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## A comparative investigation and analysis between the neighborhood concept in the traditional urban system in Iran and its similar patterns in contemporary period

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**Abstract:** Developing a suitable scale for the neighborhood in proportion to the whole city helps us better recognize and control the social dimensions of the neighborhood. Such a scale facilitates local management, self-sufficiency, integrity and social cohesion. It also develops the sense of identity and sense of belonging to place among the inhabitants. In so doing, the inhabitants and the regions can have their true potential fulfilled. In addition, the practitioners and those who are seeking a sustainable solution for the problems of cities such as urban decay, pollution, disturbances, and degradation of the quality of life, would be encouraged to reap the benefits mentioned above. Unfortunately, in the current urbanization development of Iran, neighborhoodism has failed to produce efficient outcomes partly due to variety of reasons such as the lack of understanding of the neighborhood or associative concepts, replacing the neighborhood patterns with the current patterns of the contemporary period, and adopting inefficient neighborhoodism system not aligned with the context. Therefore, this study is an attempt to analyze the neighborhood concept and carry out a comparative analysis between the neighborhood concept in the traditional urban system in Iran and its concept in contemporary alternative patterns. Identifying such differences in the neighborhood concept would help us better use the neighborhoodism as a solution to the above-mentioned problem.

To this end, documentary and library data were collected then analyzed through the descriptive and analytical method. Based on the results, the neighborhood is a physical-semantic concept whose purpose in the old urbanization of Iran and contemporary patterns is the same. However, the differences between them are related to the time and the process of development. In other words, the contributions of the residents to the gradual development of the neighborhood in the traditional Iranian system have given valuable cultural-historical meanings to the neighborhood and constructed its identity. In comparison, pre-designed contemporary patterns have sought to foster such values. This goal has sometimes been accomplished and sometimes not.

**Keywords:** *Neighborhood Concept, Traditional System, Contemporary Patterns.*



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## Introduction and framework of research

Rapid and rampant urban growth and rural-urban migration have created chaos in many cities and resulted in irregular urban sprawl. Such changes have brought about some problems (e.g. ecology pollution, social abnormalities, lack of a sense of identity, lack of social sense of belonging, economic inequalities) and generally declined the quality of life. One of the solutions to respond to future challenges is zoning or dividing the city into smaller regions. In doing so, it is possible to build locally cohesive communities, facilitate urban management and integrate the community. This goal can be accomplished through establishing neighborhood patterns because of the unique features of the neighborhood. Unfortunately, in the current urbanization development of Iran, neighborhoodism has failed to produce efficient outcomes due to variety of reasons such as the lack of understanding of the neighborhood or associative concepts, such as replacing the neighborhood patterns with the current patterns of the contemporary period, adopting inefficient neighborhoodism system, having a shallow understanding of the pattern employed or zoning spaces based solely on geographical features on the maps. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, offering the neighborhood unit as a solution require a deep understanding of the concept of the neighborhood and its equivalent concepts. Such understanding could be of great help to adopt the most suitable strategy in the different time and place. To this end, the aim of this paper is twofold. The paper attempts to first review the definitions of the neighborhood and then analyze and present the common aspects of the neighborhood concepts. The concepts of neighborhood are analyzed in the traditional urban system in Iran and its changing trends during the modernity period are scrutinized. In the following, Contemporary patterns replacing neighborhood patterns are investigated and their features are presented. Most importantly, this paper presents a comparative analysis between the neighborhood concept in Iranian cities in old days and its concept in contemporary alternative patterns. The paper ends with discussion and conclusions of all sections.

## Literature review

A growing body of literature has examined the concept of the neighborhood. In a study conducted by Abdollahi, he investigated the concept of neighborhood from different perspectives and then scrutinized the issues in Iranian context (Abdollahi & Sarrafi & Tavakolinia, 2010). In another study, Rahnamyee et al., examined the course of changes in the structure and function of Iranian neighborhoods from the ancient period to the Islamic revolution (Rahnamyee, et al., 2007). There is a considerable amount of literature on the re-conceptualization of the neighborhood in current urban conditions (Sobhani, 2006), the clarification of the neighborhood concept and its elements in the context of traditional neighborhoods (Moztarzadeh & Hojjati, 2013), the description of neighborhood concept and its changes (Azeri, 2011). Some research has been carried out on the new urban patterns replacing neighborhood in the contemporary era (Einifar, 2007); (Ardeshiri & Ansari, 2009); (Azimi & Moghadam, 2010). An article also has outlined the principles adopted in the Iranian neighborhoods and neighborhood units and compared them with one another (Saghatoleslami & Aminzadeh, 2013). However, no research has so far compared the differences among the concept of the neighborhood in Iran and the similar patterns in the contemporary era. Even the underlying causes of such differences have not been examined. To address the gaps, this study was conducted.

## The concept of the neighborhood

Neighborhood is not a new concept in the literature of urbanization in the world and in Iran. This concept was initially introduced in the form of ancient forts and shrines some centuries ago when the first central governments of Iran were established<sup>1</sup>. This term is tightly connected with the culture of the people, so much so that it is extensively used by nonscientific literature and is understandable to the lay people. However, defining this apparently simple concept is difficult not only for people but also for experts. Each of the various disciplines has defined the concept

of the neighborhood based on their theoretical backgrounds and from a specific perspective. This shows that this concept is multifaceted and complex. To learn more about the neighborhood concept, initially several interpretations are presented:

- A distinct territorial group, distinct by virtue of the specific physical characteristics of the area and the specific social characteristics of the inhabitants (Glass, 1948: 18).
- The neighborhood may be defined In terms of administratively by ward or parish boundaries, from the aspect of aesthetically by distinctive character or age of development, in socially by the perception of local residents, according to functionally by catchment areas for local residents and from the point of view environmentally as traffic-calmed areas where through traffic is excluded and the quality/safety of the living environment is paramount (Barton, 2003: 16).
- The residents who feel spatial attachment and belonging to the neighborhood define this concept as “the integrated spatial range of the city with physical boundaries” based on a mental understanding or objective signs. The scale of this range is determined by the possibility to understand and respond to everyday walking needs” (Abdollahi & Sarrafi & Tavakolinia, 2010: 100).
- Thomlinson considers three conditions necessary to form a city neighborhood: Having a large or small geographic area of the city, creating a community by a group of people in the city, and finally formation of interdependence among social groups (Thomlinson, 1969: 181).
- The neighborhood is the area in which: “common named boundaries, more than one institution identified with the area, and more than one tie of shared public space or social network” (Schoenberg, 1979: 69).
- A neighborhood can be considered as a physically and spatially united community with a relative autonomy in performance. It accommodates a heterogeneous group of people, their homes and basic life service centers. The existing cultural

similarities, which are based on factors such as religion, sect, ethnicity, language, occupation, etc., regulate everyday life, the thoughts and activities of its inhabitants, and results in social face to face interactions and the management organization arising from the residents of neighborhoods (Rahnayee, et al., 2007: 24).

Lack of consensus in the above-mentioned definitions is associated with different approaches adopted to the neighborhood and analyzing from various perspectives. For this purpose, some scholars have conceptualized the neighborhood as a geospatial concept and defined it as “a social organization of a population residing in a geographically proximate locale” (Warren, 1981: 62) or “geographic units within which certain social relationships exist” (Bridge, 2002: 2). Another group of researchers have emphasized the social dimension of the neighborhood and even conceptualized it as a social unit. This group of researcher has defined this term as a set of social communications and interactions (Moztarzadeh & Hojjati, 2013: 75).

The term can be defined from objective and subjective perspectives. Subjective perspective- focuses on the mental perceptions of individuals. This definition presents the abstract and intangible aspect of the neighborhood. Given that the measurement parameters of the neighborhood are qualitative; its definition varies from person to another.

Accordingly, “Mittellon Ketler believes that the most reasonable way to define the neighborhood is to ask the residents where the neighborhood is” (Abdollahi & Sarrafi & Tavakolinia, 2010: 94). Defining the neighborhood through objective lens allows measuring it quantitatively in terms of the specific physical boundary, the specified population, the use and similar functions.

The term Neighborhood is defined from other various perspectives. For example, “administratively speaking, neighborhoods are areas defined by walls and administrative boundaries. From the social perspective, it refers to the perception of local residents. From the functional perspective it is

associated with local service areas and ecologically, it deals with traffic characteristics, quality and security. Aesthetically, this term is defined using specific characteristics or age, and development age” (Azizi, 2006: 36).

The difference in the definition of the neighborhood is not just seen in different scientific fields. “The definition of this term varies from country to another.

As an example, in Morocco, this term is defined more symbolically than administratively or commercially” (Rabbani, 2006: 156). Such a definition shows the cultural and social dimension of the neighborhood. Definitions of this term from different perspectives are summarized in Table1:

It should be noted that the physical and structural aspects of the neighborhoods are tied up with the

Table.1. Definitions of neighborhood from different aspects. Source: Azimi& Moghadam, 2010: 10.

| Concept               | Semantic fields                       | Components and aspects of the definition  |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| subjective / internal | Ecological / Cultural / Historical    | Name / symbolic and cultural concepts / religious and conceptual factors / subjective images / a sense of belonging   |
|                       | Aesthetic social                      | A recognizable identity / signs / sensory and perceptual factors<br>The subjective and perceptual image of the inhabitants /the territory of a social group /a foundation for preserving rights and developing the social system / social bonds / strangersavoidance / security |
|                       | Political / Administrative / Planning | Specific boundaries and limits / the smallest unit in urban planning / publically supported councils and community associations (neighborhood councils)   |
| Objective / external  | Functional / Economic                 | Service ranges / Workflow and daily consumption of citizens / Indigenous employment   |
|                       | Ecological                            | Communication system / the quality of life / indigenouness/ tranquility   |
|                       | Physical                              | The specified physical ranges /the place of residence and places where the majority of citizens attend/ Organization and skeletons of neighborhoods / Construction and residential densities / Establishment of service elements  |
|                       | Demographic                           | Demographic density / the number of households/ residential units / specific population   |

cultural and social characteristics of its inhabitants, and these two components mutually reinforce or weaken each other. In this regard, “David Harvey emphasizes the association between spatial forms and social processes and Dickon focuses on the interactive relationships between the human processes and the spatial form”(Shakuee, 2009: 105-106). “Leiden (2003) investigated the effect of the artificial environment on social capital and found that the physical design of the neighborhood, in particular, contributed to the formation of social capital and increased the level of social interactions quantitatively and qualitatively. In this regard, he points out that the type and manner of designing the neighborhood can encourage residents to get involved in the neighborhood affairs or totally lose their interest in participating” (Ardeshiri& Hajipoor& Hakimi, 2013: 47). Yousefi Far draws our attention to the mutual effects of the physical and social structure on each other and states that “The study and analysis of the special and main elements contributed or contributing to the shape of the city

can help us recognize and clarify the role of social forces in urban life and the changes in the shape of cities. Based on such recognition and clarification, it would be possible to identify social-economic trends that could have contributed to the transformation of the urban community” (Yousefi Far, 2007: 321). This implies that conceptualizing this concept from either physical or social perspective and separating these two aspects from each other does not seem to be appropriate. In fact, it is native to assume that “a neighborhood is a concept characterized by only physical-visual or social features but both features play a key role in understanding this issue. The type of communication, social relations, type of business, language, ethnicity and even the noises in the city are as much helpful in understanding the neighborhood concept as the type of housing or physical texture of an area of the city that distinguishes it from other regions” (Rahnamyee, et al., 2007: 24). Despite the lack of consensus in the definitions of the neighborhood, all the definition emphasizes the physical and human aspect of the neighborhood.

The physical aspect is the physical framework of the neighborhood (physical and structural). The human aspect includes the individual-social, cultural and behavioral aspects of the neighborhood (semantic-content aspect). The first aspect is the same as physical structure of neighborhoods including buildings (residential buildings, mosques, schools etc) and the space between them, passageways and access points, topographical features, nature and all elements and spaces that can be visually perceived and it is possible to set them a limit and measure their sizes. Defining the neighborhood from semantic-content perspective is difficult because it is associated with man and variable characteristics. This aspect deals with the unlimited world of the individuals' mentality formed in connection with the past, experience, mindset, emotion types, tastes, and all factors contributing to personality traits. More interestingly, that even the built physical environment is also influenced by the mindset of individuals and in one way or another represents the culture and thinking of man throughout the history and in a particular geographical area. In fact everything has been derived from his mind and reflects his thoughts and inner feelings. Perhaps this could be a reason why a person feels more relaxed when he lives in an environment consistent with his culture and mentality.

Since these characteristics are variable, the boundaries and definition of the neighborhood varies from one person or place to another. In other words, the complexity of the meaning of the neighborhood can be attributed to factors such as the abstractness of the neighborhood concept, the different definitions of the neighborhood proposed in different sciences, the diversity of the constituent factors and the changes of meaning occurred over time. These factors show that the shapes of urban neighborhoods in different geographical areas have changed their different characteristics and functions by the passage of time. Therefore, to understand this concept precisely, it is necessary to analyze this concept in the past and today of Iran, and somewhat in different societies. For this purpose, the concept is first described in the

traditional system of the city and the Iranian society.

### **Neighborhood in the traditional urban system and society of Iran**

Examining the concept of the neighborhood in the urbanization of Iran in the old days requires a particular attention to the formation of the neighborhoods. Yousefi Far investigated the influential factors in the formation of neighborhoods in the middle ages of Iranian history. The factors were changes in political, economic and cultural relationships including the change of rulers and urban planning, the construction of new neighborhoods for specific groups, the development of neighborhoods as the result of the provision of services in a region. He maintained that formation of villages and living centers adjacent to cities and their connection to neighborhoods which have given rise to urban migration are among other important factors (Yousefi Far, 2007: 319-350). Similarly, in his study, Papoli Yazdi described the factors contributing to formation and separation of neighborhoods as follows: The ease of managing the cities, the segregation of various religious and ethnic groups, the division of the cities based on the political and military criteria, occupational and class separation, isolation caused by the natural factors (River, mountain, hill, etc.) (Papoli Yazdi, 1987: 5-6). A closer look at these descriptions shows that intrinsic or extrinsic factors have been the cause of reuniting the individuals and reinforcing their tendencies towards the group or community formation. These factors have been the government pressures on a particular stratum of society, the state of the land, the form and topography of environment, the policies adopted by the governors and, in many cases, religious, economic, social, cultural, administrative commonalities. For example, the rulers of religious regimes used to place pressure on the people of other religions and gather them in isolated neighborhoods in poor welfare and conditions. The neighborhoods were located on the outskirts of the city and the Jewish, Christians, Sunnis and Shiites neighborhoods are the examples of neighborhoods. Therefore, people

living in the neighborhoods had an element such as religion and culture in common. This gathering was organized by coercion. Different guilds with the same "occupation" also formed neighborhoods including the coppersmiths, goldsmiths, traders, businessmen and others.

Therefore, no matter whether the underlying cause for the formation of neighborhoods was the desire of people in a region, or governmental coercion, the common elements or attributes shared by the residents resulted in the relative homogeneity of the communities. Among the elements and attributes, "the common needs and destinies of human groups were the most important factors in the formation of residential neighborhoods as physical-social units.

Psychological, economic, social needs and security were the reasons households and human groups led a collective life. Kinship and tribal relationships are one of the oldest and most common factors resulting in sense of coherence. The effects of such relationships are still visible in some parts of the world and in Iran (Hosseini, 2010: 9). In the formation process of these groups, "communities, and tribal-based urban communities, collections known as the neighborhoods were created" (Pakzad, 1990: 18). "Cohesion among families, guilds or tribes created a convergence in the neighborhood, people were bound to consolidate unity and establish neighborly relations to steer their fates. This unity encouraged them to develop a sort of solidarity and social cohesion against the strangers" (Rahnamyee, et al., 2007: 25). In doing so, they experienced the adverse effects of abnormalities such as tribal and ethnic conflicts and social and cultural constraints.

The residents of the neighborhood felt responsible for each other and the neighborhood itself, and recognized each others' rights. They considered themselves as part of the community, and they felt their survival and comfort were tied up with the efficiency and power of the neighborhood. "Socio-cultural cohesion developed a sense of belonging, a psychological factor, to the neighborhood, encouraged individuals to follow the same customs

and traditions, and created a sense of distinction to other residents of neighborhoods" (Pakzad, 2007: 4). Under the influence of this social system, which included economic and political issues, the neighborhoods became self-sufficient small communities. Such a lifestyle and "the need for internal solidarity on the one hand, and facing the threat of social group against others, on the other hand, justified the need for relative self-sufficiency in the field of services and facilities" (Pakzad, 2007: 4). Hence, the structural elements of the neighborhood were shaped to support this lifestyle and to meet the basic physical and emotional needs of the inhabitants. The most important element which was created to meet the basic needs of residents was the neighborhood center. The centers "were often established near the main road of the neighborhood, and such a location created easy access to the center from different parts of the neighborhood in the best possible way" (Soltanzadeh, 1993: 98). Therefore, based on the type of access structure and form, these centers were of two types. A small square (often at the intersection of several roads or along the main road) and the market or the linear centers (linear were established along the passageways and in the form of markets) and "the main elements and spaces were formed based on the social and economic conditions of the residents of the neighborhood" (Tavassoli, 2002: 10). More precisely, the type, number, dimensions, and physical forms associated with the functions of neighborhood and consequently, the activities in such areas depend on the residents' needs and are influenced by various factors such as; scale and population of the neighborhood, climate, culture and beliefs, environment topography, access to resources, distance from the city center, residents' economic and other geographical, political and chronological conditions. For example, "in cities such as Yazd, Nayn and Kashan, where access to drinking water was not easy for all people, having water storage was one of the important service elements built in every neighborhood center or near it to meet the people's needs. However, in cities like

Isfahan, the groundwater levels were high enough to be accessible to all households; water storage was not considered a central element of the neighborhood” (Zeraat Doust Fard, 2000: 75-77). Also, because of the existing beliefs and culture, and the spiritual needs of each stratum, some elements such as fire temples (before Islam), mosques, Husayniyya, churches were established or public baths were created to address the need for sanitation. Various shops were established to supply daily needs of the inhabitants. Although these elements were also available in different parts of the neighborhood, the necessity for their presence in the neighborhood centers was felt more.

Except for the neighborhood centers and service elements, the physical elements of the neighborhood were created to meet the material and spiritual needs of the residents and promote the self-sufficiency of the neighborhood in various social, cultural, religious aspects. Therefore, the physical elements contributed to the social cohesion and identity of the neighborhood. For example, the entrance of each neighborhood was marked using an index element to establish the boundary of the neighborhood and give a warning for the arrival of strangers. Also, in some cases, the structure and type of neighborhood architecture were unique and different from other adjacent neighborhoods. Access and communication networks also had a spatial and functional hierarchy beginning with the movement of the most common and the most traffic-loaded passage, that is, the neighborhood, and ending up in the most private and least traffic-loaded passage, ie, deadlock. The hierarchy was also reflected in the form of a body such that “the width of access routes was indirectly related to the degree individuals preferred solitude, and the narrowest passageways or deadlines were exclusively used by the inhabitants of the buildings or their visitors” (Khaksari, 2006).

In this way, the communication network and the neighborhood center and other elements such as water storage, mosque, saqqakhaneh, bathroom, small squares and etc were created. “The physical texture

of the neighborhood as a spatial manifestation of the social and economic conditions of the community had a certain coherence and homogeneity. In other words, the above-mentioned factors created the physical elements of the neighborhood, and the set of elements in residential centers provided an environment reflecting the interactions of residents in their everyday relationship” (Pakzad, 1990: 18). Therefore, it can be said that the neighborhoods in the traditional urban system in Iran generally have the following characteristics:

- A) A relative independence and self-sufficiency in the social, economic, political aspects, service, management (bottom-up) and etc
- B) A solid and continuous social communications
- C) A certain physical framework with defined physical elements (neighborhood center, communication network, marketplace, etc.)
- D) A social and physical identity
- E) A gradual development

It is also necessary to note that “in the past, the neighborhood served its appropriate function as a settlement in the form of urban cells under the socio-economic influences of those days and the changes in its components over time were tied up with the changes in social relations in general and local conditions in particular” (Savari, 2005: 4). However, since in Qajar period there were no significant changes in the urban system and the collective and individual lifestyles of the people, the neighborhoods and other urban spaces preserved the same traditional and original shapes. However, “from the late Qajar era onwards, the gradual collapse of the tribal system and the transition from the traditional economic stage to the current system brought some change in the texture of Iran” (Pakzad, 1990: 6). These changes which coincided with the developments of modernity around the world reshaped the identity and the nature of the neighborhoods. As a result, the neighborhood was interpreted from new perspectives and was defined in different ways. These definitions will be discussed in detail.

### Modernity period and its impact on the concept of the neighborhood

The introduction of the principles of modernism and consequently its positive and negative consequences in Iran began in the Qajar period. “From the Qajar period onwards, the new socio-economic conditions in the country brought about changes in the urban system and, consequently, the neighborhood experienced a fundamental transformation” (Abdollahi & Sarrafi & Tavakolinia, 2010: 92). Rapid and rampant urban growth, urban migration and a shift in the economic development from agricultural to industrial and technological resulted in the following problems such as pollution of ecology, social abnormalities, lack of a sense of identity and lack of social sense of belonging, economic inequalities and generally declined the quality of life and caused many changes in its form and content. “During the transformation in the form and nature of urbanization, like the city’s constituent cells, urban neighborhoods underwent changes and took new shapes. Such changes were reflected in not only

in the physical structure of neighborhood and social, cultural, economic relationships but also in all affairs of residents of the neighborhood” (Pakzad, 2011), the most important of which are as follows:

“- Physical and functional development of the elements comprising the neighborhood structures (passageways network, neighborhood centers, neighborhood facilities, squares, and housing)

- Changes and evolutions in the social affairs and relationships of people living in the neighborhood

- Changes and evolutions in the economic affairs and relationships of people living in the neighborhood” (Rahnayee, et al., 2007: 38).

The changes influenced the two main aspects of the neighborhood, namely the physical-structural and the semantic-content. The neighborhoods no longer had its former efficiency. The changes and their effects are summarized in Tables 2 and 3.

As the result of the widespread changes in the foundations of the neighborhood in the new urban system, the interest in the traditional concept of the

Table. 2. Changes in the Physical-structural Dimension of the Neighborhoods in the modernist period. Source: authors.

|                             | Factors contributing to changes in neighborhoods                                   | The process of changes  | The results and impacts of changes on the neighborhood  |   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Physical-structural factors | Introduction of mechanized travel (cars) and advances in transportation            | Changing in the shape and function of the transit network                   | replacing organic paths with streets  | -Inefficiencies and misunderstandings of passageways, deadlock alleys, and the entrance of neighborhoods    |
|                             |  | increasing the speed of movement  | Destructing the hierarchy of passageways  | -Lack of stations and the cumulative and interactive places like nodes                                      |
|                             | Advances in technology   | Providing Access to other parts of the city                                 | -Reducing the importance and efficiency of neighborhood centers and neighborhood service-cultural places                              | -Changing the physical form of buildings and, consequently, the appearance of the neighborhood              |
|                             |  | increasing the number of buildings in height                                | -Lack of attention to the physical form of the neighborhood and important elements of the buildings                                   | -Replacing the man-made scale with mechanized scale in the proportions of habitat spaces                    |
| Socio-cultural factors      | Increasing the welfare and health services   | Increasing construction   | -Reducing the importance and efficiency of community centers, small squares, markets and other service centers - neighborhood welfare |   |
|                             |  | Increasing the number of consumable machines                                | -The ineffectiveness of a significant part of neighborhoods such as baths, baths, laundry shops, water storage facilities, etc.       |   |
|                             | Economy  | Increasing the number of service locations (Malls and commercial buildings) | Reducing attention to aesthetic factors   | Using uneven and cheap materials and disproportionate to the environment and climate                        |
|                             |  | Increasing welfare services such as electricity and gas.                    | -Destruction of the skyline   | Increasing the density of buildings, reducing green space and increasing the number of buildings in heights |
| Lifestyle                   | Increasing the importance of the material and economic aspect of the other aspects | Increasing land prices  | Reducing the use of communal spaces and, consequently, the ineffectiveness of some communal spaces                                    |   |
| Management                  | Developing Individual (independence personalism)                                   | Management and planning weakness  | -Expanding irrelevant and meaningless spaces - atypical construction and inconsistent with neighborhoods                              |   |



Table. 3. Changes in the Semantic-content Dimension of the Neighborhoods in the modernist period. Source: authors.

|                                    | <b>Factors contributing to changes in neighborhoods</b>             | <b>The process of changes</b>  | <b>The results and impacts of changes on the neighborhood</b>   |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>Physical-structural factors</b> | Introduction of mechanized travel (cars) advances in transportation | Changing transit network<br>Increasing the speed of movement in the neighborhood   | Changing in understanding the subjective and physical boundaries of the neighborhoods<br>Reducing the sense of belonging to the place, reducing the understanding and perception of the environment   |
|                                    | Advancements in technology and communications                       | Increasing remote and virtual interactions<br>Increasing the range of communications<br>Increasing consumable machines                                 | Reducing communication in person, the sense of participation and local communication, undermining community structure<br>Eliminating the boundaries of neighborhoods, reducing the sense of belonging to the neighborhood community<br>Replacing individuals with machines  |
|                                    | Urbanization  | Rural-urban migration  | Changing the social textures of the neighborhoods and reducing the sense of belonging to the physical aspect of neighborhood and society  |
| <b>Socio-cultural factors</b>      | Changing the values and attitudes and lifestyles                    | Diminishing beliefs<br>Developing Individual (independence Personalism)<br>Changing Commonalities and common goals to similarities and different forms | Vanishing some elements of social unity<br>Prioritizing the individual to the group, reduction of communal and local community shakiness<br>For example, in the past, the entire community was considered a family whose member fought for its goals, but now these common goals have changed to common names and similarities in various aspects, such as economy, education, occupation, etc. |
|                                    |   | Variable places of residence at different points of time (such as university, temporary employment at another locations)                               | Though the communication circles increased, the sense of belonging was not developed because of the temporary nature and the lack of time. The social and local sense of belonging to the old places diminished due to the lack of presence in the old place  |
|                                    | Economy<br>Job requirements<br>Top-down management                  | Rational, multi-layered and prudent relationships<br>Expanding beneficiary- interactions<br>Separating the place of work<br>Reducing Participation     | Reducing social good traits like forgiveness and assistance and help each other<br>Reducing public trust and social cohesion<br>Reducing presence in the neighborhood<br>Reducing presence at local communities and undermining the local community structure as well as reducing the sense of belonging to the neighborhood and community  |

neighborhood began to fade away. Consequently, the functions and benefits of the neighborhood such as developing a sense of identity among inhabitants, improving self-sufficiency, and control by inhabitants and enhancing social cohesion became meaningless. New architectural and urban theories were developed as the results of the problems and needs, the incompatibility of neighborhoods with traditional patterns, the new form of urbanization and the wide urban growth and development. The theories attempted to revive social and local life and theoreticians aimed at rebuilding neighborhoods in new cities not only to enhance social strength and

a sense of identity in a district of the city but also to control and satisfy the needs of citizens. To this purpose, they proposed zoning or dividing the urban areas into smaller sections. These changes led to the emergence of new definitions and theories about neighborhoods. The summary of some definitions are presented as follows.

### **Architectural patterns used in lieu of neighborhood patterns in contemporary period**

Neighborhood unit: "The idea of establishing a hierarchy of city and its discipline based on a

certain unit raised as one of the important issues of urbanization while the researchers were seeking a solution for creating a sense of identity in the urban system in the middle of the nineteenth century” (Saeednia, 2004: 57) In the 1920s, in seeking a solution for the adverse consequences of the industrial revolution, a large number of immigrants flooded into industrial American cities. Due to the lack of improvement in the physical and social conditions of these cities, a proposal entitled “Neighborhood unit” as New York regional plan, put forward by Clarence Perry for the first time. Indeed, Perry’s most important motive for proposing the Neighborhood unit plan was showing “the poof for establishing basic services near residential buildings, hence, he named these services as family neighborhood. These collections could also be considered fundamental units in the urban hierarchy. Another impetus behind the idea of bringing the Neighborhood Unit was to promote collective life which was threateningly weakened in American industrial cities. He believed that if the designs were to be fairly and accurately prepared, they could encourage people for that kind of life” (Pakzad, 2007: 2-3); (Fig.1). According the experts, the principles of self-help plan proposed by Perry for residential areas shares the following common characteristics with other plans<sup>2</sup>:

- Transportation outside the residential texture and separation of pedestrians and riders
- Observance of hierarchy and preservation of social and private privacy
- Optimal and specific population in neighborhoods with regard to its amenities and facilities
- Establishment of cultural and educational center centralized by the primary school
- Specified and certain physical boundaries for neighborhood units
- The provision of municipal facilities and services in the neighborhoods

The impetus of Clarence Perry for presenting these principles was proposing a pattern that “has been given to the scheme of arrangement for a family life

community. Investigations showed that residential communities, when they meet the universal needs of family life. have similar parts performing similar functions. In the neighborhood unit system, those parts have been put together as an organic whole” (Perry, 2007: 8). In fact, the Neighborhood Unit is not a precise or fixed plan prescribed for implementation in a specific region. It is a model or framework for establishing an urban unit. It is an exemplary pattern enjoying a physical and social integrity and is based on a desirable living standard. The model not only addresses the need at a small scale but also contributes to performance such as urban performance at a large scale. Therefore, it can be said that “The Neighborhood Unit is the smallest unit of city offering the basic services to the local community and it has been established to strengthen the spirit of neighborliness, social communication and security and to promote the quality of urban environments and small town communities in big cities” (Saeednia, 2004: 59)

A practical example based on the idea of the neighborhood and its criteria is new town Radbur project. The project was designed and constructed by Henry Wright and Clarence Stein while Clarence Perry was working on the theoretical aspects of his neighborhood. “At some points, these plans have been implemented in Iran. An example for the neighborhood unit concept is Narmak area in Tehran. Though the project was planned, the principles of designing and providing services were adhered to, this region became devoid of environmental quality due to its low sense of identity and low social sense of belonging” (Mahmoudi et al, 2014: 1-22)

Excluding geometric principles, dimensions and sizes, analyzing the common features in the designing principles of the neighborhood unit and also in the examples implemented shows that neighboring theory seeks to achieve the following goals and improve the quality of life of the urban population.

- Establishing specified and designed physical boundaries: This feature refers to defining the location, size, scale and type of activity of each

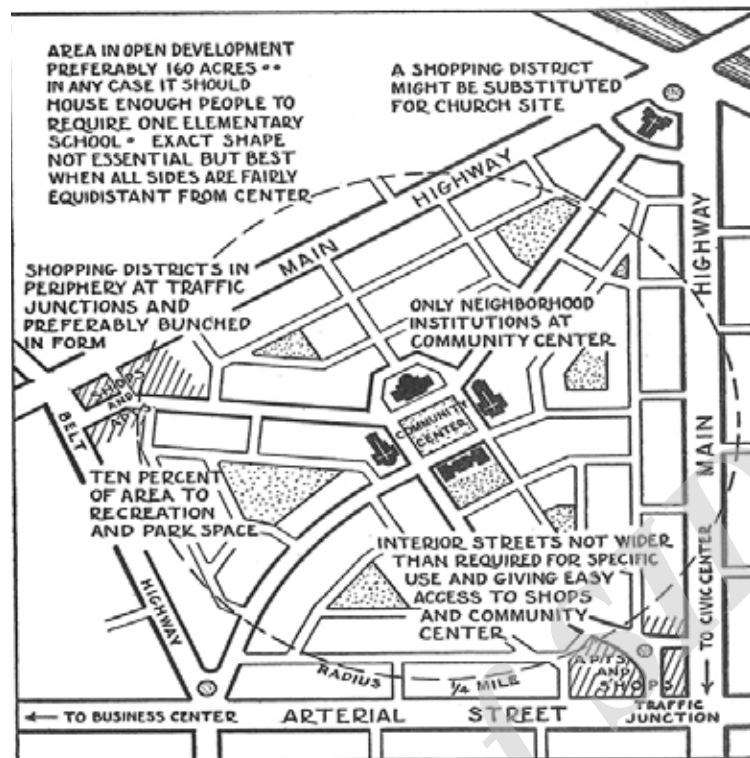


Fig. 1. Neighborhood unit diagram. Source: Perry, 1929.

region.

- Promoting a relative self-sufficiency: This feature deals with meeting the daily needs of residents through business centers, services and...
- Establishing solid social relationships: This feature refers to building a framework for developing social relationships such as gathering spaces, educational-cultural centers.
- Developing a sense of identity: This feature includes preserving privacy, establishing a relationship between location and activity, developing a sense belonging to the community, the specific structure and community, and...

### Other patterns

As stated earlier, in the early twentieth century, new architectural and urban theories were developed in response to the problems in urban life and destabilized urban system. The goal of theories was to improve the existing conditions and to overcome the weaknesses and shortcomings of the system. "The two main perspectives of modernism, interpreted

by some scholars as rationalism and empiricism, emphasized two distinctly separate concepts of the neighborhood and self-reliance collections. According to both perspectives, the purpose of the designers was establishing the social institution of the neighborhood in designed physical environments" (Einifar, 2007: 40). They believed that the formation of local communities and the use of local facilities were a solution by which the cohesion of the urban community could be improved, the urban system could be better controlled and in general, the problems in the modernized urbanization could be addressed. To achieve this goal, rationalists' designs were based on the imagination and prediction of future life and were aligned with the needs of the day and technology. This perspective resulted in high towers with high density. The towers were spaced from each other and had a variety of uses to meet their basic needs. Le Corbusier residential units in Marseilles are a good example reflecting such a perspective and designs. Experimentalists also believed that achieving this goal required using the experience of

people in the past and existing design patterns. This way of thinking was manifested as single-family units with low height and dispersion rather than high towers. The Clarence Parry’s neighborhood unit in Radbrun, described previously, is a prominent example of this perspective. “According to these two theories, “the concept of neighborhoods”, is a self-reliant complex used for shaping residential areas of cities” (Einifar, 2007: 41). Problems and criticism of existing theories resulted in developing new theories such as urban villages and New urbanism. The theory of urban villages seeks to create urban living complexes with a sense of locally cohesive community and the theory of New urbanism seeks to generalize principles(e.g. “having a pedestrian scale, identifiable center and the edge, with a sense of identity, diversity, and integrity among the functions and the inhabitants and the particular common space)” (Madani Pour, 2010: 165) to big cities.

However, “both perspectives are interested in the small-scale and distinct constructions in the middle of urban spaces” (Madani Pour, 2010: 165-166). In the second half of the twentieth century, many other theories about the revitalization of a coherent local community were developed, of which most of them were: pedestrian collections, new traditional neighborhoods, intelligent growth, and public transportation-oriented neighborhood. There is a consensus among most of the critics that in the solutions the same the neighborhood unit of the 20th Century have been aligned with new conditions and used in the design of contemporary residential complexes under the new titles “(Einifar, 2007: 44).In (Table 4), some of these patterns have been summarized.

### Discussion

A) comparative analysis between neighborhood

Table. 4. Contemporary patterns used in lieu of the Neighborhood. Source: Einifar, 2007: 39-50.

| Pattern name   | Problem  | Criteria   | Suggested solutions   | Results  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Neighborhood unit</b>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Sharing a space between bicycle riders and pedestrians</li> <li>*Lack of a sense of identity</li> <li>*Lack of local community like structure</li> </ul>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Social Welfare</li> <li>*Family importance</li> <li>*Functional performance</li> <li>*The importance of living in the local community</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Full detachment of spaces for the riders and pedestrians</li> <li>*Separation of functions</li> <li>*Neighborhood indices and school-oriented design element</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Similar to the subdivisions defined in the Garden City Pattern</li> <li>*The success and popularity of its models</li> </ul>   |
| <b>New traditional neighborhoods TND</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Urban sprawl</li> <li>*Dependence on Cars</li> <li>*Uneven development</li> <li>*The ugliness of cities</li> <li>*The poor quality of urban environment</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Social equality</li> <li>*Public Welfare</li> <li>*pedestrian-oriented design</li> <li>*The importance of living in the local community</li> <li>*Emphasis on past traditions</li> <li>*Emphasis on beauty</li> <li>*Harmonic designs based on standard codes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Hybrid functions</li> <li>*Increased density</li> <li>*combined housing patterns</li> <li>*Adherence to urban living standards</li> <li>*Access network with classic design</li> <li>*Short-term on-site designs</li> <li>Developing criteria for design</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Matching the prevailing ideas of the twentieth century with local conditions</li> <li>*Successful marketing in the housing business</li> <li>*Too much emphasis on the physical elements which are of interest to affluent social classes</li> </ul> |
| <b>Pedestrian-oriented neighborhoods or urban villages</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Lack of a sense of identity and personality in cities</li> <li>*No sense of location and neighborhood</li> <li>*Lack of reasonable housing patterns</li> </ul>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Urbanization</li> <li>*Public Welfare</li> <li>*Social Equality</li> <li>*pedestrian-oriented design</li> <li>*Attention to the local community</li> <li>*Emphasis on the rural characteristics</li> <li>*Emphasis on traditions</li> </ul>                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Classic native style</li> <li>*Hybrid functions</li> <li>*Relative density increase</li> <li>*Use of hybrid housing patterns</li> <li>*Rural Features</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Reasonable and acceptable housing pattern to physical design elements</li> </ul>   |

concept in the traditional urban system in Iran and its similar patterns in contemporary period)

As it was discussed earlier, in the traditional urban system in Iran, the neighborhoods were the result of the collective life of residents in a region of the city. The residents shared some commonalities such as ethnicity, religion, race, sect, interests, occupation, language, economics, customs and the regions had the following features : a gradual development, a relative independence and self-sufficiency in different dimensions, a solid and continuous social communication, certain physical framework with defined physical elements and a social-physical identity. The changes in the modern era and their negative effects on the structures of the cities and their components encouraged the field experts to develop new theories to improve the conditions. Analyzing all theories emerged in the contemporary era shows that using the designing principles such as access hierarchy, the provision of welfare-service-cultural services, a well-defined and optimal population and defined terms, the theorists have attempted to create an environment aligned with existing conditions. In doing so, they can not only meet the basic and essential needs of residents at the scale of the neighborhood but also provide an opportunity to increase their interactions. In other words, all theories emphasize relative socioeconomic self-sufficiency, the consolidation and cohesion of the local community, the design of a specific structure and giving an identity to the neighborhood.

What can be inferred is that contemporary patterns sought a way to revive the same characteristics and criteria of traditional neighborhoods overlooked or undermined in the era of modern industry and modern thinking in the new conditions. In other words, theorists in the new era were looking for a way to revive the old concept of neighborhood in the Iranian urban system. Therefore, it can be stated that the goal of the neighborhood is the same in all periods and geographical regions. Even though the differences in the cultures and human needs in different societies have resulted in the transformation and adaptability

of the neighborhood, its basis and characteristics have remained unchanged. Simply put, the changes in appearance and alignment of the neighborhood with different circumstances do not show any differences in the purpose of the neighborhood but rather consolidate and maintain the values of the neighborhood. What has made this concept different in the traditional Iranian system and contemporary patterns are associated with difference in the time of formation and the way of the formation.

In the traditional system, the neighborhood was gradually developed and based on the residents' desire. It was the result of a bunch of thoughts, mindsets, and desires. It had its roots in the lives of the people. In other words, because of the gradual formation and the residents' contribution, all thoughts and desires were evident in the lives the neighborhood and gave it an identity. Therefore, it can be said that history and culture are also involved in developing traditional neighborhoods and in a parallel manner influence the neighborhoods. However, the meaning of identity, history and culture are hardly reflected in new patterns. The reason is that the neighborhoods are initially designed and developed, and individuals choose the neighborhoods as a platform, depending on their needs and characteristics, the preferred option is changed when the desires change.

Also, due to the rapid formation of the neighborhood, the designer fails to take into account the concepts such as history, culture and identity, sense of place, attachment, and participation, and the designer can only provide the necessary conditions for the formation and foster the values.

### Conclusion

Based on what has been discussed, the neighborhood is a physical-semantic concept promoting a relative self-sufficiency, a cohesive social system, a specific structure and a sense of identity. The goal of the neighborhood has not changed over time and in geographical regions. The differences in cultures and human needs in different societies, changing or disrupting them over time (such as modernity period)

have brought about changes in the neighborhood to meet the requirements of time and space. In other words, the neighborhood as a living creature is organically adapted to its environmental conditions and changed accordingly. However, developing neighborhood process has created some differences between the traditional form of the neighborhood in Iran and contemporary patterns. In other words, the gradual development of the neighborhood in

the traditional Iranian system and its residents' contribution have given valuable cultural-historical meanings to the neighborhood and constructed its identity. In comparison, pre-designed contemporary patterns have sought to foster such values. This goal has sometimes been accomplished and sometimes not (Table 5).

What has been discussed so far shows how time and space play a key role in designing a desirable

Table. 5.comparative analysis between the neighborhood concept in the traditional urban system in Iran and similar patterns in contemporary period. Source: authors.

|                            | <b>Time and process of development</b>  | <b>Relative self-sufficiency</b>  | <b>Social system</b>  | <b>Physical framework</b>  | <b>Identity</b>  | <b>Results</b>  |
|----------------------------|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| traditional system in Iran | Neighborhood is gradually developed and includes residents' participation and based on the needs, culture and residents' thoughts | Relative self-sufficiency in social, economic, political, managerial, and executive fields              | *Strong, continuous, limited to neighborhood<br>*Collective life prioritized                                    | Recognizable identity signs, defined physical elements, certain boundaries | Social and physical identity of the neighborhood   | Succeeded   |
| Contemporary patterns      | Neighborhood is pre-designed and based on the wishes and projections of the designers and planners                                | Relative self-sufficiency in economic and welfare and social, political and managerial self-sufficiency | Creating a platform for social interaction and communication and promoting a community life in the neighborhood | *Chosen by planners and designers,<br>*specific elements and functions     | *Lack of basic identity<br>*Searching for a sense of identity through developing a successful social and physical system | *Sometimes successful and sometimes unsuccessful<br>*Depending on the of designs and accurate predictions |

neighborhood. Urbanization development of Iran has been inefficient because elements such as time and space have been overlooked. Moreover, nowadays' designs have been based on the contemporary patterns which has not been considered with respect to the contexts in which are being practiced. Both cultural and geographical origins of pattern have been different from those exists in the urbanization of Iran. Therefore, considering some issues such as changes in the nature of needs, new forms of urbanization and needs, differences in valuing, changes in human life and the dependence on technology and social constraints in the structure of traditional neighborhoods, it is not feasible and rational to construct neighborhoods in a completely

traditional or modern way. More importantly, it is necessary to remember that new patterns are more likely to fail if they are aligned with the conditions of the context. Now the question and the major concern of this paper is how the goals of neighborhoodism can be accomplished to reduce the above-mentioned problems?

Based on what has been discussed, it can be concluded that a proper pattern is a combination of traditional and new patterns. Such a combination helps to overcome the deficiency of the either and develop a desired pattern. In other words, the neighborhood content should be valued by its residents and encourage them to identify themselves with the neighborhood (such as the traditional pattern) and it should be presented

in a new form and in accordance with the needs and conditions and context of new age. To achieve this, the gap between the new patterns of the neighborhood and its traditional form or the difference in the process of development should be eliminated.

In addition to preserving the main positive characteristics of today's neighborhoods, it is necessary to change the process of the neighborhoods development in different ways: In addition to preserving the main positive characteristics of today's neighborhoods, it is possible to change the situation in the process of the formation of neighborhoods in different ways, such as involving residents in constructing the neighborhood and encouraging their participation, using cultural, physical, social and economic patterns and structures, and the gradual introduction of shortcomings and new requirements. All these elements can promote a sense of identity values, discourage adopting new patterns and reinforce the restoration of traditional neighborhoods in the modern frame, thereby achieving the goal of suitable neighborhoodism. There are, of course, many other ways of instilling these values. The author hopes this research will serve as a base for future studies on fostering such values.

### Endnote

1. In Iranian urban literature, neighborhood or Mahalleh (in Persian) is semantically similar to the "neighborhood unit" even though it is different from it in some aspects. This article is an attempt to shed light on such differences and these two terms are not interchangeably used.
2. It refers to one of Shi'a religious place which is used for holding mourning ceremonies for Imam Hussein.

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