On Consensus Territories

Case study: Masouleh and Talarpish

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Abstract:

The historic background of residential areas show that territorial behaviour is respectful for inhabitants , and it is considered as something necessary for living. Such territories, which create spatial-physical and even mental boundaries, construct identity of places. There are levels of territorial behaviour which are called *consensusterritories* and this is what we are going to explore here. The distinguishing feature of such territories is illegal ownership of the clients. The territories play a pivotal role in forming the organic physical structures of historic textures.

The case study of this research is the historic city of Maosuleh which focuses on the *Talarpish*; it is tried to analyse territories playing a key role in local policy making regarding the architectural elements of the historic city such as Talarpish and it might be classified at five levels: territory of unity, local territorial system, influenced by accessibility system, the neighboring territory and impacted by ritual system.

Key words: territorial behaviour, consensus territories, historic city of Masouleh, Talarpish

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Introduction:

The contemporary architecture and urban planning impacted by the recent improvements emphasise on individualism and radical creativity of designers. Such issue influenced the traditional structure of all habitats in the world to the extent that it resulted in widespread physical and social abnormalities especially in countries with long historic background in urban planning. Respecting neighbourings and territorial behaviours are an important principle in traditional architecture which is seriously neglected; as a result, recognising the necessities and conditions by which historic cities and villages should be dealt with and also employing those characteristics in residential areas are of highest importance.

Culture includes patterns which are essentials of human nature and life, and they are not just ornaments of it. So, it is necessary to consider human behaviour from existential viewpoint(Greetz.1973.46). Regarding Holy Quran verses and prophet's Hadith, especially the necessityof "There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm"("لاضررولاضرار")[1] as mentioned by prophet Mohammad (Sistani, 1993, 13) respectingand socialising withneighboring territory among Muslim societies is a duty

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1   According to this Hadith no Muslim has the right to bring harm to others while he will be freed from such harm. A Muslim should consider his deeds including constructing,… and its consequences such as its effects on his neighbors not to bother them.

and whatever brings dissatisfaction within such territory is not respected (Morteza, 2008, 50). This kind of duty is manifested in social interactions of people in historic cities and villages in Muslim world and it is one of its key factors in social organization (Azkia, 2008, 221). Additionally, it is a kind of custom torespect others and because of its mutual and interactional nature, a sort of conscious participation can be seen among people even present till now (Habibi,…,2006).

Interactional and consensusbehaviours in physical and social areas which partly will be described in terms of *territory* have different meanings in different cultures (Madani pour, 2008, 61-69) and even they are sometimes contradictory (Falamaki, 2006, 60); since such territoriality,influenced by the interaction of instinct and acquisition, is remarkably impacted by changeable variables such as time and culture (Shams, 2009,272 and Rapaport,2009,128). The historic background of residential areas in Muslim world shows indicates that inhabitants respect the territorial behaviour of each region and widespread interaction has been part and parcel of their life. Such territories, which create spatial- physical and even mental boundaries, construct identity of places and their inhabitants.

Territorial behaviour and consensus territories:

Territories are often known in terms of legal ownership and property marking. However, under some conditions, there are illegal ownership territories which are known due to "a kind of ownership felt through the physical space" Azkia, 2008, 221quoted in Belt et al). This kind of territoriality is a sort of feeling which comes from a bondage or likeness of a place and it is a kind of subjective form for having control over space.(Bahreini, 1999,71-70). Such behaviour due to observing social interaction makes the relationship between people easy and so avoids any contradiction and poor social relationship (altman,2003, 131).

Such territory can be catogrised under what Altman calls secondary or public territory (ibid, 140-148) and **Alsharqawi** names it supporting or peripheral one (Lang, 2007, 170). Such territory with different names, influenced by surrounding perception[2] and historic position of a nation, can have different interpretations and employ different scales and divisions. However, the common on ground of such territories is that the inhabitants are not their legal owners and those areas are not marked; the inhabitants consider such areas as their own properties and take defensive measures if one wants to set foot in their area[3].such territories, where the its inhabitants are on binding agreement, can be called " *consensus territories*"[4]. *Consensus territories* play a pivotal role in shaping organic and physical structures of historic textures which are generally neglected. As Rapaportstates,"it is useful to find the factors which cause bond to a territory and its surrounding environment correctly and they can help us to understand the formation of residential areas" (Rapaport, 2009,130).

The case study of the present research is the historic city of Masouleh. So, it is tried to analyse the issues according to physical and social structures of the city. Masouleh, in north of Iran, includes bewildering territorial behaviours; it is a interwoven residential area where its traditional architects (and urban planners) may be more than anybody else are concerned with finding some solutions for issues such as neighbouring,

[2] . See: Eynifar and aghalatifi. 1390
[3] . See: Altman,1382. 131.
[4] . In persion language: Consensus is meaning Adapt , Accompany,Gettingback together(Dehkhoda, 1392)

agreements and its social consequences. The organic cities like Masouleh are formed in light of itsinhabitants' agreement and respecting the certain traditional rights of its neighbours. The construction and development of buildings, their location and arrangement are in a way that apart from its morphological and semantic angle, are inevitably based on neighbours' agreement and consensusterritories.(Image1 ,figure1)

Right:Masouleh- The end of Qajar era (Masouleh Base) / Left: Physical boundary of different areas in Masouleh (Author)

Masouleh: consensus territories

It is needless to say that Masouleh architecture is beyond a mere physical element but represents special culture and history of its inhabitants (Daneshyar,2009.19-20). Masouleh houses are interwoven due to its structure and architecture which make the neighbouring inhabitants to interact and agree with each other; there are many houses in Masouleh which have a wall in common and the interior structure are interrelated through doors. This is a feature which implies social and civil unification in Iranian history (Falamaki,2012,223). Such common ground provided an opportunity for the neighbours to be in contact with each other since early days. Although the traditional-social structure of the city has undergone changes due to changes of ethical and population patterns, respecting neighbouring and consensus territories among the inhabitants are evident and it is may be because of unique feature of its physical texture. Such territories and respecting rights play a key role in social consensus of Masouleh inhabitants. Recalling that the Social system which is Dominant on Such a Biological collections, As Habermas explains(Habermas, 2011), is Based on "practical action" and The fundamental contradiction with the Contemporary society which is Based on "purposive_rational action".Hence,theclassification andanalysis of theseterritories,according to thenormsandconventions ofinteractionis key.

Classifying consensus territories in Masouleh

Classifying consensus territories which is unknown to non-locals in most cases in Masouleh is vital for taking some local measures in development and improvement of that historic place. Indeed, ignoring such territories in decision making process related to physical areas, though it is limited, can trigger defensive and even aggressive behaviour of the inhabitants. These are territories which are recognisable by living in real behaviour settings(Barker,1968,18) and if they are known they can be managed better by taking some legal measure. Such issues wereconsensus upon many years ago during the mid-Qajar era(the ruling dynasty of Iran from 1794 to 1925) which were manifested in chart of traditional management of first ten days of Muharram (The first

month of Islamic calendar) rituals in Masouleh.[5]In the following, it is tried to explain"consensus territories" in Masouleh in relation to this research paper based on "interwoven branches".[6]

1- Masouleh as a territory of unity

Epistemologically speaking, identity is a striking characteristic of our real experience of place (Relph,2010,61). Territorial behaviour which range from personal space scale to levels of behaviour which indicate a kind of national (and regional) loyalty along with basic security and motivation have an important impact on constructing individual identity (Porteous,1976). All the epistemological, psychological and anthropological studies about feeling a place entity show that our identity through the historic continuation and intimate interaction with a place will end in a kind of bond, empathy, unification, sacrifice and a kind of identification with place (Falahat,2006).

Masouleh as a territory of unity explains the aforementioned ideas, so such identity is embodied in place which may be recognizable through time, lingual, semantic, spatial, functional and physical components. The territory which can be shaped for some reasons such as geographical boundaries, historic or ethnical characteristics bringa kind of feeling of belonging, agreement and widespread consensus among neighbors (both residents and non-residents). Such feelings are represented in certain ways (despite in group contradictions) and they can be catogrised under some titles like authenticity, citizenry,stimmung and etc.

Due to its geographical and natural location, Masoulehsharply distinguishes from other surrounding habitats.[7]The city is lied down in a mountainous area, which ecologically speaking, is the best residential area and its original structure and cultural landscape have harmonious relationship with natural and artificiallandscape and it can be subject to folk-biology studies[8]. For each one from Masouleh, Masouleh is a territory of unity and an unified territory where any social or physical changes are comprehensible under concepts such as "Masouleh origin or from Masouleh"; in a sense that the overall and delicate changes of the façade of the buildings and those of the whole of the city and also, natural and artificial will change.[9]

2. Masouleh in Mahalasystem

Mahalais considered by many scholars as the basic unit of urban planning (Madani pour,2008,62) and accordingly, it is considered as an ideal unit for social organization which is publicly observed (Habibi, 2003). Scientific approaches indicate that there is a sense of solidarity and mutual relationship among the residents in light of collective identity which is one of the important elements in making Mahala(Abdollahi

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[5]. Traditional management system of holding the first ten days of Muharram ceremony is listed among the national monuments of Iran.

[6] . Using "interwoven branches" phrase highlights that such hierarchy are like branches interwoven and are inseparable (Falamaki, 2011).

[7] . It is interesting to say that when the one from Masouleh wants to go to lower parts of the city, s/he says that s/he is going to Guilan (a province in north of Iran); while it is known that Masouleh, politically divided, was part of Guilan.

[8]FolkBiology(see :Taylor,1990)

[9]. It is unanimously signed and sealed in a historic document in Masouleh that cutting down trees in upper areas in the city, which puts it in danger of falling rocks, is strongly forbidden and those who commit it are cursed (Soufinejad,1997).

and…,2010). Then, it is not surprising that Mahalain historic cities are influenced by ethnical (family), racial, religious, and other kinds of divisions (Habibi, 2003,48). Of course, it is doubtless that natural and geographical boundaries have effective impact on construction of such physical and social identities.

In the first glance, Masouleh is considered as a single local area while it consists of different residential areas like other historic cities in Iran which have undergone different historic changes with distinguishing physical traits. Such traits, in turn, left their impact on social, ethical and racial interactions of each local area (Pourali,2013). Although such Mahalas, Keysar (Keshe-sar), Khuni-var (Khane bar), AsaMelle (AsadMahala), Maza-var (Masjed bar) and Reihoneh-var (Reihaneh-bar) were made due to physical changes, these changes are not clear-cut today. However, the inhabitants are fairly familiar withdifferent social territories; to the extent that it affects social behaviour and interaction of people from one Mahala who wants to marry with another one from another Mahala[10].Undoubtedly, anthropologically speaking, studying such behaviours are essential from residential and cultural interferences[11] of its inhabitants point of views. Each Mahalla of Masouleh have Coherentidentity and Locals Are attempting for respecting Its Social relations .[12]This relations are especially specified   in establishment ofMuharrammourningrituals.

3. Territory influenced by accessibility system

Accessibility is one of the crucial aspects in constructing images of cities (lynch, 1385,94). Regarding some factors such as paths, human beings recognize the identity of the place and accordingly," s/he selects or creates those paths which build thespecial structure of his/her existential space"(Shoulz,2002,36). Not only make pavements our accessibility possible to move from one place to another, but alsoit helps us to recall what we have seen and experienced and find ourselves in bigger groups (Von meiss, 2007, 160). Accessible pavement territories should be considered as an identity constructing entity for residents in Masouleh. Such pavements, which connect houses to places like the entrance and exit of the city, bazaar, mosque, graveyard and mausoleum, are exposed to the residents due to coming and going in the city. This kind of territory as an effective territory of an individual, his/her house and family is of high territoriality.

The lack of enough land for building houses in Masouleh and accordingly, the limitation of land for paths,pavements and alleys which have common landlords, have made the residents, willingly or unwillingly, avoid any interference of the space of their houses with those of paths,in order to strengthen social agreement. Such measures which can be abused for some profitable business such as increasing the area of space up to twenty centimeters in two directions of the building which are connected to the

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[10] . · For example, for many from Masouleh believe that those who live in Masjed-bar (beside mosque) are cleverer than other residents of other Mahala. An old man from Khane-bar (beside house) Mahala who married a girl from the former Mahala considered it as an important event in his life.

[11.] See AsqariKhanqah and …,1999 and Rapaport, 2009

[12]   . It is probable to say that some public places in Mahalas in Masouleh are mosque and springs except bazaar and semi-public like neighbours' roofs.

pathsmake the residents to provoke protest and the landlord in an unwritten agreement[13] shouldrestore the beneficiary of the house.

Each new experience or interference in paths should be examined according to previous experiences and based on synchronic and diachronic pattern study of movement, natural traits and man-made surrounding (Habibi, 2003).[14] As some studies show socio-cultural impacts of each surrounding on forming direction and routes are undeniable. (widlok,1997)and Masouleh is no exception. (image2,figure2)
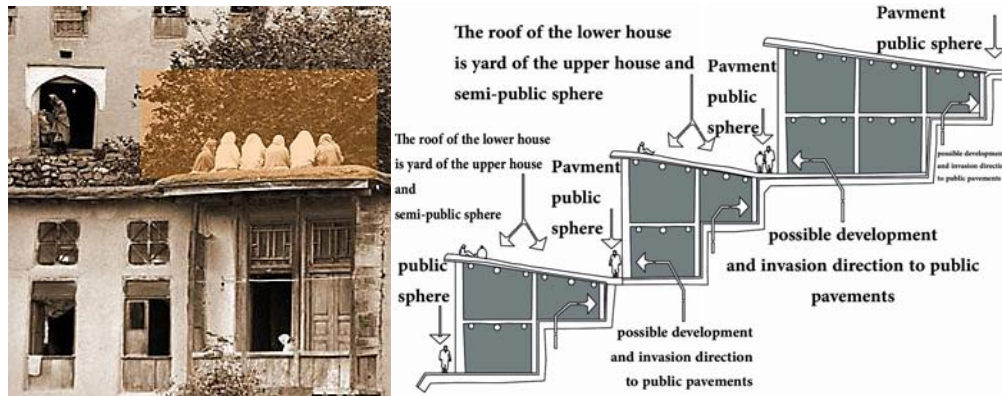
Right: possible development and invasion direction to public pavements which are carefully observed by the residents (author) Left: The way women sit on the roofs(Masoule base)

4. Neighbouring territory

The Sphere of influence of an individual house which includes neighbouring territory is the most important level in territory behaviour. As Porteous states,"a house as an eternal symbol of one's self, forms a highly meaningful set of space-group-time and so each house is fundamental centre of territoriality"(Porteous,1976). The neighbouring territory is an important Sphere of influence so in comparison to other levels it includes more territoriality and observation, and it should be considered as an effective territory for each house.

Like any other historic cities, each house in Masouleh creates aconstraint in relation with its neighbouring house which can be called neighbouring territory. However, it should be noticed that mind mapping, the plans that the residents have in their minds of these neighbouring territories, are defined in three elevationleveling. These levels are mentally portrayed regarding visual, hearing and accessibility sight. In this sense, each housewith the house beside in three floor levels form a neighbouring house which have common visual sight through slab-openings or common indirect accessibility. Such constraint of each house includes upper houses, lower houses and, of course, the floor with the same floor level with the building (three floor levels in the

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[13] . Unfortunately, lack of careful plans of registered properties and deeds worsened the development and invasion of buildings in pavements. The changeable width of the pavements in Masouleh made it practically impossible to introduce regulations common in contemporary cities.

[14] . Many of the pavements in Masouleh are the roofs of the below or beside neighbours, so an inappropriate development and designing of neighbouring house can be seen as an obstacle to neighbours accessibility.

illustration). This is the territory[15]where Masouleh'swomen sit, sew and talk with their neighbours andMasouleh's men traditionally take a walk along the roofs.[16]

This level of territory, which sometimes due to narrow alleys and accessible pavements, has a kind of garden (Croft)which is indeed the snow-throw of the upper house. This area is not part of the alley and it is owned by the lower house neighbour. However, inevitably, the upper house neighbour is allowed to throw upper house and alley snow there. Ordinarily, it is impossible to construct any building in such area for the lower house landlord.[17]The roof of the lower house,in Masouleh, is not only the yard of the upper house but also it is a semi-public space and even sometimes part of the pavement. So, any kind of change in the height of these kinds of roofs and even the covering material should be explained.[18]Such encounter with neighbouringand accepting neighbours views concerning personal properties are unique characteristics of territory behaviour in neighbouring levels in Masouleh. The boundary of such territory is often marked by locating minor directions such as stairs distinguished from public pavements while these boundaries are insensible to the strangers. As Kalen (Kalen, 2008, 32) says about determining the boundaries,employing fragile simple structures, theneighbouring boundary here is very complicated and while it is unclear for others it guaranties social safety and agreement.(figure3 ,figure4)
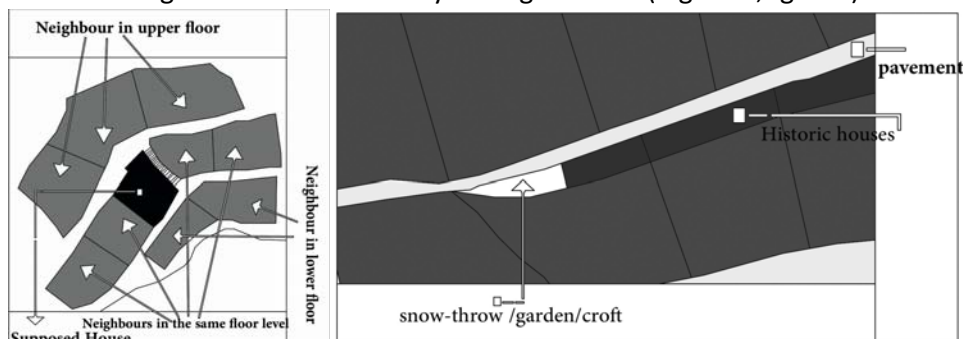
Right: Neighbours of a house in AsadMahala in Masouleh. Left: croquis (sketchy drawing) of snow thrower in Kashe-sar (Author)

5. Territory influenced by religious rituals

Collective symbols and rituals in each traditional city bring in certain rules and regulations. It is essential to understand such elements as an independent variable

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[15]. The forefront of house in Masouleh is called *Barieh-ben*. Barieh in Masouleh's local dialect means Bazsho (local windows, slab- opening). Indeed, the forefront of a house is the space below slab-opening . Also, the neighbour in Masouleh's local dialect is called *Hamsoubeh* and the neighbour with whom one shares the same wall is named *Bar-be-barHamsoubeh* (I owe such information to Mr. ShojaRoohi whom collected them from the local elderly)

[16] . Apart from an entertaining activity, men walking on the neighbours' roofs were an important way of stepping the clay, to use anachronism, insulation of the roofs.

[17]. If there would be built some constructions in such areas, the lack of snow thrower caused problems such as gathering snow in alleys and blocking the pavements. In Guilan urban architecture, i.e. Rasht, sometimes the edges of a sloped roof is extended to the neighbour's roof. While such constraint is neighbour's, s/he allows that rainwater of the neighbouring house run off to his/her drip according to a kind of agreement called Ab-chek (water-drop).

[18]. It is interesting that destruction or belated renovation of a neighbour's house in lower floor provokes protest of a neighbour in upper floor since the yard of the latter diminishes or accessibility to the neighbour's house will be difficult. There is no room for strict private ownership, these four walls, in this kind of territory and all neighbours in a local agreement respect each other rights. It is highly important especially in Masouleh Bazaar where the roof of the shop in lower floor is frontage of shop in upper floor

along with livelihood and surrounding factors. Adapting space and scene of traditional rituals with city configurationis to the degree which giving a complete analysis of its form and spatial organization is impossible (Aminzadeh, 2007). These rituals and ceremoniesare ,inMasouleh, held according to some certain rules in special places and paths. Additionally, they are implemented according to a written historic agreement under supervision of a clergyman.[19]

Holding rituals, especially carrying A'lam, which is part of mourning ceremony in Ashura in different Mahalas for special aims is a time of congregation that established an consensus and respectful territory for the inhabitants; this is why another level of consensus territory in Masouleh should be analysed in light of religious rituals especiallythe first ten daysof ceremonies of Muharram. The physical and morphological structure of the central part of the townis strikingly built to allow the mourning groups to have their ways in different Mahalas in the city and provide people with some places to watch these traditional ceremonies. Consequently, any unsuitable changes and development such as changing the width of pavements and also increasing the height of roofs of neighbouring houses can bring disharmony to this historic territory.

The territory of holding religious ceremonies should be distinguished from Mahalas territory since people from one Mahala visit another Mahala to participate in Muharram mourning groups, so the territoryshould be considered as compositionof the territory of accessibility and Mahalaandterritory of unity. This domain of territory for non-residents of Mahalas who live there from time to time is respected and many numerous old residents of Masouleh who are do not live there take part in the ceremonies, and, accordingly, the coming and going domain are respected.[20] (Image 3,4,5)

Ritual ceremony of carrying A'lamin different levels.Narrow pavements (MasoulehBase)

Healey states that the sole analysis of morphological elements should not be considered as a basis for spatial planning and, accordingly, permission for any interference (Healey, 1923, 23). Experiences show that interfering and developmental practices in Masouleh without recognizing social relations and respected territories have not led to shallow ends. This is why after years it raised protested by many

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[19] . The document was written by Mullah Mohammad Sharif, one of the clergymen, in 1883 in Masouleh and it is valid up to present time.

[20] . In early years of 50s, increasing the height of one of the buildings next to Jelo-khan Imamzadeh (Jelo-khan mausoleum), Zaer-sara now (Pilgrims' house), interfered with the sight of watching Muharram religious ceremony, carrying Alam. Although the building was built for forty years (which may seem to non-residents of Masouleh non-sense, they still want to destroy it.

residents. BuildingTalarpish (Balcony) in a house in Masouleh, which will be discussed shortly, is an example of a likely simple interfering action. Suchaction has been possible only by respecting consensus territory domains since long time ago. It is, also, evident that developmental actions such as increasing height or area of the buildings, making larger slab-openings and portals, changing the dimension and direction of pavementsare not exceptions. Such aforementioned domains which are catogrisedunder territorial behaviour play a pivotal role in decision-making and planning of the historic town.(image6)

Talarpish(Masoule Base)

The impact of consensus territories on Talarpish

Talarpish (Balcony) is a frontage in historic houses in Masouleh which has been fashioned since the mid Qajar era. This semi-open spatial element, in adaptation with increasing exteriority of contemporary buildings, is one of special characteristics of historic houses and this is why many residents of Masouleh are keen on such spaces (Pourali, 2013); however, the experience shows that such unremarkable interference in the houses, if territories are not respected, it can raise story protest among residents. Such protests, as Jones (Jones,1998) argues, sometimes due to non-cooperation, bad intentions and may be illiteracy of the residents can happen, they mostly originate in territorial domains.(image7, figure 5)
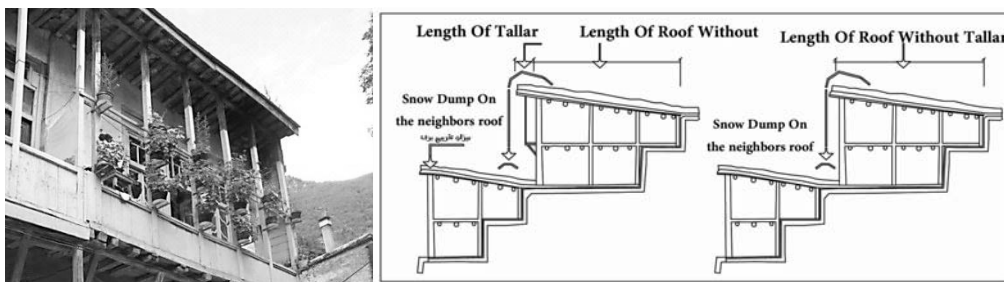
Right: Talarpish makes snow slides on the neighbour's roof instead of the pavement (Author) Left: Talarpish (Masouleh Base)

Studying providing some license for building Talarpish among documents in Cultural heritage Base of Historic Town of Masouleh indicate that the territories mentioned above are in varying degrees useful for building Talarpish (balcony) in Masouleh houses: building such spatial element (Talarpish) if it will be constructed in houses on

narrow pavements specified for religious ceremonies, it brings trouble for carrying Alam, and, accordingly, the religious rituals will be interrupted.

On the other hand, the development of such spaces because of providing overlooking domains for the neighbouring houses and posing problems for snow-throwing in pavements (for increasing the length of roofs) can bring trouble to the neighbours(Pourali and…,2012). Territorial observation has some proponents and opponents among the residents in the town. There are some inhabitants who believe any kind of physical change is against the historical authenticity of the town whilst others argue that if domains of accessibility, neighbouring and religious rituals territories are respected, it is acceptable. In the below table some of the least conditions necessary for issuing building permits for Talarpish are given. (table 1).

The least conditions necessary for building permits for Talarpish concerning consensus territories in Masouleh
1. Building Talarpish should not ruin the authenticity of houses andhistoric texture of the town. The form and type of Talarpish should be based on historic patterns.
2. Building Talarpish (Balcony) should not bring any trouble to the neighbouring houses especially should not interfere with its snow-throwing.
3. Building Talarpish should not bring any visual trouble(Privacy,…) to the neighbours.
4. The width of the lower floor pavement should be considered in a way that building Talarpish do not bring any trouble to pedestrians (The minimum height of Talarpish, regarding the floor of the pavement, should not interfere with coming and going of pedestrians).
5. Building Talarpish should not bring ant trouble to carrying Alam along routes in ritual ceremonies.
6. Generally, it is necessary to come to antacit agreement with neighbours (under the supervision and guidance of Cultural heritage Base of Historic Town of Masouleh).

Source: Pouraliand ,…,2012

Conclusion:
This research tries at finding the territorial behaviour as an important principle of architecture and urban planning which despite its impact on formation of historic architecture of cities and villages are not sadly taken into consideration. The territorial behaviour and social and psychological relations dominated are of elements that should be considered in accordance with morphological studies in spatial planning. Of these, there are some territories which are not legally owned by any owner but they are created according to *a kind of ownership feeling concerning physical space* which plays a dramatic role in socialconsensusand interactions of inhabitants and neighbouring residents. This is what Altman likely calls secondary or public territory and Al-sharqawi names it supporting or surrounding territory. Such territory can, also, be called consensus territories or territories of agreement since all parties are agreed upon it.

Maosuleh, located in north of Iran, includes bewildering territorial behaviours in a sense that it can be said most of its architects and designers are concerned about

resolving issues such as neighbouring, agreement and social consequences of territorial behaviours. These territories play a key role in local policy making regarding the architectural elements of the historic city such as Talarpish and it might be said that they can be classified at five levels: 1. Masouleh as a territory of unity, 2. Masouleh in Mahalas territorial system, 3. the territory influenced by accessibility system, 4. the neighboring territory and, 5. the territory impacted by ritual system. The living condition in these territories are always respected for residents of Masouleh and people make their best to follow them.

Studies show that the consensus territories are very effective in morphation of building in Masouleh. For instance, building Talarpish in houses in the town, as a minimum interference in town texture, was based on respecting neighbouring rights and territories agreed upon and in accordance with some territories such as neighbouring, accessibility, and…territories. Some of the major reasons of building Talarpish in Masouleh are: authenticity, form, type, historic patterns; not bringing trouble to neighbours especially during snow-throwing in lower floor houses, not bringing audio-visual trouble for neighbours; maintaing the harmony between the widths of lower floor pavements with location of Talarpish especially avoiding trouble on the routes of carrying Alam in religious ceremonies.

Undoubtedly, the legal mechanism for establishing domains such as consensus territories, which has been long established in collective mentality of the Iranian, can provide us with appropriate solutions for making local decisions in historic places. The management of today rural and urban areas can raise stormy protest among residents if such measures are not taken into account. However, taking such measures as a reasonable ground by decision-makers for interfering can promote localppartnerships and public agreement.

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