

# Urban landscape impact on the social behavior of citizens

## (Case study of Julfa and Zainabieyh districts of Isfahan)

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**Abstract:** One of the important issues of urban studies is Urban Landscape impact on mental, perceptual, and behavioral aspects of citizens. Urban Landscape, as a result of the interaction of the factor formation of city and urban community, reflects the characteristics such as the development of civil society and citizens, and their social maturity, the values and norms, economic conditions, tastes and aesthetic criteria and more. One of the most important discussions in the in the theory of Environment and Landscapes, is the role of landscapes in forming human behaviors. Human behavior is under the influence of ecological powers all over the world. When one pays attention to carefully designed landscapes, and when people cooperate with us, it is possible to create active, various and fresh landscapes based on the citizens' needs and motivations. If the sense of belonging disappears in human being, he becomes indifferent to any possible damages to environment, the opposite is also possible: keeping and caring the environment will increase both the residents' willingness towards their living environment and also the sense of belonging.

In this paper, in order to understand the urban landscape impact of mental image of citizens and to study their behavioral characteristics, we selected Julfa & Zainabiyeh districts of Isfahan, and had distributed a number of questionnaires among the inhabitants. 100 citizens were randomly selected from the population of Julfa and Zeinabiyeh districts. Their age-range was between " 20-60 ". They were required to respond a 11- item questionnaire on their attitudes towards Urban Landscape in the region. Comparative studies have been conducted on the collected data and finally some strategies have been provided to enable and organize these two districts. The results of comparative analysis from these districts show that both districts of Zeinabiyeh and Julfa have the potentiality to absorb social capital. Julfa has performed this process well and has been a successful economic capital. Julfa reminds of order, a sense of peacefulness, dynamism, wealth, readability, modernity and a representative of minority of Armenians. On the other hand, Zeinabiyeh, is losing its native residents. Zeinabiyeh's residents' sense of belonging is decreasing due to its texture weariness and its inappropriate skeleton. This district reminds us of an old texture, crowdedness, disorder, disregarding collective memories, ruined areas, poor people and lower social class. The main reason why people are highly interested to live in Julfa can be summarized in Julfa's readability, i.e. the mental image that people have from Julfa's location, its uses, its valuable and historical buildings. However, municipal strategies and plans play an important role in this success.

**Keywords:** Urban Landscapes, Social Behavior, Social Maturity, Values and Norms

### Introduction

Urban Landscape can be considered as a text carrying impalpable aspects of Civil Life; it also reveals all intangible dimensions of the civil life. In other words, with gaining visual literacy and studying Urban Landscapes, one can find out poverty or wealth status of a society and also how the economic, social and

political factors dominate the values governing an urban community. (Esmaili, 2009) Even the aesthetic taste and the subcultures are well represented in the Urban Landscape. In this way, from the mirror of Urban Landscape, one can pinpoint the city's history, dominating civil culture, safety and the security level in the community. How the community respects social contracts and the content of the social life of the community can also be understood from the Urban Landscapes. The sign and symbol system represented around the city makes it possible to evaluate the above-mentioned factors. ( Baghaei, 2010)

Regarding the importance of Urban Landscape on the morphology of citizens' behaviors, the researcher selected Julfa & Zeinabiyeh districts of Isfahan for case study and questionnaires were distributed among their citizens. Comparative studies have been conducted on the collected data and finally some strategies have been provided to enable and organize these two districts.

### **Litterature Review**

Suan Hong Ada, (holding an M.A. in Landscape Architecture, Hong Kong University) in his M.A. dissertation entitled as "Temporal Landscape: to Save Lost Opportunities in Hong Kong" has proposed "Temporal Landscape" as a solution to use all the spatial opportunities and utilize all potential power of the used and unused left lands. He called it "the Temporary Effect of the Green" which analyses the temporary landscape from morphological view and does not consider "Temporary Landscape" as a naturally built phenomenon. He asserts that Hong Kong is a compact (crowded) city with many used and unused lands, bridges and waste space which could be used to create temporary landscapes and improve the environmental conditions. ( Habib, 2001)

Pakzad in his book of "The Thought Process in Urban Development from Quantity to Quality" mentions two main reasons leading to memorable Urban Landscapes. He maintains that memorable designed city space includes identified and distinguished operations, concepts and morphological traits which are easily highlighted in the mind and creates tangible environment in addition to exciting citizens' positive feelings so that they can manipulate the space. The citizens are also encouraged to have more cooperation for keeping and protecting the space in a way that they regard the space as a part of their life environment. The results of this study show that seeking for the theoretical foundations for landscape formation Statement, Cognitive Environment Theory including the theory of city's mental landscape (Queen Linch) and the Anchor points hypothesis could be of much importance. Based on these two hypotheses, a conceptual framework has been developed to form the "Statement of the Landscape".

Habibi (2000) in his book of "City Rehabilitation" states that the "Places" which are considered as the symbol of political and philosophical-thought presence, are the location of representing social behaviors and forming communal cooperation. These places also facilitate citizenship relationships and have the potentiality to become a place for work, information exchange, social, cultural and political-economic protests. These places can also be a location for out breaking agreements and disagreements, city plays, celebration and mourning for national and religious ceremonies and other events and occurrences. Because of having symbolic attributes and events, these places play the role of identity-forming location and instigate individual and communal memories for people and the society. This raises the sense of belonging towards the place, time and identity. Due to the events and occurrences on the one hand and the skeletal elements on the other, become memorable for the people. Mahmoudi in his article entitled as "Pavements an Arena for Social Interactions" has pointed out that simultaneously with the entrance of automobiles to the cities; human beings have encountered many nervous and mental tensions and social damages. The ambiguity in the definition of the "pedestrian" in the Urban Development has imposed limitations on the citizenship interactions and has made interferences in the actions done. Therefore, Urban Development process states that the humanity factors must be regarded in designing urban space. (Habibi, 2000).

Mirmoghtadai in the article "Measures of Assessing the Possibility of Formation, Record, and Transfer of the Collective Memories in the City" seeks to find and refine skeletal and social criteria affecting the formation of collective memories in the city. In her viewpoint, these criteria can be divided into two categories: a) the possibility of events and social interaction formation and b) the possibility of recording and transferring memories and the history of the city. Each is categorized into two parts: a) the social and political structure and b) the spatial and skeletal structure. Secondary effective criteria which play a role in the possibility of the formation of social events and interactions are related to political and social structure of the city including social and environmental security, ethnic diversity, social classes, historical events, celebrations, secondary criteria as related to spatial and skeletal structure of the city including all types of public space and forums in the city and the districts. Moreover, the secondary criteria affecting "the possibility of Record, and history and Memories Transfer in the City" as related to social and political structure include stability and continuity of residence, the sense of belonging to the place, the position of city in the literature and the cinema, and construction of memorials and keeping the famous names.

Behzadfar in his article entitled as "The Main Street: Requirements and Expectations for Urban Designing" pinpoints that Streets as one of the most important building elements of the city, which express social, economic and cultural structure, in other words, streets are the indicators of the social identification. The streets can perform various and broad functions but nowadays in the shadow of fast inter-city movements caused by the modern attitude and dominance of automobiles over human being, these functions have been forgotten. (Behzadfar, 2012).

## Concepts

### Urban Landscape

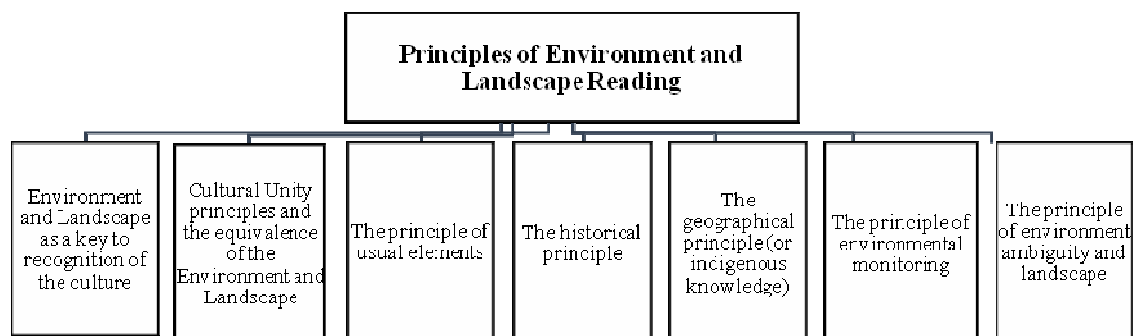
First, it is suitable to define "Urban Landscape". Although this term has been an old concept just like "Urban Development", Frederic le Mest introduced it as a special term in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as related to American states. Wilson has called him the father of "Landscape Designing". (Shoay, 1996) Then, Cullen in the Architectural Review Journal utilized the term and in 1961, he published the book of "Urban Landscapes". (Cullen, 1998). Walerhim identifies this term as the description of the current achievements in the "Urban Development"; furthermore, "Urban Landscape" is now a specialized major derived from "Urban Development and Architecture". (Lynch, 1997)

"Urban Landscape" has gained more importance today as new attitudes and views have been developed; these new views are specially related to the interactive approaches and the attention to the mutual effects of human beings and the environment. This approach further helps people know where they are living and therefore they can read (recognize) their environment; in this way they can optimally regulate their activities. This approach can further increase collective memories and group interactions. Some concepts are defined in the following.

"City Form" includes all the real information of the city. "Urban Landscape" is also defined as objectification of the City Form which the observer and his/her senses can recognize. "Urban Landscape" is the real and recognizable aspect of the environment which has its own form, function and meaning. Potential information changes to actual information which is directly sensible. Images (mental representations) are interpreted in the form of processed information in mind but the Urban Image (Landscape) will remain in the mind after you leave the place. (Pakzad, 2007)

### Principles of Environment and Landscape Reading

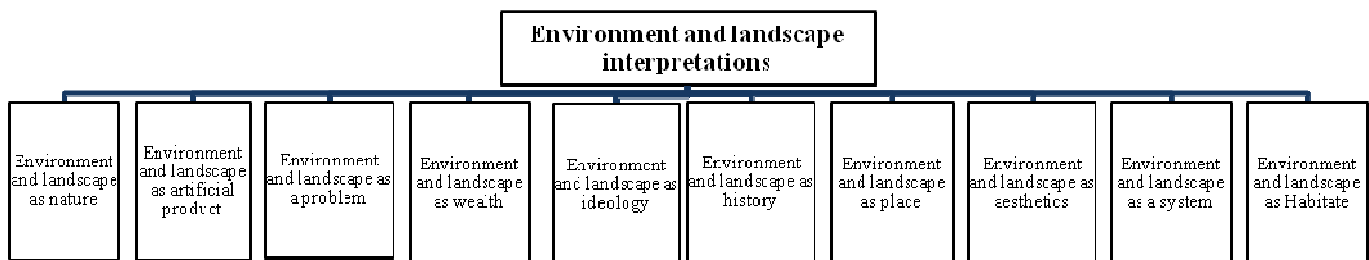
If we want to be more responsible and respondent for "Culture Designing", we have to start with the Culture Biography, i.e. its environment and landscape. To this end, it is better to take a look at the diagram 1 (from Louis):



**Diagram 1.** Principles of Environment and Landscape Reading (Motlock, 2010)

### Environment and landscape interpretations

Mining (1979) in his book entitled as "the Observer Eye: Ten Different Forms of One Landscape" has studied Observer Willingness". He points out that any environments and landscapes are not only located in front of us, but also they are represented in our mind. He proposes an experiment within which a group of people are taken to a place including cities or districts. They then are required to describe the environment and landscape and recognize their elements, composition and meaning. Analyzing 10 different types of recognitions form a landscape, he identifies different tendencies affecting landscape interpretation. He enables us to have a broad understanding of environment and landscape interpretation. These ten views have been tabulated in diagram 2.



**Diagram 2.** Environment and landscape interpretations (Miyning ,1979)

## Behavior

### Definition of the behavior

The way an activity is done is called behavior. Human behavior is the result of her/his motivations, needs, environmental capabilities, the mental image of the external environment and the meaning it has for her/him. Then, any activities under the above mentioned conditions can take different forms and result in various behaviors. Behavior is not the factor of activity but it is affected by time and place and requires the following:

- The action can be conducted in different ways.
- It requires a part of proportional environment.
- It should make an appropriate relation between the two above
- It requires a specific period of time. (Pakzad, 2000).

### Categorization of behaviors

Behaviors can be categorized into individual, collective and social. An "Individual Behavior" refers to a behavior which the person decides to perform because of people's presence around him/her and s/he can do it without others' help. A Collective Behavior on the other hand refers to the behavior which cannot be done without others' help. Social behaviors also can be divided into two broad groups: pro-social and anti-social behaviors. Pro-social behaviors are accepted by the society and they are in line with social norms and rules. This type of behaviors is constructive and promotes the society's aims and objectives. But anti-social behaviors are the negative behaviors which do not conform to social rules and criteria. They are not accepted by people and often have negative social consequences for the person who has done it.

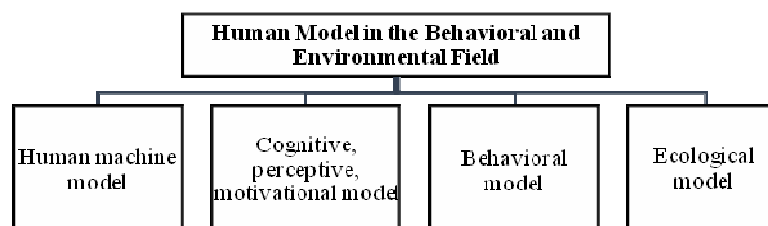
### Behaviors in the Urban Space

Urban behaviors are only possible in the eyes of other people and it's agreeable or disagreeable does not relate to the urban space it occurs in. As an example Pickpocketing is not an appropriate action but is a usual behavior in the urban space. (Pakzad, 2010).

### Human Model in the behavioral and environmental field

Human model the Behavioral and Environmental Field includes human-machine modeling, cognitive, perceptive, motivational model; behavioral model and ecological model. These patterns have been seen in Diagram 3. (Airvene, 2003).

**Diagram 3.** Human Model in the behavioral and environmental field (Airvene, 2003).



### **Environment and Behavior Relationships**

Environment and Behavior Relationships can be summarized in three approaches: a) deterministic approach, b) risk-oriented approach and c) possibility oriented approach.

### **Environmental Determinism, Formal Determinism and Architectural Determinism**

Any change in the environment results in a change in the social behavior and aesthetic values. The geographical nature determines human behaviors and culture and the region plays a less important role in this regard.

#### **Risk-oriented Approach**

The environment possibly has the capability of affecting and directing human behaviors through the works of environmental designers and urban designers.

#### **Possibility-oriented Approach**

If the (economic, social and cultural) conditions are suitable, the environmental designers could affect environmental users' behaviors. In fact, the environment provides capabilities and facilities that people may make use of the.

#### **Place (location)**

Place is a mental structure of time-space experience that an individual achieves using environmental cognition and with ascribing meaning to the events. Place includes all the perceivable things and meaning attached to them by the mental associations. Place is a combination of position, field, prior experiences and mental states. It is a phenomenological concept depending on mutual relationships among attributes and can be perceived through the Gestalt between the stimuli. Place-sense is a spatial and time related phenomenon, i.e. with the individual's movement; we can expect an increase or decrease in the scene and in the individual's feelings.

#### **Place Perception**

If we decide to design healthy psychological Urban Landscapes instead of confusing and strange scenes, we have to decode information and provide an emotional response for the scenes. Moreover, we have to notice that the scenes have physical nature in which there exists a meaning to be decoded. This meaning is a general phenomenon and not a combination of some elements. Having this information in mind, we can perceive a mental structure called Place and we are able to design meaningful and mentally sound places. (Motlock, 2010)

#### **Perception, Reaction and Environmental Understanding**

Environmental Understanding is a process through which one can decode the meaning via hints in the environment. The Effect is the evaluation one conducts on a scene. Perception is the process through which the observer evaluates the mental image of the place and ascribes meaning to it and makes it. Kaplan (1987) states that one needs to recognize the Soul and the inspiration and search within them; and one relies on her/his findings to achieve broader knowledge and meaning. However, her/his ability to process the information and ascribe meaning to it, is limited. (Adibi, 2011)

#### **Human Needs and Motivations**

In order to have psychologically sound designed environments, Urban Landscapes have to satisfy human needs. Since human beings have hierarchical needs, they have two expectations from their environments: first, they want the environment to be perceptible (Kaplan, 1987). The environment further must satisfy the need for security and safety. The second expectation is that people want the environment to provide them opportunities to interact with their environment and satisfy their need for search and enquiry. If these two expectations are met, the person is encouraged to acquire new information and use information to enhance her cognitive knowledge from the environment. (Karimi, 2010)

#### **Imaging Capability**

As a picture is formed, all the elements come together and make an identifiable pattern, in this way the complexity of perception decreases; therefore, imaging will reduce the information load. Mental images and patterns are stored in the mind based on the prior experiences.

## The Sense of Place

All the seen elements in the space including top floor, edge of the space, enclosed elements, and the elements in the frame, are a part of the visual scene; therefore, they are a part of the space. If all the stimuli are consistent with each other and provide a common concept, then the space has a powerful and meaningful sense of place. In this way, the space is considered continuous and comprehensive and it seems that all the present elements belong together. Actually this space owns high sense of place. If the space lacks continuity in its elements, it seems inharmonious. It lacks visual continuity and looks disordered and upset. It spreads the sense of confusion and it lacks the sense of place.

## Materials And Methods

### Participants

100 citizens were randomly selected from the population of Julfa and Zeinabiyeh districts. Their age-range was between " 20-60 ". They were required to respond a 11- item questionnaire on their attitudes towards Urban Landscape in the region.

### Materials

To gain a comprehensive view about how citizens in Julfa and Zeinabiyeh think about the Urban Landscapes in their districts, this study was designed on the basis of Field Research: firstly the researcher conducted a series of interviews with the residents of the two districts. Based on the results of the interviews, a questionnaire consisting of 11 items on the Likert scale was developed and administered to the citizens. The reliability and validity of which were determined. It enjoyed a high level of reliability due to Cronbach's alpha of .85. The questionnaire was also considered valid based on the experts' views.

## Julfa and Zeinabiyeh Districts Overview

### Julfa District

Julfa District is located in the southern region of Isfahan city. Some historically valuable elements and residential buildings are located in this district, all of which are considered as historical sites. This district has an East-West Street called Nazar established in 1935 and North-South Hakim Nezami Street has divided it into four separate regions.

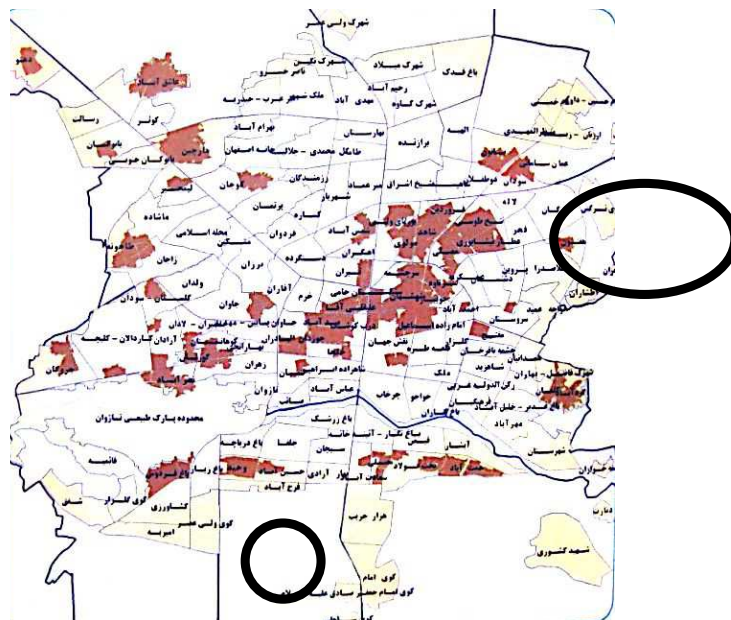


Figure 1. The Location of Julfa and Zeinabiyeh

### Zeinabiyeh District

Zeinabiyeh District is located in the North-east of Isfahan. This region once was a village called "Batan" whose genesis dates back to pre-Islamic era. Zeinabiyeh has two main quarters: Amman-e-Samani and Batan.

### Questions included in the questionnaire

Field methods of observation, interviews and prepared a questionnaire used to collect information of Julfa and Zeinabiyeh areas. Questions are shown in Table 1. The results of their analysis charts are given in the following:

**Table1.** The questions in the questionnaire on the urban landscape and social behavior of citizens

Questions included in the questionnaire	
1	Are you native to this region?
2	Are you satisfied with active business use in the region you live?
3	Are there any parks or recreation centers in your district?
4	Are you satisfied with the parks' and recreation centers' quality?
5	Are sidewalks secured in your district?
6	How anti-social damaging behaviors are monitored and controlled in your region?
7	How do you evaluate the youth's behaviors in your district?
8	Have you ever heard of theft or insecurity in the district?
9	Have you any local councils or active (civil) organizations in the region?
10	Are you ready to improve the old building face of the region with the help of other people?
11	Are you ready to work collectively to improve social and cultural status of the region?

### Results And Discussion

The results of the comparison between the frequencies of responses in the two districts are tabulated in table 2.

**Table2.** Comparison of the Frequency of responses to the questions

Questions	Julfa	Zeinabiyeh
1	Yes: 90% No: 10 %	Yes: 60% No: 40 %
2	Yes:100% No: 0%	Yes: 20% No: 80%
3	Yes: 65% No: 35%	Yes:30% No: 70%
4	Yes: 20% Inappropriate: 40% Left blank: 40%	Yes: 0 Inappropriate: 75% Left blank: 25%
5	Yes: 70% No: 30%	Yes: 50% No: 50%
6	Yes: 70% Average:20% No: 10%	Yes: 20 Average: 30% No: 50%
7	Yes:70%	Yes: 20%

	Average No:30%	Average:30% No: 50 %
8	Yes:70% No: 30%	Yes: 0% No: 100%
9	Yes: 60% No: 40%	Yes: 80% No: 20%
10	Yes: 60% No: 40%	Yes: 70% No: 30%
11	Yes: 70% No: 30%	Yes: 80% No:20 %

The results of the questionnaires' analysis for two districts of Julfa and Zeinabiyeh and native and non-native residents' mental images are provided in the following:

#### **Julfa's Residents' Mental Image**

Julfa is a very beautiful district with old and invaluable buildings (cultural heritage) adding much tourist attraction to the region. Stone-paved road includes a street called Sangtarash-ha (Stonecutters) which excites nostalgic feelings and facilitates traffic and shows the care paid to passers-by. Enough car parks for the automobiles indicates Urban Management attention to satisfy basic needs of the district

Renovation of the old buildings is done under the supervision of Cultural Heritage Organization which is welcome by the residents. Some of the buildings in this district are used for the cultural celebrations including art exhibitions. Native residents in Julfa are familiar with each other since they are of the Armenians minority who are calmly living with the majority of Muslims. Security and safety are observable in the crowded and populated Julfa, although the residents are worried about the increasing willingness among tourists to visit the district and this might disturb the district's calm and secured status.

#### **Zeinabiyeh's Residents' Mental Image**

Zeinabiyeh has not a pleasant appearance and has got seldom amenities, its streets have not an appropriate condition and less attention has been paid to pedestrians. In many streets, pedestrians and drivers are standing together without any rules governing the situation. This can pose threat to the pedestrians and specially children. Wilderness areas have changed to dirty and undefended places and just disturb neighboring residents.

Residents of Zeinabiyeh are immigrants from other villages or cities or the Afghans who have come to this district and made it exotic. Most of these families do no care for the sanitary conditions and social relationships. In this way, Zeinabiyeh has encountered problems with skeletal and cultural aspects and appearance. Many residents are suffering from the bad condition but because of economical impotence, they are not able to leave the place. Despite these conditions, the natives have common social behaviors and come together for doing ceremonial and religious celebrations.

#### **Comparison two districts of Zeinabiyeh and Julfa based on the social indices**

The results obtained from questionnaires have been tabulated and compared in the table 3:

**Next page**



**Table 3.** Comparative Julfa and Zeinabiyeh districts based on social indicators

<b>Indices</b> <b>Districts</b>	<b>Nativeness</b>	<b>Educational status</b>	<b>Satisfaction with the active uses</b>	<b>Satisfaction with the collective spaces</b>
<b>Julfa</b>	90% yes 10% no	54% below diploma 46% above diploma	100% yes 0 % no	40% good 40% inappropriate
<b>Zeinabiyeh</b>	60% yes 40% no	90% below diploma 10% above diploma	20% yes 80% no	0% good 75% inappropriate

<b>Indices</b> <b>Districts</b>	<b>Safety level</b>	<b>Social monitoring</b>	<b>Security level</b>	<b>Youth behavior</b>
<b>Julfa</b>	70% good 30 % bad	70% good 10% inmediate 20 % bad	70% good 30 % bad	70% good 30 % bad
<b>Zeinabiyeh</b>	60% yes 40% no	20% good 30% inmediate 50 % bad	70% good 30 % bad	20% good 50% intermediate 30 % bad

<b>Indices</b> <b>Districts</b>	<b>The presence of local councils</b>	<b>Participation in councils</b>	<b>Sense of belonging</b>
<b>Julfa</b>	60% yes 40% no	0% yes 100% no	65% yes 35 % no
<b>Zeinabiyeh</b>	80% yes 20% no	20% yes 80% no	75% yes 25% no

### Strategic Statements

#### Enabling and Organizing Statement for Julfa District

Based on the conducted analysis and the weak and strong points of Julfa, the following strategies are suggested:

**Social-Access strategy:** to promote identity and quality of the fields for increasing social interactions. Creating religious centers for the Armenians and streamlining traffic.

**Skeletal-Social Strategy:** to repair and restore historical buildings like Vank Church to increase international touristic centres and attempt to keeping the current population and inhibit emigration from neighboring districts.

**Skeletal-Ecological Immigration Strategy:** to restore old buildings and change their use to social service centers like hotels, because this district has benefited from natural landscapes of Sofe Mountain and identity-formation for this district is necessary to divide this district from Zayanderood river's borders. It is also possible to build track-cycling arena due to plenty of valuable lands.

**Skeletal-Use Strategy:** to increase readability and the use of the texture because the district owns famous brands. It is also of importance to isolate different historical buildings and it is also crucial to find appropriate places for the inappropriate uses, because there exists many historical plaques in need of restoration and their use also could change to hotels, caravansaries, and guest houses.

### Strategic Statement for Enabling and Organizing Zeinabiyeh District

The Enabling and Organizing programs aim to involve the government in the social, economic, and skeletal programs instead of mere skeletal programs in the districts, to improve districts' situation by people cooperation. This program must be integrated in the National Planning System, therefore periodical and annual pursuit of realization of the program is possible. Four enabling elements are mentioned in the following while two of which are explained and discussed:

- People's agency in the enabling approach
- Promoting infrastructure and services in the target area
- Strengthening the skeletal and social aspects of the districts in Isfahan
- Localizing program management

Please note that organized cooperation in Iran for managing social and local affairs is very weak. This is specially noticed in the recently established districts because these areas lack cooperative Civil Societies which are established by the old trusted experienced residents. Local Fellowship Councils established in Tehran are not yet established in Isfahan either; the municipality also does not show any incentive to create such Councils. They further lack the potentiality to do so. Then there is no appropriate substructure for the residents' cooperation in terms of enabling and organizing program in Zeinabiyeh. Furthermore, no NGOs exist in these areas. We suggest that an Organizational Office be established in the districts willing to draw the attention of the youth to cooperate in the program.

Localizing Program Management is one of the main strategies to actualize the above mentioned proposal.

### Conclusion

One of the most important discussions in the in the theory of Environment and Landscapes, is the role of landscapes in forming human behaviors. Human behavior is under the influence of ecological powers all over the world. When one pays attention to carefully designed landscapes, and when people cooperate with us, it is possible to create active, various and fresh landscapes based on the citizens' needs and motivations.

If the sense of belonging disappears in human being, he becomes indifferent to any possible damages to environment, the opposite is also possible: keeping and caring the environment will increase both the residents' willingness towards their living environment and also the sense of belonging.

Both districts of Zeinabiyeh and Julfa have the potentiality to absorb social capital. Julfa has performed this process well and has been a successful economic capital. Julfa reminds of order, a sense of peacefulness, dynamism, wealth, readability, modernity and a representative of minority of Armenians. On the other hand, Zeinabiyeh, is losing its native residents. Zeinabiyeh's residents' sense of belonging is decreasing due to its texture weariness and its inappropriate skeleton. This district reminds us of an old texture, crowdedness, disorder, disregarding collective memories, ruined areas, poor people and lower social class.

The main reason why people are highly interested to live in Julfa can be summarized in Julfa's readability, i.e. the mental image that people have from Julfa's location, its uses, its valuable and historical buildings. However, municipal strategies and plans play an important role in this success.

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