Rereading (Revitalizing) the Landscape of Abandoned Inner-City Cemeteries Based on Human Components[*]

Rana Amiri[a]- Mehdi Haqiqat Bin[b]**

[a] M.A. of Landscape Architecture, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran.
[b] Assistant Professor of Architecture, Faculty of Art and Architecture, Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran
  (Corresponding Author).

ABSTRACT

A cemetery refers to a special place with a narrative landscape reminiscent of many historical events, and most importantly, resurrection and death. Neglecting old cemeteries will gradually lead to its transmutation. This has caused these places to be forgotten in the identity structure of many contemporary cities and their role to be diminished in the minds of citizens and given a change of use. This study mainly aims to investigate the significant role of human components in the revival of abandoned cemeteries. This study seeks to answer the question, "What are the human layer components among the different layers of the cemetery landscape?" And how to facilitate the revival of the cemetery landscape and strengthen the position attached to it in the city identity structure using this layer by reading and improving its quality. Accordingly, the concepts and layers that make up the urban landscape, especially the cemetery landscape, as a part of the urban landscape with its constituent layers were studied. More attention was paid to one of the layers (i.e., the human factor layer) as the anchor layer using descriptive-analytical research and desk research. Then, the effective components in the human landscape layer (collective, semi-collective, and individual) were prioritized. Finally, the effect of this layer on other layers was investigated for application by analyzing the obtained data using field research, especially interviews with students of Landscape Architecture (those specializing in designing such places), Tarbiat Modares University. The Results section introduces several strategies to effectively revitalize and strengthen the narrative landscape of abandoned intra-city cemeteries.

Keywords: Landscape, Landscape Layers, Human Layer, Cemetery, Value.

1. INTRODUCTION

A cemetery is a landscape with different importance and position among urban landscapes over the years. It is indeed "a long-lasting space-place and a historical-symbolic phenomenon by its social nature" (Haeri, 2004, p. 3). To understand the importance of urban cemeteries, it should be noted that experts such as Lewis Mumford believe that human sedentism began with the burial of the dead and the formation of cemeteries in a particular place. Communities in which the dead were especially honored or buried in a special place were considered sacred. Therefore, they either settled in that place or returned there at certain times. This led to the emergence of some other uses and the conception of the first biological centers.

On the other hand, a cemetery is a place that gives a city its identity. Funeral rites instill in citizens a sense of belonging, historicity, and deep-rootedness, leading to the formation of a common identity among members of society. This is intensified by the burial of the deceased with special social status who are considered as symbols of urban or local national identity (Aghajan Beiglu, 2009, p. 54). On the other hand, although the urban landscape is first perceived by the body and emotions, it is understood by citizen subjectivity. The urban landscape is neither mere memories (inappreciable/non-subjective) memories nor mere bodies (perceptible-objective) but arises from the interaction of the two in the city, an objective-subjective phenomenon (Atashinbar, 2009, p. 50). In light of the above, the cemetery landscape cannot be considered as exonerated (exempted) in this regard.

In addition to objectivity, the sense of belonging and presence of man and the deep connection between man and such a space can be considered as part of the subjectivity of this landscape. The research problem is how to revitalize the aforesaid landscapes by considering its constituent layers, including the human factor layer. This study seeks to examine the effects of the human factor layer on other layers as an anchor layer by rereading and improving the quality of this layer. It should be noted that the reminiscent and narrative identity of the cemetery landscape is derived from the interaction between humans and the objective-subjective components of the landscape. Due to the unique identity of the cemetery landscape, many objective components also have semantic loads and unique codes, which are reminiscent of human values or values with their roots in worldview. Therefore, the human layer is of special importance in the cemetery landscape, considered here as the anchor layer. Given the specific functional, physical, and semantic characteristics of the cemetery, this study specifically seeks to provide a convincing answer to the question: "How can the human factor layer in the layered system of cemetery landscape help revitalize and strengthen the position attached to the cemetery landscape in the urban identity structure through reading and quality improvement?"

In their study entitled "Study of the function and meaning of modern urban form from the perspective of layer semiotics," Daneshpour et al. (X) addressed the different layers of urban form and the relationship between different layers of urban form and coding and ways to obtain codes to read these layers (Daneshpour, Reza Zadeh, Sojoudi, & Mohammadi, 2013, pp. 71-87). In their study entitled "Analysis of Semantic Changes in Urban Landscape Based on the Semiotic Approach," Rezazadeh and Mohammadi (X) attempted to reread three different landscape layers, namely natural, man-made, and man-made (or semantic), and their role in rereading the landscape of Karaj metropolis (Mohammadi & Rezazadeh, 2016, pp. 69-84). On the other hand, in his study entitled "Study of the cemetery from various urban perspectives, case study: Shohada Sohanak Cemetery, Aghajan Beiglu (X) studied the cemetery from different socio-cultural perspectives (Aghajan Beiglu, 2009, pp. 54-58). In a study entitled "How to improve the status of cemeteries from the socio-cultural aspects of sustainable urban development in Iran, Haghir and Shohani Zad (X) examined the important role of upgrading and revival of cemeteries in urban spaces" (Haghir & Shohani Zad, 2011, pp. 81-94). However, what is proposed in this study as an innovative problem is to reread the cemetery in terms of human and semantic layers. The research hypothesis highlights the high importance of the human factor layer in the layered system of the cemetery landscape. It will help revitalize and strengthen the place attached to the cemetery in the city identity structure by reading and improving its quality. The research literature consists of six sections: urban landscape and layered structure, the significance of the relationship between layers and meaning transfer, the cemetery as part of the urban landscape, the layers that make up the cemetery landscape, the human component as the most important building blocks of the cemetery landscape, and the constituent elements of the cemetery. Finally, this study attempts to conclude and provide a solution in relation to the cases mentioned above.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive-analytical methodology. First, the main research concepts are examined using desk research. This is followed by the evaluation of its constituent elements using the field method through interviews.

3. RESEARCH PROCESS

In phases of the research process, first, the concepts and layers that form the urban landscape, especially the cemetery landscape, as a part of the urban landscape with its constituent layers are examined. More attention is paid to one of the layers as the anchor layer. Then, the effective components in the human layer of the landscape were evaluated using the field method,

especially interviews with students of Landscape
Architecture, Tarbiat Modares University. The results
indicate several strategies to revitalize and strengthen

the landscape of abandoned cemeteries in the city. The
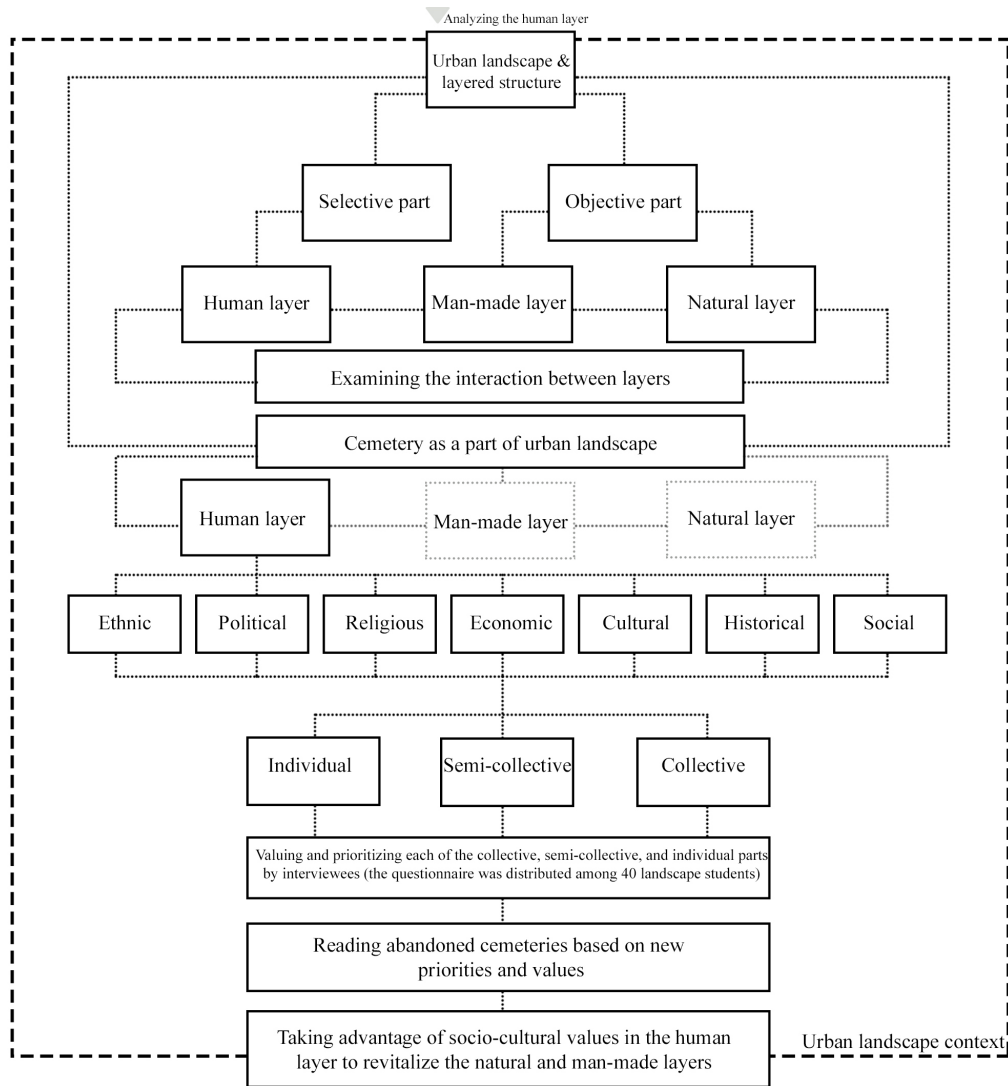phases of the research process are illustrated in Figure
1.

Analyzing the human layer

Urban landscape &
layered structure

Selective part | Objective part

Human layer | Man-made layer | Natural layer

Examining the interaction between layers

Cemetery as a part of urban landscape

Human layer | Man-made layer | Natural layer

Ethnic | Political | Religious | Economic | Cultural | Historical | Social

Individual | Semi-collective | Collective

Valuing and prioritizing each of the collective, semi-collective, and individual parts
by interviewees (the questionnaire was distributed among 40 landscape students)

Reading abandoned cemeteries based on new
priorities and values

Taking advantage of socio-cultural values in the human
layer to revitalize the natural and man-made layers

Urban landscape context

Fig. 1. Research Process

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section first addresses the urban landscape
and its layered structure and then the importance
of the relationship between the layers in the urban
landscape and the meaning transfer. This is followed
by the introduction of cemeteries as part of the urban
landscape as well as the layers that make up the
cemetery landscape. Finally, the role of man and its
relationship with the cemetery is examined. Here, the
human component is introduced as the most important
layer of the cemetery landscape. Finally, the elements
that make up the human components of the cemetery
landscape are discussed.

4.1. Urban Landscape and Layered Structure

The landscape and its layered structure must initially

be addressed. Accordingly, the landscape can be
studied as a means of discovering memories and
reconstructing the historical layers and inhabitants of
a place, as well as public history spaces, which seek
to establish a link between social history and the
public arena to establish a connection between life
and livelihood. The inhabitants of the earth tirelessly
work to write fair and rewrite the illegible ancient
writings of the soil. In this way, interventions regularly
preserve their effects in history and reveal them in
their present landscape. Some parts and layers left
over from the past in the contemporary urban realm
subconsciously influence future developments. In each
graven and rewritten layer, the traces of the previous
writing are not completely lost. This helps discover
the various historical and geological layers involved
in landscape formation. This means rebuilding the

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land, including reviving the past and re-establishing the link between the new future and the layers of the past (Grechting, 2012, pp. 43-55). "The visual aspect of the city is important because it makes it possible to read the environment as a text. Intangible aspects of civic life, such as poverty and wealth, the domination of certain institutions and values, the aesthetic tastes of subcultures, the historical depth of the city, etc., are manifested only in the mirror of the visual environment and urban landscape by a system of "signs" that facilitates a positive or negative evaluation" (Golkar, 2003, p. 96). "Urban landscape is the level of contact between "human" and "urban phenomenon," under the influence of which a significant part of the knowledge and environmental emotions of citizens is formed. The urban landscape reveals the whole city as a "text" and makes it possible to read it through pathology "(Golkar, 2003, pp. 8-23).

Since the general urban landscape (e.g., streets, parks, squares, riverbanks, etc.) includes two categories of factors, namely objective and subjective, it can be considered as the product of the interaction of three components, namely the built environment, the natural environment, and the human environment, formed in two categories of factors, namely objective and subjective (Feizi & Asadpour, 2013, p. 6). "On the other hand, the understanding of landscape depends on the history of presence in the city, which helps distinguish different layers for the landscape" (Mansouri, 2010, p. 32), "and in addition to its physical dimensions, defined in accordance with the three-dimensional coordinate axes, urban landscape carries broad layers of meaning" (Mansouri & Izadi, 2015, p. 44). In view of the foregoing, the layers that make up the urban landscape can be divided into three categories: the physical layer, the natural layer, and the human layer. The physical layer includes structures and open spaces, the natural layer includes land shape, climatic/non-climatic factors (e.g., light, smell, and sound), vegetation, and water, and the human layer includes activities and events and political, economic, social, cultural factors, etc. In addition, two other factors, namely time and motion, also affect the perception of meaning" (Mohammadi & Rezazadeh, 2016, p. 77). Accordingly, the layered structure of the landscape is depicted in Figure 2 below.
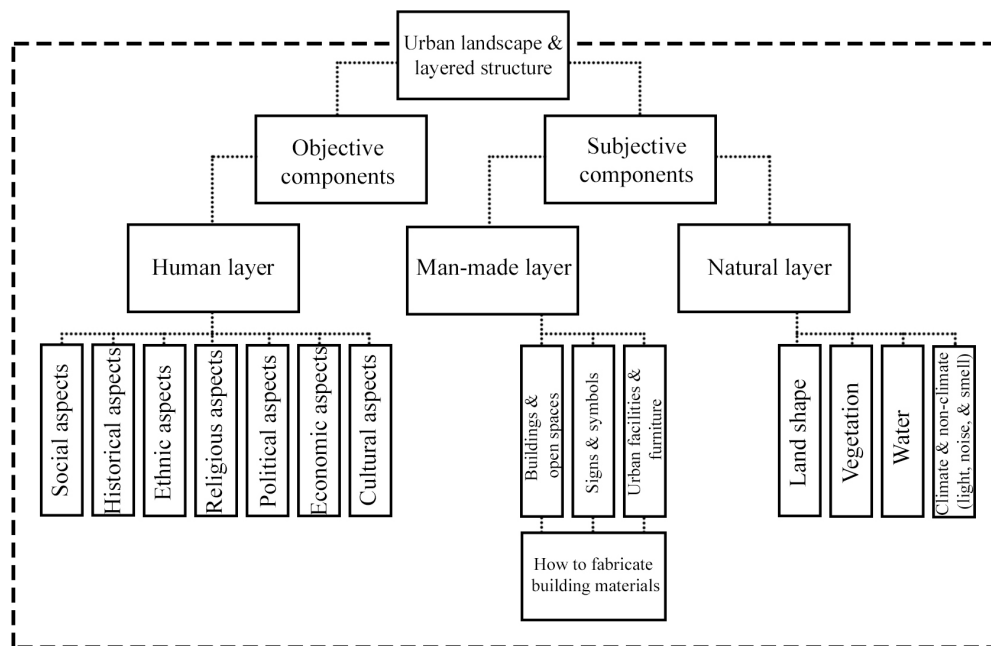

Fig. 2. Urban Landscape Context and Its Constituent Components
(Citing Habib, 2006)

4.2. The Importance of the Relationship between the Layers in the Urban Landscape and Meaning Transfer

The importance of human perception of the urban landscape lies in the fact that "the process taken by the man in dealing with the urban landscape begins with its perception and the capturing of an objective landscape. This is followed by the observer analyzing this process by processing the data in his mind and recognizing it, leading to a subjective landscape. Following cognition, the observer evaluates (as good or bad) according to the criteria formed in his mind over time, according to which he reacts and expresses a certain behavior in that environment" (Mansouri, 2010, p. 33). The study of landscape literature and its layers indicates a tangible relationship between different layers of the landscape so that each layer can affect the structure of other layers. "Despite the capabilities of this aspect, ignoring the interaction of the cultural layers and dimensions of the landscape may lead to a rupture of meaning and landscape decontextualization. Meaning is considered

an important quality in the design of the environment. In every place and space, a spiritual and psychological connection is established between users and meaning through the understanding of meanings, where they can practice self-knowledge and organize their relationship with place. Thinkers and theorists have considered meaning as crucial and identifying quality. There is a close relationship between meaningful environments and socio-cultural characteristics. Since meaning is formed in historical continuity and is projected into the past and the future, it is necessary to create meaning in a given continuum, thereby guaranteeing the construction of identity" (Mohammadi & Rezazadeh, 2016, p. 70). Meaning is read in different layers using different methods. For example, in examining meaning in a man-made environment, Rapaport considers three methods: linguistics (structure), including morphology (socio-cultural relationships) and typology (the principle of space); semiotics (perception), including cognitive maps, imaginative memory, presence in space, and subjective imaginations; behavioral and symbolic approaches from two perspectives: psychologists (environment and social behavior, qualitative norms) and behaviorists (culture and values, the pattern of events). (Rapaport, 2005, p. 35). Semiotics is one of the methods of reading meaning, well-known and popular in many fields. As Chandler puts it, "As a text analysis method, semiotics seeks to analyze texts as structural generalities and to search for hidden and implicit meanings." Semiotic studies focus on the system of rules governing the discourses involved in the texts and emphasize the role of the semiotic context in the formation of meaning" (Chandler, 2007, p. 25). Semiotics (cultural landscapes) are regarded as ways to discover and understand the meaning in the human environment (Aghili & Ahmadi, 2013, p. 1). Therefore, the term "code" can be used in this regard. "In the study of the meaning creation, another component must be present in addition to the concept of the sign, i.e., the 'code,' which allows for reading and interpretation. The concept of code is fundamentally important in semiotics; that is, the meaning of a symbol depends on the code in which it is located" (Chandler, 2007, p. 219). "At the lowest level, codes are systems for interpreting human meanings or communications in everyday life. Most environmental and cultural events carry a range of messages. However, humans are either neglected by humans because they do not know the codes that can help them understand their meanings or be misinterpreted if they are noticed. In other words, according to Saussure, the value and validity of signs is a cultural capability, and the system of signs or codes provides the ground for the realization of meaning. Meanings are activated within the framework of codes" (Daneshpour, Reza Zadeh, Sojoudi, & Mohammadi, 2013, p. 77). The concepts implicit in each design can be identified by receiving the aesthetic, social, and cultural codes of each. Furthermore, ideas derived from architectural codes can be directed. The inner and hidden layers of any design can be interpreted and revealed (Mokhtabad Omaraei, & Dabbagh, 2011, p. 59). The purpose of this study is to examine the layers of the urban landscape, especially a specific layer, and to read the relationship between these layers together as a text with layered semiotic frameworks. Hence, it is necessary to identify and decode its layers. "The urban landscape form and its constituent factors are the objective manifestation (representation) of spatial and non-spatial codes. Textual layers, i.e., the objective manifestation of spatial codes, include the textual layer of natural/man-made factors and the textual layer is related to the non-spatial codes of the urban landscape, including human factors" (Daneshpour, Reza Zadeh, Sojoudi, & Mohammadi, 2013, p. 79). The codes of the components of the urban landscape context layers are depicted in Figure 3.
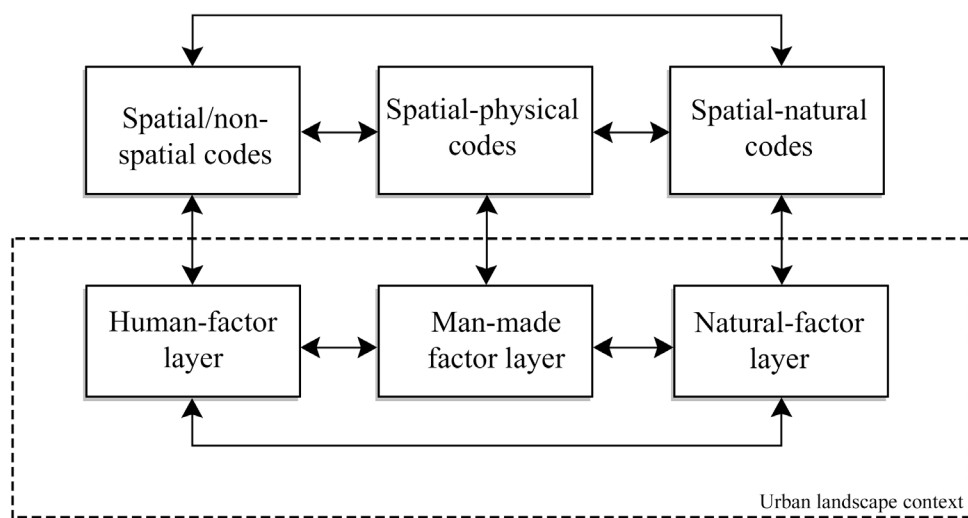

Fig. 3. Urban Landscape Context and the Relationship between Layers and Their Codes
(Citing Chandler, 2007)

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4.3. Cemeteries as Part of the Urban Landscape

Earlier, a brief description of the cemetery was made, an inner-city landscape reminiscent of the distant past. "Cemeteries are considered one of the most common and practical urban spaces. Due to their enduring role in the past and present community, cemeteries can be taken as consistent original landscapes. As memorable and narrative landscapes, cemeteries play a decisive role in preserving the memory and names of the dead. In addition to aesthetic, ecological/ecological, historical, and educational roles and features, the landscape of these sites also plays a social role in modern life. They can enhance social interactions in a space with strong memories. The narrative nature of these landscapes can be reminiscent of national and family identity as well as important aspects of the ethnic-cultural roots of the people of a society and country. Many modern cemeteries worldwide are considered social phenomena because they have turned into spaces with multifaceted recreational, tourism, cultural, commercial, and green functions, in addition to their main role of burying the dead as open urban spaces (Feizi & Razag). Asl, 2009, p. 21).

4.4. Layers That Make Up the Cemetery Landscape

According to Section 4.1, which addresses the layered structure of the urban landscape, a cemetery can also be considered as part of an urban landscape comprising different layers. Accordingly, "in addition to historical aspects (e.g., monuments, stone carvings, family tombs or mausoleum, etc.), they also benefit from natural elements (e.g., man-made and organic vegetation, etc.)" (Mansouri & Izadi, 2015, p. 45). In view of the above, the layers that make up this landscape (i.e., the cemetery) in this research can be divided into the following categories:
1. Layer of physical factors: Here, graves, monuments, and family tombs.
2. Layer of natural factors: Here, flora, including trees and flowers planted on top of each tomb in the old tradition, and fauna (i.e., birds that nest in these spaces).
3. Human factor layer: Here, emotional, political, historical, social, cultural, educational, and other factors. Figure 4 shows the layers that make up the cemetery landscape.
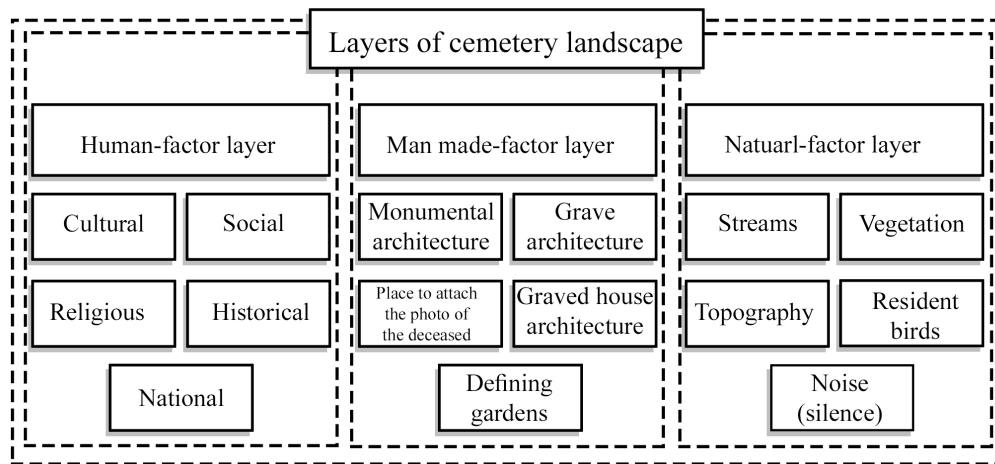

Fig. 4. Layers of the Cemetery Landscape

4.5. Human and Cemetery

Man can be considered an essential component of the cemetery landscape. When one walks to the cemetery, one looks at the signs and symbols of this space, such as the tombstone (fresco art and sculpture), the engraved poem (literature) about life and death (worldview), the tombs, and the whole cemetery space (architecture and landscape architecture) are thought-provoking as a sign of the culture and history of their time. The history and life signs of the buried dead are engraved on their tombs, evoking a historical-cultural identity for this space. Cemeteries are a symbol of society's view of death in its time, and at the same time, certain religious concepts. Hence, the cemetery recounts a load of art, culture, and history for its visitors. In addition, the cemetery space is considered a memorable and identifying place for the relatives and acquaintances

of the dead. The cemetery space inevitably brings with it shared experiences for the survivors" (Haghir & Shohani Zad, 2011, p. 84). In light of the foregoing, it seems that a special place has been attached to the man in the cemetery, which can be examined from different angles. Man is both the creator of this space (burial) and its promoter (visiting the graves of acquaintances and celebrities).

4.6. The Human Component as the Most Important Layer of the Components of the Cemetery Landscape

The layers of each landscape determine the identity of that landscape. Among the different layers of the cemetery landscape, the human layer seems to be the anchor. It is more important than the other layers. Barthes uses the concept of "anchor" for more basic

layers. According to him, some text elements can act as a stabilizing anchor and prevent the floating of textual cues" (Chandler, 2007, p. 287). "The importance of this lies in the fact that in the definition of text in layer semiotics, the text layers interact with each other, and each creates expectations of the other layer. It is possible to receive and communicate if these expectations are met" (Daneshpour, Reza Zadeh, Sojoudi, & Mohammadi, 2013, p. 80). "The human layer includes many factors, ranging from socio-cultural factors to political and economic factors. Socio-cultural factors demand their own space, leading to the creation of different and valuable spaces. This layer includes the socio-cultural characteristics of the people. Political and economic factors, in turn, change the identity of the landscape" (Mohammadi & Rezazadeh, 2016, p. 79). In simple terms, the values of the human factor layer reinforce and enhance the physical and natural elements of the cemetery landscape, even abandoned and unused cemeteries. According to what has been said about the importance of the human layer, the human factor layer seems to be the main factor determining the identity of a cemetery and the identifying anchor of an abandoned inner-city cemetery. Special attention to this non-spatial layer can help identify the landscape and determine the type and shape of the artifacts, as the main layer or the anchor. The following will refer to the constituent elements of the human factor layer.

4.7. Elements That Make Up the Human Components of a Cemetery Landscape

As discussed in Section 4.6, the human factor component in the cemetery encompasses various contexts. However, "cultural values underline the formation and justification of individual and group actions, beliefs, and goals" (Ahmadi & Ghaderzadeh, 2013, p. 37). Culture is a set of beliefs, knowledge, teachings, customs, and values developed by a society based on its own beliefs, according to which society determines its policy (Rapaport, 1969, p. 40). Social values are composed of general models of behavior, collective judgments, and generally accepted norms of practice (Biro, 1988, p. 386). Consequently, according to Section 4.5, the context of "socio-cultural values" seems to play a more prominent role than other human components in this paper. These values can be examined from individual, semi-collective, and collective perspectives. By strengthening these aspects and adopting landscaping strategies to address them, the cemetery landscape, deeply connected to the people of the city through memories, can be revitalized and attract the attention of citizens. Figure 5 shows the constituent elements and dimensions of the socio-cultural values of the cemetery landscape.
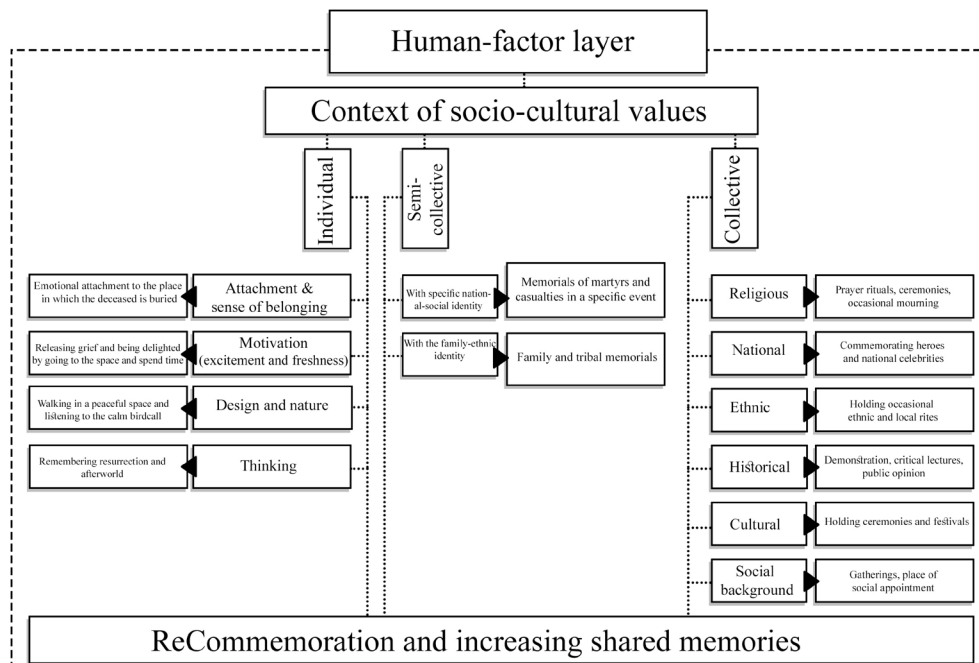

Fig. 5. Factors of the Human Component in the Field of Socio-Cultural Values
(Citing Habib, 2006)

In this study, the required data were collected qualitatively. To prioritize collective, semi-collective, and individual values and their subgroups, a questionnaire was prepared. For this purpose, a sample was selected from the expert and specialized community because the cemetery visitors were not homogeneous and belonged to all strata (here, expert opinion is required). Among the landscape architecture students of Tarbiat Modares University, 40 were selected as a sample according to researcher opinion due to the high homogeneity of the statistical population (the more homogeneous the statistical population, the smaller the sample size can represent the total).

5. FINDINGS

According to the results of the questionnaire of individual, collective, and semi-collective sections, the prioritization of individuals in the questionnaire is as follows. The final results were obtained by inductive and deductive reasoning of the data shown in Figure 6.
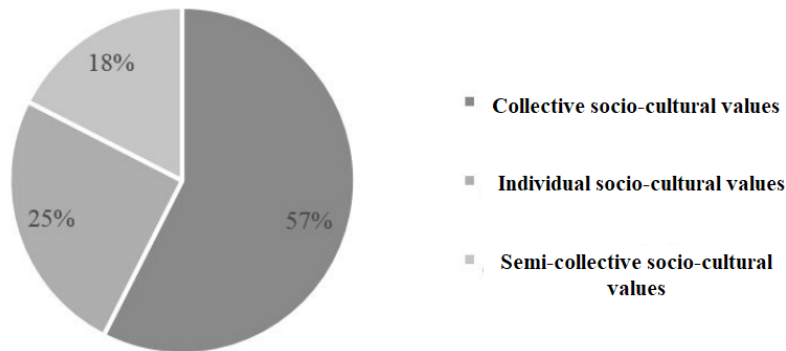

Fig. 6. Division of Different Contexts of Socio-Cultural Values

As demonstrated in Figure 6, socio-cultural values are prioritized as follows: collective (social, religious, cultural, and national/ethnic/historical), individual (interests, motivation, and thinking, and inclination/ nature), and semi-collective (groups with specific national-social identity and specific family identity) illustrated in Figures 7-9, respectively.
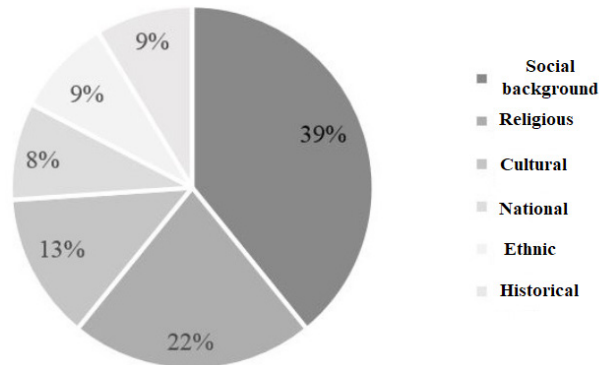

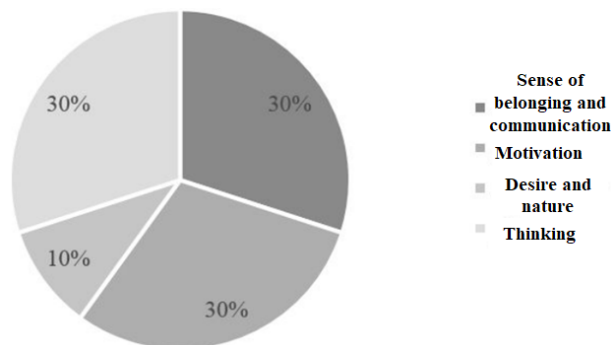**Fig. 7. Prioritization of Collective Socio-Cultural Values**

Fig. 8. Prioritization of Individual Socio-Cultural Values
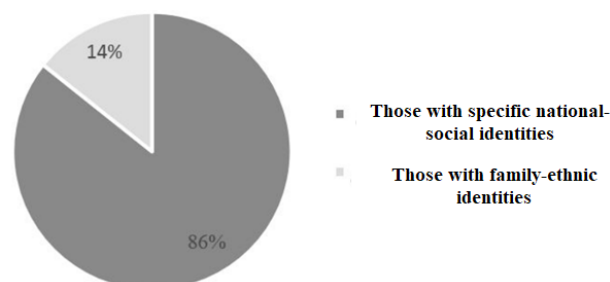

Fig. 9. Prioritization of Semi-Collective Socio-Cultural Values

6. CONCLUSION

Data analysis indicated the different positions of human components, as components of the cemetery landscape, and it's most important component, socio-cultural values (including collective, semi-collective, and individual) compared to other values. Among them, collective socio-cultural values play a more decisive regenerative role compared to the other two values. These values include specific religious, national, and ethnic rituals that can be effective by strengthening human-environment and human-human relationships and creating shared collective memory. Among the constructive and effective components of the human layer, individual and semi-collective socio-cultural values were ranked second and third, respectively. Accordingly, such landscapes can be revitalized as a result of the increasing presence of human beings in space due to individual and semi-collective socio-cultural values. The quality and presentation of collective values in the cemetery landscape affect the degree to which it effectively revitalizes the cemetery landscape. Increasing the number of public spaces that allow for discussion of individual values, learning lessons from death (through thinking), or national, identity, and ethnic memories of the city (semi-collective values) is closely related cemetery landscape narrativity, can greatly help these communities.

Regarding individual values, three factors, namely interests, motivation, and thinking, draw the audience's attention to space. In contrast, in semi-collective values, national and ethnic identities, including the memorials of those killed in an incident or a group of martyrs, play this role. To revitalize the abandoned urban cemetery landscapes, one must first read the landscape context and discover and reread the narratives/values hidden therein (human layer) and then divide them into three categories: collective, individual, and semi-collective. In the next step, in which the collective values are placed in the highest rank and the semi-collective values in the lowest rank, it is attempted to interfere with the natural and man-made layers to highlight the values mentioned above (Figure 10). This model seems to be able to help revitalize abandoned inner-city cemeteries properly and effectively.
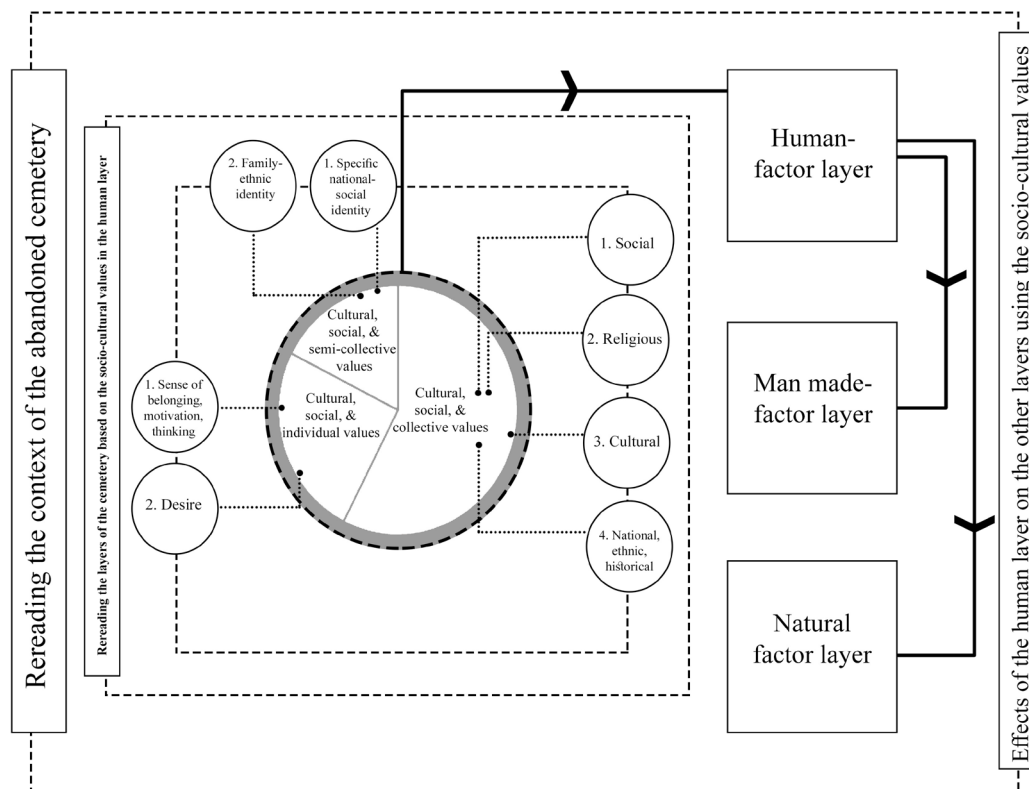

Fig. 10. Data Analysis and Findings

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