

# Peculiarities of the participative methodology application in the process of revitalization of the architectural heritage of the Yerevan historical district of Kond in Armenia

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**Abstract** This study underscores the importance of a participatory methodology in reevaluating and reimagining the architectural heritage of the Yerevan Kond Historic District in Armenia. The Kond district holds tremendous historical significance, encompassing diverse cultural heritage, architectural styles, and community identities. Preservation and revitalization efforts for this district face challenges in striking a balance between historical authenticity and meeting the evolving needs of its inhabitants. The research advocates for a participatory approach that engages local communities in the conservation and revitalization process. By involving the local people, the aim is to ensure that the district's architectural heritage is preserved meaningfully to the community and enhances their sense of ownership and pride in their architectural heritage. Furthermore, it endeavors to generate sustainable architectural interventions that balance preserving historical authenticity and meeting contemporary needs. It contributes to the district's economic revitalization, protects its architectural legacy, and fosters cultural understanding. Emphasizing sustainability, the study integrates inclusive decision-making and innovative architectural practices, offering a potential model for global revitalization. By fostering inclusive decision-making processes and integrating innovative architectural practices, this approach can revitalize the district while preserving its unique cultural identity and further facilitate the creation of innovative, sustainable, and contextually sensitive solutions. Through a comprehensive research approach, this study explores the historical context, architectural typologies, socio-cultural dynamics, and current challenges faced by the Kond district. It argues that participatory methodology is essential for the conservation of architectural heritage in the 21st century, as traditional top-down approaches have often proven ineffective. The participatory methodology ensures conservation projects are sustainable and beneficial to local communities. The outcomes aim to formulate a community-centered vision for Kond's future, with findings relevant to historic areas globally navigating similar challenges in contemporary architectural heritage reimagining.

**Keywords:** participatory architecture, revitalization, historic district, sustainable urbanization, regeneration

## 1. Introduction

Preserving and revitalizing architectural heritage serve as crucial links that connect the cultural legacies of the past with the present. Nestled in the heart of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, the Kond district stands as a living testament to the region's rich heritage. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the district's historical significance and identify the challenges in preserving its heritage (Lowenthal, 1998). As urban landscapes evolve, the delicate balance between modernity and heritage preservation becomes evident (Srinivas, 2023). Additionally, the importance of social values, defined as "the significance of the historic environment to contemporary communities, including people's sense of identity, belonging, and place" (Jones, 2016), becomes increasingly significant.

Values determine what is prioritized or conserved as heritage and how and who gets to participate in those processes. Similar to numerous other nations, heritage policies are placing growing emphasis on community involvement and social values (Robson, 2023).

Applying participatory methodology is a dynamic and inclusive approach within this context. In recent years, there has been a growing acknowledgment of the significance of collecting personal stories, memories, artifacts, and oral testimonies as essential elements that contribute substantially to a collective narrative of the past. This recognition extends beyond the

conventional notion of presenting historical information solely for public consumption. Instead, there is a realization that personal lives, with their intricacies and diverse experiences, hold the potential to become integral subjects of shared histories, transcending the confines of academic institutions (Kean, 2004). Going beyond mere physical reconstruction, the restoration of architectural heritage becomes a journey to resurrect the essence of a bygone era. Yerevan's Kond district, characterized by its labyrinthine streets, ancient structures, and cultural artifacts, provides a distinctive canvas for such endeavors. This article intricately examines the application of participatory methodology in revitalizing the architectural heritage within the historic district of Kond.

Participative methodology, marked by collaborative decision-making, serves as a conduit for diverse perspectives, fostering a sense of shared ownership. Challenges may arise regarding the adept management of varied stakeholder interests, which could precipitate conflicts or impede decision-making processes, potentially extending project durations and escalating resource demands. Mitigating these weaknesses and threats necessitates meticulous attention to process design, stakeholder engagement methodologies, and capacity-building initiatives to foster inclusive and efficacious participation. The Council of Europe Landscape Convention (2008) explicitly emphasizes that community participation is a crucial link connecting individuals with their immediate surroundings, fostering the development of identities conducive to sustainable development (Recommendation CM/Rec, 2008). This approach becomes a pivotal instrument in heritage preservation, ensuring the revitalization process aligns with the community's values, aspirations, and collective memory. Additionally, The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society underscores the potential within heritage governance and management for society to reach consensus and enhance social values through participatory activities (Faro Convention, 2005).

The engagement of the communities in architectural and urban planning endeavors epitomizes a tangible demonstration of its contemporary eminence and significance within the discipline, indicative of its status as a forefront practice distinguished by its incorporation of state-of-the-art methodologies and approaches.

The Kond district, with its layers of history and cultural amalgamation, sets a compelling backdrop for exploring participative methodology. Many stakeholders, from residents and local businesses to heritage experts and governmental bodies, contribute unique threads to Kond's revitalization tapestry. Stakeholder collaboration and management roles are essential in the development of heritage tourism, along with the interconnectedness of heritage conservation and tourism. (Aas et al., 2005). Within architecture, the redesign of heritage buildings necessitates active community participation. This involvement is specifically aimed at preserving and perpetuating heritage values, addressing dilemmas that may arise from the redesign process (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017). Navigating this intricate web of interests and perspectives is paramount for any participatory initiative's success and the historic environment's value significance to contemporary communities, emphasizing people's sense of identity, belonging, and place (Brian & Peter, 2008).

This article aims to unravel the distinctive challenges and opportunities inherent in applying participative methodology to the architectural revitalization of Kond. Through detailed case studies, community engagement initiatives, and an analysis of the evolving urban landscape, we seek to shed light on the intricate dynamics shaping the preservation and transformation of this historic district. The experiences and lessons gleaned from ongoing revitalization efforts in Yerevan's Kond district offer valuable insights for global heritage preservation initiatives, underscoring the pivotal role of community engagement in shaping the future while honoring the past. After all, "Cultural significance means aesthetic, historic, scientific or social value for past, present or future generations" (Australia ICOMOS, 1979).

## 2. Materials and Methods

This article employs a research framework that seamlessly integrates historical, architectural, and community-centric perspectives, offering a nuanced understanding of Yerevan's Kond district revitalization. Meticulously investigating scholarly literature, archival materials, master plans, zoning documents, and authoritative sources, the research roots itself. The methodology actively incorporates established conceptual frameworks and industry best practices in heritage preservation and urban development.

Diverse data sources, such as the Yerevan Project Institute's master plan of Yerevan and zoning project for the public territory of the Kentron district (Zoning project for public territory of the Kentron district, 2007) and development plans, Kond district-specific plans, and materials of Concept competition on the rehabilitation of Yerevan's historical "Kond" district (Kond district rehabilitation project, 2021), alongside insights from various projects and proposals, enrich systematic and situational analyses. Foundational elements encompass in-depth historical exploration, architectural considerations, community engagement, regulatory landscape analysis, sustainability, economic revitalization, global relevance, and future vision.

Historical exploration involves archival research, consultation with local historians, and examining historical records, providing insights into the district's evolution, cultural influences, and architectural development. Architectural considerations employ an architectural lens to explore the Kond district's unique features, including its irregular layout, diverse architectural styles, and the role of residential walls in shaping its character. Exploring concepts such as vernacular architecture and participatory architecture preserves historical authenticity.

Community engagement includes extensive surveys and inclusive dialogue sessions, capturing diverse perspectives from residents, business owners, and stakeholders. Active community involvement in decision-making processes emphasizes fostering a sense of ownership in the architectural heritage (Kuipers & de Jonge, 2017; Graham & Howard, 2008).

Regulatory landscape analysis entails carefully examining municipal policies, zoning regulations, and heritage preservation guidelines to ensure proposed interventions align with existing regulations. The article addresses sustainability and economic revitalization in architectural interventions, exploring concepts such as cluster construction for potential enhancements in living conditions, positive impacts on the historical and natural environment, and contributions to economic resurgence.

The concluding sections extend beyond Kond, drawing implications for historic areas globally facing similar challenges. The article contributes to the discourse on reimagining architectural heritage within contemporary contexts, envisioning a comprehensive, community-centered future for the Kond district. By combining these diverse methods, the article aims to provide a thorough understanding of the participative methodology applied in the revitalization, shedding light on the intricate balance between historical preservation and contemporary development.

### 2.1. Historical overview

Kond stood as one of Yerevan's oldest districts and concurrently its historical nucleus, evolving into a vibrant hub and a quasi-museum district over centuries. According to Russian researcher Ivan Chopin, historical records revealed that Kond's boundaries were broader in the old Yerevan plan, incorporating Dzoragegh, Hrazdan Dzor Gardens, and Dalma. From the other side, Kond's borders extended to the Fort (Chopin, 1852).

The Kond district stood as one of the oldest preserved areas in Yerevan, dating back to the 18th century. This historical enclave hosted structures with roots tracing to the Middle Ages, including the 18th-century St. Hovhannes Church and a partially damaged mosque from the 17th century. Positioned on a hill, the neighborhood served as a distinctive boundary, separating the central part of the city from the Hrazdan Gorge (Hakobyan, 1971). This strategic location highlighted Kond's historical significance and underscored its role in the spatial configuration of Yerevan, contributing to the city's unique topography and architectural heritage (Figure 1).

In the early 19th century, Kond uniquely occupied a hilltop position among Yerevan's three principal districts. Notably, this elevated district boasted access to both irrigation and potable water. The Ter-Grigoryans of Kond executed a pioneering water infrastructure project in 1793. This initiative involved channeling water from Getar to the courtyard of St. Hovhannes Church through a network of pipes and an aqueduct originating near the city (Shahaziz, 2003). This historical endeavor underscored Kond's innovative approach to water management during a pivotal era in the city's development. Situated advantageously at the highest point of the old city, the Kond district commanded a strategic and climatically advantageous position; narrow, irregular streets encircling the hill characterized the area. One- and two-story houses adorned the hill's summit, with affluent residents settling at the base. Later, urban planners laid out Soviet-era streets on the outskirts of Kond and constructed houses for the intelligentsia and artists instead of the "palaces" of the nobles (Figure 2).

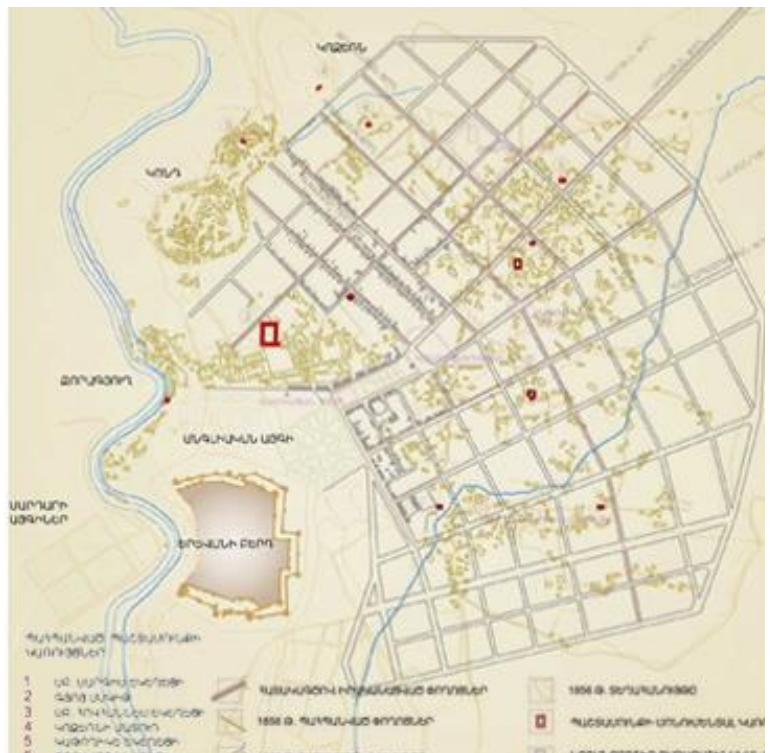
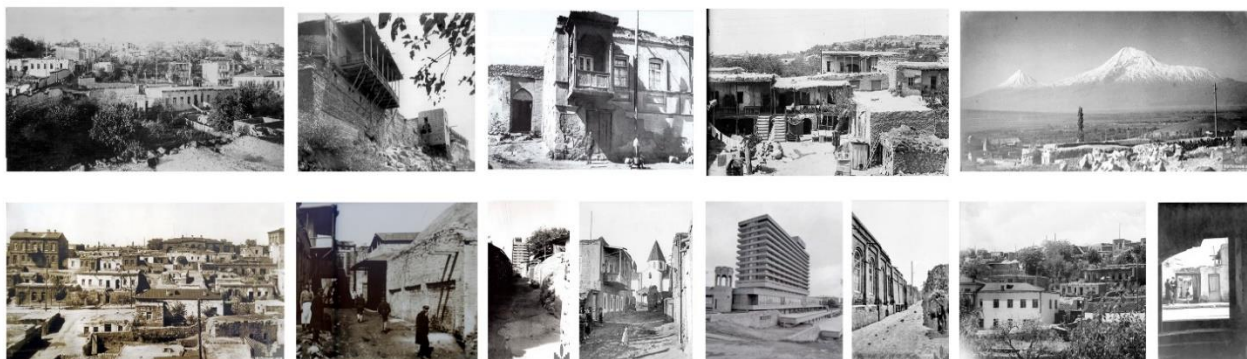


Figure 1 Yerevan's general plan layout in 1856.

Source: <https://kond.minurban.am/en>

A distinctive feature in the historical landscape of old Yerevan was the Fort, closely associated with Kond and constructed at the end of the sixteenth century. Serving as the seat of the Sardar of Yerevan, the fortress embodied a small town with its own population. Notably, the residents of Kond maintained only shops in Berd. Upon completing work time in the Fort, the inhabitants were obliged to vacate the premises. This historical account underscored the interwoven relationship between Kond and the Fort, shedding light on the social and strategic dynamics of the time.

In light of historical chronicles, coupled with extant archaeological and lithic evidence, it is discernible that Kond held considerable archaeological significance. The present-day Kond area encapsulated archaeological materials spanning a minimum of three distinct historical periods corresponding to the developmental epochs of Yerevan. As the principal impregnable elevation within the central nexus of Yerevan, Kond served as the exclusive refuge for the inhabitants of the city's central precinct for numerous centuries.



**Figure 2** Historical Scenes from the Kond district.

Source: <https://kond.minurban.am/en>

During the tumultuous geopolitical epoch of the 5th-6th centuries, marked by the division of Armenia between the Byzantine Empire and Persia, Kond assumed a pivotal role as the ultimate bastion of Byzantine Armenia. Situated within the plains of the Hrazdan River and the contemporary expanse of Yerevan, Kond stood as the last stronghold, embodying strategic and historical significance amid the shifting political landscapes of the time.

**2.2. Kond in the system of old neighborhoods of Yerevan city**

The city of Yerevan historically comprised three significant districts: Shahar (City or Old Yerevan), Tapabash (Kond), and Karahank (or Dimir-bulagh). Shahar, positioned in the northeastern part, held the distinction of being the oldest and largest district, with a settlement probably dating back to the Urartian era following the desolation of Erebuni. Over the centuries, Shahar remained consistently inhabited, representing a continuity of residence (Figure 3).



**Figure 3** Plan of Yerevan city in 1808.

Source: <https://kond.minurban.am/en>

Conversely, the district of Kond was spread in the western part of the city, across the eastern and southern slopes and foothills of the eponymous stony hill, bordered by the Hrazdan river to the west and the Kozern hill with its corresponding cemetery to the north. Hovhannes Shahkhatunyants (Shahkhatunyants, 1842), a knowledgeable authority on ancient Yerevan, provided insights into the spatial distribution of Kond. Like Shahar, Kond predominantly housed an Armenian population, particularly flourishing with the settlement of 100 houses of Armenian Boshas and the residence of ancient Armenian Melik families. The Melik-Aghamalian Meliks, in particular, held significant privileges, ascending to noble ranks during the Persian rule.

The third large district, Karahank, occupied the southeastern part of the city and experienced a relatively late settlement. Initially devoid of inhabitants, this area served as the city's quarry. Subsequently, it witnessed settlement primarily by the emerging Tatar community, ultimately integrating with the city and forming a distinct district within its boundaries (Chopin, 1852).

**2.3. A comprehensive assessment of the existing situation**

Today, the Kond district covers an approximate area of 25 hectares. The boundaries traverse along Paronyan, Leo, and Saryan streets near Hovh. Tumanyan's house museum, the stairs leading to the House of Composers, and Fricki Street. Subsequently, the borders extend along Proshyan Street, encompassing St. Hovhannes Church (Figures 4 and 5). The district is in challenging topographical conditions, with a substantial portion of the territory dominated by steep slopes.



The area exhibits limited greenery, with individual plots near houses predominantly covered with trees. The primary arterial roads of city-wide significance that touch Kond include Paronyan, Leo, and Saryan streets. Rustaveli Street connects internal district functions to essential structures such as the existing school, "Dvin" hotel, mosque, church, and other significant landmarks in Kond. The irregular and historically formed internal street network is substantial and stands out as one of Kond's most attractive features. The functional analysis of the district underscores the predominant presence of residential buildings, particularly one-story irregular constructions dating back to the 1940s and 1950s. Notably, the architectural landscape has evolved since the 1970s, witnessing the addition of multi-story residential and public structures (Figure 6).



**Figure 4** Zoning Project for the Central Area of Yerevan: "Yeryan Project" 2006-2007.

Source: <https://kond.minurban.am/en>



**Figure 5** Satellite observation of the historic Kond district.

In the contemporary context, the global emphasis on the concept of the "ancient city" plays a pivotal role in preserving the historical and artistic essence of settlements. Kond, with its distinctive street layout and an array of ancient stone and brick houses from the Persian and Russian eras, possesses the attributes necessary to align with the requisites of the "old city" concept, subject to appropriate interventions.

A comprehensive analysis accentuates the historical and environment-shaping elements within Kond. We have explicitly focused on monuments, contextual backgrounds, and conflict environments. Additionally, diverse zones, ranging from active to moderately active areas for tourist engagement, contribute to the overall vibrancy of the district. Noteworthy among the designated monuments listed in the state registry for Kond are St. Hovhannes the Baptist Church, accompanied by its sub-monuments (although devastated by the seismic events of 1679, meticulous restoration efforts culminated in its renewal in 1710), Mamri Canal, Tapabashi Mosque, and the captivating "Dance of the Mountaineers" sculpture.

Beyond the specified monuments, Kond boasts a plethora of historic buildings, structures, and other visually striking objects. Some of these have been previously acknowledged and included in various state lists, adding to the rich historical tapestry of the district. In light of these findings, proactive measures and interventions are imperative to preserve and enhance Kond's cultural and historical significance.

**2.4. The Kond district within the context of the spatial development of Yerevan**

The appearance of Kond, encompassing its street layout and urban fabric, has endured with remarkable continuity since the 18th century, exhibiting an organic evolution devoid of formal architectural impositions. Early medieval historian Sebeos contributed valuable insights into the district, characterizing it as a locale "blessed with solitary life, wonderful orchards of apple and apricot trees, babbling streams, and cool drinking water." Notably, residences in Kond predominantly assumed the form of single-story houses, secluded by solid walls, featuring balconies and pantries, thereby establishing a distinctive architectural identity set apart from neighboring districts (Figure 7). Subsequent urban planning records of Yerevan recognize Kond as an independent entity with a unique structure. Starting from the 1850s, Kond integrated into the broader urban framework, solidifying its position as one of the city's delineated districts.

In the 1924 comprehensive urban plan for Yerevan drafted by the esteemed academician Alexander Tamanyan, the longstanding structure that had organically developed in Kond over the centuries did not receive substantial consideration, and the proposed design advocated for a symmetrical ring-radial mid-rise construction, with an emphasis on the topography of the hill (Figure 8).

Meanwhile, Kond retained its affluence at that time, characterized by residential mansions adorned with brick arrow-shaped arches. Historical records indicate the presence of five out of the nine urban baths and two mosques within this district (Balyan, 2006).

In the post-Second World War era, Kond underwent minimal transformation. Concurrently, two or three generations refrained from investing in the maintenance and repair of their houses and territories, anticipating displacement or the



acquisition of new apartments. Extensive areas of historical development degenerated into disheveled districts resembling villages, contributing to this situation. Notably, the district stood out due to its residents' heightened sense of community, surpassing that observed in other districts (Hakobyan, 1967).

Efforts to reinterpret and reconstruct the district, shaped around the capital's image but inconsistent with prevailing ideas, were initiated only in the 1970s. Initial reconstruction measures focused on the outer periphery of the district, facilitated by the relatively accessible and gentle terrain and the availability of transportation infrastructure. Consequently, a significant portion of the neighborhood underwent reorganization or received additions of new multi-story buildings. Noteworthy constructions from this period include several high-rises, such as the 9-story Dwin Hotel. In 1984, a tender announced the reconstruction of Kond, and the sketch proposal by young architect A. Aghekyan was selected and obtained government approval. The proposal, subject to extensive discussions, aimed to develop a unified character for Kond's residential houses, emphasizing the preservation of the existing spontaneous street network, green courtyard spaces, and the creation of squares along the streets. The design aimed to accommodate 6000 inhabitants within the 26-hectare area slated for improvement. The vision included transforming the region into a built-up zone primarily featuring public functions, hotels, and entertainment venues, envisaged as Yerevan's "Montmartre," but the government's attention and material resources redirected to addressing the aftermath of the Spitak earthquake in December 1988, the once again deferred the resolution of the Kond question, allowing it to persist in spontaneous development, akin to the preceding two centuries.

However, until 1999, 21 residential houses in the Persian district of Kondi, including three sections of main streets, residential house gates, and two mosques, were designated as state-protected monuments. Subsequently, all the monuments, except the Tapabash Mosque (1687), were delisted on the premise that they had lost their architectural value due to reconstruction efforts. The existing list was finalized by relevant authorities only concerning the St. Hovhannes Mkrtych church, constructed between 1706 and 1710, and the Mamri canal passing under the district.

In the 2005 approved master plan of Yerevan, the specialists undertook a comprehensive analysis of the city center's development challenges within a professional project framework. Subsequently, in 2007, the Yerevan project formulated the Yerevan Kentron community (now an administrative district) zoning project. Within this initiative, architect A. Aghekyan revisited the district with a distinct approach, proposing a low perimeter of the hill for multi-story buildings, with the elevated middle part

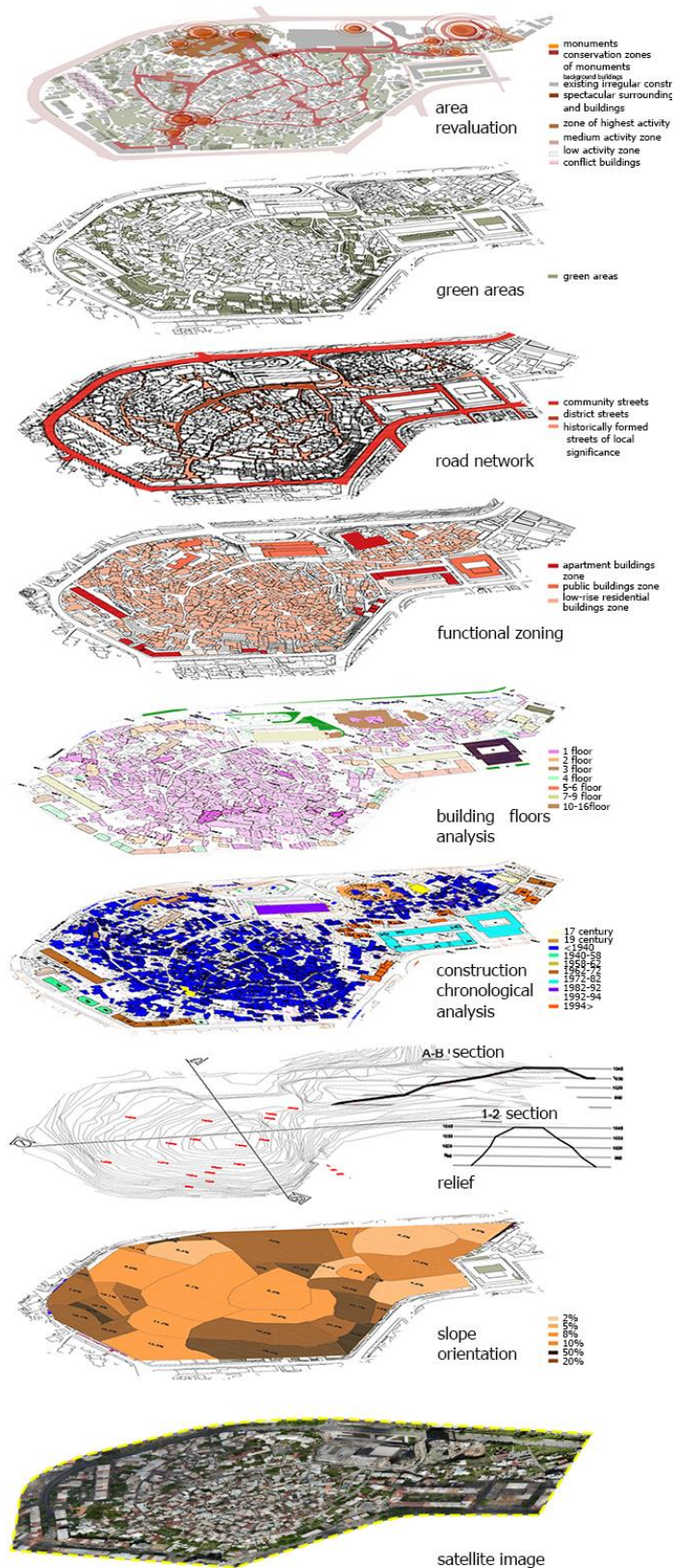


Figure 6 Complex evaluation of the present situation.



designated as a green zone. The project retained visible connections to the existing plan structure by preserving passageways within the green spaces aligned with the current street network.

Despite the circumstances mentioned above, the 2009 justification document for the preservation of historical and cultural monuments in Yerevan identified valuable environments in the area, along with several brick buildings dating back to the 18th century, as architecturally significant.

In recent years, the media has engaged with the imperative of enhancing awareness regarding the conservation of Kond. In addressing the matter of preservation and on-site reevaluation of Kond, A. Ivanov articulates that... "one can walk around there for hours, enjoying the natural, spontaneous plan texture without losing the real feel of the plan. Crooked streets, twisted passageways, crevices of passages ending with intimate courtyards, dead ends, and uneven wooden stairs. A restless labyrinth, every corner of which is full of people, life..." (Ivanov, 2021).



**Figure 7** An observation of the historical wall within the confines of the Kond district.

The continuity and sequence of settlement over the past two centuries, coupled with the inherent inseparability from the surrounding area, have been foundational elements shaping the urban development of Kondi. This interwoven relationship has endowed Kondi with valuable material and intangible spatial attributes. The resultant integrated environment from such unregulated historical developments presents an exceptionally compelling canvas for alternative development projects. During that time, stakeholders proposed various design, conceptual, and diplomatic ideas for Kond, including a zoning project, but the response was inadequate, and the proposals were not implemented (Figure 9).

In 2021, the Urban Development Committee initiated a concept competition to solicit proposals for rehabilitating Yerevan's historical "Kond" district. As of the present moment, the outcomes of this competition have not been consolidated or analyzed.

### 2.5. Enhancing community engagement and data collection in the Kond district

The Kond: oral history interviews. The extensive oral history interviews conducted with residents of Kond represent a methodically executed research endeavor aimed at eliciting and documenting personal narratives, anecdotes, and experiences integral to the historical and cultural heritage of the Kond community (Figure 10). This methodological approach, characterized by its in-depth nature, was meticulously designed to acquire a nuanced and firsthand comprehension of the local history and cultural practices. The primary mode of data collection employed in this research consisted of semi-structured interviews. Conducting these interviews adhered to ethical considerations, ensuring participant confidentiality and obtaining informed consent throughout the research process. The systematic execution of these oral history interviews constitutes a foundational component of this scholarly investigation, furnishing a substantial repository of qualitative data to comprehensively analyze and interpret the multifaceted dimensions forming Kond's historical and cultural milieu.

The compilation of oral histories transpired within the context of diverse events spanning 2017 to 2022. This encompassing initiative also integrates findings from the "Kond. Memory Elements" project. The comprehensive nature of this temporal coverage underscores a concerted effort to systematically accrue a repository of personal narratives and



**Figure 8** Organically developed structure.

Source: <https://www.armgeo.am/>

experiences within a specified timeframe. Including results from the abovementioned project adds a methodological layer to the oral history collection process, thereby contributing a distinct research dimension to the corpus of gathered data.

Within the narratives of the Kond residents, a recurring theme revolves around the perceptible contraction of the district in recent decades. This physical diminution has correspondingly resulted in a reduction of both individual and collective spaces in the memory of the local inhabitants. Frequently, when recounting daily practices or memorable events of the past, the narrator's journey through the valleys of memory seems to traverse the streets of Kond. Yet, these recollections are abruptly interrupted as the events continue in a place now severed from Kond, highlighting the district's diminishing boundaries and its cessation from being Kond.

Positioned at the geographical heart of Yerevan, Kond assumes a central role in the city's collective memory. The reminiscences of Kond residents, often infused with humor, intricately intertwine with the historical narrative of Yerevan. This interplay prompts colloquial quips designating Kond as the perpetual capital of the city. Delving into familial, architectural, and district-related recollections, the inhabitants underscore the inseparable connection between their daily experiences and the lively atmosphere of the city center.

The ecclesiastical and Islamic structures within Kond emerge as pivotal loci for memory concentration, the latter representing a distinctive form of local post-memory narrative. Despite the absence of firsthand witnesses among contemporary residents to the operational era of the mosque, its significance resonates within collective memory. Simultaneously, the church catalyzes a distinct mode of remembrance characterized by the idealization of the neighborhood's bygone era. The contrast between celebratory events, such as weddings, and the present reality marked by solemn occasions like funerals underscores the transformative trajectory of the meaning ascribed to the Kondi church.

Resident recollections extend beyond architectural considerations, encompassing temporal nuances, alterations in residential structures prompted by infrastructural inadequacies, and inter-neighborhood relationships. The remembrances encapsulate domestic events influenced by the passage of time, adaptations in housing dynamics necessitated by deficient infrastructure, and the intricate network of interpersonal connections within the community. These facets contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between architectural, temporal, and social dimensions within the collective memory of Kond, highlighting the multifaceted nature of this locale's historical and cultural fabric.

## *2.6. The cultural exchange events in the Kond and its residents*

To underscore the imperative of preserving Kond's cultural heritage, the French Embassy and the Goethe Center, in collaboration with universities, non-governmental organizations, and cultural entities, orchestrated the "Kondensé" festival launched in 2021. This cultural initiative entailed the showcasing of animation films and the organization of an art camp. The latter featured diverse workshops encompassing graffiti, stencils, silk-screening, character creation for animated cinema, crafting musical instruments (Figures 11 and 12), and discussions on Kond and architecture, culminating in a closing concert and an exhibition titled "Kond from Different Perspectives: Projects and Perspectives" (Figure 13).

The festival, strategically conceived for the benefit of Kond and its residents, sought to safeguard and accentuate the district's identity. They envisioned this preservation mandate to transpire through the active involvement of the district's residents, who possess an unparalleled insight into the authentic essence of Kond. Living within this enclave, seemingly detached from Yerevan, the residents inhabit a microcosmic world defined by their distinctive lifestyle, juxtaposed against the backdrop of high-rise hotels and elite edifices nearby.

The Kond district and its residents have been actively engaged in cultural exchange events, contributing to a dynamic and enriching milieu within the broader cultural landscape. This participatory involvement underscores the district's commitment to fostering cultural dialogue internally among its inhabitants and externally with diverse communities.

The residents of Kond have played a pivotal role in these cultural exchange events, contributing their unique perspectives, traditions, and experiences to the broader cultural tapestry. Such interactions not only serve to preserve and showcase Kond's rich cultural heritage but also facilitate meaningful exchanges with other communities, fostering mutual understanding and appreciation.

"Kondensé" served as an exceptional platform to underscore the intrinsic significance of Kond, illuminating its multifaceted potential not solely confined to architectural realms but extending to its broader cultural and communal dimensions (Figure 14). The festival, by design, accentuated Kond's unique face and sought to elucidate its substantial contributions to the cultural milieu. It thus emerged as a distinctive opportunity to assert Kond's cultural and communal importance while demonstrating its latent capabilities for further development and enrichment.

## *2.7. The Kond District and Its Residents within the Context of Interactive Exhibitions*

The Kond district stands as a vibrant testament to the rich cultural heritage embedded within its historical fabric. As part of a broader cultural engagement strategy, interactive exhibitions have emerged as pivotal platforms for fostering a dynamic dialogue between the district and its residents. This intersection of the Kond community with interactive exhibitions serves as a multifaceted conduit for cultural exchange, preservation, and communal enrichment.

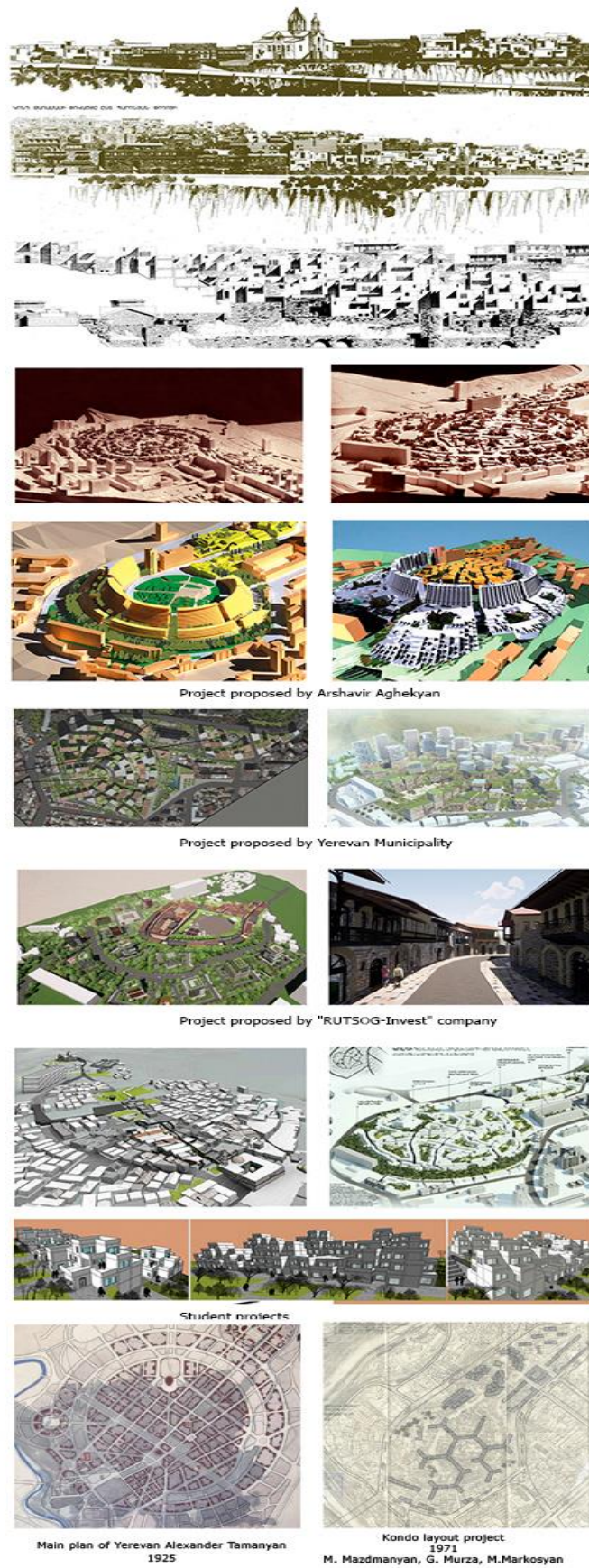


Figure 9 Tender and project proposals from different years.



Figure 10 Documentation of oral history interviews.



Figure 11 Recognizing the Kond's building materials. Source: <https://goethe-zentrum.am/>



Figure 12 "Kondensé" festival 2021: brick making process. Source: <https://goethe-zentrum.am/>



Figure 13 exhibition "Konde from Different Perspectives". Source: <https://goethe-zentrum.am/>



Figure 14 "Kondensé" festival 2023. Source: <https://goethe-zentrum.am/>

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In the nexus of interactive exhibitions, Kond residents actively contribute to their district's unfolding narrative. These events provide a unique space for residents to share personal narratives, traditions, and experiences, breathing life into the cultural tapestry that defines Kond. The immersive nature of interactive exhibitions allows for a nuanced exploration of the



district's identity, enabling both residents and visitors to delve into the intricate layers of its historical and cultural significance.

### 2.8. Importance of collaborative archival research in Kond

The engagement of Kond community members in archival research activities, specifically in the exploration of local archives and historical documents, epitomizes a dynamic and participatory research model. Designing this collaborative approach ensures the incorporation of authentic historical records, enhancing the research findings' accuracy and depth.

Through this concerted effort, the collaborative archival research in Kond was structured to foster a profound sense of shared responsibility among community members. This shared responsibility extends beyond exploring historical materials and into active participation in shaping and preserving the district's historical narrative. The collaborative process recognizes the invaluable contributions of the Kond community, acknowledging their unique perspectives, familial histories, and local insights as integral components in constructing a comprehensive understanding of the district's past.

The academic and community intertwining inherent in collaborative archival research in Kond emphasizes the authenticity of historical records and the co-creation of historical knowledge. This collaborative model transcends traditional research paradigms, engendering a reciprocal relationship between researchers and the community. It establishes a platform for active community participation in preserving and elucidating Kond's historical narrative, fostering a sense of ownership and agency among the community members.

### 2.9. Social Surveys in the Historic Kond District

Implementing social surveys in the historic Kond district represented a methodologically rigorous and interdisciplinary approach to comprehensively understanding this historically significant locale's social dynamics, cultural nuances, and community intricacies. Social surveys served as instrumental tools in capturing and analyzing a spectrum of residents' perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors, offering invaluable insights into the multifaceted aspects that contributed to the district's identity (Figure 15).

The primary objective of conducting social surveys in the historic Kond district was to systematically gather and interpret data related to the demographic composition, socio-economic characteristics, cultural practices, and community perceptions. This approach enabled researchers to construct a nuanced and evidence-based understanding of the social fabric, facilitating a holistic exploration of the district's historical and contemporary dimensions.

Meticulously designing the survey instrument encompassed a variety of pertinent subjects, including but not restricted to community demographics, historical awareness, perceptions of heritage preservation, and the impact of urban development on the social landscape. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, social surveys aimed to capture numerical data and narrative insights, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of Kond's intricate social tapestry.



**Figure 15** Mapping social survey points in the historic Kond district.

Source: <https://kond.minurban.am/en>

## 3. Results and Discussion

The extensive research has yielded invaluable insights into the multifaceted dynamics and future trajectory of the Kond district's revitalization and development. The synthesis of data, historical scrutiny, architectural considerations, and participatory architecture components culminates in a nuanced understanding, forming the basis for comprehensive strategic frameworks that underpin the strategic direction for the revitalization and development of the Kond district. A management plan was meticulously devised to operationalize these guiding principles for architectural organization and reconstruction. This management plan aims to serve as a structured and comprehensive approach to navigating the complexities inherent in the spatial and architectural transformation of the Kond district. The synthesis of these components establishes a robust and scholarly strategy, fostering the nuanced and sustainable development of the historic Kond district.

### 3.1. The essence of the idea of revitalization concept of the architectural heritage of the Kond district

The comprehensive reconstruction, revitalization, and revaluation of the Kond district are underpinned by the following guiding principles:



**Preservation of spatial and architectural integrity:** The preservation of Kond's intrinsic spatial and architectural layout is a pivotal achievement. This encompasses meticulously conserving narrow streets, stone or brick houses, and a topography-responsive environment (Figures 16,17,18).

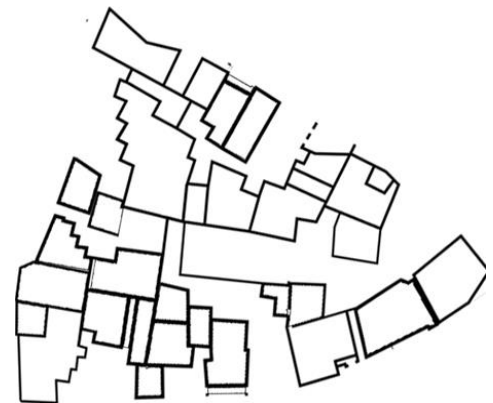
**Conservation and enhancement of monuments:** safeguarding monuments and noteworthy structures, coupled with integrating participatory architecture components, ensures the perpetuation of the district's essence. The engagement of the community in shaping architectural solutions adds a layer of authenticity to the revitalization process. Also, integrating vernacular architectural approaches is encouraged to maintain the essence of construction. This holistic approach engenders a sense of authenticity throughout the revitalization process, as indigenous perspectives play a pivotal role in informing architectural interventions.



**Figure 16** Historical street network.



**Figure 17** The fabric of the neighborhood formed by the irregular walls.



**Figure 18** A prototype of the volume-spatial character of the district.

It is imperative that this judicious engagement of the community be conducted within a framework of constructive dialogue, one that serves to enhance rather than diminish the decision-making prerogatives of project leaders while ensuring their continued accountability.

**Retention of historical street network:** preserving the historic street grid and modernized highway enhancements denotes a successful balance between heritage conservation and contemporary infrastructural demands. Participatory approaches in decision-making processes contribute to ensuring that these adaptations align with community values (Figures 19,23).

**Emphasis on central locations:**The prioritization of central locales, particularly Rustaveli Street, signifies a strategic focus on fostering pedestrian-centric urban mobility. Widening sidewalk areas through enclosed halls, with input from the community, showcases a commitment to enhancing public spaces that resonate with local preferences (Figure 20).



**Figure 19** Revitalization and re-evaluation of Kond's urban fabric.



**Figure 20** Re-creation of the spatial image of central places.

### 3.2. The basic principles of prospective development of the architectural heritage of the Kond district

**Human scale architectural design and urban planning:** The commitment to establishing a human architectural scale and preserving urban scale and microenvironments is enhanced by participatory design approaches. Actively involving the community in shaping the aesthetic quality and humanistic design principles ensures that the built

environment resonates with the cultural and historical context.

**Emphasis on district attractiveness:** Increasing the district's attractiveness through diversity, multi-functionality, and the organization of a new mixed-use area. This involves incorporating more buildings with shops and public facilities on the first floor, combining shops, offices, and individual residential apartments.

**Mixed-use spaces planning:** Development of mixed-use neighborhood spaces and buildings that cater to people of different ages, cultures, income levels, and races. Creating center attractions, such as micro-hotels, cafes, and workshops, along with appropriate tourism infrastructure.

**Accessibility and connectivity pedestrian planning:** Preserving the historical street network and pedestrian-friendly design measures exemplify a dedication to sustainable and people-centric urban planning. Participatory engagement in planning ensures that the green elements and hidden parking solutions align with the community's vision for an environmentally conscious urban landscape.

In synthesizing these results, the Kond district emerges as a historic enclave undergoing transformation and a community-driven endeavor. The integration of participatory architecture components enriches the strategies outlined, making them more attuned to the community's cultural, social, and historical fabric (Figure 21).

In synthesizing these results, the Kond district emerges as a historic enclave undergoing transformation and a community-driven endeavor. The integration of participatory architecture components enriches the strategies outlined, making them more attuned to the community's cultural, social, and historical fabric (Figure 21).



**Figure 21** Examples of promoting vernacular architecture: a,a1 - current state, b,b1 - intended version.

The participatory model established in Kond serves as a valuable precedent for future heritage preservation initiatives, emphasizing the indispensable role of community engagement in the urban development discourse (Figure 22).

### 3.3. Management plan for architectural spatial organization and reconstruction process of Kond district's architectural heritage

The management plan outlines comprehensive strategies and guidelines for preserving and revitalizing the architectural heritage within the district. It delves into specific zones, detailing approaches for maintaining historical streets, preserving monuments, implementing vernacular architecture, and deploying cluster modules. The plan emphasizes participatory architecture, engaging various stakeholders and fostering community involvement. The document aims to balance modernization with the preservation of historical and cultural significance, contributing to the sustainable development of the Kond district (Figure 24).

#### 3.3.1. Monument reassessment and historic street preservation

The predominant visual identity of Kond emanates from its historically conserved narrow streets characterized by irregular layouts and structures. Consequently, the facades of residential edifices contributed to the delineation of street contours, thereby shaping the overall environment and influencing movement dynamics.

So, the fundamental tenet of the architectural and spatial organizational concept revolves around conserving historic streets and structures in their current configurations. This necessitates the replication of wall contours enclosing the roads. In this framework, we must emphasize the meticulous restoration and reevaluation of protected monuments (Figure 25).

#### 3.3.2. Advocating for vernacular architecture elements

Vernacular architecture, characterized by utilizing local materials and knowledge, is typically undertaken by local communities without the oversight of professional architects. In contrast to professional architecture, folk architectural creativity is collective rather than individual, encapsulating the cumulative experience of generations spanning centuries. This approach becomes pertinent in instances involving unique manifestations of folk architecture, where adaptation to the environment suffices. This approach can be implemented to fulfill tourism requirements and reconstruct specific elements, such as doors, windows, and walls, without fundamentally altering the prototype (Figure 26).

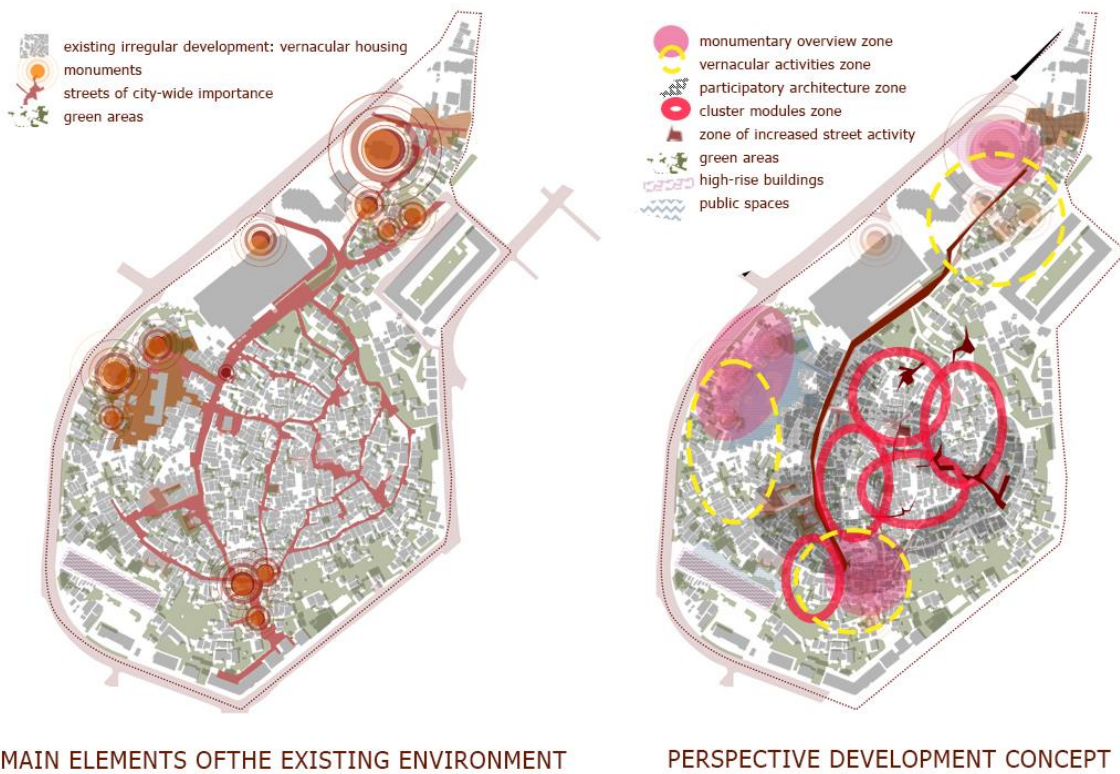


Figure 22 The Morphology of Kond's urban fabric.



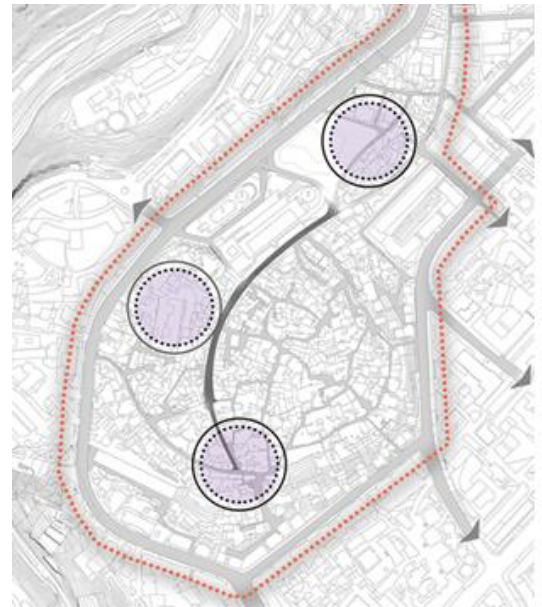
Figure 23 (Re)Shaping of Kond's urban fabric.



Figure 24 Details of zones in the management plan for architectural spatial organization and reconstruction process of Kond district's architectural heritage: a. Monumentary overview zone, b. Vernacular activities zone, c. Participatory architecture zone, d. Cluster modules zone.



**Figure 25** Monumentary overview and Rustaveli st. outline.



**Figure 26** Priority zones for vernacular activities.

**3.3.3. Dynamic collaboration zones in architecture**

The design incorporates a model involving direct participation of various social groups. This method is pertinent when dealing with a substantial population of residents desiring active involvement in the design and construction processes. It upholds the fundamental principles of the previously mentioned concept, specifically the preservation of the coloring of wall borders and the direct engagement of beneficiaries in the execution of reconstruction procedures.

The collaborative architecture approach prioritizes the systematic organization of design processes and procedures involving diverse social groups (Figure 27).

**3.3.4 Implementation of cluster modules in tailored environments**

It entails the integration of compact clusters of residential structures and ancillary buildings within a relatively confined construction area, allowing for the preservation of an adjacent space in a more natural state. This approach enhances inhabitants' living conditions and overall health and the historical and natural surroundings. The fundamental tenets of the concept are to form cluster groups within the perimeters of historic streets. Simultaneously, it implements contemporary plan solutions for comfortable apartments and other facilities. Sticking to a taxonomy limited to 1-2-3, utilizing shared construction materials such as stone, brick, and wood is imperative to maintain the Kond's aesthetic integrity (Figure 28).



**Figure 27** Zones of participatory architecture.



**Figure 28** Priority deployment zones for cluster modules.



### 3.4. *Contrasting approaches from diverse geographical contexts*

By scrutinizing divergent methodologies, the investigation enhances our comprehension of the intricate dynamics influencing urban revitalization processes and provides significant insights. With a specific focus on illustrative instances, researchers evaluate the study's findings within established literature on urban revitalization. The research contributes to the extant knowledge in this domain by accentuating the significance of adaptive strategies, community involvement, capacity enhancement, and comprehensive impact evaluation in nurturing more inclusive and sustainable urban development paradigms (Ferilli et al., 2016).

#### 3.4.1. *Flexibility and Adaptability*

Existing literature in urban studies often emphasizes the importance of adaptive strategies in urban revitalization to accommodate changing socioeconomic dynamics and community needs. The study's findings align with this discourse, exemplified by comparing traditional restoration projects like Prague's Old Town Square (Drdacky & Teller, 2006) and grassroots initiatives like the Bywater Neighborhood Association (Baše, M., 2000). Scholars such as Jane Jacobs and Richard Florida have highlighted the significance of organic, community-driven approaches to urban development, stressing the need for flexibility in zoning regulations and adaptive reuse of historic structures to foster vibrant, resilient neighborhoods (Hospers & Van Dalm, 2005; Jacobs, 1993; Florida, 2008).

**Cultural Heritage Preservation:** The study's examination of contrasting revitalization approaches, such as the redevelopment of Berlin's Potsdamer Platz (Allen, 2006) versus the efforts of the Cultural Heritage Conservation Society in Istanbul (Erdem, 2018), resonates with scholarly discussions on heritage conservation and urban identity. Research by David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre underscores the importance of preserving cultural heritage in urban settings to maintain social cohesion and a sense of place (Harvey, 2012; Lefebvre, 1991). The findings of the study stress the crucial significance of community engagement and grassroots activism in safeguarding cultural assets and fostering a collective sense of ownership over urban heritage.

#### 3.4.2. *Capacity Building and Empowerment*

The study's analysis of revitalization initiatives, such as San Francisco's Fisherman's Wharf renovation (DiFeliciano et al., 2023) contrasted with the efforts of the Chinatown Community Development Corporation, reflects broader debates on community empowerment and participatory planning in urban regeneration (Chinatown Community Development Corporation, 1977). Scholars like Sharon Zukin and Susan Fainstein have emphasized the importance of inclusive governance structures and community-based organizations in revitalization processes, arguing that empowering marginalized residents is crucial for achieving equitable urban development (Zukin, 1988; Fainstein, 2010). The study's findings highlight the transformative potential of capacity-building programs and grassroots activism in fostering local agency and fostering more inclusive revitalization outcomes.

#### 3.4.3 *Measuring Success and Impact*

The study's exploration of conventional versus innovative approaches to measuring revitalization success, exemplified by the comparison between Times Square's commercial rebranding (Forsyth, 2015) and the "Ciclovía" initiative in Bogotá, Colombia, sheds light on the evolving discourse surrounding impact assessment in urban planning (Peñalosa, 2004). While conventional metrics often prioritize economic indicators such as increased tourism and corporate investments, initiatives like Ciclovía emphasize broader societal benefits such as improved public health, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability. Scholars like Enrique Peñalosa and Jan Gehl have championed the use of qualitative indicators and participatory methodologies in evaluating urban development projects, arguing that a comprehensive understanding of success requires consideration of diverse stakeholder perspectives and non-monetary dimensions of well-being (Gehl, 2010). The study's findings underscore the importance of adopting a multi-dimensional approach to impact assessment, one that captures the intricate interaction among social, economic, and environmental variables in shaping urban revitalization outcomes.

## 4. **Final considerations**

The implementation of participative methodology in the historic district has yielded valuable findings and insights, underscoring the importance of integrating local history and culture into research methodologies. Through active engagement with the community, this approach has uncovered nuanced perspectives and enriched data collection, offering a comprehensive perspective on the historical backdrop.

Key findings highlight that involving local stakeholders enhances the authenticity and depth of research outcomes, offering a more comprehensive view of the historic district. Considering the unique cultural nuances, the participative

methodology has unearthed previously overlooked narratives, contributing to a more accurate representation of the district's heritage.

The significance of incorporating local history and culture in research methodologies is evident in the enriched narratives and community-driven perspectives that emerged. This study emphasizes that a community-centered approach respects the cultural context and produces more relevant and impactful results.

Regarding implications for future studies, the success of participative methodology in the historic district suggests a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and community-driven research practices. Researchers are encouraged to prioritize collaboration with local communities to ensure a more accurate and culturally sensitive portrayal of historical and cultural phenomena.

It is advisable to apply participative approaches more broadly across various research contexts. The historic district is a compelling example, demonstrating that community involvement is feasible and essential for robust and ethical research. This approach can be adapted across disciplines and regions, fostering a more inclusive and globally applicable research methodology that respects and values local perspectives. In conclusion, the study advocates for the widespread adoption of participative approaches, recognizing their potential to enhance the authenticity and impact of research endeavors.

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### Ethical considerations

Not applicable.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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