

# Tourism and Urban Planning for Intermediate Cities: An Empirical Approach toward Cultural Heritage Conservation in Damavand, Iran

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**Abstract**—Intermediate cities which also called medium size cities have an important role in the process of globalization. It is argued that, in some cases this type of cities may be depopulated or in otherwise may be transformed as the periphery of metropolitans, so that the personal identity of the city and its local cultural heritage could suffer from its neighbor metropolitan. Over the last decades, the role of tourism in the development process and the cultural heritage has increased. The impact of tourism on socioeconomic growth makes motivation for the study of tourism development in regional and urban planning process. There are evidences that tourism has a positive impact in local development and makes economic motivations for cultural heritage protection. In this study, by considering the role of tourism in local development, especially by its economic and socio-cultural impacts, it is tried to introduce a strategy for tourism development through a method of urban planning for intermediate cities called as Base plan. Damavand is an intermediate city located in Tehran province, Iran with a high potential in tourism by its local specific characteristic like social structure, antiquities and natural attractions. It's selected as a suitable case study for intended strategy which is a combination of urban planning and tourism development methods. Focusing on recognition of the historical and cultural heritage of Damavand, in this paper through "base plan methodology" a strategy of urban planning toward tourism development is prepared in order to make tourism development as a support for cultural heritage of this city.

**Keywords**—Urban planning, tourism, cultural heritage, intermediate cities.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**T**OURISM policies and plans are normally characterized by a sectorial, economic approach so that they are not seen as territorial policies. The role of tourism development on regional-local scale is highlighted when all infrastructures and changes, making by tourism like new places, houses, pipelines and so on are considered. How can tourism effect on local culture and its positive and negative effects has been the case of interdisciplinary debates [1], [2].

As we know, in the tourism market, new visitors are interested in exploring new attractions and physical-cultural characteristics. At the same time, tourism flow brings different people together, new residents arrive from other cities and countries, the culture is influenced, places are viewed in different ways and new meanings are given to them.

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According to Cannaos, all policies affecting the social-population composition of a territory and its urban, physical and environmental structure should not be sectorial and it can be said that "tourism policies are territorial policies" [3]. This idea emphasizes on strong affect and relationship between territorial and tourism policies. Extending this idea, it could be describe for urban plan and tourism issues, so that in urban scale tourism development plan could be a part of the urban plan. From another point of view which is the cultural heritage conservation; a variety of policies have been studied for Touristic cities. There is no doubt that tourism could bring advantages for local values at least by visitors who are interested to find, experience and visit local attractions including cultural heritage. For instance, local museum, local products, handmade arts, traditional festivals, and all other local values which are categorized under the name of cultural heritage, by exhibition find the chance to survive more.

Globalization and intermediate cities – the cities which also called medium sized cities, has been the case of challenges specially where this type of cities may be depopulated or in otherwise may be transformed as the periphery of metropolitans [4] so that the personal identity of the city and its local cultural heritage could suffer from its neighbor metropolitan. Where we faced with a city without a modified, definitive or any tourism development plan, and also without a prepared general urban plan, the question is how could urban planning help a non-touristic intermediate city to follow its urban development toward an active tourism market? In this regard, one of initiative methodologies for urban planning of intermediate cities is practically assessed in this paper. Considering all actors mentioned above, it is believed that the tourism development trend in urban planning, will conclude in better cultural heritage conservation. In this paper, it is trying to follow this issue in the Damavand city through a practical approach on Base Plan methodology [4].

## II. DAMAVAND: A HISTORIC CITY OR A CITY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF A METROPOLIS?

Damavand is an intermediate city located in the east of Tehran Capital in Tehran province, Iran. The territory has a high potential in natural and historic attractions, but there is a lack of considerable plan in the field of tourism and historical heritage. This area has been studied as the heart of an ecotourism development process by Base Plan methodology [5]. In addition to the natural attractions, the city has specific characteristics and identity in the regional scale by its local

accent, ecologic products, traditions and its neighborhood structure [6]. All of these characteristics are melting under the process of globalization or nationalization when local values are getting ignored in a larger scale [7]-[8].

Its geopolitical location shows main effective factors:

- Damavand has a strong connection with the national transportation network. Its strategic location made a perfect access to main national highways and to all around cities.
- Vicinity to the Tehran capital with over than 8 million habitants. Tehran has a comprehensive effect on all socio-economic features of Damavand.
- Tehran has a high labor market and this social labor is spreading out of the capital to its county. So there is a strong desire to residential construction in Damavand.

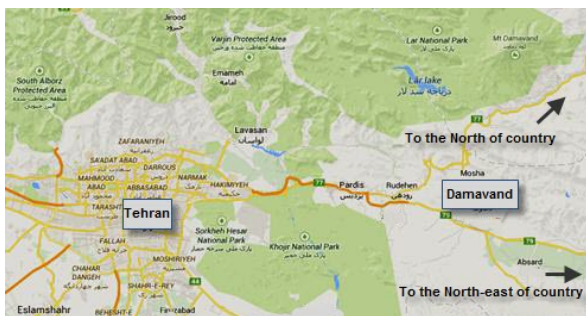


Fig. 1 Geographical location of Damavand

Hence, the geographic location of Damavand creates a complex socioeconomic condition for the city. For instance, this location makes it a suitable cheaper residence for labors working in Tehran Capital. But also, taking advantage of this feature, it can attract a high number of tourists to the city which may conclude in positive economic and social effects. In fact, the city is faced with increasing social issues and its local cultural characteristics are disappearing where it's in challenge with transient populations, immigrants and their cultures.

### III. RECOGNITION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

The tourism development issue joint with the urban planning process for this intermediate city could be planed toward cultural-historical heritage conservation. The present paper explores a cultural heritage approach upon urban planning process, notably by a focus on local specific characteristics. Since the city has no a special tourism plan, it is tried to focus on cultural heritage conservation through an urban planning method called "Base Plan" introduced by Llop in 1999.

Damavand is one of the oldest and most ancient cities of Iran. The name of the city is the same name of the highest peak of Iran, Mount Damavand. Evidence shows human presence in this area from thousands years ago. Some caves have signs of Mithraism inside. Land area is owned by the myth, having nice weather and fertile land, also fantastic strategic location between the Caspian and Central Plateau

made it important in the history. Despite the frequent earthquakes in this region, many monuments around the city are still remained.

#### A. The Specific Characteristics of the City

Among all cultural concepts of the city, more specifics are highlighted.

- The name of the city comes from Mount Damavand, a volcano potential active and the highest peak of the country with thousands visitors per year. It has a special place in Persian mythology and folklore. This mount is in the north of the city with about 25km distance.
- The social structure of the city is including 17 neighborhoods.
- Local accent of people

The other demographic characteristics are so similar or are in common with other cities in territorial scale.

#### B. The Most Valuable-Historic Places of the City: Expressions of Urban Identity

It is difficult to imagine a boundary around a city to define them as historical and cultural heritage. It seems to be more territorial issue, but when we focused on urban plan, it could be more useful to focus on urban monuments and sites symbolizing the city:

- Shebeli Tower and Tomb (12th century): it is a historical tower in the city center, standing approximately 10 meters tall, the structure is a roofed octagon tomb of Sheikh Shebeli, a Sufi mystic and under the structure there is a Sardab (basement). The structure is a remnant of the Samanid era and is similar in design to extant structures in Bukhara, Afghanistan. The structure recently underwent some preservation.
- Jame mosque (15th century): The Congregation mosque of Damavand is an historical mosque in the city center built in 1409 CE, it includes traces of Samanid architecture. It has been reconstructed in some parts.
- Cheshmeh Ala spring: This popular mineral water spring located in north boundary of the city and is close to residential districts. The high quality of this water spring led to the foundation of one of the greatest mineral water companies in Iran which product "Damavand mineral water".

### IV. URBAN PLANNING BY FOCUSING ON CULTURAL VALUES

The strategic planning and methodology of Base plan is used for preparing an urban plan by this issue. Since the planning is the first step of the development process, this paper is trying to make a relationship between urban planning steps of "base plan" methodology and socio-cultural identity of the city.

#### A. Base Plan as a Basic Urban Plan of Damavand

Base Plan by its defined methodology, is provided by a study on social, economic, typology and other local characters regarding its structure according to the structure defined by Llop are summarized as below:

- a) City size and form: Damavand has a linear city influenced by topography form with the length of 6 Km.
- b) City size and density: the legal urban surface area of Damavand (SU) including 17 neighborhoods which is limited by urban boundary is 2442 ha. Gross Density of urban area is 19 (Hb/Ha) it seems low, but it's because of the high ratio of farms and gardens inside urban boundary.
- c) The city and its urban "hinterland": The radius of influence of Damavand is approximately 28 kilometers, including the municipalities of Damavand, Roudehen city and rural areas.
- d) Network of services and its infrastructure, including water, sewage system. Public lighting and electrical grids, street cleaning and Refuse collection, Selective refuse collection are reviewed.
- e) Territorial infrastructure: including public transport, domestic and international airports of Tehran with lack of rail station inside the city.
- f) Network of free spaces and green areas shows a lack of public spaces where there are hectares of farmland inside urban boundary.
- g) Levels of urban equipment including education institutes, public libraries and health care, sports pavilion, hospital and health clinics.
- h) Government: There is a City Council with 5 councilors who elected by citizens. It chooses the Mayor of the city and supervises the Municipality's activities, but in the phase of Urban planning, this plan approved in a Supreme Council in central government.
- i) Annual municipal budget shows a medium level budget in comparison with other municipalities of the province.
- j) Type of intermediate city: Damavand is a medium-sized city on the periphery of the metropolis of Tehran.
- k) Economic activity: more than 61% of labor population is working in the tertiary sector in commerce and services. Based on the census, 1% of total employments are in direct relation with Tourism [9].
- l) Housing: Approximately half of the residents live in single family houses. Based on the census, employments in direct relation with Tourism are about 1% of the total population.
- m) Monuments or building that most clearly symbolize the city are Jame mosque (15th century) and Shebeli historic tower (12th century)
- n) Most important urban projects carried out the last 10 years
- o) Observations concerning the contents of the General Urban Plan (GUP) Study and suggestions for future Infrastructure that is including a sport complex, hospital, some changes in the transportation network, some methods for increasing the income of the municipality via construction taxes, Definition of the urban boundary
- p) Most important projects currently being undertaken
- q) To continue, different urban zones (regulated urban zone, renovation zone and transformation zone), nodes, basic services and other important factors have been defined and shown on the Base plan [5].

### *B. Result of Urban Infrastructure Analysis*

In general, the review of statistics and urban data showed that Damavand is at a suitable level of urban equipment in the majority of mentioned factors, but in the field of tourism promotion it has to specifically be planned. The last phase of urban planning by the methodology of Base plan and the fruit of Base plan documentation and study on current urban condition is a proposal in which the most important projects for the next 10 years is suggested on a graphic plan. Considering sustainable urban issues [10], [11], these projects are the result of SWOT analysis regarding tourism development and cultural heritage conservation [5]:

- Constructing a complex of a Hotel and Restaurant: The lack of hotel made most visitors to take advantage of the hotels and facilities in Tehran. Therefore, instruction of standard hotels is an urgent need regarding tourism promotion.
- Museum: The lack of a city museum in the current situation is the lack of an information center. A museum keeps of the identity of a city with all natural, historical and anthropological factors. Furthermore, it shows Attractions, give visitor information, events schedule, and information on group activities and facility rentals.
- Theme Park: It's currently defined as one of future projects in GUB. In base plan also it mentioned as one of projects because of its advantages for the city.
- Camping Area: Ecotourism potential of this county by many natural destinations around the city, attract tourists, so providing a Camping area would be a start station for adventure and nature activities.
- Local products Market: Some ecological products of this city are popular because of its high quality, being organic and special flavors such as Golden apple of Damavand, Mineral water, Cherries, traditional yoghurt and buttermilk. Construction of a local product market would be a positive factor in the local economy; also it would be a promotional strategy for protecting traditional products.
- Handicrafts Market: It will bring benefits to local people and tourists. As a market, clearly it improves the local economy and will provide an exhibition of local and traditional arts; also it will make some job vacancies directly and indirectly.
- Transport Terminal in the historic area: considering the lack of an equipped terminal for supporting public transport.
- Visitor Parking Lots: The structure of city center especially around historic monuments has not enough open space and wide streets for parking lots.
- Linear Urban Park: In comparison with a standard, which is 10 m<sup>2</sup> / person, there is a lack of public green spaces. The local river inside the city could be a valuable potential for a linear park.
- Restoration of Shebeli historic tower: This historic tower needs attention to remain for future generation and it needs a restoration and rehabilitation.

All above projects are shown on the Base plan of Damavand [5] in Fig. 2.

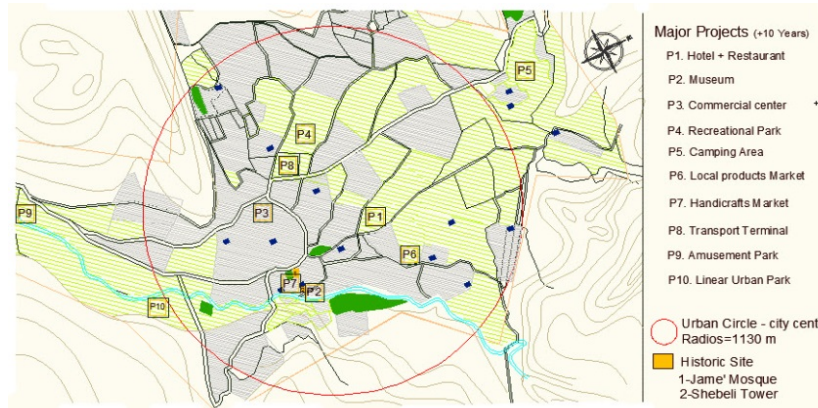


Fig. 2 Suggested Projects in Base Plan of Damavand

## V.CONCLUSION

The biggest novelty discussed here is the attempt to give a practical solution for tourism development issue in an intermediate city. Having the Pragmatic approach, it is focused on providing a plan as the first step for tourism promotion.

Nowadays, it is proved that by focusing on the local and cultural potential, final urban plan would be more in accordance with real local needs and potential [7]-[12]. Moreover, it's found that the methodology of base plan by taking attention on "urban monuments and historic buildings" as an item in its documentation process, finally could promote the planners to consider specific features of the city and take more attention on urban identity and local values. Nevertheless, its success depends on where and in which pattern we are working on this methodology. Besides, in the case of intermediate cities in Iran, planning process strategies and policies should be reviewed and discussed in future studies. It is believed that the base plan could find a location as a basic phase in the comprehensive planning process.

Considering the potential of Damavand in tourist attraction and the lack of a considerable plan in this regard, made a strong desire to practice the methodology of the Base plan as an academic work. Therefore, in this paper, the capacity of base plan is applied for tourism development and cultural heritage conservation was highlighted as lateral objective in the planning process. Therefore, his methodology which has been applied all around the world is shaped as a proposal for the first step of urban planning, could also be promoted for local strategic targets like cultural heritage conservation in other intermediate cities.

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