

Review Article

Evaluation of “Intelligent Utilization Scenarios with Historic Urban Landscape Approach” in the Wetland City of Bandar-e Khamir*

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Abstract | The rapid development in historical cities and the increasing complexity of urban functions in recent decades have led to significant changes in the historical areas of cities and have posed challenges to the balance between conservation and development. Following a shift in the contemporary approach to intervening in the historical urban fabric, UNESCO adopted a recommendation in 2011 regarding the “historic urban landscape” approach for the conservation of the heritage of historical cities. The “historic urban landscape” is an urban area that is the product of the historical layering of culture, values, and natural features among historical centers. In the approach to the historic urban landscape, the first step is to comprehensively understand the various dimensions of the city and the tangible and intangible values that have shaped it over time. This approach, by safeguarding the values, authenticity, and integrity of the city within its current structure, prevents unchecked development and creates a modern link between the past and present of the city with an emphasis on the role of the community in urban life. Conservation based on the historic urban landscape approach is responsive to the city’s continuity and dynamism. By considering the layers that express the significance of the historical city and respecting and paying attention to its urban context, conservation becomes a catalyst for more effective development, leading to sustainable changes in the city. Given the current challenges in managing historical cities in Iran, including the conflict between conservation and development at various levels, adopting this approach is of great importance in the conservation and management of historical cities in Iran. Considering the importance of the historic urban landscape approach in urban interventions, the present study aims to evaluate and examine implemented examples and the current state of the city of Bandar Khamir, a coastal wetland city. The research also provides the assessment of urban management measures in Khamir city based on the definition of historic urban landscape. The research method is qualitative, and the data collection methods include library research and field study.

Keywords | *Historic urban landscape, Intelligent utilization, Development, UNESCO, BaWndar Khamir.*

Introduction | The “historic urban landscape” approach is aimed at developing a framework for the conservation and management of historical cities and minimizing the conflict

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between conservation and development approaches (Pourbahador & Fadaei-Nezhad Bahramjerdi, 2018). The historic urban landscape approach is comprehensive and interdisciplinary. It focuses on guiding change in historical cities and the pervasive management of heritage resources in dynamic and ever-changing environments (Jafarpour Naser, Esfenjari Kanari, &

Tabibian, 2020). In historical cities, the non-historical parts of the city often have better infrastructure and accessibility, which attracts more capital and population than the historical area. In pursuit of attracting capital and population, urban management also pays more attention to these areas, resulting in uneven development in historical cities, which leads to further erosion of the historical fabric (Farahani, 2018). "Landscape" is a living legacy of past generations and represents the identity and cultural diversity of communities. It can establish tangible and intangible connections with future generations as an inseparable part of cultural heritage. In a community-oriented approach, this concept has been transformed into a new model for coordinated development and provides a method to integrate economic, social, and environmental processes (ICOMOS, 2014). "Landscape" is a concept that is evolving, and different communities can have diverse interventions based on their cultural, social, historical, and climatic conditions (Khakzand & Timouri Garde, 2015). The term "Historic urban landscape" stands for an urban area composed of historical layers consisting of cultural and natural values. This concept goes beyond the notion of a historical center or a complex and encompasses a broader urban setting and its surrounding geographic environment. This extensive setting includes topography, geomorphology, hydrology, infrastructure, land use patterns, spatial organization, perceptual and visual communications, natural and man-made features both historical and contemporary, as well as social, cultural, economic aspects, and intangible dimensions of heritage (UNESCO, 2011). In the face of rapid and profound urban changes, the historical identity and visual quality of urban environments are significantly affected. The importance of historical urban spaces and their role in making cities livable, promoting sustainable economic development, and fostering social and cultural cohesion in the modern world has led to the conservation of urban historical landscapes becoming a significant part of public sector policies in the past half-century (Azarmi & Bahmanpour, 2017). The approach of historic urban landscapes seeks to enhance the quality of human environments by paying attention to the surrounding environment. In this regard, the definition of historic urban landscape strives to emphasize the importance of value relationships in understanding and shaping the historic urban landscape, as much as physical relationships, by providing a wide range of influential components (Rostamkhani, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Bandar-e Khamir is a 20,000-resident coastal city in the province of Hormozgan, known for its wetland. It is considered the most ecologically friendly city in the province in terms of environmental sustainability, and the development of its coastline differs significantly from neighboring cities. Additionally, the wetland that is internationally recognized by the Ramsar Convention, and the Biosphere Reserve of UNESCO are located in this city. There may be a perspective that the presence of strict conservation features hinders development. However, sustainable development is only possible when conservation is not compromised in the face of development.

The question raised is whether the implemented measures for development in the city of Bandar-e Khamir reflect utilization or disruptive exploitation. Furthermore, have the evaluation criteria for historic urban landscapes been effective in enhancing the quality of the city's urban landscape?

Research Background

Cities have an inherent dynamism and are constantly evolving. Nowadays, the development and changes in cities often overlook the past and its value. These transformations, by erasing collective memories, pose a threat to the identity of the city. This situation has led to increased attention to the topic of historic urban landscapes in recent years. Notable examples include the Vienna Memorandum in 2005 and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape in 2011 (Pourbahador & Fadaeinejad Bahramjerdi, 2018). Similar research has been conducted in Iran regarding the approach to historic urban landscapes, such as detailed studies carried out in the historic city of Meybod, Yazd.

Theoretical Foundations

The historic urban landscape is a response to the management of historical cities that are facing new forms of pressures arising from development, with the main goal of preserving the status and quality of urban life (Jafarpour Naser et al., 2020).

• Historic Urban Landscape in International Documents and Conventions

To evaluate the implemented examples, the components, and the criteria defined in accordance with intelligent utilization of the historical urban landscape approach, Table 1 includes a review of international documents and conventions regarding the components related to the historical urban landscape.

Among the important criteria and components in the

Table 1. Review of documents and international conventions related to components of the historic urban landscape. Source: Pourbahador, Fadaei-nejad Bahramjerdi, 2018.

Title of document (responsible institution)	Year	The main points of international documents regarding the components related to historic urban landscape
Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) recommendation-letter (UNESCO)	2011	The importance of the historic urban landscape as a comprehensive and integrated approach lies in its role in identifying, evaluating, preserving, and managing historic urban landscapes within the broader framework of sustainable development and towards the creation of a balance between urban development and sustainable quality of life. The significance of the historic urban landscape approach is evident in its ability to manage and reduce conflicts between conservation and development through change management.
		Paying attention to the broader urban fabric and the geographical environment surrounding it in the concept of historic urban landscape.
		Emphasizing both tangible and intangible components of urban heritage as a key resource for enhancing the livability of urban areas and promoting economic development and social cohesion in a rapidly changing global environment.
		Respecting the tangible and intangible cultural values of cities and paying attention to the quality of life of local communities and improving the quality of the environment in interventions carried out in historic cities and urban areas.
Principles of Valletta (ICOMOS)	2011	The importance of paying attention to the tangible and intangible dimensions of the city to create sustainable development
		Attention to the economic and social dimensions in the protection of the historical city
		The importance of preserving traditional activities and protecting the indigenous population following the conservation of historic cities.
		The definition of setting as a natural or artificial field that encompasses the historic urban heritage that includes physical and visual aspects and everything that has a direct social, economic, and cultural connection with these areas. The connection of the city setting with the static or dynamic perception, experience, and enjoyment of the historic urban heritage areas.
Declaration of Florence (ICOMOS)	2014	Recognizing the nature of changes and managing them appropriately in light of the continuous urban transformations.
		Emphasizing change management to preserve the identity and characteristics of the city and safeguard its authenticity and heritage values.
		The necessity of continuous monitoring of changes and considering their impact on the coherence of values in the historic city.
		The importance of change management in providing suitable opportunities to enhance the quality of historic cities and urban areas.
Declaration of Florence (ICOMOS)	2014	Defining the conservation of historic cities in preserving the spatial, environmental, social, cultural, and economic balance.
		Emphasizing conservation plans, restoration, and management programs based on urban planning for the entire city, accompanied by regular monitoring that includes the analysis of the city's values.
		The importance of landscape in fostering coordinated development and creating integration between social, economic, and environmental processes by establishing tangible and intangible connections with future generations.

approach to the historic urban landscape, based on the summary provided in Table 1, we can mention the significance of the physical and intangible aspects, sustainable development, respect for cultural values, attention to economic and social dimensions, city dynamism, change management, identity conservation, connection with future generations, interaction with the environment, history, human dimensions, and sense of place.

• Key Features of Historic Urban Landscape

According to paragraph 8 of the HUL recommendation, the historic urban landscape is "the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of "historic center" or "ensemble" to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting" (Fig. 1). In general, the historic urban landscape as an approach has the following functions and characteristics:

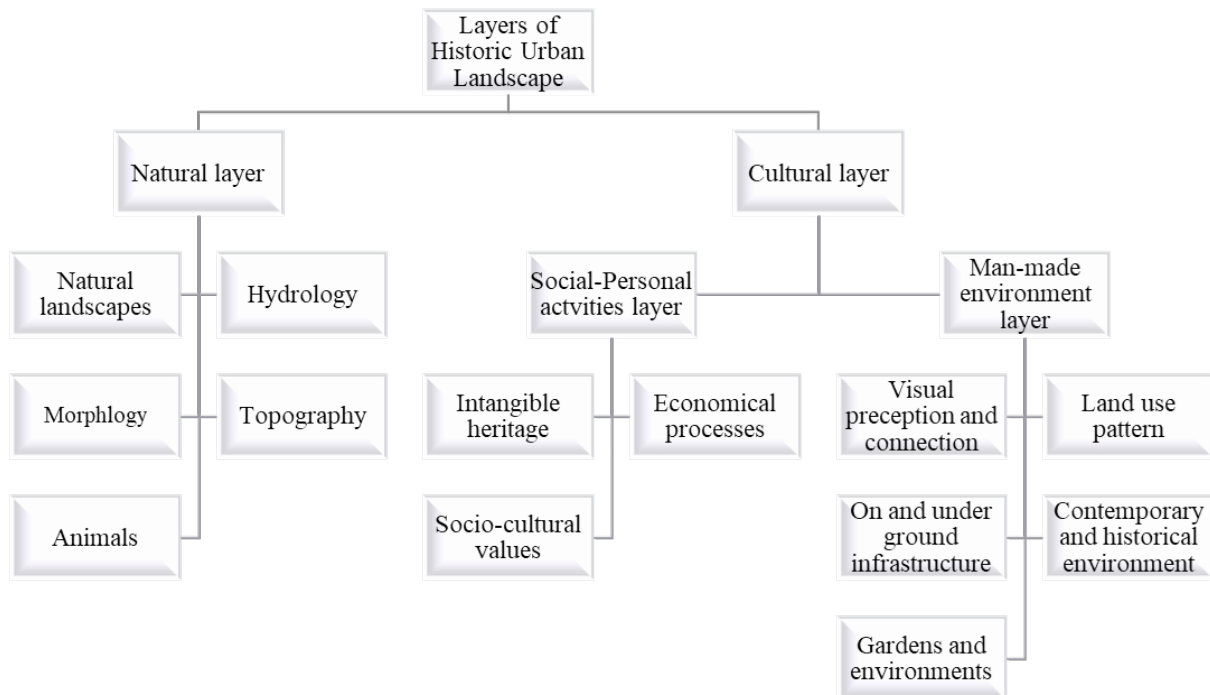


Fig. 1. Layering of landscape based on the historical urban landscape approach. Source: Taghvai & Motahari rad, 2014.

- It is a historical and interdisciplinary approach.
- It involves comprehensive management of cultural-historical heritage resources in dynamic and evolving urban environments.
- It contributes to managing changes in historic cities (based on identifying, differentiating, and layering the intrinsic relationships of cultural and natural tangible and intangible values, both local and international, within each city).
- It has a comprehensive managerial perspective aligned with sustainability concepts.
- It adopts management measures and development and conservation planning that are fully compatible with local conditions.

In the following, first, the definition of structure, fundamental concepts, and key components extracted from this approach will be discussed. Then, the study will proceed to evaluate several examples of implemented cases based on the statements of the mayor of Khamir city, and also based on the field visit conducted in the city. Due to the unavailability of complete information on all the executed cases and their extent, this study only focuses on examining some of the important layers and components in the assessable examples.

• Historic Value

In the approach to the historic urban landscape, giving credibility to the history and historical identity of a place is of utmost importance, and in the process of sustainable development towards enhancing the city, this principle should not be overlooked. The history of Khamir dates

back to before the Safavid dynasty and the Portuguese attack on Hormuz. The only available documents regarding the history of Khamir are the writings of Sedid al-Saltaneh Kababi in the book “Bandar Abbas and the Persian Gulf” and Ibrahim Beyg’s travelogue, which demonstrates the historical significance of the port city of Khamir (Dezhgani, 2008). The urban management measures taken for the development of Khamir, such as street paving, construction of new structures, and both underground and surface infrastructure, have not been aligned with the conservation of historical continuity. Instead, they have been entirely based on a modern city management policy. As a result, the lack of proper attention to water management has led to flooding in the streets and disruptions in pedestrian pathways, causing damage to the historical fabric. This contradicts the historic urban landscape approach and the conservation of historical values, resulting in a conceptual disconnection. This disconnection prevents the establishment of a meaningful connection between the contemporary development of Khamir and the concepts of the historic urban landscape (Fig. 2).

• Nature and Interaction

The urban space possesses parallel values, one of the foundational ones being the natural environment of any location. This foundation transforms through human effort into an artificial and cultivated space. The interaction between humans and nature activates the potential forces of the natural environment. The characteristics of the natural environment and

the organization of the artificial environment are tangible values that play a fundamental role in shaping the historic urban landscape and can be essential components of the mentioned approach. The primary elements of nature and landscapes in the coastal city of Khamir are, in order of importance, the sea, the Hara (mangrove) forests, and the mountains. Therefore, the natural component is one of the main and fundamental components in the historic urban landscape approach in the city of Khamir, which cannot be overlooked. Street paving in public spaces, demolishing fences, encroaching on the sea's boundaries, and the absence of definitive vegetation cover in the streets contradict the historic urban landscape approach. On the other hand, preserving the view of the mountains as a scenic element in the city corridors indicates the coherence of urban management in this aspect with the historic urban landscape approach (Figs. 3 to 5)

• Fabric and Setting

Understanding the significance of the historical site is vital and essential, and it is recognized as one of the principles of conservation (English Heritage, 2008). Historical sites are defined within their surrounding setting. The term "setting" refers to the immediate and expansive environment, encompassing the natural or artificial context that includes the historic urban heritage and the surrounding area, including the visual scope, natural and artificial elements, and related activities. According to the eighth paragraph of the recommendation, this approach includes the broader



Fig. 2. Neglect of water management and, as a result, accumulation of rainwater in the streets. Source: Author's archive, 2023.



Fig. 3. Street paving and encroachment on sea boundaries. Source: Author's archive, 2023.



Fig. 4. Lack of defined and clear vegetation on the boulevards, lack of unity in the landscape. Source: Author's archive, 2023.



Fig. 5. Visual corridor in urban arteries and landscape and view of the mountain, as a natural element. Source: Author's archive, 2023.

urban fabric and its geographical boundaries. The lack of urban landscape management, the shortage of garbage bins throughout the city, and the overall lack of attention towards the setting have resulted in the distortion of the urban landscape. Furthermore, the modification of 20 park gazebos and the complete painting of all urban park facilities that are unrelated to the setting contradict the mentioned approach (Figs. 6 & 7).

• Visual Perception and Aspects

Visual perception is another factor that significantly impacts the historic urban landscape. Special views are important sources for these urban spaces and are often remembered through the skyline. One of the undesirable effects of implementing development plans on the historic urban landscape is the visual impact, usually caused by tall building constructions that affect special views and the skyline of urban spaces. This occurrence can alter the relationship between the urban landscape and its surrounding fabric. The skyline of the port of Khamir is characterized by an uneven line consisting of windcatchers, minarets, and mountains. Improvements in the entrances' lighting and illuminating the windcatchers at night have created a distinctive visual perception of the nighttime scenery of the port of Khamir (Fig. 8).

• Processes

According to paragraph 9 of the recommendation, the processes shaping this approach include not only the natural values that are part of the tangible heritage but also social, cultural, economic, and legal values. These values, as intangible heritage, contribute to the formation of the historic urban landscape in a particular way and create a unique and irreplicable phenomenon in connection with the geographical setting. The lack of appropriate spaces for economic activities at the city level during the cold seasons and the lack of proper organization for street vendors and sellers not only disrupts the work of the sellers but also creates an unsuitable appearance for the city (Fig. 9).

Here are some other examples of implemented initiatives in the city of Khamir:

- Awareness-raising and empowerment of the local community.
- Linking the city's economy to the wetland, transforming threats into opportunities.
- Utilizing ecosystem services of the wetland for sustainable livelihoods as an alternative to other livelihoods.
- Renovating traditional eco-lodges in the old fabric of the city.
- Establishing a center for the recovery of local crafts and handicraft industries.



Fig. 6. Disorganized urban management and creating an inappropriate urban image. Source: Author's archive, 2023.

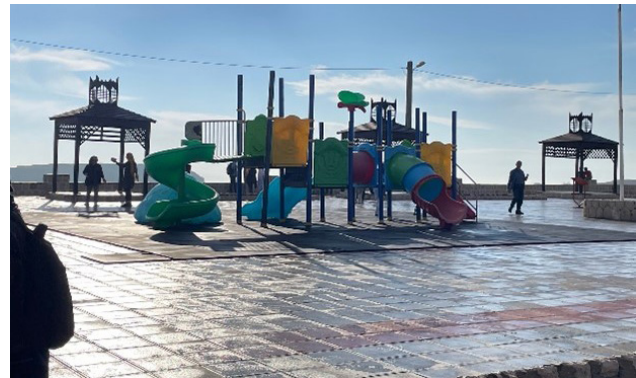


Fig. 7. The presence of gazebos and equipment unrelated to the setting. Source: Author's archive, 2023.

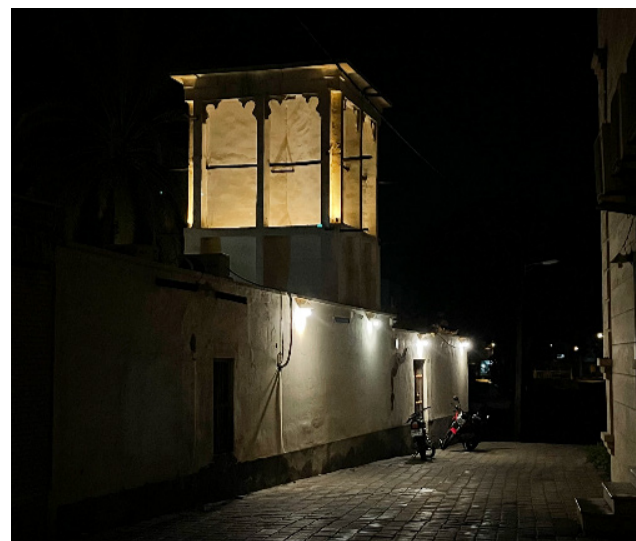


Fig. 8. Night view, lighting of windcatchers, and visual perception at night in the Khamir port. Source: Author's archive, 2023.



Fig. 9. Lack of economic organization and creating an inappropriate urban image. Source: Author's archive, 2023.

- Constructing a local restaurant using recycled wood and various cafes to address the issue of tourist food.
 - Installing 28 mobile washing fountains in parks.
 - Street marking and coloring of street curbs.
 - Reconstruction and asphalt covering of city entrances.
 - Soil deposition in a 700 square meter area of the wetland and its freezing under the name of protection.
- Linking tourism to the wetland and the other mentioned measures can be seen as a form of conservation through community participation. However, overall and according to the defined criteria and existing components, most of the implemented actions not only do not qualify as intelligent utilization but also represent examples of mismanagement and exploitation of resources.

Conclusion

One of the necessary prerequisites for sustainable development is paying attention to the sustainable management of urban heritage, which can be achieved through integrated conservation and development. Urban conservation based on the historic urban

landscape approach considers simultaneous conservation and development. The new concept of development, by limiting social interactions in the city, has diminished the sense of unity and distorted the human dimension and sense of place, which are characteristics of historic cities. In the development and improvement of the quality of the urban landscape with a historic urban landscape approach, it is possible to overlook certain sub-components or rearrange them based on the existing context, or even present a new definition. However, certain main and fundamental components cannot be ignored in defining a landscape as a historic urban landscape. In terms of the features of the coastal city of Khamir, such as the natural elements of the sea, forest, and mountains, the component of nature and interaction with the environment is one of the main and fundamental components of the historic urban landscape approach in this city. In this regard, actions such as demolishing fences and disregarding the sea buffer zone are completely contradictory to the historic urban landscape approach. Furthermore, considering the historical background of this city, the historical component is also one of the main components with a significant impact. Unfortunately, the actions taken in the city's development, including the lack of proper water management, do not contribute to the sustainable conservation of its historical heritage. The overall actions in the city are in contradiction with these components and have created a kind of conceptual disconnect with the historic urban landscape approach. Since the analyses conducted in the city of Khamir indicate that some actions align with the components and concepts of the historic urban landscape, while others do not, it cannot be generally concluded that the overall urban management actions have progressed toward a historic urban landscape, and all the main components are covered.

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