

Original Research Article

The Conflict Between Urban Development and Architectural Heritage Conservation in Iran's Historic Cities (An Analysis of the Destructive Impacts of Development Projects on the Heritage Fabrics of Tabriz and Yazd Abstract)*

Alireza Dehghani Ashkazari^{1**}, Malika Fadavi¹, Mohammad Taghi Pirbabaei¹

1. Department of Urban Planning, Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning,
Tabriz Islamic Art University, Iran

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Abstract

Problem statement: The tension between the imperatives of modern urban development (such as commercialization and tourism infrastructure) and the necessity of architectural heritage conservation threatens the integrity of the historic fabrics of Tabriz and Yazd. Furthermore, the lack of precise documentation and the weak enforcement of conservation laws have exacerbated this crisis.

Research objective: To conduct a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the destructive impacts of development on architectural heritage, identify the spatial patterns of degradation, and evaluate the effectiveness of existing conservation frameworks.

Research method: This study employs an “explanatory sequential mixed-methods design” grounded in the “Historic Urban Landscape (HUL)” paradigm. In the quantitative phase, 156 heritage parcels were utilized as “urban sensors” for field surveying and GIS analysis. In the qualitative phase, employing a “nested sampling” strategy with a focus on “deviant cases,” 47 interviews were conducted with stakeholders of the most severely degraded parcels to inductively generalize micro-level observations.

Conclusion: The findings confirm that micro-level alterations have systematically driven destructive macro-level transformations. Specifically, 34.6% of the samples in Tabriz (predominantly due to commercial regeneration in the Bazaar) and 28.6% in Yazd (driven by rapid hotel construction in the Fahadan district) have sustained structural damage. The research identifies three primary mechanisms driving this loss—“hidden degradation,” “structural instability,” and “gentrification”—and emphasizes the urgent need for a transition to the HUL conservation approach.

Keywords: *Urban Development, Architectural Heritage, Historic Cities, Commercial Expansion, Tourism Impact, Cultural Conservation.*

Introduction

Historic cities, extending far beyond a mere compilation of physical structures and building materials, serve as living repositories of cultural memory, ingenious architectural innovations, and continuous social evolution. For centuries, they have effectively embodied human adaptation to highly complex environmental,

economic, and political conditions. Across the Iranian plateau, major cities such as Tabriz and Yazd represent outstanding and globally recognized examples of this exceptional urban heritage. These specific cities are intrinsically characterized by distinct architectural traditions, complex water management systems (such as the intertwined and sophisticated networks of qanats), and organic urban morphologies that have meticulously evolved over thousands of years (Hanachi et al., 2018). However, the transition into the contemporary era, which

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**Corresponding Author: ar.ashkezari@tabriziau.ac.ir, +989140718200

has been accompanied by sweeping phenomena such as rapid urbanization, profound economic liberalization, and fundamental alterations in fundamental living patterns, has unfortunately placed these heritage cities at the dangerous intersection of conflicting and immensely challenging imperatives. On the one hand, there is an undeniable and legally binding necessity to protect these irreplaceable cultural assets, serving as critical documents of national identity and the vital continuators of collective memory. On the other hand, there exists an ever-increasing and overwhelming pressure to adequately respond to the diverse demands of modern development, to supply the economic needs of a rapidly growing population, and to systematically upgrade urban infrastructure.

The inherent conflict between urban development and heritage conservation has sharply intensified in recent decades across Iran, ultimately transforming into a deep structural crisis. This conflict stems from a multitude of intersecting factors, including the rapid growth of urban populations, post-war economic reconstruction efforts, the completely unregulated expansion of the tourism industry, and shifting governmental priorities that aggressively lean toward generating direct revenue from urban spaces. This prevailing tension manifests itself in its most severe and entirely explicit form within the commercial regeneration initiatives targeting historic urban cores. In these sensitive locations, the economic value-added of real estate properties situated in central city areas consistently and overwhelmingly overrides vital considerations pertaining to cultural, social, and historical significance (Pendlebury, 2013). Within these historic fabrics, the pervasive commodification of land and space has directly led to extensive and irreversible destruction, unprincipled renovations, and highly incompatible functional changes that essentially sacrifice the authenticity and the structural integrity of the fabric itself. This deep-seated conflict has critically and undeniably emerged in the historic cores of the major metropolises of Tabriz and Yazd. In these specific areas, the crushing and relentless pressures of urban development have completely distanced the conservation approach from an urban, holistic, and integrated perspective, aggressively driving it toward reductionist and strictly “single-building-centric” methodologies. In the

historic fabric of Tabriz, the magnificent Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex, officially inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2010 due to the validation of its outstanding universal values, functions as an organic, deeply intertwined whole and a highly sensitive socio-economic ecosystem (UNESCO, 2010). Despite this reality, developmental interventions frequently operate with an isolated, point-specific perspective, directly targeting the physical structures of individual buildings such as sarays (courtyard inns), caravanserais, and timchehs (domed halls). Merely changing floor materials, adding heavy metal structures to the roofs of these individual parcels, and subsequently converting them into modern commercial arcades not only threatens the specific authenticity of an isolated, individual building. Rather, akin to a severe disruption within a vital biological cell, it entirely distorts the spatial, functional, and ecological integrity of the entire interconnected bazaar system (Mousavi & Mousavi, 2018). Similarly, the Historic City of Yazd, which successfully earned the prestigious World Heritage title in 2017 owing to its exceptionally integrated desert architecture, its intelligent and resilient adaptation to the climate, and its highly complex qanat system, is currently facing a very serious challenge regarding the disintegration of its urban fabric (UNESCO, 2017). The rampant expansion of tourism infrastructure and the hasty, unregulated conversion of authentic single-family residential houses into boutique hotels and eco-lodges present a massive threat. Although such conversions might superficially appear to preserve the adobe physical structures at a micro-scale, at the macro-scale—due to the creation of heterogeneous and conflicting constructions in the buffer zones of these buildings and the profound change in the demographic and functional nature of the area—they have severely compromised the structural integrity and the true authenticity of the morphological and social network spanning the entire fabric (Abdollahi & Hosseini, 2020). In fact, attaining a proper and comprehensive understanding of the ongoing transformations within the heritage fabric of these two distinct cities requires a highly meticulous examination of the alterations occurring precisely at the scale of single buildings. This is because these micro-components act directly as physical carriers and the

foundational biological cells of the urban fabric, meaning any localized alteration within them inevitably triggers a series of profound chain reactions extending throughout the entire urban ecosystem (Tian, 2024). The fundamental significance of this research extends significantly beyond merely documenting specific cases of destruction in Tabriz and Yazd. This study purposefully addresses fundamental and universal questions regarding the long-term sustainability of urban development patterns within historical contexts, the actual efficacy of existing legal and institutional heritage conservation frameworks in transitional developing countries, and the long-term, completely irreversible consequences of prioritizing short-term economic gains over crucial cultural preservation. The unique experiences of Iran's heritage cities offer vital, globally relevant insights concerning the systematic mechanisms behind heritage destruction, as well as illuminating potential operational pathways directed toward far more balanced development models (Wells & Stiefel, 2018). Current research literature regarding heritage conservation in Iran, despite the existence of highly valuable academic studies, reveals significant and glaring gaps. These include gaps in the rigorous empirical documentation of heritage loss, the systematic analysis of the mechanisms of development impact (extending well beyond direct physical destruction), and the simultaneous quantitative and qualitative evaluation regarding the true effectiveness of regulatory frameworks (Khakzand & Griffiths, 2016). Aiming specifically to bridge this notable research gap, this comprehensive study poses the following core question: How do commercial expansion and tourism-based development projects directly impact the architectural heritage and the historic urban fabric of Tabriz and Yazd, and what specific underlying mechanisms (physical, economic, and social) are operating behind these destructive processes?

Research Background and Theoretical Framework

• Theoretical frameworks: political economy of space, heritage commodification, and modern conservation paradigms

The conservation of architectural heritage and historic urban fabrics in the contemporary era has, for a long time,

transcended merely physical, anatomical, and aesthetic concerns, or approaches restricted strictly to museum curation. It has dynamically transformed to become the central focus of highly complex, deeply intertwined economic, social, and political conflicts. Formulating a precise, systematic, and methodical understanding of the deep conflicts occurring between the stringent imperatives of modern urban development and the absolute necessity of safeguarding historical fabrics—especially within the sensitive context of transitional cities possessing universal values like Tabriz and Yazd—demands an evolution. It requires actively moving past reductionist, building-centric approaches to adopt a highly comprehensive, critical, and multifaceted theoretical framework.

Such a robust framework must intrinsically possess the analytical capacity to effectively elucidate the hidden driving forces of the market, the deeply intertwined relations of socio-political power, neoliberal urban policymaking, and their severe, devastating spatial consequences when forced into confrontation with the multi-layered concept of “heritage”. Accordingly, to adequately answer the research questions and properly analyze the empirical field data, the theoretical foundations of this research have been meticulously built upon six fundamental, interconnected pillars. These consist of the political economy of space school, the dynamics of the creative destruction paradigm, tourism-led gentrification (and its immediate, devastating consequence: the museumification of living spaces), the phenomenology of hidden destruction, the Authorized Heritage Discourse, and finally, the antidote-like, holistic approach provided by the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL). Below, each of these precise theoretical lenses is carefully anatomized with a dedicated focus on the context of Iran's historic cities.

- Political economy of space and the dialectic of abstract space production in historic cores

To fully comprehend the structural, institutional, and highly systematic roots of the widespread destruction of heritage fabrics in Iran, dissecting the foundational concept of the “production of space” strictly within the context of the “political economy of space” school is of fundamental and completely undeniable importance. Based entirely on the influential views of pioneering spatial theorists like Lefebvre (1991), space is no longer viewed as a neutral

output, an empty physical container, or a passive backdrop for the mere occurrence of social events. Rather, space is inherently and fundamentally a “social and political product” that is actively shaped, destroyed, and continually reproduced through a continuous, dialectical, and highly tension-filled interaction with power relations, dominant ideologies, and prevailing modes of capital accumulation. In his groundbreaking spatial trilogy, Lefebvre (*ibid.*) deliberately divides space into three distinct dimensions: “perceived space” (the physical realm), “conceived space” (the abstract space of planners and capitalists), and “lived space” (the everyday space and organic social life of inhabitants). In Iran’s historic cities, the ongoing crisis typically begins when the powerful, conceived space aggressively attempts to conquer, suppress, and entirely obliterate the historical lived space. With the pervasive infiltration of policies based on neoliberalism into the very body of urban management in Iran over the last three decades, cities have effectively and irreversibly transformed into the primary engines of capital accumulation and urban growth machines. Within this dominant paradigm, urban space is exclusively evaluated and measured based on its “exchange value” and its specific profitability potentials within the real estate market, completely disregarding its “use value” (such as elements of historical identity and neighborhood solidarity). The ruthless, accelerating process of space commodification has rapidly turned valuable historical fabrics into golden, highly sought-after opportunities for land speculation. Historic urban cores, much like the Bazaar of Tabriz, are now primarily viewed as highly susceptible arenas for the “production of abstract space”. This represents a homogeneous, purely quantified space that is completely devoid of the unique cultural differences that capital naturally seeks to eradicate. From a purely institutional perspective, urban management in Iran, which relies heavily on highly unstable revenues generated from selling building density, views commercial development within these sensitive fabrics strictly as an instrumental tool to secure municipal income. This fundamental, unresolvable contradiction between the overarching logic of capital and the logic of principled conservation ultimately forms the main bedrock for these ongoing urban conflicts.

- Dynamics of the creative destruction paradigm and aggressive commercial renewal strategy

The relentless, unceasing expansion of modern commercial complexes, mega-malls, and shopping arcades within the immediate buffer zones of historic bazaars necessitates a rigorous theoretical formulation strictly under the concept of “Creative Destruction”. This concept, famously expanded upon by Harvey (1989), argues persuasively that the capitalist system, to escape recurring crises of overaccumulation and to continually recreate itself, is structurally compelled to utterly destroy previous historical physical structures to build entirely new spaces. Destruction, therefore, acts as a structural prerequisite for generating surplus value. In the specific context of Iranian metropolises, the paradigm of creative destruction is very frequently cloaked within legitimizing, technocratic vocabulary, utilizing terms such as “organization” and “urban regeneration” projects. In this inherently violent approach, urban planners, by adopting a strict “Tabula Rasa” (clean slate) mindset, view intricate, organic historical fabrics merely as obstructive, bothersome barriers standing in the way of modernization. A prime and tragic example of this process in Tabriz is clearly visible in the extensive, large-scale interventions executed in the area of Shahid Beheshti Square (formerly Mansour). Within these projects, we clearly and unmistakably witness a phenomenon that can accurately be termed “Hybrid Neoliberalism”. This is a scenario where the complete and total destruction of historical residential fabrics occurs precisely to create massive, modern commercial centers; however, simultaneously, to provide artificial legitimacy to this destruction, limited decorative elements or highly symbolic physical structures (such as preserving a single historic mosque isolated in the middle of a square, or using cobblestones imprinted with carpet motifs) are aggressively exploited. A deeply reductionist approach is starkly evident in these developmental projects, a methodology which urban theorists frequently term the “Cuckoo’s Egg Strategy”. In this highly deceptive mechanism, powerful developers intentionally preserve a tiny, insignificant fragment of heritage (for example, merely the front facade of an ancient caravanserai) and actively use it as a branding tool for their massive, profit-driven commercial projects,

while simultaneously ensuring that the entire, deeply rooted social ecosystem surrounding it is completely annihilated.

- Tourism-led gentrification, cultural commodification, and the museumification syndrome

In historical cities like Yazd, the prevailing threats are primarily of the nature of “Tourism-led Gentrification” and aggressive “touristification”. The concept of gentrification, when applied within a heritage context, denotes a specific process wherein non-local, wealthy capitalists systematically purchase valuable historical houses and completely change their historical residential use in favor of establishing boutique hotels and traditional tourist restaurants. The resulting astronomical increase in local property values directly forces the displacement of authentic, native residents, driving them to the marginalized outskirts of the city. This phenomenon is directly and inextricably linked to the broader concept of the “Commodification of Heritage and Culture” (Ferro et al., 2024). In this process, heritage is violently detached from its original semantic and lived context, transforming solely into a highly attractive, consumable commodity specifically packaged for tourists. The tragic and largely irreversible consequence of this phenomenon is the emergence of a widespread syndrome known as “Museumification”. In this specific process, while the physical, outer body of the buildings is seemingly preserved, the crucial “Genius Loci” (the spirit of the place) evaporates entirely due to the mass exodus of the native populace. The once-living historic city slowly morphs into a mere “theatrical scenography,” designed solely and exclusively for the nostalgic consumption and experience of visiting tourists. Gentrification in this scenario not only effectively freezes the physical body of the architecture but also systematically expropriates the fundamental “Right to the City” from the local communities.

- Phenomenology of hidden destruction: mechanisms of immaterial and physical decay

“Hidden Destruction” registers as one of the most insidious, deeply covert threat mechanisms, encompassing a broad series of deliberate, calculated abandonments and silent, underhanded alterations that ultimately lead to total physical structural decay. This troubling phenomenon

is deeply rooted in what is known as the “Preservation Paradox”. Rigid, inflexible heritage laws, completely lacking in any form of economic incentives in Iran, effectively trap the owners of registered historic buildings in a financial deadlock. Under severe inflationary economic conditions, the market value of empty, developable land located in central urban cores is substantially and astronomically higher than the assigned value of a legally registered historic building. To actively bypass the strict laws prohibiting demolition, desperate or profit-driven owners frequently resort to “deliberate attrition strategies.” These subversive actions include intentionally blocking roof gutters, purposefully directing destructive surface water into vulnerable adobe foundations, and even creating intentional, undocumented fires. The ultimate, calculated goal of these actions is to rapidly push the building toward total structural collapse in order to successfully receive a legally binding “lack of stability” certificate, alongside a highly lucrative demolition and reconstruction permit. This phenomenon represents a devastating process of “Dematerialisation,” wherein the legal vacuums themselves inadvertently transform into the greatest, most potent enemy of physical heritage.

- Authorized heritage discourse (AHD) and the marginalization of everyday histories

The theory of the “Authorized Heritage Discourse” (AHD), originally posited and expanded upon by Smith (2006), argues that a highly official, strictly top-down discourse ultimately defines exactly what constitutes heritage within a society. This rigid, technocratic discourse inherently tends to seek heritage value exclusively within massive monumental buildings and grand mosques, while systematically ignoring and marginalizing the intrinsic value of everyday residential fabrics and vernacular architecture. In the historic cities of Iran, the absolute dominance of this specific discourse has caused the act of conservation to become a strictly physical, object-oriented endeavor completely focused on “iconic single buildings”. The practical, devastating outcome of this approach is that municipal urban planners very easily issue legal permits to completely demolish historic vernacular houses to facilitate street widening projects, utilizing the convenient justification that these specific structures lack

“monumental” or officially recognized national value. This extreme reductionism serves as the primary theoretical root explicitly justifying the widespread destruction of continuous, organic urban fabrics in Tabriz and Yazd.

- The antidote paradigm: historic urban landscape (HUL) as an integrating framework

In direct response to the escalating crises arising from the political economy of space, the paradigm of the “Historic Urban Landscape” (HUL) was formally introduced by UNESCO (2011) as the most comprehensive and effective model for modern conservation. The HUL approach extends significantly beyond a simple set of guidelines; it represents a fundamental, radical paradigm shift moving away from “object-oriented, frozen, and single-building conservation” toward an approach based entirely on the “holistic, dynamic, and comprehensive management of the urban ecosystem”. Based on this highly progressive theory, a historic city is emphatically not merely a disconnected collection of old buildings; rather, it is a living entity, functioning as a multi-layered matrix comprised of local biodiversity, natural topography and geomorphology, intricate local economic networks, highly valuable intangible traditions, ancient rituals, everyday ways of life, and ultimately, the physical architectural bodies. The HUL paradigm actively challenges the traditional, highly destructive binary conflict that places “urban development” against “heritage conservation.” It argues that urban heritage absolutely should not be positioned as an isolated, frozen, and untouched island desperately resisting the inevitable wave of modern city development. Conversely, heritage and culture must act as a vital social capital resource and a primary driving engine to facilitate “sustainable urban development”. In this novel, integrated framework, conservation is no longer viewed as a restrictive, limiting, and purely deterrent activity; instead, it is reframed as a highly democratic, facilitating, and robustly participatory process. This process necessarily requires engaging a very broad spectrum of active stakeholders—including members of the private sector, investors, local communities, native residents, civil non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and various government bodies—directly in the planning and decision-making process. From both a practical and

theoretical standpoint, by continuously placing immense emphasis on preserving the social and economic functions of local communities and actively enhancing their quality of life, HUL directly and vigorously resists the deeply damaging phenomena of “museumification” and “gentrification based on resident exclusion”. Furthermore, by strictly prioritizing both landscape and ecological continuity (such as paying highly specific attention to the absolute preservation of the buffer zones surrounding vital arteries like qanats, historic orchards, and the city’s natural topography), it effectively prevents the blind, destructive execution of “creative destruction” policies and episodic, highly “aggressive regeneration projects” (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012). In other words, HUL provides a highly functional, operational, conceptual, and instrumental framework. This framework allows citizens and urban planners alike to seamlessly and successfully integrate necessary contemporary values, current needs, and modern infrastructures in total harmony deep within ancient fabrics, without ever sacrificing historical identity and collective memory, thereby delivering a highly resilient spatial environment for future generations.

- Theoretical synthesis: conceptual formulation in the context of the research

By rigorously synthesizing the various schools of thought mentioned above, this research firmly anchors its overarching conceptual model upon the following premise: “The destruction of urban heritage in the cities of Tabriz and Yazd is not simply the effect of technical restoration inefficiencies; rather, it is the immediate, unavoidable output of the prevailing political economy of space, the absolute triumph of exchange value over use value, and the systemic failure of governing institutions to adopt a highly comprehensive, holistic approach (such as HUL). This failure has directly led to the catastrophic manifestation of phenomena such as creative destruction, tourism gentrification, and hidden destruction”. Table 1 carefully summarizes precisely how these specific theoretical lenses map onto and are practically applied within the empirical field of this research (Fig. 1).

• Challenges of heritage conservation in the Iranian context

Urban heritage within Iran faces a highly distinct, multi-

layered set of profound challenges. Although there exists a very long and established history of conservation laws in the country, a massive, undeniably deep chasm between written law and actual practical execution is strongly felt. Heritage management fundamentally grapples with a severe scarcity of financial resources and a highly confusing overlap of responsibilities among various competing institutions (Hanachi et al., 2018). Municipalities, heavily and systematically reliant on revenues generated directly from selling building density, possess incredibly powerful economic incentives to issue construction permits deep within the protected buffer zones of historic buildings. Furthermore, urban regeneration plans themselves sometimes directly lead to extensive gentrification (Mahmoudi Farahani & Motamed, 2018). Although it is true that tourism possesses the capacity to

supply crucial financial resources needed for conservation, the deeply imbalanced development of tourism infrastructure—manifesting as rampant, unprincipled hotel construction and highly unprofessional functional changes—places immense, crushing pressure on the already dilapidated physical body of historic fabrics. Ghaderi & Henderson (2012) have also thoroughly documented that in many observed instances, the intrinsic authenticity of buildings has been completely sacrificed to fulfill the functional requirements demanded by modern tourism.

• **Studied heritage contexts: Tabriz and Yazd**

Tabriz and the historic Bazaar: The city of Tabriz possesses a remarkably rich history of extensive commercial interactions situated along the ancient Silk Road. The Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex stands as

Table 1. Critical formulation of theoretical foundations and their correspondence with mechanisms influencing the historic fabrics of Tabriz and Yazd. Source: Authors.

Theoretical framework/ school of thought	Focus of theory	Urban phenomenon derived from theory in historic context	Physical and social manifestation in research context	Corresponding case study in cities
Political Economy of Space (Lefebvre, Harvey)	Production of space as a product of power relations and capital	Commodification of space, dispossession, urban real estate speculation	Replacing cultural value with exchange value, density-selling by urban management institutions for revenue generation	Tabriz: Construction of large-scale commercial complexes and arcades in the immediate buffer zone of the historical bazaar
Creative Destruction (Harvey, Schumpeter)	Destruction of the prior physical body to facilitate new capital accumulation	Tabula Rasa, Cuckoo’s Egg strategy in renewal	Destruction of organic fabrics and continuous neighborhoods under the pretext of renewal, selective preservation of a single monumental building as a facade	Tabriz: Aggressive renewal projects in boulevards and squares surrounding the bazaar, like Shahid Beheshti Square
Gentrification and Museumification (Glass, Bauman)	Class displacement and transformation of the social nature of space	Touristification, class population displacement, scenography	Departure of authentic native inhabitants, conversion of residential use to boutique hotels, loss of authenticity, and everyday life	Yazd: Fahadan neighborhood and the extensive, systematic conversion of patrician houses into tourism facilities
Critical Conservation and Institutional Paradox (Phenomenology of decay)	Unintended consequences of rigid laws lacking economic incentives	Hidden destruction, immaterial decay, deliberate and gradual attrition	Structural destruction of the building from within, blocking gutters, directing moisture to foundations, and removing roofs to obtain renewal permits	Yazd and Tabriz: Silent destruction of historic residential houses to sell land or construct new structures
Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) (UNESCO)	Transition from an isolated building to understanding urban and living ecosystems	Holistic conservation, heritage ecosystem management, sustainable development	Stakeholder participation, integrating modern development with identity values, preserving tangible (qanats) and intangible integrity	Proposed Strategy: Mandating Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) and transitioning from a single-building focus to continuous conservation

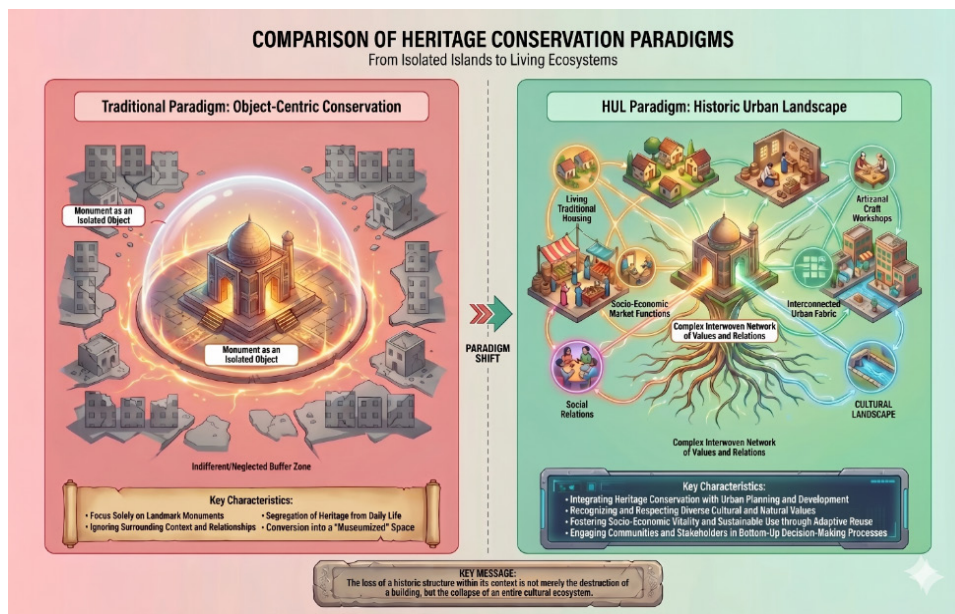


Fig. 1. Proposed conceptual diagram: Comparison of two conservation paradigms (Diagrams drawn by Gemini AI). Source: Authors.

an absolutely unique, unparalleled example of a fully integrated complex comprising interconnected *rastehs* (routes), *timchehs* (domed halls), and *sarays* (courtyard inns). Immense commercial pressures to aggressively modernize shops, replace traditional vaults with flat, modern roofs, or inappropriately utilize industrial concrete during restoration efforts, coupled with the construction of massive commercial complexes right in the bazaar's buffer zone, severely and systematically threaten both its visual and physical integrity (Gharehbaglou et al., 2016).

Yazd and the desert fabric: The city of Yazd serves as the ultimate symbol of intelligent, highly sophisticated adaptation to a harsh, unforgiving desert climate. It encompasses a complete, holistic living ecosystem featuring intricate shaded alleyways (*sabats*) and highly complex *qanats*. The official World Heritage inscription of Yazd in 2017 massively escalated the destructive pressures stemming directly from the influx of tourism (Abdollahi & Hosseini, 2020). Rezazadeh & Mahmoudi (2021) clearly demonstrated in their published research that specific urban policies implemented in Yazd have sometimes acted intentionally to facilitate the destruction of the historic fabric to create wider vehicular access and construct new hotels. Furthermore, exhaustive research conducted by Naghibi Rad et al. (2019) precisely identified that socio-

cultural changes resulting from tourism, and the subsequent transformation of traditional residential neighborhoods into native-depleted "tourist zones," serve as a severe, critical threat to the fundamental "spirit of place" (Fig. 2).

• Impacts of development on urban heritage: mechanisms

Urban development inherently impacts heritage through a wide variety of different avenues. Direct physical destruction aimed at freeing up highly valuable land represents its most conspicuous and obvious form (Stubbs, 2004). However, indirect impacts, which include structural instability caused by deep excavations, violent traffic vibrations, and rapid changes in groundwater levels, are demonstrably far more devastating and difficult to reverse (Ferretti et al., 2019). Moreover, gentrification and widespread functional displacement fundamentally alter the social meaning of the fabric, inexorably leading to the complete museumification of the city (Yung & Chan, 2015).

Research Method

• Research design and approach

This particular research is methodically designed entirely upon the foundation of the pragmatism paradigm and the precise application of "mixed methods methodology," specifically utilizing a highly structured "explanatory

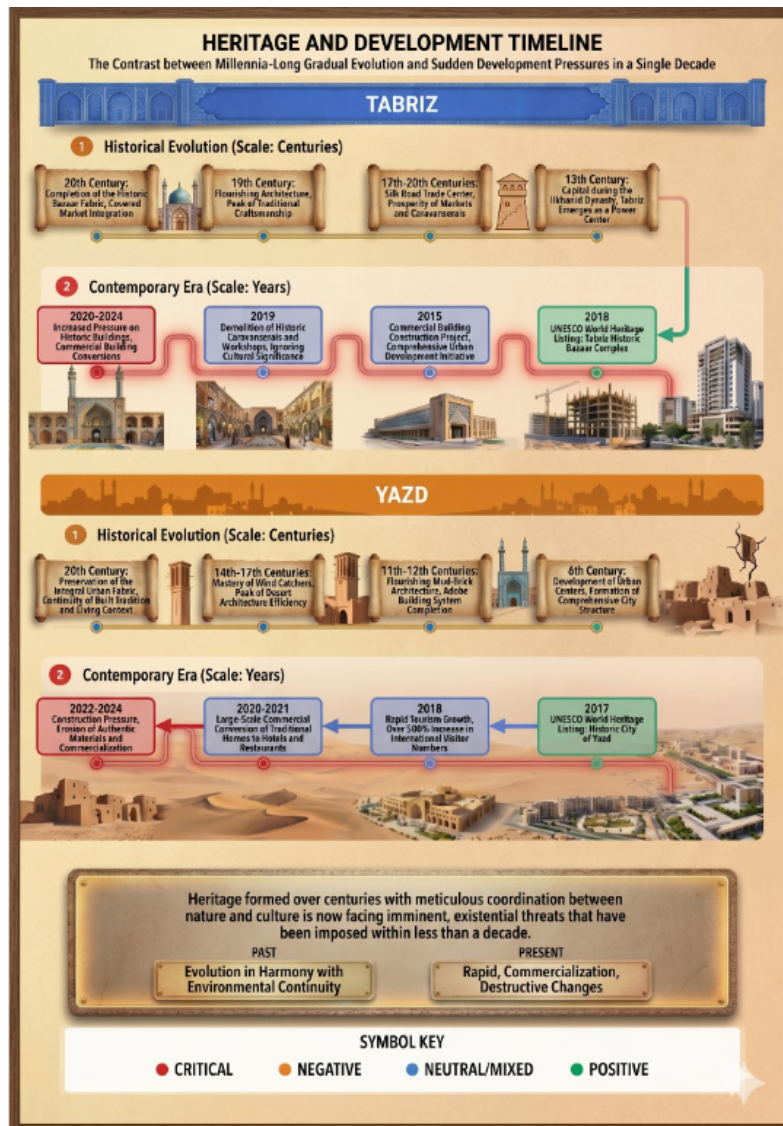


Fig. 2. Proposed chronological chart: The evolution of heritage and development in Tabriz and Yazd (Diagrams drawn by Gemini AI). Source: Authors.

sequential design” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The core philosophical logic dictating this specific design dictates that quantitative data are systematically gathered and analyzed in the first phase precisely to identify the patterns, the overall physical extent, and the macro-trends of structural damages. Subsequently, following this initial analysis, the qualitative phase is aggressively mobilized to explain, deeply interpret, and anatomically dissect the “why” and “how” behind the emergence of these quantified trends. The qualitative phase was carefully developed, relying strictly upon the “Integration through Connecting at the sampling stage” strategy. This approach was chosen specifically to prevent direct, unverified inference and to eliminate critical methodological errors.

By executing a phenomenological probing of extreme “deviant cases,” the solid groundwork for robust inductive reasoning was successfully laid. This extensive research was conducted over a comprehensive three-year timeframe (spanning 2021 to 2024), focusing with high intensity on the dialectical interaction established between the two primary databases (Fig. 3).

• **Study area and statistical population**

The geographical scope designated for this research specifically targets the highly critical zones located deep within the historic cores of the two major cities, Tabriz and Yazd. In Tabriz, although official UNESCO registry documents estimate the total area of the inscribed World Heritage Bazaar Complex to be approximately

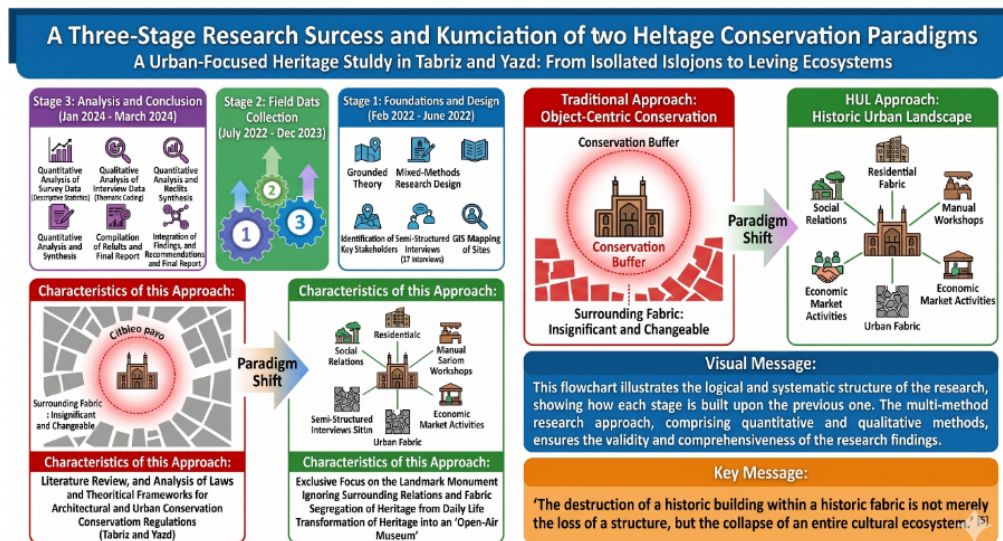


Fig. 3. Proposed flowchart: The three-stage research process (Diagrams drawn by Gemini AI). Source: Authors.

28.97hectares, and its protective buffer zone to encompass 75.40hectares (UNESCO, 2010), the precise geographical territory delimited by the researchers for the operational fieldwork of this study exclusively covers an area of roughly 7.2 hectares. This specific area targets the central core and its immediate, highly vulnerable protection layer. This specific zone, meticulously selected based on the “purposive spatial sampling” methodology, explicitly includes major, high-tension commercial hubs such as Mozaffarieh Timcheh, Saray-e-Amir, and their immediately surrounding fabrics. These are the specific locations experiencing the highest degree of physical tension while directly confronting rapid commercial modernization. Regarding the city of Yazd, while the official extent of the inscribed World Heritage property is registered at 195.67hectares and its surrounding buffer zone is established at 665.93hectares (UNESCO, 2017), the actual operational and fieldwork boundaries utilized in this specific study align perfectly with a highly concentrated 35-hectare zone. This designated 35-hectare zone strategically encompasses the urban nodes currently placed under the most intense, destructive pressure from rapid tourism development and aggressive land-use change. This notably includes the highly prominent Fahadan neighborhood and the main transit lines of ancient hydraulic systems, specifically the Zarch Qanat. The total statistical population for this study comprises absolutely all historical buildings, designated urban spaces,

and valuable architectural elements contained within these exact boundaries. In Tabriz, 89 iconic structures—including prominent sarays, timchehs, and rastehs—and in Yazd, 67 historical buildings (predominantly large patrician houses and public buildings) alongside 12 distinct neighborhood fabrics, were definitively designated as the target population.

• **Sampling and data collection methods**

Thoroughly evaluating the concept of integrity demands a multi-scalar methodological framework based heavily on the HUL paradigm. Under the dictates of the HUL paradigm, the urban fabric is emphatically not an abstract entity; rather, it operates as a networked ecosystem wherein individual buildings serve directly as functional nodes (Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012). Based entirely on the four-dimensional model formulated for assessing historic urban landscapes, the “Individual Building Dimension” remains the most fundamental, baseline unit of analysis necessary for comprehending the complex layers of the entire fabric (Tian, 2024). Consequently, in the parameters of this research, individual single buildings and highly specific micro-precincts have been effectively employed as active “urban sensors” to continuously monitor the physical, spatial, and social changes affecting the entire fabric (Preprints, 2026). Guided strictly by this inductive approach (reasoning from the specific part to the general whole), a complete census method was applied for all iconic buildings, while purposive sampling

was heavily utilized for the general fabric blocks. Given the highly sensitive heritage nature of these designated zones, and recognizing the absolute necessity for highly precise physical documentation, the census method was perfectly suited for landmark structures, and purposive sampling was deployed for ordinary residential fabrics. Based exactly upon the designed field survey process, crucial physical data were ultimately collected from 78 buildings in Tabriz (achieving an 87.6% coverage rate) and from 56 buildings in Yazd (achieving an 83.6% coverage rate). The detailed assessment of these 156 distinct micro-precincts was conducted, not to study them as isolated objects, but specifically to extract verifiable patterns of co-presence, spatial cohesion, and functional alterations. This illustrates precisely how interventions conducted at the micro-architectural scale severely affect the structural integrity of the entirety of the surrounding fabric (El-Bastawissi et al., 2022). Data collection tools incorporated the following mechanisms:

1) Field survey and physical measurement: This involved the rigorous utilization of highly structured checklists to accurately record the current physical condition of the buildings, the specific type of interventions executed (categorized into restoration, renovation, or demolition), the exact materials used (identifying them as compatible or incompatible, such as industrial concrete), and any documented functional changes.

2) Documentary analysis: This critical stage involved thoroughly reviewing highly detailed historical maps (such as the famous Dar al-Saltaneh map of Tabriz), examining aerial photographs sourced from different historical eras (specifically to measure long-term fabric changes), closely analyzing UNESCO nomination dossiers, and reading technical restoration reports issued by the Cultural Heritage Organization.

3) Spatial analysis (GIS): This technique required accurately pinpointing exact locations of demolitions and structural alterations on high-resolution GIS maps. The objective was to identify complex spatial distribution patterns of physical damage and precisely calculate their direct correlation with ongoing commercial development projects.

The overarching sampling strategy in this study,

meticulously designed to preserve the highest possible degree of epistemological coherence between the quantitative numbers and the qualitative findings, was formulated by seamlessly integrating both “spatial-physical sampling” and advanced “nested sampling” approaches (Tanner, 2023). During the first, quantitative phase, precise physical data from 78 parcels in Tabriz and 56 parcels in Yazd (totaling exactly 156 parcels and micro-precincts, inclusive of their immediate surrounding spaces) were successfully extracted using robust census methods for landmark structures and purposive sampling for general fabrics. However, to guarantee that the subsequent evaluation of human subjects in the qualitative phase maintained a highly direct, unshakeable correlation with the quantitative samples (the actual physical structures of the buildings), and to prevent the analytical process from dangerously fragmenting into disconnected pieces, the “deviant/extreme case sampling” method was strictly employed (Palinkas et al., 2011). Accordingly, from the massive statistical population of the 156 initially surveyed parcels, a highly specific subset consisting of 38 parcels was isolated. These parcels uniquely represented the most severe, glaring instances of violating conservation regulations, exhibiting highly unconventional transformations, and showcasing acute structural alterations. They were thus filtered and selected specifically as “deviant cases”. These extreme, borderline cases explicitly encompassed deeply concerning phenomena, such as the blatant usage of exposed concrete bracing deeply embedded in the historical brick structures, like Tabriz’s Mozaffarieh Timcheh. Alternatively, they included the intentional, calculated abandonment and the execution of highly radical functional changes that led directly to extreme, unstoppable gentrification in Yazd’s Fahadan neighborhood. Qualitative methodology literature strongly emphasizes that carefully studying these exact marginal and extreme cases in mixed-methods research consistently provides the richest, most condensed, and overwhelmingly deepest “information-rich cases” necessary for truly understanding the deeply hidden dynamics operating within a system (Patton, 2015). Therefore, the final statistical population forming the qualitative phase of the research was tied absolutely and directly to these highly

deviant parcels. This ensured that the final analytical inference would boast exceptionally powerful empirical backing, clearly and undeniably elucidating the complex relationship existing between the physical parcel and the social actor. To facilitate a better understanding of this complex integration mechanism, Table 2 clearly illustrates the nested sampling strategy alongside the rigorous sample screening process.

• **Analytical framework**

The massive amount of gathered data was subsequently analyzed utilizing the highly structured “Heritage Impact Assessment” (HIA) framework. This specific framework accurately categorizes the varying impacts into four primary, distinct dimensions:

1) Physical impacts: This strictly includes catastrophic structural destruction, unapproved form alteration, the removal or destruction of intricate decorative elements, and the highly damaging use of incompatible industrial materials.

2) Visual and landscape impacts: This category primarily involves the aggressive disruption of the historic skyline, drastic changes in the fabric’s grain size, and any unsanctioned intrusion into designated visual buffers.

3) Functional-social impacts: This critically encompasses highly inappropriate functional changes, the rapid onset of gentrification, and the forced displacement or migration of native, indigenous residents.

4) Environmental impacts: This includes severe, often irreversible damage to highly sensitive traditional water infrastructure (specifically qanats) and highly localized micro-ecological alterations.

The compiled quantitative data were rigorously analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics within the SPSS software environment.

- **Qualitative research principles; approaches, interview tools, and thematic analysis process**

The reality of urban development occurring deep within the context of highly sensitive historical fabrics is not a unidimensional, purely physical phenomenon. Rather, it operates as a deeply complex arena existing right at the exact intersection of competing economic interests, intrinsic cultural values, fragile social identities, and heavily entrenched political power structures (Pendlebury, 2013). Hence, an exclusive, unwavering reliance on quantitative data sets and spatial maps generated by GIS, while providing an undeniable and clear picture regarding the “extent and distribution” of the physical destruction, remains ultimately impotent when attempting to properly explain the underlying “why”, the “how”, and the deeply hidden mechanisms governing these complex processes. To acquire a truly deep comprehension of complex socio-economic phenomena such as “gentrification,” “organized hidden destruction,” and the highly obscure “informal decision-making processes occurring in urban institutions,”

Table 2. Integration matrix of quantitative and qualitative approaches using nested and deviant case sampling strategies. Source: Authors.

Research phase	Sampling type	Population and sample size	Selection criterion and link to the other phase	Methodological objective
First phase (Quantitative)	Purposive and census	156 historical parcels (78 Tabriz, 56 Yazd)	Parcels representing the fabric, located in commercial/tourism development hubs	Identifying spatial patterns of destruction and measuring the severity of structural decay
Connecting stage	Screening based on deviant case	38 critical parcels extracted from the initial 156 parcels	Parcels exhibiting the highest level of destructive changes (use of heterogeneous materials, hidden destruction, gentrification)	Filtering the quantitative database to find the most condensed tension hubs for the qualitative study
Second phase (Qualitative)	Nested and snowball	47 key interviewees	Owners, operators, legal supervisors, and neighbors directly associated with the same 38 critical parcels	Uncovering political-economic motives, reasons for violations, and preventing false analogies

aggressively adopting a profound qualitative approach firmly based upon the paradigms of interpretivism and constructivism is an absolutely unavoidable necessity (Yung & Chan, 2015). In the parameters of this research, a mixed-methods design utilizing a highly integrated converging approach was successfully implemented. In this specific design, the qualitative phase is tasked heavily with the responsibility of meticulously dissecting the various narratives, personal perceptions, and hidden motivations of the multiple actors. In the subsequent sections, the precise sampling strategy, the highly detailed architecture of the data collection tools, and the entirely systematic qualitative data analysis process are thoroughly and explicitly detailed.

- Qualitative statistical population, sampling strategy, and logic of stakeholder selection

Within the specialized field of cultural heritage management, “Stakeholder Theory” heavily and continuously emphasizes that the ultimate sustainability of absolutely any conservation program relies entirely upon properly acknowledging, actively engaging, and rigorously analyzing the highly diverse interests of a very wide array of formal and informal actors (Chapagain, 2008). One of the most fundamental, crippling challenges present in Iran’s historical cities is the pervasive existence of the “Information Islands” phenomenon, alongside the complete severance of organic, functional communication channels existing among state policymakers, technical professionals, and the grassroots local community (Elsorady, 2012). Based strictly upon this observation, the sampling strategy in this research was purposefully designed with the ultimate aim of maximizing the total coverage of this massive diversity and forcefully dismantling the rigid boundaries characterizing these information islands. The structural design of the human sampling strategy in the qualitative phase was formulated to feed directly and organically from the finalized results of the quantitative databases. This was done to elevate the methodological link and the construct validity of the research to the maximum possible degree (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). In strict accordance with this, rather than relying solely and exclusively upon highly traditional, often limited purposive sampling methods, the highly advanced, combined “Nested Sampling Strategy”

was effectively utilized (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). Nested sampling, utilized in mixed studies, successfully allows the researcher to extract highly specific subgroups that demonstrated remarkably distinct characteristics during the first phase, aggressively scrutinizing them as the exact core of the deep qualitative study occurring in the second phase. Based precisely upon this foundation, the critical selection of 47 key stakeholders targeted for in-depth interviews occurred neither entirely randomly nor entirely independent of the surrounding physical context. Rather, these specific individuals were selected precisely and strictly based upon their established proprietary, managerial, judicial, or residential affiliations specifically to the exact parcels that had formally recorded the most salient, glaring patterns of “Deviant Cases” during the initial quantitative surveys (which analyzed the initial 156 parcels). In absolute truth, the selected interviewees—comprising calculating owners of historical houses intentionally abandoned for hidden decay in Yazd, aggressive investors funding highly incompatible commercial arcades within Tabriz’s bazaar buffer zone, powerful urban managers responsible for issuing lucrative density permits, and local indigenous tradesmen severely harmed by these rapid transformations—served directly as the human and narrative tools required to accurately read the specific mechanism of the very physical anomalies that had previously been spatially measured by GIS and quantitative instruments. This highly specific methodological approach completely and effectively neutralizes the fatal, ever-present risk of “false analogies,” a flaw that perpetually and critically threatens unintegrated research projects. This neutralization occurs because the collected narratives, hidden motivations, and specific arguments extracted from the interviews are precisely the verbal and sociological interpretations directly corresponding to the same physical phenomenon measured with high precision in the first phase.

The successful completion of this rigorous process, which involved utilizing “Snowball Sampling” merely as a supplementary secondary technique, was executed strictly to effectively penetrate the deeply concealed layers of power and capital networks that wield highly decisive roles regarding the fabric’s physical changes. These networks frequently include elusive real estate brokers and aggressive commercial contractors, who often leave absolutely no clear,

identifiable trace in official state documents, yet were the primary, fundamental instigators of these massive deviations occurring within the sample parcels, while possessing no official record within registry documents. In utilizing this snowball method, each key interviewee actively introduced other highly informed individuals directly to the researchers, successfully continuing this chain until reaching the highly critical point of Theoretical Saturation (Robinson, 2014). Saturation was officially achieved when, during the final interviews, absolutely no new data, codes, or novel narratives capable of altering the established conceptual classifications were extracted (Bowen, 2008). Ultimately, 47 incredibly deep, comprehensive interviews were successfully conducted with four primary, distinct stakeholder groups situated across the two cities of Tabriz and Yazd. Their statistical distribution and exact selection logic are codified explicitly in Table 3.

- Research instrument: design and executive protocol of semi-structured interviews

The primary, fundamental method chosen for collecting initial data in this specific section relied heavily upon conducting Semi-Structured Interviews. Semi-structured interviews serve as an incredibly powerful, versatile tool within qualitative research, precisely positioned at the exact optimal point located between the rigid, inflexible structuring of quantitative questionnaires (which severely hinder deep, organic exploration) and the chaos inherent in entirely unstructured, open interviews (which massively complicate data comparability) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In utilizing this method, the researcher possesses a highly detailed "Interview Guide" that comprises primary themes and open-ended questions. Yet, the researcher simultaneously retains full, absolute liberty to steer the organic flow of the conversation entirely based upon the specific reactions, professional expertise, and highly unique lived experiences of each interviewee. This allows the researcher to delve deeply into the lower layers of meaning by forcefully posing targeted Probing Questions (Nowell et al., 2017). The elaborate process of designing the interview instrument underwent a highly rigorous, three-stage scientific protocol. Initially, based completely upon a highly comprehensive literature review (specifically including the HUL approach alongside the Heritage Impact

Assessment [HIA]), the primary, core dimensions of the development-conservation conflict were meticulously identified. Subsequently, initial questions were carefully drafted and then rigorously evaluated for Content Validity by exactly three highly experienced university experts specializing in urban conservation. Ultimately, a pilot test evaluating the interview guide was successfully conducted on three select stakeholders specifically to ensure the maximum fluency, absolute clarity, and total efficacy of the questions regarding extracting rich, complex data. The highly detailed executive protocol dictating each interview session incorporated highly precise stages. This included initiating the session by providing clear, transparent explanations regarding the research objectives and successfully obtaining Informed Consent. It critically involved guaranteeing the absolute, uncompromising confidentiality of interviewee identities (a step absolutely crucial when attempting to discuss sensitive administrative violations, the deliberate circumvention of laws, and unauthorized, illegal demolitions executed by wealthy owners and brokers). Furthermore, the session commenced with targeted ice-breaking questions designed specifically to foster a strong climate of trust. The interviews lasted strictly between 45 and 90 minutes on average and were held in secure locations mutually agreed upon by the interviewees (such as private bazaar shops, government offices, historic residential houses, or quiet engineering offices). With the explicit, recorded permission of all participants, session contents were meticulously audio-recorded, and immediately following the conclusion of each interview, a highly rigorous Verbatim Transcription process into text files was conducted. Table 4 explicitly demonstrates the exact content structure of the interview guide and the direct connection existing between the core research objectives and the specific posed questions.

- Data analysis methodology: reflexive thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke

The comprehensive text files produced from the highly detailed transcription of the 47 in-depth interviews constituted a massive, incredibly dense volume of entirely raw, unstructured data. To systematically and accurately extract the underlying semantic patterns, the highly latent concepts, and the exact causal relationships hidden deep

Table 3. Categorization matrix, statistical distribution, and analytical criteria for selecting stakeholders in qualitative interviews. Source: Authors.

Stakeholder categories	Number of interviewees	Geographic distribution (Tabriz/ Yazd)	Selection criteria & rationale	Key themes extracted regarding development conflicts
Policymakers, Institutional Managers, and State Agents	12	6/ 6	Current and former directors of the General Directorates of Cultural Heritage, historical district municipalities, World Heritage bases, and the Awqaf Organization are directly involved in approving master and detailed plans and issuing permits.	Analyzing governance barriers, inter-sectoral incoordination, pressure for urban revenue generation (density sales), and challenges in enforcing deterrent laws (Hanachi et al., 2018).
Professionals, Independent Consultants, and Academics	9	5/ 4	Faculty members in urban restoration, urban planning, and urban sociology, alongside consulting engineers and architects active in fabric revitalization projects.	Technical critique of interventions (e.g., structural damages from concrete bracing), environmental impact assessment (threats to qanat networks), and monitoring heritage authenticity.
Private Sector, Investors, and Real Estate Brokers	11	6/ 5	Owners and builders of new commercial complexes in the Tabriz bazaar buffer zone, boutique hotel investors in Yazd, and real estate agents active in dilapidated and historical fabrics.	Dissecting the political economy of development, land speculation motives, legal mechanisms of functional change, and the space commodification process.
Local community, native residents, tradesmen, and civil activists	15	8/ 7	Veteran shopkeepers of authentic guilds (like Tabriz’s carpet sellers route), remaining native residents in tourism neighborhoods (like Fahadan), and NGO members.	Documenting lived experiences of the social repercussions of development, the gentrification phenomenon, decay of neighborhood bonds, and the hidden destruction of local biological networks.
Total interviews	47	25/ 22	-	-

within this vast array of unstructured data, the “Thematic Analysis” method was utilized exclusively. Among the numerous, varying analytical approaches that currently exist, this particular research directly followed the highly authoritative, flexible, and rigorous six-phase framework of “Reflexive Thematic Analysis” famously developed by Braun & Clarke (2006). Unlike basic quantitative content analysis, which merely and superficially counts words, reflexive thematic analysis successfully enables the competent researcher to easily surpass the basic Semantic Level. It empowers them to reach the deeply hidden Latent Level, dissecting ideological structures and exposing implicit assumptions heavily hidden within the stakeholders’ discourse (ibid.). For achieving highly optimal data management, perfectly tracking the crucial Audit Trail, massively facilitating the complex tree-coding process, and successfully discovering the intricate

network connections existing among various concepts, NVivo qualitative data analysis software (version 12) was employed extensively (Salmons, 2023). The exact, highly rigorous execution of Braun and Clarke’s six distinct phases within this study is meticulously detailed below:

Phase one (familiarizing with the data): The exhaustive process of data analysis commenced the exact moment the audio files were completely transcribed. This highly foundational stage in qualitative research absolutely necessitates the deep ontological immersion of the researcher entirely within the universe of the collected data. Researchers meticulously read all generated interview texts a minimum of three times, specifically to achieve a truly holistic understanding of the various phenomena. Simultaneously, the crucial process of writing a detailed “Reflexive Memoing” began actively in NVivo. In these critical memos, initial impressions regarding the glaring,

Table 4. Semi-structured interview guide; thematic framework, objectives, and sample guiding questions. Source: Authors.

Thematic framework	Research objective	Core & probing questions
Perceptions and heritage valuation	Assessing how stakeholders understand the concept of “authenticity” and distinguish between tangible and intangible values in the fabric.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In your view, what is the most valuable feature of this historic fabric (Tabriz Bazaar / Fahadan neighborhood) that must be preserved under any circumstance? - Probing Question: Do you think the new generation of investors also attributes such value to these elements?
Political economy and drivers of commercial/ tourism development	Dissecting the economic mechanisms leading to physical and functional changes in the historic fabric.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the main motivations driving owners to seek demolition, renewal, or conversion of traditional buildings into commercial spaces/hotels? - Probing Question: How different is the profitability of new projects compared to maintaining traditional uses? Please explain with an example.
Evaluating the effectiveness of institutional, legal, and governance frameworks	Identifying structural challenges, conflicts of organizational interests, and the weak enforcement guarantee of conservation laws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you evaluate the process of issuing permits and supervising construction in this area by the governing institutions (municipality, heritage, awqaf)? - Probing Question: Confronted with obvious physical violations (like using concrete or destroying roofs), how do supervisory bodies react, and why are the laws not deterrent?
Physical, social, and ecological consequences of interventions	Tracing direct and indirect impacts of development on the integrity of the local community and biological infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What impact have recent development projects had on neighborhood social bonds, the presence of natives, or issues like water management (qanats)? - Probing Question: How does the phenomenon of “hidden destruction” or intentional abandonment of buildings occur? How would you describe the migration trend of old neighbors?

highly obvious contradictions between the official, sanitized discourse of state managers (who always spoke highly of strict conservation laws) and the gritty, objective experiences of residents (who spoke freely of the incredible ease of bypassing these laws simply by paying fines) were accurately recorded. This vital memo played a highly crucial role in heavily steering the subsequent coding stages.

Phase two (generating initial codes): Coding represents the beating heart and the primary distillation process of meaning in all qualitative analysis. In this critical stage, all texts were aggressively scrutinized line by line, and any piece of data (ranging from a single, powerful keyword to a massive full paragraph) holding the potential to accurately answer the research questions was rapidly identified and tagged by creating a specific “node” in the NVivo software. The coding approach in this research was a complex, highly efficient blend of a Deductive approach (based entirely on previous literature concepts like physical development, gentrification, and ecological impacts) and a highly Inductive approach (extracting completely newly founded codes directly from the data itself). For instance, a very specific statement by an architectural restoration expert in

Tabriz noting: “Contractors, to radically speed up work and heavily cut costs, instead of using principled reinforcement of brick vaults, use highly exposed steel bracing and excessive, unapproved concrete injection, severely raising the building’s dead load and trapping highly destructive moisture” was accurately registered under the initial codes [Use of incompatible materials],, and [Prioritizing speed and cost over authenticity] directly in the software. The systematic, rigorous coding process ultimately resulted in the initial generation of exactly 428 highly descriptive open codes across the entire dataset.

Phase three (searching for themes): Post-initial coding, the primary analytical focus heavily shifted away from micro-codes toward far broader, much more abstract patterns. Utilizing NVivo’s highly advanced visual tools and its powerful clustering capabilities, researchers successfully grouped codes possessing strong logical, causal correlation, or clear semantic commonalities into complex, tree-like Hierarchy Nodes specifically to form “Candidate Themes”. For example, a vast set of inductive codes, including [Intentional abandonment of historical houses], [Flooding building foundations at midnight], and [Creating structural

insecurity to obtain demolition permits], was accurately classified into a single, cohesive semantic cluster directly under the candidate theme “Mechanisms of Hidden and Systematic Destruction”. In yet another example, numerous codes related specifically to Yazd’s Fahadan neighborhood, such as [Astronomical rise in property prices], [Converting neighborhood into a tourist set], were perfectly organized under the highly accurate candidate theme “Gentrification and Social Decay”.

Phase four (reviewing themes): The initially extracted themes strongly demanded a highly critical evaluation, specifically to ensure they accurately represented the true nature of the data, remaining entirely void of any overlap or bias. This intense review transpired heavily on two exact levels: On the first level, the specific Coded Extracts assigned to each theme were meticulously re-read within the software specifically to affirm their Internal Homogeneity. On the second level, the absolute validity of the themes concerning the entire Data Set and the core research questions was aggressively gauged. During this vital refinement process, weak, unsupported themes were immediately discarded, and highly similar others were successfully merged. As a primary example, the basic themes “Multiplicity of decision-making bodies,” “Conflict between municipality and heritage laws,” and “Insignificance of Article 100 commission fines” were masterfully interwoven into a massive macro, organizing theme titled “Deep Institutional Gap and Urban Governance Inefficiency” entirely due to their obvious structural continuity.

Phase five (defining and naming themes): In this highly crucial phase, the exact central core and precise nature of each theme were theoretically elucidated, bestowing upon them highly academic, incredibly expressive, and totally comprehensive names. Braun and Clarke strongly emphasize that a theme’s final name must be capable of rapidly conveying its underlying, highly complex analytical narrative directly to the reader. Based precisely upon the final distillation of the data, exactly three massive “Overarching Themes” were carefully extracted and permanently solidified in this research, forming the entire analytical framework of the findings section:

1) Political economy of development and the commodification of heritage: Accurately reflecting the

absolute dominance of exchange value (exemplified by land speculation and massive commercial pressures in the Tabriz bazaar, alongside extreme hotel construction in Yazd) over the essential cultural and use values of the space.

2) Structural weakness in the urban governance and management system: Specifically detailing deep institutional fragmentation, the massive gap between written law and actual execution, and the total inefficiency of existing supervisory structures in curbing rampant developmental violations.

3) Destruction of biological networks and social displacement (gentrification): Thoroughly elucidating the highly hidden mechanisms of destruction, the devastating gentrification process, the complete museumification of historical fabrics, and the highly tragic decay of the authentic social bonds of the natives.

Phase six (writing up): The absolute final step operating in Braun and Clarke’s highly regarded approach transcends simple, basic description, actively involving the difficult process of weaving a highly analytical, heavily argumentative, and incredibly well-documented narrative straight out of the raw data. In writing the incredibly dense “Findings and Discussion” section of this report, researchers intelligently selected and beautifully presented the absolute most expressive direct quotes from interviewees (acting directly as living, breathing empirical evidence), powerfully articulating the exact causal linkage between the extracted themes and established global theoretical literature (such as Pendlebury’s specific views on the tension of values and the highly regarded HUL framework). This ultimately ensured that the very voices of the stakeholders, functioning flawlessly as primary historical documents, guaranteed the absolute validity of the report’s overarching macro-analyses.

- Strategies for validation, rigor, and trustworthiness of qualitative research

To accurately measure true quality, high robustness, and logical generalizability within qualitative research, highly conventional positivistic concepts (like standard statistical validity and basic reliability) are notoriously ineffective. Therefore, completely within the bounds of this specific study, to actively deflect the high risks posed by inevitable researcher bias and to guarantee massive scientific rigor,

Guba and Lincoln's highly comprehensive evaluation framework and incredibly strict quadruple criteria were utilized extensively (Nowell et al., 2017). The exact, calculated measures undertaken to fulfill each specific criterion are as follows:

Credibility (equivalent to internal validity): Specifically, to ensure total, absolute conformity of the researchers' highly complex interpretations with the participants' actual lived experiences, the highly effective "Member Checking" technique was utilized. A highly detailed summary of the extracted themes was securely provided to exactly 12 participants (including seasoned experts, property owners, and natives), specifically to rigorously verify the high level of alignment of the detailed analyses with their personal views. Furthermore, rigorous "Data Triangulation" was achieved specifically by meticulously matching the raw interview results directly with highly objective field survey evidence, complex GIS spatial maps, and high-level overarching documents, specifically to maximize the confidence coefficient of the findings.

Transferability (equivalent to external validity): While it is well known that qualitative research absolutely does not seek basic statistical generalization, carefully providing "Thick Descriptions" detailing the exact research context, the rich human geography of Tabriz and Yazd's fabrics, the exact demographic characteristics of the samples, and providing a highly precise explanation of the complex institutional context successfully created a solid foundation. This foundation allows other highly skilled researchers to accurately evaluate the actual applicability and transferability of these complex patterns directly to other historical cities located in the Middle East.

Dependability (equivalent to reliability): Specifically, to prevent any individual deviations from occurring while extracting highly sensitive patterns, the "Peer Debriefing" technique was strictly implemented. Exactly two independent, highly skilled researchers who were absent from the interview process rigorously audited the incredibly complex coding process and the massive data trees created securely in the NVivo software. The final Inter-coder Reliability in analyzing completely random samples clearly demonstrated an incredible confidence coefficient massively exceeding 87 percent, heavily

indicative of the incredibly high stability of the analytical framework.

Confirmability (equivalent to objectivity): consistently throughout all highly sensitive stages of the study, the researchers utilized the advanced software's highly specific capability to maintain deeply Reflexive Journals, strictly controlling and highly documenting their deep presuppositions and subconscious mental biases. The incredibly long Audit Trail forged within the software database seamlessly enables the totally transparent tracking of absolutely every macro-conclusion backward to the initial raw codes and ultimately backward to the raw, unedited interview texts with unbelievably high scientific precision.

• **Tabriz: Commercial modernization and the threat to physical authenticity**

The extensive research findings accurately recorded in Tabriz undeniably indicate a highly alarming volume of severe physical interventions motivated entirely by commercial interests. Highly systematic survey results clearly demonstrate the incredibly widespread destruction and absolute transformation of historical heritage occurring in both studied cities. In Tabriz, exactly 27 out of the 78 surveyed heritage buildings (constituting a massive 34.6percent) exhibited major or critical levels of severe alteration or partial destruction precisely attributed to highly aggressive commercial regeneration activities. Another 23 historical buildings (constituting 29.5percent) showed moderate alterations, while, highly disappointingly, only 28 buildings (constituting 35.9percent) successfully maintained high levels of structural integrity.

In Yazd, precise survey results clearly indicated that 16 out of 56 surveyed historical buildings (constituting 28.6percent) experienced terribly major or absolutely critical impacts, exactly 21 buildings (constituting 37.5percent) underwent moderate, noticeable alterations, and only 19 buildings (constituting 33.9percent) managed to retain high integrity. Table 5 accurately summarizes the precise distribution of severe heritage impacts in each specific city (Fig. 4).

- **Interventions in Saray-e-Amir**

Saray-e-Amir, widely recognized as one of the absolutely largest and highly iconic, irreplaceable elements

Table 5. Distribution of heritage impact severity in studied buildings of Tabriz and Yazd. Source: Authors.

Impact level	Tabriz (total 78)	Percentage (Tabriz)	Yazd (total 56)	Percentage (Yazd)
Critical	12	15.4%	6	10.7%
Major	15	19.2%	10	17.9%
Moderate	23	29.5%	21	37.5%
Minor	18	23.1%	11	19.6%
Negligible	10	12.8%	8	14.3%

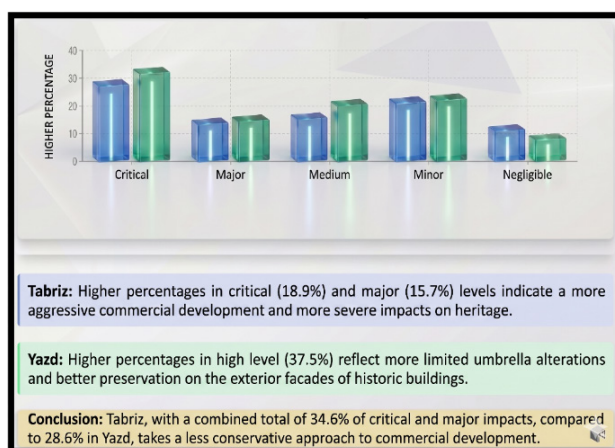


Fig. 4. Proposed comparative bar chart: Severity of impact on heritage in Tabriz and Yazd (Diagrams drawn by Gemini AI). Source: Authors.

comprising the Bazaar of Tabriz, has recently witnessed highly controversial interventions heavily disguised under the deceptive guise of simple “flooring” and harmless “organization”. Extremely detailed field investigations and highly robust existing reports definitively show that since 2019, incredibly massive paving operations have been poorly executed exactly at the entrances and deep within the main courtyard of this historical caravanserai. While the highly publicized stated goal was simply the benign removal of highly deteriorated asphalt and the careful reinstatement of traditional cobblestones, the actual, aggressive usage of extremely thick, completely impermeable concrete beds deep beneath the paving has

raised highly serious technical concerns. Applying highly dense concrete in ancient, historic brick buildings, which absolutely require the ability for “breathing” and the rapid expulsion of highly dangerous rising damp, can directly and inevitably lead to heavily trapped moisture deep in the foundations and the incredibly rapid, gradual decay of the entire structure. Moreover, heavily altering the basic spatial nature of this ancient caravanserai and actively attempting to fully convert its traditional chambers into shiny, modern commercial units (specifically arcade-style) featuring large, incompatible glass showcases and highly disproportionate signage has completely marred its visual and deep historical authenticity. It must be explicitly noted that Saray-e-Amir is absolutely not a totally isolated element; rather, it actively acts as a highly continuous “Structural Hub” deeply embedded in the complex morphology of the Tabriz Bazaar. Directly from the perspective of urban fabric integrity, using highly impermeable concrete inside this specific single building brutally obstructs highly vital capillary moisture flow and heavily alters the highly sensitive microclimate of the surrounding area, violently transferring the deadly decay process directly to the extremely fragile adobe and brick foundations and walls of adjacent, ancient routes (rastehs). Furthermore, completely converting historical chambers into shiny, modern glass arcades entirely ruptures the fundamental legibility and the deep visual-physical continuity of the bazaar’s delicate fabric, heavily imposing basic exchange value over the vital spatial cohesion of the entire complex (Gharehbaglou et al., 2016). In this terrifying scenario, the incredibly rapid decay of basic authenticity inside a single building leads directly and inevitably to the total decay of fundamental homogeneity across the entire urban fabric (Fig. 5).

- Challenges of Mozaffarieh Timcheh

Mozaffarieh Timcheh, widely considered the true beating heart of Iran’s highly exquisite carpet trade, despite its totally extraordinary significance, has absolutely not been spared the incredibly massive damages caused by highly unprincipled restorations. Disturbing findings indicate that during certain specific restoration periods, aggressively aiming to structurally reinforce the ancient building against powerful earthquakes, massive concrete bracing and heavy steel beams were used in an incredibly exposed,

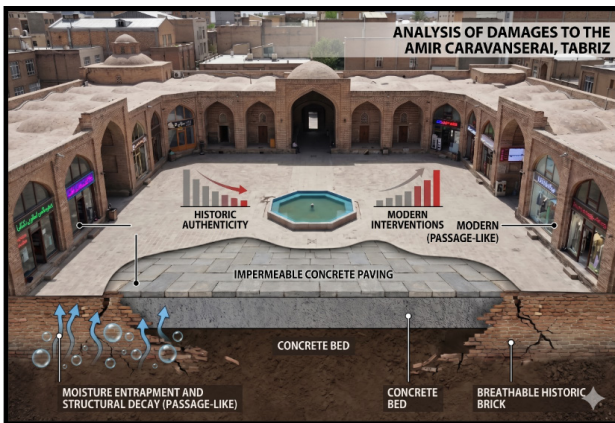


Fig. 5. Interventions in Saray-e-Amir, Tabriz (Background image is not real and is used for graphical analysis). Source: Authors.

totally incompatible manner that directly conflicts with the building’s delicate brick architecture and beautiful vaulted ceilings. Additionally, highly modern additions executed directly in the interior space of the chambers, the haphazard installation of highly damaging heating and cooling systems executed completely without proper ducting, and massive structural alterations occurring in the very walls facing the historic corridors severely threaten the total integrity of this magnificent monument. Highly advanced seismic studies further strongly confirm the incredibly high vulnerability of this specific timcheh’s fragile vaults and the highly negative, dangerous impact of the massive dead load resulting directly from the incompatible concrete interventions. Highly recurrent, massive fires occurring in the Tabriz Bazaar (such as the devastating Iki Ghavili Saray fire) serve as a severely dire warning specifically for Mozaffarieh Timcheh, where the massive accumulation of highly flammable materials (thousands of carpets) and a severely deteriorated electrical wiring system multiply the severe risk of total annihilation. Carefully analyzing the severe consequences of these unprincipled interventions starkly demonstrates that simple engineering errors executed strictly at the highly localized scale of a single building massively amplify the systemic risk applied to the entire fabric. The incredibly exposed execution of heavy concrete bracing and highly rigid steel beams deep inside Mozaffarieh Timcheh heavily bifurcates the completely unified, organic behavior of the bazaar’s complex truss and massive domed structures specifically against powerful seismic stresses. This massive structural incompatibility

exists directly between one single component (the timcheh) and the massive surrounding whole (the bazaar fabric), severely fracturing the delicate structural continuity of this massive urban heritage. The detailed assessment of this specific timcheh definitively proves that firmly within the urban landscape approach, the physical destruction of the entire fabric invariably initiates directly from highly incompatible alterations occurring within single architectural components (Fig. 6).

- Destruction of the surrounding fabric for commercial complexes

One of the absolute most deeply destructive trends currently active in Tabriz is the complete demolition of highly valuable historical residential and service fabrics surrounding the bazaar, specifically to construct entirely modern commercial complexes and massive multi-story parking garages. A glaring, highly terrifying example is the destruction of the ancient “Baghmisheh” and “Gozar Passage” areas, executed rapidly with the primary aim of widening existing streets and quickly creating highly lucrative new commercial routes. These incredibly destructive actions have completely severed the bazaar’s highly organic, historical connection with the surrounding ancient urban fabric, heavily reducing the entire bazaar to a totally isolated island functioning purely for high-volume tourism and basic commerce, completely detached from its true social context (Figs. 7, 8, 9 & 10).

• Yazd: Rapid tourism and the transformation of fabric nature

In Yazd, the precise pattern of destruction and transformation is highly distinct. Exactly 28.6% of the completely studied buildings have tragically suffered highly



Fig. 6. Challenges of Mozaffarieh Timcheh. Source: Authors.

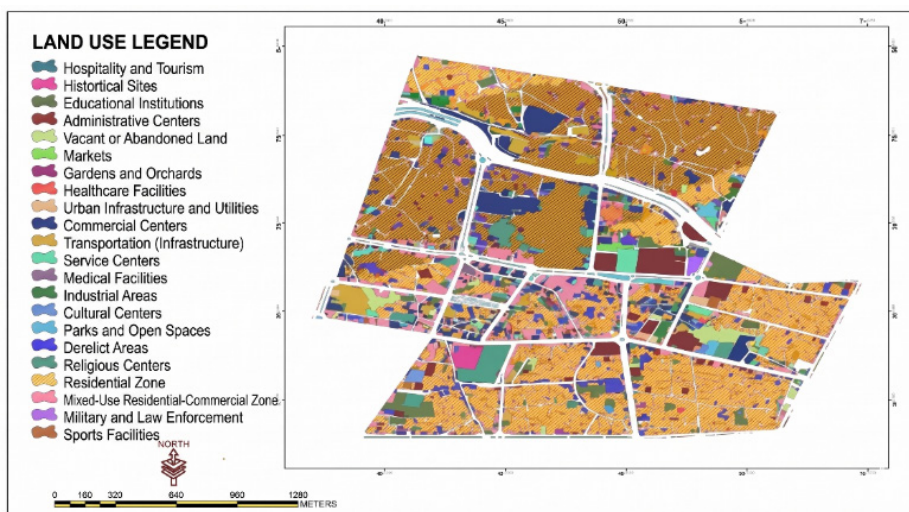


Fig. 7. Division of spatial elements in the area of Tabriz Bazaar and its surroundings. Source: Authors.

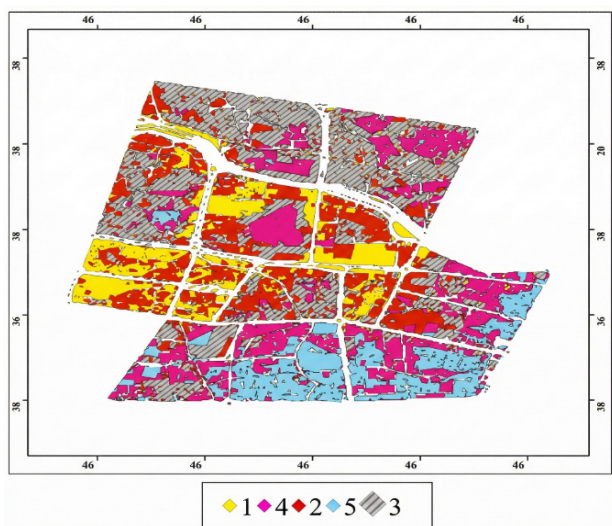


Fig. 8. Distribution of impacts on heritage in the Tabriz Historic Bazaar Complex. Source: Authors.

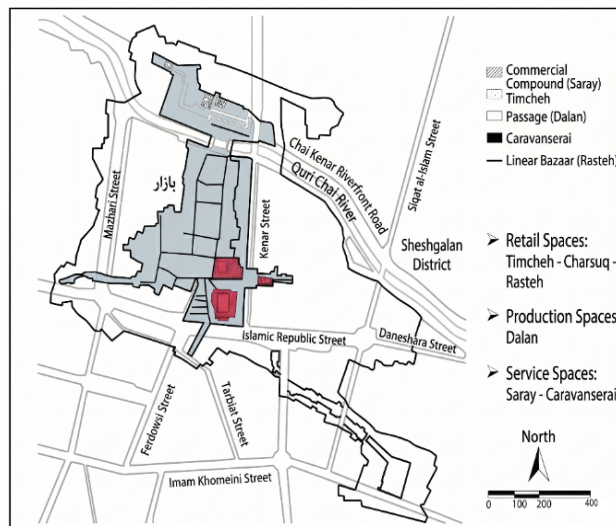


Fig. 9. Distribution of visual elements around Tabriz Bazaar. Source: Authors.

damaging alterations, primarily driven by the massive pressure to rapidly create lucrative accommodation spaces (hotel construction) and heavy tourism services.

- Gentrification and Hotel Construction in Fahadan Neighborhood

The Fahadan neighborhood, highly regarded as one of the absolutely most authentic and highly structurally cohesive parts of Yazd’s vast historical fabric, has been the primary epicenter of massive land-use changes in recent decades. Highly detailed reports generated from managing institutions strongly indicate that during the specific period existing immediately before and directly after Yazd’s World Heritage inscription, the city unfortunately

witnessed a highly dramatic surge and a roughly 500 percent massive growth (a terrifying fivefold increase) specifically in the overall rate of foreign tourist arrivals; precise visitor statistics ballooned massively from about 12,000 individuals located in the early 2010s to well over 126,000 arriving in the exact years leading up to 2018 (Kouchakzadeh, 2018; Nassiri, 2015). This intensely escalating market demand has, unfortunately, acted as an incredibly potent economic catalyst, severely accelerating the highly destructive gentrification process existing directly within these historical neighborhoods. Working directly under the heavy influence of this specific driving force, numerous highly valuable houses located strictly

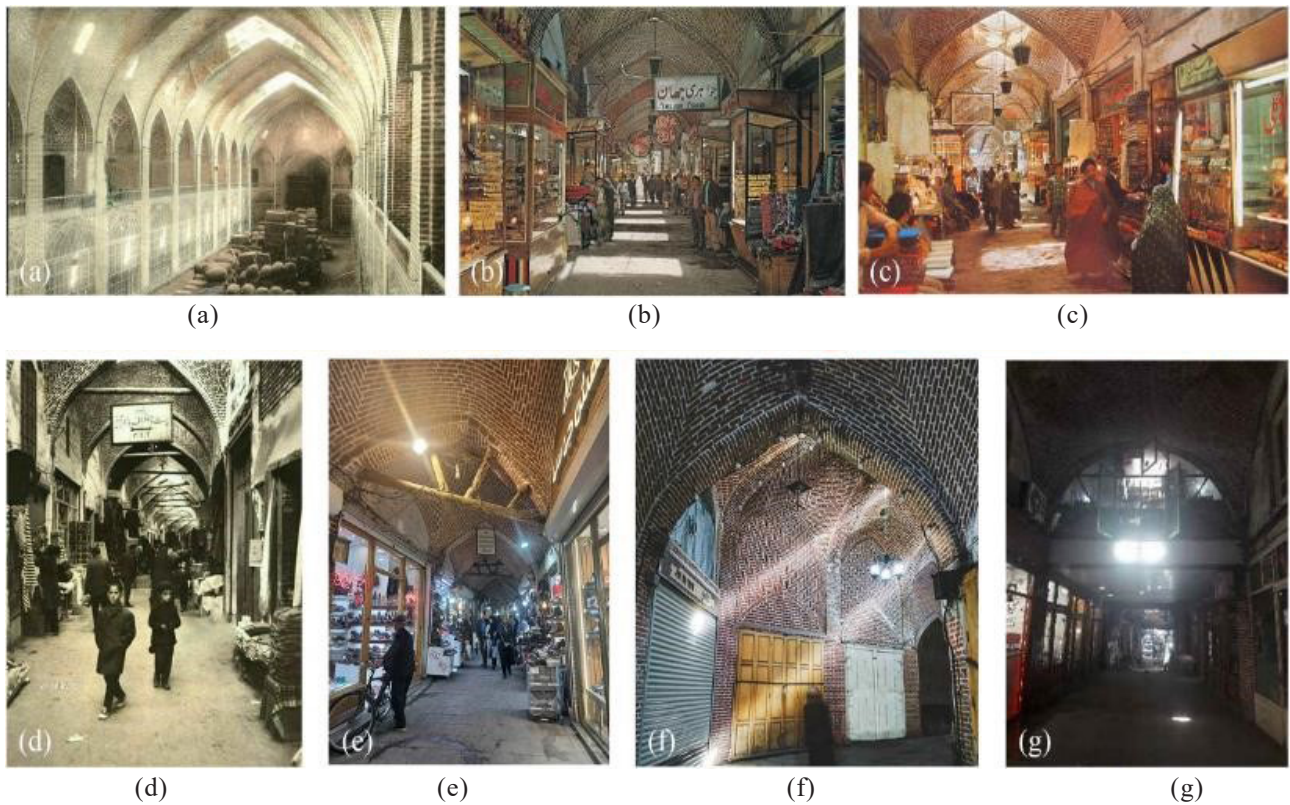


Fig. 10. Physical elements of the Grand Bazaar of Tabriz throughout history. (a) Skylights and roof lighting in Tabriz Bazaar during the Pahlavi era; (b) Covered roofs and floors in the bazaar during the Pahlavi era; (c) Internal wall showcases and shop windows during the Pahlavi era; (d) An example of internal showcases and the type of shop windows in the Qajar era; (e) Shop windows in the Bashmakhchilar route; (f) Types of shutters and their old and new variants; (g) Balakhaneh (upper floor) and entrance with diverse functions in the Bashmakhchilar route. Source: <https://t.me/qocatabriz>

in the Fahadan neighborhood have rapidly undergone massive functional changes specifically to aggressively cater to highly lucrative tourism demand; a prime, tragic example is the deeply historic Tehrani House, which was fully converted directly into a massive museum hotel. Although completely outwardly, these highly aggressive land-use changes have superficially prevented the absolute physical collapse of the actual building, precisely by injecting massive capital and preserving the thick adobe structure, the violent process of space commodification has brought incredibly severe social repercussions. The soaring, astronomical property prices and the complete transformation of the entire neighborhood directly into a “pure tourist zone” have tragically caused the rapid migration of highly authentic old and native inhabitants. This has heavily reduced the ancient fabric from a “living social environment” directly to a highly artificial “urban set” or “museum-city” that only truly comes to life strictly during highly profitable tourist hours. Deep interviews with remaining native residents highlight their incredibly

deep dissatisfaction, specifically with the massive congestion, incredibly heavy traffic, and the total erosion of deep neighborhood identity. The rampant trend of hotel construction inside the Fahadan neighborhood is absolutely the clearest example of the massive conflict existing between “single-building-centric conservation” and “urban fabric-based conservation”. While incredibly wealthy investors aggressively claim that by actively restoring and converting massive houses like the Tehrani and Lari houses, they have successfully saved the physical bodies of the buildings directly from total destruction, highly rigorous analyses based strictly on the HUL approach reveal an absolute catastrophe occurring entirely at the fabric scale. The massive commodification of individual houses and the total monopolization of massive residential blocks entirely by wealthy tourists viciously tears apart the highly sensitive accumulation mechanism of the fabric’s delicate social layers (Rey-Perez & Sigüencia Ávila, 2017). The tragic exodus of native inhabitants strongly equates to the permanent loss of highly vital intangible structure, deep

neighborhood relationships, and ultimately the complete reduction of an incredibly rich “living urban fabric” strictly into a highly disjointed collection of museum decor. Therefore, carefully monitoring these specific individual buildings in Yazd has successfully served as an incredibly powerful inductive tool to firmly prove the absolute collapse of basic resilience and integrity existing right across the entire Historic Urban Landscape (Fig. 11).

- The “Hidden Destruction” mechanism

One of the absolutely most deeply shocking findings of this entire research conducted in Yazd is the highly successful identification of the horrific “Hidden Destruction” or “Destruction from Within” mechanism. Calculating owners of certain highly valuable historical houses, completely lacking legal permission for total demolition, secretly execute the massive destruction of internal, load-bearing walls and highly important roofs, completely out of sight of the underfunded Cultural Heritage Protection Unit. Alternatively, by highly intentionally abandoning the historic building entirely and even directly directing massive amounts of water deep into the fragile foundations (deliberate flooding), they successfully trigger its incredibly rapid decay and total collapse. Following this internal destruction, which successfully renders the building totally unsafe, owners rapidly secure massive renewal or major alteration permits, heavily citing the artificial “risk of collapse” and the “total impossibility of restoration”. A highly quintessential example of this deeply troubling phenomenon is the highly publicized “Abrishami House” case, where the calculating owner

fully intended to completely demolish and fully convert it right into a massive hotel or highly lucrative reception hall rapidly through the highly gradual, secret removal of delicate architectural elements and creating false claims of naturally cracked ceilings; this tragedy was only partially halted precisely by the high vigilance of dedicated cultural heritage activists.

- The threat to qanats and the flood crisis

Unregulated, completely chaotic constructions actively occurring right within the sensitive buffer zone, and even directly over the exact paths of highly vital qanats located in Yazd (such as the massive Zarch and Firouzabad qanats), have yielded incredibly disastrous consequences. These incredibly massive constructions frequently result directly in the complete obstruction of the delicate qanat shafts and the total severing of the highly critical groundwater flow path. During the devastating, highly powerful floods caused directly by massive monsoon rain systems occurring in the summer of 2022 (August), this very blockage of qanat paths—which for centuries functioned efficiently as highly effective natural drains and brilliant ecological regulators exactly for the city—caused incredibly severe water backflow, massively elevated water levels deep in historical fabric thoroughfares, and incredibly deep moisture infiltration right into highly fragile adobe building foundations. Based completely upon highly official assessment reports published accurately by the Yazd Historic City World Heritage Base and highly senior evaluators representing the Ministry of Cultural Heritage directly during post-crisis damage monitoring, it was firmly determined that right among the vast collection of exactly 23,000 formally registered parcels deep in Yazd’s historical zone, approximately 200 incredibly valuable buildings suffered highly serious destruction (sustaining structural damage specifically between 1 and 50 percent), and exactly about 400 additional buildings endured very noticeable minor damages (Oloumi, 2022; Talebian, 2022). These incredibly solid statistics definitively demonstrate that the absolute inefficiency of the surface water disposal system, completely intrinsically linked precisely to the blinding of ancient qanat galleries occurring entirely due to modern development interventions, successfully managed to inflict incredibly significant damage on nearly one full



Fig. 11. Gentrification and hotel construction in the Fahadan neighborhood. Source: Authors.

percent of all highly valuable historical fabric buildings precisely within a very short timeframe. Additionally, the highly toxic seepage of raw sewage directly from massive new homes and hotels deeply into ancient qanat galleries has successfully caused rapid soil loosening and incredibly sudden land subsidence directly within the fragile historical fabric, heavily representing a deeply silent yet incredibly lethal threat directed precisely to the stability of the entire fabric (Fig. 12).

Discussion

A highly meticulous comparative analysis concerning the findings in Tabriz and Yazd incredibly clearly reveals that although the actual physical manifestations of the deep destruction differ greatly, the exact same incredibly powerful fundamental drivers are heavily active in both massive cities.

• Inductive explanation of findings and verification of the research hypothesis

The highly systematic, step-by-step integration combining quantitative and qualitative findings directly in this research successfully provided an absolutely ideal platform for rigorously utilizing “inductive reasoning” specifically to highly empirically test the core hypothesis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The highly fundamental hypothesis driving the entirety of the present research, probed deeply

throughout the entirety of the study, rested heavily on the premise that: “Highly destructive physical and functional changes occurring right at the micro-scale (individual buildings) are absolutely not random events or merely the natural result of basic physical wear and simple engineering errors; rather, they are the entirely systematic and completely inevitable output born directly of the dominant political economy of space, highly destructive neoliberal urban management approaches, and massive macro-scale heritage commodification, which directly and violently shatter the incredibly fragile cohesion and complete integrity of the historic urban landscape”. Thoroughly testing this hypothesis absolutely necessitated clearly proving the exact causal mechanisms. Initially, the highly precise quantitative examination of 156 parcels acting directly as urban sensors definitively proved the massive physical extent of this deep decay on an incredibly broad scale (demonstrating the presence of highly acute damage and massive structural alteration in roughly 34.6 percent of Tabriz parcels and 28.6 percent in Yazd). However, highly rigid quantitative data alone were completely incapable of explaining the core why, accurately interpreting hidden actor intentions, and fully uncovering the true dynamism of this incredible event. Right at this highly critical juncture of deep analysis, the specific application of the “deviant cases” concept located right in the qualitative samples came powerfully into play. Highly deep, intense interviews conducted with stakeholders of these severely degraded parcels powerfully revealed that these highly destructive physical anomalies (such as hasty, incredibly reckless concrete pouring exactly in timchehs to rapidly create modern commercial appeal, or secretly, intentionally flooding highly historical house foundations exactly at midnight to rapidly acquire highly lucrative instability permits) are entirely highly intentional behaviors. They are economically completely rational (viewed strictly from a speculative viewpoint), and heavily organized specifically to rapidly unlock the massive exchange value of specific lands ripe specifically for tourism and high commerce. Through the rigorous process of pure induction, starting entirely from these highly detailed micro-observations focused exactly on deviant cases, the researcher completely managed to effectively extract a far more universal, highly

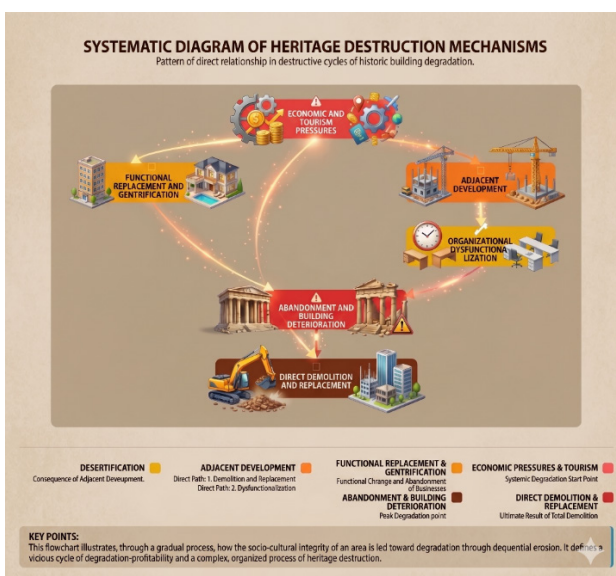


Fig. 12. Proposed diagram: Systematic model of heritage destruction mechanisms (Diagrams drawn by Gemini AI). Source: Authors.

applicable pattern precisely for historical fabrics currently in transition. In other explicit words, the highly powerful logical connection forged completely between highly rigid physical statistics (specifically GIS maps showing destruction) and deeply emotional human narratives (interview coding) successfully elevated the core research hypothesis directly from an abstract critical claim straight to a highly proven theory heavily documented by incredibly objective, undeniable field evidence. This incredibly powerful inductive inference successfully and completely demonstrated that deeply damaging phenomena like “hidden destruction,” “tourism-led gentrification,” and “museumification” are exactly the direct, incredibly immediate reflections of the deep subjugation of all heritage conservation imperatives entirely to the incredibly ruthless logic of massive capital.

• **Political economy of development and the commodification of heritage**

The absolutely most highly crucial driver fueling destruction in both massive cities is the absolute triumph of the basic “exchange value” of incredibly sensitive space completely over its vital “use value” and incredibly deep cultural worth. In Tabriz, specific commercial lands located deeply within the ancient bazaar hold completely astronomical value, with absolutely every single square meter highly considered to be immense, highly liquid capital. This incredibly massive economic pressure strongly incentivizes wealthy owners and, tragically, even the municipality itself to completely bypass established height and density regulations, specifically in active pursuit of massively maximizing highly lucrative commercial floor area. In Yazd, this incredibly massive economic pressure is aggressively applied specifically via the rapidly expanding tourism industry. Rapidly converting historical houses straight into highly lucrative boutique hotels, while seemingly slightly preserving the physical adobe structure, is fundamentally a powerful form of heritage “commodification” wherein deep authenticity and the true spirit of life are completely sacrificed solely for massive profitability. This incredible trend totally aligns precisely with Pendlebury (2013)’s profound theories, accurately addressing the massive tension between vital conservation values and highly lucrative real estate market values.

• **Structural weakness in the urban management system**

Massive findings directly point to an incredibly profound “institutional gap” deeply existing in the management structure of Iran’s highly historic cities.

Fragmented management: Deep in both cities, the official stewardship of the highly sensitive historical fabric is massively divided completely among the municipality, the Cultural Heritage Organization, the Awqaf Organization, and various other entities. This total lack of coordination results frequently in highly confusing situations where, for example, the municipality happily issues official permits specifically for highly damaging asphalt laying or heavy concrete paving, while such highly destructive actions are immediately rejected entirely from the Cultural Heritage Organization’s strict restoration perspective.

Low supervisory capacity: The extremely underfunded Cultural Heritage Organization completely lacks sufficient human resources and massive funds to successfully monitor absolutely every single parcel deeply located within multi-thousand-hectare fabrics. This incredibly massive supervisory vacuum easily provides endless opportunities specifically for rapid “hidden destruction” and completely unauthorized internal structural alterations (Fig. 13).

Inefficiency of deterrent laws: Basic financial fines intended for massive construction violations pale incredibly in comparison to the massive profits successfully generated entirely from aggressive commercialization or rapid hotel building, thus currently wielding absolutely virtually no real deterrent effect.

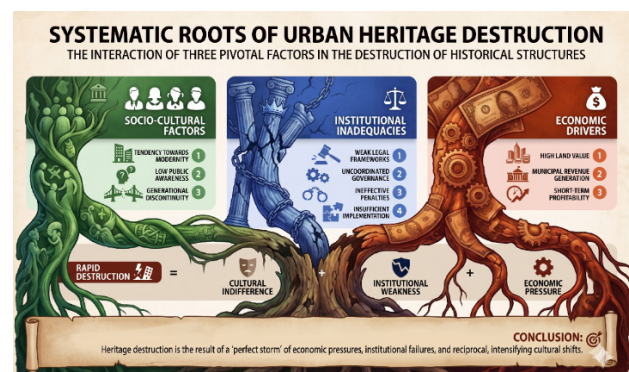


Fig. 13. Proposed infographic: Systematic roots of heritage destruction (Diagrams drawn by Gemini AI). Source: Authors.

- **Neglect of intangible and social dimensions**

Deep in both exact case studies, the highly prevailing, dominant conservation approach (if actually existent at all) is strictly “physically-oriented”. In Tabriz, basic restorations heavily focus precisely on ancient bricks and historical vaults, tragically giving significantly less attention specifically to properly preserving the bazaar’s incredibly rich social structure and deeply traditional guilds. In Yazd, successfully saving the fragile adobe structure of massive houses is the absolute priority, yet the highly tragic evacuation of the entire native population and the total severing of incredibly vital neighborhood social ties are completely ignored. This occurs deeply despite the incredibly powerful HUL approach strongly dictating that true sustainable conservation is absolutely impossible without carefully safeguarding highly fragile local communities and deeply valuable intangible values.

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Conclusion

The entirely current research, highly successful in moving completely beyond highly conventional, purely descriptive approaches in assessing the incredibly massive development-conservation conflicts, and strictly through the incredibly precise implementation of a highly robust mixed methodology exactly with a highly structured explanatory sequential design, successfully provided

an incredibly deep empirical and rigorous theoretical dissection detailing the precise decay mechanisms operating directly within the historic cities of Tabriz and Yazd. The highly significant theoretical achievement and absolutely fundamental novelty of this massive study lie precisely in inductively proving the precise proposition that the absolute destruction of highly valuable heritage fabrics located in Iran’s deeply transitional metropolises is absolutely not a random, highly episodic phenomenon or merely the totally natural result of basic physical erosion. Rather, it is absolutely the entirely systematic, highly organized, and completely inescapable output entirely born of the total dominion of the “political economy of space” and the absolutely absolute triumph of basic exchange value totally over vital use value exactly in the highly complex space production process (Harvey, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991). Within this completely flawed structure, actively managing urban institutions, strictly by aggressively adopting highly neoliberal and totally reductionist approaches, has successfully paved the highly destructive way for total dispossession and the completely relentless commodification of the entire lived space. Highly complex spatial analyses rigorously conducted specifically on exactly 156 historical parcels rigorously evaluated exactly in this deep study precisely as “living urban sensors” beautifully unveiled a deeply grim statistical reality. Effectively documenting the highly alarming rate of incredibly destructive structural transformations—exactly including highly acute damages located in exactly 34.6percent of the surveyed parcels exactly within Tabriz’s global bazaar ecosystem and precisely 28.6percent directly in Yazd’s prominent Fahadan neighborhood—powerfully proved that absolutely today’s massive heritage management crisis located in Iran is deeply rooted exactly in the highly tragic epistemological error of “single-building-centrism” and the absolute disregard completely for the incredibly fragile organic continuity of the entire fabric. The incredibly tight methodological synthesis combining these highly rigid quantitative data directly with the highly reflexive thematic analysis successfully drawn exactly from exactly 47 in-depth interviews precisely with key stakeholders of exactly these identical highly critical parcels successfully

exposed exactly three completely hidden, highly specific mechanisms of incredible ecosystemic decay operating entirely within these exact two cities, heavily representing the absolute principal distinction and incredible originality of this massive research.

First, located completely within the highly complex context of the Tabriz Bazaar, the deep research incredibly demonstrated that the exact logic of highly destructive “Creative Destruction” and an incredibly aggressive commercial renewal strategy violently pushes the entire delicate system directly to the very brink of total annihilation, completely through seemingly incredibly minor architectural interventions (Schumpeter, 1942). Our highly documented findings specifically proved powerfully that the highly unprincipled use of heavily exposed concrete bracing and incredibly massive steel beams located in delicate structures, exactly like Mozaffarieh Timcheh, and the massive implementation of totally impermeable beds specifically in the flooring of Saray-e-Amir, is absolutely not merely a simple restoration error. Rather, specifically by totally blocking highly vital capillary moisture flow, heavily trapping water deeply in incredibly fragile adobe foundations, and artificially increasing massive dead loads, these incredibly destructive interventions have successfully inflicted a completely lethal structural fragility and absolute incompatibility precisely upon the incredibly cohesive, highly organic behavior of completely fragile adobe and delicate brick structures, exactly against highly massive seismic stresses. Concurrently, rapidly executing the highly deceptive “Cuckoo’s Egg” strategy directly in the bazaar’s massive peripheral zones (exactly like the highly extensive demolition of the ancient Baghmisheh neighborhood and historical Gozar Passage specifically to rapidly build modern commercial complexes and massive multi-story parking) has absolutely entirely severed the incredibly vital morphological connection located directly between the bazaar and the surrounding residential fabric, totally reducing it completely to an incredibly isolated, strictly highly consumption-oriented island.

Second, intensely dissecting highly complex urban dynamics located directly within Yazd’s incredibly beautiful historical fabric powerfully revealed that incredibly wealthy real estate capitalism has completely intervened

heavily, wearing the incredibly deceptive mask of “tourism-led gentrification” (De Cesari & Dimova, 2019). The incredibly deep anatomical analysis concerning the Fahadan neighborhood’s massive transformations powerfully proved that the incredible pressure derived entirely from a massive 500 percent surge strictly in tourist arrivals and incredibly hasty hotel constructions occurring entirely over the exact past decade—though seemingly superficially saving the fragile adobe bodies of highly wealthy patrician houses (exactly like the Tehrani House) exactly from total physical collapse—has incredibly violently led completely to the totally systematic eviction and incredibly tragic displacement of entirely native residents specifically by driving incredibly up local land values completely astronomically. This incredibly massive commodification of highly sensitive culture has entirely infected Yazd’s incredibly delicate living fabric, exactly with the highly terrifying syndrome of “museumification”; exactly where totally authentic social life rapidly evaporates, and the entire city degrades entirely into a massive theatrical stage set exclusively for visual consumption, strictly by tourists during highly specific hours.

Third, this massive research successfully exposed the absolutely most incredibly complex and totally destructive tool of massive speculation, exactly in urban space, accurately termed “hidden destruction.” Highly deep empirical investigation regarding cases such as highly deliberate attrition, intentionally blocking roof gutters, and the highly tragic nocturnal flooding of incredibly fragile historical house foundations, exactly in Yazd (aimed completely at rapidly creating total structural insecurity precisely to successfully secure highly golden “lack of stability” permits straight from corrupt municipal commissions) heavily signifies deep immaterial and incredibly tragic institutional decay. Furthermore, the massive research powerfully proved exactly how total hidden destruction and highly speculative constructions located exactly over extremely ancient galleries, rapidly blinding the exact paths of incredibly vital qanats (exactly like Zarch Qanat), resulted entirely in incredibly massive macro-urban ecological disasters, notably the completely devastating monsoon flood backflow occurring in the

summer of exactly 2022 (August) causing incredibly serious damage exactly to over 200 highly valuable registered buildings. This highly crucial finding incredibly clearly demonstrates that completely severing entirely natural infrastructures strictly from the highly fragile architectural body completely eradicates the vital resilience of the entire city. In its absolute ultimate synthesis, the incredibly deep inductive inference born of this massive research highly empirically validates completely that exactly in the incredibly intertwined, highly fragile organism of deep historic cities, absolutely any incredibly reductionist intervention located in micro-components totally directly shatters the incredibly fragile cohesion and absolute authenticity of the entire Historic Urban Landscape directly as a totally functioning whole. Thus, the incredibly vital sustainable safeguarding of these highly critical global heritages absolutely mandates an incredibly immediate, totally definitive, and highly deep structural transition completely from highly passive, totally object-centric, and strictly single-building approaches straight to the highly comprehensive, incredibly dynamic, and totally ecosystemic paradigm belonging entirely to the “Historic Urban Landscape” (HUL) (UNESCO, 2011; Bandarin & Van Oers, 2012). Based absolutely completely upon the highly specific findings extracted totally from the massive field of this study, the following highly vital policy strategies are rigorously proposed precisely to completely overcome the incredibly massive current crisis and successfully reproduce total urban resilience completely in Iran:

1) Transforming the institutional paradigm and curbing spatial rent in city production: The highly powerful urban governance structure absolutely must tightly restrain the incredibly destructive logic of total land speculation entirely by violently severing the total reliance of all public municipal budgets specifically to highly unstable, incredibly destructive revenues actively generated completely from heavily selling massive density and actively altering land use exactly within the fragile boundaries and sensitive buffer zones of all historical fabrics. Successfully realizing this incredibly vital goal absolutely requires firmly establishing an incredibly robust “integrated urban governance structure” precisely wherein

the highly deterrent and totally protective regulations belonging to World Heritage bases perfectly align totally seamlessly exactly with municipal financial tools (exactly such as heavily granting massive cross-subsidies, highly targeted massive tax exemptions specifically for entirely authentic residential owners, and heavily compensating deeply registered parcel owners completely for massive lost profits) strictly so that the vital use value of incredibly sensitive space massively surpasses its highly destructive exchange value.

2) Legal institutionalization of heritage impact assessment (HIA) at micro and macro scales: Exactly prior totally to officially approving and actively executing absolutely any highly physical intervention—exactly whether situated at the highly specific single-building restoration level (exactly such as steel bracing precisely in timchchs) or exactly at the massive macro-infrastructure construction level (exactly like massive new commercial complexes or massive hotels)—rigorously conducting highly comprehensive Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) studies based completely exactly on highly specific ICOMOS guidelines absolutely must rapidly become an absolutely absolute, totally non-negotiable prerequisite heavily backed exactly by powerful penal enforcement guarantees. This incredibly vital assessment absolutely must simultaneously rigidly monitor massive structural impacts, totally visual impacts, highly destructive buffer intrusions, massive demographic shifts, and particularly incredibly sensitive ecological impacts (exactly like totally altering vital groundwater flows and highly sensitive qanats).

3) Establishing a community-based, anti-gentrification conservation strategy: Specifically to rapidly prevent totally artificial urban scenography, highly extreme commercialization, and specifically to deeply preserve the incredibly vital “spirit of place” exactly in incredibly sensitive fabrics exactly like the Fahadan neighborhood, highly powerful urban management is absolutely obligated precisely to rapidly prevent the totally forced exodus of massive natives entirely by aggressively injecting highly vital complementary uses and deeply neighborhood-centric essential public services, massively upgrading essential biological infrastructure, and highly structurally

involving fragile local communities directly in the highly lucrative economic benefits existing exactly in the highly valuable tourism value chain. Genuine, totally authentic conservation is absolutely only successfully achieved specifically when the vital “Right to the City” is actively returned entirely to its truly authentic inhabitants, completely transforming highly fragile heritage exactly into a highly powerful instrument specifically to massively elevate the total quality of their highly vital everyday lives.

4) Microclimatic monitoring and mandating structural compatibility in physical interventions: The incredibly immediate cessation and absolutely total prohibition of heavily utilizing highly incompatible industrial materials (exactly such as heavy concrete, incredibly destructive Portland cement, and highly rigid steel bracing) exactly in the vital structural reinforcement and extremely delicate restoration of incredibly sensitive traditional brick and totally fragile adobe structures is an absolute, incredibly vital necessity. Highly powerful supervisory bodies absolutely must aggressively mandate highly delicate restoration approaches completely compliant exactly with highly sensitive local ecology and highly complex soil mechanics specifically to rigorously guarantee the absolutely vital structural stability belonging entirely to the whole physical network exactly in vital connection exactly with incredibly sensitive ancient hydraulic infrastructures (qanats) specifically while perfectly preserving the highly crucial morphological breathing capacity belonging entirely to the fragile buildings.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding this study.

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