# A Reflection on Iran's Current Housing Situation based on the Affecting Factors

[1]*Ghazal Safdarian, [2]Hootan Kosari Haghighi

[1]Ph.D. in Architectural Engineering, Member of Young Researchers And Elite Club, Robat Karim Branch,Islamic Azad University, Robat karim, Iran.
[2]M.A. Iran University of Science and Technology, Tehran, Iran.

**ABSTRACT:** Housing can be considered as one of the most important needs of each family and the provision of suitable housing for people has always been considered as one of the indicators of progress in any country. Because of the specific attitude to the issue of housing in Iran, in other words, turning it into an investment, the major part of the households' income has been accounted for housing. Given the importance of the matter, housing in Iran is affected by factors that often are considered as markers to assess the recession or boom in this sector. Among these factors, socio-cultural, economic, and demographic indicators can be noted that play a very important role in the formation of housing patterns and are considered a basis to assess mutual impressions of each of the above factors in this sector. This paper is aimed to examine how each of the economic, cultural, social, and demographic indicators has effect on the current housing situation in Iran. This paper attempts to analyze independent and interactive effects of each of the indicators on the housing sector by the method of content analysis and library and then continues to find ways to improve what is seen in the housing typology. The results suggest that changes in cultural indicators have the most profound impact on housing typology in long-term period, while changes in economic factors affecting the housing pattern is very transient, superficial, and short-term.

**Keywords:** Housing, Housing Typology, Economic Indicators, Socio-Cultural Indicators, Demographic Indicators

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is the result of a library research and a qualitative method based on statistics and information provided by relevant organizations, such as the Statistical Centre of Iran and the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and it analyzes housing developments in terms of qualitative and quantitative aspects in the past few decades by identifying factors and indicators affecting the housing fluctuations and prioritizing any of the indicators with regard to their impact on the housing sector.

## INTRODUCTION

Today the supply of affordable housing (both in terms of quantitative and qualitative characteristics) has become a concern for countries especially developing countries. Analysis of housing and explanation of its different aspects in each country are performed by housing indicators in each

country. Indicators are the same factors affecting the housing, recession, or boom in this sector. These indicators are important in analyzing the status quo and the amount of construction in housing sector. The objectives of this research are 1- to identify and assess the factors affecting housing, strategy and policy for their control, 2- to recognize and understand the components (quantitative and qualitative) of the housing by analysis of the status quo, 3- to explain the relationship between indicators affecting the housing and prioritize the effect of each of them on the construction.

Regarding the indicators, it is necessary to note that each of the three economic, cultural-social and demographic indicators has impact on the housing issue based on their certain weight and percentage so that the sum of these indicators in the form of a regular and balanced model will form a housing pattern. The point is that in the particular circumstances of time and place, disruption of this order at once causes disruption of the balance and the percentage weight of each factor and

*Corresponding Author Email: *ghazalsafdarian@yahoo.com*

polarization of the model towards one side; one thing that today for example makes the model polarize towards economic indicators. This in turn reduces environmental quality and human comfort. However, what is important in this regard is to maintain a new asymmetric balance by new methods of discipline in the model of indicators effectiveness.

### Economic Factors Affecting the Housing

Economy can be one of the most important factors affecting the housing market's fluctuations and it includes a significant number of economic indicators. Each of these indicators is based on its sphere of influence in three levels of macro, mid, and small (Table 1).

### National Production

Given that the economy in Iran is dependent on oil, the oil revenues have double impact on the Iranian economy. On the one hand oil revenues stimulates economic growth by facilitating imports of capital and intermediate goods and requirements of industry and new technologies and in some cases, the oil revenues boom in some periods of Iran's economy has led to expansion of non-interchangeable sectors (e.g. housing and services) and contraction in the tradable sectors (like industry and agriculture) and thus reduced the long-term economic growth (Mehrara & Nayeri, 2009).

So at the times that we face the several-fold increase in oil prices and consequently liquidity, the inflation has been rising in the country and the negative effects of the inflation are visible on economic growth and consequently in the housing sector as well.

### Economic Growth

Economic growth has led to boost in all sectors, including construction and housing. According to the Central Bank, every year, the construction sector shows a substantial share of economic growth.

### Bank Interest Rate

One of the macroeconomic variables is interest rates. According to the economic theories, raising interest rates will reduce the housing price bubble growth. Stabilization in the housing market reduces economic fluctuations and helps to long-term stable balance (Qolizadeh and Kamyab, 2008).

### Average Income of Citizens

With increasing income, purchasing power increases and the result will be more demand for housing and the increased demand will lead to an increase in housing prices. Overall there is always a logical relationship between income and housing prices in advanced societies so that the rate of these changes will help to raise the quality of life. According to Paul, affluent families with high class jobs benefit from autonomy and self-sufficiency and the reason is that this group of people is able to enjoy the necessary equipment and tools (Dickens,1998, 162). Rain Vater also believes that lower classes tend to save in their housing in order to consume the extra money for other needs and interests (Dickens,1998, 171). In our country where the demand for housing is considered as an asset, analysis of this relationship would not be possible without taking inflation into account. Considering the statistics released by the Central Bank since 1991 to the present, income has had significant growth but considering the several-fold increase in housing prices, the purchasing power of people significantly (about 64%) decreased that this issue has been due to inflation in the recent years (Table 2).

Table 1: Review of economic indicators

| Macro level | National Production | |
|---|---|---|
| | Economic growth rate of the country | |
| | Interest rates (usury) | |
| Mid-level | Average income of citizens | |
| | Land price | |
| | Investment (land / building / housing transactions) | |
| | Charges | Cost of construction of 1 m2. housing |
| | | Cost of maintenance of 1 m2. housing per year |
| | | Consumption expenditures at 1 m2. housing (water, electricity, gas, etc.) |
| Micro level | Bank credits, etc. | |
| | The demand for housing with the purpose of settlement or safe investment | |

Table 2: The Comparison of the price and rent of housing in Tehran with the least salary
(Source: Statistical Center of Iran)

| The Comparison of the price and rent of housing in Tehran with the least salary | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
| Average price of one square meter of residential unit foundation (Rial) | 475000 | 463000 | 516000 | 595000 | 958000 | 1603000 | 1560000 | 1558000 | 1755000 | 2251000 | 3198000 | 4810000 |
| The minimum monthly salary (Rial) | --- | 68010 | 89820 | 116820 | 160000 | 207210 | 254460 | 301530 | 361830 | 458010 | 567900 | 698460 |
| The power of purchase of housing with a minimum annual salary (square meter) | --- | 1.8 | 2.1 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 2.4 | 2.1 | 1.7 |
| Year | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | | |
| Average price of one square meter of residential unit foundation (Rial) | 5996000 | 5841000 | 6497000 | 8314000 | 15098000 | 18737000 | 1612000 | 18647000 | 22623000 | 39043000 | | |
| The minimum monthly salary (Rial) | 853380 | 1066020 | 1225920 | 1500000 | 1830000 | 2196000 | 2635200 | 3758000 | 3758000 | 4352000 | | |
| The power of purchase of housing with a minimum annual salary (square meter) | 1.7 | 2.2 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.0 | 1.3 | | |

## Land Price

The price of land is one of the factors affecting housing. Rising demand for urban land and the supply of land which cannot comply with the demand has led to increase in the price of land (Shojaei). What is certain is that with the rising price of land (which is the effect of a decrease in supply), housing price increases as well. According to what was said, in the mid-level housing and fluctuations are functions of the price of land.

## Investment

Increased investment, both public and private (as the effect of economic growth of the country) is one of the most important factors for the development of the housing sector. Given that investment in real estate is one of the most appropriate options for families, but in some cases, by too much investment of families, especially families in the top income deciles, the housing sector has become a supported sector, out of monetary

and fiscal policy of the government (Gholizadeh, 2009).

## The cost

The cost affecting the housing sector (supply) can be verified in 3 parts:

The cost of construction of 1 sqm. of housing:

The construction cost that includes the price of construction materials and labor is very impressive in the price fluctuations. Buildings have much influence.

The cost of maintenance of 1 sqm. of housing per year: Maintenance costs, i.e. operating costs like charge, is one of the determinants of housing prices.

The operating costs and energy consumption: The current costs of water, electricity, and gas consumption that can have a role in determining the price of residential units by the elimination of energy subsidies.

In particular, there is a direct relationship between costs and prices of housing, as housing prices have increased in recent years.

## Bank credits

Bank credit growth has increased the price of housing but uncertainty about the future level of funding will lead to the uncertainty of the level of housing prices. (Gholizdeh, 2009).

Demand Housing demand resulted from factors such as population growth, migration and urbanization, changing family forms, income, etc. increases housing price. Therefore increase in demand and not enough supply will increase housing prices. This is worth mentioning that the demand for owning a residential unit in the country origins from two completely different purposes: possession of a residential unit for settlement or possession of a residential unit to investment purposes.

## Cultural Factors: Neighborly relations and the possibility of living in the neighborhood

The Privacy of space required for psychological comfort of the residents considering cultural and common definitions of the target community:

There is always a mutual and close relationship between culture and society, so that the existence of one of them depends on the existence of another one (Haghi & Zabihi, 2012). It is important so that it has become one of the most important topics in the science of environmental psychology. In other words, culture of every society is one of the key issues in the design of residential space and consequently in the comfort of the people. Social interaction with people while respecting the territory and privacy through the design of coordinated spaces yet contrasting, has been always used as an important strategy in traditional Iranian architecture.

The impact of literacy and education rates on the possibility of living in the neighborhood.

One of the solutions proposed in the neighborhood is harmony of residents in terms of social aspects, culture, and values in

order to avoid cultural interference and conflicts that affecting factors such as level of education, along with other factors such as the economy can be noted in this regard. In other words, too much attention to the economy and ignoring the other criteria would have caused disintegration of social relations in the city. The maximum combination of subcultures and consideration of the principles of coexistence.

Population growth and immigration in recent years has become one of the major problems in metropolises. The adjacency of different cultures, the mismatch of people and social distance have led to problems in this regard. So considering the importance of this issue and to solve the problems arising from the fact that have been remarkable in recent years, measures should be considered for culture promotion and acceptance of existing conditions by people. Consideration of these issues in multicultural societies (like capitals) is more sensitive.

## Globalization and its impact on the living of people

Architecture of any country that is the result of interaction of the social, political, economic, and historical features is an evident of the community's culture which is expressed in the architecture body. The effects of globalization (often from the late Qajar period) left sediments behind that even affected the way of living. As a result, attitudes and standards of people regarding favorable housing have changed.

To the extent that today in our country we witness a massive change in the structure and form of family from extended families to the nuclear (elementary) families (Desire for independence) which consequently we see fragmentation of large and extended families and the emergence of new families that need new housing (Navab, 2009).

## Change in lifestyles and the manner of performing basic activities of the family

The manner of performing main activities plays an important role as one of the most important cultural aspects in the housing issue as Rappaport knows it one of the 5 principals affecting the internal space of the houses (Lang, 2004). Lang also believes that the activities pattern, from the pattern of daily activities to very complex ceremonies depends on the stage of the life cycle, gender and social roles within specific cultural contexts. Our habits and the environments where we live to a large extent form what we will search in the future (Lang, 2012, P.29).

What we are witnessing today is the uneven changes in all aspects of Iranian families from their joint activities to their relationship with each other etc., and thus housing as a product of cultural relations shows fundamental changes.

Living space, however, is the product of social relations but it has mutual influence over the relations (Athari, 2005).

## The history of the culture of apartment settlement

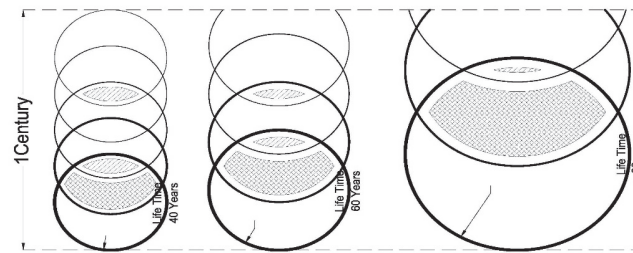Living in Apartments in Iran does not have a long history and

Fig.1: Intergenerational information transfer zone

mainly goes back to several decades ago and what we see at this time is mismatch of lifestyle from short buildings to high-rise buildings that has had so dramatic consequences in Iranian architecture (Safdarian & Habib, 2014). It is natural that in some socio-cultural contexts, the speed of adaption of new conditions is more or less than other human environments and in some communities, despite dating back less than a phenomenon, far more than other communities, despite shorter history of a phenomenon, the speed of adaption is more than other societies with a longer history in this regard. In general, in study of the history of a subject in a human environment, the number of generations who passed through a period of time (like a century) should be examined. In societies with a traditional fertility, the number of successive generations over a century varies between 4 to 5 generations while at present the number of successive generations over a century varies between 3 to 4 generations. (Fig.1)

## Social and Demographic Factors Affecting the Culture

Population growth rate;

Change in population leads to increased demand for housing and according to studies, increased demand leads to increased rents and housing prices (Abedin Darkoosh & Rahimian, 2009). Although the population growth rate in Iran was descending compared with previous years, it has increased with the population, especially the urban population, which indicates more demand in the housing market.

The average age of the independence of the child from the family and the need for new housing;

Independence from family or in other words, individualism of

children, is a very important issue which mainly we have been dealt with in recent years. Individualism at the macro level is the effect of factors such as independence, logical separation from family, experimenting (positive aspects), selfishness and undermining family relationships (negative aspects). The less age of independence from family, the more demand for new housing. In recent years, tend to have more independence in children has been increased which is one of the reasons of interest in a new housing. This has gone so far that in top economic deciles although children have not formed new families, they tend to live in independent housing units and this culture has led to the formation of a new (though small) demand model in the housing market.

The household size (the indicator of number of household members);

Since the impact of population on housing demand takes shape as a household, considering the growth and increase of household and its size has specific important. Household size is mainly based on the increased or reduced fertility. The small size of household is one of the appropriate conditions for the welfare and comfort of households in a community.

The number of households living in one residential unit;

This indicator or in other words population density in residential units is one of the most important factors in assessment of the housing situation in the country and a measure to assess the quality of life and standard of living in the country (Fig. 2).

On average, 4.44 persons per housing unit live in the country that this trend has been decreasing for reasons including family planning policies, marriage age, and social and economic factors (Satarzadeh, 2009).

Marriage Age and the need to a new housing;

Population Density ⊣ - More than one household in one residential unit — Poverty
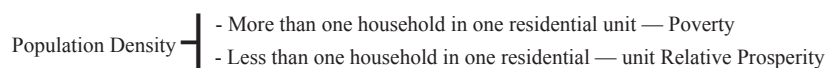- Less than one household in one residential — unit Relative Prosperity

Fig 2. Analysis of the number of households living in a housing unit compared with relative prosperity

Age of marriage in Iran in recent years has been raised very impressively so that it can be the effect of individualism, increased economic pressures, and increased levels of literacy. In the census of 2011, the average age of marriage has been 23.4 for women and 26.70 for men that still rising (Census of Population and Housing).

The rate of young people in a society is indicative of the demand for housing. As this amount is increased, the high price of housing increases as well.

The rate of divorce and the need to a new housing;

Divorce as a social event is the result of the disintegration of the family. Increased number of smaller centers to live, despite the damage on the community, brings additional burden on the housing sector (Fig. 3).

Divorce

Family $\longrightarrow$ Smaller Centers $\longrightarrow$ Increased Demand $\longrightarrow$ The need to more housing
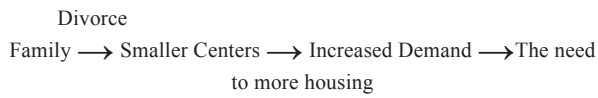
Fig3. The effect of divorce on the increased rate of housing

The mutual effect of economic and demographic - social factors on each other

If for any reason, economic conditions of the society are improved, as a result, demographic - social factors are affected by these changes and the changes crystallization is different in the past and present.

In the past when economic conditions was improving and growing, in the first step of its contribution to the society, it led to an increase in the relative fertility and family outgrow so that it continued insofar other limiting factors limited the growth (Fig. 4).

Therefore the impact of the matter in the past on the pattern of housing, formation of larger housing for more people was considerable. The matter from another perspective led to the development of the residential context and eventually organic growth of city, but at the moment, the impact of economic growth on social-demographic indicators has been otherwise. Now, as a result of improving economic indicators in a community, increase in the population growth rate and the number of births is not felt necessarily (Fig. 5). Therefore instead of increasing demand and thus increase in the quantity and comparing in different aspects, we witness an increase in the quality of different sectors. Therefore, the implications of this matter at the present time are felt on the housing pattern, construction of buildings with better quality but not necessarily larger and increased space per capita. Moreover, despite the increase in the welfare, given the sustainability issues, pressure on primary resources of soil and water and energy decreases (Fig. 6).

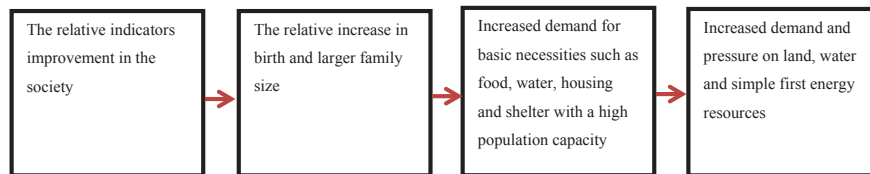Perhaps in the not too distant past, by the death of people

Fig 4. The effect of economic factors on the population in the past
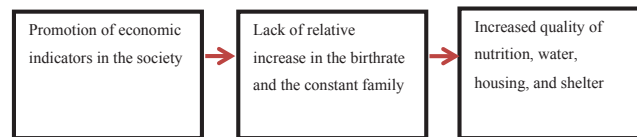
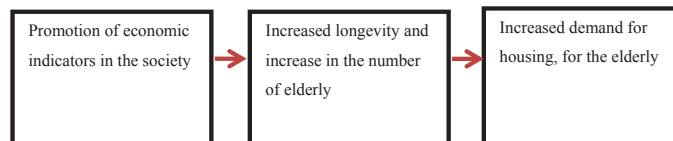Fig 5. The impact of economic indicators on population in recent times

Fig 6. The impact of economic indicators on housing in recent times

Table 3: The mutual effect of measures on each other and new patterns of housing

| The fall of economic indicators on social demographic indicators | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The fall of economic indicators in today's society | Increasing marriage age and living with parents | Change in the housing pattern considering the change of demand | |
| The fall of economic indicators in today's society | Difficulties in the family | Multi-family living in a home for more protection | Change in the housing pattern |
| The fall of economic indicators in today's society | Increase in crime rate | Changes in the pattern of home and family protection | Change in the pattern of housing in the form of walls, fences, camera, alarm etc. |
| The fall of economic indicators in today's society | Increased convergence in the community | An increase in the assembly of people in the group housing | |
| The impact of the fall of demographic and social indicators on economic indicators | | | |
| Population growth rate and demographic revival, if between 0 to 1.5 percent | Lack of productive generation in the future and a vague demographic prospect | Slowing economic growth in the medium term | |
| Negative population growth rate | Lack of productive generation in the future and the risk of extinction | Slowing economic growth in the long term | |
| Population growth rate between 0.5 to 1.5 percent | Ensuring productive generation in future | Economic growth | |
| Population growth rate between 1.5 to 2.5 percent | Hard to meet the requirements due to increased demand | Lack of economic growth | |
| Population growth rate more than 2.5 percent | Lack of living necessities | Negative economic growth | |
| Increased life expectancy and the increasing number of elderly people | | Direct impact on the housing pattern of the elderly as a result of the provision of housing to suit the physical and psychological needs of the elderly | |
| | | Increased life expectancy | |
| Increased rate of divorce | | Direct impact on the housing pattern, proportion to the new needs | |
| The impact of improving economic indicators on culture | | | |
| Economic recovery | Increase in the possibility of addressing cultural infrastructure | Promotion of the co-existence culture as well as lifestyle changes | Impact on the housing pattern |
| Economic recovery | Increasing education and literacy rate | Increase in patience and tolerance | Increase in the density and population capacity |
| Economic recovery | Institutional promotion of construction culture and standards | Improvement of the quality of housing pattern and increase in the useful life of the building | The possibility of increasing density and flexibility in the human population |
| Economic recovery | Institutional promotion of building maintenance culture | Improvement of the quality of housing pattern and increase in the useful life of the building | |
| Economic recovery | Change in the culture of spending as purchase by installments or bank loans | Reduction of brokerage in the housing market | The impact on quality of housing pattern |
| Economic recovery | Decrease in the rate of economic crimes and theft | The impact on the culture of building maintenance and understanding of deprivation concept | The impact on quality of housing pattern |
| the impact of the fall of economic indicators on culture | | | |
| The fall in economic conditions | The less possibility of addressing cultural issues | Decline in the culture of coexistence as well as changes in lifestyle | The impact on housing pattern |
| The fall in economic conditions | Lower level of education and the literacy rate | Reduction of patience and tolerance | Less possibility of density |
| The fall in economic conditions | Decline in the culture of construction and non-compliance with standards | Decline in the quality of housing pattern | |
| The fall in economic conditions | Undermining the culture of maintenance and repair of the building | Decline in the quality of housing pattern | |
| The fall in economic conditions | Change in the culture of spending for housing | Increasing brokerage in the housing market and culture of brokerage and earning money effortlessly | The impact on the quality of housing pattern |
| The fall in economic conditions | Increase in the rate of economic crimes and theft | The impact on the culture of building maintenance and understanding of deprivation concept | The impact on the quality of housing pattern |

The rate of changes of economic indicators between 2 to 5 years

Housing

Typology

The rate of changes in demographic indicators

between 10 to 25 years

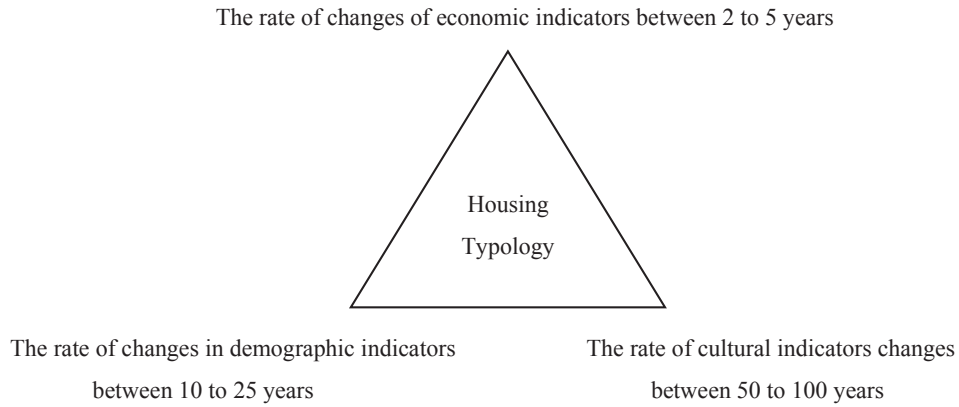The rate of cultural indicators changes

between 50 to 100 years

Fig. 7: Timescales of changes in each of the three indicators affecting housing

Table 4: Proposals and solutions in the field of indicators affecting housing

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Proposals in the field of socio-cultural factors influencing the pattern of housing | Investment in the promotion of effective cultural backgrounds in the housing sector, including the development of co-existence, promotion of reading culture, increase in human communication and interaction and virtual communication control | Investments in media and television and radio production and book publishing, magazines and other publications aimed at informing the public about the necessity of apartment settlement |
| | | Familiarity with living laws and regulations as concentrated patterns from an early age (kindergarten, school) due to the necessity of culture promotion in this regard |
| | | Public familiarity with the basic indicators of a good and appropriate residential building |
| | | Indirect investment through the development of related information on the Internet and popular social networks |
| | | Indirect investment in the protection and preservation of Iranian living style and also preparation for the inevitable changes by the globalization phenomenon and cultural promotion in this case |
| | | Investment to protect the subcultures and avoidance of their extinction and trying to establish appropriate interaction between the subcultures |
| | | Investment to increase the literacy rate and improve education and promote reading culture |
| | | Investment in the arts, drama or visual arts in order to promote the culture in this regard |
| In the field of demographic indicators affecting the pattern of housing | | Providing financial incentives to prevent birth rate cut for long-term positive impact on the pattern of housing |
| | | Providing financial incentives to prevent that part of divorce with economic origin (especially in the lower economic stratum) |
| In the field of economic factors affecting the housing pattern | | Policies and legislation that would reduce brokerage in the housing economy |
| | | Policies and legislation, leading to appropriate economic investment on the housing sector and resulting to the manufacturing of high quality, durability and standard products |

in the fifth or sixth decade of life, while they had physical ability to naturally pass their life, a part of related demand naturally came out of the cycle. While at present, the average life expectancy increased by 2 decades and while the physical abilities of elderly reduces, the need to form a housing adapted to the living conditions of elderly people is necessary. However, the improvement of health, medical facilities and economic affordability of the elderly will cause increased life expectancy in the next century and the needs of the present generation in the next 50 years will have significant differences with the current elderly. Current seniors, after the loss of their spouse, in order to escape from loneliness, tend to live with other older peer relatives such as their siblings despite the fact that, due to the shrinking of household size and generally small families at present, this pattern will not be applicable in the next half century and actually, cohabitation with other adult friends will be replaced with other elderly relatives which in turn will lead to the development of housing for the elderly in the next century.

### Mutual Influence of Indicators on each other and the Emergence of a New Type of Housing Model

Each of the indicators, in addition to its role as an independent index, can lead to the emergence of new patterns in housing by influencing other factors that are mentioned below (Table 3).

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research for the three parameters affecting the housing typology are as below.

In terms of speed of the change in the affecting indicators it can be concluded that the fastest changes is related to economic, then demographic, and eventually cultural indicators. (Fig.7) Examination of all three factors together indicates that the faster rate of changes, the more possibility, but the less depth, of impact on the model. Therefore although cultural components show slower rate of changes (in the time between the emergence of one to two generations), they have much deeper effects than demographic or economic indicators on housing typology.

Today Housing typology in our country has been under the influence of economic factors more than it should be.

Existence of a lot of ups and downs over the past four decades and economic instability has led to strong fluctuations on top of the pyramid and sectional and fast impact on housing typology from this perspective. Although these effects have little depth, we have never seen relaxation at the top of housing typology because of too much change. However, stabilization of the economy and avoiding a bubble in this sector will cause economic factors to have an impact on the model just as much as their real contribution and not more. The model suggests that a growing upward trend in the quality of housing is not possible today unless all the three

pillars are changed simultaneously and coordinated because a sudden change in each pillar will damage to balance and order of the housing pattern. In this respect, the proposals are offered as follows: (Table 4)

### CONCLUSION

Finally, it seems that the purely economic approach (and sometimes with technological demonstration) towards the construction industry cannot drive the development of housing market towards the right path. In fact, a chain of relevant and simultaneous changes in each of the three indicators affecting housing can determine a balanced effectiveness. Direct financial investment in culture of settlement as the first step and economic investment in demographic indicators as the second step requires the formation of a suitable background for the formation of an appropriate pattern of housing.

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