From Social Equity to Spatial Equity in Urban Space: Precedent Study Approach

Authors : Dorsa Pourmojib, Marc J. Boutin

Abstract : Urban space is used everyday by a diverse range of urban dwellers, each with different expectations. In this space, opportunities and resources are not distributed equitably among urban dwellers, despite the importance of inclusivity. In addition, some marginalized groups may not be considered. These include people with low incomes, immigrants from diverse cultures, various age groups, and those with special needs. To this end, this research aims to enhance social equity in urban space by bridging the gap between social equity and spatial equity in the urban context. This gap in the knowledge base related to urban design may be present for several reasons; lack of studies on relationship between social equity and spatial equity in urban open space, lack of practical design strategies for promoting social equity in urban open space, lack of proper site analysis in terms of context and users of the site both for designing new urban open spaces and developing the existing ones, and lack of researchers that are designers and finally it could be related to priorities of the city's policies in addressing such issues, since it is time, money and energy consuming. The main objective of this project is addressing the aforementioned gap in the knowledge by exploring the relationship between social equity and spatial equity in urban open space. Answering the main question of this research is a promising step to this end; 'What are the considerations towards providing social equity through the design of urban elements that offer spatial equity?' To answer the main question of this research there are several secondary questions which should be addressed. Such as; how can the characteristics of social equity be translated to spatial equity? What are the diverse user's needs and which of their needs are not considered in that site? What are the specific elements in the site which should be designed in order to promote social equity? What is the current situation of social and spatial equity in the proposed site? To answer the research questions and achieve the proposed objectives, a three-step methodology has been implemented. Firstly, a comprehensive research framework based on the available literature has been presented. Afterwards, three different urban spaces have been analyzed in terms of specific key research questions as the precedent studies; Naqsh-e Jahan Square (Iran), Superkilen Park (Denmark) and Campo Dei Fiori (Italy). In this regard, a proper gap analysis of the current situation and the proposed situation of these sites has been conducted. Finally, by combining the extracted design considerations from the precedent studies and the literature review, practical design strategies have been introduced as a result of this research. The presented guidelines enable the designers to create socially equitable urban spaces. To conclude, this research proposes a spatial approach to social inclusion and equity in urban space by presenting a practical framework and criteria for translating social equity to spatial equity in urban areas.

Keywords : inclusive urban design, social equity, social inclusion, spatial equity
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