

LAYERS OF INTERVENTION FOR REVITALIZATION OF HISTORICAL DISTRICTS

(Typical sample: Oudlaajaan neighborhood-Tehran)
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ABSTRACT: The historical context of a city is part of its physical body, the existence of which has begun in the far past and is now challenging and opposing modern urban developments. Today, in the process of making optimum use of urban lands, treating the historical contexts has turned into a dilemma, for with such blocks being of vast areas, it is impossible for them to be frozen and turn into museums; on the other hand, it's impossible to halt the process of developing new buildings, the visual and historical properties of which do not match the ones of the old context. Now the question, in studies regarding the revitalization of ancient, historical contexts is: how can the paradox of modern life and its needs be combined with the old urban context? 'Oudlaajaan, a neighborhood in the west of Tehran, was built during Safavid Dynasty and is now, due to wrong policies applied by urban management authorities during different eras, worn in many aspects. With the inhabitants not feeling to belong in the place and the presence of functions which do not match the physical body, the area has completely lost its visual values. In case we want to perform a more realistic and effective revitalization, it's better to view the historical context, not as a combination of building blocks, but as a system. In this article, we tend to present four layers of action to revitalize ancient contexts. It's necessary for planners of urban policies to legislate and make their decisions in each one of these layers, and through the hierarchy mentioned that will be mentioned.

Keywords: Intervention, City, Historical Districts, Spacial Organization, Structure, Element

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Historical context and its situation in today's urban contexts

The historical urban contexts especially in the important ancient cities are a jewel and give identity to the city or the country. These contexts are the initial core of the each city which possess cultural, historical, architectural, urbanism, symbolic, indicative of different historical periods and in the course of time have been the abode for many and have passed their evolutionary process in the modern days. Also these contexts have various values and features which are:

1-the cultural status 2-the pure integration of the buildings and the nature 3-the potential of changing to tourist attraction and entertainment resort 4- archaeological values 5-being part of the national memory 6-natural and cultural events 7-the home for the scientists 8-using special methods in the architecture. These contexts in the course of time and in social and economical changes which result in the reconstructing process

and urban exhaustion dramatically lose their quality and their existence will be threaten in several ways. In Iran, effective measures have been taken to preserve the architectural and historic items. Yet about the preserving the historical textures and neighborhood few measures have taken place. The multidimensional quality of human abodes and historical textures necessitate the environmental designer's involvement with the environmental, physical, economic, social and managerial aspects of the texture.

b. The Necessity of Intervention in the Historical contexts The elements and spaces of the urban contexts have a limited age and in the course of time run-down and change. Considering the exhaustion from the climate, natural disasters, and human activities, no building can stand long without preservation. To provide the required urban space, prevent urban exhaustion, preserving the historical sites and adapt the urban spaces with the today's needs and also decreasing the social tensions, reconstructing and renewing the old ineffective textures of the cities is unavoidable. Here we briefly discuss the necessity of this intervention. -The efficacy of the new development inside the city - Threat to cultural heritage -The Exhaustion of part of a city and its being departed from the physical-spatial organization -Special privileges and potentials of the historical texture -Preserving the identity and social solidarity

c. The process of Intervention in Iran's historical contexts Intervention in Iran's has been made in relation with the existed structure and building a proper relation with the main urban elements. New development at that time took place to reinforce and preserve the history of the city with considering the needs of the citizens. Interventions made in Iran's urban contexts in 1925, were without considering the real necessities and cultural, social and economic traits of the time. They were solely a blinding following of the western modernization. The important point is that in many of the European countries the intervention was made outside the historical core of the city for the sake of preserving the historical contexts. Whereas in Iran this intervention resulted in the disjunction of the historical contexts and in fact the new development stood in the face of the urban history. There has been a consensus in all the methods and goals of intervening in the historical fabrics in Iran since 1981. However due to the different viewpoints on the matter, reaching to this consensus needs more disputes. Authorities and experts have taken a number of steps in addition to implementing a number of plans regarding the intervention in the fabrics' designs. These are based on three main viewpoints called methods and strategies of intervention are: The first theory is the museum theory: which

disapproves of any methods but the protection and preservation of the historical contexts. Methods such as "renovating" which result in the destruction of the contexts and their historic-cultural values are not accepted in this method. The second theory is the "renovating" theory: this theory sees the totality of the historical context as run-down contexts and does not believe in the historical-cultural values in the structural aspect and considers only a limited number of buildings as valid to be preserved. This theory without considering the cultural and historical values invests in and reconstructs the whole historical area. The third theory has the middle ground or the realistic theory; this theory states that the totality of what we consider as the historical contexts is never homogeneous with the same value, but it includes a wide range from the historical sites to even the run-down urban areas which are not worth preserving.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Historical neighborhood of Oudlaajaan and its situation in today's Tehran contexts
Oudlaajaan, a neighborhood in the west of Tehran, was built during Safavid Dynasty and is now, due to wrong policies applied by urban management authorities during different eras, worn in many aspects. With the inhabitants not feeling to belong in the place and the presence of functions which do not match the physical body, the area has completely lost its visual values. On the other hand, in spite of all the existing disharmony and disorganization, Oudlaajaan neighborhood is a well-established settlement where people have been born, lived and died for generations and have communicated with its physical and environmental elements. Hence, it seems apt to focus on some aspects of the landscape features of the context in the urban design process.



Fig1. (a) Oudlaajaan's location in city of Tehran, (b) Some valuable space of Oudlaajaan's

2.2 Methods of research For the sake of arranging this article, studies and measurements have been done on the neighborhood, and some questionnaires have also been filled out by the inhabitants, and analyzed. These, besides the theoretical information gathered, have formed the basis of the research

2.3 Suggestions for the intervention of historical contexts To confront the historical context, if a more realistic and useful approach is desired, the confrontation had better take place at a higher level than the plaques which means to see the totality of the historical context as a system; In this article despite surveying the problems and obstacles in way of renovation the historical contexts, and knowing the necessity of revolutionizing in the present situation, it has been tried to survey the main element in identifying the structure of historical contexts and present ways of intervention in these kind of contexts. To do so, four layers of intervention and reviving the old contexts are presented. The urban policy makers need to take these four layers into consideration and make their decisions according to the four priorities:

a. Identifying the role of historical contexts in the present city

The first intervention in the city is determining the perspective and the role of the district. Defining the role of the districts in determining its economic, social and structural fate is so important that it can be considered as the first step in determining the kind of intervention and directing other activities. In fact determining the role of the district is the main factor in determining the character

and place of the city. Intervention in any other layers should be subordinate to this definition. To clarify more, the role of Oudlaajaan in the past is explained and then is compared with its role today: On this basis, we divided the district into several survey blocks and chose some people of each block randomly to fill out our questionnaires, asking them about their visual experience of the district.

Oudlaajaan is a historical context which was a residential district in Tehran in the past. This fabric which had important urban indications had passages, such as Oudlaajaan Passage, which was an active bazaar in the district in the past. Thanks to its excellent position, this bazaar has become more active day by day and as a result has swapped its local face and therefore its congruency with the district. Nowadays, this bazaar has become an important center for local market for iron and iron sheets or glaziers. These commercial activities which are incongruent with the residential passages, such as the above named one, have resulted in the evacuation of these residential areas their changing into warehouses and business centers. These changes in the functions of the

districts and the loss of their identity have been followed by the plaques' insecurity, deterioration and their being abandoned and finally the gradual deterioration of the context. Oudlaajaan district consists of a wide range of functions which have a variety of activities incongruent with the historical and residential identity of the district. Bazaar being located in the district and the emerge of the incongruent activities (activities improper to the potential of the district) as a result, on one hand and lack of congruency in the structure of the district with today's needs (for example cars not being able to enter the area (because of small passages) and lack of services) brought about a change in the old identity of the city. Furthermore, these activities have caused the rest of the civil life in the district to be affected and to deteriorate gradually. Low-paid and under-privileged people living in the area now have changed the mentality of the citizens about Oudlaajaan and has left no desire to live in it anymore. It seems that to tackle the deterioration of the district the following steps must be taken: taking the disturbing activities out of the district, determining small business units, implementing programs for the families with higher cultural and social classes to return to the district, defining new functions in accordance with the historical features of the district. Defining the role on the basis of the today's needs and the geographical situation of the Oudlaajaan is the main factor which

can bring about the revival of the district from the functional and mental deterioration.

b. Identifying and connecting the special organization of the old context with framework of present city

A city, as an open system, consists of some elements and the relation between them. Since each of these elements is definable in the framework of its features and on the basis of different roles in the subsystems of the urban organization, different kinds of elements of the systems can be identified. The spatial organization is the citizens' mental image from the city which is comprehended by connecting different elements in a goal-oriented harmony. This organization is a real interpretation and not an imaginary one. It is a hidden issue which manipulates its force on localizing the function to develop and make other changes in the city. This organization has been formed under the influence of geographical, climate, historical, economic, and cultural conditions. Oudlaajaan was a residential strict in the central Tehran which enjoyed proper commercial and residential districts. The logical correspondence of physical structures and functional structures had caused a social integration and an active life in the district.

On the other hand, Oudlaajaan was the central core which connected the structures of other districts. Inside Oudlaajaan there were defined sub-districts and alleys which consisted of houses of rich families. Generally it can be said that not only the old Oudlaajaan connected the district structures and important points in the city but also internally it had accessibility order and had defined logical spatial organization in the city of Tehran. From 1963 to 1978, due to the land amendment policies and urban-commercial development, the deterioration of the old social-economical structure speeded up. In this period, constructing new streets and using them as the commercial districts related to the bazaar divided the historical district of Oudlaajaan into three different districts and this caused the existing order of the alleys (sub-district) to be distorted. On the other hand, the division of the district caused the unity of the residents to be faded. From this period on, the Middle Oudlaajaan which is our case study, because of being disconnected from the rest of the district, had a different deterioration rate. The Southern part of the Middle Oudlaajaan was taken over by the Bazaar as the workshops in the north part of bazaar grew toward north. Today in Oudlaajaan, in addition to the deterioration resulted from spreading of bazaar the worst deterioration is caused by the disunity of the spatial

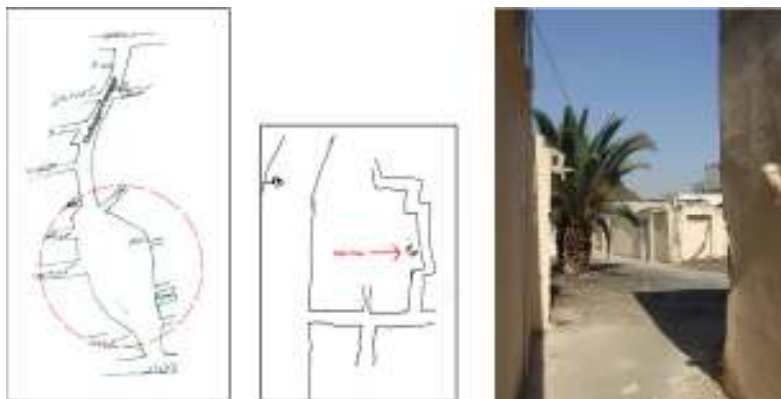
organization of the district and the city. The districts being isolated from the active structure of the city, lack of connection with surrounding districts and lack of urban service provision intensified its deterioration. Starting connections with the surrounding districts, reopening the passages for north to south and creating small openings in the districts and creating the small service unities and determining residential units, defining the proper small activity units and residential and commercial and cultural besides one another are strategies to solve this problem.

c. Revitalizing the main factors of structure of historical districts Peoples' mental image about the whole structure of the context including: the signs, the centers and its structure of passages should be found and analyzed and a thorough pathological analysis the amendments should be made. The wholeness of the city is an abstract concept that is the outcome of the viewer's understanding of the details. A brain in order to understand the concept of city as a whole needs a structure which puts the details in an accessible relation with one another. A set of elements without a conceptual or spacious relation to one another and whose linking aspect has not been determined, is not able to express the concept of the city totality. In other words, brain with knowing the structural elements in a set, interprets the relationship between and the combination of the elements takes

place while interpreting identifies a unique identity from the set. As a result, the comprehension from a city is the comprehension of a system. In smaller scales there is a general concept from the conceptual and mental structures from the minuscule urban spaces or a set of small neighborhoods which constitute a network only comprehensible for their residents. This set of symbols, passages, spaces and patterns which has formed in the mind of the residents constitutes a network considering which will result in residents' satisfaction attracts their cooperation as not considering it will result in their dissatisfaction failure of the reconstructing the neighborhood. These mental signs and factors can be identified in most cases; for example: the proportionate of the passages, signs in them, the passages forms etc... shave enormous effect in the residents' minds. The role of a district's framework as a whole is like the music notes in a symphony or words in a literal text. The variety of effects achieved as a result of combining different notes in music is astonishing. And this can be true in case of creating urbane space in any scales and especially in the scale of districts. a) Passages are the main skeleton of the contexts and provide the possibility of moving for the viewer. They are the first places to be seen by a viewer and as a result create a mental identity card of the fabric for the users. Passages prepare places for function, social behaviors, social memories and economic activities, so it has a fundamental role in neighborhood. Moreover, they make an illusion of spaces for residents with regarding to the landscape. The tone being produced by the combination of the mass and space of the district directly affects the residents and the pedestrians and draws them along itself. Passages are determined clearly from the first day of the establishment of the basic core of the quarter; they develop along with the extension of the district and keep in themselves all the normal and attitudinal events in the neighborhood and consequently, they turn into strong means of penetration and arrange not only the spatial organization but also the basic order of the quarter. It is so that any new experience happened through these axes, takes a position regarding past and future experiences and turns into a strong arranging force. An axis should adapt itself along its way with the natural and man-made specifications of the neighborhood, make relations with the other hard and soft elements, and get identified in an arranging background. Therefore, strengthening continuity or developing a living and ongoing context in the neighborhood requires a study of simultaneous movements, and the time and duration of their taking place, along the axes which run through it.

b) Centers and other important knots of the textures are the second reason which, form the mental images of the residents, are the places to form the human social interactions with the environment and district. Reviving and recreating the network of the connected places has resulted into reordering of the spatial framework of the district and its network. And this is understood in relation with the other centers and in relation with the main center. This method results into creation of a kind of juncture for the paths that puts the district and sub-district centers in a connection with the main passage which results into pauses and movements in the path

c) District signs and symbols are other important factors which create a structural connection between the physical spatial elements and reinforce the memories and internal identity in the district. Restoring some of the signs existing in the context and also creating other symbols in the district, in the pausing points, main center, sub centers, squares or along the paths for cars or pedestrians result the reactions which orders the organizing space forces in the district. Signs and symbols in the district especially locating in the knots and important points in the fabric distinguish the façade of different parts of it and reinforce the sense of direction and therefore readability of the district. In this case a questionnaire was designed to find out the residents' mental view and then extract the main mental indices. The results of these questionnaires indicated that factors such as: the proportion of the passages, the shape of the passages, public spaces in the fabric and the signs in it were among the important shaping factors in the residents' image.



(a) (b) (c) Fig2. (a) As the result of the narrowness of the passage the small opening in the people's mind has become bolder. (b and, (c) A small element such as the palm tree is instilled in the residents' mind as sign.

Generally it can be said that restoring and reinforcing Oudlaajaan's past spatial organization and synchronizing it with the activities, functions and needs inside the

district is one of the factors that can bring about the readability of the internal spaces of the fabric avoid the disunity and deterioration of the texture. Reinforcing the structure of the spatial organization which is a network of knobs, axis, and district signs can provide the needs inside the district and at the same time prepare the ground for social activities.

d. Studying the building with physical or historical values The existing plaques in the context have to be analyzed from different aspects such as the place of the building besides the passages and features of the building etc. and any programming must be implemented according to them. For

this purpose, the buildings with physical or historical values will be studied in depth. After studying and intervening in the historical context on the basis of these three layers which have clear priorities at the level of plaques of the fabrics, there would be the turn to intervene with the most detailed parts and cells of a system. This intervention has always been the main concern and mainly the buildings are analyzed at this level. Intervention at the level of plaques has mainly been through taking the ownership of the historically valid plaques and constituting law and policies specifically for historical buildings which are practiced in the urbanism regulations. Oudlaajaan`s today is a fabric in which limited number of historically valid buildings can be found due to the deteriorations in it. These buildings, which have national values and need some strategies for their maintenance, are built with the local materials such as mud, wood and bricks and along the narrow and organic passages. These issues become so serious at times which make any interference in the fabric very difficult. Not implementing a proper strategy leads to freezing the fabric and as a result deterioration of the fabric or it's being abandoned. According to physical interpretation and field studies, all valid plaques in the fabric have been analyzed and generally they have been divided into several groups whose treating policies are mentioned: I) There cannot be any intervene with the buildings which are restorable regarding their physical value and stability because of the Cultural Heritage Organization ban. In such plaques in addition to the necessity of determining the regulation for their preservation, they can be declared as public property so that the general public can use these valid buildings. Needless to say cultural functions or being used as museums for the purpose of tourist attraction can provide this possibility. II) Buildings that have valuable structural details but their other parts are deteriorated. About these buildings some rules and regulations can be formulated about their adjacent areas. In this method of confrontation the features of these plaques, their valuable details and elements have been considered and in order to

have a better harmony in rhythm, the connection, proportion and other valid elements and factors between them are found and used to interfere and revive these historical fabrics. To preserve the visual and identity values new rules and regulations will be formulate in this area.

III) Buildings that have deteriorated or become very instable in the course of time: these plaques can only be used as a model to study building regulations and architectural style and there would be no need to preserve them.

3. CONCLUSION

Considering all mentioned, due to wrong policy that has been made along with a lack of comprehensive, classified criteria for building development in historical areas which have resulted incomplete use of the capacities of such urban contexts this question has always been that: “how the paradox of modern life and its needs can be combined with the old urban context?” for this purpose we studied in case we want to perform a more realistic, effective revitalization, we depict the historical context, not as a combination of building blocks, but as a system. The results In this article present four layers of action to revitalize ancient contexts. It’s necessary for planners of urban policies to legislate and make their decisions in each one of these layers, and through the hierarchy mentioned below, from 1 to 4.

1. Determining and modifying the contemporary role of the historical contexts in the present city, and checking the relevance or irrelevance of its functions and their quantity in the context.
2. Identifying the special organization of the old context and connecting it with framework of present city.
3. Revitalizing the main factors of structure of historical districts according to mental and physical inhabitant’s image of neighborhood.
4. Studying the building blocks with physical and historical values in different dimensions, such as their entrances, the way the blocks are established besides a road, etc and then planning them. In this step, buildings with physical or historical values will be studied independently

Parts of this research are taken from the urban landscape project of Oudlaajaan that has been prepared by the Renovation Organization of Tehran with the co-operation of the Organization of Heritage, Tourism & Handicrafts and the Municipality of Tehran.

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