

Beauty at the Edge of the Development

The Encounterment of Ardabil City and the Shorabil Lake

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Abstract | The speedy development of the city inevitably leads to the encroachment of the surrounding natural habitat and consequently erodes the possibility of paradigm thinking and the addressing of its multiple dimensions in a going concern. In every phase of the development, the result of the city and nature encounterment is the place of outstanding beauty where the urgency of development eliminates any possibility to adapt the developmental plans with the exiting capacity, as a result of which, the functional and physical beauty aspects surpasses the others. The extent of this development defines the edge of the city and the nature as the middle space where is influenced by distinct characteristics and the attributes of both of these elements. The transformation of this edge, affected by the spirit of the time, is sometimes the forming ground of invasive and opposing forces and sometimes the ground for interaction and exchange. In this study, the developmental edge of the city of Ardebil and its encounterment with the nature of the Shorabil Lake, as the only natural inner-city lake in Iran is examined from aesthetics perspective and its place in the urban planning studies of the city determined. The emphasis on functional-physical approach in urban planning of the city is clearly visible around the lake, indicating that the semantic dimensions influenced by the natural history, has been ignored and instead the leisure aspect of the lake prioritized. This could be the case where all the developmental aspects of the edge is considered as a unified approach, thus, besides responding to the quantitative needs, the role of spatial territory in the urban organization is considered through the quality management and the hidden potentials.

Keywords | Urban Edge, Natural Capacity, Spatial Territory, Shorabil Lake, Ardebil.

Introduction | The opportunity for a clear expansion of the spatial divisions of the territories is hindered by the pace of the rapid growth of the cities. The territory, besides being a physical concept, is simultaneously non-physical and mental which encapsulate cultural and historical factors. The territory is redefined in connection with two concepts of the border and the edge. The border, as a distinct line is the decisive divider of different arenas and classes and the edge represents the transition process of the arenas that is associated with the concept of growth and development. When the rapid pace of development of the cities is influenced by the government interference and the speculative interests, this would result in preference of quantitative growth over the qualitative, where, the concept of edge earns more prominence.

The spread of the developmental edges and recalling the high capacity of the nature in qualitative and spatial development, has always been a bed of conflict in regards to difference of approach, related to the nature and the urban development. The challenges of restoring the nature in the cities and the rediscovery of its spiritual and psychological benefits through aesthetics review becomes essential. Investigations indicate that the aesthetic subjects in the early period of naturalistic approach, mostly leaned towards the materialistic and objective aspects of the nature, that due to speculative approach and disregard of its capacities, were subjected to change and alterations. The later approaches however, have rather been consolidated, critical and semantic. In this paper we intend to disclose this transformation and review and analyze the direction of the flow of this matter in the Shorabil Sample Lake in Ardabil. Among the urban landscape projects, Shorabil is the only tangible and close sample that could be mentioned in the encounterment of the city with the nature's edge, hence, earning itself a special place in the developmental process. The important question is this, in spite of the importance of the dimension of the mental concept of the territory, how has the contemporary development of the city of Ardebil been carried out in encounterment with the edge of the lake? For better understanding, this study makes an attempt to review the aesthetic approaches at the edge of the city development.

Aesthetic Approaches at the Edge of the City and Nature

The emergence of the industrial cities, the qualitative and quantitative requirements and problems of different eras, uncontrollable urban development, the loss of natural potentials and the nostalgic desire of the nature alienated man, are all among the factors that have created a formidable challenge for the contemporary

urban dwelling man. The breathing space, urban order, the hygienic issues and the bond between the nature and city dwelling and so on, are only part of the answers in order to fulfill the needs of the urban dwelling. The historic transition of the contemporary events show that the initial answer pointed towards the physical criteria, but attitude gradually faded away and was replaced by quantitative and practical factors. The continuation of this transition is towards the wholesome and unified approach, so it would address physical, environmental, cultural issues and hence, have an all-encompassing meaningful look at the connection between the nature and the city. Today, the quantity of the nature is no longer considered as an issue of the man's lost environment, but the indisputable, irreplaceable, meaningful-quality and inspirational role of nature in his life. Notwithstanding the tendency of overwhelming number of approaches to the meaning, pursuing this kind of beauty in contemporary era involves less color and weight.

The beginning of the city and nature interconnectivity in modern era is manifested by the emerging number of naturalistic parks that like the islands of nature have cropped up in the fabric of the city. Afterwards, by picture-framing the nature which we have encountered, we understand the enforced and showcase type of connection, followed by fenceless spaces that are considered as the city spaces with various functions, in order to create an environment with a strong sense of collective space. As the final connection, the extension and transformation of the city and the nature is made into one, inseparable and dependent (Mansouri, 2010). In redefinition of this transformation, we can validate distinct concept of this research as: the concept of the edge in development and its aesthetics

Ipsen (2010), in his study by the topic of "the greenness between inside and out", while defining the border and the edge at the beginning, clarifies their distinctions and emphasizes seven important points of the edge. He considers the edge and the border as distinct lines that distinguish variety of functions and activities that varies from the dynamics at the edges. Finally, with the discussions about the edges and the city theory, he describes the edges as the gate for understanding of the urbanization process and also as the capacious spaces that are prone to modification and transformation. The flow of social, economic, cultural motivation and the urban expansion on the one hand and the progress of the city life style on the other, starts from here, but not from the core. Right now, the value of the edge, considered as a bridge between two things, a turbulent arena for a dialogue and simultaneously as an infertile land with potentials that challenges the professionals for defining the city edge (Ipsen, 2010:197-204)

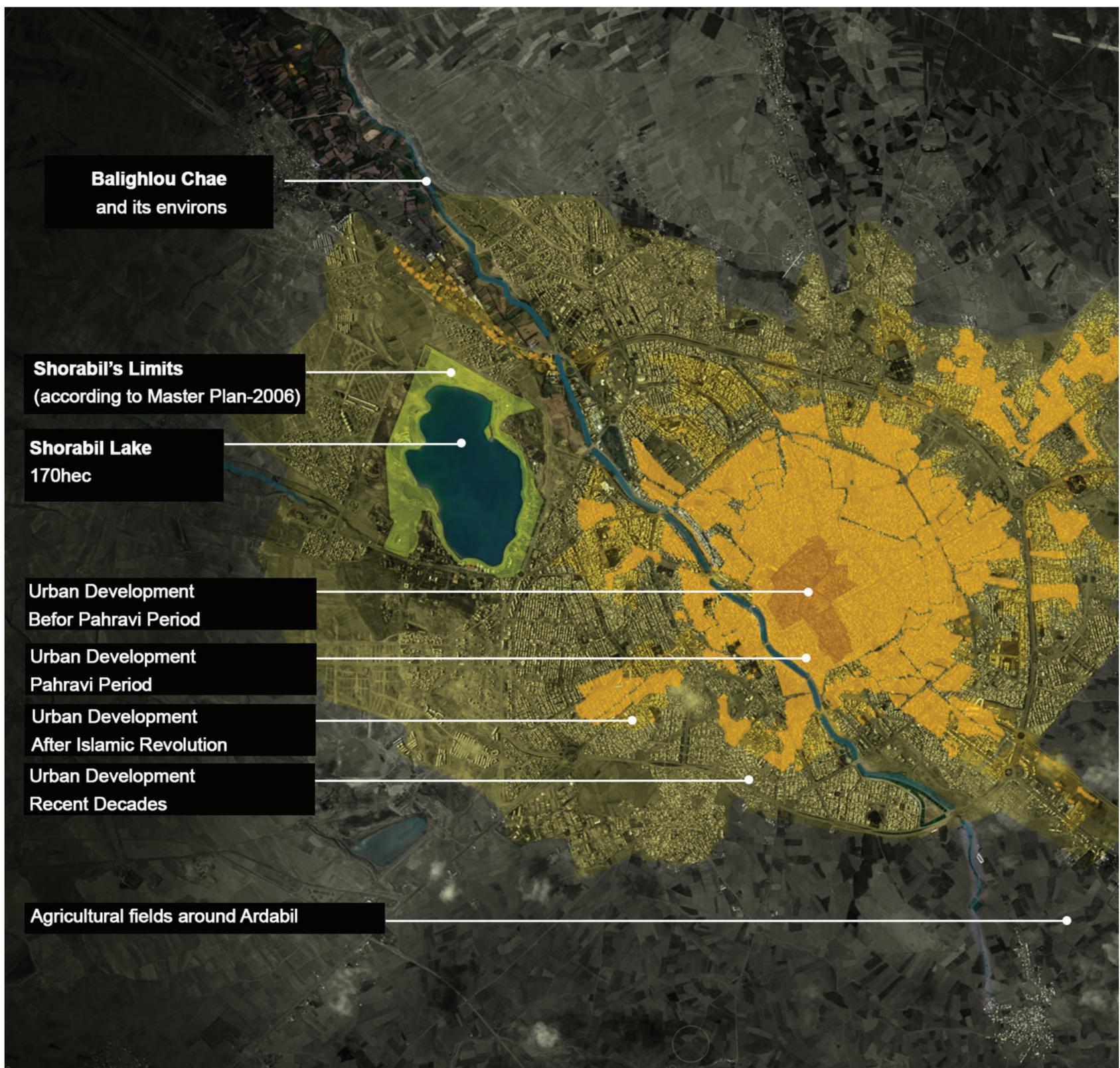


Pic1: The Visual Disturbance and the Lack of Spatial Justice of the Lake Edge.
Photo: Keramat Hassani, 2017.

Territory is another concept that "Topolovich" in the article "Architecture of the Territory, beyond the boundaries of the city" calls it a social and cultural structure that the architects are familiar with, but due to its complexity, believes in an interdisciplinary coalition for curbing the debate. According to him, the architects and the urbanists have the ability to synthesize the complexity of the territory beyond their limited expertise. Such a synthesis is possible only through a qualitative phenomenon, with a phenomenological approach to the realm and through special thought context (Topalovic, 2015). Hence, realm of the conceptuality in visual that in addition to pointing at the objective dimension, has its

roots in culture, society and the mentality of the citizens, at the same time.

Specialists of this arena, consider the quality of urban life as a way of communicating with the nature, and the perception for its aesthetic encounter. By reviewing the theoretical literature, we can follow three different types of beauty in the contemporary era: the enforced aesthetics, which is the dominant dimension of the body, the beneficial aesthetic, which is accompanied by the functional overlay, and an evolutionary and interactive aesthetic that tries to care for the semantic dimension. The quantitative and the qualitative aesthetic encounter could either be simple or developed, which



Pic 2: The position of the Shorabil Lake in Various Periods of the City Developments.
Source: Authors, 2017.

is influenced by technical, economic, management and design elements. The important point is the future perspective of the perception of beauty that has a semantic orientation. Meaning that the aesthetics that faces the city and nature, is looking at the type of edge and space, not the boundary.

Therefore, to improve the quality of urban landscape, we need to understand and apply these concepts, right from the decision making to implementation of development processes. Concepts like spatial domains, the edges of urban development and nature, and the aesthetic approach that requires interdisciplinary and collaborative thinking to reveal and protect the

capacities of the platform through the holistic program.

The Transition of Beauty: The Edge of the Ardebil City and the Shorabil Lake

In the south of Ardebil, there is a shallow natural lake called Shorabil. The lake is located on a sedimentary bed of black muddy sludge, which in turn is covered with a white layer of 5-8 cm salty sediments. In the past, this lake was used as an additional reservoir of the Balykhlo-Chai River in the fall and winter (Safari, 1971: 391), and today it is the source of fresh water with a capacity of 14 million cubic meters and an approximate depth of 10-12 meters. The morphological capacity of the surrounding



Pic 3: The Lack of Management of the Edge and the Visual Quality of the Lake Shorabil.

Photo: Ehsan Keramati, 2017.

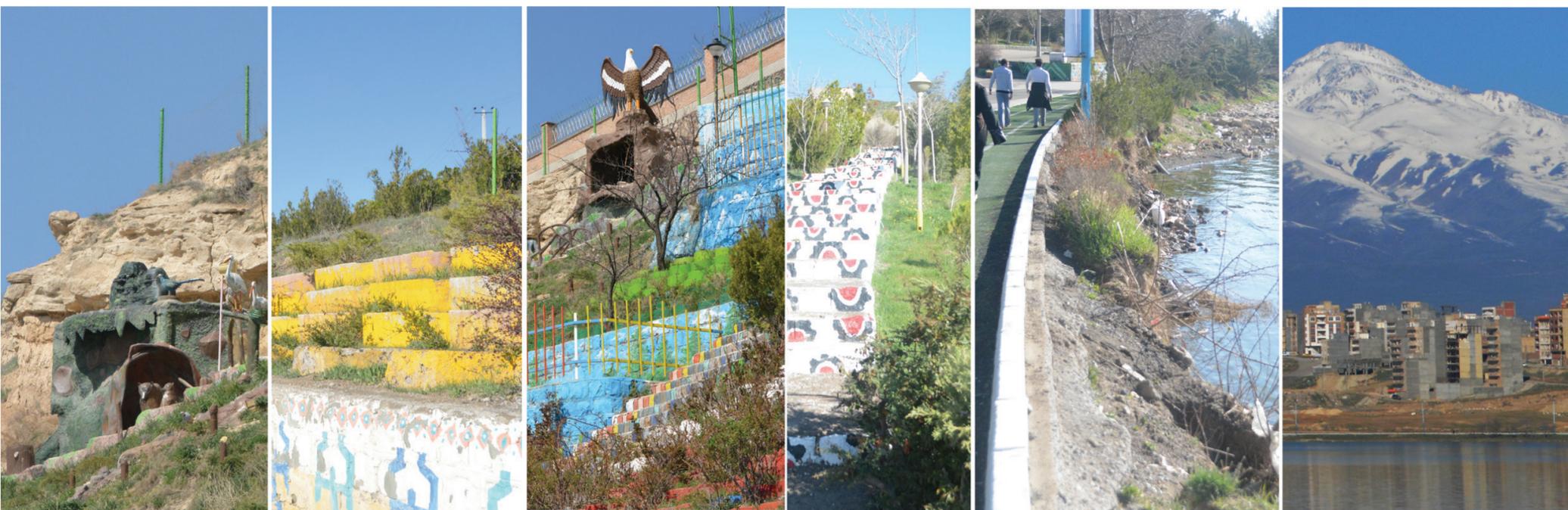
area around the lake is comparable to the plains around Ardabil acts as the broadest city view, and the destination of recreation and tourism of citizens from the distant past - more with a carriage and a bicycle - to this day - a bicycle and a car. Shorabil is derived from the two words "shura" and "bill"; shura meaning the salt marsh, which has its origin from a formerly saline lake, Bill or Will, which is also at the end of the name of the city of Ardabil, in the Avestan language. The city in the sense of the close proximity of the city, it shows the close connection of the lake with the city.

The saline water, the muddy sludge with medicinal property, enclosed by the reed marshes and the fertile farm lands with the view of Sabalan, the grand mountain, in the horizon, the horse drawn carts, the bicycles, the rocky cliffs, the sedimentary rocks, the women and the commotion of the children, sticking in the memories of the visitors. This perspective, in the process of development in Pahlavi era, became functional. In 1973 master plan, the surrounding area was designated to wooded green space. Gaining a new position in the national hierarchy of decision making, put the Ardebil city into a new path of regeneration. During the new era, the completion of the connecting roads from Ardebil to Astara and also Talesh to Khalkhal has improved the connectivity of the city with the surrounding area. Similarly, as a result of special attention of the government to the border regions, after the war, the province of Ardebil came out of its long-awaited geographical and historical isolation. With the expansion of the city towards the south, the thoughts of conversion of this natural ecosystem into

resource cum leisure complex with sports and cultural centers, became stronger. In 1995, by channeling a substantial volume of the Balikhloo river water and at a later stage, adding the Yamchi dam water, through the canals in 2003, water desalination of the lake got greater boost. The present imposed state of the lake, due to lack of proper management, besides destroying its medicinal properties and ecology, new micro biological condition, including new species of plants, animals and birds have been introduced leading to a new perception of the lake that once was a saline water stretch with a name describing its salinity.

One of the most important suggestions for the preparation of the land in 2005 was the enhancement of the facilities and tourism infrastructure (Field Consulting Engineers, 2011:99) that in the following years the matter of utilizing distinct multiple potentials of the city in developmental planning was brought up again and a new problem in connection with the city edge defined. In relation to major projects, Ardabil is a pioneer zone among other tourism projects in the province and one of the largest in the north west of Iran. Ardabil is a distinct example of a city with outstanding connection network, inner-city network, nature, and history; based on the city-garden and rural development pattern. With this view, the panoramic nature of tourist attractions in Ardebil, in regards to safeguarding and enhancing the position of tourism, the natural attractions like shorabil lake, balikhloo and west and north west rivers, become subject of a major discussion (Ibid:161).

By definition of the path of the fourth ring road which



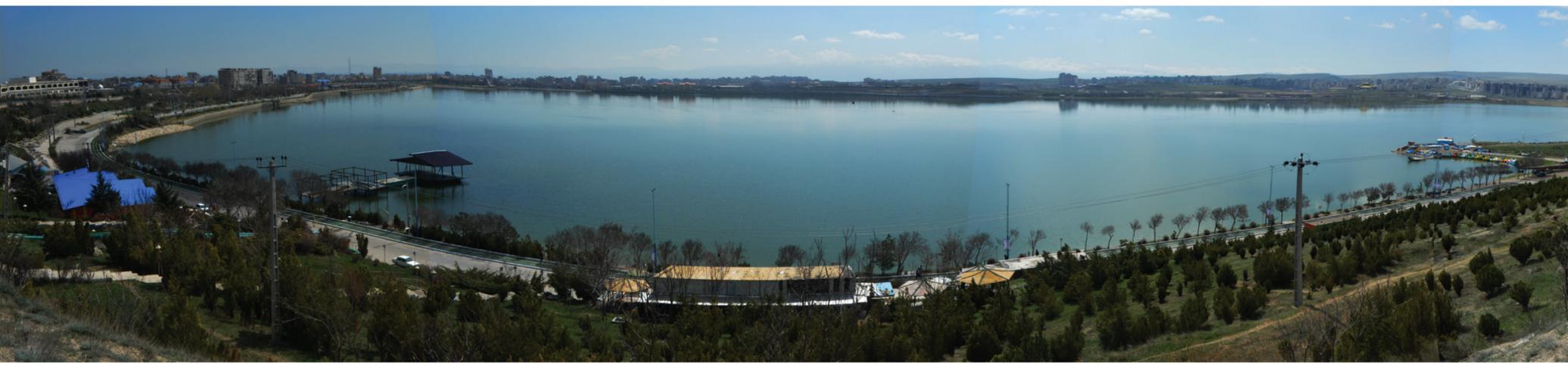
Pic 4: The dominance of the physical and Functional Look in response to the need of the Audience, Photo: Ehsan Keramati, 2017.

defines the extreme edge of the city, the shorabil lake gets an inner-city location and consequently, various urban planning have been taken into consideration in relation to adding the potentials of the lake into the city. From the allocation of the southwest and east part of the lake with a panoramic view to various utilities with distinct characterization that so far have not been realized, right to the definition of the Parkman project (park plus the building) at the edge of the lake, with the high price of land, puts it all under the scrutiny (Ibid:170); (pic.1). This type of interference, hand in hand with the developments of the 70s and onwards, have been addressed in order to fulfill the immediate needs of the citizens like the housing, and traffic etc. Unavoidably, the edge and the span of the lake becomes an arena for defining the practical-skeletal aesthetics. By implementing different projects without having a comprehensive vision, beside neglecting the potentials of the edge, by limiting the lake, it is lead into the path of eventual isolation (Pic. 2).

In 2010s, we are faced with the allocation of the edge of the Shorabil lake to *Ateck* Consulting Engineering company for planning and project management. The consultant would act according to the necessities of the long-term major planning of the city. The logic behind the planned utility of the shorabilPpark could gradually separate the future natural developments and allow physical interference over the planning of the area. The product of the planning in 2014 is similar to the planning of Chitgar and the Boostan-e Velayt lake projects. The presented planning has been presented, without

the consideration of the meaningful potentials of the area like the farming lands around the lake, medicinal property of the sludge at the bottom of the lake and its visual and panoramic topography overlooking the city and the Sabalan Mountain (Pic. 3).

By imposing functional-skeletal beauty and the creation of artificial islands, stone and metal fences, the consultant has reduced the values of the shore, its beautiful identity memorability of the visit. In addition, through the creation of monotonous health conducive walkways, border making, separating the pedestrians from the cyclists, and horse drawn carts, the flexibility of the space with the nature has been eliminated. Although, the plans of the Atec company has not been approved by the municipality due to the economic preference and the ownership problems, but it is apparent that some projects are being carried out by the supervisor that by the definition of the open space around the lake as the green public space and the year 2025 vision for the city, some projects have been defined that are in direct contrast and meaningful unity of purposeful development of the this center. The lack of proper understanding of the spirit of the created spaces like university section, cure section, military section, exhibition section, and the dwelling section, visual mayhem due to inadequate planning, inferior quality of the fixtures, improper layout of the elements and their unoriginal nature, the plantation of the plants on the slopes within the concrete blocks on dusty areas of the lake and technical weaknesses are among the problems of the lake view (Pic. 4). The popularity of this area without any development speaks



Pic 5: The Lack of Visual Unity, the Imposition of the Physical and Functional Aesthetics in Fixtures and the planting plans.
Photo: Ehsan Keramati, 2017.

for its huge potentials due to the beautiful scenery, the mount Sbalan, Balikhloo river and Nader historical hill, presents a major challenge for the developers in terms of creating harmony and unity between the city and the nature (Pic. 5).

The city, as a living being and in permanent dialectic with the nature, goes through changes, advances, grows and transforms throughout its life. The city edge, the area in process of transformation from the man-made into the natural form with high level of potentials, has always maintained its significance. The edge that gives the opportunity to citizens to have encounter with the nature. The review of aesthetics of the space in approaches of the contemporary period, shows the transition from the functional-skeletal beauty to meaning- related beauty. Integrated and unified connection between the city and the nature that fulfills the quantitative needs of its audience simultaneously through qualitative space management, which answers in accordance with the communal space. The Shorabil lake

area in the city of Ardebil, is one of the most important edges of connectivity between the city and the nature, in spite of having a high capacity for intervention and management, the track of similar problems and special epidemic, typical of the urban landscape projects could be followed. With the contemporary developments of 90s and thereafter, coupled with the expansion of the city towards the lake, the area with the concept of edge appears in Ardebil as the main challenge of the city. The desalination of the lake water for crop irrigation, the ecological diversion and the morphology of the region to isolate the project by the city artery, the transformation of the agricultural lands to the green belt, forestation, and erection of dwelling buildings, have all the sign of imposed beauty oriented. It could be perhaps said that the Shorabil Lake has little value for the citizen in general and younger generation in particular, a mere footprint in mentality of the older generation and name from the nostalgic old times.

Conclusion | The mere predominance of the physical and functional approach in response to the edge of the city and the nature of the transition has mostly eradicated The life of the lake. The missing link at the edge of the development of the city of Ardebil and its encounter with the lake creates a meaningful scenic beauty due to its spatial capacity. The meaningful name, its ecology, medicinal property and the reminiscing memory are eliminated as a result of exclusion from the major upstream planning. The transition the identity-semantic edge to the overwhelming borders with physical and functional attitude, has contributed to the isolation of the lake within the city. By considering the theoretical background of the study, it could be concluded that, the

lack of adequate attention to setting up spatial border in general and the concept of the edge of the development in the upstream planning in particular, play major role in beautifying the city that currently due to hasty developments are ignored. In developmental phases, by having a comprehensive outlook through specialist contributions, it is possible to manage the unified beauty of the area by a meaningful vision of practical and skeletal approach. Therefore, in the suggested that planning factors like historical background, spatial character, land partitions around the lake, the nature (river, the order of land division, topography etc.), socio-cultural (the dwellings, leisure, educational, exhibition etc.), economical (crop yielding, tourism etc.) need to

be considered. The structural connection of the lake with the axes of life and the readability of entities like the Blihkloo river, as the tourism and leisure centers, could define the lake as a unified structure with the town. The pedestrian path, bicycle, cart and the green

belt structures, not merely seen as the border around the lake but a connection with the whole entity of city and its parts. Having a unified vision could help towards distinct role the disclosure of this space in the body of the town.

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