

Urban regeneration of a dysfunctional historic texture: a reflection on social theme in the northern zone of Naqsh-e Jahan Square of Esfahan

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1.This paper has been obtained from a research project titled “Strategic regeneration of the northern zone of Naqsh-e Jahan Square” which has been carried out by collaboration of Daneshpajooan Pishro Institute and direction of Nosazi-Behsazi Organization of Esfahan Municipality.

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Abstract

Abstract

Nowadays, an important matter has emerged which is to pay attention to the problems of releasing historic textures. Urban regeneration with emphasis on social themes has always been a fundamental approach to eliminate the shortcomings of historic textures. Redefining social life and public events, creating unity and integrity, and social justice and etc. are of the main approaches to urban regeneration according to historical values and the existing identity in these textures.

This research is trying to identify the social themes of dysfunctional historic textures in the northern zone of Naqsh-e Jahan Square of Esfahan, and suggest proper solutions based on the current and past situation of this neighborhood, so that it can revitalize this area through a comprehensive plan and become able to play novel roles alongside its historic identity, in coordination with new urban centers. To do so, methods of desk research, survey research and questionnaire have been employed. The volume of the samples have been calculated with Cochran formula method and the data analyses have been done with SPSS software first, and then using GIS, they have been positioned on a limited-blocks level and by overlaps of indicators, known factors of the inefficiencies have been introduced so that the problems causing inefficiencies in textures with social themes can be tackled.

Key words: urban regeneration, urban regeneration with emphasis on social theme, northern zone of Naqsh-e Jahan Square of Esfahan

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Introduction

During the last few decades, inefficient textures have become one of the most important urban issues. These textures, comprising a high percentage of urban population, face complicated issues such as urban poverty, insecurity and identity crisis on one hand, but also have hidden potentials and capacities for future internal developments which has led to attracting urban planners' thoughts towards inefficient urban textures. There have been various viewpoints on worn-out textures. In this research, we have tried to identify the problems in the texture in coordination with urban sustainability policies by employing the approach of urban regeneration with emphasis on social aspect which has become distinguished in recent years for renovation and reconstruction. Urban regeneration is an approach towards endogenous development; in other words, it is employing the existing potential and actual capabilities in urban planning. The goals are maintaining the valuable characteristics of old textures, creating new characteristics appropriate for modern needs, redefining values of the past, redefining social life and group events, creating unity and integrity, creating social justice among residents of old neighborhoods to respond to the needs on today.

The northern zone of Naqsh-e Jahan Square, having a historic texture worthy of renovation, preservation and conservation and having high historic potential and tourist attractions such as: Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Atiq Square, Hakim Mosque, etc. is full of possibilities to be developed; however, unfortunately due to unconsidered actions and not taking care of the decaying process, this texture has faced more problems in recent years and the neighborhood, the showcase of culture, has lost its place and identity, and attractions created by cultural-positional differences in this area has decreased. People's migration from this neighborhood, rise in crime rate, etc. are visible signs of dysfunctionality of this historic texture. That's why it's crucial to actively revitalize historic textures and reconsider what has been done on it to exploit the possibilities

and potentials and improve the sense of belonging, and in turn, creating identities for neighborhoods.

Urban regeneration

The concept of urban regeneration can be interpreted differently based on the level of a country's development. In most advanced economies, the goal is to promote "return to cities", revitalize the city center, reactivate serious international competitive grounds; and be creative for improving environmental quality in an extensive manner towards an intelligent growth (Chaline & Coccossis, 2004, p. 7). Urban regeneration is a comprehensive and integrate idea and measure to solve urban problems in the target operation area, which in the end leads to a sustainable economic, physical, social and environmental advancement (Roberts & Sykes, 2014, pp. 15-16)

The term "regeneration" means revitalizing, reanimating, reviving and reawakening. This term has been widely in use in urban development studies as substitute for urban reconstruction, since 1995. Couch defines this substitute as: "Urban regeneration moves beyond the aims, aspirations and achievements of urban renewal, which is seen as a process of essentially physical change, and urban revitalization, which whilst suggests the need for action, fails to specify a precise method of approach."

Roberts has provided one of the most comprehensive viewpoints in the introduction of Urban Regeneration: Urban regeneration is a process which leads to creating new urban spaces while preserving the main spatial properties (physical and functional). Urban regeneration, comprehensively and integrally, is a series of actions towards solving urban problems, so that it brings permanent improvement in economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of the changed texture (Khodaverdi & Moazzezi Mehr Tehran, 2016, p. 22).

In recent worldwide urban studies urban regeneration is a process which leads to creating new urban spaces while preserving the main spatial properties

(physical, functional, identity). Generally, regeneration tries to consider the situation and environmental, socio-cultural and economic conditions to revitalize places that have become worn-out and dysfunctional over time, and also to enhance environmental qualities in such a way that physical and functional revitalization take place simultaneously.

Urban regeneration with emphasis on social aspect
In recent studies, social sustainability and generally social aspect of sustainable development and people's role and their requests have increasingly gained importance. More concentration on this aspect has been very effective in urban development approaches and especially regeneration. Evolution of urban regeneration is defined with "social approach", "local communities" and "sustainable places", and research studies show us how traditional concepts such as basic needs including housing and environmental health, education and skills, justice, reducing poverty, and liveliness are being increasingly completed and replaced by concepts such as identity, sense of place and culture, empowerment of contribution and access, health and security, social capital, welfare, happiness, quality of life, and benefits of social media; in other words, "hard goals" are replaced with "soft goals" (Colantonio & Dixon, 2011).

In this movement of revitalizing urban centers and also in many new experiences of urban regeneration such as BID and TOD which are demonstrated in modern forms, public spaces obtain a new kind of concept that is defined as the index of sustainable regeneration quality. Additionally, it is said that public spaces have become the key to the success of regeneration; where "the important function of aggregation point of local community" creates positional success for particular events, improvement in sense of place and in fact the modern "Greek Agora", and they (successful public spaces) are the positive outcomes of urban sustainable regeneration process (Bevilacqua et al, 2013).

The comparative evolution of urban renovation theories with emphasis on social aspect in Iran and worldwide

Policies and plans of refurbishment, reconstruction and renovation in each era have been in use in accordance with the dominant approaches of effective and leading forces and also the condition and environmental, economic and social conditions of cities, having the indicators and aspects identifying the era and its dominating policies (Bahreini, et al, 2014).

Two movements from the second half of 19th century have made significant changes in the spatial-social organization of urban textures. First, actions of Baron Haussmann in Paris, demolishing parts of populated neighborhoods and constructing wide avenues, which led to extensive interventions in urban textures of other countries. Second, protective laws of England deal with the needs and problems of older cities that had stepped into industrial level. In Iran, in late Safavi era (the first half of 18th century), Esfahan's doctrine made an evolution in urban development; the city prospered which was not through manipulating the ancient city, but creating new towns next to the ancient city. Therefore, major physical-social changes in development parts of the city were forming.

Major economic, social and political changes in the first half of 20th century brought upon extensive conflicts in planning processes and urban policy making in Europe. On one hand, Wars, spread of modernist thoughts in the beginning of this century and also outcomes of industrial revolution, amplified the tendency for development and on the other hand, follow up on conservation thoughts mixed with technology and also the beginning of supports in international scale continued the conservation movement. In Iran, Qajar was the first government that in order to create a symbol of growth and development, tried to transform cities and in fact from this era forward, manipulation in ancient urban textures came to existence. Serious commence of actions and policies relating to manipulation in ancient textures of historic cities was happened in the first half of 20th century.

Legacy of world war two (1950s) in Europe was decay and collapse of urban organization of many cities in this continent. Modernists call this period "the era

of reconstruction". An era that from a social viewpoint concentrates on planning for welfare and improvement of living standards and building houses. In Iran, the first turning point in this era is the start of construction programs. The first construction program (1948-1954) credit-wise, prioritized the social and urban reforms section, but wasn't properly realized.

In 1960s, while considering values of culture, history, aesthetics, architecture, and urban texture, the necessity of "functional revitalization" and "texture empowerment" was also noticed. In this approach, in addition to caring about reconstruction and physical improvement of neighborhoods, their economic and social revitalization is also heavily emphasized. The flow of gentrification of urban neighborhoods also happens in this step. Nonetheless, the empowerment and renewal of urban life was never successful to turn into a dominant approach in this decade. At the same, in Iran, the second and third construction programs were approved but ancient urban textures were left out and the decay in historic textures became worse compared to previous programs.

By the development of laws, institutions and responsible organizations, and especially by the process of decentralization and transferring power to local governments, the expansion of conservation mindset was continued. Facing economic issues and social aberrations of urban textures, empowerment programs have shifted their concentration to elimination of social deprivations and by following up on "projects of developing social groups" and considering "social pathology approach" they have tried to motivate people to keep living in these areas by paying attention to values and social benefit (sociable actions). At the same time, the fourth and fifth construction programs were approved. Signs of manipulation in urban textures were visible in the fourth construction program. For the first time, there were direct considerations for conserving historic textures in the fifth construction program and for this purpose a budget has been allocated to

refurbishment, renovation and improvement of the environment but resulting in failure due to lack of legal bases.

In 1980s, the regeneration and improvement policy combined with neoliberalism. For instance, we can mention local governments not participating in city affairs. This era is the same time as Islamic Revolution. The social capital formed by this huge participation, caused people to be active in various social, political and economic platform of the country. The start of programs called "texture fluid-making" is known as the first people-oriented action for improvement and organization of urban textures. By postponing fluid-making projects to urban development plans and designs, a new era of urban renovations began, which itself created a more comprehensive program called "improvement of urban texture".

Undoubtedly, the most important urban regeneration programs since 1990s until now is in the size and method of engaging social groups with this matter, compared to the past. In England, with the Labour Party having the government in 1997, the government concentrated its efforts on putting local groups in charge of management, organizing, and operating urban regeneration plans. "New policy for social groups" is the name of the program that assigns the responsibility of creating and managing organizational structures in scale of neighborhoods, to consider problems in neighborhoods. In this approach towards regeneration we assume that local citizens are the most reliable sources to settle the issues, based on their everyday living experiences in the area. In 1990s in Iran, two major actions for manipulation in ancient texture were planned. During 1990-1993 the operating policy was gradual improvement and refurbishment by the citizens through improvement plans with similar structures as common detailed plans. During 1994-1996 the policy to use lands and properties located in worn-out textures of urban centers is the start of a new era in interventions of urban textures. This policy was put into action in the second 5-year program of eco-

conomic, social and political development of the country under the title of “problematic urban texture”. Peaceful coexistence and companionship of styles and cultures is the last step of evolution and transformation in the concept of renovation by the start of the third millennium which is new definition of urban regeneration and renaissance. The idea of urban renaissance believes that promoting the sustainable life style and including all of the social groups in a city and their activities is related to the design of physical environment; construction and improvement, improvement and refurbishment, and empowerment and sustainable contribution of people, were three major approaches during 1994-2001 and 2002-2006 and the next period until now, which intended to reach balanced urban development through exploiting the existing physical, economic and social capacities with an approach of sustainable and extensive contribution of people. Overviewing the recent decades, we can say that the social aspect has always been specifically emphasized.

Research method

This research has a practical nature and the research method in this study is descriptive-analytical. The required data of this research has been collected from questionnaires that have been validated. This data was analyzed in SPSS statistical software using proper statistical tests. The results of this part will be presented in two formats of descriptive and coherence analyses. And then, based on the results obtained from questionnaires, surveys and interviews, the discussed indexes, in they can be graphically showed, will be positioned in block scale using GIS, and eventually the condition of the neighborhood is demonstrated in social aspect by overlapping the acquired layers. The presentation of conditions of blocks in a spectrum of appropriate, medium and inappropriate, shows the appearance of the neighborhood in this test. Integrating the results of questionnaire over city blocks enables us to take into account the solution approaches for dysfunctionality that match the root of the problem, in regeneration. Thus

the basis for achieving statement of outlook, and big and small goals is provided.

Research variables

In addition to indexes that were studied directly and visually, the main concept of this research (urban regeneration) was evaluated by several multiple indexes via two methods. After coding, the scores of indexes were summed and the total mark of each respondent has been determined. These items have been localized according to the properties of Naqsh-e Jahan neighborhood. On the other hand, in the second method the condition of each block has been evaluated according to the following standards based on some of the mentioned indexes so that the precise position of dysfunctionality in each index becomes indicated; then, the dysfunctionality in social aspect is graphically showed through the overlap of indexes. Six indexes of literacy, unemployment rate, gross population density, net population density, security and social interactions on block level and six indexes of social contribution, security, identity, immigration, justice, and social interactions in form of questionnaire were studied to evaluate and identify the level of dysfunctionality in social aspect.

Research range and domain

The northern zone of Naqsh-e Jahan Square is located at the center of the historic part of Esfahan, which is surrounded by Sepah and Hafez St from the south, Abdorrazzaq St from north, Hafez St from west, and Chahar Bagh St from east. This area with its history, because of Chahar Bagh Bazaar passage on the left and Esfahan's old covered bazaar through it, has created a complex with wide and diverse economic function. This area has become unable to host population and a part of has even gone empty of residents due to existence of hidden cultural and historical values and the commitment for their preservation, and also because of aggregation of services, activities, workshops and storages. However, this area has experienced aggregation of more services and activities over time, in terms of economic activities.

Data analysis

The condition of neighborhood was studied based on the mentioned indexes in social aspect form people’s ideas. In order to analyze social aspect in-

dexes through questionnaire, we used 12 items in rating measurement level in six indexes. The highest mark is 5 and the lowest is 1. The mean of this

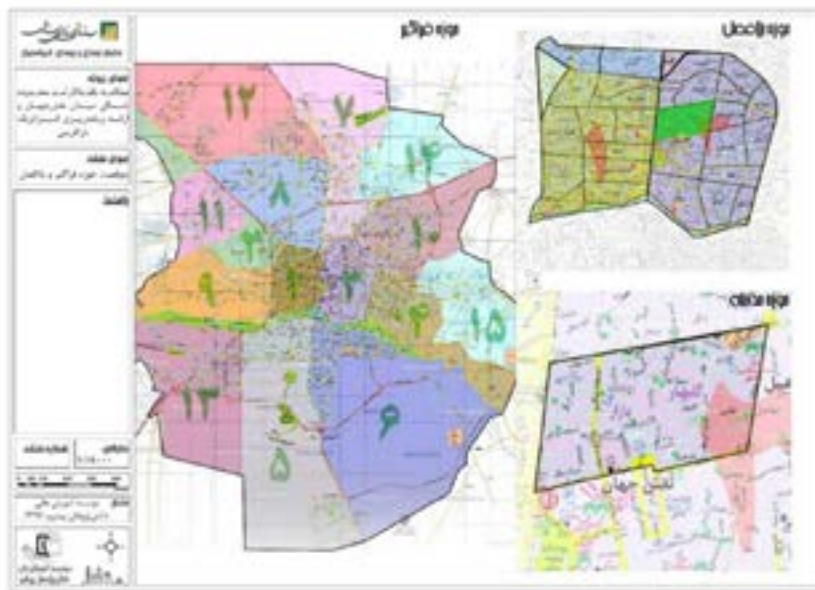


Figure no.1: the location of studied area

variable for respondents is 3.32 and skewness coefficient is 0.42; since the skewness coefficient factor has a lean to the left, less people have evaluated the current social condition as desirable.

Descriptive results related to social indexes in above table and diagram show that since opinion

sharing sessions and group sessions with neighborhood trustees are not held and there’s no chance of face to face communication between the residents, social interactions are at a low level and also crime presence and insufficient lighting at night have led

+	Immigration	Social interactions	Social justice	Social identity	Security	Social contribution
N Valid	322	322	322	322	322	322
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.43	3.10	3.32	3.44	3.21	3.39
Median	3.00	3.00	3.50	4.00	3.50	3.25
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00

Table no.1: descriptive results of social aspect

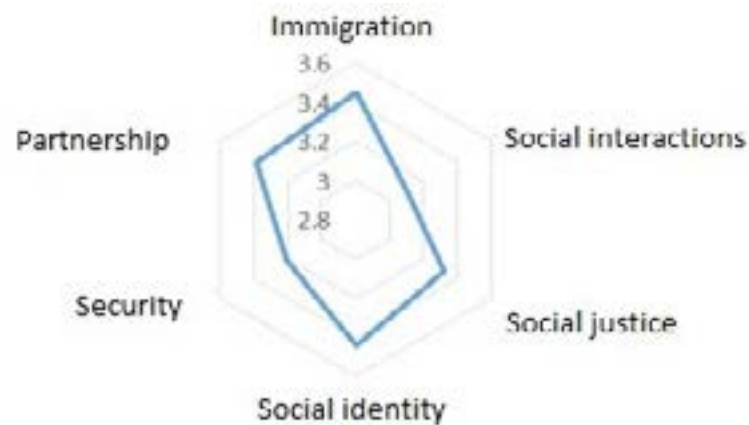


Diagram no.1: condition of social aspect in the area from respondents' view

to the decline of security. On the other hand, social identity factor has a higher score.

To evaluate and identify dysfunctional blocks in social aspect six indexes of literacy, unemployment rate, gross population density, net population density, security and social interactions were studied on blocks level; their standards of appropriateness and inappropriateness is shown in the following table.

Literacy index has been evaluated based on blocks with more or less literate population than mean literate population. This index shows which of the blocks has a lower level than the average of the whole area, according to dominant social conditions. The related data has come from official census in city blocks. The map shows that all the blocks adjacent to Charhar Bagh St have a high level of literacy. We have to

aspects	index	standard	
		appropriate	inappropriate
social	Literacy	Blocks with more literate population than mean literate population of the area	Blocks with less literate population than mean literate population of the area
	Unemployment rate	Blocks with lower unemployment rate than mean unemployment in the area	Blocks with higher unemployment rate than mean unemployment in the area
	Gross population density	Blocks with lower gross population density than mean population density in the area	Blocks with higher gross population density than mean population density in the area
	Net residential density	Blocks with lower net residential density than mean residential density in the area	Blocks with higher net residential density than mean residential density in the area
	Security	Blocks that have more secure passages and have no crime-inducing land uses	Blocks that have less secure passages and have crime-inducing land uses
	Social interactions	Blocks that have interactions among its residents (having social nodes)	Blocks that doesn't have interactions among its residents (not having social nodes)

Table no.2: introducing the evaluated indexes in the research

mention that in blocks with no statistical information literacy index has not been taken into account. Unemployment rate index has been evaluated based on blocks with more or less unemployed population than mean unemployed population. Unemployment index can have both social and economic consequences. As unemployment rate rises, in addition to decrease in family's economic power, crime rate and social aberrations rise too. According to the data, if statistics of unemployment rate in the area exceeds mean unemployment rate, it is considered inappropriate. The map shows that blocks with more residential seeds have less economic power.

Net residential density index is evaluated based on blocks with more or less net residential density than mean density of the area. If the density is higher, the residential level has been distributed with less proportion among the block residents and users are densely present in the block. Block with no residential level are not counted in this part. We have to mention that blocks with big old residential pieces and full of worn-out parts whose residents have migrated, or abandoned pieces with no residents have lower-than-mean gross density but due to the described undesirable conditions, these types of blocks are placed in dysfunctional group as well.

- Gross population density index is evaluated based on blocks with lower or higher density than mean density in the area. Its approach is the same as net density, with a difference that the entire area has been considered. Similarly, for investigating this index, blocks with low population density, large lands and pieces, or blocks with many worn-out parts whose residents have migrated, were also put

into the category of dysfunctional blocks.

- Security index has been evaluated based on blocks with many secure passages and no crime-inducing land uses. The security of passages was studied according to lighting, type of land use (and their active hours) and the quality of surrounding passages of blocks, in addition to presence of abandoned lands and ruins. As we can see on the map, most blocks have high security. This topic was hinted in questionnaires filled in by users.

Social interaction index is evaluated based on blocks with social nodes such as Naqsh-e Jahan Square, Atiq Square, Hakim Mosque, Bazaar, etc. People have stronger social relationships and neighborly friendships in blocks that have hangouts and social nodes. A block that has these types of places is desirable according to this index. Their condition is shown on the map.

In the end, maps of indexes of literacy, unemployment rate, net residency density, gross population density, security and social interactions have been overlapped and blocks of this area are divided into three categories of appropriate, medium and inappropriate. The result map form overlapping shows that few blocks have undesirable conditions.

Conclusion

According to the results, problems and issues of each block has been prepared that based on the analyses overlay, produced a tables for inappropriate blocks (blocks no. 21, 26, 22, 31 and 40). In the table, green shows appropriate and red shows inappropriate conditions based on the defined indexes. Also, matching the data from the questionnaire, absence of social interactions is noticeable



Map no.1: literacy



Map no.2: unemployment rate



Map no.3: net residency density



Map no.4: gross population density



Map no.5: Security



Map no.6: social interactions



Map no.7: overlap of social aspect indexes

on neighborhood level.

Therefore, according to the practical achievements of this research, for regeneration of dysfunctional blocks based on the dominant condition and existing potentials in each block, we present the following

recommendations:

- Managing and developing tourism according to existing potentials and thus making income and jobs in all blocks
- Exploiting historic elements to creating diversity in

Block	Index	Block	Block	Unemployment rate	Net mobility density	Gross population density	Security	Social interactions
			1	2	3	4	5	6
2	4		Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Green
22			Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red
26			Red	Red	Red	Green	Red	Red
35			Green	Red	Red	Green	Green	Red
40			Red	Red	Red	Red	Green	Green

Table no.3: document of dysfunctional blocks

each block

- Using people’s contribution towards reaching empowerment and increase in social interactions
- Improving the social role of bazaar and squares and their surroundings through active contribution of administrative, public and private sectors

- Improving social relationships by creating public spaces for leisure time in blocks no. 22 and 21
- Preparation for contribution of residents in social and cultural organizations to activate regeneration programs
- Empowering local structures in order to increase so-

cial contribution

- Program of lighting in neighborhood spaces with emphasis on blocks no. 21, 22 and 26
- Using public spaces and physical and spatial bonds to increase interactions
- Holding various educational classes and increasing learning possibilities in religious places for residents in order to create inclusive contribution
- Holding exhibitions and music, art and culture festivals next to the buildings in blocks no. 21 and 31
- Creating new jobs relating to tourists' needs in neighborhoods by developing historic buildings in block 21
- Holding various religious rituals locally on specific days in select neighborhood centers in block 31
- Creating a simplification office as a place for increasing the rate of relationship between
- the residents and the employers in block 26

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