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Original Research Article

Strategies to Promote Vitality in Mehr Housing Complexes: An Analysis of the Lived Experience of the Residents and the Views of Experts

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Abstract

Problem statement: Adopting a modernist view of dwelling and limiting this view to physical needs have reduced urban spaces to one-dimensional, inhuman, soulless, lifeless structures. Moreover, they have reduced the use of residential complexes to shelters. The growing population in urban communities has led to the construction of residential complexes, especially in metropolitan areas, where modernist and minimalist approaches have been employed to provide quick and cheap shelter for the poor. For almost a decade, the construction of these residential complexes in Iran has been done under the name of Mehr Housing. The main obstacles to improving the vitality of such complexes, which have also been raised by the authorities, are financial issues and limited budgets.

Research objective: This study first seeks to identify vitality and its components, and then to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the three housing complexes of Mehr housing in Pardis city (Hesa, Parseh, and Samen) in terms of vitality. For this purpose, the behaviors of their residents were observed and recorded. In addition, in-depth interviews were carried out with the residents of the complexes, and then strategies were proposed to enhance the vitality of the complexes in the current conditions at a fraction of the cost.

Research Method: The methods of this research are qualitative and survey. The data for this study was collected through open-ended interviews. For this purpose, documentary research was carried out. In the first phase of the study, valid written sources, including books and articles, were reviewed and related experiences, the relevant concepts associated with the dimensions and variables of vitality, were extracted. In the second phase, survey studies, in addition to observing and recording behaviors, in-depth interviews were conducted with the citizens of the three residential complexes of Hesa, Parseh, and Samen as a case study, and the data gathered was categorized and analyzed using the content analysis method.

Conclusion: With reference to the financial difficulties of Mehr housing projects in the current situation, a logical solution requires paying attention to the mental, immaterial, and non-capital components of vitality. Based on the views of experts and analysis of interviews with residents, the most important immaterial component is a sense of belonging to a place. Part of the problem is that residents lack a sense of belonging to their place of residence. Since they have settled there for a long time, they do not know each other and find themselves in a new and unfamiliar place. However, it is possible to increase a sense of belonging among the residents of these complexes by adopting some measures. The proposed policy of this research is to speed up the process of creating a sense of place, strengthen social solidarity, and familiarize residents with each other through participatory and interactive activities in which their presence is necessary.

Keywords: *Vitality, Sense of Belonging, Mehr Housing, SShahr-ePardis.*

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Introduction

Access to housing or a shelter is one of the first needs of any society. Today, the growing population of the city has increased the necessity of building residential complexes, and we are witnessing mushrooming residential buildings whose low quality has turned them into commodities with an expiry date. Neither architects nor people are interested in such buildings. In addition to losing the country's capital, this might cause art such as architecture to be forgotten and devalued (Hashempour & Sami, 2018). Mehr Housing Project, the largest housing construction project in the country, is based on the experience of mass housing construction in Western countries after World War II, and this project has been inspired by cheap and fast housing projects to provide housing for the poor and middle class in large volumes (Naseri, 2019). Although Mehr housing projects in Iran have been finished and people have settled in, the success of the projects in creating a quality of life for their residents has remained a claim (NematiMehr & RezaeiKhabooshan, 2015).

Satisfaction with the living environment and vitality are important factors influencing life satisfaction (Malekshahi, Nikpour, & Habibi, 2018). Today, one of the most important issues in the design of public spaces in the city, especially in residential complexes, is the vitality of these places, which encourages the continuous presence of citizens (Khorasanizadeh, Saberi, Momeni & Mousavi, 2019). Vitality in public spaces refers to a safer, more desirable, and more attractive environment that has the potential to offer more options for social activities and to serve as a place for cultural exchanges (Jalaladdini & Oktay, 2012). Lack of vitality and life in urban areas disrupts vitality and health in daily life then imposes lots of costs on various social, cultural, spiritual, and psychological dimensions by creating obstacles to public participation and social interactions (Sedaghati & Farsi, 2016).

One of the aspects of life satisfaction is satisfaction with the living environment and, consequently, residential buildings. Today, with the development of human societies and the changes in the lifestyles and dwellings of people, designers and planners have focused on the quality of spaces and the vitality of the environment to ensure the satisfaction of residents (Toloudel, Pourbagher, & Mahdavi, 2016). The role of the economic factor has become so prominent that, in some cases, managers and designers have neglected the quality of the housing and have reduced it to the level of shelter (Ansari, 2015).

In addition, the possibility of providing citizens with housing, including the necessary components, is not possible for a variety of reasons, such as the limitations of modern life, which are affected by population growth and the relentless growth of urbanization in the present era, as well as unfavorable economic conditions and the limited budget of Mehr housing projects. Therefore, this article attempts to identify the components of vitality through the existing obstacles using landscape knowledge and by examining the three housing complexes of MehrHesa, Parseh, inPardis city as a case study:

This study intends to answer the following questions. Concerning the lack of budget and financial constraints facing Mehr housing projects, can employing proper management and use of landscape knowledge enhance the vitality of these complexes at a minimum cost? If so, what are the strategies?

Literature review

Rafieian and his colleagues evaluated Mehr Housing in Mehrshahr in Zahedan city from economic, physical, socio-cultural, and political perspectives and concluded that the quality of the urban environment in Mehrshahr was low in all aspects (Rafieian, Masoudi Rad & Rezaei, 2014). Shokrgozar and his associates evaluated the housing satisfaction in Mehr Housing of Rasht using physical-spatial, functional-structural, socio-cultural, and economic indicators and concluded that the satisfaction reported on all indicators was moderate and weak, and only the financial

conditions of the residents forced them to live there (Shokrgzar, Sojudi, Mohammadzadeh, Shabanpour & Nazari, 2016).

In their study, Huang and Du found that the vitality of housing complexes was influenced by public facilities, neighborhood units, housing characteristics, social environment, and rental rates. They concluded that the government should improve not only the physical housing space but also the public housing and social allocation plans. Moreover, it should consider the different needs of public housing residents to improve housing satisfaction and their efficiency (Huang & Du, 2015). By examining the housing challenges of KazerunMehr housing from the residents' point of view, Shams Al-Dini and his co-workers concluded that the citizens' satisfaction was below average. Accordingly, they identified five reasons for dissatisfaction, which included inappropriate location, weakness of physical welfare services, socio-economic problems, weakness of management, and environmental problems (Shams Al-Dini, Saffarian & Nekoueebakhsh, 2018).

Masoudirad et al. evaluated the policies of Mehr housing using the sustainability indicators of Khorramabad city and found that paying attention to the dimensions of sustainability could be a solution to the problems of Mehr housing (Masoudirad, Ebrahimzadeh & Rafieian, 2019). In the study of Mehr housing in Babol, Yazdani et al. found that individual characteristics of people such as gender, marriage, age, and income could be associated with the satisfaction of their place of residence. They concluded that the satisfaction level of residents at MehrBabol housing was moderate and there was a significant relationship between gender, age, monthly income, and the marital status of people and their satisfaction with housing units (Yazdani, Salmani & Pashazadeh, 2017). Tucker and Abbas found that physical design features were effective factors in promoting the vitality and quality of densely populated neighborhoods (Tucker & Abbas, 2018). Behzad et al. studied the six components of housing shape and pattern, housing strength and safety, environmental quality, accessibility, infrastructures, and land use to understand which components contribute to the quality components of Mehr housing. The result showed that shape, the housing pattern, and land use were the most important components (Behrad, Akbari & Ahmadi, 2019). In the study on the satisfaction of residents at Mehr housing in Sham Asbi Ardabil, Yazdani et al. found job status, facilities and amenities, easy access, and public transportation were effective factors that increased the satisfaction and vitality of the residents of this place (Yazdani, Ahmadi & Pashazadeh, 2019). To address the current situation in Mehr housing projects, Naseri also proposed strategies such as creating spatial diversity, diverse territories, and diversity of landscapes (Naseri, 2019). What differentiates this study from previous research is its focus on vitality strategies in Mehr housing complexes at minimal cost due to economic conditions.

Definition of vitality

Vitality can be synonymous with words such as "livability", "liveliness", "viability," and "and in cities, it stands for a space where different people attend voluntarily or compulsorily to spend moments on a wide range of days (Foroutan, Sanaatgar kakhki & Rezaei, 2013, 66). Vitality is a state of liveliness, dynamism, and communication with the environment that is effective and influential in this relationship (ZakirHaghighi, 2019). Vitality is an urban characteristic including a set of physical and non-physical qualities and organizational systems that provide the possibility of a happy life for citizens (Golkar, 2007). According to Gahel (2008), an environment can be vital if people, in addition to performing necessary and routine activities, are also largely engaged in selective and social activities (Gahel, 2008). Lynch defines vitality as the degree of desirability and habitat support of vital functions, biological supplies, capacity, and capacity for human life (Lynch, 1981). Montgomery enumerates vitality along with the diversity of the main components

of activity in urban space and believes that vitality distinguishes successful urban areas from each other. Landry defines urban vitality as the raw power and energy in a city (Montgomery, 1998, 97) and contends that this power can be channeled and focused toward a specific goal to create a vibrant city (Landry, 2000). Urban vitality does not deal with population and the number of people in urban spaces, but it is a quality that depends on the location of the landscape, wherein the audience from all walks of life attends to perform voluntary and social activities in addition to mandatory activities (MortazaMehrabani, Mansoori & Javadi, 2016).

Therefore, based on what has been reviewed, several indicators represent vitality. In this study, first, the indicators and factors of vitality mentioned by different theorists were reviewed, and then the indicators were divided into two groups: physical and semantic (Table 1). It should be noted that the physical characteristics in this study refer to those indicators that create vitality by changing or creating a new quality in the architectural form. In some ways, the form and objects have been used to establish a sense of vitality in the environment, such as diversity of uses, creating collective spaces, etc., but semantic indicators of vitality are not limited to physical changes in society and include issues such as social interactions, neighborhood relationships, and a sense of belonging to a place of residence. It should be noted that indicators such as security, which can be created in the environment both by objective (material) elements and subjective indicators, fall into both groups. Objective and subjective indicators affecting the vitality of urban spaces were extracted from articles and studies conducted in this field and are detailed in the following table.

In Table 2, the components shared by experts were selected based on their high level of frequency (see Table 1) and were compiled to be used as a framework for evaluating the case study.

Case Studies

In this part of the study, according to the objectives of the research, all residential complexes of Mehr housing in Pardiswere examined. These residential complexes have been fully opened and all of their units have been used by residents. The buildings have 5 to 6 floors. Examples of residential complexes are Hesa, Parseh, and Samen in Pardis City. In the following section, the vitality of the residential projects was evaluatedby careful observation and analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with the residents of these complexes.

Research method

The methods of this research are qualitative and survey. The data for this study was collected through open-ended interviews. For this purpose, documentary research was carried out. In the first phase of the study, valid written sources, including books and articles, were reviewed and related experiences, the relevant concepts associated with the dimensions and variables of vitality, were extracted. In the second phase, survey studies, in addition to observation, in-depth interviews were conducted with the residents of the three residential complexes of Hesa, Parseh, and Samen as the case studies. The interviews were continued until the theoretical saturation, and then the data obtained from the interviews and observations were analyzed using the content analysis method. The main points mentioned by the interviewees were placed into several main categories. Then, the level of residents' satisfaction with each of the general categories was analyzed and evaluated (Table 3).

Examination of the current situation and analysis of the spaces of the three complexes

In this section, the data were gathered from in-depth interviews with residents and through the recording of residents' behaviors in residential complexes of Hesa, Parseh, and Samen by the authors of this study. The data were analyzed and the answers provided by residents fell under 6 general categories (sense of belonging to a place, infrastructures and services, environmental aspects,

Table 1. An introduction to vitality indicators. Source: Authors.

Indicators	Semantic	Physical	Expert, year, book, or article
Permeability-Readability diversity-Flexibility-Visual compatibility-Personalization capabilities-Energy efficiency-Cleanliness	-	Permeability-Diversity-Legibility-Flexibility-Visual compatibility-Personalization capabilities-Energy efficiency-Cleanliness	Bentley, 2003 "Responsive environments"
Diversity in forms –functions, and uses-Utilization of natural elements-Invitation and presence of people-security	Security	Diversity in forms –functions, and uses-Utilization of natural elements-Invitation and presence of people-security	Pakzad, 2007 "Guide to designing urban spaces in Iran"
Diversity in forms -functions, and uses Diversity in activities, Legibility, Population density, and Social interactions	Population density, and, Social interactions	Diversity in forms -functions, and uses Diversity in activities, Legibility	Jacobs, 2007 "The life and death of great American cities"
Legibility, Visual personality, Training, Permeability and movement, Mixed-used of forms, Quality of the public arena, Climatic comfort, Flexibility, Harmony with nature, Energy efficiency, Cleanliness, Security	Inclusiveness - Safety and security - Color of belonging	Legibility, Visual personality, Training, Permeability and movement, Mixed used of forms, Quality of the public arena, Climatic comfort, Flexibility, Harmony with nature, Energy efficiency, Cleanliness, Security	Golkar, 2007 "The concept of quality of life in city design"
Observance of the human scale of spaces - Increasing pedestrian activity - Active frontage of buildings - Proper connection between activities inside and outside buildings - Variety of activities	-	Observance of the human scale of spaces - Increasing pedestrian activity - Active frontage of buildings - Proper connection between activities inside and outside buildings - Variety of activities	Gehl, 2008 "Life between buildings: using public space"
Security and safety-Survival-Compatibility-Health-Stability	Security	Security and safety-Survival-Compatibility-Health-Stability	Lynch, 1981 "The theory of the good shape of the city"
Accessibility - Social interaction - Public interest - Comfort and convenience	Social interactions	Accessibility - public interest - comfort and convenience	Madanipour, 2000 "Urban space design-attitude on the social and spatial process"
Possibility of watching people and hearing their voices - Possibility of an informal gathering of people in public arenas - Possibility of socialization of children and youth in public arenas - Attention and respect of all citizens to each other - Respect for the knowledge and awareness of all residents	Possibility of watching people and hearing their voices - Possibility of an informal gathering of people in public arenas - Possibility of socialization of children and youth in public arenas - Attention and respect of all citizens to each other - Respect for the knowledge and awareness of all residents	-	Lennard, 2007 "Principles for a livable city"
Equipment and facilities providing physiological needs-Safety and security-Permeability and accessibility-Flexibility of spaces-Strengthening the sense of place-Identity-Readability and visual fit-Land ownership-Sense of individuality and belonging-Personalization-Participation-Easy and appropriate movement Foot	Safety and security - Strengthen the sense of place - Identity - A sense of individuality and belonging	Equipment and facilities providing physiological needs-Safety and security-Permeability and accessibility-Flexibility of spaces-Readability and visual fit-Land ownership-Personalization-Participation-Easy and convenient movement	Lang, 1994 "Human needs"
Variety of uses - focus and density of uses - Access-Identity-Balance of Activities-Functional Links	Identity	Variety of uses - focus and density of uses, Balance of Activities - Functional Links -	Pamir, 2004 "Creation of vibrant city center"
Identity - Social actions - Ecological sustainability	Identity-social actions	Ecological sustainability	Salzano, 2007 "Seven goals for a livable city"
Contextual data –Mixed uses and diversity - accessibility - security - identity - innovation and creativity - competitiveness - organizational capacity	Identity	Contextual data –Mixed uses and diversity - accessibility - security - identity - innovation and creativity - competitiveness - organizational capacity	Landry, 2000 Urban liveliness: A new source of urban competition

Table 2 .Physical and semantic components selected based on frequency .Source :Authors.

Criteria	Indicator	Frequency
Objective (Physical)	Diversity and mixed uses (diversity in forms and functions and uses, physical diversity, diversity of uses-variety of activities, mixed uses with forms, a variety of activities, active frontage of buildings)	6
	Accessibility (permeability and movement, a proper relationship between indoor and outdoor activities, permeability and accessibility)	6
	Infrastructures and services (equipment and facilities meeting physiological needs, possibility of informal gathering of people in public areas, comfort and convenience, flexibility, and personalization of capabilities)	5
	Environmental aspects(efficiency in terms of energy consumption-cleanliness, use of natural elements, climate comfort-flexibility, harmony with nature-energy efficiency-cleanliness)	4
	Collective arenas (a dense population of social interactions, the possibility of people watching and hearing their voices - the possibility of informal gatherings of people in public arenas - the possibility of socializing children and youth in public arenas, social interactions, the quality of the public arena, participation)	5
Subjective (Semantic)	Identity	4
	Sense of belonging to a place (strengthening the sense of place-sense of individuality and belonging, identity, attention and respect of all citizens to each other, compatibility, personalization capabilities, the color of belonging)	6
Objective and subjective	Security	4

accessibility, security, and collective arenas (Table 3). Each complex was assessed based on these indicators (Table 4).

- **Hesa residential complex of Pardis city**

Hesa residential complex has 91 blocks consisting of 5-story buildings, with an area of about 2 hectares and a population of 6000 people. The complex is located near Amir Abbasi and ShahidChamran streets in Pardis. It is surrounded by Safir Omid Street from the south, ShahidKazemi Street from the east, and two access points and side streets from the north and west. Currently, the main pedestrian access is from Safir Omid Street, which is the main communication route between the residents, and Adalat Square and Imam Khomeini Square, which are the main squares of the city. The access and entrance of drivers and riders to this site are from its northern side. The whole complex is built on sloping land with topography and most of the streets have a slope.

- Vitality analysis of Hesa residential complex

1. Accessibility: The routes in this complex do not have a human scale and are in accordance with a car scale. It has become a place for drivers and riders and turned into a large parking lot. In addition, due to the high slopes of the streets and the long distance between the building blocks and the exit of the complex, pedestrians face many difficulties in their daily comings and goings (Fig. 1).

2 .Diversity and mixed uses :In this complex ,the uses are located in a core and are separated from each other, and have created a landscape lacking smoothness, fluidity, and mixed uses in the whole or certain parts of the complex.

3. Infrastructures and services: This complex has a lack of spaces such as parks, playgrounds for children, public spaces for residents to interact, sports facilities for young people. There is also a lack of suitable infrastructure for water supply and health services.

4. Environmental aspects: In this complex, most of the open spaces are covered in asphalt, stone, concrete, and non-human trenches. The green space and the trees are seen as minimal as the adjoining strip gardens and do not have the characteristics of a flowing green space in the whole complex. This has limited exposure and communication of people with nature in their daily commutes (Fig. 2).

5. Collective arenas: The role of open space is limited to a space serving as an access point for drivers and riders in this complex and the lack of spaces for pause and interaction, has turned these

Table 3. Classification of recurring themes in resident interviews. Source: Authors.

Frequently reported indicators in interviews	Summary of in-depth interviews with residents	
	Satisfaction	Lack of satisfaction
Sense of belonging to a place (Subjective)		Lack of interest in the place of residence, change of residence in case financial able, very little and superficial acquaintance with only close neighbors, lack of friendship groups between children, youth, and other age groups.
Infrastructures and services (Objective)		Complaints about the lack of proper infrastructure and services for garbage collection and low level of hygiene, lack of recreational and leisure facilities such as parks, playgrounds for children and adolescents, and the like, lack of water to irrigate green space.
Environmental Aspects ((Objective	Satisfaction with the very suitable climate of their place of residence, ie the city of Pardis, satisfaction with the amount of green space in the complex	Lack of green space
Access (Objective)	Short and convenient distance of some building blocks to the entrance of the complex	Dissatisfaction with long routes to access the main points of the complex, including entrances, steep, inhuman, and machine-driven routes, and the long distances of some blocks from the entrance of the complex.
Collective arenas (Objective)		Complaining about the lack of spaces for different age groups to gather together, including young and old.
Security (Subjective and objective)	Satisfaction with the security of the complex, proper guarding, and walling.	Dissatisfaction with the security of the complex for a variety of reasons such as the lack of proper walls and fences around the complex and the lack of colorful presence of residents to monitor the open spaces of the complex.

Table 4. Assessing the status of each of the three residential complexes surveyed in vitality indicators by analyzing the residents' interviews. Source: Authors.

Residential complex	Sense of belonging to a place	Security	Collective arenas	Infrastructures and services		Accessibility	Identity	Diversity and mixed uses
Hesa	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	●
Parseh	●	●	●	●	●	●	•	•
Samen	•	●	•	●	•	●	•	●

Fig. 1. Difficult access to the main street for pedestrians, especially children, women, and people with disabilities due to high slopes.Source: Ziya Hosseynzadeh, 2020.

Fig. 2. Scattered, linear, and very little vegetation on the surface of Mehr housing complex of Hesa in Pardis.
Source: Ziya Hosseynzadeh, 2020.

spaces into unsafe and rarely encourage residents to gather together. One can barely see a group of more than 2 or 3 people.

6. Identity

Open space

The open and public spaces between the building blocks in this complex are in the form of scattered plots and negative pieces and do not have any specific geometry and boundaries (Fig. 3). In addition, these complexes lack an identity and are

not associated with the past of the inhabited society as well as elements such as neighborhood systems, appropriate spatial organization, and the center of the neighborhood. Moreover, in this complex, concrete and identical building blocks have been designed and built-in advance by a consulting group without involving the residents in decisions. The similarity of the building blocks has made it very difficult to understand which residential unit belongs to which family and the lack of addressability has eliminated the multiplicity of individual identities.

7. Sense of belonging to the place The designers of the complex, regardless of the semantic aspects, have only tried to meet the needs of the residents for shelters. Moreover, according to interviews with residents, social relations between residents are weak and limited in this complex and the concepts such as fellow neighbors and neighborhood have been faded. All consider themselves to be temporary residents who will leave these complexes if they can afford to move their houses.

8. Security A. Mental security In this collection, the significant contribution of colors to increasing the presence of people, social supervision, and consequently security, has not been considered. Instead, the spaces are dim and dark at night and devoid of people. In addition, the presence of women in an urban space is an indicator of security in the space while the presence of women is a sign of insecurity (Gehl, 1988). In Hesa complex, the number of women present in the yard throughout the day and night does not exceed two.

B. Security from the objective dimension: This complex does not have enough police stations and other security agencies (there are just 2 police stations in Pardis). Out-of-sight angles and corners, lack of guards, lack of lights, and lack of proper fences and walls around the complex have caused insecurity (Figs. 4 & 5).

Fig. 3. Public spaces between buildings in the negative and abandoned space complex. Source: Ziya Hosseynzadeh, 2020.

Fig. 4. Lack of fences and walls to create security in the complex and prevent criminals from entering. Source: Ziya Hosseynzadeh, 2020.

Fig. 5. Corners and out of sight spaces, suitable places for addicts and delinquents. Source: Ziya Hosseynzadeh, 2020.

- **ParsehShahr Residential Complex**

Parseh residential complex has 20 blocks consisting of 6-story buildings with a total of 480 units, an area of about 2 hectares, and a population of 3,000 people. The complex is located near Amir Abbasi and ShahidChamran streets in Pardis.

- Analysis of the vitality of Parse residential complex

1. Accessibility: In terms of accessibility, it is in better condition than Hesa complex. Although the

grounds of this complex do not have a pedestrian and human scale, most of the blocks have relatively easy access to the entrance of the complex.

2. Security: Due to constructed walls and security practiced by guards for controlling the entry and exit of gamers, it is safe. However, due to mental security, residents rarely attend the area, and social monitoring is not good (Fig. 6).

3. Environmental aspects: In terms of environmental issues, this complex has a relatively better situation than HesaComplex does, especially in terms of green space. However, the type of materials used in the area (e.g. asphalt and concrete surfaces) are of low quality (Fig. 7).

4. Diversity and mixed uses:Parseh Residential Complex has no uses except being a residential building and this aspect has a major weakness.

5. Sense of belonging to the place: In this complex, according to the observations made and the interviews conducted with the residents, the neighborhood relations are very limited and friendships between groups of different age groups are weak. Interviewees added that they were willing to move their houses if they can afford to do that.

6. Identity: Like Hesa complex, in Parseh complex, the open space between the buildings is completely negative and abandoned and there are separated by specific boundaries or a physical or mental geometry. In addition, the building blocks of the complex are completely similar and barely distinguished from each other.

7. Infrastructures and services: In terms of infrastructure and services, Parseh Complex suffers from major weaknesses such as lack of water supply, children's playground, local park, sports field. However, hygiene and garbage collection services offered in this complex are better than those in the Hesa complex.

8. Collective arenas: The public space of Parseh Complex has low livability due to the lack of collective spaces for interaction and gathering of different age groups.

- **Samen residential complex of Pardis city**

Samen residential complex of Pardis city includes 46 blocks with 5-story buildings, 460 units, the population is about 2000 people and an area of 4. 7 hectares is located near Imam Ali and Quds streets of Pardis city.

Fig. 6. The proper condition of Parseh Complex in terms of wall construction and security. Source: Authors.

Fig. 7. Relatively suitable situation of Parseh Complex in terms of green space. Source: Ziya Hosseynzadeh, 2021.

- Analysis of the life situation of Samen residential complex

1. Security: This complex is also in a good condition in terms of security from the objective perspective and has proper monitoring by guards at doors, entry and exit control, and constructed walls, but it is weak in terms of mental security and the presence and supervision of residents (Fig. 8).

2. Accessibility: In Samen complex, the open space and traffic routes are based on the scale of the car, but the distance between the building blocks and the entrance of the complex is relatively appropriate, and due to the low slope, residents do not have to travel on steep slopes.

3. Environmental aspects: Like Hesa complex, Samen complex has a fundamental weakness in

terms of environment, both in terms of lack of green space and in terms of materials that are incompatible with the climate of Pardis (Fig. 9).

4. Diversity and mixed uses: This complex has a better situation than Hesa and Parseh because of different uses such as bakery, mosque, and several commercial units, which are located in this complex. However, this is still far from the ideal. Residents have to travel long distances and leave the complex to provide some daily needs such as fruit.

5. Sense of belonging to the place: Like other complexes, in Samen, the neighborhood relations are very limited and friendships are weak. The interviewees expressed a desire to move from this complex if they can afford it.

6. Identity: In this complex, the role of open spaces has been reduced to commuting routes of drivers and riders. They have no definite borders and identities, and blocks, like other Mehr housing projects, are completely uniform and devoid of identity and distinction.

7. Infrastructures and services: Like the other two complexes, Samen complex has many weaknesses in terms of infrastructures and services.

8. Collective arenas: This complex essentially lacks livable space and does not encourage residents to gather and interact.

Findings, discussion, and strategies

Based on what has been discussed, both the vitality components identified by experts in this field (Table 2) and the issues raised by residents (Table 4) can fall into two categories: objective (material) factors and subjective (non-material) factors. The first factors require funding. However, in the current economic conditions of the country, providing funding to meet all these needs of housing projects is far from common sense and seems not to be practical.

As mentioned in the literature review and theoretical foundation, previous research has been focused on material indicators of vitality. However, this study argues that in such circumstances, the vitality of these complexes can be significantly improved by focusing on non-capitalist and subjective components of vitality. In addition, among the subjective components of vitality, the sense of belonging to a place is of greater importance and priority, both in the views of experts (Table 2) and in the analysis of residents' conversations. Therefore, it seems that the vitality of these complexes can be significantly improved by paying attention to this shortcoming. The term sense of belonging to a place refers to pleasures that have been experienced over time and are sometimes subconsciously formed based on behavioral, emotional, and cognitive links between individuals or groups and their physical social environment (Sarai, Oshnavi & Rousta, 2016). The sense of belonging to a place has two dimensions, physical and social, and the results show the superiority of social belonging over physical belonging in the environment. Analyzing

Fig. 8. Suitable condition of Samen complex in terms of security created by the control of entry and exit through security guards. Source: ziya hosseynzadeh, 2021.

Fig. 9. Appropriate condition of Samen complex from environmental aspects and low level of green space. Source: http://iraalborz.com/fa.

the results based on the environmental meaning model (the result of the interaction of the individual withothers, and the environment) shows that the sense of belonging to the place depends on individual features and characteristics, including motivations, competencies, and knowledge of the place. It is also rooted in social interactions and is influenced by the relationship between the individual and others in the environment, which stems from the human need to belong as a basic human need (Forouzandeh & Motalebi, 2012). Social factors and structures influencing the sense of belonging to a place often include neighborly relations, acquaintances, bitter and sweet memories in the neighborhood, the existence of equal social classes next to each other, holding collective rituals, and the existence of popular organizations and institutions in the neighborhood, of which neighborly relations and people's acquaintances play an important role in creating psychological bonds (PirBabaei & Sajjadzadeh, 2012).

Therefore, as it is clear, the sense of belonging to a place requires the passage of time and history of residence, physical actions, and social interactions. In addition, the residents of Mehr housing complexes often do not have a long history of housing and there is not enough budget to make specific physical changes in these complexes. But the residents' sense of place can be significantly enhanced by increasing social interactions among residents and getting to know each other through participatory and interactive activities and non-capitalist physical actions and consequently, improve the vitality of these complexes (Fig. 10). The following section presents strategies for increasing the sense of belonging to the place and interactive and participatory activities among the residents. These strategies have been developed based on the reviewed resources.

Having a neighborhood scale makes social dimensions recognizable and controllable on a neighborhood scale, enables local and precise management, promotes self-sufficiency, integration, enhances social cohesion, creates a sense of identity and spatial belonging in residents, and uses all the potentials of residents and the area (Hosseini & Soltani, 2018). Also, according to the criteria that can be defined in the social dimension, the neighborhood is a part of the total space organization in which the interactions of individuals occur face to face and can be defined in relation to factors such as administrative relations and defining specific areas, livable environment, social perceptions of residents of the neighborhood environment, functional dimensions and providing the services needed by its residents (ibid.). Integrated spatial boundaries, the existence of physical boundaries based on mental perception or objective signs, a sense of spatial belonging and social solidarity, the possibility of face-to-face cognizance are among the points that are important in the neighborhood (Malekshahi, Nikpour, Habibi & 2018). In neighborhood-based planning, the participation of local communities is very important. The neighborhood-centered approach tries to increase social interactions by strengthening and improving the physical space, and in this way, it improves a sense of place, enhances economic self-reliance, and promotes social capital (Sajjadi & Vahediyeganeh, 2017).

Many experts put an emphasis on strengthening and highlighting the important role of locals and the presence of associations and civic institutions in decision-making with the main emphasis on the role of residents and their real participation in activities and daily actions (Bezi, Mirtavakoli & Zaydeli, 2016). The point that is very important in the intervention in urban contexts is the issue of popular participation. In this regard, it should be noted that any intervention in urban living contexts would not be successful without the participation of residents. The reason is in the participation process, the programs are in accordance with the views and suggestions of the residents, and therefore the programs are more realistic (Zanganeh, Hosseinabadi, Roshandel & Nabipour, 2014).

Therefore, the following strategies can be used to improve vitality in Mehr housing complexes with a minimum budget in the current situation:

1- Dividing each complex into several neighborhoods

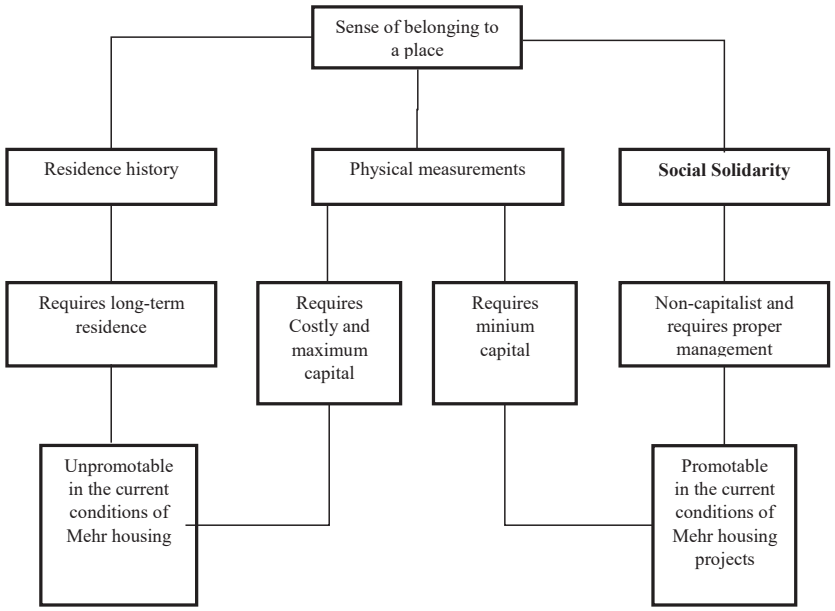

Fig. 10. Classification of scalable and non-scalable components sense of place in the current economic conditions of Mehr housing projects. Source: Authors.

so that the residents of the first and last unit in each place have the opportunity to establish a neighborhood relationship and face-to-face interaction with each other.

2- Determining the physical boundaries of each neighborhood with cheap materials such as fences, soil, and similar materials and encouraging the participation of the residents of each neighborhood.

3-Accommodation of residents in each neighborhood based on ethnic, trade union, occupational, educational features.

4- Forming a council for each neighborhood and electing an official to select the members of the same place and involve the residents in decisions and consult them in the management and decision-making for the neighborhood.

5- Organizing various social ceremonies and celebrations to acquaint and interact as much as possible with the residents on various religious, national, and religious occasions such as Muharram, Ramadan, Nowruz, Yalda, Syrian Wednesday, etc., organized by the local council and the residents' cooperation. Repeat regularly and on specific dates.

[6] -Forming different sports, artistic and scientific groups in different age groups and holding competitions between them with the planning of the local council, for the residents to interact more with each other.

7-Carrying out affairs related to each neighborhood, such as planting plants and irrigating green spaces, guarding and controlling the entry and exit of each neighborhood, garbage collection, and cleaning the neighborhood with the participation and assistance of residents.

8-Establishing a mosque or a low-cost reliance with cheap materials such as tents and tarpaulins for daily and collective worship, speeches, holding local council meetings, showing films for different age groups, etc.

9-Creating distinction and individuality for residential blocks of any place by using cheap solutions such as murals.

In this study, vitality indicators were first extracted from available resources and experts' views. Then three residential complexes of Mehr housing projects of Pardiswere evaluated through careful observation and in-depth interviews with residents. Then, the indicators stated by the experts and the indicators identified by the residents were divided into two types of objective (material) and subjective factors. Since, in the current situation of Mehr housing projects, providing objective and material components of vitality is not practical, therefore, the logical solution in this situation is to pay attention to the subjective, immaterial, and non-capital components of vitality. Analysis of the

views of experts (Table 2) and interviews with residents shows that the most important immaterial component is a sense of belonging. This should be at the top of all possible actions. Part of the problem is that residents do not belong to their place of residence because they often have a low history of residing there, are not acquainted with each other, and find themselves in a new and unfamiliar place. Therefore, the proposed policy of this study is to accelerate the process of creating a sense of place in the residents of these complexes, strengthen social solidarity and familiarize residents with each other through participatory and interactive activities in which they attend. To achieve this, it is necessary to delegate authority to their residents. This requires proper management and recognition of the high social capacities in these complexes.

The residents of these complexes themselves need to be able to form small local councils between any adjacent blocks and determine their boundaries. In this case, the residents of each neighborhood will tend to plan for the development of these complexes, both physically (e.g.cleaning, guarding, maintenance of green space, etc), and semantically (e.g. Various ceremonies and celebrations). Such ceremonies will promote social interactions, and a large part of the current problems of these complexes, (e.g. insecurity, limited social interaction, poor cleanliness, and residents' lack of belonging to the place of residence will be solved without allocating large budgets.

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