
Towards revitalizing urban life through urban regeneration in historical context: case study inner core of Kermanshah city in Iran

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Abstract

Since the recent decades, Historic Urban Quarters have emerged as a focus of many regeneration efforts. Clearly these important areas of city have their specific identity and character but mostly they lost their viability. Like other countries, many big cities in Iran have a historical and traditional background and their old tissues are valuable. The problems of these sites, based on different angles of urban life, could be summarized as disorder of the built environment, natural environment and socio-economic environment. In this regard, the main goal of this survey is to propose design policies for Inner core of Kermanshah City as the case study through a new strategic framework. Therefore, in this paper, firstly, we will study concepts and definitions of urban regeneration and proposed principles of urban task force group in order to have more liveable design. Then by applying SWOT technique we will analyze the existing situation of the case.

Key Words: Urban Regeneration, Urban Task Force (Group), SWOT Analysis, Kermanshah City.

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that historical inner cores have a special place in the history of cities. They are assumed as the initial part of the city formation. As they are coherent

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entities, they could clearly be identified by their traditional values which make historic context worthy of conservation. Recently these contexts have lost their vitality due to people immigration as the main reason. Cities are going to be vacant from inner cores that results new development in countryside. In this sense, urban planners and designers focus on inner cores of cities more than before to find some new solutions. Urban regeneration was one of their latest answers to these contexts' problem which has started since 1926 (Habibi, 1994) in Iran. Various assessments of historic contexts reveal that this urban intervention was not successful in most Iranian cities. Inner core of Kermanshah City in Iran is one of these contexts that is under the process of regeneration but has encountered many problems in different aspects of urban life (Kalhornia, 2001). Hence, it can be stated that there was not an integrated vision toward different dimensions of urban regeneration and lack of comprehensive evaluation of the specific site is perceptible so that it was not possible to identify the potentials and weaknesses. On the other hand, planners did not have any strategic framework to define design policies for prospective redevelopment.

Thus, this paper aims to suggest design policies that are going to be propounded through a new strategic framework. These policies will be proposed to bring vitality back to the context's urban life. This approach might be generalized to be applied in other historical fabrics in Iran. In this regard, the first concept to be explored is urban regeneration in Inner Core of Kermanshah. Then, some factors of successful urban regeneration will be followed; also there would be an analysis of Inner Core of the case by SWOT technique. At last it will conclude in some design policies for Inner Core of Kermanshah City through a strategic framework.

2. Urban Regeneration in inner core of Kermanshah

The historic environment is a broad term that is open to individual and varied interpretations. It is the product of human interaction with nature simultaneously. It is made up of a variety of individual assets, including historic buildings and structures, ruins, landscapes, parks and gardens, and scenes of historic events, in particular battlefields. It is also an asset of enormous cultural, social, economic and environmental value (Historic environment, 2011). The location of the historic features in the landscape and the patterns of past use and activity are also part of the historic environment. Everywhere whether rural or urban, has a historic dimension that contributes to its quality and character (Historic Environment SPD, 2010). Furthermore, historical context can be considered as a compound structure while relying on commitment with physical remains also on emotional and aesthetic responses and on the power of memory, history and association (Graham, Mason,

Newman, 2009) which are lost through ages and suppose to be revived in the process of urban regeneration.

Urban regeneration is a comprehensive and integrated vision and action that leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been, or is, subject to change (Roberts and Sykes, 2000; Gullino, 2009). The concept of urban regeneration has changed over the time, from depressed area reconstruction to community redevelopment and further to the downtown regeneration (Chang and Chen, 2011).

Besides, successful urban regeneration retains the aesthetic, cultural, and historical values embedded in the local built environment, and maintains urban viability and community coherence (Orbasli, 2000; Larkham, 1996). Also physical and social space should be linked with time in a new way in order to respond to new senses and sensibilities of our time (Montañola, 2008) which is ignored currently in many urban regeneration projects in Iran.

It could be noted that the process of urban regeneration as a latest approach of urban intervention in which many countries like Iran are involved, was conducted in order to revitalize the historic setting. Many big cities in Iran have a historical and traditional background and their old tissues are valuable. A large part of these tissues in contemporary period have become undesirable and inefficient spaces and in some cases there are lacks of economical and social values. For enhancing quality of life in this context and conservation of valuable parts in this area some urban interventions have begun since 1926 (Habibi, 1994) but without considering real needs and socio-cultural characteristics. Accordingly the valuable part of history and collective memory of the community in the neighborhood might be eliminated gradually. Inner core of Kermanshah city is one of these contexts that has still been under regeneration process but encountered many problems based on different aspects of urban life. As a result, we need to apply a holistic view which can solve these problems in historical context in Iran and especially in Kermanshah.

2.1. Introducing Historical part of Kermanshah City

Kermanshah city is one of the oldest urban centers of Zagros with its unique geographical position in the western border of Iran (Figure 1). The city is sited in a rich historic region where the mankind settled in about ten to twelve thousand years ago.



Figure 1: Kermanshah city is located in west of Iran and is one of the historic cities in Iran- <http://www.google.com>



Figure 2: Inner core of Kermanshah- <http://www.google earth.com>



Figure 3: Morphology of the context <http://www.google earth.com>



Figure 4. Old bazaar <http://www.google.com>



Figure 5: A renovated historic building in the context <http://www.google.com>

Faiz Abad District (Figure 2 and 3) as the Inner Core of Kermanshah has a historical background and is considered as the initial core components of the city. It is the area of 64/32 acre (12% of historical core of 285-acre Kermanshah City) with a population of nearly 5,600 and is located in the old city in the Northeast of the old Bazaar (Figure 4) (Eftekhari Rad, 2001). In this context, there are houses which their history goes back to 100 to 150 years ago (Figure 5 and 6).

In the past, the old town of Feiz Abad District was one of the significant ones in the city where affluent people were living. It was the first and immediate residential neighborhood next to the bazaar.



Figure 6. Museum of calligraphy (historic house) <http://www.google.com>

The first approaches of historical context regeneration of Kermanshah were formed in 1967 through a survey in Durham University (Kalhornia, 2001). In 1982 city planners emphasized on urban regeneration in city master plan

and in 1997 the first steps in this way has begun (Kalhornia, 2001). In spite of conducted interventions, analyzing the current situation of this area clarified that there is no signs of historic urban life. Feiz Abad District has faced series problems which necessitated finding solutions to prevent further destruction.

Some those problems are as following (Kalhornia, 2001):

1. Living low-income people in these sites (disorder of the economical setting) (Figure 7)
2. Lack of quality in buildings (disorder of the physical setting) (Figure 8).
3. Lack of urban public services, equipments and facilities (disorder of the land use and density) (Figure 9)
4. Lack of appropriate access (disorder of the transportation setting) (Figure 10).
5. The inconsistency in the Urban Landscape (disorder of the urban landscape) (Figure 11)
6. Massive migration of population of these sites which leads to some social problems (Disorder of the social setting) (Figure 12).

Accordingly, it could be said that in historical context of Kermanshah, there were no comprehensive urban design principles to be followed in the process of urban regeneration in order to make it vital again. Therefore, this research is looking for some new concepts to revitalize urban life in this context.



Figure 7: Lack of public space and facilities for children and elderly- Authors' Archive.



Figure 8: An old house with low quality- Authors' Archive



Figure 9: Tarikeh bazaar. Authors' Archive



Figure 10. Low quality of pedestrian ways and not proper accessibility into the context in urgent time – Authors' Archive.



Figure 11. Ruins due to new constructed street .Authors' Archive



Figure 12: New constructed bazaar near the Tarikeh bazaar which is not welcome for people. Authors' archive

3. Defining Successful Urban Regeneration

In recent years many of our urban areas have been affected by being neglected and declined due to people immigration from inner cities, caused by a lack of quality and amenity in an unhealthy environment, and deprived housing. One of the main challenges of planners these days is to make multifunctional cities not just for living, but also as centers for human activities. There should be multidimensional solutions based on the integration of great design concepts, economic opportunities, environmental responsibilities, and social welfare.

Achieving a successful urban regeneration is not only about numbers and percentages. It is about creating the quality of life and vitality that makes urban living desirable. To stem a long period of decline and decay, some changes should be considered in urban attitudes so that towns and cities once again become attractive places in which to live, work and socialize. But to be successful, regeneration also has to be placed within its economic and social context which is totally neglected in our site (Urban task force, 2005). This negligence has caused many problems in the context as lack of livability, despite of being under the process of regeneration. Also based on previous literature, urban task force was one of the groups that are looking for concepts to create livable spaces. Hence, this research focuses on the principles of mentioned group in order to revitalize urban life in this historic fabric.

Entirely, it seems essential that through the design concepts by urban task force, designers and urban planners especially in historical contexts in Iran, compound policies, powers and resources. These

actions will be done to achieve an integrated approach in responding the needs of urban societies.

Urban task force group has developed a framework of design principles for creating more livable places for urban regeneration. These principles can provide us with a set of ground rules for starting to think about a site or area in order to regenerate urban setting. These principles are as follows (Urban Task Force, 2005).

1. *Site and Character*: Design proposals should recognize that each location is different and the layout of a development site must recognize its social and physical context. Also design should respect local traditions and relationships
2. *Public Realm*: Design should create a hierarchy of public spaces.
3. *Access and Permeability*: Designing a user-friendly public realm by caring about pedestrians, cyclists and public transportation.
4. *Optimizing land use and density along with Mixing activities*: Diversity of activity should be encouraged; design potential of vacant lands should be optimized by intensifying development.
5. *Mixing Tenure*: Design should avoid single housing tenure and should offer a wide choice of tenure options at urban block.
6. *Sustainable Design*: Buildings, Landscape and public spaces should be designed to high standards to be durable over generations.
7. *Environmental responsibility*: Development projects should be as compact as possible and should enhance the environment.

4. Research Methodology

We selected a case study approach for our research since it allowed us for an in-depth understanding of revitalizing urban life in historical context (Yin, 2003). We conducted our research and study in the Kermanshah city in Iran, as we were able to have a very good and sustained access to data.

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with local residents about their problems and needs as well as with some consultants who have experiments in

revitalizing historical context particularly in this site. Before the interviews, an interview protocol as interview guideline was developed which showed the points that had to be explored (McCracken, 1988). During interviews, validity of collected data was checked. In addition of interviews, site visiting to observe what was going on, was one of an excellent source of data collections for this research. We collected archival relevant documents like technical plans, projects reports, annual reports and so forth which were in municipality and consulting firms worked on different projects in this site. These archival documents and additional sources of data enabled us to have triangulation of evidence (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Also, they help us prepare our interview protocol and questions. It was possible to use these documents to enhance memories of people about the site and what had happened.

In analyzing the data, we used content analysis of the interview and documents. Subsequently, cross-tabulation was used in order to show the results of our analysis (please see Table 3).

5. Analysis of historical core of Kermanshah through SWOT

Based on the concept of urban regeneration in historic fabric, this is clear that it is a process which has a comprehensive vision to urban problems and their resolutions in built environment, natural environment and socio-economic environment. Hence, it can be stated that only through employment of organized planning approaches would it be possible to develop an understanding and vision across a whole range of built, natural and socio-economic environment. The underlying intention of systematic approach is to identify what is valuable in a historic urban quarter, qualities that should be protected and enhanced; and along with identifying these, to determine where negative factors could be removed or mitigated and to recognize where the opportunities for enhancement lie (Doratli et al, 2004).

Burton et al.(2002) state that the popular SWOT model (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) forms the basis for virtually all formalized strategy formulation processes. According to different authors, the objective of SWOT is to recommend strategies that ensure best alignment between the external environment (of threats and opportunities in an environment) and the internal situation of strengths and weaknesses in an organization (Hax and Majluf, 1996; Hill and Jones, 1992). Therefore, SWOT analysis can be considered as a useful tool for approaching regeneration of historic urban quarters.

This paper considers the SWOT which was utilized by Moughtin (Table1) for environmental assessment and also explores the site's problems based on SWOT method (mentioned in Table 2).

Table1: SWOT analysis of Maughtin (Cuesta, 1999)

| | <i>Strengths</i> | <i>Weakness</i> | <i>Opportunities</i> | <i>Threats</i> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| <i>Built Environment</i> | | | | |
| <i>Natural Environment</i> | | | | |
| <i>Socio-Economic Environment</i> | | | | |

The forthcoming SWOT analysis (Table 2) is developed based on Maughtin's approach (Table 1) and the mentioned site problems (Physical Disorder, Social Disorder, Environmental Disorder, Transportation and accessibility Disorder, Land use and Economical Disorder). This SWOT analysis covers detailed criteria for specific area. In order to evaluate our site and context and also its external environment, we use this technique (Table 2) to analyze the weakness and strengths of our context (Inner Core of Kermanshah) and existing opportunities and threats around it (Chase, 2001).

Table 2: SWOT Analysis for Inner Core of Kermanshah City, Developed by Authors, 2013

| | | Strengths | Weaknesses | Opportunities | Threats |
|----------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| Built Environment | Land use (Figure 13) | Existence of bazaar and mosque Being some rehabilitated historical building | The lack of Entertainment cultural spaces. The lack of welfare services for dwellers | The chance of using ground floor spaces of buildings (specially for pedestrian in commercial street) Restructuring and diversification in the application of traditional bazaar | Destroying of residential context by modern commercial buildings Changing vacant space into parking space. |
| | Physical Form (Figure 14) | Organic formation of the context Considering environmental principals in local architecture Harmony in roof shapes Uniting materials and colors Considering sky lines in local design | Unbalance between void and solid Creating infill architecture incompatible with the historical context Physical demolition | Protecting historical value by renovating historical heritage The chance of creating new architecture based on contextual identity | New architecture that will destroy sky line in the future New architecture will deprave the historic identity of the context. |
| | Transportation/Accessibility (Figure 15) | Formation of the old streets in organic form and by considering the density and climate of area. Hierarchical system of accessibility Existence of "Sabat" as a climatic shelter | Low quality of roads Not caring about elderly and disable people Lack of designed space as parking(on-street, off-street) Impossible access of vehicles in urgent time into the core of context Lack of legibility in the system | Protecting historical value by renovating historical heritage Defining local mixed use (Tarike Bazaar) as a livable passage Enhancing the quality of historic path (Hakim Nasir) inside the context. | New design street will cause the unlimited access of vehicles into the site Recent constructed streets and path are interfering with traditional structure of the context |
| Natural Environment | Environmental (Figure 16) | Existence of old trees Block development according to use the optimal environmental energies | lack of designed landscape Vacant lands inside the context is the place for garbage Existence of traffic and pollution along the context edges. | Connection of green areas with activities Designing local points in vacant lands. Defining a guidance system to guide polluted water | Demolishing of green areas in process of new development The process of demolishing and new designs will cause crowda and pollution |
| Socio-Economic Environment | Social | Acceptable social interaction due to a location of historical context | Not having mix users Occupation of low income residence | Promoting social interactions Enhancing the security inside the context especially for children and elderly | Increasing antisocial behavior Immigration due to lack of welfare services |
| | Economical | Existence of old bazaar and some historical houses Existence of Historical monuments | The disharmonic ombination of economical Activities | Old bazaar restoration Combination of cultural-historical and economical structure To highlight historical elements to attract tourists | Deteriorating of old bazaar People immigration will cause problems in economic cycle of the context |



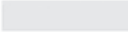
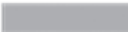


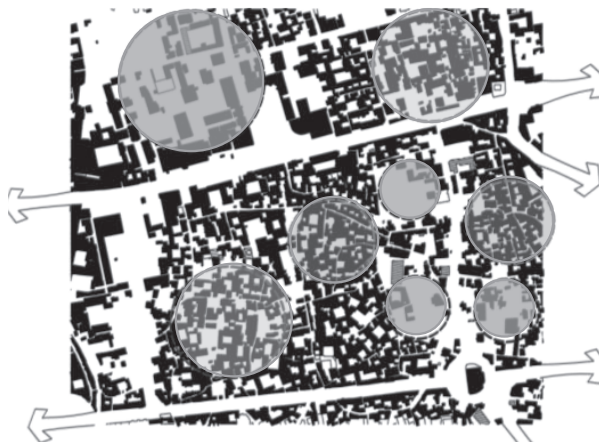
-  Residential zone
-  The historic building
-  The historic building with administrative user
-  Commercial zone (bazaar)

Figure 13. Land use Analysis, Municipality of Kermanshah-Graphic analyze by Authors






-  Void and ruins spaces due to new interventions
-  The high density part of context
-  Balance between mass and void

Figure 14. Physical analysis, Municipality of Kermanshah-Graphic analyze by Authors

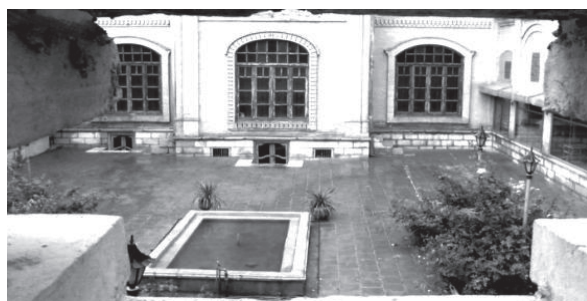


Organic and old accessibilities of inner context.

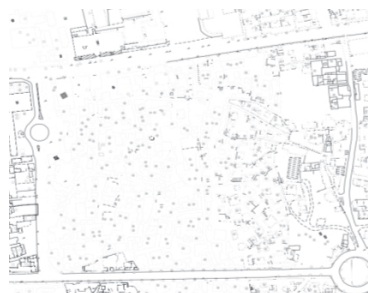


Main accesses of the site.

Figure 15. Accessibility Analysis, Municipality of Kermanshah-Graphic analyze by Authors.



Inner courtyards include gardens and small pool.



The important part of green space in the context belongs to inner courtyards of houses.

Figure 16. Environmental Analysis, Technical plan: Municipality of Kermanshah-Graphic analyze by Authors.

6.Strategic Framework for Proposing Design Policies (in Inner Core of Kermanshah City)

Based on what was done in SWOT Approach and Urban Design Principles of Urban Task Force group, the strategic Framework for gaining design policies to promote vitality could be developed (Table 3). In other words the environmental problems and needs of the site would be solved and responded by the proposed design policies. In order to suggest more responsive policies, urban regeneration dimensions regarding SWOT analysis classified into environmental subsets.

Table 3: Strategic framework to propose design policies, Developed by authors, 2013

| Environmental Subsets Contextual Indicators | | SWOT Approach + Urban Regeneration Dimensions | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|---------------|----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------------------|--------------|---------|-----------------------------|
| | | Built Environment | | | | Natural Environment | | | Socio-Economic Environment | | | |
| | | Physical | | | Functional | Landscape | Climetical features | Vegetation | Economic | | | Social |
| | | Historical Character (in Iran) | Urban Pattern | Architectural values | Functional Distribution | | | | Employment Pattern | Stakeholders | Tourist | Structure of Citizens/Users |
| Urban Design Principles (Urban Task Force) | Site and character | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | public realm | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Access and permeability | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Optimizing land use and density/ Mixing activities | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Sustainable design | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Mixing tenures | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |
| | Environmental responsibility | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● |

The main intention of this framework is to propose design policies to identify the new strategic concepts for future redevelopment of the historical context in concern. In this sense, designers and urban planners could propose design policies based on site situation (Strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats) regarding the principles of more liveable design (Urban task force principles) toward having successful urban regeneration. As it was indicated in Table 3 and based on authors' opinion, empty circle shows that there is no policy in this section and the solid one means that there will be one or more design policies in each part.

All above discussions will now be illustrated in the selected case study, the Inner Core of Kermanshah in order to achieve new design policies for prospective redevelopment in the process of regeneration (Table 4).

Table 4: Development of Strategic Framework for Inner Core of Kermanshah City, Developed by Authors, 2013

| Environmental Subsets | Built Environment | | | | Natural Environment | | | Socio_Economic Environment | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---------------|----------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------|------------|--|--------------|---------|-----------------------------|--|
| | Physical | | | Functional | Landscape | Climetical features | Vegetation | Economic | | | Social | |
| | Historical Character (in Iran) | Urban Pattern | Architectural values | Functional Distribution | | | | Employment Pattern | Stakeholders | Tourist | Structure of Citizen/ Users | |
| Contextual Indicators | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Site and character | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Characteristics designing in harmony with contextual identity. -Providing opportunity for development and blocks composition. - Creation of diversity and unity in the complex and also improving, maintaining physical characteristics of collective memories. -Rehabilitation and restoration of historical places | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Designing void and mass based on regional climate -Incorporating natural elements in the complex. | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improving symbols of collective memories -Appropriate design of degraded lands in the context near old Bazaa. -Renovating historical bazaar) Tarikheh bazaar)in inner core of context. -Advertising and presenting the historical characteristics of the site to attract tourists and different. | | | | |
| public realm | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lighting at night - Designing livable focal points with special activities in order to improve identity Defining space boundaries physically/visually - designing urban public spaces around historical and local monument. - Creating facades in order to make space enclosure | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using natural elements in designing collective spaces and play grounds -Designing climatical shelters | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Making opportunities for different social groups to use an urban space -Designing local spaces to identify historical culture for new generations. -Designing streets as places for social interactions - Designing according to defensible space principals to avoid to having lost space. -Having qualified spaces while reducing designing expenses. - Holding seasonal festivals in public spaces in order to improve economic situation. Designing attractive public spaces (in different scale) around the old Bazaar in order to captivate tourists. | | | | |

Towards revitalizing urban life through urban regeneration in...

| | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Access and permeability</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Using elements for reducing speed in pedestrian and vehicular routes or avoiding to design straight paths. - Designing Legible paths inside the local context. - caring about hierarchical process in designing accessibility. -Enhancing qualities of paths -Emphasizing on pedestrian accessibility and limiting vehicular access into the site. -Designing path next to local symbols. | <p>-Equipping path with natural and green elements.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using bazaar as an important elements to promote social interaction. - Ease of movement into shopping centers and also old bazaar for improving economical activities. |
| <p>Optimizing land use and density/ Mixing activities</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Increasing legibility through creating diversity. -Physical repairing of functions that are important in terms of identity in order to increase sense of belonging and collective memory. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Using compact approach in designing blocks to achieve maximum thermal insulation. -Using degraded lands for designing green areas. -Designing according to connect activities and nature. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creating mixed use to have night life . -Designing free activities (Cycling, local competition,...) to be able to attract all groups of people - Land segmentation and density increasing according to people financial affordance. - Defining leisure activities to attract tourists to the district. |
| <p>Sustainable design</p> | <p>-using durable and vernacular materials-appropriate technology and orientation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - increasing environmental flexibility in order to enable different activities to be happened - Designing according to Green architecture aspects -Designing energy efficient buildings in order to use renewable resource | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Restoration of spaces with historical identity for different age groups, especially youths, children -caring about aesthetic factors for attracting people more than before. - Minimizing maintenance expenses for old buildings -Reducing expenses by minimizing energy usage. - Enhancing people participation in the process of designing and implementation |
| <p>Mixing tenures</p> | <p>- Creating urban block instead of single housing</p> | | <p>-Providing different types of housing for adaptability to various social situation family</p> |
| <p>Environmental responsibility</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Considering topography in order to minimize excavation and embankment -Mentioning compact design principals in the process of urban regeneration. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enhancing a quality of environment by limiting damage respecting bio-diversity natural resources and reducing the use of non-renewable resources - Regarding old trees in the process of regeneration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Designing and preserving spaces under the control of public or private sectors. -Regarding land as a valuable resource in terms of economical issues. - Dedicating private environment to public use in some hours a day under a kind of supervision. |

Conclusion

The main incentive for proposing the new strategic framework has been the idea that it would be a reliable support to the decision process on the appropriate strategic approach for revitalizing historic context. Focusing on the design concepts of urban design task force regarding strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats makes it possible to be more conscious about the key constraints and possible opportunities. Also this approach provides identifying design concepts on the area concerned in terms of the parameters of urban design task force by classifying them under built environment, natural environment and socio-economic environment in order to have more liveable design. This classification not only considers the urban regeneration dimensions but also describes the situation of the specific site under SWOT approach. The proposed framework can serve for the strategic formation only if the data on various matters of SWOT analysis are accurate.

Evaluation of the new framework and its application to the Inner Core of Kermanshah from this perspective reveals that this framework and its application does not only convey a contextual understanding of this historic environment, But for safely generalizing and developing this framework for other setting it is not trustable to rely on analyzing a single case. In this sense, similar contexts under the process of regeneration should be evaluated in addition as mentioned case study in this paper.

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