Title

A Study of the Transformation of Herat City, Afghanistan: Traditional Houses with Domical Vault Roofs as the Indicator

Abstract

Authors

Samimi, Sayed Abdul Basir

Citation

Issue Date

2018-03

URL

http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12000/41488

Rights
Abstract

Title: A Study of the Transformation of Herat City, Afghanistan
-Traditional Houses with Domical Vault Roofs as the Indicator-

Herat in Western Afghanistan, as an oasis city on Silk Road and the former capital during the Timurid Dynasty, is known for its cultural heritages. However, as the urban population increases rapidly, the city is under strong development pressure. The study as the first step investigates the distribution of houses with domical vaults and defines the sites with higher density. Location of this type of houses was pointed out on aerial image of the site taken in 2017 and density of houses are defined in grids with area of one Hectare and 7 Sites with higher density are found. As the second step, the study focuses on transformation of Herat Old City which is known as origin of Herat and most important historical site of Herat. The data for this part of study was mainly provided through a survey of 457 houses based on physical changes and residents’ backgrounds as well as literature detailing the development projects of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC). It quantitatively analyzes physical changes happening in the historic quarters of the Old City with a particular focus on the relation between environmental improvement projects by the AKTC and residents’ private property developments. The findings show that the changes in private housing did not occur uniformly across the Old City. It is likely that they have been stimulated by the improvements of public and private properties by AKTC, and are still ongoing alongside these improvements. As the third step, the study looks at the extent of physical change as well as changes of residents in the Momandha Quarter in the southwestern part of Herat Old City, where many traditional adobe houses with domed roofs are preserved relatively well until now. It finds that activities of new constructions and repairs using industrialized materials have been accelerated as new residents are moving into the old neighborhoods attracted by lower property prices. The new residents are unaware of the value of this cultural heritage and the majority have demolished the old domed houses for redevelopment purposes. As the final step, the study proposes recommendations for new conservation zoning based on distribution of domical roof houses and studies on transformation of Old City and concludes that the municipality of Herat should (1) provide and enforce clear guidelines for new constructions (2) involve local community in preservation activities and (3) raise awareness of the value of the city’s cultural heritage and landscape.

Name: Samimi Sayed Abdul Basir