

# Urban Identity in the Entrance of City

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**ABSTRACT:** Identity, a series of traits and characteristics that makes a person or a member of the community come to a kind of “recognition” about individuals and other communities; The city also, following the example of this criterion gains character and gets independent. Identity in the city, through the creation and association with “public memories” of citizens causes the sense of interest and dependence which leads the inhabitants of the city toward becoming a citizen, which is a more active level of being just inhabitants. Although the identity is the effect of the culture of its citizens, it affects the process of becoming a citizen and can cause the formulation of criteria related to the participation and judging of observers and residents. Urban identity is a reflection of all the local people’s traditions, culture and aspirations grouped together. It reflects their needs, successes, failures and future. Constricted, the city is understood and interpreted through the technical rather than the sensory, yet it is the sensory from which people build their feeling and emotion. Sensuous requirements may coincide or conflict with other demands but cannot be separated from them in designing or judging urban spaces. The static physical setting, activities and meaning constituted three basic elements of urban identity places. Since place identity is a sub-structure of the self-identity of person consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the world in which the individual lives. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, values, meanings and conceptions of behavior and experience. This study investigates and compares basic elements of urban identity in Zanjan city entrances with using Analytical Hierarchy Process Method and the proposed recommendations for the increase identity.

**Keywords:** Identity, Urban identity, Elements of the urban identity, Entrance, AHP<sup>1</sup> method.

## INTRODUCTION

Identity is the foundation to place attachment and sense of belonging. It is a reflection of people’s traditions, culture, aspirations, needs, and their future. In the past, the local community with its beliefs and creative abilities was an integral part of the design and building process. Consequently, the architectural product succeeded in expressing the identity of this community and maintained elements of continuity and distinction (Shafik & Alya, 2011).

Identity is the glue which binds people together and connects them to place. It is the opposite of root lessens. It brings a sense of belonging, a cohesive force which can be powerful enough to overcome some aspects of economic deprivation and physical decline.

A strong sense of identity can be an attractor, bringing new investment and talent into an area (Watson, 2007).

Identity is a measure of growth for the city; the other hand, when a city or community grows, part of the traits identified in the new organization will grow and change. In this structure, the city’s identity as a factor for the development and promotion of environmental quality criteria to be considered. To provide fields of participation and personal security.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research uses an inductive and deductive methodology, through data collection to achieve a deeper understanding about identity, urban identity, urban identity

elements and Process of identity Creation in Cities. Therefore, this study with the help of AHP hierarchical analysis, makes comparison of the identity in Zanjan city entrances (the road from Tehran - Tabriz the direction from Bijar). Finally, design recommendations are proposed to promote the identity in the entrance space.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Definition of Identity

Identity is “the distinguishing character or condition of a person or a thing. Also defines identity as “the extent to which a person can recognize or recall a place as being distinct from other places” (Lynch, 1981); Like individuals and cities should have character and distinctions. The need for place identity was highlighted by (Relph, 1976, 147). In his pioneering book “Place and Placelessness”, as follows:

A deep human need exists for associations with significant places. If choose to ignore that need, and follow the forces of Placelessness to continue unchallenged, then the future can only hold an environment in which places simply do not matter. If, on the other hand, we choose to respond to that need and transcend place lessens, then the potential exists for the development of an environment in which places are for man, reflecting and enhancing the variety of human experience (Relph, 1976).

Many advantages can be gained by discovering and reinforcing a city’s own identity. Small differences may be

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magnified, special events may be commemorated, designers may seek to set their stamps on projects, and many other motives may encourage efforts to undertake the quest for urban identity.

### Understanding Identity

It is accurate to say, however, that there is not much consensus on how to define identity; nor is there consistency in the procedures used for determining the content and scope of identity; nor is there agreement on where to look for evidence that identity indeed affects knowledge, interpretations, beliefs, preferences, and strategies; nor is there agreement on how identity affects these components of action. At its simplest, the problem is that in social science there is no consensus on how to treat identity as a variable. Not that should consensus but its absence reflects the dearth of work on some basic questions about how to conceptualize and study identity. There are these problems that: If identity is a key independent variable explaining political, economic, and social behavior, how does it vary, why does it vary, and how would one know variation if one saw it? (Rawi et al., 2001).

Identity is one of the essential goals for the future of a good environment. People should feel that some part of the environment belongs to them, individually and collectively, some part for which they care and are responsible, whether they own it or not. At the urban level, the environment should be such that it encourages people to express themselves and to become involved. Considering older cities in general, it is agreed by many theorists that the organizing elements of the city are the districts and the public domain, the street and the square. However, this acknowledgement is in opposition to important trends in contemporary city planning. New urban developments, owing to local economic politics are usually oriented towards creating a monotonous and standard image. Consequently, buildings are designed with little concern for their relationship to each other or for the overall effect of the city. Spaces left between them have become undefined, undesirable, useless and non livable. To change this, we must develop a sensitivity to public spaces; not only in central civic and business districts, but also, and most importantly, in urban and around urban quarters, where the spaces between are becoming more important as densities increase (Derya, 2002).

### Definition of Urban Identity

Urban identity is a reflection of all the local people's traditions, culture, aspirations grouped together. It reflects their needs, their successes, their failures and their future. Constricted, the city is understood and interpreted through the technical rather than the sensory, yet it is the sensory from which we build feeling and emotion. Sensuous requirements may coincide or conflict with other demands but cannot be separated from them in designing or judging urban spaces.

Social identity is basically derived from the belonging to or affiliation to precise categories, ethnic groups, socio professional categories, religions, nationals, etc. with which individuals identify themselves and which generate a group of internal and external attributions that define this identity. However, they appear as axes from which urban identity are formed as a substructure of social identity. The vital

importance of public urban spaces is historical. The image of many squares was closely tied to the great civic buildings located nearby, such as cathedrals, city halls, or libraries. Today, creating a square that becomes the most significant place in a city- that gives identity to whole communities- is a huge challenge. Any place should have its own special character to distinguish it from other places. The most significant determinant of the urban identity is the local urban context that is formed by all elements of the physical and natural elements. Conservation encourages identity since old environments are more usually part of common heritage (Shafik & Alya, 2011).

Cultural identity in contrast to individual identity concentrates on groups or social systems. By that, space is one of the most important preconditions to develop cultural identity e.g. in its function as a symbol, as space, where interactions take place (Friedrich, 1998). The notion of "identity" involves numerous determinants such as those of political and social order (Schneider, 1998). As such, it seems to be a "complex adaptive system". Since cities are constantly changing, and evolving new forms, their urban identity is created through the complex interaction of natural, social and built elements.

Therefore, the urban environment has to be considered from a historical perspective, not merely by understanding historically significant buildings, but rather through the evolution of the local urban context, with respect to human activity, built form, and nature. There were many approaches to the identity- modernism debate.

### Basic Elements of the Urban Identity

The static physical setting, the activities and the meaning constitute the three basic elements of the urban identity of places are (Shaftoe, 2008). The first two of these elements can probably be easily appreciated, but the component of meaning is much more difficult to grasp. Much more focus must be put on the sense of place which is the aura and impression of this place. Meaning and character have more than a purely visual or spatial dimension, and they cannot be instantly achieved by the implementation of a new urban design scheme. Thus the physical component can be understood as comprising nature and the built environment (Clare & Francis, 1997).

Similarly activities can be distinguished as being creative, destructive or passive. Meanings can change and be transferred from one set of objects to another, and they possess their own qualities of complexity, obscurity, or clarity. Since place identity is a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of broadly conceived cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives. These cognitions represent memories, ideas, values, meanings, and conceptions of behavior and experience.

Urban and architectural features could be analyzed according to the previously mentioned elements as follows (Asfour, 2008).

Physical Settings (Table 1 and 2):

- Tendency to look inwards- Architecture of courtyards and enclosed spaces
- The use of geometric shapes and repetitive art (arabesque)
- The use of decorative Arabic calligraphy
- The use of warm colors
- Passive environmental management

Dense Fabric  
 Meaning (Table 3 and 4):  
 Private yet integrated community  
 Religious spirit  
 Activities (Table 5 and 6):  
 Public festivals, fairs and family picnics.  
 Cultural plazas for public speeches and festivals

### Process of identity Creation in Cities

Now explanations to Identifying Trends in a city that has spatial and perceptual broad-scale are presented:  
 What helps to identifying in this city is considering the criteria of architecture and landscaping. Correct proportions and order, in an architectural work, causes to create identity and the double identity for the city.

### The Physical Setting

Table 1: Paired comparison matrix of three entrances to the physical setting

	A entrance	B entrance	C entrance
A entrance	1	3	2
B entrance	1/3	1	3
C entrance	1/2	1/3	1
Total each column	11/6	13/6	6

Table 2: The results obtained from the middle rows

	A entrance	B entrance	C entrance	Middle row
A entrance	0.54	0.46	0.33	0.443
B entrance	0.18	0.23	0.5	0.303
C entrance	0.27	0.07	0.16	0.166

### The Mean

Table 3: Paired comparison matrix of three entrances to the meaning

	A entrance	B entrance	C entrance
A entrance	1	2	4
B entrance	1/2	1	2
C entrance	1/4	1/2	1
Total each column	7/4	7/2	7

Table 4: The results obtained from the middle rows

	A entrance	B entrance	C entrance	Middle row
A entrance	0.571	0.571	0.571	0.571
B entrance	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.285
C entrance	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.142

## The Activity

Table 5: Paired comparison matrix of three entrances to the activity

	A entrance	B entrance	C entrance
A entrance	1	4	5
B entrance	1/4	1	3
C entrance	1/5	1/3	1
Total each column	29/20	16/3	9

Table 6: The results obtained from the middle rows

	A entrance	B entrance	C entrance	Middle row
A entrance	0.689	0.750	0.555	0.664
B entrance	0.172	0.187	0.333	0.230
C entrance	0.137	0.062	0.111	0.103

Table 7: Paired comparison matrix of Entrance weights for the criteria of physical settings, meaning and activity

	Physical Settings	Meaning	Activity
Physical Setting	1	2	3
Meaning	1/2	1	3
Activity	1/3	1/3	1
Total each column	11/6	10/3	7

Table 8: The results obtained from the middle rows of Entrance weights for the criteria of physical settings, meaning and activity

	Physical Settings	Meaning	Activity	Middle row
Physical Setting	0.54	0.6	0.42	0.52
Meaning	0.27	0.3	0.42	0.33
Activity	0.18	0.1	0.14	0.14

Landscape Design and organization of urban spaces are important factors in identifying in cities.

Developing environmental awareness

To strengthen the urban spirit of solidarity in this way helps us to identifying in cities.

In the meantime, the city landscape confusion and destruction of familiar urban spaces and outstanding urban signs and forgetting these institutions various parts of the cities over time will fade urban identity. It is better to point out that here the related organizations and municipalities have great role in maintaining these elements. Now we have to understand which of these elements can act as an identifying and cultural symbol. By Overview into Different cities of Iran and the world we see that different elements can be considered as an element of identity.

### Elements of Identity

Entrance  
Religious Monument  
Hotel  
Bathroom  
Square  
Commercial Building  
Bridge  
Garden  
Tomb  
University  
Tower  
Cultural Center  
Market Places

All of the above-mentioned elements are considered here as an entrance identity element.



Fig 1: Location of Zanjan Province in Iran (Source: Yar-Shater, 2008)

### Entrances of Zanjan City Location

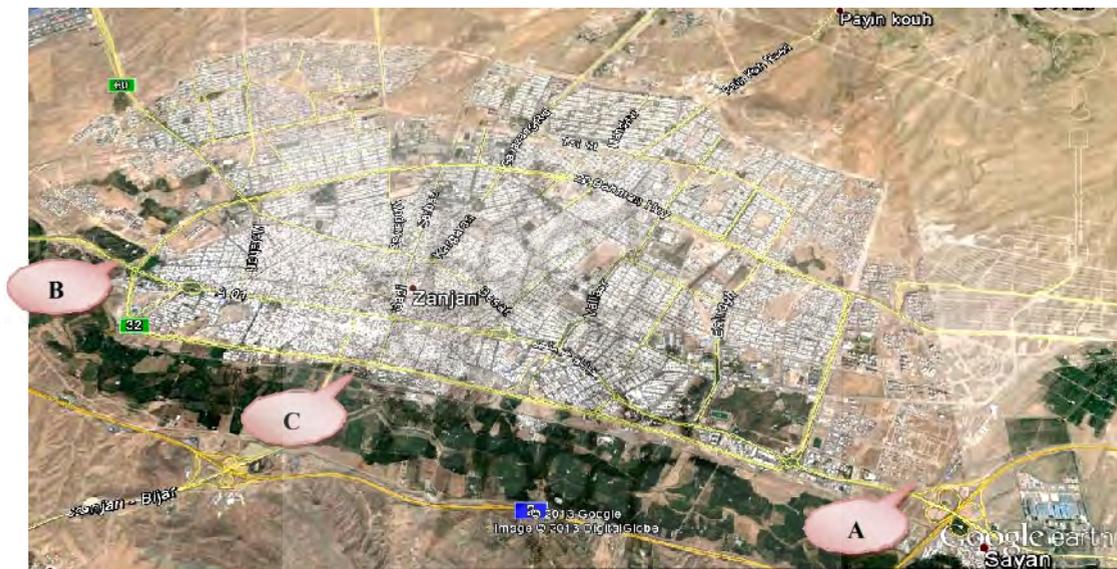


Fig. 2: Location of Zanjan's city entrances (Source: Google earth, 2013)

- A: entrances of Zanjan city from the Tehran road
- B: entrances of Zanjan city from the Tabriz road
- C: entrances of Zanjan city from the Bijar road (Fig 2)

### Entrance

To talk about the entrance as one of the urban spaces can be very large. Today, the entrance gate of Shiraz which is at the entrance of Shiraz is one of the samples. But today with the development of technology, people are traveling by air, train, etc. The other gates have lost their traditional concept. Instead, the airport and the train station can be considered as the symbol of identity. Today the city is designed in an entry form, scale and proportions with respect to the city. Hierarchy of spatial structure and enclosed space gradual steps, and the creation of identity and legibility and preparation for entry into the city to initial recognition, the visual aspect, the body of another observer moving with the speed of the space is input in the design was that the city should consider.

### Case study: Location of Zanjan Province in Iran

Zanjan Province in central and northwestern parts of the country, and between 35 degrees and 25 minutes to 37 degrees and north 15 minutes and latitude 47 degrees and 1 minute to 49 degrees and 52 minutes east of the prime meridian is located (Fig. 1). The province is bordered by seven provinces. from the north to khalkhal from Ardebil province and Rudbar from Gilan province, from north-east and East, to Takestan and Buin Zahra and Qazvin from Qazvin province, from south to Hamedan from Hamedan province, from south-west to Bijar from Kurdistan province, from West to Takab of Azarbaijansharghi, From south west to cities of Myaneh and Hashtud from Azarbyejansharghi province. The extent of the city has not taken into account. The size of the province in 1378 was about 22164 square kilometers and a relative

**Comparison Elements of urban identity in Zanjan entrances with using «Analytical Hierarchy Process Method of AHP» (Fig 3).**

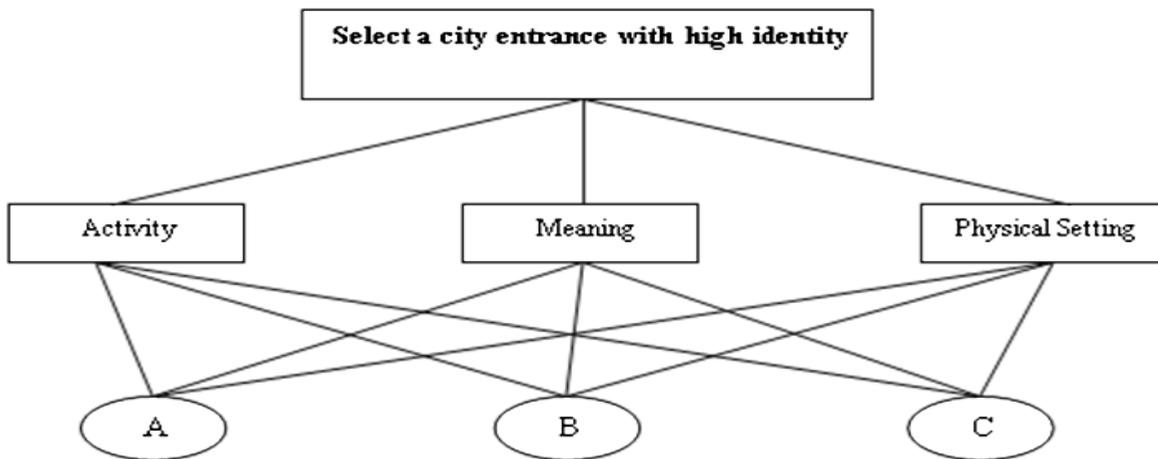


Fig. 3: Hierarchy of entrance selection with high identity

**Calculate the Final Weight Options**

Table 9: entrances weights for criteria

	Physical Settings	Meaning	Activity
A entrance	0.443	0.571	0.664
B entrance	0.303	0.285	0.230
C entrance	0.166	0.142	0.103

final weight of A entrance=  $0.52 \times 0.443 + 0.33 \times 0.571 + 0.14 \times 0.664 = 0.51$

final weight of B entrance =  $0.52 \times 0.303 + 0.33 \times 0.285 + 0.14 \times 0.230 = 0.283$

final weight of C entrance=  $0.52 \times 0.166 + 0.33 \times 0.142 + 0.14 \times 0.103 = 0.146$  (Table 8)

Table 10: The final priority of entrances

weight	entrance	Priority
0.510	A	1
0.283	B	2
0.146	C	3

density in the province is 42 persons per km. Thus, in comparison with the area average of provinces in the country (65920 square kilometers), Zanjan is considered to be among the small provinces in size and the relative ratio of it is 1/34. By comparing three entrances to Zanjan city, it is believed that Zanjan city's entrance from Tehran road (entrance A) Due to final high weight has the Identity features more than other entrances (Table 10).

And Zanjan city's entrance from Bijar Road (entrance C) has the least identity characteristic of the physical settings and fields of activity and this means that it has had less attention. Therefore, the following recommendations are given to enhance the features of urban identity in the entrances.

#### **Proposed Recommendations for the Promotion of Identity, at the Entrance to the City**

Emphasis on the identity of city entrance is possible via the following methods:

Establishment of Some of the known activities which bears the value of identity for the city.

Reinforcement of Functions and using the land which in the minds of the public has characteristics of an accepted city.

Reinforcement of Vision and landscape to one or more elements of natural signs (such as mountains, Rivers, gardens, etc), or elements of artificial signs (such as religious buildings, historical monuments and important streets, etc).

Use of special symbolic forms

Use of the identity elements (taken from Native body morphology of the city) in the total and Components of volumes and Walls of building.

Using the signs and elements which are set up in the entrance of the city that will reinforces the identity concept of it. These symbols can show themselves as posters, billboards or green areas like palm trees

In visualizing of the identity elements (giving the physical aspects of the identity element) it is necessary to pay attention to the following points:

Strictly avoiding the superficiality.

Being innovative, but if innovation reduces understanding and readability of signs, using the basic symbols is better. Different signs should have various designs. At the same time, monotony and spontaneity should be avoided.

They should be abstract as far as possible but being abstract should not reduce the projection to the beneficiaries. (It is really true that being more abstract makes the elements and signs more specific).

These elements and signs should be distributed in the entrance of the city. This distribution does not necessarily mean equal accumulation. For example by passing through visual aspects to mental and finally to physical ones, the accumulation of the elements can increase and more outstanding elements can be used.

Establishment of the elements should be selected deliberately.

Establishment of symbolic elements should be selected in a way that it causes visual sequence and making scales on the way of movement.

On the whole, it can be said that probably the most difficult part of the definition for entry to the city is to select and use conventional instances for the purpose of identifying characteristics of it.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conclusion, identity is a measure of growth for the city; on the other hand, when a city or community grows, some of the identity characteristics in the growth, change and gains new organization. In this structure, the city's identity should be considered as benchmark for the development and a factor to the promotion of environmental quality so that it will provide background for contribution and security of the people. Urban identity must be considered as a kind of public identity. It means that this identity as a district or city identity will be meaningful when it can show itself physically in the quality of the city provided that the manner of the city is understood correctly. The desired urban space should reflect our urban identity through the physical settings, activities held and meaning. Identity could be expressed either through visual abstraction or conceptual abstraction. This leads to a sustainable urban community that maintains its identity.

There are different modern approaches to identity revival as follows:

Design ideas could be developed on the fact that traditional architecture and urban design is an indispensable reference for new projects. This includes a process of "Visual Abstraction" in which it alludes to past architecture in a photographic sense. It decomposes traditional architecture into elements, either at the level of facades or plan types, and then transfers them into projects. The copying is not literal and involves some modification. The end result may be simpler than the original and different in the overall composition, but it must visually recall the historical source from which it is derived.

There is another approach named "Conceptual Abstraction" in which it analyses past architecture in a manner that can yield rules and formulas for the new design. This abstraction is conceptual because there is no direct visual resemblance to past architecture and may reveal modern technology in full thrust.

## **ENDNOTES**

1- AHP method: Analytical Process Method

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