

# Investigating the Role of Old Trees in the Identity of Urban Landscapes; Case Study: Shohada Street in the City of Ilam

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Received 06 February 2017; Revised 05 November 2017; Accepted 30 January 2018; Available Online 21 December 2019

## ABSTRACT

Various factors and elements can influence the identity of urban landscapes the most important of which is the old trees in the urban spaces. It is now for years that the researchers are paying more attention to the shells, walls, and details of the cities in line with the investigation of the cities' identities and, in a smaller scale, to "urban spaces" but they have neglected the importance of the old trees as a valuable natural heritage. The current study aims to emphasize on the importance of protecting and conserving the trees (the old ones) in the urban spaces and the relationship between old trees and such a subject as the identity in the urban landscape in the study area. In order to perform this study, there was a need for a proper geographical ground; thus, Shohada Street in Ilam was selected and the residents and the users were subjected to the study questions. The data required for this study were collected using observations, content analysis, and questionnaire. Shohada Street is one of the urban spaces in the city of Ilam and the existence of the old trees is amongst the factors that are effective and are of great importance in the street's identification. The investigations show that the green spaces in this city have undergone a substantial decrease in comparison to the past years and this issue has overshadowed the natural identity of the city. The present study tries to find answers to the following questions: is there a relationship between the old trees and the identity of the urban landscapes? Can solutions be found for the identification of the cities using the trees? And, how much and in which way do the old trees influence the identity of the urban landscape in Ilam? The results signify that the green space and, particularly, the old trees are amongst the most important elements parallel to the creation of landscape identity in the cities. Old trees can grant identity to the urban spaces and distinguish them from the other spaces and they also make the urban spaces and streets more identifiable and more beautiful.

**Keywords:** Urban Space, Old Trees, Urban Landscape's Identity, Shohada Street in Ilam.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the increase in constructions, considerable shortage of green spaces and trees and the creation of negative 3D environments have caused environmental pollutions and reduced the quality of life. This is while the sustainability of the cities is laid on the foundation of the components constructed in the urban environment and this entails paying of a greater deal of attention to the natural constituents and urban spaces. Urban landscape is one of the branches seeking the enhancement of the urban environment's quality and it is obtained via physical and skeletal instruments and chases functional, aesthetical and identity-related goals. As a vitrine offering the society's mindsets to the outside world and as a ground of the civil life formation, the city establishes a relationship between the identity and the urban landscape as an effective matter in the related fields of science. Since long ago, natural factors have played important roles in the life area of the Iranians and have notable effects on Iranian identity (Karimi Moshaver & Negintaji, 2017, pp. 401-408). In other words, it is now for years that Iranians have had a close relationship in all the aspects of their individual and collective lives with the orchards and palm groves as constantly posited old traditions and phenomena (Bemanian & Saleh, 2011, pp. 61-80). Trying to find the nature and quiddity of the urban landscape's identity for evaluating such a scale as macro-level intervention policies is necessary for today's cities. Considering the fact that the cities of Iran are recently suffering from the quality problems of the urban environment and lack of identity, the high value of the historical and ancient monuments increases to the importance of protecting and conserving them in the first place while many of the urban specialists have neglected the old trees that are valuable and fruitful natural inheritances.

Trees can influence the identity of every urban space like square, streets, and others, as well, whereas the trees and green spaces are not taken into account the way they deserve. The old trees that play an important role in the identification of a place have gone through a complex evolutionary trend to have their current status which in national and natural terms, are equal to the country's historical buildings hence they should be equally conserved. Thus, it is via culturalization and encouraging public participation that the conservation of the ancient trees can be accomplished. The old trees possess value and identity in the urban spaces and can bring about the distinction in the urban spaces from one another. Protection of the old trees can somehow be the conservation of the past history hence it is of an undescribable value and identity for future generations and users (Tafhami & Moharreri, 2014, pp. 7-10). Conservation of the old trees is presently one of the important issues in the area of the urban landscape's identity. Since the old trees have resisted in the course of their long lives against various kinds of bioenvironmental stresses, it is highly important

and valuable to conserve these trees as the valuable reservoirs of every country. On the other hand, the changes in the biological conditions and the emergence of phenomena like climatic changes and global warming, as well, have influenced the life of the old trees. The old trees have witnessed natural evolutions and numerous environmental stresses during their long lives and they can be studied as an alive history. In this article, Ilam has been selected as the study case as a city with coherent natural texture and bioenvironmental diversity and natural identity in the past. Studies show that green spaces existent in this city have been reduced in contrast to the past years to a large extent and this issue has overshadowed the city's natural identity. Shohada Street is one of the urban spaces in Ilam that its possession of the old trees is amongst the factors highly effective and very much important in the identification of this street. However, lack of paying attention to their presence and the effect they have on the quality and identity of the street has caused reduction in its environmental quality while paying attention to these natural elements could have brought increase in the quality and simultaneously enhanced the dynamicity and vitality of this place thereby to create a memorable and well-identified environment. For more investigation, the concepts related to this subject will be defined.

## 2. STUDY BACKGROUND

Old trees are considered as valuable genetic, botanical, cultural and even historical reservoirs in every spot on the planet earth and countless efforts are made for their conservation and persistence. Fortunately, the quality, number, and diversity of these trees are very considerable and amazing in Iran. The appropriate natural environments, people's paying attention to the proper fruit production of the trees, placement in the historical and religious places as well as the special beliefs are amongst the reasons for the exceptional longevity of the old trees. The tree has always been envisioned as the exemplary form and symbol of renovation and return to a unit origin as well as the full-length mirror of the human beings and unique thoughts. Moreover, the tree has been very respectful since long ago before the ancient Iranians. Veneration of some of the evergreen trees or old trees in Iran due to their adjacency to the holy shrines of Imams' Descendents and holy masters, as well, is a sign of their reverence in the Iranian's beliefs. During the third and fourth centuries after Islam, i.e. Samanids' Era, as well, the image and symbol of the tree are axially seen in every corner of the artworks. In Iran, many of the trees, including vine, sycamore, pomegranate, and palm, are sacred. Amongst these trees, cedar was envisaged as the tree of life in that period of time and the image of cedar has been used in all of the arts in a symbolic form (Alebrahim Dehkordi, 2016, pp. 105-114). In a glance at the background of the urban landscape works

worldwide, masterpieces can be found by Andersson (2006), Nassauer and Raskin (2014) and Richards-Rissetto and Landau (2014). In Iran, as well, numerous valuable studies have been performed in this regard. Farshad Negintaji has dealt in his Ph.D. dissertation with the investigation of the role of natural factors in the formation of the places' identity in the city of Yasouj. The results obtained from this study indicated that there is a significant relationship between the natural factors and places' identity in Yasouj and that the natural factors can be seen as one of the important cases for developing the urban landscape. The recognition and optimal use of the natural elements in designing the architectural landscape and prevention of nature's destruction cause augmentation of the identity of the place (Karimi Moshaver & Negintaji, 2017, pp. 401-408). Hamid Mahmoudi investigated the position of palm tree in enhancing the visual qualities and climatic comfort of the coastal walkways in a study (case study: coastal walkways in Bushehr) and concluded that the use of the green spaces and trees can better respond to the general public's expectations of the urban spaces and maximum presence of the citizens in the urban spaces can be accordingly witnessed. Some of the general public's expectations of the urban spaces are: beauty, unity, identity, security and comfort each of which can be enhanced via making use of the trees and green spaces thereby to bring about elevation in the quality of the urban spaces (Mahmoudi & Alimardan, 2016, pp. 43-55). In an article called "the role of natural and artificial factors in the new urban identity", Zekavat points to the idea that the natural and artificial environments have concomitantly led to the creation of the visages of the new cities in a gradual course (Zekavat, 2006). In a research titled "granting identity to the city via taking advantage of the natural elements (case study: city of Hamadan)", Ali Asghar Rahimiyyun (2010) underlines the necessity of being inspired by and using nature in the creation of identity (Rahimiyyun, 2012, pp. 93-104). In another study, Fereshteh Aslani dealt with the investigation of the role of tree as a natural index in the reconstructions following accidents (case study: Bam palm groves after the earthquake in 2003) and points out that all of the characteristics of a city, especially trees and vegetation that are part of the collective memory and identity of a city should be taken into consideration when making plans for post-accident reconstructions. Negligence of the issue can be followed by irreparable consequences like frustration, loss of identity and even problems in the subsistence of the people of the city. It is concluded based on this article that the reconstruction planners can encourage the people's participation and create motivations for reconstruction via designing and implementing programs like public gardens and reconstruction of the palm groves and neighborhood parks following identification of the identity-bestowing vegetation in the accident-stricken region and determination of the damage rates (Aslani, Asadian Zargar, & Montazeriun, 2019, pp. 207-218).

### 3. IMPORTANCE AND NECESSITY OF RESEARCH

Despite the codification and preparation of various and diverse urban development plans, the urban landscapes' identity has been neglected in the cities of Iran by the urban planners and designers and their real position has not been correctly defined and specified. In the investigation of the position of urban landscapes in the urban development plans, it can be seen that one of the main objections to the comprehensive and detailed plans is the extreme emphasis on the physical-functional goals and ignorance of tailoring the urban landscapes for enhancing their identities and lack of response to the psychological, affective, cultural and welfare needs of the citizens. Nowadays, historical and ancient works are considered as having a high value and their protection and conservation are deemed important. Such a heritage is viewed as a fixed and unchangeable point in the plans and projects; but, the urban specialists never look at trees as valuable natural and fruitful heritage while the trees are amongst the manifestations of creature and embodiments of the Creator of the world. Natural, physical and identity effects of the green spaces and natural factors, including trees, on the urban system and their various ecological, social and economic outputs in the structure of the communities are undeniable (Mohammadi, Ahadian, & Azadi Qataar, 2012, pp. 259-276). It is worth mentioning that natural intra-city factors, including trees, are amongst the most important ecological structures that, meanwhile creating public spaces and instigating urban dynamicity, can bring about continuation in the natural processes like weather streams if they are correctly planned (Barqjelveh & Sayad, 2013, pp. 327-350). As it is proved in many of the anthropological studies, trees are metaphors of the individual and social health as well as signs of continuity, memory, and reconstruction (Martos, 2016, pp. 479-495). Therefore, planting of the tree means an effort for continuing and constructing life (Nail, 2018, pp. 48-55). On the other hand, considering the lack of attention in the majority of the urban plans to the city's natural potentials, it seems that the proper application of this place for increasing the quality of environment and urban identity is a necessary and inevitable issue (Johari, Pourja'afar, Masnavi, & Haghghatbin, 2013, pp. 189-204). Purposeful designing of the urban spaces and paying attention to the urban landscapes' identity, especially in the area of the old trees' protection and conservation, can corroborate a sense of belonging in the citizens and cause an increase in their participation in the city. The most prominent important aspect of this study, as opined by the researchers, is the proposition of the concept "landscape identity" with an emphasis on the protection and conservation of the old trees in the area of the urban design that can be posited as a pattern for solving the identity problems of the urban landscape.

#### 4. STUDY METHOD

The present study is an applied research and, considering the nature of the subject and the posited hypothesis, the approach governing this study is “field recording”. The study method of the present study is of combined (quantitative and qualitative) type. In a classification of the quantitative research, as well, the present study is also considered as a survey research<sup>1</sup> wherein use is made of questionnaire for the fact that a set of indices has been evaluated through questionnaires (number of questionnaires and sampling method have been random); Likert’s scale has been employed for scoring the answers. After gathering the required information, the analyses of the information and data are carried out and this stage has been conducted based on the quantitative and qualitative methods. In the quantitative method, the obtained information is seminally subjected to the analysis using the statistical and drawing software packages and the results are given in the form of table, diagram, and map. In the qualitative method, as well, the data are analyzed and the various aspects of the study issue are investigated according to the basics of the theory posited for the examination of various issues such as the present study’s case which is the evaluation of the effect of old trees on the urban identity and vitality and so forth via various ways, including interview.

#### 5. STUDY LITERATURE

Trees are very valuable in the urban spaces and grant identity to them such as the identity that the old trees dedicate to a street. The differences in the trees of two streets can make them distinguishable from one another following which each of them can be provided with a special identity. Even the type of pruning the plants and trees in the urban spaces can induce a special identity to them; this way, these spaces can be given a more accentuated identity by means of trees for enhancing the quality level of the urban spaces (Saidnia, 2000, p. 35). Old trees are more effective in the area of making more memories and they draw a lot of attentions in the urban spaces. Lynch believes that “events can also have an identity” (Lynch, 2002, pp. 74-83). Green spaces and trees make urban spaces capable of responding to the general public’s expectations and they can additionally bring about an enhancement in the quality of the urban spaces. Old trees can play the role of an ID card or a deed in the urban space and bring along the spirit and history of the past times to today’s urban spaces and make the attendants of these urban spaces establish communication with their past and with the history accommodating the old trees in its heart up to the present time. In order to render more exact and codify the issue as well as for identifying the indices related to the variable, the definitions, and scales of the urban spaces, urban streets, urban landscape, and urban landscape’s identity have been investigated.

#### 5.1. Urban Spaces

Urban spaces are part of the open and public spaces in the cities and they are somehow reflective of the nature of collective life, i.e. the place in which citizens are present (Pakzad, 2010, p. 81). Urban spaces are objectivities perceivable by the citizens with the information sent by it not being solely physical and visual information but information that is perceived by all of the senses; thus, the landscape of an urban space includes all of the information available for a space that can be perceived by the senses and subsequently processed in the perception process; urban spaces may also be envisaged as objective-subjective-human-physical-social-spatial structures (Yusefi, Sadeghi, Abdullahi, & Charkhzarrin, 2015, p. 7).

#### 5.2. City Streets

Street is considered as an urban space and an essential element in the spatial construction of the intended city. Today’s Iranian citizens imagine street more as a straightforward car-traveling passageway with its floor being covered by asphalt (Tavassoli, 2007, pp. 41-50). Streets are places wherein the social interactions and urban movements have reached their maximum quality and quantity and filled the citizens’ minds with collective memories and shared mentalities about the type and the quality of city life. The urban streets are replete with numerous and diverse events and citizens attend them for various reasons during different hours so the streets should respond to the needs of the attendants of the space. However, the primary goal of constructing the street currently is establishing a connection between the various points and connecting them to one another. It has to be always considered in designing that the streets located in highly crowded spots with a lot of activities, account for various functions and serve duties other than communication performance (Gharib, 2013, p. 50).

#### 5.3. Urban Landscape

Information about form, performance, and meaning of space as well as about the indices of a landscape is revealed in numerous levels from surficial to fundamental in this process. However, the notions by the experts have always been expressive of two different aspects of this phrase. Some of the experts realize urban landscape as an objective reality while others believe that urban landscape can be defined in the citizens’ minds and from their perspective; another group, as well, knows both of the objective and subjective aspects as distinct properties of the urban landscape and believe, in defining this term, that the objectivity and subjectivity are necessary and enough conditions thereof. In other words, the urban landscape is a phenomenon that is only revealed through human experience and in an interaction between human beings and the environment (Yusefi, Sadeghi, Abdullahi, & Charkhzarrin, 2015, p. 7).



#### 5.4. The Identity of Urban Landscape

As an element that renders the city meaningful for the citizens, the urban landscape can be employed as a factor that causes the creation of a sense of belonging to the place. Favorable urban landscape sets the ground for the dynamic and active presence of citizens in the city and it causes a sense of belonging to space due to having the identity constituents. Therefore, the urban landscape is amongst the key factors in creating identity in a place.

What grants meaning to the identity in urban landscapes is the relationship of today's human beings with their past and present lives that emerge on the cities' context with collective memory and city's mind being one of the instruments of their maintenance or generation. The ratio of the identity and urban landscape can be summarized in four interactions which are per se means for conserving identity in the urban landscape:

- The physical properties and capabilities of the city
- Perceivable meanings and concepts of the city
- Dynamic grounds of time and today's life
- Social life and civic life of the citizens (Atashinbar, 2009, pp. 45-56).

#### 5.5. Importance of Old Trees in the Urban Spaces

"The physical environment of nature is the element constituting the urban spaces and it is the first ground on which the artificial environment is formed. It is evident that some of the qualities of the urban environment are the results of the interaction between human actions and nature's physical space" (Madanipour, 2008, p. 51). "Out of the entire assistances provided by nature to the urban landscape, the role of the tree is surely more accentuated. The interesting relationship between the urban image and the trees has a long history. The idea that the trees have structures like buildings that lead to the creation and interweaving of a plant-based architectural style has been previously accepted but the trees, in their proper position, are considered as live organs the presence of which is pleasant among our residential space" (Cullen, 2014, p. 82). "Many of the urban spaces in the cities situated in the green regions with pleasant weather and discrete and scattered textures have had green spaces. Furthermore, in the cities, the passageways and urban spaces of which lacked the green spaces, one or several important passageways that served recreational and ceremonial purposes and accommodated the rich or ended in the palaces were planted with trees. Chaharbagh Street in Isfahan is a good example of this group" (Soltanzadeh, 2010, p. 75). Vegetation is comprised of growing and changeable elements for which reason it has had diverse effects on the space and caused the enrichment of the space during different times. For example, in autumn, the falling of the trees' leaves paints the space with a different color and/or the trees become more robust and eventually old in the long run. In addition,

God's natural elements fill the nature in the artificial environment (Pakzad, 2010, p. 91).

#### 5.6. The Effect of the Old Trees in the Urban Landscape's Identity

Plants and trees are very diverse and each of them possesses a special meaning and concept and symbolizes a specific topic. Some of the trees and plants are deciduous and some others are evergreen which constructs a different image of the urban spaces during the year for the citizens and causes identification of these spaces (Hdmn & Yazvsky, 2008, p. 114).

The trees are valuable in the urban spaces and grant identity to space such as the identity bestowed by the old trees to a street. The type of planted trees and/or the method of pruning and conservation of them in urban space can be effective in the identity thereof. This way, such spaces can be made more identified for enhancing the quality level of the urban spaces by the use of trees that play an effective role in the identification of the space as components of the urban spaces so that the people can feel sense of belonging to them because sense of belonging is latent in the meaning of identity and it is the result of identification process in its today common sense. Based on the polls, the existence of trees has a large effect on the unity and integration of the place in such a way that the inconsistent and ugly places can be concealed from view through vegetation. "Shading of the walkways and parking lots and streets is also another effective method for cooling and beautification of the urban regions. Trees can be planted in the periphery of the parkometers and/or in the middle of the internal middle lines of the parking garages and/or along the streets. In general, more shade can make the urban regions more comfortable and healthier for the individuals" (Association of America Municipal, 2008, p. 89).

### 6. INTRODUCING THE STUDY CASE

Ilam is the capital of Ilam Province and, in terms of the geographical position, it is located in 46° 26' of the eastern longitude and 32° 38' of the northern latitude. In regard to the geographical location, it can be additionally stated that it is situated in the south and southwest of the country. The city has four regions and 14 urban districts and 38 neighborhoods (Maleki, 2011, pp. 117-136).

#### 6.1. Introducing the City of Ilam

The formation method of the city with its water springs and gardens was summarized to several main streets and a number of auxiliary streets. The lands were predominantly used for gardens and green spaces constituting the current texture in the center of Ilam. About 60% of the city's 20000-square-kilometer area is comprised of hills and mountains with vegetation and forests (Fig. 1). The city's growth has been

started from the center of the city at the side of the water streams and stretched more towards the west and somewhat towards the south and northwest. The central texture of the city is still the cultural, social, recreational and economic heart thereof even with the growth and development of urbanization during the recent decades in its periphery (Heidari, 2009, pp. 20-50). The disorder and confusion in the image of the landscapes in the city of Ilam is the result of the failures in the relationships between the factors influencing the urban physique and has a considerable effect on the citizens' spirits and behaviors and caused a decrease in the environmental quality in the citizens' perspectives



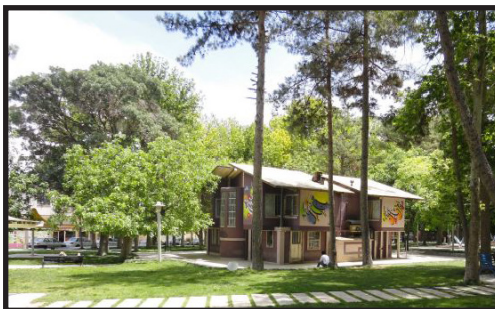
as well as the people's indifference towards the city and being discouraged for improving the status thereof. The shortage of studies regarding the identity of the urban landscape with an emphasis on the role of the old trees in Ilam and, on the other hand, the rapid trends of the destruction of these textures and absence of plans for organizing and designing the city image and, in sum, the effect of the old trees on the urban landscape in the area of the identity of the urban spaces is vividly discernible. Tourists' attraction and tourism development, as well, are amongst the other effects of enhancing the identity of the urban landscape.



**Fig. 1. The Map of Ilam (1948), Old Trees and Green Spaces Existent Therein**  
(www.ilamtoday.com)

## 6.2. The History of the Existence of Old Trees in the City of Ilam

In the vicinity of the main mosque of Ilam, there is a beautiful park that was opened in 1971. The park reaches in the area of two hectares and it is aesthetically located in the urban space (Fig. 2). In its space, there are robust trees in a beautiful background. Due to the proper position, many individuals visit it to use the space's facilities especially during the appropriate seasons of the year (Heidari, 2009, pp. 20-50). The combination of the pine and sycamore trees



**Fig. 2. Large Old Trees in Kudak Park in Ilam**

in Pasdaran route and the alleys that lead to Shohada Street are amongst the most important factors of the identity of the landscape in the city of Ilam and these trees have been existent in the streets of Ilam since long ago and have become a part of the city's identity with ages of nearly 60 years. These trees have caused the creation of a suitable composition of evergreen and deciduous trees in this environment and the citizens can well perceive the temporal changes by observing the sycamore trees in various seasons of the year and discern a sense of greenness upon viewing the pine trees in the urban space (Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3. Large Old Trees in Pasdaran Street in Ilam**

### 6.2.1. Analyzing and Investigating Shohada Street in Ilam

Shohada Street is positioned in the old texture of Ilam and in the north of district 1 of the region 1. After passing the Shohada Square, one can reach the city entrance and Azadi Tunnel in the east and

Modarres Boulevard in the west. Shohada Street has been introduced as an absorbing and distributing route (Fig. 4). Shohada Street has old trees and this dates back to the time of the streets' formation. In the field studies performed on Shohada Street, it was observed that the trees are planted at the side of an old ditch on both sides of the street and this same



ditch is the border between the street and sidewalk. The space in the periphery of these trees is still intact and no designing work has been conducted in the periphery of them for creating green spaces. From the perspective of the view and the urban landscape, as well, there is seen a lot of confusion in the sidewalks and in the vicinity of the trees. The flooring of the sidewalks is mosaic. The urban furniture, like the lamp posts, benches, and dust bins are qualitatively and quantitatively in a good situation in this street.

The traffic and parking of the cars in Shohada Street is very congested and this is due to the existence of shops on this street. Of course, none of the aforementioned elements alone indicate meaning, concept, and function rather it is in conjunction with the other elements that they gain meaning. For instance, the urban spaces are formed with furniture, lighting, floor-working and green spaces and the walls, as well, become soulless without color.

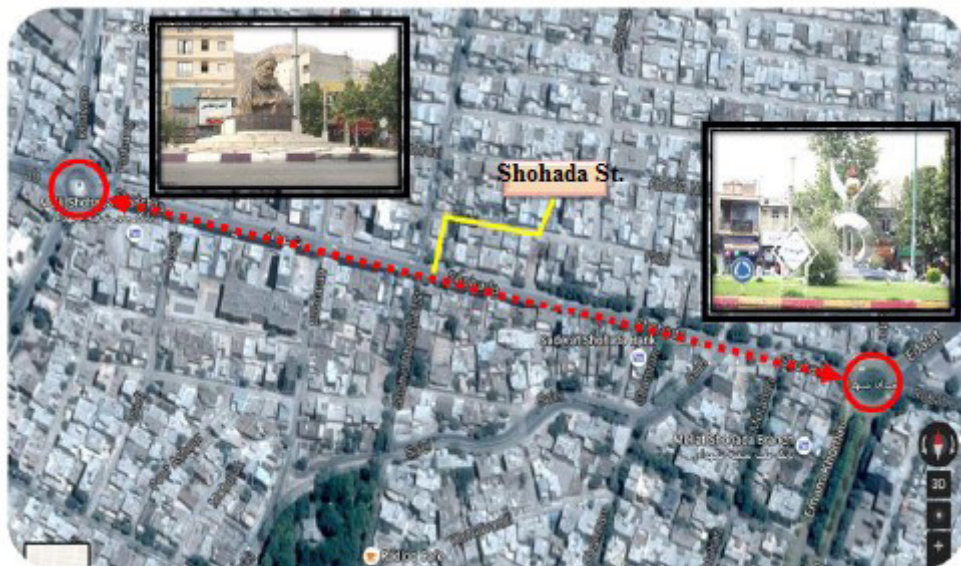


Fig. 4. The Position of Shohada Street in Ilam

#### 6.2.2. Importance of Old Trees in Ilam's Shohada Street

Sowing of seedlings is one of the most effective and most cost-effective methods of softening the urban environment. In order to create a change in the visual identity of the city, the trees should be sufficiently large in diameter and number so that they can be able to create a special view in the city's image. Planting trees near the curbstones gives rise to a continuous shape looking like a green and vertical curtain and bringing about solidarity in the pavement space. It is via organizing and managing the trees in the urban spaces that effective measures can be taken in line with the corroboration of the urban identity and creation of a diverse space for the comfort of the citizens; in addition, the designers and managers of the city can make use of this important instrument for improving the urban spaces like Ilam the urbanization and architectural identity of which is dubious and has undergone changes during the recent years.

In the studied region, the 30- to 40-year presence of the trees has caused them to become the capital and heritage of the city. Thus, they have to be transferred to the future generations; 81% of the individuals present in the polling have underlined and confirmed the existence of the natural elements and trees in the

creation of vitality and dynamicity of the place and the sidewalks' climatic comfort. The old trees existent in a place cause it to preserve its past and old sense even with the new constructions and this has been pointed out by 79% of the individuals. The persons residing the place have demanded participation for the protection of the green spaces; 88% of the individuals have chosen the option "very high" and "high" for protecting the trees of the region and this is indicative of the sensory relationship between the citizens and the place's natural setting and, considering the polls, 95% of the individuals stated that they would choose to have a severe and bitter reaction against the individuals who wanted to cut the trees. This is while the functionalist approach has set the ground for the destruction of them. It can be generally stated that these two parts of the street with their different landscapes and different spatial qualities are reflective of a big mistake made in this city; this is a mistake that will not be corrected even after several generations and does not bring the lost identity back.

#### 6.2.3. The Effect of Old Trees on the Identity of Landscape in Ilam's Shohada Street

Old trees can build the identity for urban spaces. For example, the identity that the old trees give to

an urban space rarely seems to be witnessed through the planting of new trees for the fact that they cannot link the citizens to their past hence they are incapable of bestowing identity to the urban spaces. The lack of small urban spaces through emphasizing the natural elements, especially the old trees, has led to the removal of the happy and cheerful spirits of the past cities. Nowadays, the old trees are being cut with the improper management and implementation of civil reconstruction activities such as the widening of the streets but everyone knows that the old trees are the heritage indicating stability and one of the most important competencies for attracting the audience to the urban spaces. During recent years,

the municipality of Ilam has started cutting off the old trees with the objective of widening Shohada Street. This intervention has caused dullness in the street's space whereas the execution of a more appropriate policy could enhance the quality of the urban spaces and create a tourism path on this street hence contributing to its economic development. This measure taken by the municipalities has been followed by reactions from the people and non-governmental organizations and resulted in the cessation of the street-widening project and part of the trees that were in danger have been saved (Table 1).

**Table 1. The Role of the Old Trees in the Indicators of the Identity of the Urban Landscape**

Indicator	Sub-indicator	Quantitative and Qualitative Indices
Identity of Place	Veneration of the human needs	Paying attention to such subjects as tranquility, beauty, sense of place and security
	Interest rate	The tendency for the presence and using the place through paying attention to the quality enhancement
	Lack of inclination towards substitution	Familiarity of the individual with the environment and feeling a sense of belonging to the environment
Sociability	Feeling pride for space	Feeling attachment and identification with the place
	The ability of welcoming strangers	Increasing the tourism attractions and ability of infrastructures for responding to the visitors' needs
	Participation	The possibility of all the individuals' participation for preserving the urban landscapes, especially trees
Memorability	Sense of belonging	Individuals' satisfaction of the existent landscapes and having a sense of belonging in an environment
	Being accustomed to a place	Feeling comfort by the presence in a place and tendency for presence due to the created sense of belonging
	Experience in the environment	Reminding of the extant memories of the environment's landscape in the individuals' minds
Comfort	Security	Feeling secure against the bad climatic conditions, feeling security against traffic and accidents
	Comfortability	Possibility of standing and pause, the possibility of watching, speaking, and hearing
	Enjoyment	Possibility of enjoying the climatic conditions, enjoying the existence of trees by means of the created landscape

## 7. DISCUSSION

In the following of this research and in order to

clarify the issue, we deal with the investigation and comparison of two parts of the street: the part with trees and the part without trees (Fig. 5).



**Fig. 5. Aerial Photo of the Parts with and Without Trees on Shohada Street in Ilam**



### 7.1. Investigation of the Part with Trees on Shohada Street

- In the intended area, trees have been planted in rows on both sides of the street within a distance from the sidewalk and the street. This same issue is effective in the beautification of the street's image and securing of the spaces. In various seasons, different landscapes have been created that influence the human psyche and soul.
- The goal of planting trees in the margin of the street is more related to the controlling of sound and light and street's traffic for creating a favorable urban landscape and image and enhancing the environment's quality.



Fig. 6. A View of the Old Trees in Shohada Street in Ilam in 2016

- Creation of the shade and the cooling characteristic of the trees is one of their other positive effects in such a way that shade is created during summer and the need for ventilation is lowered and the wind force is mitigated during winter.
- The pollution of air in Ilam due to the aerosols and dust particles coming from the western countries has become a severe problem with very acute outcomes for the citizens of the city. The old trees can be effective in reducing the adverse effects of the microparticles in such a way that it has been observed in an evaluation of the questionnaire results that 88% of the individuals have confirmed the issue and knew about it (Fig. 6).



### 7.2. Investigation of the Part without Tree in Shohada Street

- During recent years, the initiation of the project for widening Ilam's streets, including Shohada Street, is an excuse for endangering the life of trees and cutting them for patching and widening the streets. The operationalization of this goal in part of Shohada Street has led to a solely vehicle-moving route in which the other transportation methods, including active transportation, have been neglected and the

individuals' tendencies for pausing and spending time have been demolished.

- Cutting of trees in part of Shohada Street has eliminated the old configuration that these elements had created alongside one another during years and caused the creation of a negative 3D environment with urban landscape that is crawling with urban problems and blemishes; the sycamore trees can be proper solutions in concealing the problems of the buildings and urban installations' views and creating an environment featuring unity (Fig.7).



Fig. 7. A View of the Part without Old Trees in Shohada Street in Ilam in 2016



### 7.3. Comparison of the Parts with and without Trees

One of the methods by the aid of which one can get aware of the people's notions and demands is a questionnaire that has been used in the present study, as well. The people's ideas have been expressed in

the context of the current research paper. Most of the people attending Shohada Street were shopkeepers and their clients as well as residents. Therefore, paying attention to the satisfaction of their needs and meeting their expectations from this street should be taken into consideration (chart. 1).

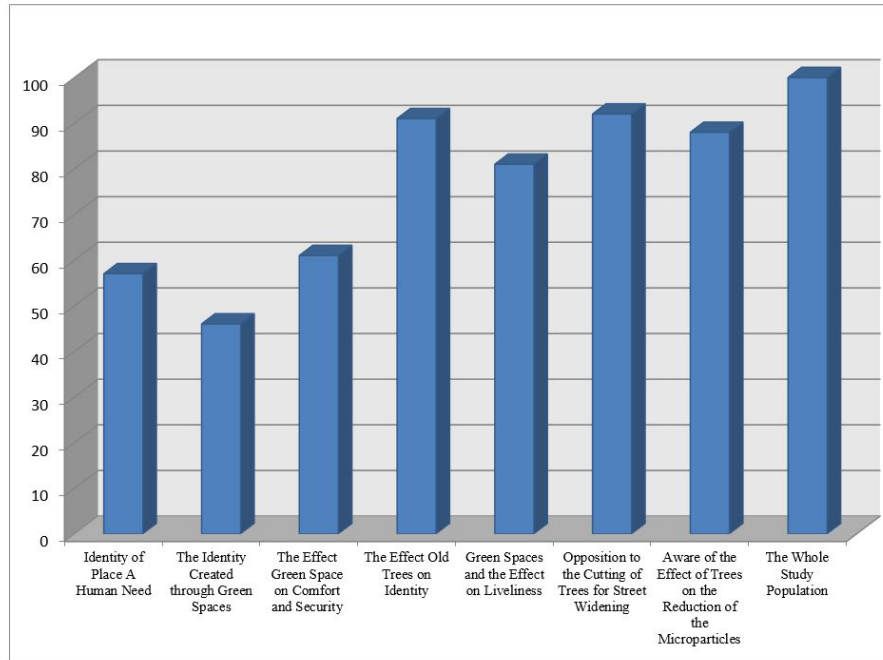


Chart 1. Analyzing the Questionnaire's Results

Consistency with the environment occurs in the long run and with limitations and the existence of numerous factors alongside one another, including old trees, buildings, roads, traffic hours and signs, create an image in the minds of the residents and non-natives and their interrelationships causes the creation of identity. The old residents know the old trees existent in Shohada Street as part of the identity of the urban landscape in this street and feel a special attachment to these old trees and have protected and supported these old trees as valuable natural heritage. The existence of traffic in Shohada Street has caused the widening of this street to be taken into account while the destruction of these old and memorable passageways has damaged the identity in Ilam and these harms might per se be the origin of more substantial damages to the living urban spaces. 76% of the individuals realize the old trees to have a very accentuated role as natural elements of the urban landscape in creating and enhancing the identity hence attention should be paid to them. According to the interviews, the old trees in Shohada Street create a feeling of comfort and security in regard of the urban landscape in the citizens in such a way that 61% of the citizens attending the polling claimed the same issue and asserted the large effect of it on the feeling of tranquility and security. In the studied area, 65% of the individuals claimed that the existence of the old trees has a large deal of effect on the beauty of the place. Most of the citizens consider the distinction of a place from the others or the

very identity of the place as being in the natural elements and trees and 46% of the citizens know the identity of the city's streets as being to some extent related to the green spaces.

### 8. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded based on the materials presented in the present study that, considering the climate of our country, it is necessary to pay a particular attention to green spaces, especially the old trees because the existence of the trees in the urban streets is reflective of the old bond between the human and the nature hence, in order to improve this relationship, efforts should be made for protecting the old trees. The existence of the trees, especially the old trees, grants a special identity to the urban spaces and causes distinction in those spaces from the other ones. The trees make urban spaces and streets more beautiful and render the structures more coherent. Some of the general public's expectations of the urban spaces are beauty, unity, identity, security and comfort each of which can be enhanced through taking advantage of the trees and green spaces thereby to bring about identity in the landscapes.

Shading of the urban spaces is an effective method for cooling and creating climatic comfort for the human beings and rendering the sustainability of the urban spaces (especially during the hot summer days) and

this eventually causes more use of the space and more presence of the people therein and causes the sense of belonging in the people to their city. The effect of the old trees on the identity of the urban landscapes is in such a way that their elimination results in the destruction of the configuration that has been formed during years in the body of the city and minds of the people and coming back to it will be very difficult. The old trees can respond to the general public's expectations better and be a factor encouraging the citizens' maximum presence in the city. The trees give the citizens and region's residents a sense of "identification" and, considering the inharmonic growth of the cities and destruction of the green spaces and cutting of the old trees, it is necessary to adopt regulations that have the required executive power. Any executive measure by the executive branches should be dependent on the protection of the green spaces, especially conservation of the old trees as important factors in the identity of the urban landscape.

## 9. SUGGESTIONS

- Training specialized, skillful and, in the meantime,

committed individuals in line with taking care and protecting these old trees to the maximum possible extent

- Informing people of the favorable effects of the green spaces and existence of the old trees and encouraging the people's participation in their management
- Cooperation between the municipalities and local officials and use of the protective policies for creating streets with special and touristic urban landscapes and eventually such collaborations increase the citizens' support of the green spaces and conservation of the old trees and preserving of the identity of the street's landscape
- Involving the regional culture in the designing of green spaces with trees
- Conserving of the old trees in the streets in line with the protection of the identity of the street's urban landscape
- In case of the need for changes in the area of street widening, these changes should be in such a way that the conservation of the old trees and preservation of the identity of the street's landscape be the main goals
- Planting trees in the margin of the local street for parking and shade.

## END NOTE

1. Survey is a method for obtaining information about the perspectives, beliefs, ideas, behaviors or specifications of a group in a society's members and questionnaire is widely used in this method. The statistics are attained via performing research.



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#### HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE

Molaei, F., Borumandan, M.T., & Gholamian, M. (2019). Investigating the Role of Old Trees in the Identity of Urban Landscapes; Case Study: Shohada Street in the City of Ilam. *Armanshahr Architecture & Urban Development Journal*. 12(28), 157-169.

DOI:10.22034/AAUD.2019.97369

URL: [http://www.armanshahrjournal.com/article\\_97369.html](http://www.armanshahrjournal.com/article_97369.html)

