Measuring Place Attachment and the Effect of Place Scale on It in Different Urban Fabrics; Case Study: Rasht City

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ABSTRACT

Attachment to place is seen as a positive emotional connection between individuals and groups and their environment. The attendance and relationship of people with the places they are attached to will have positive psychological consequences for them. However, staying away from these places can lead to distress and mental chaos. Failure to study the effect of spatial scale on spatial attachment causes the needs of citizens to create an emotional relationship to be ignored by designers and planners at different spatial scales. This paper aims to understand the role of place scale on attachment to place, which will help us to identify attachment at these spatial levels and evaluate their relationship. To this end, 400 questionnaires were distributed among the residents of four different urban contexts of Rasht (new, old, middle and peripheral neighborhoods), and the obtained data were analyzed by correlation test. Based on the analysis, a U-shaped relationship was attained between spatial scales in which the house scale has the highest degree of attachment among residents and the neighborhood scale has the lowest degree of attachment. Regarding the minimal attachment to the neighborhood in a U-shaped connection, it can be imagined that the boundaries and limits of the neighborhood in cities are more invisible than the city limits. On the other hand, correlation analysis reveals the attachment between these three scales. Neighborhood attachment has the least correlation with attachment to city and home. This means that in addition to the lack of attachment to the neighborhood in today's cities, this attachment also has a minor role in creating an attachment to other spatial scales and most importantly the city. These results indicate that the position of urban neighborhoods in the lives of citizens is fading and planners should adopt suitable policies to create more opportunities to create emotional bonds between citizens and their neighborhood.

Keywords: Attachment to Place, Spatial Scale, Social and Personal Factors, Rasht.

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1. INTRODUCTION

From a psychological point of view, a human's relationship with his/her environment is one of the most important issues in the field of urban planning and design. The question that researchers have tried to find a suitable answer to in numerous fields of science is "how a person finds himself in an emotional connection with his environment and becomes attached to it". The research done by Fried (2000, p. 195), could be mentioned that was based on the physical characteristics of the place and the degree of people's attachment to it. In another study, Hidalgo & Hernandez (2001, p. 276) examined the relationship between place scale and attachment to it, and in a more recent study, Scannell and Gifford (2010, p. 7) studied the social areas affecting people's attachment to place. In a small number of studies done at different spatial scales, the results reveal that people's feelings about the place differ regarding the place scale. For example, in a study examining place attachment at three scales (home, neighborhood, city), Hidalgo and Hernandez reported a U-shaped curved relationship between different spatial scales (Hildago & Hernandez, 2001, p. 279). Individuals felt very little attachment to the middle spatial scale (neighborhood), and these results were confirmed in similar studies (Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007, p. 316). Lewicka examines from the neighborhood scale to the world to find out to which places people are more attached. The research findings, independent of the cities and countries under study, show that the urban scale has been much more important to researchers than neighborhoods (Lewicka, 2008, p. 211; Lewicka, 2010, p. 45). Shamai and Ilatov examined place attachment on three scales (city, state, country) in Israel and among immigrants and natives, and they did not discover a particular form (Shamai & Ilatov, 2005, p. 470).

Attachment to the place is significant because it creates and increases the level of participation, commitment, and cooperation of residents of different urban areas and offers a better way to solve problems and improve the quality of life. Consequently, for architects and urban planners, it is essential to evaluate the level of attachment to the place at different scales. The necessity of this phenomenon, as well as urban planning knowledge, can be explored in fields such as social health, place branding and tourism management, etc. In spite of various studies on place attachment in the past, there is still rapid and chaotic development of cities and a physical approach to issues in our cities that has weakened this sense. Particularly at the neighborhood level, problems such as identity crisis and the weakening of relations have arisen, which stem from an indifference to the relationship between man and place. Considering the prominence of attachment to place and its reduction in the current situation, this study tries to introduce the content of attachment to place, measure its extent in three scales (home, neighborhood, and city) and compare the attachment values in these three scales and discover the relationship between them.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Numerous studies have examined the positive relationship between man and his residence. The principal results of these studies have revealed that a man's positive attachment with his place of residence, increases his quality of life and physical and mental health. The way of forming and strengthening these links at different spatial scales, as well as differences due to the impact of the scale, is a matter that can help urban planners and designers to better meet the needs of citizens at different spatial scales. Consequently, the definition of attachment to place and attachment to place in different spatial scales are discussed in detail below.

2.1. Attachment to Place

Based on the researchers' ideas, the gradual evolution of concepts such as place and spatial attachment follows a certain path (Salaripour, Daneshpour, & Safaye karpour, 2021, p. 2). Attachment to place is a multilevel and interdisciplinary concept that has many different and complex dimensions. Generally, attachment to place is assumed as a multifaceted concept that describes the connection between people and their specific places (Salaripour, 2018, p. 30). Low and Altman defined attachment to place as an emotional connection between individuals and their living environment (Salaripour, Ramezani, Zali, & Safaye karpour, 2018, p. 40; Low & Altman, 1992, p. 9). Hernandez et al. define attachment to a place as people's emotional sense to comfortable and safe places they want to live (Hernandez, Hidalgo, Salazar-Laplace, & Hess, 2007, p. 314). The reflection of indicators related to a person's emotions and feelings towards a place in the questions made by researchers who study attachment to place is understandable (Scannell & Gifford, 2017, p. 258). Cognitive and behavioral features are other characteristics of attachment to place. This means that specific beliefs, memories, and activities that connect a person to a place are effective in creating a sense of attachment in individuals (Ratcliffe & Korpela, 2016, p. 123). It is not these places that have meaning in themselves, but our experiences and memories of them create the place and give it meaning (Manzo, 2005, p. 70; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2013, p. 10). Long-term interactions with a place and the memories that happen to a person in it can create an attachment to the place (Najafi & Kamal, 2012, p. 1).

In numerous cases, people communicate with places only through mental and psychological ways, and they do not need physical interaction and communication to create an emotional connection with the place. They may also have feelings for some components of the

environment and move them to places with similar components. In other words, they have a mental image of their favorite places and judge new places according to that image that these mental images can be positive or negative (weak) (Farnum, Hall, & Kruger, 2005, p. 25; Degnen, 2016, p. 1650; Zali, Ebrahimzadeh, Zamani-Poor, & Arghash, 2014, p. 218).

2.2. Scale of Place and Attachment to Place

Places have different scales. The places we can become attached to are the places where we live, i.e. our room, apartment, neighborhood, city, etc., that we can become emotionally attached to all of them (Cuba & Hummon, 1993, p. 121; Gieryn, 2000, p. 468; Jordan, 1996, p. 31; Low & Altman, 1992, p. 9; Moser, Ratiu, & Fleury-Bahi, 2002, p. 127). Though most of the research conducted on places and people's attachment to them has been done in the middle scale of the place, i.e. the neighborhood (Giuliani, 2003, p. 3). About 70% of these studies are about neighborhood attachment, 20% about home attachment, and very few about city attachment. A very small percentage of studies have examined more than one scale at a time. Nevertheless, this theoretical bias towards the neighborhood is present in place-based research that most attachment studies are conducted on this scale (Giuliani, 2003, p. 3; Lewicka, 2005, p. 388).

As mentioned in the introduction, studies on attachment and spatial scale have revealed that the urban scale creates attachment. Nevertheless, in terms of content, in one of the first studies, Cuba and Human showed that in three small American cities, home attachment is further investigated with demographic variables, neighborhood attachment with social participation variable, and attachment to living area with the variable of on-site activities (Cuba & Hummon, 1993, p. 119). In Shamai and Ilatov studies, the variables of "length of residence" and "age" have shown more correlation with attachment to smaller scales (such as a city) than larger scales (such as country) (Shamai & Ilatov, 2005, p. 471). Hidalgo and Hernandez concluded that social factors, in general, were more important than physical factors for attachment to a place. Particularly for home attachment, these factors are much more important than neighborhood and city attachment (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001, p. 278). In addition, in the studies of Brown et al., no difference was observed between the predictor variables of home and neighborhood attachment. The data of this study do not offer acceptable information about the scale of the place and the variables of attachment to it (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010, p. 429).

As observed, different criteria play a role in creating attachment at different spatial scales, and many dimensions of the effect of spatial scales on creating attachment still need further investigation. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this research.
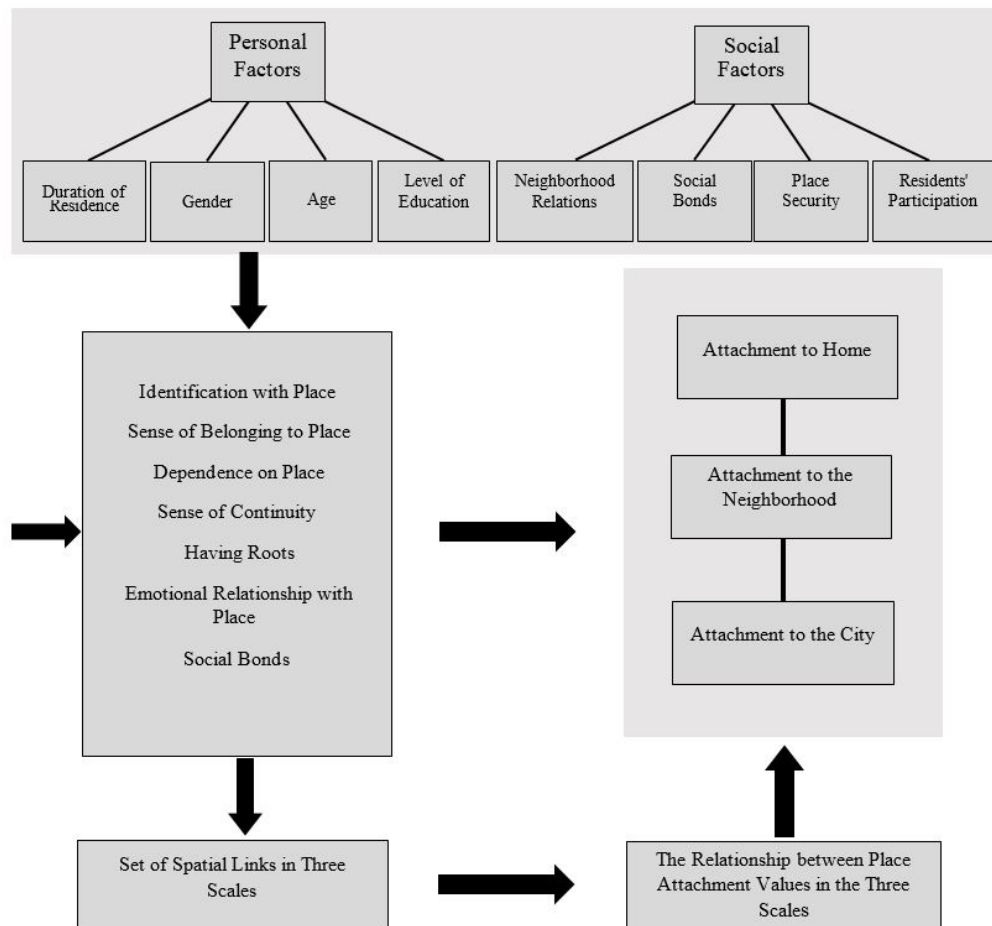

Fig. 1. Conceptual Model of Research

3. CASE STUDY

The city of Rasht, as one of the largest cities in Iran and the capital of Gilan province, is considered the most populous city in northern Iran and is the third most visited city in Iran (Fig. 2). Regarding the official census of 2016, the population of Rasht is 676,991. The city of Rasht in recent decades, in terms of population and physical, has grown and expanded significantly (Zali, Ahmadi, & Faroughi, 2013, p. 188). Consequently, the city has experienced numerous changes and new residential areas have expanded outside the city, which have different appearances depending on the economic situation and income level of residents. Consequently, since neighborhoods are the chief source of attachment to the local community, weakening their social and physical space is the most important issue related to the research topic.

Fig. 2. Map of Rasht Location

4. METHOD

A questionnaire was used to collect data in the study area. To use the questionnaire, a sample must be determined, the sampling method has no determinant relationship with the sample size, and from each method you use, the important thing is to collect the minimum estimated sample size. Using Cochran's formula is the simplest way to determine the sample size. Cochran's formula shows the minimum sample size and it is better if the sample size is considered a little more. The population of Rasht was included in Cochran's formula to determine the sample size, which was 384, and in this regard, 400 questionnaires were distributed and completed in four different contexts of Rasht. The selection of four different contexts has been done in order to first measure the effect of different physical characteristics of residential areas on attachment to the place in the city of Rasht and in the next stage, the specific social space of each of these contexts have differences that the distribution of the questionnaire in four different contexts will also help to clarify the differences in these dimensions. Consequently, the classification of urban contexts lets both the coverage of different urban neighborhoods in the statistical sample and the possibility of comparing the differences in these environments. The Personal characteristics of the respondents were also examined at the beginning of the questionnaire, which is categorized and presented in the form of Table 1:

Table 1. Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Texture Type	New	Middle	Old	Peripheral
Count	98	98	98	106
Gender	Male	Female		
Count	208	192		
Age	20 to 25 Years	26 to 30 Years	31 to 35 Years	35 Years and Above
Count	216	57	46	81
Education	Diploma and Lower	Associate Degree	B.A	M.A. and Higher
Count	126	54	186	34

The questionnaire of this research consists of 19 questions, which are in the form of a Likert scale. The Likert scale is used if the goal is to measure subjects that are not visible but affect people's behavior. These topics can include things like emotions, views, and opinions. Out of 19 questions, three questions are related to the house scale, eight questions are related to the neighborhood scale and eight questions are related to the city scale. These questions are designed to examine the independent variables (place identity, place affect, place dependence, and social bonding) to measure the degree of place attachment in the city of Rasht. The items of this research are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Items of Attachment to the Home, Neighborhood, and City

Items		
Home	**Neighborhood**	**City**
I feel good when I enter my house.	This neighborhood aligns with my ideals.	This city is in line with my ideals
I have good memories of this house.	The attitudes of the residents of this neighborhood are similar to my views.	I participate in celebrations, ceremonies, and events that take place in the city.
I am attached to the house that I live in.	This neighborhood is part of me.	This city is part of me.
	I have many friends and acquaintances in this neighborhood.	The attitudes of the citizens of this city are similar to my views.
	I am proud to be a resident of this neighborhood.	I am proud to be a citizen of this city.
	I have sincere relations with my neighbors.	To maintain this city, I am willing to do everything I can.
	To maintain this neighborhood, I am willing to do whatever I can.	Emotionally, it is difficult for me to leave this city.
	Emotionally, it is difficult for me to leave this neighborhood.	If I am away from Rasht for a few days, I will feel homesick.

After completing the distributed questionnaires, the data were analyzed by a one-sample t-test and Pearson correlation using SPSS software to examine the degree of attachment to the place in three scales (home, neighborhood, and city) in Rasht.

5. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

As it was perceived, the study of the effect of spatial scale on the degree of attachment to different places in the city can lead to highlighting the importance of each spatial scale for citizens and the mechanism of emotional relationship with these places. To this end, after completing the questionnaire, various statistical analyzes were done on the data, the purpose of which

was to identify the difference in place attachment score caused by the spatial scale.

5.1. Attachment to Home, City, and Neighborhood

In this section, the extent of citizens' attachment to different spatial scales is examined. In this regard, a one-sample t-test was used to analyze the data. In the first part, the degree of attachment is examined in general and without separating the neighborhoods (Table 3). Nevertheless, in the second part, the degree of attachment in different scales (house, neighborhood, and city) in four types of different places in Rasht (new, middle, old, peripheral context) is examined (Fig. 3).

Table 3. The Degree of Attachment in General and Without Separation of Neighborhoods

Scale	Test Value = 3		
	N	**Sig. (2-tailed)**	**Mean**
Home	3	0.000	3.9758
Neighborhood	8	0.000	3.0388
City	8	0.000	3.6766
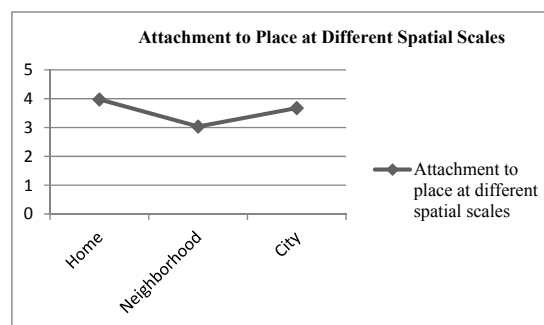
Fig. 3. Attachment to Place at Different Spatial Scales

The results reveal that attachment to home is at a higher level than attachment to neighborhood and city.

In general, man needs a place called home. The house provides security, control, identity, and privacy. An

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appropriate home is essential for human health. Because it brings enough peace and due to the protection of human against the environment, the person will be less prone to damages. Consequently, it seems noticeable that attachment to home is more than attachment to neighborhood and city. The dominance of attachment to the city compared to attachment to the neighborhood stems from the issue of identity. There are two main reasons for this: One is that people, consciously or unconsciously, attribute their identity to their city rather than their neighborhood. The second reason that can be considered is that individual needs are more easily met in the city than in the neighborhood. In other words, meeting the basic needs at the city level is easier than at the neighborhood level. Therefore, for the two reasons mentioned, it is obvious that the attachment to the city is more than the attachment to the neighborhood. The results of attachment to the three scales of house, neighborhood, and city are presented in Table 4. The results of the four types of neighborhoods are presented separately in Table 4.

Table 4. Attachment to Place in Three Scales of House, Neighborhood, and City With Separation of Neighborhoods

Type of Texture	Scale	Test Value = 3		
		N	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean
New	Home	3	0.000	4.0170
	Neighborhood	8	0.000	3.2232
	City	8	0.000	3.5319
Middle	Home	3	0.000	4.0510
	Neighborhood	8	0.000	2.9401
	City	8	0.000	3.7819
Old	Home	3	0.000	3.8707
	Neighborhood	8	0.000	2.9885
	City	8	0.000	3.6365
Peripheral	Home	3	0.000	3.9654
	Neighborhood	8	0.000	3.0059
	City	8	0.000	3.7500
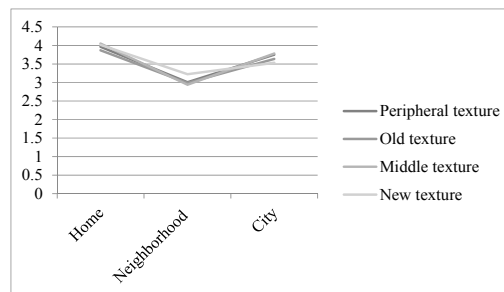
Fig. 4. Attachment to Place in Three Scales of House, Neighborhood, and City And Its Relationship with the Type of Urban Context

The results show that attachment to place in the three scales of the home, neighborhood, and city, always follows a certain form and has little relationship with the type of urban context and the quality of the neighborhood (Fig. 4).

5.2. Relationship between Attachment Values at Different Spatial Scales

The present study tries to explore the relationship between place attachment values at different spatial scales. Consequently, Pearson correlation analysis was used to investigate the relationship between them. Due to the limited criteria, no factor analysis has been done for it.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Coefficients between Place Attachment Values at Different Spatial Scales

Correlation Scale	Sig. (2-tailed)	Pearson Correlation
Attachment to Home with Attachment to City	.000	.424 **
Attachment to the House with Attachment to the Neighborhood	.000	.264 **
Attachment to the Neighborhood with Attachment to the City	.000	.320 **

The results of correlation analysis revealed that there is a positive relationship between attachment values in these three spatial scales but the intensity of this relationship between these scales is not the same. For 400 data, the Pearson correlation coefficient between home and city attachment, between neighborhood and city attachment, and between home and neighborhood attachment is 0.424, 0.320, and 0.264, respectively (Table 7). Correlation coefficients can be interpreted as follows: the house as a place for private life and the city as a social settlement have a high correlation with each other. Consequently, citizens' expectations of the city are primarily focused on the home, and especially on its economic and physical dimensions such as property position, housing quality, etc., and then on concepts such as vicinity and social relations that can be experienced at the neighborhood level. The other side of this issue shows another challenge related to neighborhoodism. A challenge that shows that with the complexity of social relations in modern cities, social networks are becoming less location-oriented. In the present age, which is called the age of movement, travelling by car or at a higher level not travelling due to the presence of virtual networks causes a spatial scale such as neighborhood to lose its position for hosting social networks.
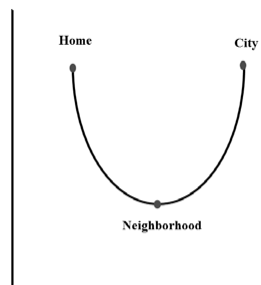

Fig. 5. Attachment Rate and Spatial Scale

Consequently, the results of the analysis show that neighborhoods not only have less attachment but also the relationship between neighborhood attachment and home and city attachment is low. The neighborhood as a central spatial unit has lost its role to socialize and create an identity with residents. In the past, in addition to being a continuation of the house, the neighborhoods were also a gateway to the city. Neighborhoods were a place for social interaction and socialization, a role that is now being played in large-scale urban spaces because our neighborhoods create less opportunity for this. Psychologically, the limit of the neighborhood in the city is more blurred than the boundary of the city. The boundary of the city is more visible than the boundary of the neighborhood in the city. Physical and functional deterioration of neighborhoods and rapid changes in their social, economic, and physical structure, has reduced the role of neighborhoods in the public mind and declined the residents' sense of belonging to the neighborhood (Fig. 5).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

One of the necessities for continuing to live in the city, neighborhood, and even home is to have a sense of attachment to the place. Various researchers and thinkers have made extensive efforts to examine the sense of attachment to place. Most of these studies have focused only on the neighborhood , and little research has been done on all three scales of home, neighborhood, and city, which also reported the U-shaped relationship between attachment values in these three levels. The current study contains two parts, the first part examines the attachment to place in different spatial scales of Rasht and the second part examines the relationship between attachments values in different spatial scales. In the first part, attachment to place was examined in these three scales: house, neighborhood, and city, the result of which revealed the highest attachment to the house and the least attachment to the neighborhood. This result indicates that neighborhoods in response to the new needs of their residents have failed. Numerous researches on attachment that were done on a neighborhood scale and between traditional and modern neighborhoods of the city found that attachment to traditional environments is more than attachment to modern environments. Nevertheless, the results of the present study indicate that the attachment to the three spatial scales in the new, old, middle, and peripheral neighborhoods are not significantly different from each other. Even in many cases, the residents of the new neighborhoods show a greater degree of attachment to their home, city, and neighborhood. The chief reason for these evolutions is due to differences in the pattern of attachment. As the correlation coefficient table shows, attachment to neighborhood and city depends more on one's attachment to one's home. This issue indicates that the dimensions of individual life in Iranian cities have become more prominent in recent years, which has pushed back the concept of social life in the neighborhood and the city. The results of this study indicate the null status of the neighborhood in the life of residents. Its absence will have a huge semantic and emotional burden and will lead to a complete change in the meaning of the neighborhood and the sense of belonging to it over future generations. Recognizing the needs of people in the new era and coordinating the space of neighborhoods with these needs is one of

these solutions. Studying the traditional neighborhoods of Iran as spaces that met the needs of the people and had a coordinated mechanism with their residents, can help planners to achieve this goal. As Figure 6 shows, in the old cities of Iran, the neighborhood as a middle scale has clear boundaries and very important function.
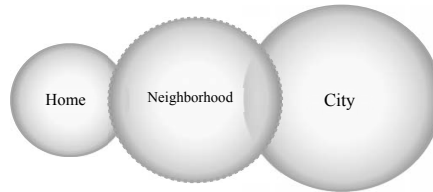
Fig. 6. The Performance of Triple Scales in the Historical Past of Iranian Cities

The reduction of the family dimension along with the independence of housing units and increasing their facilities, importance of the values of private lifestyle versus social residence style based on neighborhood relations over the past few decades along with the lack of attention to social events by city managers, in general, make the scale of the house more important in the life of the public. On the other hand, the boundaries of the neighborhood have become blurred for the citizens, and in fact, the neighborhood has assigned its roles to the two spatial scales of home and city (Figure 7). In this way, security and privacy are no longer defined within the boundaries of the neighborhood but within the boundaries of the house, and in the other dimension, membership in social networks, making friends and other collective events do not occur within the boundaries of the neighborhood and these affairs are all done on a city scale.. In many cases, even if these events are near home, our perception as citizens is that social experience is happening on an urban scale. This is because the Social institutions within the neighborhood and their subdivisions no longer play a role in creating a social experience for residents. As a result, any social experience outside the home is an experience for us in the city, not the neighborhood.
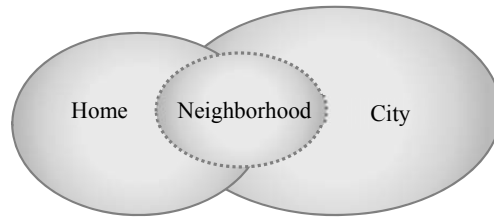
Fig. 7. Function and Relationship of Three Spatial Scales in the Contemporary Period

One of the most significant ways to reinforce the role of neighborhoods is to involve people in neighborhood issues and affairs management. Everyday tasks such as maintaining and caring for the neighborhood's green spaces, painting curbs and walls, or special events such as holding mass events such as celebrations and mourning are examples of neighborhood affairs. Identifying favourite topics of different age and social groups in the form of online social networks and locating social events based on these topics can be another solution. For example, enthusiasts of cycling, computer games, or other sports and entertainments can arrange thematic and social events in the neighborhood. Another solution is to prepare the environment to increase interaction between residents. Sometimes small changes in street design, including creating a seating area, defining edges, or increasing the number of leisure uses, can make the space more social. At large, the design of urban spaces based on the original Iranian patterns and the needs of the people and the constant communication of the people of the neighborhood with the urban management apparatus can strengthen their sense of attachment to the neighborhood.

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