

Strategies to empower the marginalized communities of Ghale Chanan District in Ahwaz Province

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ABSTRACT: The main objective of this study is to investigate the problem of marginalization in city of Ahwaz and to propose empowering strategies within the liberal framework. The staggering growth of Ahwaz population as the regional center in the Southwest of Iran, the seventh metropolis of Iran and the second largest city in terms of marginalization have given rise to a plethora of problems such as filthy marginalized communities, illegal housing, etc. One of these marginalized communities is Ghale Chanan District. It has been infused with numerous problems in the last few decades to the extent that it poses health, safety and welfare threats to the city. Empowerment is based on the poverty alleviation and its advancement depends on the cooperation of the citizens and urban management. It aims at provoking the sense of belonging in the area and eliciting the proper response as to the share of the state and people. What is central to this strategy is a special emphasis on increasing household incomes and poverty alleviation. The research method is descriptive - analytic and a sample size of 266 households was randomly selected using Cochran method. The data obtained by means of the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS software based on Pearson Chi-Square method. This area is characterized with physical and social features such as relatively stable and homogenous social context, disinclination to cooperate with state-run offices, lack of awareness of the urban management planning among the local people, the low quality of the housing and a combination of all these factors. The results, however, show that the citizens with a longer history of residency in the area enjoy better amenities and services. There is a positive (parallel) relationship between the history of residence and the desire to contribute, and the citizens with higher awareness of urban management planning are more likely to cooperate.

Keywords: marginalization, organization and renovation, empowerment, Ahwaz, Ghale Chenan.

INTRODUCTION

Marginalization is rooted in the history of human social life and its manifestations have been the ethnic, religious ghettos used as settlements of the poor in the ancient societies. In its modern sense, this phenomenon have been incited by the emergence of capitalism and urbanism and the increasing migration from rural areas to the cities, first at the heart of capitalistic societies and then in under-developed countries. The implications of this colonialism are the rise of a number of social issues the most important of which are economic interventions, unemployment and migration from rural areas to the cities, which, in turn, worsen the issue of marginalization (Rabaniet al., 2009).

One painful yet persistent aspect of this issue in Iran is the nefarious shadow of informal settlement or marginalization which has been the upshot of the unrefined waste of an unbalanced urban economy and poverty-alleviation culture on one hand and the lack of attention paid to this issue on the other hand. Thus, it has imposed behavioral abnormalities and aberrations on their receptive destination, i.e. cities. Rural migration and rapid growth of urbanization along with the rise of marginalization, the inefficiencies and difficulties of the urban life and the lack

of housing and proper employment have prepared the ground for the social seclusion of these areas. Several studies conducted in various cities indicate that though the history of marginalization in Iranian dates back to 1300, it has been especially evident in 40s and 50s. At that time, the rise of oil price and its injection to the Iranian economy increased the per capita income prominently. Moreover, the wealth obtained from the divided lands tempted the landowners to return to the cities. As such, the decline of the agricultural sector and the inefficiencies of the industrial sectors along with the failure of the industrialization policies in many of the developing countries pushed the vast rural masses to the towns, and owing to the fact that urban industries were not able to employ this unskilled labor force, they were inevitably absorbed in the informal economy and unskilled service sector, creating a poverty belt around the urban fringe. This rate of migration has been so high that today one eighth of rural population lives in the margin of the big cities and this figure is estimated to be doubled in the next 10 years (the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Resettlement Policy Framework in informal settlements, p 133). Whatever the reason, we have to deal with the marginalization issue these days and the scholars are mainly concerned about working out reasonable and pragmatic solutions to this problem and its related issues. The expansion of the cities, the depletion of natural resources and the massive traffic jams are just some of the devastating effects of uncontrolled population growth and its unbalanced distribution on the natural environments and the culture of the society (Ghorbani and Nooshad, 2008).

Empowerment is based on the poverty alleviation and the sustainable human development revolves around the citizen participation in urban management (Khazraee, 2002). The aim of civil participation or empowerment is to reinforce the sense of belonging in the area and the responsiveness of the local residents to the question of "share of state and people " in organizing the neighborhood (Khatam, 2003).

In this approach, the emphasis is on increasing the income and alleviating the poverty of the households. In this regard, training professional and skillful labor force, easing their access to the sources, organizing and marketing of their business, particularly with the mediation of the private and local enterprises, are highly important. (Komato, 2002).

The underlying principles and implications of the empowerment approach are as follow:

Public participation and their collaboration in the planning, decentralization in decision-making of the government, promotion of the women's status and gender equality, recognition of the various age groups of the society, reinforcement of local management capacity and introduction of new management and planning devices to the city managers (Jafari, 2003).

Overall, the best way to promote the process of the development among the informal communities is the organization and improvement of a vision document to implement the empowering strategies.

The process of social learning along with the collective contribution and the sense of belonging nurture the security of the housing and the hope for the future. The improvement and gradual development of the living environment of the informal settlements is only achievable through organization and empowerment of the low-income people. In this way, their separation from the city would gradually disappear (Sarafi, 2002).

The appointment of Ahwaz as the center of the development and the continuity of construction activities in this city, the lack of equitable distribution of resources between Ahwaz and other cities of the same province and the focus on the service and welfare facilities and land reforms in 40s were all among the reasons that set the scene for the growth of this city, attracting huge population from nearby rural areas. The growing demand for housing and land led to a rise in the prices, an issue aggravated by the urban institutions, which made land inaccessible to the poor and pushed them to the margin of the city.

Like other major cities, Ahwaz is dealing with urban problems such as marginalization, cultural poverty, uneven development, increased crime rate, emergence of false jobs and issues of that ilk.

Moreover, the eight years of the Iran-Iraq War, (1980) and its impact on the city have compounded the problems of Ahwaz.

This study acknowledges the effect of the history of residence on the extent of access to the services and facilities (educational - cultural and medical), the effect (positive or negative) of the history of the dwelling on the desire of the citizen to participate in the empowerment of their settlements and the effect of citizen's awareness of the municipal and urban management planning on their inclination to engage in empowering their neighborhood. Thus, the overall objective of this study is to investigate the willingness of the citizens to contribute to the empowerment strategies and present viable solutions for implementing these solutions in the marginalized areas of Ahwaz with the emphasis of GhaleChenan District.

Hypotheses

1- There seems to be a significant relationship between the history of the dwelling and access to the facilities and services (educational – cultural and medical) in the GhaleChenan District.

2 - There seems to be a significant relationship between the history of the dwelling and the willingness to participate among the citizens of the GhaleChenan District.

3- There seems to be a significant relationship between citizens' awareness of the municipal planning and their willingness to participate in empowering projects in GhaleChenan District.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this study, the library and field research methods have been used for data collection. The field study was conducted via random sampling, questionnaires, observations and interviews. According to the Housing Foundation of Khuzestan Province as quoted from the political division of the Khuzestan municipality in 2011, GhaleChenan District had 2418 households, which formed the statistical community of the study. The analysis of 266 samples was conducted using Cochran method.

Theoretical principles of the study

In connection with the phenomenon of marginalization in the world, three general approaches can be distinguished. The liberal view considers the emergence of the informal settlements as a natural process and uses the market rules for its analysis. It deals with the supremacy of the demands over supply at the cost of ignoring the root of the problem, namely the class division and poverty, as the inevitable upshot of capitalism in the era of monopolization and globalization. This is due to the fact that in the liberal view, capitalism is the best existing mode (Piran, 2003).

As opposed to the liberal view, the radical view sees the formation of informal settlements in the Third World as the result of "international relations and world dominant powers on one hand and national characteristics on the other hand" (Ahmadipour, 1998). According to the center-peripheryinteractive view, in the last decades, the structure of the human settlements, particularly in the mega cities, have experienced the qualitative changes due to the general developments of the human society commonly known as postmodern, disorganized capitalism or globalization. These qualitative changes consist of three main elements: the change in economic and social foundation of metropolises, the change in the spatial structure of the metropolises and the change in the planning and management of mega cities. The outcome of all these changes is the emergence of a complex and large settlement in spatial terms, which far from being based on a single center and a center-periphery relationhierarchy, mainly consist of a dispersed, multi-center and multi-core complex. The overflow or absorption of the populations and the activities of the mega cities in the marginal areas as well as the modified role and function of the metropolitan centers carry positive and negative implications which should be addressed together. According to this view, the solution to the marginalization issue requires a reasonable interaction between the center and the periphery.

Considering the characteristics of the urban system of Iran, ParvizPiran divides the unorthodoxtextures of modern cities into three categories: a) shantytowns; B.) villages within the city, and c) sub-standard settlements (Piran, 1995). The theoretical perspectives related to unusual textures can be categorized into two areas: 1) the views that seek to find the root causes of unusual urban settlements and 2) the views which seek to offer solutions. These are also a number of different approaches including liberal, radical and dependency approaches (Irandoust, 2009).

The main argument of this paper is within the framework of liberal view. Liberalism does not address the root causes of the formation of these settlements and only deals with the maintenance and acceptance of the status quo (Shokouee, 2004). One of the Liberal theorists is C. Turner who in his two articles "Controlled urban settlements" and "Who must know what about housing" address the issue of marginalization and unorthodox urban settlement, saying, "the builders of huts and other unorthodox settlements are the urban planners and architects who have taken things in their hands in the society where urban planning and architecture has disappointed them"(Piran, 1995).

This is what known as "limited government" or "minimal state" or, in other words, the government with diminished responsibility in which the citizens choose their individual and social responsibility and take matters in their own hands (Qaderi, 2000).

Arthur Lewis is another liberal theorist who believes that the residents of these settlements should be protected because it encourages migration to such places and exacerbates cultural poverty (Fakoohi, 2004). This situation creates a cycle of poverty and deprivation which is characterized by the transmission of poverty from generation to generation through a combination of family situation and local and neighborhood conditions, giving rise to homelessness as one of its side effect (Knox and Marston, 1998).

One of the schools derived from the world of capitalism and liberalism is the evolutionism school of renovation which has influenced a number of the existing spatial models, developing the urban political infrastructure in the developing countries (Irandoost, 2009). The problems associated with such settlements include the lack of proper sewage system and severe financial weakness, the low income of its residents (Mohammadi et al, 1387, 1385: 85) and the security issue facing the landowners and services, which in a cause - effect relation, has compounded the complexity of the situation (Magigi and Majani, 2006). In terms of structure, factors such as unequal opportunities, unequal distribution of resources (Ziyari, Mehdinejad and Parhiz, 2009), delinquency (Kargar, 2007) among other things are often involved in formation of unorthodox settlements and any attempt to improve these settlements should first address them

To improve the living conditions and settlements in these textures, maintain the stability of social and environmental development (Farhoodi et al., 2004) and promote the contribution of citizens and empowerment, the emphasis should be placed on social, economic and cultural processes of the city, highlighting the local communities and efficient municipality (Sarafi, 2008; Tavakolinia and Ostadi Sisi, 2009,). The role of councils in all managerial aspects should be highlighted (Tavakolinia and OstadiSisi, 2008). In this way, understanding the level of citizen satisfaction with the residential environment seems necessary (Rafieian et al., 2009).

Given this experience, it appears that the proper approach in dealing with these settlements within the liberal view is "organizing and empowering" because, besides preserving the existing structures, it can help improve the social, economic, physical and cultural conditions (ZareShahabadi et al., 2010).

What is meant by organization in this paper is in fact the structure - functional arranging and ordering of the system components in such a way that contribute to the general improvement of the system with emphasis on the physical aspects and urban services (Kamanroodi, 2007). The intended aspects of empowerment include economic, human, social, political and cultural dimensions (Luttrell et al., 2007). Thus, in addition to the physical improvement, the human aspects of the unorthodox settlements are also brought to forefront, which can be best addressed within the framework of empowerment approach. In general, empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of the poor to "share", "negotiate", "influence", "control" and "take responsibility " of the institutions affecting their lives (Narayan, 2002).

Marginalization in Ahwaz

Ahwaz is one of the mega cities that have gone through intensive demographic changes since late 1981s. The urban population studies show that with a growth rate of 5.5 percent per year, the population of this city has increased from 338,604 in 1976 to more than 579,826 in 1986. 69.2 percent of this increase has been due to the migrations, and fertility and birth accounts only for 8 percent.

In the 2006 census, Ahwaz's population with a growth rate of 3.3 percent per year was more than 804,980 people, with 68.2 percent of the total population increase due to immigration and the remainder (31.8%) due to the fertility and birth. The literature confirms that unsuitable urban environments for the immigrants and living in the "marginal settlements" as the solution to the problem of residence expose the people separated from their culture to the urban anomies, producing social evils, addiction, social tensions and disinclination to participate in public culture of the urban community and, of course, Ahwaz is not excepted from this rule. In modern times, Ahwaz, due to increasing population and unbalanced distribution in terms of physical growth and development, has expanded dispersedly and this physical heterogeneity has created unpleasant areas such as Hasirabad and CharsadDastgah slums.

The growth of Khuzestan's industries such as steel and oil along with the expansion of the army and the construction of residential and office complexes by these industries have also led to the confusion and fragmentation of the city boundaries. The city is now confined to the area owned by the oil industry from north, steel factories from east, the lands belonging to water and power organization from south and vast area controlled by the army from the northwest. This has hindered the harmonious development of this city.

This manner of development has always been common in the cities expanded around the course of rivers, producing a myriad of problems in provision of urban services and accessibility at different level. The lack of consistency in physical and social development and unbalanced distribution of the populations and facilities in the past decades, inefficiency of land use allocation and failure in implementation of urban planning in the years prior to the Iranian Revolution along with such factors as changes in economic, political, social and cultural aspects have significantly affected the population movements and population pressure has unraveled uneven urban development in various part of the city.

In the years following the Revolution, we witnessed the rise of residential settlements, which were built either based on a specific planning and design or haphazard and chaotic construction around the West and the East bank of Karun River.

KooyeAlavi, KooyeValiasr, Farhangianl, Golestan and residential areas such as BistodoBahman, Daneshgahi, Razmandegan developed in the western bank of Karun and currently KooyeMeli Rah, Azadi, Sepidar, Resalat, Bahonar, Modares, Taleghani along with Naft, Abuzar and Qian Abad town are under construction (Management and Planning Organization, 2001).

With a population of 1.1 million in 2006 and more than 320,000 marginalized settlers, this metropolis has the worst situation (relative to its population) in terms of marginalization among the Iranian mega cities. This number of marginalized settlers, which live in 17 districts, make up more than 30 percent of the total population of Ahwaz. Table (1) shows the population, number of households and the total area of the marginalized communities of Ahwaz (Research Department of Chamran University, 2006).

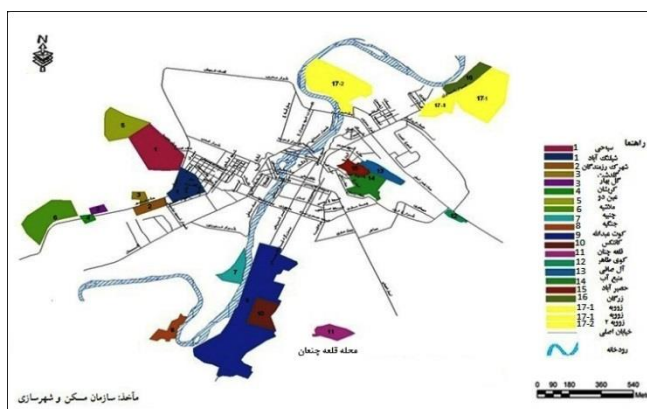


Figure 1. Distribution of marginalized communities in Ahwaz and the location of GhaleChenan. Source: Housing and Planning Organization of Khuzestan Province, 2008

Table 1. Population, number of households and the total area of the marginalized communities of Ahwaz

District	Population	Households	Area (km ²)
1 Shiltak Abad and Siah	58621	10313	11.29
2 Razmandegan Town	7325	1336	0.79
3 Goldasht – Golbahar	2000	400	0.35
4 Kerishan	2405	320	0.22
5 Eyn Do	13288	2451	2.22
6 Malashieh	26.94	5060	3.03
7 Chanibeh	1328	340	1.13
8 Jangiyeh	4325	771	0.91
9 KoutAbdollah	111227	25006	11.76
10 Kantex	7156	1720	1.54
11 GhaleChenan	11042	2200	1.02
12 KooyeTaher	1323	131	0.28
13 Al-e Safi	7717	1320	0.96
14 Manba-e Ab	18944	3925	1.58
15 Hasirabad	26795	5724	0.75
16 ZArgan	10784	2084	1.27
17 Zooye (1 & 2 and Ali Abad)	13024	2043	10.92
Total	323398	65144	47.8

Source: Housing and Planning Organization of Khuzestan Province, 2006

Marginalization in GhaleChenan

GhaleChenan is situated in the southeastern of Ahwaz, on the north of Karun River and the east of Ahwaz-Abadan Road, 11 km from the city center, 4.2 km from the Karun River. With regard to the municipal subdivisions

(service area) it is located in district 5 of Ahvaz municipality. Map 2 shows the location of Ahvaz and GhaleChenan in Khuzestan province in 2012 (Khuzestan Planning Department, 2008 and Google Earth 2012). There has been a significant growth of population in this area since 1345 indicating the high potential of the area for accommodating the immigrants (urban and rural) and its relatively high birthrate. The latter has been so high in GhaleChenan that between 1976 and 2006 it has increased by more than 4.8 times.

According to official statistics in 1996-2006, the average growth rate of GhaleChenan has been 11.3 percent that, compared to Ahvaz (4.3%) and Khuzestan province (2.5%), is remarkably high.

Table 2. The change of population and growth rates from 1966 to 2006 in GhaleChenan

Year	1966	1976	1986	1996	2006
Population	142	2177	6287	7862	10363
Growth rate	-	31.4	11.2	2.3	2.8

Source: Statistical Center of Iran, General Population and Housing Census in 1996-2006

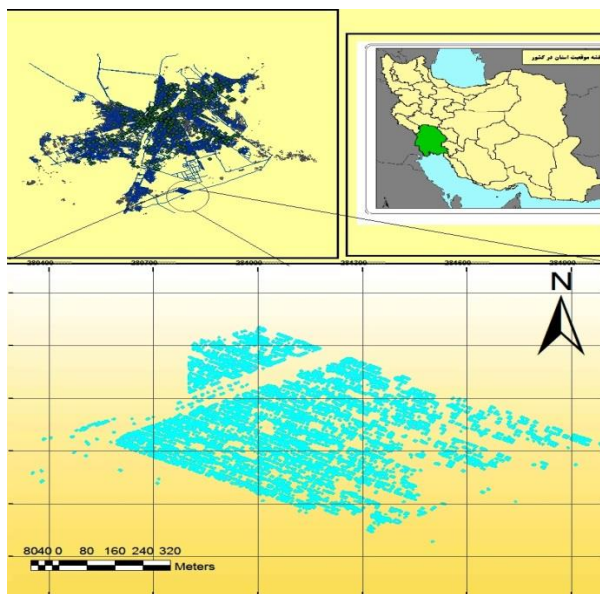


Figure 2. The location of Ahvaz in Khuzestan Province and the position of GhaleChenan in 2012. Source: Khuzestan province, GIS unit of State Divisions and the Department of Politics and Elections, 2011

As to the history of GhaleChenan, it is said that Chenan was the name of a landowner called Chenan whose fort-like castle with 40 to 50 rooms was home to his relatives and descendants as well as many local farmers. Given the fame of this fort, this area was named after it. Formerly a village, this area is now one of the informal settlements of Ahvaz which has not been yet recognized as one of the districts of Ahvaz by state. The physical texture of the city has spread like an independent town without any planning. It has developed as a marginal neighborhood independent of the urban order with different socio - economic functions. According to the Housing Foundation of Khuzestan, this district covered an area of 3 km² with a total population of 10955 people in 1390 (Housing Foundation of Khuzestan quoted from the political divisions of Khuzestan Municipality, 2011).

In recent years, following the growth of marginal texture, GhaleChenan has played host to lower classes of society who have been driven into this area due to the growing inflation and staggering rise of the cost of living (Housing and Urban Development of Khuzestan, 2006).

In the last decade, GhaleChenan has spread from South and Southeast sides. The area developed across the region between Ahvaz - Abadan - Mahshahr in the captured lands is called ZoorabadMosama. At a small distance (about 500 meters) from the southwest of GhaleChenan, an area known as Ghale al-Saghire (small castle) has appeared which is rapidly growing.

The situation of the residential complexes in the region

According to local residents, the most important factor in persuading families to settle in this area (53.0%) has been the family and cultural-ethnic ties to the extent that the social texture of the area is almost homogeneous with the majority of the residents speaking Arabic and affiliating themselves to certain Arabic tribes such as Nasserism, Hezbavi, Baghlani, Roshdavi, etc.

There are many common bonds between the people living in this area. Cheap land and housing (22.9%) were the main motivation for the people without permanent source of income or job. They lived in the newly established areas which were absolutely poor in terms of housing standards. The majority of people, who cited the proximity of this area to their workplace as the reason for the settlement, were working in Ahwaz steel plant (often without tenure).

Table 3. The reason of settlement in GhaleChenan

reason of settlement	frequency	Frequency percentage	Aggregate frequency
1 Cheap housing and land	61	22.9	22.9
2 Closeness to the relatives	141	53.0	75.9
3 Closeness to the workplace	28	10.5	86.5
4 Iran-Iraq War	34	12.8	99.2
5 others	2	0.8	100.0
total	266	100.0	100.0

The large number of people with private ownership in the area confirms the fact that having private home is one of the main motivations of the immigrants. That is, given the financial inability of these people, this place offers them the opportunity to buy cheap houses or (informally) build their own house.

Table 4. the type of land ownership in GheleChenan

Type of ownership	frequency	Frequency percentage	Aggregate frequency
1 Private	239	89.8	89.8
2 Rental and mortgage	24	9.0	98.9
3 Organizational housing	0	0.0	98.9
4 Dedicated lands	0	0.0	98.9
5 Others	3	1.1	100.0
total	266	100.0	100.0

In light of the fact that nearly 86.8 percent of the households have been living in this area for more than a decade, and approximately 47 percent of them has been homeowner for more than 30 years, it can be concluded that the social texture of the area has reached a stability and it is ready for organizing social activities such as non-governmental and non-profit organizations (NGO's), cooperatives and so on.

The building materials in GhaleChenan mainly include brick and steel (18.0 percent), bricks, concrete blocks and steel (76.3%) and reinforced concrete and other materials respectively with 4.1 and 1.5 percent. Thus, the majority of the buildings in GhaleChenan have been made out of durable and semi-durable materials. This shows the concern of the residents about their houses and their effort to use the best materials (within their means). In a sense, although the materials used are durable, factors such as the lack of qualified workers and the use of improper construction techniques, the high level of ground water (less than 50 cm), the spill of the urban sewage and surface water to this area, etc. have reduced durability of the building materials.

Table 5. The history of residence in GhaleChenan

History of residence in the area	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Aggregate frequency
1 Between 0 to 5 years	12	4.5	4.5
2 Between 6 to 10 years	23	8.6	13.2
3 Between 11 to 20 years	44	16.5	29.7
4 Between 21 to 30 years	62	23.3	53.0
5 More than 30 years	125	47	100.0
Total	266	100.0	100.0

With regard to the quality of the buildings in the area, it seems that in a large part (nearly one fifth) of the decrepit buildings, the lack of authority's supervision (supervisor engineers) on the construction process and the haste to complete the building to avoid paying taxes and pertinent costs to the municipality, have affected the quality of the buildings. Furthermore, the use of secondhand building materials, the participation of the family in construction due to their inability to pay the costs of skilled workers, wet lands and high levels of groundwater are also among the factors increasing the extent of buildings in need of renovation (48.1%).

The findings of the field studies suggest that the absolute majority of the new buildings within the South, Southeast and the West parts have been constructed using blocks and steel in accordance with the financial status of the owner (poor condition) without any regard for Regulations 2800 (Building Safety). Thus, with regard to the type of the materials and construction method, 10.9 percent of new buildings and other 41 percent, which are in acceptable condition, cannot be considered as a reliable figure.

Contribution indexes

Based on the result of the questionnaires, it can be said that the degree of people’s contribution was extremely low and their disinclination or distrust of the authorities was quite high. As observed in several interviews and field studies, the local people viewed officials not as coordinator and assistance at dealing with the problem, but as instigators of the problems with their uncooperativeness and failure to provide proper services as well as negligence in addressing the issues of newly built shantytowns around the city.

The local people, however, maintained that improvement of the area through establishment and promotion of NGOs, change of the interaction process and recognition of these areas by the state and non-state organizations like Municipality, Housing and Urban Planning and so on can be actually helpful.

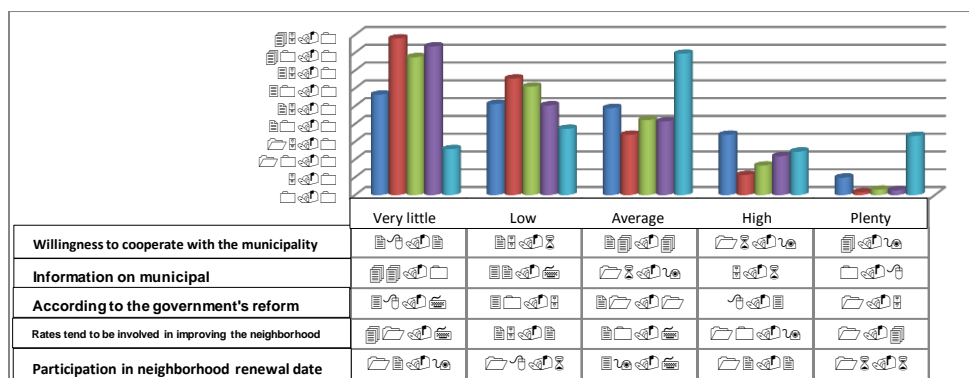


Figure 3. Participation indexes in GhaleChenan (in percent)

Priority of the problems

According to the results of the questionnaires, the direst issue in the GhaleChenan is the lack of job opportunities to the extent that about 59.8 percent of the subjects referred to it as their most important problem. In addition, this lack of job opportunities and its associated income issues have given rise to a set of problems such as inability to pay for children's education and health care and necessities of life, inability to provide affordable housing, which, in turn, has been a contributory factor in development of informal settlements.

As a result, the housing of the fringe dwellers is small, modest and non-durable in terms of the building materials, with an unpleasant façade and inefficient equipment.

Given the low level of income and the lack of financial support of the households, it seems that state assistance coupled with the insignificant capitals of the local residents through the establishment and promotion of NGOs is the only solution to this problem.

Based on the findings of the study, unemployment, financial issues and housing are the main problems of the residents of GhaleChenan respectively. Meanwhile, the lack of infrastructure and access network along with issues related to the entertainment facilities is next in order of priorities. It should be noted that the study of the different aspects of the informal settlements has shown the importance of solving the financial and occupational issues of the residents since these problems are the root of numerous other issues.

Table 6. Priority of the problems in GhaleChenan district of Ahwaz

The direst issue in the eye of the local residents	Frequency	Frequency percentage	Aggregate frequency
Narrow pass ways and dirt roads	12	4.5	4.5
Lack of job opportunity	189	59.8	64.3
Lack of hygiene, cleanliness and sewage system	43	16.2	80.5
Lack of cultural, educational, sporting and recreational facilities	33	12.4	92.9
Lack of infrastructure and municipal facilities (water, electricity, gas, post, etc.)	19	7.1	100.0
Total	266	100.0	100.0

In light of the findings, we will now test the hypotheses.

First hypothesis:

There seems to be a significant relationship between the history of the residence of the citizens and their access to the facilities and services (education - cultural and medical) in GhaleChenan area.

In this hypothesis, the history of the residence was the independent variable and the access to the infrastructural facilities was the dependent variable. Considering the qualitative nature of the variables, Pearson Chi-Square method was used to examine their relationship.

As shown in the table, the value of X^2 is equal to 1.336 degree of freedom which is equivalent of 16 with the significance level 0 (zero). Therefore, considering the value of X^2 and the significance level, it can be said that there is a significant relationship between the history of residence of the citizens and their access to facilities and services (educational - cultural and medical) in GhaleChenan. In other words, the more the precedent of the residence in GhaleChenan District, the more the access to the infrastructural facilities.

Table 7. Test of the first hypothesis

Statistical index	Value
Kendall's test statistic	1.336
Degree of freedom	16
Level of significance	0.000
Number of samples	266

Thus, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

The fact that many of the newly established buildings and the new migrants live in the Southwest of GhaleChenan and Zoorabads (local term for shantytowns) have also affected the results. The newcomers are in urgent need of facilities and services and they should take priority in the empowerment programs.

The second hypothesis:

There seems to be a significant relationship between the history of residence of the citizens and their willingness to participate in empowerment projects in GhaleChenan district.

In this hypothesis, the history of the residence is the independent variable and the willingness for participation is the dependent variable. To examine the relationship of these two variables, Chi-square test method was used. As shown in the following tables, the value of X^2 is equal to 1.584 which is equivalent to 16 degree of freedom and the level of significance of 0 (zero). Therefore, given the value of Kendall's test and the significance level, it can be said that there is a significant relationship between the history of the residence of the citizens and their willingness to participate in the renovation of the GhaleChenan district.

Table 8. test of the second hypothesis

Statistical index	Value
Kendall's test statistic	1.584
Degree of freedom	16
Level of significance	0.000
Number of samples	266

The second hypothesis is thus confirmed.

The experience shows that as the residence period of the families increases, their sense of belonging and concern about the condition of their neighborhood increases too.

Since more than 70.3% of the residents have lived in this district for over 20 years, the result of the second hypothesis seems reasonable. Thus, the more the history of residence in GhaleChenan District, the greater the desire of the citizens to contribute to the empowerment of their neighborhood. As such, the first and second hypotheses confirm the method presented in liberal view for empowerment of the area under study.

The third hypothesis:

It seems that there is a significant relationship between the awareness of GhaleChenan's citizen of the municipal planning and their willingness to participate in empowerment projects.

In this hypothesis, the extent of the citizens' awareness of the municipal planning is the independent variable and the desire to participate is the dependent variable. The result of the hypothesis testing shows that the value of X^2 is equal to 47.918 degree of freedom which is equivalent of 16 and the significance level of 0 (zero).

Thus, according to the value of Kendall's test and its level of significance, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the awareness of the citizens' of GhaleChenan of the municipal planning and their inclination to participate in empowerment projects.

Table 9. test of the third hypothesis

Statistical index	Value
Kendall's test statistic	47.918
Degree of freedom	16
Level of significance	0.000
Number of samples	266

Thus, the third hypothesis is also confirmed.

It seems that the attitude of the marginal settlers toward the urban management and municipality in general, and the dwellers of the GhaleChenan district in particular, is not positive and the local people are hardly aware of the urban management planning. Thus, considering the inefficiency of the municipal services and unawareness of the dwellers of urban management programs, the desire to participate in empowerment of the area is expected to be low.

The general tendency to the urbanism and the rise of urban population are among the economic and industrial effects that urban planners should take into consideration to be able to meet public needs.

Natural increase of population, migration of workers from rural areas and low-income towns to big cities to find work and better life, recent industrial developments, poverty, etc. have led to the population density in some areas of major cities, producing problems in terms of urban facilities and services which in turn have given rise to issues such as the lack of housing, emergence of the poor and unhealthy marginal settlers and so on.

It should be noted that the goal of immigrants is to find work, better income, safety, welfare and access to the urban amenities. Thus, the larger urban centers are more likely to attract larger number of immigrants. The size and rapid pace of migration depend on economic elasticity and development poles (World - International, 2008).

Ahwaz is one of the mega cities of Iran which is faced with urban issues such as marginalization, cultural poverty, unbalanced growth, increased rate of crime, the emergence of fake jobs, and so on.

Moreover, having gone through eight years of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) and enduring its impact on urban texture, the problems of this city are compounded.

As such, one of the factors affecting the growth and development of marginal settlements in marginal areas of Ahwaz like GhaleChenan, Malashiye, Eyndo, Shelang Abad, Chanibeh, KootAbdollah, Saihi, etc. is war and its social, economic and cultural impacts.

This along with the urban issues have portrayed an unpleasant image of the city to the outsiders, acting as a major obstacle in the path of implementation of detailed and inclusive urban planning. The marginalization issue in this city, however, is a result of the general marginalization trend in the country. The factors affecting the process of marginalization in Ahwaz include Agrarian Reform in 1962; the discovery of oil in Khuzestan province including the city of Ahwaz, appointing Ahwaz as the main industrial pole in the Southwest region of the country and concentration of the factories and industries; eight-year Iran-Iraq war and the reconstruction of (formerly) war-torn areas. Today, Ahwaz as the political capital of Khuzestan Province and the center of higher education institutions, specialized health care, power plants and commercial and industrial centers have been receptive of immigrants from other towns and villages of Khuzestan and even other provinces. In light of the rapid development of these areas in Ahwaz, the growth of marginal and unstable settlements around this city is a major concern that demands national determination and specific measures which are radically different from current ones.

Suggestions

To date, several methods for coping with the issue of poor marginal settlements around the cities have been proposed, though most of them have not been effective. The present situation of informal settlements reveals the inefficiency of the former approaches in dealing with this issue, as they have been mainly provisional measures. We should keep it in mind that these people are the impoverished (as cited in the Holy Quran, 3:94) who, in an attempt to change their life and fight poverty, have moved from rural areas to the isolated and poor marginalized settlements around the cities.

It seems that the issue of marginalization needs both preventive and remedial measures. The latter can be done through empowerment of the marginal settlers and the former addresses the immigrants who besides needing better housing, require better jobs, at least for the next generation of these families.

In accordance with the liberal view and considering the political, economic and social structures of Iran, some recommendations to prevent or relieve marginalization and realize social justice can be made (especially GhaleChenan district in Ahwaz):

1– Abolition of the tradition of centralized domination which reinforces the government control, colonial sovereignty and centralized planning systems.

- 2- Reinforcement and equipment of the small and medium town in line with the decentralization policies with emphasis on the dynamics of these areas as the link of urban and rural community, and promoting their service to curb migration.
 - 3- Providing sustainable job opportunities for residents of informal settlements, decent shelter (within their means) safety and basic services and infrastructure
 - 4- Establishing and strengthening housing cooperatives to help construct residential buildings in accordance with the economic means of the low-income urban classes.
 - 5- Establishing community based organizations or NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) in these settlements
 - 6- Fighting with illegal and unplanned constructions undertaken without the supervision of the authorities (the so-called Zoorabads)
 - 7- Equitable distribution of services (education, health, welfare, etc.) in all districts, particularly the poor ones.
 - 8- Creating public spaces (such as cultural, entertainment, recreation and sport centers) in the existing informal settlements
 - 9- Holding training courses for citizens to raise their awareness of the rules and norms of urban life and show respect to their own and other rights
 - 10- Preparing the ground to promote sustainable and inclusive environmental conditions with the aim of reinforcing the health, safety, comfort, hope and human dignity in the informal settlements
- In the end, it should be noted that reconstruction measures need to be considered along with the planning to curb the growth of marginal settlements.

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