded as an aesthetic-functional product. In that era, there was not any difference between the form of function, culture, and nature. The following dual issues are the outcomes of, late 18<sup>th</sup> century, early 19<sup>th</sup>, and industrialization era and the afterwards, including form–function, object–subject and human–nature. This separation reflects the discreteness in the history of sciences, arts, and philosophy. The Discreteness in concept of public life is a result of inconsistencies among entities in society and advancements of economic entities compared others. Patrick Geddes logically considered this separation originated from some stages of humans' life in which, an effective and active life has not been fulfilled yet; the life that its main elements are wisdom, art, politics, presentation, movement and life consistency and refers to the beginning of human and so on. According to his opinion, the urban space is created when the above elements are created in it (Parsi, 2002). Hence, culture and its dependent elements are not only among semantic components of urban space, but also are necessary to create it. Based on this fact, city and the spaces for people presence reflect their ideas, beliefs and cultural interactions, and its shape would represent its function and meaning.

Urban spaces have provided a ground for people cooperation and interaction and established a flow of culture, deliberation, and human experiences. According to François Choay, culture-oriented urban planners, in contrast with advancement-oriented urban planners, have sought to promote a more humanistic conversation about city and urban space. It considers human, aesthetics, the totality of the organic city, and relationship with special nature (Choay, 1965). People such as Ruskin, Morris, and Howard are among the first culture-oriented people. Others like Goddess, Jacob, Lynch, and Alexander, because of their opposition to advancement-oriented pattern of urban planning, can be accounted in humanistic approach and regarded as followers of culture-oriented pattern and approach, in urban planning.

Overall, city is a material and spiritual system. It responds to requirements, activities, and behaviors of its residents through its spaces. People present in city based on their individual or collective needs, and their special behavioral patterns, and they form or even change urban space. In other words, city and its various spaces are background or place for these kinds of events. It is apparent that spaces and their specifications are firmly dependent on manner of acting and behavioral patterns of their users. As mentioned previously, this relation is not one-way. While spaces mirror the entire activities and behavioral patterns of the society, they also affect on

their residents' activities and behaviors. (Pakzad, 2007).

The related interpretations about urban space have both differences and also fundamental similarities. The central concept in all these concepts and interpretations, is 'social space' that provides the possibility and a place for social activities and interactions in outdoor spaces of the city and it is regarded in contrast with indoor space and architecture. In fact, with respect to its semantics, social space is one of the most generic concepts and urban space is among the most special ones. In this regard, urban space is those open spaces that are initially a place for activities, events, living and urban culture, and are also effective on these processes and human products.

'It should be considered that urban regions are milestones of human societies and a centre to gather people and objects' (Madanipour, 1996). The differences between diverse societies are reflected in their religions, collective memories, and variety of customs. They give special appearance and content to urban spaces and seek a different function and meaning from each society's urban spaces. The nature of the relationship between city and the concept of 'memory' is very important, as it has been a basis for city definition and urban designing. According to Lynch's idea, 'no element is experienced from city by itself, unless it is observed in relation with its surroundings. The hierarchy of events, which caused its appearance and existence, should be recognized and it should have related to memories of past experiences' (Lynch, 1960).

Memories, based on number of people who remind them and they play a role in their life, are excluded from individual memories and subsequently, added to collective ones. Collective memories mean those in which group of people are participated, and they transfer memories to others and are involved in their formation. The common interface between collective memories and urban spaces is in their social identities and requires spatial reference points. 'Numerous factors play roles in formation and intensification of the collective memory and magnifying and devoting value to special spaces (including single and public spaces). Single spaces are those public ones that are located in a given place and well known with a specific name, like Nasar Tekieh, Baghe Fin, Amir Chakhmagh square, and so on. Homonymous spaces are homonymous public spaces that are positioned in different places and cities, but have specific properties and similar homonymous ceremonies

operated there; such as Tekieh<sup>1</sup>, Mosque, Tamashakhaneh (Theatre), Bagh, etc.' (Naghizadeh, 2010) Factors including people-society, time-history, location-space, ceremonies-events and their dependent specifications are accounted as the most important factors to form the collective memories.

## 2. The issue presentation

In this article, human and his presence in space are considered as components of urban space. In fact, without human presence, the urban skeleton is no longer considered as urban space. The concept of mixed-use urban space is a mix of spatial specification of space and human presence. The parts of issue, which are related to human presence, are his perceptual and behavioral specifications. Considering urban space as the skeleton, positions the space more in the position of an existing and describable assumption and less as a prone issue for change and dynamism. In fact, human presence as a component of urban space induces dynamism into space. Through presenting and performing behaviors, the urban space is being created in each moment and this dynamism and vitality shows the current moment in urban space; while a space without human presence would represent its past and history.

Nevertheless, the issue is that how a desirable relationship in terms of quality can be established between urban pillars (human and space skeleton)? The subject of this article is proposed to renew the urban space using a special format. Today's cities consist of variety of spaces including streets, squares, parks, and probably gardens. These words have had different meanings in different historical eras. For instance, we can indicate the square. In urban spaces, squares are among the main and important ones and are places that people gather and present there. In recent century and with developments in urban transportation systems and scale enlargements, cities have encountered many alterations. Although number of squares in cities has been raised, the square position, among other urban spaces, and people presence quality have been considerably damaged. Following this damage, cities no longer benefit from special properties of squares, those that Iranian ancient and historical cities took advantage of them. Then some sorts of urban behaviors and perceptions were diminished and even lost. Amplification of perceptions and behaviors' effectiveness from alteration in the concept of urban squares is an issue,

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<sup>1</sup> Place of mourning for Imam Hussein, the third Shiite leader, towns and villages in Iran. Another name for this urban space is Hosseinieh.

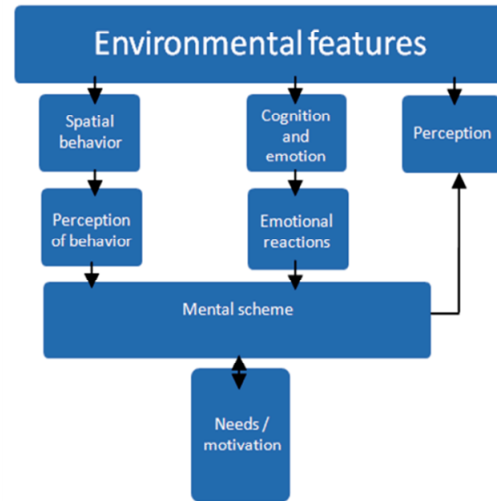
which relates to culture and identity of this territory. In discussions about identity crisis, the reasons should be consciously figured out in the current urban texture. Therefore, in this paper, the matter is to attend the quality of people presence in urban squares in order to determine a method to re-assess the specifications of an Iranian square.

Squares have a bold image in citizens' minds and are one of the important elements for legibility and identification of cities. Based on viewpoint of many researchers, square alongside street forms one of the two conceptual and logical fundamental elements of the city. Square is a location and symbol of silence, population gathering, magnitude, and destination. While street is a symbol of movement, population transfer and the artery of human flows in the city. On the other hand, filed is the best instance to define urban space, as a place for human presence and their activities. In order to reach the best possible meaning, it requires a functional and skeletal integrity. Therefore, it is essential to attend the square as the main scene for social life, the place for gathering people, and related to position and quality of human presence. Dropping the quality of human presence in today's Iranian urban squares and decreasing its semantic and functional aspects is totally sensible and apparent. Un-organized situations in most of today's Iranian urban squares are not only a skeletal phenomenon, but also a decline in squares' quality. It would lead to qualitative and quantitative changes in some groups of social perceptions and behaviors, those that affect urban life specifications. Therefore, the necessity of attending to such studies refers to the importance of cultural guidance and urban society's identity. In this regard, it should be emphasized that it is essentially needed to intensify the relationship between executive officials, and academic and researching centers. In the following, through analysis of human presence quality in urban squares, three main topics of human presence in city, the corresponding quality with human presence in city and square, and the presence in Iranian traditional cities' squares will be studied.

### 3. Human presence in city

Nowadays, the job of environment designers is significantly under penetration of the concepts that are related to human nature. This effect and penetration have been inconstant during the history. In some periods, people considered themselves as free and sometimes under control of the environment. However, environment has a potential power to supply human experiences and behaviors. The main processes regarding human and environment interaction is shown in Figure 1. Environment information is obtained via perceptual processes,

which are stimulated by mental scheme and directed by human requirements. These schemes are to some extent innate and to some learnable. They direct not only perceptual processes, but also emotional reactions and actions. In contrast, these processes and reactions affect mental schemas as product of the perceived behavior. Human emotions and actions are restricted with natural environment's capabilities and the created capabilities from the cultural environment and human internal personality (Lang, 1987).

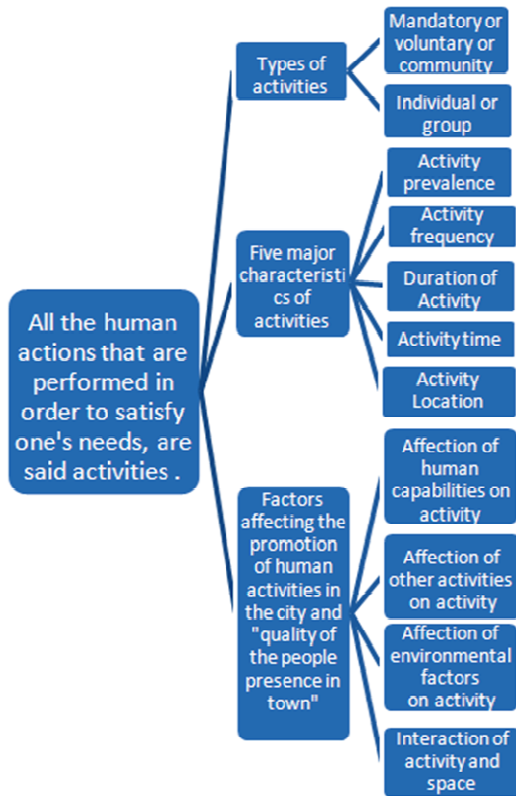


**Fig 1.** The basic processes of human behavior according to Lang.

In order to 'identify and segment human activities in urban space and their relationship with urban space' (Figure 2), it should be mentioned that the entire human actions that fulfill one of his requirements are called activity. Despite a significant variety of human behaviors, they could be categorized into smaller segments via their physical similarities or through common responses to a need. Every small segment can be attributed to a specific activity. Activities can be divided into three groups according to their deterministic or optional nature and via deterministic and optional methods:

- Necessary activities; they are mostly deterministic and involve people's daily activities such as commuting to work or school, or shopping. An individual has always no choice but to perform these activities.
- Optional activities; they are not vital like the previous type and can be operated when favorite conditions are available. Otherwise, people do not feel any necessity to perform them; like recreational activities.
- Social activities; these kinds of activities demand others' presence in the space. Principally, they are unlikely to be operated

in the individual form; such as activities regarding performing a show, ceremonies, mourning, demonstrations, etc. (Gehl, 1987).



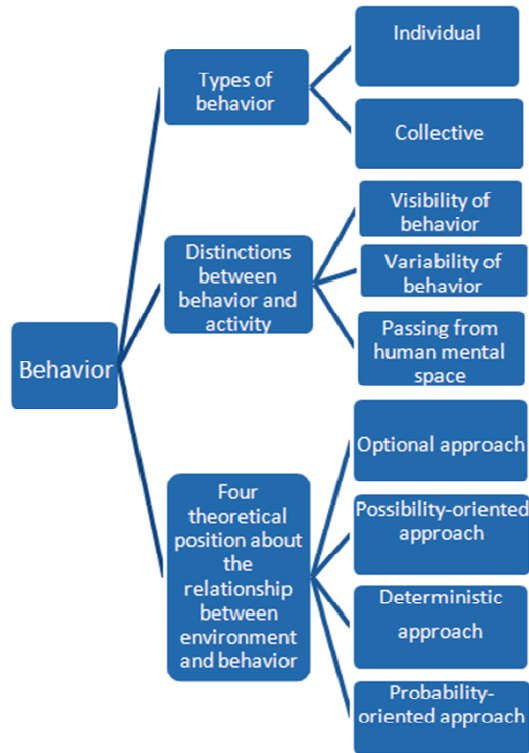
**Fig 2.** The human activities in urban space.

From operator perspective, activities can be divided into two major groups of individual and collective activities. Different activities, apart from their types, have some specifications that at least the five main ones can be expressed here: prevalence, frequency, duration, time, and place of their implementation. In addition, factors influencing the enhancement of activity specifications are generally humanistic or environmental. Behaviors, including individual or collective instances, have some specifications that are generally categorized into humanistic or environmental. Human factors consider human biological abilities and his other activities along with the given activity. Environmental factors are regarded as natural and artificial. These factors can be studied in four categories of, effect of human abilities on activity performance, effect of other activities on performing of this activity, effect of environment factors on activities, and interaction between space and activity (Pakzad, 2005). The manner of performing each activity is called behavior. Human behavior is obtained from individual motivations and requirements, environment capability, and individual mental image

of the outside world. This image is perceived based on his perception, and the associated meaning of the picture this is delivered to him (Lang, 1987). Therefore, every activity under impact of the above conditions, can gain different shapes. Collective behaviors have specifications that distinguish them from others. In this regard, three specifications should be mentioned; behavior visibility, behavior changeability, and transition from human psychological space (Pakzad, 2005).

Regarding the relationship between environment and behavior, four theoretical positioning can be recognized including optional, possibility-oriented, probability-oriented, deterministic approaches (Figure 3). The optional approach believes that environment has no impact on human behavior. Although there are serious restrictions for human behavior like some biological characteristics, the optional approach is indefensible. The possibility-oriented people consider the environment as the supplier of human behavior and even more than that. This approach regards the environment as a set of behavioral opportunities. According to this assumption, it might show that people are not as free in their behavior as probability-oriented people suppose. Every individual is engaged with a set of motivations and competencies inside himself; at least part of them is determined by geographical, social, and cultural environments. According to belief in determinism, when people act freely, they are actually under the control of environment and inheritance. Based on determinism of the environment, which is a branch of evolution theory, the environment is the main determinant of human behavior. In this theory, the environment is considered as its geographical or earthy shape. Believers in determinism, assume the function of the built environment is of the same kind. Deterministic approach considers the environment-behavior relationship as a causal relation, and believes of new architectural movement (modern) are constructed based on deterministic presumptions. Furthermore, while the environment is full of capabilities for human behavior, environment perception and utilization depend on individual requirements and competencies (Lang, 1987). The environment has geographical, skeletal, and cultural specifications that are internally related to each other and allow some behaviors to be exposed. A set of environment capabilities in a special situation, provides a potential environment for human behavior in that location. People understand not all of these capabilities and not even all understood capabilities are utilized. People position, motivations, experiences, values and cost-ward that people gains from companies via their activities or their aesthetic interpretation of

surrounding environment, specifies their utilization of the environment. Perceptual and cognitive processes and spatial behavior are influencing from individual and collective competencies and also the environment's structure. Human is an adaptive creation, but its perception from environment is affected by matters that he is used to them. However, it should be noted that even in conditions that human values are threatened, people still adapt.



**Fig 3.** The human behavior in urban space.

**4. The corresponding quality with human presence in city and square**

Urban space is the main place of events and incidents that organize a creative role for the linkage between today and tomorrow. Urban space is the place of commuting between past, present and future. This space includes four main elements of residents, pedestrians, human-made elements, and time (Habibi & Maghsoudi, 2003). In this regard, the main shaping and defining factor for urban space is human and his presence. Human builds the urban space and also present and act in there. In various models and definitions of urban space and place, human and his presence are among the main indicators to present the location. This fact can be seen almost all models including; bipolar model of form-meaning(content), in which human and his presence is positioned in the meaning pole, and other models like form-meaning-activity, in which considering activity and meaning, the humanistic aspect is regarded as the main former

of place and urban place. In this section, in order to clarify aspects of human presence in city, some of motivating and amplifying qualities of human presence are proposed, such as mixed use, human scale, pedestrian freedom, and accessibility for everyone (Figure 4).

From the perspective of experts in environment designing, cities and urban environments can be considered as the best and most valuable achievements in squares of technologic, artistic, cultural, and social during centuries. Public arenas are the most important part of cities and urban environments; because in these areas, there is maximum contact, interaction, and relation among humans. These areas include the entire parts of urban texture that people access them physically or visually, such as squares, streets, parks, intersections and even the surrounded buildings.



**Fig 4.** The main qualities that amplify human presence in the city according to Tibbalds.

According to Francis Tibbalds's viewpoint, nowadays, we are witnessing the depreciation in public arenas of cities. Many cities and towns in different countries around the world have been converted into hazardous places. Dirty places, full of rubbish and garbage, covered with declarations and wall slogans, polluted air, frustrating noises and traffic, the uniform and mostly unpleasant mass buildings that have been badly renovated and they all do not respect people around there. Insecure locations that are a shelter for homeless people in aisles and underpasses at night, and during day, they are a place for begging (Tibbalds, 2004). From her point of view, most of buildings and urban spaces instead of saying 'You are welcome...' and asking to enter, ask people to leave and say 'get the hell out of here...'. Currently, buildings and cities are means of earning for some people.

To answer to the question that 'How it would be possible to enhance the quality of human presence?', one of the major factors that could respond is the nature of current activities in city or

urban environment and extent of their merger. In the life of a city or urban environment, the functions and activities are more important than buildings. Increasing diversity would lead to a more dynamic and lively urban environment. 'Cities and urban environments are more than a set of buildings that are separated by streets or parks. Undoubtedly, cities are for people and about people. Thus, the higher diversity and the more performance, it is more likely to acquire the quality of citizen-orientation. This has not been coincidence that ancient cities were built around a public space (for example Greek Agora and Roman Forum). Moreover, continuity of this tradition is not also coincidence, where crossroad, place, urban square or square gain their importance from the presence of a church or city hall. All of us have experienced a sense of inconvenience and lack of comfort in urban texture in various situations. While most of people in rural environments seek for loneliness and solitude, absence of people in urban environments would provide an uncomfortable and unpleasant environment in the best possible situation and in the worst one, the hazardous and annoying place (Tibbalds, 2004). ' Hence, creating a multi-functional environment with rich and diverse nature is one the most important duties of urban environment designers. Particularly at the current age that this quality in construction has been eliminated or decreased due to opinions and activities of modern designers and architects. They have oversimplified functions and activities, and built uniformed and single shaped buildings.

The next quality, which has an important role in heightening human presence, is to attend human scale in designing and building of urban environments. Urban environments are for humans and not for cars, trucks, and large projects. According to Jurgen Knirsch, urban squares are the place for people to meet each other every day and should be a screen for performing a play, ceremony, celebrations, and a location to set up markets. In consistency with these activities, it should be designed based on human, and his skeletal and psychological scale (Knirsch, 2004). However prolonging roads into urban texture has caused that most of empty spaces, unused lands, temporary parking, buildings with wrong directions or extensively setback from the road, to be like spots and scars on the view of the city. These places are unpleasant and ugly, because they do not acquire the humanistic scale, i.e. the vital social specifications, those needed for successful urban environments (Tibbalds, 2004). These vital social specifications can be presented more clearly in the design of various urban spaces including urban squares alongside physical and aesthetic aspects. Based on Zucker believes, visual specifications of

square, in contrast with a creation by a sculpture or a painter, or even a unique creation by an architect, would not reflect the specifications of a specific historical era. In fact, although filed, like an alive organism, is transformed with changes in social and economic conditions, its fundamental substance is a space and a role that it plays in the urban space organization. However, he still insisted that in the stage of analysis or designing urban spaces, historical-social aspects and the current activities of spaces should be fully attended and it is not advised to focus only on aesthetic and physical aspects (Zucker, 1970).

There are still many impediments to pedestrians' freedom. They are mostly originated from the practices of traffic management, construction, and positioning of buildings. In centre of most cities, both pedestrians and cyclists are confronted to serious dangers. Besides the risks of accidents, noises and smoke are also unfavorable for people and could result in long-term health problems. Traffic signs benefit pedestrians less than others. Pedestrians will find only a few seconds to escape from hazards of cars those are passing rapidly. Even in the environments that are allocated to pedestrians, there are various shapes of obstacles in front of pedestrians; such as timbers, pins, the fences, chairs, bins, garbage, advertising elements, the entire or part of cars' bodies that have been parked in sidewalks, plants, pipes, damaged floors, pits, and big hollows (Zucker, 1970). It is possible for many cities to convert to more humanistic via providing the freedom for pedestrians.

The last point refers to the time that a new construction is in process in cities. The principle goal should be to improve and elevate sanitary and public welfare for citizens. It is very important to be able to provide the selection power, diversity of access to, activities, information resources, and various places, for all classes of people inside society. Urban environments should be accessible for all people apart from their age, ability, background, and income. It should enable them to create a selection power for accessing activities, buildings, and different resources. These environments should not be in line with special requirements of drivers of motor vehicles or a specific class of society. This is part of the concept of inclusiveness or accessibility for everyone.

City residents and travelers seek for diversity and selection power. They would like to practice varied range of activities, observe objects, go to places, shop, and do whatever they like. Both mentioned groups need difference and diversity in urban spaces. I.e. they like to see places and do the tasks that are different from their daily life and jobs.

Based on this fact, each city or urban environment, while responding to these extensive and diverse sorts of needs, should be able to protect its unique and sole nature. 24hrs accessibility to urban environments and removing obstacles from urban environments is among other components of inclusiveness of urban spaces, in order to intensify human presence in city. Malls and shopping centers, which are closed at night and during holidays, devastate urban environments. On the other hand, new constructions should be pursued in a way to facilitate movement and accessibility between streets and adjacent locations. Moreover, every single opportunity should be obtained to eradicate obstacles in urban environments and make them accessible for all people (Zucker, 1970). Spaces with public ownership have the highest extensiveness of scale, the largest number of users in cities, and greatest share in collective living of citizens. Therefore, improving the quality of this group of spaces is in priority compared others. However nowadays, urban complexes have unshaped and anti-space spaces, in which unusable spaces are left and forgotten, and they are known as lost spaces (Trancik, 1986).

Establishing these qualities in urban environments, we can witness a return to concepts of the cities and to previous lovely urban environments in urban planning. With respect to this new orientation, the scale of the pedestrian is regarded to reach delicate and absorbing places, associated with sophistication, merger of functions and activities, attention to inclusiveness and accessibility for all people. The ultimate objective is to create urban environments with specified identity. The environments that are rooted in their own historical or regional background, while the skeletal designing of public areas as an organic, colorful, human-oriented, and appealing environment is the main job of urban designers. However, prevalent methods to divide different sections of urban environments represent the separation of the related professions of city. In fact, in order to build and create locations and better, more coherent and desirable environments, all professions should cooperate, as none of them is able to supply extensive and complicated needs in urban designing alone.

##### **5. Presence in square of an Iranian-Islamic city**

There are many historical indications to Iranian squares in the written manuscripts of historians and geographers after Islam. The remained instances of these types of squares have made it possible to study their design and performance. The definition of space, the method of construction and architectural components of the square has been in relation with continuity of the method of production,

and traditional social and political structure in Iranian cities. It has been survived with few changes until the advent of modernity. This sort of squares is called traditional, due to continuous and uninterrupted presence in the Iranian city. This traditional square has protected its specific functions and special pattern. These cases have mostly the same specifications that are mentioned about traditional squares around the world. A traditional filed has been a place, to perform military ceremonies, and saber rattling of the incumbent regimes. Therefore, it has had a similar function as modern squares. In other words, besides entertaining the monarch and residents of city, it has been a reminder to public regarding the power and authority of governors. Governmental buildings like palaces or Dar-ol-Emareh (King House), or religious buildings like mosques and Tekiehs were positioned in one or some edges of traditional squares. In addition, due to urban importance of the existence of religious buildings, shrines, or temples, squares were built beside them. Hence, it was converted to a square with special local identity and in this way, a square acquired considerable spatial importance (Ibrahimi, 2009).

What is certain and can be extracted from ancient texts is that, the square for Iranian urban residents has been a wide space, which has been designed for presence and collection. The square was notable due to its position. Square has always operated like a social node and many events have occurred there, including variety of functions in the scales of neighbor or city, and many kinds of annual events such as celebrations, mourning, etc. In addition, square has been a place to exchange information and daily news and in other words, a place to collect the highest amount of existing values in neighbor or city, which was exchanged among people.

Square as urban space has some specifications that among them, objective-oriented activities are dominant and there are some transitional activities and with some skeletal proportions in a specific period. In addition to these special specifications, general notable specifications can be mentioned, like its extensiveness compared to proportions of other passes, an intersection of several passes, acquisition of specific function permanently or periodically, and the possibilities of having physical objects in its centre. In the Iranian culture and civilization, 'extensive open spaces, that had a restricted or relatively a specified area, positioned beside roads or in their intersections, and they had communicational, social, commercial, sport, military functions or a combination of two or some of them, were called filed (Soltanzadeh, 2006). In other words, filed has been a space and place, with regular or irregular

dimensions, which has played a role as a location for an activity or activities. Its nomination was sometimes related to the principle activity of the square; such as Mashgh (Homework) square, Tar-e-Bar (Vegetables) square, Bazi (Play) square, Razm (Combat) square. Circumference of the square was occupied with some functions compatible with its character. Therefore, the main thing that has defined a square was its restriction and major function; i.e. defining of its dimensions has been by its surrounding elements. Furthermore, although walls and angles of squares might have been a place for some activities, squares have been open spaces with the main function in their centre. Thus, the square that has been a restricted area with specific elements, reminds us a kind of concept of 'center' and 'surrounded' and has been also a place for performing an activity (Dehkoda, 1378).

The effective principles and factors about efficient positioning of activities and spaces in the Iranian city square are as follows: convergence of similar-type activities, divergence of incompatible activities, the type and main function of square, and its formation that considers three main issues of form, function and activities of the square space.

In squares like roads, the similar and compatible activities are positioned with each other. In past, this rule has been attended in open spaces of the square; for example, sellers of inexpensive objects were centralized in specific parts, and those who entertained people were located in specific places (convergence of similar-type and compatible activities). In Iranian urban squares, incompatible activities and spaces were distinguished to be located differently and sometimes, timing of their positioning was different. In fact, time factor was effective to coordinate the relationship between different activities about their adjacency or remoteness (divergence of incompatible activities).

One of the important and effective factors to adjust and set the order of locations was the surrounding or inside activities of the square. For instance, open space of a local small square was rarely used for permanent trading (major type and function of the square). Construction and formation of squares had an effective role in positioning of activities and spaces. In those squares that spaces were initially designed and then constructed, activity positioning was followed with proper order and with a measured hierarchy (Formation of the square) (Soltanzadeh, 2006).

Urban squares with its skeletal specifications had different functions. The most important ones were religious, commercial, governmental, military, communicational, and sport. However, the above-mentioned activities have been proposed in two

scales of 'urban' and 'neighbor'. In addition, minor functions like formal ceremonies for criminals' punishment can be addressed, which are included in six forms of functions. Considering any of these functions for squares, it would be a representation of their social function with different weaknesses and strengths. Even the communicational function, because humans subject to face-to-face contact while walking in sidewalks, would reflect a stage of social function. Among them, the most distinctive function, which is followed by cultural and social consequences and effects, has been their religious function and many of squares have had religious background based on numerous reasons (Naghizadeh, 2006).

Among squares with religious function, Tekieh can be indicated. The space to perform ceremonies of Imam Hossein has been known as Hosseinieh or Tekieh. These spaces have significant importance to represent Islamic aesthetics in open urban spaces of Iran. It means although Islamic aesthetics is presented in the entire urban spaces and Islamic society architecture, Tekieh and Hosseinieh as the Iranian-Islamic squares are deeply rooted in Shia believes. It could be a pattern to represent the semantics of Islamic aesthetics. While a square like Naghsh-e-Jahan is skeletal pattern of Islamic aesthetics in an Iranian city, the main aspect of Hosseiniehs and Tekiehs is their symbolic and semantic aspects. Where in these ceremonies and in this urban space, which is sometimes complemented by performing-religious programs like Ta'zieh<sup>1</sup> alongside some symbolic elements (such as Palm, Saghakhaneh, Alam (flag), etc, time and places are passed by, and people will unite with each other, time and places (Aminzadeh, 2000). Presenting in these spaces, people remind those places, times and specific events. In addition, they notice a continuous message of seeking the right and god to the united soul and body of human society, the message that has been always heard by real Muslims in periods of time and around geographical locations. In these days, religious squares' skeleton is being united with symbolic elements such as Alam, Kotal, Saghakhaneh<sup>2</sup>, and clothes of mourners who participate in mourning, Shamayel, horse and Ta'zieh square's players. Tekieh and Hosseinieh location is

<sup>1</sup> Ta'zieh means Condolence Theater and it is traditional Persian theatrical genres in which the drama is conveyed wholly or predominantly through music and singing. Tazieh dates before the Islamic era and the tragedy of Saiawush in Shahnameh is one of the best examples.

<sup>2</sup> A symbolic space for giving water to mourners in the Ashura.



being integrated with the time and location of Ashura<sup>1</sup> apart from its occurrence in past times and another location.

## 6. Conclusion

Urban space in Iran, in addition to general specifications, has some specifications to organize some principles like spatial continuity, integration of residential units and urban elements, space restriction, scale and proportion, heterogeneous spaces, territory and combination principles (Tavassoli & Bonyadi, 2000). These principles, along with those like people-oriented thinking, avoiding from vanity and Statics, etc (Pirnia, 1990) that consist Iranian architectural principles, determines the method of building urban space and its bodies, and the relationship between the components of these spaces with themselves and other urban spaces.

In Iranian cities, an urban space like square acquires its meaning from a larger and more coherent whole called city. This component never damages this coherence and continuity (The spatial continuity principle). Another character of urban spaces in Iran is skeletal connection and continuity of them with other spaces (The principle of linkage between urban elements). Another principle, which is important in square spaces in Iran, is restriction that among the most important issues, is accounted to define and form the square space. In the Iranian urban spaces and squares, the size of its components, comparing others, among other urban spaces, and overall in city, have desirable scale and proportion (The scale and proportion principle). Creating heterogeneous spaces in cities of Iran is another principle that has impeded uniformity and malaise in Iranian urban spaces. This quality was induced through alteration and diversification of scales, proportions, restriction, and urban spaces' components (The heterogeneous space principle). Another important principle is territory and hierarchy of urban spaces; meaning that an area and territory is obtained for every activity. Moreover, other issues were considered including the quality of activity, the current behavior (e.g. the extent of being public or private), and the relationship or lack of relationship with other spaces and their spatial territory. The other principle, which can be considered, as it is extracted and related to the principle of continuity and linkage, is the composition principle in urban spaces. It is an artistic principle in analysis and building artistic creations,

<sup>1</sup> It is commemorated by Shi'a Muslims as a day of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the grandson of Muhammad at the Battle of Karbala on 10 Muharram in the year 61 AH (October 10, 680 AD).

which is more related to form and skeleton, and regarding urban space, it is more related to its walls and empty space. According to that, creating unity is one of the objectives and methods to make an artistic creations and compatible and beautiful urban space.

However, considering these facts, the quality of urban space has been extensively changed. In several recent decades, form, meaning, function of squares in different cities like other aspects of personal and social life, and urban form and image have been affected from prompt and sometimes devastating changes. One of the most devastating and effective alterations is entering cars into cities and urban designing based on the maximum penetration of cars into urban spaces. Although the current form and meaning of squares in cities have been altered, the meaning and mental expectations of people have more compatibilities with their last form and function of such spaces. This semantic aspect leads to centralization of activities and functions, those are sometimes in contradiction with each other in square space. That is because of its value in the minds of driver, pedestrian, designer, and manager.

Proposing a method and strategy for a multidimensional issue like square is a complicated task. It needs to associate with deliberation and precaution after initial researches. On one hand, urban square is an extensive space in the body of city that engages the people's minds. On the other hand, it is the most important place and space for social and collective interactions and functions for present and future of people. In Iran, although square might not be presented like western attitudes regarding its semantics and special functions, the existence of the urban spaces such as local squares, governmental squares, Tekiehs and even Char Sough<sup>2</sup>, etc and instances like Naghsh-e-Jahan square, represent an Iranian square instance in Iranian cities.

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<sup>2</sup> Intersection between the traditional markets of Iran.

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07/02/2012