



Evaluation and ranking of the components of empowerment of dilapidated structures by improving social status (Case study: Harsin city)

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Abstract

Background and Objective: Today, dilapidated urban textures are not only considered a physical and structural challenge, but due to the accumulation of deficiencies, they have become a platform for weakening the collective identity and degrading the social status of their residents. In new approaches to regeneration, the transition from purely physical renovation to "community-based empowerment" is an inevitable necessity; because the sustainability of any urban intervention depends on restoring human dignity, strengthening the sense of belonging, and restoring self-esteem to citizens who must themselves be the main agents of change and development in their living environment. The purpose of the present study is to evaluate and rank the components of empowering dilapidated textures with the approach of improving the social status of citizens in the city of Harsin.

Methodology: The present research is of an applied type and is descriptive-analytical in terms of methodology. The statistical population of the research consists of 30 experts and specialists related to the field of urban planning, urban decay and urban management. The data were collected through a questionnaire and the SAWIC multi-criteria decision-making model was used to analyze and rank the factors.

Results and Findings: The results of the study show that in the dilapidated context of Harsin, "social degradation" has surpassed physical challenges, and the socio-cultural dimension, with an emphasis on reducing damage and improving security, has the highest priority over the economic and physical dimensions. These findings prove the necessity of changing the paradigm from "physically-centered" to "human-centered" and show that physical and management interventions should only play a facilitating role. Therefore, success in empowering this context requires a strategic focus on recreating the identity and promoting the social status of residents before any physical renovation.

Keywords: Worn out texture, empowerment, social status, modeling, SAWIC, Harsin city.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Cities, as living and dynamic organisms, have faced serious challenges in the face of rapid urbanization, the most prominent of which is manifested in dilapidated urban fabrics. These areas, which often constitute the historical and original cores of cities, have failed to adapt to modern requirements during the transition to modernity and currently suffer from problems such as severe structural decay, infrastructure shortages, and physical disorganization. This inefficient situation has not only made livability difficult for residents but has also led to a rupture in the spatial integrity of the city and a sharp decline in resilience against natural and artificial crises. Despite these challenges, dilapidated fabrics possess a dual nature; that is, while they are considered vulnerable zones with falling ecological and economic value, they are also the most important strategic reserves of the city for housing and achieving endogenous development. The main factor in the persistence of this situation has been one-dimensional, physical-oriented perspectives that have viewed these areas merely as construction projects or commodities, ignoring their deeper dimensions, such that today these areas have transformed into islands of deprivation and spatial-social exclusion.

The primary issue in dilapidated fabrics, beyond physical instability, is the emergence of a kind of psychological isolation and social exclusion for residents. A sole focus on physical renovation has caused 'humanity' and human 'dignity' to be sidelined, leaving residents struggling with the 'stigma of place.' Therefore, intervention strategies must move away from traditional approaches and view empowerment not as a construction process, but as a strategic driver for rejuvenating civic dignity and redefining the social status of residents. Empowerment, with the goal of shifting from 'shame of place' to 'pride of residence,' must be based on leveraging social capital and the informed participation of residents. Modern approaches, by relying on these capitals, seek to grant agency to residents, transforming them from passive marginalized individuals into empowered, rights-bearing actors. In this path, active and intelligent participation of the people, as a necessary condition, has found a central place in the orientation of planning systems. Ultimately, sustainable regeneration requires a forward-looking perspective and urban branding, so that by reviving identity and social status, these fabrics can emerge from isolation and regain their rightful place in the competitive network of modern cities.

Harsin, due to its antiquity and cultural richness, faces the challenge of dilapidated urban fabrics; a problem that, beyond physical decay, has tarnished the social status and diminished the sense of self-worth of the residents in these neighborhoods. This research emphasizes that a sole focus on construction and project-oriented measures, without considering local identity and human dignity, will not only fail to lead to sustainability but can also weaken deep social bonds and intensify the mental marginalization of citizens. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to transition from a physical perspective to a 'human-centered' approach, in order to identify and define the key indicators of empowerment for dilapidated fabrics, centered on elevating the social status of citizens in the city of Harsin.

Methodology

This research is designed with a mixed-methods (qualitative-quantitative), applied, and descriptive approach, aiming to identify and weigh the indicators for the empowerment of dilapidated urban fabrics. The research process was conducted in two parts: in the qualitative

phase, through a comprehensive literature review, 4 dimensions, 9 indicators, and 31 sub-indicators were extracted. In the quantitative phase, the SIWES multi-criteria decision-making method was employed to weigh and rank these indicators, as it facilitates the decision-making process through simple direct scoring.

The statistical population consists of 30 experts and specialists in the fields of urban planning and urban management, selected through purposive sampling. The data collection instrument was a standard questionnaire based on the Likert scale, the validity of which was confirmed by subject matter experts. Finally, all data analysis calculations were performed using Excel software to determine the importance of the components and to clarify the relationships between them in order to achieve the research objectives."

Results and Findings

This research aims to identify and localize indicators for the empowerment of dilapidated urban fabrics in Harsin, with a focus on enhancing social status, through a literature review, a survey of 30 experts, and the application of the SIWES multi-criteria decision-making method. In this process, the importance of criteria was first determined based on expert opinions within an initial decision matrix. Subsequent to data normalization, the final weights for dimensions, indicators, and sub-indicators were calculated using standard deviation to identify executive priorities for urban management.

The results of the analysis indicate that the 'social and cultural' dimension, with a weight of 0.3430, is the most influential pillar in the empowerment of Harsin's dilapidated fabrics, followed by the 'economic,' 'physical and environmental,' and 'institutional and managerial' dimensions. At the sub-indicator level, 'reducing visible social harms' and 'sense of security' hold the highest priority, reflecting a paradigm shift from a 'physical-oriented' to a 'human-centered' perspective. In fact, this research proves that traditional construction and infrastructural measures, in the absence of attention to identity-building, security, and the social status of residents, have minimal effectiveness in regenerating dilapidated fabrics. Therefore, urban management must shift the orientation of its programs from physical renovation toward strengthening social capital and eliminating negative environmental perceptions.

Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that the "social and cultural" dimension, based on priorities such as enhancing security, reducing social harms, and identity-building, is considered the most vital pillar in empowering Harsin's dilapidated fabrics, taking precedence over the economic, physical, and managerial dimensions. This prioritization, highlighted by sub-indicators such as "reducing social harms" and "sense of security," represents a fundamental paradigm shift from a "physical-oriented" to a "human-centered" perspective. In this regard, the findings prove that the main challenge in these areas is not physical decay, but rather "social decay." Therefore, the success of regeneration strategies in Harsin requires shifting the focus of planning and allocation from mere physical renovation and routine services toward "social regeneration," eliminating environmental stigmas, and restoring the residents' sense of belonging and dignity.

Declarations

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Authors' Contribution

Authors contributed equally to the conceptualization and writing of the article. All of the authors approved the content of the manuscript and agreed on all aspects of the work declaration of competing interest none.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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