

Film as a Tool in Urban Design Education

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Abstract

Urban planning and especially urban design is multidisciplinary and therefore for appropriate perception, understanding and analysis must have close relations and transaction with other disciplines especially urban planning, environmental design, sociology, psychology, economy and architecture. One of the means to propose solutions is visual representation of the environment, through sketches, maps, photos and films. Cinema as an effective public media, is constantly reproducing spaces, environments, events, symbols and icons and reminds, educates or represents it for its users. Given cities' important role in film and the medium's particularly vivid and kinetic depiction of cities, films provide a rich resource for the teaching of urban design. This paper intends to illustrate the relation between social life and urban form through selection and review of 10 movies during the last decade in Iranian cinema and discusses ten films screened in the University of Michigan's Master of Urban Design Program's introductory studio for their lessons about the intersection between urban form and social life. Since, cinema constantly informs the user about the space, he/she would develop an understanding and feeling through the virtual space of the scene which may promote his presence in a specific place. Also new perspectives towards the urban space and its uses and functions are developed. Therefore the aim of this article is to find out the role of movies in urban design education. Another aim of this paper is to analyze the style of demonstration the urban spaces in sequences of urban films to recognize reflection, application, and display of urban environment in these selected movies which have had some sequences of urban spaces that demonstrate and reflect the real urban spaces. After summarizing the reasons for using film in urban design studio, it describes the criteria used to select films, identifies some of their lessons (which are revealed through viewing exercises), and concludes with a reflection on the value of film in teaching urban design. First the application of movie as an educational tool would be clarified, and then the selection criteria for the movies are stated and their lessons are explored. Finally it is concluded that due to the role of cities in movies and media, especially in representing the mobility, vitality and clear representation of the city, they could be used as a major educational resource in urban design. An understanding of urban spaces, through movies would provide a comprehensive understanding of formal, functional and semantic characteristics of spaces and improve urban designers' understanding of the environment. This could be used to find out the problems and shortcomings within the contemporary urban space and looking forward to provide urban design solutions. In addition, findings of this research can create guidance for moviemakers to choose proper samples of urban spaces and qualitative aspects of urban spaces into movies to increase level of people understanding.

Keywords: Urban Design, Film, Iranian Cinema, Education, Urban Space.