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Landscape Approach to Mountain-City Interaction The Relationship between Tehran City and the Alborz Mountain Ranges through the Lens of Experts

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Abstract

Problem statement: There are many evidences which show that the relationship between Tehran City and the Alborz mountain ranges is not favorable. Evidences also indicate that the city of Tehran and its people cannot benefit well from blessings and capacities of the northern mountains. Studies on the relationship between Tehran City and Alborz also show that residents of Tehran have become indifferent to Alborz Mountains. The authors of the present study argue that in difference of inhabitants of Tehran to the surrounding mountains has not happened all at once. With the loss of the mountain's functions over time, this very important natural element has been diminished in the minds of people. Considering multidimensionality of the issue, one of the ways to examine this subject is examining it from the viewpoint of experts.

Research objective and research method: This study sought to explain the reasons for this undesirable relationship through the lens of experts. In this study, thematic analysis method was used to analyze the results obtained from semi-structured interviews with an exploratory approach with experts.

Conclusion: According to hierarchical classification of results, four main theme emerged: (a) the reduction of mental and semantic status of the mountain; (b) incorrect understanding of the mountain and its capacities; (c) objective and physical approach to the mountain; and (d) cultural issues; also the eleven sub-themes were (a) advent of religion; (b) advent of technology; (c) advent of modernity; (d) planning system; (e) partial and merely environmental view of the mountain; (f) economic approaches; (g) mountain accessibility; (h) changes in people's lifestyle; (i) changes in epistemological model of people; (j) people's common beliefs; and (k) reduction of people's belonging, which fall under the main themes.

Keywords: *Tehran, Alborz Mountains, Experts, Landscape approach, thematic analysis.*

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Problem statement

In the past Alborz Mountains used to have many meanings to Iranians due to their many functions and their inaccessibility. In general, mountains have had many meanings in the ancient world and in Iran also, both in the Mithraism period, the Zoroastrian period, as well as the Islamic era. In Iran, due to its natural geography, mountains have been a fundamental issue, and if they did not exist, there would be no water and forests, and Iranian plateau would not have formed in this way. But “for a variety of reasons and with the advent of religion and technology, Alborz Mountains have lost their functions and importance, and the failure of functions has diminished the relationship between people and mountains. In general, it can be said that these mountains used to have objectives and mental functions in the past and have gradually lost their semantic and mental functions” (Dariush & Atashinbar, 2018). It can be said that currently, “the only relationship between people and the mountain is an objective relationship with a recreational and sporting function which is only limited to holidays” (Dariush & Taghavian, 2019).

As it is stated in Tehran Landscape Atlas: “Three distinct elements of mountain, foothills, and desert have formed the landscape and natural, social, and cultural environment of the region and have led it: from top to bottom, from coldness to warmth, and from summer-quarter (Yeqlaq) to winter-quarter (Qishlaq). Cities and villages are placed between these two poles on the foothills and human activities have been established in the same distance. The contrast between mountains (Yeqlaq) and desert, and even between north and south of the city, allows preventing emergence of acute conditions at any season. The dramatic contrast between climates of different seasons is ultimately pleasing and allows activities whether in agriculture or recreation to be highly diverse” (Habibi & Hourcade, 2005).

These mountains have also affected the development of Tehran’s spatial structure. “The foundation of the city of Tehran, based on a vertical axis linking the

old city in proximity of the market to the hills full of trees and cool weather of Shemiran in the central Alborz foothills, has followed a long-standing ecological logic that, from the beginning, has governed emergence and then development of the city” (Hourcade, 2009).

In Master Plans of Tehran in 1968 and 2006, much emphasis has been placed on the attention to the Alborz Mountains as identity-creating and nostalgic landscape elements, but in practice, no attention has been paid to them. There have also been numerous studies at national and international level showing that proximity of a natural element such as a mountain creates many opportunities for a city. Therefore, it can be said that Alborz Mountains currently have many capacities that can alleviate many problems of Tehran City but no attention is paid to them. “Studies have shown that with the advent of technology, the symbolic and mythical and sometimes ecological features of mountain and thousands of years of interactions between people and mountains have been forgotten, and in urban planning, mountain is merely considered a natural element and, at best and most advanced view, it is a natural environment” (Dariush, 2016). Lack of attention to mountain has made people indifferent to the destruction of mountains, too. For example, one of the main mountains of Bibi Shahrbanoo has been occupied by the cement factory and people have not protested to it at all, and even recently a word called “mountain-grabbing” has been invented meaning the city’s invading mountain’s privacy. “The head of the Department of Land Affairs announced the emergence of a phenomenon called “mountain-grabbing” around the city of Tehran in addition to land-grabbing and said: if this process is not ended strictly, it would threaten the country’s food security and natural resources” (Mashreq News, 2014). This process of lack of attention to Alborz Mountains has gone so far as we can see in some scientific sources that Alborz Mountains -that once were the source of water and life- now are announced as the cause of pollution in the city of Tehran: “Alborz

Mountains in the north and northeast of the city, as a barrier, block the western winds and cause all pollutants remain in the city” (Safavi & Alijani, 2006). “Due to the existence of mountains that are located as a barrier in front of these flows, and severe atmospheric stability, pollutants accumulate in a thin surface layer over the city of Tehran” (Naghavi, 2011).

Therefore, the main concern is ignoring the mountain and neglecting its capacities or in other words, reducing the emotional relationship between people and the mountains. Functions of the mountain have changed for people over time, and mountains no longer have their past meaning for people, and most of historical functions of the mountain for people in the past have now disappeared or are ignored. “However, this does not mean that now the mountain does not mean much to people, but people’s ignorance of mountains shows that new meanings of mountain are not strong enough in the minds of people to stimulate them to demand and question the destruction of mountains and lack of attention of local government to mandatory guidelines of paying attention to the mountains such as urban Master Plans” (Dariush & Taghavian, 2019).

In order to find new solutions to revitalize the role of Alborz Mountains for people and city of Tehran, it is important to find the factors that have caused the relationship between inhabitants of Alborz foothills and the mountains, with all their importance, to become as it is now. This means that the more we can find the reasons for failure of this relationship, the better we can discuss the current relationship and explain how it should be. One of the important ways to find these reasons is to examine experts’ opinions in this area to clarify the dimensions of the issue.

Given that this study was novel and its emphasis was on an exploratory approach, authors sought to clarify the issue as much as possible through the lens of experts, by asking this question: What are the factors that have caused the current relationship between Alborz Mountains and the city of Tehran to be as it is (undesirable)?

Literature review

Some previous studies have shown that the Alborz Mountains have great opportunities and importance for Tehran, but these advantages have remained neglected:

A study entitled “Urban edges; studying the role of edges in the realization of landscape goals” has examined the role of urban edges in citizens’ mentality, and has introduced the Alborz Mountains as one of the most important identity-creating edges of Tehran (Yarahmadi, 2010).

A study titled “Visibility of the identity-providing element of landscape” considers Damavand Peaks and the Alborz Mountains as the main components of landscapes and strategic landmarks of Tehran and as a special opportunity for the city of Tehran that no planning has been done for paying attention to these elements (Alehashemi, 2014).

A study entitled “Capacities of Bibi Shahrbanoo Mountain landscape” showed that Bibi Shahrbanoo Mountains have been one of the highly important geographical, historical and human elements for Ray residents but have lost their function and have been separated from the city (Khajepiri, 2014).

Other studies have also sought to find out the reason for the indifference of people to Tehran to the Alborz Mountains and ignorance of the status and capacity of the Alborz Mountains for Tehran. For example:

A study entitled “Alborz Mountain in Tehran’s Master Plan” considered lack of attention to mental functions, emphasis on mountain body, and view of it as an environment as the reasons for lack of enough attention to the mountains in planning and actions of the Master Plan (Dariush, 2016).

A study titled “Mountain Landscape in Persian Modern Poetry”, which aimed to find the status of mountain in Persian Modern poetry, considered two main reasons of breaking the traditions and changing the worldview as the factors of change in the certain meanings of the term mountain in Persian new poetry (Dariush & Atashinbar, 2018).

A study titled “Position of mountain in Iranian literature over time and the impact of modernity

on it” emphasized the issue that in the past, mountain used to be an objective and subjective (landscape) and a cultural and semantic element for Iranians, and as other semantic elements, it has not been safe since the advent of modernity to Iran, such that many pioneering intellectuals and politicians at that time believed that traditions were the cause of Iran’s backwardness.

It can be understood that the ground for reduction of the psychological and spiritual role of mountain has been created sooner than the advent of modern culture to Iran and its reason has been the reduction of cultural reproduction power in the society of that period (Dariush & Motedayen, 2019).

Moreover, regarding the reasons for the indifference to and reduction of attention to environments, Barati and Dariush in their recent study on the factors affecting people’s indifference to nature, have generally classified them into the following categories:

The first category includes studies which deal with the role of religion, traditions and ethics in the face of environmental issues; the second category includes those which deal with the role of recognition and awareness of the environment and its related issues; the third category of studies deals with the role of beliefs and attitudes toward environment; the fourth category addresses the destructive role of neo-capitalist thinking and its impact on the environment; the fifth category deals with the status of government and politicians; and the sixth category deals with the effects of increased income, education, and economic prosperity on the attention to environmental issues. In other classifications, the role of culture and social norms, the role of public participation and responsibility for environmental issues, as well as the impact of environmental belonging on its conservation and maintenance has been addressed. The last category that is relevant to one study refers to the involuntary response of an individual to environmental issues arising from his anxiety and concern (Barati & Dariush, in press).

Theoretical Foundations

The relationship between Iranians and natural

elements is different from that of Westerners, and consequently, the reasons for failure of this relationship are also different from those proposed in Western theories. On the other hand, it is important to note that mountain for Iranians had not been a merely objective environment and nature. The holistic approach to landscape whose concepts have come from the West, can be used as a conceptual ground in theoretical foundations.

The European Landscape Convention in a broad definition considers landscape as an area understood by people; a region whose characteristics are related to the interaction between human and natural elements and includes nature, urban areas, rural area and suburban areas (CEO, 2000).

Furthermore, according to definitions, “landscape is another kind of place and is the product of human-environment interaction in outer spaces” (Berque, 2008). By examining natural models, Bell has concluded that landscape is part of the environment in which we are residing and we understand it through our perception (Bell, 2012). Burke has defined landscape as a type of place which has biological, ontological, and logical assumptions. In other words, the existence of a place is not because of that place, rather it emerges in relation to the subject, and merely living creatures, in particular (Berque, 2013). Also, the landscape approach to natural elements based on sustainability concepts leads to environmental sustainability. “Combination and integration of cognitive and mental aspects of the aesthetic evaluation of nature represent a significant advance in spiritual and ethical dimension of human mind and can lead to environmental sustainability (Habibi, 2013). “Landscape is the macro space of human life in the environment and does not appear by itself; human being, with all its mental complexities, in a reciprocal process with nature and environment, receives them and influences them” (Mansouri, 2010). Overall, the landscape approach is a holistic approach to nature and has three aspects of beauty, function (readability) and culture (identity). “The holistic approach or landscape approach that

is today considered as a standard definition in scientific and professional communities of landscape also considers the relationship between human and landscape as a complex and indivisible relation in which case, landscape is considered as a whole. That is, landscape simultaneously has a body and a meaning, and simultaneously it is both objective and subjective, and these two are inseparable; in other words, landscape is an objective-subjective phenomenon and it is located in science-art area; in this approach, the aesthetic emphasis is on mind, and it interprets the landscape from the perspective of observer's mind, which is influenced by spatial and temporal components" (Mahan & Mansouri, 2017).

The important point in the landscape approach to city and nature is that it encompasses objectivity and subjectivity at the same time and considers phenomena as objective-subjective. This causes that "interventions made in cities will not be only in terms of physical and quantitative aspects, but also will take into account qualitative and semantic factors. Considering the phenomenon in relation to temporal-spatial-natural dimensions is considered as one of the advantages of landscape approach" (Zandieh & Goodarzian, 2014).

So, based on the landscape approach, it can be said that the issue of a one-dimensional view of mountains and not seeing mountains and city as a whole, can lead to this lack of attention to the mountain and its reduced importance. According to the concept of landscape approach to nature, view of mountains should be a holistic one, and as it was said, mountain, especially for Iranians, had not been a mono-functional nature. The Alborz Mountains have originally been a ground for the formation of the city of Tehran in its hillsides. "The inhabitants and the body of Tehran have not been and are not separate from Alborz Mountains, meaning that the city of Tehran has been formed in the body of the Alborz mountain ranges and cannot be separated from it. Also, according to the landscape approach, it should be said that in the past, mountains used to

be a cultural element with objective and subjective dimensions but over time they have lost their mental aspects and are no longer a cultural element of landscape and these may be the answer to why mountain opportunities have been neglected" (Dariush & Motedayen, 2019).

Research method

Due to originality of the study subject and viewing mountains as landscapes, the interviewed experts were selected from various specializations but were related to the study subject. Given the different expertise and different answers of the experts to the main question, thematic analysis method was used as the best option. Accordingly, data collection, sampling and result analysis were also carried out in accordance with this method.

Data collection method

In this study, in order to collect the related data, qualitative research interviews were used, and semi-structured interview method was used among qualitative interviewing methods (Fig. 1). The type of questions of qualitative researches affects the method of identifying data themes (Abedi Jafari, Taslimi, Faghihi & Sheikhzade, 2011). Given that the study was new in the area of city-mountain relationship in Iran and had an emphasis on exploratory approach, so, a macro question was used.

Sampling method

The interviewees were selected through targeted method. The experts were selected through snowball method from among academic specialists having studies and specializations related to cultural and natural studies,. In terms of sample size, although there was no emphasis on theoretical saturation in thematic analysis method, based on general principle of qualitative studies, this method was used. "Basically, sample size for qualitative studies is a sample size that answers the research questions adequately" (Marshall, 1996).

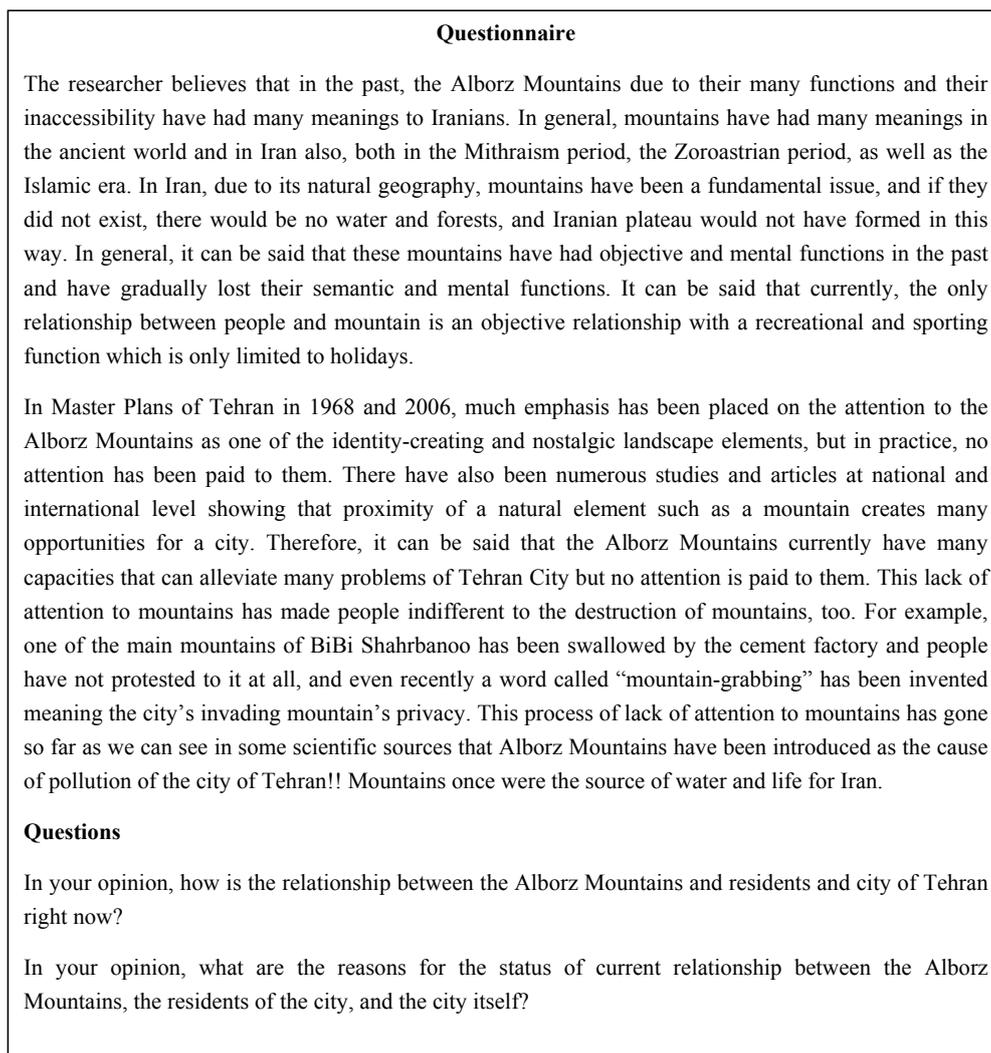


Fig. 1. The description of questionnaire. Source: Authors.

Data analysis

“thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting the existing patterns for qualitative results; this method is for analyzing textual data and converts sparse data into rich and detailed ones” (Braun & Clarke, 2006)

It also differs from interpretive phenomenology, content analysis, and Grounded Theory. “In phenomenological analysis, the emphasis is on the interviewees’ experience of the subject. In content analysis, the frequency of data is important, and in Grounded analysis, theory extraction is important; on the other hand, in thematic analysis method, there is no need for a theoretical or conceptual

framework” (Abedi Jafari, et al., 2011). This study is an interdisciplinary research and experts were selected from diverse specialties related to the subject. Therefore, due to presence of experts from different specialties, analysis and classification through factor analysis method was not possible. “thematic analysis goes beyond counting explicit words and phrases and focuses on recognizing and explaining explicit and implicit ideas” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). So, given the above, thematic analysis was chosen as the best and simplest method for this study. “Theme represents important information about research data and questions, and to some extent, it shows the meaning and concept of

the pattern existing in a set of data" (*ibid*). "Theme is a repetitive and distinctive feature in a text that, in the researcher's view, reflects a particular experience and understanding of the research questions" (King & Horrocks, 2010). "Theme is a pattern existing in the results and at least organizes and describes the observations and at best interprets some aspects of the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998). Given the diversity of methods used in the thematic analysis and diversity of viewpoints of experts, there are different topics and classifications for themes. In the present study, thematic analysis was carried out based on hierarchical classification and based on King and Ryan and Bernard's theories_ theme hierarchy in the form of themes and classification as the main themes and sub-themes (King, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Validity and Reliability of the Research

Since thematic analysis is a flexible method, the researcher should explain what he/she is doing clearly and explicitly and he/she should describe what he is saying and what he is doing clearly and explicitly. "Among the recommended methods for evaluating thematic analyses, the method of 'receiving feedback from respondents' was used in this study. In this process, the researcher presented the results of his analysis to respondents and asked them to comment on the degree of consistency between his/her interpretations and their own experiences" (Abedi Jafari, et al, 2011).

Research Results

The obtained data included 38 cases which were the results of interviews with 20 experts in specialty areas of: architecture, urban development, sociology, philosophy, history, literature, psychology, geology, geophysics (meteorology) and art, in response to the macro question of the research (Table 1).

As stated in research method, by classifying theme hierarchies, results of experts' interviews can generally be classified into four main themes and 11 sub-themes (Table 2).

As mentioned earlier, the obtained results were classified by hierarchical method in thematic analysis:

Reduction of mental and semantic status of mountain caused by the loss of mountain functions

• Advent of religion and philosophy

- With the growth of religious beliefs in ancient Iran, the mythical and mysterious status and importance of the Alborz Mountains has disappeared.

- With the growth of religious beliefs in ancient Iran, the status of Alborz Mountains as a place of living for Mehr or sun has gradually declined and has lost its function and importance.

- With the advent of religion, the mythical status of the Alborz mountains has disappeared; a place which was considered the place of Chinvat Bridge and Iranian's souls were considered to be evaluated there after their death.

- With the construction of temples and religious sites, the mythical status of the Alborz Mountains as a place for worshipping and solitude has disappeared.

- The vile and low status of nature from the viewpoint of Sadrayi philosophers of the Safavid and Qajar periods (including Mulla Sadra and Mullah Hadi Sabzevari) has also diminished the importance of mountains.

• Advent of technology

- The possibility of creating and producing air conditioning by planting trees in any part of the city and producing air conditioning with electrical installations has reduced the function and importance of mountains in producing air conditioning for people.

- With the creation of peripheral highways and passages and reduction of free and natural access of people to mountains, the role of the Alborz Mountains as their natural safeguard and habitat has been diminished.

- Development of new constructions in Tehran has reduced the likelihood of the mountain to be seen from within the city, making the mountain forgotten in people's minds.

Table 1. The characteristics of the interviewees interviewed in this study .Source: Authors.

Row	occupation	specialization	Gender	Education	Themes mentioned
1	Faculty member of Tehran University	Associate professor of landscape architecture	M	PHD	5
2	Faculty member of Tehran University	Associate professor of landscape architecture	M	PHD	7
3	Faculty member of Tehran University	Associate professor of landscape architecture	M	PHD	7
4	Faculty Member of Qazvin International University	Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture	F	PHD	4
5	Faculty member of Beheshti University	Assistant Professor of Architecture	M	PHD	3
6	Manager of Consulting Engineers	Architecture	M	PHD	6
7	Faculty Member of Humanities Research Institute	Professor of Sociology - Tehran	M	PHD	5
8	Faculty Member of Al-Zahra University	Associate Professor of Urban Sociology	M	PHD	5
9	Faculty Member of the Institute for Cultural and Social Studies	Assistant Professor of Sociology of Public Sector	M	PHD	3
10	Faculty Member of Qazvin International University	Associate Professor of Urban Planning	M	PHD	6
11	Faculty Member of the Institute for Cultural and Social Studies	Assistant Professor of Philosophy - Cultural Studies	M	PHD	4
12	Member of the Faculty of Science	Assistant Professor of Philosophy - Cultural Studies	M	PHD	3
13	Faculty member of Tehran University	Assistant Professor of Art-Mythological Research	F	PHD	5
14	Faculty Member of AllamehTabatabai University	Associate Professor of Literature	M	PHD	3
15	Faculty Member of ShahidMotahari University	Associate of Law	M	PHD	2
16	Faculty Member of AllamehTabatabai University	Associate Professor of Psychology	M	PHD	3
17	Faculty member of Tehran University	Assistant Professor of Geophysics	F	PHD	4
18	Member of the Faculty of Science	Assistant Professor of Geology	M	PHD	4
19	Member of the Faculty of Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT)	Assistant Professor of Cultural History	M	PHD	5
20	Artist	Singer, mountaineer	M	Bachelor	3

Table 2. Classification of the results into main and sub-themes. Source: Authors.

Main themes	Sub-themes
Reduction of mental and semantic status of the mountain	Advent of religion
	Advent of technology
	Advent of modernity
Incorrect understanding of the mountain and its capacities	Planning system
	Partial and merely environmental view of mountain
Objective and physical approach to the mountain	Economic approaches
	Mountain accessibility
Cultural issues	Change in people’s lifestyle
	Change in people’s epistemological model
	People’s common beliefs
	Reduction of people’s belonging

- With the advent of technology and advancement of science of structures and installations, mountain’s status as a refuge against natural disasters has been reduced.

- Transmission of Karaj River during Nasserian period has diminished very high importance of northern mountains as the sources of water supply (springs and aqueducts) for people.

- With the development of urban water piping system and use of new equipment, natural importance of the Northern Alborz Mountains as the primary and pristine source of water supply, including springs and marshes, has been reduced.

• **Advent of modernity**

- People’s dissatisfaction with the Qajar period led them to ignore their tradition and culture, and sometimes people called them as the reason for their backwardness; so, mountains lost their importance as a cultural element.

- With the advent of modern government and the formation of army, mountain’s security function and its status as a refuge against enemy invasions have disappeared.

- Modern streets and development of irrigation system allowed tree planting in streets, and green space expanded all over the city; thus, landscape status of the mountain as a nature diminished; “preference of tree to mountains”.

- In the process of nationalism after the Constitution and returning to the historical glory of Iran,

mountains, as an identity-creating and national element, were largely ignored by thinkers of that period (such as Akhundzadeh, Kermani, Talbov, and Taghizadeh).

Incorrect understanding of mountain and its capacities

• **Planning system and planners**

- Since the models based on which Tehran has been formed, had not been in the vicinity of mountains (such as development model of European cities as well as Isfahan City in Iran), mountains and their importance have not been addressed in the construction and development of the city of Tehran.

- Importance of mountains to people is not measurable and there is no per capita for its degree of importance; so, its importance has decreased.

- Despite relative attention to mountain in Master Plans of the city of Tehran, it seems that its authors, due to the lack of knowledge of mountain and its capacities, have failed to properly explain mountain-city relationships.

• **Partial and merely environmental view of mountain**

- Viewing mountains and city as separated from each other has caused the reduction of contextual importance of mountain in the construction and development of city.

- Given that decision makers about the Alborz Mountains have generally been environment

specialists, they have not paid attention to mental and cultural aspects of the mountain.

Objective and Physical Approach to the Mountain

• Economic approaches

- Given the dominance of tribal and aggressive system in Iran, natural resources such as continuous natural mountain ranges have always been used as the tools for domination, and have been under violence in various forms being used for grazing and livestock.

- Cruel productivity economy arising from modernism has been one of the reasons for the decline of the mountain's importance in the eyes of people of the city.

- Turning mountains and their lands into commodities and their being marketable has caused the destruction of their semantic importance.

- Mountains have turned into an economic value such that proximity to a mountain is equal to the expensive price of a land.

• Mountain accessibility

- Accessible mountains were something that did not exist in the minds of people in the past, or they did not have the possibility for it.

- New mountain climbing plans and climbing the Alborz Mountains with the help of new technologies have led to the decline and reduction of its mysterious importance and spiritual grandeur.

Cultural issues

• Change in people's lifestyle

- With the changes in livelihood style of people from hunting, livestock breeding, and farming (or changes in general living method), dependence to and importance of mountain in public life gradually decreased.

- An urban man does not need soil and water because all he needs comes from outside.

• Change in epistemological model of people

- The change of epistemological models from myth to religion and tradition and from religion to science has reduced subjective status of mountain.

• People's common beliefs

- Since one aspect of mountains is from belief and meaning, damages to people's religious beliefs has made mountain dim in people's minds.

- Continuous presence of mountains near the city and view of people has led the mountain to remain unknown and people did not need to know it. Hegel: "A familiar issue is not necessarily a known one".

- Some people believe that mountains are too big to be damaged and in their view, mountains' benefits for acity are permanent; and therefore, they have become indifferent to its destruction.

- Occupation of mountain lands (which have been national resources) and construction of private palaces and promenades have made people indifferent to the mountain: "privatization of a public issue".

- Only a few people in Tehran may recognize the sustainable and ecological importance of the Alborz Mountains in respiratory tracts and in maintaining air stability in Tehran.

• Reduced dependence of people

- Urban decision makers have not belonged to the Alborz Mountains and have not considered a psychological status for the mountain.

- Rapid development and growth of migrations to the city of Tehran has reduced the residents' sense of belonging to the city and nature and mountains.

- People's lack of attention to nature and mountain had been due to the lack of public participation in city administration and environmental change due to the help of the financial capital of oil money.

Discussion and Conclusion

Tehran's mountains have played a significant role in its locating and establishment, and position of the city in the vicinity of these mountains has created many capacities and advantages for it. On the other hand, as previously mentioned, research on the relationship between the Alborz Mountains and the city of Tehran is scarce, and for the reasons stated in this study, Alborz Mountains and their related issues are not currently important to the people

of Tehran. Recent studies have focused on the opportunities created by the Alborz Mountains for the city of Tehran and have mentioned some of the reasons that residents of Tehran do not pay attention to these mountains. However, to find new solutions for revitalizing the role of the Alborz Mountains for people and the city of Tehran, and also to evaluate current relationship between people and mountains and future planning, it is important to find the reasons that have caused the relationship between inhabitants of Alborz foothills and those mountains to become as it is now. This means that the more we can find the reasons for failure of this relationship, the better we can understand how the current and future relationship between the Alborz and Tehran should be. The experts' answers to the main question of the research showed this important issue.

Mountains had been a multidimensional natural element for Iranians. So, based on a holistic landscape approach, interviews were carried out with experts from various fields in order to find the reasons for undesirable relationship between Tehran and the mountain.

Results obtained from the interviews with experts are all factors of the undesirable relationship between the Alborz Mountains and Tehran and its inhabitants. These results were classified hierarchically into four main themes and eleven sub-themes. Main themes included the reduction of mental and semantic status of mountain, incorrect understanding of the mountain and its capabilities, objective and physical approach to the mountain, and cultural issues, and sub-themes which are subordinates to the main themes and were classified as follows: advent of religion, advent of technology, planning system, partial and merely environmental view of the mountain, economic approaches, mountain accessibility, changes in people's lifestyle, changes in epistemological model of people, people's common beliefs, and reduced dependence of people.

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