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Cultural Heritage Management for Sustainable Development in Rural Cultural Landscapes: The Case of Throne of Solomon in Iran

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Abstract:

This paper is aimed at studying the potentials of cultural heritage in the discourse of development in rural cultural landscapes. It studies the attributes of the integrated cultural landscape management in order to maintain sustainability of the cultural landscape as a holistic system of entangled cultural and natural elements. This management approach is investigated through participative activities as well as considering cultural heritage as a resource for local sustainable development in all dimensions. While going through chronological review of policy documents in the area of sustainable development and cultural integration, academic literature review was made to come up with defining the interfaces of valorization of cultural heritage and the dimensions of sustainable development. The relevant challenges regarding the rural cultural landscapes were studied through a questionnaire survey in the case of a World Heritage Site in Iran, namely Throne of Solomon (Takht-e Soleyman). The findings of the empirical research show that the area is suffering from the lack of symmetrical exploitation of the resources not adequately resulting in economic development, environmental protection and social cohesion. On the other hand, at local level there is a positive trend for the participative activities for valorization of cultural heritage as a potential resource for development which acknowledges global recognition of culture as the forth pillar of sustainable development.

Key words: Cultural landscape management, sustainable development, cultural heritage, participation, valorization

JEL classification: Z100

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1-Introduction

One of the most important challenges of development pertains to the rural cultural and historical landscapes. This challenge is related to the worries about the changes occurring in the social, cultural and environmental structures of regions as the consequence of the development patterns. In other words the challenge is the result of implementation of a modern concept within a traditional context. Accordingly in the recent years, along with the development concerns, global attention has been drawn to the importance of preservation of social structures, local identities and cultural diversity. These new considerations have broadened the concerns of sustainable development.

The evolution in the theoretical perception of sustainable development was made from stressing on the environmentally sustainable development to the inclusion of economic and social dimensions and cultural integration later on. A reflection on the theme of culture and sustainable development began to emerge starting in the 1990s. In 2001, UNESCO adopted its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Agenda 21 for Culture was adopted in 2004 at the Universal Forum of Cultures in Barcelona which is based on the principles set out in UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity[1]. According to the outcome of the latest UN conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, people are at the center of sustainable development.

Although today sustainable development has got a unique definition, its mode of implementation has to be adjusted locally. In this respect, agenda 21 (1992) persuades local authorities to adopt "a local Agenda 21"[2], which means that the global considerations and guidelines have to be localized in order to address the real problems and challenges of the regions and to adopt relevant solutions. This would be the mainstream of achieving the goals of Agenda 21 which were later emphasized in the document "The Future We Want" in 2012.

Considering the multi-dimensional approach to development adopted according to the existing global conditions and demands, this paper intends to study cultural heritage as a new resource for sustainable development of rural cultural landscapes with regard to a case study in a specific region in Iran namely Throne of Solomon.

Throne of Solomon is a region in North West of Iran which has been considered as a sacred place since millenniums ago. The sanctity of this area was associated with natural features like warm water springs which were believed to be mysterious in the past, and several geological features formed by the sedimentation of travertine springs. One of the most important fire temples of the followers of Zoroastrianism in Sassanid era (224-651A.D.) and the relics of ancient worship places belonging to about one millennium B.C. around the crater of Zendan Mountain are two evidences of this fact. This fire temple is still considered to be important by the Zoroastrians in Iran and around the world. The fire temple, the architectural relics belonging to Islamic and pre Islamic era and the lake of Throne of Solomon together with their buffer zone has been registered in UNESCO World Heritage List in 2003. This area is surrounded by gold and other precious stone mines as well as the natural attractions and protected species of flora and fauna. The combination of the cultural and natural elements creates a rich area which requires special consideration in development strategies in order to preserve the authenticity and the heritage values.

A single-axis local development strategy depending only on economic resources could result in the erosion of the diverse cultural and natural heritage which is the constructor of the identity and the distinctiveness of the area. In this regard, the hypothesis of this research is to consider the valorization of cultural heritage as a way towards regional development which would sustain cultural and natural heritage of the area.

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[1]Dallaire G., Colbert F. (2012), "Sustainable Development and Cultural Policy: Do They Make A Happy Marriage?", ENCATC Journal of Cultural Management and Policy, Vol. 2, n°1, 6-11

[2] Clause 28.2 of Agenda 21, 1992

The work described in the present paper aims at being a contribution to an innovative approach where local sustainable development is realized through the valorization of cultural heritage in a rural cultural landscape.

It intends to study the role of heritage in sustainable development though the fulfillment of the points mentioned in the outcome of Rio+20 "The Future We Want". It also aims to confirm the hypothesis that a solution for preservation of natural and cultural assets of a landscape is to develop the economy in rural areas through participation of local people and valorizing traditional and local capacities bound to the landscape.

This article is a part of a broader research concerning the role of valorization of cultural landscapes in achieving new ways towards local sustainable development. It studies the capacities and importance of cultural heritage as a resource for development in the area of study in such a way that not only promotes the green economy in the area but also helps the preservation of the cultural heritage itself, local identities and traditional knowledge. At the end it will come up with the conclusions through an inductive-deductive approach.

The research is developed through referring to the relevant academic and policy literatures mainly the outcome of the latest UN conference on sustainable development; "The Future We Want" (2012). It goes further by presenting empirical data resulted from a questionnaire survey conducted among the local inhabitants in the nearest village to the Throne of Solomon WHS (World Heritage Site), located within the UNESCO buffer zone. Through the questionnaire survey, this paper will analyze the inhabitants' perception about the role of cultural heritage in the development of their region, their prioritization and recommendations regarding the preservation of cultural heritage and finally their resilience and level of participation in valorizing and exploiting the cultural assets of the landscape.

This analysis would firstly show if the existent theories in the literature concerning the role of culture in development are in accordance with what local people reveal and secondly how they prioritize the valorization of cultural heritage in their region.

The structure of this paper is as follows: the second paragraph is dedicated to the literature review and theoretical analysis of interfaces of cultural landscape and sustainable development. In the next section the characteristics of the area of the study are introduced, and the subsequent paragraph is devoted to the explanation of the evidences of the empirical research. Finally, some considerations aim at answering the questions at the base of this research.

2- Cultural Landscape Management and Sustainable Development Interfaces

The term sustainable development was popularized in Our Common Future, a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987. Also known as the Brundtland report, Our Common Future included the definition of sustainable development as a development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The concept of sustainable development and its articulation in three dimensions or pillars; economic growth, social inclusion and environmental balance, was developed in the second half of the 1980s.

Since then it has been a generalized opinion that these three dimensions are not enough to reflect the complexity of contemporary society. Researchers and institutions have pointed out in recent years that culture must be included in this development model[1].

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[1] http://www.agenda21culture.net

According to Rio Declaration (1992), sustainable development is a broad concept which should be included by different disciplines. It also puts emphasis on the participation of people and the role of the marginal groups in the society.

Later, in Agenda 21 for culture (2004), culture was referred as an indispensable dimension for development. Accordingly culture was considered at the heart of urban strategies, not only due to its intrinsic vocation of promoting human rights, shaping the knowledge society and improving quality of life for all, but also for its role in the creation of employment, urban regeneration and social inclusion. In this regard the main principles of good governance were mentioned as transparency of information and public participation in the conception of cultural policies, decision making processes and the assessment of program and projects[1].

The theory of integration of culture in sustainable development strategies was developed once again in the following year in The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) through emphasizing on the importance of cultural diversity in increasing the range of choices and fostering human capacities and values, hence sustainable development for communities, people and nature.

"The role of culture in sustainable development is mainly about including a cultural perspective in all public policies. It is about guaranteeing that any sustainable development process has a soul"[2]. Therefore the governance in terms of rational relationship between the administrators and the inhabitants is important in such a way to guarantee the active role and participation of them in all stages of sustainable development.

According to the UN System Task Team on the post-2015 UN Development Agenda (2012), development interventions that are responsive to the cultural context and the particularities of a place and community, and advance a human-centered approach to development are most effective and likely to yield sustainable, inclusive and equitable outcomes.

Both in the policy documents and academic literature, heritage is repeatedly identified as a powerful economic and social resource, a development asset that can be used to catalyze local-level development, provide employment, generate incomes, revitalize local urban and rural areas, enhance environmental protection and strengthen communities' social capital[3].

From a management point of view, it is important to localize development plans for individual regions. Accordingly, consideration of cultural heritage as a development asset has to be conceptualized according to the characteristics of its context.

Cultural landscape which is recognized by UNESCO in the World Heritage List is not only a reflection of history of the territory but also a projection of a complex system of human and nature interactions. A landscape cannot be expressed in terms of its constituents separately. Instead, all the objects present in the landscape are interrelated and together create a holistic system which has a form, structure and function. This system is subject to development, change and completion in which the components could be divided among history, economics, government, sociology and so on[4].

A rural cultural landscape encompasses a wide variety of tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage. People living in such areas are still dependent on their environmental elements and traditional lifestyle, their cultural heritage is rich and the natural heritage is more intact in

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[1] United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), 2004

[2] United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Barcelona City Council, 2009

[3] World Bank, 1998, 15

[4] Sauer Carl O. (1925), (Landscape Morphology by Carl O. Sauer was one of the first and most influential papers in promoting and developing the idea of cultural landscapes)

comparison to the urban cultural landscapes. Therefore the issue of development in a rural cultural landscape is quite delicate since the changes created by development patterns should include several considerations for protecting and maintaining the original characteristics of the landscape.

European Landscape Convention[1] definition for landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors. It could be interesting to compare the international definition with one of the most relevant national interpretations, the Italian one. At national level Italian legislation (n.63 of 26 of March 2008) articulates cultural landscape as a land expressed by identity whose characters derive from actions of natural factors, human being and their relationship. The human factors of the cultural landscape correspond to economic, cultural, social and political components, while the environmental components indicate all that are related to the natural features and the context in which the human being is living.

On the other hand, "The Future We Want" document (2012) acknowledges the need to further mainstream sustainable development at all levels, integrating economic, social and environmental aspects and recognizing their inter-linkages, so as to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions[2].

By comparing the above-mentioned definitions and arguments strong correlations are found between the characteristics of a cultural landscape and dimensions of sustainable development.

In fact landscape could be handled as something indicating the quality of life of a society[3], having strong links with the conviction of human-centered development thereby. The human factor of cultural landscape makes the fact more clear that the participation of the stakeholders and valorizing cultural assets would result in the social and economic development of the region. The valorization of cultural heritage as an eminent cultural asset in a cultural landscape is based on the following principles: integration of interdisciplinary competences, defining organizational approach to networks, participation and involvement of local community in specific policies and management of local cultural heritage, promotion of sustainable entrepreneurial initiatives, consideration of the territory not as a passive receptor of cultural tourism but as a distinctive knowledge hub in the cultural field, identification of innovative jobs-and relevant competences- to be able to define the management plan, to make it concretely operative, and to measure and verify the effects of its accomplishment in terms of conservation and valorization[4].

Valorization of cultural assets including cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism and cultural infrastructures in a cultural landscape can serve as a strategic tool for revenue generation, particularly in developing countries given their often-rich cultural heritage and substantial labor force[5]. It is also effective for environmental protection, since values and beliefs of the society shape their relationship with the natural environment and the ways they manage and impact it. Cultural values, local knowledge and traditional practices of environmental management can be valuable resources towards achieving ecological sustainability[6].

Cultural Heritage could be a potential contributor to economic growth, whereas many financial policy decision makers in developing countries regard cultural heritage as a mere consumer of budgetary resources[7].

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[1] Also known as Florence Convention, adopted on 20 October 2000 in Florence (Italy) and came into force on 1 March 2004.

[2] UNCSD, 2012, The Future We Want, 2

[3] Palang H. and Fry G.(eds), 2003, 6

[4] Donato F. and Badia F., 2008, 9

[5] UN System Task Team on the post-2015 UN Development Agenda: Culture: a driver and an enabler of sustainable development, UNESCO, 2012, 3

[6] The Power of Culture for Development, UNESCO, 2010, 7, in http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001893/189382e.pdf

[7] Fekri H. et al., 2008, 112

Most of the developing countries are in the transition process towards the new situation impacted by technological and communicative changes, globalization and so on. In this regard, it is important to pay more attention to the cultural and social consequences for adjusting the change to the local identities. As most attention has been given to systemic changes in natural or institutional environment and less to cultural and intra-individual processes, the synthesis of this last perspective into sustainability policies can lead to more durable achievements in transition processes[1].

Weaver and Jordan (2008) argue that supportive constituencies are needed for policy makers to be able to take the risk of starting fundamental changes. This citizens' support can only arise out of certain values, feelings and beliefs or, as Robinson et al. (2006) call it, from new approaches for engaging different groups in public policy making in sustainability issue[2].

The management of cultural heritage has been conceptually transformed "from separate objects – architecture, archeology and movables – heritage to landscapes, urban and rural areas and the whole historic environment and place"[3]; while at the same time cultural heritage is assumed to be able to contribute in flourishing of the economy of the cultural landscape and the people well-being. This would be obtained through entrepreneurial initiatives other than agriculture and animal husbandry in a rural area. The result would be the capacity building for creating green jobs which is correspondent to an important concern of "The Future We Want" about importance of green economy.

In this regard, jobs created by cultural sector supports the discussion in the "The Future We Want" (2012), which invites the green economy policy makers to "Enhance the welfare of indigenous peoples and their communities, other local and traditional communities and ethnic minorities, recognizing and supporting their identity, culture and interests, and avoid endangering their cultural heritage, practices and traditional knowledge, preserving and respecting non-market approaches that contribute to the eradication of poverty".

On the other hand, the contribution of cultural heritage sector to the local sustainable development is dependent on the capacities and potentials of the region as well as level of stakeholders' participation. As stated in Nara document (1994) "Responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, in the first place, to the cultural community that has generated it, and subsequently to that which cares for it"[4]. Instead, "The Future We Want" (2012) addresses the importance of participation of different stakeholders in the landscape which brings the marginalized and indigenous people to the center of the local development plans. This concept is supported in different parts of the document, especially in the section dedicated to "Engaging major groups and other stakeholders" which emphasizes that sustainable development requires the meaningful involvement and active participation of regional, national and sub national legislatures and judiciaries, and all major groups like women, youth, children, indigenous people, local communities etc. It puts special stress on the importance of the participation of indigenous peoples in the achievement of sustainable development and also recognizes the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People in the context of global, regional, national and sub national implementation of sustainable development strategies[5]. It is also recognized that opportunities for people to influence their lives and future, participate in decision-making and voice their concerns are fundamental for sustainable development[6].

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[1] Omann I. and Rauschmayer F., 2011, 148-149
[2] ibid, 149
[3] Loulanski T., 2006, 55
[4] ICOMOS, 1994, Nara Document on Authenticity, Article 8
[5] UNCSD, 2012, The Future We Want, 9
[6] ibid

Therefore to consider the policies, it is necessary to invest largely on the people, giving them the awareness for management of change instead of inducing them by the fear of being overwhelmed[1].

The idea followed in this paper is to consider the cultural heritage as a resource for development through maximum engagement of the local community in all the steps of cultural landscape management as the main stakeholders who can legitimize the changes occurring in the area.

3-The case of Throne of Solomon: Capacities and Barriers for Sustainable Development

Throne of Solomon (in Persian language: Takht-e Soleyman), is located in the North West of Iran, in a valley set in a volcanic mountain region in West Azerbaijan province. Distance of the site from Tehran (capital city of Iran) is about 500 km.

The significance of this region relies in the relationship between cultural and natural features which are reflected in the life style and local beliefs of the inhabitants. In such an area cultural identity is strongly associated with the ways in which people interact with the landscapes. According to the historical and cultural literature the sanctity of the area is rooted in the relationship of cultural elements with the surrounding natural dimensions.

Takht-e Soleyman may precisely be considered as an outstanding example of creation of an architectural ensemble in close symbioses with its landscape illustrating significant stages in human history. It reveals one of the great artistic achievements of the Sassanid civilization, and witnesses the organization of landscape and religious activity in perfect harmony. Archaeological evidence makes it possible to observe how urban sites were related together and were integrated in their natural environment, and how this major spiritual center of Iran was incorporated to the whole immense of the Sassanid Empire[2].

This area is rich for its cultural diversity bound to the diverse ethnic groups, cults, dialects and traditions and cultural products. Many of which are associated with the natural context and characteristics like mountains, warm water springs and so on. The area of the concern of this study is composed of the following classification:

- Main historical site: The site is formed of an oval platform, rising about 60m above the surrounding valley. The platform measures about 350m by 550m. It has a small calcareous artesian well, which has formed a lake of 120m depth. It includes the unique survival of one of the three principal fire temples of the Zoroastrian faith called Azargoshnasb, built in the Sassanid dynasty, the era of the significance of Zoroastrianism in Iran and a temple of the same era dedicated to Anahita (ancient Persian goddess of waters and fertility). The lake at the center of the complex is believed to have connections with Anahita Temple. The lake which is supplied by sources operating as an artesian well is undoubtedly at the origin of foundation of this site[3]. In this place two out of four fundamental natural elements; water and fire, have been worshiped through history. It also embeds the Sassanid and Ilkhanid (14th century) remains of architecture (fig. 1).

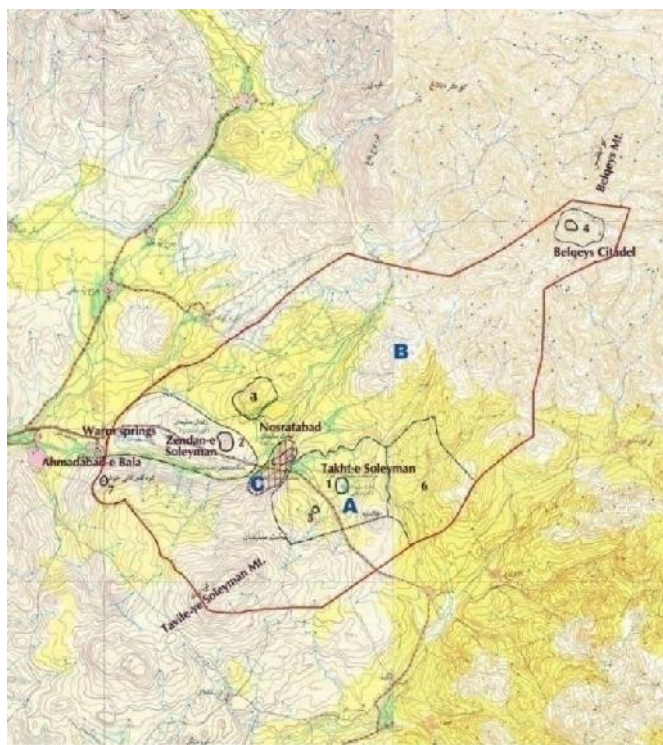**Figure 1. Aerial photo of the WHS**
(Source: Takht-e Soleyman archive)

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[1] Donato F., 2013, 103

[2] http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1077.pdf

[3] ibid

The ancient fire temple was destroyed in seventh century A.D. by the Byzantine army, a counter-measure to the Sassanid attack to their territories. It was restored and used again in 1270 as a hunting palace. It was neglected once again in the fourteenth century and abandoned with its ruined monuments until 1819.

- UNESCO zones: Takht-e Soleyman cultural and historical site was registered in UNESCO World Heritage List in 2003. In UNESCO evidence, Takht-e Soleyman is proposed as a single nomination centered around its main oval fortified site (no. 1 as seen in the fig. 2 below) protected within its double buffer zones (specific 'A' and landscape 'B'). The landscape buffer zone 'B' includes 6 other connected ancient complexes provided with their own specific buffer zones (2 to 7 except for no. 5 that is included in A) and an enclave 'C' allocated to Nosratabad village and its restricted expansion (fig. 2).

Figure 2.Takht-e Soleyman core and buffer zones, Cultural Heritage, Handcrafts and Tourism Organization of Iran, 2002.
Source: http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1077.pdf

Figure 3. Aerial Photo of Zendan-e Soleyman

(Source: Takht-e Soleyman archive)

Six other connected sites within the landscape buffer zone (B) of Takht-e Soleyman are presented in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Cultural heritage sites situated in the neighboring area of the world heritage site

Name	No. on fig. 2	Explanation
Zendan-e Soleyman mountain	2	A hollow sedimentary hill with max. 110m height and a mouth of approximately 60m width and 80m depth surrounded by the remains of temples or shrines, dated to the first millennium B.C. These are associated with the Manas, who ruled the region from 830 to 660 B.C. The crater was once full of water, but has later dried out[1] (fig. 3).
Tape Majid	3	A mound which has been dated to the first half of 1st millennium B.C.
Belqeys Citadel	4	On the highest part of this mountain there are remains of fortifications dating back to the Sassanid era (3rd-7th century A.D.). They have a close architectural and historical relationship with the monuments of Takht-e Soleyman.
Brick baking kiln	5	It is dated to the Ilkhanid period (13th-14thcentury A.D.)
Stone quarry	6	Old stone quarries of the Sassanid period are situated at about a km to the East of the nearby Takht-e Soleyman lake and fire temple. The extracted stones were used in the construction of the temple and its surrounding wall.
Ahmadabad tumulus	7	A second tumulus (unexcavated) lies on top of the western slope of the huge mountain of Tavileyeh Soleyman (Solomon's Stable Mountain). The tumulus is in form of a small mound, and seems to be dated to the Ilkhanid period.

- Nosratabad village: located in the buffer zone of UNESCO World Heritage Site is Nosratabad, which is situated at about 1.5 km to the west of the main site of Takht-e Soleyman.

Among several villages in vicinity of Takht-e Soleyman World Heritage Site, Nostarabad village is chosen as the area of study which accommodates the prime stakeholders of the heritage site. The reason of the choice is the location of the village within the UNESCO buffer zone and its short distance from the site, which consequently creates the highest interactions of its inhabitants with the indirect and direct effects of the site like tourism, expansion limitations for the village and special considerations for economic growth (fig. 4).

Figure 4. Main site in front, Nosratabad village in the back

(Source: Takht-e Soleyman archive)

According to the latest demographic data the village has the population of 781 inhabitants consisting of 403 male and 378 female.

Economy in this area is based on agriculture, animal husbandry, bee keeping, mining and handicrafts especially carpet weaving (Afshar or Ahanin carpet) and tourism as an emerging industry.

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[1] http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1077

The mines in this area are important economic resources consisting of important gold mines, construction and decorative materials. At present a number of inhabitants of the nearby villages are involved in mining activities.

This region is mainly suffering from a socio-economic problem, which is a limited local employment opportunity outside of agriculture and animal husbandry. Although the region is situated in mountainous area and is fertile for agricultural activities, the geographical condition of the region like cold climate and shortage of water has prevented the inhabitants from relying too much on agriculture to make their living. Most of the local people have low income which results in emigration of the people of the working age to urban areas to find better job opportunities.

In many several households animal husbandry can only cover the needs of the same family. A limited number of local people are employed in mining industry but as stated by local people they are not the prime beneficiaries of the mining activities. Furthermore over-exploitation of the mines has resulted in environmental pollution and has distorted the visual beauty and integrity of the landscape.

Making handicrafts, mainly Afshar carpet, is usually done by the women at home during the cold seasons. There isn't any existing organization for systematic production and marketing this handicraft.

Two dominant factors of tourism are human made elements like cultural heritage and modern touristic facilities, and natural factors like mountains, lakes, etc. In Takht-e Soleyman region, both of the factors cultural heritage and special natural features (geological features and shapes, warm water springs, mountains, etc.) are outstanding.

Throne of Solomon WHS has significant capacities to attract different types of tourists such as cultural tourists, eco tourists, geo-tourists, energy tourists (for the believers of energy centers in this area), health tourists (for mineral warm springs) and religious tourism (for Azargoshnasb fire temple). Although receiving a certain number of tourists every year, the statistics show that the number is quite low considering the potentialities of the region and in comparison to other areas with similar conditions.

According to the in-site observation, speaking with the authorities and local people and referring to the existing documents, a number of burdens against the local development were identified. These problems are articulated as follows taking into account the concerns of "The Future We Want":

- Marginalization of the local people
- Problems related to the income generation of local people
- Weak social network with outside
- Migration of young people to the bigger cities
- Insufficient or unqualified infra-structures for tourists
- No organized plan to support handicrafts and cultural products
- Ignorance of the cultural heritage and local identity
- Insufficient attention to protection of natural feature and bio-diversity
- Environmental pollution as a result of over-exploitation of mines

Despite the existence of various economic, cultural and natural resources, this area suffers from lack of development in many aspects like infrastructures, low life conditions, insufficient welfare and income and so on. Also the incoherence in exploitation of different resources is resulting in the marginalization of the local inhabitants as an important group of beneficiaries of the landscape as well as creating negative side effects like environmental pollution and ignorance of cultural assets or local identities.

Usually the cultural potential inherent in the cultural landscape is not taken into considerations by policy makers and authorities. These hidden potentials are in the forms of tangible and intangible

dimensions. However, if these potentials are identified and valorized there will be a shift towards social and cultural development. Cultural landscapes and build heritage need to be protected and their utilization enhanced not only because they are valuable makers of human history, but also for general development to be sustainable1.

4- Participation of the Local Community: the Key Issue for Valorization of the Cultural Heritage

A questionnaire survey was executed with the aim of identification of the role of cultural heritage in the local sustainable development in the Throne of Solomon WHS. The target group was the local people inhabiting in the Nosratabad village. Since this area is a WHS not receiving a huge number of tourists, it should be investigated how the heritage of the region can have positive effects on the local development besides influencing on tourism industry.

This is an issue to be finalized by the policy makers and should be executed by the involved institutions, but according to "The Future We Want", it should be formerly accepted and well perceived by the local people as the main stakeholders and the final goal of local sustainable development.

The respondent group consisted of 82 persons. Out of the returned questionnaires, 70 were assessed to be valid.

1- The first question was asked to evaluate the feeling of the respondents about their living environment, local culture and their presence in the domestic society. The answers showed that 78% of them have positive feeling for their region and its socio-cultural elements, although some of them had reasons to abandon this area e.g. to benefit from better welfare and economic situation. Therefore, it is concluded that the majority of the target group feel strong attachment to their region and put value on their culture assets and identity.

2- In response to the question seeking the level of understanding of the respondents about the value of preservation of cultural heritage in their region, 84% stated that cultural heritage of their region is worthy to be preserved.

3- Regarding the awareness of the local people about the role of cultural heritage in present and future development of their region, three questions were asked. Each question respectively showed that, 81.4% of the respondents considered the heritage of the region as a wealth for the future generations. Only 45.8% thought that up to the time, the heritage of the region has improved highly or moderately the economic, social and cultural development of the region and 88.6% believed that the heritage could be considered as a type of economic, educational, cultural or national pride capital.

After the conversion of the responses to quantitative amounts and aggregation the quantities, the analysis showed that the mean weight of the answers was 3.15 (between the ranges of 1 to 4). This figure was higher than 2.5, the average value of responses considered as mean acceptable awareness of the local people[2]. This result shows that most of the local people perceive that the cultural heritage could be considered as a resource for local development at present as well as in the future. The results are presented in the Table 2 below.

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[1] Final report of EPSON project 1.3.3, (2004-2006) The role and Spatial Effects of Cultural Heritage and Identity, 42

[2] The responses were numerically coded between 1 and 4 in the form of Likert-scale. Therefore the mean weight of 2.5 was considered as the average of 1 and 4.

Table 2: Aggregated results addressing respondents' awareness about the role of cultural heritage in sustainable development

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1.00	2	2.9	2.9
	1.50	1	1.4	4.3
	2.00	2	2.9	7.1
	2.17	4	5.7	12.9
	2.33	1	1.4	14.3
	2.67	4	5.7	20.0
	2.83	1	1.4	21.4
	3.00	11	15.7	37.1
	3.33	23	32.9	70.0
	3.50	1	1.4	71.4
	3.67	14	20.0	91.4
	4.00	6	8.6	100.0
	Total	70	100.0	

4- The respondents' ideas were asked about the contribution of the cultural heritage in creation of job opportunities and generating revenues for the region. The weight given to the role (potential or active) of the heritage in economy by 80% of the respondents was equal or more than the 2.5 (mean value).

5- In another question respondents prioritized eight proposed alternatives as the measurements for local development. Their first priority was "Creating new job opportunities" and the last one "Local people participation".

While the rest of the alternatives were prioritized between the two above, as follows:
Preservation and valorization of cultural heritage
Promoting agriculture and animal husbandry
Development of tourism industry
Improvement of roads and access ways
Mining industry
Environmental protection

Although they gave the weight 2.3 (between 1 and 4) to the influence of the heritage in local development up to the time, they gave 3.15 to its role as a potential resource for local development.

The remarkable difference between the above-mentioned figures points out the unexplored or unexploited potentials of the cultural heritage in the local development. The negative and positive deviations from the mean value of 2.5 reveal the fact that cultural heritage in the development discourse is rather operational and could be promoted.

6- Through another question respondents revealed that they feel only little enhancement in the local development as a result of inscription of their region in UNESCO World Heritage List. The results are shown in the fig. 5 below.
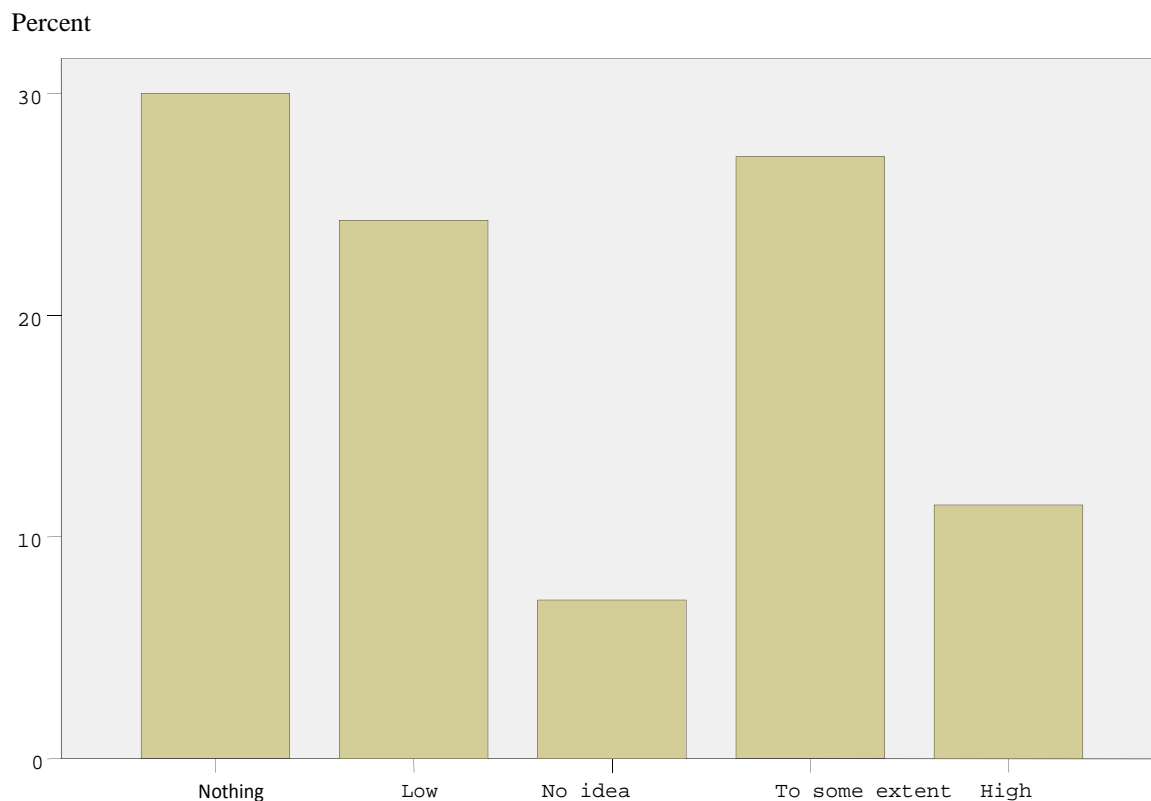
Figure 5: Graph of respondents' opinion about the influence of inscription of the site in UNESCO list in local development

The analysis of the inhabitants' statements could be translated into this articulation that the attention given to the region as a world heritage site in national or regional development plans was not sufficient.

The questionnaire survey shows that local people have acceptable awareness of the worldwide value of Throne of Solomon heritage site. They also perceive that it can have a dominant role in the development of their region, in terms of job creation, development of social networks, preservation of local cultures and identities, presentation of the history and culture and so on. Although almost all of them are scientifically unfamiliar with the challenges of cultural heritage preservation and management it seems that they intrinsically understand the idea of valorization of cultural heritage and don't see opposition between valorization and preservation issues. Moreover people have strong feeling of attachment to this place and feel respect for their history and culture.

The income generation and economic situation is the main problem that the local people are facing. Consequently they prefer development measurements which focus on the enhancement of the household economic situation. Apart from improving agriculture and animal husbandry or promoting infrastructures for the development of tourism industry, it is directly stated by the respondents that cultural heritage has potential capability to improve this problem. This is an interesting result considering the fact that in many cases cultural heritage is considered to impose extra expenses to the region and its preservation is considered to be luxurious.

According to the categorization of the proposed development measurements, mining activities are fallen to the bottom of the table, although it might be expected to have positive effect on the economy. Respondents believe that the revenues of this activity are not returned to the same region. Moreover they find this activity destructive by damaging landscape view, and making sound and

water pollution. This is a point correctly understood by local people since over-exploitation of the mines is going to result in environmental pollutions and could disturb the integrity of cultural landscape. This result puts emphasis on the fact that economic activities in a cultural landscape should not be focused on economic resources only.

Despite of the reality that local people are not aware of the importance of their participation in the development discourse or at least they have no idea about the possible ways of their participative activities, it is obvious that participation of the local people as the main stakeholders of this cultural landscape is very important in maintaining the sustainability of the landscape through traditional knowledge and experiences of the indigenous people. Moreover this will help the local people to move from the margins to the center of the development plans.

According to the questionnaire survey local people are willing to be engaged in cultural heritage sector it terms of preservation activities and income generation. This is a favorable ground to be considered by the policy makers and authorities as a shortcut to reach the sustainable development goals through participative activities based on the high public awareness, resilience and low conflict among the interests of different groups of stake holders.

5- Conclusions

The arguments presented in this paper point out the culture as the forth pillar of sustainable development, new considerations about sustainable development as a human centered issue, localization of the global notion of sustainable development and global worries about the changes imposed by development patterns on socio-cultural structures of the regions.

These arguments bring about serious challenges for development in the rural cultural landscapes, since a rural cultural landscape encompasses a wide variety of tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage. Local people living in such areas are still dependent on their environmental elements and traditional lifestyle. Therefore the issue of development in rural cultural landscapes is quite delicate since several considerations have to be fulfilled in order to protect and maintain the original characteristics of the landscape.

Accordingly, this paper was intended to find ways to respond to the above-mentioned arguments through focusing on cultural heritage as a resource for sustainable development in the cultural-historical contexts.

Since cultural landscape can be continuously transformed by the interactions of nature and people, the effective management could be attained through the integrated approach in which cultural heritage valorization and capacity building for cultural based economy have an operative role alongside with the other economic provisions, environmental management, promotion of infra-structures, and so on. Instead, a local development strategy depending only on economic considerations could result in the damage of the diverse cultural and natural heritage assets, which are the constructors of the identity and the distinctiveness of the area.

As acknowledged by "The Future We Want" document (2012), the importance of participation of different stakeholders in the landscape which brings the marginalized and indigenous people to the center of the local development plans.

Considering human being at the center of sustainable development makes it necessary to create a rational relationship between the administrators and the inhabitants in such a way to guarantee the active role and participation of them in all stages of sustainable development.

In this regard it is important to consider public participation in an integrated management plan resulting in the enhancement of infra-structures and innovative activities which in turn will open the ways for the region to develop in all dimensions.

Based on the theoretical investigations, the following considerations made the basis for the empirical research and questionnaire design for Throne of Solomon WHS:

- Sustainable development as a human centered notion;
- Cultural landscape as a holistic system requiring an integrated management approach;
- Interfaces of cultural landscape and sustainable development;
- Avoiding exploitation of a part of the resources while ignoring the other parts;
- Valorization of cultural heritage as a potential resource for local development especially in case of WHSs;
- Preservation of cultural heritage, local identities and feeling of attachment to the place;
- Participation of indigenous people.

One of the positive achievements of the empirical research was remarkable realization of local people about the significance of cultural heritage in their region. They have relatively strong feeling of attachment to the place which makes powerful bedrock for preservation of cultural diversity in the region. This cognition consequently supports sustainable development, given the fact mentioned in The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) about the importance of cultural diversity in increasing the range of choices and fostering human capacities and values, hence sustainable development for communities, people and nature.

Moreover respondents showed good understanding of the perception of sustainable development and the role of cultural heritage in this discourse. This conclusion was gained through their implicit statements acknowledging that cultural heritage is a wealth for people at present, a capital for future generations and can promote the region in terms of economy, culture and so on.

However the empirical survey showed that local people have substantial awareness about the importance of cultural heritage preservation and its potentials in local sustainable development, it negatively reveals that they have not been considered as a part of development plans and there were no participative activities assigned to the people in the area.

According to "The Future We Want" (2012) the participation of different stakeholders in the landscape brings the marginalized and indigenous people to the center of the local development plans. This is one of the important challenges of the cultural heritage management especially when there is requirement for preliminary measurements like public awareness raising about values of cultural heritage and public responsibility for preservation and valorization of the heritage. The results of the empirical research show that in the area of study a positive favorable ground is available for the public participation considering their remarkable awareness about the values of the heritage and strong feeling of attachment to the place.

Although it was believed by the local people that he cultural heritage is one of the most important resources for job creation and economic development in their region, it has not shown considerable impact on the local development up to the time. Moreover even inscription of their region in UNESCO World Heritage List has not made great changes in this area in terms of income generation, tourism industry, wellbeing, infrastructures and so on.

Through integrating the results of the theoretical and empirical research, it is acknowledged that cultural heritage, especially in a cultural landscape, could have dominant role in the sustainable development process since it would maintain:

1- Sustainability of the system: by leading all the economic activities in such a way that no damage occurs through over or mal-exploitation of the resources.

2- Capacity building for new economic activities: cultural resources are important grounds for entrepreneurship and income generation and could help to reinforce the identity and dynamism of

the inherited culture. To revive, exploit and preserve the cultural resources the appropriate steps should be taken; such as identification, organization and valorization of the heritage assets.

To maintain local sustainable development in cultural landscapes and to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions, it is desirable to integrate cultural and social capitals with other resources and institutional provisions while opening the field to local people to engage in management process through a bottom-up management approach.

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