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Original Article

Analyzing the Status of Strategic Planning in Enhancing Quality of Life in Saqqez City, Iran

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ABSTRACT

Strategic urban planning has become an important tool promoted by local governments for the city's economic and social development project design. To achieve this, In order to, it is necessary to adopt a strategic planning approach to enhance the quality of life process. The aim of this paper is evaluating the status of Strategic Planning (SP) in enhancing quality of life (QOF) in Saqqez city. In so doing, the applied methodology is based on qualitative and quantitative methods with point on social indicators to adjusting the level of quality of life in the spatial system of the regions and reduction and removal of the existing inequalities among urban districts of Saqqez city by consideration of strategic planning approaches. Results showed that from the 100% of statistical population in Saqqez city about 45% had 20- 35 years old with Diploma and higher education (10% diploma, 15% MA and MS and about 20% of them have MS and upper academic education) and almost of Saqqez citizens have under 200$ income per month while poverty line in Iran can be detected with revenues of about $ 500 per month. In the end of this presented some solve ways.

Keywords: Quality of Life, Strategic Planning, Saqqez city, Social Development.

Introduction

Strategic urban planning has become an important tool promoted by local governments for the city's economic and social development project design. This type of planning has important differences from the more traditional one, focusing exclusively on the spatial and physical planning. From this perspective, it can be noted that the basic principles of strategic planning are the public-private cooperation and public participation in the design and implementation of such plans, which led to conceiving the model as political governance instruments (Rahnama and Heydari, 2013). In the late 20^{ths} and beginning of the 21st century, urban planning was undergoing a transformation in the models and methodologies used as a response searched by local governments to get adapted to the current social and economic contexts, which are increasing

complex, demanding and locally interpenetrated, where the new scene of internationalism and globalization has provoked the traditional planning based on physical and spatial organization of cities to be no longer sufficient to drive the urban development public policy (Rafiean and Asgarizadeh, 2009). Quality of life has been the domain of development discourse for the past decade. It has been widely recognized that measuring progress in terms of GDP is not sufficient (See, Cummins at el.; Eckersley, 1998; Shea, 1976). This paper attempts to examine the concept of quality of life in relation to other related concepts such as standard of living, cost of living and life satisfaction. In the quest to rate cities and countries according to their quality of life, numerous attempts by various organizations can be found. However, Cummins states that "the quality of life construct has a complex composition, so it is perhaps not surprising that there is neither agreed definition nor a standard form of measurement" (Cummins, 1997). Strategic urban planning has dominated the urban planning field for the past 2 decades or more. It aims to improve the cities' performance and ensure future development to be planned and responsive. Its reliance on participatory approach enriches the process, promotes local ownership and ensures, to some extent, its actual implementation. The overall aim of the process is to improve the performance of the city through adopting the strategic urban development plan. This can be viewed as a tool to enhance quality of life of city. Thus, Kurdistan has been faced with numerous challenges in its attempts to reconstruct the region and start a sustainable development process (Heydari, 2012; Kolbel, 2008). In the last few years, the Saqqez region has benefited from considerable development in many areas. This was the result of the government's attempts to seize new opportunities to improve the life of the people of the region. Throughout its development stages, strategic thinking, especially since the beginning of the third millennium, has led to a series of successful strategic applications, most importantly in strategic planning which is extensively adopted by governments and organizations. Practical experiments have proved its effectiveness with respect to interaction with local and international environmental dynamics and changes, often characterized by constant change and extreme complexity. This situation occurs as a result of the development of national economies on the one hand, and development of global economy, on the other, in addition to globalization consequences and the interaction between local and world economies (Axhausen, 2000). In response to this new situation, at the beginning of the 90´s, a new kind of urban planning called Strategic Urban Planning was put into practice, constituting the application of local governance to the public policies to promote public policies for socio-economic development in cities. The basic principles of this new type of planning are the model of governance for the development and implementation of public policies, that is, citizen participation and public-private cooperation between actors of the city as a method of adapting to the new demands and those imposed by the current complexity on improving the quality of urban life (Barton, 2006; Krels, 2007). Strategic spatial planning in the post-apartheid era has attempted to promote more compact and integrated cities, and to redress patterns of inequality of the past. This article examines how spatial planning in Saqqez has attempted to reshape existing and emerging spatial

patterns of a divided sprawling city through the use of quality of life frameworks to guide development. It focuses particularly on a very recent initiative to link spatial planning and infrastructure development through a growth management strategy. This initiative is consistent with current international emphasis on linking spatial planning and infrastructure (Angel, 2008; Mattingly, 2001). Many cities have carried out strategic planning exercises in recent years and some of them have started implementing the resultant strategic plans (Darguea and Sevilla, 1998). In the light of the above-mentioned development, the authors, under its clear mandate, believed it was necessary to adopt a strategic planning approach to enhance the quality of life process. To do so, for the very first time, a multi-year comprehensive strategic plan was prepared based on a clear understanding of the current status and vision for the future. This Strategic Plan will be the reference for all future development in quality of life and capital investment projects. It will also be the guide for the preparation and execution of the annual budget. It is hoped that this Strategic Plan will enable the Kurdistan province generally and Saqqez city specially to overcome the problems and delays in project implementation resulting from the outdated methods currently used.

Background

In the decision-making process, land managers need to carefully consider the changes brought about by urban sprawl. Land cover and land use change models are useful tools to analyze, understand and predict land cover changes and their consequences. Land use change models are also tools for understanding the causes and consequences of land use dynamics (Rahnama and Heydari, 2013). In the Chuandong area of China, the local strategic spatial plan includes development of a new city. The proposed new system, SSP-SS, is intended to assist local government decision makers by enabling them to produce a visible, pellucid model of the effects of local strategic spatial plans. As mentioned above, this system simulates urban growth and integrates the economic and social development plan with the land-use plan and urban plans while taking into consideration environmental issues, such as the total amounts of natural resources used and waste discharged. Strategies often have little legal or formal power, but exert influence through the strength of their visions and their power of persuasion (ibid). Planning projects, on the other hand, are often short-term proposals reliant on trend extrapolation and prognosis, which tend to promote incremental change and have more formal and political power (Sykes, 1984). The experiences cited have a great deal in common with respect to the wealth of shared tools, processes and perspectives brought to bear on the subject. But there are also interesting differences based on local conditions and institutional and policy frameworks which play a very important role. We can draw a number of conclusions from these experiences. They provide us with new ideas as to the key elements needed to improve the management of the process, the most recommendable tools and the importance of strategic planning approaches. We can distinguish between those features which perform best and worst as well as those factors which, when they occur simultaneously, cause the process to fail. It is up to the cities and those who design their normative frameworks to learn from these experiences in order to apply these tools better in future. We can say that

strategic planning will continue to attract and charm many citizens, technical staff, businessmen and politicians but that it should not be seen as a panacea. What really counts in determining the success of strategic planning are social and political processes. In Latin America these include Cordoba, Rosario and Buenos Aires in Argentina, Santiago and Rancagua in Chile, La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Bolivia, Trujillo, various districts in Lima, Tarapoto and Negritos in Peru, Bogota, Medellin and Cartagena in Colombia and Havana, Cuba. Concepts of strategic, multi-sectorial and multi-annual planning hold attractions for planners; but many urban actors have been attracted not only by the instruments of strategic planning but also by the promise of a democratic process in which key actors are able to reach common agreement. Strategic planning holds out the promise off fundamental change in the cities involved, setting out a path for the new millennium towards grand programs and projects which are truly transforming, modernizing and innovative (Acioley, 2000; Albrechts, 2001; Davidson, 1985). The understanding, measurement, and improvement of human experience have been major goals of individuals, researchers, communities and governments. The overall assessment of human experience has been commonly expressed by the term quality of life (QOL) across multiple disciplines including psychology, medicine, and economics, environmental science, and sociology. A search of the Institute for Scientific Information database from 1982 to 2005 reveals over 55,000 citations utilizing the term "quality of life." QOL as a general term is meant to represent either how well human needs are met or the extent to which individuals or groups perceive satisfaction or dissatisfaction in various life domains. Understanding QOL has tremendous potential implications because improving QOL is a major policy and lifestyle goal (Schuessler and Fisher, 1985). Recent research on QOL has focused on two basic methodologies of measurement. One method utilizes quantifiable social or economic indicators to reflect the extent to which human needs are met. The other looks to self-reported levels of happiness, pleasure, fulfillment, and the like, and has been termed "subjective well-being" (Diener and suh, 1997; Easterlin, 2003). Social norms affect both the weights given to various human needs when aggregating them to overall individual or social assessments of SWB, and also policy decisions about social investments in improving opportunities. Social norms evolve over time due to collective population behavior (Azar, 2004). The evolution of social norms can be affected by conscious shared envisioning of preferred states of the world (Costanza et al., 2007).

In Kurdistan every economy produces different kinds and quantities of commodities and services, using the available economic resources. Production processes involve mixing the available productive elements and using the accessible technological level to obtain largest possible quantities of goods and services. Production elements receive material benefits in return for their contribution to the production process. Labor element receives wages, land element (land owner) gets proceeds, the element of capital gets returns, and the organizing side also has a share of accrued profits. Thus, the production element receives an income for involvement in the production process (Wong, 2013).

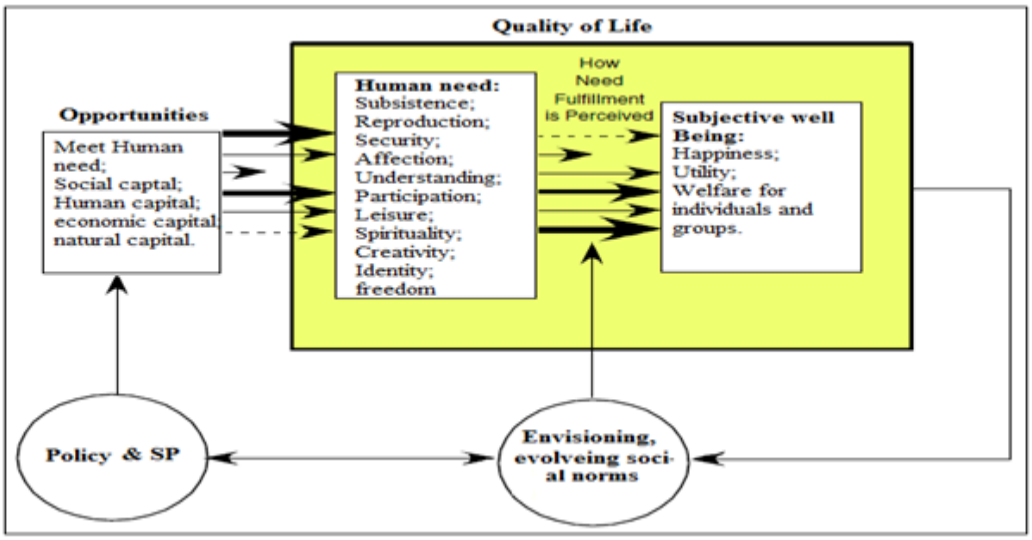

Figure 1. Quality of Life (QOL) as the interaction of human needs and the subjective perception. Source: Authors adopted Costanza, 2007

Case study area

Saqqez city is located between 46°13'-46°16' eastern longitude and 36°11'-36°15' northern latitude within north-west of Kurdistan province in northwest of Iran and covers approximately 1474.8 ha. According to the 2006 census, the city's population was 135037, whereas its current population is about 145000. Building area was 618.26 ha. The average elevation of the city is about 1496 m above mean sea level. Saqqez is characterized as a mountainous area which is located within Zagros Mountains rages from south-east to north-west. This area forms about 15.5% of Kurdistan province. The difference of height between the highest elevation point (Chehel- Cheshme Mountain, 3173 m and Symone-Rood basin, 1150 m above mean sea level) is about 2023 m. Saqqez River emanates from western mountains (Khan valley) and continues its path across the city toward north-east. Fig. 2 shows location of study area in Kurdistan province, Iran (Rahimi, 2012). Also, it has a 987 Km^2 common border with Iraq country. Western border of Iran was specified by the border commission according to the Goldsmith Plan in September 1871. This borderline has separated parts of Kurdistan from Iran (Sykes, 1984) and today a majority of the Kurdish population (about 25 million people) live within Turkey (a group of Kurdish people also lives in Iran, Iraq and Syria Countries (Kurdish Encyclopedia, 1975). Kurdistan province within the in Iran has the lowest level of development.

Methodology

The phrase, QOL means many things to many groups. It is interpreted to be the livability in the area or as one measure of the level of attractiveness or as the absence or shortage of family and medical issues such as teenage pregnancy, disease, and quantity of poverty, etc. Das (2008) defines it as well-being or ill-being of people and the environment in which they live. QOL is a broad term which encompasses notions of a good life, a valued life, a satisfying life, and a happy life (McCrea and Poor Ahmad, 2006). In their

extensive review of the literature on QOL, Mulligan et al., (2004) broadly interpret QOL as the satisfaction that a person receives from surrounding human and physical conditions, conditions that are scale-dependent and can affect the behavior of individual people, groups such as households and economic units such as firms. QOL has been the focus of numerous studies but a universally acceptable definition has not been arrived yet (Das, 2008).

Figure 2. A landscape of case study region. Source: Rahnama, Shokouhi and Heydari 2013

This is due to the fact that many researchers agree that QOL is a multi-dimensional and relative concept, dependent on time, place, individual and social values. Forming a database theory of the concept of the quality of life, its indicators, its importance and its role in the development is vital. This is the case of studying heritage areas, their problems, and the different ways of dealing with them in the Saqqez city case. In so doing , the research method we have used was based on the descriptive- analytical approach. We used a documental method to collect information. Following an applied methodology, we applied correlation, field and survey methods. The statistical population of current paper was 350 persons of Saqqez citizens aged between 20 to 60 years old. According to characteristics of population, sampling method was simple random sampling without replacement and each expert was considered as a sample. Morgan's sample size estimation table was used to determine size of sample, so 20 experts were selected as the final sample.

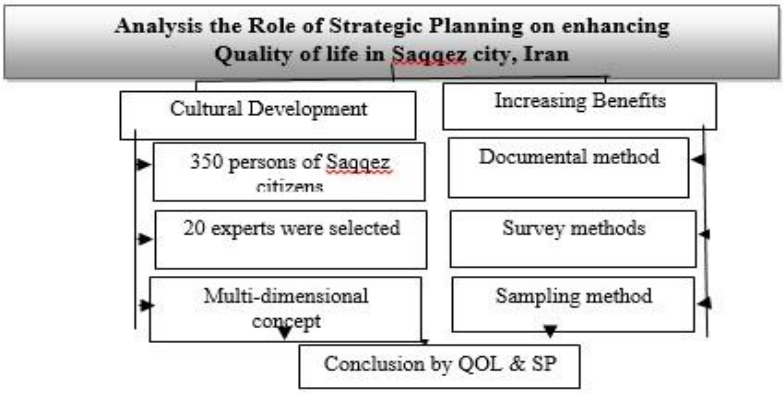

Figure 3. Status of QOL & city area in SP of case study region. Source: Rahnama, Shokouhi and Heydari (2013)

Results

The quality of life construct has a complex composition, so it is perhaps not surprising that there is neither an agreed definition nor a standard form of measurement. The central methodological debate within the QOL research community is informed by a differentiation between objective and subjective measures. Two basic approaches have been used by researchers to examine QOUL, particularly in the context of people living in cities and metropolitan areas:

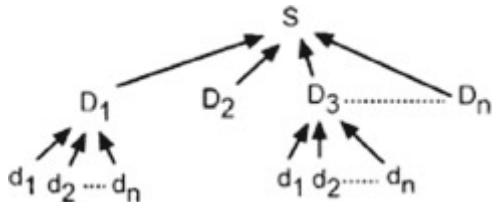

Figure 2. Simplest structural model of QOL. S = life satisfaction/well-being, D = domain satisfaction, d = sub-domain satisfaction. Source: Pacione (2003).

In another method, the subjective QOL can be measured in terms of individual's overall life satisfaction with regard to their life as a whole. In this method, overall life satisfaction is commonly measured using either the intuitive or the rational responses. In the intuitive method, individuals are asked about their life as a whole, but in the rational method, individuals are first asked questions about their feelings about several domains of life such as housing, natural environment, safety, job, income, etc. and then their feelings about life as a whole will be questioned. The number of Kurdish cities increased from 6 in 1976 to 23 (10 main cities and 13 minor cities as subset cities) in 2013. In the different National development plans before and after Islamic Revolution, urbanizations related to industrialization of these urban settlements in these areas has increased. Saqqez covers an area equivalent to 4730 square kilometers. Also, Saqqez city from the view of breadth allocated to itself an area about 15.48% of Kurdistan province area vast. According to physical divisions Saqqez city has 3 zones, 6 districts and 22 neighborhoods. The plan adopts a wide range of strategic goals for the development of the economic and social sectors in the case study region, drawing upon the data of the strategic analysis of the economic and social reality of the region, as well as the results come out from the diagnosis of the immediate and future challenges that are expected to face development during the coming five years. The previous goals are divided into 14 main axes, from which many quantitative and qualitative indicators have been derived to depend upon in the achievement of those goals.

Results show that from 100% of statistical population in Saqqez city about 45% were 20- 35 years old with Diploma and higher education (10% diploma, 15% MA and MS and about 20% of them have MS and upper academic education). Regarding economic dimension, most of Saqqez citizens have under 200USD income per month, despite the poverty line in Iran can be detected with revenues of about $ 500 per month. In order to, some dials as life expectancy has a lower level than many other parts of Iran. While only about 10% of Saqqez families have Health insurance and about 90% of them do not have sufficient insurance in case of facing diseases and

challenges. In response to the question of how your life quality is, many of respondents have stated that they are not much satisfied with the quality of their life (64%). Also, other parameters have the same status.

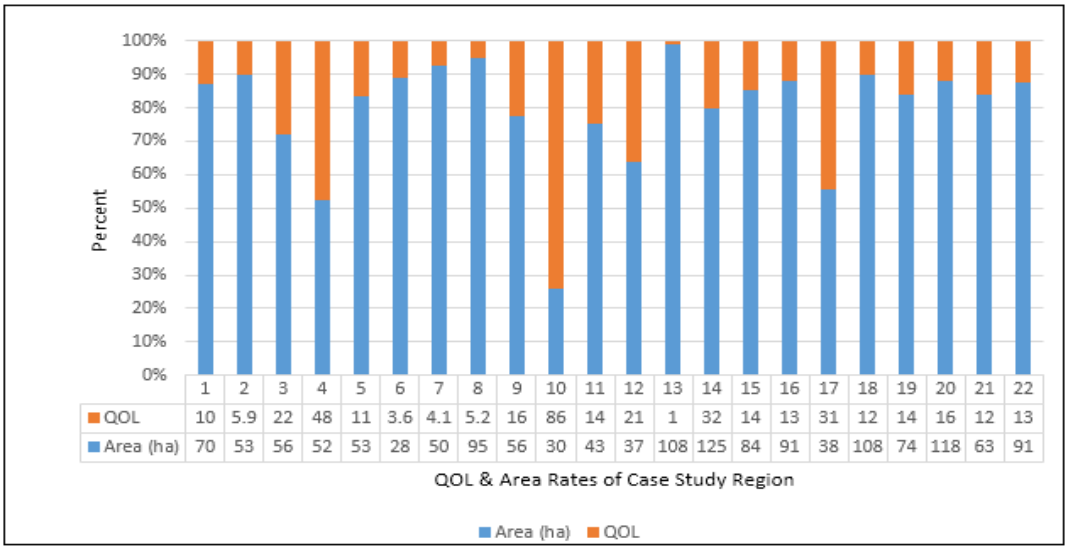

Figure 3. Status of QOL & city area in SP of case study region. Source: Rahnama, Shokouhi and Heydari, (2013)

Table 1. Some parameters of QOL in Saqqez city with attention to SP approaches

Question	AVG	Standard deviation	median	Skewness rate
Satisfaction of QOL	3.31	0.79	3	-0.11
Health Satisfaction	3.68	0.92	4	-0.65
Relation with other citizens	4.08	0.69	4	-0.82
Have sufficient money for needs?	2.79	1.03	3	0.24
Residential satisfaction	3.56	0.97	4	-0.5
Total	17.42	4.4	18	-2.32

Source: Rahnama, Shokouhi and Heydari, (2013)

Based on Likert scale, we formed some questions and distributed them among citizens in different age, economic, gender and social ranking (Fig. 3).

Accordingly, the following points are put forth:

-Allotting at least 50% of the state investment budget for development of services and major infrastructures at the districts, sub-districts and rural areas, proportionate with their population size, degree of deprivation in the past decades, and their particularities;

-Increasing local and foreign private investment by at least 10% of overall invested annual capitals, at the less developed areas, achieved through a series of incentives proposed by cooperation and coordination with the government stakeholders;

-Preparing or upgrading the integrated structural plans in the governorates, aimed to regulate land use, during the first two years of this Strategy, and encourage

growth at central development areas for realizing economic integration among governorates;

-Annually selecting 10 villages with appropriate population number in accordance with scientific approaches to provide services programs and infrastructures for rural areas;

-Promoting decentralization with regard to management of development facilities and private sector involvement in plans and programs designing at the level of governorates, municipal councils of districts and sub-districts. Private sector will also be encouraged to participate in governorates' development quality of life by considering strategic planning's projects which represent viable investment opportunities.

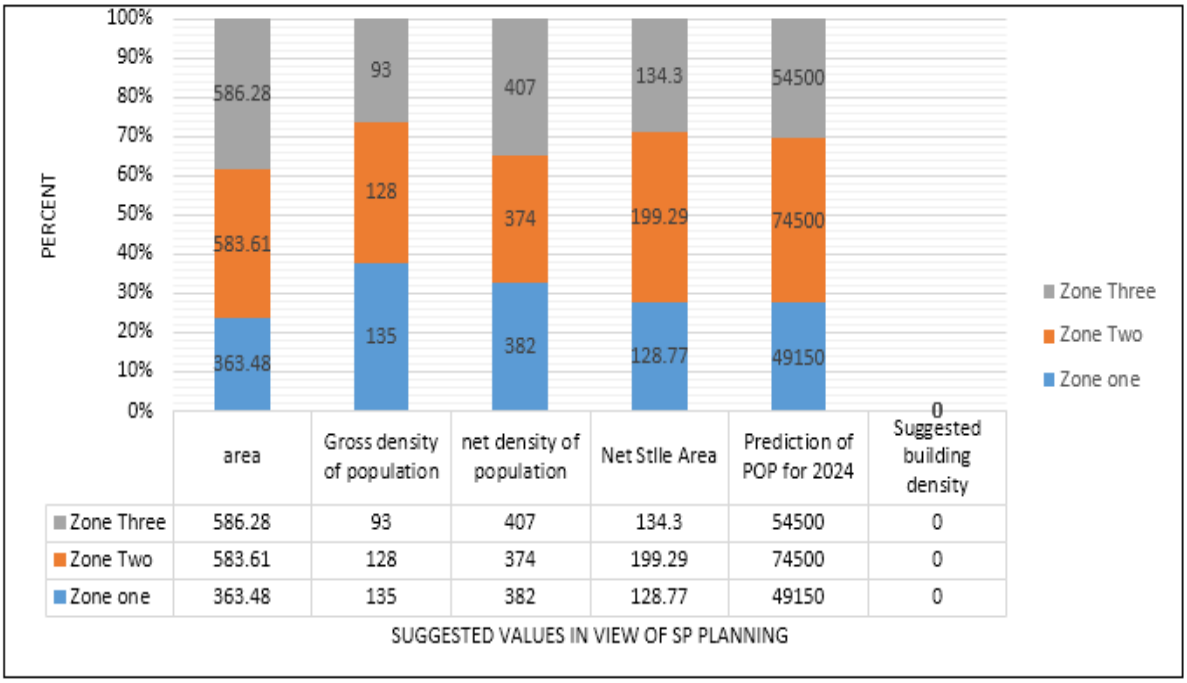

Figure 4. Different physical parameters of QOL in SP approach. Source: Rahnama, Shokouhi, and Heydari, (2013)

Table 2. Idea rates of QOL according to Strategic planning in future of Saqqez city

	Indicators					
----	**Rooms per person**	**Household income upper than 300 $**	**Employment rate**	**Quality of support network**	**Voter turnout**	**Homicide rate**
Rate (%)	24	12	34	2	40	8
Ideal Rate (SP)	67	57	90	40	75	3
Total rate (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Rahnama, Shokouhi, and Heydari, (2013)

Table 3. The status of Strategic Planning parameters in Quality of Life in Saqqez city

Answers of Saqqez citizens to Questionaries'	Parameters					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Residential concentration in locality	-0.915	---	---	---	---	---
Times of doing cultural activities	---	---	---	---	-0.547	---
Number of room in dwelling unit	---	---	-0.514	---	---	---
Per capita of health , medical services	0.352	---	---	---	---	0.211
Household monthly income	-0.414	0.241	---	---	---	---
Relation with neighbors	---	---	---	-0.919	---	---

Source: Rahnama, Shokouhi, and Heydari, (2013).

Increased tourists' spending;
-Financial restructuring of public revenues and public expenditures, controlling development rates of public expenditure;
-Raising investment absorption capacity, aimed to increase level of productivity and product;
Employment rate in relation to population (especially age-group 15-64).
-Improving total employment rate in the different economic activities (agriculture, industry tourism...etc.);
-Enabling all children aged 6 years to go to school, and enabling 99% of them to complete primary stage, during 5 years;
-Reducing the number of students per teacher or teacher per classrooms by half over 5 years through increasing the number of school buildings and teachers;
-Increasing the financial allocations of the operating and investment budgets for the education sector, including the increase in scientific and technical research allocations in case study region;
-Controlling communicable diseases in accordance with defined ratios for each disease;
-Developing the colleges and schools of nursing, encouraging people to enroll developing medical institutes, increasing the number of graduates, and establishing further medicine colleges along with sophisticated curricula and renewed experiences.

Table 4. Suggested sectors based on Strategic Planning in Saqqez city

Sectors	SP (%)	Predication of the implementation rate (%)
Residential	36.17	72.88
Mixed	0.96	196
educational	4.56	53.11
trade	1.42	93
Health & hospitality	1.98	35.86
Green space	12.71	14.4
Athletic	3.11	22.19
Social & culture	1.24	41.94
Official and enforcement	2.77	69.3
Public facilities	2.11	84.36
ways	31.76	72.92
industries	5.2	11.15
Tourism	2.24	---

Source: Rahnama, Shokouhi, and Heydari, 2013

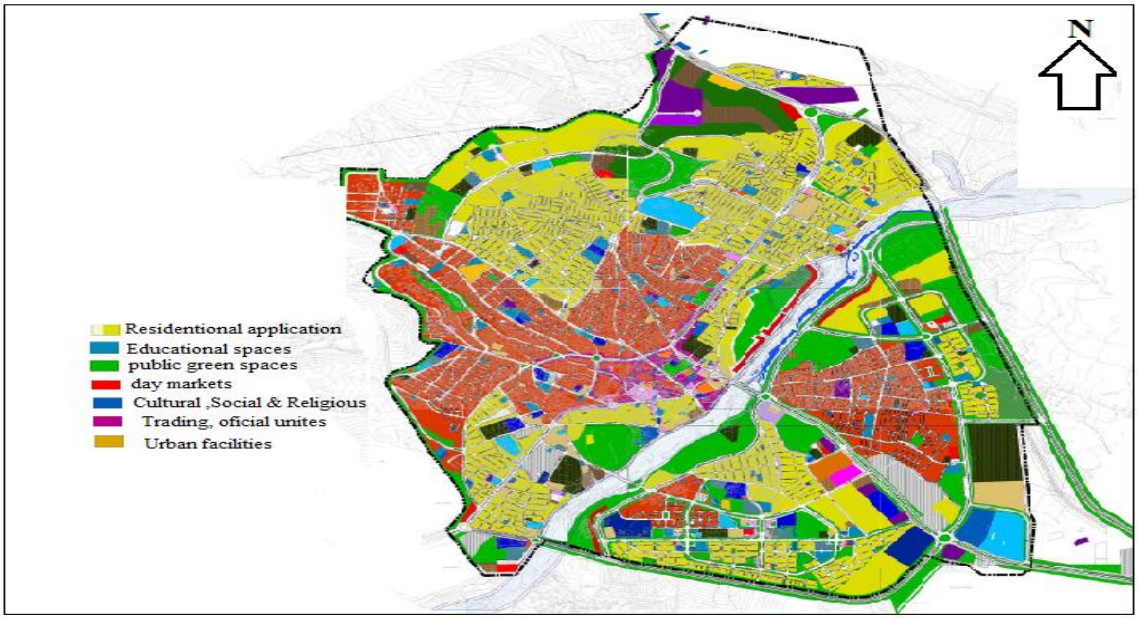

Figure 5. Suggested situations for better Quality of Life facilities in case study regions.
Source: Rahnama, Shokouhi, and Heydari, (2013)

Conclusion and Suggestions

Some cities have adequate potential to change the path of rural migration and therefore have attracted rural immigrants. Saqqez, also is one of these cities, having the natural capability and numerous deprived villages in its surroundings. It has expedited growth in the past three decades. Rapid population growth in Saqqez city has not been accompanied by the development of facilities, infrastructure, opportunities and resources; so, residents have encountered serious challenges in improving their quality of life. Accordingly, this study aims at assessing the QOL of residents in Saqqez city using objective and subjective indicators by strategic plans.

1. Attention to the urban population of cities in Saqqez city in generally and Kurdistan province as specialty in providing of services with spatial movements of human elements in the framework of complete spatial ideas.
2. Methodical programming, proposing accurate and administrative solutions with the goal of achieving regional balanced development and progress.
3. Applying quantified and social indices as complementary elements of programming not as elements of opposing elements in programming.
4. The highest distribution coefficient obtained relate to the indices of the ratio of mosques and hosieries to every 10,000 people and the ratio of cinema and theatergoers to the total population that shows the importance of these indices in filling the time of citizens and their attention to their beliefs.
5. Repeated reviewing in distribution of health programs, basic structure and curing services.
6. Investment of government in basic parts of Kurdish cities economic instead investment on today needs of citizens in high rate.
7. Improving the infrastructures of urban management in Kurdish regions.
8. Improving the educational rate of Kurdish citizens also economic conditions.

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