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MODERN URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS WITH THE HISTORICAL FABRIC IN BASQAL

Abstract. Basqal settlement, as one of the oldest inhabited areas of Azerbaijan, holds significant importance in terms of historical and cultural heritage. Its urban development history encompasses successive stages, beginning with riverside settlement, extending to mountainous landscapes, enclosed habitation within fortifications, the medieval feudal era, the craftsmanship phase under Tsarist Russia, and continuing into the modern period. The formation of “Otay Basqal” during the 1960s–1970s, characterized by rapid urban expansion, affected the historical fabric of “Ancient Basqal,” generating contradictions through demographic shifts, depopulation, and the incompatibility of new constructions with the historical environment. Although contemporary tourism policy stimulates socio-economic development, it simultaneously poses risks of diminishing the authenticity of the historical landscape. The principal challenge lies in harmonizing modern development with the preservation of historical texture, safeguarding cultural heritage from commercialization and imitation, strengthening legal mechanisms, and ensuring the full implementation of protection zones. The Basqal case transcends the local level and may be regarded as a universal model for reconciling heritage conservation with modern development in protected areas.

Key words: historical fabric, urban development history, tourism policy, cultural heritage, protection zone.

Introduction. Basqal settlement is one of the oldest inhabited places in Azerbaijan and holds special significance both in terms of historical and cultural heritage. The urban structure of the settlement has been formed over centuries on a historically developed fabric. When referring to the historical fabric of Basqal, the “Old Basqal periphery” is primarily meant. The boundaries of this periphery end at the Basqal River and Ocaçay River. Beyond these rivers, the “Otay Basqal” periphery begins. These two peripheries or areas form the modern urban system of Basqal. The rapid development of “Otay Basqal” in the modern period, driven by demands of employment, tourism, infrastructure, and socio-economic development, has begun to have a certain impact on “Old Basqal.” This, in turn, introduces new elements into the historical environment, leading to contradictions such as the transformation of the historical fabric into a historical landscape scale and the loss of boundaries. The aim of this thesis is to analyze, through a scientific approach, the contradictions between historical fabric and modern development in Basqal urban planning.

The interpretation of the main material. The history of settlement in Basqal dates back to ancient times. Archaeological studies show that the initial settlement of Basqal was formed in riverbank areas and later developed towards higher elevated landscapes, particularly in the direction of Qalabashi and Khankendi, in order to protect itself from floodwaters. As a result of this process, the settlement (urban development) history of Basqal can be divided into several stages:

- Early riverbank settlement (urban development) period
- Formation period in elevated mountainous areas
- Closed urban development within fortress areas
- Medieval feudal urban development period
- Craft-centered urban development during the Tsarist Russian period
- Modern period (from the early 20th century to the present)

In the modern stage, Basqal’s urban system consists of two main peripheries: the historically existing “Old Basqal” and “Otay Basqal,” which was formed in the 1960s–1970s. This periodization allows for tracing the continuity of Basqal’s historical settlement and urban development processes. In 1989, Basqal was declared a State Historical and Cultural Reserve, covering an area of 76 hectares. Within the reserve, there are fortifications, mosques, baths, water and sewage systems, and ancient neighborhoods dating from the 9th to 19th centuries. Basqal is known for its silk production and kelagayi

(traditional silk scarf) craftsmanship, which gained wide fame in the Caucasus and Europe in the 12th–13th centuries [1]. The historical bazaar square and a 300-year-old plane tree serve as living witnesses of cultural heritage and symbols of the settlement. These elements form the historical fabric of Basqal and preserve its unique identity.

Impacts of modern urban planning: The attempts to preserve “Old Basqal” within its gradually transforming urban system resulted in the formation of “Otay Basqal” in the 1960s–1970s. [2]. Consequently, a process of demographic relocation began in Old Basqal. This population shift created conditions for depopulation in certain areas, and over time the historical structure of these abandoned zones began to deteriorate and disappear. This, in turn, leads to cases where neighboring areas expand within the neighborhood, courtyard spaces merge with street structures, or areas simply turn into ruins [3]. The emergence of new building structures that differ significantly from the historical fabric and traditional construction materials in these ruined settlements is one of such phenomena.

These impacts are clearly observed in Old Basqal’s Chayqirakhı, Kelekuche, Qelebigah, Qalabashı, Xarabiyan, and Dere neighborhoods. In Dere neighborhood as well as in Demirchibazar and Qoshabulag—areas historically associated with craftsmanship, especially silk production, metalworking, and other silk-related crafts—employment-related displacement processes can be observed. These include the cessation of activity in the large silk artel and the emergence of new silk and kelağayi production facilities in Otay Basqal. Such processes were more pronounced during the Soviet period and the 1990s.

In the modern period, the policy of developing Basqal as a tourism center has also had certain impacts, which is not a phenomenon unique only to Basqal. Concerns regarding the negative effects of mass tourism have already been raised even at the UNESCO level. Solutions and regulatory guidelines are being developed regarding the risk posed by mass tourism to world heritage sites. Thus, within the reserve area, festivals, events, and tourism services are organized. Renovated roads, communication networks, and modern residential buildings are integrated into historical neighborhoods. While this process stimulates socio-economic development on one hand, it alters the originality of the historical environment on the other.

Modern urban planning approaches, instead of creating harmonious integration with the historical fabric, sometimes lead to aesthetic inconsisten-

cies and the infiltration or imitation of cultural and material heritage. The commercialization of residential structures within historical landscapes increases the risk of transformation into accommodation and workshop-retail systems, which in turn affects the density and qualitative structure of cultural heritage.

Contrasts between historical fabric and modernity: A number of contradictions can be observed between the historical fabric and modern development:

- Construction of buildings using materials different from those of the original historical fabric.
- Emergence of structures that are significantly larger or smaller than the scale of the surrounding historical urban landscape.
- Alteration or excessive imitative intervention in the technological elements of narrow, cobblestone streets.
- Changes in urban system appearance due to replacement of density and scale of entrance structures.
- Construction of aesthetically incompatible tourism and service facilities alongside medieval architecture.
- Simplification of traditional craftsmanship for tourism purposes, i.e., transformation of production-from-scratch approaches into ready-made commercial production, leading to the commercialization of cultural heritage structures.
- Expansion of infrastructure alongside protection of historical monuments, creating a risk of weakening the conservation regime, etc.

These contradictions show that modern development should not completely replace the historical fabric; rather, it must be integrated with it in a harmonious manner.

Key challenges: The main challenges faced in the urban development of Basqal are as follows:

- Maintaining balance.
- Preserving the originality of historical monuments and neighborhoods while meeting modern tourism and residential demands.
- Commercialization of cultural heritage.
- Minimizing the risk of simplification of traditional craftsmanship for tourism purposes.
- Improving existing legislative acts in a way that strengthens the preservation and protection of cultural heritage.

- Adoption of legislative acts ensuring that the concept of protection or buffer zones is applied to the entire reserve area and all structures within it.
- Establishing a legal basis for protection zone documentation and the adoption of relevant legal acts.

In conclusion, the observed contradictions between the urban development history and modern growth of Basqal settlement show that it is necessary to reconcile the preservation of historical fabric with modern requirements. The urban landscape of Old Basqal contains examples of cultural heritage formed over centuries, but the rapid development of “Otay Basqal” and tourism-oriented policies introduce new elements into this historical environment, creating a risk of weakening its authenticity. The main conclusion is as follows:

- The historical fabric must be integrated harmoniously with modern development; otherwise, cultural heritage faces the threat of commercialization and imitation.
- The example of Basqal shows that a balanced approach can ensure both socio-economic development and the preservation of the originality of historical monuments and neighborhoods.
- Strengthening legal mechanisms, full implementation of protection zones, and regulation of tourism are key conditions for ensuring the continuity of Basqal’s historical identity.

Thus, the experience of Basqal can be regarded not only as a local case but also as a universal model for reconciling cultural heritage preservation with modern development in all protected areas.

Conclusion. These challenges and solution directions in the case of Basqal will enable the resolution of similar problems in all protected areas, ensuring both the preservation of cultural heritage and the continuation of socio-economic development. The preservation of the historical fabric, urban system, and architectural heritage of Basqal and similar reserves must be aligned not only with local efforts but also with the principles of international conventions. This approach will ensure the sustainability of cultural heritage and facilitate its global recognition. The example of Basqal shows that the historical fabric must be integrated harmoniously with modern development; otherwise, cultural heritage faces the risk of commercialization and imitation. A balanced approach can ensure both socio-economic development and the preservation of the originality of historical monuments. Strengthening legal

mechanisms, full implementation of protection zones, and regulation of tourism are the main conditions for ensuring the continuity of Basqal's historical identity. This experience can be regarded as a universal model for reconciling cultural heritage preservation with modern development not only at the local level but in all protected areas.

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BASQAL ŞƏHƏRSALMASINDA MÜASİR ŞƏHƏRSALMA VƏ ONUN TARIXİ TOXUMA İLƏ TƏZADİ

Basqal qəsəbəsi Azərbaycanın ən qədim yaşayış məkanlarından biri kimi tarixi və mədəni irs baxımından mühüm əhəmiyyətə malikdir. Onun şəhərsalma tarixi çayqırağı məskunlaşmadan başlayaraq dağ landşaftlı ərazilərə, qala daxilində qapalı məskunlaşmaya, orta əsr feodal dövrünə, Çar Rusiyası sənətkarlıq mərhələsinə və müasir dövrə qədər ardıcıl inkişaf mərhələlərini əhatə edir. XX əsrin 60–70-ci illərində formalaşan “Otay Basqal” sürətli urban inkişafı ilə “Qədim Basqal”ın tarixi toxumasına təsir göstərmiş, demoqrafik dəyişikliklər, boşalmalar və yeni tikililərin tarixi mühitlə uyğunsuzluğu nəticəsində ziddiyyətlər yaratmışdır. Müasir turizm siyasəti sosial-iqtisadi inkişafı stimullaşdırsa da, tarixi landşaftın orijinallığını zəiflətmək riski daşıyır. Əsas çağırış tarixi toxumanın müasir inkişafı ilə harmonik inteqrasiyası, mədəni irsin kommersiyalaşma və imitasiya təhlükəsindən qorunması, hüquqi mexanizmlərin gücləndirilməsi və mühafizə zonalarının tam tətbiqidir. Basqal nümunəsi lokal səviyyədə kənara çıxaraq qoruqlarda tarixi irsin qorunması ilə müasir inkişafın uzlaşdırılması üçün universal model kimi dəyərləndirilə bilər.

Açar sözlər: tarixi toxuma, şəhərsalma tarixi, turizm siyasəti, mədəni irs, mühafizə zonası.

Насиб Зейналов (Азербайджан)

СОВРЕМЕННОЕ ГРАДОСТРОИТЕЛЬСТВО И ЕГО ПРОТИВОРЕЧИЯ С ИСТОРИЧЕСКОЙ ТКАНЬЮ БАСКАЛА

Поселение Баскал, являясь одним из древнейших мест обитания на территории Азербайджана, обладает значительной ценностью в историко-культурном отношении. Его градостроительная история охватывает последовательные этапы: от прибрежного заселения до освоения горных ландшафтов, замкнутого проживания внутри крепостных сооружений, периода средневекового феодализма, этапа ремесленного развития в эпоху царской России и до современности. Формирование «Отай Баскала» в 1960–1970-е годы, сопровождавшееся стремительным урбанистическим ростом, оказало воздействие на историческую ткань «Древнего Баскала», породив противоречия, связанные с демографическими изменениями, депопуляцией и несоответствием новых построек исторической среде. Несмотря на то, что современная туристическая политика стимулирует социально-экономическое развитие, она одновременно несет риск утраты аутентичности исторического ландшафта. Основная задача заключается в гармонизации современного развития с сохранением исторической структуры, защите культурного наследия от коммерциализации и имитации, укреплении правовых механизмов и полном внедрении охранных зон. Пример Баскала выходит за рамки локального уровня и может рассматриваться как универсальная модель согласования охраны исторического наследия с современным развитием в охраняемых территориях.

Ключевые слова: историческая ткань, история градостроительства, туристическая политика, культурное наследие, охранный зона.