ROOFTOPS AS REVIVED SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE: LESSONS FROM THE CULTURAL ROOF PROJECT IN BUSHEHR, IRAN

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Resumo | Abstract

In the historic urban Iranian cities, the rooftop has long functioned not merely as a building envelope but as an active social stratum, a semi-public threshold mediating between the private dwelling and the collective life of the neighborhood. This dimension of vertical urbanism, however, has largely eroded under the pressures of modernization, leaving a void in the informal social infrastructure of many historic urban cores. This paper investigates the Cultural Roof project in Bushehr, one of the port cities on Iran's Persian Gulf coast, as a case study in deliberately reconstructing rooftop social life within a historically sensitive context. The old context of Bushehr's urban form is defined by four distinct neighborhoods, Behbahani, Shanbedi, Kooti, and Dehdashti, whose tightly packed building masses and narrow shading alleys produced an architecture of proximity in which rooftops once served as interconnected nodes of social encounter. The project, situated in the Shanbedi district adjacent to the traditional bazaar, translates this historic pattern into a programmatically layered public space that incorporates cultural, musical, and communal programming. Drawing on urban morphology, post-occupancy analysis, and the spatial logic of climate-responsive vernacular architecture, this research argues that the reactivation of rooftops as culturally programmed public spaces offers a viable and contextually grounded model for addressing social fragmentation in historic neighborhoods. In Bushehr, folk music is identified as a structuring social catalyst, capable of bridging generational and class divides within the community. The findings suggest that rooftop intervention strategies, when anchored in local cultural memory and climatic intelligence, can restore forms of social interaction that conventional street-level urbanism fails to recover.

Palavras-chave | Keywords

Urban morphology; urbanism; vernacular architecture; social interaction; public space.

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Resumo biográfico | Short biography

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