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A TOURISM-ORIENTED CONSERVATION PLAN FOR A HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOOD BASED ON URBAN DESIGN QUALITIES: THE CASE OF YAZD IN IRAN

Abstract: After the inscription of the Historic City of Yazd on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2017, the number of tourists visiting increased. The area is formed of several neighborhoods. This study aims to propose a conservation plan for the oldest, the Shah Abul-Ghasem Neighborhood, using the urban design qualities suggested by Golkar. The study based on a field survey in the neighborhood was carried out in such a way that items related to urban design qualities were photographed and categorized into environmental, functional and aesthetic-experimental components. Proposed measures and recommendations for the development of tourism in the area are presented based on the field survey results.

Keywords: conservation plan, urban design qualities, tourism development, neighborhood, historic city.

ZORIENTOWANY NA TURYSTYKĘ PLAN OCHRONY ZABYTKOWEJ CZĘŚCI MIASTA W OPARCIU O ELEMENTY ZAGOSPODAROWANIA PRZESTRZENNEGO: PRZYPADEK MIASTA JAZD W IRANIE

Abstrakt: Po wpisaniu historycznej części miasta Jazd na listę światowego dziedzictwa UNESCO w 2017 r. liczba odwiedzających miasto turystów wzrosła. Omawiany w artykule obszar składa się z kilku dzielnic. Niniejsze badanie ma na celu przedstawienie propozycji planu ochrony najstarszej z nich, czyli dzielnicy Shah Abul-Ghasem, stworzonego na podstawie podziału elementów zagospodarowania przestrzennego zaproponowanego przez Golkara (2000). Analiza została przeprowadzona w oparciu o badania terenowe w rzeczonyj dzielnicy. Obiekty będące elementami zagospodarowania przestrzennego zostały sfotografowane, a następnie podzielone na kategorie jako środowiskowe, funkcjonalne oraz estetyczno-eksperymentalne. Na podstawie zebranych wyników zaproponowano rekomendacje dla rozwoju turystyki w badanym obszarze.

Słowa kluczowe: plan ochrony, elementy zagospodarowania przestrzennego, rozwój turystyki, dzielnica, historyczna część miasta.

1. INTRODUCTION

Iran (until 1935 known as Persia) is located in the Middle East region, distinguished by a large area (1,648,000 km²) and a wealth of natural and cultural heritage. Its history dates back to antiquity (3,000 years B.C.), and its impressive heritage is created by monuments from many eras (O'Gorman, McLellan, Baum, 2007). According to UNWTO, Iran is in the top ten countries in the world in terms of tourist attractiveness, although due to the geopolitical situation, this country has a small share in the global tourism market (Zolfaghari,

2007). Nowadays, the Iranian authorities, after an initial (1980s) negative approach to the development of tourism (Khaksari, Lee, Lee, 2014), see it as a sector that can provide employment for a increasing young population and can improve general living conditions. For this purpose, many tourism development plans and programs have been prepared (Foruzan, 2014; Sarkheyli, Rafieian, Taghvaae, 2016) and Iranian cities are undergoing changes related to the development of tourism and leisure functions (e.g. Hakimian, Afshar,

Kowalczyk-Anioł, 2019; Kowalczyk-Anioł, Afshar, 2018; Lak, Gheitasi, Timothy, 2020; Rezaei, 2017).

Yazd, along with Shiraz and Isfahan, is known as one of the three vertices of the golden triangle of tourism in Iran (Aslani, Shahriari, Zabihi, 2020). In addition, the Historic City of Yazd was the first Iranian city to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List (WHL) and as such can be considered a future international tourism destination, especially for cultural tourism.

After its inscription on the WHL, it became the center of inevitable attention and curiosity about the site and its outstanding value. Consequently, certain activities that are proposed for the site, and the number of tourists who will visit it, will increase. In most cases, such a site will suffer from the lack of required resources to manage tourism and take advantage of the long-term preservation of its unique value (UNESCO, 2008). Thus, the destination needs to be equipped with appropriate or updated tourism management plans which take into account the changes brought about by UNESCO recognition (Cravidão et al., 2018).

Some studies have already addressed tourism in the Historic City of Yazd following its inscription on the WHL. Dehghan Pour Farashah, Aslani and Khamzade (2018) presented a strategic plan for cultural tourism development in the Fahadan Neighborhood in Yazd. Nasrolahi, Roux, Ghasvarian Jahromi and Khalili (2019) examined the points of view of a local community living in the buffer zone of the Historic City after its designation while Rastegar, Zarezadeh and Gretzel (2021) investigated social justice issues arising.

The purpose of this research note is to 1) use the so-called urban design qualities suggested by Golkar (2000) for an analysis of the area, 2) present proposed measures for the area, and 3) indicate suggested recommendations to stimulate tourism development. The researchers carried out this study as a post-inscription evaluation to provide a 'road map' for the future. Although some plans have been prepared for the conservation of the historic fabric by responsible organizations in recent years, all of them looked at this area holistically. Therefore, most of them have not been implemented. It seems that planning on a neighborhood scale could be considered a flagship development applicable in short term.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. CONSERVATION PLAN

Urban conservation deals with parts of the built environment that are of architectural or historic importance including buildings (individually or in groups), localities (streets, blocks, environments or precincts), spe-

cial gardens or landscapes, and other features (MMBW, 1981). Urban conservation in historical cities tries to meet the requirements of the era of their development. Accordingly, urban renewal policies are applied to preserve the urban fabric and the city's inherited structure, as well as the flow of modern urban necessities in harmony with the architectural types of buildings and surroundings (Hmood, 2019). This objective could be achieved through a process of understanding, documenting and managing change to historic buildings and sites known as a conservation plan (Abid, 2016).

2.2. URBAN DESIGN QUALITIES

Urban design qualities are formed in the context of urban space and reciprocally affect the formation of urban space. Urban design qualities could be defined as "characteristics or attributes of the nature of a place" (Seddighi, 2019, p. 147). Golkar (2000) suggested three main components for analyzing urban design qualities (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Urban design qualities
Source: authors based on Golkar (2000)

According to Golkar (2000), each component contains the following indicators:

1. Environmental component: microclimate quality of urban spaces (climatic comfort) including sunshine, shading, wind, humidity etc.; quality of sounds, smell and aroma from the environment; quality of sustainable urban design; efficiency of natural resources consumption (energy, land etc.); equilibrium of ecosystems; reduction of pollution (air, land, and water).
2. Functional component: quality of behavioral settings (compatibility of activity, time and space); quality of

adaptation of urban form to land-uses, pedestrian and vehicular network, information network, etc.; quality of environmental safety for activities; quality of environmental security for activities.

3. Aesthetic-experimental component: quality of physical-spatial environment (objective environment) including spatial ossification, physical organization, permutation, mass-space, Nolli map, materials etc.; quality of perceptual-sensorial environment (perceptual environment) including quality of the objective landscape, structural analysis of urban facades etc.; quality of perceptual-mental environment (cognitive environment) including quality of the mental landscape (spatial and temporal), evaluative mental landscape, attached meanings, vitality etc.

2.3. TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

According to McCutcheon (2010, p. 171), the term "development" is synonymous with "growth expansion, enlargement, elaboration, evolution, advancement, maturation, progress, filling out, flowering, blossoming, enrichment, broadening, fleshing out, amplification." In the field of tourism, development means that a place advances its facilities and infrastructure for attracting tourists, catering to their needs (Lominé, Edmunds, 2007). Tourism development is a long-term process and requires planning, building and managing attractions, transportation, services and facilities that serve tourists (Khan, 2005).

2.4. NEIGHBORHOOD

Engstrom, Ofiesh, Rain, Jewell and Weeks (2013, p. 37) defined a neighborhood as "a geographic unit of limited size, with relative homogeneity in housing and population, as well as some level of social interaction and symbolic significance to residents."

Old Iranian cities are made up of a large number of neighborhoods and each one has a special identity in terms of anthropology. These neighborhoods which are micro-urban areas usually grew organically and gradually. Often, they do not have a specific form and geometry and the boundaries between them are not exactly definable (Shamseh Consultant Engineers, 2006). Each neighborhood has a central zone that provides for people's daily needs within walking distance. In these centers, there is usually a bazaar, public bath, ab anbar¹, mosque, lard², hussainia³ and small workshops. Commercial activities are often found either alongside connecting pathways or at intersections, therefore, in many cases, this zone is not located in the physical and geometrical center of the neighborhood, and accessibility is not the same (Afshari Sistani, 1999).

3. CASE STUDY

3.1. THE HISTORIC CITY OF YAZD AS A UNESCO WHL SITE

Yazd province (Figure 2, see p. 86) is one of 31 in Iran, located in the central region of the country between latitudes 29° 48' to 33° 30' N and longitudes 52° 45' to 56° 30' E. The province is bounded on the east by the Lut Desert and the north by the Great Salt Desert. The weather in the area is hot and dry in summer, and cold and dry in winter. Yazd, the capital of Yazd province, covers about 99.5 km² and its altitude is about 1200 meters above sea level (Naghshan Consultant Engineers, 2008). According to the latest report of the Statistical Centre of Iran (2016), its population is 656,474.

Archaeological excavations have found some evidence of prehistoric civilization in the Yazd region (Ja'fari, 1964) and the name of Yazd probably derives from the name of the Sassanid king Yazdegerd I. In the pre-Islamic era, the region was a Zoroastrianism settlement but after the Arab conquest of Persia, Islam gradually became the dominant religion (UNESCO, 2017b).

The Yazd region, in the first half of the last B.C. millennium, played a major role in the political fate of the Median tribal unions. During the Achaemenid period, until several centuries before the invasion of Alexander the Great, Yazd was a civilized region with a special strategic and communicative position (Kateb Yazdi, 1979). After the 10th century A.D. (4th century A.H.⁴), Yazd became an important trading center due to its vicinity to major trade routes (Silk Road and Spice Route) (UNESCO, 2017b). Marco Polo the famous Venetian merchant who visited Yazd in 1272 describes the city in his book "The travels of Marco Polo" in the following way:

...It is a good and noble city, and has a great amount of trade. They weave there quantities of a certain silk tissue known as Yasdi, which merchants carry into many quarters to dispose of... When you leave this city to travel further, you ride for seven days over great plains, finding harbour to receive you at three places only. There are many fine woods producing dates upon the way, such as one can easily ride through; and in them there is great sport to be had in hunting and hawking, there being partridges and quails and abundance of other game, so that the merchants who pass that way have plenty of diversion. There are also wild asses, handsome creatures... (Polo, 1993, p. 88).

During historic periods, the location of the city has changed. The current location of Yazd city centre which is known as the Historic City of Yazd city was established after the 10th century A.D. (UNESCO, 2017b). According to experts and historical sources, the Fahadan Neighborhood is the oldest district of the Historic City of Yazd (Kateb Yazdi, 1979).

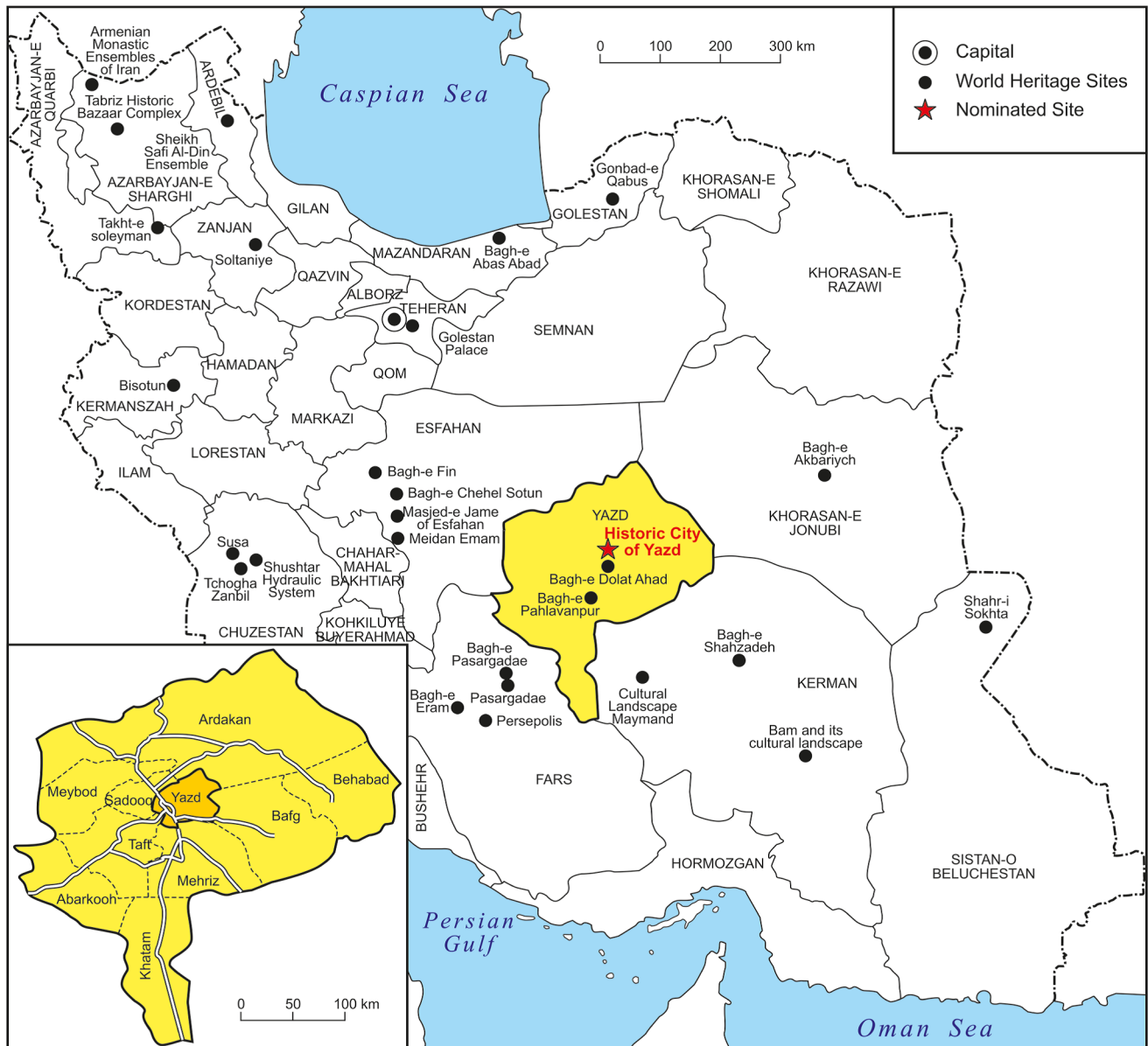


Figure 2. Location of Yazd province
Source: UNESCO (2017b)

In July 2017, the Historic City of Yazd (Figure 3), with an area of 195 hectares, was inscribed as Iran's first city on the World Heritage List at the 41st session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Kraków, Poland. The Historic City of Yazd qualified for criteria nos 3 and 5 of the six main criteria for inscribing a site on the WHL. Descriptions of the criteria are as follows:

Criterion (III): ...Yazd is associated with the continuity of traditions that cover social organization. These include Waqf (endowment) benefiting public buildings... as well as developed intangible and multi-cultural, commercial and handicrafts traditions... It reflects diverse cultures related to various religions in the city including Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism, which are still living peacefully together as can be seen in their traditional crafts and festivities.

Criterion (V): Yazd is an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which is representative of the interaction between man and nature in a desert environment that results from the optimal use and clever management of the limited resources that are available in such an arid setting (UNESCO, 2017a).

This area is a set of neighborhoods with unique characteristics which attract many domestic and foreign tourists each year. Shah Abul-Ghasem (Figure 4) is one of these neighborhoods and its name is derived from Shahab al-Din Qasim Taraz who built a mosque and a school in the eighth century A.H. (Afshari Sistani, 1975). Due to the existence of specific historic buildings, including the Tashakori Mosque (the architectural style is important), the Jenog Abanbar (the oldest Abanbar which has an inscription dating back to 878 A.H.), and

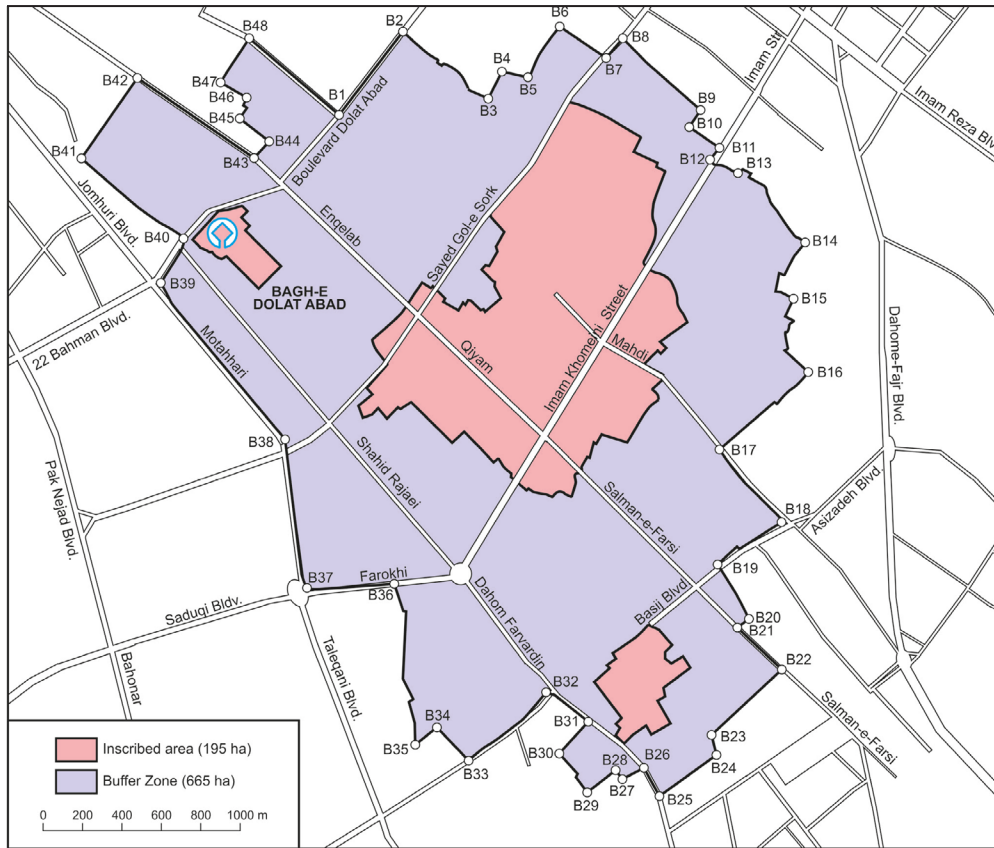


Figure 3. Area of the Historic City of Yazd
Source: UNESCO (2017b)

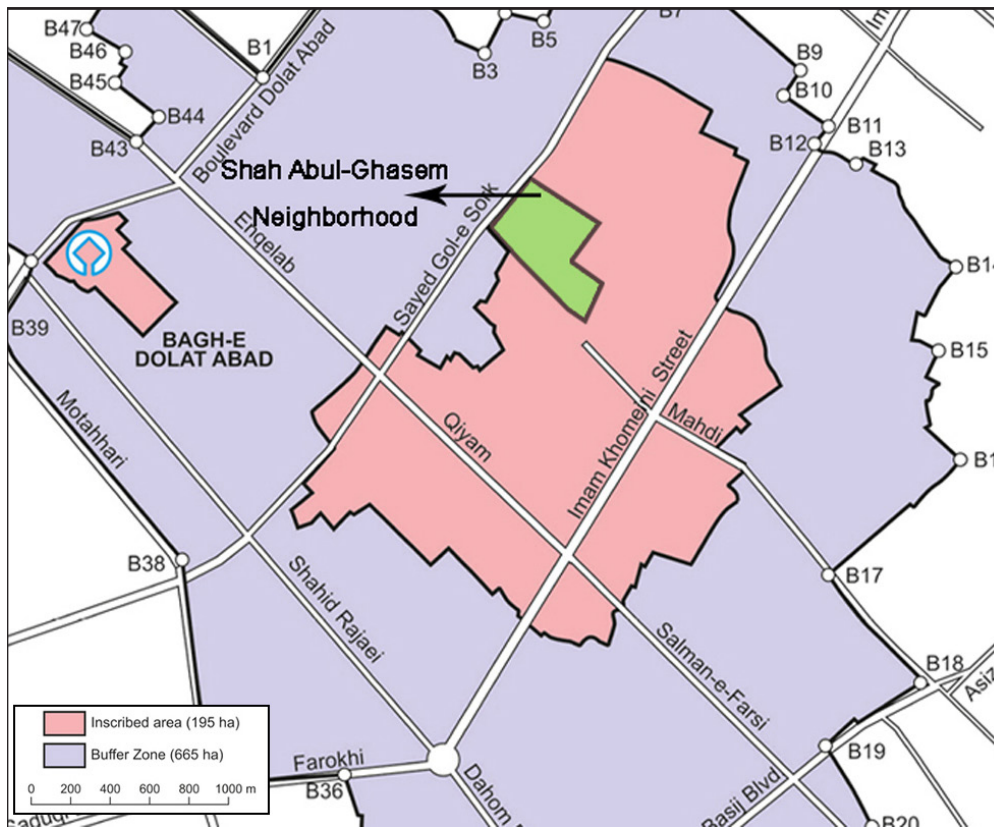


Figure 4. Location of the Shah Abul-Ghasem Neighborhood in the Historic City of Yazd
Source: own research

the Kamaliyeh School (one of the buildings constructed in the Ilkhanate era), this neighborhood has heritage importance (Khademzade, 2009). On the other hand, the Zarch Qanat route (which has been on the UNESCO World Heritage List since 2016), passes through the Shah Abul-Ghasem Neighborhood and has potential in this neighborhood for attracting tourists (UNESCO, 2017b).

were provided in the form of a neighborhood conservation plan including proposed uses, pathways, etc. marked on a map; intervention types; and 3D scenes of historic buildings and pathways after restoration. Besides the conservation plan for the immediate neighborhood area, related recommendations were presented as well.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY


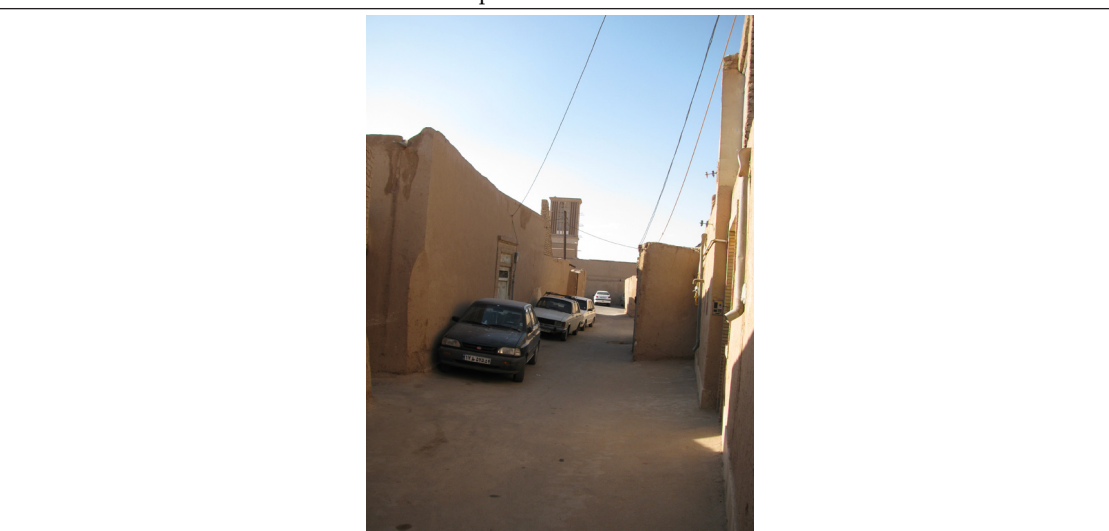
The research follows a qualitative approach in which data were collected using a field survey in the neighborhood through observation. Accordingly, the researchers photographed items related to urban design qualities and categorized them into components: environmental, functional and aesthetic-experimental. In addition, a land-use plan of the neighborhood was prepared by the researchers. Then, proposed measures

5. FINDINGS

5.1. ANALYSIS OF THE URBAN DESIGN QUALITIES OF A PART OF YAZD (SHAH ABUL-GHASEM NEIGHBORHOOD)

As mentioned earlier, in order to present a conservation plan for this area with a tourism development approach, an analysis was initially conducted based on the above components (Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis based on urban design qualities

Urban design quality	Item
Environmental component	1. Accumulation of rubbish and construction waste
	
	2. Noise and air pollution due to vehicular traffic
	









Urban design quality	Item
	<p data-bbox="422 282 1345 315">3. Decreased climatic comfort and loss of microclimates due to widening of some pathways</p> 
Functional component	<p data-bbox="719 703 1050 736">1. Abandoned textile workshops</p>
	
	<p data-bbox="667 1124 1102 1158">2. Numerous abandoned commercial units</p>
	
	<p data-bbox="416 1534 1353 1568">3. Rehabilitated and adaptively reused historic buildings as boutique hotels and an ecolodge</p>
	

Table 1 (cont.)

Urban design quality	Item
	<p data-bbox="539 331 1230 365">4. Disruption of access following the construction of irregular streets</p> 
	<p data-bbox="735 757 1031 790">5. Lack of organized parking</p> 
	<p data-bbox="628 1176 1139 1209">6. Numerous vacant land lots and residential units</p> 
	<p data-bbox="671 1603 1098 1637">7. Interference to pedestrian flows by cars</p> 





Urban design quality	Item
	<p data-bbox="715 280 1050 309">8. Lack of proper street furniture</p> 
	<p data-bbox="687 636 1077 665">9. The obvious presence of 'foreigners'</p> 
	<p data-bbox="576 992 1189 1021">10. New constructions contrary to World Heritage guidelines</p> 
	<p data-bbox="655 1494 1114 1523">11. Heritage buildings with tourism potential</p> 

Table 1 (cont.)

Urban design quality	Item
	<p data-bbox="671 327 1094 356">12. Low quality of restorations in the past</p> <div data-bbox="534 365 1230 808"> </div> <p data-bbox="517 819 1251 851">13. Vulnerability of urban fabric to natural factors such as rain and snow</p> <div data-bbox="464 860 1302 1229"> </div>
<p data-bbox="153 1240 300 1328">Experimental-aesthetic component</p>	<p data-bbox="411 1240 1358 1272">1. A part of the old city fortification as an element in strengthening the urban landscape fabric</p> <div data-bbox="608 1281 1160 1632"> </div> <p data-bbox="727 1644 1038 1675">2. Lack of rich visual corridors</p> <div data-bbox="325 1684 1445 2049"> </div>





Urban design quality	Item
	<p data-bbox="539 286 1232 315">3. Erosion and deterioration of surfaces and facades facing pathways</p> 
	<p data-bbox="657 696 1114 725">4. Lack of physical integrity of urban facades</p> 
	<p data-bbox="497 1099 1273 1128">5. Lack of enclosure of public spaces on a human-scale following destruction</p> 
	<p data-bbox="619 1525 1152 1554">6. Poorly-lit main roads, pathways and urban spaces</p> 

Table 1 (cont.)

Urban design quality	Item
	7. Disturbance of urban facades
	
	8. Indigenous architectural patterns and materials within the historic fabric
	

Source: own research.

According to Table 1, the functional component has 13 issues, the experimental-aesthetic – 8, and the environmental – 3. Thus, it can be inferred that most issues in this area concern people’s behavior; land-use adaption; pedestrian-vehicle interaction; and safety and security for activities. On the other hand, despite the physical-spatial richness of the environment, sensorial and mental perception is low. Furthermore, climatic discomfort and various kinds of pollution are visible in the urban spaces caused by a lack of management and planning as well as actions inconsistent with the area’s historic background that have happened within the urban space in recent decades.

6. PROPOSED MEASURES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. PROPOSED MEASURES WITHIN THE AREA

Based on the analysis, proposed measures including a conservation plan and intervention types within the Shah Abul-Ghasem Neighborhood and its immediate

area are introduced in this section. The conservation plan for the neighborhood is presented in Figure 5.

The proposed intervention types within the area are provided in Table 2 (the numbers in Table 2 refer to Figure 5).

Renovation was proposed in cases where the existing structures needed to be upgraded to improve their performance by either altering the scope of the structure, providing additional facilities or improving existing ones (Anwar, Ahmed, 2017). Rehabilitation was proposed to make possible compatible uses for properties through repair, alterations and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey historical, cultural or architectural value. Reconstruction was proposed to depict accurately the form, features and character of non-surviving properties using this method to replicate their appearance at a specific period of time and in their historic location (Weeks, Grimmer, 1995).

3D scenes, illustrated in Figures 6 and 7 (see p. 96), of proposed designs for historic buildings and pathways after restoration.

The conservation plan for the immediate neighborhood is presented in Figure 8 (see p. 97).

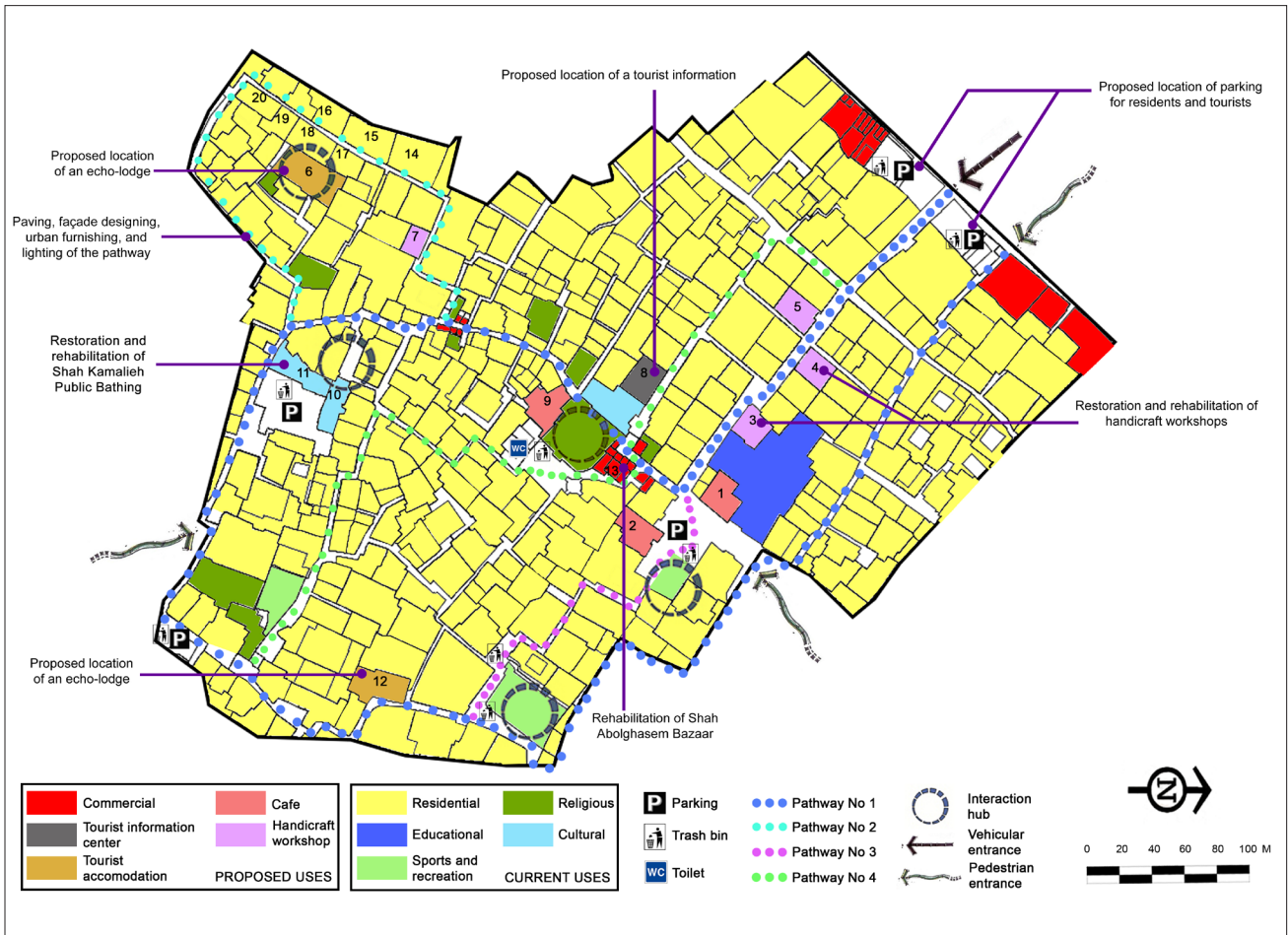


Figure 5. The conservation plan for the Shah Abul-Ghasem Neighborhood
Source: own research

Table 2. The proposed intervention types

No	Name	Intervention type	Type of ownership
1	Samei House	rehabilitation	private
2	Samei House	rehabilitation	private
3	Mirzai House and Workshop	renovation	private
4	Textile Workshop	rehabilitation	private
5	Textile Workshop	renovation	private
6	Shekari House	renovation	private
7	Textile Workshop	renovation	private
8	Ehramian House	renovation	private
9	Ehramian House	rehabilitation	private
10	Shah Kamalieh School	rehabilitation	public
11	Shah Kamalieh Public Bathing	renovation	public
12	Hazirei House	renovation	private
13	Shah Abul-Ghasem Bazaar	rehabilitation	public-private
14	Private house	renovation	private
15	Rezaei House	renovation	private
16	Vacant land	reconstruction	private
17	Kazemi House	reconstruction	private
18	Vacant land	reconstruction	private
19	Riahi House	renovation	private
20	Vacant land	reconstruction	private

Source: own research.



Figure 6. 3D scenes of historic buildings after restoration
Source: own research

Here are shown the surroundings of the studied area and the proposed tourism footpath, as well as vehicular and pedestrian entrances to the core zone of the WHS.

6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA

In terms of tourism potential in the studied area, including one of the main neighborhoods of the Historic City of Yazd, the following recommendations could be suggested covering the issues analysed that are not addressed by the proposed measures. They should be taken into consideration by the Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Yazd province (CHHTO) and Yazd Municipality for tourism promotion at the local level.

- preventing cars from entering the neighborhood center – non-residents are required to park their vehicles in a specified parking space;
- promoting ‘walkability’ and creating vehicle restrictions – using signs and maps to guide pedestrian flows, as well as erecting bollards on the entrance to pathways;



Figure 7. 3D scenes of pathways after restoration
Source: own research

- creating and developing green spaces in the neighborhood – designing parks and providing planted areas on vacant land;
- documenting the textile industry as the traditional occupation – producing documentary films and brochures in cooperation with local experts;
- designing street furniture according to its context – this should be in harmony with the climatic and historical setting in terms of color, form and material;
- monitoring restorations by residents – property owners are required to implement these with the least interference to the architectural style of buildings such as materials and layout;
- assess the pathology of buildings and prepare a preventive conservation plan – the Yazd World Heritage office is required to make periodic supervisions and present annual reports concerning the condition of the historical buildings;
- transferring of ‘foreigners’ out of the neighborhood – Yazd Municipality is required to consider alternative places for their accommodation out of the core zone;
- creating enclosures in urban spaces based on historical maps – owners are required to enclose their vacant land with adobe walls as soon as possible;
- designing pathways based on the location of land mark elements – old fortifications and monuments to promote ‘readability’.

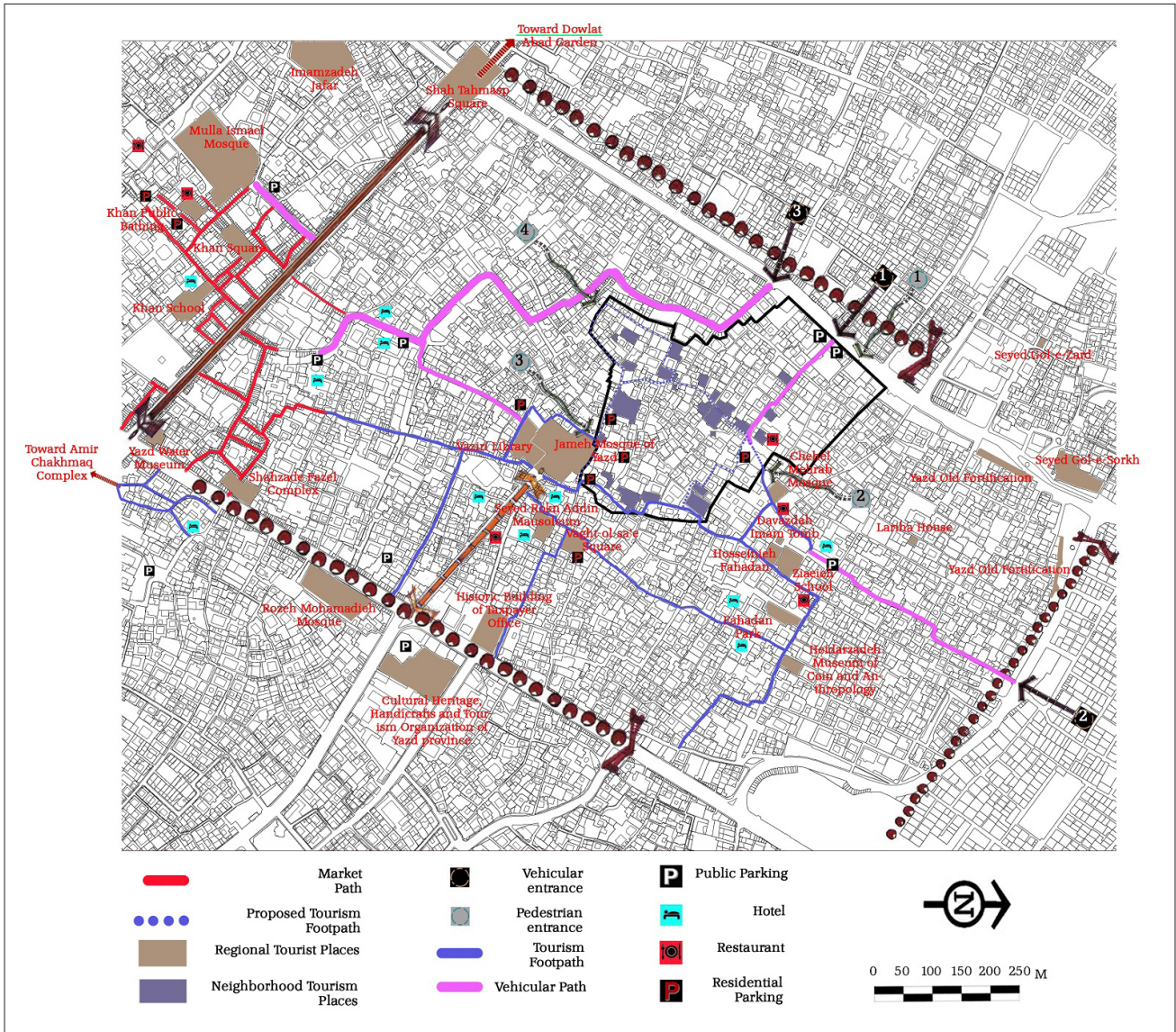


Figure 8. The conservation plan for the immediate area of the Shah Abul-Ghasem Neighborhood
Source: own research

7. SUMMARY

The purpose of this article is to present a conservation plan for the Shah Abul-Ghasem Neighborhood and its immediate area in the Historic City of Yazd. In this regard, field research was carried out based on the components suggested by Golkar (2000) to analyze the urban design qualities of the studied area. The findings revealed that the main issues are functional, experimental-aesthetic and environmental.

The article has made it possible to illustrate a variety of challenges (planning and design) that face the historical urban fabric (an organically developed neighborhood in the Iranian city of Yazd) in connection with its entry on the UNESCO WHL, as well as its expected tourism development. It refers only to a part of these challenges and a small area so in subsequent studies it would

be worth following the trajectory of tourismification throughout the entire Historic City. In particular, would it be different from Western models, as suggested by Scott and Jafari (2010), and to what extent will it be conducive to the sustainable development of the city?

ENDNOTES

¹ *Drinking water reservoir* – a container in which drinking water is stored and utilized (UNESCO, 2017b).

² *Resting caravan area* – a square-like space that was formerly a place for unloading goods such as coal, fruits, vegetables and firewood brought from the countryside for urban consumption (UNESCO, 2017b).

³ *Memorial place* – its main function is to hold religious ceremonies (UNESCO, 2017b).

⁴ *After Hijra* – the abbreviation for Islamic Hijri calendar dates.

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Artykuł wpłynął:
5 października 2021
Zaakceptowano do druku:
19 listopada 2021