



Reviving the Cultural Route and Its Role in the Sustainability of Historical Areas - Kerbala as a Case Study

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ABSTRACT

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Cultural heritage represents one of the most important resources for development processes, and cultural routes as cultural elements have the potential to revitalize and develop the historical area sustainably by stimulating cultural tourism. One aspect of cultural tourism is to provide cultural itineraries for visitors that enable them to explore the cultural heritage of the host region. The literature in this field has dealt with the potential of heritage in general in providing meaning and value to the environmental, and socio-economic aspects that form the foundations of sustainable development. This paper uses a multidisciplinary approach to study the possibility of designing and reviving cultural routes as catalysts for historical revitalization. Taking the Cultural Routes in (Karbala) as an example, the network and node perspective model are adopted to determine two historic tourism routes in this region. And it turns out that the preservation and protection policies for heritage must be integrated manner with the development processes, and to achieve a balance between the aspects of sustainable development and emphasize their interrelation and interaction with the historical environment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage represents the symbolic synthesis of society's identity values that recognizes them as its property. Heritage is a living historical memory, therefore a key in building cultural capacity, as far as it is achieved by the accumulation of attitudes, behaviors, and implicit values of cultural production over time [1]. The concept of heritage, as addressed by the International Council on Monuments and Sites ICOMOS, has been expanded to include the natural, built as well as cultural environment. At the same time, includes landscapes, historical places, sites, as well as biodiversity, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge, and living experiences [2].

The expansion of the heritage concept and its development and preservation gives a definition of heritage on a broader level as well, as it is defined as the result of a set of interactions and influences that give meaning to it. Cultural expressions and traditions have gained recognition thanks to UNESCO (2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage). Thus, heritage becomes a resource and engine for regional development along with its basic cultural diversity [3]. As a result, cultural heritage contributes to economic and social development, and this qualitative approach can be an important catalyzed tool for local economic development, taking into account the dimension of how to attract visitors.

So the culture is a public good and a common heritage of humanity, and this is the main reason for which we must preserve it and highlight it [4]. Since the mid-twentieth century, there has been a significant global interest in heritage preservation and management, this has been accompanied by

an evolution in the heritage understanding and management in historical environment, this is evident in conservation planning as part of urban planning that defines policies and strategies for managing and evaluating of heritage and its importance [5].

The literature mentions that many European countries have recently been interested in integrating the cultural-historical aspect into urban strategies from the perspective of cultural goods, for the purpose of enhancing the competitiveness of cities. Cultural goods are defined as including three categories (archaeological monuments - collections - sites). The concept has now expanded to include other categories (such as historical neighborhoods, historical city centers, landscapes, etc.), as well as the sum of the various cultural, historical, architectural and archaeological local, natural and geological values, as well as intangible values within the concept, which enhanced the value of heritage. According to this context, cultural route falls within the broader framework of heritage concept, it is one of the tools that link cultural goods and integrate them into a common framework, which enhance the definition of the different categories of cultural goods [6].

While the context of cultural property has expanded beyond individual monuments, special attention has been paid to the diversity among the basic characteristics of cultural heritage, and as a direct result, new patterns have been identified in the field of cultural heritage, in order to highlight the importance of the cultural and geographical context that In it, during the development of the cultural component, so in this sense, the concept of cultural routes was been recognized as unified systems of cultural assets [7].

The main question in this paper is, how to revive (historic) cultural routes as the catalyzed and generating value for

sustainable development in historical areas, which respect the heritage values, identity and authenticity, at the same time have a positive impact on the local community economically, socially and spatially. The research assumes that the programs of reviving cultural routes constitute an effective field in reviving historical areas, by linking them to the scattered heritage nodes (architectural heritage), and to the lives of local population, which also acts as a catalyst for revival and sustainable development of those areas.

2. CULTURAL ROUTES

Human groups have expanded their range throughout history (driven by the expansionist, commercial, or economic drive, desire to spread religious beliefs, and a variety of other complex factors) resulting in cultural mixing between human groups, leaving tangible and intangible traces embodied in peoples' heritage and shared values [8]. The cultural route, as emphasized by ICOMOS, is one of the cultural achievements that reflect culture, beliefs, and lifestyles in various eras [2].

Cultural routes are a relatively recent cultural phenomenon that has given rise to a new type of heritage. that reflects a geographic and mental journey with representative values, meanings, expectations, and experiences, culminating in a tourism product [3].

The Council of Europe defined cultural routes as “a route or series of routeways, based on a cultural concept or phenomenon of national significance to common European values.” Then the concept expanded to include a cultural, educational, heritage and tourism cooperation project aimed at promoting and developing a route or a series of routes based on a historical road, a cultural concept, or a character of national importance [9]. Determining the itinerary of the cultural itinerary depends on a set of important points and tangible elements that testify to the itinerary importance. The realization of the cultural route includes a number of tangible elements and others of an intangible nature, through a cultural link of decisive importance at a particular time in history for a particular society or group [10].

There are two types of cultural itineraries: one that connects a number of important and minor locations to build a cultural itinerary, and the other that turns the itineraries into a destination and center of tourism activity. Culture's growing importance as a component of tourism consumption is an innovation in and of itself [3]. In this instance, it is critical to preserve and conserve the essence, and authenticity, of the route's historical significance, as well as acknowledge and promote the role of the local population, followed by a policy based on environmental, social, and economic criteria [11].

At the present time, cultural routes are playing an important role in the tourism industry, and the impact of this supports the economic, social, and cultural aspects of society [12].

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), cultural itineraries can be classified into five categories depending on [10]:

- (1) Design and Structure.
- (2) Their subject.
- (3) Their lands.
- (4) Historic origin or current reconfiguration.
- (5) Infrastructure for visitors.

European cultural routes, such as the pilgrimage route in Norway, often follow ancient and documented routes, such as

Hohe Strasse in Hessen, Germany, as walking and cycling destinations as well as the spatial layout of historical sites [13].

According to the aforementioned diversity in the literature and also the results of the meeting of experts in Madrid which stressed the need to take into account the cultural richness and the diversity of cultural relations and properties that may exist in the cultural routes, cultural routes an appropriate tool for highlighting the fact that cultural reality is a multifaceted guide, which requires an interdisciplinary approach [8]. According to the literary diversity in the definition and understanding of cultural routes, their concept can be classified as illustrated by Table 1 [8].

Table 1. Definition of cultural routes concept

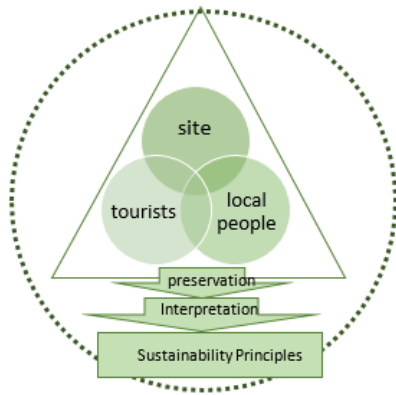
| Theme | The Cultural Route Concept |
|--------------------------|---|
| Its Origin | The cultural route is a product of man as a means of transmission and communication. |
| Its Essence | It represents a means of communication and evidence of interrelationships between distant cultural groups. |
| Its Function | represents a historical way of communication. |
| Its Extent | Historically established route boundaries represent the extent of the cultural route and are independent of natural boundaries. |
| Its Structure | The diversity of heritage characteristics produced different structural configurations of the cultural routes |
| Its Importance | Through cultural exchange between different cultural groups linked to a well-established cultural route |
| Its Constituent Elements | The heritage elements scattered along the cultural route vary, such as urban centers, landscapes, defensive structures, and others. |
| Its Comprehensive Study | the cultural route is understood through the physical route itself, its function, tangible and intangible manifestations |
| Its Dynamics | it's understood through the movement of people and goods along it (to and fro), so it is a representation of cultural phenomena. |

Source: [8]

3. CULTURAL ROUTES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

All sustainable tourism development ideas and models emphasize the significance of a balanced relationship between the site, local residents, and visitors as a prerequisite for achieving sustainable urban growth in historical locations. Areas are the basis on which tourists, residents and hosting places depend on interacting mutually to meet the needs of everyone, where preservation and rehabilitation and maintenance work are at the core of these needs. It is related to the issue of conserving the values and meanings of their activities and their surroundings for the local community, that is, traditional, artistic, economic, social, functional, environmental, and experiential aspects of their activities and environment (Figure 1) [14].

It is not enough to own cultural heritage in today's world; it is also required to turn it into consumer experiences for both locals and tourists. A huge number of cities have used the benefits of cultural innovation and urban renewal to achieve these values in the last part of the twentieth century. at the same time, advertising the city as a nice place to live and attracting visitors and international investments [15].



Source: the authors relying on [14]

Figure 1. The main parties for interaction in cultural tourism approach to historical areas

The enhancing the visitor experience by exploring the

meanings of the place, excitement Thinking and interpreting in place, linking people with place, have direct effects on other areas of interaction, such as heritage preservation, management, community rehabilitation and local economic development. The visitor's experience must be at the heart of any heritage management process [16].

Local economic advantages are based on the common requirements that those connections meet at the level of economic development, which is the most directly tied to direct interactions between tourists, inhabitants, and hosting sites. For the local population, they can contribute to the vitality of a region and help create an atmosphere conducive to tourism, and thus (tourism) contributes to promoting the preservation and revitalization of historical areas, which improves the lives of the residents, in addition to the economic return of tourism in the lives of local residents, such as increasing income and job opportunities [14]. The research extracted its theoretical framework as shown in (Table 2) to determine the field of study and analyze the relevant indicators.

Table 2. Theoretical framework for reviving cultural routes

| Main Indicators | Possible values | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| Features and characteristics [11] | | A specific and distinct physical route, linking heritage sites and related places |
| | | A tool to support the process of preserving cultural heritage and the sustainable development of its associated areas. |
| | | A unique example illustrating the heritage of a region, community, ethnic group, minority or nation. |
| | | The link between tangible and intangible heritage and an entity that is inseparable from them. By reviewing tangible heritage, the cultural route provides an opportunity to explore, understand and disseminate intangible heritage. |
| | | An important tool in developing the concept of cultural heritage and recognizing its diversity |
| Cultural route classification [8] | | A means of distinguishing place and society through experience |
| | According to the job | a major destination and hub of tourism activity |
| | According to the content - | A linking element between a number of primary and secondary destinations |
| Cultural significance [17] | | According to the content - the heritage physical entities it embraces and which it connects to |
| | | Material values of heritage entities associated with the route |
| | | Historical values of the route |
| | The core values of the cultural route | The utilitarian values associated with the sustainable economic development of the road area and the economic and social empowerment of the population |
| Design-based route model [13] | | Values associated with local identity - cultural values |
| | | Social Values - Social Interaction and Integration |
| | | According to the route structure |
| | | According to the theme of the historical event |
| | | According to the nature of the historical area |
| Strategies for sustainable reviving cultural route [16, 18] | | According to the historical origin of the route and its reconfiguration |
| | | According to the infrastructure of visitor |
| | | Direct investment of the cultural route through sustainable cultural tourism approach |
| | | The catalyst approach to sustainable development - a catalyst for the revitalization of the historical environment - an effective element for the revitalization of cultural heritage |
| | | A network perspective-based approach - integrating and interacting incoherent and isolated cultural resources |
| | | Promote and support civilizational cultural events and festivals related to enhancing interaction between diverse cultures |

4. CULTURAL ROUTES IN KERBALA

Kerbala Governorate is one of the most important cities of the holy Islamic shrines in Iraq and the Islamic world alike, Figure 2 [19]. Kerbala is characterized by its historical and cultural values, as well as the privacy of its urban center, which includes the presence of two large shrines, the shrines of Imam Hussein and his brother Abbas, which represent the nucleus of the center.

Although no serious and tangible measures have been taken towards the revival and systematic development of cultural

routes in Kerbala, this paper seeks as an inciting step in this direction, as an initiative to highlight the importance and role of the cultural route in Kerbala, in the planning process and sustainable development of the historical area.

There is a very important fact in Kerbala, as it is a tourist destination that attracts millions of visitors annually in the religious tourism field, and it is possible to take advantage of this aspect and attract this number of visitors by harnessing the potential of the cultural routes in its resources diverse and cultural values as an interactive network of culture and creativity, as well as to introduce the heritage of Kerbala,

which can provide a unique experience for visitors that brings back in their memory the events, stories, and heroisms that took place along those routes, and it has an integral relation with the rituals of visiting Imam Hussein and al-Abbass, as one of these routes represents the route that Imam Hussein took with his family to Kerbala before his martyrdom.

From an economic perspective, cultural routes can play a prominent role in encouraging visitors to prolong the tourist period, thus achieving economic benefit from the cultural heritage, as well as securing the necessary funds to preserve and maintain heritage sites. There are no studies in Kerbala that examine cultural routes as a concept and a multi-dimensional activity.

There is an urgent need to conduct qualitative research on cultural routes at the local level, especially if we take into account the rich cultural heritage in Kerbala and its geographical characteristics and natural capabilities, in addition to the lack of an attempt to include cultural routes as a rich hub for visitors' experience within the current road network linking parts of the region and in the development process and preparing the comprehensive plan for the governorate.

According to Allawi, Kerbala is characterized by great natural and human potentials that make it eligible to move from traditional tourism towards the application of the tourism sustainability principles and spatial development, and the introduction of smart trends for improving regional growth, thus achieving economic, social and environmental benefit for the local community and visitors. According to this importance, we will analyze everything related to the potential of cultural routes and the extent to which they can affect

development [18].

4.1 Cultural routes design in Kerbala-historical background

The review of this historical aspect enhances the importance and effectiveness of the proposal on the necessity of establishing and reviving cultural routes in Kerbala, especially since the cultural importance in Kerbala covers the entire historical period from the early ages to the modern era, to emphasize this unique cultural and historical heritage, it is important to point out the points Important historical in Kerbala. In the past, Kerbala was an area inhabited by human settlements since the first civilizations witnessed by humanity in Iraq, represented by the civilization of Mesopotamia.

Where the historical literature confirmed the proximity and relation of the region with the civilizations centers and nations that passed through the land of Iraq, and this is what the remains of archaeological sites and legacies testify to, which refer to the reality and nature of life and social activities in various times and eras. Such as the presence of Christian cemeteries in the ancient villages of Kerbala, which are known (Al-Nawawis), which are currently located west of the city center of Kerbala. Due to the strategic location of Kerbala in central Iraq, it formed a bridge for Arab Semitic migrations between the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula [20]. This made it a link for trade passing from Iraq to the Arabian Peninsula regions, the extension of valleys in the northern Badia towards the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia helped to achieve this connection.

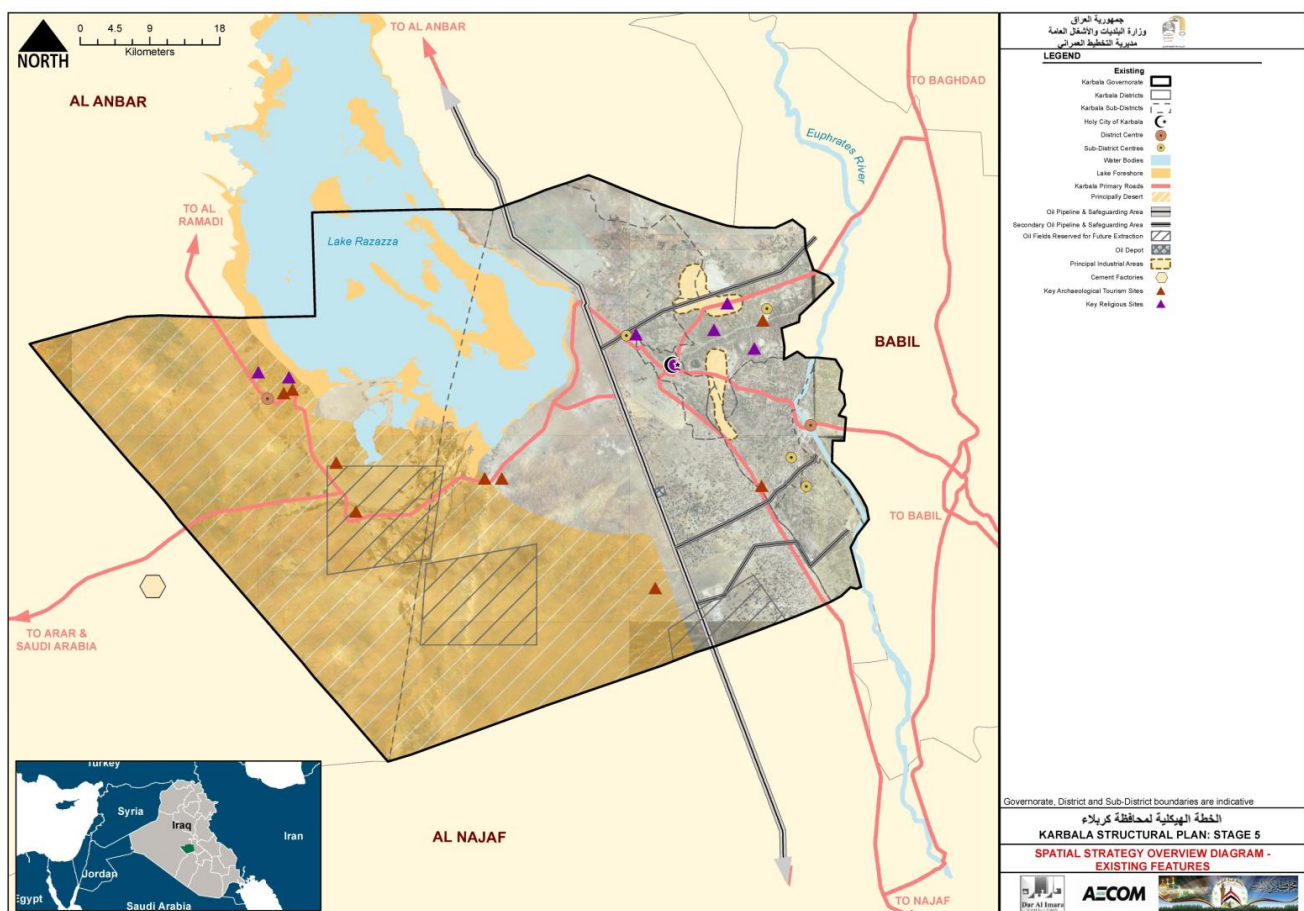


Figure 2. Kerbala's location within the map of Iraq, the administrative division of Kerbala Governorate [19]

It is known that the city of Al-Hira (the center of Christianity in Iraq) had a distinguished role before Islam in the movement of transport and trade with the people of Mecca. Al-Hira lies on one of the most important trade caravan routes linking it to the West. It also grew up in an area with an ancient civilized nature. The Kings of Al-Hira took upon themselves to trade with the Meccans, benefiting from the support of the Sassanids for them. There are a number of factors and characteristics that made Al-Hira a center for the commercial transport process, it was a commercial station for the land convoys coming from the ports of the Persian Gulf and then to Iraq, Syria and Egypt [21].

Kerbala was one of the most areas influenced by Al-Hira city due to its geographical proximity, which affected the geographical, political, and religious depth connection between them, which made each affected by the other. Monasteries have spread in places near orchards and rivers outside al-Hira. A number of churches were also established, including Al-Qusayr Church, which is located to the south of the village of (Ain Al-Tamr) in Kerbala. which Geographically, belongs to the city of Al-Hira, whose lands extended to the Arabian Gulf in the south and the upper Euphrates River in the north [22].

Near the fortress of Ukhaider, a unique archaeological building that dates back to the Sassanid era. Christians of Al-Hira kings also built a number of palaces along the strip between Al-Hira and Kerbala, such as the Shameon Palace, [23]. And Bardawil Castle, an archaeological site representing a Christian monastery or hermitage, taken in a secluded place for worship, is located north of Ain al-Tamr city, near the western (dry) coast of Lake Razzaza, [24]. Thus, Kerbala, with its strategic location (which mediates the trade route between East and West), became a bridge for trade, cultural and religious exchange between the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant and in various ages.

In this context, the (Al-Hira-Ain Al-Tamr) road emerged as a cultural route rich in the historical events, that passed through it and as a route for cultural, religious and commercial exchange, as well as the military campaigns and Islamic conquests that took place, such as the military campaigns led by Khaled bin Al-Walid heading from Al-Hira after its conquest towards the Ain Al-Tamr city, which He descended there with his forces, announcing the Islamic conquests in many of the lands located on the Euphrates River (Figure 3). Thus, the land routes linking the Arabian Peninsula with Iraq and the Levant came under Islamic administration. Likewise, Imam Ali, peace be upon him, passed by it when he returned from the Nahrawan battle, where there were farms, trees and palms [25]. This added another value and meaning, indicating the depth and authenticity of the history of the route on the one hand, and the region on the other.

After Islam, the movement of trade exchange between Iraq and its surroundings became very active; Especially Kufa (Al-Hira)-Ain Al-Tamr-Damascus road, which crosses Kerbala, as well as the land pilgrimage route that passed along Kufa, the Al-Tar Caves, Al-Ukhaidir Palace, Khan Atshan, and the Mujada beacon, and then Ain Al-Tamr, which was a major commercial center at the time [25].

Darb Zubaydah was one of the main ways in pre-Islamic and then Islamic times use it in pilgrimage and trade, and the famous one in the Abbasid era, the land pilgrimage route. Because of the length of the road, stations were built along it to rest and supply water and food, known as hostels. The historical sources mentioned the names of the hostels located

on the road and the distances between them. The hostels which were located on the pilgrimage route between Mecca and Kufa; were a means of living for some people, so they worked on digging wells in them, thus, the hostels provided protection for travelers and pilgrims [26].



Figure 3. The cultural route (Al-Hira-Ain Al-Tamr), which was shaped by historical events

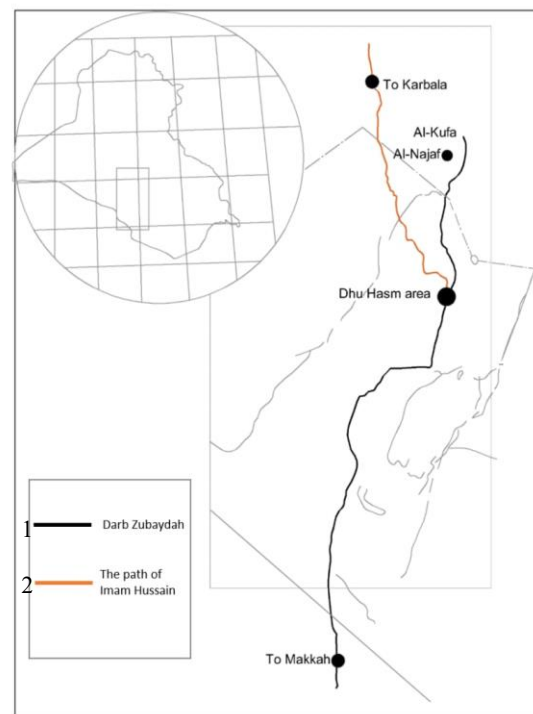


Figure 4. 1- Hajj Road (Kufa-Makkah)- Darb Zubaydah; 2- The route that Imam Hussein, peace be upon him, traveled from Makkah Al-Mukarramah to Kufa

During the journey of Imam Hussein, peace be upon him, (grandson of the Messenger of God, Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him peace), heading from Makkah Al-Mukarramah to Kufa, He took the Hajj route, opposing army led by Al-Hur bin Yazid Al-Riyahi, approached him at the Dhu Hasm area, and prevented him from heading to Kufa. At that time, the route of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him), deviated to the left towards Kerbala, and when the Imam entered Kerbala, the last hostel in which he stayed was the Muqatel

palace, before heading to At-Taff land, where he was martyred there in (680 AD) (Figure 4) [26]. AL-Tuff Battle is the last of the most important historical events in Kerbala, which earned it a high religious value and position in Islamic history, so it became a city due to the religious factor, and became attracting thousands of Muslims, travelers and merchants [24].

All that can be said about its history at the time of Islamic conquest, is that it is an agricultural area located on the banks of Euphrates River, and the people who inhabited it, depended on agriculture due to the soil fertility, and the water abundance, where it had large number of springs that were spread throughout it [25]. Thus, the route that Imam Hussain, peace be upon him, walked with his family, represents an important cultural route that expresses a unique historical event that carries values and meanings along it, and narrates in all its steps that human tragedy and the heroic epic at the same time. Those who follow the route can recall those stories and bring back the feeling of that timeless memories. Thus, the events of this route are an integral part of the scenario of the millionth visit that the city of Kerbala attracts every year.

5. METHODOLOGY

This paper addresses the topic of the importance of using and reviving cultural routes, focusing on aspects of spatial, economic, and social sustainability, as well as cultural goals, and to be adopted as a catalyst for the revival of historical areas, by addressing the issue of cultural heritage in general, and cultural routes in particular, as a dynamic asset in city revitalization processes, beyond looking at heritage as a fixed archaeological component in sustainability development, which confirmed by ICOMOS directives [2]. The study adopted a multidisciplinary approach, as it specializes in the sustainability of the historical environment, the cultural routes in Kerbala represent a complex system, where a set of ingredients contribute to its creation, and the elements are studied through [27]:

- (1) An economic approach: to realize the management and sustainability assumptions of tangible and intangible cultural heritage interventions linked to the itinerary.
- (2) An anthropological historical approach: to cataloging cultural excellence and identification.
- (3) Operational approach: to identify processes that correspond to the historical and ecological character of the areas involved in the development.
- (4) Policy approach: to determine the appropriate process for the implementation of the cultural road network.

To use these cultural routes as a new generative value for the revival of historical cities, and based on what was stated in the classification of cultural routes mentioned by the World Tourism Organization, the current study will focus on the design of cultural routes, according to the first and fourth categories of tourism organization classification, which are the routes that depend on design, structure and historical origin, this requires a linear model based on identifying one or more starting points and one endpoint as well, as well as the model based on a set of points [12]. The model is based on the network perspective, according to the model of [18]. The structure of the study will be as shown in the (Figure 5).

First, all aspects of the road must be organized sequentially and according to various stages, ending with the design and securing of infrastructure for visitors, including the natural environment that embraces cultural heritage, Second, the

revival of cultural routes must affect the historical environment spatially, socially, economically and culturally, establishing strong and cohesive links with the community and equal relation with historic nodes (architectural legacies).

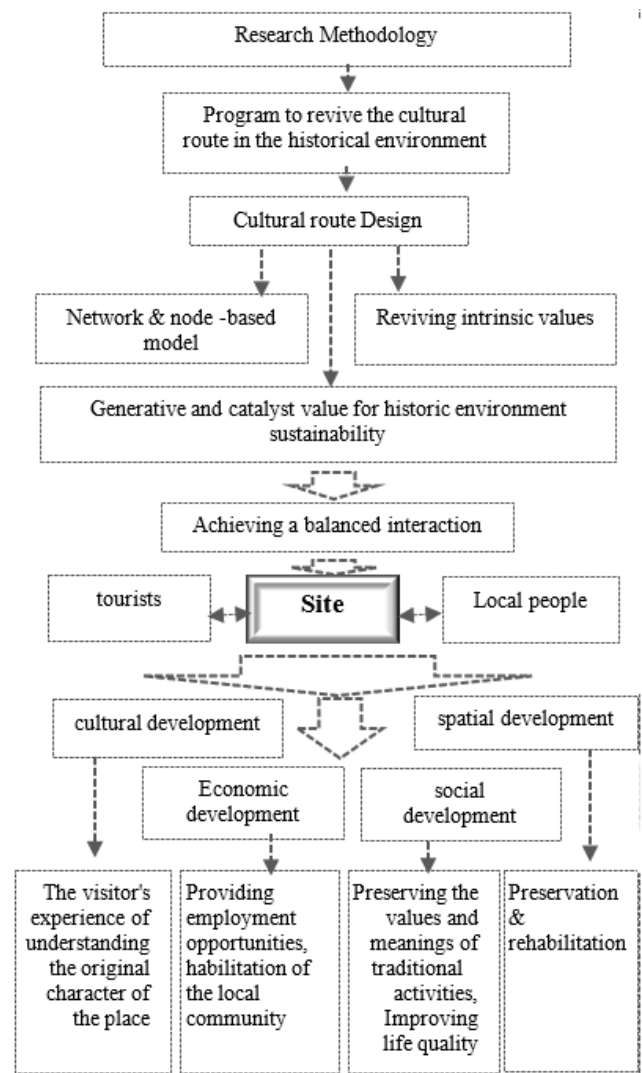


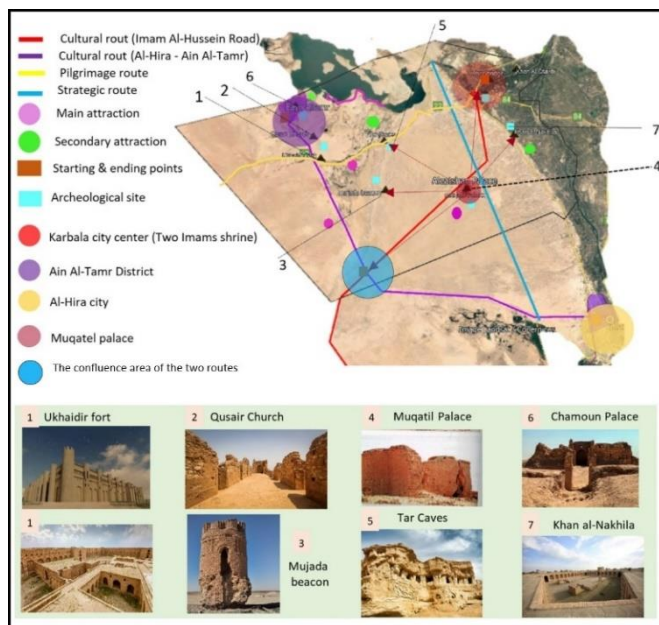
Figure 5. Study methodology - Reviving the cultural routes

Regarding architecture legacies, in this study, the term "node" refers to the spatial component of the heritage architecture in the network. in which physical contacts or lines of communication stemming from cultural routes intersect or branch. For each node to have an impact on the network, it must be governed by the regulatory role of conservation and protection measures, to contribute to adding value to both the urban and heritage context. Heritage nodes must be connected to be used as a new product value to rejuvenate an area alongside cultural route ways, balancing all aspects of sustainability.

The priority will be the selection of the sites to be included in the cultural routes and the spatial positioning of each architectural heritage, as a result of which competitiveness cannot be achieved without achieving communication. By analyzing the content of both literature and documents to trace the two cultural routes in Kerbala, we find that they intersect in the southwestern part of it and along the western plateau (Figure 6).

It is possible to make the convergence area the starting point, and the beginning of a cultural tour that covers the historical

area as a whole, investing the two historical arteries in creating a network of contact with the heritage nodes. For visitors who intend to visit Imam Hussein, peace be upon him, (religious tourism), the (Imam Hussein route, peace be upon him) will be taken as the main destination for religious tourism. Especially as it provides a rich experience for the visitor to remember all the events that took place on the AL-Hussain route, which will catalyst the importance of this route as one of the components of religious tourism. Along this route, a network of secondary roads that lead to the heritage nodes adjacent to the road will branch off.



Source: [20]

Figure 6. Reviving Kerbala's cultural routes

The visitor will choose his destination according to his interests, his time, the availability of attractions, facilities, infrastructure (hostels, restaurants, rest, and entertainment stations commensurate with the natural and traditional elements of the place), as well as the availability of appropriate means of transportation. Until he reaches the area of (Muqatel palace), which represents a historical center for the convergence of various events, where historical sources indicated that its construction was a station for commercial caravans on the road between Aleppo, Kufa, and Basra. Muqatel palace is also considered a link for the caravans heading to the Hajj road, and it represented one of the roads linking Kufa to Sham, as well as the other road through Ain al-Tamr. It also represented one of the postal stations between Kufa and Sham for its strategic location, and it was located within the borders of the former Kingdom of Al-Hira. then concluded with the most important event that increased its value, which is that it was the last hostel in which Imam Al-Hussein, (peace be upon him) lodged before he went to the place of his martyrdom [28].

One of the important matters is that a Muqatel palace is located geographically in a straight line with the hostels that Imam Hussein, peace be upon him, passed through and in a spatial sequence imposed by the geography of the region. Muqatil palace will be a focal point from which multiple routes depart, including the Al-Tar Caves of unique geological nature and, and another to the Islamic-era Al-Mujda minaret. Where the sources find that Muqatel Palace, Minaret Mujda,

and Ukhaider Palace are linked historically, as they represent a sign between Muqatel Palace and Ukhaider Palace [28].

Therefore, Muqatel palace will play a prominent role in planning and reviving Imam Hussein's cultural route, as a point of reference and link to complementary historical events. Muqatel palace act as the cultural distributor for the visitor towards the heritage contract associated with it. The area (Muqatel palace) and it's desert geographical nature possesses the spatial and natural elements that can be revived as a modern village that attracts visitors. And thus activating the aspect of desert tourism, where visitors have the opportunity to stay in the desert and live in villages and taste the traditional social life and the nature of life of another era, which as a whole constitutes one of the elements of the intangible cultural heritage after securing all the necessary infrastructure requirements for the visitor's comfort. As well as the possibility of encouraging the innovative scientific aspect and establishing a desert science centre there.

Finally, we will go to the endpoint of the route, where the final destination is the shrine of the two Imams Hussein and his brother Al-Abbas, peace be upon them. The journey can be reversed in terms of starting the starting point and for the same route so that the tourist completes his journey by taking the other cultural route as a complement to his cultural journey and sensing the other historical aspect of the region.

As for the second cultural route (Al-Hira-Ain Al-Tamr), A network of secondary roads can be established to enhance its connection with the architectural heritage spread along its extension, starting with Al-Ukhaider Fort, Al-Qusayr Church, Shmeon Palace, and Al-Bardawil Castle. As well as the picturesque nature, agricultural lands, and activating the aspect of natural medical tourism that Ain al-Tamr region enjoys, due to the presence of Wells and springs that are used for treating for several years, but at present, this tourism has declined due to the continuous neglect, whether in the wells themselves or the necessary infrastructure for them and the targeted patients or even at the level of the roads and routes that connect them (Figure 6).

The selection of POIs in a network model depends on geographic location, scope, period, and semantic values. The existing local routes are integrated with the cultural routes at specific points that do not conflict with the geographical and environmental nature such as the strategic road and the land pilgrimage route that passes through different areas of the natural environment, terrain and agricultural villages, and provides A unique experience to cross into a region rich in heritage. The main objectives in designing and reviving cultural routes are determined by the necessity of achieving a unique visitor experience rich in historical values and creative interaction with the cultural and environmental heritage of Kerbala.

Through an objective and chronological approach to a network of historical places (heritage nodes), this approach will be under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and with the active participation of the municipality, urban planning departments, local authorities, and the local community based on the general concept that cultural heritage is a public good. It highlights the state-led institutional framework with the locally established legal and regulatory frameworks and regulations.

In the field of sustainable development, the revival and development of cultural routes in Kerbala can contribute to promoting sustainable development towards a positive outcome at the local and international levels. Likewise, its

revival will create great opportunities for cooperation and significant investments inside and outside Kerbala. Emphasis will be placed on modern infrastructure and improving access to these sites by securing the necessary means to protect and preserve them. The goal is to integrate Kerbala's cultural and natural environment into the daily lives of the citizen and visitors alike. Therefore, the achievement of the aspects of sustainability is guaranteed through the management and attention of this network by the local government in Kerbala and the Ministry of Culture, as well as the active participation of the local community and the economy through various activities in cultural sectors such as festivals, competitions, different types of sports and exhibitions that promote local products.

6. DISCUSSION

In general, for heritage to exploit all its historical and cultural potential, a balance must be achieved between cultural heritage resources and development programs, by integrating those assets into strategies of planning and development.

When taking the cultural routes in Kerbala as an invigorating value and as a planning tool for the revival of historical areas, we found many elements of the tangible heritage scattered as abandoned architectural entities in historical areas with various characteristics, these routes must

be viewed from the perspective of the network.

Despite the historical value of the study area and a large number of natural resources of importance in it, the area does not contain the minimum levels of infrastructure organization for development. There are no connecting routes to enhance the possibility and ease of access to historical assets; There are no accommodation facilities and entertainment institutions for holding various festivals and events, and there is no concept of marketing archaeological sites, and therefore antiquities that reflect cultural heritage in their actual reality are disrupted, including cultural routes.

When we analyzed Kerbala's strategic developmental plan [19], which provides the vision to investing Kerbala's natural, social and agricultural potentials in developing the tourism aspect, and thus economic development and improving the quality of life, we found it concerned with the development processes in the agricultural, industrial, commercial, service and religious and tourism sectors as a future vision of Kerbala Governorate. as well as, we find that it lacks shedding light on the importance of cultural heritage resources and did not pay attention to the intrinsic value of these assets and their role as an effective driver of sustainable development. in addition to that, the strategy plan suggested new routes linking the parts of the province without Addressing the possibility of reviving cultural routes, which indicates the lack of awareness in realizing the importance of the historical and cultural value of Kerbala as a whole.

Table 3. Heritage sustainability indicators

| Main Variable | Secondary Variable | Assessment Topics | Analysis of the strategic plan for Kerbala |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Environmental | Preserving the architectural heritage | Building efficiency/construction techniques and methods | The heritage aspect was not taken into account as a generative value or a heritage-based development approach |
| | Visitor's mode of travel | car/non-car based modes | -Attention to the creation of secondary roads -The study did not address the investment of the concept of cultural routes -The study did not care about the visitor's journey style, whether traveling by car or without it |
| | Climate change adaptation | Assessment of climatic comfort levels - providing treatments and investing natural energy sources (wind and solar energy) | It did not include a section on cultural heritage (tangible and intangible) at all levels |
| Socio-Cultural | A sense of belonging and pride | Association with a place or cultural resource | -No emphasis has been placed on the importance of fostering a sense of pride for the local community with heritage resources |
| | Social interaction | The ability to generate skills – Links to education and learning in the community | -The study presented proposals for projects aimed at improving the level of public services and facilities, and consequently the quality of life of citizens and their residential complexes, in a way that would benefit residents, stakeholders, investors, visitors and religious tourists. |
| | culture and arts | Promotion of entertainment and arts programs | |
| Economic | finance resource | Resources available for heritage projects | -The study was not concerned with the financial allocation for heritage protection |
| | Employment | Work in the field of heritage | -did not address the provision of employment within the heritage sector |
| | multiplier effect | Greater benefits for visitors in the field of the local economy and thus investment | -The study focused on strengthening relations and economic capabilities locally, regionally and globally by paying attention to the aspect of religious tourism and providing its facilities. |
| Generic | Perception/Evaluation | Educating residents and visitors about heritage and its links to sustainability | -The study lacks shedding light on strengthening the relationship between the local community and heritage significantly |
| | | Assessing the importance of heritage in everyday life | -Concerned with the aspects of sustainable development through proposals for environmental improvements to enhance the ecological value, improve biodiversity and provide better recreational opportunities for residents and visitors |

Source: the authores relying on [29];

This paper provides in Table 3 a framework as a means by which decision-makers can determine the value of historical assets within planning and development policies, the framework shows indicators of the sustainability of the historical environment [29]. This approach helps assess the potential for new development in historical areas. Then, the extent to which these variables are achieved will be tested in the analysis of the development plan study in Kerbala to measure the extent to which this study follows a developmental methodology based on heritage.

7. CONCLUSION

The expansion of the concept of cultural heritage in recent years, and the realization of the importance of the cultural route in the context of cultural resources, have led to the identification of new directions, approaches, methodologies, and policies for the protection of cultural heritage. In this context, there have been serious international attempts to manage and establish a network of cultural routeways that focus primarily on awareness of cultural heritage and its importance, which goes beyond its archaeological and material values.

The activation of cultural routes in a creative manner, as discussed in this research, is of great importance in the revival of heritage, as we found that the effect of revitalizing the cultural route does not stop at the boundaries of heritage revival only, but extends its impact for the benefit of society in general, it represents a complex and multi-dimensional system and represents a qualitative contribution to the concept of heritage Both the cultural and the natural as a geographical representation of continuity, as this also agrees with ICOMOS statement [11].

For the cultural route to be used as a new generative value and as a tool for planning and sustainable development for the revitalization of historical areas, it must be viewed from a multi-dimensional perspective linking the material and immaterial aspects. Thus, it must be realized from the network and node perspective, as this research shows. According to the network model [16], which seeks to secure the infrastructure for visitors and its effect on strengthening ties with the community and with heritage nodes alike, where the effects of activating the cultural route extend to the historical environment economically, socially, and spatially.

We concluded from our analysis that if the network between the heritage nodes and the vital historical parts of the area is missing, it will remain deserted, isolated, and separated from the life of the community and the neighboring areas. Based on this, the success of revitalizing the track and using it in a contemporary way must respect the tangible and intangible values of the available resources and at the same time contribute to sustainable development with a variety of planning tools.

Based on theoretical concepts presented by the research, an important vision can be drawn about the mechanism of using the cultural route as an effective development tool in directing the sustainable development process that expresses the integration of the relationship between planning policies and heritage management, And the effect of each on the other, where planning stimulates the creation of new meaning and value for heritage and society, At the same time, the activation of heritage (tangible and intangible) contributes as an engine for sustainable development.

In this study, an integrated approach was proposed to activate and revive two roads of historical importance in Kerbala, the levels of analysis followed: (1) a previous study of the roads, (2) analysis of the Kerbala strategic plan (3) new proposals to activate the cultural routes. The proposal does not focus on a single area or monument but on a comprehensive and objective treatment of monuments and sites that integrate them into a network dating back to various historical eras, which will be addressed in future detailed studies.

Since an effective cultural policy in Kerbala is still missing, it needs catalysts to draw attention to the importance and effectiveness of cultural heritage in general and the historical route in particular as a generative and active catalyst for the region. So, this paper was prepared as an inciting and initiating step to highlight the importance and role of the cultural route in Kerbala in the planning process and sustainable development of the historical area, and as a start for subsequent steps of preparing detailed studies for each aspect of the development.

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