

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGES AND THE NEED FOR REHABILITATION OF THE HISTORICAL BUILDINGS —IN THE CASE OF CHAR-CHATTA-BAZAAR—

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Abstract—Cultural heritages and historical buildings play a significant role in socio-economic development of a country. Kabul is the capital and an ancient city of Afghanistan with lots of historical quarters and traditional architectural buildings. Role of the historic city of Kabul is critical for benefiting from the value of culture and heritage. Unfortunately, past decades of tragic war that was imposed on Afghanistan has dealt a severe and destructive blow to the physical and social fabric of its cities. Kabul also suffered a great deal of devastation, much of its fine architecture and urban fabric was destroyed including the great *Char-Chatta* bazaar, which was one of the fine commercial establishments in the region.

This paper describes about the background and importance of the Kabul Old City in particular about the role of *Char-Chatta* bazaar on the economy and tourism industry of Kabul. Moreover, this study looks on the sustainability of a rehabilitation plan which was prepared for developing of the aforementioned bazaar and as well as recommend some points which can severely hamper the architecture, identity and historical character of the area if not adequately addressed.

Index Terms— Afghanistan, Old City of Kabul, Char-Chatta bazaar, Architectural heritage, Rehabilitation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Kabul is the capital and as well as the largest city of Afghanistan with some 3,500 years of history [1]. It situates on a strategic location along the trade routes of South and Central Asia, and a key location of the ancient Silk Road. The historic city of Kabul contains a wealth of cultural repositories through its architecture and urban form that are the result of an evolving process of development through many generations. Being located on the major network of ancient trade routes, connecting India and China to the Persian trade routes and beyond to the west, the city reflects an eventful layers of historical accounts that are inherently important for its development [2].

Based on the archaeological investigations, Kabul's original site can be traced near the slopes of the Chakari Mountain, which is situated to the south part of the existing city, where Buddhist temples and irrigation canals are found [3]. It is believed that the growth of the city continued to the northwest for defense purposes. According to the Rig Veda (circa 1200 BC), there is a mention of Kubha, which refers to Kabul River. Ancient researchers have figured out in 675 AD that Kabul was an important strategic commercial and pilgrimage center. During this period Kabul was an agricultural city and the residents were followers of Buddhism. In 698 AD, the Arabs invaded Kabul and city suffered from significant devastations of the war. After a year the residents converted to Islam religion [4].



Fig. 1. Silk Road and strategic location of Kabul connecting the East and West

In 1502 AD, Babur shah the mangol emperor established Kabul as his capital and during his period he implemented lots of construction projects including gardens and several buildings. In 1739 AD Kabul was invaded by the Iranian King “Nader Afshar” and soon it was retaken by the Afghan King Ahmad Shah. He selected Kandahar as the capital and after his death in 1773 AD his elder son “Timur Shah” come to the power and transferred the capital from Kandahar to Kabul, primarily because of its central location and lesser number of tribal conflicts [4, p.13]. During his period, Kabul has significantly developed, the residential quarters were known by tribal and clan names and agriculture was the main occupation of the residents. During 1839-1842 AD due to conflict with the belligerent British Army, the city destroyed. Kabul lost many of its fine architecture and historical buildings including *Char-Chatta* bazaar which was one of the finest commercial establishments in the region [5]. The Bazaar was burned by the British Army in retaliation for their defeat. In this research, we took a look on the historical background of Char-Chatta bazaar and have analyzed them from the socio-economy and environmental point of view and finally proposed a rehabilitation plan which is in line with the cultural and historical aspect of the area.

A. Location

Char-Chatta bazaar is located in the Old City, 1st district of Kabul with a land area of 4566m². The site is known as *Bagh-Ali-Mardan* and is famous for its unique character and historical background. It was one of the largest covered bazaars of its time in Central Asia. The bazaar designed based on the linear form and the length was said to be around 200m. The following figure shows the location of the bazaar.

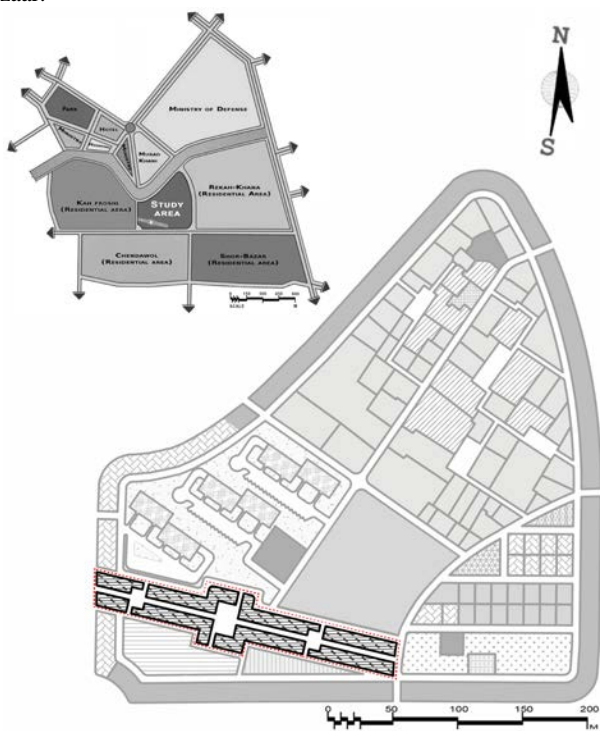


Fig. 2. Location of Char-Chatta bazaar

II. METHODOLOGY

The methodology which has conducted in this study covers the historical analysis and urban development of Kabul and the role of the historical buildings and heritages on the socio-economy

development and identity of the place. Afterward, the study particularly focused on *Char-Chatta* bazaar which is one of the most famous and historical places of Kabul. The past and existing condition of the bazaar has analyzed from the physical, socio-economy and environmental point of view and then a rehabilitation plan considering the existing situation and cultural identity of the area has proposed. Moreover, some significant points have also recommended which can severely hamper the architecture, identity and historical character of the area if not adequately addressed.

III. EXISTING PROFILE AND ANALYSIS OF THE AREA

Char-Chatta bazaar is located in *Bagh-Ali-Mardan* area which is a part of the old city. Kabul's Old City is mainly located in the south of Kabul River and comprises many residential, commercial and historic quarters. These quarters are named either after a trade establishment or after the names of tribal and tribal leaders. The layout and architecture of this area was strongly affected by the Islamic culture and traditional architecture style.



Fig. 3. Char-Chatta bazaar in 17th century, Sketched by: Zia Samadi

Char-Chatta bazaar was one of the fine commercial establishments in the region; it was built in 17th century by Ali Mardan Khan who was the governor of Kabul at that time. The bazaar was made of four main parts which was called “Chatta” and each part had their own function and selling stuffs. Each part was connected to a courtyard called “Chawk” as shown in Fig. 4.



Fig. 4. Form of the bazaar

The first part was the place of tailors; this part was basically consisting of those shops which were selling clothes in general. The second part was the place of vest sellers, most of the tourists were coming to this part for purchasing the most traditional afghan waistcoats. The third part of the bazaar was comprised of grocery shops and some stores which were selling kitchen stuffs. The last part was the place of coopers whom were making and selling cooper pots, dishes, water pitcher, kittle and other cooperage stuffs.

The courtyard “Chawk” was playing a significant role in sustaining natural lighting and ventilation for the shops and pedestrian. It is said that based on the form of bazaar, the courtyards were providing a cool and comfortable breeze during the hot summer. Char-Chatta bazaar was a famous commercial center; its merchandise has been mentioned by early travellers, thus reflecting the important strategic location of Kabul between East and West [6]. Unfortunately during the First Anglo-Afghan War on 1842, bazaar was burned by the British Army in retaliation for their defeat. Some literatures said that after the war the bazaar was still fulfilling commercial needs until 1970, but after 1980 it was completely destroyed. Currently, the second story of the bazaar has completely destroyed and some other parts are also distracted which severely affected the circulation and form of the bazaar. Based on the land use digitization of the site, the area of bazaar has determined around 4566m² with approximately 189 shops. The shops vary in size and form but the average size for each individual shop has estimated around 24m². Fig.5 shows the existing land use of the area.

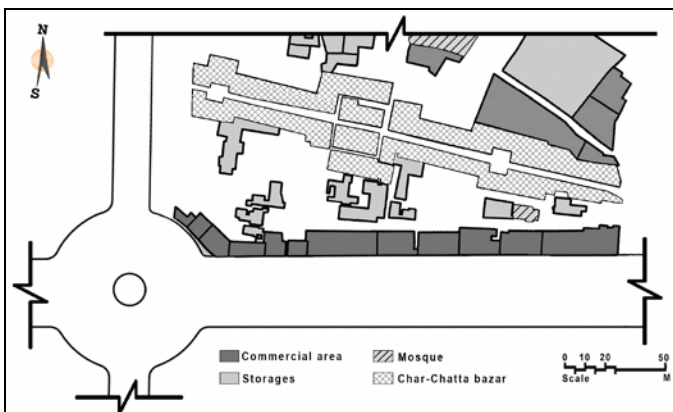


Fig. 5. Existing land use of the area

After the war, some people reconstructed their shops with different construction material. According to our survey, currently most of the shops are made of mud-bricks with wooden beam and concrete floor. The figure below shows the picture which has taken from the second “Chat” of the bazaar and reflect the existing condition of the bazar.



Fig. 6. Existing condition of the shops in bazaar, June-2018 (Photo by the Author)

Usually war is not counted as the only destructive factor for culture, heritages and historical sites but unorganized and uncontrolled urbanization also can affect the identity and historical background of an area. After the Taliban regime and establishment of the new

government, people returned from abroad and other provinces to Kabul in search of the improved social and economic opportunities. These push and pull factors of immigration caused a huge wave of urbanization in Kabul, the government however couldn't take effective measures to control illegal land transactions and land grabbing proliferation of informal settlements on steep hills and other undesirable activities such as illegal grabbing the public land and land use exchanges.

Land use transformation is a biggest problem which can directly affect the characteristic and identity of an area. Old city of Kabul in particular *Bagh-Ali-Mardan* area is a clear example of this process. Being close to the CBD, good accessibility and existing of the public facilities around the area, all these factors have significantly increased the land value in Kabul Old City. In Afghanistan, the land valuation occurs generally based on the market value method; people purchase and sell their lands essentially based on the location, infrastructures, legal description and facilities at the vicinity of the area. According to a research related to the Bagh-Ali-Mardan area, the site has considered and evaluated as a high price land and most of the residential and public lands in this area have illegally transformed into storages and commercial in violation of the Master Plan and caused social, cultural and environmental problems to the area and the people who are living around [7]. Even though majority of the residents are suffering from such condition but the government response has been quite weak. The government's main planning strategy for alleviating the informal settlements has been upgrading in the form of provision of some facilities and paving the roads. More importantly the government didn't put any step toward development or rehabilitation of this bazaar however it is the most important and historical area of the capital, the only strategy of the government for the destructed historical places were preservation. Char-Chatta bazaar or other important economic and cultural establishments are necessary to be revitalized in order to rejuvenate and restore the status and prestige of the Old City.

On 2011 the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MUDH) has proposed an upgrading plan for development of the *Bagh-Ali-Mardan* area, their concept was essentially based on the physical upgrading model, the main objective was to preserve the existing houses and provide basic urban services for the residents, in their plan about 12184.5m² area which include the Char-Chatta bazaar were completely preserved, but there was no any development plan or rehabilitation plan shown in their map in this regard [8]. Now the bazaar is in a very worse situation, it has lost the main form and architecture, moreover it has created problem for the neighbor areas as well as disrupted the traffic and transportation system. Fig. 7 shows the present circulation plan and existing of vendors and carts at the vicinity of the bazaar.

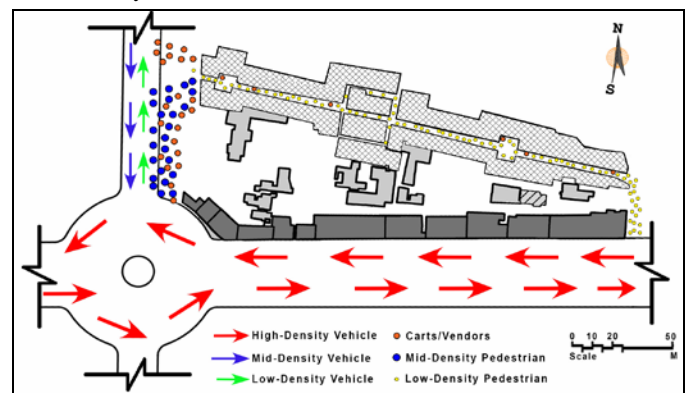


Fig. 7. Existing circulation plan of the area

IV. PROPOSED REHABILITATION PLAN

Historic Afghan cities throughout centuries of its existence supported a way of life and a very splendid urban expression that came from a profound philosophical and religious background. Like many Islamic cities the new architectural style and urban development in Kabul pursues a modernist style of architecture that does not provide the charm of traditional Afghan places and lacks much regional fit. Traditional Afghan cities and architecture is the product of centuries of development which have a direct bearing on its regional identity and sense of place.

On 2018, a development plan based on the Land Readjustment model considering the people's need have proposed for Bagh-Ali-Mardan area. Land Readjustment (LR) is identified as a potentially very useful method for developing countries, the landowners jointly leave land for streets and other public facilities and build the required infrastructure, but implementation of the urban planning methods depend on the socio-economic and cultural condition of each place, therefore each country and region needs their own model of LR [9]. The author has proposed an afghan model of LR specifically for Afghanistan which is complying with all factors and aspects of the country.



Fig. 8. Proposed land use plan after adapting LR

The model basically relied on the preservation of the historical sites and low project cost in order to minimize contribution ratio for the residents (Fig. 8). As *Char-Chatta* bazaar was an important part of this project, therefore in here we just focused on the rehabilitation plan of the bazaar and analyzed it from the socio-economic consideration and its influence on the revitalization of the culture and historical identity of the area.

In the new plan, we have preserved the bazaar and as the main structure has already destroyed so after a comprehensive research and analysis we prepared a concept plan which consist of some new land uses at the vicinity of the site due to support the function of bazaar as well as to maintain a loop circulation system for the area.

The new land use includes a traditional restaurant, car parking and some new shops. The restaurant has proposed in order to provide traditional cuisine and to assist the bazaar in well-functioning. The main idea was to create a loop system, the current system is that people enter the bazaar, do shopping and then exit. The loop system can connect one land use to another due to support each other from commercial and cultural point of view. Based on this system, people enter the bazaar, do shopping then may have a visit from the restaurant and exit. Moreover, as this area is a historical place so the restaurant has proposed to be developed based on the Islamic and traditional architecture to reflect the characteristic and historical aspect of the area. People and in particular the tourists can enjoy the traditional cuisine along with the culture and classic architecture of the area. Following figure is the sketch concept plan for the bazaar.

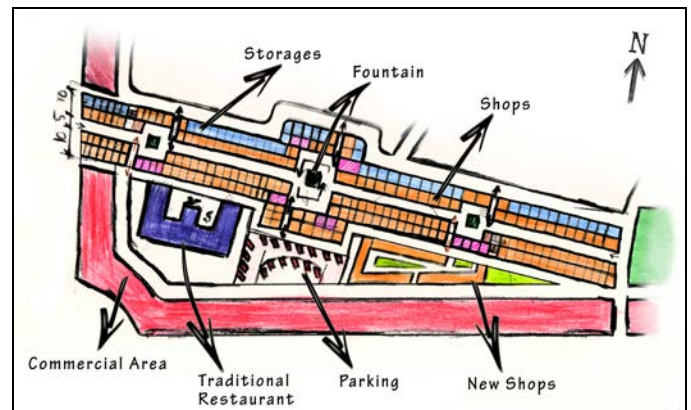


Fig. 9. Proposed sketch concept plan for the bazaar

We planned the bazaar in two stories as it was in the past and efforts have been made to preserve the main form and architecture. As each public facility requires a parking for the vehicles, based on the land size restriction and value of the land a parking lot with the area of 612.4 m² has planned next to the restaurant.

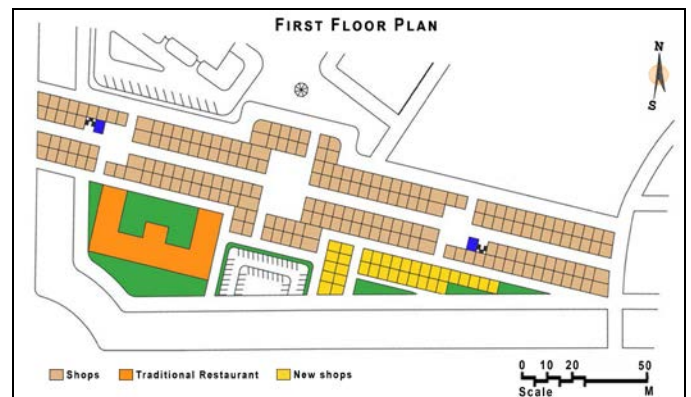


Fig. 10. First floor plan of the bazaar

In the second floor the restaurant is connected to bazaar through the bridge. Each floor contains two public toilets and furthermore two staircases have considered in the plan which connect the first and second floor of the bazaar. Fig.11 shows the second floor plan of the bazaar.

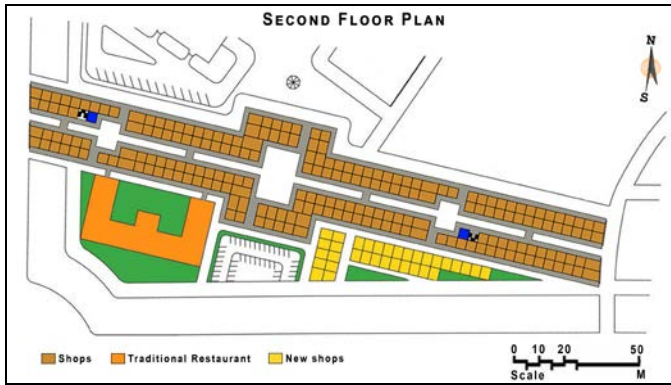


Fig. 11. Second floor plan of the bazaar

Moreover local construction material and traditional architecture style has proposed to be used in this area. Local construction materials are cheap and environmentally friendly to the condition of Afghanistan. Furthermore it can match with the culture and historical background of the area. Concrete may now be vogue for the new houses of Kabul but local construction material and traditional Afghan building techniques have been honed over centuries of trial and error. The traditional architecture style is well suited for the extreme climate, and uses locally available materials [10]. For development of the roads and infrastructure we proposed cobble stone to be used. Afghanistan is a mountainous country and as well as rich in having stones, it is cheap and environmentally sustainable too. According to the research, stone is a labor-intensive construction material and has the potential of generating job opportunities for labors [7]. Table 1 shows the sustainability of stone in comparison to the asphalt road.

Table 1. Comparison sheet of asphalt and stone price

No	Construction material for the road	Width	Length	Infrastructures	Cost (\$/m ²)	Total cost (\$)	Durability			Maintenance Required Level		
		(m)	(m)				High	Moderate	Low	High	Moderate	Low
1	Asphalt	7	1000	Sewerage/Drainage	71.4	500,000		✓			✓	
2	Stone	7	1000	Sewerage/Drainage	50	350,000	✓					✓

In the past, each part of the bazaar was covered by arcades “Chat” which was providing shadow and covering the bazaar. Unfortunately, now the second floor and arcades have destructed so shopkeepers are using the canopies for shading which cannot avoid from the heavy winds, rain and high intense of sunlight during the day. In the new plan considering the previous form and shape, roof with the arcades are proposed to cover the bazaar and connect to courtyards (Chawk) as it was in the past (Fig.12).

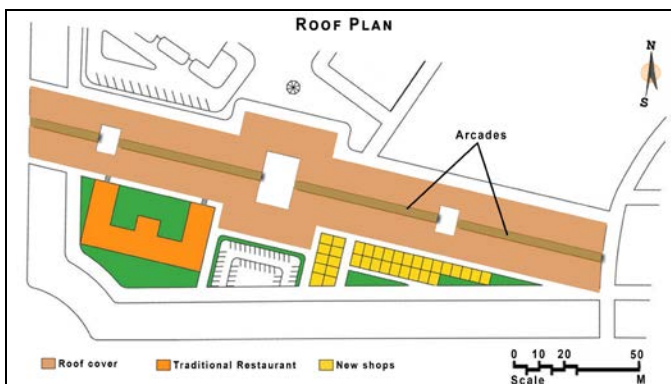


Fig. 12. Roof plan of the bazaar

As the bazaar is located inside the residential area, in order to avoid from the function interference between bazaar and the residential area, we endeavored to place the storages in the upper site first floor of the bazaar which is faced with the residential mid-rise buildings in order to avoid disturbance to the residents who are living there. The figure below shows the circulation map of the proposed plan for the bazaar.

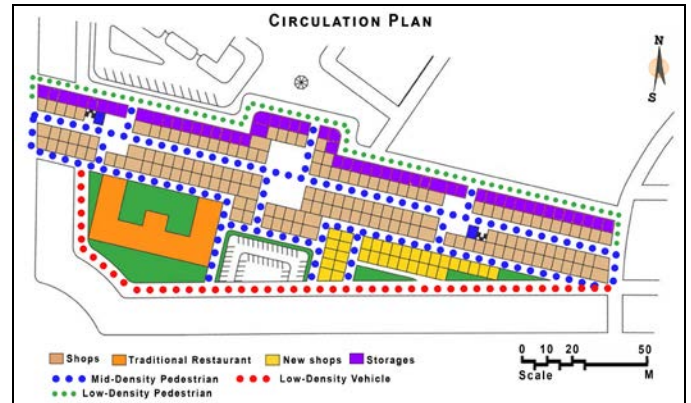


Fig. 13. Circulation plan of the bazaar after rehabilitation

A. The project finance, management and sustainability

Sustainability is often seen as a three-dimensional concept that includes a social, ecological and economic perspectives [11], regarding the Land Readjustment (LR) plan which was prepared for Bagh-Ali-Mardan area, efforts have been made to cover all three aspects in the model. After 2014, most of the international aid has been significantly decreased; this put a negative impact on the employment rate, GDP, security and other economic sectors of government.

Currently, Afghanistan is facing with economic crisis due to some constraints in respect to the developmental budget. The core national budget which has adopted by the government for the year 2018 was estimate around \$5.5 billion which about \$1.6billion of that has allocated for the development budget [12], which does not suffice for constructing all developmental projects in the country, by the other side as long as Afghanistan relies on the aid money alone, we cannot expect to move toward sustainability growth. Therefore, considering the weak national budget and other financial challenges, the author proposed private sector to be involved in developing of some public facilities like clinic, traditional restaurant and shops through different Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) models.

Since the bazaar belongs to a historical area and as well as located near the Central Business District (CBD), this counts as a potential factor for attracting local capital investment. In Afghanistan, lands which are located at the vicinity of the CBD, are considering high-price lands. Private sector will certainly invest since they can make enough profit in short period of time. Private sector can invest through Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) or Design-Build-Finance-Operate (DBFO) models of partnership based on their contract with the government and these models can make the project more sustainable and applicable. The roughly cost calculation and net profit in respect to the development of bazaar has illustrated respectively in table 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2. Construction cost of the bazaar (Roughly)

Roughly Construction Cost of the Historical Bazar and New Shops							
No	Land Uses	Area After the project	Number of the Stories	Number of the shops	Area of each shop (m ²)	Construction cost (221\$/m ²)	Construction cost per shop (\$)
1	Bazar	4661.96	2	432	20	2060588.43	4420
2	New shops	988.00	1	33	20	218348.00	4420
Total Cost		2278936.43					

Table 3. The profit for the Implementer (private sector or government)

The profit from the Bazar								
Total designed shops in the bazar		Number of the Stories	Shops which will be given to the existed shopkeepers		Shops for the sell		Shop Price	
Number of the shops (#)	Area of the shops (m²)	2	Number of the shops (#)	Area of the shops (m²)	Number of the shops (#)	Area of the shops (m²)	Before	After the LR project
432	8309		189	3780	243	4529	400	600
The total income from the selling of the shops = 2717400 \$								

Table 4. The pure profit of the project

The Pure Profit		
Total income from the selling of the shops (\$)	Total Project Cost of the bazar (\$)	The pure benefit for the gov or Private sector (\$)
A	B	A-B
2717400	2278936.43	438463.5672

V. CONCLUSION

Historical buildings and heritages reflect the identity and cultural aspects of a country and can strongly contribute to the socio-economic development. During the last decade, although government and some international organization made efforts on preservation and importance of the historical areas, but these attempts have never officially been put into practice. Kabul is the capital city with lots of historical and cultural heritages inside. The role of historic Kabul is critical for benefiting from the value of heritage.

It has played an active role in catering to the needs of commerce and culture of not only its own population but also the merchants and trade throughout the region. Its importance has been prominent and described by the intensity of commerce, culture and administrative vitality. The city has had some of the richest economic and cultural resources that influenced its underlying urban fabric. The urban structure was intertwined with many ancient bazaars, commercial series and religious establishments. Urban planners and architects need to make careful analysis of the Old city's urban attributes and carefully formulate them into coherent strategies for newer developments. There are a number of historical buildings including the Char-Chatta bazaar which was one of the historical and fine commercial establishments in the region. Its merchandise has been mentioned by many travellers and tourists which reflects the unique characteristic and rich culture of the area. Unfortunately it was destroyed and burned during the first Anglo-Afghan-War on 1842. Since that time due to many political, social and economic issues, government could not make efficient efforts toward rehabilitation and development of the bazaar.

Currently it is in the worst situation, the second floor has completely destructed and the main form and architecture has also changed which have severely affected the background, characteristic and cultural identity of the Kabul Old City.

The concept development plan which was proposed for rehabilitation of the bazaar looks more feasible and sustainable according to the socio-economic condition of the city. The concept has essentially developed based on the historical background, cultural identity and commercial needs of the area. In the new plan, efforts have been

made to preserve the main form and architecture of the bazaar, some additional facilities like traditional restaurant and new shops have also proposed due to provide a proper and loop circulation system as well as to support the function of bazaar. The traditional restaurant can play a significant role in strengthening the cultural identity of the area. Moreover, it can pave the ground for the private sector to take part and invest through different models of partnership like BOT and DBFO. Based on the historical background, location and land value of the area, these models can bring much profit and benefit for the private sector, government and people. Due to avoid from the monopoly and other risks in PPP models, the government should play an active monitoring role in order to properly control the private sector, furthermore clear policy recommendations and guidelines should be devised to establish a well-functioning system and regulate the private sector in such a way to prevent from the misuse of land and historical character of the area.

Moreover, cobblestone has proposed for developing of the road and infrastructure in bazaar; Afghanistan is a mountainous country and rich in having stones, unfortunately nowadays we are importing a huge amount of cement, asphalt and other construction materials from neighboring countries which is not economically friendly as it costs too much because of the tax and transportation expenses, in addition according to its durability it is not sustainable too (Table 1). Cobblestone can generate job opportunities as it is a labor-intensive construction material and as well as can match with the historical background, nature and cultural identity of the area.

Overall, the rehabilitation plan for the bazaar has developed based on the historical and cultural background of the area; it can certainly contribute to the culture and socio-economic development of the city. Revitalizing the historic city will not only improve the economic status of the area but also enhance the social conditions of its inhabitants who now occupy the historic district. Among the important resources in the city is the motivation and skills of the population that have to be mobilized in a massive scale.

Historical buildings and cultural heritages play a major role in forming the cultural identity of a nation. Preservation and reconstruction of these places are not only a cultural responsibility and mission but also own high economic importance for Afghanistan. Therefore, the role, cultural and economic value of each historical place should identify and clear strategies should be devised in order to sustainably preserve and rehabilitate these assets.

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