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A Review of the Contextual Adaptability of Three Contemporary Urban Paradigms: New Urbanism, Urban Village and Urban Renaissance

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ABSTRACT: By the beginning of the third millennium, environment has become an issue of global importance. Changes arising from globalization has led to the formation of concerns that have inevitably been effective in the field of urban planning /design. New paradigms pertaining to urban policies have become pervasive all over the world, ignorant of the country's local context. Lack of attention to contextual compliance underlying some of these paradigms have caused extremes in some cases that intensifies local-global dualities. This is especially evident in developing countries: there are occasionally some proposals to employ international architectural consulting services with innovative/ new approaches to design or plan for large cities with great local backgrounds. In these circumstances, the adaptability of international planning/design paradigms to local context is highlighted as a point of concern. In this research, firstly, 'contextualism' is reviewed as a theory underlying urban development. Secondly, three recent international urban development paradigms: New Urbanism, Urban Villages and Urban Renaissance and the adaptability of their proposed solutions to urban context will be analyzed. An analytical method for comparative research is used to describe the main ideas of research. In each section, with an overview of the most important related literature, a multi-step process and logical reasoning, the strategies of each paradigm are compared within a model (multiple dimensions of urban design). To compare the adaptability of strategies to the context, 'contextualism' conceptual framework has been utilized. It is concluded that each paradigm has more emphasis on a specific dimension of contextualism which traces back to specific economic, political, cultural circumstances from which that paradigm has been originated. Thus, when applying an international planning/design paradigm to a new environment, it will bring about practical changes only if it is calibrated to the local area's context initially.

Keywords: New Urbanism, Urban Village and Urban Renaissance, Contextualism, Sustainable Development.

INTRODUCTION

Along with the population growth, city development is inevitable, but if it is carried out in an unharmonious and hasty way, it will lead to inconsistencies in different dimensions. Following shared global values and economic, cultural, political, and technical advancements and presence of global entrepreneurs that are sensitive to meet

cosmopolitan demands, urban developments replicate the shape and forms that are completely out of context. The above approach is a challenge that urban managers, planners and urban designers are facing. The challenge is how to coordinate the universal strategies with the local context by the internationalization of urban development and design services, to achieve realistic and workable solutions on one hand and support the diversity that exists

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in the very nature of the place on the other hand. Adapting urban design approaches within the local context should follow the slogan "think globally, act locally". In this regard adapting global strategies in the local context is the issue that should be addressed in urban development process.

THE GLOBALIZATION OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT PARADIGMS

Globalization has made the different parts of the world become closer together. Currently, by the aid of digital technology and telecommunications, international trade and the emergence of multinational clients, architectural and urban development have an international scope and the performance of a majority of them, having multiple offices in different continents, is global (Knox, 2007). At the beginning of the last century, the domination of modernist view and its consequences turned to an international style. In this era many architects and urban planners' ideologies have been dominated by the idea of design beyond traditional boundaries particularly due to political and economic interrelationships. This movement, based on the theoretical foundations of globalization, changed from an individual taste to an organized phenomenon in the last decades of the twentieth century (Shayan, 2011). But the failure of standardizing approaches resulted in the formation of critical approaches.

At the beginning of the third millennium, environment has become a matter of global importance and economic, social, political and cultural changes occur in order to prevent the falls that threatens human survival. Environmental issues and globalization are intimately interwoven and prevailing environmental challenges, have turned to global issues.

In recent decades, 'Sustainable development' is the most influential school of thought that has globally affected development in various political, economic and social aspects. In this regard, a 'sustainable city' is a city that maintains the quality of the environment, improves social justice and economic efficiency with the aim of moving towards greater efficiency in the use of resources, while tries to reduce inequality, the dependency on cars, and using renewable resources. Sustainable development in a community is guaranteed only when the economic output and employment rate is provided in an optimal level, Social welfare and high quality of life besides healthy, clean and green life away from the pollution

concerns flow in the city (Bahrainy, 1998).

Sustainable development led to the formation of several concepts, whose supporters believe that once realized, they would lead to sustainability in urban areas. Those concepts include compact city (Jenks et al., 1996), the edge city (Garreau, 1991), the poly centric city (Lynch, 1961; Lessinger, 1962; Frey, 1999), the urban quarter (Krier, 1998), the sustainable urban neighborhood (Rudlin & Falk, 1999), the eco-village (Barton, 2000), the millennium village (DETR, 2000), urban revitalization (Wagner et al., 1995 & Teaford, 1990), and the New Urbanism, Transit- Orient Development, Traditional Neighborhood Development and Urban Village (Katz et al., 1994; Calthorpe, 1993; Kelbaugh, 1992; Aldous, 1992; Biddulph et al., 2003; Tait, 2002). These concepts have become important in legitimizing and coordinating more finite elements of an underlying development strategy and in some cases providing a perceived deeper legitimacy to the act of planning (Bahrainy, 2012). Credibility of these concepts and translating them into practice is a difficult dilemma to deal with. In this regard concentration of this paper is on three of these concepts.

Undoubtedly, aims of all of these concepts is to improve quality of life, but since each of their strategies addresses specific issues affecting their unique origins; this article is therefore intended to remind and raise awareness about this issue by reviewing the adaptability of three urban development paradigms in the context of sustainable development: New Urbanism, Urban Villages, Urban Renaissance.

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on descriptive—analytical method. To collect data for this research extensive literature review has been conducted. Since the study has a theory based on qualitative arguments, the analytical method for comparative research is used to describe the main ideas. In each section with an overview of the most important written sources related to the topic, by the help of a multi-step process and logical reasoning, the strategies of each movement are presented and compared within the model (multiple dimensions of urban design) proposed by Carmona (2003). To compare the adaptability of those strategies to the context, 'contextualism' conceptual framework has been utilized. Fig.1 shows the ideogram of the research's methodology.



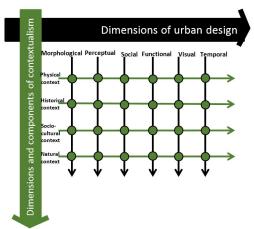


Fig. 1. The Ideogram of Research's Methodology

THE NEED FOR AN URBAN DEVELOPMENT CONFORMING TO URBAN CONTEXT

Modernists' break with the past and modern development's lack of coordination with the built environment has caused a chaotic urban space and cultural mismatch that gradually deteriorated urban identity. Despite such developments, contextual design is formed in continuity with the past, gradually over the years in line with nature and its surroundings. Contextual design is based on natural form rather than a standardized template occurs without any limitations. The latter encompass various cultural, social and economic aspects. Disregarding contextual design leads to conflicts in culture and identity and creates dissatisfaction. In addition, human beings belong to their environment, while the environment also belongs to the same people, and finally both give their identity to each other and find their own identity from each other (Shaygan, 2001).

But how can the adaptability be realized? In response to this question, it seems that the more design strategies adapt to the contextual history, culture, identity and meaning; the more that paradigm would be reasponsive.

In this regard, local context gains importance. Schulz (1980) notes that as the place is a comprehensive phenomenon, it will have an incomplete meaning if it does not house itself with the context of any locality. He therefore strongly emphasizes the need to take locality into account. He highlights that place's tangible values of material substance, shape, texture and color harbor environmental characters; as these tangible values

will gain meaning together with the abstract meanings that they will include. He defines the place within both the different quantitative and qualitative dimensional sections; and actually emphasizes that a sense of place is not only made up through the tangible details of the space but also the sense of place is established together with the abstract (qualitative) aspects and meaningful feelings. He seeks meaning and symbolic function by understanding the systematic pattern of the settlement. In summary, Norberg-Schulz conceives people's life world as a basis for orientation and identity (Nesbitt, 1996).

Related to schulz's point of view, "contextualism" views context as a historical event. Primarily, it merely attended to physical dimension of urban developments, but gradually tended to humanistic and socio- cultural aspects. Contextualists believe that city's physical component is not only affected by its internal features, but also depends on the environment and the surroundings. Thus, we cannot merely consider the essence of phenomena and its dimensions, regardless of the context in which it is located. (Stokols, 1987).

Tavalaee (2001), defines contextualism as the adaptation to physical, historical and socio-cultural contexts (Fig. 1), in which the contextualist designer should be able to discover the very features of a place and consider it as a part of the design process. In addition to the above three contexts, 'natural context' has also been considered in completion of contextualism different aspects (Fig.2.).

Physical Context

The form of the city is not evaluated by itself, rather it is usually studied in the broader environmental context. An architectural masterpiece is carved in the larger urban system and placed in a hierarchy of categories. Thus, contextualism links architecture and urban development in a certain context. Urbanist's tendency to build in the existing context is defined by interweaving the new and the old in a way to create a lively whole (Waterhouse, 197).

Historical Context

Historians believe that past have genuine guidelines for the contemporary urbanism. When a community breaks with its history, it has considered the whole past generation's works as vain attempts. Man, in a word, has no nature; what he has is history (Rowe & Koetter, 1978).



Socio- Cultural Context

Urban form is a reflection of the set of cultural rules. People share a set of values, beliefs, a world view and

symbol system which are learned and transmitted. These create a system of rules and habits which reflect ideals and create a lifestyle, guiding behavior, roles, manners, as well as built form (Rapoport, 1977).

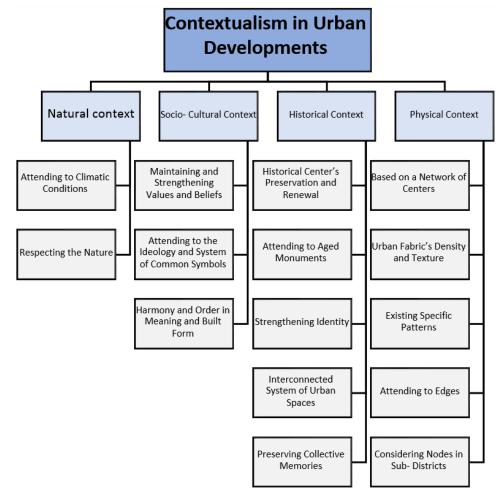


Fig. 2. The Dimensions and Components of Contextualism (Tavalaee, 2001)

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRINCIPLES AND PROPOSED SOLUTIONS OF THREE PARADIGMS: NEW URBANISM, URBAN VILLAGES AND URBAN RENAISSANCE

New Urbanism

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, United States was growing complicatedly and without a preconceived Plan. Intermingled, unplanned land uses were one of the major city problems. After the Second World War with the advent of modern architecture and caroriented development, a novel pattern based on zoning ordinance emerged. It caused land use separation and city sprawl. By 1980s, majority of American architects and urbanists announced their concern and dissatisfaction towards declining urban centers and increasing dispersed, car-oriented local communities distant from the center.

Into this opening -where the modernist city found itself challenged on several counts- stepped the



vigorous prophets of new urbanism. As an antidote to the placeless suburbs, they offered a new prescription for neighborhoods that followed historic principles and buildings that employed traditional materials. To reduce the ailments generated by car-oriented development, they advocated urban living in vibrant, connected, and diverse places. Their ideas have inspired a generation of designers and planners. The new urbanism involves new ways of thinking about urban form and development. Drawing on historic lessons from the most beautiful and successful cities, new urban approaches affirm the appeal of compact, mixed use, walkable, and relatively self-contained communities. Instead of car-oriented development practices, new urbanism argues for traditional architecture and building patterns that facilitate walking and that create strong urban identities. In sum, in an era when modernism has profoundly affected the shape of the city, new urbanism presents a new image of the good community (Grant, 2006).

New urbanists principles are asserted as follows (CNU & HUD, 2000):

- 1. Walkability:
- Most things within a 10-minute walk of home and work.
- Pedestrian friendly street design (buildings close to street; porches, windows & doors; tree-lined streets; on street parking; hidden parking lots; garages in rear lane; narrow, slow speed streets).
 - Free of cars pedestrian streets in special cases.
 - 2. Connectivity:
- Interconnected street grid network disperses traffic & eases walking.
 - A hierarchy of narrow streets, boulevards, and alleys.
- High quality pedestrian network and public realm makes walking pleasurable.
 - 3. Mixed-Use & Diversity:
- A mix of shops, offices, apartments, and homes on site. Mixed-use within neighborhoods, within blocks, and within buildings.
- Diversity of people, ages, income levels, cultures, and races.
- 4. Mixed Housing: A range of types, sizes and prices in closer proximity.
 - 5. Quality Architecture & Urban Design:
- Emphasis on beauty, aesthetics, human comfort, and creating a sense of place; Special placement of civic uses and sites within community. Human scale architecture & beautiful surroundings nourish the human spirit.
 - 6. Traditional Neighborhood Structure:

- Discernable center and edge.
- Public space at center.
- Importance of quality public realm; public open space designed as civic art.
- Contains a range of uses and densities within 10-minute walk.
- Transect planning: Highest densities at town center; progressively less dense towards the edge. The transect is an analytical system that conceptualizes mutually reinforcing elements, creating a series of specific natural habitats and/or urban lifestyle settings. The Transect integrates environmental methodology for habitat assessment with zoning methodology for community design. The professional boundary between the natural and man-made disappears, enabling environmentalists to assess the design of the human habitat and the urbanists to support the viability of nature. This urban-to-rural transect hierarchy has appropriate building and street types for each area along the continuum.
 - 7. Increased Density:
- More buildings, residences, shops, and services closer together for ease of walking, to enable a more efficient use of services and resources, and to create a more convenient, enjoyable place to live.
- New Urbanism design principles are applied at the full range of densities from small towns, to large cities.
 - 8. Green Transportation:
- A network of high-quality trains connecting cities, towns, and neighborhoods together.
- Pedestrian-friendly design that encourages a greater use of bicycles, rollerblades, scooters, and walking as daily transportation.
 - 9. Sustainability:
- Minimal environmental impact of development and its operations.
- Eco-friendly technologies, respect for ecology and value of natural systems.
 - Energy efficiency.
 - Less use of finite fuels.
 - More local production.
 - More walking, less driving.
 - 10. Quality of Life:

Taken together these add up to a high quality of life well worth living, and create places that enrich, uplift, and inspire the human spirit.



Table 1. Classifying New Urbanism's Proposed Solutions.

	Defined	Dominant Values	Proposed Solutions						
	Problems		Morphological Dimension	Perceptual Dimension	Social Dimension	Visual Dimension	Functional Dimension	Temporal Dimension	
New Urbanism	-Urban Sprawl -Car Oriented Developments -Ugliness -Unlimited Growth -Declining Urban Centers	-Amenity -Equity -Walkability -Community -Tradition	-More Density Parallel to Preserving Existing Structures -Compact, Pedestrian-Friendly, and Mixed Use Neighborhoods -Climate, Topography and History, Forms Architecture and Landscape	-Increased Legibility by Perceptual Linkages -Reinforcing Community Identity -Clear Sense of Location, Weather, and Time	-Reinforcing the Culture of Democracy -Safe, Comfortable, Interesting Streets and Squares for Pedestrians	-Human Scale Architecture & Beautiful Surroundings Nourish the Human Spirit -Emphasis on Beauty, Aesthetics and Human Comfort	-Mixed- Use Within Neighborhoods, Blocks, Buildings -Interconnected Street Grid Network Disperses Traffic & Eases Walking	-Preserving and Maintaining Historical Buildings -Preserving Respected Traditional Structures	

Table (1) Presents New Urbanism's Defined Problems, Dominant Values and Proposed Solutions and Recommendations, Classified on the Basis of Carmona's (2003) Dimensions of Urban Design.

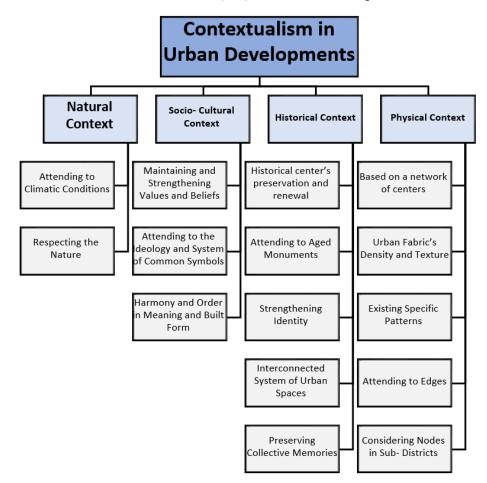


Fig. 3. New Urbanism's Adaptability to Contextual Dimensions



Urban Village

In the late 1980s, the 'urban village idea' was introduced as a significant and legitimate approach for creating successful and sustainable neighborhoods. This approach was to compensate for the substantial failures of urban planning in recent decades and to revive valuable principles used in the successful shaping of cities in the past. In recent times, the term 'urban village' was first used by urban sociologist Herbert Ganz in 1950s and later by Jane Jacobs in 1960s. The most fundamental influence in the emergence of 'new urbanism' in the United States and 'urban village' in the UK may no doubt, be referred to the writings of Jacobs. Since then urban village has been applied as a strategy in many cities throughout the world to serve different purposes, but especially to create and regenerate livable neighborhoods (Bahrainy, 2012).

In 1992, the Urban Villages Group published the first edition of the Urban Villages report, which was prepared as a discussion document, or form of manifesto, for the concept. The report concluded with information on urban codes and estate management and it presented the entire concept in the form of an imaginary development called Greenville that was seen to embody the key principles of the concept. These became established as the main tenets of the movement (Neal, 2003):

- A development of adequate size, or critical mass;
- A walkable and pedestrian-friendly environment;
- A good mix of uses and good opportunities for

employment;

- A varied architecture and a sustainable urban form;
- Mixed tenure for both housing and employment uses:
- Provision of basic shopping, health and educational needs:
 - A degree of self-sufficiency.

Aldous (1995) has also suggested a few Urban Village design and development principles, in which neighborhood constitutes the essence of urban village. Rudlin and Falk (1999) introduce some of the characteristics of ecological neighborhoods, social neighborhoods and model neighborhoods. Some of the main characteristics they suggest are: limiting the size to a proper level, cohesive form, clear definition for the center, desirable urban density, diverse and mixed uses, providing stores, work place, school, and residence for all income groups, employment opportunities, recreation, public services, reducing car dependency, easy access to public transportation, in planning access network due attention should be paid to car and pedestrian, simultaneously, diversity of housing types and an environment suitable for pedestrians (see also: Perry, 1929; South worth and Owens, 1993; South worth 1997). These principles, which make up the main elements of the Urban Village concept are indispensable parts of urban policies and urban development guidelines in many cities these days. This is, in many ways, a major departure from modernist principles (Bahrainy, 2012).

Table 2. Classifying Urban Village's Proposed Solutions

	Defined	Dominant Values	Proposed solutions						
	Problems		Morphological Dimension	Perceptual Dimension	Social Dimension	Visual Dimension	Functional Dimension	Temporal Dimension	
Urban Village	-Environmental Pollution -The Pressure of Development on Farm Lands -Lack of Character, Sense of Place, and Community -Lack of Affordable Housing	-Urbanity -Amenity -Equity -Walkability -community -Tradition -Village Life	-Respecting Vernacular Architecture -Encouraging varied Architectural Forms -A Clear Definition for the Center -Adapting Development to Ecological Context -Increased Density in Villages	-Legible, Focal Points, Strong Street Corners	-Maximum Possible Self Sufficiency -Developing Civic Organizations -Encouraging Consultation and Community Participation -Bring Life to the Buildings and the Spaces in Front of them Civicorganizations -Encouraging Consultation and Community Participation -Bring Life to the Buildings and the Spaces in Front of them	-Human Scale Architecture & Beautiful Surroundings Nourish the Human Spirit -Emphasis on Beauty, Aesthetics and Human Comfort	-Provision of Basic Shopping, Health and Educational Nneeds -a Good Mix of Uses and Good Opportunities for Employment -Reducing Car Dependency, -Easy Access to Public Transportation -Connected Street Network -Traffic Calming	-Variety of Buildings and Spaces that Change and Adapt Over Time	

Table (2) Shows Urban Village's Defined Problems, Dominant Values and Proposed Solutions and Recommendations, Classified on the Basis of Carmona (2003) Dimensions of Urban Design.



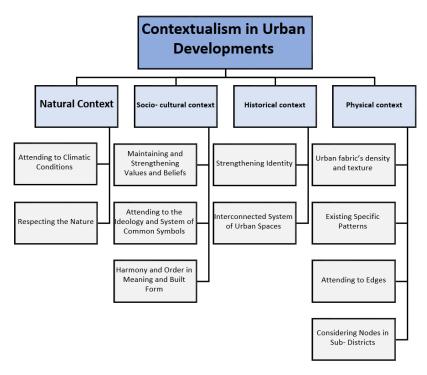


Fig. 4. Urban Village's Adaptability to Contextual Dimensions

Urban Renaissance

The Urban Task Force, convened at the behest of the Government and chaired by Richard Rogers, included a multidisciplinary coterie of urban practitioners, policy makers and practitioners. The Urban Task Force in UK was charged with identifying "...causes of urban decline in England and recommending practical solutions to bring people back into our cities, towns and urban neighborhoods. It will establish a new vision for urban regeneration founded on the principles of design excellence, social well-being and environmental responsibility within a viable economic and legislative framework". The Task Force's report contains over 100 recommendations for change. They cover design, transport, management, regeneration, skills, planning and investment (Hall, 2003). The report illustrates the key benefits that mixed-use and integrated urban neighborhoods can offer through proximity to work, shops and basic social, educational and leisure activities. Good urban design, the report suggests, 'should encourage more people to live near to those services which they require on a regular basis' (Neal, 2003).

"Excellence in the design of buildings and spaces cannot exist in isolation from a clear understanding of what makes for the most sustainable urban form. In this report we argue that the compact, many-centered city of mixed uses which favors walking, cycling and public transport, is the most sustainable form" (Urban Task Force, 1999, p. 40).

The quality of the built environment in our towns and cities has a crucial impact on the way they function. Well-designed buildings, streets, neighborhoods and districts are essential for successful social, economic and environmental regeneration. Recent experience in Dutch, German and Scandinavian cities show that we have fallen a long way behind in quality of urban life (UTF, 1999). New urban developments, on brownfield or greenfield land, must be designed too much higher standards if they are to attract people back into our towns and cities. Urban developments should be integrated with their surroundings, optimize access to public transport and maximize their potential by increasing density in appropriate conditions. They should seek diversity; encouraging a mix of activities, services, incomes and tenures within neighborhoods. Land must be used efficiently, respect to local traditions and keep minimum negative environmental impacts. Priority should be given to high architectural standards and to the design of public spaces between buildings where people meet and move about. Quality of design is not just about creating new developments. It is also about how we make the best of our existing urban environments, from historic urban



districts to low density suburbs. The Government should prepare a national urban design framework, defining the core principles of urban design, and setting out non-prescriptive guidelines showing how good design can support local plans and regeneration strategies. The use of spatial 'masterplans' - a three-dimensional strategy that explores how a new development will work in its wider

urban context - is encouraged. This would not only bring greater rigor to the way that public funders and planners assess the likely impact of development, but also create a valuable tool for improving urban design (UTF, 1999).

Table 3. Classifying Urban Renaissance's Proposed Solutions

	Defined	Dominant	Proposed Solutions						
	Problems	Values	Morphological Dimension	Perceptual Dimension	Social Dimension	Visual Dimension	Functional Dimension	Temporal Dimension	
Urban Renaissance	-Social Polarization -Rapid Consumption of Natural Resources -The Social Transformation - Flowing from Increased Life Expectancy and New Lifestyle Choices -Poor Design of Towns and Cities	-Well Designed Towns and Cities -Compact and Connected Cities -Supporting Diversity	-Limit Greenfield Land Releases and Channel Development in to Redeveloping Brownfield Sites -Create Home Zones that Put the Pedestrian First in Residential Areas -Increasing Density in Appropriate Conditions	-Identity Reinforcing and the Collective Memory	-Democratic Local Leadership with an Increased Commitment to Public Participation -The Renaissance Require a Change of Culture - through Education, Debate, Information and Participation. It is About Skills, Beliefs and Values, not just PoliciesPriority to the Design of Public Spaces where People Meet	-Respecting Local Traditions in Architectural Forms	-Environment Well Integrated with Public Transport -Mix of Activities Services, Incomes and Tenures	-Built Environment Adaptable to Change in Time	

Table (3) Shows Urban Renaissance's Defined Problems, Dominant Values and Proposed Solutions and Recommendations, Classified on the Basis of Carmona (2003) Dimensions of Urban Design.

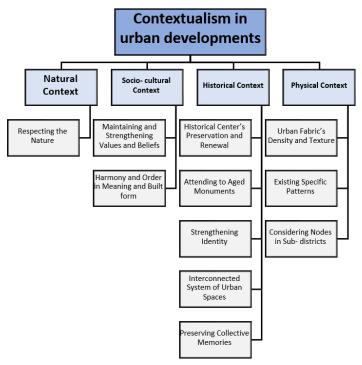


Fig. 5. Urban Renaissance's Adaptability to Contextual Dimensions



ANALYZING THE ADAPTION OF EACH PARADIGM'S PROPOSED SOLUTIONS TO URBAN CONTEXT

Fig. 6. Compares the adaptability of the proposed solutions of each paradigm with the contextualism dimensions and components. According to Figs. 3-5, each

paradigm has more emphasis on a specific dimension or component of contextualism. However, this matter traces back to their specific origins. It should be noted that emphasizing on some specific components of a context, does not necessarily mean disregarding other dimensions.

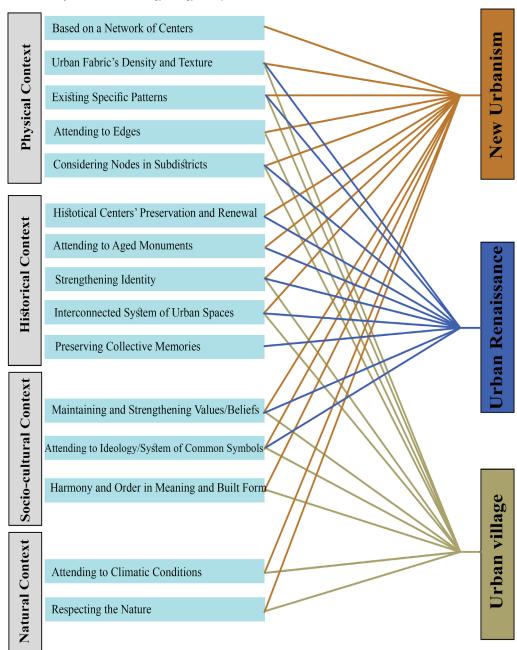


Fig. 6. Analyzing the Adaptation of Each Paradigm's Proposed Solutions to Context



CONCLUSION

Each paradigm's achievement in addressing urban issues is undoubtedly directly depending on how well they could adapt the contextual features. Each paradigm has been developed due to specific economic, political, and cultural circumstances and in terms of conditions of their own era with the ambition to resolve part of the context's weaknesses of its time. To better clarify the achievements of this paper, the context of the Iranian city over the history, together with Iranian theorists' opinion toward this topic must be surveyed and specifically analyzed.

According to the results of this research, New Urbanism is more adapted to physical context along with socio-cultural context (though, unlike the initial ideals it led to better social life for the affluent), Urban Village adapted the natural and historical context and Urban Renaissance seems more adaptable to historical and socio-cultural context. Hence, when applying each paradigm's proposed solutions to a certain context, strengths and weaknesses of the local area together with

its opportunities and threats must be comprehensively recognized and in the next step, corresponding solutions should be considered.

In terms of contemporary architecture and urbanism in the current conditions, that either large-scale architectural or urban development projects based on imported services and new planning and design approaches are suggested sporadically, or self-alienated effective professionals are encountered with new global requirements, and there is no efficient system to resolve local- global dualities, this research would achieve its goal if it could solely warn against how to apply global paradigms' proposed solutions in the specific conditions of the local context.



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