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Discussion Points:

- Q. What about modern planning?
- A. In Oman they preserve the old city structure and buildings. But they are rather associated with poverty. In Dubai some old house are renovated and transformed into museums. The growth of today is beyond the needs of the indigenous population. Soon they will be only a minority in the country (because there is such high immigration from abroad).
- Q. What impact will the fast growth have on the cultural heritage (on the archaeological sites)?
- A. Maybe 10-15% is discovered today. Both the discovered and the undiscovered are threatened.

New Urban Settlements in the Ecological Context; Miānqāla and its New Settlement in the South Eastern Coasts of the Caspian Sea

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Abstract

In the Iranian public media, it was widely reported that by the end of 2004, 380 hectares of the eastern farthest end of the Peninsula Mianqala (northern part of Iran, located in the southeastern coasts of Caspian Sea) were sold to an organisation – the result is that "Asurada" Island will be turned into a so-called "Tourist Village". The decision has been made and civil works are to begin. The village planned as a new settlement is specifically considered to work with Mianqala, which since June 1976 is an international biosphere reserve and since 1969, an Iranian nature protected area. Considering the special condition of the region as a biosphere reserve, this paper introduces the current

situation of the Island Āšūrāda and the suggested program by the aforementioned organisation. Subsequently, it tries to find an optimal answer to the question of whether "Āšūrāda" is appropriate for such a purpose and how far it is allowed to be interfered with, through this new settlement. The paper asserts for this development, there is consideration of the settlement's urban and architectural concept; subsequently analysis is conducted for the spatial development of the settlement, in terms of its influences on the ecological sources, the rural structure and the financial as well as social aspects. Such study is required, particularly due to the chain of tourist influences, which certainly will introduce a new pattern of urban character in terms of quality and quantity. Finally, with the assistance of the case presented, this paper poses the question of whether a new urban pattern like this can endanger a traditional and above all a nature protected context or not.

Introduction

Iran borders the Caspian Sea with a 740 kilometre-long coastline to the north (CIA 2005:IRAN). One of the important coastal features along Iranian coastlines includes Gorgān Bay²⁵ in the east (Picture 1), which is almost entirely separated from the Caspian Sea by the 60 kilometre-long Miānqāla²⁶ Peninsula (Picture 2).

Along the Caspian coast the climate is subtropical. The climatic and geographic situation of this region provides appropriate conditions for wildlife - over 260 species of waterfowl were identified in Miānqāla in the year 1998 (Table 1). The Peninsula Miānqāla is considered a wildlife refuge centre and was therefore listed as the only natural biosphere reserve in the northern coast of Iran in 1969, later in 1976 designated by United Nations as a protected Area (Erdmann/Frommberger 1999:133). The northern latitude of the peninsula is 36°46' - 36°57' and its eastern longitude 53°30' - 54°02' (Picture 3), its area is about 68,800 ha.

²⁵ Also known as Astarābād bay (De Planhol 1989:688).

²⁶ Transcription method used for the Proper Nouns – not international familiar names e.g. Caspian Sea or Iran – is here commonly given after the Encyclopædia Iranica. Miānqāla is also written Miānkāleh i.e. Miankaleh.

Picture 1. The Caspian Sea and Miānqāla



Source: Britannica 2005

Picture 2. Gorgān Bay and Miānqāla



Source: Global Insight 2005

Picture 3. Aerial Photo of Peninsula Miānqāla

Source: Google Earth 2005

At the east end of this Peninsula the Island Āšūrāda²⁷ is located, in the 36°54' - 36°53' northern latitude and 53°57' - 54°01' eastern longitude. Its approximate altitude is -28 metres from sea level (Persian Gulf base). This island and its newly conducted urban concept is the crucial point for this paper.

Āšūrāda belongs geologically and ecologically to the Biosphere Reserve of Miānqāla. According to the latest statutory division of the Iranian provinces, *Taqsimāt-i Kešvari*, this peninsula is part of Iranian Province Māzandrān, but remarkably according to the same order, this Island has been subordinated to the neighbour province of Golestān, and belongs to the district of Bandar-e Torkaman²⁸ (Picture 4). The canal of Ķozeini²⁹ must have been a major reason for this decision. This canal has broken the last tie between the peninsula and the island (Picture 5); consequently Āšūrāda turned into an independent island, despite this separation the correlation of both is in several ways not debatable, e.g. in terms of their upcoming development. In addition, this island is also originally a protected region of the Caspian Sea and has the same resources like Miānqāla. Its status as a unique and international biosphere reserve, its appropriate climate situation and great potential for attracting tourists, all argue for an attractive ecotourism resort. Such concepts using these resources as a "Tourist Village" have been developed mainly during the last three years. This paper investigates the question of how far such a concept will influence the natural resources and the original features. It identifies, whether or how far it can or will achieve the suggested concept for sustainable development.

²⁷ Also written Ashurada, Ashooradeh, Ashoura Deh and Ashouradeh.

²⁸ Formerly Bandar-e Šāh. The Torkaman Port is on the southeaster Caspian Sea and located at the entrance of Gorgān bay about eight km south of the mouth of Artrak.

²⁹ Also written Khozeini.

Picture 4. Aerial Photo of Āšūrāda

Source: Google Earth 2005

Picture 5. The Peninsula Miānqāla

Source: Google Earth 2005

This analysis is divided in four main sections. Following this introduction, it describes the status of Āšūrāda, subdivided into four segments; location, history, actual state and its importance. The second section assesses the concept of development on the Island, e.g. programs, plans and infrastructure, while third section deals with the problems of the concept. The last section concludes the paper with note that tourism itself is sharpening pure awareness of the evils of environmental degradation, and this could be conducive towards the adoption of sustainable tourism policies, not to forget, the high sensibility of the region, which should be also greatly considered.

The Status of Āšūrāda

This section introduces the main features of Āšūrāda, which are primary for most planning concepts.

Location

Āšūrāda is known as an archipelago. As late as the early nineteenth century, it consisted of three sand formations at the entrance. These are the Islands of Gorgān Bay (Mirfendereski 2001:30). They are known as little, middle and main (partly great) Āšūrāda Island. The two smaller islands at the western end of the

archipelago joined intermittently the Peninsula Miānqāla as the water of the Caspian Sea declined, e.g. in 1891-1892 (Qā'em-Maqāmi 1987:877). Actually, the island group of Āšūrāda (also known as Āšūrān) presented an optical illusion, a veritable "now you see it, now you don't" (Mirfendereski 2001:31). For instance, due to the changes in water level of the Caspian Sea, only two Islands were registered. At present, there is only one island, which is known as Āšūrāda Island. It measures about 4.7km long, 1.2km wide, and is no more than 1.0 to 1.5 metres above sea level. The two minor islands were habitable on account of their inappropriate situation, e.g. ground (ATV 2005: Ashooradeh).

This island is located at the eastern end of the Peninsula Miānqāla and at 36°54' northern latitude and 54°01' eastern longitude. Its approximate altitude is about -28 from sea level (Persian Gulf level). Its southern part borders Gorgān Bay and the southern coast of Torkaman Port (with approximately three kilometres distance), its western part limits to Kōzeinī Canal, and from the north it is bounded to the Caspian Sea. The main way for accessing Āšūrāda Island is from the mainland e.g. from Port Torkman is via its port deck (CPE 1998: 19). The nearest cities to the Island are Kordkoy (11 km), Bandar-i Gaz (18km) and Gorgān City (23km).

History

In spite of some opinions, this island viz. the term Āšūrāda is first mentioned in the Qajar Period, of the 18th Century (Qā'em-Maqāmi 1987:877), there are some traces of the island, referring to the 17th Century. The Cossacks of South Russia, being instigated by the Grand Duke of Moscow, decided to attack Persia in the period of Shah Abbas the Great, in 1668. They entrenched themselves on Peninsula Miānqāla, as the Persians attacked them they took refuge in Āšūrāda and remained there for a time (Curzon 1892:186). Also, later a Russian commander Vyonovich, who should have been on the Island in order to establish a commercial enterprise, in fact was there to build a fort with canons (Qā'em-Maqāmi 1987:877). In comparison to 6000-year-old written history of Iran, the island was rather unknown, and probably is the reason, why other islands, like the famous historical Island of Abskun, are often identified as Āšūrāda, a fact that is dubious³⁰.

According to both peace treaties with Russia in 19th Century, Golestan (1813) and Torkamanchai (1828),

Russians occupied this island about the year 1840³¹ (Curzon 1892:183). In 1846, Russians erected a few buildings on the island. Under new management of the Chancellor Amir-i-Kabir, Persia applied to England to aid in obtaining the withdrawal of Russia (Avery 1967:51,52). In 1849 England made an attempt, but without success. In 1851, Turkmen carried out a surprise attack on the Russians and captured their garrison for a time³². In 1854, Persia demanded the official evacuation by Russia, but they ignored the demand, although Russia admitted that Āšūrāda was Persian territory.

In 1856, Russian position on the island strengthened, and naval force augmented. It was the most southerly of the Russian stations, as even Jules Verne mentioned in his book "Robur, the Conqueror" or "The Clipper of the Clouds" (Verne 1887: 53). In 1866, Naser o-Din Shah visited Āšūrāda and confirmed the police powers of Russia against the Turkmen (Curzon 1892:183). Up to this time, the inhabitants of this island were Russians and there were few Iranians. The Russians left the Island after the collapse of the tsar government and the ratification of a friendship treaty between Iran and the Soviet Union on February 13, 1921 (Qā'em-Maqāmi 1987:877).

In August-September 1941, during World War II, the Soviet Union marines took up positions on little Āšūrāda –one of the three islands of Āšūrāda. They installed there a generator, an observation tower and a wireless station (Mirfendereski 2001:158).

This constant seesaw in the region and on the island ended finally in the first years of 1950's. Iranian fisheries established facilities there, consequently first Iranian inhabitants settled down in terms of a little village. By the end year of 1960's and mid 1970's the Island became of national and international importance as a biosphere reserve as a part of Peninsula Miānqāla. In 2001, "Alavai" Organisation, a sub-company of "Mostaz'afān" foundation, laid claim to the island, as its own property. This contention was based

³¹ After Sir H. Rawlinson it must be 1837-1838 (Rawlinson 1875: 137).

³² There is two different dating for this, the second one is after Qā'em-Maqāmi the year 1838, which shall be the reason, that the Commander of Gorgān as well as the Iranian Cancellor Mirza Aqasi requested the Russians to support the Iranians against the Turkmen. The Russians did it, but subsequently they didn't leave the Island (Qā'em-Maqāmi 1987:877). It is also mentioned, they first landed in the Little and Middle Āšūrāda, as the Turkmen Pirate were still for a while on the Great Āšūrāda and later the Russians booted them out of the Great island (Mirfendereski 2001:32, 33).

³⁰ Cf. eg. "Takmil Homayoon N (2002): Abskun or Island Āšūrāda, the office for cultural research, Tehran".

on documents, which confirmed a private sale procedure in 1997. It prevented the Environment Ecology Organisation of Iran, Iranian Media and several NGO™ Organisations from accepting this claim for several reasons (Iran 2005:5).

In 2003, different court cases accredited the sale. During this process the islands, in expanse of 380 ha, were released to a private company called “World Touristic Organisation (Sāzmān-e Gardešgari-e Jahān)³³” (Iran 2004:6). This Company decided to construct a “Tourist Village” on the island (FTZ 2003, 27) and placed an order with an Iranian architecture firm and subsequently an Austrian consulting firm “IAMCC³⁴”, which presented the project development of the Tourist Village of Āšūrāda in March 2005, which this paper discusses.

The construction process, which should have begun in 2004, is still in dispute, since two important governmental organisations of Iran “Environment Ecology” and “Cultural Heritage and Tourist” are still struggling over the future concept of the island (CHNA 2005:9388).

A brief chronology of important events for Āšūrāda is as follows:

Important events of Āšūrāda Island

- 1668 Probably the first official dating of the island with title “Āšūrāda”
- 1840 Russian occupation of Āšūrāda
- 1921 Evacuation of Russians
- 1941 Second Russian occupation of Āšūrāda
- 1950’s Āšūrāda again under Iranian control
- 1960’s Development of an Iranian village
- 1969 Known as a national nature protected reserve
- 1976 Known as an international biosphere reserve
- 1997 Sold in a private sale
- 2001 Existence of a tourism concept
- 2003 Development of the financial plan
- 2005 First stage of the project development under urban planning considerations.

Actual State

³³ This Company gives in its English documents the indication “Tourism Areas Organisation”, in this paper mentioned as TAO. The main shareholders of TAO are as follows: Kerman Automobile Industries Co. (PJSC) 60%, Arg Civil Co. (PJSC) 30%, Free Zone Consultant Engineers Co. 10% (Ftz 2003:26).

³⁴ International Architecture Management City Planning Consulting.

The actual state contains the current situation of the island, e.g. buildings and facilities, economical aspects, importance of Island.

Buildings and Facilities

In the 1950’s, Iran fisheries established two fishing stations on Āšūrāda Island. Consequently Āšūrāda Village was developed in the 1960’s on the main Island of Āšūrāda (Great Āšūrāda), besides the constructions, which existed on the middle Āšūrāda e.g. observation tower (Mirfendereski 2001:158). Adjacent to the Caspian Sea viz. its water allowed another village to develop on the island, which there is no sign of any more. As a result of the inundation of the Caspian Sea in 1990’s many coastal structures were damaged in Iran and amongst others even the Āšūrāda Village, insofar that almost all of the tenements were devastated (Iran 2004:6). There is in fact by the time no real rural or urban context on the island. The noticeable artificial constructions on the island are be listed as below:

- Nine fishing stations, two with architectural installation, e.g. building, tower (Picture 6)
- The Masque of Āšūrāda (Picture 7)
- A Restaurant (Picture 8)
- A guard station
- An old fortification; probably built by Russians in 1920’s (Picture 9)
- Historic house; belonged to Russian Minister plenipotentiary
- The damaged Village of Āšūrāda (Picture10).

Picture 6. A Fishing Station in Āšūrāda



Source: FTZ 2003

Picture 7. The Masque of Āsūrāda



Source: CHNA 2005

Picture 8. The Restaurant in Āsūrāda



Source: ATV 2005

Picture 9. The Residence in Āsūrāda



Source: CHNA 2005

All of these constructions are concentrated in southeast part of the island. There is also a roadway, which runs through the island heading northwest.

Picture 10.1. Village Āsūrāda



Source: FTZ 2003

Picture 10.2. Village Āsūrāda



Source: CHNA 2005

Economy

As mentioned, there is not a completed urban context on the island at present. The Organisation of Iranian Fisheries has divided the whole of Iranian coastal area for fishing into five zones and the midpoint of “zone four” is located in Āsūrāda Island, with 9 coastal stations, two of them have also constructions. These stations produce about 50% of best quality Iranian caviar. (Hamshahri 2001: 2159). The composite stocks of sturgeon from Acipenseridae include five species: Beluga, Sevruga, Asetra-Russian, Asetra-Iranian and Spine (CPE 1998: 83). These five species provide the most valuable fishery resources of Iran in the Caspian Sea (Picture11).

In the rural life, such as the life for the residents of Āsūrāda Village, the main activities include fishing and animal husbandry (CPE 1998: 21).

Picture 11. Fishing the most important industry in Āšūrāda



Source: CHNA 2005

Importance of Island Āšūrāda

According to the mentioned features of the island, its importance can be listed in these followed items:

Strategical

Āšūrāda Island has a strategic importance for Iran as the only Iranian island in Caspian Sea and the last Iranian end of horizontal coastal land with a point on it. As a result of this importance, the Russians occupied the island for almost one hundred years.

Ecological

The international and national natural Biosphere Reserve, due to its great value as a wintering station for over a quarter of a million birds, including pelican, flamingo, greylag goose, lesser white fronted goose, swans, red-breasted merganser and the rare white-headed duck (CPE 1998: 27). At the same time the island has valuable multifaceted vegetation, which acts a meaningful part in the ecosystem of the Caspian Sea and above all for the Iranian southeastern coast.

Economical

This island is as mentioned an important pole in caviar industry of Iran. In addition, Āšūrāda demonstrates a great potential for attracting and accommodating domestic and foreign tourists in its seaside resorts' explicit consideration of ecotourism (CPE 1998: 27).

Ecological Problems and Threats

These are mainly activities that cause steady changes in the ecological environment, e.g. threats for the wildlife refuge, which is a nature reserve. As mentioned, this coastal area is of great value as a wintering station for over a quarter of a million birds.

Furthermore, green space on the island has an enormous importance.

Unfortunately, the major programmes for wildlife management were outlined in 1974-76 and they are mostly not efficient anymore. Above all, there is also no sufficient actual program for the implementation of these concepts. In addition, the main destructive activities are reed cutting, hunting, sailing and fishing by the local and neighbour population. Further, some parts of the island, like the Peninsula Miānqāla, are used for livestock grazing (Picture12) (CPE 1998: 26).

Additionally unprotected reservoirs of special vegetating (e.g. Lapoo-Zaghmarz) have been developed serious hunting conducts; and nearby, irrigation schemes may reduce the flow of fresh water into the bay system. There is also a fish-processing factory in the village of Āšūrāda, which influences the environment. Eco-Tourism, which has caught on more than ever in Iran and also includes international tourists, gradually endangers the island and its wildlife refuge.

Picture 12. Livestock grazing in Āšūrāda



Source: CHNA 2005

The Concept of Ecotourism

The suggested concept of TAO "Tourism Areas Organisation" compiled by IAMCC proposes ecotourism for the island as the main idea in terms of a Tourist Village. This concept is indeed new in Iran but is well established across the world. There are many examples, which have the same character and function, e.g. the case of small islands of Cres-Lošinj in Croatia or the island of Malta. The main critic in Āšūrāda is the sensibility of such a biosphere reserve; however, ecotourism has taken place in international biosphere reserve contexts, such as Vosges du Nord/Pfälzerwald in Germany and France. Therefore, it is in principal possible to think about such a concept also for Āšūrāda, although it is obviously the program presented itself, which can deliver reasons for or against its implementation. Therefore, it is necessary to

study first the concept for Āšūrāda Tourist Village, in order to judge it.

Spacial Proposal

The basic concept of TAO is producing a village for tourists, who are interested in its ecological context, e.g. Miānqāla and Āšūrāda, but also in sport and entertainment, rowing, swimming and so on. The proposal considers mainly two categories:

- Day-visitors (max. 500 persons)
- Over-night tourists (max. 100 persons) (Ftz 2003: 14, 15)³⁵.
-

In 2005, as an addition, the construction contractor proposed the opportunity for overnight stay capacity for about 2000 persons in the southeast part of island (FTZ 2003:27). Therefore, it was necessary to add also basic accommodations and facilities (Reinberg 2005: 15, 16). This construction is also considered for the southeast end of the island, at the actual former place of Āšūrāda Village (Picture13). The villas in the form of pile dwellings are also distributed in other places on the sea in northern parts of the island (Picture14). Hotels and villas are the suggested forms of accommodation with beds in several 4 and 5-star Hotels, 150 beds in 75 Villas (50 small and 25 large single-floor villas). These lodgings stretch over approximately 10,000 sqm (FTZ 2003:27). Other suggested facilities include a shopping centre and theatre.

Picture 13. The suggested area in southeast of the Island



Source: Ftz 2003

Picture 14. Schematic perspective for pile dwellings

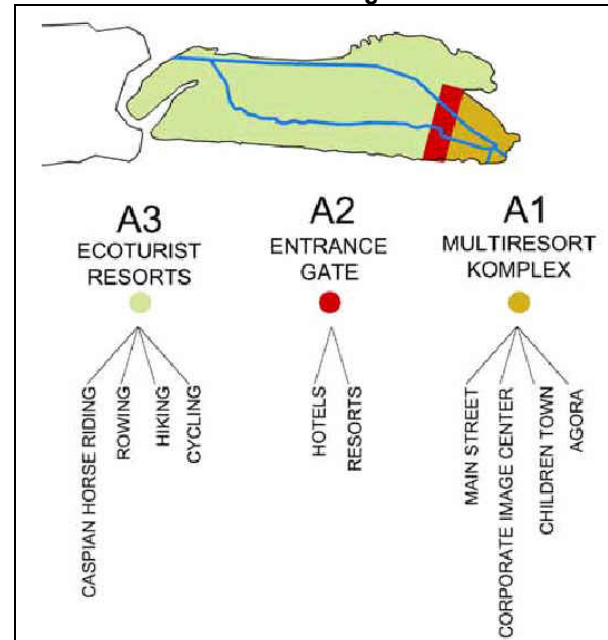


Source: ATV 2005

Zoning Plan

According to the building regulation, the entire construction has to be concentrated in only 10% of the island. The consultants' suggestion is to divide the Island into three main zones viz. making a zoning plan. It consists of three main zones and two zones in boundary of the island (Picture15). These three main zones will identify the character of village (Reinberg 2005: 12).

Picture 15. Schematic of Zoning Plan



Source: Reinberg 2005

A1 Zone: Multi-Resort Complex

- Area: 80 ha
- Facilities: Mixed-used facilities, Main Street, Stores, Restaurant, Children's Town, Corporate Image Centres, and Retail/Urban Entertainment Centres (Picture16).

³⁵ In the First concept, it was 150 persons (Ftz 2003: 35).

- Function: promotion of sustainable development, as an economic instrument (Reinberg 2005: 14).

centre for local and traditional customs, like horse sport, e.g. polo.

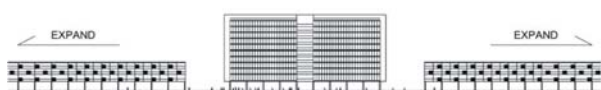
A2 Zone: Entrance Gate

- Area: 25 ha
- Facilities: A combination of hotels and resorts, SPA-Hotel, Marina Hotel, Beach Hotel and the Main Hotel with the entrance gate³⁶.
- Function: the Mixed-use facilities, Main Street, Stores, Restaurant, Children town, Corporate Image Centres, Retails and Urban Entertainment Centres (Reinberg 2005: 15, 16).

- Parvaneh Village, also in the north, is considered appropriate for birds. Furthermore, there are several attractions planned, such as a bird garden and ballooning. Sadaf Village at the eastside of the island works with the entrance gate and is a pre-stage to the ecological context, the functions are tourist information, park for children, park for artists, exhibition and so on. Also here, shall be the chair-lift station which connects the island to Bandar-e Torkaman.

- The Mahi Village, as its name fish inspires, is considered for the south of island mainly for water sport, e.g. swimming, boating and fishing. Village Halazoon presents at the west end of the island a unique look to Miānqāla and the Caspian Sea, a reason to focus all of 5-star villas there, according to this class of villas a place for golf course.

Picture 16. The Designed Entrance Gate

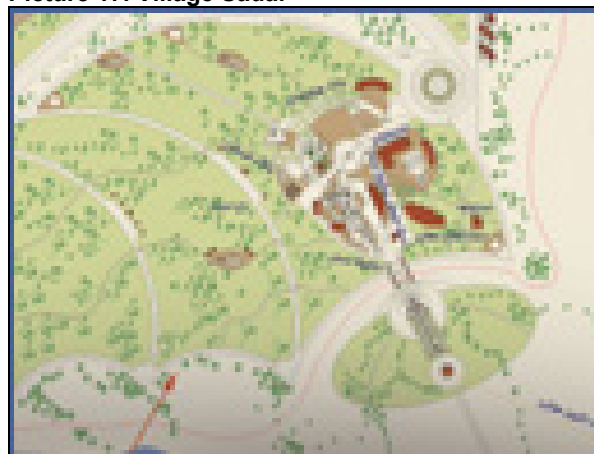


Source: Reinberg 2005

A3 Zone: Eco-Tourism Resorts

- Area: the rest of island approximately 275 ha, which concludes about 2 ha constructed area (all one Floor)
- Facilities: Accommodation in current fish-house and in five star accommodations (as traditional fishermen's house, Table 2)
- Function: Service for day/overnight tourists.

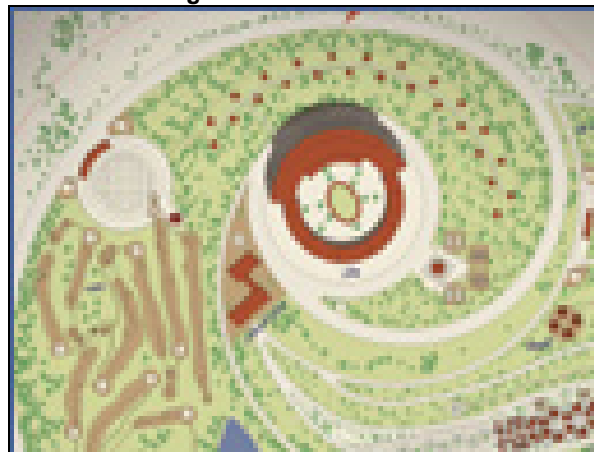
Picture 17. Village Sadaf



Source: ATV 2005

This Zone includes five villages: Dorna (eng.: crane), Parvaneh (eng.: butterfly), Sadaf (eng.: mussel), Halazoon (eng.: snail), Mahi (eng.: fish) (Picture17-22).

Picture 18. Village Halazoon



Source: ATV 2005

Each Village has a special feature and function, which – along with the suggested formal concept – gives the name of the village:

- The Dorna Village is intended to be located in the north on the original point of the island for the refuge wildlife; from there it is also considered as bird garden in the new concept. In addition, this village is close to the original masque of island and works as

³⁶ Here the consultants suggest a function with a high density of buildings and visitors. This was not given in the first concepts - for instance regarding the quantity of over-night guests, which was first 100-150 persons (FTZ 2003: 14, 15) is changed to 1800 persons: "The Main Hotel could be about 7-8 story building. The Hotel Group shall provide facilities for up to 1800 over-night guests (Reinberg 2005: 15)".

Picture 19. The Zone Tree and its Design Concept



Source: ATV 2005

Picture 20. Village Parvaneh



Source: ATV 2005

Picture 22. Village Dorna



Source: ATV 2005

Picture 21. Village Mahi



Source: ATV 2005

Infrastructure

As a consequence of the spatial concept it is essential to analyse the Infrastructure in order to further and more precisely prove the sustainability of the design concept in context of Āšūrāda. The main idea of design has considered the following groups in the island, which are elaborated after:

- Transport System
- Water System
- Wastes and Pollution
- Energy System

Transport System

The sustainability of the ecological resources of the island is considered as transport is limited to boat and bicycle movement inside the Island. There are also other suggestions, like Caspian horse, electro boat, electro car (Reinberg 2005:24).

Regarding the transport of pedestrians, the recommendations are a “sustainable path-way” raised about 60 centimeters above ground-level that has two aims: *Firstly the pathway provides pass over by floating and second the plants and animals environment will be preserved* (Reinberg 2005:24).

Picture 22. Sustainable Pathway



Source: ATV 2005

Water System

This shall include an appropriate mix of permeable and non-permeable surfaces linked for replenishment of ground water, e.g. recycling grey water and rainwater (like Turkmen and recycling of rain water) collection should be made for non-portable needs (Reinberg 2005: 24). The main suggestions of the consulting firms include these propositions:

- Monitoring of water
- Usage of appliances for low water (for suitable consumption)
- On-site waste water treatments, e.g. through reed beds, passive systems and so-called living machines
- Collection systems for rain and storm water
- Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS)
- Design of general groundwater issues, hydrology, watersheds and water quality in strategic approaches
- Local assessment for water management and its strategy
- Usage of swales, basins, filters drains and ponds.

Wastes and Pollution

The proposal of the consulting firm includes these suggestions:

- Development of policies for using of building material, which can be recycled, reused and reclaimed materials.
- Strategies for reducing construction waste

- Involvement of the local community in strategic decisions about pollution
- Encouraging of separate waste streams (e.g. in the course of financial supports).

Energy System

The main proposal of the concept consists of these suggestions:

- Policies considering layout of the built environment and energy conservation techniques. Improvement of know-how concerning energy conservation (especially to householders and business);
- Free or subsidised energy surveys
- Strategic planning of supply and connections in concern of new energy sources
- Supporting and addressing usage of renewable energy sources and the latest energy-efficient technologies (e.g. opinionated energy harnessed on-site or at neighbourhood)
- Optimised public lighting (e.g. street, traffic light).

Financing Concept

TAO estimated the total financing requirement of the Project about US\$6.5 million in 2003. This amount consists of an approximate six million US dollars in capital expenditures and the rest in working capital. The financing is to be supported from debt equity (US\$3.5 million, about 54%) and in equity financing (US\$3 million, about 46%) (Ftz 2003: 29).

Resource for Equity Financing

- TAO at US\$ 0.9 million (Island)
- Investor with a contribution about US\$ 2.1 million in cash.

The ownership will stand by 30 to 70 and the investigation will have an IRR of 24.71% (Ftz 2003: 30, 38, 39).

Resource for Debt Equity Financing

- financing from a foreign bank
- hard currency financing from an Iranian bank
- a soft loan in from the oil surplus fund

The loan shall allow a minimum of 2-year grace and 4-year repayment period preferably with rate of 12%. (Ftz 2003: 31).

Revenues

The master plans of the Tourist Village are based and provide for a multitude of resident types, including Main Street, Retail Entertainment, Corporate Image Centres, resort luxury hotels, small and medium-sized hotels, and provides non-ownership concepts (Reinberg

2005:30). The Concept of Island shall have based on TAO assumption (ftz 2003:32, 33) revenues in the first year US\$1,186,400 and in the second year total annual starting from US\$2,516,080.

Management Concept

Neither TAO nor the consulting firm gives a precise plan for management concept. TAO mention four categories of staff within the administrative context of village, the first category (5 persons) shall work in management level. The loans of staff and the periodical crew complement (8 months in full) are referred to in the financial proposal (FTZ 2003:34, 35); however, topics like the service actually provided by the employees and the chart of their duties are not clear.

Social Concept

The project has not accounted for the social concept. It has been referred to by the consultants in the entirety of concept as a result of "*Involvement of a wide group of stakeholders, particularly including local communities*" (Reinberg 2005:11).

The consulting firm suggests generally the Urban Entertainment Centres, Agoras, Main Street, Hotels, stores and recreation centres as an object, which shall work for the social concept. This substance is as a viable and unique neighbourhood with other opportunities for growth in terms of cultural, recreational and development for the all communities in urban neighbourhood and building scale in order to integrate the local community, exploiting the potential of region, improving the sustainability of local business and organisation and green architecture (Reinberg 2005:12).

Time Table

The Construction time of the project is expected for about two years (FTZ 2003:5). It seems the scheduled time cannot be told – particularly due to the problems of confrontation of different organisations (Iran 2005:5).

Sustainability of Concept

Sustainable development is an approach to economic planning that attempts to foster economic growth while preserving the quality of the environment for future generations. This impression is due to the results of long-term activities, depending on the particular resources, in many cases difficult to apply. More difficult is in this case achieving a "sustainable check"

for a concept, whose construction has not even begun. Nevertheless, it is possible to give expected analyses based on the ideas and concepts, which later figure the development, promoting dual goals of economic development through tourism and protection of the environment.

This check up focus is attended on the two main issues of sustainability, stressed in the WTO's definition for sustainability:

- Infrastructure of the concept of Āšūrāda, in view of ecological, economical and socio-cultural aspects.
- Management policies regarding the government policies and the concept of planning itself.

Infrastructure in different views:

One of the main claims of the current concept is the fulfilment of the economic, ecological and social needs by the management of resources in Āšūrāda (Reinberg 2005, 27). The critical points will dwell on this context and with regards to the existing information.

Ecological

The TAO authorities, pressed by different pressure groups including the NGO's, the mass media and above all the Environment Ecology Organisation of Iran, had to realise the negative impact of unplanned tourism development on the fragile and unstable coastal environment of the island with the risk of erosion of the ecological and cultural values. This modification of emphasises is particularly perceivable due to the amendments occurred in two versions of concepts for the Tourist Village of Āšūrāda, presented since 2003 (cf. FTZ 2003 and Reinberg 2005).

The solutions, which are given for transport and water system, the guidelines for wastes and pollution are constructive and helpful, but in most of cases, they are too general and not accurate enough. For instance, if we emanate from 150 over-night tourists, 500 day-tourists further up to 1800 guests in the entrance gate (Zone 1), the total waste and pollution can be calculated after standard norms, and subsequently the necessary facilities, which at this instant can turn to a critical point against the concept. In this case the master plan and a first stage of studies is not enough the make an accurate decision, whether the given solution will work.

The concept of the Tourist Village of Āšūrāda introduces no clear system for the calculation of the optimal carrying capacity for tourism in the island except the financial reasons. Nevertheless, it will be important to view the results also from another standpoint, namely the ecological one, a number for the capacity of island and then compare them with each other, in order to evaluate, whether the facilities and infrastructure are sufficient and efficient.

Economical

The financial proposal appreciates the incomes with a relative good IRR of 24.71% (Ftz 2003: 30, 38, 39) and the direct expenditure e.g. for the construction, but the hidden costs are disregarded. These expenses – especially at the beginning are relatively high – cover in environment-friendly concepts mainly supplying the necessary expensive technology, instruments, and their specific installation and extensive monitoring, remain unmentioned. In addition, the cost for providing the basic infrastructure as defined in the concept and further their monitoring can be a high contribution, the unexpected costs, which are not assumed, can influence the output of the project and its sustainability.

Socio-cultural

As a result of the given analysis, it is comprehensible that there is no remarkable social structure at the present on the island, in this point it is important to appreciate the historic development of the island and the region, mainly the present situation of neighbourhood, e.g. Bandar-e Torkaman and Bandare-e Gaz. Hence it is not enough to limit this consideration e.g. to the construction of villas after vernacular architecture (Reinberg 2005: 9, 10) or creating functions and facilities for local conventions, like horse racing (FTZ 2003: 24, 25). It is important to appreciate the encounter of tourists with the local population, which will certainly result in changes of the social aspects in the neighbourhood. The number of tourists at the entrance gate (Zone 1) – as suggested up to 1800 persons (Reinberg 2005: 25) – particularly seems to be in this social term (hyper)critical and the recommended infrastructure seems insufficient. Further, it gives an impression, that such a hotel development and the number of tourists at Āšūrāda may be ecologically insupportable and socially arguable. It can disapprovingly influence previously untouched customs of Turkmen and their folklore. Therefore, it is recommended to make accurate suggestions resulting in socio-cultural **integrity** and at the same time protecting the valuable **diversity** of the region. The concept of the Tourist Village of Āšūrāda

ignores viz. misses a well defined model for fostering awareness of environmental ethics in tourism, in order to reduce harmful elements such as waste, promoting natural and cultural diversity, and supporting local economies and local community involvement.

For improving socio-cultural aspects in Āšūrāda, it would be helpful to dynamically and intelligently factor-in the valuable historic buildings of the island, like the residence viz. castle, and traditional structures, like fishing stations, into the proposal of the Tourist Village of Āšūrāda.

Management Policies

In the given concept, there are no suggestions and consideration to the precise activities and responsibilities of local and national authorities, regarding this new model for the Island. It is insofar understandable – but not acceptable – that a great part of Iranian authorities, like the mentioned Environment Ecology Organisation and several NGO's, were against the project. Nevertheless, for a long-term sustainable development, it is essential to define topics like dependable authorities, a framework of co-operation between authorities and TAO, distribution of responsibilities, above all budget for hidden costs, which are not mentioned in the financial proposal, if not, several of these ecological ideas will not work in reality. For instance, how does "the local assessment for water management" work as declared in ecological "water system" of the island, if there is declared neither an individual budget nor an institution responsible for it? Definitely, it is an excellent opportunity for the communities in the neighbourhoods, like Bandar-e Torkaman and Bandare-e Gaz and even Gorgān to innovate and upgrade, to establish quality standards, to educate and inform their people as well as tourism professionals about the responsibilities entailed in creating and keeping a favourable landscape in both Āšūrāda and Miānqāla for sustainable tourism. However, if there is no a constructive and defined guideline, it will not happen.

It is essential to consider a specific system with the island authorities and the government, in order to assist taking place true ecotourism in Āšūrāda, which can be environmentally sound and economically sustainable. For instance this system can be:

- a system of co-ordination and co-operation between the local authorities (for example, in Bandar-e Torkaman and Miānqāla protected areas, the TAO, the hotel groups in Āšūrāda viz. and the other investors), in order to achieve objectives related to ecologic-environmental and socio-cultural conservation; and,

- a partnership between decision makers in the field of Iranian tourism and those responsible for culture and environment in TAO and their investor, which will finally have 70% of the ownership of the island.

In any case, such deliberations are missing in the existing concept and that is why they are highly recommended.

At this point, it is appropriate to note that the current documents for the Tourist Village of Āšūrāda included only the first stage of project development, the final concept will probably respond properly to all posed questions here.

Conclusion

Although tourism poses the threat of environmental damage, e.g. pollution, in Āšūrāda, it also can create economic incentives for the preservation of the environment in Iran and increase awareness of such a unique and fragile ecosystem.

In conclusion, it must be stated that tourism in Āšūrāda can be a powerful movement of competitiveness. It is the trajectories of national and probably international travel (above all for the countries in the neighbourhood viz. Caspian Sea). Nevertheless, **Sustainable tourism patterns might be realised, if extra caution be exercised in order to protect these special ecosystem values**, which are particularly susceptible to the detrimental externalities of tourism development.

In this context, and in credit of a tourism concept for Āšūrāda the conclusion of this paper can adopt the words of Giovanni D'Ayala, the Secretary General of INSUL (International Scientific Council for Island Development), in his speech of The Problematic of Island Tourism and Unstable Development³⁷, which are: "The islands which confront the above issues [in terms of tourism] within a coherent and global long term strategy will be in a position to demonstrate to the international community that tourism, conservation and economic development can peacefully coexist".

Table 1. Miānqāla, a Coastal Protected Region of the Iranian Side of the Caspian Sea

Province	Mazandaran
Position	Lat. 36° 46' - 36° 57' Long. 53° 30' - 54° 02'
Area (ha)	68, 800
Type of Management	Wildlife Refuge
Vulnerable Plants Community	Pelican White-fronted, Goose, Gray lag goose, Faisan, Greater Flamingo, White-headed duck
Vulnerable Plants Community	Brackish marshes
Identified Bird species	260
Migratory Birds species	89
Treats	Illegal hunting, Tree cutting, Reclamation, Over grazing, Sand mining, Bush extraction

Source: After CEP 1998

Table 2. The Concept of accommodations in Zone three of Āšūrāda

Accommodations	Area (sqm)
Number of Small Villas	50
Small Villa	45
Small Villas (Total)	2,250
Number of Large Villas	25
Large Villa	70
Large Villas (Total)	1,750
Private Garden/Entrance Area per Small Villa	105
Private Garden/Entrance Area per Large Villa	130
Garden & Entrance (Total)	8,500
General Built-Up Area	2,500
General Garden Area	5,000
Total Built-Up Area	6,500
Total Garden Area	13,500
Total Area	20,000

Source: Ftz 2003

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Discussion Points:

Q. When will the island be opened? Is there any information in the internet?

A. Maybe in two years. You will find it in the internet.

Q. The question is about the last picture (showing the connection in the context of sustainability of social life, economy and ecology). You didn't mention the aspects of the social life at all.

A: I focused on the ecological aspects in order to limit the time of my lecture.

But I can say that due to a flood some time ago the island id almost abandoned, so there won't much influence on/of the social life.

The Issue of Water Supply for Small Towns in the Islands of Southern Vietnam *Tran Anh Tuan*

Southern Institute for Urban and Rural Planning (SIUP South), Vietnam

Introduction

Vietnam has over 2,000 km of coastal land and many small islands with long established population groups. Following the trend of globalisation, development in this zone presents definite advantages but also difficulties. The solution to water supply is important in the progress of urban infrastructure.

A solution for an environmentally safe water supply could be "spot neutralization", together with an innovative use of rain water through: storage methods on islands that have reservoirs, the supplementation of underground water and the development of a vegetation carpet.

Despite the strong viability of this solution, it is not feasible in some areas and would require technical and economical assistance from different sources. In this

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