Providing Skeletal and Activity Solutions for Promoting Vitality of Old Contexts (Case Study: Sagharisazan Town of Rasht)

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ABSTRACT

Background: Problematic contexts of modern cities are considered as a multidimensional and complex issue in cities. These contexts are accompanied with social, economic and skeletal deficiencies each of which has various reasons and contributing factors. Narrow streets and alleys, parts with low average area, low quality masonries, and weak buildings are some of the general characteristics and skeletal problems of these contexts. Vitality is one of the multidiimensional qualities of the cities whose creation and promotion are affected by various skeletal, social and economic factors. Such factors in an urban city lead to this quality in an integrated and coordinated manner. Therefore, the purpose of this work is to provide a skeletal and activity solution for promoting vitality of the old context in Sagharisazan town of Rasht. According to theoretical basis collected through available literature, nine indices including user diversity, skeletal diversity, qualitative and quantitative access, light safety, passenger safety, climatic comfort and utilities comfort are selected as the tools of measuring vitality in Sagharisazan town. Moreover, by means of parametric t-test, in SPSS software, the status of these indices were assessed. It seems that this town is in a poor quality of vitality. The research method used in this paper is descriptive and for achieving a theoretical framework corresponding to understanding theories, documents and library resources were used. Results and findings of research reveals that lack of access leads to reduction of life quality, dissatisfaction from urbanized environments and increase in immigrations. Furthermore, it can be said that higher diversity of activities, providing safe environments for urban life will help improving vitality.

INTRODUCTION

Cities are like living creatures which live, grow and become mature. However, in this complex process of grow and development, changes in a part of the city may be more compared to other parts and a part of the city may be forgotten. Sometimes, a part of the city is reconstructed and some parts may remain unchanged for several years. Consequently, parts develop in the city which are not compatible with today’s urban characteristics. Narrow alleys and unsafe buildings, irregular divisions and at the same time, fine, has been the mass in the region and a symbol.

Sagharisazan is an old town in Rasht city and has long been a cultural and religious center of Rasht. Presence of various religious centers in this region, including EmamzadehKhaharEmam, Sagharisazan Mosque, ChaharBaradaran and Burnt Mosque caused the improvement of the cultural and religious role of these towns. These mosques can be recognized with a distinguished skeleton as an extensive mass in the region and a symbol for the region which gives identity to the town or even the city.

Lack of green landscapes and local parks, compaction, and fineness of the context and lack of open spaces, labyrinth-like and dead end alleys and lack of educational centers in the region, are of the weaknesses of the towns. Old urban contexts, face various skeletal, economic, social among other problems as a result of
instability. Due to importance of the sustainable development in urbanization terminology, concentrating on basics and criteria of the sustainable vitality in urban environments as one of the indices of sustainable development seems necessary.

Today, providing hilarity and vitality in urban areas is one of the main challenges of the urban management systems if the developed countries. Despite of extensive researches about urban old contexts in skeletal aspect, social dimensions of the issue has been less considered and research in this context can lead to an improvement in life quality and life conditions in these contexts.

A review of the topics corresponding to vitality:

Vitality is a term which has not long been in urban sciences and maybe it is less than one decade that is being used in urbanization terminology. As vitality, this term is derived from psychology and social sciences into the urbanization. Although some attribute it to livability or liveliness which seems that means having capacity of living rather than vitality. Vitality is in fact a quality of urban qualities which illustrates the quantity and quality of the presence of citizens.

Golkar, quotes John Russ, head of commission of architecture and artificial environment of Britain as: vitality is the quality of life, the way it is being felt and experiences by people in urban environments [13]. He believes that vitality can be defined in micro and macro scales. In micro level, vitality means diversity of activities in public level and adaptation to urban spaces in military framework of behavioral camps and it is diversity in macro level that makes joyful life possible for citizens (Same, 25).

Diversity of activities is a factor leading to vitality and can be considered as the most important one. This diversity must be available every time to provide vitality. Activities can be contradictory or even support each other. They can be limited to certain people or conversely, have general users [8].

According to Lynch, city must be responsible for its performance and meet the criteria of vitality, appropriate access, supervision and authority, efficiency and fairness as well. He points out that with regard to vitality, an environment is considered as appropriate residence place which can provide residents with health and better life and on the other hand, nominates three main characteristics of the environment which affect health and a vital environment and sufficient bed for life as “survival, safety, adaptation” [14].

Urban environment as a dynamic place, must include elements which can be varied and maintain the urban environment fresh, attractive, exciting and diverse. These changes can be a change in appearance of a shop so that it can have a list of events and planned activities [6].

Research method:

According to the addressed objective, this research uses documentary method and in this way, for gaining a related theoretical framework and understanding opinions and viewpoints regarding vitality, methods such as documentary and library study, searching in foreign resources are used and at the end, some solutions are recommended.

Study region:

Sagharisazan is located at the eastern end of the old context of Rasht city which approaches Shariate St. from north, Sagharisazan St. from south, Motahhari St. from west and Roudbartaan town from the east. This region is composed of a line of bazaar and is in fact the second line of Rasht bazaar. Presence of tomb of KhaharEmam led to improvement of the traditional cultural and religious role of the town and undoubtedly, its profound effect on formation of the surrounding context caused the formation of religious, commercial and educational activities in this region.

Other religious places of the city can be recognized by distinguished skeleton as extensive masses and are recognized as a symbol which identifies the town or even the city. Neighborhood of residential and commercial zones with religious centers in this case is an example of urban architecture in old context of Rasht which are confined in gardened yards and low height walls, represent a special manifestation of the urban architecture of Guilan, specifically Rasht in this old town.

Map 1-2: location of Sagharisazan in Rasht City (ref.: organization of housing and urbanization of Guilan Province)

As a result of exhaustion of old buildings in this old residential town, lack of access to interior of residential contexts, immigration of old and noble families and etc., this town faces a lot of problems and persistence of this trend, has led to loss of originality of towns and damages the identity of Rasht in an irreversible manner. Skeletal, social, activities and economic revitalization of this town leads to rehabilitation of the town as well as improving life quality of the residents.

Cultural and social characteristics:

Sagharisazan is one of the old and reputed towns of Rasht and many of its famous owners such as Professor Samieie lived in this region. However, as time passed, due to problems such as exhaustion of context, type of
communication network, and problems arising from the urban services, this town lost its attractions and suitability, on the other hand, newly constructed towns were attended by rich people. It seems that after rich people left the town, immigrants of lower financial power replaced them. On the other hand, activities of sellers of second-hand products has long been performed in this town and its accompanied crowd are other factors leading to loss of suitability of the town. Due to lack of service utilities, exhaustion of buildings and infrastructures, various problems of old towns of the city center including aforesaid town, this town lack social value and status according to residents of other regions specifically young people.

Economic characteristics and structure of activity and performance:

Town Sagharsazan, with respect to access to city center, main market of Rasht, proximity with Zarjoubriver, old houses including Samiei and Abrishami Houses and Tomb of KhaharEmam, has gained a suitable location. It seems that the studied region has the potential of becoming one of the suitable regions of the Rasht city if appropriately improved. However, narrow alleys and tight streets and lack of suitable access, makes the development of economic activities and growth of the town difficult. The main commercial activities in this town are second-hand products selling, supplying food products, appliances and clothes.

Characteristics of communication network:

The most important characteristic of Sagharsazan passages – like other historical towns – is complexity and being slim since as time passed, they are created according to human scales and lower population and it is common that they do not respond to today’s demands. In general, it can be said that access and passage in narrow and labyrinth-like walkways poses problems for both passengers and riders. Lack of parking spaces in town caused open and marginal spaces to be used for parking vehicles and this makes the traffic difficult. Passengers face various difficulties such as inappropriate pavement, rough walkways, narrow paths and mass of second-hand sellers products and shops of the town.

Test of research hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Sagharsazan is poor with respect to vitality.

In this section, using parametric t-test, by test value as much as 3, we evaluate the indices of Rasht city. The reason for choosing 3 is the evaluation of each item based on Likert spectrum. In other words, in Likert spectrum, scores are within the range of 0-5 and 3 means the mean of the suitability; that is, when the average is below 3, condition is not suitable. Otherwise, it will be suitable.

In this hypothesis of research, null hypothesis and its opposite are expresses as follows:

\[ H_0: \mu > 3 \]
\[ H_1: \mu \leq 3 \]

In table 1, value of average and standard deviation together with standard error of each of the vitality components are computed. Variables having an average higher than 3, are separated from those having lower average. In table 2, the results of t-test are summarized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vitality components</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Usage diversity</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>11.42</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeletal diversity</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>18.92</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity diversity</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>17.81</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative and qualitative access</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>-4.61</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light safety</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>-7.28</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passenger safety</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>-7.87</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climatic comfort</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>-7.07</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental comfort</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>-6.35</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility comfort</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>-10.80</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 2, the results of t-test are summarized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vitality components</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>DOF</th>
<th>Meaningfulness level</th>
<th>Average difference</th>
<th>95% safety for average difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower limit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage diversity</td>
<td>11.42</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
we can eliminate them. With respect to qualitative and quantitative access, the town has the meaningfulness of the test is 0 which is lower than 5% error. As a result, we conclude that plex and multidimensional problems of the various research contexts. Therefore, at . Components of utility and ion to the vitality of old urban context and ranks first. Level quality of this region to an vitality is an effective quality for improving old contexts which leads to promotion of life quality and as a result, Old context is one of the com work, by presenting skeletal and activity solutions, it was tried to promote vitality of the old context of the town.

For example:

**First component:** usage diversity

By applying 95% safety factor and 5% error, the value of t-test statistic having DOF as much as 149 is calculated as 11.62 and average difference for sample and test case average 3 is 0.96 which means that sample average is higher than that of test and safety intervals for this index are of the same sign and don’t cover 0. Therefore, level of meaningfulness of the test is 0 which is lower than 5% error. As a result, we conclude that the observed difference is meaningful and positive difference of the averages means suitable conditions of the component.

**Second component:** skeletal diversity

By applying 95% safety factor and 5% error, the value of t-test statistic having DOF as much as 149 is calculated as 18.92 and average difference for sample and test case average 3 is 1.30 which means that sample average is higher than that of test and safety intervals for this index are of the same sign and don’t cover 0. Therefore, level of meaningfulness of the test is 0 which is lower than 5% error. As a result, we conclude that the observed difference is meaningful and positive difference of the averages means suitable conditions of the component.

**Table 3: Coefficients**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vitality components</th>
<th>Non-standard coefficient</th>
<th>Standard coefficient</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Standard deviation</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>t</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative and quantitative access</td>
<td>0.221</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>6.159</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skeletal diversity</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.227</td>
<td>4.311</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity diversity</td>
<td>0.202</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>4.255</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility diversity</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.213</td>
<td>4.077</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental diversity</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>3.620</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light safety</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.144</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usage diversity</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.032</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>2.477</td>
<td>0.014</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climatic comfort</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.043</td>
<td>0.059</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passenger comfort</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.038</td>
<td>0.912</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Results of hypothesis test:**

In table 3, weight $\beta$ represents the effect of each variable on other variables. Data and relative values of the table illustrate this fact. Component of access to civil services, either qualitatively or quantitatively, with coefficient as much as 0.258 has the most contribution to the vitality of old urban context and ranks first. Level of meaningfulness is 0.00 lower than allowable value of 5%. Components skeletal and usage diversity with weights of 0.227 and 0.213, respectively, rank 2 and 3 in vitality of old urban context. Components of utility and environmental comfort with $\beta$ values as much as 0.213 and 0.218, respectively, rank 4 and 5. Level of meaningfulness for above variables is less than 5%. Hence, changes in vitality of old contexts are meaningful. Results of evaluation of aforesaid components confirm the above hypothesis.

**Conclusions:**

According to above issues and investigates cases, it can be claimed that there are a lot of problems leading to reduction of vitality in Sagharisazan. Although these factors are various, by taking appropriate measures and exact planning, we can eliminate them. With respect to qualitative and quantitative access, the town has the highest score, with respect to skeletal and activity diversity, it ranks 2 and 3, respectively owing to the diversity of commercial applications of Sagharisazan Street and eastern region of the town most of which are observed in the field of commercial activities. It seems that by increasing some commercial and cultural applications and increasing open and green spaces, we can improve the usage and activity diversity of this region to an acceptable level. Components of utilities and environmental comfort ranked 4 and 5, respectively. For this town, it can be stated that sewage and rubbish collection systems are not of suitable quality. Welfare utilities such as urban furniture, public WC, drinking water and so on, are problematic qualitatively and quantitatively. In this work, by presenting skeletal and activity solutions, it was tried to promote vitality of the old context of the town. Old context is one of the complex and multidimensional problems of the various research contexts. Therefore, vitality is an effective quality for improving old contexts which leads to promotion of life quality and as a result,
attracting and maintaining population and tendency to reconstruction of the town. Contexts which are considered as old in our country, are similar from various aspects. Therefore, it can be claimed that the most important problem of old contexts of the country from which people suffer is lack of access to utilities either qualitatively and quantitatively. As stated before, it can be said that increasing usage and activities diversity, providing safe spaces and suitable for urban life can help improving vitality.

**Recommendations:**
1. Providing places for leisure times, e.g. places for sitting, resting, exercise and play and so on in spaces produced as a result of setbacks.
2. Establishing night activities such as highly visited and transparent shop in main points in order to make the place safe at night.
3. Preventing creation of obsoleted places which are unsafe along with pass ways by establishing active usages or lighting and making vision for them
4. Keeping the integration and compatibility of the skyline and façade of new buildings with that of old ones.
5. Maintenance and improvement of flora coverage and green spaces along with passages including old and valuable trees
6. Providing a multipurpose space at the entrance of buildings especially in local passages so that it can have multipurpose activities such as sitting and gathering residents and passerby people.
7. Appropriate design of sidewalks and providing an attractive and suitable environment for walking and cycling
8. Encouraging usage of public transportation by providing facilities
9. Considering a useful width of the sidewalk according to contribution of passages and walks and maintaining this minimum along with passage
10. Preventing entrance and parking of vehicles in sidewalks using separating elements such as fences and green spaces
11. Providing public transportation from various points of the city to Sagharisazan due to its active and extra-urban role.

**REFERENCES**
