

The Landscape of Enclosure, from “Manifestation” to “Representation”

Landscape is a concept defined as the outcome of human interactions with the environment, society, and history. «Manifestation» (Nemood) is the explanation of this outcome, which emerges gradually as a result of a will for stability and continuity of establishment in a place. In return, ‘Representation’ (Namad) is the outcome of the human will to express his/her desired concept; it can be a «conventional» or «natural» sign. Iran’s cities, as well as small castles in rural areas in the past, used to be significantly defined by their enclosures known as «Hesar.» It was separating the border of inside and outside space, interior home-space with its individual interactions from the exterior released space of Nature. The enclosure, while protecting the interior space from the invasion of outsiders, was the protector of the inhabitant’s space against the wild nature as well. The encounter of these two worlds on both sides of the enclosure was quite distinct, as was turned into the manifestation of life and reflected the possibility of living beyond its border. On two different sides of the wall, two distinct landscapes were perceived: on one side, there was an inhabited space where humans used to be attend, and on the other side, an environment away from any intervention. The gardens and settlements were all inside the enclosure, and the vacant deserts were outside. The street was in contrast to the desert. The enclosure was the distinct border between the two huge manifestations of the landscape; it was a kind of urban landscape against the natural one; the realm of human life in opposition to wild nature. The meeting of these two landscapes, brought about by the manifestation of the enclosure, provided a context for the development of the close concepts. The enclosure was not merely a manifestation of the convenience of human life but also recognized as an indicator of supremacy and dignity. The farmlands and gardens were developed outside the enclosure, as the new migrants and the peasant dwellers gradually settled outside it. The neighborhood areas were formed outside the enclosure, which was then formally known as the outside districts. In social confrontations, the social ghettos of the same religion but different from the ruling class were located outside an enclosure. The Zarisef district in Kerman city, which is located behind the urban gate, was one of these patterns. This separation, which arose from the social classes of that time, was more evident before the advent of Islam. The cities during the Sassanid era were allocated to certain classes, in which the enclosure was the common symbol of their territory. Inside area, which was called Sharstan, and the outside area, known as Rabz, were separated by an enclosure in the middle. Basically, the outside was not even triggered as a city. The first urban intervention following the arrival of Islam in Iran was the act of destroying enclosures as a symbol of superiority, which was in opposition to implementing justice. Due to the symbolic aspect of enclosure and its power, its other functional features of it were ignored. The superiority of its symbolic aspect, meaning «representation» to «manifestation» in perceiving the concept of the enclosure, led to the convention of destroying them. Following this occurrence, Rabz and Sharstan were merged, and thereby the inside and outside territories were connected. The security and natural functions of the enclosure were inevitably overlooked. Ignoring the necessity of its manifestation a few centuries later resulted in its emergence again. The cities and castles of their masters recovered their enclosures again. As a result, the process of emergence of those manifestations as the initial elements of the landscape and their transformation into representing them as a symbol and an elevated element of the landscape was restarted.

According to an interpretation of the socio-economic classes in the western world, there is a focus on the originality of the enclosure in response to perceiving the social structure of «land» and «location» of living space. In terminology, ‘Bourgeois’ means a resident of a ‘Bourg’ or a castle, the upper class that lived over the enclosures and inside the Bourg. The enclosure was a required security element of the aristocracy and the representative of social superiority as the symbol of the bourgeois caste. The kinds of landscape elements, which are quite evident in the process of turning a manifestation element into a recognizable representative symbol, are the most significant characteristics protecting them is vital for the continuity of the identity of human communities. Therefore, in urban developments, where the destruction of enclosures is inevitable, the various aspects of them including their physical, functional (manifestation), and semantic (symbolic/representative) dimensions should also be respected.

Paniz Soleimani Salar, the brilliant artist has explained the conflict of these two different worlds on both sides of the enclosures in Dameghan city by illustrating this astute image.

*According to the idea of some linguists, «Bourg» is an altered version of the Arabic word «Borj», which is derived from the Persian root «Borz», meaning high and elevated.

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