The role of place identity in the preservation of Iranian historical sites: A comparative study of Jolfa and Masjid Jame districts, Isfahan

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Abstract

Urban places may be perceived as the collective imprints of their inhabitants’ personal participation in the mental and emotional moulding of their place identity and place-attachment. In historical texts (sites) this construction process of place-attachment is even more intense due to the conglomeration of historical and collective memories as well as its pertinence to the question of national identity. Yet, because the locals’ sense of a place is necessarily unique to the particular place they might be more sensitive, appreciative and protective of it.

This paper examines whether and to what extent the locals’ sense of place, place-attachment, and place-identity play a crucial role in the conservation and preservation of historical texts in their cities. For the purpose of comparison two historical sites with different physical situations of the Isfahan city, namely, the Jolfa and the Masjid Jame districts, were selected for study through field observations and questionnaire surveys of 200 randomly selected respondents. The findings revealed that although there were significant positive relationships between place identity and the conservation and preservation of historical sites, several other factors did influence the preservation process. These ranged from aesthetic and ownership considerations to economic situations and management issues.

Keywords: collective memories, historical sites, Isfahan, place-attachment, place-identity, sense of place