The Existing Capacities for Citizen Participation in the Structural Transformations of the Historic Core of Shiraz

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Abstract: Since the last four decades, the historic core of cities has faced with enormous transformations in which cultural heritage properties have been threatened by various surge of redevelopment. The historic core of Shiraz in Iran has also been the subject of such controversial issues. This paper aims to examine the effects of social, economic, and physical transformations on the body of the historic core of Shiraz, and the role of citizens within it. The paper begins by highlighting the importance of various transformations in the historic core and providing an understanding of their effects on the built-heritage conservation; and then, it examines the structure of urban management and the role of citizens within it. This study found that the existing capacities in social, economic, political, and cultural aspects for citizen participation in the process of urban planning and management in the historic core of Shiraz city.

INTRODUCTION

According to UNESCO, heritage has defined as our patrimony, what donated from the past, what we are using today, and what is supposed to be transferred to the next generations (UNESCO, 2008). Heritage is in the broad sense that it can be divided to tangible and intangible heritage. Tangible heritage includes monuments, buildings, and sites, and, intangible heritage comprises the knowledge and skills, including instruments, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces (UNESCO, 1972). The first decade of the present century has already that heritage is constantly under threat of destruction (ICOMOS, 2011). The destruction is on the increase by the new development trends in dealing with historical environments. In Iran like other developing countries, the historic city centers have also been in the context of such controversy (Hanachi, P et al, 2010). It is now considered that the historic cores, which constitute a small but significant part of the cities, today, have been dramatically deteriorated through a various surge of redevelopment. However, there have been abortive attempts to revitalize them in Iran because their major emphasis has been paid on physical regeneration per se (Moosavi, 2011). The lacking of sufficient studies on the urban heritage conservation (UHC), it has been provided by this study a deeper insight on the identification of the employed approaches, and to address the extent of citizen participation in the process of UHC. Particular attention of this study is given to a case study. It is the historic core of Shiraz city in Iran. It has been faced with an increase in looting and considerable damage to the cultural heritage by local authorities in the recent decades.

The situation of the historic core in the heart of Shiraz

Shiraz, one of the six principal cities of Iran, the fifth largest after Tehran, Mashhad, Isfahan, and Karaj are the center of Fars province in southern Iran (Table I). According to table I, Shiraz has increasingly faced with a high growth rate of urban population in comparison with Tehran during period 1976-2011. Given to the comparative perspective, it witnessed a dramatic increase (166.4 percent) in urban population growth while it was 66.5 percent in the metropolitan of Tehran as the capital of Iran. However, studies have shown that the continued high growth rate is linked to the ways in which the components of urban growth affect the physical structure of the city (Bazrgar, 2003). In this respect, it appears increasingly clear that the historic cores of cities are the most affected parts of the cities. In fact, the historic core of Shiraz is also not excluded that. As figure 1 show, the historic core of Shiraz has located in the heart of the city.