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REVIEW: THE IMPACT OF URBAN GROWTH ON THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN
THE CITY OF NAJAF

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Abstract: Urban growth in the city of Najaf is a major challenge, due to its religious status and proximity to important countries in the Arab region. However, it is not impossible. Through sound comprehensive planning, investment in infrastructure, combating corruption, and imposing good governance, with the development of long-, medium-, and short-term strategies and their careful follow-up, the city of Najaf can be comparable to major cities on the global level, because it is equivalent in its visitors to well-known tourist cities such as Paris in France and London in Britain, as the number of visitors to Najaf annually reaches about 30 million visitors and tourists. If these procedures are implemented correctly, they will certainly play an important role in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the services provided and thus improving the quality of life for citizens in the city. This potential for improved services should instill a sense of hope and optimism in the audience about the future of Najaf.

INTRODUCTION

Like other cities in the country, the city of Najaf is witnessing rapid urban growth, influenced by the dynamic demographics that are naturally reflected in the economic, social, and cultural aspects. This rapid growth is imposing significant challenges related to the quality of infrastructure services in general. The impact of this growth on public services is grave, and therefore, this study seeks to clarify the motives for growth, and to clarify the relationship between this rapid growth and its impact on the quality of public services in the city, with a focus on the most important challenges and proposed solutions.

The researcher and specialist who follows urban growth in the city of Najaf, many motives and variables (geographic) appear to complement each other to draw the city's temporal and spatial borders, which affect the size of the town and its inhabited area and the following concepts can describe these variables:

1- The demographic factor: It is the city's most crucial and primary demographic factor that gives it continuity and growth. By knowing the city's demographic reality and its role in drawing its urban structure, it is possible to compare what is available from available capabilities and the ability to meet their urban needs with high quality. In the city of Najaf its population reality was (56261) people in (1947) and reached (1471592) million people in 2023 AD, and this indicates the absolute increase achieved by the impact of natural growth and migration from the villages and cities of the country, which affected its growth at accelerating rates and the quality of services in it, which required the creation of a new system of infrastructure and services, to feed Increasing demands on services.

2- The economic factor represents the central pillar and driver for the city's growth and urban development. In Najaf, financial factors played an essential role in the city's urban growth, especially in religious tourism and creating two economic practices: industrial and commercial. Spiritual tourism is described as a factor of attraction and attraction for job seekers, whether skilled or unskilled, which made the economic movement grow and spread with the city's main roads and axes so that the economic factor occupies a distinguished position in meeting the needs of its residents and neighboring towns, and thus what enhances the city's urban expansion and the quality of services in it.

3- Land use planning (transportation routes): There is no doubt that transportation routes represent the main lifeline for the city's growth and the sustainability of its urban expansion because the diversity of different land uses usually depends on the network of internal transportation streets. Therefore, the city of Najaf is linked to a group of newly developed roads, which began to appear in the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century. These roads meet the increasing needs in conjunction with the significant increase in population. These newly developed roads in the city were represented by four

main axes: the Najaf - Karbala, Najaf - Diwaniyah, Najaf - Kufa - Hilla, and Najaf - Network). New roads are being worked on, including the Najaf-Hillah Expressway, to connect it with Baghdad Governorate and the strategic road that passes through the western Najaf desert, as these roads play a role in driving the wheel of growth and population expansion, in conjunction with the rest of the other growth factors, and their combined impact on the efficiency and quality of the services provided. 4- The administrative factor: Due to the privacy enjoyed by the city of Najaf in its administrative aspects and the addition of a central character to its privacy, which increased its inhabited area, the administrative factor represents the main turning point in strengthening the urban framework of the city and plays the same role in its sustainability, continuity, and integration with a higher-ranking administrative unit. This is what happened with the city of Najaf when it was separated from Karbala in the last century, which required the intervention of the competent and concerned authorities to develop the basic designs for the city and direct its growth and future directions, as is the case with many cities in the country, which merged or were administratively disintegrated from some cities. Accordingly, The challenges associated with urban growth in the city of Najaf and affecting the quality of services provided to its residents are represented by pressure on the infrastructure, namely (shortage of water supplies, weak sewage network, inefficient electricity services, weak electrical voltage and increasing congestion in its main axes), lack of education, health services and green areas, and increasing environmental pollution of all kinds (air pollution: due to emissions from factories and vehicles and deterioration of air quality) (water pollution: due to the discharge of sewage and industrial waste) (noise pollution: resulting from increased traffic, industrial activities and street vendors, which negatively affects the health and comfort of residents), which led to weak municipal services with the absence of comprehensive and sustainable planning for urban growth, which caused the spread of slums and the deterioration of the civilized appearance.

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