

Original Research Article

Investigating Kerman's Vernacular Landscape with an Emphasis on Rural Landscapes as an Endangered Heritage*

Sina Naseri**

Ph.D Student in Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Architecture, University of Tehran, Iran.

Received: 22/09/2020

Accepted: 26/12/2020

Available online: 20/01/2021

Abstract Today, it is important to pay attention to the rural landscape as a rich context consisting of cognitive and identity components. In landscape study, recognizing the nature and spatial values are important. Especially when these values are in danger of structural changes. The rural landscape is a set of conceptual infrastructures whose combinations as components of a system crystallize the identity and culture of the village. This will contribute to the legibility of the village. But what has emerged today as a rural landscape is the result of a naïve view that has overlooked what a village is. This has resulted in the negligence of why we should preserve the village and highlights the necessity of this issue. Due to climatic, cultural, and identity diversity, Kerman's villages reflect different perspectives of the rural community of this province. These perspectives have changed the structure of villages, especially after modernization and improvement attempts were done after the earthquakes of recent decades. The result has disrupted the rural system at the micro and macro levels, and we can see this disruption in the native landscape of Kerman. We collected data for this study through a bibliographical research method and field observations during a trip to Kerman province and visiting its villages. This study is based on the assumption that several factors have played a role in changing the rural landscape and have accelerated the process of changes. To this purpose, we examined the different concepts of the village, and then we presented the factors that change the rural structure by identifying the rural landscape and its components.

Keywords *Rural landscape, Agricultural landscape, Conceptual infrastructure, Rural planning guidelines.*

Introduction The concept of village can be studied from two dimensions; the first dimension is a practical view of the concept of the village, which can be defined through the lens of a specific framework and it distinguishes those biological

complexes located in this area from the city. According to the definition of the Statistics Center of Iran, "a village consists of a population at most 5,000 people that their economic base is livestock ranching or agriculture" (ISNA, 2016).

The second dimension of the village has been mirrored in the word "Abadi" and shows that "the village as a biological complex reflect external life and human social life. In other words, the formation of habitation coincides with the appearance of the

* This article is based on a field trip report, entitled "the Tourism of Kerman Native Landscape", which was held in 2017 under the supervision of Dr. Seyed Amir Mansouri, and funded by Nazar Research-Center (NRC).

** +989173177249, sina.naseri.archi@gmail.com

village, and then after the formation of biological complexes and human's inhibition, the concept of the settlement has been formed (Raheb, 2007, 106). According to this explanation if we consider a settlement as the meaning of development, based on human selection and in direct connection with water; then Human's life depends on the water and environment and also we can say that the relationship between the environment and human in the village is based on an interactive approach. This interaction is directly related to agriculture as a component of rural economic life. Also, it is formed in accordance with the context, local characteristics, and rural community's needs. Rural landscape, as a complete example of human interaction with the environment, is a source of the native landscape's knowledge and reflects the components of identity and the characteristics of rural infrastructure in their life. But today our conceptualization of the village is no longer based on our understanding of its aspects but it has been limited to the group of definitions based on the numbers and figures like the practical definition provided for the village.

One of the reasons for this lack of knowledge is the changes in the rural landscape's structure. As a result, the original concept of the village will be neglected in definitions, and because of that rural landscape will be ignored as an identity heritage. Unfortunately, the changes in the villages of Kerman province have been made without considering its ontology and originality and this has destructed its culture and identity. For this reason, rural landscapes do not reflect their identity. A lot of factors, such as natural disasters, policies (e.g. rural planning guidelines and changes in rural residents' point of view), reflect a change in the conceptualization of the village and the vernacular landscape. The interaction of the mentioned factors and lack of knowledge of existing conditions has resulted in incorrect management measurements. These actions have eliminated the identity of the villages instead of preserving the valuable rural heritage and rock the cultural and identity foundations which have been formed as a lasting rural heritage over the years.

Theoretical foundations

• Rural landscapes as a lasting heritage

We can express rural landscape features from two aspects: The first dimension is the perception that we can see the image and general structure of the village in it. This general image consisting of the

ground, sky, and horizon. It can be considered as the silhouette (skyline) and the village's initial landscape. Also, the image and structure of the village landscape can be seen more clearly. Then during the hierarchy of reaching the village pastures, farms, gardens, general texture, appearance effect, buildings, and composition of major materials can be recognized and some landscape components will be understood (Taghvaei, 2013, 26). This show of the village's landscape is the first image that is presented to the audience for general introduction and recognition. This picture shows the objective dimensions of the village that has been formed in connection with various factors such as living, existence, and the way of their communication (Fig. 1).

The second dimension of the rural landscape is formed by components that originate from the unique environment and identify each village. These components are influenced by factors such as climate, local characteristics. They are also different in each area of Kerman province and this diversity reflects the general identity of the village.

• Rural landscape and its components

Rural landscape can be a reflection of its residents' minds and it is influenced by cultural and physical factors of the village. Each village has a special geographical environment that has gained its identity in the living process and also this identity is reflected in its components. The rural landscape is not based on the consuming economy of the city rather it relies on the productive economy. So the agricultural system is considered as an economic infrastructure in the villages and in addition to economic aspects and cultural factors, the resulting futures as a context shed light on the general landscape of the village. The relationship between agriculture, infrastructure, and water resources has given direction to the agricultural landscape. The economic life of the village and its general shaping structure are a hierarchical function of the orientation and presence of water. In the traditional context of the village, the agricultural landscape consists of agricultural lands. In addition to shaping the life and livelihood of the village, these lands are considered as an effective component contributing to understanding the village's landscape and play an important role in audience perception of the village's economic infrastructure and standards of living. Also, the most important difference between the entrance view of villages and the entrance view of cities is agricultural landscapes. Other

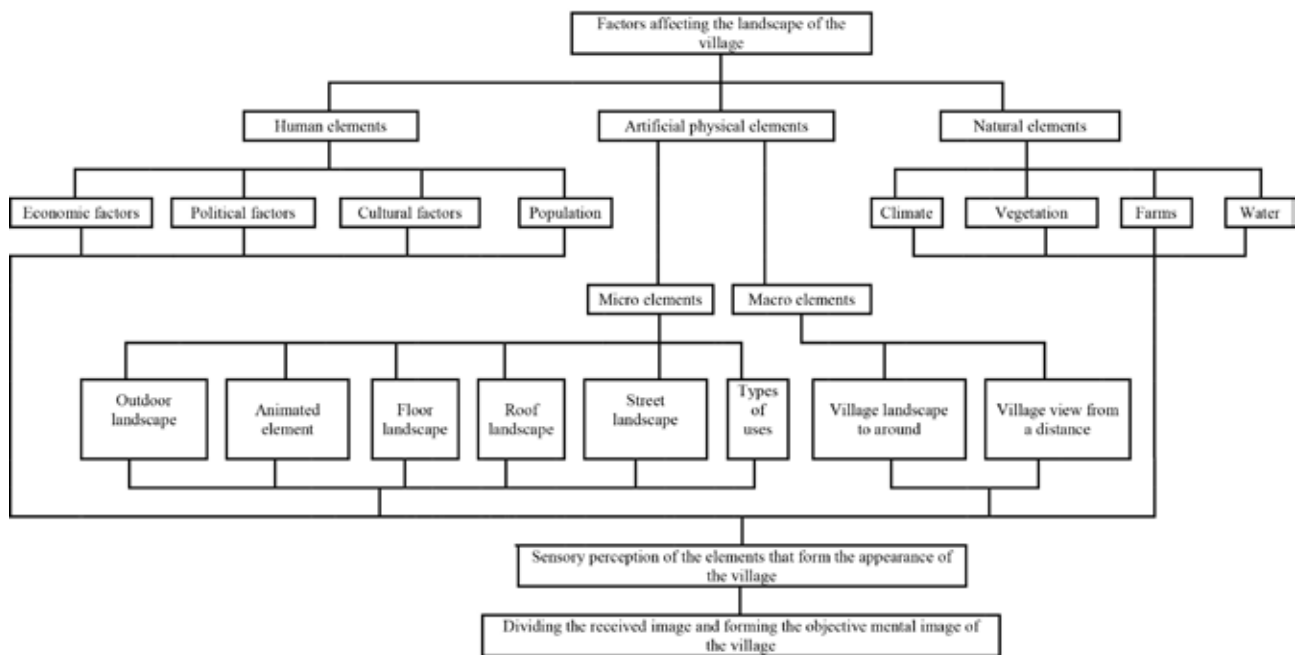


Fig. 1. Constructive components of the village landscape. Source: Abbaszadegan, 2013, 24.

characteristics that form the rural landscape, and are in direct relation with the inhabitants of the village are its streets and landscape. This is important because of the several ways which are formed in the original rural landscape. The word “Street”, as the definer of the entrance of the village, shape the audience’s mental image when they see the village for the first time and also it plays a role in the form of signs. Especially in the rural landscape, streets act as a frame and lens for watching and understanding the around landscape. The first step in reading the village landscape is adapting the mental image to the historical identity of the place. The observer’s perception of the rural landscape is formed through the spatial hierarchy of the streets that are leading to the main core of the village. The streets in the village represent the livelihood of its inhabitants and also provides a general horizontal view. The hierarchy of margins of rural ways is formed based on the division of different layers which include agricultural lands and then gardens. Therefore, streets reflect a general understanding of the living and economic characteristics of the village and serve as a representative of its economy. In other words, the street is the sign showing the type of livelihood and its connection with the infrastructure of rural life.

Today, the rural streets in Kerman province are only used for connecting different places and the main concern of people is reaching the destination. The users of these streets can’t find a specific

component to understand in the path. Due to the lack of a spatial hierarchy of the streets, they will encounter a new type of streets connected with the agricultural landscape, which has been designed without paying attention to the local characteristics. As a result, the rural streets should be considered the same as streets in the city in which natural elements and trees are placed next to the modernist and urban elements regardless of the ecology of the region (Fig. 2).

Another factor that forms the rural landscape, and differentiates it from the urban landscape, is the formation of rural structures. Organic structures are formed base on the concept of biology and they are in direct relationship with human needs. They



Fig. 2. Connection of livelihood infrastructure and streets as a connecting element of livelihood and life in rural areas, Rayen village. Photo: Meysam Khalilpour, 2017.

consist of form and urban structure. The purpose of this important rural feature is the infrastructure mentioned earlier. The mentioned factors reflect the mental connection of the residents with the rural landscape in addition to the objective aspects. These factors have changed in the rural landscape of Kerman province. In the following section, we will identify the factors affecting this development.

Research methodology

This research is qualitative. We collected data for this study through a bibliographical research method and field observations during a trip to Kerman province and visiting its villages from 15 to 16 November 2017. This study is based on the assumption and several factors play a role in changing the rural landscape and have accelerated the process of changes. Therefore, the researcher attempts to identify and describe these factors based on the theoretical foundations of the study and observations.

• Earthquake: reading and recognizing rural landscape change in Kerman

The history of earthquakes in Kerman province and also the importance of recent earthquakes around Kerman show the characteristics of seismicity in this area. In the last century, Kerman has had the strongest earthquakes in Iran. In 1981, a large part of Kerman province was shaken in less than two months. The first earthquake with a magnitude of 6.8 Richter occurred in the center of Golbaf city and destroyed the city completely. The second earthquake occurred on 23 July 1981, with a magnitude of 7.1 Richter. It was the strongest earthquake in Kerman province and one of the strongest earthquakes in Iran. It occurred near the Sirch village and destroyed about 85% of the rural context and homes (ISNA, 2016). After the rescue operation, the village began to be renovated but after this earthquake, the village got a new type of rural landscape. So the structure of the spatial organization and the original indigenous landscape was not similar to the original type of the village. Extensive destruction is the result of natural disasters. Its effects on the landscape, especially rural landscapes, on one hand, are inevitable and on the other hand, have extensive consequences. Earthquakes have casualties and also they destroy the original context of the village, which contains the signs of rural identity and biology. In the first step of the renovation, because of the need for rapid reconstruction and accommodation of victims, housing and reconstruction operations are done speedily with the assistance of individuals and

legal entities. Due to the importance of high-speed construction and lack of materials, the renovation process takes place without paying attention to the rural characteristics and a combination of traditional and new materials. So the new buildings have a different shape and make a new context and landscape for the village. The important point is that this action is not inevitable, but also because of the importance of rapid renovation and improvement of villages, this picture is as part of the landscape after the earthquake and it is hacked in the public's mind (Fig. 3).

Now the question is whether the decisions of the residents after the earthquake to rebuild the village are more influenced by external factors or they are based on the cultural structure of the village? To answer this question, we examine other factors that change the structure of the village (Fig. 4).

• Management plans: Planning guidelines of the village or a small city model

The rural design guide is an instruction as a scaled-down model of a Master plan of the city that has been suggested since 1983 and it's done as a tool for rural development management in the country and its purpose is rural revitalization in various dimensions (Fereydoonzadeh, 2019). The management plans like the rural planning guides have been done in the villages. However, they have been done with a superficial understanding of the urban structures without considering the environmental, climatic, cultural, and identity characteristics of the villages, and with the purpose of a better and easier life. Using new materials and construction instructions from an urban point of view has seriously changed the organic structure of the villages. After the destruction in some villages in Kerman such as Golbaf and Sirch, needed reconstruction because of the earthquakes in



Fig. 3. New planting plan in front of the ways and rural access routes without connection with the components of village identity, Tikdar village. Photo: Meysam Khalilpour, 2017.



Fig. 4. Transformation of the indigenous landscape of the village due to the difference between vernacular materials and new materials, Ismailabad village. Photo: Meysam Khalilpour, 2017.

1981. On one hand, the necessity of reconstruction and on the other hand, developing Kerman's villages have led to the urban policies in which there is no sign of planning a village. These damages in rural settlements created a fear that traditional materials are less durable than new materials. For this reason, the shape and form of the villages have changed after the renovation and reform. But what remains as a result of a design guide in the earthquake-stricken villages of Kerman, is a mandatory approach with urban views that are formed without paying attention to the original characteristics of the rural landscape. These management plans have been changed all dimensions in the village without paying attention to the type of livelihood in the village, its spatial structure, identity, and cultural background. This change is just base on the common structure and pays attention to matching rather than the context and place. The base of these changes should be found in overshadowing the meaningful infrastructure of the village and changes in people's point of view (Fig. 5).

• **Changing: The temptation of urbanization in the village**

The third factor that affects the characteristics of rural identity is the change in rural residents' point of

view and their tendency to lead an urban life and be urbanized. This factor has changed the original rural structures. Therefore, the rural aesthetics, which used to be based on identity components has become a matter of personal taste and imitation of the city (Fig. 6). This is true for people in the villages located near the downtown of Kerman. Those who live in the villages, regardless of the natural components and are interested in leading an urban life. They have not only embraced this new and tasteful aesthetic but also they have led rural life in this direction in



Fig. 5. Samples of urban life in the countryside as new symbols of the rural landscape, Sekonj village. Photo: Meysam Khalilpour, 2017.

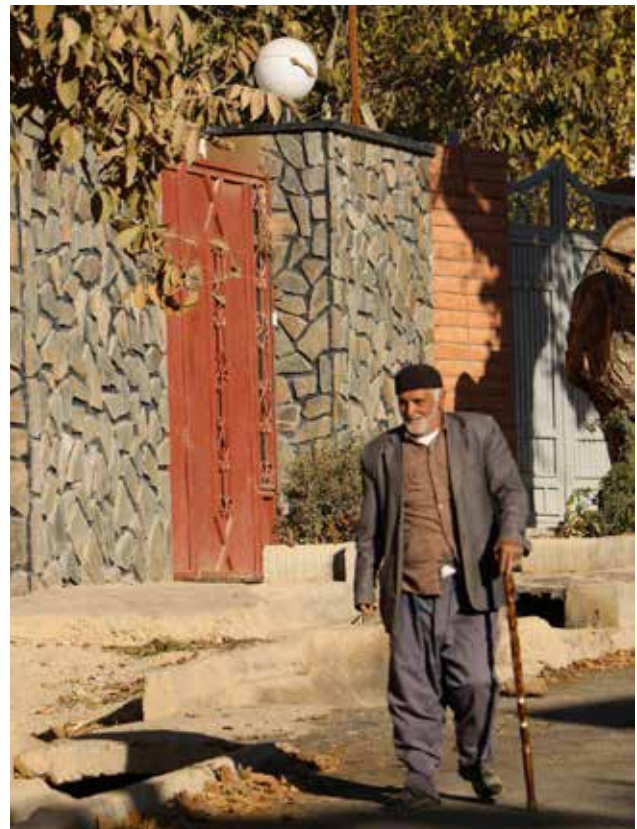


Fig. 6. Using new materials and urban construction methods in a way unrelated to the rural landscape heritage, Kerman province. Photo: Meysam Khalilpour, 2017.

all different dimensions. However, management programs like designs guide are effective in changing this point of view.

Conclusion

The contemporary rural landscape of Kerman province can be considered as a result of incorrect management policies, external factors, and not paying attention to endogenous development. These factors have been formed without any signs of rural culture, identity components, and also without any signs of livelihood and rural economy as its identity manifestations. This important factor is the result of changing the basic rural structures and various cultural and livelihood dimensions. The rural landscape of Kerman, in the name of development and the form of rural plans, does not indicate its identity components. These changes are caused by an inevitable natural factor such as an earthquake

but subsequent events are wrong policies that have targeted and destroyed the village's identity and its landscape which are the result of the interaction among cultural, biological, economic, and livelihood factors. Reconstruction and modernization policies don't pay attention to the rural originality so their actions have no benefit for a village, and the result is the destruction of rural settlements, their landscape, and also the organic structure. The mentioned factors such as natural disasters, management instructions, and changing the attitude of villagers just result in the creation of a new village that is not related to its old structures and its landscape. Therefore, there will be no rural landscape for our villages. If the villages are not considered as cultural heritage, continuing the process of renovation and improvement in the earthquake-prone areas will disappear the rural identity and nothing will be remain of the rural landscape identity of Kerman province.

Endnote

1. Infrastructure is a set of connected systems that shape the activities of communities and provide essential services for their sustainability and development.

Reference list

- Abbaszadegan, M. (2013). *Manzar-e Roosta-ha-ye Iran* [A Landscape of Iranian villages]. Tehran: Ministry of Roads and Urban Development.
- Fereydoonzadeh, H. (2019). *Tarh-ha-ye hadi-ye roustaei, Hedayatgar-e abadani va ya takhrib-e roust-ha* [A view on "Rural pilot projects, guiding the development or destruction of villages"]. Retrieved December 17, 2017, from <https://nazaronline.ir/4110>
- ISNA. (2016). *Negahi be zelzele-ha-ye 100 sal-e akhir-e ostan-e Kerman* [A look at the recent earthquakes of the last 100 years in Kerman province]. Retrieved December 6, 2017, from <https://www.isna.ir/amp/94121107279>
- Raheb, Gh. (2007). Derangi dar mafhom-e rousta [A Reflection on the Concept of the Village]. *Journal of Environmental Studies*, 33(41), 105-116.
- Taghvaei, M. (2013). Rural landscape and features of manipulation of natural environment. *Journal of Housing and Rural Environment*, 7 (143), 38-20.

COPYRIGHTS

Copyright for this article is retained by the authors with publication rights granted to Tourism of Culture journal. This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Naseri, S. (2021). Investigating Kerman's vernacular landscape with an emphasis on rural landscapes as an endangered heritage. *Tourism of Culture*, 1(3), 35-40.

DOI: 10.22034/toc.2020.249628.1023

URL: http://www.toc-sj.com/article_122901.html?lang=en

