HISTORIC RELIGIOUS IDENTITY, RAY URBAN DIGNITY

Searching Planning perspective at the neglected historic religious district to revive the local quality as a promoter of urban cohesion in different scales

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout this section I will reflect on my Master thesis in order to show the relationship between the research and the design, as well as my subject in a wider relevance. The exploration of the research and the design cooperation will start with the definition of the subject. Generally, this process began with a thorough literature review based on the main interests I had within the context of social and spatial quality in Ray and segregation and fragmentation phenomena.

Since the subject was shaped, the theoretical research formed the backbone of the concept and the data research took the main step. The urban strategies that are being proposed by the present thesis aim to rethink the social and spatial conditions in the southern district of Tehran named Ray in order to provide opportunities to counteract the processes of decay and socio-spatial segregation and fragmentation. The idea of this thesis was sparked by the newspapers headline: “How forgotten Ray can gain back its identity?”. In addition, Ray has been defined as a main historic- religious centre in Tehran master plan made by municipality.

In fact, Ray with 6000 years old and 10 million visitors per year due to its holy shrine, has been neglected and the local people suffer from the segregation in high scale and fragmentation in local scale. It is a multicultural district with diverse people. Due to its location and function, segregation is tangible in metropolitan scale. Firstly I aimed to connect Ray to the rest of the city more strongly, but by context analyzing the fragmentation in the local scale became more highlighted. Actually, Ray is not only segregated from the rest of the city but also it suffers from inside fragmentation socially and spatially. Lack of proper local services, low life quality have caused to moving out residents and replacing with migrants who do not have any sense to Ray. The thesis tried to revive local quality as a promoter of urban cohesion in different scales. On the other word, by promoting the local economic, social, spatial potentials in order to preserve their identity and to stimulate of their economy in different scales, Ray can be revived. Overall, limitations and opportunities of local actions should be determined in order to reach upper levels.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH AND DESIGN

By researching, it was understood that segregation and fragmentation phenomena are strong and influenced by different factors such as the economic, social and spatial aspects. Moreover, they are influenced by different levels such as global, national, local and group level processes, by structural and individual factors. In addition, it was clarified that areas and people have strong relationship. It means character of an area effects our decision, as much as whom we influence where we can select to live. Some places are inherently unattractive to live in; this impacts strongly on people, determining who moves in, out and who stays, creating people-based characteristics, alongside physical conditions. Studies illustrated that social and spatial factors and strategies in different scales should be taken into consideration. In fact, in order to reverse exclusion by area, we have to improve the local quality and make inner district more attractive for more people by creating stronger incentives to renovate it. The future planning ways in Ray are limiting suburban land supply, creating higher density in depleted urban zones, encouraging people to recycle old buildings and used land, improving public transportation, managing neighbourhoods to encourage a social mix, improving public spaces, services, creating multipurpose spaces and protecting green spaces. In fact, trough this socio-spatial structure, urban space mediates social experiences and confrontations on a daily basis. Thus Public spaces, public services and multipurpose spaces with appropriate quality can increase social interactions. The introduction of tram network and proposing new metro stations provided spatial development opportunities in Ray. New public spaces can be defined in these nodes with concentration of mixed use function and walkable areas. They have a key role on enhancing livability, social interact and life quality in Ray.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THEME OF THE STUDIO AND THE SUBJECT

The theme is directly connected to the studio of Complex Cities and regions in transformation which stands under Spatial planning and strategy chair. My project is faced with changing urban identity, social, spatial, functional and migration patterns. The thesis deal with segregation in different scales and presented the strategies for possible developments. In fact, my project is to consider Ray urban form and its structure in different levels, first the local scale for example public spaces and neighbourhoods and then metropolitan scale for example metro and tram network. Generally, the Complex Cities Studio has allowed me to explore freely around different scales strategies for the right criteria to assess the local design. This was provided through the sufficient range of lectures series such as spatial planning, urban growth and urban regeneration. Actually, the studio has reflected upon the chosen complex as the thesis project in order to transform problems into opportunities and creates a balance future development socially and spatially.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE METHODICAL LINE OF APPROACH AND THE METHOD CHOSEN BY STUDENT

Basically, the high scale interventions need strategies that will ensure a long term improvement of spatial and social structures. As a result, spatial conditions for local integration cannot be achieved without the review of the urban networks in all scales with their diverse challenges. If this hierarchy strategy idea is applied in Ray, the eventual restructuring of Ray district can become a cohesive urban space towards the cohabitation of multiple users. As mentioned previously the research focused on multiscalar approach in different layers. As a matter of fact the methodology follows this hierarchy. Analyzing, visioning, planning and designing have been done in two scales local (Ray district) and metropolitan (Tehran context).
Due to industries, agricultural lands, land price and its location, immigrants have settled in Ray that have changed social fabric. In addition, Ray has been segregated from the rest of the city due to three main reasons as follows:

1. Metropolitan scale strategy
   - The location which is in the southern district
   - The location which is separated Ray from Tehran
   - The highway which act as a barrier

In order to connect Ray to Tehran spatially, we proposed three approaches as follows:

1. The proposed Metro stations
2. The introduced TOD Nodes
3. The proposed zoning map

TOD (Transit Oriented Development) nodes can be introduced as new centrality in Ray. Depends on each metro stations character, future developments can be proposed. The proposed zoning map organizes the future developments and functions.
Ray has been fragmented in the district due to three main reasons as follows:

- To connect the fragmented Ray to each other socially and spatially, we proposed three approaches as follows:
  1. **Solution**
  2. The proposed Tram network
  3. The pedestrian network
  4. The preserved green belt and public spaces

The maps show the proposed Tram and pedestrian networks that have made the district more accessible at the local scale.
Design strategies in different scales

The image shows the hierarchy strategies from the locals scales to metropolitan scale. preserving the green belt, activating public spaces, organizing zoning areas, improving pedestrian network, introducing tram network as local scale strategies and defining new metro stations as a metropolitan scale strategy have tried to decreased social spatial segregation problems and increase local quality and make the district more active, cohesive, livable and attractive.
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROJECT AND WIDER SOCIAL CONTEXT

The specific starting point of this urban restructure proposal was defined along the necessity of consolidating the urban structure and growth of Ray towards preparing the conditions for positive impact of local development. Parallel to this statement, it is needed to improve quality of life of the inhabitants of Ray, reduce social spatial segregation by considering their needs and capacities into the transformation of Ray and have higher developing perspectives. Generally, when the socio-spatial segregation is solved in local level, they will become gradually pale in city scale. By considering social, cultural values and urban identity, more vital urban environment can be generated.

By changing the urban form, people relations can be changed. As a matter of fact, Thesis tried to provide a mutual recognition of all socio-spatial groups, the rich and the poor in Ray as well as the visitors. The thesis took into consideration residential relation as a mutual accessibility between residents. Concentration of social groups create the opportunities for a greater planning, a more effective programmes, especially where the district is hold by weaker social groups. By mutual recognizing of all socio-spatial groups, society can be more cohesive.

It is possible by applying proper normative instruments in relation to public spaces. On the other word, reviewing and studying the district structure showed the main solution to reverse exclusion in Ray is increasing the quality of the public spaces physically and functionally. The public space plays a key role in an urban structure and city life. It as a privileged element provides an opportunity to promote local cohesion. In fact, a public space with its natural ability can create and maintain strong local centrality. In addition, a public space effects environmental quality, economic competitiveness and emphasises the sense of citizenship.

The physical facilities, the activities, accessibility conditions, and the surrounding land-used programmes support public spaces.

Thus Public spaces, public services and multipurpose spaces with appropriate quality can be the elements of increasing social interactions by putting residents and users in different relations to attractions. In this case, selecting areas in Metro station as transition node, the shrine surrounding as the vibrant heart of Ray and the boulevard link draw activities by encouraging people to cross and use the amenities.

In the end, by a collaborative process of revitalizing, designing and arranging the physical elements Ray can be more harmonious, vibrant and successful places for people, first residents and then in a larger scale tourists or other users. Well designed Ray plays as magnets for businesses and tourism industry. It can attract more tourists who visit Ray for religious or historic purposes and investments, and instill community pride, the viability of the district.
P5 Reflection
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Title: Historic Religious Identity, Ray Urban Dignity
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