

Assessment of Social Sustainability in Sprawl Urban Neighborhoods (Case Study: Shadabad, Tehran)

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

There is an emphasis on human dimension and the community as the main axis of sustainable development. The goal of sustainable development, as considered in this paper, is to explore comprehensive development which is made possible through social development. Objectives such as cultural identity, social cohesive, establishment of public organizations, citizen participation, and empowerment of people are central to this discussion.

This paper attempts to contribute to the definition of social sustainability in a comprehensive and coherent manner and develop a theoretical framework within which this concept can be analyzed. There is a shortcoming of this framework in the available literature today since it requires a rearrangement of multidimensional elements. This can combine social, economic and environmental issues into a single independent body.

In addition, the concept of “social sustainability” can be observed through a qualitative lens since it deals mainly with qualitative concepts such as human life and well-being. Thus, “social sustainability” preserves and promotes social capital, i.e. realization of a unified and comprehensive society with mutual benefits for all residents, greater interaction between groups of citizens. This is accompanied by greater sense of compassion, patience, flexibility, and affection. Social capital, in this manner, is the values of “human rights” and “cultures”.

In developing a comprehensive definition of the concept of “social sustainability”, we have considered people within their living environment and the physical potential as well as their ability to reproduce the structure. As shown by previous studies, understanding the concept of social sustainability is better achieved by understanding and accepting the importance of other concepts such as “quality of life” and “social welfare”. These are evaluated by the criteria such as accessibility to services, decent housing, security, appropriate income, and lower levels of deprivation.

Another concept which is discussed in this paper is “urban sprawl”. This takes prominence here since it has been one of the major topics of discussion within the literature on sustainable development in recent years. Planning based on the theories of sustainable development has been critical to urban sprawl from different economic, social and environmental perspectives. The main criticism is related to the low levels of social sustainability in the neighborhoods

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which have been created due to urban sprawl. Advocates of sustainable development believe that urban sprawl leads to the problems such as diminution of social justice, negative consequence for public health, weakening of sense of community in inner cities, greater social segregation, polarization, and inability to cope with distinctions and variations in life styles. Thus, this study attempts to assess the factors which affect the level of social sustainability in one of the sprawl neighborhoods of Tehran (Shadabad).

Methodology

A questionnaire has been used to gather data from 300 residents of the Shadabad neighborhoods. Factor analysis and Pearson correlation coefficient have been used to analyze the data obtained through questionnaire and field survey.

As the first step of analysis, the indices of social sustainability are discussed. The indices are classified into objective and subjective. It should be noted that the subjective indices are more focused in this paper than the objective ones.

In the next step, factor analysis is used. KMO test is 0.719. This made it possible to continue the use of factor analysis. Five factors which affect "social sustainability" are developed here using the factor analysis: "social action", "neighborhood satisfaction", "individual satisfaction", "social capital" and "neighborhood attachment"

The last step of the analysis is related to identification of the underlying factors which affect the extent of social sustainability. These factors are evaluated through the use of other criteria such as the expanse of migration to the neighborhood and level of economic hardship. For this purpose, Pearson correlation was used.

Results and discussion

The analysis of findings suggests that the most important factor for the low level of social sustainability in the Shadabad neighborhood is low rate of social interaction among neighbors. The next major factors are dissatisfaction with residential environment and housing, lack of jobs, and low incomes. Some other significant variables are lack of social capital and poor sense of belonging to the community among citizens. Statistical analysis shows that all the mentioned variables are primary elements in the discussion of "social sustainability".

It can be concluded that the coefficient tables of the correlation between the two factors of migration to the neighborhood and economic hardship have a significant effect on the social sustainability. In fact, migration to the neighborhood shows significant correlations with the three factors including social action, social capital and sense of belonging, and economic hardship. These are meaningful in the discussion about individual satisfaction.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the factors such as migration to the neighborhood and economic hardship in the context of urban sprawl are contextual and indispensable factors which affect the social sustainability levels. These lead to lower social action and less inclination and disposition to participate in public activities at the community level. In general, the results show that the concepts such as "migration to the neighborhood" and "economic hardship" play a greater role in social sustainability. Five other factors, i.e. social capital, individual satisfaction, neighborhood satisfaction, social interaction, and neighborhood attachment are also significant in sustainability of neighborhood.

Keywords: social sustainability, sustainable development, sprawl, social capital, Shadabad.