

City of Yazd today, a general overview of a World Heritage historic city

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Abstract: This article intends to create an image of the city of Yazd in its current state as accurate as possible. Its aim is not to analyse the city from a particular architectural or urban point of view or evaluate its development. Instead, it aims to provide a general account of Yazd as it is today and its outlook for future without focusing on detail. Although some detailed information is given where necessary.

Keywords: Yazd, historic city, urban rehabilitation.

Introduction

Yazd, one of the most ancient cities in Iran is located on the border of the central desert, Dasht-e Lout. This geographical location means a hot and dry climate with low level of annual precipitation and humidity as well as high average temperature. Its historic urban fabric was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2017 for two criteria: the first as «a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared» and second as «an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change».² In addition to its historical values and cultural significance, Yazd is the capital city of the Province of Yazd and the largest city in the region. The important industrial, medical and higher educational institutions present in the city make it a destination for new population both on temporary and permanent basis and from inside or outside its immediate region.

1. Architect, Doctorate in Urban Studies.

2. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria/>; 13/07/20; 11:41.



Yazd, Jami Mosque Street © Morteza Ahmadvand.

Yazd is a tourist destination both nationally and internationally. In recent years especially after the nuclear deal between Iran and P5+1 (2015) the number of foreign tourists increased significantly, and Yazd became a global tourist destination although not yet as important as Isfahan, Shiraz or Kermanshah. During Spring 2019, the city of Yazd has been amongst the first 20 tourist destinations for Iranian families.³ It is well known for its sustainable traditional architecture and urban development that is in total harmony with the harsh climatic conditions. The building materials are adobe and mud bricks and the whole historic city benefits from a sub terrain water distribution system called *kariz* or *qanat*, which is an engineering masterpiece. Each building, either a house, a mosque or a caravanserai, has a central courtyard consisting of a shallow pool and some vegetation, which create a microclimate inside the building. In addition, Yazd is the main city of Zoroastrian community which is the ancient Iranian religion still practiced in fire temples and places of worship in the city and the region.

3. <https://www.amar.org.ir/داده‌ها-و-آمارات-اعمال-طاو-اهمداد/>; 13/07/20; 17:21.

The first master plan of the city was prepared in 1977 in “Design Atelier” of the Faculty of Fine arts of the University of Tehran under direction of architect Professor Mehdi Kowsar. Italian architect Professor Ludovico Quaroni cooperated as consultant in the project. The focal point of this plan was the safeguard of the historic center along with managing the development of the city and the formation of new urban zones: «Along with the usual research for a master plan that considered the different aspects of Yazd, special attention has been paid to the old part of the town, attempting to define it as the main element of the whole urban complex».⁴ At the time of preparing the master Plan Yazd was a small town with only 135,000 inhabitants. A new master plan was prepared in 2006 by Arseh Consultant Engineers for the city, which had seen its population grow this time to more than 480,000 inhabitants. Since 1977 Yazd has changed in many ways. New districts have developed around the city and many preservation projects have been undertaken in the historic part. This article intends to create an image of the city of Yazd in its current state as accurate as possible. Its aim is not to analyse the city from a particular architectural or urban point of view or evaluate its development. Instead, it aims to provide a general account of Yazd as it is today and its outlook for future without focusing on detail. Although some detailed information is given where necessary. The main sources used for this study are the official plans prepared for the city, the national census, some desktop research and prior personal knowledge.⁵

General overview

Located at the middle of the Iranian plateau the city of Yazd is the largest city in the region and one of the most ancient ones in the country. Archeological studies show that the region has been inhabited by human local communities since the fifth millennium BC. Then the Arians immigrated and settled there around the second millennium BC.

4. KOWSAR 2019.

5. I have lived in Yazd from 2000 to 2006 and have taught at the Faculty of Art and Architecture of University of Yazd. This direct involvement in the life of the city besides a research I did about the architectural and urban identity of Yazd provides me a clearer and deeper vision of this historic city and its physical and social aspects.

The province of Yazd includes a large number of historic sites and archeological remains. Only in the city of Yazd eighty-four historic sites and buildings are classified as National Heritage including houses, mosques, gardens, underground water reservoirs, bazars and caravanserais.⁶ Yazd is also the most important city of the religious minority of Zoroastrians, followers of the ancient Iranian religion, Zoroastrianism,⁷ which has been practiced in Iran for more than three millennia. It was the official religion of Iran before the Muslim conquest in 651. The Zoroastrian fire temple inside the city and some Zoroastrian worship places in the region are also recognized as national heritage.

Connections: Yazd is located at a strategic intersection of major routes coming from across the country. For centuries, the Bazar and caravanserais of Yazd received the traders along the Silk Road or Spice Road. In the National Land-Use Plan Yazd region is appointed as “center of industry and service and good distribution point” (ibid). Today the existence of large and small industries and various mines in the region assigns a particular importance to the transport infrastructure. More than 7,000 km of roads and two major lines of railroad connect Yazd to the rest of the country. There is also an airport with regular flights to Tehran, Isfahan and the major cities in South, East, Southeast and Northeast of the country.⁸ Its main road known as CENTO⁹ road is one of the most important good transport corridors joining the ports of Persian Gulf to the rest of Iran (ibid). Three vast provinces of Hormozgan in South, Kerman and Sistan in East are connected to the rest of the country by the help of Yazd’s transport network. The city is situated on Asian highways AH2 running from Denpasar, Indonesia to Khosravi, Iran and AH70 between Donetsk, Russia to Bandarabbas one of the Iranian Southern ports on Persian Gulf coasts (ESCAP, United Nations).¹⁰

6. ARSEH 2007.

7. It was the official religion of Iran before the Muslim conquest in 651. Today the population of Zoroastrians in Iran is about 25,000 who live mostly in Yazd, Kerman and Tehran.

8. Arseh 2007, *op. cit.*.

9. Central Treaty Organization, look at: Bagdad Pact (1955-1979).

10. Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific; The Asian Highway network is a regional transport cooperation initiative aimed at enhancing the efficiency and development of the road infrastructure in Asia, supporting the development of Euro-Asia transport linkages and

Demography and society: According to the latest national census in 2016¹¹ the population of city of Yazd was 529,673. The estimated population of Yazd for 2020 is around 570,000 people. In the whole province the population growth rate within a period of five years (2011-2016) has been 1.77 in urban and – 2.04 in rural zones. The average age is 29.9 years with 29.6 years in urban and 31.7 years in rural zones. This information indicates a rural-urban migration flow in the region as young people migrate from rural to urban zones. Yazd is amongst few Iranian cities, which has succeeded to attract high skilled immigrants both from its adjacent region and other regions in the country. Master plan suggests that during the decade between 1986 and 1996 more than 50,000 immigrants arrived in Yazd while more than 42% of this population came from urban zones of other regions.¹² This is especially due to the development of three different fields in Yazd: industry, higher education and specialist healthcare in infertility treatment and heart diseases. Researchers even discuss that Yazd could be a medical tourism hub in the Middle East, if necessary infrastructures are provided¹³: «The region of Yazd has historically been mostly urbanized. This is due to, in one hand the climatic conditions, which are not suitable for agriculture or livestock raising, and in the other hand the location of the city on the ancient Silk and Spice Roads, which made it an important community of industrial production and commercial activity. The same paradigm is as important today as ever. Today 85% of the region's population lives in urban zones way above the average rate of urbanization in the country, which is 74%. As master plan shows 42.8% of labour force works in industry, 54% in services and only 3.2% in agriculture». ¹⁴ The population is settled on an area of about 20,000 hectares, which means a density of less than 30 people per hectare. In addition, according to the estimations of Arseh Consultant Engineers, which has provided the last master plan of Yazd in 2006, 26.5% of the master plan area

improving connectivity for landlocked countries. URL: <https://www.unescap.org/our-work/transport/asian-highway>, 17/07/20, 16 :38.

11. <http://amar.yazdmporg.ir/Populate>; 14/07/2020; 13:08.

12. ARSEH, 2006, Arseh Consultant Engineers, Master plan of the city of Yazd, Tehran, 2006. Consulted on the website of the Iranian Ministry of Roads & Urban Development, URL : <https://www.mrud.ir/یرامعمو-یزاسرهش-یتاعالطا-یاهنم/یرامعمو-یزاسرهش>

13. ARDAKAN et al 2019.

14. ARSEH 2006

(including Yazd and its four satellite zones) consists of wasteland. Low density and large amount of land available inside legal borders of the city indicate that inner growth is an achievable solution for further development, which prevents urban fabric to sprawl beyond the current administrative boundaries. This is crucial for sustainable development especially in such arid and hot climate. Water shortage has always been an issue in many regions of Iranian plateau. In the central part of Iran it has created a particular culture and lifestyle along the centuries. The harsh climate has influenced every aspect of the communities including social relations, production and economic models, and urban and rural development patterns. People had invented “*Kariz*”,¹⁵ a complex and efficient system of sub terrain irrigation galleries to distribute water into the cities and villages. This water is extremely precious and not enough in volume to be used for large-scale agriculture as it evaporates easily under the hot rays of sun. Instead planting fruit trees and creating gardens could be a better choice for agriculture as they create shadow, which will preserve water from evaporating. The gardens protect the city against sand storms and cool down the air. The fruits serve as an economic source for local consumption and export. In the 17th century, during Safavid era Yazd was one of the largest silk producers benefiting from thousands of mulberries planted everywhere within and around the city. In addition, the sweet berries consumed fresh or dried made another source of income. Today this wise and sustainable way of living in difficult climate conditions is mostly forgotten and the majority of gardens are destroyed and replaced by new roads and residential districts. Sand storms happen more frequently – three times only in 2019 – and each year cause damages to agriculture, infrastructures and buildings, according to the director of the Service of Crisis Management of Yazd governorship.¹⁶

15. *Kariz* called also *Qanat* is a system of deep wells dug in the mountain foots, where water tables are formed as a result of rain and snow precipitations. Each will is connected to the next one by a sub terrain gallery which lets water flow gently on a slope calculated with high accuracy in a way that the water flow appears somewhere inside the city and is divided and conducted into small canals who pass through different quarters. At the time it was first used to fill the public potable water reservoirs, then passed through the mosques, then watered public baths, then irrigated notable people's houses, flowed into the other public places for other usages than drinking and finally watered the gardens, which used to surround the city as a green protecting belt.

16. Khabarban news website, URL: <https://khabarban.com/a/23803913>, consulted on 01/08/2020, 20:32.

Morphology and Urban fabric: Like most Iranian cities the city of Yazd consists of three distinct urban fabrics following different patterns of composing the “space” and the “mass” and different approaches to the “public” and “private” spaces.

1. The old part, which has been constructed in the course of centuries and is listed as World Heritage.
2. The middle part formed mostly between 1925 and 1941
3. The third part, consisted of new developments from 1950s on

The characteristics of each of these parts will be explained later.

Today Yazd is administratively divided into three boroughs, ten districts and fifty-two neighbourhoods.

Circulation network: Yazd follows a quasi-linear urban pattern extended between Northwest and Southeast. Street layout also is based on a longitudinal artery driving the whole length of the city and two transversal routes. An interlacement of secondary streets interconnects them and forms the circulation network of the city. There is also a beltway on the West, which serves mostly new developments and relates the city to its region. The network development suggested by Master Plan of 2007 is not yet completely executed. On the map (Fig. 1) solid lines show the existing axes and dashed lines represent new ones proposed by Master Plan.

Urban fabric: Historic sources like the works of geographers and explorers show that Yazd has certainly existed in Sassanid era (224-651) although some sources date it back to Achaemenid empire (550-330 BC). Nevertheless, today in Yazd *intra muros* the oldest buildings of the historic core are not older than 10th century.

Latest Master Plan (2006) suggests the location of the first core of Yazd, before Muslim invasion in 651, somewhere near the actual northern limits of the city. During the following centuries the city grew mostly on the direction of South. In 17th to 19th centuries it sprawled slowly towards Southeast and Southwest. In Pahlavis period (1925-1979) by urban modernization and the arrival of automobile the urban growth continued in a faster pace towards East, Southeast and Northwest. However, the most rapid urban growth happened after the revolution of 1979 as urban area increased three times within just five years – from 1800 ha in 1981 to 6000 ha in 1986. The population growth in the same



Fig. 1 – The network development suggested by Master Plan of 2007.

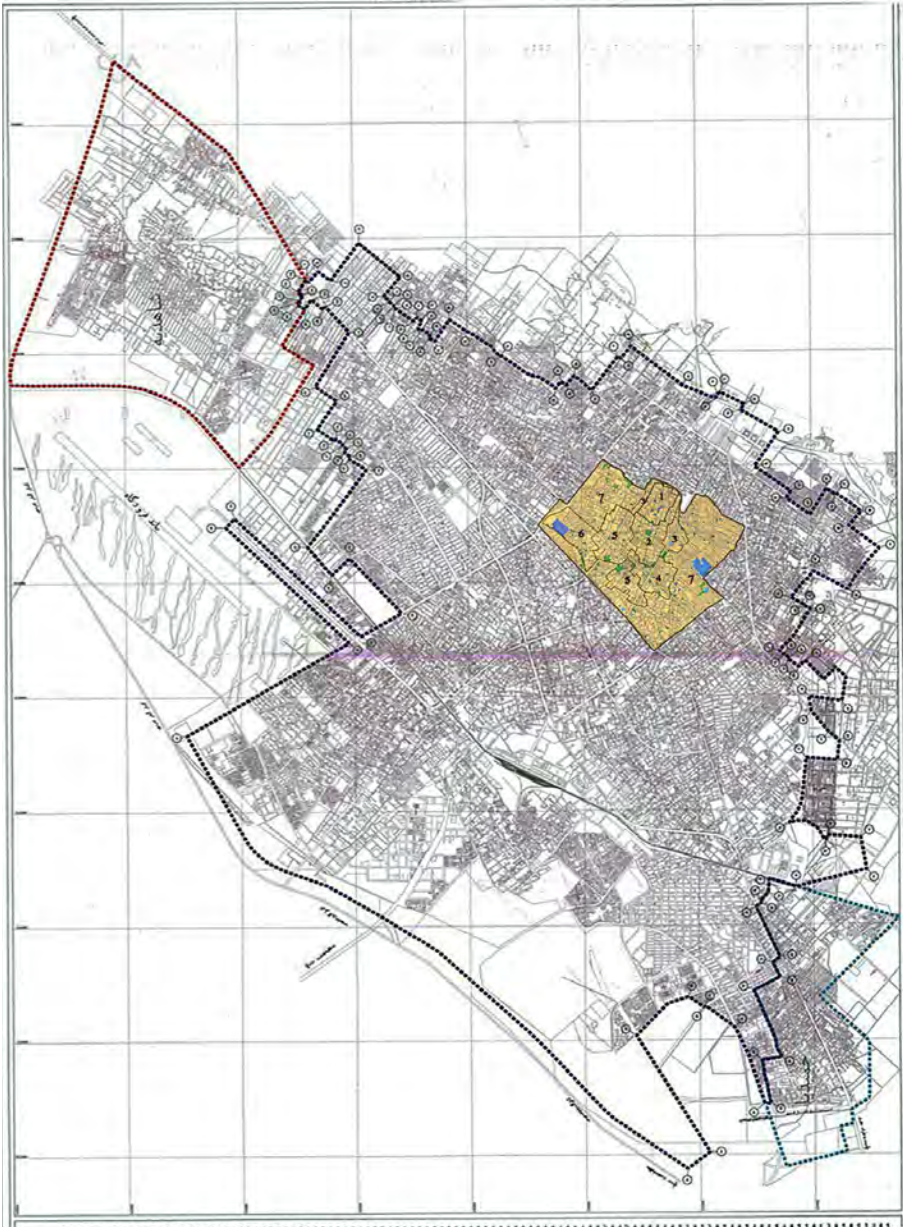


Fig. 2 – Yazd's urban growth © Arseh Consultant Engineers, 2007.

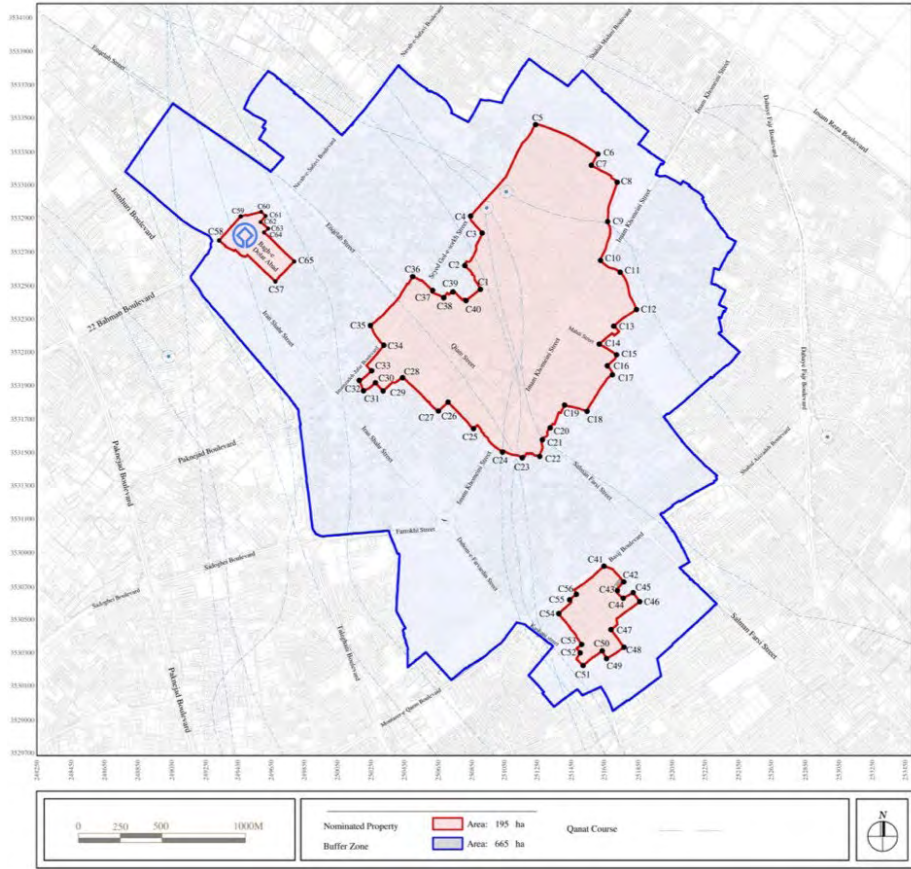


Fig. 3 – Yazd World Heritage, Property (red) and Buffer zone (blue) © whc.unesco.org



Fig. 4 – New districts of terraced houses, Safa'iyyeh, Yazd © Google maps.



*Fig. 5 – Terraced single family houses in new neighbourhoods, Yazd, Iran c Faegheh Nassei.
Fig. 6, 7 – New developments, Yazd, Iran c Faegheh Nasseeri.*

period was about 33% (Masoumi, 2014) partly due to the immigrations caused by Iran-Iraq war (1981-1988). When the first Master plan was being prepared, 120,000 Yazdi lived in an area of about 1090 ha. Today the population has reached 570,000 and the area increased to 20,000 ha (Tehran University, 1977 & Arseh, 2007). Figure 2 shows the urban growth of Yazd from the 4th century to present. Zone 1 represents the city in Sassanian period in 4th century. In the 11th century the city expanded to zone 2 and continued extending to zone 3 until the end of the 15th century. In zone 4 we can see the expansion of urban fabric in 16th century. During the 17th century Yazd spread into zone 5. New developments during 18th and 19th centuries pushed the limits behind the borders of zone 6 and finally urban modernization under Pahlavis introduced new limits for modern Yazd (zone 7). The rest of the map, inside the black lines, represents recent developments that are formed 1979 onwards. The area listed as National Heritage includes all the old part as well as the middle part (developments of 1930s) but the World Heritage urban fabric excludes all Pahlavi and some parts of Qajarid urban fabric (Fig. 3) although the buffer zone goes further and covers the middle part too.

Morphology: The old parts of the city are consisted of a compact fabric of introvert buildings arranged along narrow – sometimes covered – alleys, which are interwoven and form a pedestrian circulation network. Public open spaces are formed on the intersection of these narrow and shaded alleys and are used by children for playing and by adults for casual meetings or ceremonial gatherings (Tehran University, 1977). Each building has an internal courtyard with a shallow pool and vegetation.¹⁷ These small interior gardens create a microclimate, which improves climate conditions in hot and arid region by reducing temperature and increasing humidity inside the building. Closed or semi-open living and service spaces are built over one or two floors around the rectangular courtyard. External facades have rarely any opening other than the entrance door and are covered with clay. This

17. In some mosques like Jami' Mosque (Friday Mosque), the courtyard is let free to be used as a gathering place for prayer or other religious ceremonies. In such occasions, it can be covered by large decorated sheets of white canvas.

finishing material along with the curved form of the walls and the skyline create a harmonious image in the whole historic part. From time to time a *badgir* (wind catcher tower), a dome or a minaret stands out as a landmark. Although bazar, mosque or Hosseiniyeh¹⁸ have a strong social character and play an important role in the social life of the neighbourhoods, there are two essential differences between the definition of public urban space before and after the modernization measures enforced by Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941) resulting to the formation of “middle urban fabric”. The first difference concerns the architectural pattern of public space. Until the end of Qajar period architecture followed the same old rules and there was no difference between the spatial patterns of public and private buildings. They were all constructed according to introvert arrangement of spaces around an inner open space. In fact, even in a mosque or bazar the public space is “inside” and the external manifestation of the building is limited to its entrance, but “*Rezashahi*” architecture introduced a new definition of public space embodied in an extrovert architectural pattern: «While public buildings are open to the crowd, their facades facing the city are quasi closed. In these constructions, as in those of private dwellings, the “interior” and “exterior” are carefully separated. Indeed, it was only with urban radical transformations, during the first part of Pahlavi period, that a new type of public architecture was born. Open to the outside, it becomes visible to “public space” which itself acquires a new definition. This architecture is embodied in the new streets (*khiaban*) and the “extrovert” buildings that line them. These streets cut the compact and coherent fabric and impose a new urban way of life». ¹⁹ These new concepts created a new architecture, extrovert and open to “outside”. New streets and squares cut into the old compact fabric presented an unprecedented “urban façade”. *Khiaban* became the new public space of the city, where automobiles circulated in the middle and pedestrians

18. Deriving its name from the grandson of Mahomet, Hussain ibn Ali, Hosseiniyeh is a public gathering place used for commemoration ceremony of martyrdom of Hussain killed in Irak in 680. Hosseinyeh can be open or close. In Yazd they are rectangular open spaces surrounded by a row of small vaulted balconies in two floors where people sit to watch the ceremony, which is held by men in the open central part.

19. REZAEI-TABIBEH 2014.

strolled on both sides and looked at the windows of new shops selling, mostly, European products. Two-floor facades of *khiaban* were uniform on the whole length of the street. The shops usually occupied ground floors, while second floors were given to sewing workshops, physicians' offices, small hostels or even residential apartments. This mixture of functions is new to the Iranian cities especially living in an apartment on the border of the street was completely unprecedented.²⁰

The second difference lies in the presence of the State in the urban space. New squares called *maydan* were built on the conjunction of *khiabans* and State buildings like governorate, municipality, prefecture or National Bank were set up around them. Actually, governmental buildings stepped out of the "Arg", a citadel-like enclosure, where previously consisted of royal palaces and governmental institutions, and sat on the border of *khiaban* or *maydan*, themselves new forms of public space offering a new life style.²¹ These transformations formed a new urban fabric, which we call today "middle fabric" to distinguish it from the old and the new parts of the city. The middle fabric of Yazd is inscribed on National Heritage. It is also included in the buffer zone of the World Heritage fabric and is protected by law although not as strictly as old fabric. Since 1940s Yazd has continuously sprawled mostly towards South and Southwest. Modernization of the cities, especially the introduction of car transportation increased urban mobility and encouraged wealthy inhabitants to reside in greener suburbs, where most of them own private gardens. So, they left the old city and gradually formed new districts in suburbs. The architecture and the urban morphology in new residential developments are totally different from old parts. Some neighbourhoods, like that of the professors of the University of Yazd (Fig. 4, 5) are constituted of the

20. In fact, the modernization of Iran starts with Constitutional Revolution (1906), when Absolute Monarchy is replaced by a Constitutional Monarchy. The modern State apparatus creates new institutions, for which a new urban structure is needed but this urban transformation does not happen immediately. Although some urban modernization, or "Europeanization" measurements start at the end of 19th century, they are limited to Tehran and on a very restricted scale. It is only during Reza Shah Pahlavi's period (1925-1941) that vast urban transformation and forced modernization occurs not only in Tehran, but in all Iranian cities. New buildings are constructed for new State institutions and a new relationship is defined between the State and the city.

21. MAREFAT 1988

rows of terraced single-family houses arranged along the streets of a quasi-rectangular grid. In some others, blocks of apartments are built around shared gardens (Fig. 6, 7). In contrast to historic parts mixed land use is not an attribute of new developments. Lack of services is a serious problem in new neighbourhoods. While in old city each district has its own district centre, providing all kinds of services to inhabitants, new neighbourhoods are nothing more than residential buildings and streets. It takes often long time for urban services to be provided in new parts of the city. Although the height of the buildings and the number of floors in historic parts of the city are limited, the total density is higher than in new neighbourhoods. This makes historic fabric more available to create a sustainable environment.²²

Revitalization programmes and infill development in historic part: Although the Master Plan of 1977 required the preservation and rehabilitation of the historic core the Revolution of 1979 and eight years of war with Iraq (1980-1988) practically stopped all development programmes, the cities grew without an efficient management, especially when it came to receiving war refugees. In 1984 the revision of the Master Plan of Yazd was assigned to Shahrbod Consultant Engineers. Execution of Master Plan was put on the agenda and some protection measures were taken in historic part of the city. In 1989 the Faculty of Art and Architecture of the University of Yazd was established in a restored historic house in the district of Golchinan in old part of the city. Since then a few more restored houses are obtained to include the faculty as it further developed. Today the Faculty has four hundred and ninety-three students in three departments of Architecture, Painting and Urban studies in Bachelor and Master programmes (Fig. 8, 9). The presence of young students in the historic fabric has a positive social impact to the local area although some religious inhabitants see their “artistic” appearance and behaviour as disrespectful towards the traditional moral values. Besides the establishment of this Faculty many other revitalization projects have been executed in the historic core. The old city walls and the façades of the street Seyed-e Gol-e sorkh are restored although not exactly as designed in the Master Plan of 1977 (Fig. 10, 11,12).

22. SHARIFNEJAD et al 2016.



Fig. 8 – Faculty of Art & Architecture, Painting department © Mprteza Ahmadvand.

The old Bath of Khan has been transformed into restaurant and the water reservoir of Mirchakhmagh into *Zoorkhaneh*.²³ Since 1990s as part of Comprehensive Plans, some parcel amalgamation projects are prepared and executed in historic core. In such projects two or more parcels of land, often ruined houses, are joined to be constructed as one building. The projects of Tal (1996), Posht-e Bagh (2000), Sheikhdad (2004) and Nazarkardeh (2011) are some examples built in historic part

23. Zoorkhaneh literally house of force is a traditional gym for practicing an ancient repertoire of sportive exercises, which are done by a group of men standing in a circle around the central part of the hall called Gowd. Their movements are accompanied and directed by the rhythms of percussion and poems played and song by Morshed (director). This sportive ritual is inscribed as World Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2010.



Fig. 9, 10, 11 – Faculty of Art & Architecture, department of Urban Studies © Faegheh Nasseri; Seyed-e Gol-e sorkh Street © Faegheh Nassei; Old city walls, Seyed-e Gol-e sorkh Street, Yazd © Faegheh Nasseri.

of Yazd.²⁴ Certain experts criticize these projects for not paying attention to architecture and urban patterns of the site, not considering social characteristics of the environment and ignoring participation of inhabitants amongst other things. However, they do not deny the positive consequences of such projects as reducing crimes, creating a vibrant environment and in some cases encouraging people to stay in the old city (*ibid*). The Urban Development and Revitalization Company of Iran (UDRC) has documented a large number of these projects in historic fabrics of Iranian cities including Yazd. We present two constructed projects with different functions as example. The first one is a residential complex in Nazarkardeh district, near Mirchakhmagh square, called Hamsayegi-e Kavir (Kavir Neighbourhood) and the second one is Fooka Café near Jami Mosque. Kavir Neighbourhood is finished in 2011 and Fooka Café in 2010.

Kavir Neighbourhood consists of sixty-one apartments with additional facilities like swimming pool, sauna, gym and children's playground, built on an area of 4660 m². Kavir neighbourhood is built by housing cooperative of Kavir Tile Company (yazdtileco.com) for the workers of this industrial unit and encompasses apartments from 42 to 120 m². Architects of the project mentioned the term “vernacular contextual” to describe their architecture. Their design is inspired by introvert housing typology as in the ancient houses of historic fabric (UDRC, 2020). So the main element of the concept is a central courtyard in two levels surrounded by built spaces. They have used brick and mud finishing to better integrate the buildings into their environment. The property developer evaluates this project as a success, which meets the expectations of the residents. He also claims that one of the inhabitants of the district who had moved because of the degraded social environment has returned to the district after the construction of Kavir Neighbourhood (*ibid*). Without ignoring positive aspects of this project, we can criticize it for the mediocre architectural creativity, for poor details and for low quality construction workmanship. However, the Iranian Ministry of Roads and Urban Development has awarded it for its positive impact on:

24. GHADERIAN 2017.

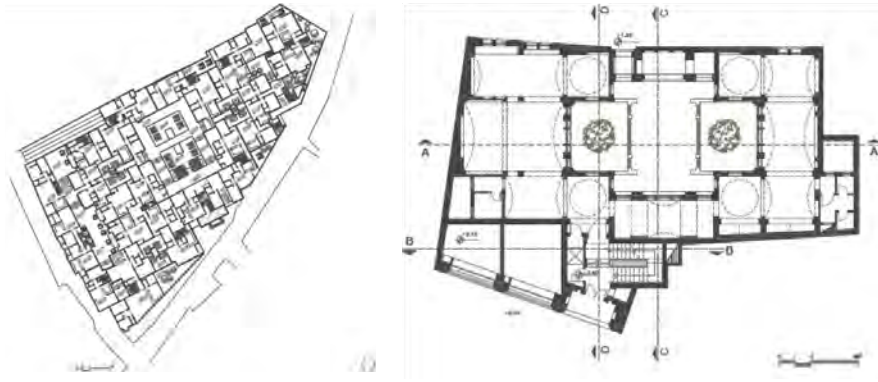
- safety and social ambiance of the district: after construction of this complex the adjacent environment has become safer. Drug-addicted people who gathered in ruined buildings left and some former inhabitants who had left have now come back.
- hygienic level of the district: The ruined buildings were transformed into garbage depot, which attracted Leishmaniasis flies. The construction of Kavir Neighbourhood has removed this problem.
- economic situation of the district: since the construction of Kavir Neighbourhood the property price has increased. New commercial and service activities started and some abandoned shops reopened (URDC, 2020).

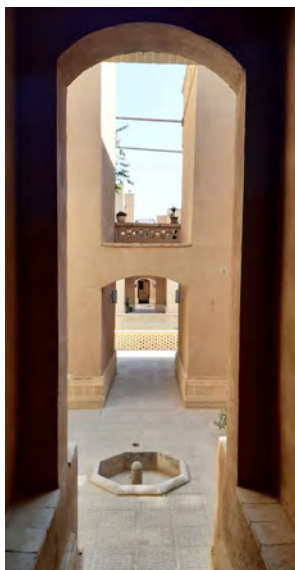
The least appreciation goes to the architectural qualities, although from the point of view of form, colour and material it is in harmony with its context.

Fooka Café is a restaurant built on the grounds of two small ruined houses on the border of the street leading to Jami Mosque. The area of the land is equal to 462 m². There is also another important historic building in the neighbourhood, Seyed Rokn-ed din dome. According to UDRC's book *Documentation of projects and buildings of the Urban Development and Regeneration Company Fooka Café* was initially planned to include various functions as restaurant, shops and offices but building regulations allowed only one function: the restaurant. Fooka restaurant is built over two floors around an internal courtyard and has a simple and quasi symmetric concept. Architects tried for the building to be as modest as possible with respect to the two important neighbouring landmarks, Jami Mosque and Seyed Rokn-ed din dome. The roof is designated to receive guests allowing them to enjoy the view of the townscape and the cool breeze of summer nights.

Future Prospect

According to the rules and regulations suggested by Master Plan and approved by the Ministry of Road and Urban Development the future development of Yazd should lie on few essential bases: The safeguard of historic fabric and traditional architecture, the prevention of the city to spread beyond the actual legal borders and the preservation of natural environment and gardens all over the region.





Left page

(above left)

Fig. 13 – Kavir Neighbourhood in Nazarkardeh historic district, Yazd, Iran © UDRC.

(above right) Fooka Café, ground floor, Yazd © UDRC.

(down) Fig. 14, 15 – Kavir Neighbourhood © Faegheh Nasseri.

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(above left/right) Fig. 16, 17 – Kavir Neighbourhood © Faegheh Nasseri.

(down/right) Fig. 18 – Fooka Café, view of central courtyard from the roof top, Jami Mosque in the background © Faegheh Nasseri.





Fig. 20, 21 – Fooka café, above: courtyard, bottom; roof top restaurant with Jami Mosque and Seyed Nasr-ed din dome in the background © Faegheh Nassei.

«Strategic studies should be done before any intervention in the historic part. Any construction, restoration or preservation measures in historic parts should be approved by Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization and under the control and supervision of the Municipality of Historic City. [...] Developments beyond actual administrative borders should absolutely be prohibited. Natural environment and gardens should be protected and preserved» (Arseh, 2007).

All these plans and programmes aim to adapt Yazd of tomorrow to the standards of a sustainable city with a well-restored urban heritage, well-preserved natural environment and a developed economy. But plans alone are not enough; a strong commitment and a deep sense of responsibility, both in urban authorities and in citizens, are needed to achieve the goals of development programmes.

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