The Architecture of Inheritance:
The Sense of Belongingness Through Shared Community Spaces

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ABSTRACT

The first purpose of architecture is to create a habitat that fulfills society or individuals' needs for places to work and live. It is a manifestation and expression of the cultural values of the society with which it interacts. Architectural design and perception have changed dramatically over the years, transcending through the passage of time, absorbing and reflecting the changing trends in human behavior brought about by technological advances and modernization. The entire spectrum from space to urban planning needs to follow a direction that amalgamates tradition and technology, capturing society's mind. The rapid urbanization of Dhaka city has resulted in its fast-growing population, leading to the city's expansion. In designing any housing project, the most important thing is not the production of housing units but building a community and organization of pace's social life. to see the values in life and to cope with intensely painful emotions. In the modern urban communities, we lack this sense of belongingness due to the lack of social spaces among the community people. This paper investigates the necessity of community bonding through interaction within the shared social spaces, reflecting a sense of belongingness among the housing community's peoples. The paper will compare the social life and spaces of vernacular housing of Bangladesh and Dhaka city's modern housing in-depth. Technological advances have an important role in changing the dimension of interaction in the modern era. Findings suggest that technological advances are not only one reason for shifting the paradigm of social interaction, rather the scarcity of shared community spaces also has a significant impact on it. Therefore, this paper attempts to advocate for a perspective to revive the sense of belongingness to these migrated communities in urban areas while simultaneously show some design parameters.

Keywords: Inheritance, Sense of belongingness, Vernacular Architecture, Shared Community Space, Technological Advances.

1. INTRODUCTION

Social interactions are considered an essential aspect of housing and highly influenced by physical design. The appearance of cities and buildings can lead to significant behavioral changes, increase happiness, increase social interaction, etc. A built environment is a spatial framework for human activities. Although spaces are a by-product of social, cultural, and economic processes, they function as a hub of social and cultural activities. Personal and social processes are interconnected, and spatial frameworks may define numerous social patterns for the people. Individuals are driven to some degree by factors such as responsibilities, values, and mutual perceptions, in which they view reality differently depending on their experiences, desires, and motivations. The type of social life in which we live and almost continuously communicate with others is important. The interactive social space inherited from vernacular architecture has the quality of inclusiveness in which a sense of belongingness is naturally created. However, in a dense city like Dhaka, which accommodates nearly 21 million people, it is very difficult to find this interactive space for the community people. Thus, people become more biased on technology in comparison to their needs. Surprisingly, people living in the same building in different apartments do not know or communicate because of the lack of interaction. In contrast, in a vernacular settlement, the people of the village are known to others and have close bonding.

The scarcity of common sharing space in the urban city's housing area creates a vacuum for the generations in terms of social values and never creates a sense of belongingness in that place where they have lived for years.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Social interactions building a community

As a result of communicating daily and continuously, people in a society share a common way of life because they have developed behavior patterns on which all, more or less, agree. Therefore, social interaction becomes a fundamental issue for society and social life [1]. Social interactions are considered an important aspect of housing and highly influenced by physical design. The presence of three variables strengthens this effect. The first variable is the probability of touch between residents; the second one is the proximity of living, and the last is the availability of suitable space for interaction [4]. The closer people get to each other, the more likely the chances of meeting and social interactions are [5]. The first way to make contact in a community is through informal communication with the neighbors [5]. These experiences are a passive form of community construction that can lead to "comfortable" social control, common feelings of security, and/or goodness [6]. There is a possibility of establishing pleasant and active social interactions if passive communication between residents is frequent [5]. Active interactions are intentional and can lead to active community buildings, such as sharing interest among residents through joint activities [6].

2.2 Space framing social interaction: shared community space

Each society has its way of doing things to create its own space. Situations, the character of spaces, the picture of an urban area, and the environment vary from region to region [1]. According to architect Charles Correa, the major elements for the tropical region, which is very similar to our culture, are; a) space needed by the family for exclusively private use such as cooking and sleeping, b) areas of intimate contact, including the front doorstep where children play, people meet your neighbor, etc. c) the neighborhood—the water tap of the town—where people are part of their community, and d) The central urban area—the open space the entire city uses. These elements are mutually interdependent, and the number of elements and their interrelations may vary. For example, families' territory in using

open-air spaces is crucial because they are becoming more and more limited when the surroundings buildings get taller. For many purposes, a family can use a ground-floor courtyard, like sleeping at night; two stories and one can still cook in it; five stories, and it is for children to play in only, and ten stories is parking lot [7].

2.3 Sense of place and sense of belongingness

Any space will be active and used by people when they feel a sense of belongingness toward that space. Eventually, they tend to own that place, even though they might not own that space legally. "In addition to the physical elements, the environment includes messages, meaning, and mysteries that people decode, understand, and judge based on roles, expectations, motivations, and other factors. This general sense is created after perception, and judgment in a special environment in a person is called a sense of place. A sense of place is an important factor in the coordination of a person with the environment. It causes better utilization of the environment, customer satisfaction, ultimately their sense of belonging to the environment and the continued presence in it" [9, p. 343]. The sense of belonging to a place is a level higher than the sense of place that has a determinative role in the enjoyment and continuity of humans' presence in space. Belonging to a place created based on a sense of place is beyond the awareness of settling in one place. This sense leads to the link of a person to a place where man considers him a part of the place and based on his experiences of signs, meanings, functions, and character, a role is imaged for himself, and the place will be respected for him [9, pp. 343-344].

2.4 Technological advancement and the dimension of interaction

The impact of technology on social interaction is a great debatable issue. There are many studies about the effects of technology on social interaction and face-to-face communication since the rise of cell phones and social media usage in the late 2000s. "Recent advancements in communication technology have enabled billions of people to connect more easily with people great distances away, yet little has been known about how the frequent presence of these devices in social settings influences face-to-face interactions" [2, p. 1]. Emily Drago conducted a field observation and a survey to measure the level of engagement the Elon University students have with

their cell phones, other technologies, and each other in face-to-face situations. Many respondents voiced their concerns that technology is diminishing society's ability to communicate face to face. One student stated, "people have lost the ability to communicate with each other in face-to-face interactions." At the same time, another respondent said, "technology is making face-to-face communication much more difficult because people use technology as a crutch to hide behind" [3, p. 16]. Emily concluded that "with technology advancing at the speed of light and human interaction changing just as quickly, it may be impossible to predict the results" [3, p. 17].

2.5 The scenario of Dhaka City

Over the years, Dhaka, located on the River Buriganga bank, is a megacity from a local town. The population has also increased by this time. Side by side, the problems related to different urban issues, including housing for accommodating this large amount of people, have increased, particularly since independence in 1971 [11]. The real estate companies are trying to provide apartment buildings to the people. Many people are catered by private real estate companies, who play vital roles in both migration and intra-migration of Dhaka [10]. This apartment dwelling introduces a new arena of "modern Bangladeshi society," which is very different in nature and practice than the so-called "rural Bangladeshi society." The styles of interaction have changed over the years. These changes can be attributed to rapid urbanization and its impact on human behavior and its impact on land availability.

Moreover, the drastic disparity between receipts and socio-cultural aspirations harms the socio-cultural interaction among the mass people. It happened in a wide-ranging nature in the present Dhaka society and changed people's activity and behavior towards others.

2.6 Building construction rules for community spaces in Dhaka city

Understanding the importance of community spaces, the Bangladesh Building Construction Act includes the rules of having community space and open ground in the apartment building. Building Construction Act 2008 has clear instructions of having 4% community space of the building, which has more than 3000 square meters FAR (Floor Area Ratio), including the livable area. Moreover, if the plot size is 1300 square meters or more, there should

be an open ground for the apartment's inhabitants. The ground will be 10% of that land area [12]. However, if we see the housing area's plot size, it is found that the maximum plot of the residential area of Dhaka city is less than 1300 square meters. That is why maximum apartment buildings are out of community space. The designed residential areas have some community facilities like lakes or playgrounds, but they are not near their house.

2.7 Research Gap

From the literature review, it is found that many researchers have worked on social interactions and neighborhood spaces. Some research has found the technological impact on social interactions, and many researchers have concluded that the uses of technological devices lessen the face-to-face interaction. There has been a lack of empirical research assessing the cross-relation between technological advances and the use of social interaction spaces for community bonding. This research tried to find out the role of modern technology and the shared community spaces in the case of social interaction.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Given the above discussion, the following questions are raised:

- Is community bonding and interaction necessary?

- What are the media of interactions?

- Is technological advancement an obstacle for face-to-face interaction?

- What is the value of shared community space for a sense of belongingness in the case of Bangladesh?

The research has distinct two-part, and the objectives of this study are:

- to find out the importance of shared community spaces in social interaction and bring a sense of belongingness and the characteristics and dimension of shared community space in vernacular settlement and Dhaka city of Bangladesh.

- to understand the role of technological advancement in social interaction.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study is exploratory research using both qualitative and quantitative data. The research has been designed in the following sequence:

- From the very early stages of the research, an extensive literature review has been carried out from secondary data sources of relevant theories and research.

- Next, the study and analysis of shared community spaces in general vernacular settlements of Bangladesh have been done from both observation and secondary data for clear understanding.

- A major part of the analysis was based on primary sources of data collection. First, the study undertook a reconnaissance survey and analysis of shared community spaces of selected case studies in the urban context of Dhaka city. Two survey areas were selected, whereas one of them has designed shared community space, and another area did not have any designed community space. Informal interviews were taken with 6 inhabitants from both survey areas.

- A questionnaire was surveyed among 67 people and mainly about the uses of community spaces and technological devices. Respondents were selected from various residential areas of Dhaka city. The selection criteria were the availability of uses of various devices as well as whether they are living in apartment buildings that have community space in the housing area or do not have that facility. There was no age limit for the respondents.

- Other data collection tools were used, including photographic registration, observations, measurements, and map preparations.

- Finally, a comparative analysis has been done on the different parameters that act as a catalyst to develop the sense of belongingness of a place and the quality of the shared community space, and its impact on social interaction was evaluated by the qualitative method.

5. THE ARCHITECTURE OF INHERITANCE

Although cultural, sociological, economic, and environmental understanding is required in the field of architecture. Nowadays, mainstream urban architecture often tends to lose its connection with its region's cultural and social contexts, resulting in a more generic form of architecture that can be replicated anywhere. Vernacular architecture of any region reflects the region's cultural, social, and environmental contexts, which have been practiced by the locals for years. Studying and analyzing the characters of a region's vernacular architecture might help understand how this inheritance can act as a catalyst to design respecting both past and present.

5.1 Shared community space in the vernacular settlement in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has an extensive architecture based on traditional knowledge about the area's topography and environment. Shared interactive space is a very common phenomenon in vernacular homesteads of Bangladesh in which people meet with each other for different purposes and create a sense of belongingness. Typically, in vernacular settlements, each homestead consists of at least one shared interactive space within the homestead premise known as courtyard outman. This courtyard is actively used by the homestead residents, who generally belong to the same family. However, neighbors also use this courtyard passively as a route to other homesteads or other purposes. These courtyards have clear physical and visual access from each household within the homestead.
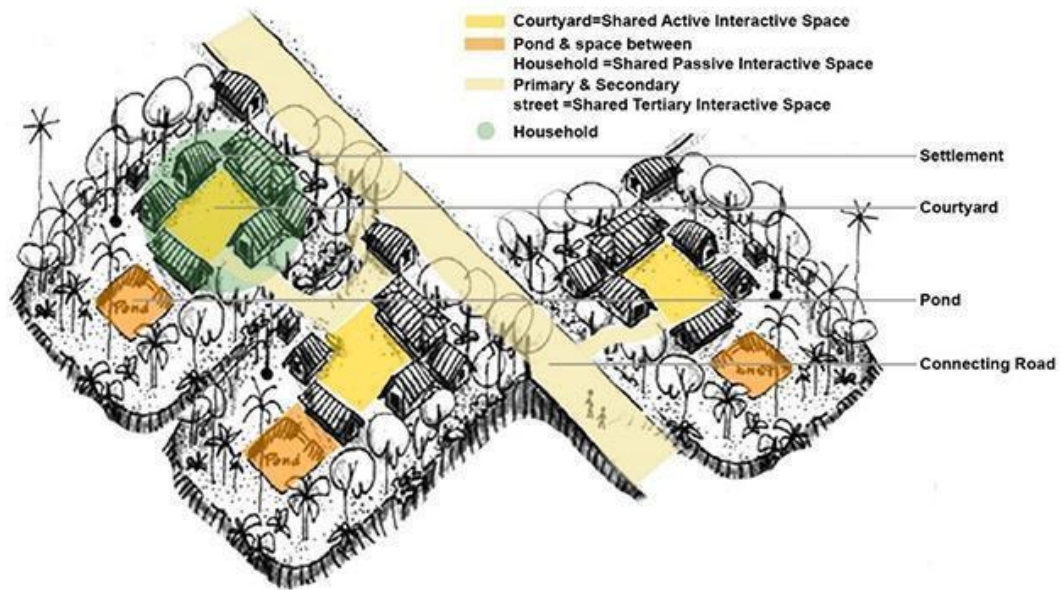
Figure 1. Aerial view of a typical household of the vernacular settlement of Bangladesh.

Figure 1 shows some settlements formed a household that contains a courtyard, which is a shared active-interactive space, all households are connected by a pond and in-between spaces, which are shared passive interactive spaces—all these shared spaces connected with primary and secondary streets (Figure 2 and 3).

Figure 2. Section of a typical household of the vernacular settlement of Bangladesh.

Figure 3. A typical household of the vernacular settlement of Bangladesh. Source: [13]

Studying the vernacular homesteads, the parameters of sense of belongingness of a place for the users can be identified as:

- Ownership

- Physical Access

- Visibility

- Frequency of use

- The scale of the space in the proportion of the user group

- Proximity/distance of the space from the user group

- Security/privacy of the space

In the vernacular settlement of Bangladesh, people have face to face interaction in social spaces. It makes a bonding, which is also considered social capital. The above parameters help them create a sense of belongingness with that space and the community. It plays a significant role in cultural continuity and social values.

5.2 Shared community space in the urban context of Dhaka city, Bangladesh

Dhaka was a small rural settlement on relatively high and flat land surrounded by flood-affected swampy land until the 16th century (Figure 4). In the last 400 years, the city experienced several rulers with different city development and expansion perspectives. As the capital of Bangladesh since 1971, Dhaka leads the nation in urbanization and city primacy. To fulfill the huge housing needs, various developers developed modern apartment buildings in the city's maximum areas. In the old Dhaka, there was a fabric of vernacular settlement in terms of interaction and connectivity. However, modern apartment buildings only have housing units and lack community spaces. In Dhaka's urban context, the shared community's features and characters have been changed over time due to different reasons like technology, globalization, cultural and social value change, etc. Two sites have been selected to study and analyze the shared community space based on the parameters identified from vernacular settlements.

Figure 4. Selected Case Study Areas, Dhaka.

5.2.1. Case Study 1: Eastern Panthachaya, Panthapath, Dhaka.

It is a gated housing complex built by a private developer company. It comprises of four towers: 14 storied buildings with an open to sky courtyard within its premises. The central court remains active with the interaction of different age groups throughout the whole day. In the morning, elderly people use this space for morning walks and exercise, while in the afternoon, children often, with their parents or without parents, come to this place for playing (Figure 5 and 6).
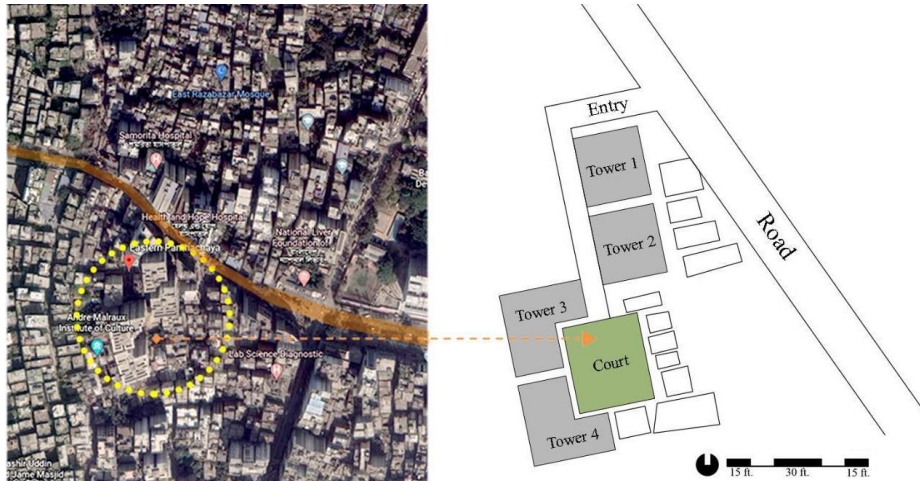

Figure 5. Map of Eastern Panthachaya, Dhaka & Schematic plan.

(a)   (b)

Figure 6. Use of the Central court by the residents.

Analysis of the central shared community space with the parameters of sense of belongingness of a place produced the following results:

- Ownership: The central court is owned by the residents legally.

- Physical access: Residents of all the apartments have direct physical access to space.

- Visibility: The courtyard is visible from tower 3 & 4, partially visible from tower 2 but not directly visible from tower 1.

- Frequency of use: The courtyard is being used frequently by residents of different age groups at different times.

- Space's scale: The courtyard is surrounded by buildings from all sides, creating a sense of enclosure within the space. The court has 14 storied towers of the housing complex on two sides and 6/7 storied buildings on the adjacent sites. It helps make the space less congested by breaking down the scale of the space (Figure 7).

- Space's proximity from the user group: The courtyard's position is where residents from all the apartments can have physical access here. However, towers 3 & 4 have better accessibility than towers 1 & 2.

- Security/privacy of the space: As it is a gated complex, the building's security is well-maintained. It has a boundary wall on two sides, but the adjacent sites' upper apartments have visual access to the court, which might hamper privacy.
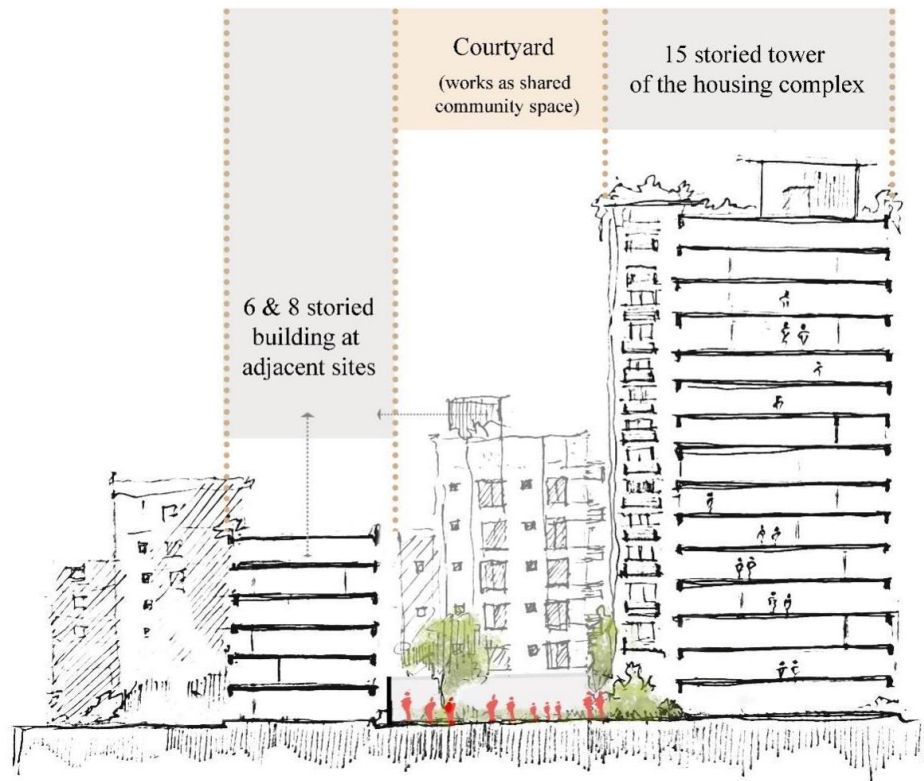

Figure 7. Section of the Central court.

5.2.2. Case Study 2: Chand Mia Housing, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.

Chand Mia Housing is one of the populated housings in the Mohammadpur Residential area. From the physical survey, it is found that almost all the plots of Chad Mia Housing, Mohammadpur have a size of less than 1300 square meters. Thus, according to the Building Construction Act 2008 (discussed in section 2.6), no apartment has any designed or dedicated community space for interaction or gathering (Figure 8). This housing does not have any playground or community space for this quite bigger housing area. This housing has dead-ends in the road no 3/3. Here, the scenario is different from the other areas of this housing. Here, the residents, especially children, use the streets in front of their apartments as gathering space. The street is 20 feet wide and has very few vehicles as the street ends at a dead-end. Many people use this road to walk in the afternoon. In the afternoon, women of many houses gather here with their children and gossip with each other. Children use this space for playing and cycling. It is the most usable space for various social activities of the residents surrounding the dead-end. Here, the children know each other so that they have a bonding.
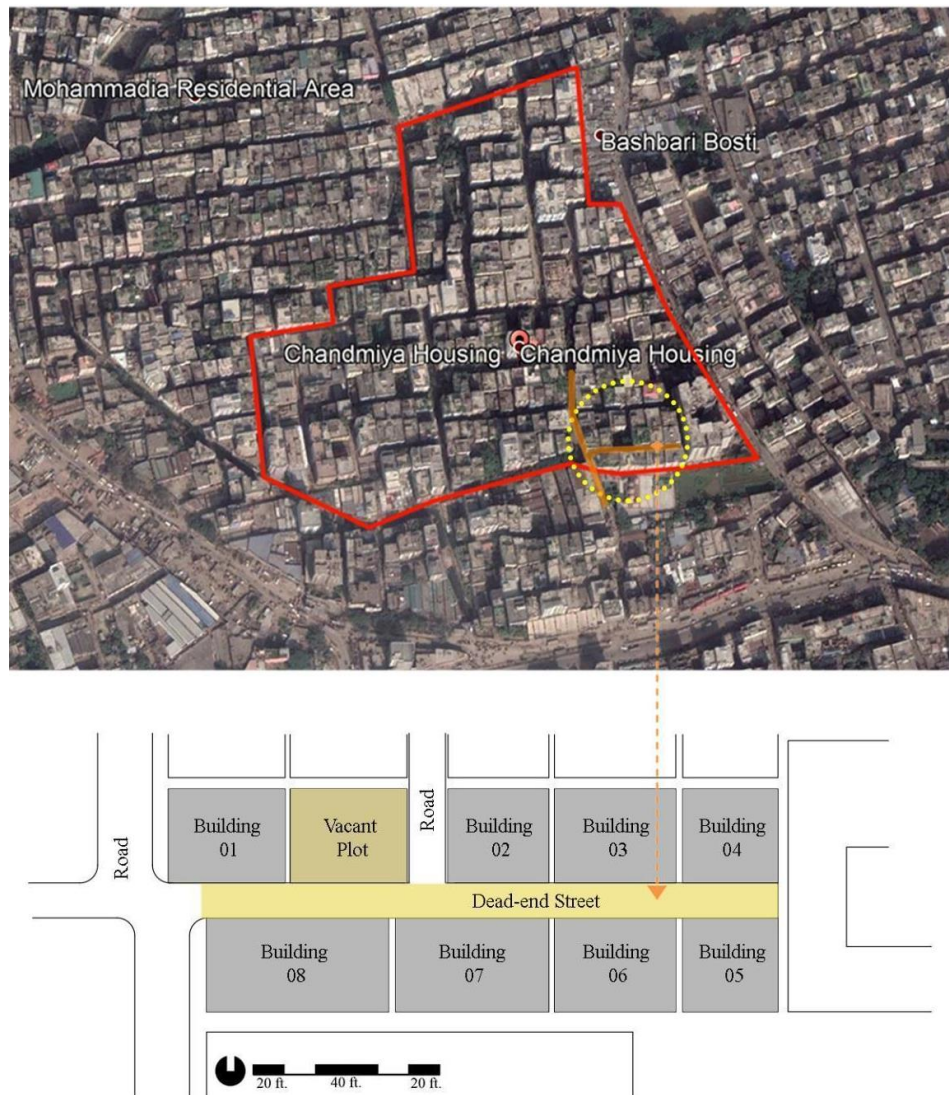
Figure 8. Road No. 3/3, Chand Mia Housing, Mohammadpur, Dhaka.

Analysis of the central shared community space with the parameters of sense of belongingness of a place produced the following results:

- Ownership: Though the residents do not own the streets legally, they have a social claim.

- Physical access: The residents have direct access to the streets.

- Visibility: The streets are visible from the ground level and the roadside balconies of the apartments.

- Frequency of use: As there are very few vehicle movements in the streets, it can be used by the residents frequently for gathering space.

- Space's Scale: The street ends at the back of another building, creating a dead-end. The street has six storied buildings on either side, creating a sense of enclosure in that place. It creates an intimate scale of social gathering, allowing children to play there.

- The proximity of the space: The streets are the entryway of the apartment buildings.

- Security/privacy of the space: As the streets are dead-ends, the gathering space's privacy can be maintained at a certain level. But the security of the space is questionable as the streets are public property (Figure 9 and 10).

(a) (b)

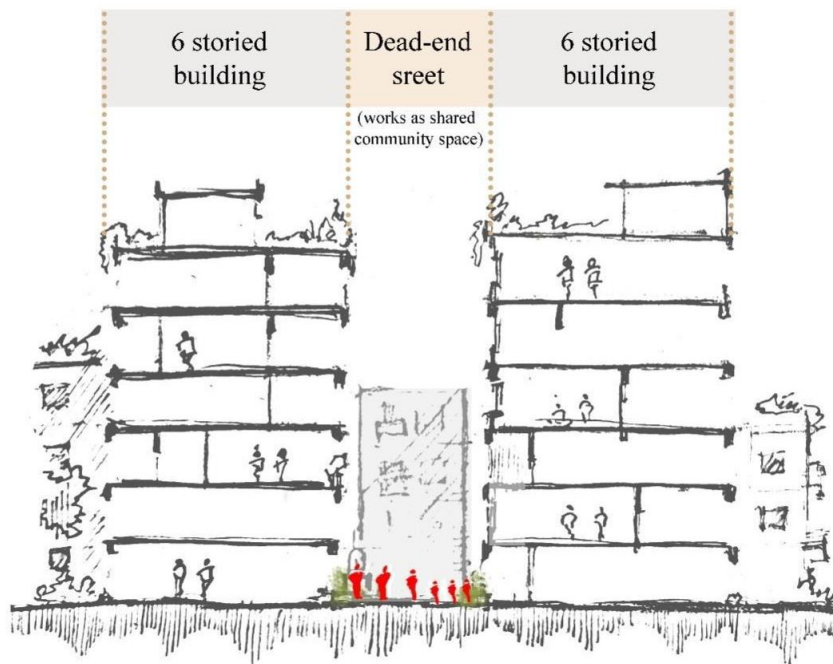**Figure 9.** The activity of the dead-end of Chand Mia Housing, Mohammodpur, Dhaka.

Figure 10. Section of the Road No- 3/3, Chand Mia Housing.

5.3 Findings from the case studies

From the two case studies and the informal interviews of 6 inhabitants from the site, the findings are as follows:

- People use the shared community area if it is near and accessible.

- It is a source of community bonding and interaction, which is necessary for mental refreshment (according to one interviewee)

- Shared community or interactive space has an inheritance value for Bangladesh, transformed into vernacular to modern housing.

- The basic parameters of both community spaces for a sense of belongingness are the same, but maybe the dimensions are different.

- From the vernacular study, it can be seen that some parameters act as catalysts for making sense of belongingness. Many areas of Dhaka city have playgrounds or community space away from their house. These long-distance playgrounds of the big

residential area do not match those parameters for its scale, distance, and users.

- Where it does not have any designed or proper community space, inhabitants of that area transform the other spaces (footpaths, streets, building setbacks, street dead-ends, etc.) into community interaction spaces according to their needs.

5.4 Discussion

In Dhaka city, most of the population are migrated from various areas of the country. Various push-pull factors accelerate this process of migration of Dhaka city. From the vernacular study of Bangladesh, it is found that they have various social interaction spaces in their close proximity, which fulfills the parameters of creating a sense of belongingness of that space. In the case of Dhaka city, most people do not have the facility of community spaces near to them. That is why it is difficult to make relationships with their surroundings. The case study shows that when there are community spaces, peopl use those spaces; however, when there is no properly designed community space, people customize other spaces according to their needs. This indicates people have the need for community spaces in close proximity for social interactions, even in a busy city like Dhaka, which is one of the media of making sense of belongingness of a space. Community spaces should fulfill the parameters so that the residents can own that space.

6. CHANGE IN SOCIAL INTERACTION AND THE ROLE OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY

"Little by little, technology has become an integral part of how people communicate with one another and has increasingly taken the place of face-to-face communication. Due to the rapid expansion of technology, many individuals are fearful that people may be too immersed in this digital world and not present enough in the real world" [3, p. 13]. The use of devices and technology that allow people to communicate digitally has decreased face-to-face interaction. According to Tomlinson [8], such cultural fusion represents a form of neo-imperialism that destroys cultural diversity. Cultural globalization poses a threat to nation-states in this context. In Dhaka's case, there is a big question that the pattern of social interaction is changed only for the advancement of technology or the lack of proper social interaction spaces. In addressing this issue, this research conducts a questionnaire survey.

6.1 Questionnaire survey among 67 participants

A questionnaire has been done on 67 people of different ages. They are the inhabitants of apartment buildings in different areas of Dhaka city. Some have a community facility in the apartment building, and some of them are deprived of those facilities. Still, all of them have the facility to use modern technology and various devices.

Table 1. Information on the age of the respondents of the questioner survey.

Sample Number	Age Group (Years)
12	11-20
24	21-30
15	31-40
5	41-50
11	51-60

Table 2. Information on the profession of the respondents of the questioner survey.

Sample Number	Profession
36	Student
24	Job Holder (Public/Private)
8	Stay at Home (No job/ Retirement)

Table 3. Information on accessibility/ availability of the respondents of the questioner survey.

Accessibility/Availability	User (%)	
	□, Yes	□, No
Access to Modern Technology & Devices	100	0
Availability of community space within the housing complex	18	82

Table 4. Social Interaction pattern of the group who do not have community space within housing/apartment complex (Sample number = 55 people).

Activity	Number of People		
	□, Regular	□, Occasional	□, Never
Use of informal community space (ex. footpath, streets, building setback, etc.) for social interaction	6		47
Entirely dependent on technological devices for social interaction	49	6	2
Interaction with neighbors	7	8	40
If a community space is provided within the housing apartment or at the proximity	50	5	0

Table 5. Social interaction pattern of the group with community space within housing/apartment complex (Sample number = 12 people).

Activity	Number of People		
	□, Regular	□, Occasional	□, Never
Use of community/gathering space for social interaction	10	2	0
Use of community/gathering space for social interaction	4	8	0
Interaction with neighbors	6	4	2

6.2 Findings of the questionnaire survey

- If there is any community space for the apartment building inhabitants, people regularly use that space.

- If they do not have any shared or gathering space, they have less interaction with neighbors.

- People who do not have the access or facility of interaction spaces become more dependent on technological devices. On the other hand, those who have both access to technological devices and community spaces enjoy both of them and interact with neighbors.

- The study found that the absence of a proper community or social instruction space has a great impact on people and their behavior.

- All participants of this survey feel that the shared community space is necessary for social interaction and bonding, which have great social and cultural value.

6.3 Discussion

This research conducted a questionnaire survey among different ages and professionals to determine the role of modern technology and the value of shared community space in urban life. It is found that the absence of social interaction spaces in the housing community has a great impact on residents, especially on children. The social interactions among the neighbors disrupt due to the absence of shared community spaces in housing areas. Moreover, the scarcity of community spaces added more dependency on various technological devices. One participant of this survey thought that playing in the community space in the housing complex helps her child become more sensible and friendly to other children. Another 50-years-old participant expressed that he has met with his neighbor in the afternoon while walking together in the interactive social space and talking with each other on various topics, which is a matter of pleasure for him. He meets regularly with them in this space, and they are like friends in

his neighborhood. Those who have been using technological devices regularly also feel that community space is an integral part of social life for community bonding.

7. SUMMARY

No doubt, technology is one of the important tools for advancement and development. In the arena of modern technology, the paradigm of social interaction has been changed. Using modern technology and devices offers people an extra dimension of interaction over the world. However, there is a great debate on the positive and negative impact of technology on social interactions. Many people often blame the use of technology. This study found that technological advancement is not the only catalyst for changing social interaction; there are many other reasons like the decreases of shared interaction spaces or community facilities where the inhabitants get the scope to meet together for face-to-face communication. It makes people over-dependent on technological devices and miss face-to-face interaction while increasing the gap of social values and bonding. When designing housing for mass people, this study suggests it needs to care for common shared space for the community within proximity so that space is a part of their life and grows a sense of belongingness naturally. Providing a shared community space will enhance the sense of belongingness of the community's inhabitants, which has a close relationship with the inheritance of Bangladeshi Architecture. The parameters of developing a sense of belongingness discussed in this paper could be a guideline to the inclusive design approach towards housing design. Within the limitation of this paper's survey, this can lead to further research, including the opinions of the shared community or gathering space, urban community, and a sense of belongingness.

8. LIMITATIONS

The survey has been conducted into two residential areas of Dhaka city. However, if it can be done in other residential areas of Dhaka city, it could be added more dimensions. Due to time constraints as well as the limitation of the survey extent of this paper, the analysis and discussions can lead to further research, including the community people, designers, and policymakers.

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