



SELECTION METHOD OF DESIGN PRIORITY FOR IMPROVING RURAL TEXTURES

Case Study: Zonouzagh Village in Iran

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Biographical Note

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Abstract

The majority of valuable textures are found in rural residences. Physical design is the important part of a valuable texture improvement project. Because of the governmental policies in Iran, physical planning of improvement project is limited in specified confinements. Employing a suitable method for selection of design priorities in primary stages of project causes the improvement in the most part of the existing values. Present research offered practical experience by Author at selection method of design priorities in the Iranian village of Zonouzagh. This method was employed to register the important points on the base maps for extraction of high grade locations of the village texture for design priorities. These maps often involve historical development phases, quarter's confinements, connection between quarter's centres and passageways grading. Correct selection of design priorities for improving rural texture assures project goals and organic continuity in case village and even adjacent villages to be achieved.

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1. Introduction

Improvement of Valuable rural texture involves renovation of all effective factors on rural life and texture elements. *“Urban- or rural- physical construction is the reflection of dominated socio- cultural and eco- political conditions in specific time and place of history that reformed in the passage of time”* (habibi, 2001, p.3). Thus in improvement project *“Preserving and promoting the values, intellectual, local and vernacular properties, conventions and patterns, and improving the social terms and keeping the architectural heritage and vernacular culture and living style in a village, are among the most important objectives of rural restoration”* (Sadigh, 2000, p.67). Physical design is the most important part of a valuable texture improvement project. Because physical interference is very fast, tangible and effective. *“Urban- and rural- design can be defined as follows: ... the process of giving physical design direction to urban growth, conservation, and change”* (Barnett, 1982, p.12, quoted in: Poerbo, 2001, p.18). The improvement project of valuable rural textures in Iran is financially supported by the government. Because of the governmental policies and cost and time limitations, physical planning and implementation part of improvement project are limited in specified confinements. Also the improvement project is an activity of public utility. Therefore, the Project execution is limited in public spaces of texture. So the selection of design limitations in primary stages of project is important. *“The priorities selected within the valuable texture mainly include important passageways and public spaces that include three stages of wall (façade), floor (ground plan) and furniture reconstruction”* (Hatami-Khanghahi, 2010, p.244). These passageways and spaces are dominant with respect to other public spaces of the texture for several reasons, and can provide a suitable background for development of the village in the future. But the main issue is selection of passageways and public spaces among other passageways and valuable spaces, as a plan priority. This involves the main valuable characteristics of the texture that all residents can benefit from desirable results and makes the village as a creative village. *“It preserves historical heritage and a city’s- and village’s- environment and improves amenity. Consequently, citizens- and villagers- enhance their creativity and sensitivity”* (Marta-Christina Suci, 2009, p.90). Execution of the physical planning in specified part without considering total resources of the village and observing patterns and behaviours can cause imbalances in present relations and habits. So, it is necessary to select planning priorities by identifying effective factors on rural life involving most of the desirable patterns and valuable relations dominated on texture lifestyle. For doing so, different effective

factors on rural life are converted to tangible form and architectural maps and plans. Then passageways and public areas are graded according to importance on each map.

This research was aimed to evaluate the design priorities selection of improvement projects of valuable texture in the village of Zonouzagh in East Azerbaijan Province, Iran. This project is important because the author used suitable method for selection of design priorities in Zonouzagh village based on simple maps of existing conditions. Employing this method is an effective factor in gaining public satisfaction and providing proper background for plans organic continuity in this village and even in adjacent villages. Furthermore, the effective factors for an efficient project include the competence of the architect and his knowledge about the present and past conditions of the fabric and rural life relations.

2. Research Method

This research graded public spaces and passageways of rural texture based on effective factors of rural lifestyle and selected the important locations for plan execution of improvement project. Local information was collected in the field and then it was reflected in four architectural maps. An envelope method was employed to register the important points on the base maps for extraction of high grade locations. In this method the selected priority for physical planning consists of more valuable characteristics. Improvement project covers optimal factors of rural life. The elements of research were as follows:

2.1. Valuable texture

“The harmony between the components of economic, social, environmental and physical structure makes rural residential spaces valuable” (Alalhesabi, 2006, p.88). Also *“one can posit that all successful urban- and rural- places are comprised of three sets of elements: 1) Activity- economic, cultural, social, 2) Form- the relationship between buildings and spaces, 3) Meaning- sense of place, historical and cultural”* (Montgomery, 2003, p.295).

Historical events, life and production styles, management methods and traditions are seen in– urban and rural- valuable textures. So in rural textures spaces and passageways are valued according to economical- livelihood, socio- cultural and climatic- natural patterns. *“Pattern is a principle consisting of three parts that expresses the relation between the background, problem and solution and it should be expressed in a way to help establish this relationship”* (Alexander, 2002, p.215). These patterns and their relationships with background and current issues make a texture valuable.

2.2. Physical design

The aim of the physical design is to preserve vernacular values, development of these values and as far as possible to avoid proposing the new and unfamiliar concepts for village texture. Physical renovation is the most important part of the restoration project because physical interference is very fast, tangible and effective. These designs practically implement the results of studies and theoretical analyses. In physical design, first the architect determines the valuable bound of the texture. Then, the physical designing priorities within the bound of the valuable fabric are selected.

2.3. Design priority

Passageways and Public spaces are locations for physical design of valuable rural texture. Based on limitations, the plan was conducted in places with high priority. This prioritization could be affected by different factors, so the architect should be familiar with the texture and effective factors and patterns. *“Recognition of these patterns and factors is important because our understanding of the environment is based on them and enables us to reach a determination of the effect of each pattern on human life”* (Bell, 2003, p.12).

3. Selection process of design priority

This research offers determinate method for selection of design priorities in improvement of valuable rural textures. In this method the priorities are selected based on simple maps of existing conditions of public spaces and passageways. These maps often involve historical development phases, quarter's confinements, connection between quarter's centres and passageways grading.

Case study: The village of Zonouzagh is the centre of the Zonouzagh rural district of Marand in East Azerbaijan province, adjacent to the town of Zonouz and 30 km from Marand. The texture of this village is stair-like, because of their mountainous hillside site and the village is located on an incline ending at a river. Also, this village is surrounded by gardens (Fig.1). Narrow sidewalks are proper for passing of animals and passer-by. The cultural, religious and tribal understanding is seen as a social layer in addition to the beauty of the texture.

3.1. Historical development phases map

Development process of rural texture indicates the antiquity of different parts and often their oldness degree show the value of spaces and their internal elements. In most cases, historical textures are valuable because of several factors like passer-by authority, authenticity of construction, climatic characteristics and vernacular methods and materials. In other words, some parts are valuable more than the others, since there are local and native patterns. Identification of development phases causes recognition of valuable places. Usually old cores and parts of rural

texture are valuable. So that based on developmental phases map the confinements of the project are determined.

Case study: according to information obtained from historical documents and narratives, this village was first constructed at a cave located on north part of village texture. The presence of well and possibility of building construction led to establishment of the houses around the well. The map of the historical development phases showed that this village was developed around the central part slightly towards the north of village texture in high lands. Then the new texture was shaped in south part, because of slope and build limits in north parts and presence of connection routes in south part of the village (figure 2). The antiquity of the central part and surroundings in primary development phase is an important factor showing its value because of using vernacular methods and materials proportionate with needs and limitations in that period. In other words, passageways and spaces of older parts are passer-by routs. In these parts of texture wall (façade), floor (ground plan) and furniture construction are proportionate with economical, socio-cultural, climatic and natural characteristics of the village.

The architect proposes his selected priority based on historical development phases map. Selection of the design priorities among present passageways in historical core caused to offer reconstruction method for most of the valuable patterns and spaces in minimum land of texture by employing a cost-effective way. Since the vernacular methods in historical core were in harmony with local conditions and needs, the architect requires high accuracy in his planning for coordination with modern needs by respecting the old values.

3.2. Quarter's confinements map

Confinements of quarters in a village indicate confinements that their residents have more common points encountering cultural, social and economical and sometimes religious issues. Also common factors of earning manner and shape of the land and other current conditions cause unity in patterns of public spaces in a quarter. Common benefits lead to mutual understanding between residents of each quarter. Balancing in financially cost among different confinements, especially in projects that financially supported by the government, is an important factor in development relations among quarters in the rural texture projects. This relation is deeply perceived in old parts. In most cases, new quarters involve combination of young families of village or immigrant. In some cases, land limitation caused to constructed new quarters apart from the old texture. These new quarters depend on old and purebred quarters of village from cultural, social, livelihood and construction aspects.

In Ideal valuable rural texture project, design priorities involve all public spaces and passageways of all quarters, so that all residents can benefit positive results of the project. But in

selection method, the old and purebred quarters have the priority. In other words main common passageways and public spaces among old quarters of texture have the priority.

Case study: texture of Zonouzagh consists of five quarters: Seydlar, Aghababa, Badir, kodalar and new parish. Confinement of these quarters has been defined in primary studies of project as quarter's confinements map (figure 3). According to collected data, Seydlar, Aghababa and Badir quarters are old. The residents of kodalar are immigrants from near villages into southeast part of the village. New parish consists of young families and this parish is branched from old families of three old quarters. Because of the land limitation in old texture, the new parish located in south part of village and in front of entrance main passageway.

Old quarters passageways are passer-by and often architecture elements in these passageways are locally and vernacularly. In other words, the valuable part of Zonouzagh village texture consists of three main quarters and their public spaces. The architect proposed his suggestion for design priorities after identification of quarters. In selection stages of design priorities seemed that selection of design route by covering the three old quarters can be the best suggestion for priority and benefit for most of villagers. Also selection of common passageways among these three quarters satisfies all residents of village. It was a main factor in guarantying the plan organic continuity by residents. *"A government- controlled planning and design, which lacks the process of public/private collaboration often leads to problems in the design/decision-making process and the eventual failure of the product"* (Bahrainy and Aminzadeh, 2007, p.126).

3.3. Connection between quarter's centres map

Connection passageways between centres of quarters are more important than other internal routes, since their begin points and end points have been quarter's centres and main parts. Quarter centre is a place for social contacts and it is an important factor in shaping and transferring culture concepts. The main public spaces are happened in quarter's centres as stop places by widening width of a passageway. These calm spaces by authority of passer-by demand for some valuable public patterns. Quarter's centres have been shaped by this identity. In relation with different centres, one of these centres is specified as main centre because of special situation or its valuable factors like religious centrality, well or other factors. Connection route between the main centre and other centres is important than other routes. The selection of connection route between main centre and other centres as a design priority lead to reconstruction of important public spaces with most vernacular patterns. When the main centre of village is reconstructed directly, all residents can benefit mentioned project.

Case study: The centres of three old quarters of Zonouzagh were formed in open space in front of three mosques of village and commercial shops around the mosques. The centres of two

new quarters of village have less importance and they are located in direction from main route of each quarter (figure 4). The old well in middle of the village is the main centre of village, so this centre is important than the other centres. The main centre is located on entrance passageway of old texture and it is connected to old quarter's centres by important passer-by routes.

The architect proposed his design priority based on quarter's centres map. Ideally, design priority involves main centre and all centres of quarters. In other words, the selected route passes from five quarter's centres and main centre of texture. But because of financial limitation and project goals, at first, main centre and then, three old quarter's centres have the priority. So the situation and importance of these centres caused that the project involves main centre and centres of three Seydlar, Aghababa and Badir centres. Main centre belongs to all residents, this selection satisfied village population and it was a main factor in organic continuity.

3.4. Passageways grading map

Situation of each passageway and level of utilization by residents and also their roles in connection between the main internal and external centres lead to different importance grades for rural passageways. So, differences in passageways width and antiquity of the passageways do not affect on this criterion. These passageways are graded according their usage. Passageways Selection by high grades as a design priority caused that the project execution by minimum expenditure of time and money led to most effect on texture improvement and direct benefits for most residents of village.

The old passageways are often passer-by in rural fabrics. Climate, security factors and sometimes the slope of land cause this trend. New passageways of new quarters are constructed wider than old passageways. Passer-by routes are suitable secure places for social gathering and cultural activities. Antiquity and calm situation in passer-by routes lead to social and cultural identity, proportionate by villager ideas. Thus more valuable patterns are appeared in wall (façade), floor (ground plan) and furniture of these passer-byes. In other words, the background of patterns in these routes is traditional and its components serve current traditions in rural lifestyle. *"In traditional societies, especially in rural societies, the pattern guarantees the continuation of traditional and vernacular architecture"* (Zargar, 2005, p.17). According to characteristics of mentioned plan, it seems that the old and passer-by dominated routes in the improvement project have the priority. Based on mentioned subjects about passageways grading and characteristics of the old passer-byes, the best suggestion for design priority will be the best degree of main passer-byes which located in old part of the texture.

Case study: in the study stages of Zonouzagh texture, the passageways were graded according to their importance in connectivity of the main village centre, the quarter's centres and

the other important centres (figure 5). The passageways were divided into four grades, first and second grades of main passageways and first and second grades of secondary passageways.

In study stages the architect selected the priorities from main passageways based on Passageways grading map. In addition to mentioned grading, the passageways were divided into passer-by and roadway categories.

Because of the past requirements and needs in the old texture passageways, they had low width and these passageways were proper for passing of animals and human (figure 6). They weren't roadways. New passageways provide passer-by and roadway capabilities. So the architect was suggested the first degree of the main passageways in valuable part of village texture by domination of passer-by as a design priority in improvement project of Zonouzagh village.

4. Selection of design priorities

According to mentioned characteristics, design priorities for improvement project are selected among; 1) old passageways in historical core of village, 2) Passageways which are passing from the most main and old quarters of village, 3) Connection passageways between main quarter's centres of village and 4) High importance grade passer-bys.

Case study: In improvement project of Zonouzagh village, the first and second priorities for design and execution of project, was proposed according to figure 7 based on mentioned characteristics in this research. These priorities are selected among first and second grades of main passageways in the village historical core and they are connected village main centre and centres of Seydlar, Aghababa and Badir quarters to each other and they are passer-by routes with more traditional patterns.

Conclusions

The selection method of design priorities is a practical experience by the author in valuable texture of Zonouzagh village in Iran. This method graded public spaces and passageways of rural texture based on effective factors of rural lifestyle. Local information was reflected in four architectural maps. Architect was registered the important points on these maps for extraction of high grade locations. In general, these maps involve; 1) Historical development phases: In this map the development process and the oldness of different parts of the texture are recognized. The passageways and public spaces in the old and historical parts of texture in the improvement project have the priority. 2) Quarter's confinements: In this map different quarters and their confinements are distinguished. The routes which are passing from the most of main quarters are important 3) Connection among quarter's centres: In this map main centre and quarter's centres of the village and also the connection routes among these centres are recognized. The priority is to identify the passageways between the main quarter's centres of the village. 4) Passageways grading: This map grades passageways according to the type and level of usage by villagers. Passer-by routes with the best grade are important.

In this method, the skill of the architect is critical for discovering the various dimensions of relations that govern rural life and for creating awareness of the background of the rural life relations. This awareness helps the architect to provide suggestions as design priorities in rural societies that are appropriate for unique specifications of any village.

Selection of design priorities that take advantage of the environmental experiences of the village over time increases architect suggestions to achieve the goals of the project and cover the most valuable characteristics of the village fabric and optimal factors of rural life. Also the acceptance and participation of the community in the execution and organic continuation of the plan in the case village and even adjacent villages are the result of correct selection of the design priorities.

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Figures:

Fig.1. View of Some Parts of the Zonouzagh Fabric (Source: Author)

Fig.2. Historical Development Phases Map of the Zonouzagh Fabric (Source: Author)

Fig.3. Quarter's Confinements Map of the Zonouzagh Fabric (Source: Author)

Fig.4. Map of Connection between the Main Centre and Other Quarter's Centres in the Zonouzagh Village (Source: Author)

Fig.5. Passageways Grading Map of the Zonouzagh Fabric (Source: Author)

Fig.6. Passer-by Routes Grading Map of the Zonouzagh Fabric (Source: Author)

Fig.7. Design Priorities Map in Improvement Project of the Zonouzagh Valuable Fabric (Source: Author)



Figure 1

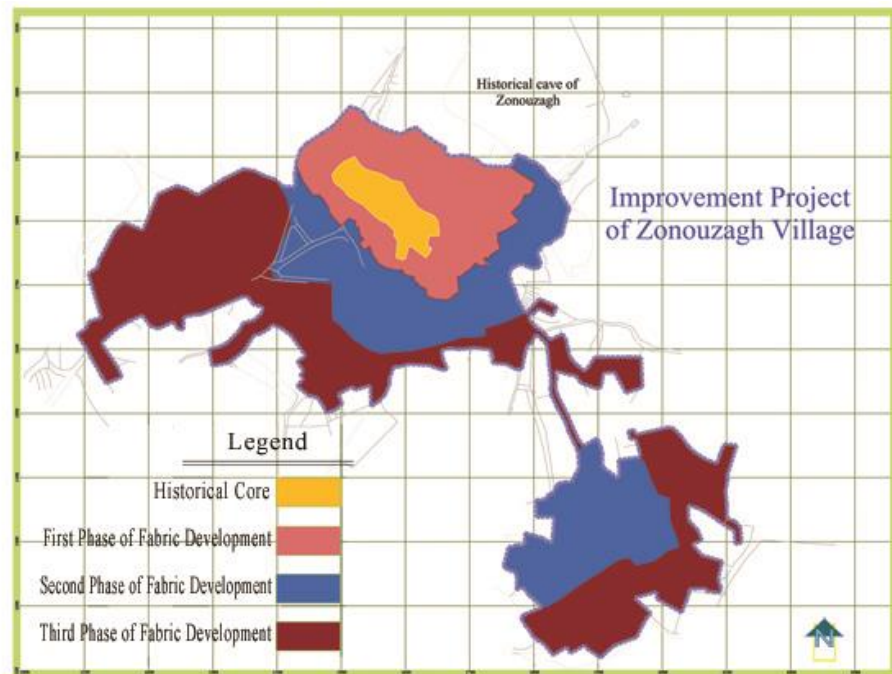


Figure 2

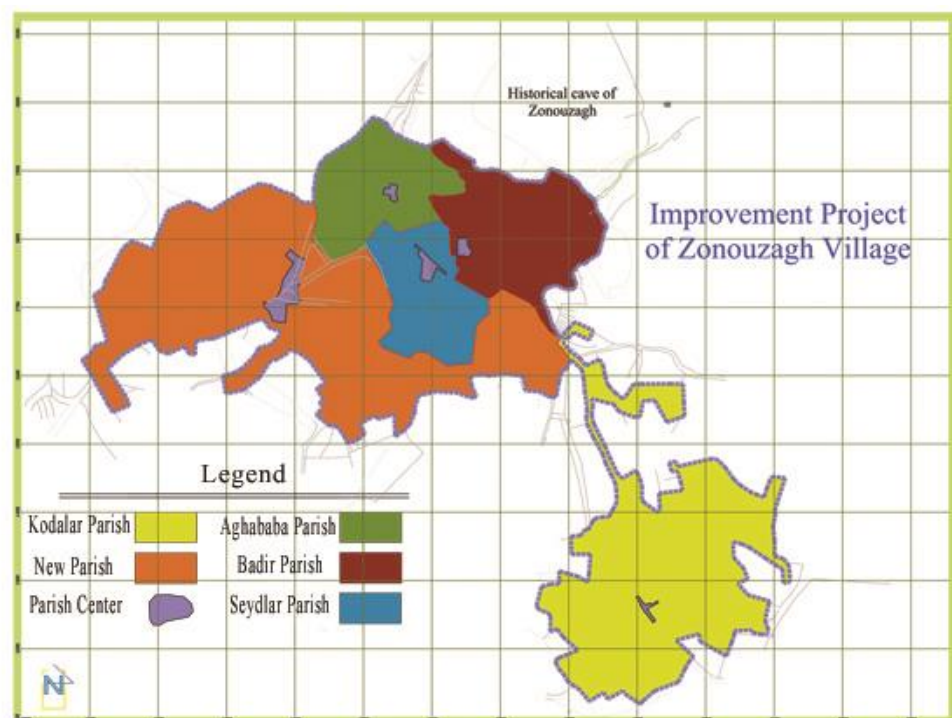


Figure 3

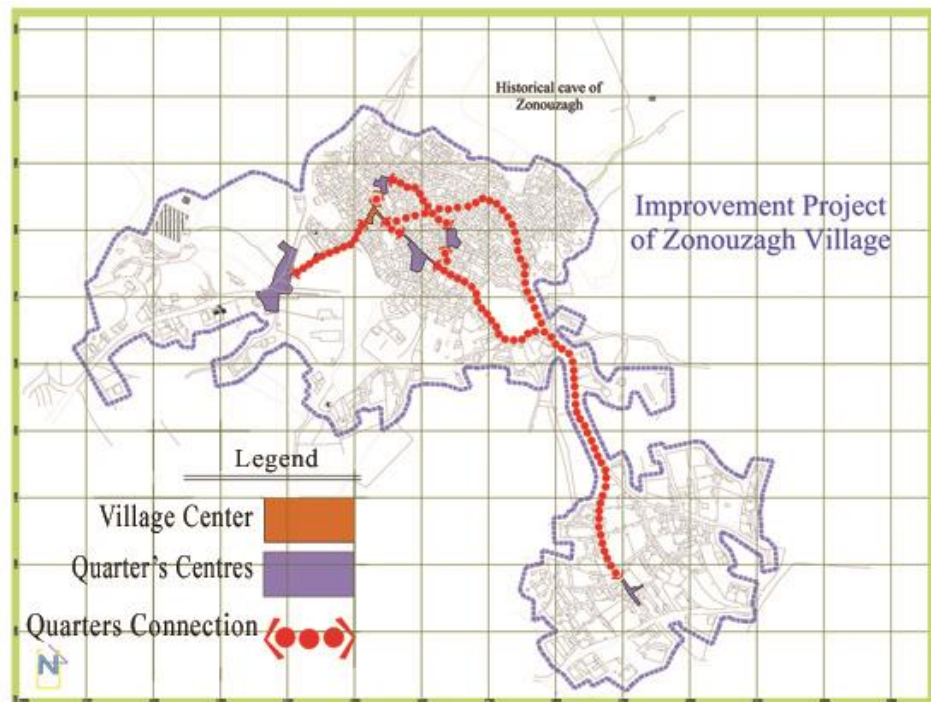


Figure 4

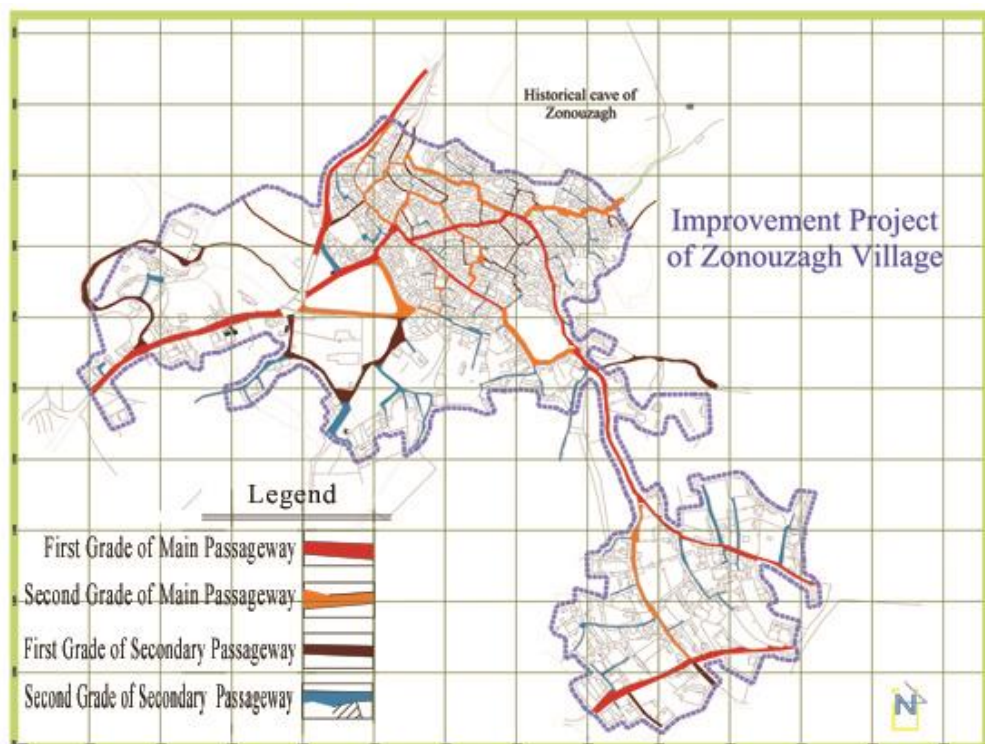


Figure 5

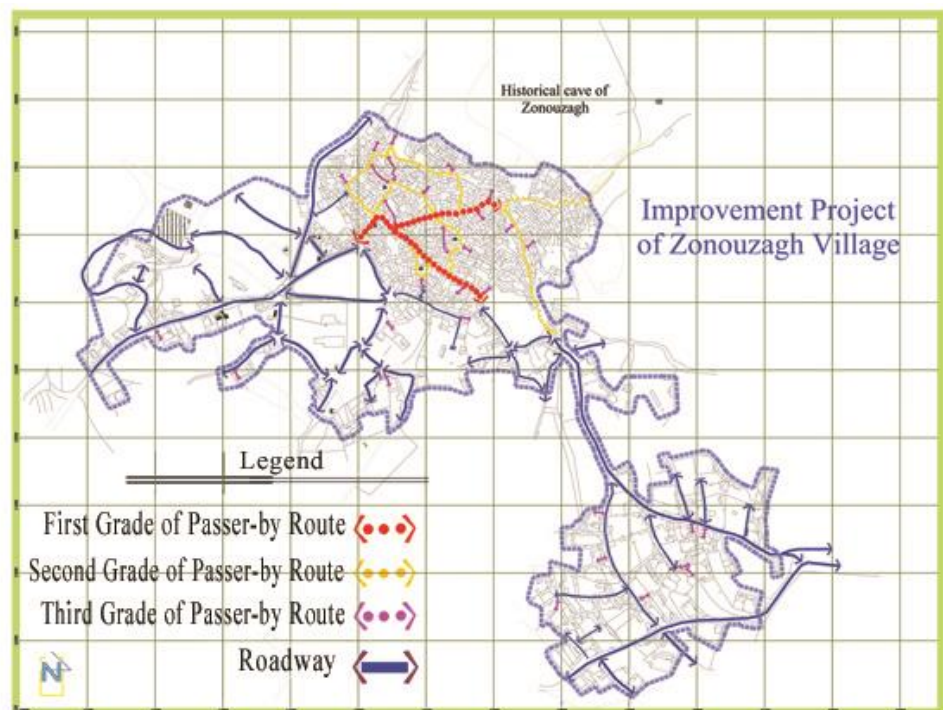


Figure 6

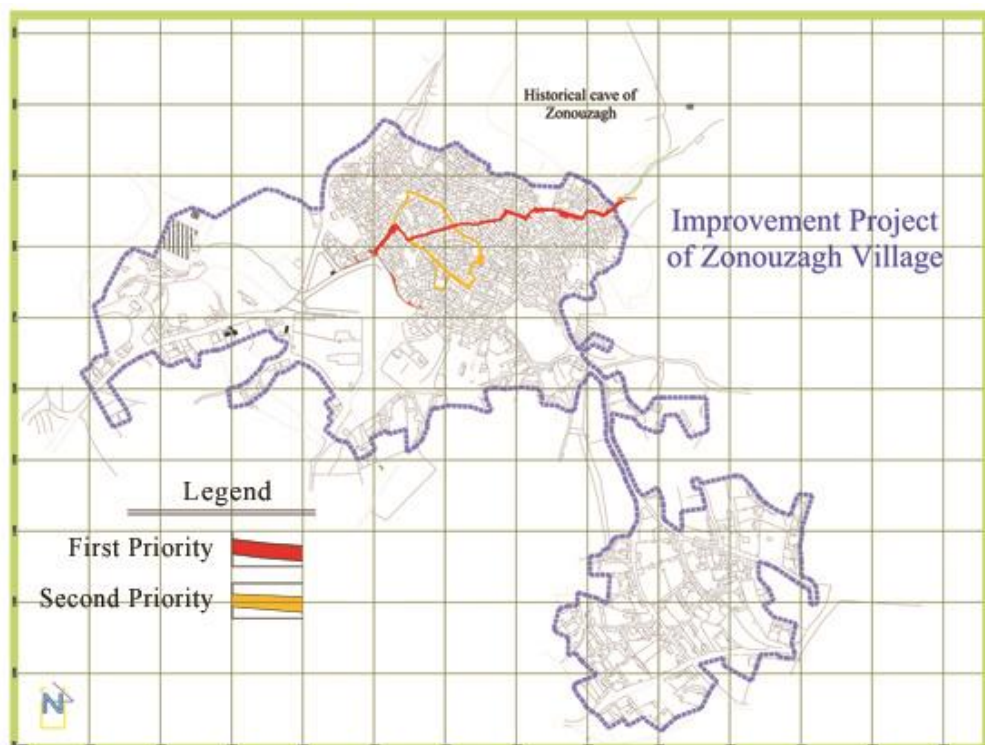


Figure 7