

SOCIAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT RECOGNIZED AND EXPLAINED: (A CASE STUDY, ZAYANDEH RUD HISTORICAL, NATURAL LANDSCAPE IN ESFAHAN, IRAN)

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ABSTRACT:

Formation as well as development history of Esfahan shows strict parallels with social contexts in most periods. An investigation of urban Sustainable development issues from social viewpoints as well as a study of urban architectural features of the historical city of Esfahan reveals many common indicators. Therefore recognizing these principles and sustainable features from social attitudes in Esfahan urbanization process and in the so called Zayandehrud historical- natural zone / landscape provide us with theoretical as well as practical approaches towards the city's social sustainable development and towards recovering its (historical) identity in contemporary times. It turns out that the genesis of the city as well as the historical – natural zone of Zayandehrud has been accommodated with some social contexts. This paper aims to recognize these principles and social sustainable features in Esfahan and in the historical – natural zone of Zayandehrud. Data have been gathered through library methods to be analyzed later by the qualitative ones. They are followed by comparative studies of the city's features with respect to urban principles and social sustainable developments, and finally, the corresponding principles are being recognized from social viewpoints. Among these social sustainable features, anthropocentric and citizen- centered policies, social justice and prosperity, as well as social collaborations and interactions have been "discovered", recognized and explained.

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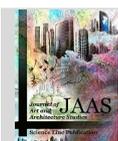
Esfahan, Recognizing, Sustainable Development, Zayandehrud Historical-Natural Zone/Landscape

INTRODUCTION

The traditional Iranian history of architecture and urbanization likes a continuous chain of experiences and values transmitted by city-builders and architects, and by people in general for a long duration of several millennia in an oral – practical (i.e. non-theoretical) sense. These have been shaped on the basis of social, cultural, economical and natural infrastructures of their time during this gradual rate of progress. This sort of concordance between Iranian cities, villages and buildings and social, cultural, economical and bio-ecological contexts in the whole space-time domain has rendered the so called Iranian architecture-urbanization being always capable of obviating basic physical and spiritual demands of the people and the society as well. Due to swift expansion of urban development issues in international, national, regional and local levels, these issues needed to be clearly explained in national and local scales and on a scientific basis. It is for this reason that native/indigenous contexts and infrastructures needed to be identified so as not to allow the "import" of these universal concepts which contradict Iran's social, cultural, economical and bio-ecological infrastructures on the national and local levels. It turns out that clinching stability and sustainable

development issues in the cities of Iran and all around the world requires recognitions of native contexts as well as of principles and features of historical and traditional cities of the country. This human–nature–city–architecture correlation within the framework of Iranian architecture–urban structure, and in the historical city of Esfahan in particular, heralds of the existence of some specific, stable features and concepts potentially capable of resolving contemporary problems connected to architecture as well as to urban structures in Iran and elsewhere and useful for architects urban–structure designers. Most scholars concerning issues related to sustainable development in Iran, while trying to discover values of stable Iranian architecture–urban structure features, just restricted themselves to some general glances to the issue; for example have recently surveyed the concept of sustainable development and sustainability and its main aims, as well as its applications in urban development [1].

In another paper have investigated the concept of sustainable development in (urban) districts. This paper however aims for the first time to investigate social sustainability in the historical – natural zone/landscape of Zayandehrud as one of the historical 'zones' of Esfahan and to find its common



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features with the modern concepts of urban sustainability to be compared with each other [2].

It is attempted to answer the following questions:

- What are the common features and principles of the historical city of Esfahan and of sustainable urban development from social viewpoints?

- What are the common features of the historical natural zone of Zayandehrud and the city itself from social points of view?

We have firstly investigated the issue of urban sustainable development by the aid of a library study and then indicators of urban social sustainability are defined. It is followed by a historical study on the city of Esfahan and historical-natural zone of Zayandehrud and a comparison has been made between features of social urban sustainable developments in Esfahan and Zayandehrud, enabling us to "discover" and recognize social features of the city and the zone.

The concept of sustainable development

Sustainable development and sustainability in general were first introduced and defined by Brandt (1987) in a report, who refers to true and efficient exploitation from and management of durable natural, financial and human resources so as to reach to favorite consumption pattern [3]. Sustainable development concerns continuous securing of demands together with providing prosperity of the people, accompanied by increasing lifestyle qualities. It is in fact a continuation of general development concept approaches attempted embedding human prosperity within the framework of social, economical and cultural progresses in a financial, natural and human resources context. Economic, social and cultural enhancements should be accompanied by preserving justice for contemporary people as well as observing rights of posterity; these are among goals of sustainable development program.

As stated by the basic goal is to secure fundamental needs, enhancement of lifestyle levels for the all, a better management of ecosystem and to guarantee a safer and more secure future [1]. According to the concept of sustainable development, a human being should be considered as a sort of supervisor who is permanently engaged in "calculating" benefits and harms, as well as costs, of various "human – nature" interaction measures; the "cost" is in fact paid by human beings themselves. In other words, human beings are "in charge" of the mother earth [4].

on this basis one can say that attaining to a comprehensive concept of sustainable development requires clinching in three fields of sustainable social, economical and ecological developments. Speaking most succinctly, sustainable development is the common section of those three types of development [5].

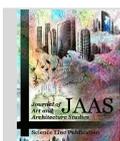
Concept of city building and sustainable urban development

Rapid urban developments in recent decades have affected human being's environments from various social, economical, cultural and political dimensions.

Introduction of sustainable development as a sort of slogan of the 3rd millennium is also due to sufferings of human life environment from urban structures. No doubt no one is able to speak about sustainability and development while leaving cities and urbanization issues unnoticed. Cities are identified as the basic disturbing factors of sustainability over the globe, and in fact urban sustainability and universal stability are the same concepts. Unusual growth of urbanization and city's populations, usually followed by swift expansion of the bodies of the towns during last decades of the last century, produced new challenges in city structures and city making policies, and have given rise to severe problems such as increase of social anomalies, "identity" crisis, (lack of) social belonging, extension of" social and environmental" ecological problems, and social inequalities. Therefore global spread of the issue requires formation of a sort of world – movement involving some changes of attitudes upon city making policies–no doubt including such new concepts as sustainable development [5].

other approaches include modern social–qualitative theories of development presented within the framework of such concepts as life quality and social prosperity. Huge activities have been on progress to stipulate world collaborations for clinching urban sustainable developments, itself including enhancement of urban life quality and securing basic needs, the most important result of which being promotion and application of social and qualitative indicators in programming processes as well as in urban sustainable developments [6].

The urban sustainability concept introduced within the general "sustainable development" school of thought as a modern world paradigm. It originates from emergence of various problems arisen from social – economical growths in cities from ecological viewpoints. Sustainability concepts gradually generalized to wider issues at the local, national and international levels and paid also attentions to social as well as economical issues in addition to ecological ones. A "sustainable" city may therefore be defined as one emerged from mentalities allowing permanent possibility of enhancing social, economical and ecological health of the city and the region as well [7]. Clinching urban sustainable development requires providing grounds for "human" sustainable development as well as for(potential)increase of social/citizen prosperity to be materialized, within whose context it become possible to maintain social justice, to design a consistent life- environment, to strengthen solidarity structures (such as responsibility and commitment),to enrich social and family bases, to



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construct structural order within urban spaces to provide grounds for perceiving aesthetical aspects, to increase exploitations from urban spaces, to increase citizens satisfactions, and finally, to integrate environmental visual structures with the urban landscape [8].

Urban social sustainable development

As in any house there exists a context for maintaining family-like relationships responsible for obviating elementary needs in a private sense, a corresponding context is needed for formation and maintaining social relations, citizen life and lifting social needs; this context is city, city spaces and public fields. Based on the same "city-house" analogy, the former too should enjoy some advantages and features deserved for a good settlement; city is just a sort of a "large" house in this sense and should be able to provide a favorite context for the life [9]. From the social sustainable development viewpoints in the cities, the main actors of the development process are human beings and society. Based on the definition of sustainable development which allows securing needs without depriving the posterity, clinching social justice and reducing (social) discriminations are as important for the contemporary urban development programs as for future generations. The scale and rate of discriminations/inequalities, of the risk of undergoing damages, and of poverty of low-revenue classes in developing countries, contribute to the importance of the issue of social sustainable development in cities [10]. In the following, different components of the issue of urban social sustainable developments are being reviewed separately:

Anthropocentrism, Citizenry Centrism, and Pedestrian Centrism

City and city spaces are reflections of public life and should be able to respond to people's needs for a social life. People are face to face there. They trace in their minds a sort of eventful and continuously differing space. A great spectrum of people with different ages and social positions are engaged there [11].

a considerable part of social and cultural interactions are taking place in urban spaces and thus they enjoy an important role in enhancement of social and cultural affairs. Among these, citizen centric and pedestrian centric urban spaces enjoy an enthusiastic social role and can attract people; they may voluntarily choose them to settle. Pedestrian centric spaces are of greater importance due to their special identity, for bringing a sort of belonging to environment and for providing wider grounds for receiving beauties; they are capable of absorbing a great spectrum of social groups to enhance the sense of convergence and to provide grounds for direct interaction of people with different attitudes, senses, trends and wishes [12].

Social Justice

This means the possibility of use and exploitation of all urban facilities, opportunities and functionalities by citizens in a coordinated and stable sense so that all members of society could enjoy the citizen rights on equal footings. Maintaining social justice in cities as a component of a general attitude provides an ideal state with evenly distributed public services and functionalities needed for human ease and prosperity [13].

Social Prosperity

It is defined by prosperity indicators within urban structures which provide the possibility of adopting a fairly similar life style for all members and classes and for some special groups such as kids, olds, ills and malformed. Among important indicators of urban prosperity one can enumerate health facilities, good nourishing, the right of having suitable residence, leisure facilities, and the right of having job and revenue [14].

Public Collaborations

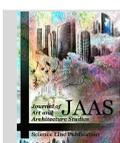
One of the basic issues in urban social sustainable development is simultaneous employing of sustainable human-oriented developments as well as exploitation from social capabilities and public collaborations. This may be implemented through maintaining more practical democracy at the local and regional level, allowing local decision makings (while keeping them immune from being penetrated by "external" groups), and relying on conversant decision makers [1]. Thus a sustainable urban designing is not possible without citizen collaborations so that the enhancement of life style qualities and increase of social prosperity become feasible [14].

Social Interactions

One of the key principles of urban social sustainable developments is to reach to a health social structure, to strengthen citizens' social positions and to increase quality and quantity of social interactions; and this might be clichéd by searching opportunities in which human society as well as personal and public positions might be enhanced. Public and open urban spaces with mixed functionalities provide best potentials for shaping most kinds of social citizenry interactions [13].

Social Diversity, Dynamism and Freshness

Freshness and dynamism of urban spaces, in contrast to their possible embarrassments, are reflections of quantities and diversities of activities and events taken place there. Public spaces such as streets, squares and parks are all scenes of occurrences of urban life public activities, forming a context for human activities in dynamical spaces versus those stable and motionless places of job and settlements. These are also reckoned as the basic and vital urban spaces producing a network of



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motion connecting various centers and spaces within the city [15].

Social Security

Security is one of the components of daily life, affecting directly and/or indirectly the daily behaviours and attitudes of the people. It manifests itself mostly through interface of some of the qualitative life indicators such as security in [16]:

- Buying and selling of houses;
- Choosing paths of movements;
- Determining a place for settlement; and in
- Choosing a place for entertainment

Active presence of people in the city increases the security indicator in the urban space which is a necessity to guarantee its continuation of existence, without whose presence the city loses its identity, or its quality become drastically reduced [17].

Historical–Cultural Identity of the Society and Public Memory

From social point of views, cities are suitable places for shaping of social organizations for enhancement of cultural values and for extension and strengthening of social relations as well as preserving humanity values and local and national identities. It is for this reason that the issue of "identity" in urban environments has emerged as one of the most controversial subjects of our era; as perhaps any one is trapped within a sort of "identity crisis" in a consciousness or unconsciousness manner. Lack of identity and coordination nowadays dominate the cities in a progressive manner. They have not only produced an unfavourable scene and an alien environment for the resident people, but also have overshadowed all aspects of social and ecological life within urban societies [18].

In addition to a need for a favourable social context for clinching of social events and for shaping of social identities as well as for strengthening of society's cultural–historical identity, suitable conditions are also needed for preservation of recollections and for transferring them to posterity. Such factors as stability and continuation of habitation, belonging to and depending on the residential place and high stature of cities in literature and cinema movies, all refer to social-political grounds for preservation of city recollections; including such measures as conservation of historical monuments, construction of monumental structures and keeping alive the old–traditional names of districts and places, which are among most important methods for preservation of memories of the city [19].

The Sense of Belonging to Society and a Place

To have a sense of a place or of belonging to a place means the existence of a mental perception of the hosting environment as well as of a fairly conscious feeling of it which puts people with an "inner" connection with the environment; in this way

people's feelings become integrated with that environment. This sense becomes a factor which makes an environment or a space for the people as a place coupled with specific behaviours and senses. This sort of "place sense" not only makes the environment as a secure and ease one, but also contributes to cultural concepts as well as to social and cultural relations of the people in a specific place and recalls the past experiences and the "collective identity" as well [20].

Training and Enhancement of Social Public Conscious

One of the key principles of urban sustainable development is eradication illiteracy and enhancement of education. This increase of public knowledge becomes feasible through development of training methods and presentation of free educational services. Public training of issues related to sustainability and social developments as well as development of training of professional sciences related to social sustainability in professional fields of urban studies in universities, will give rise to increase of public and professional knowledge which ultimately increases the significance of these issues in the society itself [5].

Recognizing the concept of social sustainable development in Esfahan

Anthropocentrism is one of the basic principles of Iran's traditional architecture and urban planning. Historical city of Esfahan is among one of the most important cases in whose planning and development the basic needs of the people have been respected maximally. This historical city responds successfully to most mental as well as physical requirements of an extended social spectrum of people and classes living in its districts. This feature is what is known nowadays as "Anthropocentrism", and/or citizenry – based urban planning, in modern terms of sustainable urban development issues. While city's programming, management, planning and development have been in the hands of kings and governments in most periods of times, but these have been accompanied with local people collaborations as well. Existence of numerous open and public spaces as well as wide entertainment-green spaces have played a decisive role in shaping of social relations of Esfahani people in different periods. People with different religions and ethnical origins were living in Esfahan next to each other in the past. Most urban spaces of the city were completely "pedestrian–centric" before the advent of automobile and its introduction to the city as well as exerting drastic structural changes to conform with "car–based" movements in Pahlavi era. Existence of such spaces as Chaharbagh and its nearby green spaces, herald of the once important role of pedestrian citizenry and its corresponding culture in the historical city of Esfahan in the past. Esfahan has been one of the most important scientific centres of



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Iran in retrospect and many outstanding scientists were active there. Training has been always very systematic there within its schools. Below a review

of our study of urban sustainability in Esfahan has been classified within a table on a comparative study basis (Table1).

Table 1: A comparative study of social features of Esfahan in terms of urban development indicators

Urban sustainable social development features	The same features in Esfahan
Anthropocentrism in urban spaces	Respecting it in urban planning
Diversity and mixing of people's spectrum	Various religious- ethnic groups
Social prosperity and public services	Entertaining and public services
Human collaboration in urban planning	Social collaboration in developments
Enhancement of social interactions	Dynamic social relations in public spaces
Preservation of local district features	Coherent social system and formation of districts Based on religious – ethnic admixtures
Social & mental security	Increase of social security and public prosperity
Strengthen of dynamism and freshness	Entertaining ,tourism and sport spaces and Holding local celebrations in urban spaces
Enrichment of sense of belonging	Formation of collective memory and sense of belonging
Pedestrian- centricism in urban spaces	Importance of pedestrian citizenry and promotion of Pedestrian culture in urban spaces of Esfahan before the advent of automobiles
Extension of education & increase of Publicconsciousness	Importance of development sciences and promotion Of educational spaces in the whole history of the city and in safavid period in particular

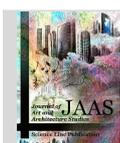
Recognizing the concept of social developments in the historical–natural zone/ landscape of Zayandeh rud

As a significant natural element in the cities' structure, rivers have always played important role in their shaping and extension. Urban elements created in connection with these natural contexts within the cities enjoy salient roles in their appearance and identity, as some cities are being identified through such specific features of these contexts. In this way the river of Zayandehrud have been so influential during most epochs in shaping, development and qualification of the city of Esfahan. As the greatest river of central Iran flowing in the lowest areas of the city from west to east, it originates from the domains of zardkuh and terminates to gavkhuni swamp. The river is the basic factor behind formation of city of Esfahan as well as its nearby villages formed within its watershed [21].

We have no information on the effect of Zayandehrud on the city in pre–Islamic period and early Islamic period as well. The banks of Zayandehrud were within the city's territory at the Al e buyehera and included a number of districts, palaces and (water) mills. In saljuq period the city's structural orientation gets changed from North West to the south due to attractiveness of river's nearby fertile fields and river's direction becomes defined as

a sort of "recreational zone" of the outer–city areas. But it was in safavid period that Zayandehrud becomes a dominating eastern–western orientation of Esfahan through construction and reconstruction of various bridges; and in this way a new direction of the city's extension (via the so–called hezar jarib district) becomes defined. It seems that one of the reasons behind formation of the city and of the so called Safavid "garden–city" in particular, has been Zayandehrud itself as a natural element of the city's orientation. The natural and organic orientation of Zayandehrud, coupled with the geometrical and planned orientation of chaharbagh, formed two main milestones of the city in the urban planning of Esfahan "garden–city" in safavid period. Chardin, the famous French explorer, has mentioned in his celebrated travelogue that: "Esfahan has been constructed in the same direction as that of Zayandehrud. Three beautiful bridges have (also) been constructed over it; one at heart of the city and two at its two terminations" [22].

Historical bridges constructed over Zayandehrud each belong to a specific period of Esfahan history of development with their own functionality. The age and identity of each belong to part of the history of Esfahan. 33 POL (meaning "bridge with 33 mouths") and the flux of Zayandehrud water course has been



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always a symbol of dynamism and freshness of Esfahan (Figure 1).

Entertaining and walking in the open green spaces next to the banks of Zayandehrud has always been among customs of Esfahani people from earliest times of the current history of the city. Before construction of parks in the banks of Zayandehrud in contemporary era, the area was full of "natural" trees and used by people for the same purpose [10].

Some sort of cults, celebrations and entertaining activities were in progress in Zayandehrud region in safaid and qajar periods, among them one can mention annual ceremonies performed in the area known as daryacheh "lake" between Pol e Khaju and Pole Juyii. People were gathered there which was made full of embellishments and facilities suited for the ceremonies; such activities as illuminations, boating and fireworks were provided and music players too absorbed local people to the banks of Zayandehrud [10].



Figure 1: 33 Pol; pol e khaju, Esfahan.

The river and its bridges were also a place for entertaining foreign ambassadors. These sorts of ceremonies were held up to recent times (in 19th century) in early summer each year [14]. Some religious ceremonies were also held there. Figuera, the Spanish ambassador in court of shahabbas the great, mentions in his book of performance of such ceremonies by Armenian society of Esfahan next to

the banks of Zayandehrud which was accompanied by singing Christian incantations as well as carrying on traditions related to baptism [22]

The historical-cultural zone of Zayandehrud is enumerated as one of the main foci of shaping relations between various social classes in Esfahan. Zayandehrud is not only the main factor of natural as well as ecological life of the historical city of Esfahan, but also reckoned as the main context for the social life of the city and a cause for public links. Presence of people with different ethnic, cultural and religious origins together with such elements as the river itself, as well as entertaining and green spaces and bridges, rendered the city and its society most fresh and dynamical.

As the western-eastern course of Zayandehrud passes through heart of the city and as it intersects with various northern-southern "passes" such as "4bagh" axis, many bridges were constructed at crossing points to provide accessions to the city much more frequent. In this way northern and southern areas of the river become attached to each other through numerous historical as well as modern bridges to provide most appropriate urban space accessibilities of streets and passes to nearby spaces.

Finally in the table bellow we have presented details of a comparative study concerning features of urban spaces sustainable development versus the historical-cultural zone of Zayandehrud; this provides a key path to find their common features enabling us to "discover" and recognize Zayandehrud region social features in the past (Table 2).

CONCLUSION

Our comparative study of the social features of the city of Esfahan and the historical-natural region of Zayandehrud within the framework of urban sustainable development (Tables 1), reveals some common features such as social prosperity, public collaboration, sense of belonging to a place and social security which should be reckoned as basic factors of Esfahan's sustainability during its history and in safaid period in particular. But on the other hand in Zayandehrud region, one can enumerate in addition to mentioned ones the existence of diverse functionalities as well as highlighted miscellaneous urban aggregates shaped from religious, cultural and ethnic originals. These have had drastic effects on creation and development of social sustainability in the past and have been achieved through existence of various pedestrian-based gardens, bridges and nearby spaces in the Zayandehrud region.

In present times, however, reduction of human presences in public spaces as well as decrease of social interactions have given rise to impoverishments of social freshness and dynamism in most urban spaces and old districts. Increase of population in an already saturated infrastructure has been followed by reduction of social prosperity in Esfahan and emergence of such crises as social



security reductions in some districts and urban spaces as well as the appearance of the modern phenomenon of settling in "unofficial" residences in city's nearby areas. But after the proposed scheme for recognizing features of social sustainability in different historical periods as well as identifying indicative places and zones of each city, one can

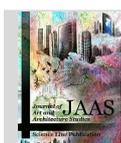
approach the issue of urban planning and sustainable development in contemporary era as well (Table 2).

Table 2: A comparative study of social-urban spaces sustainable development; the case of Zayandehrud historical-cultural zone/landscape

Features of social sustainable development of urban spaces	Principles of social sustainability of urban space of zayanehrud historical zone
Citizen oriented and pedestrian centric	Zayandehrud and its nearby green space as a Basic pedestrian-entertaining spaces of The city of Esfahan
Strengthen of citizen interactions	Zayandehrud as a place for public aggregate And shaping of relationships
Emphasis on social meetings of any (religious, ethnic and cultural) sort	Synthesis of different religious, cultural and ethnic groups in Zayandehrud region
Social and mental security in urban spaces	Permanent pedestrian citizenry presences for Entertaining activities so that the urban Security is guaranteed
Social & formal Freshness and dynamism	Contribution to social freshness through the Existence of the river, bridges and natural Green spaces
Enhancement of the sense of belonging To a place and corresponding recollections, As well as of historical and aggregate Identities	Massive public presence & existence of memorial historic and natural spaces
Emphasis on diverse and mixed urban using	Synthesis of tourism, entertaining and Service functionalities
Extension of entertaining and sport-like Activities in urban spaces	Nearby spaces of Zayandehrud & its bridges as place for entertaining - cultural activities
Increase of accessibility to urban spaces	Existence of salient urban elements such as Bridges and open – green spaces to secure Appropriate accessibilities
Creation of a fresh and diverse (but coordinated) Urban space	Existence of different historical-natural spaces with diverse urban faces in Zayandehrud region to produce a fresh And dynamical urban landscape within it

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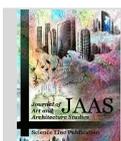
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