

# The folk visage of the city

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The city is the greatest product of human civilization. Many thinkers and scholars agree on this. The city is “a place” where people come together, and through it, they “interact” with one another. As a result, the interaction between humans is a conditional action which is realized through the “city”. That is why the city not only births but also leads the interaction of human beings. A dual entity, which is both an agent and an object in interactions. The “relationship” of humans with this entity will also be in two ways: they affect the city and get affected by it.

So the questions of “essence and identity” are two main questions that determine the nature of human’s relationship with the city. To ask of the essence of the city and how it is, regardless of its historical components and with the mere reliance on the “existence” of the city, is an ontological question to Layout human behavior with each other and with the city. The question of who-ness and identity of the city is an epistemological question and it depends on the historical becoming of the city: when did it appear and how it relates to historical events? This knowledge is also essential for the intervention and management of the city. From such a perspective, the city is a phenomenon mixed with human and human society, which has a significant role in the cultivation and development of human personality. Therefore, the criteria of the two elements of body and human in urban interventions are the most important place to determine the significance of each one and determine their role in the urban scenario.

The manifestation of the city for man is its visage. The city -despite its reality- is represented and read in the human mind, which we call the visage of the city. The city’s landscape, the consistent truth of the city, is composed of the body and its inhabitants in the eyes of the citizens. Such a phenomenon is the subject of urban studies. One of the questions that arise in various measures in urban skeleton management is the level of manifestation of citizens’ individuality in the city framework. The modern world, by reducing the maximum of this manifestation, defines the city as a community-based legal entity in which individualities do not have much chance of expression.

In the interpretation of the eastern block of modernism, which led to communist cities, individuality was completely ignored, even on a residential scale. In the name of globalization, consistent style and authenticity of function Western interpretation of modernism sought to battle the individuality, and with the exception of the capitalist individuality, the community did not get the chance of individual expression in the city’s visage.

In contrast, the visage of the cities of the Islamic world, despite the unity of the physical form, was the place of the emergence of citizen individuality and at greater scales, the diversity of locals, ethnicities, and professions, which gave a distinct identity to cities. Such cities represent the extensive participation of residents in the production and management of the city. The wall of the house, the portal, the adjacent sidewalk and the planting of trees in front of the house were one of the manifestations of citizens’ individual engagement in the production of the city as a whole. This unwritten process is still ongoing in the cities of Iran, and only in those cases where municipalities, without questioning the necessity and correctness of the act, interpreted their maximum powers to construct universal pavements, plant trees of the same length along the street, and recently licensed facades for walls and portals which alter citizens’ individual engagement.

It seems that the tradition of authoritarianism and the focus of urban management and the elimination of partnerships are so powerful that even in the era of participatory dialogue it manages to exist and operate. Decorating the house’s frontage in special ceremonies and events is a manifestation of the event-driven social participation in the city’s landscape. The decorative lighting for the festivals and the installation of the signs of mourning and the commemoration of epics are manifestations of individuality in the city’s narrative visage.

One of the most important examples of narrative visage is the design and installation of commemorative signs of the citizens in their homes’ framework. This action, if accompanied by a participatory approach and with the dedicated statement of the martyrs’ family, creates meaningful morals in the city’s visage. Combining this practice with the commemoration of religious memories and religious practices, including Ashura, add to the centrality of the neighborhood and gradually the neighborhoods of the city develop landmarks, which are known by the inhabitants due to their popular visage. This approach to organizing the city’s landscape, with its soft, delicate, and deep-seated meaning grooms the city for beauty, identity, and understandability, without being subjected to the physical characteristics and conventional contradictions that produce urban signs.

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