

## 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.

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### 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.

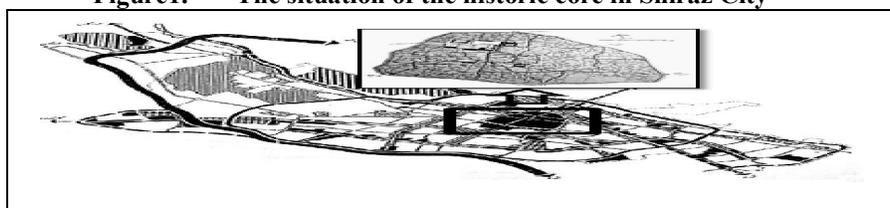
### The situation of the historic core in the heart of Shiraz

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.

**TABLE I. Population of Metropolitan Cities in Iran during 1976-2011( Million People)**

Rank	Metropolitan Cities		Year				
			1976	1986	1996	2006	2011
1	Tehran	Population	4.53	6.042	6.758	7.083	8.245
		UPG rate	100	133.4	145.2	150.1	166.5
2	Mashhad		0.668	1.463	1.887	2.427	2.772
3	Esfahan		0.661	0.987	1.226	1.602	1.978
4	Karaj		0.138	0.275	0.941	1.386	1.967
5	Shiraz	Population	0.425	0.848	1.053	1.227	1.549
		UPG rate	100	199.5	223.7	240.2	266.4
6	Tabriz		0.598	0.971	1.191	1.398	1.545

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, Census, 2011

**Figure1. The situation of the historic core in Shiraz City**

This area with 377.5 hectares constitutes 2.8 percent of the total of Shiraz (Table II) (Pardaraz, 2005). It should be mentioned that the initial core of the city formed on this area. In addition, it has gone through the wide transformations during the last centuries. Also, it is necessary to note that it encompasses the most significant tangible and intangible cultural heritage including religious

centers and monuments. In fact, it can be seen as historic and cultural identity of the city due to the presence of more than 400 monuments, 8 historic gates, and 12 cultural axes (Bazrgar, 2003). Since the tremendous loss of cultural heritage properties through the absence of citizens, it is necessary for conservation take on some significance in the minds of the general public.

**TABLE II. Area and Population Density (people per hectare) in the Urban Regions of Shiraz**

Urban Regions	Area (hectare)	Population Density
1	3085	60.82
2	1689.4	114.96
3	1803	106.04
4	2318	100.7
5	1671.3	110.8
6	2923	104.1
7	1478.9	103.8
Old area	377.5	110.1
9	2543	102.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>17889.1</b>	<b>103.9</b>

Source: Statistical Center of Shiraz Municipality, 2011

**The Historic core of Shiraz facing with the various surges of transformations**  
***Social transformations and its effects on the body of the historic core***

The process of the extreme social transformation in Shiraz intensified in 1970s in dealing with modernization phenomena during

second Pahlavi dynasty. At the turn of this decade, Shiraz faced with a high population growth which has driven by three factors; migration of villagers to the city, collapsing nomadic living and developing the job opportunities in the city (Bazrgar, 2003). In fact, these factors have brought up several significant changes in the quality of life in the historic core of

Shiraz. The first serious change carried out in the context of depopulation (Hanachi, P et al, 2010). However, the weight of evidence over the years suggests that population of the area dramatically decreased from 102,000 in 1956 to 55,194 in 2006 (Table III). According to the Statistical Center of

Iran, the issue of depopulation was a matter of worry in 1996 while it has become a crisis in the urban planning process. By the hands of modernization trends, the genuine and the native population has remained less than 25 percent of the total in the texture (Pardaraz, 2005).

**TABLE III. The population and its growth rate in Shiraz city in comparison with its historic core**

Part		Year			
		1956	1986	1996	2006
Shiraz	Population	170659	848289	1053025	1340076
	Growth rate	-----	2.19 (%)		1.54 (%)
The historic core	Population	102000	78911	65862	55194
	Growth rate	-----	-1.79 (%)		-1.53 (%)

**Source: Statistical Center of Iran, Census, 2006**

According to statistics published by Statistics Center of Iran (SCI), these transformations have contributed to change at the most of social indicators. This study examined some of changes in the indicators which have showed in the table and figure 2.

- i. According to Census 2011, the speed of depopulation has been more than the entered population (during the last decade, 20,000 people depopulation versa 9,000 people entered). Despite attracting 200,000 people as new population in the city, a relatively small percentage of migrants have absorbed into the area (only 5 percent of the total immigrants) (Pardaraz, 2005). Figure 2 in part (i), shows as well their congestion in the north and west of the area. According to the fieldwork study, 63 percent of residences are living less than 5 years in the area.
- ii. Figure 2 in part (ii), shows the congestion of Afghans' migrants in the area. In fact, studies have shown that the most significant migration flowed into the area has regarded to Afghans people (about 20 percent of the texture are Afghan's migrants (Pardaraz, 2005). They have illustrated that irregular immigration is a crucial factor to reduce the fixation index in the native people to stay at their homes.
- iii. The gross residential density in 2011 estimated to be approximately 140 people per hectare while it was 149 and 174 people per hectare in 2006 and 1996 respectively. The decrease in gross residential density indicates that the area is trending towards a somewhat more depopulation in the area, urban environment despite the fact that its urban boundaries continue to expand (figure 2, part (iii)).
- iv. According to fieldwork study, about 73 percent of residents have been for less than 10 years at

the area. It is also interpreted that the proportion of new residents has become more than the native dwellers who moved to the new areas. Figure 2 in part iv shows the distribution of dwellers in the area.

- v. As figure 2 in part (v) shows that the tendency of settlements is much within the area than its lateral edges. This concept merely means that the extent of deterioration within the area is more. According to study, about 47 percent of dwellers have requested to renovate their houses.
- vi. The lacking of facilities, utilities, and urban infrastructures let to increase discontent among dwellers of the area. As a result, the vulnerability of low-income urban dwellers is more than the others. As figure 2 in part (iv) indicates that the vulnerability of dwellers who live at the edge of the area is much than within it. Dwellers' attitudes toward participation in urban affairs declined due to reduce their fixation and consciousness in the historic core.

#### ***Transformations of economic activities in the historic core of Shiraz***

The historic core is a significance part of commercial and business center of Shiraz city (Bazrgar, 2003). According to macro structure of business and activities, there are three main role defined to this area, commercial, pilgrimage, and tourism roles (Pardaraz, 2005). Although the commercial role of district 2 and 3 is overtaking on the historic core, but pilgrimage, and tourism roles are unmatched field in Shiraz city. The main elements in the system of economic activities are based on are:

- The most significance pilgrimage centers mean Shah-e Cheragh, and Mir Mohammad, brothers of Emam Reza "A" have located in

the historic core. It is necessary to note that they have had more than 5.6 million pilgrimages in the last holiday throughout of Iran (Pardaraz, 2011).

- The traditional bazaar and its complementary fields built in 1881. It has been the most significance backbone of the city. Although it is the host of much tourism because of its architectural values, and also, of it could concentrate traditional business in the different part of its body, but it is gradually losing its own significance, due to; 1) two main road split its structure and separated its functions, and 2) people attitudes have change toward

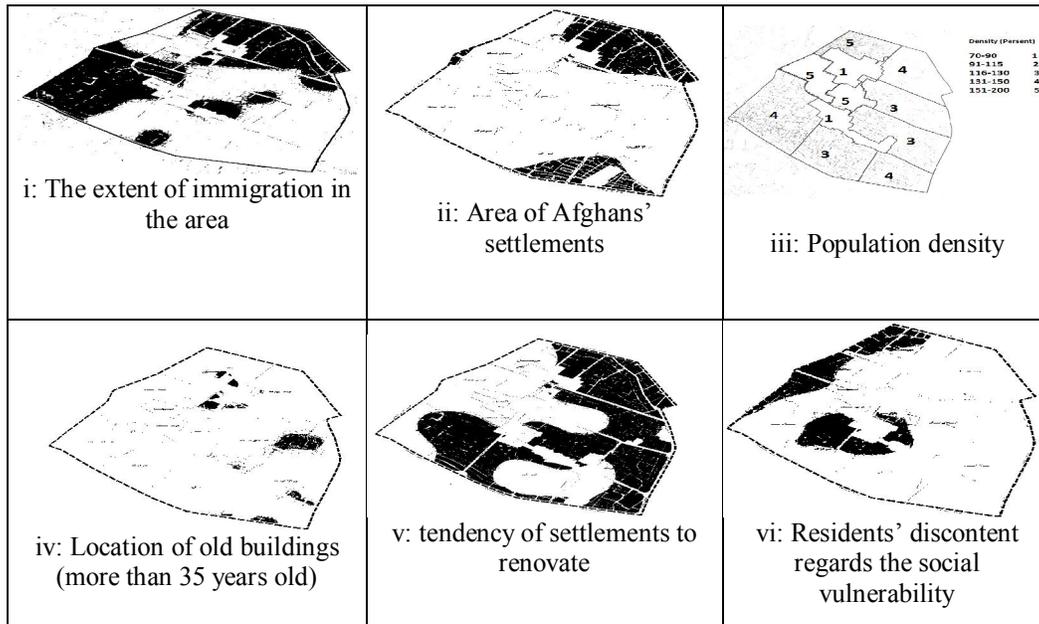
modern commercial centers in the north and west of Shiraz [4]. It causes to make main changes in the bazaar's activities as the most significance urban city center.

It cannot be denied that the tourism role of the historic core is prominent (Bazrgar, 2003). It is due to an existing unique values such as; possess more than 800 monuments, 22 historic passageways, the best sample of Zandiyeh city in Iran, rich and valuable urban fabric, ritual and religious values, and so on. Although it has rich and unique values, there is no integrated conservation plan to connect master plan of the city.

**TABLE IV. Transformations of Socio-demographic Index in the historic core of Shiraz during 1996-2011**

Indexes	Unit	Years		
		1996	2006	2011
Population	people	65862	55194	53125
Households	household	16639	14564	13590
Household size	people	4	3.79	3.9
Immigration in	percent of the total	12.5	8.1	4.8
Six Ratio	percent	105	110.1	110
Literacy Rate	percent	81.7	81.1	79.9
People per housing units	people	6.07	5.5	5.2
Household per housing units	household	1.51	1.45	1.32
Gross residential density	People per hectare	174	149	140
Residential Units	unit	11052	10259	10262

Source: Statistics Center of Iran, Census 1996, 2006, 2011



**Figure2. The critical areas of concern in the historic core of Shiraz based on social indicators**

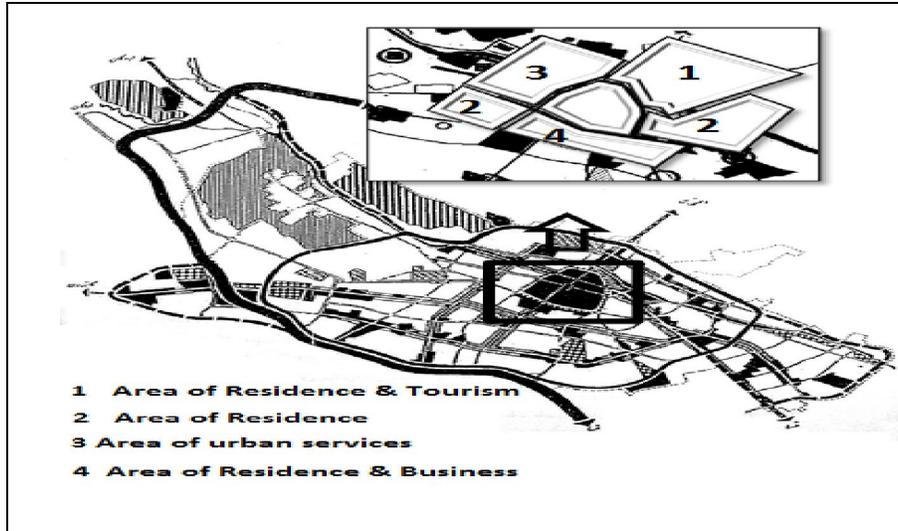


Figure 3. Action of land use neighboring areas surrounding the historic core of Shiraz

**The pathological perspective on the physical aspect of the historic core in Shiraz**

Despite various organizations have defined the definition of the historic core of cities differently, there are some similarities in them. According to the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicraft and Tourism Organization (ICHHTO), “historic areas include the properties remaining from the past which was evidence the passage of man through history; recognizing these resources, makes it possible to learn about the identity and the line of man’s cultural evolution, and in this way to create a context for receiving lessons” (Statutes of ICHTO, 1988). Although these areas possess a rich variety of unique historic buildings and spaces, they are suffering immense deterioration in the different dimensions particularly physical aspects (Habibi et al, 2010). According to the Act of Higher Council for Architecture and Urban Planning in

2006, there are three indicators to recognize deterioration in the old area of cities:

- Fine grain urban texture: It includes the building blocks in which more than 50 percent of them have an area less than 200 square meters,
- Instability in the urban texture: It includes the building blocks in which there is lack of the structural system in more than 50 percent of them,
- Impermeability in the urban texture: It consists of the building blocks in which more than 50 percent of their roads are less than 6 meters.

As mentioned previously, the historic core of Shiraz constitutes 377.5 H out of 17889.1 H. It is pertinent to mention that due to lack of consideration to an appropriate urban conservation programme, physical indicators are degrading at alarming status (Pardaraz, 2011). As mentioned in the table V, we are facing with four controversial issues on the physical aspects of the historic core of Shiraz.

TABLE V. Analysis of the current status on physical aspects of the historic core in Shiraz

Physical variables	The current status
The quality of buildings	Ruined and damaged buildings form about 25 percent of the total which need a serious restoration,
	About 46 percent of old buildings need a structural reform to improve their qualities for surviving,
	The portion of new building or in the process of construction is extremely limit (less than 2 percent),
Type of structure	Resistance structures have a small proportion in the whole area (about 3 percent),
	Mud brick and wood structures form about half of the total (47.38%),
Area of building	The average of the area is 238 square meters in the historic core. This is 165.4 m <sup>2</sup>
	The most of houses have an area between 100 to 200 m <sup>2</sup> (46.1%).
Dating buildings	About 75 percent of the current buildings have more than 30 years old, and more than 50 percent of these buildings have more than 60 years old.

Source: Pardaraz’s Consulting Engineers, Strategic and Structural Plan of Region 8 in Shiraz, 2011

**First**, this area has faced with degradation of quality in the building. It is now considered that about one fourth of buildings and monuments was ruined and damaged. Also, the proportion of buildings which are being reconstructing is less than 2 percent of the total. In addition, about half of the current buildings in the historic core are needed to a structural reform. **Second**, the most current buildings of the area do not make earthquake-resistance because their material of structures was not designed to endure high earthquake. In this respect, studies have illustrated that nearby a half of the total buildings possess a mud brick and wood structure. **Third**, from the viewpoint of building area, the historic core, is fine-grain urban fabric, because about 46 percent of buildings having an area less than 200 square meters. **Lastly**, this beautiful yet naturally frangible environment has high dating back. The statistics have shown that about 75 percent of the current buildings possess more than 30 years old. Furthermore, consideration should be given to this fact that approximately 50 percent of them have more than 60 years old. This situation makes it necessary for decision-makers to formulate urban heritage conservation in the historic core.

#### **Citizens and the structure of urban management in Shiraz**

Urban management structure in Iran has much similarity to the other developing countries in many aspects. This concept does not merely means that these countries are similar to it in terms of governance, and social and cultural context. Building on these notions, there are two organizations to form main pillars of urban management structure in these countries. They are “city council” and “municipality” that later are considered as the most powerful executive force in the city. City councils are as the final manifestation of people power because they would be elected by citizens, and they would select the mayor which is the responsible for urban affairs (Mozayyeni, 1995). Although, it appears that the municipality is the head of executive pyramid of the city, but it is, on the one hand, under the control of the Ministry of the Interior, and, on the other hand, it is under the supervision and control of the city councils (Mohammadi, 2010). It should be mentioned that this model of urban management which is a combination of the public and government, is a new approach and inexperienced. It began from 2000 when the Islamic City Council formed with the supervision and intervention of the government. The city council of Shiraz has passed three periods of four years from 2000 to 2012. Although the establishment of the city council in Shiraz was a extremely serious matter toward indirect citizen participation, it has

tried to do complementary activities and to carry out some plans and programmes in order to fulfill direct citizen participation (Mohammadi, 2010). In order to realize and deepen direct citizen participation, a few number of Islamic City Council like Shiraz have established community and neighborhood councils. This non-governmental, non-political, voluntary, and economically independent council was active in 112 neighborhoods and including 490 people composed of many different social classes from 2001 in Shiraz (Shiraz Municipality, 2012). They have participated to decision-making in the some programmes such as; examination of physical conditions, environmental issues, socio-cultural activities, determination and protection of monuments of neighborhoods, the allay nominalization, and monitoring local libraries (Mohammadi, 2010). It is necessary to note that five categories can be found for citizen participation in the urban development plans. They include provision of funds, selection of consulting engineers, preparation of development plans, examination and adoption of the plans, and lastly plan implementation (Hanachi, S. et al, 1999).

#### **The existing capacities for citizen participation in the historic core of Shiraz**

The process of decentralization instituted in the structure of urban management system in Iran, after establishing Islamic city council in 2000. In order to provide policies and programs of country’s development, it has been considered and emphasized to form local organizations, and give urban affairs in hand of the public in the different levels (Hekmatnia, 2004). It has been acknowledged that city management system changed from Mayor to Mayor-Council. In recent years, new capacities have been added to the early duties of city councils to enhance citizen participation in the urban planning and management. However, the weight of evidence over the years suggests that there have been the growing capacities for citizen participation particularly in planning and managing heritage in the historic core of Iranian cities (Mohammadi, 2010). This paper has reviewed the performance of Shiraz’s city council during the last three its periods. Although, it appears that there are many constraints and limitations for citizen participation in the urban affairs, but it cannot be denied that there has been the following social, economic, political, and cultural capacities as a turning point in the relevant views.

#### **Social capacities:**

- Increasing willingness to form several NGOs and civil societies in regards to urban issues,
- Improving interrelationships in the

neighborhoods and communities,

- Emerging people and groups who are being trusted by local people as the local trustees and the informal local leaders,
- Increasing tendency of experts and academic people to improve citizen participation in the urban affairs,

**Economic capacity:**

- Increasing the non-governmental financial participation has led to increase the level of urban services,
- Conducting investments of private sector in development projects has led to promote the better performances urban services,

**Political capacities:**

- Changing the perspective of government towards decentralization and citizen participation has taken into consideration in the country's 5-year development plans,
- There are clear and strengthened Acts and laws with respects to citizen participation and city council in the Iranian Constitution,

**Cultural capacities:**

- The existence of the spirit of cooperation in the format of new NGOs like Basij Resistance groups in the mosques,
- The existence of religious traditions, which improve the spirit of cooperation and participation.

**Conclusion**

The city of Shiraz has faced with the huge transformations during the last four decades. It was due to a high growth rate of population and wide migration of the rural population, on the one hand, and the lack of an integrated planning and management, on the other hand. These transformations have left devastating effects on the social, economic, and physical aspects of the city particularly on its historic core.

**First**, from the standpoint of social aspects, the historic core of Shiraz has faced with a wide depopulation of native and noble dwellers and instead that settlement of low-income people within it. This change has associated to disrupt the social equation and change in the combination of integrated communities in the historic core. As a result, they do not feel any attachment to the neighborhoods. **Second**, In addition to social effects, there have been serious negative effects on the economic aspects of the historic core. The economic life of Shiraz city has depended to the three vital roles of pilgrimage, tourism and commerce which are being threatened by the hand of recent transformations. It is now considered that the lack of comprehensive plans led

to that the economic activities have tended to the economy of poverty and disability. **Third** examining physical structure of the historic core during the last decades shows that the buildings were constantly under threat of destruction. It is pertinent to mention that due to the lack of urban integrated conservation and management programme, there is a serious degradation of quality in monuments and cultural heritage.

Despite these transformations, it is observed that citizen attitude has increased to local government and citizen participation after 2000. It stems from establishing Islamic city councils and neighborhood councils which have changed the structure of decision-making in urban planning and management. However, in Shiraz city, neighborhoods and city council has experienced three periods of four years during the last years. This movement has created good capacities in the socio-economic, political, and cultural aspects for citizen participation in the decision-making process.

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