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Landscape Typology as a Method for Reading Historical Contexts (Case study: Sari Old Neighbourhood of Ab-Anbar-No)

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ABSTRACT

Iranian cities located in specific geographical regions have developed their unique landscape typology based on historical receptions, and it is necessary to use landscape typology to understand the design of buildings in the Iranian ecological context and reach appropriate model patterns in that region. Unfortunately, after modernisation, contemporary architecture and urban planning in Iran have faced bitter experiences resulting from cultural discontinuity and historical ruptures, resulting in serious harm. This article examines one of the old neighbourhoods in Sari County called "Ab-Anbar No" as an example of the Iranian indigenous urban landscape. The main proposed method of this article is a thematic relationship framework based on images obtained through repetition in urban streets to analyze the proportions, distances between buildings, visual communications, and harmony between two adjacent buildings along streets, and the formation of alleys guiding designers towards a suitable pattern in the existing architecture and urban planning fabric. In this method, perspectives from different points of the fabric are studied to provide detailed information on the structure of the fabric. The frames under study indicate that factors such as balance, confrontation and contradiction, memorability, clarity, emphasis, narrowness, widening, repetition and sequence, suddenness, climate, materials and plant fibres are carefully considered in this fabric, and any revitalization of the fabric must be done while considering such qualities.



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Introduction

Due to accelerated urbanization, modernization of life, growth of population, and the appearance of cars, modern urban equipment, and utilities (electricity, water supply, and sewage networks, schools, health departments, public safety, and protection organizations, banks, and the branches of various administrative departments, workshops, and repair shops) on the one hand, and the lack of adequate recognition and proper valuation of historical cities and traditional architecture, and insufficient thinking for their improvement and revival on the other hand, most of the renovations is limited to the construction of a few new streets in historical fabrics or the destruction of building units and construction of new buildings with completely different characteristics and in contrast with the characteristics and principles of urban planning and traditional architecture [1]. This has destroyed the landscape and the application of fundamental changes in the appearance, architecture, and visual qualities of cities. Paying attention to the spatial form of the city as a basic necessity in urban development plans shows its significance in different cultural, social, and physical aspects of the city. Therefore, by studying and understanding the urban growth spatial structure of the cities according to the complex system that governs it, one can identify the mechanisms and forces that govern its growth form to some extent [2].

The role of old cores in the developed cities of Iran is a sensitive topic. The newly expanded cities, which in terms of identity are indeed the same old cities, that had a limited and organic body, have turned to their surroundings by being expanded with considerable haste to respond to the new practical needs. The new infrastructure was settled in the neighbouring lands without paying attention to the old urban pattern and landscape [3].

By employing the case study of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood of Sari, this study tries to express the importance of urban planning by taking a proper look at the past, learning from it, and acknowledging that the sustainable values of architecture and urban planning of the past can still be the language of architecture and urban planning in present-day Iran.

Problem statement

As stated, the main problem addressed in the present research is to discover a guideline for the reconstruction of areas of the city, which while conforming to the needs of society also follows the traditions and rituals of the past. Not taking into account the traditions and characteristics of native identity has caused the cultural wealth of society to be easily destroyed in conflict with today's modernism. A group of experts were looking for the reconstruction of bodies after their destruction, but it soon became clear that the bodies were not visible to the passers-by and that the

neighbourhood atmosphere had not returned to usual. It is assumed that by restoring the urban landscape that was the result of the typology of old city landscapes and its visual connection with today's foreign landscapes that required the changes and updates of the city, the traditions of our ancestors in our living environment can be restored. In the present manuscript, the old fabric landscape of Sari's Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood was studied typologically, and while proving the hypothesis and achieving the existing and specific typology of the urban landscape of Sari's old fabric, this method was employed in the reconstruction of the landscapes that were destroyed in the modern era of demolitions.

Research method

The current research was a comparative and analytical study of the landscape typology of Sari's historical fabric. The main hypothesis of this research was based on the fact that the landscape in the image of the spaces of every city is composed of a series of consecutive and connected images that are familiar to the residents and have specific instructions for them. In the first step, by studying and receiving a basic understanding of the subject of urban landscape through various books, the form and body of the fabric and the background of the research were studied. Then, field studies were carried out, during which photographs were taken from the beginning to the end of the old and well-known paths of the fabric (one photo every ten steps). Subsequently, the images taken were presented as sketches by working on the available software packages, and the results were classified by analyzing the features in each sketch. The results from the images and frames, which were acquired through repeated commuting through the passages opened a path for the scientific usage of the existing traditions in the fabric landscape to find suitable solutions to solve the problems of today's urban development.

Discussion

Literature review

The Austrian architect and urban planner, Camillo Sitte, presented his thoughts on urban planning based on the reconstruction of urban landscapes entitled *City Planning According to Artistic Principles*. By providing a valuable collection of sketches and illustrative images of the sites left from the past, he expressed the rules and criteria of aesthetics through spatial analysis relying on qualitative criteria instead of quantitative ones. For the design of spaces, Sitte gives great importance to the physical act of a person by which he understands the space, i.e., "seeing". As a result, according to him, urban development is about connections, and these connections should be determined based on the level of visibility for the pedestrian observer in the city. The physical environment has a strong influence

on the human spirit and includes its social life [4]. Furthermore, Tavassoli and Ahri examined urban facades in their books "Urban Design" and "Isfahan School in Urban Planning"[5; 6]. However, the theory of urban landscape continuity was written by Gordon Cullen in another book entitled *Townscape* in 1961. In 1998, some parts of this book were translated by Dr. Manoucher Tabibian, and it was introduced as a reference for students of architecture and urban planning in the fields related to urban facades [7]. In this type of investigation, for the first time in the landscape study of English cities, classification and definitions were discussed. However, in subsequent years, this theory was not accepted in the recognition and reconstruction of Iranian historical fabrics. Alaie in his research, which is based on the priority of the urban landscape in revitalization, understands it in line with its indigenous perspective. From this perspective, successful revitalization essentially has a qualitative view of the issue of revitalization [8]. Bahrami and Kharazi Ghadim focused on the role of tourism as a factor in revitalizing historical fabrics. Their research is based on the important premise that tourism in fabrics that are architecturally and urbanistically important is itself a factor in revitalization. The Faezabad neighbourhood in Kermanshah is examined as a case study in their research [9]. Eskandari, Babaei, Morad and Mousavi focus on the role of urban stimuli in revitalization in their research. The question they raised was to what extent urban stimuli can be effective in revitalizing the urban landscape. Three areas in Ahvaz city were examined as a case study, and the results indicated that the central part ranked first, the Ameri district ranked second, and the Khoramkushak district ranked third [10]. Rezaei Talarpushti, Zangabad and Nastaran used structural equation modelling to evaluate solutions for revitalizing the historical fabric of Gorgan. The research results and promotion of micro-participation showed that tourism should be taken seriously. Creating and proposing executive solutions regarding pedestrian tourist paths and establishing a special municipality for the worn-out fabric were among the key solutions of this research [11]. Moazzeni Khorastgani and Haghghatbin introduced collective memory as one of the most important factors in revitalizing historical fabrics in their research, emphasizing that such an approach should lead to an increase in the sense of place and ultimately focus on sustainability. They brought historical cities into focus [12].

Urban landscape

The landscape of an urban space is all the available information from the space that can be received by the senses and processed in the process of perception: information on the form, function, and meaning of the space. Therefore, the indicators of a landscape present themselves at multiple levels, from the superficial

to the fundamental, and all of them are the source of feelings that are created in a person. This feeling can be a slight satisfaction with the texture of a paved surface or a deep psychological feeling arising from the special state that a person feels when leaving behind a narrow and dark path to a field full of light [13].

Based on this, in the study and evaluation of an urban space's landscape, the following points regarding the perception of the space should be considered:

- What is related to the users such as their perception capacity (humans)
- The existing environment or the conditions in which the perception takes place (environment)

Spatial sequence

Every day, people move through the urban space, an environment that is experienced from morning to night. Movement in the urban space causes the perception of successive scenes, each of which creates an experience for the individual. Here, the movement of the individual and the characteristics of their path create the basic structure of these successive experiences. If while passing through the spaces or a path, a person perceives different and distinguishable spaces and can consider them related to each other, then it can be said that there is a spatial sequence. This spatial sequence is the qualitative requirement of sequential urban spaces. Otherwise, people are faced with scattered and unrelated spaces and do not perceive the entire city as a unified space.

Spatial quality

The quality of elements and the relationship between the perceived elements of the space present characteristics that individually or together create feelings in individuals. This quality of space depends on confinement, balance and proportion, narrowing, and widening of space, confrontation and contradiction, memorability, clarity, emphasis, repetition and sequence, suddenness, climate, being covered and roofed, formation of light and shade, materials, and plant fibers [13].

Spatial qualities are topological and arise from geometric relationships. These qualities create an emotional response in the space audience according to their internal requirements. Although the internal emotions of individuals are not solely related to spatial qualities and may also be influenced by individuals' memories, this does not negate the intrinsic impact of spatial qualities. For example, the quality of confinement can create a sense of being inside the mind of the space audience. Sometimes this feeling can be associated with being inside a house, sometimes it can be associated with being in a prison. In any case, a mechanism can be identified that is dependent on the intrinsic qualities present in the space

regardless of individuals and that stimulates emotions in individuals, where memories and personal inner experiences need to be controlled [13].

Space identity

In addition to the fact that in the short term, space should be perceptible as successive spaces; it and the changes made should be identifiable over time so that it has an identity. The identity of space has meaning when there is different information about that space from another time and can be used to compare to the existing meaning to recognize the identity. However, when the space has physical, semantic, or practical characteristics and it is no longer possible to adapt mental images to the space, there is an "identity crisis". When it comes to the culture of the past or one's own cultural identity, two aspects must be determined. First, what has been created throughout the history and depth of life? It is not sufficient to mention what existed in the past. The second is to consider how much of this significant reserve meets today's needs and what parts of it are still alive.

The basis of formation and identity in the landscape of Iranian cities

The old cities of Iran have always been subject to the morphological features of the land and have been integrated with it on different scales. The ancients have benefited from a deep knowledge of the natural-geographical and bio-ecological environment in choosing the location of their cities and how to establish them on the land. The formation of architectural units and the cities consisting of the old residential centres of Iran has followed the specific intellectual foundations of the people of each city. In addition, in forming cities as an integrated artefact, customs and traditions or principles of common coexistence and cooperation between citizens are considered the first-level determining factor when it is considered on a large scale [3].

Formation of mazandarani form and landscape

The growth and development of the cities of Mazandaran region are organic like other cities of the country; adherence to land is discussed for the surface and is not dependent on the depth of the land. The northern cities of Iran have presented a way to blend with nature by accepting it and letting it pass through their fabric, and on the contrary, as far as possible and necessary, they have expanded branches of their body in the natural space [3].

The role of climate in the formation of Mazandaran's urban landscape

In the native architecture of Mazandaran, other than nature and environment, climate has significantly influenced the architectural structure. Every place has its unique climatic characteristics and has some demands regarding the formation

and the direction of buildings in the city, their spatial density, and the type of roof, floor, and walls [14]. In this climate, which includes most of the shores of the Caspian Sea and the northern slopes of the Alborz Mountains, in coastal and very humid cities, it is necessary to protect buildings from excessive soil moisture; therefore, houses have been built on stilts and blinds, and natural airflow and ventilation have been used in the design of structures [15]. The urban fabric was in the form of wide and open plans and their physical form was mostly long and narrow. To make maximum use of the wind in creating natural ventilation, they used many openings facing the wind, and the location of the building in the fabric is determined according to the wind direction, which has a great impact on the formation of the overall landscape of the fabric.

The role of materials in the formation of Mazandaran's urban landscape

In the past, Iranian architects attempted to obtain their building materials from nearby places, and buildings were built in such a way that did not require materials from other locations (self-sufficient building approach). In this way, the building was built more rapidly and it became more compatible with the nature around it. Furthermore, during its renovation, the building material was always available. The historical fabric of Mazandaran's old neighbourhoods was no exception to this rule; in the construction of the buildings of these neighbourhoods, native materials such as wood, clay, and bricks were used. Additionally, straw mud-based mortar, Saroj, and gypsum plaster were employed to bond the building materials in the temperate and humid climate, and clay, as a native material, was utilized to cover the roofs. This material has imparted a distinctive aesthetic to the urban landscape.

Contemporary revitalization of historical fabrics compatible with the environment:

The purpose of reconstructing traditional fabrics, in addition to preserving ancestors' heritage, could be to utilize them today. The revitalization of fabrics by itself is a factor in preserving them for the future. Therefore, it seems logical to introduce a sense of today into the historical layers with twists and turns so that there is more enthusiasm for being in them. For example, modern methods can be used in designing spatial details to create spaces. However, at the same time, a traditional aspect can be presented to viewers. One such encounter can be found in recent years at the Babol Gate in Sari City. The Babol Gate is one of the entrance gates to Sari that was once used as an entrance to the city. Today, it is one of the existing intersections in the city before Sari Clock Square. This gate or today's intersection uses modern technology while incorporating details that are considered part of Mazandaran architectural typology. Wood is used to bring a clear image of traditional Mazandaran architecture from past to present and as an

environmentally friendly, recyclable material. Wooden consoles that are reminiscent of both traditional Mazandaran architecture and urban architecture during the Pahlavi era are seen on the building facade. The height of these consoles from the ground is such that their shading serves as relief from hot summer afternoons and as shelter from winter rains. In other words, wood materials not only evoke the image of Mazandaran in people's minds but also serve a practical purpose compatible with the climate.

Sari, Ab-Anbar-No neighborhood

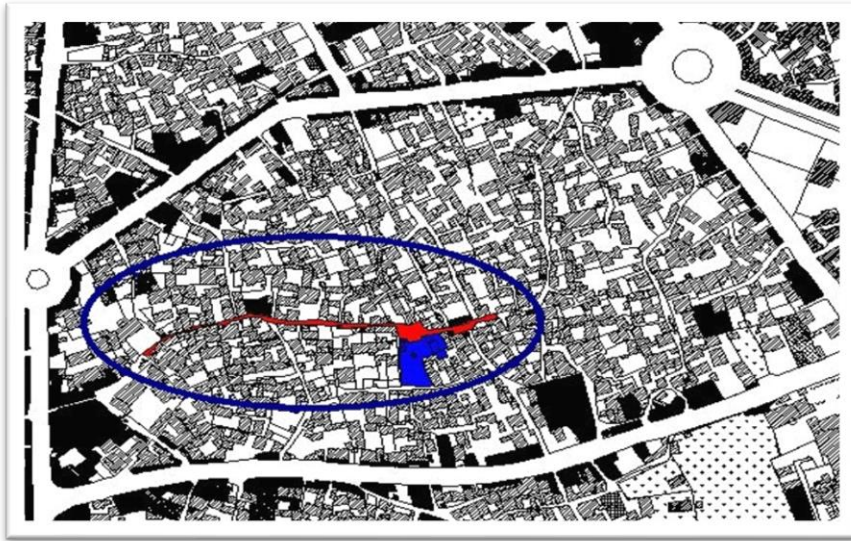


Figure 1. Location of the examined area.

If the native and organic architecture of each region and city is accepted as a clear example of sustainable architecture compatible with the climate and culture of that environment, the review and examination of the concepts resulting from these observations is the best guide and source for inspiration and learning about the architecture suitable for that region [16].

Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood, which is within the cultural heritage protected areas, is one of the old neighbourhoods of Sari city. Most of its existing buildings belong to the Qajar dynasty period, and the fabric of this neighbourhood, like other old cities of Iran, was formed based on the principle of dynamics. Regarding the natural geographical features and people's participation in the formation of the architecture, this neighbourhood can be considered a good example of authentic Mazandaran [17]. Relying on local materials and local construction facilities, which is caused by climatic conditions, has not only given a different appearance to the buildings of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood but has differentiated the looks of

passages and the landscape compared to other regions of Iran due to the abundant use of wood and brick as well as plant fibres in the body of the walls.

Study of the landscape of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood's main passage (the route sketches)

The concept of typology of architectural type is like a pattern that is repeated over and over again in different states. It is a form and abstraction, not an actual building. The type stems from a generality; in unconsciousness and even ignorance. The type appears in the main pattern, which is the purest and most valuable example [18]. The typology of the urban landscape of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood's main passage is an example that has been identified and studied in the form of a sketch record and consecutive frames of entrance and return routes.





Figure 2. Sketches of the landscape of Ab-Anbar-No's entrance route (source: the Author).

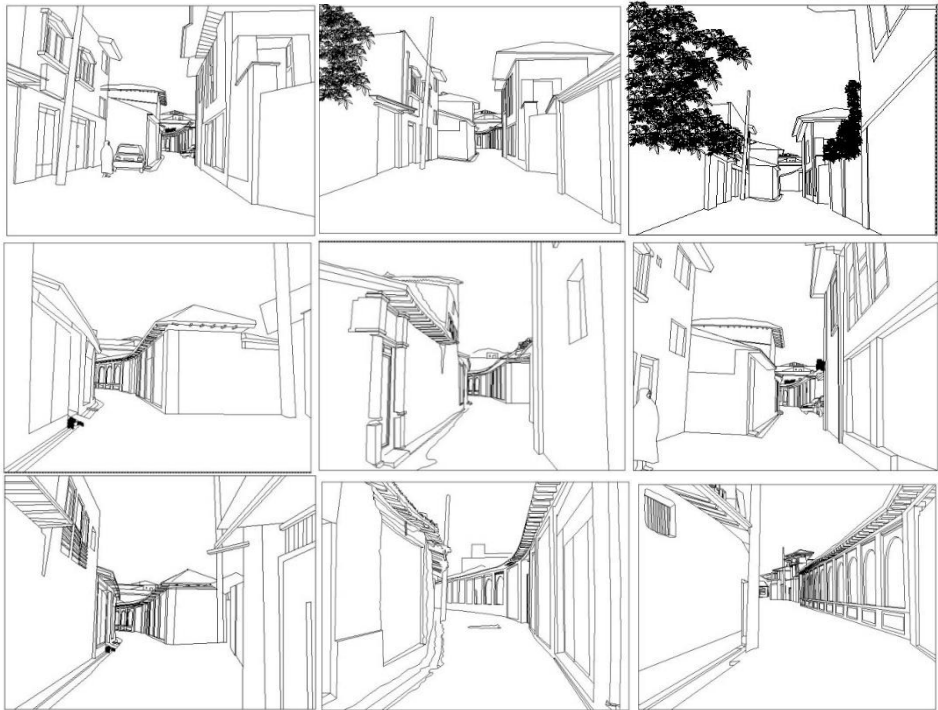


Figure 3. Perspectives of the landscape of Ab-Anbar-No's return route (source: the Author).

Examining different qualities in the landscape of the fabric

The Balance



Figure 4. Perspective of the commercial area of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood.

Balance is the action and reaction between the forces. This state occurs when the functions are spread equally in the space, like the location of the commercial spaces in the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood which were placed together in a completely symmetrical and balanced way.

Confrontation and contradiction



Figure 5. Perspective of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood's entrance.

In these two situations, there is a kind of contrast; the difference between two things. Unfortunately, within the perspective of the neighbourhood, the contradiction is observed in the authentic old buildings and the new buildings without an identity.

Memorability

Figure 6. Perspective view of Ab-Anbar-No's Takyeh.

Memorability is a state that can facilitate the re-identification of the environment and is a basic condition for recalling and remembering the memory of the space. In this neighbourhood, Takyeh and the water reservoir have always created memories.

Clarity

Figure 7. Perspective of the return route in the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood (source: the Author).

Clarity is the ability to predict a kind of order in a space that is easy to understand. In this case, a person can predict how the elements are used in the whole space, either from experience or from their logic and observations. On the way to the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood, the order in the number of floors in adjacent buildings (single-story and two-story buildings) and the form of the buildings is completely visible.

Emphasis



Figure 8. Perspective of the return route (the Kiomarsis' house) (source: the Author).

This quality arises from emphasising a spatial element due to its appearance characteristics in an urban landscape. This characteristic can be observed in the part of the road where the famous house of the Kiomarsis is located.

Narrowness

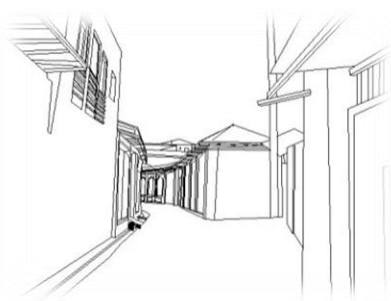


Figure 9. Perspective of the return route of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood (source: the Author).

The sudden narrowing of a path can change the speed of pedestrians or divide the space. This quality can be observed in parts of the path.

Widening

Figure 10. Perspective of the entrance path to the centre of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood.

The widening of a path makes people feel more relaxed and disperses activities, which in most cases leads to the growth in social interactions. This widening is quite noticeable in the entrance and return directions in the centre of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood.

Repetition and sequence

Figure 11. Perspective of the return route of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood (source: the Author).

It is a quality of perspective or its elements that gives a person a feeling of mobility and dynamism. Like a sequence of rows of trees or the lights of a street. This rhythm and sequence can be observed on Ab-Anbar-No's curved paths.

Suddenness

Figure 12. Perspective from the entrance route of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood.

It is a state of a sequence in space, in which a person experiences various feelings; encountering new and sudden elements is one of these states. To create this quality, a harmonious and uniform space is needed. This quality is extensively observed in the pathways of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood, after passing through a path, a new aspect of the fabric is suddenly encountered.

Climate

Figure 13. The perspective from the passages of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood.

Alleys in traditional neighbourhoods have characteristics following their unique climate. Sari's Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood is located in a temperate and humid region. As a result, the passages in this neighbourhood are unlike Bushehr,

where passages have tall and narrow walls, or Yazd, where the walls are impenetrable and with no windows to reduce the effect of wind storms. The skyline in Sari's Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood is tall in the entrance part of the house and short in the parts of the courtyard wall overlooking the alley. This height of the wall in some parts and its shortness in other parts create different rhythms of light and shadow, which follow the mild climate of this neighbourhood. With the variation in the height of the fabric's walls, both the sunlight and the wind find their way forward, which contributes to the comfort of the fabric's residents. The sunlight can easily pass through the short walls overlooking the courtyard and cause the trees and plants in the gardens to grow, and also the wind can find its way through the skyline with its fluid movement, and its impact felt on one's face.

Materials



Figure 14. View of Ramdani's house in the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood.

The main materials used in the Ab-Anbar-No fabric are local materials and native to this area: clay, brick, and wood as the main materials that shape the architecture and structure of the building, and straw mud mortar, Saroj, and Gypsum plaster as the bonding materials between the bricks, and clay to cover the roofs in this rainy region. Among the common mental images in the passages of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood are the clay roofs found in the alleys, which serve as a shelter against the sun in the summer, and occasional rain in the winter. The feeling of standing under such roofs, the extrusion of which is enough for sheltering a person in the alley, is one of the memorable features of Sari's Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood.

Plant fibres



Figure 15. Perspective from green passages of the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood.

Generally, in the passages of traditional neighbourhoods, clay walls covered with a combination of straw and dried mud can be observed. In some of these passages, the use of brick covering or wood can also be seen. The use of vegetation that grows from the yards of the courtyard houses has found a role in the urban landscape by passing over the walls of the courtyards, demonstrating the intelligence of the locals regarding the fabric. These green coverings amid the dominant colour of clay or brick and in harmony with the colourful sashes in the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood have a special appeal for the passers-by.

Conclusion

Urban landscape is the perceptual processing that a person receives from the spatial sequence of the environment (sequences and perspectives). Since, in the process of perception, the information sent from each space is received frame by frame, it is stored in the mind in order. The first frame is a perceptual one that includes the general and basic characteristics of the space, and the last frame includes the smallest details of the space. In the process of adapting the mental ideas of the space with the existing reality (to identify or reacknowledge it), the brain also acts in the same order. Therefore, the change in the basic characteristics of the space impairs the adaptation of mental images with the existing reality, and in other words, it makes the adaptation impossible or changes the identity of the fabric. However, the change in the secondary characteristics does not change the identity, considering that the adaptation process is completed in the first stages. Based on this, to solve the problem of today's lost urban image and revive the native identity in the historical fabrics, it is possible to reach typology and a method of design through the recognition of the general and basic patterns of the old fabrics. Using this method, the case of Sari's old fabric (the Ab-Anbar-No neighbourhood) was investigated. In the reconstruction, it is important to preserve the environment-friendly traditional fabric. Therefore, it is possible to follow the

typology of the fabric landscape for the initial design to adapt the mental images with reality, and use current methods and materials for designing the details.

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