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## End note

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\*This article describes the discovery-based learning based on research activities in Europe trip in 2015.

1. Were an ancient Iranian people who lived in an area known as Media (northwestern Iran).
2. Is a building designed specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood.
3. An autonomous charitable foundation, in Mashhad, Iran.

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be regarded as one of the most important cultural landscapes of this city. This historical cemetery has been built on a foundation of mixed features of small natural, cultural, artistic landscapes of the city. Thus it can be counted as one of the urban open museums. Moreover, because it has played a sustainable role since the establishment up to now, it is classified under organically evolved cultural landscapes.



Fig.6. Milan cemetery, Italy.  
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl,2015.

## Conclusion

In Milan Monumental Cemetery, signs and symbols such as tombstones, sculptures, inscriptions, and its architecture as a whole, display culture, art and history specific to its time. Each tomb belonging to each character in this cemetery as a historical-cultural and social evidence demonstrates its particular sacred concepts and the community's attitude to the phenomenon of death in its particular time and has a double function for the dead and the living. Therefore, a part of culture, art and history is portrayed for the people who come to visit this place. Moreover, the space of the cemetery sounds memorable as well as having identity for the dead's relatives and other visitors. This place is important in terms of memorability because it contributes to remembrance of the deceased and in addition to its aesthetical, environmental, ecological role and features, it contains historical dimensions for today's life. Additionally, this cemetery makes it possible to improve social interactions, to enhance

quality and to promote vitality in the society and reveals fundamental aspects of ethnic, cultural and artistic origins of the community, and also indicates the people's national and local identity.

Milan Monumental Cemetery, an open space, is not only a place where signs and memorials have been gathered (monuments, horizontal and vertical tombstones, family tombs, etc.) but also contains natural elements (plantations, ground slope, the weather, animals, etc.). The existing natural, cultural and historical elements combined with social concepts, plus functional dimensions, and distinctive features such as universality, being specific to a particular period of time, popularity, etc. reflecting residence tradition and customs of human societies have made it an attractive cemetery and converted this place to an urban public open one and a sustainable tourist destination having identity. As a result of these, it has been accepted as an organically evolved cultural and social landscape.



Fig.5. Milan cemetery, Italy.  
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl,2015.

Furthermore, European Landscape Convention sees historical-cultural landscapes like cemeteries as the most essential and diverse part of cultural heritage and emphasizes that to preserve historical and cultural landscapes necessitates an attention to environmental, natural and human contexts and relationships of such landscapes (Momtazpour, 2012: 139). Whenever a burial takes place in a landscape or a burial identity is constructed, the landscape is called 'burial landscape'. It is interesting to know that cemeteries are classified under sustainable landscapes because in most of them we are getting involved and they are in constant of change.

Milan Monumental Cemetery contains a variety of artistic memorials such as sculptures, tombstones, and structures which play a central role in conveying a sense of place, memorability and identity of the space because these elements in a logical and visual combination with the environment have resulted in creation of effective signs in development of relationships with the visitors. Generally, artistic designs of sculpture-like tombstones in this cemetery can be categorized into five groups as follows:

1. A mixture of a tombstone with human characters' sculptures with regard to Western

anthropocentric thoughts.

2. A combination of tombstones with mythological and sainted characters' sculptures

3. utilization of allegorical and decorative signs in tombstones

4. Utilization of holy and sacred emblems in designing tombstones

5. Positioning several tombstones in a porch leads to a common symbol

These signs indicative of people's way of living in public spheres based on geographical features carry messages for future generations and introduce a variety of concepts and subjects. Generally speaking, signs and symbols in this cemetery illustrate a wide range of meanings which have created an identity for the cemetery and have distinguished it from other different but of the same type phenomena. At the same time, utilization of the system of these signs and symbols for analysis and criticism of the landscapes of this cemetery is considered as a great strength of this place. Eventually, this complex of memorial-artistic elements which is unique in terms of diversity and beauty of form and content (emotional, religious, historical, cultural, political, literary, scientific, etc.) not only has introduced artistic styles and conventions, but also has developed the public's insights. In fact, this cemetery reflects a part of Italy's history.

Moreover, three approaches have been proposed in creation of small landscapes in this cemetery as follows:

1. A combination of trees with the tombstones

2. A combination of flowers and plants with the tombstones

3. Creation of enclosed green spaces in some places

4. Formation and promotion of main avenues of the site using shade trees

In general, Milan Monumental Cemetery can

of people such as the cemetery's staff, local people, the dead's families, artists, tourists, etc. spend their time; this matter and other factors like freedom of location, tomb design, proper urban place-creation, provision of facilities for special disabilities, a diversity of memorials, proper green space and urban furniture, social security, etc. have made this cemetery a vital and sustainable urban space.

Physical fabrics and location-spatial structure constitute one of the main bases of Milan Monumental Cemetery because the creation of its physical fabrics is affected by thoughts, beliefs, social activities and cultural level of the society. The identity of this place is proved through evoking collective memories by the citizens. Meanwhile, sculptures, ancient elements, their effective space and relationships with their surrounding environment and architecture reinforce the collective memory, a sense of belonging to local society, and spatial identity. In this cemetery, sculptors have been to expand a collective identity and develop spirituality of the society through urban art with regard to its impact on changing social behavior. (Fig. 4).



Fig.4. Milan cemetery, Italy.

Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl,2015.

### The Cultural Landscape of Milan Monumental Cemetery

In defining the term 'cultural landscape', there are two words 'landscape' and 'culture' which are defined as follows:

'Landscape' is an objective-mental, dynamic and relative phenomenon resulting from the human interaction with nature and the society with history" (Mansouri, 2004) and "culture' is what relates to daily beliefs of a group of people and their behaviors" (Dabiri, 2009) and "cultural landscape is a geographical area, including both cultural and natural resources associated with a historic event, activity and person" (Faizi&Razaqi-Asl,2009:20). Moreover, UNESCO World Heritage Committee has defined cultural landscape as the geographical distinction of lands: representation of the combined works of nature and of man. Additionally, this Committee identifies three categories of cultural landscape as follows:

- 1."A landscape designed and created intentionally by man";
- 2.an "organically evolved landscape" which may be remained of the past a "continuing landscape"; this kind of landscape created by the interaction between earlier societies, their livelihood, customs and Nature consists of two types:

Heritage or (relic) landscape created through an evolutionary process in the past and its certain and meaningful features have remained in the environment now (the evolutionary process was completed in the past).

The continuing (sustainable) landscape which has a social active role in current life has remained of the past customs. Its evolution continues and its evidences are clear.

- 3.an "associative cultural landscape" which may be valued because of the "religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element" (UNESCO, 2005, as cited in 2005:360),(Fig. 5).



cemetery for the public. Moreover, it seems that where a dead body is familiar to the most of the public, the same situation yields to a quite common experience for the public, revealing national identity (Esmaeili, 2009: 32).

Environment identity is a consequence of national and logical relationship of a person with the environment. This relationship and a sense of belonging will develop if the person is able to have a deep recognition of the environment and to differentiate that from other environments. According to Proshansky, place-identity is a substructure of self-identity, and is comprised of perceptions and comprehensions regarding the environment. In Lalli's terms, person's identity is constructed in relation with the environment (Daneshpour, 2008), (Fig.3).

The quality and enrichment of an experience drawn out of the environment for a human being depends on the relationship developed between the human and the environment. From this perspective, Milan Monumental Cemetery possesses such a special feature that memories and remembrances in this place would be converted to physical signs. That's why this place partakes a human nature and is individuated, and consequently human-human relationship will be substituted for the human-cemetery one. It is worth saying that the main attention of this relationship is towards the dead. Due to this feature, this cemetery gets a different view according to a diversity of characters interred in this place. Public cemetery, sacred figures, national heroes, artists, etc., each constitutes a different quality of a cemetery space and based on the dead's characteristics, what occurs in such places takes on various meanings. In cases where a well-known figure of a society is interred, this human-centered relationship between the human and the place will be converted to a socially common experience.



Fig.3. Milan cemetery, Italy.  
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl, 2015.

Italians are naturally artistic. This country is extremely rich in literature, art, poetry, music and so on. Their strong belief in Catholicism continues to permeate all this country's artistic and cultural aspects. In All Saints' Day celebrated on 1 November, a funeral march is played for the dead, church bells ring, the people go to the cemetery and cover their relatives and friends' graves with candles and flowers especially daffodils. Generally, a person comes to this cemetery to visit either one of the interred honored figures or the relatives and friends' graves; in both cases, he can visit people with the same feeling and attitude; moreover, with regard to providing relief moments in this cemetery, the social interactions between people have been increased, the experience of the place has been made less unpleasant, and has led to vitality in different time periods of this cemetery.

Milan Monumental Cemetery as a tourist public space belongs to every citizen, regardless of origin and religion. It is a place where the municipality of Milan tries to provide welfare services for tourists while affording facilities to particular groups for sightseeing. Nowadays, this cemetery is a place where several different kinds

reminding people of the dead (Faizi&Razaqi-Asl, 2004: 23),(Fig. 2).

Designed by the Italian architect Carlo Maciachini, Milan Monumental Cemetery established in an area of 250,000 square meters between 1866 and 1897. This large complex of tombs is located right at the center of the city, enjoying a high level of historic and artistic values. The main entrance of this cemetery, there is a Pantheon-like building known as Famedio made of different marbles, containing the tombs of some of the city's and country's most honored citizens. Across the main entrance, there existed a number of monuments. This cemetery as one of the best tourist attractions of Milan and consequently Italy consists of sculptures, tombs and monuments. Italian classic and contemporary masterworks, plus Greek temples, primary metal works and carved marbles have changed this place into a place which visitors find so appealing. This place is replete with statues of musicians, writers, artists, architects, painters, politicians, teachers, generals and Noble winners. Some allegories of angels, saints and gods with an enigmatic smile on their lips can be seen all over this cemetery.



Fig.2. Milan cemetery, Italy.  
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl, 2015.

### The Social Landscape of Milan Monumental Cemetery

The success rate of urban spaces can be attributed to the rate of the use and presence of human being in that place. In fact, the main purpose of architecture and urbanism is to improve social interactions and increase affinity between people. Generally, to create a thriving public space which can receive different groups of visitors, some points of view have been proposed, including Jane Jacobs, Jan Gehl, Allen Jacobs, Cooper Marcus, Donald Appleyard's and points of view of PPS (2010). Indeed, according to these points of view, generally factors such as urban mixed land uses, vitality, visual beauty, protection and maintenance of space in particular and other factors including physical comfort, the possibility of seating and pausing, well access and security, symmetry and legibility, diversity and universality of space are considered of utmost influential elements on social interaction and presence (Behzadfar&Tahmasbi, 2013: 18).

In studying graveyards in terms of social landscape, it is seen that a grave, as a place where a human being is buried, indicates the physical signs of the dead person, and by developing relationship of the visitor of this place with the buried person, this space is given different views. Regardless of this feature, graveyards possess different environment qualities dependent on who have been buried there (Kashigar, 2003:101). It seems that interring one of relatives in this cemetery not only establishes an identity to this place, but also creates memorable aspects for these people. Presence at the head of the grave of a country's honored person in a cemetery, with regard to the fact that there might have not been any chance for the most of the community to visit him when he was alive, reflects development of relationships of a different kind; this is a factor which will mitigate uncommon situation of the

of belonging and identity leading to creation of a national and civil society. Utilization of artistic elements, different styles of tombstones, human ideas about death, species planting design and landscape planning have attracted a lot of interest from tourists and created sustainable cultural-social landscapes in Milan.

### **Historical Origins of the Architecture of the Cemetery in Europe**

In Italy at 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC developed the Etruscan Civilization, a great civilization which had made significant progress in mathematical sciences, engineering, painting, sculpture, architecture and other sciences. Of the most important remains of the civilization are Arch Augustus in Perugia and a complex of graveyards called necropolis or “city of the dead” that has been built on the basis of Roman infrastructures and the geometry dominating the city is the same as chess urban system which shows worldly life and afterlife, and it also represents the special place of the dead in the civilization. In fact, these patterns brought about the emergence of cemetery architecture in future of the West civilization.

It was till 1400 the time when the Renaissance began, the dead were usually buried at church yards in Europe, some of which have been remained yet. Considered signs of death in these places have generally laid particular stress on memento of death and fear of death represented through death’s head or angel of death, creating a terrifying situation of death. After the Renaissance, a marked shift in attitudes towards death was seen. In this regard, a new concept ‘Picturesque Graveyards’ introduced. Circa 1750, the concept of cemetery was illustrated by referring again to Etruscan definition with regard to the East, while in Victorian period there existed grave gardens which had something in common with Persian

tomb gardens. Tomb gardens are types of Persian gardens being in their original themes, they are used as places for interring several leading figures (Wilber, 2004). The importance of gardens in Persians’ view is much beyond material life and symbolic of eternal welfare and Garden of Eden. One can say that the special place of Heaven in Islamic tradition and its particular description have played an important role in creation of this type of tomb and can be a reflection of people’s desires to go to the heaven (ibid.). Moreover, of the most important cemeteries in Iran, it can be referred to complexes of tombs which have been built surrounding a popular religious figure’s tomb or mausoleum during the years consisting of a shrine, mosque, school, library, Khanqah<sup>2</sup>, ābanbār (water reservoir) and so on, which have been added to that complex during different periods of time. The following are some examples: Astan Quds Razavi<sup>3</sup>, Sheikh Ahmad-e Jami mausoleum complex in Torbat-e Jam, Fatima Masumeh Shrine in Qom, and Shah Nematollah Vali Shrine in Mahan.

Cemeteries once used to constitute an important part of human habitats’ themes and the essentials of cities. As permanent places, they have been to carry out ritual, cultural and religious activities, then have turned out to be a part of urban fabric gradually with urban development. This is a direct cause of these monuments having different stories across different parts of the world. These urban elements which have been built in commemoration of the dead have had their own style in every period. Graveyards are among the most sustainable urban elements so that according to a typology developed for historical-cultural and social landscapes, they may be taken into consideration as ever-lasting original landscapes due to their sustainable role in the past and current societies. As memorable landscapes, these places play a key role in



## Introduction

That the phenomenon of death constitutes part of the landscapes of our surroundings is a matter of concern, that's why Adolf Loos remarks that the only architectures prevalent in the world which can be known as real architectures are of monuments and mausoleums, and the others have been created according to functional needs. In other words, the term "Architecture" suits more these monuments. Attention to death has essentially led to creation of different type of architectures in all civilizations, for example Catacombs (subterranean mausoleums) at Etruscan civilization of west, catacomb-like burial chambers of The Medes<sup>1</sup> and The Achaemenid Empire at Iran, and noble mausoleums still existed at the Islamic Period. But a cemetery as a space specific to the death has a function more for the living rather than for the dead. Thus, the upshot of this was that death is adjacent to life. Cemeteries were places in which existed memorials which have been converted into special places through a combination of natural and historical- cultural elements to such an extent that they are regarded as natural and historical-cultural places. With regard to the old history of cemeteries and historical concepts concerning death as the physical architecture of death, human myths in all ages and civilizations seem priceless. In fact, the architecture of death memorial as one of the oldest architectures of the world involves stone libraries consisting

of too many stones indicative of symbolic and historical signs, and historical-cultural and social concepts have brought about the creation of cemetery landscapes.

A graveyard as a part of urban environments reflects human residence in its most historical form. It is a place having a close relationship with human society to such an extent that based on the impacts of that on the community and its susceptibilities to the society, a cemetery continues. Therefore, it seems that cemeteries fix a time and place in a culture forever, carrying the past into the present and even into the future in perpetuity (Fig.1), (Worpole, 2003:18).



Fig.1. Milan cemetery, Italy.  
Photo: Behzad Masoudi Asl, 2015.

## Research Questions

1. Is Milan Monumental Cemetery a mere burial ground or also a public space and a tourist destination?
2. If it is a public open space, how features of urban cultural and social landscapes are utilized for its attraction and function?

## Research Hypothesis

Milan Monumental Cemetery as a single urban public open space is a cultural-social phenomenon as well as a confluence of life and death as the two opposites, and as one of the most historical urban elements establishing identity in the city in consistent with the culture, facilitates the possibility of preserving and developing a sense

# Cultural and Social Landscapes of Milan Monumental Cemetery

Based on an Urban Public Open Space Approach\*

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## Abstract

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Cemeteries have been created in civilizations in which dead people must be buried. In different epochs, these places have found different features in relation with the kind of perception of the concept of death by the community. In this regard, a cemetery space can be examined from this point of view in different cultures and civilizations; furthermore, the impacts of concepts, worship rites and rituals regarding death in each culture on the creation of cemeteries can be assessed. In fact, the relationship of humans with space depends on the relationship of a person with a place and social relations formed in that place. This means that the quality of an urban space is comparable in terms of status of its relationship with the people and on the other hand in terms of the relationships formed in that space from the historical- cultural and social points of view.

Milan Monumental Cemetery can be a notable instance of architectural view towards the phenomenon of death. This historical cemetery as an open space is the place where a variety of arts are exhibited including painting, sculpture, literature, calligraphy, architecture, architecture of landscape, etc., representing culture, beliefs, and notions of the community concerning concepts such as life, death, virtue, eternal life, Nature and so on. Moreover, this cemetery is counted among the most precious artistic and architectural works of Italy in terms of cultural and social landscapes. As a live and permanent place, this cemetery serves as a space for ritual, cultural, religious and social activities. Thus, the present research aimed to investigate the role of this cemetery as an urban public open space through social and cultural landscapes. This study is classified as a qualitative research method, and the data were collected by using documentary and field study analytically and descriptively.

## Keywords

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Cultural and social landscapes of Milan Monumental Cemetery, Role of the cemetery in urban public open spaces, Historical cemeteries, Architecture of death.