

Designing Neighborhood Open Spaces within Gender Equity Approach and “Ethics of Care” Framework

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Abstract

Public spaces are the places in which public daily life occurs and they change over time based on socio-economic and cultural changes of the society. Public spaces are the spaces for a variety of activities and considering the socio-cultural characteristics of societies provide activity space for different demographic groups based on age, gender, and other characteristics. One of the major aims of urban design is improving the user's quality of life through equipping urban environment, with appropriate open spaces to accommodate all age and occupations as well gender groups. Good design and provision of necessary facilities would accommodate the variety of functions and users and would create a more attractive, meaningful and livable urban living environment. This study is based on the belief in women's equal rights of presence and use of public urban open spaces and acknowledges their presence in such spaces. It also believes in gender equity regarding access to space as an inclusionary approach in use of them. This research is also focuses on the theory of “Ethics of Care”. This theory studies women's experience in public space and is based on an inclusionary approach. The goal of this paper is defining the importance of women's presence in urban spaces through specifying supportive activities and functions in urban open spaces. Since women's place of presence (activity space) has historically been in or near home, it seems that neighborhood open spaces are in close relation with their daily life; especially in Iranian culture, neighborhood spaces have been in deep relation with women's needs. Finally the factors that effect women's use of physical places are determined and recommended for consideration in design to promote presence of women in neighborhood open spaces to provide gender equity in use of space while maintaining ethics of care considered by women.

Keywords: Gender Equity, Public Urban Space, Women, Ethics of Care, Urban Design