

Sustainable Urban Development: A Study in the Planning and Evaluation of Urban Services

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Abstract:

This study was based on clarifying the variable of urban development and its connections with the variable of planning services in the city, and what are the interactional spatial imbalances between individuals due to the lack of comprehensiveness in planning for facilities and service equipment, as it is extremely difficult to make a generalization on the phenomenon of building urban patterns without taking into account the planning issues of the city, as it varies. Urbanization from one urban form to another, and given the nature of the subject, it is in dire need of a socio-ecological treatment.

This research paper came to highlight the role of services as one of the most important concepts that has received great attention recently due to the increasing need of individuals for these services, especially after the development of technologies and methods used in providing these services.

Keywords : development, planning, services, urban coordination, city.

Introduction

Development is generally perceived as a matter of biophysical processes, while the social and cultural dimensions of the city, social actions, and political institutions that have emerged over time are understood as secondary to natural factors or as derivatives of the biophysical environment. On this basis, it becomes necessary to employ technological solutions and rely on the capacity of science to understand and interpret the world. At the same time, there has been a revival of indigenous knowledge and a greater appreciation of the wisdom embedded in social and ecological experiences.

Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to demonstrate the role of urban service planning in promoting development and, at the same time, in strengthening social relations and social systems within the framework of social organization.

Research Problem

The city is a social and administrative unit whose inhabitants live together within a defined geographical area with the aim of exchanging benefits and achieving common goals and objectives. The economic activities of its population are primarily based on industry, commerce, and crafts. Cities are characterized by ease of mobility and transportation, a relatively high standard of living, and the availability of administrative institutions and services in their various forms.

Urban planning aims to improve the ecological conditions upon which the city and its surrounding areas have been established. It also seeks to enhance the social, economic, and even psychological conditions of the population, improve the relationship between housing, streets, and public services,

facilitate the establishment of public parks and recreational spaces, preserve and expand green areas within residential neighborhoods, and provide all essential community services and infrastructure that contribute to strengthening neighborhood relations within urban residential communities.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following principal research question:

To what extent are service planning programs implemented in the development of cities?

This main question was followed by two subsidiary questions:

What is the role of service facilities in urban neighborhoods?

How do service facilities contribute to achieving socio-ecological integration within the city?

Research Hypotheses

The study was based on the following hypotheses

Main hypothesis: The planning of infrastructure services can contribute significantly to achieving development.

Secondary hypothesis: Social and cultural systems are reinforced through the availability of service facilities that support and strengthen social relationships.

Research Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive method, as it is considered the most appropriate approach for describing the phenomenon under investigation and providing a comprehensive and clear understanding of it. In addition, the case study method was employed.

A random sample was selected, covering all neighborhoods of the city. A research questionnaire was administered to 600 respondents to investigate the city's planning process, particularly the service-related component and the manner in which services are spatially distributed. Several research tools were also employed, including direct observation, questionnaires, official documents, and administrative records, in order to collect the greatest possible amount of relevant information.

Section One: Urban Development

Urban development also refers to an increase in population density exceeding 2,000 inhabitants per square kilometer, an expansion in city size beyond 10,000 inhabitants, the engagement of individuals in productive activities, the dissemination of technology, the predominance of commercial, industrial, and service occupations, a high degree of division of labor and social complexity, and the organization of social interaction. Development is closely associated with state growth and with the evolution and coordination of systems of social regulation, together with the social, ecological, and cultural orientations that contribute to urban development.

This section is divided into two subsections. The first addresses the concept of development, while the second examines urban planning.

First Subsection: The Concept of Development

This subsection discusses the concept of development, its determinants, its roots, as well as urban planning and the study and evaluation of services.

First: The Concept of Development

The term development has become one of the most frequently used concepts in recent decades. Nevertheless, despite its widespread usage, the concept remains ambiguous, giving rise to numerous and diverse theoretical approaches that seek to explain and define it.

Development also refers to both economic and non-economic programs resulting from the organization of local communities. Some sociologists have considered community development to

be the process through which societies transition from a pre-industrial (agricultural) stage to an industrial one.

Social values also play a crucial role in either facilitating or hindering development. Development can hardly perform an effective role where prevailing values remain rigid and underdeveloped.

Based on the foregoing, development may be defined as a deliberate and purposeful process of social change aimed at transforming society from its existing condition to a more desirable one. In other words, it is a planned and well-designed process intended to promote societal progress in its economic, social, cultural, and institutional dimensions (Rashwan, 2004, p. 15), within the framework of the state's general development plan.

1. The Concept of Urban Development

Urban development is the process through which rural communities evolve into urban communities. It also refers to the emergence and growth of urban societies.

It further denotes the process of examining the social, ecological, and cultural trends that contribute to urban growth and development.

Urban development likewise encompasses the planned transformations that occur within cities, including housing development, the construction of high-rise buildings, the creation of streets and neighborhoods, and the establishment of trees and green spaces.

During the second half of the twentieth century, a new concept of urban development emerged. In 1969, Schoon published a study on urban problems that addressed both the physiological and social needs of cities. Particular attention was devoted to slums, after which new programs focusing on urban renewal and model cities were introduced (Rashwan, *The Role of Social Variables in Urban Development*, 2004, p. 15).

A. Factors of Urban Development

John Dikey classified the variables contributing to urban development into four fundamental components:

- Human beings and social groups;
- The natural environment;
- The human-made environment;
- Human activities.

In addition, urban development and city growth are driven by advances in technological innovation, increasing efficiency in transportation and communication technologies, comprehensive knowledge of water, air, land, and natural resource management required for development, as well as specialization and integration among regions.ⁱ

Second: The Origins of Urban Development

It is extremely difficult to determine with precision when and where cities first emerged. Historians generally agree that the earliest classical cities were coastal settlements. In ancient Sumerian cities, for example, religious temples constituted the dominant institutions, around which commercial quarters developed. The emergence of writing and agricultural surplus also played decisive roles in the formation of urban settlements.

1. Elements of the Urban Way of Life

Although urban and rural life within the same state share a number of common characteristics, urban life is distinguished by several fundamental features:

Large population size and high density tend to produce superficial and impersonal social relationships. Consequently, individuals become less bound by traditional ties and local affiliations and increasingly depend on secondary groups, which require effective mechanisms of social control.

Cities are characterized by an advanced division of labor and occupational specialization in the production, distribution, and provision of goods and services.

A. Rates of Urban Development

It is difficult to formulate universal generalizations regarding the formation of urban systems because urbanization varies considerably from one urban system to another. This variation reflects the fact that history has produced different patterns of cities across societies at different stages of development.

These differences are manifested in varying rates of urban growth, diversity in city size, differences in economic structures, individual and national income levels, education, technical skills, technological advancement, industrialization, the spread of newspapers and magazines, electronic communication technologies, transportation facilities, and the external dynamics that influence development.

Second Subsection: Urban Planning

The excessive increase in the population of cities, together with their growing density and household size, has become one of the most pressing urban challenges in most African countries classified among those with low levels of development. These rapid increases in urban size, growth, and density place considerable pressure on both physical infrastructure and social infrastructure.² (Atoui, 2003, p. 250). This subsection addresses the planning and evaluation of services, including their concept, classification, and principal characteristics.

First: Planning and Evaluation of Urban Services

Every city carries out its activities within the framework of a plan designed to meet both its present and future needs (Al-Shawawrah, 2012, p. 200). It is therefore important to distinguish between cities that emerged without prior planning—such as the ancient city of Ur in Iraq, which is characterized by its narrow streets, winding alleys, and limited mobility and planned cities.

1. Concept of Services

The concept of services has attracted considerable attention in recent years because of the increasing demand for them, particularly following advances in the technologies and methods employed in their provision (Al-Dulaimi, 2015, p. 38). Researchers have proposed various definitions of services, among which are the following:³

Philip Kotler's definition: Services are any activity or benefit that one party can offer to another. They are intangible in nature, do not result in the ownership of anything, and their provision is not necessarily linked to the production of a tangible product.

Grönroos's definition: Services are sensory-perceived and exchangeable activities provided by specialized companies or institutions, or by organizations whose primary function is the provision of services.

A. Classification of Services

Services may be classified into two principal categories according to the planning approach adopted and the spatial dimension they occupy.

Classification According to Spatial Dimension

- **Community or Social Services**

These include education, healthcare, and recreational services, which are characterized as area-based services.

- **Infrastructure Services**

These include water supply, electricity, sewerage systems, solid waste collection, telecommunications, and road networks.

Classification According to Service Type

Services may also be classified according to their nature, including:

Administrative services;

Commercial services;

Health services;

Recreational services;

Educational services;

Industrial services;

Religious services.

Characteristics of Services

The principal characteristics of services include the following:

Adequacy of services for the entire population;

Efficiency of services through the use of advanced technologies;

Flexibility of services in accommodating population growth;

Provision of safety and security;

Compatibility with environmental conditions.

Second: Principles and Levels of Service Planning

1. Principles of Service Planning

Service planning is carried out according to spatial, distance-related, and capacity-based standards in order to ensure equity in service provision for all residents of a city, region, or state (Al-Dulaimi, Planning Community Services and Infrastructure, 2015, p. 15). These principles include:

Achieving equitable distribution of services in accordance with population size, density, and internationally recognized standards.

Ensuring that services are adequate and provided with a high level of quality and efficiency.

Employing modern technologies in service delivery and management, such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Remote Sensing, and the Global Positioning System (GPS).

Ensuring the continuous provision of services in a manner consistent with scientific and technological progress, as well as the economic and social transformations taking place within the state. Services should therefore evolve in response to population growth and the changing needs and aspirations of residents.

Adopting a practical and systematic strategy for the provision, distribution, and expansion of services to ensure equal access for every individual.

Ensuring that the development of services keeps pace with changes in population density and internationally accepted standards, including revisions to standards governing water supply, electrical energy, communication, and transportation services.

Evaluating the implementation of service plans, designs, and projects to assess their efficiency, identify deficiencies where performance is inadequate, and develop appropriate solutions to the problems, errors, and obstacles encountered during service delivery.

Allocating sufficient financial resources by the state to provide the various types of services required to address existing shortages and meet community needs.

Encouraging public participation in service provision and in the preparation of plans and designs, since such participation contributes to reducing errors that may accompany service delivery and thereby enhances service efficiency.

Coordinating the efforts of agencies responsible for service provision in order to avoid overlap or conflict, particularly with respect to infrastructure services.

Ensuring that service plans and designs are sufficiently flexible to accommodate anticipated future population growth without reducing the basic share of services available to each individual.

Taking into account the locations of all types of services when preparing urban master plans, since planners may otherwise overlook the requirements for extending water networks, telephone lines, and other essential infrastructure.

A. Theoretical Approaches

The Social Approach to Development

This approach emphasizes the importance of human development. It was described by Ross under the concept of the process, while Cary referred to it as the Integrated Community Action Approach, and Sanders described it as the Process, Method, and Activity Approach. Both theoretical and applied studies in social work, as well as research in the sociology of development, have demonstrated that human and social dimensions play a decisive role in the success or failure of economic development.

The following framework illustrates the interaction among needs assessment, community organization, policy formulation, planning, program implementation, and evaluation, ultimately leading to the satisfaction of community needs and the transition of society toward a better condition (Al-Latif, 2008, p. 55), provided that community members actively participate throughout all stages of the process.

The Integrated Approach

The integrated approach is based on the premise that development cannot be understood through a single perspective alone. Rather, it requires consideration of all dimensions contributing to development including the economic, social, religious, and political dimensions on the basis that all community needs and problems must be taken into account when planning appropriate development interventions.⁴

Section Two: Urban Services

This section is divided into two subsections. The first addresses the levels of service planning, while the second examines the use of modern technologies in urban service planning.

First Subsection: Levels of Service Planning⁵

Service planning is undertaken at several levels according to population size, population density, and the nature of the urban structure. This subsection discusses services provided at the level of residential clusters, neighborhoods, cities, and regions, in addition to examining the state of development in Algeria and the evaluation of urban services.

Residential Cluster Services

The residential cluster represents the primary unit within the urban structure of the city. It is composed of several residential blocks and takes a form that corresponds both to the site's characteristics and to the design adopted for the neighborhood or the city. Specific services are provided to residents of these residential clusters, including primary schools, kindergartens, health centers, recreational areas, small markets, and mosques, in addition to infrastructure services such as water supply, electricity, sewerage systems, waste collection, telecommunications, and transportation, all provided according to the standards established for each service.

First: Neighborhood Services

The residential neighborhood constitutes the second level in the city's urban structure. It consists of several residential clusters and, like residential clusters, may assume different physical forms.⁶ Neighborhoods generally include secondary schools, large commercial markets, a central mosque, more extensive recreational areas, and healthcare facilities. In other words, the essential services available within residential neighborhoods are comprehensive and intended to serve all neighborhood residents. As in residential clusters, neighborhood services are planned according to population size and density.⁷

City Services

A city is composed of several residential neighborhoods. Consequently, services provided at the city level are intended to serve the entire population and complement those available within residential clusters and neighborhoods. Such services may include universities, institutes, major public hospitals, recreational facilities, sports stadiums, libraries, public parks, and other urban amenities.

Regional Services

A region is a broad geographical area characterized by relatively homogeneous features and may encompass several cities and large villages located in close proximity to one another. Certain services are therefore planned to serve all residents of the region equally, such as universities, central hospitals, public parks, transportation services, water supply projects, power generation plants, and wastewater treatment facilities.⁸

1. Development in Algeria

The emergence of industrialization in Algeria led to the formation of new working-class groups, which subsequently evolved into new social strata within urban communities. Industrial expansion also stimulated successive waves of rural-to-urban migration and contributed to the establishment of the General Union of Algerian Workers.

A. The Reality of Development in Algeria

The concept of development encompasses numerous dimensions, making it difficult to formulate a single comprehensive definition. Development is a complex, multidimensional, and comprehensive process involving economic, social, cultural, and political aspects, while also recognizing the importance of psychological and biological dimensions in understanding human behavior (Gharbi, 2001, p. 128), as well as the motivations that influence individuals and shape social relationships.

Second: Evaluation of Services

Service evaluation is based on several principal criteria, including the following:

Service quality: The type and quality of service constitute fundamental evaluation criteria. Services should meet acceptable standards and internationally recognized specifications. Evaluation should consider not only the quantity of services provided but also their quality.

Service distribution: One of the primary principles of service planning is ensuring that services are distributed equitably among all residents according to their numbers and population density.⁹

Service efficiency: Service efficiency is assessed according to the extent to which services are delivered to every individual in conformity with established standards and without operational deficiencies. Services should be provided in adequate quantities and should respond effectively to the continuously increasing demand.

Service flexibility: This refers to the ability of services to accommodate continuous and growing demand while ensuring availability for all residents without diminishing the share allocated to the original population. For example, increases in population density resulting from migration require services capable of adapting to such demographic changes. Accordingly, service flexibility constitutes an essential criterion in evaluating the capacity of services to respond to anticipated future developments.¹⁰

1. Services in the Algerian City

Sustainable development is development that can be maintained over time. It emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between human beings and their natural environment, as well as between society and its development. Its focus extends beyond quantitative growth to include qualitative improvements, such as enhancing income distribution among members of society and providing employment opportunities, healthcare, education, and housing. The ecological environment constitutes the natural reservoir of resources upon which humanity depends (Amin, 2008, p. 5), while development represents the means through which societies pursue welfare and collective well-being.

A researcher examining Algerian urban society finds that it represents a mixture of modern and traditional housing, much of which did not originally conform to the principles governing the development of human settlements. Only in recent decades has substantial attention been devoted to the provision of service facilities within urban settlements.

Second Subsection: The Use of Modern Technologies in Urban Service Planning

The world has witnessed remarkable advances in information technology, which is now employed across virtually every sphere of life. Since the city constitutes the setting in which various systems interact and technological applications are implemented, these developments have significantly improved urban services. Consequently, the quality of public services should be closely linked to the quality of state administration. This subsection therefore examines the role of technology in supporting planning concepts, as well as the position of the present study within the scientific approaches that explain the relationship between development and ecology.

First: The Role of Technology in Supporting Planning Concepts

Modern technologies have substantially improved methods of service management and enhanced their operational efficiency. These technologies have contributed significantly to scientific research by:

Reducing the effort required for data collection compared with conventional survey methods.

Shortening the time needed to conduct studies and producing rapid and accurate results.

Providing periodic information that enables researchers to conduct comparative studies across different time periods, thereby identifying developments in phenomena such as urban expansion.

Integrating information databases with spatial data and maps related to the study area, thus facilitating spatial analysis.

Modern technologies also make it possible to monitor global developments in scientific research methods and their applications in service planning, including the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS), the Global Positioning System (GPS), remote sensing, and other advanced technologies.

To achieve optimal results from these technologies in urban planning, several procedures may be followed, including:

Selecting appropriate satellite imagery related to community services or infrastructure according to the required map scale, the size of the study area, and the type of information needed.

Processing and analyzing satellite images in accordance with the objectives of the study area. Image enhancement techniques are employed to monitor changes, identify developments in land use, and reveal important service-related phenomena within the city.¹¹

Employing modern technologies in an integrated manner to collect data, generate information, and produce maps of the study area. Remote sensing, GIS, and GPS complement one another by collectively providing comprehensive spatial information.

Utilizing the data and information generated through these technologies to prepare and continuously update base maps of cities, illustrating both their natural and human features as well as patterns of urban development, thereby providing reliable references for ongoing urban studies.

Providing detailed information on urban growth, the nature and quality of services delivered to city residents, and the challenges associated with each category of service.

Extracting information from satellite imagery and organizing it into vector maps and thematic layers (Vector and Layers).

Integrating information databases with the spatial data of the study area to facilitate their use in various fields.

Analyzing the collected information according to the objectives and requirements of the study.¹²

Second: The Position of the Present Study within Scientific Theories

1. The Ecological Perspective

The ecological perspective refers to the interaction between human beings and their social environment. The concepts and ideas associated with this perspective are founded upon the view that the essence of the city lies in the concentration of a large number of individuals within a relatively limited space. In other words, it focuses on examining the effects of city size and population density on urban structure, social organization, institutions, and planning.

The lifestyle of urban residents, the nature of their social relationships, and their responses to the environment give rise to different forms of behavior and patterns of conduct that leave their imprint on urban life. This perspective is, to a considerable extent, consistent with the objectives of the present study.

It is evident that the migration of individuals or groups from rural areas to cities influences their behavior and consequently affects the nature of the social relationships that emerge as a result of this spatial transition. Accordingly, the ecological perspective in sociology represents an attempt to understand the social changes and organizational patterns that arise within a particular area as a consequence of the interaction between the population and its environment.

Urban Concentration and the Characteristics of Urbanism

Urbanism is dynamic rather than static; it is characterized by movement, continuity, and constant transformation.

Urban life requires rapid adaptation. Individuals who fail to adapt quickly tend to become socially marginalized and, according to some scholars, may become vulnerable to psychological disorders. By contrast, individuals who successfully adapt and actively interact with their environment are more capable of thriving in the city. Rapid adaptation is therefore regarded as a fundamental prerequisite for successful urban living.

Urban life differs from rural life in that it is flexible rather than rigid. It is characterized by rapid change and mobility, unconstrained by the relative stability of rural environments. Social relationships in cities are marked by flexibility and the capacity to adjust to changing circumstances arising from shifts in social positions and roles. Consequently, social classes within the city are relatively open, and urban life may therefore be described as inherently dynamic.

These represent some of the principal characteristics of urban life. Nevertheless, urban life is far too complex to be fully defined by these characteristics alone.

The Organizational Perspective

Within this perspective, urbanization and urban growth are not limited merely to increases in population size and density or to the development of an economic system supported by advanced industrial technology. Rather, they fundamentally involve the evolution toward increasingly complex forms of social organization. This includes the development of communication systems and the establishment of social and political mechanisms that facilitate coordination and integration among specialized and differentiated sectors.

In other words, urban growth represents the transition from a simple society to one of greater organizational complexity. Urbanization likewise reflects the cumulative development of institutional complexity that has accompanied technological advancement.

Historically, this institutional development has included the emergence of strong centralized governments, the expansion of local, regional, and international markets, and the proliferation of both formal and informal organizations, such as labor unions, workers' associations, and employers' organizations. It has also involved the creation of numerous social organizations designed to meet the growing needs of an increasingly complex economic and social system, together with transformations affecting the structure and functions of existing institutions such as the family, schools, religious institutions, systems of social status, social stratification, and power structures.

Indeed, a substantial body of scholarly literature has examined the relationship between the emergence of cities and urban growth on the one hand, and patterns of social change on the other. The common denominator across this body of research is the emphasis placed on bureaucracy, social stratification, and the expansion of voluntary associations as the principal indicators by which urbanization and urban growth may be assessed.

A. Objectives of the Urban Development Strategy

The principal objectives of the urban development strategy include the following:

Developing urban areas through the modernization of transportation systems, the rehabilitation and maintenance of roads within cities and neighborhoods, and the improvement of water and electricity networks.

Promoting rural development and modernization in order to create attractive opportunities within rural communities.

Locating industries in small cities and suburban areas to create centers capable of attracting population and investment.

Adopting policies aimed at addressing population growth and directing urban expansion toward smaller cities and rural settlements.

Giving greater attention to urban planning in a manner consistent with both present and future development requirements.

Promoting the construction of new cities based on sound planning principles, whether satellite or independent cities, to function as centers of attraction for employment and residential settlement.

Conclusion

Urban policy constitutes the set of strategies adopted by public authorities to address the spatial and territorial imbalances affecting cities, enhance urban neighborhoods, and reduce social disparities both within individual cities and between neighboring cities and their respective neighborhoods.

Throughout human history, the principles of urban planning and development have represented a synthesis of science, art, and ethics. They embody a body of knowledge and professional expertise that reflects the cultural evolution of civilization and contributes to the advancement of human thought, social life, and the organization of the built environment. The quality and architectural character of buildings, their harmonious integration into their surroundings, respect for natural and urban landscapes, and the protection of cultural and historical heritage all constitute matters of public interest benefiting both society and the state.

Among the principal findings of the study are the following:

Urban planning processes constitute an essential component of city development and cannot be neglected.

The availability of service facilities within urban neighborhoods strengthens social relationships among individuals and groups.

Effective planning and sound planning management play a significant role in achieving community development.

The planning of public services and facilities contributes substantially to enhancing the social well-being of individuals and communities within cities.

Religious and sports facilities play an effective role in strengthening neighborhood relations.

The study proposed the following suggestions and recommendations:

Giving top priority to planning aspects in the construction of cities.

Involving experts and specialists in the preparation of the city's development plan.

Giving top priority to service facilities and infrastructure accompanying housing.

Ensuring the participation of individuals and communities in the preparation of development plans.

Suggestions:

Working toward establishing a sustainable urban development authority in cities and monitoring the extent of its implementation.

Benefiting from the experiences of countries that adopt sustainability as a guiding principle in their urban life.

Recommendations:

Mainstreaming sustainability across all areas of urban life.

Adopting the concept of creating a better quality of life.

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¹ Hussein Abdel Hamid Ahmed Rashwan, The Role of Social Variables in Urban Development, op. cit., p. 80.

² Abdullah Atoui, Urban Geography, Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabia, Vol. 3, 1st ed., 2003, p. 250.

³ Khalaf Hussein Ali Al-Dulaimi, Planning Community Services and Infrastructure, Dar Safaa for Publishing, 2nd ed., Amman, 2015, p. 38.

⁴ Ibid., p. 56.

⁵ Khalaf Hussein Al-Dulaimi, op. cit., pp. 51–52.

⁶ Ibid., p. 52.

⁷ Khalaf Hussein Al-Dulaimi, op. cit., p. 51.

⁸ Ibid., p. 53.

⁹ Khalaf Hussein Al-Dulaimi, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 55.

¹¹ Khalaf Hussein Ali Al-Dulaimi, op. cit., p. 606.

¹² Khalaf Hussein Ali Al-Dulaimi, op. cit., p. 675.