

The role of housing in the regional development approach of small cities

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Abstract

House is considered not only as one of the main needs of human beings but also as one of the best determining characteristics of living standard. Housing shortages is one of the most acute problems next to the rapid growth of the large cities and their suburbs in developing countries. These cities take all the opportunities, services and the funds Which a country has to offer,, Despite this fact,, These cities are still dealing and struggling with a variety of urban problems such as : housing shortages, high unemployment rate, urban transportation problems and failure to supply other services, as well as environmental destruction. As the direct result of the allocation of all the resources to the large cities, the other regions of the country, including small cities and the rural areas have become stagnant and underdeveloped. The efforts to speed up the development of the small cities have been intensified to deal with the lack of equilibrium and harmony created by the unbalanced growth and development of the cities. To guide and monitor these developments, the Urban Regional Development and Planning was found to ensure and emphasize dynamism of the small cities. Small cities development can have an effect on the region only if these cities' development is sustainable and Takes place properly; therefore, sustainable urban development is one of the requirements for the regional development approach. Housing and its appropriate development is one of the affecting and important factors in achieving urban development and realization of sustainable development in small cities. This article discusses housing's place and its role in the process of achieving sustainable urban development in small cities based on its characteristics and indicators; and refers these cities' function in the regional development planning.

Keywords: Housing, Small cities, Urban sustainable development, Regional development

1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to analyze the role of housing in small cities with regard to their roles in the regional development process. In order to achieve urban progress and development, housing and its characteristics are considered in this study. The Paper's theoretical approach is the regional development theories in relation to small cities. One of the concepts of this approach s its integration and comprehensiveness in the area's socio-economic balances within different regions of countries that in light of it all the focal habitat must be considered with the pervasive preparation view. Providing necessary facilities in small cities makes settlement systems unified in region. This system plays

an essential role in social - economic development, therefore, the resulted relation in the urban and rural development will spread to the other settlement.

With rapid growth of the cities in developing countries, shortage of residential units and high unemployment rates has emerged. Some researchers suggest that urban and regional development planning must be based on emphasis on dynamism of the small cities as a solution. Due to job opportunities, education and other facilities in large cities, these cities are the final destination of immigrants from villages and small cities. The theory supporters of small cities' role in regional development believe that if such needs are supplied in small cities, rural immigrants' final destination would be these cities. As the direct result of absorption of the immigrants in small cities, number of immigrants migrating to the large cities could decline, and in turn, part of the problems in the major cities which originate from overcrowding would go down.

Poor urban distribution (Despite the fact that the number of small cities is far greater than the large ones, only a small

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percentage of the population is living in them). Moreover, importance of having a balanced population distribution has led to giving priority to the small cities when it comes to development planning. By doing this, it is hoped to increase the urban areas' population. Nowadays, the approach to regional development planning focuses on decentralization and integration of regional development, which could lead to formation of balanced and normal settlements. Small cities being the main element in this approach get to be the focal attraction and active interaction between the large cities and the rural loop. The regional development theories with spatial approach and the aim of giving authenticity to settlements establishing system in the integrated development process are based on principles and views. These principles begin within a process of central Place, centre-surrounding, growth pole and rural-urban development theories. Eventually, small cities and middle approach were raised. Small cities development has a significant role in the region's balanced sustainable development and housing. Furthermore, its appropriate development in small cities is one of the affecting factors in realization of a proper and sustainable development in these cities. Therefore, presenting an appropriate pattern and plan for housing development is an initial step towards accomplish this.

Therefore, in order to impress upon regional development this study aims to look into and analyze the role of housing development in small cities.

2. The research framework

Analysis of Housing's role in small cities require considering some concepts that in theoretical principles will be referred to. In this section, first, regional development, the concept of small city and the principles of its sustainable development will be discussed. Then, housing indicators and variables affecting its development would be introduced. In the next step the relationship between these four concepts will be considered. First, the position and the role of small cities in regional development and planning will be considered. Then, the role of housing and its development in a sustainable urban development will be analyzed. After analysis and summary of the issues discussed, a model that determines the role of housing in small cities, with emphasis on role of these cities position in regional development and planning, will be presented.

3. Theoretical Principles

3.1. Regional Development

Definitions and concepts of region and area relating to the purposes of planning and development are used differently. In general region is defined as: A space or part of the Earth or part of country which natural, social and economic factors have separated it from its surrounding [1]. Region is part of a country that its climate, vegetation, economic, politics and culture is close or the same.

Planning area scan could be defined based on the proposed objectives, planned methods and the expected development.

Metropolitan area is a cluster of cities and towns in a certain geographic area with established political and administrative boundaries. In other words, a metropolitan area is composed of a number of cities that the largest city within it is called the Metropolis.

Regional development is not the concept of national development planning. At the national level, development plans are made on a smaller scale, potentials and problems of a village, sector, city or a province. Whereas, on a national level, the plans are made for an entire region of a country i. e. Northwest region of Iran rather than just the Qazvin province. The plans are made based on what the policy maker's desire for an entire region of a country as far as that region's growth and development is concerned. Regional planning can be considered as an organized and systematic effort to choose the best ways and methods to achieve specific objectives in a region [1].

Regional development theories are, mainly, rooted in three branches of science: region, region's economy and theoretical geography of the region. Regional development is a multi-order and interdisciplinary system. Its foundation is based on four theoretical categories. These four categories are: place theories, geographical theories, theories of physical planning and economic theories.

1. Place theories that deals with local and regional development and land preparation concepts define the way market centers affect the nearby areas' development. These effects could be positive or negative.

2. Geographical theories that rely on the local homogeneity and are used in terms of natural geographical, economic, social and cultural areas resorts to some geographical criteria.

3. Theories of physical planning rely on physical standards which govern planning and urban design are utilized in the field of regional planning and most aspects of engineering, architecture, construction, house building, establishing urban infrastructure and beautification.

4. Economic theories which is the concept of application of principles and economic analysis in certain geographic areas (regions). It, primarily, deals with economy in connection with national land and consider only the region's economic development [2]. Theories of regional or spatial development are also classified in two other general categories.

1. The first group consists of theories that are separable and are based on the division of functional economic /social activities and rely on partial planning and are used for regional development.

2. The second group consists of theories that are based on the primacy of human spatial and territorial trait. The integrity of their activities within an environment relies on spatial planning for regional development.

Economic sector growth, the center-surrounding, growth pole theory and the hierarchical system of settlements which originates from the central Place theory are theories that belong to the first group. The theories of environment/region and the informal sector belong to the latter [3].

The regional spatial development means arrangement of spatial organized components in a region and is stepping away from the process of imbalances and polarization of spatial structure. In terms of spatial development, there is an organic

link between the spatial organization and the structure of consumption, production, circulation and transportation of resources in the region [4].

In general, regional development policies for growth and development in the region were developed and planned as a whole. By executing some of these policies and imbalanced regional development, the system of settlement and economic indicators in the region became imbalanced; therefore, studies had to focus on the balance of the settlement points and comprehensive regional growth and development. One of the most effective approaches is small cities and considering their role in the regional development system.

According to this theory, if one area's distribution is balanced and harmonic, villages wouldn't be exploited and swallowed by the cities and their development could be done objectively and in a balanced manner. Executing regional planning and development provides a better chance for administration of justice than developing through partial programming. Proper regional development requires optimal growth of the small cities and optimum use of the intermediate space between the rural areas and the large cities. Small cities are also considered the center of settlements and could help to partly control population growth and migration.

3.2. *The concept of small City*

Small city, like some other words, is a relative concept, because it depends on the level of urbanization, development and economic structure of a country. Consequently, it may vary from region to region within a country.

Small cities could be defined from two different aspects. First aspect is the function (activity and role) and the second aspect is the size (small or large). The main characteristics of these cities are:

- The city falls in the last level of a country's population urban network.
- The main activity of the small city is, mostly, associated with agriculture and the related services. The activity of the processing sectors and small-scale industries are in the next order.
- The city has a clear territorial and rural influence and usually has an organizational function in the agricultural sector [5].

The most common indicator for the level of a city is its population. In Iran, generally, urban land development projects are known to find population-based criteria sufficient for identifying the domain and the boundary of the small city areas. In this article, the cities with population of twenty to fifty thousand people are considered as small cities, and have been evaluated and analyzed.

3.3. *Different aspects of urban sustainable development*

Sustainable development is a kind of development which meets the needs of the present generation, and at the same time, does not take away the capability of meeting the future generations' needs from the developed area. To put it differently, it is providing solutions to physical, social and economic development patterns which could prevent problems

such as destruction of natural resources, biological systems, global pollution, climate change, uncontrolled growth in population, injustices and low quality of human life. The development which could provide current needs of a society, without sacrificing the needs of the future generations, and without damaging the environment, is a sustainable and viable development [6].

One of the main issues which are discussed when dealing with sustainable development is the priority of local development to national development. Proponents of endogenous development demand development from bottom to top. Sustainability is, now, a top priority in development planning codifications and plays a crucial role in the development of urban settlements when designing an environment.

Urban development could be considered as the basis for renewed economic, social, political, cultural and civil rights structures. It is, primarily, aimed at improving the process of urbanization and city orientation, environment, urban restoration, organization of urban economy and strengthening the political, social and cultural aspects of the urban life. Urban development, as a spatial concept, could be defined as the significant changes in land use and density levels which meets the needs of the residents' housing, transportation, leisure time activities, food and etc.

Sustainable urban development takes place by solving structural problems such as, social and institutional changes, developing infrastructures and services, pollution control and ecosystems management.

In general, a sustainable city should have four aspects taken care of: environmental, social, economic and political [7]. Therefore, to achieve a sustainable city, one must, first, resolve the raised problems and, then, establish four different aspects of a sustainable city.

Sustainable urban developments, in environmental, social and economic areas, are based on natural resources, urban environmental quality and functional patterns indicators. Planning, in this regard, includes the following aspects:

- Economic incentives for decentralization of industries , encouraging small industries and self-employment, changing patterns of production, and distribution and consumption
- Social-cultural: central role of human, poverty alleviation, women's participation and role of cultural identity
- Physical: paying attention to waste disposal and sewage systems, use of natural energies and making it a point in urban design and planning, developing urban public facilities, making point in use of materials, designing multi-purpose spaces and compact contexts and paying attention to pedestrian movement.
- Environmental: pollution, health and health planning, thinking of safety of the city against natural disasters
- Decision making and executive methods of management: reform in the planning, role of participation of institutions ,professionals, designers and planners, role of education, information, exchange of sustainable development data and use of technology in data analysis [8].

Achieving sustainable urban development requires urban planning and design an action that, in physical aspect, supports these objectives. The focus of this research is housing which contributes greatly to making the fabric of a city and has an important role in its habitants' life and different social groups.

3.4. Housing and Its indicators

Housing life has been introduced as one of the most basic human needs. In the performed studies, it is mentioned as the main factor for the development. Housing requires a vast amount of research. Planning to develop a territory requires a variety of scientific studies from different angles of economic, social, political and physical aspects. Most governments, in response to the shortage of housing units, use housing planning in national, regional and urban planning in order to solve citizens' housing problems.

In terms of providing a necessary space to accommodate human comfort, housing is not only an existence of material that its realization requires knowledge of engineering but also is a spatial quality which is in charge of meeting the psychological needs. In addition to the residential unit, neighborhood units, district, village and city are also considered housing [9].

Basic material needs of a man have been divided into three categories: biological, economic and social needs. Housing plays a special role in meeting each one of these needs.

-Biological needs are: shelter, food, protection against noise, pollution and diseases.

Housing, like food, is a fundamental and biological need and a social right of every individual and family. Proper shelter is the most essential human need. Each individual's access to housing is the sign of social justice and one of the indicators of development and welfare. A shelter is considered to be proper if it can protect humans against outside conditions and provide residents with comfort, health and vitality.

-Economic needs are considered to include: improving living standards, access to daily activities and infrastructural facilities.

Nowadays, housing is considered to be a kind of investment, increased income and is an economic concept. Housing's economic aspects originate from being proposed as one of the major sectors of economy. Housing is considered to be one of the greatest enterprises.

Therefore, there is a direct relationship between macroeconomic and investment in housing sector. Its policies, development, employment, organizational structure and approach to housing as a production and not consumption make it a social-economic investment [10].

In fact, the best, most lucrative, fastest and the safest private sector area of investment is investing in land and housing. During an inflation or an economic depression, when the price of the goods keep rising, investing in housing is a positive measure and could be considered as a secure investment. Housing has an important role in economic stability and family welfare, because poverty and economic insecurity is a factor of social instability.

-Social needs are: opportunities for intellectual development, preservation of cultural traditions and satisfying emotional needs [11]

The main function of housing, in addition to its primarily role as shelter, is providing ideal conditions for families in order to undertake family activities. Stability and cohesion of family is one of its positive consequences.

Housing has an effect on family participation in the

community. This effect could, especially, be seen among poor urban families who are more committed to neighborhood associations. House is the closest environment associated with human and man tests his first experiences in relationship with others in it. In fact, it is a stepping stone for entering into the larger community.

Housing's social indicators are, in fact, the needs that housing meets. Housing, in addition to the physical structure which a family can use as a shelter, includes the entire residential environment which contains all the services, social facilities and amenities necessary for a better family life and people's employment, education and health schemes. In other words, housing is more than just a physical shelter. It applies to all services and public facilities that are necessary for a man to live better.

Physical aspects of housing can be investigated from two angles: first, housing as a residential unit, and second, the physical relation of housing to its environment which has been considered as a social indicator and is raising the role of housing in the urban development program. External aspect of housing is very important. The profound impact of housing on residential environment and city community is noteworthy.

Housing is not only a construction volume and a shelter, but in the context of social development, it could bring about a sense of social belonging and attachment to the neighborhood. Housing should provide ground for interaction between people by utilizing architectural elements scheme. Role of housing in physical development of cities throughout the history has had a variable process. In recent periods, housing and the environment has been the main factor in shaping the cities. Housing has always been the largest function of cities and the provision and production of housing is the quantitative factor in determining the physical development of cities. This is, especially, more important and has more impact on small cities. Due to the physical development and population increase in these cities, the need for more housing, in comparison to other functions, plays a more fundamental role in formation of the identity and fabric of the city. Among the most important housing physical issues, one could name provision of infrastructure. Land preparation and provision of infrastructures can define the relationship between the housing and residential environment and convert shelter from the actual housing and urban expansion to the urban development [10].

4. Theoretical framework

4.1. Position and role of small city in regional development

City needs to build relationships with the region in order to be able to continue its life, but the relationships scope and volume does not remain constant; therefore, it leads to growth of the city. This growth affects areas surrounding or in connection with a city which can be considered as the influence area or influence space of the city. This influence, on one hand, makes the transition of the city's achievements to the region and, on the other hand, leads to the city's physical growth. In general, the influence area of a big city is small

cities and large villages around it [1]. As a result, in many cases, the major cities, by growing and infiltrating to the adjacent areas, take down the neighboring villages and even small cities and destroy the biological, social and economic balance of the region.

Given the lack of balanced development in the region due to excessive growth of the large cities, deliberate and sensitive development policies for accelerating the spatial centralization and supporting small and medium urban centers and the model of spatial decentralization of development, especially, in favor of small cities is evident in regional policies in developing countries [5].

The main reasons for raising small cities in the regional development planning in countries are:

1. The rural population and rural interaction is rarely considered while these aspects are important components of a city in any successful urban-rural development program.
2. Due to the failure of the mechanisms of gradual growth from large cities to small towns, this growth is more inclined to continue toward the center. Measured initiatives to strengthen small cities can the spatial distribution of development in urban systems.
3. Due to the political role of these cities being restricted to the needs and demands of the region's population, small cities can affect allocation of resources at higher levels and be effective in meeting the needs of local development issues.

Another regional development strategy in rural areas is considering the effect of small cities on the rural areas. Developing and strengthening small cities, in addition to the decentralization, is causing the regional development through providing urban facilities and services. By doing this, it influences rural areas and helps to maintain the organic relationship between the urban and the rural areas. Furthermore, it helps to stabilize the rural population and, hence, decrease the problems of the large cities.

Small cities interact with the smallest element in the settlements, villages. Also, its connection with intermediate and large cities plays an important role in the regional development and balance such as population, activities and investment stability.

4.2. Role of housing development in sustainable urban development

The needs of each city can be divided into five categories:

1. Basic needs, 2. Functional and Artistic requirements,
3. Communication and Networking, 4. Infrastructure,
5. Ecological considerations

Housing, as one of the basic needs of people, next to clothes, food and security is one of the most basic needs of the city. But to assess this role and place it in the list of the required elements for a city's development one must note housing features and performance of these indicators in planning as influencing factors in sustainable urban development.

As it was stated, to achieve a sustainable city, first, the structural problems such as social and institutional changes, infrastructures, development of services, pollution control and ecosystems management must be resolved. Then, four different aspects of a sustainable city must be established.

Housing, in terms of resource allocation, has a high capacity and effectiveness, and is considered as an economic good and a relatively safe investment context in the third world countries. Housing, also, requires a heavy early investment. For this reason it is one of the primary things that many people want to own their own homes. Therefore, its development can lead to development in economic sector by expanding economic activities and poverty reduction.

Economic growth comes with employment and security. These two factors are followed by growth in the influenced areas and, ultimately, the political development of the small cities. This takes place because of the increased role of these cities in the balanced regional development. Therefore, development in housing with proper investment and targeted planning can help achieve this goal. Thus, housing development not only will help to develop the infrastructure but also provide a stable and relative growth in the urban economy with political development. However, economic and political growth cannot improve and promote social and environmental aspects of the cities on their own.

Providing biological needs and promoting social situation of the households play an important role in the improvement and promotion of human (social) and the Environmental indicators. In social terms, location, shape and type of the materials used in building residential units brings social status for its owner. Improper and out of standard housing, in addition to having direct and indirect adverse psychological effects, also has social outcomes such as crime, and violations of laws and regulations [11]. Paying attention to the quality indicators and life needs in construction and development of housing is also important from this angle.

Population growth and migration follow rapid urban development and, consequently, problems such as, employment of a large group of new workers within the economy. Also, due to population growth, pollution, environmental destruction and the need for social services would increase. In addition to the financial poverty, housing and urban poverty occurs. Poverty in housing means overcrowding, unhealthy houses and high rent to income ratio. Urban poverty also means high priced urban infrastructure, forced seizure of land and increased social and environmental costs such as pollution, etc. With development in housing, small cities can respond to their population growth needs and the potential migrations that may take place from rural to urban areas and partly help the urban economy and employment. Moreover, developing settlements is one way to provide appropriate and adequate housing in these cities.

5. Summary, Analysis & Model presentation

In the recent century, large cities were the focus of development planning and have, now, reached their ultimate growth and are physically notable.

Lack of sufficient resources, poor economic management, absence of comprehensive plans for housing and other infrastructure failures that are in the economy on one hand, and the rapid increase of urban population on the other hand, have made providing shelter an obscure problem in these

countries. Moreover, the expansion and uncontrolled growth of cities and high density in the urban area has led to the development and construction of housing for the growing population in these cities, practically, impossible. As a result, urban and regional development planning was developed based on the emphasis on dynamism of small cities. Development of small cities has been raised to deal with the lack of balance and harmony caused by imbalanced growth of the cities as a solution so that the development could be extended to the other regions. In this approach, urban and regional development planning was prepared based on the emphasis on the dynamics of small cities.

Therefore regional development requires growth and optimization of small cities and proper use of them as an interface between villages and big cities. Small cities are noteworthy as a settlements focus as well and can also partly, control the population growth and migration, thus, for a proper regional development, proportional and sustainable development of small cities is essential.

The coming together of these has contributed to political and economic stability of small cities and has lead to the sustainable urban development.s

According to the conducted studies, and due to the characteristics and indicators of housing and its role and place in the city and sustainable urban development, the following model was obtained.

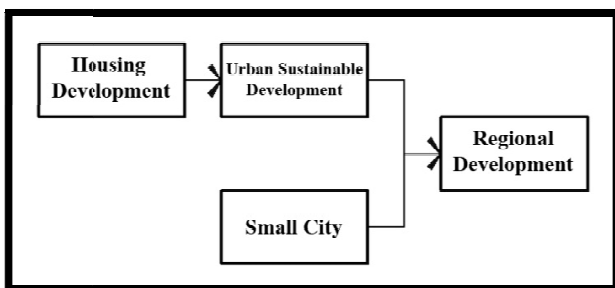


Fig. 1. The relationship between the concepts of research

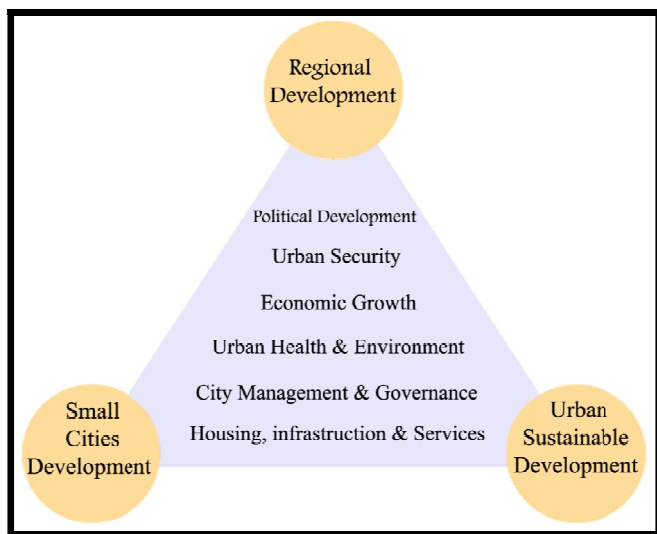


Fig 2. Housing and its position in region

6. Conclusion

Balanced regional development depends on proper and balanced growth of small cities. This development is only sustainable if it is able to solve the needs of these cities to allow them to play their role well in the region. Therefore, sustainable urban development and codification of its framework and various aspects is the requirements for this regional development approach.

Urban development has various aspects; in fact, city can achieve sustainable development via development of environmental, social, economic, and political aspects. Housing and its development plays an essential role in achieving growth and stability of these four aspects. Housing development, considering its big capacity in allocation of manpower and financial means, can contribute to economic growth and affect lower poverty indicators. Proper housing growth provides residents' biological needs in cities and improves social conditions in households. Therefore, it will have a very important role in the improvement and promotion of human (social) and environmental indicators.

Consequently, developing a proper model for the residential development of these cities could ensure their proper and controlled growth and lead to improvement of the quality of life in small cities.

A comprehensive approach, in which all the elements and components affecting the housing are considered and provides a set of different prioritized solutions, is the primary step for achieving comprehensive and sustainable development of small cities. Finally, housing has a basic functional position and is the main factor in achieving comprehensive and sustainable development of small cities. Consequently, it plays a significant role in achieving sustainable and balance regional development.

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