

Landscape Approach in Architecture

“We have sent down the wind”¹...

To remove the hat from their heads (Sohrab Sepehari, Surah Tamasha)²

In the harbor city of ‘Bandar-e Lengeh’ there is a house that is known as one of the Iranian architectural masterworks. The ‘House of Fekri’, a less-known work, looks like a classic house according to the Iranian profound house-building culture. Since it does not represent huge spectacular architectural characteristics such as a tall portal, luxurious decorations, and expanded water features (Aab-Nama), it is a less-seen work and an unknown building. However, in the conceptual realm of «Architecture as an observation platform of Nature»³, it is an exceptional work. ‘Bandar-e Lengeh’ has a hot-humid climate, with a long and harsh season. The architecture of ‘House of Fekri’ has two necessary conditions⁴ for living in this environment: The landscape of sea and the blowing wind, and some additional characteristics (sufficient conditions)⁵, introversion, and responding to the diverse required functions of the residents. Forming the house is the outcome of the interaction between these two conditions. To observe the sea, a raised platform (Soffeh) has been built on a flat ground far from the sea, to let the house residents have a broad view of the sea landscape. So, the house has turned into an observation platform for the house residents to let them perceive the sea as a sign of celestial verse, and an adopted element of Nature on a tangible scale to fulfill the mission of making them feel⁶ and perceive⁷ the wholeness of existence. This is the first condition for becoming an ‘observation platform or Nazargah; it is an opportunity that provides the chance of feeling Nature. In addition to this characteristic, to satisfy the physical comfort of the house residents in the hardship condition of Bandar-e Lengeh, the wind flow and air circulation have been provided by making space between different parts of the building mass and hollowing out the volume of the building. The distance between the filled masses besides making the condition for the passage of the airflow, increases the speed of the air and lets a current of air be produced as the result of the pressure difference between the top and the bottom of the passage. This is apart from the natural wind that is directed into the house rooms by the windbreakers. The artificial wind produced by the perforated architecture of this House flows both in the outer spaces and the spaces between the built sections. It is the place where the porches and corridors of the house have been built for the greater efficiency and comfort of the residents during the long and hot summer season. This way of intervening in the space, which causes the breeze to flow in the house in the outer spaces and at a level lower than the height of the natural wind, besides making the house a comfortable place to live, is a sustainable and enduring measure for the human to interact with a sign of Nature. The wind in the House is highly perceived on a tangible scale, as the observer constantly feels the wind blowing. Having the exterior and interior spaces for both formal space and living environment, and landscaping in a garden pit are among the sufficient conditions that make the entity of the house.

The form of the House has its advantages from both ontological and epistemological levels. Initially, the house inhabitant is in constant interaction with the two natural signs as celestial verses, the Sea and the Wind, and at the second level, it shapes the natural and historical needs of the inhabitants in the light of the historical culture and civilization. The outcome of that ontological “Promise” with this epistemological «Appearance» is making a kind of architectural landscape, which the ‘House of Fekri’ is a prominent example of this approach.

1. The descent of the wind, same as the descent of the Quran, refers to encountering a tangible and lower form of the transcendental truth.
2. A hat, like a covering for both the head and the truth; removing the hat implies to the uncovering the truths. Sohrab ironically refers to direct confront with the wind reality as a celestial verse for the perception of existence.
3. According to my belief, «Architecture is meant to be an observation platform of Nature» as a mission. Nature is an important book of knowledge for humans, and architecture has to create the context for encountering the ontological signs of Nature with humans as the inhabitants.
4. Necessary condition is a condition required for an object to occur and allows the object to be existed and created.
5. Sufficient condition is a condition that is complementary and ontological cause for the occurrence of the object. Objects are divided into different types following their creation. The rank of their existence precedes their essence.
6. Make something feel is a term coined by Shafi'i Kadkani to interpret Masnavi poems written by Maulana (Jalaluddin Mohammad Balkhi).
7. General perception or the sense of space is an interpretation for encountering and understanding the ‘existence’ of an object. It happens when the existence of an object is perceived regardless of it ‘essence’ that has not yet been understood.

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