

Original Research Article

# The Dilemma of Preservation or Change?

## In a Search for a Solution for the Survival of the Social Landscape of the Historical Texture in Semnan and Damghan Cities\*

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**Abstract** The social landscape is created by collective life and shared interactions between the people themselves and their environment. The historical texture of the cities narrates the city's identity and depicts its history, and the preservation of their social landscape is greatly important. Adoption of a suitable approach in terms of the social landscape in the historical texture of the cities depends on the creation of a balance between the preservation of the valuable works of the past in the environment and harmony between their different physical, semantic, and functional aspects and the needs of the citizens and contemporary urban society. Preservation of the social landscapes in the historical texture of cities such as Semnan and Damghan is faced with some challenges. Urban management has moved towards a protective and demonstrative approach, with some prioritization of the physical environment. In contrast, in some other cases, it has physically and functionally equipped the environment to allocate the space to contemporary society without sufficient understanding of the meaning of the space, context, and audience needs. The current article aimed to investigate the different aspects of the social landscape and how they evolved in the historical texture of Semnan and Damghan cities in a way that, through considering the effects of different factors, it would be possible to adopt a suitable approach to preserve such landscapes in the context of today's urban life. The social landscape is a general and synergistic phenomenon of function, body, and meaning, and paying attention to the key role of people to preserve it over time is very important. A unilateral and environment improvement-oriented approach without considering the social and cultural aspects, the instability of social composition would lead to a drop in public participation and commitment and a decline in the social landscape. The necessity to pay attention to the basic prerequisites such as the validation of capabilities, the intrinsic meaning and inclusive nature of each space, the needs of the contemporary society, the supportive factors of individuals' presence, and the key role of people, allows for the realization of the social landscape as the product of the dynamic experience of the environment by the society and the collective asset with widespread ownership. Some forms of active protection and collective management through restoring the relationship with the places positively impact the survival of the social landscape. Planning a holistic, integrated, and multi-dimensional process to increase the citizens' attachment to the place and observance of a balance between the preservation and manipulation of the landscape also help with the survival of the social landscape and continuous updating of the users' relationship with the landscape and interpretation of it.

**Keywords** Social landscape, Historical texture, Identity, Urban management, Semnan, Damghan.

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## Introduction

The landscape, as a multidisciplinary concept, is associated with a different recognition of concepts such as space, environment, and how the world is built and experienced, allowing for the adoption of a new perspective on the relationship between humans and the environment. "The landscape is the sensory and symbolic manifestation of the environment and the space of community's existence and activity, and creates semantic relations that are constantly established between the communities and their physical environment, and are renegotiated" (Berque, 2013) in a way that with the fading of the effectiveness of the human communities on the environment, the landscape distances itself from its interactive, dynamic, and social meaning, and is reduced to a mere body. The cities are the greatest manifestation and concrete product of human civilization since cities make some groups of people gather together, interact, and build the social landscape of a city (Mansouri, 2018). The social landscape is created by collective life and shared interactions between the people themselves and the environment. Its survival over time depends on maintaining a relationship with the community as a key factor that allows for its existence through presence, experience, meaning, and gradual environmental interventions. The valuable textures and places narrate the identity of the cities. They depict their history, and preserving their social landscape is of great importance because the diminution of people's presence coincides with removing this valuable part of the city's social life and weakening their identity.

On the one hand, in the historical texture of the cities, preservation of the environmental aspects of the landscape as a relic of the past and the cultural reality related to the human subject is necessary. Culturalists recognize the landscape as a cultural media (Malpas, 2011, 7), visual ideology (Cosgrove, 1984, 47), and unintentional autobiography of humans (Lewis, 1979, 1), and as a result, preserving some valuable environmental features including the body in these areas is necessary. On the other hand, the continuous and constructive presence of human communities guarantees the survival of the social landscape in the historical texture. From the culturalists' perspective, the landscape, through prioritization of the human aspects, has a dynamic (Schatzki, 2011, 65), ever-changing, and constructive nature that intervenes in the constant formulation of social life (Schein, 1997, 662; Tilley, 2006, 7). It has made the issue of recognition and adoption of a suitable approach to treating the social landscape in the urban historical texture difficult. It has also created a kind of dilemma between the necessity of preservation of valuable works of the past in the environment and the accommodation of different physical, semantic, and functional dimensions with the needs of today's urban

society. In this regard, the survival of the social landscape in the historical textures of cities such as Semnan and Damghan is faced with some challenges. Urban management has moved towards a protective and demonstrative approach, with some prioritization of the physical environment. In contrast, in some other cases, it has physically and functionally equipped the environment to allocate the space to contemporary society without sufficient understanding of the meaning of the space, context, and audience needs. The current article, by investigating different aspects of the social landscape and how they evolved in the historical texture of Semnan and Damghan cities, in a way that, through considering the effects of different factors, seeks to answer the question of how such landscapes in the context of today's urban life can be preserved by the adoption of a suitable approach towards the historical textures of the cities?

## Theoretical framework

### • The constituents of the social landscape

The landscape is the product of the synthesis of two aspects of objectivity and subjectivity that create the generality of an integrated and inseparable concept and allow for its understanding through a holistic approach (Hemmati, Mansouri & Barati, 2022, 69). Investigating the landscape as a holistic phenomenon does not include unnecessary divisions such as the perceived physical, etc. However, each sample can use such divisions as an analytical tool (Lindström, Palang & Kull, 2013, 104). Social landscapes can be investigated as the product of interaction between people and the environment based on the two main components of people, and environment.

#### - People

Man plays a determinant role in the formation of the concept of landscape. It means a "land made, bounded and embodied by the man who also relies on the role of the human subject." The existence of meaning in the landscape, a "context of potential relations," is created by the determinant role of the man (Delue, 2015, 272-273). The landscape is not the product of a single individual's attitude. However, it is the product of the integration of individuals' attitudes that emerge in the form of social structures, collective experiences of humans, and interaction between the people and the material world in the framework of the social situation in a way that landscape's components also bring about distinct collective concepts and different meanings for the individuals (Hunziker, Felber, Gehring, Buchecker, Bauer & Kienast, 2008, 140; Cosgrove, 1992, 85; Swafeld, 2006, 23). The cultural landscapes are specially formed as results of consecutive reorganization of the environment so that the land use and spatial structure are changed according to the society's needs, more suitably (Antrop, 2005, 21). Therefore, human society is the main

factor in the formation of the social landscape of the cities that, besides meeting their needs, changes it into a landscape related to their collective lifestyle through changing and manipulating the physical environment based on its value system.

#### - Environment

Some scholars view the material landscape as an arena in which human beings demonstrate their existence by shaping physical objects in the environment through the praxis of residence (Olwig, 2003, 874). In this regard, the landscape is known as a cultural image and a visual method to represent the environment and ideologies transfer matrix (Harris, 2010, 191; Daniels & Cosgrove, 1988, 1). The valuable environmental features in the historical texture of the cities are among the important factors effective in the formation of social landscapes. They indicate the identity and lifestyle of our ancestors. However, a dominant concern is a disconnection from the social relations of material land production, resulting in a symbolic treatment of the landscape as an image, text, or theatre. The most important issue is to preserve the sense of the landscape as a geographical material that includes humans and the material environment without being reduced to a mere social construction (Cosgrove, 2010, 34). The preservation of memorable and natural features in the form of heritage is at the opposite end of restorative nostalgia... Nations devote considerable resources to preserving not only the physical morphology but also the social expression of prominent landscapes (Cosgrove, 2006, 57). By prioritizing the environment, people's landscape as a cultural media is a reflection of the lifestyle and interaction of groups of people with the environment, which is responsible for the transfer and continuation of the experiences of cultural groups beyond the visual and physical symbolic effects.

#### • The dilemma of prioritization of the people or the environment in historical textures and places

Historical places and textures are known as one of the most important manifestations of the social landscape. A relationship between the social and cultural features of the past and present came into existence by the local communities through their collective and shared life in the space. Thus, they carry the urban identity and the shared assets of modern societies. How the social landscapes from the past are treated should be in a way that bedside preserving their historical signs and social capabilities, they should enjoy the contemporary facilities and be placed in the context of urban life. As long as the human and environmental aspects of the landscape have been involved in their formation, they should also be considered in the process of protection, development, and updating.

The identity of a place is a continuous sameness that identifies it from other places and is found simultaneously in

the person, the object in question, and the culture to which it belongs (Relf, 1976, 46). "Identity, as a concept related to the existential structure of phenomena, is a dynamic relationship composed of contradictory but complementary bipolarity of continuity and change. In terms of the city, the concept of identity refers to the historical continuity of the city and the environment according to changes and new needs. The constituent components of the city's identity as a relative concept include all its existential contexts, including the body, activity, and cultural and social meanings, which on the one hand go back to humans and on the other hand to the environment" (Teimouri, 2014, 45). The contrast in dynamics and establishment and formal and mental content is one of the main factors of identity formation and its continuity in the city landscape. This continuity means living in today's cities with the support of yesterday and combining the city's civic life of today with the historical continuity of the past in its body (Atashinbar, 2009, 47). In forming the concept of place and social landscape as a kind of identity-bearing place, presence, experience, imagination, and human intervention are considered based on the four components of the situation, meaning, mentalities, and body (Tuan, 1977). The meaning of place is rooted in bodies, objects, and activities, but it is equally dependent on human intentions and experiences. These three components form a common structure in a dialectical and overlapping relationship (Relf, 1976, 47). Place attachment is also considered in connection with the three components. A person, whether an individual or a cultural group, a place consisting of physical and social dimensions and a process including behavior, cognition, and feelings of a place (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, 3). Based on this, the evaluation of the transformation of social landscapes at different levels of human life is based on the degree of prioritization of the two important components of the environment and man, and the study of the formation of the concept of place and landscape should be based on the degree of simultaneous attention to the criteria of the body, performance, and meanings, which can be received through human behavior, feelings and understanding of the environment (Fig. 1).

#### Introduction of the case study

The city of Semnan, with more than 350 hectares of historical context, is one of the richest cities in terms of the existence of historical monuments and the valuable context in the country, where numerous historical monuments from the Ilkhanid to the Qajar period can be seen (Hasanabadi, 2021). The city of Damghan, 115 kilometers from Semnan, is especially important among historical Iranian cities, despite the existence of valuable historical buildings. Today, we see the focus of urban management on the protection, restoration, exploitation, and development of tourism in

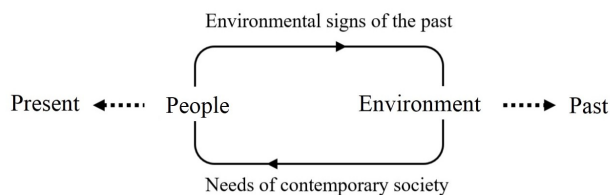


Fig. 1. The Constituents of the Social Landscape. Source: Authors.

the historical context of these cities. However, the unplanned environmental interventions and the change of the audience community make the survival of the social landscape of the historical context as an integrated human-environment whole difficult. In the following, we will examine the evolution of the public landscape and evaluate the urban management measures regarding the social landscape of the two mentioned cities.

### Street creation; the first physical intervention and environmental evolution

Penetrating streets are considered one of the most important modernist actions in transforming the urban landscape, which is often built with the aim of urban development, transportation, and connecting important points in cities. During the first Pahlavi period, street paving was used in all prominent Iranian cities, including Semnan and Damghan. In the central parts of the cities of Semnan and Damghan, modern street creation, regardless of the intertwined existence of the neighborhoods, separated the urban texture and disrupted the semantic and functional unity of the historical texture and the market and the neighborhood-oriented organization of the city in such a way that until the creation of streets in Damghan city, urban neighborhoods were separable and were a reflection of the functional and civil unity of the city (Falamaki, 1989, 253). Considering that neighborhoods are recognized as independent socio-spatial units, such interventions have affected the social and social meaning of neighborhoods over time. While the neighborhood is considered a suitable field for renovation due to the possibility of social participation, the appropriate scale of intervention, and the possibility of better planning (Teimouri, 2010, 30). As the hierarchical access from neighborhoods to the city center has been disrupted as a result of street constructions, the amount of citizens' presence in historical passages has decreased. At the same time, the new functions that match the needs of contemporary society have been concentrated in the vicinity of the main streets, and the number of visits to the market and neighborhood centers as the focal points of social life has gradually decreased (Fig. 2).

### Demographic and macro changes in the human component

Although the demographic changes have not suddenly

distorted the historical texture structure like the physical intervention of street creation, it has brought about consequences such as the departure of long-term residents from the texture and the decrease in the sense of attachment and social capital as implicit but pervasive complications and affected the social landscape of the texture as a social-physical whole. The evolution of residential strategies is usually associated with the emergence of a new social class with different economic and cultural attributes. In Semnan and Damghan, the worn-out historical texture and its deprivation of modern life facilities, as well as the concentration of capital and facilities in newer districts of the city, have led to the gradual migration of the long-term residents from the city center who are replaced with the immigrant and low-income classes.

Some infrastructure shortcomings in the historical area of Semnan have led to the gradual departure of locals from this texture (Jahanaray, 2021). The new residents, who lack a proper economic base and attachment to the historical texture, do not play a role and actively participate in daily life. As a result, social and popular power has declined their lack of mutual understanding in the face of common problems. Many measures have been focused on improving and beautifying the environment, and no constructive and holistic solutions have been offered to strengthen and stabilize social assets. "The modernist approach to the renovation sits alongside a physical attitude and lack of consideration for the local identity and sociocultural aspects have created an improper cycle in which the instability of the social composition and the decrease in the length of residence lead to failure in commitment, participation, and responsibility" (Teimouri, 2014, 47).

### The decline of bazar's social landscape as a result of weakening of functions:

The Bazar has been the backbone of the Iranian city and the platform for its socio-economic development, and due to its proximity to the public buildings has a social dignity in a way that in the descriptions of the travel memoirs from the Iranian cities, it has been introduced as the city's heart



Fig. 2. Dissociation of the historical context of Semnan and the establishment of main functions near the street as a result of modern street construction. Source: www.Atlantik.ir.



and at the same time, a place for business, a promenade, and a meeting place for people (Abarghouei Fard & Mansouri, 2020, 22). Based on features such as being placed along the main roads or their intersections, it allows for hierarchical access from all neighborhoods, various economic activities, and the presence of different people to meet their needs; the Bazar is one of the main examples of social landscapes in the Iranian cities. The social and social aspects of the Bazar and its surrounding public places have been noted in the descriptions of Semnan and Damghan cities (Mousavi, 1989, 164; Curzon, 1970, 386).

Developments such as the distortion of the organic structure and the accessibility of the Bazar, the location of new urban functions in the vicinity of the streets, the failure to cover the diverse needs of the people, and the lack of up-to-date economic activities have led to the abandonment of the historical markets of Semnan and Damghan from the social life of the city in such a way that the commercial complexes built in the new areas of the city have acted as an economic competitor of the market. The physical and functional decline has been provided by the reduction of the capital flow in the market (Fig. 3). Due to the evolution of lifestyle and leisure, citizens have few choices and attractive destinations to attend the market. Based on this, the Bazar has been separated from the course of development with the city structure change and the citizens' needs. With the decline of economic, social, and cultural capitals, we have seen the decline of the acceptance of the historical markets of Semnan and Damghan as a successful social landscape in the past.

### Renovation of the environment with a merely physical approach

Social landscapes in the historical cities of Iran have been spontaneously and gradually characterized by the presence of people and have been formed according to the relationships and functional and semantic capabilities of the space (Abarghouei Fard et al., 2020, 24). However, some of the measures taken in the direction of renovating the historical fabric have only resulted in the formation of a high-quality and usable body. Saray-e Naqsh-e Jahan in the historical market of Semnan is a valuable restored historical building registered on the list of national monuments of Iran (Bandari, 2022). The inns have impacted the prosperity of the social landscapes of historical texture due to their capabilities such as proper location, the spatial opening of the inn's yard, and economic performance. However, by observing the empty-of-population space of the inn, it seems that the measures taken have not been successful enough.

In physical interventions to beautify the space, the merely formal aspects of the perfection of actions to create



Fig. 3. The decline of the social landscape of Semnan Bazar as a result of the weakening of its functional and economic role. Photo: Hediye Mohammadi, 2022.

beauty are reduced depending on the observer's mentality (Mansouri, 2016, 67). Quantitative and physical elements can be used and programmed only after recognizing their role in the production of the landscape as a single objective-subjective existence (Mansouri, 2010, 6-7). The imposition of a purely physical structure and the lack of basic prerequisites such as diverse functions in line with the needs of society, environmental stimuli, collective activities and events, and opportunities for people's participation is an obstacle to the success of the social landscape of the Saray-e Naqsh-e Jahan. Processing of the body of the space is artificial and formalistic. It includes gluing historical elements of Iranian architecture such as a pond, brickwork, and arch with heterogeneous materials and has not created a synergistic composition (Fig. 4). The transformation of the inn's function from a specialized trade space to service uses such as restaurants and exhibitions is a kind of disregard for the specific capacities of the space, and the diminution of the public view of the bazaar as a supporting factor makes it more difficult to revive the social landscape of the inn.

There are other examples of the lack of unity between

the management procedures and the multiple values of the social landscapes of historical context in the cities of Semnan and Damghan. The destruction of historical buildings due to wear and tear and replacement of service uses such as parking, and sanitary facilities and preservation of single historical buildings adjacent to them are among these cases (Fig. 5). Although facilitation of access, creation of attractiveness, adding value to the historical monument, and encouraging people to be in the space have been the main goals of the performers, the final product is not compatible with the goals above. Despite being aware of the heritage value of the texture, the city management has acted in a topical, specific, formal, and dramatic way in dealing with it.

### Physical approach to dealing with the meaning of social landscape

To manage the natural environment and meet its needs, cultural groups value natural elements and turn them into cultural symbols (Abarghouei Fard & Saboonchi, 2020, 29; Saboonchi & Abarghouei Fard, 2020, 21). Water is one of the most important natural elements with cultural value in the central plateau of Iran, which has influenced the formation of social landscapes with the function of leisure and entertainment. The bilateral connection between the city and the water infrastructure in Semnan follows the neighborhood system. Beyond a physical structure, it is connected in a multifaceted way with the social, economic, and cultural structures of the city (Alehashemi, 2020, 5)<sup>1</sup>. Bagh-e Feiz pool is one of the remaining examples of the unique water system of Semnan city that many measures have been taken for its landscaping and construction (Habibi Bastami, 2019). This pool organization plan mostly relies on visual and physical aspects such as adding furniture, flooring, and inappropriate vegetation has not created a favorable spatial quality and environmental comfort. It does not consider various attractive stimuli, functions, and purposes that also worsen this problem. In the organization plan of the Bagh-e Feiz pool, to create a meaningful and continuous interaction of people with the space, no attention has been paid to providing the context for the continuation of the multifaceted value of the water element as the main essence of the space. As a result of the lack of direct access to water and the enclosure of the pool, water has been reduced from being an effective factor in the formation of the overall structure of Semnan city as a sustainable social habitat to a demonstrative element far from the tangible experience of running water in the streams in the surrounding alleys (Figs. 6 & 7). As a result of not paying enough attention to the functional-semantic role of water and not providing the ground for people's presence, the potential capacity of the Bagh-e Feiz pool for



Fig. 4. Only physical measures in the renovation of Saray-e Naqsh-e Jahan of Semnan. Photo: Shaghayegh Golshahi, 2022.



Fig. 5. A museum approach to preserving the tomb of Pir-e Alamdar and removing and destroying its surrounding texture in the Khorab neighborhood of Damghan. Photo: Pedram Sadafi Kohneshahri, 2022.

the formation of a social landscape has been lost to a large extent.

### The Influence of Meaning on the Continuity of the Social Landscape

Cheshmeh Ali of Damghan is a successful public landscape centered on the valuable role of natural elements, which is the source of the only permanent river in Damghan city, located 30 kilometers away from the city. Its water is supplied from many underground springs and northern mountains, and next to it, there are plane trees that are approximately a thousand years old. The semantic role of the element of water can be found in the formation of the Cheshmeh Ali, the mythological beliefs surrounding its naming, and tourists' reference to the spring's sanctity in the local traditions (Mirshokraei, 2003; Haqiqat, 1983). The discovery of numerous ancient artifacts with images of ancient goddesses with the help of otherworldly forces to protect the water sources of Cheshmeh Ali (Ghazanfari & Karimin, 2016) is a confirmation of the historical





Fig. 6. Presence of metal fences and the limitation of measures to beautification and landscaping in Bagh-e Feiz pool of Semnan. Photo: Naeimeh Heshmati, 2022.



Fig. 7. Tangible experience of water and more favorable spatial quality in the passages adjacent to Bagh-e Feiz pool. Photo: Hamideh Abarghouei Fard, 2022.

importance of the sanctity of water in the formation of its landscape, which has been preserved over time with rituals such as sacrificing and tying to the thousand-year-old plane tree at the foot of the spring.

Cheshmeh Ali of Damghan has an inherently social identity and meaning. The continuation of rituals related to natural elements has given the space inherent

credibility and turned it into a suitable platform for performing rituals and recreation. Although the coexistence of water, trees, and buildings is a familiar infrastructure for the interaction of Iranian people with the environment, something beyond the combination of natural and man-made elements has caused the continued presence of people in Cheshmeh Ali. Continuity of meaning and inherent value over time is an obstacle to the negative effects of incorrect physical interventions such as changing the natural boundary of water, fencing around the area, low-quality and disproportionate flooring, etc. In this regard, one of the factors for the survival of social landscapes is the preservation of common meanings and beliefs, which is manifested in the Cheshmeh Ali of Damghan in the form of the sanctity and added value of the element of water in the formation of rituals and the continuous interaction of people with the environment (Fig. 8).

### Continuation of the traditional social landscape of Takaya and Hosseiniyeh

Human performance, experience, and perception give cultural and social meaning to environmental situations. The social landscape is intertwined with identity-giving concepts such as culture and rituals, which in specific locations have special objectives and mental effects and have an important impact on the memory and social aspects of urban life. Among these cases, we can mention places such as mosques, Takaya, and Hosseiniyeha, which by holding religious and ritual ceremonies, have become the cause of solidarity and unity among the people (Mokhles, Farzin & Javadi, 2013; Abarghouei Fard, Saboonchi & Farzin, 2018, 5; Abarghouei Fard, 2021, 44-45; Khoramrouei, Mahan & Farzin, 2019, 51; Khoramrouei & Mahan, 2021, 13; Khoramrouei et al., 2020, 20). Despite the diminution of daily social activities, some collective ritual events and special events such as holding funerals are going on in the old bazaars and Takayas of Semnan and Damghan and are a reminder of their previous role as a social institution in the city. The rituals of stoning and Toq Jameh in Damghan and the tradition of Chador Doozi in Semnan are well-known rituals that keep the spontaneous social landscape alive in the historical texture. The holding of rituals in specific periods and the memories left from them constitute the important sources of individual and collective identity and the deep centers of human experience, which are the result of the convergence of knowledge, impressions, and behaviors of the audience in these places (Figs. 9 & 10). Beliefs and rituals directly affect the formation of social capital, local identity, and how social landscapes are shaped. It is necessary to pay attention to the needs



Fig. 8. Presence of people next to the Iranian landscape trilogy in Cheshmeh Ali Damghan. Photo: Mehdi Nasirian, 2022.

and desires of the people, not only in the role of the audience but also as the main agents of the formation of human and social actions. The people, as the main stewards, should be at the center of decisions related to the social landscapes of the historical context. The concept of participation as a measure to transform the manager-oriented approach into the people-oriented approach and giving priority to people's wishes and mentalities as one of the main beneficiaries in this field is considered (Majidi, Mansouri, Sabernejad & Barati, 2019 & 2021).

## Conclusion

Restoration of the public landscape as a flowing entity between the environment and people that evoke the identity of the city is not possible by rebuilding its body. The social landscape is a synergistic phenomenon of function, body, and meaning, whose survival depends on the harmony between the people's needs, the environment's capabilities, and the managers' approach. Restoring the collective life, empathy, and participation bring about the role of people as contributors in social and civic life, and by strengthening social values and meanings, realizes collective symbolic ownership. A unilateral approach focused on improving the environment without considering the social and cultural aspects leads to the instability of the social composition and the reduction of commitment and participation of the people. The necessity of paying attention to the specific capabilities of each place and accommodation to the needs of the contemporary society, considering the infrastructures and upstream factors that support the presence of people and the values aimed at functions and events and proper organization based on the inherent validity and the main essence of the space, demonstrate aspects of the importance of the role of people in the formation and survival of social



Fig. 9. Social landscape of holding religious ceremonies and mourning in Nasar Takiyah in the historic market of Semnan. Source: <https://www.mehrnews.com/news/2415637>.



Fig. 10. Jameh Kardan ceremony at the Takiyah of Hazrat Abulfazl of Damghan. Source: <https://www.dana.ir/news/919037>.

landscapes. Considering these preconditions, the realization of the people's landscape as a collective asset with extensive ownership brings about the active protection and collective management through the reconstruction of the relationship with the places, supporting the feeling of attachment and stimulating the desire to care for the place, which has a positive effect on its survival. Deciding on a social landscape is, above all, deciding on the experience of an environment continuously updated by the human subject over time. In such an approach, maximum and minimum extreme intervention in release or absolute protection is rejected. Designing a holistic, integrated, and multifaceted process to increase citizens' attachment to the place and maintain a balance in landscape protection and intervention will help to maintain the performance of public landscapes and continuously update how users interpret the landscape (Table 1).



Table 1. Evolution of some of the most important examples of the social landscape in the cities of Semnan and Damghan. Source: Authors.

Social landscape	Past capabilities	Causes of decline/continuity over time	Lessons for better management in the future
Historical Bazaar of Damghan and Semnan	Accessibility, multifunctional structure, democratic nature, and social dignity, an integrated combination of body, function, and meaning	The distortion of the organic structure and accessibility of the market, the lack of up-to-date economic activities, the changing needs of the audience, and the transformation of the meaning of the market.	The necessity of accommodation of historical places with the needs of contemporary society, giving preference to the ability to be used from a social landscape
Saray-e Naqsh-e Jahan	Appropriate location, spatial opening, and the possibility of people's presence, supporting and helping the economic prosperity of the market	A demonstrative and museum and merely physical approach, lack of proportion of physical details used, lack of attention to function, meaning, previous identity, and capacity of space	The need to pay attention to the social landscape as a synergistic combination of body, function, and meaning. Considering the infrastructures and upstream factors that support people's presence
Bagh-e Feiz Pool	A part of the water system affects the social, economic, and cultural structures of the city	Emphasis on visual and physical aspects in valuing the functional-semantic element of water and reducing it to a demonstrative object	Suitable space creation for prioritizing the meaning and main essence of space formation
Cheshmeh Damghan	Creating the ground for natural elements to be present and collective interaction of people in performing rituals, recreation, and entertainment	Continuation of the intrinsic meaning and value of space due to the belief in the sanctity of water despite inappropriate physical interventions	The necessity to pay attention to the meaning and inherent credibility arising from common beliefs
Religious rituals and events	Formation of collective experience, solidarity, and unity of people	Continuity of beliefs and cultural components affecting social capital and local identity	Paying attention to the key role of people and the place of meanings and values focused on repeatable functions and events over time

## Endnote

1. On January 5th, 2010, the traditional water distribution system of the city of Semnan (Registration Number 400)

was added to the list of intangible national works (Mohaqeq, 2021).

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