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Islamic Principles and Culture Applied to Improve Life Quality in Islamic Cities

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Abstract

Cities, towns, and residential area compounds constitute the most salient and tangible manifestations of human culture. The objectives of this study were in three folds. First to identify principles of modern urban planning and living. Secondly, to identify Islamic ideology basis to Quran and conduct of prophetic relative to urban planning and living and finally, to identify Islamic urban planning joined to present condition and knowledge. Strategy for the research design involved Post-Occupancy Study (POE) upon Islamic cities monuments within the metropolitan city of Esfahan, Iran. In this study, it was realized that the strategies proposed in this study is changeable with the geographic and cultural conditions.

Keywords: Islamic cities; quality of life; Islamic ideology; present knowledge; Islamic design

1. Introduction

First the "Islamic City" means a city built up on the Quranic and prophetic principles and teachings, while "Moslems City" is meant a city where Moslems live. Doubtless, taken for the second sense, Islamic City has been and is of a higher frequency. However, the question is the possibility of building a city in

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the first sense. In today's world, the deficiencies and confusions in the urban society, the Islamic ideology and an outcrop of the Quranic and Prophetic teaching has developed stable procedures suitable to each period for building a utopia. In this study, certain essential precepts of planning for an Islamic city have been briefly addressed and finally attempts have been made to analyze the precepts within the context of a field research in the city of Esfahan. There are essential Islamic precepts which need to be addressed in planning an Islamic city as the following: *Human Welfare and Glory, Justice and Equality, Central Consideration, Unity and Kind-heartedness, Economic Development, Security and Safety and Environmental Protection.*

According to Ehlers, undertake all or part of the costs or religious duties of the society and the urban services, provides supply low-cost housing and create employment opportunities for endowed property (Ehlers, 1994:53). Khaki said; during the early periods, to develop protect and maintain an ideal environment an Islamic concept of urban construction is addressed to the Prophet benefited from endowment, assignment, privacy and computation. (Khaki 2008: 127). To protect the environment of an Islamic city, there are rules in order to be considering like Eco-Centrist Rule, Rule for Preservation of an Optimized Use of Natural Resources and Abstention from Dissipation*,* This is to guarantee and respect for citizenship rights in society. Benefactors who, seeking to help inflict damage on people such as fire-fighters who meaning to rescue damage people, are under no guarantee or obligation to compensate.

The Islamic city has always been built in line with the natural forces making optimized use of light, wind, water and other resources available (Nasr, 2007). In the design and structural forms of the city, using such concepts as backyard, porch, covered and narrow streets, orchards, etc. was meant to accommodate the climatic and geographic conditions governing the Moslems' lives (Ghanizadeh, 2007). In view of the Islamic teachings and accounts, today by resorting to such measures as development of the green space, utilization of renewable energy resources, green transport, green architecture and building self-sufficient housing, more emphasis must be placed on eco-centrism.

In this respect, there are valuable guidelines in the Islamic literature such that the fate of people and ethnic groups who care little about the use of natural resources and seek to undermine them is nothing short of destruction (Esmaeili et al, 2007:59) & (Farooq, 2006 : 124). Quran addresses the issue in chapter An'am, 165. The Prophet says, "Protect the earth, water, etc. as if they were your mother "(Alavian et al, 2008: 395). He also says, "Moslems share three things: water, range and fire (Karin, 1938:311). This prophetic account suggests a stable development for intra-generational and inter-generational use in the human society. Today, in view of the above such new energy resources as geothermal and nuclear, must be exploited and other such resources as fossil fuels and forests, must be reserved for the miscellaneous purposes of the future generations.

2. Methodology

In this study, first a mixed method (Library and Descriptive-Analytic) was used and subsequently SWOT method of analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) was used to examine the data and provide a strategy. In line with the topic of the study, a checklist of the strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities and Threats (T) were composed. Then, an opinion poll of the people and authorities was conducted on the principles of the research topic and the components using a questionnaire with a high score assigned to each question. Next, the scores were computed and analyzed to decide on priorities (Table 1) and (e.g. Fig 1). Finally, to eliminate or reduce weaknesses and threats as well as improving the strengths and opportunities available, appropriate strategies were selected. The context of the study was the Islamic city of Esfahan.

3. Data collection and Analysis

In Figure 1, the SWOT analysis shows that once the research topic was explored with the help of SWOT the following strategies were recommended:
  a. Competitive Strategies (SO) create laws to hold Council meetings with the authorities and university faculty prior to approval of the projects.
  b. Develop International Relations to establish overseas commerce and attain the coefficient FQ7.
  c. Create Tax and Business Laws
   This is aimed at prevention of hoarding land and housing.
  d. Support Crisis Management, this is achieved by benefiting from the experience of successful countries.
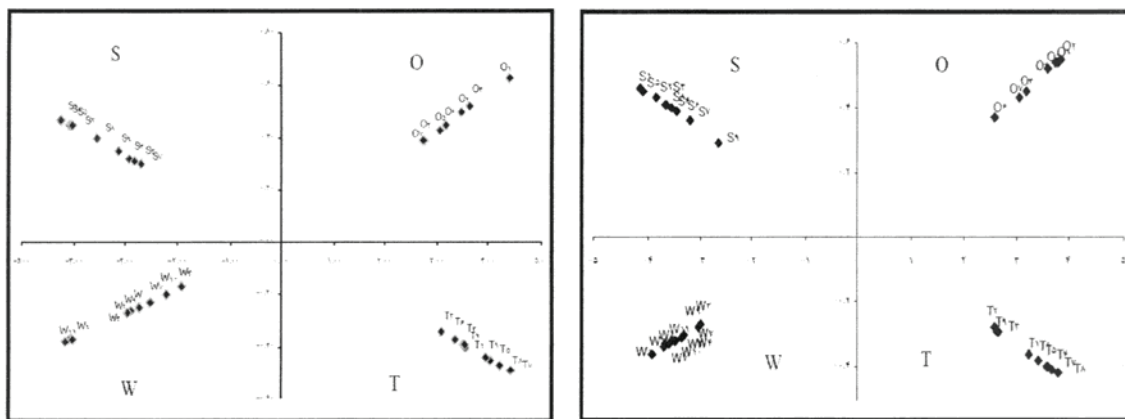 e. Create Social Laws to Promote Citizenship Rights.

Fig. 1: The SWOT Analysis Graph (Left) as viewed by Authorities and Graph (Right) as viewed by Public. Source: (Author, 2011)

4. Results and Discussions

In the Table 1, there are the aspects that were defined and discussed. The result shows as below:

3.1 Revision Strategies (WO)

  a. Revise economic and employment plans to increase the economic welfare of the family in respect of the international status of the city.
  b. Substantially making revisions improve the environmental laws of the society.
  c. Revise to promote the spiritual dimension of cities.
  d. Arrange meetings between the spiritual scholars and university academics to improve and help promote the welfare and human glory.
  e. Revise the social security and safety laws of the city

3.2 Change Strategies (ST)

  a. Add variety to the meetings with authorities and university staff in accomplishing the job;
  b. Add variety to the local cultural and recreational programs to overcome cultural invasion;

   c. Organize conferences for ethnic groups to reinforce social unity and
   d. Arrange training sessions to create procedure-based rather than broker-based employment opportunities.

3.3 Defensive Strategies (WT)

   a. Create programs to improve the financial capability of the family and promote the welfare;
   b. Expedite planning to prevent cultural invasion;
   c. Prevent widening of class differences;
   d. Plan in such a way to reduce migration to cities and cultural heterogeneity of the population;
   e. Prosecute environmental violators;
   f. Prosecute social insecurities and prevent unauthorized overbuilding.

Table. 1: SWOT Analysis Matrix (as viewed by public and authorities)

SWOT Analysis	Public				Authorities				Final Rank
	Sum of Weights	Mean Weights	Relative Weights	Rank	Sum of Weights	Mean Weights	Relative Weights	Rank	
Strengths									
S1= Central thought, council and professionalism	644	4.13	0.46	1	106	4.24	0.47	1	1
S2=Recover the components of Justice and equality in the society	564	3.86	0.43	3	102	4.08	0.45	3	3
S3= Respect for the environment	568	3.69	0.41	4	89	2.81	0.31	8	6
S4= Provide welfare and human glory	549	3.56	0.4	6	67	2.91	0.32	7	7
S5= Provide urban safety & security from various aspects	620	4.8	0.45	2	101	4.04	0.45	4	2
S6= Economic development, commercial & industrial growth	547	3.48	0.39	7	102	4.23	0.47	2	4
S7= Unity (solidarity) & kindheartedness in the society	484	3.31	0.36	8	89	2.68	0.3	9	9
S8= Respect for citizenship rights	563	3.66	0.41	5	82	3.37	0.4	5	5
S9= Reinforce the religious aspect & piety	406	3.64	0.29	9	75	3.13	0.35	6	8
Weaknesses									
W1= Financial problems related to the family problems	607	3.92	0.36	1	94	4.09	0.35	2	1
W2= Deficiency in the social urban security	550	3.35	0.32	5	72	2.88	0.26	7	5
W3= Absence of academic meritocracy in urban responsibilities	463	2.99	0.27	11	65	2.71	0.25	8	10
W4= Lower human glory	538	3.61	0.33	3	68	2.96	0.27	4	3
W5= Absence of unity and citizenship participation in urban affairs	518	3.32	0.3	9	48	1.92	0.17	11	11
W6= Lack of attention to the spiritual aspect in the city	574	3.7	0.34	2	97	4.04	0.37	3	2
W7= Economic problems and employment of citizens	539	3.57	0.32	4	60	2.5	0.23	9	7
W8= Deficiency in urban safety against natural disasters	570	3.68	0.33	6	72	2.88	0.26	6	6
W9= Absence of justice-centeredness in urban society	468	3.04	0.28	10	65	2.95	0.27	5	8
W10= Failure to fully provide for citizenship rights	520	3.38	0.31	8	55	2.02	0.2	10	9
W11= Failure to attend to protection of natural resources and dissipation	525	3.3	0.32	7	104	4.16	0.38	1	4

SWOT Analysis	Public				Authorities				Final Rank
	Sum of Weights	Mean Weights	Relative Weights	Rank	Sum of Weights	Mean Weights	Relative Weights	Rank	
Opportunities									
O1= Presence of a powerful & international status in business and industry	595	3.81	0.54	2	110	4.4	0.63	1	1
O2= Distribution of services & urban resources & government housing projects	599	3.86	0.55	1	87	3.48	0.5	3	2
O3= Exploit crisis management & superior technology in this context	485	3.17	0.45	5	79	3.16	0.45	4	5
O4= Presence of a theological climate, university & efficient specialists	559	3.61	0.52	4	91	3.64	0.52	2	3
O5= Supplement legislation to reinstate citizenship rights (solidarity of the theological & academic climate)	586	3.76	0.54	3	76	3.04	0.43	5	4
O6= Ground for creating eco-towns with respect to the industrialization of cities	400	2.56	0.37	7	68	2.75	0.39	6	7
O7= Raise living standards in accordance with the example of successful countries	471	3.04	0.43	6	66	2.72	0.39	7	6
Threats									
T1= Increased population & pressure on the urban environment	498	3.23	0.36	6	89	3.56	0.4	5	5
T2= Surplus imports & weakened domestic economy	399	2.56	0.28	9	88	3.52	0.39	6	8
T3= Increased unplanned migration and heterogeneity of population & undermined solidarity	408	2.62	0.29	7	77	3.08	0.34	9	9
T4= Population density & heterogeneity in population, spread of insecurity	543	3.6	0.4	3	85	3.54	0.39	7	4
T5= Imported culture, luxury-centeredness, increased class differences	552	3.61	0.4	4	89	4.05	0.45	3	3
T6= Increased urban population & undermined citizenship rights	516	3.41	0.38	5	74	3.3	0.37	8	7
T7= Cultural invasion via international media & undermined spiritual aspect	568	3.69	0.41	2	102	4.43	0.49	1	2
T8= Increase living expenses and undermined welfare	586	3.81	0.42	1	97	4.22	0.47	2	1
T9= Employment of laymen authorities	405	2.6	0.29	8	95	3.96	0.44	4	6

4. Conclusion

A study of the procedures which would help the existing cities safely cross modernity and its adverse effects are of considerable importance. In this context, by applying the Quranic teachings and prophetic conduct, the Islamic outlook and culture provide principles with whose assistance we can significantly improve the quality of life. In view of this study, one can realize that the existing cities outnumber the Moslem-inhabited rather than the actual cities. By applying these principles, we can experience a transition from the Moslem-inhabited cities to the actual Islamic city and realize the Islamic utopia. It should be noted that the strategies proposed can change with the geographic and cultural conditions.

Acknowledgements

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