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Research Paper

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Identifying the Frameworks and Design Standards of the Sports City Model based on the Grounded Theory

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ABSTRACT

Urbanization and urban design develop with the growth of population simultaneously. Urban planning requires the specialists' attention in different fields by necessity, resulting in moving such planning towards creativity. The present study aims to identify the frameworks and standards related to the design of the sports city in an applied form based on the grounded theory. To this aim, a qualitative approach was adopted. The population included 18 experts in the field of urban planning and architecture, as well as sports management who were selected purposefully through semi-structured interviews. Coding was conducted in three stages of open, central, and selective. Validity and reliability of the data were confirmed by three participants and repeating the coding by two experts, respectively. Based on the results, the frameworks and standards of the sports city include city parks, sports venues, characteristics, physical structure, placement of sports venues and spaces, accessibility, livability, pride and brand of national honors, development, and existence of sports medicine centers. The results reflected the common opinions of exports in the field of sports management, as well as urban architecture and planning, indicating that the above-mentioned categories are among the identified frameworks and standards, as well as essentials of sports city.

Keywords: Frameworks, standards, sports city

Various definitions have been presented for the city. For example, the city, as one of the most critical achievements of human civilization, is considered as a place for extensive residence. The modern city is regarded as a collective achievement and a product of design for the collective (Rezvani, 2016). The city is considered as the result of human civilization, which is used by people for residence. The average and intermediate limit should be regarded to assess cities since the city benefits from a interdisciplinary nature and process. According to Appleyard's division during 1982, the city is considered as the core of human civilization and manifestation of mental technology (Nazemian and Lal Shateri, 2015). The city

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requires special conditions for development, urban life, and urbanization during expansion, and lack of attention to such cases leads to social and economic issues and obstacles (Kachoui and Motamedi, 2015).

Framework means skeleton, body, base, domain, and form. Urban design framework is regarded as a method of studies in the qualitative-applied guide documents with a process-oriented approach. Benefitting from such method requires procedural bases in compliance with the legal documents of the city (Zekavat, 2022).

The urban design framework is among the intermediate documents in the scale of the area specific located in the development framework infrastructure and is regarded as one the most overarching documents for preparing action area plan (Zekavat, 2022).

Standard means an accepted sample, model, template, and anything confirmed by the elite as the basis of the sports city for comparison (Persian dictionary, Amid dictionary).

Urban standards are divided into qualitative and quantitative groups.

Qualitative standard: The livability of a city, which is manifested in the absence of war, disease, and conflict between social groups, can be defined as the absence of fear among people for living in a city, balance in the population, people's freedom, and space of pedestrians and riders, balance between open and built spaces and between residential and built areas with other required urban uses, compliance with the hierarchy identified for distribution of urban services, and benefitting from appropriate per capita for different uses in proportion to the residents of a city.

Quantitative standard: Quantitatively and physically, a city should be designed to benefit from living conditions as follows —

- There should be an optimal location in the main and secondary centers of the city, residential neighborhoods, and their hierarchical relationship with each other.
- There should be a design of roads and optimal access networks which consider the connection between residential centers with neighborhoods, center of neighborhoods, and urban centers.
- There should be a connection between different places based on general, recreational, occupational, cultural, educational, and cultural-sport needs, as well as creating appropriate spaces for different classes in order to generate happiness and hope. In addition, social and cultural indices and climatic conditions should be regarded in the design of urban spaces in order to create intimacy and friendship between residents (Vojdani Tabatabai, 2013).

The standard means the indices and criteria indicated by elites for sports and physical activity of citizens in the city.

Cities are considered as a sign of human technology and civilization considering the interaction between humans and their surrounding environment in cities (Nazemian and Lal Shatri, 2015). Modern urban planning is regarded as the cognate of industrial development, which transforms the social, economic, and cultural structures in addition to creating shifts in the industry, leading to urban development (Saeednia, 1995). The creativity of the society is among the indices of its construction. Modern design of urban planning should develop all of the parts in society (Madanipour, 2011). The design influencing human life is among the main challenges and discussions in modern academic circles (Golkar, 2000).

Urban design focuses on the public face of the city. Thus, squares, streets, and buildings play a critical role in urban design. The urban design emphasizes the placement of a set of buildings forming a unit,

which may include property owners and government buildings, as well. City design includes buildings differing from other ones and public parks (Pourmand, 2016).

Building and improving the urban environment with the most appropriate and best sports facilities in the shortest time and at the lowest cost in the contemporary world is among the most critical strategies of a living and dynamic organization (Hosseini *et al.* 2013). Therefore, recreational and leisure places can be provided for tourists and citizens from mountains and rivers, as well as open natural spaces according to the natural ecosystem at the entrances of the city (Bahreini and Ali Taleb Baboli, 2002).

According to Gutton, urban planning seeks to provide an environment which guarantees the survival of humanity, meets its spiritual and physical needs, and reveals its superior qualities (Saeedi and Tavakoli, 2006).

Urban design is considered as an evolutionary and continuous process, which should be implemented in the framework of environmental changes by participation of specialists from different fields. Organizing the existing situation, social and cultural, economic, physical and skeletal, administrative and managerial, as well as executive and political needs, along with the need to align with the process of urban developments are among the reasons for urban planning (Sarvestani, 2009).

The citizens who use the city determine its design method. The designers and specialists can encourage citizens by designing spaces and streets for walking, cycling, and necessary recreation (DeBourdeaudhuij, 2003).

Physical activity can be supported with special innovations in urban design. People fail to benefit from physical activity and exercise in a regular and planned manner. Thus, urban planners and designers should increase the level of physical activities among the citizens with purposeful planning (Hosseini *et al.* 2013).

The knowledge of urban management and planning increases, along with the growth and development of cities. Lack of sports facilities and spaces commensurate with other uses is among the main challenges in Iran (Hosseini *et al.* 2013).

Few studies have been conducted on the relationship between sports and cities. However, some focus on the areas dedicated to sports in cities (Smith, 2010).

Areas equipped with sports, welfare, and recreational facilities are among the vital points in cities, which contribute to their health and well-being. Such facilities belong to the public and all of the members in the society. No balance is observed between residential areas and sports and open spaces in most cities of Iran, and a small share is allocated for such spaces (Zohrehvandian *et al.* 2015).

Sports cities are among the latest manifestations of sports in the world (Puy *et al.* 2015). The modern growth of sports cities owes to the global development of professional sports and major sport events (MSEs) such as the modern Olympic Games (Misener and Mason, 2008). Usually, the critical infrastructure of sports events is utilized as a commercial company in the city to rationalize the costs of new sports infrastructure and increase the economic profit. Few studies have been conducted to interpret the social benefits of sports cities (SBSC) in planning (Puy *et al.* 2015).

Planners still underestimate the "social benefits" of SBSC and do not consider planning and consequences for activists (Beasley and Chali, 2011). Sports cities play a potential role in economic development, urban reconstruction, and internal investment. Manchester and Indianapolis are considered as successful examples in this area. However, cities rely on effective sustainability planning to achieve long-term gains (Balletto *et al.* 2021).

Constructing sports facilities and spaces needs a large amount of money. Therefore, the correct location and positioning of such spaces is among the critical indices in construction to benefit from easy, convenient, and fair access (Azimi Delarestani *et al.* 2014).

Location should be carefully considered and places with less traffic should be selected for construction due to negative traffic effects around sports venues (Soltan Hosseini *et al.* 2014).

An increase in population and development of cities has raised the significance of sports venues for a quality life. In other words, such venues are regarded as a critical support for a large part of the human society. The number of sports venues and sports per capita in constructing the cities is among the most critical issues in city design commensurate with attractive and refreshing life for citizens (Ebrahimi, 2017).

An increase in sports activities in big cities requires planning in order to equip and prepare, resulting in reminding a kind of identity called sports identity (Abbaszadegan, 2006).

The sports facilities are among the critical service centers, which should be considered seriously due to their significance for the people's health in the society. Various functions can be indicated for such facilities which play a critical role in urban life (Karimi, 2006).

Branding or labeling is not specific to sports and there are other methods to identify the cities with concepts such as "cultural, music, green, and fashion" cities (Chalip, 2006).

Utilizing the sports city brand or label is often accompanied by a "sports event development strategy". The claim for growth and development of the city is complemented by applying world championships to endorse the city brand (Misener and Mason, 2008).

A historical background is observed for the modern concept of "sports cities". Formation of areas in cities or "urban areas" can be attributed to the Olympics, where the first recorded games were held during 776 BC (Smith, 2010), and Delphi and its smaller Pan-Hellenic festival held approximately during 586 BC (Valavanis, 2004).

No agreed definition is observed for "sports city", despite its increasing use, and most cities like Manchester, Tunisia, and Dubai benefit from sports labels. However, several combined terms are expressed for sports cities such as "international sports villages", "sports areas" such as Doha, "sports centers" such as Singapore, and "national sports references" such as Birmingham, Glasgow, and Sheffield (Puy *et al.* 2015).

The city progresses by its citizens' creativity, and management to create an economic transformation based on knowledge plays a key role in cities. New solutions should be used to eliminate the obstacles in cities such as Bradford, England which became a creative city in the field of film and cinema during 2010, or Dublin which was named UNESCO creative city in the field of literature (Mohseni *et al.* 2017). Dog Island was built during the inner city reconstruction in urban development with the participation and management of a group of consultants and offices in London (Pourmand, 2016). The establishment and lack of proper placement of sports venues adjacent to other uses is among the basic obstacles in Iranian cities while the information, management and urban planning increases with the growth and development of cities (Hosseini *et al.* 2013).

Basically, the term "sports city" is utilized to designate a part of the city as a sports area, a temporary attraction, or business brand (Smith, 2010).

The sports city literature is particularly impressive in the oil-rich Gulf States (Brumber, Kreutz, and Maguire, 2013). However, most cities use sports for its socio-political benefits and local services. For instance, Dubai Sports City as a strategy aims to improve international indices and reduce the economic dependence of UAE on oil production (Dubai Sports City official website, 2014; Smith, 2010).

According to theorists such as Register, Gaffron, Downton, and Young, the location for buildings should be correct in the urban structure to create an appropriate space for walking in the city. In addition, applying motor vehicles should be minimized and bicycle and pedestrian network should be strengthened and prioritized in the city (Arabi *et al.*).

The modern growth of sports cities owes to the global expansion of professional sports (MacAloon, 2008).

Urban development and methods of movement are related to walking, cycling, running, and other physical activities and are among the main priorities in urban planning. The aforementioned activities should be considered in the design strategy due to connection between physical activity and urban design. The correct placement of parks, recreational facilities, streets, and open spaces is regarded as an incentive for physical activity. People display more activity in parks equipped with basketball courts and racket sports. In addition, beaches can be appropriate places for activities such as dance, volleyball, chess, exhibitions, celebrations, and concerts (Mehdinejad and Sadeghi Habibabad, 2018). Thus, the priority and number of sports venues which can help create a sports city should be determined in the design of the city, and the urban design should be such that the city appears like a sports city.

The need for citizens' sports activities in different strata of the society and for sports skills in the sports venues of the neighborhoods should be met. The residents' needs in different age groups and cultural characteristics for sports venues should be assessed in urban design. The neighborhoods should be designed considering the social characteristics such as the residents' age composition, literacy, and employment, as well as place of residence. Further, the concept of neighborhood can be understood in the social sphere. Reaching sports venues leisurely lasts 20-30 minutes, which covers 1000-1500 m with a penetration radius passing the streets of the urban distributor and collector with a maximum speed of 50 km (Ebrahimi, 2017).

The creativity of society is among the factors which shape cities in being built or not. The development of society in all parts of the city is among the obligations of modern urban planning in urban design (Madanipour, 2011).

Quality is regarded as one of the recent challenges in urban design in university circles. The quality of design affects the residents' quality of life (Golkar, 2000). Totally, construction-, protection-, and society-based methods are used to design a city (Farahani, 2015: 120). The results should be in line with the intended objective by controlling and monitoring the urban design process (Pakzad, 2006). Visual-functional, perceptual-essential, and participatory-management approaches are utilized in contemporary urban design (Farahani, 2015).

A large number of studies have been conducted to provide a model for a centralized sports city. However, the frameworks and standards related to the design of the sports city should be identified. Few studies have been conducted on the frameworks and standards of the sports city although their value is not less than designing the sports city model. Most studies have focused on sports and health in cities, as well as the placement of sports venues in recreational and sightseeing centers. Most societies in the world seek

to activate the citizens with physical activity to contribute to social and economic development due to the significance of sports and leisure (Kartakoulis, Webb, Karlis, Polukas, Loizou, and Kartakoulis 2015: 42).

In order to benefit from healthy, active, and dynamic citizens, the cities should be designed based on frameworks and standards which lead to physical activity since contemporary life is more inactive and most people live in apartments. Planning a sports city should balance the social, economic, and environmental needs of the society, as well as increasing the economic capability of developing the global sports industry. The sports city is among the last manifestations of urban planning after the destruction of modern urban planning such as suburban housing and the like. Accordingly, urban planning after modern urban planning moves towards mixing different uses to consider the city in a cellular manner. In fact, sports city is considered as the last manifestation of professional, universal, championship, and educational sports in order to create an international image. The development of an active city begins with creating civil infrastructures (Marcus & Forsyth, 2003). The people can be guided to an active life by creating supportive environments and infrastructures in order to expand physical activity in cities (Bellew *et al.* 2011). Identifying the evaluated frameworks and design standards of the sports city has provided a structure through which a model of the sports city can be presented based on the recognized design frameworks and standards.

Methods

The grounded theory was utilized in this qualitative study. The population included 18 elites in sports management, as well as architecture and urban planning who were identified by purposeful sampling and were willing to cooperate. The data were collected by semi-structured interviews until reaching theoretical saturation. Coding, categorization, and data analysis were conducted after converting the interview to text with MAXQDA 2020 software realizing its confidentiality. In other words, open, central, and selective coding was conducted, as well as integrating and improving the categories (Danaeifard & Emami, 2007). The core codes were recognized after open coding, resulting in identifying 10 categories related to sports city design frameworks and standards. The validity of the data was confirmed by three participants. In addition, two experts confirmed the reliability of the data by repeating the coding.

Results

Totally, 18 experts in architecture, urban planning, and sports management with doctorate education and specialty in urban planning and sports venues were interviewed, among which 14 participants were members of the academic staff and four were among the managers and experts of the Ministry of Sports and Youth with Doctorate degree in sports management. Table 1 indicates the demographic characteristics of the conducted interviews.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of interviewees

Elites and experts									
Field of study			**Work experience**			**Age**			**Number of interviewees**
Sport Management	**Urban Planning**	**Architecture**	**Over 25**	**21–25**	**Less than 20**	**Over 60**	**51–60**	**40-50**	**18**
10	7	1	11	5	2	4	7	7	

Totally, 700 codes related to the topic were extracted from the interviews regarding identifying the frameworks and standards of the sports city design. Then, the codes were refined, removed, or integrated (more correct vocabulary was selected and common concepts were deleted), resulting in obtaining 179 codes. In the next step, the coding of the main and secondary categories was achieved, resulting in identifying city parks, sports venues, physical structure, placement of sports venues, accessibility, benefitting from national pride and brand, and existence of sports medicine centers with 8, 12, 11, 4, 11, 4, and 3 codes, respectively, as well as characteristics of sports cities with 6 subcategories (tourism, environmental, infrastructural, economic, social, and cultural characteristics of sports city) and 80 codes, livability with 3 subcategories (security, non-motorized bicycle, and walking) and 29 codes, and development with 2 subcategories (sustainable development and ability to develop sports) and 16 codes.

Based on the grounded theory, the framework for developing the theory is based on categories. Therefore, 10 categories are determined among the subcategories and codes (Table 2). In addition, Chams' view emphasizes that the type of relationships between categories and codes is focused, resulting in acquiring the research model and theory.

Table 2: Categories and subcategories to identify the frameworks and standards of sports city design

	Categories			**Subcategory and abundance of codes**
Identifying the frameworks and standards of sports city design	City parks			8 codes
	Sport places			12 codes
	A characteristic of the sports city	Tourism characteristics of sports city		4 codes
			Benefitting from welfare services	10 codes
		Environmental characteristics of sports city	Applying the capacity of natural resources	17 codes
			Environment	3 codes
		Infrastructural characteristics of the sports city		6 codes
			Existence of native, traditional, and local sports infrastructure	1 code
			Infrastructures	8 codes
			Creating infrastructure to strengthen the culture of sports	1 code

				Existence of infrastructure for international sports organizations	2 codes
		Economic characteristics of sports city			1 code
			Sports industry		3 codes
		Social characteristics of sports city			8 codes
			Benefitting from a appropriate per capita		3 codes
		Cultural characteristic of sports city			3 codes
			Benefitting from a culture of exercising		2 codes
			Benefitting from laws and policies supporting sports		8 codes
	Physical structure				11 codes
	Placement of sports facilities and venues				4 codes
	Access				11 codes
	Livability	Security	Cycling safety		1 code
					1 code
		Non-motorized bicycle			6 codes
		Walk			4 codes
					17 codes
	Benefitting from the pride and brand of national honors				4 codes
	Development	Sustainable development			3 codes
					4 codes
		Ability to develop sports	The ability to exercise for everyone		1 code

	Ability to develop championship sports	8 codes
		1 code
Existence of a sports medicine center		3 codes

Fig. 1 shows the type of relationships between categories and subcategories and the research model.

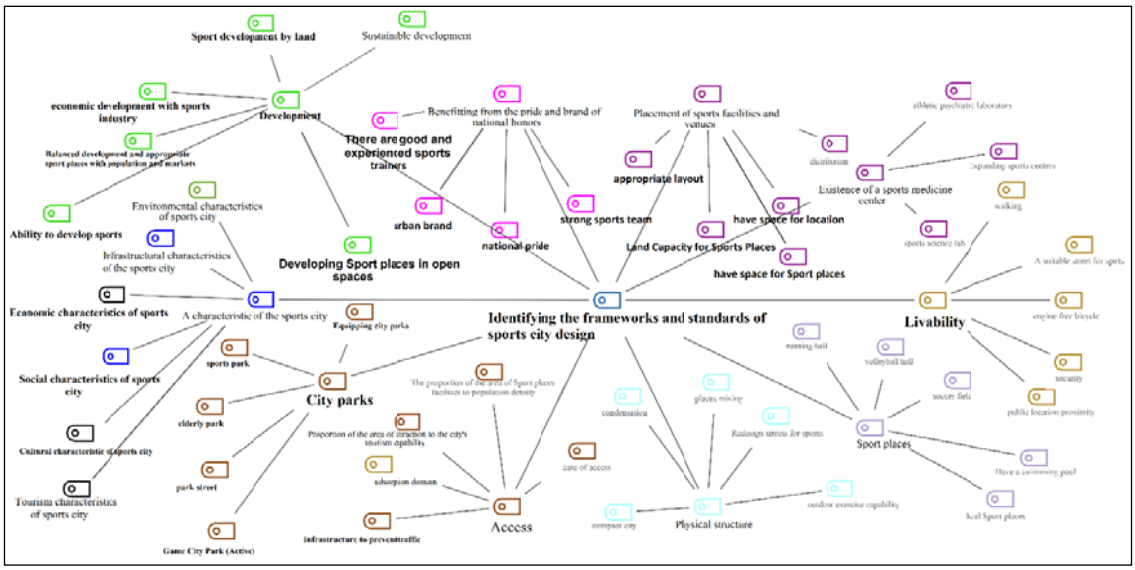

Fig. 1: Type of relationships between categories and subcategories and the research model

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All of the factors which hinder or facilitate the citizens' physical activity should be considered, as well as providing various solutions in creating an active city and presenting the development factors of physical activity in micro and macro form (Saffari and Latififard, 2018). This study sought to identify the frameworks and standards of a sports city design. Achieving a sports city requires focusing on development in various fields such as sustainable development, which includes sustainable social, cultural, and economic development, as well as the ability to develop public sports and championships. Sports should be regarded as an industry. A sports city should be livable and secure so that the urban environment can support physical activity, walking, public cycling, sports and active streets, sports equipment and cheap recreational sports, family sports, urban design with an approach to the health and well-being of citizens, services needed by sports spectators, as well as eliminating the dominance of cars in the city and benefitting from clean air. In order for the city to benefit from the component of sports access, different factors should be regarded including easy access to sports venues, existence of the necessary infrastructure to prevent traffic, appropriateness of the usage radius of sports venues with the density of the population,

tourism capacity of the city, increasing public transportation commensurate with the sports venues, and existence of sports facilities for several neighborhoods with proper walking access to shopping centers. A sports city should benefit from the ability to exercise in the outer space, mixing uses, having a cellular structure, and expanding green and public space and structure to public spaces. A sports city needs to consider utilizing the capacity of natural resources such as the sea, lake, mountain, hill, river, beach, forest, and desert. A sports city should regard the ability to hold sports events, existence of a sports field in the neighborhoods, neighborhood, as well as traditional and local sports, recreational and educational sports infrastructure, ability to hold public runs, infrastructure for sports organizations such as Olympics and the association for international sports for all (TAFISA), and integration in the process of beautifying and building sports facilities based on the population compatible with other uses. Considering union issues, benefitting from a sports industry, and regarding economic value of sports venues are among the economic characteristics of a sports city. Benefitting from sports facilities which encourage sports, existence of sports organizations under the municipalities, having appropriate sports per capita in the city and neighborhoods, high percentage of athletes, and having vitality are among the social characteristics of a sports city. High health literacy of the people, existence of support policies of the rulers for citizen sports, policy making on sports requirements, willingness to cooperate with the competent authorities in supporting sports, presence of sponsors in constructing sports venues, urban redesign to reduce social harms, and regulating laws and policies supporting sports are among the characteristics of a sports city. A sports city in the field of sports tourism needs to benefit from welfare services such as accommodation facilities and hotels, welfare services for recreational sports and championships, presence of public uses and shopping, existence of an international hotel, and provision of hotel services. Such a city should have sports facilities and museum, different kinds of parks such as public, sports, amusement, and adventure parks and a park for the elderly, sports science centers and laboratories, pride and brand of national honors, experienced coaches, and sports team.

Ethical Statement/Declaration

Hereby, I consciously assure that the following tips are fulfilled:

1. This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
2. The paper is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.
3. The paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
4. The paper properly credits the meaningful contributions of co-authors and co-researchers.
5. The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
6. All sources used are properly disclosed (correct citation). Literally copying of text must be indicated as such by using quotation marks and giving proper reference.
7. All authors have been personally and actively involved in substantial work leading to the paper, and will take public responsibility for its content.
8. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.
9. The participant has consented to the submission of the research report to the journal
10. The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests

11. This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors."
12. The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article (It is stated in the article).

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