

Phenomenological Analysis of the Architectural Reading of Vakil Bazaar in Shiraz Based on the Ideas of Juhani Pallasmaa

Mohammad Ali. Rahimi^{1*}, Hossein Mahboudi²

¹ Assistant Professor, Dept. of Architecture, Bushehr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bushehr, Iran.

² Ph.D. Candidate in Architecture, Dept. of Architecture, Bushehr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Bushehr, Iran

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ABSTRACT

Research Problem:

Human beings engage with and experience the world immediately and directly through bodily perception. However, in the contemporary era, many architectural works shaped by design and structural approaches that rely primarily on visual appeal have increasingly become objects of fleeting attraction. This has led to a gradual erosion of essential spatial qualities such as presence, spatial flexibility, and the authentic experience of dwelling. The human lifeworld comprises phenomena that exist tangibly in the real world: people, trees, stones, earth, water, cities, streets, houses, windows, the sun and moon, night and day, and the changing seasons. Alongside these tangible elements are phenomena rooted in perception and internal emotional experience. The lifeworld and the experience derived from it can be examined and interpreted through phenomenological approaches in architecture. This perspective invites reflection on sensory and emotional stimulation in response to one's surroundings. Within the phenomenological framework, the concept of "givenness of things" becomes the core of inquiry. Here, the human subject is never detached from the world; phenomenology does not ignore the world in favor of consciousness, but rather reveals the world through consciousness. Since human connection with the external world occurs only through the senses, examining how sensory mechanisms contribute to the perception of built environments is essential. Architects working within a phenomenological framework strive to reinterpret space based on core theoretical concepts and existential concerns. One of the most influential figures in this regard is Juhani Pallasmaa, a Finnish architect and theorist. This study aims to explain Pallasmaa's phenomenological concepts and analyze the role of embodied architectural experience what he defines as "embodiment" in the historic structure of the Vakil Bazaar in Shiraz. This approach helps uncover the distinctive qualities of such historical spaces in contrast with modern or contemporary commercial markets.

Research Question:

How are phenomenological themes in Juhani Pallasmaa's thought manifested in the architectural fabric of the Vakil Bazaar in Shiraz, and how can they contribute to a meaningful, embodied spatial experience for its users?

Research Method:

This research was conducted with the aim of analyzing Juhani Pallasmaa's phenomenological theories within the architectural context of the Vakil Bazaar in Shiraz. To this end, a descriptive-interpretive phenomenological method was applied, based on the approach of Max van Manen. Positioned within qualitative research paradigms, this study seeks to describe and interpret the

essence of architectural phenomena through lived, sensory, and embodied experiences of space. The theoretical framework was established through a literature review focusing on phenomenology and Pallasmaa's concepts. Fieldwork included observation and semi-structured interviews with ۳۰ shopkeepers and craftsmen working within the Vakil Bazaar. Participants were selected purposefully, and theoretical saturation was achieved as recurring themes emerged during the coding process.

The Most Important Results and Conclusion:

Human perception of space is not limited to vision alone; it also involves smell, hearing, touch, and even taste. The eye collaborates with other senses in perceiving space: the ear contributes through environmental sounds, every place has a unique smell, and the skin serving as a boundary between body and world senses and interprets space. The body, therefore, plays a fundamental role in perceiving architectural environments through the full spectrum of the senses. This reality was clearly reflected in the experiences of the study's participants at Vakil Bazaar. Their continued sensory engagement with the market's spatial atmosphere turned into a lived experience where all bodily senses played a direct role: hearing the sounds of workshops, conversations, and calls to prayer; smelling the fragrances of herbal shops; pausing in courtyards; and touching the textures of building materials all contributed to forming this experience. Ultimately, this embodied perception led to mental responses in participants, shaping how they internalized, remembered, and recounted their spatial encounters. It becomes evident that vision is only one of many perceptual tools, and that the richness of spatial experience depends on the cooperation of all senses. The findings of this research suggest a need for contemporary architecture to adopt a new interpretation grounded in embodied perception, reinforcing a sense of place attachment. If designers and architects consider this dimension of human experience, buildings will not be reduced to mere commercial products, but will become meaningful environments capable of fostering deep, reflective, and lasting relationships between people and space. Thus, architecture can create multi-sensory experiences by enabling the presence and activation of all human senses experiences in which each sense reveals a unique dimension of space. In conclusion, the study reveals a significant overlap and meaningful correlation between Pallasmaa's phenomenological themes and the embodied perception of architectural space within the Vakil Bazaar of Shiraz.

KEYWORDS

Phenomenology, Juhani Pallasmaa, Vakil Bazaar, Sensory Perceptions, Embodiedness