Cultural Landscape: Sustainable Urban Development Strategies through Cultural Mapping (A Case Study: Kashan)

Meysam Namaki
PhD Candidate in Cultural Management and Planning, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran; namakiarani.m@gmail.com
Saeid Sharifi
Associate Professor, Department of Cultural Management and Planning, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran, (Corresponding Author); sa.sharifi@khuisf.ac.ir
Mohammad Latifi
Assistant Professor, Department of Architecture and Urban Planning, Isfahan (Khorasgan) Branch, Islamic Azad University, Isfahan, Iran; mlatifi@khuisf.ac.ir

Received: 08/06/2024
Accepted: 31/08/2024

Introduction

The cultural map provides an avenue for urban diplomacy and serves as a key capacity builder through the establishment of sister city agreements between municipalities. The sharing of cultural resources and the heritage fostered by these partnerships not only ensures the protection of cultural assets but also promotes the sustainable development of cultural heritage. This is achieved by facilitating the exchange of knowledge and the best practices that help cultivate a more comprehensive mutual understanding of each cultural heritage. The influx of migrants and the changing of environmental conditions in Kashan necessitate a renewed focus on sustainable urban development to address resulting challenges and risks. As such, preserving and protecting the city's cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, have become increasingly urgent. A comprehensive cultural map can aid in the formulating of strategies for mitigating the effects of rapid urban growth and climate change on Kashan's historical monuments to ensure their preservation for future generations.

Research Method

This research employed an applied and developmental approach, comprised of two phases: qualitative and quantitative. In the qualitative phase, content analysis with open and axial coding techniques was used for the inductive data analysis. In the quantitative phase, confirmatory factor analysis and t-tests were conducted to validate the components identified in the qualitative phase. Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary data collection tool throughout both phases of

the research. To ensure reliability and validity of the data collected through interviews, multiple interviews were conducted in parallel and compared to confirm consistency. Furthermore, two coders were employed to code the data, and the agreement between them demonstrated the data's validity. The quantitative phase involved the use of a researcher-made questionnaire consisting of 37 items based on data from the qualitative phase. Cronbach's alpha was employed to estimate the internal consistency of the questionnaire items, resulting in a coefficient greater than 0.7, confirming their validity. The research population consisted of experts related to cultural heritage, university professors specializing in architecture and urban planning, and cultural and urban managers. Using purposive sampling, a criterion-based and heterogeneous approach was employed with participants selected based on their experience in designing cultural and urban landscapes as well as a demonstrated record of research and publications related to these fields. The researchers continued sampling until theoretical saturation, at which no other new themes or insights emerged from the interviews. In the quantitative phase, 150 individuals from the sectors of cultural heritage tourism, urban experts, and experts in architecture and urban designing in Kashan formed the statistical population.

Results

In the present study, based on the participants' perspectives, the core codes of strategies include technical development, technological development, cultural differences, cultural awareness, cultural heritage care, ecotourism, landscape sustainability, and public participation. The findings showed that elements such as the development of information and communication technology, the use of artificial intelligence equations and calculations, the use of hardware capacities, strengthening the public electronic space, analyzing national patterns of cultural consumption, monitoring changes in cultural consumption, strengthening intercultural diversity, increasing children's awareness, awareness-raising campaigns, caring for intangible cultural assets, preserving historical cultural assets, controlling knowledge gaps related to cultural services, endogenous empowerment of the local community, continuity and transmission of indigenous construction culture, controlling energy consumption and pollution caused by it, cultural policymaking based on heritage preservation, expanding the mapping of cultural assets to the ecosystem dimension, using materials with the ability to restore and rebuild, strengthened the sense of belonging to the place and acknowledged the shared cultural and social landscape, and such elements formed the strategies for sustainable development of the city through the cultural map. Factor analysis, the conceptual units of the strategies, was developed as a factor model. The indicators of the evaluation of the generality of the factor model as a whole indicate that the data fit the model. All the indicators of the evaluation of the generality of the factor model, by considering the desired values of these indicators, indicated the desirability of the factor model of the conceptual units of the strategies. The conceptual units of the strategies were in a desirable state. In other words, the correlation of these conceptual units with the conceptual units related to these themes was estimated to be from medium to high, and as a result, the measurement tool had factor validity.

Conclusion

In recent years, urban and territorial development policies have been shifting towards a focus on the vital role that landscapes play in sustainable and economic growth. Cultural landscapes are one of the key components of a cultural map and a significant area of interest for UNESCO. By inscribing cultural landscapes onto the World Heritage List, UNESCO has enabled the exploration of new avenues for understanding and preserving local values and cultures. However, due to human activities and natural changes, these landscapes have been increasingly susceptible to degradation and destruction. In response, the application of information technology tools to collect, process, and represent cultural heritage landscape data has provided robust theoretical and technical foundations for landscape modeling and applied research. By harnessing the power of these technologies, it can more effectively safeguard cultural landscapes and their inherent cultural values, while simultaneously promoting sustainable development in urban and territorial planning. Landscapes can be broadly categorized as natural and cultural landscapes. In Kashan, a unique blend of these landscapes exists, which can be harnessed to create a distinctive spatial representation of human culture. The incorporation of cultural landscapes into cultural mapping not only provides valuable insight into the spatial dynamics of human culture but also reflects the historical and natural influences that shape regional culture. However, achieving sustainable development in Kashan requires careful consideration of landscape sustainability and public participation, as these factors are essential for promoting and nurturing the values inherent in the landscape. These different aspects of the cultural landscape can be conceptualized as a hierarchy of interrelated elements. Amenities, which can be considered individual features or attributes, contribute to the formation of amenities, which in turn combine to form unique cultural scenes. These cultural scenes, in turn, represent the overall cultural style and aesthetic characteristics of a given place, and form the basis for cultural practices, value-affective judgments, and even cultural identity among relevant cultural subjects. By understanding and preserving these cultural scenes, we can better appreciate and sustain the cultural values of Kashan's landscapes.

Kaywords: Cultural landscape, development, cultural map, sustainable development, Kashan.