An Introduction to the Concept of Privacy and How it is Realized in the House Life-World1 Comparative Study in Pre-modern and Modern Iranian Houses

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Abstract

Privacy, as the process in which humans regulate their relation with the others and achieve the experience of introspection, can be reached in the 'house' more than everywhere else. This phenomenon and its realization in the life world of house is studied and analyzed in this essay.

There are various definitions of privacy from different points of view, but they mostly confirm that privacy is a spectrum as a concept. The basic hypothesis of this research is that failing to pay attention to the spectrum-like nature of privacy in designing living spaces especially 'houses', has on many occasions caused such spaces to be built by considering only one aspect of such concept. 'Individual privacy' and 'collective (group) privacy' are on both extremes of the privacy spectrum and two equal aspects of one nature, and they must be considered simultaneously for the optimum realization of privacy. Giving priority to either of the aspects or ignoring each of them can result in mental or social damages and turn the atmosphere of the house into an ineffective place in the extensive provision of the needs of the residents. Assuming a qualitative approach on the basis of interpretive historical method, this research has analyzed the realization of privacy spectrum in the two groups of pre-modern and modern Iranian houses. According to studies, a one dimensional/one faceted approach to the spectrum nature of the privacy in either group of the houses has led to the elimination of some territories. So either of personal/ individual identity and collective identity is bold in one of these two groups of houses. Therefore, the all-inclusive consideration of privacy spectrum and trying to achieve all of its aspects can be considered a comprehensive approach.

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Introduction

Humans show a side of all their sides due to the capacity and depth of environment they are located in. In case the environment is dimensionless and the bed is designed at one dimension, it may prevent the appearance of inner layers of humans or result in their unpredictable and defensive actions. According to this fact, space as the bed of life can and must be organized in various layers and sides in relation with this existing fact. Therefore, the potential and tendency of human for perception and witness is a proof of multi-layer existence and its depth. Privacy is the cause of such witness. Today architecture sometimes – not necessarily always – has actually ignored it by combining all layers of existence, and by redirecting them to the lowest layer, especially in subjects such as house that provides this opportunity. The quality that overcame the freedom of architecture to choose due to structural innovations, the possibility to create transparent spaces, and direct spatial connections. However, it should be remembered that today's lifestyle and natural and economic limitations have facilitate this selection. Privacy has sometimes been deprived from subjects that are not naturally in agreement with transparency. Confronting natural qualities is unstable and fragile because there is always a fight between the phenomenon nature and the quality imposed to it, especially when the new qualities seek profit. Studying behavior in environments that gradually lose their privacy due to the consistency and transparency shows noticeable results.

The addressed question

"House is a place where the first direct spatial experiences occur in loneliness or in public, and privacy is available in it without the presence of others" (Arjmand, 2012: 27). The question is, have the understanding and drawing various models for the needs of human for privacy resulted in fulfilling the need in an Iranian house, especially in the present era? This question is important because houses with consistent space without privacy have unpleasant

effects on human perception. Failing to pay attention to territory definition, ignoring personal privacy, and evading other people's privacy due to interference of areas inside a house may prevent people from experiencing a calm and quite life. Alexander is among the architects who constantly warn about losing privacy. "Privacy, as an ancient and valuable symbol, is in danger of destruction more than any other symbols. Privacy is a mysterious combination of self-confidence, loneliness, tranquil, thinking, and mind focus" (Alexander, 1992: 40). Another look at the architecture, or in more accurate terms, the "building" of today houses shows the permanent confrontation between the nature and new quality. Open kitchens stand facing the halls, and play the first role in front of the audience in the "display" scene with their furniture and decorations, without any concern about defacing the image of their general spatial pattern (Fig.1A); where the privacy of bedrooms are damaged due to the noise of TVs and audience because of the thin walls; where the required space for corridors and filters is eliminated due to increasing the space of halls and living rooms and the entrance opens directly to the heart of the house (Fig. 1B). The truth is in all these changes, privacy has always been neglected; when the TV is placed in the center of the house and its sound diffuses into all rooms, when the guestroom is inconsistently combined with living room and it wants the privacy of family members to be untouched and on screen, and in balconies that sometimes look like a mole on the façade and demand their share of street noise and pollution, whether the western type of balconies or the Iranian porch and it meant to be a private place for the house members to reunite with nature and enjoy the view.

Literature review

Many researchers have carried out studies on privacy, its necessity and requirements. This subject has been investigated both in humanities and behavior sciences and in environment psychology in architecture.

Fig 1. Consistency of territories and interference of areas – failing +to provide "collective privacy" for house members.
A. Converting kitchen to a part of living room and guestroom in an apartment in Karaj. Source: author.

Fig 1. Consistency of territories and interference of areas – failing to provide "collective privacy" for house members.
B. Opening the door directly to living room and guestroom and eliminating the corridor or entrance filter in an apartment in Tabriz. Source: author.

This subject has not been neglected by sociologists since privacy and territories are among the basic concepts in the formation and continuity of social life of humans. Sociologists such as Richard Jenkins and Irwin Altman and anthropologists such as Edward Hall have presented theories on territories and the need for privacy. In architectural psychology, architectures such as Amos Rapoport and Alexander have studied the causes and needs of humans for privacy in architecture environment especially in houses. Rapoport says, "Since building a house is a cultural phenomenon, the house formation, organization, and spatial order is significantly affected by the culture to which the house belongs" (Rapoport, 2009: 82). Therefore, "The important thing for the form is the type of response we give to the needs from a cultural point of view" (Ibid: 100). This fact results in finding various responses in different cultures although there are equal definitions and analyses for the need of human for privacy. Studies have been carried out on the realization of privacy in Iranian houses. Majority of these studies are in form of article and they are not comprehensive authorization. This article tries to continue the previous studies, and it focuses on a part that has not been discussed in other studies, which is the realization of privacy in Iranian house, and how it is realized in comparison with the history of those houses.

Research Framework
• Definition of Privacy
"Privacy means to empty yourself from others, and to get free from the surrounding environment" (Nasiri, 2009: 38). "According to Kelvin, privacy is a cage a person creates around him in order to prevent the other's influence and power" (Altman, 2003, 26). In other definitions, privacy has been introduced as a contradictory concept and a type of process. "Privacy is the process to monitor the border of oneself/ others. Man sometimes needs to be with others while sometimes he needs to be apart from others. Therefore, privacy is a dialectic process that always changes" (Altman, 2003, 14). Due to this nature, it is

inevitable to create equilibrium between privacy and interaction. One person or a group has privacy when he can get free from social or public conservations and regulations at different levels. "Feeling privacy is obtained usually when one has control over his private life environment and when he feels he has an option in social interactions" (Einifar, 2000: 112). Therefore, privacy process is available where it is organized in various levels in controllable manner.

• Application of Privacy; Introspection – Formation of Individual or Group Identity
One of the most effective applications of privacy is to create opportunity for introspection and reviewing connections, thoughts, and behavior. "Introspection requires an opportunity so people or groups look into themselves to describe and evaluate themselves. This is not usually done in the presence of others" (Altman, 2003: 57). "Privacy also helps self-esteem and determination of one's objectives" (Altman, 2003: 59). Privacy is a situation in which one can reach his internal depth and his internal truth (Nasiri, 2009: 39). Westin states, "Privacy provides individual dependency. It helps self-assessment while it limits and protects connections" (Lang, 2007: 166). Cooper Marcus reports, "When we become more ourselves, we flourish more according to Maslow" (Marcus, 2003: 100). According to these statements, giving credit to the situation in which a person or a group seek privacy and dedicating space to them, not only provides an opportunity to evaluable and repair connections but also improves the application of space. It also provides the chance for the inner layers of each person, which are less available and more volatile, to be observed and to flourish.

• Levels of Privacy / Optimized Privacy
According to Altman's definition, privacy is a process with two final ends of crowdedness and solitude. When the obtained privacy is less than the desired privacy, the person suffers from privacy invasion or crowdedness. When the obtained privacy is more than the desired one, the person suffers from impatience, loneliness, and solitude (Altman, 2003, 32). Hall has put this concept into consideration in the

four layers around a person near each other: intimate, individual, social, and public spaces (Hall, 1966, 161). The space is created at various radiuses from the person, and it is developed depending on the level of connection the person desires to have. "According to Westin, four types of privacy are known. Solitude or not being seen, closeness or company with other people, being unknown in public, tolerating or using psychological obstacles to control the unknown disturbance" (Lang, 2007: 166).

These definitions show that researchers believe that there are levels in the spectrum-type concept of privacy. According to these definitions, two concepts of "collective privacy" and "individual privacy" can be defined in house subject in the two edges of privacy spectrum (Diagram 1). According

to Jenkins – anthropology theorist – "Individual identity emphasizes on differences while collective identity focuses on similarities" (Jenkins, 2002: 34). Hence, individual privacy creates an opportunity for individual identity of the house members to form according to their differences while the collective privacy provides them with a chance to develop their collective identity according to their similarities.

In general, there are numerous definitions for this concept presented by various researchers. However, all those definitions on privacy and the presented model can be classified in the following table:

Methodology

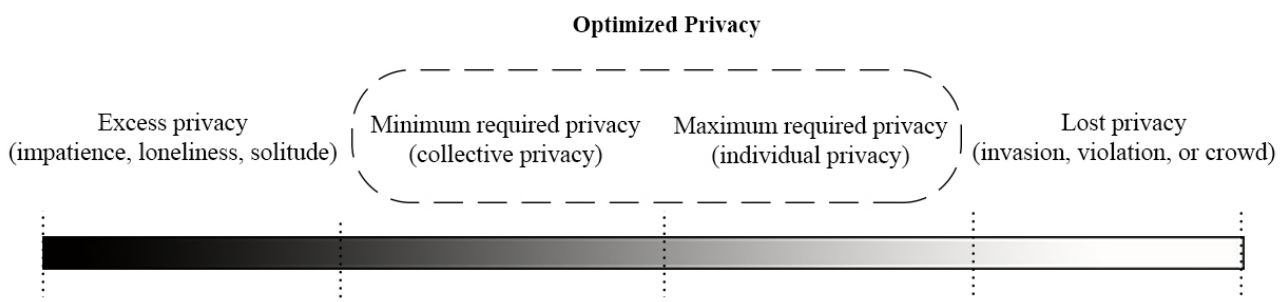This section studies the realization of individual and collective privacies in samples of two groups of pre-

Diagram 1. Individual and collective privacy and their position in privacy spectrum. Source: author.

Table 1. Comparison between classifications or patterns presented for privacy spectrum. Source: author.

	Classifications / Patterns			
Irvin Altman	Solitude ◄————	privacy	————► crowd	
Edward Hall	Intimate	Individual	Social	Public
Westin	Solitude	Closeness or intimacy	Anonymity	Reserve
Present Study	Solitude	Optimized Privacy — Individual Privacy	Collective Privacy	Crowd

modern and contemporary houses in Iran. Since there is no document or written paper about Iranian houses before the Safavid Era and the houses remained from this era are usually houses of the rich, palaces, and large garden-houses, in this study the houses from the middle grade in the Qajar and Pahlavi Eras have been studied, which have not changed a lot yet. In the contemporary houses section – without taking into consideration the primary modern houses in Iran, which have usually been made by famous architectures for individual owners and unfortunately, they have not become common although they were useful – samples have been presented from houses built by the middle class in which the life of the most of Iranian people takes place and usually follow the same order in the allocation of space to various applications.

• **Pre-Modern Houses**

In a study entitled "Comparative Study on the Concept of Privacy in Iranian Introverted House and Western Extraverted House", the realization of privacy levels in a pre-modern Iranian house has been described as follows:

Obtaining privacy in the house has been classified into three steps in this table. "Entrance and its belongings, which has the most parts in the house and in other words, is the place to explain the concept, privacy explanation step, internal space in the house that divides privacy and separating the access to other parts of the house, and more personal space in the house such as rooms where privacy is allocated to house members" (Nasiri, 2009: 40). In other words, after passing through the world outside the house, provision of privacy begins at the entrance. This research studies Iranian introverted

traditional houses that usually have central yard and its surroundings.

In these houses, the house space has been formed according to the type of step-to-step access from the public area to the personal area. "In Iranian traditional house, the entrance, porch, corridor, and the yard make possible the access to the internal parts of the house. The entrance is an important and notable section in the design of these houses because people should not enter the house directly and suddenly, and there would be no sight from the entrance to the internal parts of the house (Bani Masood, 2011: 288). In fact, when the house members enter the house from the outside world, a type of privacy is created that can be called collective privacy. Gifford states, "Having Company is a type of selecting privacy process" (Gifford, 1999: 70). In these yards, the living of a few families with family relations or the house members gathering together enables collective privacy, in which people are close to each other while strangers to others. In the next step, porches and corridors are the places for the gathering of family members. All these spaces prepare a territory for the realization of collective character for house members. Pre-modern houses that were affected by patterned life were usually designed this way (Fig. 2).

However, a side of privacy spectrum has been neglected in this relatively one-direction approach in Iranian pre-modern houses, in which "each member of the house" has the opportunity and possibility to do his personal stuff in the absence of others and tries to develop his independent identity.

According to Gifford, "Being alone in a space is a type of privacy" (Gifford, 1999: 70).

Table 2. Steps to reach spaces from the entrance to the internal sections of the house in an Iranian introverted house. Source: Nasiri, 2009: 40.

	Step One	Step Two	Step Three
Iranian introverted house	Entrance (Pishgah, podium, door, porch, corridor)	Central yard (central point: water and nature), alcove	General space in house (external), private space in house (internal)

1. Hashti
2. Birooni (Court)
3. Se Dari
4. Anbar (Warehouse)
5. Tanabi
6. Gooshvar
7. Dalan
8. talar
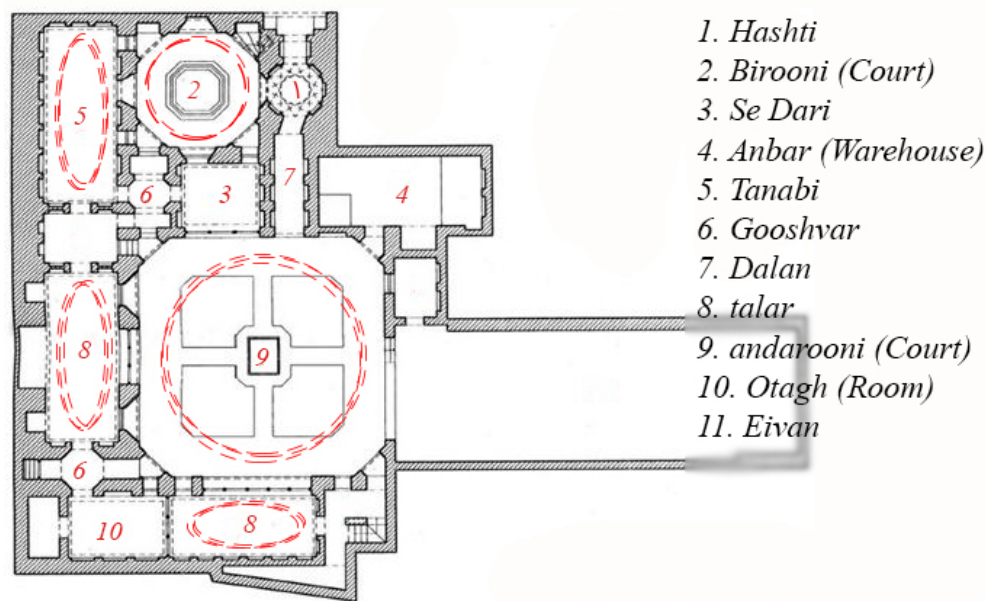9. andarooni (Court)
10. Otagh (Room)
11. Eivan

Fig 2. Entrance and access to spaces that provide collective privacy in samples of Iranian traditional houses.
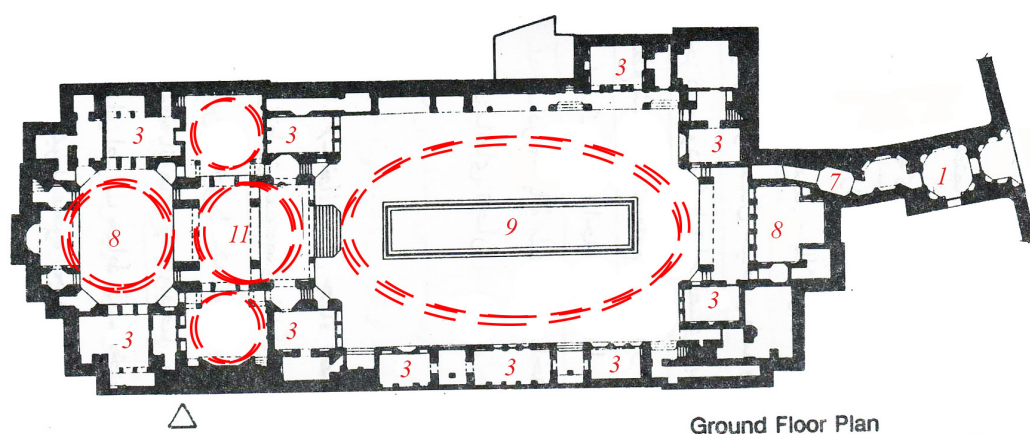A. Beheshti House, Qazvin. Source: QCHTO, 2006: 111.

Ground Floor Plan

Fig 2. Entrance and access to spaces that provide collective privacy in samples of Iranian traditional houses.
B. Boroojerdis House, Kashan. Source:Ghobadian, 2013: 130.

Individual territories are required in order to obtain such privacy. "The absence of such territory or the inability to adjust the others access to it can result in long term in losing self-esteem or individual identity" (Altman, 2003, 140). In these pre-modern houses, no personal room was usually allocated to house members, and people lived and rested together in a collective manner even in the most internal rooms in the house, or each room belonged to more than one person at the same time. Rooms had usually more than one door or they were connected to each other (Fig. 3B and 3C), in a way that having access to one room usually resulted in destroying the privacy of other rooms. Therefore, people rarely had the opportunity to have individual privacy. There were rooms with more limited access in these houses in the basement or in upper floors, but such rooms had been used for separated collective activities rather than being a place for individual privacy for the house members. Titles such as guestroom, storeroom, kitchen or the place to cook food, alcove, upstairs (Gooshvar), three-door room – "three-door room was the bedroom" (Pirnia, 2002: 162) – firewood room, etc. show that rooms were usually the territory of applications rather than humans. Although in these types of houses there were spaces such as Gooshvars to be used as a private place, the simultaneous presence of more than one person in these rooms prevented the possibility of using the rooms as an individual privacy. As a result, there was a private room without whatever – devices and personal stuff – one person needs to be present in his privacy (Fig. 3).

• **Contemporary Houses**

Another side of privacy spectrum or individual privacy has been received attention and responded to in the architecture of Iranian contemporary houses, which represent a type of copy from western modern architecture. Allocation of personal space to all members of the family and creating of individual character have been of high interest in this era, although the diversity and depth of spaces providing collective privacy have been eliminated due to the
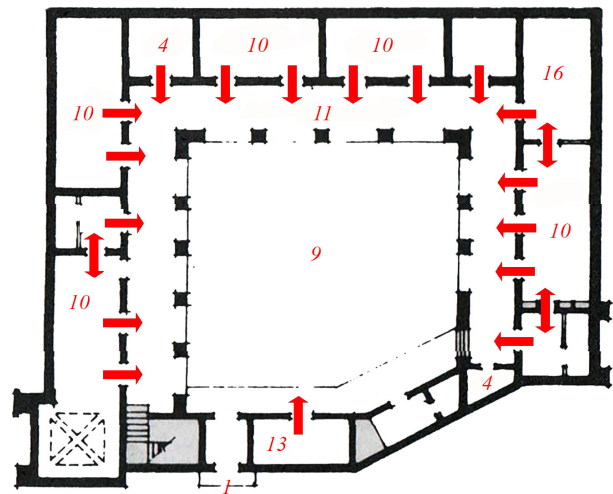

Fig 3. Connection and direct access of private rooms to collective space or to other room / There is usually no individual owner for the rooms. A: A house in desert in Iran. Source: Ghobadian, 2013: 74.
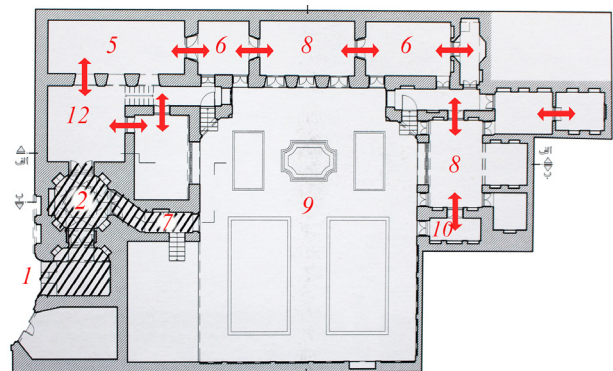

Fig 3. Connection and direct access of private rooms to collective space or to other room / There is usually no individual owner for the rooms. B. Sa'd os-Soltan's House, Qazvin. Source: QCHTO, 2006: 129.
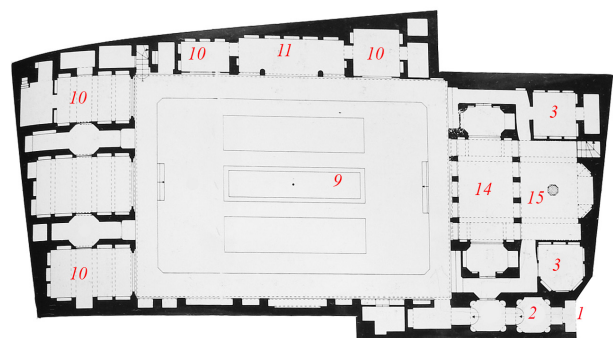

Fig 3. Connection and direct access of private rooms to collective space or to other room / There is usually no individual owner for the rooms. C. Tahami's House, Kashan. Source: Mousavi Rozati, 1996: 54.

consistency. "In these designs, living room, dining room, and even the kitchen are not completely separated from each other as an individual room or personal space for the family members" (Ghasemzadeh, 2010: 7). "In western countries, especially after the World War II, there was a tendency to make close the public and private space in the house. Therefore, the middle space between the outside world and inside the house has been almost eliminated. In the other hand, the border between individual lives of all family members has become a first priority inside the house by firstly separating the children room from parents' room and secondly by separating the rooms of children. Although in this type of architecture there is a serious tendency to make close or even to unite the living room with the guestroom and kitchen, the required space is allocated as much as possible to private rooms for all family members" (Bani Masoud, 2011: 289); (Fig. 4). Cooper Marcus has carried out a study on the psychological side of house and territory claiming in his book entitled "House, Symbol of One-Self". In an analysis on the internal decoration of an urban apartment, he states, "The decoration of bedrooms, the only private space of the residents, was a symbol of each person belonged to the space in an excited and very personal manner. However, the living room, which is the territory of six or eight or even more persons, had a simple decoration because a group of people with different one-selves is too hard to reach an agreement" (Marcus, 2003: 94). In fact, since it is difficult for people to discover and flourish their one-selves in the public places in the house due to its allocation to a few people, a part of their individual identity – such as what they like to see on the walls of the rooms – can be observed only in personal spaces. The same is seen in the architecture of Iranian contemporary houses. Allocating space to individual privacy has resulted in the elimination or decrease in the space for collective privacy. In other words, one or a few private rooms have been allocated to house members for individual privacy in Iranian contemporary houses depending on the financial
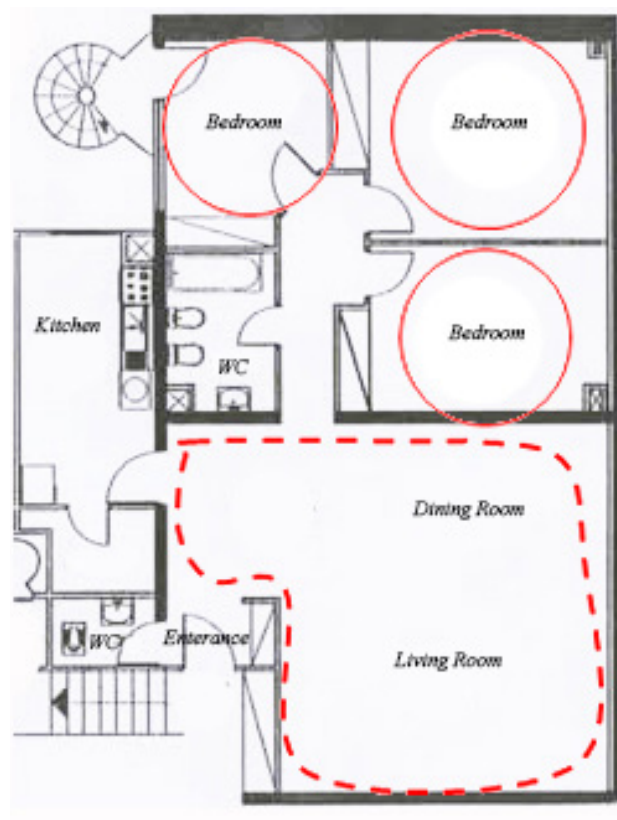

Fig 4. Closeness and consistency of collective space in one hand and allocation of space to all family members in the other hand in an Iranian modern house.
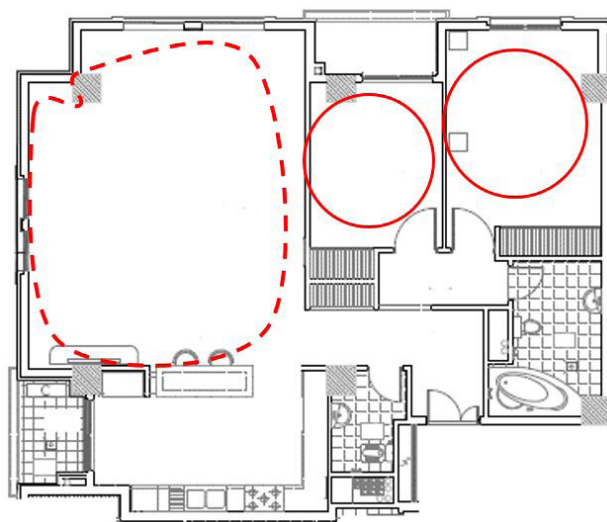A. Three-bedroom apartments, Ekbatan Town, Tehran. Source: Ekbatan Town website.

Fig 4. Closeness and consistency of collective space in one hand and allocation of space to all family members in the other hand in an Iranian modern house.
B. Two-bedroom apartments, Baghmisheh Housing Co., Tabriz. Source: Baghmisheh Housing Co. website.

situation of the family and the area of the house. However, the character, value, and depth of collective space have been significantly decreased in comparison with pre-modern houses. The result is a room usually larger than other room as the only collective space in the house, and it has usually been directly surrounded with more private rooms and servicing areas.

Findings

Studies show that there were various and numerous spaces in Iranian pre-modern houses for people to live and carry out activities together. Many characteristics of the rooms such as location, number, places where doors are located, size, and even the name of the rooms show that the rooms were allocated to collective activities or for the presence of more than one person. In addition, rooms are not usually allocated to individual privacy of the house members in these houses. In the other hand and in modern houses, the number and diversity of collective space have been significantly decreased and the spaces have been eliminated or combined. However, in most of these houses, rooms have been allocated to individual privacy of people depending on their needs – for example, a room for parents and separated rooms for the boy and the girl (Fig. 5). There were various types of collective space in the house but no personal room was usually allocated to family members. People lived and rested in the internal rooms of the house, or a room was possessed by a few persons at the same time. Rooms usually had more than one door or they were connected to each other. There was rarely a place to obtain individual privacy.

Most activities of people are carried out in their personal rooms. The collective space in the house is simple and there are no distinguished sections. There is no space to obtain collective privacy.

Discussion before Conclusion

If the ignorance of individual space in the architecture of Iranian houses until the modern era deprived people from the opportunity to innovation, self-
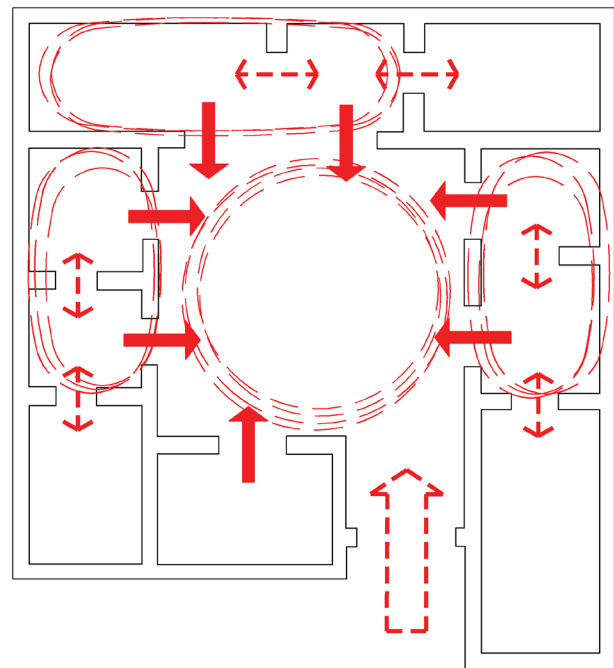

Fig 5. Collective and individual privacies before and after the modern changes in architecture of Iranian houses
A. Giving priority to collective privacy for house members in pre-modern era.
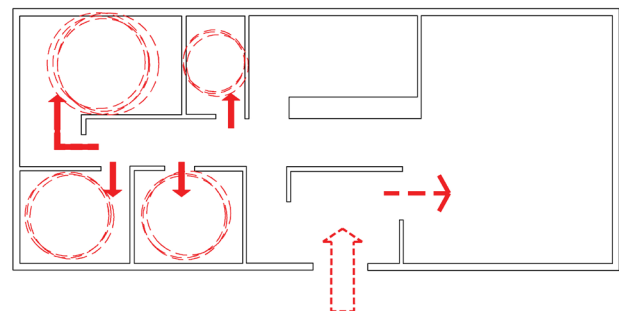

Fig 5. Collective and individual privacies before and after the modern changes in architecture of Iranian houses
B. Giving priority to individual privacy for house members in modern era.

estimation, and dependency and it gave people less chance to create their own identity, the architecture of Iranian modern house deprives people from being together and realization of collective identity. The only collective space in the house is often a space a little larger than the other rooms, where all collective activities of the family such as watching TV with loud noise, children playing, eating, and even studying are carried out without the presence of any priority or territories. Therefore, in each of the two groups of Iranian pre-modern and modern

houses, one of the edges of the privacy spectrum is more observed. In a comprehensive approach, it is necessary to pay attention to and try to realize all sides of privacy spectrum.

Table 3. Comparing privacy realization patterns in Iranian pre-modern and modern houses. Source: authors.

Privacy Realization Pattern in Iranian Pre-modern Houses	Privacy Realization Pattern in Iranian Modern Houses
Giving priority to collective privacy for house members Allocating space collective activities Not allocating space to individual privacy for house members Allocating space to separate applications, and not to people	Giving priority to individual privacy for house members Giving space to house members (in general, not necessarily always) Not presence of collective space to do various collective activities Consistency of the previous collective spaces and their combination in one room

Conclusion

Individual and collective privacies are in the two ends of privacy spectrum and they are two sides of a similar concept. Paying attention to one of the privacies without taking into consideration the other creates an environment in which people either lose their innovation and introspection due to the inability to obtain individual privacy, or they avoid the crowd due to the absence of collective privacy in the house. Therefore, unique personal identity was very weak in Iranian pre-modern houses, and people usually lived in form of a family. In Iranian modern houses, however, there is much less tendency to gather together in collective space inside the house to have company in order to develop collective identity because the only collective space in the house is usually a space created by the combination of all collective spaces in the previous types of houses. It can be claimed that a real sample has been found in the outside world for the concept of privacy spectrum when the arrangement of micro-space in the house is in accordance with privacy spectrum requirements, and when they are arranged according to the expectations from space to realize privacy. To this end, spaces can be classified according to their ability to gather house members together and to obtain minimum or collective privacy to maximum or individual privacy. Spaces are required to make possible the transfer from a level of privacy to another level not suddenly, but in an indirect and continuous manner as well as designing the space according to priorities in order to obtain flexible spaces designed to manage connections and to provide optimum privacy.

Endnote

Habermas divides the world into lifeworld (world of life) and system (world of society). System is based on the intellectual action towards the goal while lifeworld is based on the communicational action and mind connection between people. "Lifeworld is the place for connection and interaction of communicational wisdom of activists, and it consists of culture, society, and personality" (Bayani, 2015, 198). In fact, lifeworld includes cultural experiences and interactive communicational actions that are bases for all life experiences. House has been considered a type of lifeworld in this article due to the fact that humane relations in the house are first type and based on connection between people free from intellectual and targeted preservations, and the concept of privacy is in direct connection with humane relations.

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