

Organizing Informal Residential by Use of Empowering Method (Case Study: Yasuj City- Besenjan)

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Abstract

Informal accommodation is one of the undesirable results of urbanism in current world. It has been especially formed as a result of fast industrialization and regional inequalities. It has also caused many problems for cities and mass cities. We should not ignore this matter and should not respond it partially, selectively and sporadically. Appearance of informal accommodation represents existence of structural barriers and inefficiency of current policies in supplying residential, and corresponding servicing for low income citizens in macro level. In micro level, also, lack of urban management, illegal resources of stockholders and illegal behaviors in accepting and rejecting these settlements intensify the problem. To organize and empower them, precise and proper planning is necessary. Yasuj, being centre of Kohgiluyeh & Boyer-Ahmad province, is one of the cities which it has faced many changes especially from 2001s on because of construction of informal settlements under the influence of social, economic system. The main objectives of this article are to recognize the procedure of formation of social- economic peculiarities of the informal settlements in Yasuj as a whole and in Besenjan district as a part, and also to present and codify planning in order to organize and empower it.

Keywords: Yasuj, Empowering, Organizing, Informal Settlement, Besenjan District.

Introduction

Nowadays, millions of people around the world, especially in developing countries, are living in unauthorized, messy settlements; and also they are living in a bad economic, social and environmental conditions. England, a hundred years ago, referred to slums in England, and he thought of the industrial revolution as a cause of these slums existence. In 1996, about 25 percent of population lacks a home in dignity of human life (Mohammadi, 2008). Abrams (1946) believe that the attempts of urban areas to provide shelter and housing are cause of illegal settlements and defined it by the law of coercion and legal coercion. Turner (1969) has a positive view regarding such settlements and refers them as a successful solution to the housing problems of

urban areas in developing countries (Hadizadeh, 2003). Basically, lack of management has led lack of certain responsive organization or principal to lead city in the dimension of implementation and management (Pourahmad et. al., 2010). The evaluation patterns of residential environment can be effective in identification of strengths and weaknesses in the current condition and in awareness of strengths and weaknesses (Rafieian, 2009). Informal settlement in Iran, which started about the year 1941 in Iran and grew sharply till 1971 (Hataminezhad and Zomorodian, 2002), was influenced by issues such as Land Reforms and rise of oil prices causing rapid and enormous changes in the development of cities. It also caused rural migration to the cities. Yasouj city is among the medium- sized cities of Iran that is subject to

instability due to the vast migrations and the extreme weakness of immigrants' economic status. One of the sectors of Yasuj that it would be more reflective of the aforementioned issue is Besenjan district. In this article, the main reasons for the formation of informal settlements instability in Yasuj will be investigated with emphasis on Besenjan. Then, after pathological investigation of the current condition, some recommendations will be developed regarding empowerment strategy for improvement and regulation of conditions in all aspects of the physical, social, economic, environmental and etc.

Research Significance

Indifference to rapid changes in the composition of urban and rural populations and neglect in dealing with this trend caused a rapid expansion of informal settlements in big cities, and provided residents property right and the right of residence, which can lead to some special social effects (Piri, 2011). Though, Yasuj is not one of the metropolitan cities, the massive immigration to it causes abnormal and informal settlements; and its urban development has emerged as a major issue unstable and it needs reforming programs, especially organizing and empowerment is inevitable.

Research Objectives

This study aims to organize informal settlements of Besenjan district in Yasouj by the empowerment approach. In the context of this overall objective, the following sub-objectives will be considered to achieve the intended purpose of the study:

- Investigating peculiarities of enabling approach in improving the urban environments of informal settlements aspects;
- Investigating the Besenjan district weaknesses in terms of physical, social, cultural, economic

and environmental aspects;

- Investigating the strength points of Besenjan district in terms of physical, social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects;
- Identifying the possible threats in the under-studying district in terms of physical, social, cultural, and economic environment aspects;
 - Identifying current opportunities in Besenjan district to use the empowerment approach in various fields;
- The developing appropriate strategies to empower Bnsnjan district with the use of SWOT technique.

Research Methodology

This study is of the type of descriptive-analytical and benefits from survey documentary method. Documentary studies include studying current resources about informal settlements and empowerment strategies as well as research reports and projects about Yasouj and Besenjan district. Survey and field studies include questionnaires, interviews and observations of the physical, socio - economic condition of Besenjan district. The subjects of this research include informal settlement of Yasuj that were chosen according to the scope of the research topic with a population of about 3915 people (1385). Then, using a Kokran formula, 50 households were chosen to be given questionnaires and interviews. Afterwards, coding and creating a database in the SPSS software were done. To analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the Besenjan district, SWOT technique was used.

Conceptual and theoretical foundations

The word empowerment in social, cultural and political contexts, has different meanings including control, power of self-reliant, self reliant, selection, decent life in accordance with ones values, challenges and coping capacity to obtain ones rights, freedom, knowledge and

ability, which are located within the value systems of societies. However, the World Bank made an official definition of this term as: Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of the poor people to participate, negotiate, influence, control and maintain responsible institutions that influence their lives (Narayan, 2002: 13-14). In other words, strengthening the ability of deprived groups is to use formal processes and structures in order to access resources, services and opportunities (Asian Development Bank, 2010). Empowerment approach which was used with increased urbanization and informal settlement in the mid-1980s, considered the problem of informal settlements in the context of a more comprehensive approach to housing provision in the sense that the provision of housing for the majority of the urban population was to meet credit and financial resources, basic infrastructure and services and to recognize the possession and ownership of them. Empowerment, from this point of view, is not the mere use of the state treasury but is creating the field of utilization local resources and communities to improve their economic and social status. This approach relies on the view of poverty alleviation and human-centered sustainable development based on citizen participation and urban management (Friedmann, 1992). At the same time, empowerment must lead to the emergence of leadership among local communities. (Pal, 2008).

Successful efforts to empower poor people have led to an increase in their freedom of choice and action in different areas. Access to information, participation and inclusion, responsibility and local organizational capacity are four elements of a common approach to empowerment (Narayan, 2002).

Participation and inclusion: One of the key elements of the empowerment approach is participation of the poor in the policy and

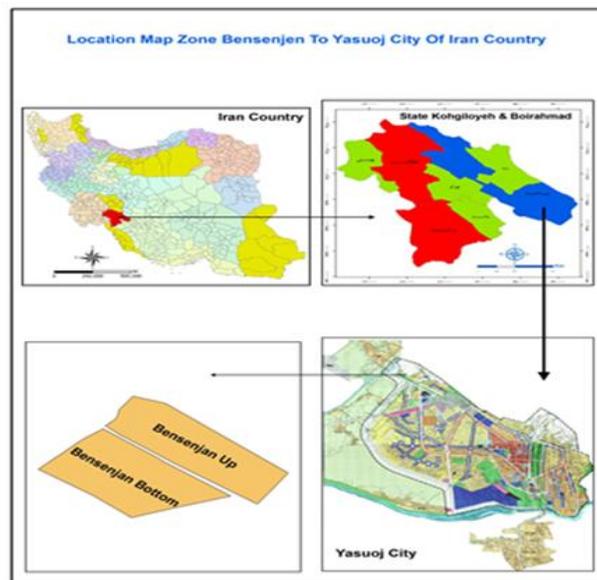
decision-making in organic urban areas. This participation is formed based on bilateral dialogue, and a citizen gives identity to ones habitat by obtaining identity through this dialogue thus causes ones entrance into the public sphere (Khazraei, 2002). The followers of the Frankfurt's school of thought and critical thinking believe that this area is heavily dominated by instrumental rationality, modern objectification and positive sciences, has been declining. Thus, it has provided a basis for deconstruction and reason of postmodern thinkers like Jack Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean-Francois Lyotard, David Harvey, McCarthy and others. Instrumental-strategic rationalism in the views of Foucault and Habermas is reasoning that its objective and success is in the exercising much more effective domination over nature and human (Haghighi, 2004).

The poor citizens participation in the urban poverty colonies and in margins isolated from the city can cause lead to verbal communication, entrance to the public domain, cross-cultural understanding and perception. Empowerment approach looks at the poor people as mass producers who have the ability to control their decisions and minimal resources, especially financial resources. And a citizen can give identity to his residence through this conversation (Khazraei, 2002). Sustainable participation of the poor in societies with strong norms of deprivation or multi-ethnic societies with a history of conflicts is a complex process that requires new mechanisms, resources, facilities, continuous preparation and trial and error. Their participation could be in the forms of the representative of the groups and associations, elected political representatives, information – basis and or participation on the basis of competitive market mechanisms (Narayan, 2002).

Introduction of the area under study

Based on the political divisions, Yasuj city is the centre of Kohgiluyeh & Boyerahmad Province and the center of Boyerahmad County, and it is located in central zone, northern Sarrood district. From the natural views, it is located between the Beshar River in the South and Mehrian River in West and Dena Mountains in the North and East. Yaouj city is located in 30 degrees 28 minutes of north latitude and 51 degrees and 36 minutes of east longitude from the Greenwich meridian and has an area of 1801 hectares. Yasuj is limited to Zagros Mountains from the North and East, to Beshar River and villages of Akbarabad and

Najafabad in the South, to Industrial Park and the village of Bluko from the Southwest, and to Mehrian River and villages of Mehrian, upper, middle and lower Sharafabad from the West and North West. From Physical Divisions, Bensenjan District is located in the area 4 of Detailed Design of Yasuj city. In 2008, the total area of Bensenjan was 117 hectares that included all areas of residential, commercial, green space and so on. And it was devoted 22% to roads, 10% to residential areas, 19% to the bare land, 7/21 to the land, 7% to garden and agricultural land and the rest to the civil service.



Findings

SWOT Analysis Model and Its Application in Empowering Informal Settlements

SWOT technique is an analytical and strategic planning tool which is often used in participatory planning. SWOT analytical outputs can organize basic information and give a general understanding of reality and provide a set of common strategic ways. Two main elements of SWOT are:

A: indices of internal condition shown by the current strengths and weaknesses points. A

strong point is referred to any known internal assets, technology, motivation and morale of activities, job and financial communications and so forth, which it can be helpful in the area of creating opportunities and reducing. And it is a weakness, internal conditions or any kind of the internal defects that endangers the competitive position of the region, or faces the creation of opportunities with some difficulties.

(B) External environmental indices recognized with ignored by undiscovered existing threats and opportunities. An opportunity can be any condition or characteristic of the external

environment that supports the competitive advantage of the region; and a threat is a challenge to inappropriate behavior or any type of external conditions that might adversely affect the condition of the area (Luvic, 2003).

SW_s (strengths-weaknesses) and OT_s (opportunities - threats) Analyses give the formation of primary objectives, strategy for development and a preliminary action ranking that facilitates achieving short-term, medium-term and long-term goals.

SWOT analysis method is used at least in three ways in making decisions about the corresponding strategy:

- A. The most common application of SWOT is to provide a logical framework to guide situations, different strategies and, ultimately, the choice of strategy systematically.
- B. The second application of this method is to compare the external key opportunities and threats to strengths and weaknesses systematically in a structured approach.
- C. The third implication of SWOT analysis method is to extend analysis to all aspects of the position and consequently to provides a dynamic and efficient framework to choose strategy.

In implementing SO_s (strengths and opportunities), the aim is to use opportunities, existing outside of the set but related to it, by using the internal strengths. The aim of Strategies aimed WO_s (weaknesses and opportunities) strategies is to reduce internal weaknesses by using current opportunities being outside of the set. In implementing ST_s (strengths and threats), the aim is to prevent the effects of existing threat by using internal strengths. The objective of WT_s strategy (internal weaknesses and threats) is to minimize

internal weaknesses and avoiding threats from the external environment, because internal weaknesses and so many external threats create a too risky position. When the programmer uses the matrix of threats, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses, the important thing is to use those very specific strategies rather than general or public strategies (Sahraian, 2003).

- The analysis of the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats of the informal settlement of Bensenjan in the comprehensive investigations of internal and external environment of Bensenjan District, being mainly in the form of field observations, interviews with people, obtaining experts' views and questionnaires, are collected strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats that are presented in two parts according to SWOT technique: internal factors including strengths and weaknesses, and external factors including threats and opportunities.

A. Internal Factors

Strengths points of the physical structure: from the macro-analysis of data collected in the strengths points of physical structure of Bensenjan District, we can mention durability of buildings, use of building materials like brick and iron in the construction of many houses, the existence of basic infrastructure and services such as water systems, electricity, telephone, street, location of this District within the city boundary, land ownership and housing based on accepted local and customary contracts.

Social and cultural structure: the sense of participation among people, a young population and relatively educated jobseekers, local institutions and leaders, the women's local organizations, the formation of neighborhood and close relationships, sense of confidence in neighborhoods to each other, a sense of security and social cohesion, a sense of hope and

belonging to the place, manpower, the tendency to use public education and using capabilities of human resource in the social and cultural domain.

Economic structure: the traditional way of organizing informal working force, ready to work in hard jobs, motivating in legal money making, willingness to employment even in very low social jobs;

The environmental structure: presence of appropriate natural slopes in the region to conduct surface water, suitable place for constructing of sewerage network, traditional sewerage networks and possibility of making it improved are among the strength points of this District environment in the field of natural environment.

Weakness Points

Physical structure: old infrastructures of water and sewage networks, not suitable coverage for thoroughfares of alleys, lack of proper access to water network and sewage network despite of infrastructure networks, lack of convenient access to recreational spaces and lack of appropriate local park, severe lack of centers public services (education, health, cultural, etc.) and the lack of serious efforts in the city planning authorities to improve the physical structure, including weakness points of the region in the structural section.

Social and cultural structure: high rate of population growth and fertility, high rate of illiteracy and low educational levels of illiteracy, high rate of dropout, large family size and lack of health educations and family control, low level of urbanism culture and citizenship and sustainability of rural culture are among the characteristics of this District as social and cultural weaknesses points.

Economic structure: the lack of local work force and lack of expertise, job innovation at the District level, and employment of the employee population in social low level jobs, employment in the informal sector, the low legal age of work force, weak financial status of people, low wages and purchasing power, economic inappropriateness of the urban economy and lack of activity in the proper productive works are among the economic weaknesses of this District.

Natural Environment Structure: poor sanitation, surface sewages, the lack of water disposal system, lack of sewage disposal wells, improper disposal of wastewater by means of open channel, low transmission capacity of channels of urban sewage and surface water are among serious weaknesses of the under-study District.

B. External Factors

Existing Treats

Physical structure: severe lack of public and open spaces, disobeying agent of democratic planning of open spaces, mixed neighborhood units, non logistic, barren and empty spaces, and mass residential units without technical criteria are among physical threats to this region.

Social and cultural structure: dropout student population of the areas, especially boys, increasing social malformations, young people's lack of access to leisure, high immigrant population and the problems caused by their presence are among serious threats that govern the social and cultural structure of the District.

Economic structure: increasing growth of unemployment rate of young people in the District, increase in the harmful social informality, lack of professional and technical learning activities, children and adolescents working in the activities of waste and bread

collection, very high rate of unemployment among very active population in the District are among economic threats of this District.

Environmental structure: release of domestic sewage in some public places, an increase of infectious diseases, lack of sewage disposal wells, lack of parks, proximity of incompatible land uses can be considered as environmental threats of the area.

Opportunities

Physical structure: the tendency of urban management institutions to organize the District, public attention at the national level to solve the structural problem of urban informal settlements and support of specialized committee of informal settlement to this subject, adjacency to Friday market, possibility of setting up local markets and supplying domestic and handmade products, the possibility of organizing non-compatible land uses, possibility of property seizures due to low rate of urban land prices, the possibility of using vacant capacity on the other hand, i.e., selling the city and limiting space, the possibility of establishing specific areas of business are among the physical opportunities existing in Bensenjan District for empowerment.

Cultural and social structure: helps of international organizations to social and economic empowerment activities, public sector support of cultural activities, activities of governmental and nongovernmental organizations to educate the population, the possibility of collective learning religious beliefs

and values and avoidance of and reluctance to serious crime, possibility of the use of unity assets between different groups, the high value of family as a fundamental pillar of social order, required ground for wide acculturation are among useful tips and good opportunities for empowerment.

Economic structure: government support for the establishment of funds in loans, existence of free education workshops of employment, official identification and loans from government, possibility of training facilities in order to make money because of the young labor force, the possibility to repay the loan, the possibility of local establishment of funds in loans and aggregate revenue, the possibility of forming local self-help small-scale cooperatives, capability of supplying handicrafts in specific areas of business, collective family economic power and possibility of organizing and possibility of using the District ready workforce in organizing and empowering activities are also among existing opportunities in the economic ground.

Environmental infrastructure: the plan of constructing sewage networks by urban management, choosing the District as a district to implement Healthy City Project, free education of personal and environmental hygiene also imply environmental opportunities of the District. By identifying weaknesses, strengths, opportunities and threats, the final matrix to select appropriate strategies for organizing informal settlements of this District has been established.

Table1. Empowerment analysis of Bensenjan District based on SWOT model

		Settlements	Relationship
External factors	(Strengths)	The willingness of urban management institutions to organize the District Government attention to the issue of organizing informal settlements Public libraries and cultural centers Support of international organizations to empowerment activities Capability of supplying handicrafts in the areas specific to business Possibility of establishing local small-scale cooperatives Government support for the establishment of the local funds Plan of constructing the sewage networks by urban management Choosing this District as a place for implementing Healthy City Project	Low cost of organizing and empowerment The possibility of using the potential of labor force Improving social capital Utilizing the capabilities of women Appropriate physical designing and planning Using the idea of home economy Poverty and low income Neighborhood disputes Failure to pay governmental loans
	(W) (weaknesses)	High density of people and households per dwelling High rates of population growth and women fertility Lack of local expertise among employees in the District Weak economic foundation of families	Poverty and low income Neighborhood disputes Failure to pay governmental loans
External factors	Opportunities (o)	The willingness of urban management institutions to organize the District Government attention to the issue of organizing informal settlements Public libraries and cultural centers Support of international organizations to empowerment activities Capability of supplying handicrafts in the areas specific to business Possibility of establishing local small-scale cooperatives	Possibility of resolving the legal problem Promotion of regional culture Formation of the spirit of cooperation Promotion of public health Possibility of recognizing as a legal entity

		Government support for the establishment of the local funds Plan of constructing the sewage networks by urban management Choosing this District as a place for implementing Healthy City Project	
	Threats (T)	Improper planning and designing of open spaces Mass housing units without technical principles Lack of the youth's access to locations appropriate for spending leisure High unemployment rate Increase of social crimes because of false jobs Adjacency of incompatible land uses Environment poor sanitation and inadequate sewage disposal	Increase in number of organizing problems Insecurity of residents in public places Formation of boudoir and possibility of delinquency False jobs and social offenses Social insecurity High costs of physical designing Prevalence of infectious and parasitic diseases

Source: results of field study done by authors

Conclusion

Informal settlement is of the negative consequences of urbanization in the contemporary world, which is especially formed as a result of rapid industrialization and regional disparities. It faces cities and especially metropolises with numerous problems. This study, in addition to investigating settlement and its formation in Yasuj (Bnsnjan District), provides some guidelines to organize and empower it.

Favorable natural position and being crossroad in the one hand and the presence of numerous villages around the city on the other hand, has

caused Yasuj to have significant physical and population growth in the last two decades. In this respect, the excessive extension of Yasuj has caused many problems in the field of sustainable development. Regarding informal settlements of Yasuj, although the advent time of these settlements is before the Revolution in Iran, these areas have been recognized as part of city and urban services over time and because of being in the boundaries of comprehensive plan of the city. Now, based on Yasuj municipal documents in 2012, there are informal settlement in 5 points in city. According to statistical investigations and the authors' researches, a majority of the residents of

these settlements are in an average to low economic condition.

From physical perspective, informal settlements in the city of Yasuj are not suitable. So that, based on the author's studies, settlement whole area of the majority of households is less than 150 m². Despite these districts are not being much old, the quality of most buildings are repairing or destructing. In terms of types of building materials, nearly 50 percent of the houses are made of cement blocks. Also, more than 75 percent of the buildings have no resisting structures. Hence, they are vulnerable to natural disasters. Other physical problems of these districts are poor quality of roads, lack of asphalt coverage, no canals for waste waters, the poor quality of buildings and the rural context. So that this conditions of Bensenjan district seem to more than any other condition of informal settlements in Yasuj.

Based on the investigations done about the informal settlements of Yasuj, we came to this conclusion that residents of informal settlements in Yasuj, though have better living conditions and urban services than some of other developing countries and even than some cities of Iran, these settlements face numerous problems in terms of economic, physical and environmental problems.

Bensenjan district is facing with salient shortages in terms of facilities and urban convenience including sanitary services, commercial, green space, and sport. A variety of environmental problems such as inadequate sewage disposal and dust conditions can be observed.

Based on the results obtained from interviews with residents of Bnsnjan, the most significant problem of this under study District are economic factors (unemployment among youth and low-income residents). And then, respectively, physical and environmental problems were mentioned. Overall, more than 50 percent of the residents of these

settlements were not satisfied from these places. And they said that, if possible, they would leave their homes. Lack of amenities, too crowded district, poor sanitary conditions are mentioned as main reason for leaving their settlements by interviewees. In the absence of control of this District, more people will come to this settlement in the future. Thus, considering the above mentioned issues, the most appropriate time to stop the spread of informal settlements is organizing this District.

Due to numerous problems in the District of informal settlements, more than 90 percent of informal settlements population was ready to public participation in order to solve the problems of their living place. In contrast, residents of the settlements pointed to the weak role of organizations and urban authorities to manage and solve the problem of these settlements.

Recommendations

- Identifying capabilities of Bensenjan district and enabling capabilities of city residents
- Increasing coordination between the institutions of urban management to form leading headquarters and sector planning.
- Forming empowerment headquarters and organization of urban poverty in Yasuj
- Preparing organizing and empowering designs for residents of informal settlements
- Revising comprehensive and detailed plans and determining social justice in them
- Determining the role and functions of institutions involved in organizing and empowering informal settlements in the Bensenjan district
- Organizing the informal sector of economy, and creating jobs for the residents of the informal settlements

- Trying to improve the level of urban services in this area to the average level of city services
- Developing regulations to prevent the spread of urban poor districts
- Providing resistant housing of districts under special regulations of housing, and retrofitting housing of the poor's districts under optimal patterns of housing based on the needs of residents
- Promoting health level and environmental condition of Bensenjan district

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