

## A STUDY OF THE IDENTITY AND CULTURE OF ARAK VILLAGES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE CITY

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### **Abstract**

Identity is fundamentally constructed upon sources such as language, history, and socio-political or cultural commonalities. When examining culture through the lens of identity, it must be addressed as a primary formative factor manifested through structures like language, values, customs, rituals, and mythology. From both individual and social perspectives, identity and culture are inextricably linked, often reflecting more pristine and profound meanings in rural settings compared to urban life. Furthermore, cultural diversity acts as a catalyst for the emergence of multiple identities. Given the specific characteristics of Markazi Province, the historical heritage of Arak and the Sultanabad Fortress play a significant role in this formative process. This study investigates the case of Arak and its surrounding villages through a combination of archival research and field studies. The findings suggest that these examples of intangible heritage serve as significant assets for rural tourism. By analyzing rural and urban lifestyles and their inherent subcultures, the study elucidates how shifts in lifestyle lead to transformations in collective identity, ultimately playing a critical role in the strategic development of rural tourism.

**Keywords:** *Cultural Identity, Arak, Intangible Heritage, Rural Tourism, Lifestyle Transformation, Sultanabad Fortress*

### **INTRODUCTION**

In terms of geographical location, Markazi Province has characteristics that other provinces may not have. Being located at a point that connects the north and south and the west and the east, this province has played a decisive role in the cultural, economic, social and political life of the country since ancient times. According to historical results, Markazi Province was part of the Great Median states in the first millennium BC, which encompassed the entire central and western part of Iran and was considered one of the ancient centres of settlement on the Iranian plateau. In the Dehkhoda Dictionary, it is stated that (Sultan Abad Iraq) is limited to Farahan from the north; to the land of Qom from the east; to the south to Mahallat and Kazaz; and to the west to Mount Shazand. Its building is new and was built in 1189 AH by Yusuf Khan, known as Gorji, in the western corner of the Farahan plain, and its shape is regular and rectangular. In the book Simay Iran, it is stated: (The initial building of the city of Arak was built in 1231 AH by order of Fath Ali Shah Qajar and by Yusuf Khan Gorji (Sepahdar), the commander of the local garrison, and it was called Sultan

Abad Castle.) Since the establishment of this castle until now, many people have been moved to this place from the north, south, east and west of the country, both since the establishment of Sultan Abad Castle and in the present time due to the industrialization of the city.

In defining identity, it should be said that the identity of a society and its culture are a set of traits and characteristics that make its people distinctive and distinguished from those of other societies and provide the solidarity and empathy needed by people for the survival of society. Therefore, it seems that addressing the issue of identity in this modern era seems vital and necessary. Identity, from a social psychological perspective, involves individuals deriving a part of their self-concept from the groups they belong to, such as their nationality, profession, or cultural affiliations (Ellemers & Haslam, 2012). This concept has been increasingly scrutinized in social sciences due to transformations in modern societies, including globalization and localization (Anisimova & Echevskaya, 2012).

Identity manifests itself in both the individual and social spheres, and all of these spheres have a non-biological nature. In the first layer, the sense of identity is considered a relatively stable change in the essence of identity, which is mainly subject to biological factors, but in the metaphysical layers, identity is considered as an unstable matter subject to environmental variables. Individual identity is related to the individual's feeling about himself and creates distinctions that are identified with components such as name, nationality, ethnicity, or personal, intellectual, value or ideological inclinations. Identity in the collective sense is also formed by the transformation of I into we and follows values, rules and norms, with changes in each of which the collective level of identity changes. Social identity manifests itself in different layers of family, ethnic, group, urban, national, supranational and global. In these layers of identity, identity is subject to space and time, and space is bounded and renewable. And spatial stability also enables cohesion, a sense of belonging, and social level of identity cohesion in common matters. (Czyżowska, 2022; Uçar, 2017; Berzonsky et al., 2011) The increasing problematization of identity in contemporary societies is influenced by processes of differentiation, globalization, and multiculturalism, which can lead to increased individualization and a weakening of social solidarity (Rosati, 2005). Furthermore, the intersubjective nature of identity, shaped through social interactions and recognition, is paramount in modern discussions of identity.

It seems that the identity of each individual can be defined only in relation to their presence in society. From this perspective, social studies believe that identity is the result of the sum of interactions between the individual and the social environment and includes the set of attachments that each individual has to the social system. Attachments such as belonging to an age group, belonging to a gender group, belonging to an economic class, belonging to a political system, etc. The socio-cultural identity of individuals and communities is characterized by stability, encompassing spiritual values, ethno-cultural factors, and the political and legal contexts of a society (Arefev et al., 2022).

If culture is expressed as the common ideas of humanity that lie in a bed of differences, it is this difference in ideas that will lead to cultural differences, and therefore identities will also be different; that is, cultural differences lead to identity differences. What causes the social identity of a human group to be formed is the similarities between the elements of that group that separate, differentiate, and differentiate them from other human groups. Among these parameters are dialect and language, nutrition and food, beliefs and religion, clothing and dressing, aesthetic preferences, recreation and entertainment, sports, etc., which can be examined in the cultural domain.

With the formation of global identities, governments have faced a serious challenge. Although identity in the global sense is a conflicting concept, its existence has become important from the perspective that it confronts national and local identity with a challenge. Globalization has a profound impact on cultural identity, reshaping perceptions and facilitating cultural exchange, which can enrich local cultures while also challenging traditional norms (Kerubo, 2024). This can lead to the emergence of hybrid cultural forms, blending local and global elements. However, it also poses threats of cultural homogenization and the erosion of unique identities due to the dominance of global media and consumer culture (Kumar & Tiwari, 2024). Efforts to preserve local traditions and promote cultural resilience are crucial, including supportive cultural policies and educational programs emphasizing cultural diversity and heritage (Kerubo, 2024). While globalization can threaten local identities and encourage hedonism, it also enriches life experiences and opens economic opportunities, necessitating a balance between adopting global elements and preserving local culture (Ratnawati, 2025). Some perspectives argue that globalization can enhance cultural identity by making people more aware of their own culture's uniqueness and fostering a sense of global togetherness that does not necessarily conflict with diversity. Global identity is not opposed to anything, but rather its distinction from the multiple aspects of local identity. In other words, national identities are distinguished from each other, while global identity is a unique identity.

It is necessary to examine the role of several factors in the formation of individual identities in today's society. First, internal developments that affect social cohesion. These elements are manifested in lifestyles and force the cultural flow in society to move and develop at a general level. Since everyday life is an interactive and dynamic process, in which media and consumer products are consumed creatively by individuals to build their identity and lifestyle in an interactive and based on arbitrary values. The existence of native programs and shows of each culture and nation greatly contributes to the formation of the identity of the individuals of that society. (Loseke, 2007). Today, the issue of consumer lifestyle and paying attention to it requires attention to the challenges arising from changing tastes, lifestyles, areas of daily life and issues such as fashion, music, globalization. Therefore, human daily life cannot be considered a place of ordinary and mundane affairs and removed from the field of study.

Addressing the lifestyle of the villages in the outskirts of Arak and working on their rural development can be a great help in the formation of micro-identities that imperceptibly affect the identity of the city of Arak. The traditional notion that rural and urban areas are distinct and independent is outdated; instead, robust rural-urban linkages are crucial for sustainable and inclusive development in both regions. Policies should recognize and support these interdependencies rather than separating them (Chirisa & Mazanhi, 2022). Furthermore, the neat rural-urban dichotomy is often misleading, as boundaries are constantly transcended by movements of people, goods, ideas, and resources (Hommes et al., 2019). Sustainable rural development, particularly in vernacular settlements, faces challenges from globalization and tourism, underscoring the need for an identity-based and people-centered approach to preserve architectural and urban identity and foster a sense of belonging among residents (Boyacıoğlu et al., 2023).

In any case, the social foundation of identity in modern societies and industrial cities such as Arak can be explained around three broad areas of leisure, social class, and consumption. The need to pay attention to rural development over urban development is not because the majority of the Third World population is located in rural areas, but because the ultimate solution to the problem of urban unemployment and overpopulation is the improvement of the rural environment. By

establishing a proper balance between the economic possibilities of cities and towns, creating suitable conditions for broad participation of the people and enjoying the benefits of those developing countries will take a great step towards realizing the true meaning of development (Berzonsky et al., 2011). According to Tolen, the Third World achieves development through rural planning and rural development, not through the use of the imaginary extension of the benefits of urban development to the villages.

One of the main sources of identity creation is the common elements of a group, such as history and geography. Identity in this sense is an interpretation that an individual presents based on the common elements of the collective self, and in order to create this solidarity, he considers himself dependent on this group for a sense of belonging and cohesion. We can consider culture as a great and special manifestation of human society. Therefore, by paying attention to the customs, traditions, and traditional ceremonies of a region, we can continue to preserve and maintain the identity-building elements in that region, and this is not possible except through rural development. Since every year a large number of villagers migrate from Arak with their major work, education, and purchases, they shape the lifestyle, identity, and culture of Arak city. According to the author, by applying Bourdieu's theory and spending on the social and cultural capital of the city's people, we can greatly contribute to the formation of local identity, the preservation of current identities, and the identification of existing identities with the city, preserving the intangible heritage of the province and the identity of the young generation. Through the study of rituals and some ceremonies, a positive sense of identity of the region of life or country can be observed among people. It can be said that kinship is important because it encompasses identity processes, and on the other hand, identity is a cultural phenomenon because the sources and raw materials that constitute identity, namely language and identity-building structures, are cultural in nature.

## **RESEARCH METHODS AND METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative, interpretive research design grounded in cultural sociology and human geography, with a particular emphasis on identity formation, lifestyle, and rural–urban interactions. Given the conceptual nature of identity and culture as socially constructed and context-dependent phenomena, a qualitative approach is deemed most appropriate for capturing the symbolic meanings, lived experiences, and socio-cultural dynamics of Arak city and its surrounding villages. The research is primarily descriptive–analytical, aiming to explore how rural cultural elements contribute to the formation, transformation, and reproduction of urban identity and lifestyle patterns.

### **Case Study Strategy**

The research is structured as a case study focusing on the city of Arak and its peripheral villages in Markazi Province, Iran. This spatially bounded case was selected due to Arak's historical formation as a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural city, its strategic geographical position, and its high rate of rural–urban interaction and migration. The case study strategy allows for an in-depth examination of identity-related processes within their real-life social, historical, and cultural contexts, particularly in relation to rural development and tourism potential.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected using a combined library-based (documentary) and field-oriented approach, enabling triangulation and enhancing the credibility of findings.

#### **1. Library and Documentary Research**

The documentary component involved an extensive review of primary and secondary sources, including academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, historical documents, official reports, and previous studies related to identity, culture, lifestyle, rural development, globalization, and tourism. Classical and contemporary theoretical frameworks particularly those related to social identity theory, cultural capital, lifestyle analysis, and Bourdieu's sociological concepts—were used to inform the analytical structure of the study. Historical texts and regional studies were also examined to contextualize the formation of Arak and its surrounding villages.

## **2. Field Observations and Cultural Exploration**

The field-oriented component focused on qualitative observations of cultural practices, lifestyles, rituals, customs, language use, and everyday social interactions in selected villages around Arak. Attention was given to intangible cultural heritage elements such as local ceremonies, dialects, traditional consumption patterns, and leisure practices. These observations were used to identify cultural continuities and transformations and to assess how rural identity elements influence urban collective identity and lifestyle.

### **Analytical Framework**

The analysis was conducted using thematic and interpretive analysis, guided by sociological and cultural theories. Concepts such as identity (individual and collective), lifestyle, cultural capital, consumption, leisure, and globalization served as analytical categories. Bourdieu's theory of social, cultural, and symbolic capital was employed to interpret how class, consumption patterns, and cultural practices function as identity markers in both rural and urban contexts. Additionally, rural urban linkage theories and rural development perspectives were applied to examine the reciprocal influences between villages and the city of Arak.

### **Scope and Limitations**

The study focuses primarily on qualitative cultural and social dimensions and does not rely on quantitative surveys or statistical modelling. While this approach allows for depth and contextual richness, it may limit generalizability beyond the studied region. Nevertheless, the findings offer transferable insights for similar cities experiencing strong rural urban interactions, cultural diversity, and identity transformation processes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The research adheres to ethical principles relevant to qualitative cultural studies. Observations were conducted with respect for local customs, cultural sensitivities, and community values. The study aims to represent cultural practices accurately and respectfully, avoiding homogenization or essentialization of rural or urban identities.

## **ANALYSIS**

Through psychoanalytic perspectives and through psychological perspectives, we are able to establish a link between the individual and society. Identity and personality are intertwined in today's social world, and it is necessary to know that individuals do not simply enter the social and cultural world by fitting into roles and places that have been predetermined for them (Steffler & Farahmand, 2015). Social identity can be called the result of the process and manner of producing and constantly changing patterns of values, symbols, history, myths, and traditions that constitute the distinctive heritage of different societies. In a sense, it wants to reduce the conflicts in group identities in a way and converge them under a superior subject, which is social identity, and provide

the motivation for cooperation, empathy, and coexistence between the members of the society. That group of factors that result from the climate and natural conditions of the environment in which individuals grow and develop, and can affect the behaviour and life of individuals over many centuries and create characteristics in a group of people, provides a sense of belonging and attachment to that group over time. Of course, the similarities resulting from the climatic and geographical conditions of a group of people do not alone create social identity, but they are considered as one of the important parameters for creating identity. During the Seleucid period, Iraq Ajam, and especially its northern part (Khorheh village), came under the attention of Greek rulers. The existence of ancient monuments from that period in Khorheh confirms this view. In the first Islamic century, this region was renamed the state of Jabal or Qahistan, so that Islamic geographers of this century referred to it as part of the Pahlavi lands and as Qahistan or Qahistan (Jabal). In the 2nd century AH, this region, along with Hamadan, Rey, and Isfahan, was named Iraq Ajam.

Yusuf Khan Gorji, who was a wealthy man, decided to build a castle and chose the current location of the city of Arak for it, and during the construction, it was given a city form. Yusuf Khan was appointed as the Sepahdari in 1222 AH and was appointed to the government of Iraq before the construction of the new city.

The purpose of establishing and building this city was initially a military base so that it could be effective in the region, so the initial building was built as a four-gate fortress and in the years of peace and tranquillity, the protective walls of the city were removed (Sistani, 1373:444). In the book Report Name, we read: ((Arak is the current name of the city that was founded as a war fortress during the time of Fath Ali Shah Qajar (1227 AH) under the supervision of Yusuf Khan Gorji.)) In the early 14th century AH, one of the cities became very prosperous, and more than fifty foreign companies had branches in this city and were engaged in business and trade. In 1307 to 1310 AH, an (English) company known as Ziegler built a large fortress in the city, most of which remained later and became known as the Foreign Fortress. The city of Arak was initially known as the Sultanabad Fortress, and then with the title of the fortress removed, and also as the New City in the letters available at that time.

The above are all documents that the formation of Sultanabad and the formation of the fortress were centered on the gathering of different identities, and the same issue still applies to the city of Arak. In the process of globalization, the term hybrid and linked culture is the basis of the cultural commonality of nations, which is updated based on sexual preferences, classes, and ways of life. In fact, globalization has intensified the contradictory process of modernity and has brought it into a reciprocal process of homogenization and heterogeneity of communal identity. The specific effect of this is the absolute expansion of the number of minority identities at the indigenous and local levels on the one hand, and the overlap of identity roles and the formation of increasingly widespread social identities in non-indigenous and supranational forms on the other. (Czyżowska, 2022)

Primitive societies are self-constructed only on the basis of their cultural heritage. This cultural heritage seals a special identity on the forehead of each society, the identity of the people who build it, and the culture of this identity is saturated by returning to its predecessors, its dead, and its traditions. From now on, the society has its own name, its own personality (calendar, flag), its founder or founders, its own myths and rituals, which imprint its characteristics on each individual. The dependence of this individual on the society becomes a filial relationship, thus imprinting its

social orientation on the individual (Moren, 2003). The background of the formation of the current Sultanabad and Varak castles has been formed from the beginning on the basis of multiple identities. Therefore, now that the high speed of life and the influence of technology have confronted humans with two challenges, it is necessary for governments to consider leisure management as an identity strategy. On the one hand, leisure is achieved through freedom from excessive work and entertainment is achieved through human needs. On the one hand, the renewal of strength from hard work and on the other hand, the consumerism of society has become of great importance. (Ferguson, 2009)

So, it seems that the planning of Arak city officials for the proper spending of people's leisure time can itself be a factor in strengthening group, national, and tribal identity, which of course requires identifying these potentials in Arak and its surrounding villages. Another dimension of cultural heritage is manifested in the form of language, and language as a system of signs that has a special fundamental function can be examined both in the anthropological dimension and in the structuralism and semiotics dimension. In this way, humans understand the world in the way that language draws it for them. Whorf and Sapir believed that there is a close connection between language and thought. Accordingly, people who speak different languages see and interpret the world in different ways. In this sense, identity is considered a function of language because language determines the existence and reality of the human being. Winkelstein believes that language is the basis of socio-cultural phenomena. With the numerous linguistic diversities seen in the central province and the city of Arak (Tati, Raji, Turkish, and Khalji), it seems necessary and essential for the authorities to pay more attention and precision to these matters in the matter of identity. (Phazhooheshfar, 2005)

In Pierre Bourdieu's views on lifestyle, the concepts of class, consumption, and capital are of great importance. He considers lifestyle to be systematic activities that arise from the individual's taste and preferences and are mostly objective and external. Lifestyle symbolically gives an individual an identity and creates distinctions between different social classes. On the other hand, according to Marxist theory, the position of classes is defined in relation to production and in a purely economic space. According to Bourdieu, there is always a struggle for power and status among the different classes of society. These conflicts occur in the social space and these conflicts are not only related to economic power, but also include cultural dominance. The dominant class in society has a monopoly and dominance over legal culture and defines and determines it. Class tastes in the use of leisure, the use of the body, clothing, speech, and other characteristics, according to Bourdieu, determine identity in terms of gender (masculine and feminine), social class (lower class, upper class), and other individual and social attributes.

The type of physical consumption (food, decoration, and consumer goods) and symbolism of individuals determine their lifestyle, which shows the identity of individuals. Of course, in terms of the use of signs and styles, an unlimited combination of lifestyles can be imagined, which expresses the individuality and free choice of individuals, especially in the "postmodern" society. However, as mentioned, this diversity and variety also express common orientations in the social relations and attitudes of members of society, the origin of which is the cultural capital of individuals. By examining the cultural needs of each class and ensuring that the different tastes of each class in providing leisure time for individuals in society are met by the authorities, one can hope to preserve and maintain these different cultural identities in the city of Arak and its surrounding villages.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The best way to preserve the identity of cities and villages is the rural-urban strategy, which has been proposed from the perspective of rural development and according to the theories of Friedman and Weaver. They propose that with this strategy, the face of rural areas changes and the adaptation of urban life elements to the specific rural contexts is created. Also, the network of social interactions in rural areas that are beyond a single village expands. Rural development is a multidimensional process whose subject is the improvement and promotion of the quality of life of the poor and vulnerable segments of the rural community. In the book *Rural Development*, we get acquainted with the theories of Capp, who defined rural development as a process that seeks to improve the well-being and self-discovery of people living outside the urban area through collective efforts.

Increasing production and productivity, access to income-generating opportunities, access to public services and production institutions, gainful employment, self-confidence, and people's participation in the development process and ecological balance are all interdependent goals that are reflected in rural development, which itself plays a valuable role in maintaining the infrastructure of urban and rural identities. Arak officials can take advantage of this potential for the benefit of Arak by mastering these topics. Many areas related to cultural development require in-depth and applied research, and without this research, cultural measures will lack foresight and will lack the necessary richness. As seen, cultural development is a concept that takes a specific form in each country and has deep roots in our national culture. It is not something that can be made possible with the help of foreign models, and officials of a country should consider themselves free from thinking and searching, thinking that others have worked in this direction. Whenever cultural matters are far from national and internal interpretation, it will remain, something artificial and an alien element. Research on cultural development should be carried out comprehensively and in relation to urban and rural livelihoods and education. On the other hand, the mixing of cultures plays an important role in cultural development, which is a determining factor of national identity. In the context of global developments and the country's huge economic and social transformations, the need for a very broad activity in the field of formulating cultural programs and even cultural capital is felt, and we should all be thinking about a new cultural system that relies on our national culture and at the same time is useful and usable for our future generations living in an industrial society, and that moves our civilization, culture, and machine life towards a mixed and modern culture of tradition and modernity.

Since culture is born from the environment of human life, it also adapts to environmental changes and new surroundings and is influential and dynamic. Current Arak also has great cultural diversity due to its high immigration rate among other cities in Iran, and serious research on the cultural diversity of these ethnic groups seems necessary and essential.

The twentieth century was the beginning of a great transformation in social relations, and all the attention of thinkers and theorists suddenly shifted from production to consumption. This was the result of the view of a society that had chosen consumption as a factor of identity for itself. For this reason, for cultural sociologists, in examining the concept of lifestyle, consumption and consumer relations in the broadest sense and in all forms are of decisive importance, because social actors style their lives through consumption as cultural signs and symbols. As a result, for modern man, who defines his social identity based on consumption patterns, they create a crisis of constantly

changing identity. From this perspective, lifestyle is the objective and tangible aspects of culture in society and reflects the visible part of the collective identity and cultural identity of the society. By examining the lifestyle of the people of Arak city and the surrounding villages, by examining their consumer relations and types of consumerism, and by examining how the youth and families of Arak and the villagers around Arak spend their free time, we can understand the identity-building factors of the current people of Arak city.

Today, consumption, as Bourdieu analyzes, is a mode of communication. The dominant class uses culture to reproduce domination. His aim is to question the processes by which cultural distinctions are constructed and which themselves serve to guarantee and legitimize forms of power and authority. In the researcher's opinion, by further addressing Bourdieu's theory on the topic of identity, we can reach solutions regarding urban identity that are beyond the scope of this article and are an extensive and useful survey and fieldwork. In a consumer society, every commodity becomes a symbol and sign of an individual's class status. This is why the upper class of urban society in Arak displays its difference and distinction from others by consuming expensive and symbolic goods. Just as Bourdieu believes, the social middle class uses culture to ensure its reproduction as the dominant class. In his opinion, consumption is a legitimate tool for producing cultural capital for social groups with unequal power, which is done with the aim of establishing identity, value, and social status. Consumption exists as a way of expressing distinctions between social groups, and lifestyle is generally a form of expression and display of individuality, habits of thought, social status, and individual and social identity. By examining rural and urban lifestyles and the subcultures within them, we can arrive at the problems of lifestyles or changes in their lifestyles, which ultimately lead to changes in rural and urban collective identity.

Globalization is also a case of identity change. Underdeveloped countries have three approaches to globalization: confrontational, erosive, and argumentative. In the confrontational approach, globalization provokes cultures. These reactions will be an attempt to return to past traditions in the form of religious fundamentalism and the interpretation of the concept of identity as a base for confronting the globalization of capitalism. In the erosive approach, Western culture is recognized as the driving force of globalization, and the condition for its realization is the erosion of other cultures and identities and the gradual replacement of elements of Western culture and its acceptance. This approach speaks of the unification of other cultures and their assimilation with Western culture. In the argumentative approach, positions of criticism and interaction combined with conflict replace submission and confrontation. This approach refers to the coexistence of cultures and the search for the meaning of new global words with the approach of finding identity.

Globalization also moves the concept of territory and land from terrestrial geography to the cyberspace of the network. In the meantime, paying attention to ethnic and local cultures is a significant issue. However, the globalization of national culture affects local and national cultures, and in this sense, the nation will be nothing more than a collection of different languages, traditions, and ethnic groups. In the end, it must be accepted that the industrial and modern world of the twentieth century has become a place of competition and struggle for the identity of different countries in the world, and no country or nation should consider itself the only one in this competition, because in this age of communication and intangible cultural warfare, there is as much competition and global rival as there is a plurality of cultures in a country. So, according to Dr. Rafi (2006), there are two ways to resolve this competition. One is to expel all competitors from the scene and into illusions and fantasies (because competitors always exist) and to believe that one exists alone in the competition field and to assume victory in the face of one's illusions and

fantasies. The other way is to tolerate and accept the opponent and strengthen oneself in the competition with the opponent. The second case is not possible except by recognizing the national and local identities of one's city and villages, strengthening them, and introducing them to others along the way.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study regarding the interrelationship between rural culture, collective identity, lifestyle transformation, and tourism development in Arak and its surrounding villages, several policy-oriented and research-based recommendations can be proposed.

First, it is recommended that local and provincial authorities adopt an integrated rural urban cultural planning framework. Such a framework should explicitly recognize rural villages not merely as peripheral spaces but as active contributors to the cultural identity and social capital of the city of Arak. Strengthening functional, cultural, and symbolic linkages between the city and its surrounding villages can contribute to preserving micro-identities while simultaneously reinforcing a coherent urban identity.

Second, systematic documentation and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage such as local languages, dialects, rituals, traditional ceremonies, oral narratives, and indigenous lifestyles should be prioritized. These cultural elements represent valuable identity-building resources and can be strategically utilized in the development of sustainable rural and cultural tourism. Establishing local cultural centers, community museums, and participatory heritage programs can enhance intergenerational transmission and prevent cultural erosion under the pressures of globalization.

Third, rural tourism development policies should be grounded in community-based and participatory approaches. Active involvement of local residents in planning, decision-making, and benefit-sharing processes is essential to ensure that tourism development contributes to social empowerment, cultural continuity, and economic resilience rather than cultural commodification. In this context, capacity-building programs focusing on cultural entrepreneurship, tourism management, and heritage interpretation are strongly recommended.

Fourth, greater attention should be given to lifestyle studies as an analytical tool for understanding identity transformation. Future urban and rural development strategies in Arak should incorporate empirical assessments of consumption patterns, leisure practices, and social interactions, particularly among youth. Such analyses can provide valuable insights into emerging identity dynamics and inform culturally sensitive policy interventions.

Fifth, given the linguistic and ethnic diversity of Markazi Province, policies aimed at recognizing and valuing multilingualism and cultural plurality are essential. Educational curricula, media content, and cultural programming should reflect this diversity to foster social cohesion, mutual recognition, and a shared sense of belonging among different social groups.

Finally, from an academic perspective, further interdisciplinary and field-based research is recommended to deepen understanding of rural urban identity interactions. Longitudinal studies, comparative regional analyses, and mixed-method approaches can significantly enhance theoretical and empirical knowledge in this field. In particular, applying sociological theories of identity, cultural capital, and lifestyle such as those proposed by Bourdieu in localized contexts like Arak can yield valuable insights for both scholarship and practice.

In conclusion, the preservation and reinforcement of cultural identity in Arak require a balanced approach that integrates rural development, cultural policy, tourism planning, and social research. Such an approach can contribute not only to sustainable tourism development but also to the long-term cultural vitality and social cohesion of the region.

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