Review Article

THE ROLE OF VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS IN THE IDENTITY OF THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

*Nima Sadegh Zadeh[1], Hamed Asadi[2] and Khadijeh Bayat[2]
[1]*Young and Genius Scholars Club, The Branch of Tehran-Markaz, Open Islamic University, Tehran,
Faculty member of Payam Institute of Higher Education, GolPaygan*
[2]*Student of Architecture, Payam Institute of Higher Education, GolPaygan, Isfahan, Iran*
*Author for Correspondence

ABSTRACT
The visual communications can play an important role in improving the urban spaces quality. Today, the visual comfort is the main and basic variable of the human-made environments, especially in the urban spaces. The urban landscape involves the cultural values, and the social environment. So, the importance of evaluating the visual comfort and the role of the environmental qualities in the improvement of the urban landscape becomes evident. In this respect, considering the effective factors of the urban façade can effectively influence the urban identity. Recognition of a subject called the identity of facade, and their consistency introduce the buildings view as one of the elements of improving the urban space quality, and inducing relaxation on the citizens. This study has descriptive-analytic approach, and uses the library method to gather information, and investigated the building façade subject as an identity and cultural debate.

Keywords: *Visual Communications, Identity, Urban Landscape, Urban Identity*

INTRODUCTION
The human is being affected by his surroundings. The surrounding of natural and artificial environment can influence his culture, and the way of his growth. Gradually, this leads to the habit formation of the individuals living in the area. The presence of boring and low-quality urban spaces characterizes the modern urban. This article puts emphasis on the role of the visual communications, and their influence on the identity of the modern urban landscapes. Today, although the building and state industry in metropolitans have been growing and expanding, but one thing missing is the necessity of the influence of the visual communications in the building facade that can affect the urban identity and culture. During recent years due to blind imitation of the architectural styles, the indiscriminate and inappropriate use of materials has lead to disorders in the city views, which lack of consistency has created the turbulence of identity which is quite tangible. Therefore, the important role of the usual communications in the identity of the modern buildings facades is among the objectives of this study.

The Literature of Study
There are extensive researches on the visual comfort and the city view. Of these studies, it can be mentioned the research by Gorden Kallen (1999) in his book titled "The Selection of the Townscape" which has been translated into Persian, in which the townscape is regarded as the art of integrating the vision and the structure of the streets, buildings, and the places that build up the urban environment. Ismail Salehi (2008) in an article, "The Variables of the Visual Comfort and Their Effect on the Environment Fitness" believes in the visual relationship between the human and the environment, along with other variables, to be effective on the evaluation of the environment quality. Simon Bell (2006) in his book "The Elements of Visual Planning in Architecture" regards the understanding of the visual structure in the surrounding world as a source of planning seducing views, and he believes that the ultimate visual goal in the urban planning is to create the balance between the elements, the unity and diversity, with respect to the spirit and the place. Hoda AlaviTabari (2008) in her book "Lighting in the Landscape Architecture" encounters the correct lighting to increase the security and safety in the urban environments. Masoud Motawali (2010) in his article "Evaluating and Measuring the Aesthetic quality in

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the urban Landscape Based on Consecutive Views" extracting the indexes and the elements of aesthetic quality in the urban landscape in the consecutive views of Darabad, Tehran, introduces some models to improve the quality of the city view. Mohammad Atashinbar (2009) in his article "Persistence of Identity in the Urban landscape" studies the factors of creating the identity in the urban landscape, and draws a map of aesthetic environment to improve the environmental quality, and its influence on the urban identity. On the subject of the environmental quality, and the urban landscapes, there are several other researches by other scientists; which, they are indicative of the importance of this subject in the cities.

Study of the View Points of Identity

The Literal meaning

The identity in Dehkhoda's Dictionary has been defined as the personality; this meaning is familiar with the philosophers and the theologians (Dehkhoda, 1955). In Amid's Dictionary the identity is the reality of an object or person, which involves the substantial attributes. The word of the identity means the personality, the nature, the existence and being, and is ascribed to Hoo (He) (Amid Hasan, 1984). In Moein's Dictionary, the identity has been defined as: 1- Essence of God, 2- the existence, the being, 3- what identifies the person (Moein, 1992), i.e. what discriminates the individual from others. Therefore, the identity is not proposed in vacuum; there is necessarily a kind of self, and otherness, and if not, there will be no identification. Oxford Dictionary regards the identity to be whom and what of a person (Gordon, 1999).

The Identity in the Pundits' Viewpoints

The Identity in the Thinkers' Viewpoints: Stewart Hall

He considers the identity in the way of becoming, which are the id and a factor of being recognized (Qotbi, 2008). The identity is a factor of identifying individual from other individuals, the objects from other objects, and the group from other groups. Charles Jencks believes that: the identity is classifying the objects and the individuals, and relating oneself to other thing or individual (Tajik, 2005). In other words, the identity is a vehicle for the integration of the subject. Also, it can be regarded as a layer of phenomena entering to be involved in a community.

Although the identity is rooted in the similarity, it is always related to the discrepancy, too. Katherine Woodward believes the identity is assessed via similarities; the similarities to the humans such as us, and the differences from others who are not like us (Mahta, 2004). So, the word "identity" requires an understanding of two conflicting meanings; the two meanings which conflict each other in mutual concept called the identity.

The two meanings are the similarity, and the difference. The intra-group similarity synchronous to the extra-group difference; this quality which means the contrasting objects is similar to the harmony, and can conceived as «the discrepancy from others, and the similarity to the peers» (Ibid). The identity implies the fact that each phenomenon via some objective and subjective attributes shows its similarities to a group of objects, and its differences from other groups.

Hence, the identity is the factor of identifying the phenomenon while it introduces and contrasts the two concepts of the difference, and the similarity.

The Identity in Architectures and Planners' Viewpoints

The identity is seen as the physical embodiment of nameless qualities the building; qualities which are the basis of enlivening each human, city, building, are original nature, while they cannot be nominated at all (Alexander, 2002). Walter Boor believes that the identity is those small or big differences that make possible the recognition of a place, and the readability of the environment, and causes the sense of attachment to the environment (Qotbi, 2008).

Kaleen emphasizes on the difference of each environment from other environments. He defines the identity with regard to the individual difference of each environment, and avoiding the uniformity and the similarity of the urban environments via featuring out the especial attributes of each environment (Ibid). In Rappaport's viewpoint, the identity is the ability to recognize and identify an element from another element (Ibid). Rappaport provides an intelligent solution for the problem of the identity, and describes

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the public and the private identity, and believes that two type of expressing the identity should be determined (Soanes and Stevenson, 2008).

1- The private identity: the consolidation of the identity for oneself, and the relatives; and, only the informants can identify this phenomenon.

2- The public identity: the phenomena of the identity consolidation should be clear, frequent, and well-known.

To have private identity means having extra-group differences; while, the public identity means having intra-group similarities. Therefore, having identity requires the synchronous qualities of similarity and difference attributes; the attributes should be in a way that urban body, while maintaining duration, be developing, and lead to the creation of a whole, in finality (Mahta, 2004). In the above definition three criteria for the evaluation of the identity are implied: difference from others, and similarity to peers; duration and development; and, unity in diversity. Among them, the criterion of difference from others, and similarity to peers is the fundamental principle; and, the other two criteria are regarded as its subsets. Also, of the last two criteria, the criterion of duration and development is more concerned with the single building architecture; which, by regarding this attribute the city achieves a unity which is resulted from the diversity of elements, and the attribute of the unity in diversity becomes realized.

The Identity and Architecture in the Modern Era

Since the «identity problem» objectifies itself in the changes and obstructions, the passage of traditional society to the modern society, and the occurrence of the new worldview was one of these changes which in the modern era gave rise to many questions on the subject of identity (Qotbi, 2008). In the modern era, the traditional criteria for evaluating the identity were disallowed, and consequently, the question of the identity, and its identifying criteria were proposed (Kellner, 1992). Alexander (2002) believes that «for a time in the modern architecture, the utensil of architecture excessively receives attention; and, resting on a part of human life, i.e. the physical function' ceased the modern movement from creating appropriate spaces of perfect human living, i.e. the lively and happy spaces. » So, the lack of recognition of the life in its full aspects such as physical, spiritual, and mental aspects, and the reflection of such recognition in architecture led to the present crisis in the identity of architecture. Over recent decades, it has been much the more clarified that the functionalist approach creates a schematic environment which is without adequate attributes and facilities for the human's thinking; for this reason, the problem of meaning becomes significant in the architecture (Sommere and Mignonneau, 2008). In the modern era, the physical aspect in everything including the architecture has been proposed as the main objective of the programs and plans; and, the art of architecture has minimized into an object, and building (Neverez, 2006). The human biological unit gain importance. Hence, the architecture famous as «international style» which had been formed in the modern era becomes popular. Choosing the word «international» found «to be without identity», or in better words, the universal identity; the application of the word «international» for the architecture style of the period is regarded as the indifference to the culture of different societies.

In the pre-modern community, the identity (Or self) has never been subjected to any raid, indecision, or shake from another one, and naturally, it has not been subject to collapse and crumble. In these societies, the private identity is stable and consistent because it is defined and supported by the helping systems of predetermined roles, and the historical legendaries. Each individual is a member of enduring kinship system which determines his relations, and interests, and even his present and future fate. So, his behavior and habits are determined in the frameworks of the intended system-which is based upon a limited and closed worldview Mean while, the system frame works, and its constituting worldview determine the individual's future way of living (Mahta, 2004).

The Urban Identity

When we speak of the urban identity, we refer to something that is hidden in the appearance and heart of city, while it may bear no relationship to the shape and outlook of city. In fact, the urban aesthetics is not a reason for the identity of the city. It is important that what goes on inside the city. There are what norms

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and behaviors in the city that gives identity to the city. Since, the identity is a collection of characteristics and attributes that discriminate between a person, or society and other individuals and societies; following this rule, the city also becomes personified and independent. The city is collections of living and dynamic factors, which identity is transmitted over time; and, the constituting elements and factors of its environments such as buildings, tracks and fields are created by its residents' creative spirit. The identity of the city via creating and evoking common memories of the citizens, creates among them attachment, and it guides the city dwellers to become citizens, who are more active than mere dwelling. So, even if the urban identity is itself a product of its citizens' culture, but it influences the process of citizenship, and can develop the criteria of coordination and judgment by the observers and dwellers. The identity is a standard of growth for the city; in other words, when a city or society grows, some of its identity attributes will change while growing, and form a new organization. In this structure, the urban identity should be conceived of as a standard of development, and a factor of improving the environment quality in order provide the backgrounds for the individuals' participation and security. The urban identity should be regarded as a kind of collective identity; which, of course as the urban and district identity will be significant only when it show up objectively in the urban physics and content; on the condition that the identity norm is correctly perceived (**Stem, Robert A.M. Stem Architects and M& Co., 1993**). The urban identity is basically different from the urban shape. We have beautiful cities which may contain no identity factors; or, the city appearance is very ugly, but the social correlations, and coordination give a beautiful formation to city within. When we speak of the urban identity, we refer to something that is hidden behind the appearance and heart of the city, and it may bear no relations to the shape and outlook of the city. In fact, the urban aesthetics is no reason for its identity. It is more important that what goes on inside the city. There are norms and behaviors occurring in the city which give identity to the city.

When we speak of the parish living, the old quarters occur to us. Maybe if reconstruct the old quarters as they were before, we cannot recreate their past identity and formation. The relationship between the urban identity factors can be mutual. The city has no meaning without the human factor. If there are no citizens in a city, it is no more a city. So, when we speak of the city, we are speaking of the human interactions: the interactions between the humans, the human and the environment, and the human and the city. For this reason, the constituting factors of the urban identity shape the human identity [19].

The Visual Communications

Recognizing what is called the visual communication is like learning language; a language which only involves pictures. The pictures have similar meanings for different nations with special languages. The visual language is more limited than the speaking language, but it is more direct for sure. So, the visual communication is a tool of transmission from a sender to a receiver, which has no alternative by any means; but, the primary requirements are the preciseness of information, the objectivity of the symbols, the unique code system, and the lack of misunderstanding. In such a case, it is much easier to communicate more directly with the audience, regardless of his nationality, language, race, etc. In the world of advertising pictures which are at work in the visual communications and information, there are some rules. The rules are a result of researches and review based on the statistical information. Then, the necessity of visual studies which are based on the psychological attributes of the product becomes evident to find the pictures which are related to the logical consequences of appropriate colors and techniques. The presented pictures should be clear and understandable to all; if not, the visual communication can not be ascribed to them; in fact, it should be called a visual chaos, rather than a visual communication. In this regard, we can primarily divide the message into two parts: one part involves the information that is transmitted by the message, and the other part involves the tools of visual conveyance. The tools of visual conveyance entail a series of elements which make the message visible and are: the texture of the shape, the structure of the tool, the repeatable and portable samples. In this regard, the messages that pass on us in different situations can be divided into two groups: the casual communication, and the intentional communication. When the casual visual communication occurs, it can be freely interpreted by the receiver as a scientific message, an aesthetic message, or every other thing. On the contrary, the intentional visual

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communication should be received in a way that reflects its sender's whole message. Each individual has in mind a massive bulk of pictures formed in his lifetime; which, they are actually a part of his inner world. Via this personal collection, the communication is conveyed. In the collection of personal pictures, the objective pictures are searchable. The pictures for many individuals have a common point. So doing, we will be able to choose the appropriate picture, shape, and color to fit the intended group. Each plan consists of makes and symbols; and, it should be points out that the symbols give sensitivity to the plan.

The Visual Comfort
The visual comfort can be defined for the spaces which due to showing more optimum quality and quality of information, can be used more healthily, securely, and optimally, and contain higher official or supervisions (Salehi, 2007). The visual comfort belongs to the main and basic variables of the human-made secure environment because the city, as a place for dwelling and living, is a big home; as, the home should have some attributes and benefits in order to provide the dwelling and living with optimality and comfort, also the city should have qualities to provide comfort, ease, and security. Also, like the home, the city should be warm, friendly, and pleasant to facilitate the possibility of the optimum life [20].

The Façade and its Role in the Identity
The subject of building façade and the construct of the urban body are also a cultural and identity debate. In our city views, there can be seen some clutters which more a result of blind imitations of architecture styles. The indiscriminate and inappropriate use of a material over a period makes it to be destructed and invaluable; which, in our urban bodies, the phenomenon is very frequent. Is it not that in every era the architecture shows the dominant thinking of that era; similarly, it can be said each building view, also, shows its owner's cognition. Today, more than every other time the effect of the views due to the interrelationships between the individuals, and their surrounding, is considerable; and, it can tangibly or intangibly lead to several social behaviors; sometimes, the influence is much that it increases the prices of some areas, and makes them superior to other areas; but, unfortunately, while there is a daily increasing attention paid to the subject of building façade, and the important role that it can play in our time to improve the architecture, in the modern architecture of Iran, it has not yet received appropriate favor [21]. On the subject of utility, the place, and above all the sense of attachment are influential. Accordingly, the recognition of the areas with special identity belongs to the important strategies in the urban planning. The identification of the identity of the areas throughout the city involves the identity of the residential areas in the olden texture, downtown, and the places of the nobility with their visual qualities, and the city view throughout all the urban areas to maintain their values [22].

The urban space as one of the main principles of building the urban fabric has public and social concepts; and, since, the urban planning is concerned with building the urban physics, it will have public and social attributes.

However, the identity of each phenomenon consists of two basic elements: the objective, and the subjective parts. To understand the urban identity both the objective elements of the city, i.e. the physical structure of the city, its economic function, the public places, etc., and the subjective elements of the city, i.e. the dwelling social groups, the social understanding and consciousness, their expectations, and demands the status of the citizenship, the homogenous groups, and the like should evaluated and studies. For this reason, in a give place the observers' feelings will be different. However, when individuals are subjected to a place, there will be main and basic fixed parts. The fixed parts derive from the common biological basis of perception and cognition, common special experiences of the real world, and the common cultural norms (Alexander, 2002).

The Relationship Between the View, and the Visual Quality
The subjects of view, façade, and the planning of view in the process of building architecture planning have always been fundamental; and, this procedure with the least swing has been continuing up to the recent decades in the art of architecture. It was only during the last decades and years of the 20th century that a critical issue arisen about the common perception of view in the architecture planning. Apart from this, the view is one of the most effective elements that influence the building visual quality; such that,

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each individual's primary understanding of the building is gained through the view. The discussion of view in its particular term initiates from the main and principle surface or surfaces that represent the most amount of information about the building body because they are subjected to instant vision; and, the view is produced based on the knowledge of its being on the surface nature, with a thought of marking this property.

On the subject of building view, the experts have proposed some functions such as the security, establishing a relationship (between the inner side and outside, the orderly and the non-orderly, the private and the public, and the natural and the artificial), the building introduction, the decision on a particular direction, …which they are all have a common point: the city, and the urban space. In this way, the building view becomes significant in the urban space, not in solitarily and independence, rather in the synthesis and unity with other buildings in a space such as a street, or square, it will be evaluated and remarked.

Hence, the city view is forms not by a single architecture in a specific time, but rather over times and by many constructors. The city view is not any more resulted by setting along the single building views together; rather, this arrangement conveys a superior concept with aesthetic, topologic, semantic, and even functional and environmental dimensions.

In Dehkhoda's Dictionary, the view means the appearance of something, what is subject of vision, what can be seen from outwards, the outward view of a building, the outward part of building, the building outward technique, and building the mansion view.

Over recent years, after the recognition of the importance of the public spaces and the value of city life, the view has regained importance. In practice, the view distinguished the inner building from the outside, and separates the private space from the public space. The view is indicative of the cultural status of the building constructors; and, it shows the discipline of the building plan, and the owner's tasteful decoration. The view introduces the statues of the building residents to the public. In fact, the view is the appearance of the building, and is indicative of the best status of the planner or the owner against the outdoors. The inner building views are more private; but, the views that open to the alley or the urban texture are more public. Therefore, the building back and front views from one hand show the social status, and from other hand show the special status of the dwellers; so, each building view should both be in harmony with the public space, and express the inner building body. The building view influences the city which it is located in, and the burden of influence show itself in the body of the streets or the squares that building is located in. If a single building view is regarded apart from other buildings view, the urban harmony in its totality is removed.

The conflict between the urban aspect and the individual view expression will be removed when the building is accounted for as part of the city, and it shows multilateral communications with the surrounding environment. The facing the alley, or the street should concord to the consistency factors of the neighboring views. However, they show special characteristic according to the combination of different elements based on their function, sizes, and materials. In fact, the view is not a flat view, rather it can be a «visual» surface for transmitting information, and can tie itself to the modern technological life, and, it can actually reflect a great volume of visual information.

Also, Queen Lynch says on the recognition of the urban quality: "the recognition of a city quality solely is achieved via its visiting by the citizens; the process is carried out through a mental image, and the environmental perception that the people have about their dwelling place. So, of the sensation that affect the individual the colors, forms of stimulation and variety in light, odor, and sound are more effective. It is evident the having a clear image of the environment enables the individual to easily move form place to place. In other words, the characteristics such as readability and visibility will become apparent only in a good arrangement of the urban elements. These factors give quality to human life environments, and separate them from low-quality environments [20].

Gordon Kaleen in his book "Summary of Urban View" represents the objective view techniques, and he believes that the wonder, and the artistic show that we are after do not occur by themselves, and

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throughout the process the effect of the space on the human through his visual ability is more important, and it creates what we call it as «the sensation of space» (Kaleen, 1999).

Christopher Alexander in his definition of the identity in the buildings and cities believes that the main principle is to know the identity of each space is formed by the continuous repetition of a specific pattern of events in that place. The identity of each building or city, more than everything else is influenced by the event that occurs there. The activities, events, forces…are the phenomena that create each individual's life.

The Visual Communication in the Building View (Digital View)

The building industry is one of the areas that involve several different fields, so that its prosperity or downfall will considerably influence the economic indexes of the country. In the technological era, the multimedia industry came to the aid of the construction industry and caused astonishing changes in the major of view technology.

The digital art screen systems have been used only in the inner spaces such as art galleries, and museums in small-scale applications for many years. The first media sign samples were the virtual plants, which the people could influence the virtual plants by touching the real plants (Bell, 2006). Along with the advancements of technology, and the increased quality of the project or pictures, the media views entered the arena of the urban spaces; and, by making use of large buildings as the screens, they were introduced as new tools of planning the urban view; and, a new relationship was established between the digital space, and the world of architecture and city.

The media views generally are either mechanical or electronic. In the more advanced views, the media comes into contact with the collective and private life of the audience, and brings up a kind of audience to form the city view, advance the technology, and quicken the future societies and cities.

The popularity of such screen monitors changes the individuals' way of understanding the city view and architecture. If up to few years ago, the building was seen as a picture by the projection technology, nowadays with the occurrence of urban screen monitors above the building views, they become animations. Now the urban screen monitors as a bed of visual representation in the city view, are employed as tool of transmitting information and communications. Such arts of such scale make it possible for the city to become public area of constant change.

Of course, it should be kept in mind that unplanned employment of the media view technology in from of frequent and non-harmonic media views in the big cities, and the occasional arrangement of the views without integration with urban landscape can create light pollution in the metropolitans. Sometimes the light pollution and congestion appear as the exclusive characteristics of some cities [24].

Achievements of Employing the Media View

Conveying information: In this area, the screen monitors cover a lot of events. In addition, the communication of information can have important functions such as social-artistic programs, or above all, the adverting (AlaviTabari, Hoda, 2008).

The City Symbol: Of the effects of the media views in the urban space are the typicality of the urban space, and its function as a city symbol. The special shape and scheme of the space makes it as an important element of the citizens' collective memory, and gives it an exclusive identity in such a way that many individuals know the space through the media symbols.

Liveliness: the colors, lights, and the sounds make this area of the city very lively (Motawali, 2010). In addition, the diversity of the media views, and ability of projecting different pictures and films add to the spell of the space.

Security: the high brightness from screen monitors creates a relative security, most importantly, gives a sense of security to the passerby so that the individuals dare to pass the space even in the late at night, and they will feel easy.

The liveliness, in the chaos: the numerous media view, and their chaos, from one viewpoint, creates the light pollution, and the visual disorder. The great diversity of monitor screens and their general disorder cause the feeling to aesthetically induce chaos. However, the chaos can be indicative of the great

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liveliness and activity in the field; since it is exclusive to a special point, and is not extended throughout, it can be defended.

The Evaluation of the Media View

Liveliness: the media view with extensive dimensions influences the urban public space very much; it brightens the city by producing pictures full in color and light; it makes city an interesting and artistic area.

The city symbol: this view is observable from far distances and from bird view whether in night or day, and it acts as a city symbol. This influences the urban space readability and memory very much.

Dynamism: This media view like all other media views each moment displays a different picture; so, it conveys dynamism, and variation.

Readability: the different content of projection in the entrance areas, and other bodies determines enter and exit points of the buildings, and makes it easier to find the location.

CONCLUSIONS

Although the media view like other new technologies have some problems, and need to receive appropriate contact and management, but mean the while they create new achievements for the city, which make it necessary to use and adopt them. The available issues of the media views can be relieved by intelligent planning, building harmony, and the digital view. In fact, when the media view is considered as an element of architecture, building, and city view, it will not be very hard to tackle with its problems as a tool of forming the indicated totality. This is on the architectures and city planners to create a reasonable and logical relationship between their expert knowledge, and the modern technologies, and make use of the available potentials to improve the urban space. So, the most important achievement of the media views is their liveliness and dynamism, and the citizens' contribution of creating such symbols so that the most considerable result of the contribution will be the feeling of attachment among the citizens. When the individuals enjoy being in their own urban space, and even more when they are able to influence on their urban space, they will not feel strange to the city for sure. Other important point is that the presence of buildings with media views in the city will make them as urban characteristic point which will help in the readability and locating directions in the intended area. In additions to improving the urban communications, other media views attributes that make the city interesting are: the grace, the introduction of art to the urban space, providing lighting over nights, entertainment and advertisement, and above all the flexibility and adopting rapidly the new streams.

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