

## City Development Strategies in Bandar Abbas, with an Emphasis on Sustainable Development Approach

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**ABSTRACT:** One of the prominent features of urban development strategy is to give importance to planning and design process and also the obtained result. We can say that urban development strategy is both process and product. Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the indicators of sustainable urban development and plans to study these indicators in an actual arena (Bandar Abbas). This is an applied descriptive-analytical research. The required information is collected through library and field studies. Related theoretical principles, domestic and foreign experiences, available documents, administrative data, and official statistics are applied in the part of library studies. Questionnaires, interviews, and direct and systematic observation are used in the part of field studies. Statistical communities involved in this research include: people, city managers (municipal employees, city council, police governor, etc.), natural and legal consultants and contractors who are active in the field of urban management and planning in Bandar Abbas and also professors and experts of urban planning and management. Finally, due to the large volume of data, a random sample of 372 people was selected from the statistical population using Cochran Formula. Average scores for sustainability in four dimensions of economic, social, physical-environmental, and management in development of Bandar Abbas were 2.91, 3.45, 2.81, and 2.42, respectively. Factors affecting sustainable development in Bandar Abbas were evaluated: Average scores and total weighted scores of internal factors were 3.16 and 3.28, respectively. Also average scores and total weighted scores of external factors were 3.16 and 3.28, respectively. Therefore, it is concluded that Bandar Abbas is highly affected by unsustainability in three dimensions of economic, physical -environmental, and management and only in social dimension the sustainability status is satisfactory. Assessing the factors affecting the realization of sustainable development in Bandar Abbas shows that numerous internal and external factors are effective in this field; however, the contribution of internal factors is greater.

**Keywords:** Development Strategies, Bandar Abbas, Sustainable Development

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### INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development meets the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet its own needs. Since sustainable development is a process towards sustainability, it cannot be followed in one step and it needs continuous and cohesive effort to be realized. Sustainable development is a multi-dimensional process looking for integration of the economic, social, and environmental purposes in a sustainable manner in order to provide stable and continuous changes for long-term welfare of the society [1]. Some characteristics and key objectives of sustainable development include: inter-generational equity, intra-generational equity (including social and geographical equality), environmental protection (and living within its carrying capacity), minimum use of non-renewable resources, economic viability and diversity, self-reliant community, social and personal welfare, and satisfaction of basic needs of people in society [2]. In sustainable urban development, the quality of human life is placed in an urban centered space so that the continuity of citizens' lives could be coupled with development and social welfare and the sustainability of the urban environment would not be damaged. The strength point of sustainable development theory is to pay attention to relationship and establishing correlation between elements of development in a logical form which can cause survival of development. City Development Strategy (CDS) is the process of preparing the city's long-term prospects, based on which action plans are provided. In other words, City Development Strategy (CDS) is the preparation process of the realization of city's long-term prospects through short-term and medium-term action plans which emphasizes widespread citizen participation, equitable growth, ecological balance, and economic competitiveness enhancement of the city [3]. One of the prominent features of City Development Strategy is that it gives importance to planning and design process and also the obtained result. This is why we can say that City Development Strategy is both process and product [4]. Various studies suggests that "the world's urban population will reach more than 2 billion people by 2030, about 94 percent of which will occur in less developed countries" [5]. This uncontrolled growth and increased migration to cities lead to uncontrolled expansion of urban areas, creation of new habitats, and reduction of human welfare [6]. There are also other effects which are include: unplanned constructions, uncontrollable expansion and frequent changes in the spatial structure of cities, tendency towards suburban life, urban extension [7], and in one word

"unsustainability", particularly in developing countries [8]. Given the importance of assessing indicators of sustainable development in urban areas, in recent years a relatively large number of studies have been done and some of them are mentioned below:

Gharekhanlu and Hosseini studied the indicators of sustainable urban development. At the end of their study, those indicators which are worthy to be considered in examining the sustainability of cities are listed as follows: 1. Population, 2. Economic situation, 3. Climate change, 4. Air quality, 5. Natural water quality, 6. Open society, 7. Unified and integrated Plans, 8. Ability and potential for innovation, 9. Potentials and capacities related to regional infrastructure, 10. Social capital, 11. Education, and 12. Security [9].

Taghvai and Akbari conducted a study on spatial analysis of development indicators in regional metropolises in Iran. To achieve this, they attempted to analyze and assess the status of municipal services in these cities using techniques of centrality indicator, Preston and McGranahan, and taking advantage of 20 variables of urban development and 5 demographic variables collected from regional metropolises in Iran. The results, using centrality indicator, show that metropolises including Tehran, Mashhad, and Esfahan are ranked first to third, respectively, and cities including Semnan and Yasuj are ranked 29th and 30th, respectively. The technique of McGranahan also show that metropolises including Tehran, Mashhad, and Esfahan are ranked first to third, respectively, and cities including Yasuj and Semnan are ranked 29th and 30th, respectively. The research findings, utilizing the technique of Preston, also show that development indicators in regional metropolises in Iran do not have a balanced trend. The point where a break appears in the slope of the diagram shows that a change has occurred in the centrality level of metropolises [10].

Saraei et al., assessed and evaluated the levels of sustainable development in Babolsar districts. The results of this study, in terms of consolidated indicators, show that the sustainability factor varies among districts of this city. Among the sixteen districts, one district is placed in ideal sustainable group, two districts are placed in strong sustainable group, seven districts are placed in semi-sustainable group, four districts are placed in weak sustainable group, and two districts are placed in unsustainable group. Research findings also indicate that there is inequality and a big difference among various districts of this city in terms of enjoying development indicators. These inequalities were very dramatic (0.98 percent) in the field of environmental and social indicators and they were lower (0.32 percent) in underlying indicators [11].

Sheikholeslami et al., evaluated the city of Shiraz in terms of sustainable urban development. In this study, after evaluating the present situation of the city, distribution process of activities and services, the way of taking advantage of resources, and analyzing executive policies and programs, it is concluded that the development process of the metropolis of Shiraz is not favorable and faces several issues [12].

Sarvar and Mousavi conducted a study to assess the sustainable development of cities in West Azerbaijan province. This study indicates that the city of Urmia, which constitutes 33.8 percent of the population, enjoys a high rank in development. The overall results of the study indicate that, in terms of development, the regional spatial pattern in the province is center - periphery pattern. It means that big cities, in terms of population, administrative, and economic features, are more developed [13].

Accordingly, the present study aims to investigate the indicators of sustainable urban development and plans to study these indicators in an actual arena (Bandar Abbas). The question is which of the dimensions of development in Bandar Abbas is more sustainable and which one is more unsustainable. Then this question is raised that "which city in Hormozgan Province is the most sustainable city and which one is the most unsustainable one. Accordingly, the research questions are as follows:

Which city in Hormozgan Province is ranked first in terms of sustainability?

What are the most sustainable and unsustainable dimensions in urban development of Bandar Abbas?

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is an applied descriptive-analytical research. The required information is collected through library and field studies. Related theoretical principles, domestic and foreign experiences, available documents, administrative data, and official statistics are applied in the part of library studies. Questionnaires, interviews, and direct and systematic observation are used in the part of field studies. Statistical communities involved in this research include: people, city managers (municipal employees, city council, police governor, etc.), natural and legal consultants and contractors who are active in the field of urban management and planning in Bandar Abbas and also professors and experts of urban planning and management. Finally, due to the large volume of data, a random sample of 372 people was selected from the statistical population using Cochran formula. Data obtained in this research are assessed using descriptive tables of the first hypothesis testing and also SWAT model of the second hypothesis testing. The reason of using SWAT model is that with the help of this model we can assess internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) and external factors (threats and opportunities) and finally provide strategy. This model is one of the most widely-used strategic planning models.

## RESULTS

The first hypothesis testing: "It seems that Bandar Abbas is currently placed in an unsustainable development situation.

To test this hypothesis, the development of Bandar Abbas was examined in four main dimensions including economic, social, physical – environmental, and management. Their average scores are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Sustainability assessment in different dimensions of Bandar Abbas

Dimension	Economic	Social	Physical – Environmental	Management
Average score	2.91	3.45	2.81	2.42

Research findings, 2013

The second hypothesis test “It seems that internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) have greater impact than external factors (threats and opportunities) in the process of sustainable development of Bandar Abbas.

To test this hypothesis, 64 factors were examined in the form of weaknesses (23 factors), strengths (17 factors), opportunities (13 factors), and threats (11 factors). The results are presented in Table 2 in the form of average scores of factors and also total weighted scores.

**Table 2.** Assessment of factors affecting sustainable development in Bandar Abbas

Internal factors		External factors	
Average score	Total weighted score	Average score	Total weighted score
3.63	3.67	3.16	3.28

Research findings, 2013

### Internal and external factors affecting sustainable development

Based on the research findings, 40 factors were identified as the internal factors affecting sustainable development in Bandar Abbas which include 23 factors representing strengths and 17 factors representing weaknesses. The most important factors representing strengths include the willingness of residents to participate in urban affairs, top tourist attractions, and high sense of spatial and social belonging among the citizens. The most important factors representing weaknesses include lack of serious consideration for preserving resources for future generations, poor urban management in strategic look at the future, and bilateral and interactional relationship between people and authorities. According to the obtained results, the average score of these factors is 3.63 and the total weighted score is 3.67.

24 factors were identified as external factors affecting sustainable development in Bandar Abbas which include 13 opportunities and 11 threats. The most important opportunities are: privileged location of Bandar Abbas, high number of tourists, and rich managerial experience in the field of sustainable urban development. However, the most important threats to sustainable development in Bandar Abbas include: lack of government support for public and private sectors, irregular increase of immigrants, expansion of informal settlements phenomenon, lack of integrated urban management, and organizations’ inconsistency in providing services. The average score of external factors affecting sustainable development in Bandar Abbas is 3.16 and total weighted score is 3.28.

## DISCUSSION

As can be seen in the results of the first hypothesis, average scores of the three dimensions of economic, physical – environmental, and management are less than average (3). This indicates the undesirability of conditions and unsustainability of the development process in these dimensions. Only the average score of social dimension is more than 3 which indicate sustainability. However, considering that three dimensions indicate unsustainable conditions in Bandar Abbas. The first hypothesis of the study implying unsustainable situation in Bandar Abbas is approved.

The results of the second hypothesis suggest that both average score and total weighted score of internal factors are more than external factors. Therefore, the second hypothesis is also approved. It can be said that internal factors (strengths and weaknesses) have greater impact on the sustainable development of Bandar Abbas in comparison with external factors (opportunities and threats). Based on the results obtained, this research concludes that Bandar Abbas is highly unsustainable in three dimensions of economic, physical – environmental, and management. Only in social dimension the sustainability status is satisfactory. Also assessing the factors affecting sustainable development in Bandar Abbas indicates that numerous internal and external factors are effective in this field; however, the contribution of internal factors is greater.

Therefore, it is recommended to benefit from citizens’ material and social assets in implementation of service and development projects using ST strategies (conservatively).

\*Effort should be made towards the development of transportation operations in Bandar Abbas in national and international level with government support for the private sector, especially local investors.

\* The role of public institutions, such as assist councils and NGOs should be strengthened in order to protect investors and local economically active forces in the city in line with investment and entrepreneurship in the form of small businesses.

\*Sustainability's basic elements must be trained and promoted on different dimensions with responsibility and coordination of governmental organizations. It is important that continuous efforts be made to preserve resources for future generations.

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