

A Reflection of Rural Living and Social Concerns on the Kitchen Space in Missouri, U.S.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Typically the rural living patterns differ from those of the city. The farmer who lives in the country engages in agriculture, and the city dweller, known as a salary man, usually works in his office. Also, the house in the country differs from the one in the city, in that, the house was built by the people and their personal life is contained in that space. In the house, the kitchen is the primary space and is more complicated than other areas with its many appliances and facilities in need of being accommodated. This has affected the design of the kitchen, and the space has been changed as a result of social and technological advancements. This trend on the kitchen space was showed in the article American rural area and the Korean rural area(Ryou & Choi, 1997). The 1st analysis, studying the remodeling and desirable changes of the rural kitchen space in Missouri, suggested that the tenants needed the kitchen to be larger space with more storage space and a wider workspace. According to Yoon, Chungsook. et al.(1994) the needs of tenant could be classified as 'improvement' so that the quality of the present kitchen space is better through the change of its size and its arrangement, and 'maintenance' from the social and physical life of the present kitchen space took longer through the repair and replacement of its materials and facilities.

The analysis of the tenants' needs on remodeling depicted a changing trend on the rural kitchen space, but were not enough to determine the differences of the rural kitchen design from those in the city. Therefore, this study was to examine the special features and adequate design of the rural kitchen, the kitchen design for the handicapped, in recycling, and the users' evaluation on the kitchen. Also, the differences in rural living which influenced the design of the kitchen were explored.

II. METHODS

This study continues to observe the needs of the tenant in the kitchen area in Missouri, and uses the same research methods which were used in the prior study¹⁾. In other words, the data was collected from a mail questionnaire survey and the number of residents totalled 104, rural residents²⁾ selected from communities in the state of Missouri.

Also, the researchers examined the handicapped and the recycling efforts on the

kitchen³⁾ because these concerns reflect the social changes and concerns that influence the design of the kitchen.

III. RURAL LIVING AND THE DESIGN OF THE KITCHEN

This study examined the different needs of a rural kitchen area from the city, and determined their design characteristics. Because the residents were in a rural area, they believed their kitchen needed to have some special features and different design qualities.

1. The special features of a rural kitchen

Regarding the results on the special features of a rural kitchen, 41 respondents(39.4%) indicated that the rural kitchen differs from that of the city. The most special feature was the 'freezer'. Particularly, 'a large freezer' is needed in the rural kitchen(27 of the 41 respondents, 65.9%). Most commonly the freezer is set up in a basement⁴⁾, a porch, a utility room and so on. Another feature was the pantry⁵⁾, which provides storage space for extra food and canned goods(10 of 41 respondents, 24.4%). 2 respondents suggested a built-in pantry was a very distinct characteristic. Other remarks included a wide counter for working(2 respondents) and simply a large and spacious area spaces(3 respondents).

2. The adequate design of the rural kitchen

Concerning the adequate design for a rural kitchen, 54 respondents(51.9%) expressed their opinions. Through a qualitative analysis on their thoughts, the researchers found that the most important factor was the ease and convenience to work in the rural kitchen; the effective arrangement and circulation of appliances • facilities • equipment • furniture, and their maintenance were much pointed out by the rural residents. In the aspect of spaciousness, they wanted a large kitchen space<table 1>.

<table 1> The adequate design needs of the rural kitchen

adequate design needs		number of opinions	
convenience & ease to work	• large and effective arrangement for workspace	12	27
	• ease of keeping purchased products / a freezer	7	
	• use of materials to be easily maintained	6	
	• kitchen located at the center of the house plan / movable island kitchen	2	
large space	• large dining space / a dining table within a kitchen	8	17
	• larger kitchen	4	
	• opened kitchen space	5	
other	• present kitchen is adequate / practical kitchen / comfortable kitchen / fireplace within a kitchen, etc.	6	15
	• no special differences	9	

To interpret the users' opinions, related to the design of the kitchen, the first factor of design was a convenience, particularly the convenience for making meals, because the kitchen space stands as the center of work for the family. For convenience, they need storage space as well as an easy means of cleaning the area. This need of storage is in tune with the results of its special features, the 'freezer and pantry'. The second factor was the spaciousness and openness of the kitchen, and the central location of the house plan. In other words, residents want the rural kitchen, to be large and open in order to serve as a family living area. Understandingly, a few residents had an opinion not so different from people residing in the city.

IV. SOCIAL CONCERNS AND THE DESIGN OF THE KITCHEN

1. recycling efforts

Sixty-one respondents(58.7%) made an effort to recycle in their rural home. The recycling items were glass(90.2%), paper(83.6%) and aluminum cans(11.5%). To analyze the relationship between recycling efforts and housing space, 35 respondents(33.7%) answered that the accommodated space was provided in the house. In addition, 21 respondents made the effort within the kitchen, and 14 respondents did so in other spaces such as the garage, the basement or the utility room. About 66.3% of the respondents mentioned that their houses did not accommodate for recycling space, because an appropriate place in the kitchen was not provided. However, at present the house does not accommodate a recycling space. Occasionally, one respondent collected aluminum cans. Also, another respondent was preparing to design a recycling space in his house, while others needed the collecting area for a community.

2. handicap accessibility

Society has seen an increase in the handicapped and the elderly, and so this study examined the accessibility of the handicapped. Twenty-three respondents, in reference to their kitchen, answered that the handicapped could be accessible. Forty-three respondents(41.3%) were able to use a wheelchair in their kitchen. They pointed out some problems though : the accessibility to the upper cabinet and sink were difficult, the height of the counter was a little high, the kitchen space for using a wheelchair was limited, and entering the kitchen from outdoors was also a problem. A wheelchair could be used in their kitchen, though, with not too many major difficulties.

V. AN EVALUATION ON THE KITCHEN

1. safety • function • comfort

The users evaluated the safety, the function and comfort of their kitchens. The positive answers(yes) were safety, 97.1%, function, 91.3% and comfort, 84.6%. There were few negative evaluations. Regarding function, 8.7% of the evaluators gave negative answers(no) because the workspace was not large enough. 12.5% of the evaluators answered comfort negatively, because there was no social or dining space within the kitchen since the kitchen space cannot accommodate a lot of people.

And so, these results revealed that the function and comfort of the kitchen were related with the size of the kitchen space. Also, the results were similar to the 1st analysis on the users' needs and the latest results from special features and the adequate design of the rural kitchen. Therefore, the most important factor to plan the kitchen space was in regards to dimensions within the rural houses.

2. satisfaction

The satisfaction of the kitchen⁶⁾ was evaluated, and 94 of the evaluators(90.4%) answered 'greatly satisfied' and 'somewhat satisfied' on their questionnaire. Most respondents were satisfied with their kitchen. Their reasons for satisfaction are presented in <table 2>.

<table 2> the evaluation on the rural kitchen

evaluating scale	N (%)	the reasons of evaluation on the rural kitchen space	number of opinions
greatly satisfied	55 (52.9%)	• well planned kitchen with necessary equipments • facilities • appliances, work counter, dining table, pantry and so on.	17
		• to be well designed the kitchen meets the user's needs	12
		• very convenient kitchen to cook, to arrange equipment • facilities and to clean	10
		• easy to socialize, converse, have a break time with family	4
		• enough kitchen space to cook and to invite visitors	4
		• very proud of my kitchen	1
somewhat satisfied	39 (37.5%)	• kitchen is small / work counter, storage, cabinets, work space and larger space for dining table	16
		• the shortage of facilities and appliances : dining table, chair, dishwasher, lighting, etc.	3
		• no arrangement and no improved wallpaper, cabinets and workable counter-top	5
		• convenient kitchen / small work and dining space with in the kitchen	4
		• a large dining area and a centered kitchen on the house plan	1
• the kitchen space was old	1		
a little satisfied	6 (5.8%)	• the kitchen space was old / storage space, equipment • facilities and cabinets were not enough	4
		• the kitchen space on the house plan was inefficient and small	1
		• floor materials and appliances needed to be changed.	1
not at all satisfied	4 (3.8%)	• the kitchen was old but residents were too poor to improve it / small kitchen space, shortage of cabinet space, bad arrangement and circulation	4

When the respondents felt their kitchen space was well planned, with the necessary equipment • facilities • appliances, the work counters, a dining table and a pantry, they evaluated it as 'greatly satisfied' . And so, it can be understood that the equipment • facilities • appliances to support the work in the kitchen were the most effective factor to design it. And so, the influenced factors were the design to

reflect the users' needs, the easiness to work and maintain, the meeting of the family, and the size of the kitchen.

For some, evaluating it as 'somewhat satisfied' was caused by the small kitchen space and the shortage of kitchen facilities. The respondents indicated 23 individuals regarding their reasons. The unsatisfied factors were the shortage of storage space, small kitchen space, circulation of facilities • equipment, except for the people who were 'greatly satisfied' and 'somewhat satisfied' .

To summarize the results, regarding the safety, function, comfort and the satisfaction of the kitchen space, the most important factor in designing the kitchen was large enough dimensions. Also, the size factor was related to the equipment • facilities, the dining space and the actual family meeting space.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the design of the rural kitchen is different from that of the city. When the researchers of this study plan the rural kitchen space, the following special aspects were considered - a large space, enough storage space to include a freezer and a pantry, an easiness to work and a design for convenience - to meet users' needs.

Also, the rural residents wanted the kitchen space to be arranged as the central part of the house. The kitchen has become the heart of the family living space to meet and socialize with each other. These needs were influenced by social changes, and the kitchen is no longer a working space for only women, but a living space for the whole family.

The rural kitchen has adopted the concerns of society, the recycling efforts and the accessibility of the handicapped. These results were distinctly characteristic. It can be assumed that in 1990 these concepts had already been applied to the universal design of the rural kitchen.

In conclusion, the American rural kitchen was influenced by the rural life and concerns facing society. In the future, the researchers plan to extend this study as a comparison between countries.

Notes

1. Ryou, O. S., Choi, B. S.(1997). Users' Need for the Kitchen Space in Missouri, *U.S. Housing Research Journal* 8(1). 87-96.
2. We sent 180 questionnaires to the rural residents, and received 104 questionnaires. The ratio of return was about 57.8%.

3. When we examined and explored the rural kitchen in 1991, the new design factors of the kitchen were environmental concerns, technological developments, accessibility and its universal design. So this study examined an environmental concern(recycling and the kitchen) and its universal design(handicapped and the kitchen).
4. In the pilot study, we visited 12 rural homes in Missouri and interviewed the residents by using field survey methods, most of the housing types visited semi-basement and two-story homes. The basement space was used as a living space, in which old things were stored, a freezer was put, and sometimes it connected to the garage area for the car.
5. On the first analysis, 4 houses were improved by establishing a pantry after 1987. The pantry is a storage facility for many canned products and instant food. Because the rural area is located far from the city, residents went to the market once a month and bought many things.
6. This study adopted a measuring satisfaction of a 4 point-Likert scale. At first, the research adopted a 5 point-Likert scale, but Ruth Brent, chairman in the Department of Environmental Design, at the University of Missouri, Columbia, proposed that a neutral value is not clear.

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