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Social Interaction vs. Low-income Housing Project (Case study of Abo-Alanda Kareem Housing Project)

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Abstract:

Housing is recognised as the living area for people. Spatial configuration that can arise human activity, urban spaces security, local economies, raise house prices, residents physical and psychological health through social interaction encouragement. The purpose of this research is to investigate the social interaction of 'Kareem' public housing projects in Jordan, Abo-Alanda branch as a case study, and propose several recommendations for the competent authorities to improve further public housing projects. The study noticed that the issues are included within social interaction aspects. This indicates that through improving social interaction in the neighborhood, the mentioned issues could decrease greatly.

Keywords: Housing, social interaction, Public housing projects.

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1. Introduction

- 'HOUSING' as a term

Dwelling physical, achievement process, 'social-cultural relationship', life's expiration ways and people's life heart…etc. (as cited in Dwijendra, N. K. A., 2013).

HOUSING FUNCTIONS, according to Blauw (1994):

1. 'Shelter' that considers basic functions of a home and a neighbourhood
2. 'Utilitarian function' i.e. facilities and activities of normal life routine
3. 'Domain functions' which assures the user privacy zone.
4. 'Social function' as the communication facility from home to outside world.

HOUSING as a neighbourhood:

The living area for people, and "the location for connections of social, economic, physical and environmental factors" (Dehghanmongabadi, A., Hoşkara, Ş. Ö., and Shirkhanloo, N., 2014).

NEIGHBOURHOOD impact

- Health, experiences, social relationship, and people's behaviours that relates to their neighbourhood's satisfaction (Diez Roux, A. V., & Mair, C., 2010
- Crime ratio since designed environment can increase or decrease it (Newman, 1973)

- *Social interaction* since it considers an 'Oopportunity' or 'Constraints' for it (Yance, 1971)

SOCIAL INTERACTION

Is influenced by two major factors: '*social variables*' and '*physical elements*' (Hester,1984).

Physical Elements

Physical Elements can raise the social interaction by the following:

- 'Layout pattern, site plan, scale and proportion, land use mix and physical features' (Heath, G. W., et.al., 2006).
- Public spaces (Holland, et.al., 2007):-
    - Enable people, within a certain community, to meet and interact.
    - "contribute to the cohesion of communities" since people of different levels and ages are sharing the same area
    - Allow "people to assess and reassess the characteristics of space and their own relationship with it".
    - Offer young people who has a demand for gathering and practice sociability a suitable place.
- Spatial configuration that can arise human activity, urban spaces security, local economies, raise house prices, residents physical and psychological health through social interaction encouragement (Holland, et.al., 2007), (Hillier, B., 1996).

Social Variables

- Sociodemographic features are related to 'presence of children at home, owner-renter status, the length of residence and annual income' (Hester,1984)
- The social network promotes 'neighborhood interaction' and 'community formation'.

It is noteworthy that there is a lack of research in this matter, especially in third world societies. Thus, the objective of this study is to explore the social interaction in the low-income housing

projects in Jordan. The paper highlights the Kareem housing projects condition in general and Abo-Alanda housing project condition in specific. Furthermore, the findings intend to propose a helping model for policy makers in the government, or local housing and planning authorities in order to improve low-income housing project.

2. Problem statement

The purpose of this research is to investigate the social interaction of 'Kareem' public housing projects in Jordan, Abo-Alanda branch as a case study, and propose several recommendations for the competent authorities to improve further public housing projects.

3. Methodology *(A qualitative and a quantitive research)*

3.1.Data Collection:

Methodological procedures adopted in the investigation represent a varied approach to collect data by integral stages:

(1) ***Stage one***: : investigating the related literature and the project background.

(2) ***Stage two***: face-to-face interview with the responsible committee of Abo-Alanda neighbourhood.

(3) ***Stage three***: face-to-face residents interviews by open code questions with a stratified random sample (n= 250) that represent the population with 95% confidence level.

Moreover, the site of the study was visited twice at noon during working days to assure residents' presence in their homes and the study was also carried out in September of 2016 on the assumption that residents' behavior won't be restricted to the winter cold or the summer hot.

3.2.Data Analysis:

Attributes will be predicted through previous literature in order to extract the most affected factors and aspects on social interaction. After that, data will be compared and analyzed using field data (interviews of residents and related committees).

- ***Housing projects***

According to Davidson, C. H., et.ql., (2007), low-income housing projects in developing countries are confused through some factors:

- Construction codes and standards; houses are either unaffordable or non-standard houses.
- Projects limited construction schedule; low-income houses suffers consistent construction delay.
- Social vulnerability; the residential community condition.

Moreover, Al-Homoud, M., et.al., (2009) concluded that the housing demand factors in Jordan are: demographics, housing financing system and financial liberalization, government policies regarding financing and interest rates, and the supply aspect. Those factors affect the residential housing choices and capabilities, which indicate the increasing need for the low-income housing. Thus, the government suggested Kareem housing projects with the guidance of the HUDC.

- ***The HUDC public housing project***

The HUDC has been the head of the Jordanian residential sector for about four decades by achieving 185 housing projects which served over 84,000 family. In addition, the HUDC official elaborated that 'Kareem public housing project' is within the national residential strategy, which aims to enable low-income citizens to obtain suitable housing within an acceptable urban

environment. 'Kareem public housing project' was declared in 26th of February 2008 to permit 100,000 citizens for having their own habitat enduring the next 5 years. The study will take Abo-Alanda project as a case study since it is the closest branch to the capital city – Amman.

- ***STUDY SITE***
  - *General view*

For the purpose of our study we chose Abo-Alanda housing project, located in the capital suburbs. Although the project was started at 2008 but many facilities are not finished. Moreover, it is noteworthy that only 60-70% of the residential units are inhabitant and the remains are offerd for rent or sell. However, the project has an area of 160 ha with over than 1700 residential unit (figure1).

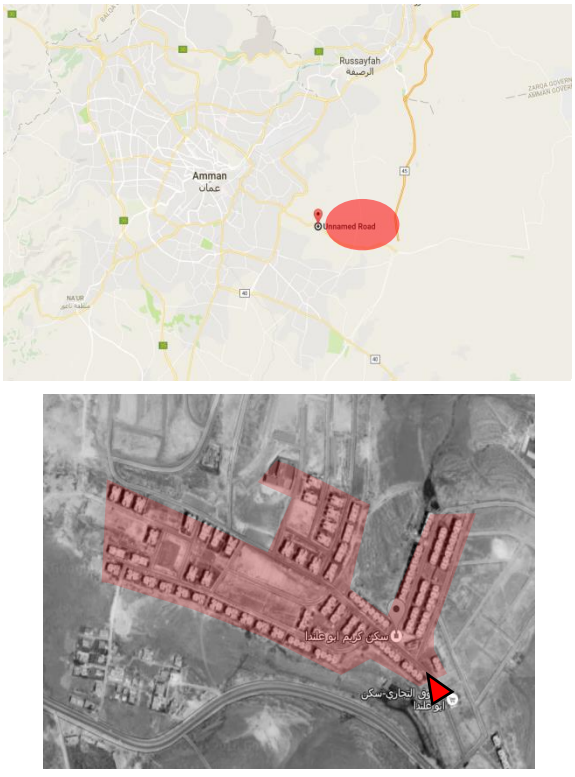


Figure (1): Project location

4. Analysis

- ***As a suburbs project***

As the studies noted that people prefer the suburbs' sites more than inner cities' locations for better housing, better services and better transportation (Lord, J. D., & Rent, G. S.,1987). However, in Jordan that was not the cause for the residents who decided to live in the housing project that were located beyond the residential area. Abo-Alanda housing project (figure 5), as the other branches of Kareem housing project, located in the suburbs due to the lack of suitable sites, as HUDC explained. Therefore, by comparing the common advantages of living in the suburbs, Lord, J. D., and Rent, G. S. (1987) suggestion, with Abo-Alanda housing project as a general overview, we can notice the following:

1. Better housing: The houses are suffering from high humidity problems; walls are cracking around the house.
2. Better services: There is a great shortage in services either for the lack of operation or the staff.
3. Better public transportation: The site has only one bus that comes three times a day. This inconvenient transportation has been a main reason for residents to offer their homes either for renting or for sell.
4. Parking lots: The project does not provide enough parking lots.

Figure (2): Abo-Alanda suburbs location

- *<u>As a segregated project</u>*

According to Dias, L. M. C., and Márcia, L. (2013), 'segregation' is a term that argues project location suitability in the city, and social concentration in certain regions or neighborhoods. Moreover, they added that segregation is also related to social separation, inequality of access to an urban space, inequality of infrastructure and building condition. Accordingly, in comparison of those attributes to Abo- Alanda housing project, it is clearly that it considers a segregated project due to its condition in location, accessibility, infrastructure and social aspects.

- *Project components*

The project varied between two building types: Four apartments building and three apartments building; Semi-attached building and Attached building (figure2). The apartments' areas were varied between (90-135) m^2. Moreover, the project contains some services, parking lots, and (13m to 6m) streets.

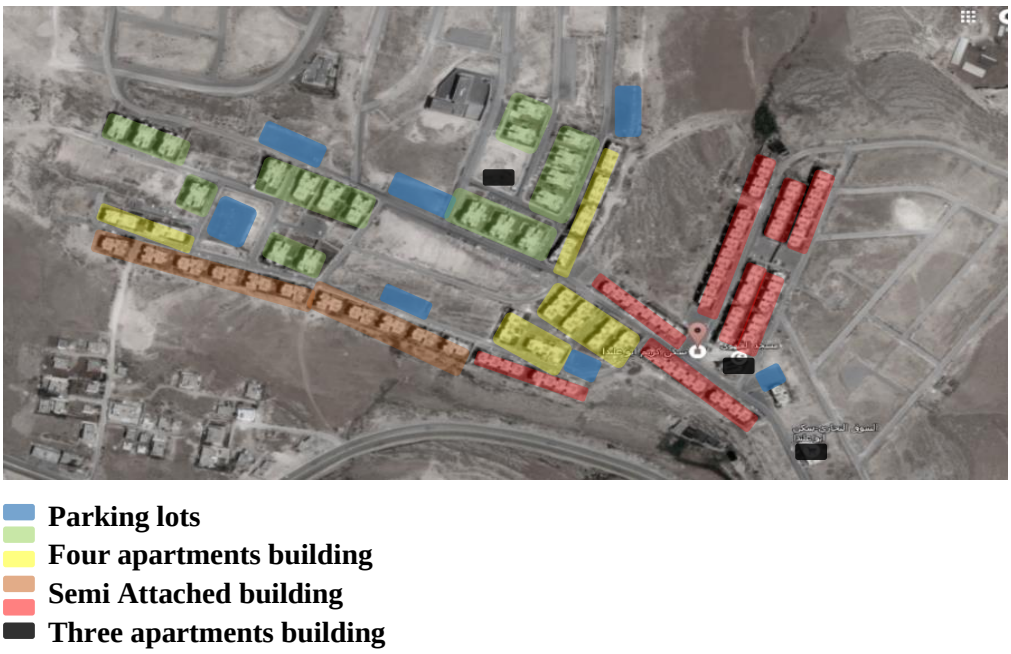


Figure (3): Project components

- Services

The project was designed to provide two schools (males and females), a commercial center, a medical center and green areas. However, only the females school, couple of small shops and the medical center with many services shortages were valid (figure 3).

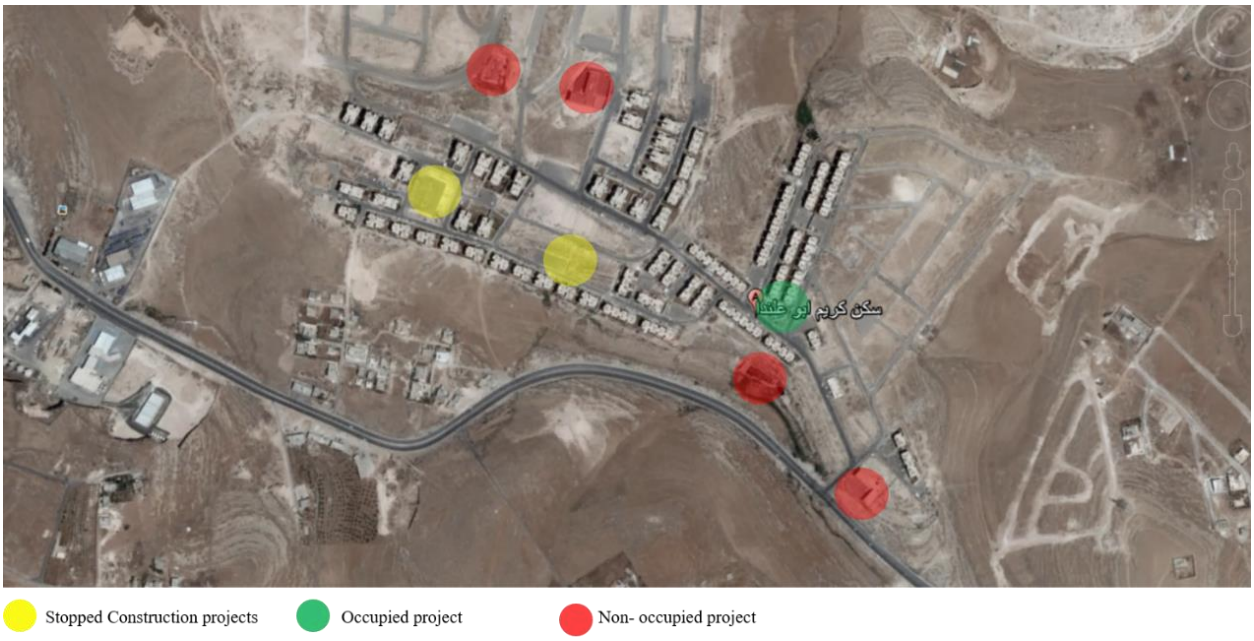


Figure (4): Project services

- Buildings

Each building has four floors from the highest street and it rises along with topography(figure4).

Figure (5): Building examples

2. ***Users Perspective***

Andrews and Withey (1976) noted that individuals' satisfaction with their social relationships occupies an integral part of their social interaction (cited in Barrera, M., & Ainlay, S. L., 1983). Accordingly, the interviewers asked open-ended questions to define the residents' dislikes issssues about their neighborhood i.e. users complains, which were narrowed to the following aspects (figure 7):

A) Services:

- Medical centre stuff shortage.
- Construction delay of the male school.
- Construction delay of the public park.
- The non-operated commercial centre.

- The lack of any kind of entertaining centers.
- The lack of cleaning services.
- The lack of public transportation in the area.
- The great walking distance (1.6 km) to reach the main street (Figure 6)

Figure (6): Walk distances for the nearest street and services

B) Building Construction

- Humidity cracks and rankness.
- Inefficient Pipes' instillation.
- Inefficient thermal isolation system.

C) Health

- The threat of water treatment facilities.

- The threat of insects' diseases.
- The lack of cleaning services; stuff, waste containers and waste tracks.

D) Social Safety

- Thiefs' threats.
- Drags threats.
- The lack of social integration.
- People isolation.

E) Parking lots

- Inconvenient parking lots capacity.

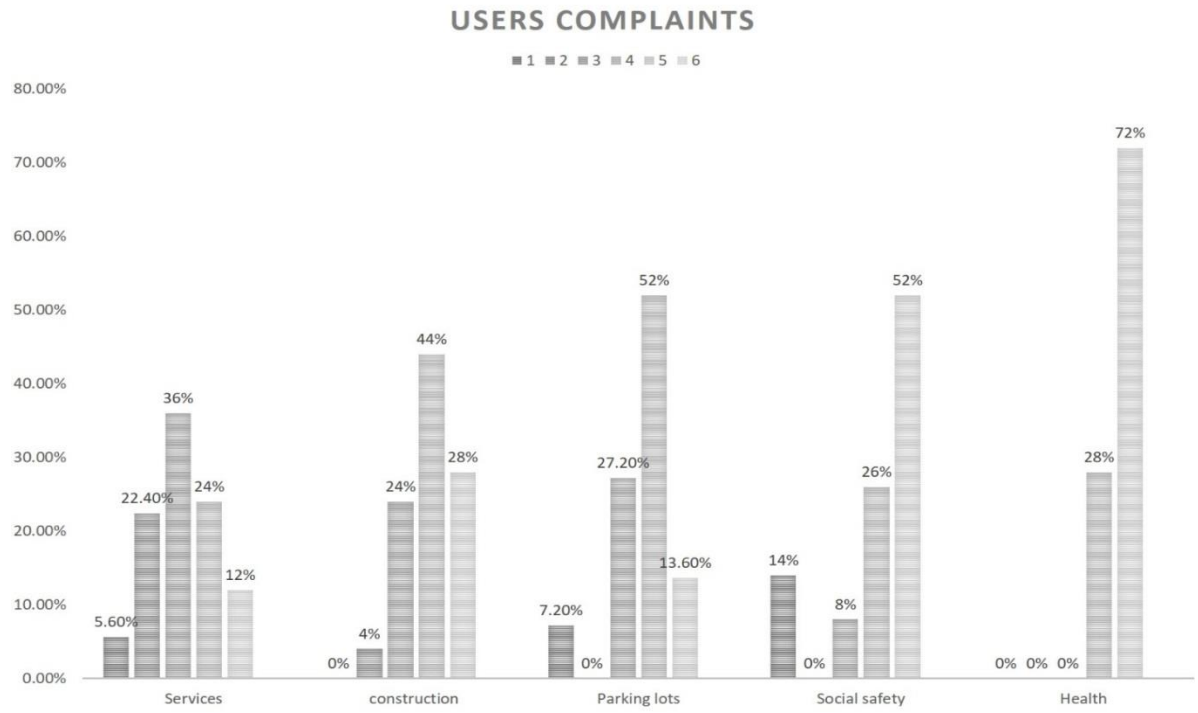


Figure (7): Users Complaints

2. ***Responsible Committee Perspective***

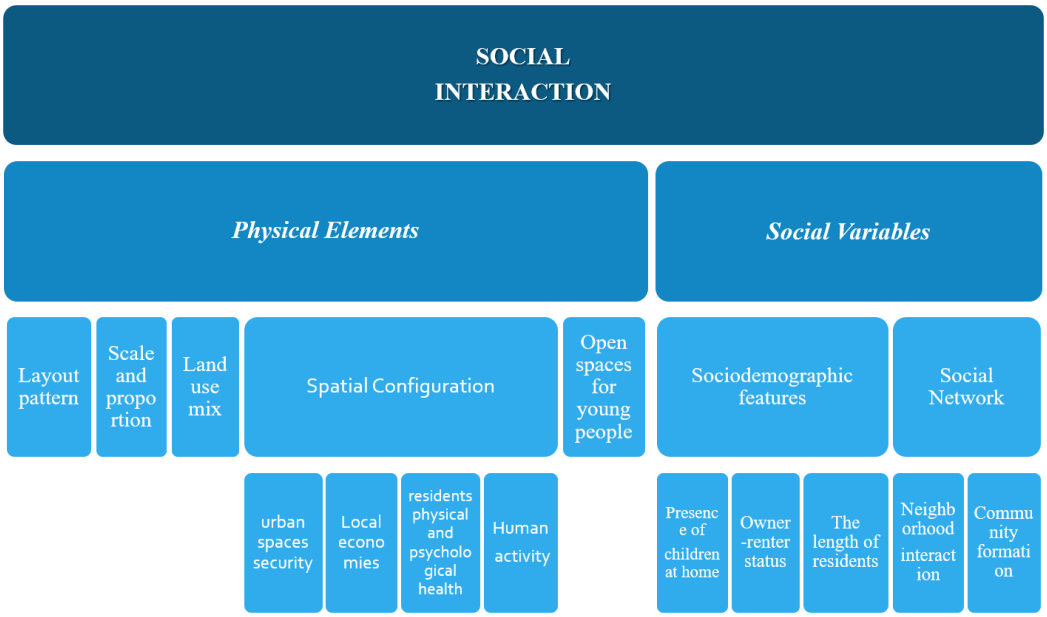
The study interviewed the Responsible Committee of the neighborhood which presented all the documentation of user complains and issues. These documents included all the problematic issues in the neighborhood and after reviewing them, it has been cleared that all problems were underneath one aspect; 'Administration'.

The major administration issue in the neighbourhood is about the Responsible Committee itself in which the staff competes for positions and neglect responsibilities. However, the other issues are the following:

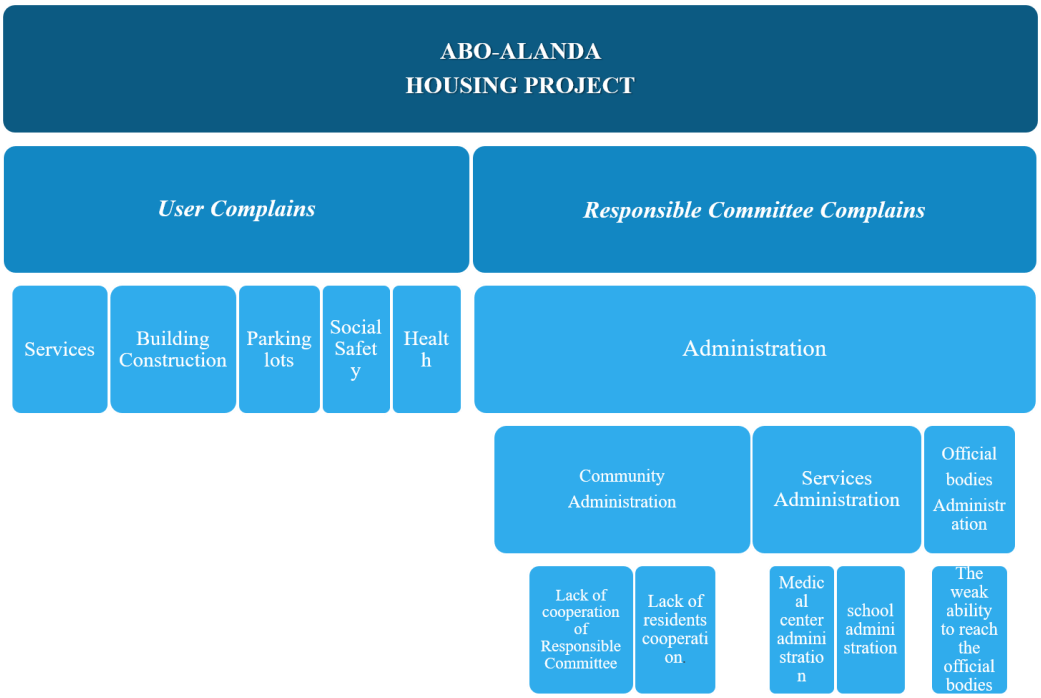
- Residents have problem with the school administration that disregard their duties.
- Lack of residents' cooperation.
- Medical center administration doesn't provide convenient services to the users due to the lack of staff and capabilities.
- The weak ability to reach the official bodies to solve major issues that threatened residents' health:
    - The threat of water treatment facilities.
    - The threat of dirt.
    - The threat of insects' diseases.
    - Public transportation

5. **Results**

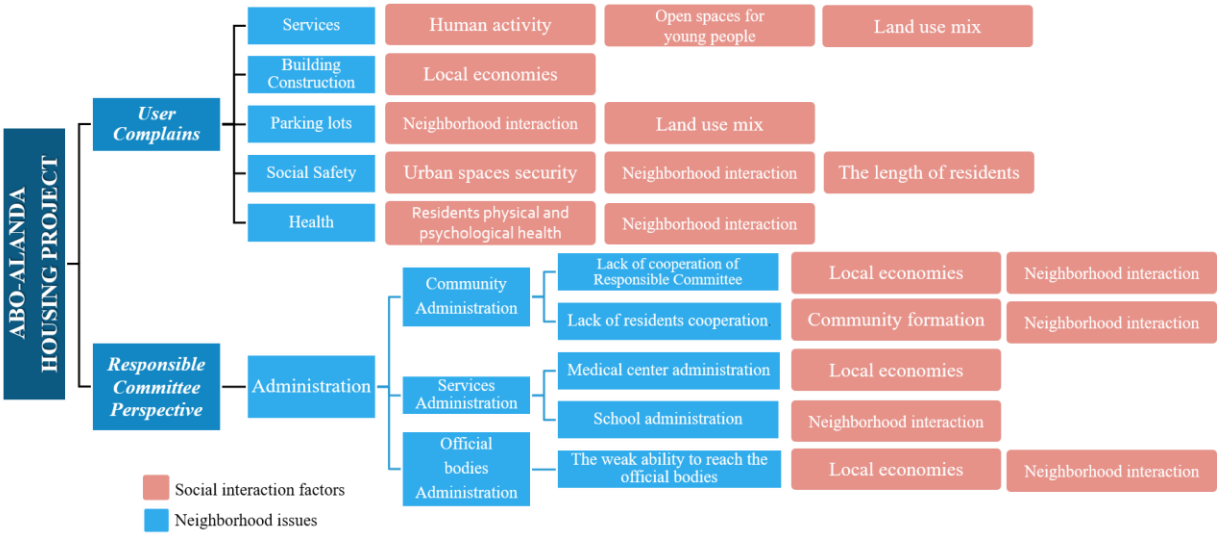
Figure(8): Social interaction Aspects Conclusion



1. *Neighborhood Study Conclusion*



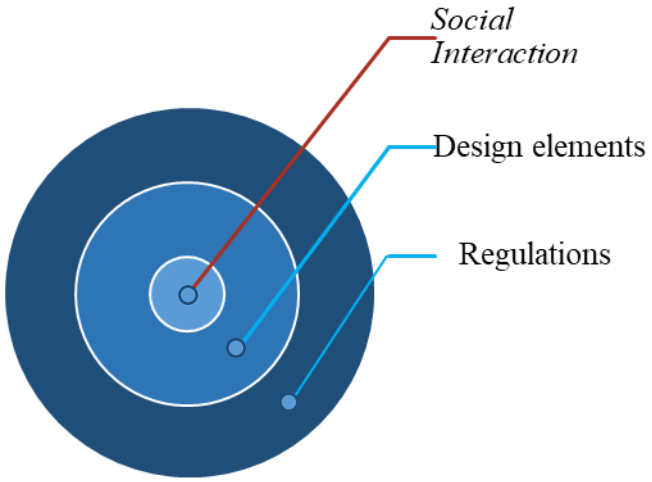
Through comparing the previous two diagrams, the study logically linked the neighborhood issues with social interaction aspects.



6. Conclusions

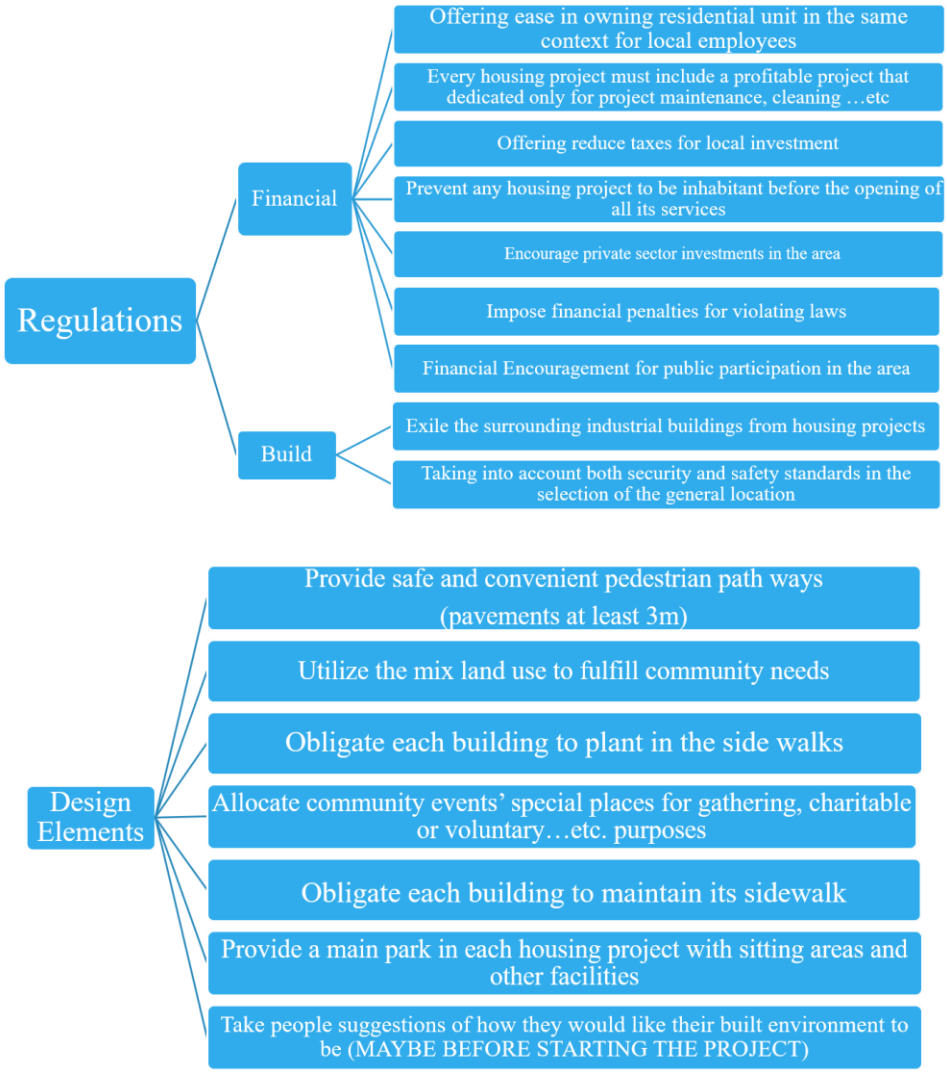
Primary conclusions

- The study noticed that the issues are included within social interaction aspects. This indicates that through improving social interaction in the neighborhood, the mentioned issues could decrease greatly. Therefore, this study will proposed a model that presents design elements and regulations to improve social interaction in order to minimize the mentioned problems.



Primary conclusions for Regulations

- It is noteworthy that HUDC or any responsible committee for public sector projects provides only a primer draft for the project, which includes the visualization image of the project without any indication of how the project can remain alive. This has been considered while suggesting the following regulations:



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