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Research Paper

Spatial integration in the regeneration of urban decay textures A case study the Tehran city

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A B S T R A C T

Urbanization development has incurred various unpleasant consequences on urban settlements. Old urban centers have thereafter decayed during population and activity refinement and undergone improvement, reconstruction, and renovation actions by the dominance of a physical dimension and non-participatory practice. In the 20th century, a regeneration approach with a holistic solution focused on participatory practice was proposed to solve the urban decay problems. The approach has several strengths as well as weaknesses among which lack of spatial integration is the most important one. The paper aims at investigating the role of spatial integration in Tehran urban decay regeneration. The research data were qualitative and quantitative, collected through library and field methods. The statistical population included Tehran's planning experts. Delphi method was also used in this research. The obtained data were analyzed by theme analysis and TOPSIS model. The results showed that Tehran urban regeneration plans have not been implemented and have been merely documented, and actions taken towards regeneration were limited to improvement, reconstruction, and renovation. Spatial connection of the target areas has also not been taken into consideration in these documents.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Urbanization development has incurred various unpleasant consequences on cities, one of which is problematic inefficient fabrics including the urban decays. Due to such event in each historical period, different approaches have been proposed to organize urban decays, such as reconstruction, restoration, and renovation focusing on the physical dimension and non-participatory practice, as well as regeneration as a holistic, participatory approach. The regeneration approach has several strengths as well as weaknesses among which lack of spatial integration is the most important one. Touched by these changes and a systemic outlook, spatial planning was introduced in management and territorial development at different levels – from local to national. Since the beginning, this type of planning had content and methodological defects such as physical orientation, quantity orientation, and technocracy. These defects led spatial planning towards "strategic spatial planning". Unlike the traditional spatial planning, the approach is flexible, dynamic, amendable, holistic, participatory, trans-territorial, and inter-territorial. Accordingly, one of the structural and functional aspects of strategic spatial planning is "spatial integration". The literature on regeneration and empirical research in Iran and other countries indicate that although the regeneration approach is universal in terms of content (physical, economic, social, and environmental) and method (participation-oriented), not sufficient attention is paid to spatial integration. Moreover, according to the government's regeneration documents and plans, it can be stated that no attention is paid to spatial integration in the regeneration approach specified in the documents. Therefore, it is necessary to provide integration and ask all stakeholders to participate in Tehran urban decay regeneration and the subject should be investigated in the present research.

Methodology

The research data are quantitative and qualitative, collected through library and field methods. The statistical population included 25 planning experts and authorities of Tehran. The Delphi method was used for experts to come to a consensus. Non-probability, snowball sampling was used in which senior managers of Iranian Urban Regeneration Company and Tehran Municipality and university professors as the first level of experts introduced other experts of urban regeneration documents, and the next levels of the sample were similarly identified and selected.

Results and discussion

In the first step, to analyze the research data, urban regeneration documents (namely manual of style of target area determination; regenerating and empowering the Iranian urban inefficient areas and neighborhoods; national strategic plan for restoration, improvement, innovation, and empowerment of urban decays; comprehensive framework of sustainable urban regeneration; internal development; urban regeneration by recognizing and redeveloping the opportunities available in cities; and the report (plan) by the Renovation Organization of Tehran) were investigated by an integrated outlook using theme analysis regarding content, procedural, and spatial aspects. In the second step, after being scored by participants, the criteria extracted from content analysis of Tehran urban regeneration documents were analyzed using the TOPSIS model. The results showed that Tehran urban regeneration plans have not been implemented and have been merely documented, and actions taken towards regeneration were limited to improvement, reconstruction, and renovation. Spatial connection of target areas has also not been taken into consideration in these documents.

Conclusion

Urban decay problems in metropolises are a concern for urban managers since residence and activity in these urban fabrics have no good efficiency. Different studies have been conducted on the subject; accordingly, it can be stated that in urban decay regeneration approach, participation of both the private and public sectors has been paid attention. The evolution of regeneration plans in Iran indicates the emphasis on reducing the involvement of the central state in these plans. In other studies conducted on regeneration approach based on spatial planning, the concept of "spatial integration" has not been taken into consideration, despite some references to the concept of space. Therefore,

this feature distinguishes the present research from others. The results indicated lack of attention on spatial integration in Tehran urban decay regeneration approach, and the spatial status of this city will not be improved. Among the different factors that have made the objectives of urban regeneration plans unrealized in terms of spatial integration, we can refer to: the centralized, top-down nature of urban management; multiplicity of urban regeneration documents and plans and lack of a single plan; no coordination between financing entities (including government, municipality, and people); diverse regulations for implementation of regeneration plans; and lack of attention on spatial dimension (the link between micro, medium, and macro levels of cities). In order to realize the spatial integration, regeneration plans of target areas should be implemented by taking into account the whole target areas of these plans in urban regions, counties, and the province of Tehran.

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Conflict of Interest
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