



Urban Agenda Platform

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# Sense of community and Built environment: How can built environment, social economic conditions and history of place shape our sense of community?

Region	Middle East and North Africa
Award Scheme	Dubai International Award
Start Year	2017
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

## Summary

Sense of community is a concept in community and social psychology and has been investigated in several researches. The sense of community level changes towards many independent variables and it is related to the quality of the built form. This research aims at investigating the relationship between the sense of community and some determinants such as; the physical environment, the historical background and the socio economic conditions in selected neighborhoods.

## Background and Objective

The research clarifies the problem of Alexandria and its reasons. One important reason is the absence of law and rules in construction which causes the change in the quality of the city and the decrease of sense of community. Therefore, the study identifies the importance of rule of law and give some recommendations related to this. Action should be taken from residents to protect their community and take decisions about their neighborhood. The establishment of civil associations to encourage the social interaction in the neighborhood. Each government and district should settle a plan and work hard to achieve it in an atmosphere of limpidity with the neighborhood residents. The law enforcement and put laws that prohibit the distortion of historical buildings.

## Actions and Implementation

Sharing, public participation, protect the commons and fulfillment of needs are all values that have been identified and encouraged by this study. A strong community is able to fit people together so that people meet others' needs while they meet their own. The research clarifies the disadvantages of informal housing and the loss of land value. we should protect our cities for the income generation. The neighborhood residents, they have a double role to increase and protect the level of sense of community in their place. The first role is related to their neighborhood as a place (physical attributes), the second one is related to the social interaction and relations between each other's. It can be concluded as follow: a. Action should be taken from residents to protect their community and take decisions about their neighborhood. b. The establishment of civil associations to encourage the social interaction in the neighborhood. c. The mutual respect between the neighborhood residents in rights and duties. d. The public participation and taking responsibility towards their community.

## Outcomes and Impacts

This research works on increasing the level of sense of community in Alexandria. the concept of SOC basically encourages the protection of public domain and the equitable access to public goods because people in the same community share its goods and have a common needs. Integration and fulfillment of needs is the third element of SOC which translated into more ordinary terms like reinforcement. Reinforcement as a motivator of behavior is an essential point in behavioral research and it is obvious that for any group to maintain a positive sense of togetherness, the individual-group association must be rewarding for its members. Given the complexity of individuals and groups, however, it has been impossible to determine all of the reinforcements that bind people together into a close community, although several reinforcers have been identified. One is the status of being a member (Kelley, H. H., 1951). Competence also suggested as a reinforcer on interpersonal attraction. People are attracted to others whose skills or competence can benefit them in some way. People seem to gravitate toward people and groups that offer the most rewards (Rappaport, 1977). People do what serves their needs, so some questions appeared: How do people prioritize their needs, especially after meeting the basic survival needs? What creates a need beyond



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that of basic survival? Reinforcement as an organizing principle seems blind and directionless unless it is complemented by other concepts (Chavis, D., J. Hogge, D. McMillan and A. Wandersman, 1986). A strong community is able to fit people together so that people meet others' needs while they meet their own. This concept is what the research want to clarify, we should protect our city, culture and history from this transformation and the decrease of quality because the city is owned by all its resident's.

## Gender and Social Inclusivity

This study do not give a plans or strategies for a place but it studies a problem and try to give some solutions or recommendations to solve it. In Alexandria, many evidences on the decreasing quality of neighborhoods could be cited. For instance, many of the city residents are suffering from noise, air pollution and poor quality of the public transportation system (Abdo, 2013; CAPMAS, 2013). The main problem is the quality of life in the neighborhood can affect the level of sense of community. So, the level of sense of community in Alexandria can be affected by the change in its quality. Therefore , the researcher gives some useful guidance and recommendations. Planners have an important role to encourage and increase sense of community. a. The perceptual elements of a city's form need to be made sufficiently amenable to being recognized identified and remembered. A balance must be found between complexity and simplicity in individual design elements. b. The special character of places needs to be emphasized, in order to foster place attachment. This approach might also increase the variety of locale-specific experiences in a city, and serve to limit the uniform blandness of built forms that would otherwise decrease their ease of recognition or interpretation. c. Settings should be designed to enable and facilitate the activities that people plan to execute within them. This highlights the need for participative planning, in order to identify potential users' needs, preferences, and intentions. d. Settings, places and elements need to be made easily accessible and the presence of good network of public transportation, so as to reinforce their common significance and foster shared sense of place. e. Buildings in the same place should respect the concept of harmony and human scale.

## Innovative Initiative

This point is related directly to the topic of this study, as it has been mentioned before. This study aims at investigating the relationship between the sense of community level and some determinants of the physical environment ( the built environment ). The idea that the built environment can be designed to promote sense of community forms the basis of several new fields of community design, including New Urbanism. Also, researchers have made some interesting finds, including an apparent correlation between sense of community and neighborhoods design and buildings, aesthetics features, street design and services, that will be more clearly by explaining the built environment definitions and variables (Butterworth, 2000). There is some existing research that supports aspects of the relationship between walking, walkability and sense of community. For example, Lund (2002) found that walkable environments facilitated opportunities for residents to meet, interact and engage in their neighborhood, which can foster sense of community and could improve mental health outcomes. Conversely, it is also clear that sense of community has a favorable influence on resident's propensity to walk within their neighborhood. The conceptual model in (figure 10) conveys these hypothesized relationships (Lund, 2002; Farahani, 2014). Sense of community has been found to be enhanced by urban planning that encourages the following points (Farhani, 2014): a. Visual coherence. b. Diversity and attractiveness of houses and other buildings. c. Affords sufficient privacy. d. Ensures residents have easy access to amenities, parks, recreation facilities and a town or neighborhood center. e. Offers pedestrian-friendly spaces. f. Provides streetscapes so that houses have views of the surrounding neighborhood. g. Encourage open verandas and low fences in order to encourage social interaction; and restricts motor traffic.

## Conclusion

This study ended by some recommendations to planners, residents and decision makers. Theses recommendations guide the government and the residents to the importance of controlling the transformative forces of urbanization. 1. The neighborhood residents, they have a double role to increase and protect the level of sense of community in their place. The first role is related to their neighborhood as a place (physical attributes), the second one is related to the social interaction and relations between each other's. It can be concluded as follow: a. Action should be taken from residents to protect their community and take decisions about their neighborhood. b. The establishment of civil associations to encourage the social interaction in the neighborhood. c. The mutual respect between the neighborhood residents in rights and duties. d. The public participation and taking responsibility towards their community. 2. Finally decision makers, governor and chiefs of districts have an important and critical role in fostering sense of community. It can be concluded as follow: a. The empowerment and the public participation in decision making, especially in all the issues that related to their community or neighborhood. b. Each government and district should settle a plan and work hard to achieve it in an atmosphere of limpidity with the neighborhood residents. c. Providing assistance and financial support to each neighborhood to improve its quality and to meet the needs of its residents. d. The law enforcement and put laws that prohibit the distortion of historical buildings.