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The Relationship between the Dweller and the Dwelling Revisited

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Abstract

The houses of the modern and postmodern era have failed to provide a “friendly haven” for their dwellers. Some evidence shows that they even promote a sense of alienation and detachment among the dwellers. Available studies show that this problem could be related to a variety of factors such as the lack of harmony between the dwelling and the existential aspects of human being, the lack of meanings associated with such aspects and, the passivity of the dwellers.

Accordingly, the main question of this paper is how the dweller and dwelling are associated. To this end, this research aims at characterizing the house that encourages human to discover its hidden dimensions. Such a house promotes a reciprocal interaction with its dweller and it is like a mirror through which the dwellers can see themselves and reflect on what has been talked about.

This article argues that “the legibility of dwelling” and “the dweller’s interpretation of meanings” are helpful to establish the relationship between the dweller and the dwelling. The relevant studies and theories on the topic were collected and analyzed to explore “the exchange of meaning between the dweller/dwelling”. This study is an attempt to identify the factors contributing the relationship between the dweller and the dwelling. In this regard, based on the degree of legibility and meaning exchange, we proposed several levels of relationship between the dweller/dwelling: “Signification”, “Meaning made by the dwellers” and “Meaning generated by the dwelling”. Finally, the characteristics of a dwelling which interacts with the dweller are introduced and categorized as “readable and familiar dwelling”, “thought-provoking and imaginative dwelling” and “transcendental dwelling”.

Keywords: *The relationship between the dweller and dwelling, The exchange of meaning, Reading, House.*

Introduction

Amongst several factors contributing to human’s participation in different events and his life, the

dwelling is the most important and has been intermingled with his or her life. It is the first place in which a person experiences the sense of attachment to space (Haeri, 2009: 48). The inseparability of the dwelling from the person’s life has encouraged the scholars to consider the dwelling as a process than finalized product. The process intermingles with all existential

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dimensions of human being throughout time. When such a deep and dynamic relationship is established between the dweller and dwelling, the notion of settling down in its true sense (i.e. a place to which a person finds attachment) is realized; the person gives up being a mere observer and, instead, participates in the world. The participation of the dweller leads to revealing the Self, things and the world (Norberg Shultz, 2002: 10). Such a double revelation gives the dweller a sense of stability and set him/her free from the lack of identity, emptiness, and meaninglessness of today's world (Hay, 1998). The scientific and positivist approaches to dwelling have replaced personal, strong and friendly revelations with formulae and regulations and consequently, has produced a dwelling where the imagination of the dwellers are ignored (Partoei, 2008: 11-12). The rule-governed, formulaic and universal dwelling of today which is the result of Cartesian thought does not promote a deep interaction between the dweller/dwelling. Conversely, it intensifies a sense of homelessness, bewilderment, and distress for today's human being. In this regard, the dweller is treated as an object in front of (not beside or with) things and is a distant observer who has a superficial relationship with the dwelling and plays a passive role in meaning-making. To address the above-mentioned problems and establish a deep relationship between the dweller and dwelling, we assume that the dwellers should be encouraged to get involved in meaning-making process. Such a relationship needs to be reciprocal to promote a sense of attachment and help the dweller discover his/her true self. Accordingly, this study is an attempt to examine "how the dweller/dwelling relationship can be established?" To this purpose, first, we present the viewpoints of different scholars and show how meaning is influential in establishing the relationship between the dweller and dwelling. Since such a relationship is bilateral, the interaction between them is presented as "the exchange of meaning". In this study, the meaning generated by the dweller and how it is interpreted are considered.

Accordingly, the various aspects of this relationship are explained in order to show which features of a house can increase the dwellers' level of participation.

Research Methodology

• The research procedure of this qualitative study was as follows:

A) We carried out a careful review of prevalent theories and studies on the relations between "person" and "space", in general, and "the dweller" and "the dwelling", in particular. Then we examined meaning as an element connecting the dweller to the dwelling and reviewed this issue through the lens of different theories, 2) the origin of meaning and the role of its creator and its user were studied. Since the meaning emerges in a bilateral relationship between the dweller and dwelling, it is referred to "exchange of meaning", 3) More precisely, such an exchange is considered as a multilateral matter. In this regard, different degrees of meaning exchange and, different degrees of the relationship were investigated, 4) finally, with reference to the degree, the features of a dwelling to its dweller were explicated (Fig. 1).

Review of Literature

Before the 70s rarely was the focus on the relationship between person and space. Later the growth and density of population in new cities and, consequently, developing plans for accommodating the homeless and different social groups draw the attention of many researchers to the relationship between the space and human (Daneshpour, Sepehri Moghadam & Charkhchian, 2009: 37). Nowadays different scholars have attempted to investigate this issue through the positivist, phenomenologist, and structuralist lenses. Positivists focus on the analytical, scientific and objective nature of this relationship and its generalizability rather than the personal and subjective experiences of people (Carter, 1977). In their studies, the positivists explain the various kinds of meaningful interactions occurring between person and space they emphasize practical meanings and ignore the

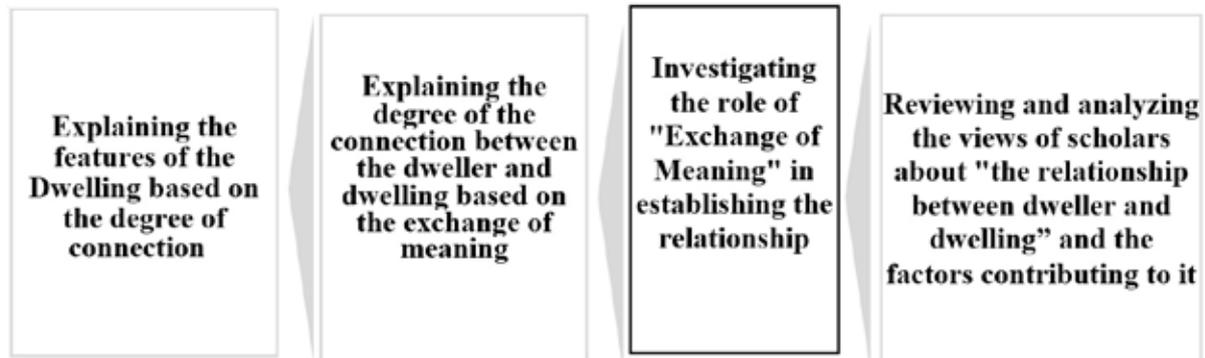


Fig. 1. An overview of the research procedure. Source: authors.

subjective qualities and deep emotions of people (Partoei, 2008: 225-229). In this approach, the person as a subject is opposed against the space as an object. The neglected point is that a person is not simply an observer of his/her life but is its creator (Ibid: 11-12). Phenomenologists put an emphasis on the ready-to-hand entity or the relationship between human and phenomena than present-at-hand human's view of phenomena (Heidegger, 2006); a kind of relationship which develops through the very close and often unconscious interaction between a person and different phenomena in the context of real life. Hence, according to this view, the experience is the main element in the relationship between person and space and it presents an in-depth meaning of a person's existence than being an abstract place. These meanings are formed through the person's interactions with and perceptions over time and mostly signify the unconscious and perceptual dimensions in the hidden layers of his/her experience and result in his/her spiritual-psychological attachment to space (Relph, 1976).

The ideas of phenomenologists have been criticized by positivists for the lack of validity and generalizability. It is because in explaining the deeper layers of person and space relationship, they consider space as a qualitative feature, and emphasize the personal and unconscious experiences of the human (Partoei, 2008: 199). Structuralists criticize such a view for ignoring the system of social, ideological and economic structures and, contrary to phenomenologists who defines spatiality as inside

feature, structuralists considers spatiality as an inside and outside quality (Messy, 1994: 146-157).

Structuralists emphasize the dynamic social interactions between the person and space and argue that the meaning originates from social and ideological structures. They believe that various features (e.g. as globalization, economy, culture and social communications) which are reproduced incessantly in space can contribute to establishing the relationship between the person and space. What differentiates the structuralists from phenomenologists is the emphasis on personal experiences and socio-economic structures. Some phenomenologists think that such discrepancy can be addressed whereas others doubt it (Ibid).

However, it seems that in spite of the differences between the above mentioned views, all highlight that the "meaning" plays a key role in establishing the relationship between person and space. In this context, "meaning" refers to all thoughts that a stimulus triggers in observers' mind and the observer compares it with his/her experiences, aims and intentions. If there is concordance between the observer and the space, the relationship will be made. As mentioned before, such meanings can include a spectrum ranging from spontaneous or primary meanings, like practical and pragmatic ones, to more complicated or connotative meanings including evaluative and symbolic notions.

In establishing the relationship between the dweller and dwelling, in particular, some scholars have highlighted the role of meaning. For example,

Rapoport (2009) believes that those meanings rooted in the cultural values are of great importance. He maintains that form and structure of the house are affected by culture. Also, Alexander (2007) introduces “anonymous quality” for the values exist in reality but not imposed by anyone and move in their own direction. Moreover, Cooper (cited in Jolfaei, 2009: 54) pays attention to the symbolic meanings of the house and introduces it as the reflection of its dwellers. What seems to be common among different views about the dwelling is that meaning plays a key role in forming the relationship between the dweller and dwelling. Consequently, this paper shows how the meaning is made in the process of establishing the relationship between the dweller and the dwelling. Understanding the concept of the dwelling or its meanings requires the interaction and experience of human being. In establishing the relationship between the dweller and dwelling, different issues need to be considered. In the following sections the relationship among these issues are investigated (Fig. 2).

The Role of Meaning-Exchange in the Dweller and Dwelling Relation

According to many scholars, what transform our space into a dwelling are its different associative meanings which develop and are reinforced over time (Relph,

1976; Low & Altman, 1992; Fried, 1963). Therefore, the house is the result of meanings constructed in the course of time and through the interaction with the dweller. It is noteworthy that these meanings are not simply the sum of various elements such as spatial, functional and social structures but it is the result of complex interactions of these aspects with each other and the person (Partoei, 2008: 226).

In fact, what happens in the reciprocal relation of the dweller and dwelling is the dialogue and interaction which occurs between them through “exchange of meanings” in the course of time (Relph, 1976; Low & Altman, 1992; Fried, 1963). In this interaction, the relationship between the person and the dwelling is reciprocal and the will and actions of the human being make space meaningful and transform the empty space to an experienced place and, in the same manner, the place can affect the person. The meaning of the space can influence the values and practices of the person (Walmsley, 1990: 64). Relph (1976) argues the modern architecture has failed to create such a meaning because it is developed based on the quantitative theories. According to Heidegger (2006), the absence of such meanings leads to the dwellers’ sense of detachment in today’s world and questions the true dwelling. To address this problem, he proposes the creation of the space with which the

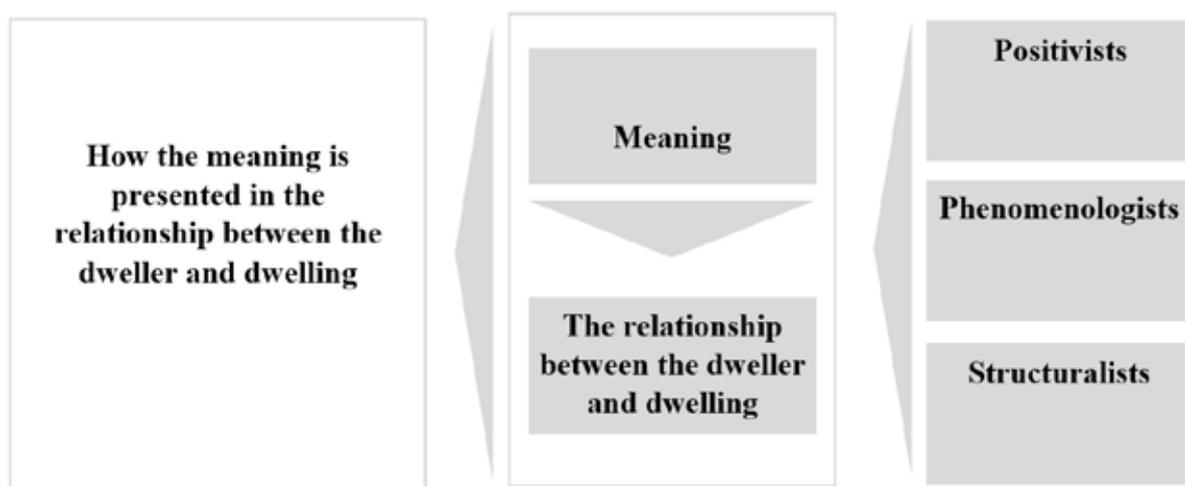


Fig. 2. The shared viewpoints about the role of meaning in the relationship between the dweller and dwelling. Source: authors.

dweller identifies himself and actively get engaged in the meaning-making process.

The Role of Dwellers' Reading in the Exchange of Meaning

As mentioned before, in the relationship between dweller and dwelling, the dialogue and interaction which take place in form of meaning exchange is of significance. It should be noted that the meaning of a work can be stated in two ways: 1) the meaning which accords with the imaginations of its creators, 2) the meaning of the phenomenon understood by the addressees of the work (Nasri, 2010: 60). "Each historical work or phenomenon has an intrinsic meaning which is in accordance with the mindset of its creators; however, the very meaningful work is related to various issues in different times and anyone may read it differently and, for this reason, it is changeable and fluid" (Ibid). Since the readers change in the course of time, the meaning read by them also changes. Similarly, since the meaning of a dwelling is in a constant interaction with the dwellers, it is not the only meaning presented by the designer but how the dwellers interpret it is also important. The semantic fluidity of the dwelling is so that "if it does not last in the form of physical reality, its memories will flood back to our mind. The images of the things destroyed hundred years ago would be triggered in our minds; and be interpreted as beautiful, ugly or their forms are subject to change" (Mansouri & Azad Armaki, 2009: 43-46).

Thus, it should be mentioned that the meaning associated with dwelling is affected by both the designer and the dwellers and it is the result of their contemplations and subjective interactions. With reference to the addressee's interpretation, especially in the interactive dwelling, we can conclude that the meaning of the house mainly depends on the "reading" of the dwelling by the dweller rather than what creator has had on his mind. Indeed, the process of reading is realized through interactions between the addressee and the work, and such interactions which result in some changes in the readers' mind and help him/her

out with the interpretation of the work and it requires activating certain kinds of knowledge in the mind of the readers and also creating new kinds of knowledge and concepts (Ahmadi, 2001: 681). In this process, each time the work is read, the reader may arrive at a new understanding which helps him to grasp a deeper understanding or, put it differently, taking possessions of the work (Nasri, 2010: 122-123). Regarding the amount of addressees' participation, Ingarden (Ibid, 683) divides the process of reading into two groups of "receptive reading" and "constructive reading" and argues that any reading is participation in meaning-making. However, in most of the cases, the reader does not go beyond the explicit intention of the creator and its surroundings. In such instances, according to him, the relationship between reader and work is limited. It is in contrast with constructive reading in which the final meaning always changes, the reader takes an active role in meaning-making and develops more interactions with the work (Ibid). Hence, what deepens the dweller-dwelling relationship in the reading is the process of "meaning-making" or, in the words of Heidegger (2006), the "productive activity" between them which helps the dweller to not be a mere observer but take an active role in his/her life Heidegger maintains that the dwelling should not be treated as a mere object but should represent an active and dynamic dweller. If a house can promote variegated and creative readings for its addressees, it can interact with its dwellers more deeply and increase their sense of attachment.

The Levels of Meaning Exchange between the Dweller and the Dwelling

In the view that the dweller's reading and the dwelling's readability are emphasized, the dwellers and dwelling interact with each other and stand beside each other. In this view, the house is an internal world which has a connection with the person and semantically interacts with him. But what is called the exchange of meaning between the dweller and dwelling can be conceptualized in three levels. The two levels of "signification" and "meaning-making"

are investigated in detail in the following sections.

• Signification

In the book "The Creation of Architecture Theories", Lang (2012) extensively reviews different views about cognition, and perception, and argues that the information needed for creating meaning between person and space should have significant features to trigger mental actions. What actualizes this matter is "the association of mental schemas". Schemas are mental models created when individuals are confronted with a new phenomenon (Ibid, 102). "These models are not finalized products but are like an experienced software that any change in the condition and context of its operation leads to variegated results in their products" (Soltani, Mansouri & Farzinv, 2012: 6). Thus, our understanding of life occurs through the very models, continuously changes and evolves in a certain framework. Our perception of space would be positive if we treat it as an independent and objective entity, and we, an objective entity, act and contribute to it and can match our subjective perception with our own imagination. In the process of matching, "identification" plays a significant role in forming the relationship between the dweller and dwelling (Pakzad, 2007: 26). Therefore, it seems that the two features of readability and familiarity help the dwellers avoid misunderstanding about the dwelling. The legibility feature helps the dweller identify an independent and distinct place whereas the familiarity feature offers a place congruent with the dweller's subjectivity (Fig. 3).

• Readability

"According to many scholars, the misunderstanding of the reader is not associated with the interference of the presuppositions but the imposition of those presuppositions which are alien to the work. The true solution is that the reader corrects them by the aid of the clues in the work itself and the related evidence" (Abedi Sarasia, Elmi Sola & Elmi Sola, 2010: 180). In his book, Lynch (2005) considers these clues and evidence present in the place as some part of the meaning and calls it "legibility".

According to him, readability is the same as semantic transparency helping to know the constituents of the space easily and relate them to each other and present them as an integrated frame in the mind. Since the environment is the mediator of this relationship, the place should have clear and, in some cases, almost ambiguous symbols by which people identify the space and select the appropriate behavioral model (Ibid). In all, readability can be related to: 1) Integrity in the physical form, 2) Conformity to the pattern of activities. The places may be readable and understandable at one of these levels.. However, the better transference of messages and complete employment of potentialities of a place requires the two complement each other (Bentley et al. 2003: 113). Thus, it seems the two features contribute to the legibility of dwelling: 1) The integration of generalities, i.e. the parts and elements of the space should be recognizable and separable in the integrated and coherent set or totality, 2) The ability of responding to particular activity patterns which are a part of the dwellers' mentality.

• Familiarity

To make relation with new phenomena, the human mind always like to find familiar things and tries to identify objects in the form of most familiar models. Knowledge (which occurs due to the association of schemas) does not happen in the vacuum and each person reads a work with a set of presuppositions and mental models (Lang, 2012). Therefore, for associating these schemas and facilitating familiarization with a place, it is important to pay attention to imaginations, memories, thoughts, conscious and unconscious beliefs, values and needs of the person regarding the physical features of the place. It should be noted that these presuppositions are not simply collected and recognized as images in the mind but "Based on the whole received information, the brain constitutes a model and anytime the model is retrieved, the brain experiences visual, aural, olfactory, emotional, sensational, etc. imaginings (Eftekharzadeh, 2013: 88). For completing and recognizing the schemas, the human brain deals with

live and significant experiences, not mere visual images. Thus, it seems that for promoting the sense of familiarity with the space in the dwellers, such schemas or “multilateral schemas” should be activated. Moreover, to survive in the course of time, the schemas should be congruent with “the intrinsic and eternal humane models” in order. According to many scholars, the models which are intrinsic and originated from eternal motifs can arouse sympathy in everyone and would be immortal through time and space as they reinforce deep and common humane notions (Hojat, 2014: 242; Nadimi, 2014: 16; Noghrehkar, Hamzehnezhad & Forouzandeh, 2009: 40). By employing such models in designing, the dwelling can interact with all people at any time and place and becomes a speaker who speaks with and pleases everyone (Fig. 3).

• **Meaning-Making**

“By nature, the human being is a semi-explicit entity” (Bachelard, 2012). Accordingly, people do not like to be lost and attend unfamiliar places but they like its vagueness and complexity because it enables them to create new information (Rapoport, 2005). When we encounter the phenomena for the first time, we associate it with the saved models in our minds. In this process, our mind is challenged by several questions and enigmas related to the phenomena and

it tries to subsume the proposed model to the previous model and forms a new model whose meaning will be created by the reader (Grutter, 2007: 17).

Accordingly, in reading a thought provoking dwelling, the reader is defied and, inevitably, fills the gaps based on his/her experiences and world-views and addresses the difficulties. Thus, s/he interprets dwelling based on his/her perception or sees the dwelling as s/he likes it to be. In such a condition the dwelling becomes like a text whose creation is influenced and controlled by the dweller.

Paying attention to the process of meaning-making in the relationship between the dweller/dwelling is important because in designing a house, the architect cannot design or plan the building according to dwellers’ preferences since the dwellers’ methods of reading are different. The difference between the designer and the addressee, the difference between different groups of addressees, the changes associated with the dweller in the course of time and, generally speaking, the continuous change of life phenomena all result in different methods of reading (Gharavi Alkhansari, 2009). This leads to the formation of different meanings for the dwelling. The meanings might not have crossed the mind of the builders. “Thus, the building or space which is designed for a particular person (let alone a stranger or imagined

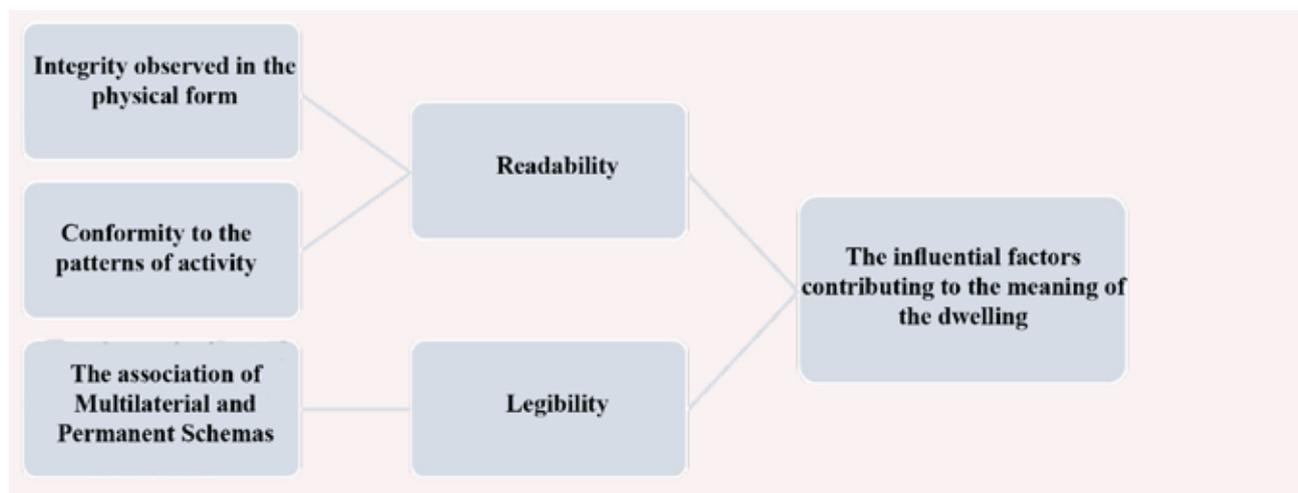


Fig. 3. The influential factors in the meaning of the dwelling. Source: authors.

group) should not be prepared completely and finalized and it should not be too inflexible to change in the future (Pakzad, 2007: 31-32).

However, the dwelling should not be too vague or challengeable to understand for its dweller because his/her mind cannot conform to the presupposed models. Because of this, things which are too much novel seem to be more annoying than interesting. In other words, The more a message is unexpected, the more is novel but such novelty should be always related to previous information, otherwise it is not understandable for us at all (Grutter, 2007: 22-28). In this regard, the vagueness of details and integrity in generalities and the familiarity accompanied by novelty can play a positive role in the process of meaning-making (Fig. 4). The vagueness of environment should not separate the dweller and dwelling. Such degree of vagueness is not damaging

and on the contrary, it can be influential in deepening their relationship between the dweller and dwelling. It stimulates creative human responses including imagination, memory, association, and distinction. It also provides a place from which people receive different meanings and to which they also give meaning.

According to many phenomenologists, continuity as an important factor in the process of meaning-making can strengthen the connections (Holub, 1994: 89). It is worth-mentioning that the dweller reads the house on the basis of his/her knowledge and experiences and sometimes changes his/her views in the course of reading. Consequently, s/he modifies the presuppositions and gives the work a new meaning and sometimes feel hesitant and perplexed. In fact, each time the work is read the reader gains a new understanding. Such knowledge contributes



Fig. 4. Integrity presented in Generalities and Variety in Details in Abbasian House in Kashan. Source: www.mehrnews.com.

to a deeper understanding of the work. In this case, a reciprocal relationship is established between the reader and work and both affect each other (Ibid). Thus, meaning generated can be analyzed from two perspectives: The dweller and dwelling.

• **Meaning made by the Dweller**

In the process of meaning-making, the focus is on the imagination of the dweller and how he attempts to avoid challenges (Antoniades, 2002: 30). Meaning-making is the result of interaction between the mental models of the dweller and the new space and, indeed, imagination is the tool facilitating this interaction. Imagination is the fluid faculty which promotes free thinking when human being encounters with challenges, restrictions as well as questions and help him/her to peep at everywhere s/he likes and diversifies his/her imaginations and memories, enriches the mental models, forms new thoughts and discovers or, better saying, creates new truths (Craft, 2009: 130). The thought-provoking house encourages the person to develop the model of a quiet and organized place in his/her mind, then based on this model, provide a place in his/her environment to settle down. Indeed, the real and tangible house helps us to model the imaginary house by challenging our mind. It is the imaginary house which gives meaning and the individuality to the real one. This individuality originates from the mind of the dweller and, due to this, the house is a representation of the dweller and replete with the sense of attachment and self-identification. The role of imagination in the process of meaning-making and the dweller and dwelling relationship is so significant. In this regards, Bachelard (2012: 50-55) considers the house as the haven of dwellers' imagination and argues that people need to imagine their own house and assign meaning to it. He maintains that the intimacy between the dweller and the house The creation of new meaning which is the result of interaction between the dweller's mental models and the real models in the space and their experience of imagination brings with itself because the interaction is derived from the mental models of the dweller (including beliefs,

memories, individual and collective images, etc.). According to him, the process of meaning-making is realized in two forms: first in our mind and then in reality. When the generated meaning beyond the mind of the dweller and is manifested objectively, then it can make a deeper connection with the dwelling (Ibid: 52). As Jung (cited in Arbab Jolfaei, 2009: 58) argues the implementation of personal meanings associated with the house promotes a sense of attachment among its dwellers. Respectively, Rapoport (2005: 17-20) shows the importance of changes and personalization in the process of dwellers' meaning-making in reality and argues that the personalized meaning of the space is created via dominating, completing and changing it. According to Rapoport (Ibid: 96), "most people free themselves from the ready-made constructed spaces and physical elements which seldom change. He maintains that having the right to select makes the dwellers interested in establishing the relationship. In his view, what is wrong is the excessive tendency of architects to design every aspect and element of the space. Such desire does not permit the user to make any changes in the space. He is against the closed and clear-cut design and recommends that the design should be open and flexible enough to let different people and groups bring their own ideas to the space in different ways such as using environmental objects and elements and personalization (Ibid: 18), (Fig. 5).

• **Meaning generated by the Dwelling**

By nature, the human being is a perfectionist and to manifest his/her true Self, he needs to develop his/her abilities. S/he expects the house to provide a proper context for achieving this goal. Therefore, the features of the house should provide the human with the lifestyle that he has imagined for him/herself and it should be a sign of self-transcendence as well. The house can keep up his spirit and promote his/her Self-flourishing. The meaning promoted by dwelling emphasizes this aspect in the process of dweller-dwelling connection.

For some scholars such as Pallasmaa (2010: 121) the dwelling should appreciate the reading of the dwellers



Fig. 5. A House in Aghda in which the niches present the meaning made by the Dweller. Source: www.mehrnews.com.

and promote a critical view of the world and reflect an ideal world which is tightly attached to valuable meanings. He uses the adjective of “humanizing” to describe the architecture as the clothes a tailor sews based on the physical features of the customer that not only hides the defections but also brings him/her perfection This is the very thing that an architect should do in the society; he should pay attention to the needs and demands of the society and use his/her intellectual genius to satisfy the needs of the dwellers and develop the society (Noghrekar, et al. 2009: 40). Also, the meaning promoted by dwelling differs from what was mentioned in the first level (the meaning made by the dweller). In this level, we are not simply a passive reader but participate actively in establishing a connection. In addition, the message sent by the dwelling at this level is much related to the implicit layers which are rooted in perennial values. By signifying a kind of eternity at the heart of the transient life of human being, they both survive in the course of time and actualize the diversity of values (Partoei, 2008: 163-165). In other words, at the level of “signification”, reading is only passive and the role of the dweller in the dwelling is not active. For a “constructive” reading, the dwelling seems to be inspired with the deep meanings rooted in intrinsic values. Since these meanings are connotative, they are ambiguous and,

subject to different interpretation. These features make reading continuous and create a deeper level of person/space relationship (Daneshgar Moghadam & Eslampour, 2012: 79). In addition, given that they are intrinsic, they can interact with everyone at any time (Nadimi, 2014: 15-19). They are immortal like the Hafiz’s poems whose interpretations are not limited

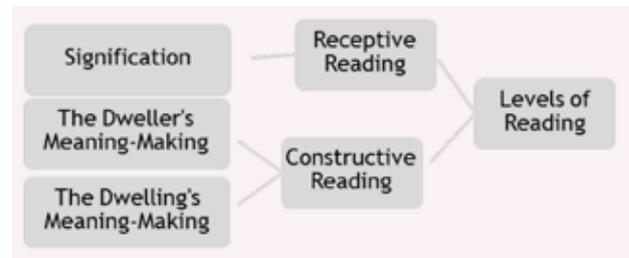


Fig. 6. Levels of Reading in Relation to the Levels of relationship between the dweller and dwelling; Meaning made by the dwellers and Meaning generated by the dwelling. Source: authors.

to time or place since they present human-associated notions and problems (Fig. 6).

Conclusion

Based on the literature review, the relationship between the person and the space can be described through the lens of the positivists, phenomenologists and structuralists. In all views, the role of meaning in such a relationship is emphasized; the only difference is that each has considered a different aspect of it. This study focuses on the meanings generated in the dweller and dwelling relationship and shows how these meanings are presented. Accordingly, establishing a kind of reciprocal relation between the dweller and dwelling is necessary. This is called “exchange of meaning between the dweller and dwelling”. In addition, such an exchange is a dynamic issue including time and incessant “becoming” which can be represented in three levels (Fig. 3). In this context, “signification” is the first level and set necessary condition for the other two levels. It is the necessary premise for the deriving and interpretation of meaning. For establishing the relationship at this level the two features,

“legibility” and “familiarity” should be present. In addition to familiarity and conformity, human being is always in search of new things. Thus, if a person wants to like the house truly, the other two levels should be passed. The first one is an evident manifestation of the Self (the dweller). This stage includes several messages sent to the house (the dweller’s meaning-making). At this level, the house is transformed into a workshop for the dwellers’ “imagination” and provides the ground for the creation of new meanings by “raising questions”. This process is manifested both mentally and practically that, in the latter, the relationship between the dweller and dwelling becomes deeper. At this stage, the meanings sent from the dweller to the dwelling are the representations of the person him/herself and the house becomes a river in which s/he finds him/herself. Though it is familiar, it has wonders; it has the calmness resulted from familiarity as well as the wonder resulted from agitation so that leads the person to revelation. A house cannot be representative of its dwellers, it is not enough to simply be significant and imaginative but, like the person who seeks perfection, it should have a transcended geometry. This geometry is a developing and nurturing and is able to generate the meaning. At the this level, house is characterized by “transcendental features”, not a prison for the dweller. It has a spatial feature which lifts the person’s spirit. At this stage, meaning flows from the dwelling to the dweller. Moreover, the dweller participates in searching which finally entices him/her to discover deep layers of his/her self. Respectively, for promoting his/her perceptual-cognitive level, the addressees need to experience deep meanings which are congruent with the self. The more meanings present the existential aspects of the person and his/her natural and transcendental needs and demands, the more they will help people to gain a deeper understanding of space and connect with it. It seems that by focusing on the intrinsic, natural and cultural aspects of human being, we would be able to have access to a transcended dwelling which is in line with

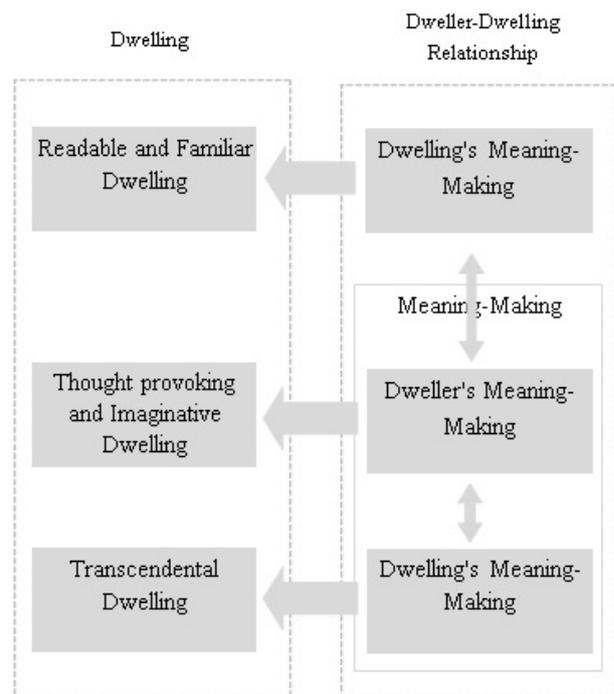


Fig. 7. Conforming the features of the dwelling to the levels of relationship Dweller/Dwelling based on Meaning Exchange; Meaning made by the dwellers Meaning generated by the dwelling. Source: authors.

the person’s spirit, and anyone can read it according to his/her inner voice and interact with it (Fig. 7).

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