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# Space and place concepts analysis based on semiology approach in residential architecture The case study of traditional city of Bushehr, Iran



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## KEYWORDS

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**Abstract** Space and place are among the fundamental concepts in architecture about which many discussions have been held and the complexity and importance of these concepts were focused on. This research has introduced an approach to better cognition of the architectural concepts based on theory and method of semiology in linguistics. Hence, at first the research investigates the concepts of space and place and explains their characteristics in architecture. Then, it reviews the semiology theory and explores its concepts and ideas. After obtaining the principles of theory and also the method of semiology, they are redefined in an architectural system based on an adaptive method. Finally, the research offers a conceptual model which is called the semiology approach by considering the architectural system as a system of signs. The approach can be used to decode the content of meanings and forms and analyses of the architectural mechanism in order to obtain its meanings and concepts. In this way and based on this approach, the residential architecture of the traditional city of Bushehr – Iran was analyzed as a case of study and its concepts were extracted. The results of this research demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach in structure detection and identification of an architectural system. Besides, this approach has the capability to be used in processes of sustainable development and also be a basis for deconstruction of architectural texts. The research methods of this study are qualitative based on comparative and descriptive analyses.

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## Introduction

Space and place are among the most discussed concepts in architecture. Particularly, these concepts were noticed more in the modern architecture than it was in the past by architects and attempts have been made to present a new image of it. Moreover, the perception of fundamental concepts and basic characteristics of these two elements would have been useful

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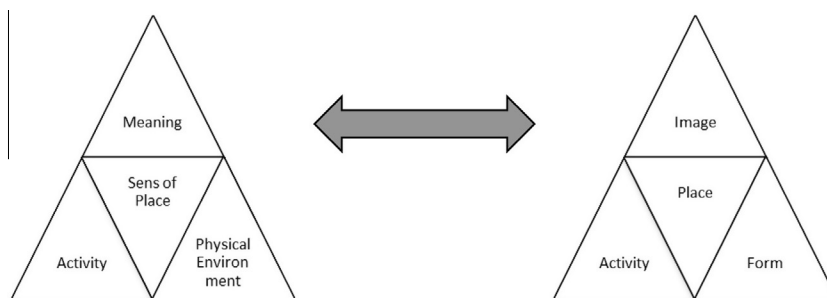
**Table 1** Space and place characteristics.

Space	Place
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space can and should be perceived through the capabilities (potentially) of movement or lack of such capabilities and how that movement took action, flow or stoppage [12]</li> <li>• Mere space has two features: “Spatium” and “Extensio” [3]</li> <li>• Space is created by a specific set of natural and artificial things whose architecture is involved in its creation [5]</li> <li>• Everything which has no space is not architecture. Every building creates two spaces at the same time: interior space and exterior space. Interior space is the essence and basis of architecture [6]</li> <li>• Architectural space can be perceived objectively and feel directly and it can identify by its defining elements [4]</li> <li>• The relation between inside and outside, which is the first aspect of objective space, shows that spaces have various levels of extension and surrounding [10]</li> <li>• Giedion agreed that the architecture can be perceived by two main aspects: organizing of space and built form [9]</li> <li>• Space can be identified by its limitation elements and its character followed by the condition and the order established among these elements. These elements include: floor, ceiling, wall, material and surface, openings [4]</li> <li>• In the phenomenology approach, space has distinctly definable elements which include: dialectic of inside and outside, centrality, surrounding, territory and range [1]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spaces obtain their pure existence from the place and not from ‘mere space’. Spaces, which we come across among them, have been formed by the place. The purity of these places is hidden in things like buildings [3]</li> <li>• If space gives the possibility of movement, place creates pause [8]</li> <li>• The Unity of gestalt, form and space are the characteristics of places and where the living occurs [26]</li> <li>• The place does not need to be occupied or determined by a particular object. Even the environmental conflicts are enough to determine a place [4]</li> <li>• The place can be considered as a result of the interaction of three components: human behavior, concepts and physical characteristics [1]</li> <li>• Paolo Portoghesi did sometimes define it as the “system of places” [9]</li> <li>• The place is a combination of memory, sensory experiences and narratives [7]</li> <li>• The place can be realized as the synthesis of space organization and built form and its meaning is indicated by architectural language or tradition [9]</li> <li>• The most important role among the factors which give character to a place is opposition to the environment. It means topologies, form, and material and color opposition [4]</li> </ul>

in architectural processes and creating the architectural products. In fact, if the purpose of architecture is creating a space or a place for dwelling and living (as Heidegger and Norberg-Schulz had said), then the questions are: what do space and place mean exactly? How could these concepts be created in architecture? Nowadays, identity and sense of belonging are among the fundamental issues in architecture and urban design, especially in cities and regions with a historical background, it has become very important. These are such topics which have been related directly to space and place concepts, thus, highlighting the necessity of discussion about these concepts. There are a lot of different methods for recognizing and analyzing these concepts in architecture. So, this article has attempted to present an approach based on semiology knowledge. Then, the capability of the semiology approach in analyzing the concepts of space and place in architecture has been investigated and its abilities and characteristics have been achieved.

### Space and place concepts in architecture

Although we use the word ‘space’ very commonly in our daily life, the concept of space is quite complicated and makes it difficult to define [1]. However, attempts to offer a definition for space are assigned to Plato and Aristotle [2]. Heidegger [3] did not consider space as something which stands in front of the humans, rather than in his view, space is neither an external nor an inner experience. Space is not something predetermined and fixed; In fact, it is the personal location which defines the space [4]. Moreover, the perception of space is only possible in the presence of the perceptible objects therefore space is the relation among objects [5]. Space, based on its English lexical concepts, can be classified into three types of geographical space, living space and (interior or central) architectural space [4]. Bruno Zevi [6] considered space as the basis of architecture which architecture obtains its characteristics based on it. Table 1 presents the characteristics of space and place in architecture.

**Fig. 1** The components that create the sense of place [11, p. 194].

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