The Social Morphology of the City in the Qur'anic Perspective

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Abstract. This article discusses an important message of the Qur'an concerning the process of formation and transformation of human settlements. The significance of this study stems from the fact that it evaluates the spatial structure and character of the inhabitants in a city, suburbs, or hamlets from the standpoint of the Qur'an. The theme of urban sociology was discussed according to the thematic interpretation method *(maudū'ī)* based on Ibn ʿĀshūr understanding in His Book *Al-Taḥrīr wa Tanwīr*. The findings showed that the inhabitant plays a significant role in shaping the morphology of the city. City dwellers differ from village residents in terms of faith, social care, and even the formation of the city shape. The paper ends with a plea for greater attention to the Qur'anic Commentary and examining contemporary urban issues.

Keywords: City in the Qur'an, city morphology, *Al-Taḥrīr wa Tanwīr, Ibn ʿĀshūr*, urban sociology.

1 Introduction

Durkheim argued that sociology has three main divisions: social morphology, social physiology, and general sociology [1]. Social morphology includes geographic setting, population density, and other preliminary data likely to influence social aspects. Social physiology is concerned with dynamic processes such as religion, morals, law, economic and political elements, each of which can be the subject of a specific discipline. General sociology is an attempt to find general social rules that may reflect a particular social process. Durkheim considered it a philosophical part of sociology [2]. Durkheim's analysis has widely applied to the concept of the city. Urban morphology is the study of human settlements and the processes of city formation and transformation. While urban morphology approach is a study of the expression of urban spatial forms, covering physical aspects and non-physical such as historical, cultural, social, and economics of the population that affect changes in urban spatial forms. The discussion on social morphology will include the spatial structure and character of the area, whether it is metropolitan, city, or hamlet (Bedouin) [3][4].

The relationship between residents and cities has stimulated a lengthy discussion among urban social experts [5]. The series of studies emerged a brilliant discourse on the new urban form that humans will inhabit. However, the concept of de-urbanization, urban death, and making rural (neo-ruralization) further emphasizes the implications of the population on the

urban form. The vast expansion of urban areas triggers the process of deurbanization. This consequence changes the structure of traditional towns or villages and jeopardizes their sustainability [6].[1]

Since classical, many things in nature consider the differences of human groups in terms of competition and living space. The analysis of social ecology considers other functions, the dominant one being housing. The evidence is that most of the descriptions of cities are well-thought-of settlement patterns and residential units. On the other hand, it seems clear that the new forms of urban morphology are primarily the product of the progressive differentiation of populations in a metropolitan center. In line with the increase of population mobility in amount, direction, range, and frequency, the relationship between occupants and the city becomes very dynamic. A set of social-ecological concepts addressed to reconstruct the spatial structure from a critical point. There is no doubt that one of the main problems is a profound readjustment of the steady balance between population and cities [7].

Since the population factor influences the physical characteristics of urban morphology, it will be interesting to discuss it from the perspective of the Qur'an. The holy book is a guide (hudan) that answers natural phenomena, human stories, explanations of human character, the relationship between humans and their environment, and other themes. Fazlur Rahman grouped these themes into eight major themes, while three focus on humans (as individuals, society, and Muslim society) [8]. Other studies discussed humans in the Qur'anic review, both as social beings, natural processes, physique, and its relation to natural elements, such as the explanation of Ezheei and Ali Nurdin [9][10].

Many scholars have carried out the trend of Quranic commentaries from interdisciplinary studies. Ibn Ṣirāy and Al-Shamisī compiled al-Mu'jam al-Jami' which contains an explanation of place names and keywords regarding places/regions in the Qur'an [11]. Although it is an encyclopedia (mu'jam), the discussion of this book resembles a thematic interpretation. Meanwhile, Ali Nurdin wrote thematic commentaries; he focused the analysis on social aspects of society in terms of qawm, ummah, ṣa'b, qabilah, firqah, ṭaifah, hizb, fawz and ahl. Specifically, Vasic, et.al [12]. examines the concept of place, its specific character, identity, and sense of place.

Meanwhile, Latifie investigates the architectural concept of God over the universe. God is a "creator" who has the power of "creativity" has created humans as vicegerents on earth; humans must be symbols of God's attributes. Humans have gained the ability to dominate nature. His research also touched on the similarities between the creation of the universe and architectural works [13].

In some reference works, urban morphology, perhaps more than any other field of knowledge, is confronted with the challenge of sharing boundaries of various kinds– disciplinary, linguistic, and geographical; between the particular and the general; between the West and the East; and between research and practice, to name a few examples [14]. As a result, all scholars addressed urban morphology from a multidisciplinary point of view. It is notable, for example, that Hopkins has discovered spatial connections between ecology and an urban morphological notion – the fringe belt – that was developed in what has proven to be one of those urban morphological masterpieces mentioned earlier [15][16]. While Sam Griffith believes that spatial cultures are intended to facilitate a process of interdisciplinary framing for increasing scholarly interest across the humanities and social sciences in the ways in which the materiality of the urban built environment is agential in the production of social life [17].

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[1] Although the population has not increased, as observed in Slovakia and surrounding countries, the population has even decreased over the last few decades.

2 Methodology

In contrast to earlier findings, this article examined the social character concerning habitation and its influence on city morphology from the perspective of the Qur'an. This article examines the spatial structure and character of the population in a city, suburb, or hamlet. Is it true that the inhabitants have a considerable impact on the city's morphology? Is there a difference between city dwellers and country people in terms of faith, social care, and even the design of the city? as well as how the Qur'an pays attention to these contemporary urban issues?

We performed a discussion through the thematic exegesis method (mauḍū'ī) [18]. As a first step in collecting data, we identified over 161 verses relating to the city theme. This selection was based on six keywords in the Quran: madīnah, qaryah, balad, dār, arḍ, and miṣr. According to the thematic method, after gathering pertinent verses from the Qur'an,[2] the next stage is to examine them using primary sources (Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr)[3] and other contextual literature [19].

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 City and Inhabitant in the Qur'an

The themes of urban morphology mentioned in the Qur'an are related to the city and inhabitant term. The Qur'an mentioned at least six terms of the city or township, namely madīnah, balad, qaryah (qurà), dār, arḍ, and miṣr, besides other terms [20][21].[4] The word madīnah was mentioned 17 times in 17 verses, qaryah 56 times in 54 verses, balad 19 times in 19 verses, dār 48 times in 47 verses, arḍ 461 times in 440 verses, while miṣr repeated five times in 5 verses. Thus, the entire term was repeated 606 times in 582 verses. Nevertheless, the relevant word to the "city" theme amount to 161 verses.

Ibn 'Āshur (d. 1973)[22][23] [5] was a scholar who was well-versed in urban sociology [24].[6] The proof for this may be found in his commentary, which meticulously analyzes key passages from a social point of view. In his writing, the word aqṣà al-madīnah in Surah Yāsīn (36): 20 defined as "the farthest part" or "the end of the city," while the meaning of "and a man come from the end of the city (jā'a min aqṣà al-madīnah) shows that faith in God first appeared in the

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[2] Manually through Faydillah al-Ḥasanī Al-Maqdisī, *Fatḥ Al-Raḥmān Li-Ṭālibi Āyāt al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Maktab al-Buḥūth wa al-Dirāsāt, 1995) and digital calculations using the application via http://tanzil.net and http://Qur'an.ksu.edu.sa.

[3] This book is written by Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Āshūr— henceforth Ibn 'Āshur, was born in 1296 AH/1879.

[4] Ibn Ṣirāy and Yūsuf Muḥammad, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Jāmi' Limā Ṣurriḥā Bihi Wa Ubhima Fī al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm Min Al-Mawāḍi'*, 46–81 Other terms may refer to the city according to Ibn Junaydil, Abu Khalīl, placed names—such as Yathrīb, 'Iram, Thamūd, Madyān, Saba, al-Aḥqāf, al-Aikah, Babil, Hunain, al-Ḥijr, in addition to the terms hasanah, jannatayn, al-jannah, and others—which attributed to the meaning of the city or region. These words are used in the Qur'an in certain forms.

[5] Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Shāẕilī ibn "Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥammad Ibn 'Āshūr was born in 1296 AH/1879 AD in La Marsa, a coastal city near the Tunisian capital.

[6] He was a complete person, as an interpreter, linguist, jurist (mujtahid), and a leader (imām). He was well-versed in Islamic Arabic culture, jurisprudence, grammar, history, and comparative religion.

suburbs before spreading in the core of the city. According to his knowledge, Ibn' Āshūr also explained this verse by analyzing and observing the city morphology [25].

The urban morphology expressed a spatial structure and character of a metropolitan area, city, town, city center, and a suburban area, and the ownership or control and occupation. The city center was a place for Jewish rulers and scholars (akhbār), which were arbitrary and against the Apostles' call. The city center residents were subservient to their masters, deeply bound and afraid in contrast to the suburban residents who are more independent–based on their character who had careless about others, because the suburban residents' behavior may be closer to the behavior of the Bedouin [26].[7]

In line with the above interpretation, Ibn' Āshūr distinguishes the regional hierarchy at three levels: the city center, the outskirts of the city, and the hamlet or village (Bedouin). The inhabitant at each hierarchy has respective characteristics.

3.1.1 Spatial Characteristics of Inhabitant

The characteristics of the hamlet (ahl al-badāwah), according to Ibn' Āshūr are more open and tend to be easy to accept kindness than city residents (ahl al-qur à). Due to the simplicity of nature of survivors, if they hear good, they will quickly accept it. In contrast, city dwellers are closed, strong, steadfast in the teachings of their ancestors, tend to maintain their previous beliefs, and reject everything that changes them. Thus Ibn' Āshūr said that the inhabitant is the pattern of conduct for anyone, both good and evil (li-anna ahla-ha qudwatan li-ghayri-him fī al-khayr wa-al-shar).[8] Shihab mentioned a profound reason that city dwellers face multiple problems, competition and material needs, and more temptations, different from Bedouin people or those who live in rural areas [27].

God sent apostles from a city, not from a village (Bedouin). This fact caught the attention of Ibn' Āshūr. He explained the reason that the villagers were still considered part of the city. Commonly the villagers come to the nearest town to meet their needs because the village has a dependence on the city to meet their needs. Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1402) mentions two opposite forms of social organization: nomadic and sedentary. Residents of the city who settled could develop their territory steadily compared to the nomadic villagers. According to Ibn Khaldūn, civilization emerges from the city, and urban society can construct an intense culture (al-ḥaḍarah) and civilization ('umran) than the Bedouin.

3.1.2 Characteristics of Inhabitant based on the Terms *Aṣḥāb* and *Ahl*

The terms qaryah and madīnah are followed by the word aṣhāb and ahl as mentioned in Surah Yāsīn (36): 13 and Surah al-Kahfi (18): 77. Shihab says that the word fī al-madīnah in Surah Al-Kahfi (18): 82 is different from the previous verse (Surah Al-Kahfi (18): 77), which uses the word qaryah instead of al-madīnah even though both indicate the same city. According to Shihab, Surah Al-Kahfi (18): 77 impresses a criticism of the population so that it uses the word ahl qaryah, while Surah Al-Kahfi (18): 82 impresses a compliment to the child's parents, so the Qur'an uses the word al-madīnah in a better context.

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[7] The urban hierarchy describes the level of urban function as a result of differences in count, type, and quality of urban facilities. Based on these differences, the volume and type of service for each facility are also different. The theory of central places has become the basis for understanding urban external relations through interrelated hierarchical models.

[8] Refer to the explanation of Surah al-Qaṣaṣ (28): 59 Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr Wa al-Tanwīr*, vol. 20, p. 152.

The history of the city of Medina has developed rapidly. The Hijrah spirit of the Muslims who migrated from Mecca to Medina encouraged city development. The heroic story of ḥijrah is a milestone of civilization (madanī), and these kind communities were also called civil societies. It is reasonable because, according to al-Maliki (d. 2004), the Prophet and his Companions who emigrated (muhājirīn) did not think about the possibility of returning to their hometown forever until death. The Prophet brought them together based on this spirit, built mosques, mobilized unity, conducted a population census, and built a market for economic development.

The phrase ahl al-madīnah, according to Shihab, is to show a better context than ahl al-qaryah. But in the interpretation of Al-Taḥrīr wa Al-Tanwīr describes six verses out of 17 verses in the term al-madīnah criticize the inhabitants. An example to clarify, in Surah Al-Tawbah (9) verses 101 and 120, the term al-madīnah after the word ahl (ahl al-madīnah, refers to the early inhabitants of Medina) who have hypocritical characteristics and disobey the command to fight. Before this verse was revealed, Allah had first threatened the hypocrites to stop hurting the Prophet, as in Surah Al-Aḥzāb (33): 60.[9] Likewise, in Surah Al-Munafiqun (63): 8, even though it does not follow the word ahl, its meaning condemns Medina's hypocrite residents.[10] When the verse of Surah al-Tawbah (9): 101 was revealed—as narrated by al-Ṭabarī (d. 310H) in his commentary—the Prophet stood up, called out the names of the hypocrites, and kicked them out of the mosque.[11]

The above description thus designed that qaryah and madīnah are determined not only by the population's condition but also by its scope. Based on the scale, qaryah is more general and broader (large city) than madīnah. Qaryah is also known as al-mudun (المدن). Four verses discussed al-madīnah in the Qur'an, namely Surah Al-Tawbah (9): 101 & 120, Al-Aḥzab (33): 60, and al-Munāfiqūn (63): 8, referring to the Medina as the geographic name. However, the context of these verses described the evil of city dwellers. Overall, 35.3 percent of the verses on the term al-madīnah criticize the inhabitant. This context is better when compared to the term qaryah, where 82.1 percent or 46 verses out of a total of 56 verses condemn the population.

3.2 Population and Possible Implications for City Morphology

There are four types of urban population. There were nighttime dwellers and workers in the past, but city users and metropolitan businesspeople emerged along with civilization. Martinotti describes that in one traditional city (a city of the past), the inhabitant or population mostly lives in the city area; they were residents who work in the city. City boundaries include both habitants in one place or unit of space; for thousands of years, and until later, a city surrounded by great walls and neatly separated by the rest of the land. The addition of market visitors, tourists,

[9] *"Indeed, unless the hypocrites, those who are sick in their hearts and those who spread false news in Medina (from hurting you), We will surely command you (to fight) them, then they will not be your neighbors (in Medina).) but in a short time"* in QS. Al-Aḥzāb (33): 60 which descended first in Medina (QS. 90th) before Al-Tawbah (113). Meanwhile, there is one other verse that uses ahl al-madinah editorial, namely Al-Ḥijr (15): 67 but talks about the residents of Sadūm City.

[10] *"They said: "Indeed, when we return to Medina, indeed the strong will expel the weak from him." Whereas power is only for Allah, for His Messenger and for the believers, but the hypocrites do not know."* QS. Al-Munāfiqūn (63): 8 is the 104th order of the Madaniyah surahs based on the revelation of the surah.

[11] History from Ibn 'Abbas, narrated by Al-Haitham> in Majma' Al-Zawāid, also narrated by al-Ṭabranī in al-Awsāt, and in his book called al-Husayn ibn 'Amru al-'Anqazī he is known to be weak. Al-Ṭabarī, Tafsr Al-Ta}bari, 14: 440.

pilgrims or suppliers, did not significantly affect the social and ecological structure of the city. However, until last decades the city walls, even when they did not strengthen their military, still had administrative significance: payment for access roads at the entrance and the gate closed at night. As can be observed in urban systems in most developed economies, cities are not in decline but are undergoing significant transformations. The new population (city users and metropolitan people in business) was changing the social and physical shape of the city and creating a new metropolis generation [28].

Most of the above-explained deals with that illustrated by Ibn 'Āshūr concerning the cities in the Qur'an. Surah Sabā' (34):18 hints at the high civilization of the Sabā'. Allah made between the sacred cities, located close together, even though there was a distance but journey at night and during the day is safe. If someone comes out of Mārib to Sham, the trade caravan will go through the Tihāmah road then al-Ḥijāz then the outskirts of Sham until it arrives in the center of Sham. Every time the journey takes one marhalah, there will be qaryah, balad, or dār to rest. All the visitors (al-ghādī) are accepted in the city, rest and spend the night, and prepare provisions (for those who did not bring supplies from Mārib). The human's activities likely shaped the phenomenon of the city formation alongside the road (hafāfi aṭ-ṭarīq) between Mārib and Jelq. Caravan landings, active trading between residents and visitors, residents buying supplies from the Kafila, and meeting the city's needs such as goods and fruits, or vice versa, are all urban characters (ṭabī'at al-'umrān) [25].

In Martinotti's terms, the visitors (al-ghādī) mentioned by Ibn 'Āshūr were the nighttime dwellers or metropolitan businesses. If further elaborated, Ibn 'Āshūr's opinion align with urban theories; according to Spiro K. Kostof (d. 1991M), cities are formed through the interaction between buildings and residents. At first, the city's shape was neutral, but then it changed until the influence of various cultures emerged [29][30]. Mohammed et al. stated that the physical city's religious, political, and cultural values have developed into aesthetic conventions, then the process plays an essential role in social and urban maintenance [31]. Geometrically, the city's shape is distinguished based on the city's geometric shape that was intentionally planned (planned city) or not (unplanned evolution or instinctive growth). Unplanned city forms are generally metropolitan cities; a particular city segment develops spontaneously to accommodate a variety of complementary interests so that in the end, the city has a natural form, known as an organic pattern. On the other hand, cities in medieval Europe were well planned, so they were characterized by regular shapes and geometric roads [32].

According to Jamel Akbar and Ibn al-Rami, a city usually has a gate built by residents or the authorities' policy to maintain security. In 1459 in Cairo, there were many thefts, then rich people made a gate in their place; next, in 1497, the Governor ordered the residents to build a gate. In 1389, the gates were guarded and armed; guards prevented entry to anyone except those with a password. Traditional neighborhoods marked by gates, such as markets, squares, roads, and cul-de-sacs, are named after the name of the group of residents or their business/trade: haral or mahallāt, najjārin (carpenters), saqqayīn (water carrier), and other similar occupation. The description shows that housing in Muslim cities functions as a unit, where the residents come from the same ethnicity or profession, close ties either because of regional similarities, religious sects, ethnicities, expertise, or other things that show social homogeneity [33].

Physically there have been many changes in the shape of the city. So far in the urban system in the most developed country shows a significant transformation. New types of the population are changing the social and physical shape of the city and creating a new generation [28]. The presence of a new population is associated with the massive development of various urban activities. The urban built environment is determined by culture, resulting from small actions contributed by many generations. All architecture has a cultural basis or is a language of artistic

expression. It is one of the ways used by society to express that society and its values in the physical world [34].

One of the most widely cited definitions of the city is an urban settlement as a center whose activities and institutions—whether economic, administrative, or religious—affect the larger area around it (hinterland) [35]. City interaction or connectivity is the key to growth as well as equitable development. The city system represents the city's spatial structure as a vehicle for the diffusion of activities [36]. The simplest interaction form of the inhabitant and the city structure is when farmers bring their produce from the fields to the densest point of interaction (markets). Next, the importance of central places is recognized widely by the surrounding area.

Inter-city connectivity is hinted at in the Qur'an. Surah Al-Qaṣaṣ (28): 15 "And Moses entered the city (Memphis)." indication that Moses—who at that time was in the care of Pharaoh—left the palace away to another city (Memphis) which was outside Central government. The territory of the Egyptian government at that time stretched from the Indian border to the Danube Sea, which flowed through Eastern and Central Europe. Ramses II *(al-akbar)* divided Egypt into 36 regions (cities) to accommodate various ethnic groups in their respective groups.[12] A ruler managed each part under the reign of the Pharaoh. The connectivity between cities, especially from the center of government to the 36 towns below it, was quite good; this was noticeable in the ease of Musa visiting the city of Memphis from the capital (palace). The city accessibility must be well reached by their residents, both from the city center to the hinterland or other cities. The city of Memphis has seventy gates that can be accessed from all over the city side.

Furthermore, the word *al-madaī'n* (المدائن), the plural of the city *(al-madīnah)*, mentioned three times in the Qur'an, namely Surah al-A'rāf (7):111, Al-Shu'arā (26): 36 & 53. These *ayah* are different in text, Surah al-A'rāf (7):111 uses the term *wa-arsil* (وَأَرْسِلْ), Surah Al-Shu'arā (26): 36 mentions *wab'ath* (وَابْعَثْ), while Surah al-Shu'arā (26): 53 stated *fa-arsala* (فَأَرْسَلَ). The whole meaning is the same, namely sending or delegating. These three words indicate good connectivity between existing cities so that the dispatch or delivery can be moved quickly. Early cities were generally closed; a wall or fort separated the city from the city's outskirts. Defense, trade, and religious activities were the goals of such a city. The city structure is internally divided into sections according to occupation, religion, or culture. Relationships between inhabitants occur naturally well; they meet each other and face to face. Ecological measures of pre-industrial cities include people, area, and density. Areas, where residents establish social relations are almost no different from the territory where they have physical contact [37].[13]

3.3 New Typology of Occupant

Martinotti mentioned four types of urban population: nighttime dwellers, workers, city users, and metropolitan business people. Other varieties can affect the city's shape, namely the leader [38].[14] A principal, major, city manager, or administrator must exist to build cities, provide infrastructure, and create strong relationships among residents. Ibn 'Āshūr mentions several terms that refer to leadership, namely *al-mālik, al-malā', al-mutraf, al-akābir,* and the mayor *(wali al-madīnah).* The king *(al-mālik),* as mentioned in Surah Al-Naml (27): 34, has the impression of a conqueror. If the king entered another kingdom, he would surely destroy that city and make the noble population despised. While *al-malā',* which is mentioned in Surah al-

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[12] Stated in Al-Qaṣaṣ (28):4, "Indeed, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people into factions (شِيَعًا).."

[13] This condition is rarely found in cities in the West and even in the world.

[14] The structure of the city government has always been influenced by political and power factors.

Qaṣaṣ (28): 20 is the regulator of affairs *(ūlū al-sha'n),* and Surah al-A'rāf (7): 88 as a ruler or leader who boasts among the townspeople. While *al-mutrafūn* in Surah al-Isrā' (17): 16 and Surah Al-Zukhrūf (43): 23, who has favors and spaciousness of life; a representation of the Meccan polytheists. As for *al-akābir*—in Surah al-An'ām (6): 123, *akābira mujrimīha*—are evil rulers. Meanwhile, the term mayor introduced by Ibn 'Āshūr is a nickname for *wālī madīnah*, as in the Egyptian kingdom named *Fūṭīfār*, the head of the royal police.

Associated with the qualification of Arab leaders in the pre-Islamic period until the beginning of Islam, Ibn 'Āshūr explained two conditions: a leader must have the capacity or ability to lead and originated from a great city (tribe). Both are not gathered except for the most famous tribe in the city, which comes from the most renowned city. These conditions are the primary consideration; hence the function of the city is as a place to fulfill all tribal affairs, supplies, and trade. In line with al-Fārābī (d. 950) concerning the character of the ruler, then there are two kinds of cities, namely the ideal city *(al-madīnah al-faḍīlah),* and the city of ignorance *(al-madīnah al-jahīliyyah).* Al-Fārābī defines the virtuous city *(al-madīnah al-faḍilah)* as a city in which people aim through association for the things by which true joyfulness can be achieved. The morals of leaders and their people are the main indicators to attain a virtuous city [39].

4   Conclusion

Inhabitants play a significant role in shaping a city. However, not all typologies of urban dwellers are completely articulated in Ibn 'Āshūr's commentary, but some important characters can be identified. According to the type of work, this article aligns with Martinotti's notion that there are four types of residents; nevertheless, Ibn 'Āshūr identified a fifth dominating type, the leader. Meanwhile, Ibn 'Āshūr presented his study by Ibn Khaldun's theory that individuals in the city center, suburbs, and Bedouins have distinct personalities. Inhabitant distribution refers to a spatial pattern created by population dispersal (spatial distribution); Finally, this article contends that Exegesis accomplishes urban theory in a parallel and complementary manner. An interdisciplinary thematic interpretation approach might be used to address contemporary issues.

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