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Article

Barriers to ensuring continuity in urban facades identity, legal tools-based analysis: The case of Iran

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ABSTRACT

With the increase in construction activities under the effects of neo-liberal policies, especially in metropolitan cities, the urban management system faces the critical issue of striving for an urban identity. This study seeks to reveal the awareness of national urban laws and regulations regarding the urban identity concept in the scope of urban facades and silhouettes. On the other hand, the problems experienced and visible in urban silhouettes and identity are indicators of awareness regarding the legislation and the deficiencies and obstacles arising from its implementation. Iran, a developing country with different layers of identity such as culture and religion, is selected for this research. The research focuses on the case of Iran in two essential components. Firstly, it aims to demonstrate the awareness of legal tools in the scope of the necessity for the continuity of urban identity and silhouettes. Then, it reveals the real implementations in urban areas, which show the loss of identity and continuity in the urban facade and silhouette.

The most reliable way to reveal this is through urban silhouettes and facade visuals. In this case, the visuals of the buildings built during the Pahlavi period, the buildings from the first years of the revolution, and those being built today as city and architecture interfaces show the lack of identity and the loss of continuity of the facade in their most distinctive features.

Since architectural development and urban areas are always subject to social and political development, the era after the Islamic Revolution of Iran, as one of the most important political, social, and cultural events, was chosen to evaluate city facades and identity. In this study, a comprehensive literature review was conducted, in which the legislation, including legal sources, laws, and regulations, as well as historical periods, maps, and visual sources, were examined. The requirements of the legislation and real practices were compared with the support of visuals.

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INTRODUCTION

Urban landscape, as defined by Cullen (2003), is the structural and visual integrity of the series of buildings, streets, and places that form urban areas. Urban identity is created by the various elements that make up an

urban region, including streets, squares, public spaces, and buildings. Therefore, the urban landscape has been described as a space with a unique material composition, color, texture, and form. Stated differently, Norberg-Schulz believed that each area has its essence, the 'Genius Loci' (Vecco, 2020). On the other hand, the intangible factors

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that shape urban areas are urban policies and motivations, religious and cultural aspects, and inspirations from other civilizations (Kelly, 2019). Cities' unmeasured growth, combined with the effect and pressure of competitiveness and global urbanization, causes a loss of primary or acquired identity qualities. Identity is the distinct characteristic of a place and a way of representing natural, cultural, and man-made components of the city, as distinctive physical and visual features that shape the images of the place (Ziyae, 2018; Ujang, 2012; Carmona et al., 2010). A city's identity features, such as its aesthetics, are discernible in all urban settings, including streets.

On the other hand, interfaces exist between nature and the city, masses and voids, meaning and spaces, and shape and activity. Interfaces serve as the transitional areas between different architectural forms, influencing how we perceive the urban environment. Dovey & Wood (2015) define interfaces as assemblages that connect various elements at different scales, such as streets, buildings, and neighborhoods (Dovey & Wood, 2015). Urban interfaces exist in the transition between public and private spaces. For example, street interfaces are formed by aggregating masses and the spaces between buildings (Orhan, 2018).

Thus, the phenomenon known as the 'identity crisis' is one of the subjects that many cities are dealing with, as streets, landscapes, and mass constructions have not left any significant impact on the quality of today's modern cities (Kasravi et al., 2020; Majidi et al., 2021). On the other hand, urban identity should reflect the perception of society and individuals observing the city (Şahin, 2022). It means an effective and positive connection, in other words, a sense of belonging between the place and the individual (Altanlar, 2021). Recently, by presenting "themes" for residential environments, the identity and image of an ideal place to live have been artificially copied and shown to users (Garip & Garip, 2015).

After the Second World War, there was a shift towards prioritizing economic aspects in urban design and planning. This led to the formation of rational urban spaces and the adoption of a modernist approach, while ignoring social dimensions and natural environments (Madanipour, 2006; Bal, 2007). According to Mumford, the city of that era symbolized the strengths of modernity, in which every perspective of life had to be controlled (Imrie & Street, 2009; Mumford, 1961). Thus, bureaucracy became the outcome of this era, starting in the early 20th century. The interrelationship between bureaucracy, urbanism, and the regulation of daily life in the city are important subjects in urban governance literature (Imrie & Street, 2009). Since the 1980s, the implementation of large-scale urban projects began with the neoliberal policies followed by governments (Yollu, 2006). Different interventions by the state supported this process.

In the past century, the management of urban spaces has evolved significantly. Today, there are alternative development regulations, new types of organizations, and large management associations (Ben-Joseph, 2009) involved in global urban management, all of which differ from traditional approaches. In this regard, the urban environment is a collective endeavor affected by diverse stakeholders (Carmona, 2009) and decision-makers. This process was accompanied by the eclectic designs of post-modernism with different architectural styles. The identity crisis created by all these interventions in urban spaces, which affected both conceptual and physical areas (Amiri, 2017), is becoming visible in today's cities through inharmonious landscapes and architecture.

Urban identity can be lost due to the impact of new and dense constructions and the functional changes of buildings, even when they maintain their architectural character. Spatial and functional changes become vital determinants in the transformation of the urban spaces surrounding them, and the adaptation of new functions directly affects the identity of urban space (Seçmen & Süyük, 2021).

Therefore, the behavior of society is influenced by architectural and urban features in cities (Amiri, 2017). Thus, the urban facade/view, which serves as an urban interface and emerges as a socio-spatial assemblage, forms urban identity and the quality of urban spaces, playing a vital role in urban structure (Tavakoli, 2010). It is also the most important part of cities for this influence. In recent decades, the decision-making process in neoliberal cities has been under the authorization of urban elites and private agents. Cities are managed with the collaboration of the private sector through neoliberal urban policies, with the strategy of gaining a place in the global urban network (Miro, 2011). In this context, urban regulations by the government, as a specific type of rule, have played an important role in the design of the built environment (Baer, 1997). Despite the wide scope of urban management, here it refers to the general performance of the country's governments against endogenous and exogenous events and their sequences. This situation appears to be more common, especially in developing countries.

In European architecture, facade characteristics are closely related to the city and its urban spaces, as well as its cultural, social, and environmental aspects. Despite the diversity of shapes, the buildings were relatively harmonious, even in their attempts to provide the best quality in their main facades. On the one hand, the building faces the urban space and establishes a reciprocal relationship with the city with maximum architectural style in the facade's design (Alishah et al., 2016). Although identity and facade issues have been examined since the 1960s and '70s in the West (Kasravi et al., 2020), it has only recently become a subject in developing countries like Iran.

Iran settled some of the world's oldest civilizations and had cities such as Hegmataneh (Iran, Median Empire). Hence, urban management systems in the country can be traced back to the past. On the other hand, in the Middle East, Iran was among the states that first emerged and were recognized within the international political system (Soheili & Diba, 2011). The country's urban management systems changed significantly after the 1920s when the First Pahlavi era began. Modernity and nationalism replaced localism and ethnic identity during this period with an effective central government. Particularly, the architecture of this era was primarily influenced by the trend of ancient nationalism, where the bulk and volume designs were derived from historic structures without explicitly imitating the shapes or features of Achaemenid, Parthian, or Sassanid architecture (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows buildings whose facades were designed decisively using ancient elements and symbols in Iran during the First Pahlavi era (Figure 2) and buildings whose structures were designed based on ancient elements without direct imitation (Figure 2). In comparison, the identity crisis is apparent in the eclectic view of today's Iranian streets (Kasravi et al., 2020) (Figure 3).

The maintenance of continuity in urban identity, as a reposition of different experiences and cultures, has now become an unreachable parameter for metropolitan and historical cities. Various types of academic research debate the urban management, urban planning paradigm, and the government's stance on planning programs in the developing country of Iran (Charbgoo & Mareggi, 2020; Pilehvar & Kamali, 2010; Farhoodi et al., 2009; Rasoolimanesh & Jafar, 2013; Pilehvar, 2020). Against these studies, this research tries to reveal the differences between the awareness of urban legal sources and real implementation in Iranian cities. The research is structured into five sections to address the following questions: Which laws emphasize the necessity of continuity of facade identity in the scope of

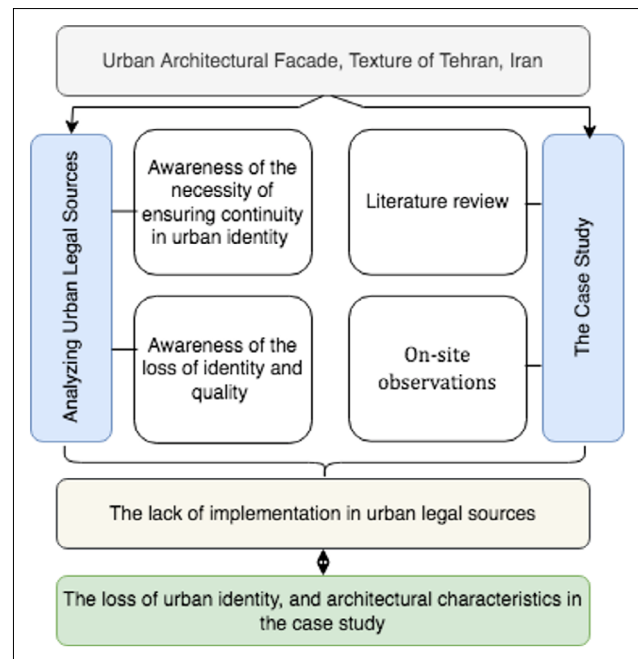


Figure 2. Research design.

the urban silhouette? In which laws is the awareness of the continuity of facade identity present? What are the barriers to ensuring continuity in Iran's facade identity/silhouettes despite the understanding of urban legal sources?

Literature Review

Given the rapid growth of urbanization and the increasing number of constructions in recent years, the heterogeneity and visual alteration in the "faces" of cities have become a supplementary part of visually polluting urban landscapes (Gjerde, 2010). Building facades, as one of the indicators of visual pollution in today's cities, are considered one of the urban features that provide essential information for citizens



Figure 1. (Left) Police Palace, Tehran (1936); (Right) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by Gabriel Gorkian, Tehran (1933-1937) (Yousefi, 2019; Wikipedia, 2024; Hakim, 2001).



Figure 3. Facade/view, and city/ building interface of Tehran, Iran.

to establish a correct relationship with the environment. Architectural structures and the street interfaces in which they are situated are key elements that both create the city and give it its identity (Orhan, 2018). Unfortunately, this relationship between the building, architectural structures, facade, and atmosphere—briefly, city and architecture interfaces—is often neglected (Salingaros, 1999). Heterogeneous structures in form, color, and material are placed together so inconsistently that one might think "maybe it's intentional" (Hight & Chris, 2011; Amiri, 2017). Pedestrian-oriented environmental design is an issue that has been ignored in today's cities, causing them not to meet human aesthetic, emotional, identifiable, and cultural needs. The confusion and disorganization in the city's appearance show no strong connection between architecture and culture (Naghizadeh, 2000; Amiri, 2017). Modern architecture has altered the face of urban public spaces by inviting infrastructures, automobiles, and industrial buildings into cities. Subsequently, the constitution of so-called "industrial cultures" has undeniably changed our sense of urban spaces and their cultural landscapes.

As Ziyae (2018) mentioned, many of the current urban issues arise from industrialization and modernism that emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries, manifesting in many urban layers (Table 1). In particular, the two main trends of urbanization and globalization significantly influence urban settings. While identity and facade issues have been studied in the West since the 1960s and 1970s (Kasravi et al., 2020), developing nations such as Iran have only recently turned their attention to them. There are numerous studies analyzing the architectural characteristics, identity, and silhouette of urban areas. Examples from these studies are summarized in Table 1. However, research that discusses the influence of legal source awareness and the differences between this awareness and real implementation is very limited. This study is original due to its examination of urban legal sources connected to the historical periods of the country (specifically after the Islamic revolution) and the loss of continuity of facade identity and silhouette as reflected in reality.

Table 1. Urban facade and identity through urban research literature.

Author	Matter	Method	Scope
Rapoport, 1990	The meaning of the built environment.	Professor Rapoport explains a new framework for comprehending how the built environment develops to have significance for both individual people and entire civilizations through examples and vignettes derived from a variety of cultures, historical periods, and modern America.	Studying the relations between urban environments and the reactions of their users based the meaning that the environment provides for users.
Bahrainy & Aminzadeh, 2007	Evaluation of Navab Regeneration project in central Tehran, Iran.	An analysis of the Navab Regeneration Project in central Tehran using a post-construction/post-occupancy evaluation.	Analysing place identity through Regeneration of a high way Project.
Shamsuddin & Ujan, 2008	The sense of a place for traditional streets.	Users of the streets were surveyed and interviewed in person to learn more about place attachment and how it affects place identity.	Highlighting place attachment concept and its significance in creating the sense of place.
Alishah et al., 2016	The role of building facade on the urban landscape.	The library approach and document analysis have been the techniques employed in the data collection process. The content was examined utilizing the inductive reasoning method to study building facade designs within the historically documented urban environments.	Revealing the dominant figure of the urban body as facade and urban landscape and its effect on thr citizen's outlook, with the case of Sari.
Ziyae, 2018	Evaluation of urban identity through a pattern of cultural landscapes.	A paradigm for study that emphasizes the place's identity based on its cultural features.	The need for special notice of the cultural and social appearances of places transformed in the urban planning/design process.
Sadeghifar et al., 2019	The relationship between building facade and people preferences.	A total of 124 students enrolled in three faculties at Golestan University were given a photo-questionnaire survey.	Exploring the importance of urban building facade on visual quality of the city and the user's perception.
Montazer et al., 2019	The influence of 18 th and 19 th century Russian Neoclassical architecture on the architecture of Iranian managerial-service buildings.	Descriptive-analytical research methods have been employed, while historical-interpretive research methods have been utilized to gather historical theoretical foundations.	To examine the part of Russia in using European architecture and western architectural components in Iran, and to specify patterns of Russian neoclassical architecture and capture them in Iran's administrative-service buildings.
Askarizad and Jafari, 2019	The influence of Neoclassic facades on urban textures.	Using statistical analysis method.	The importance of designing buildings and their effect, with the case of Iran.
Kasravi et al., 2020	The principality of existence, approach to the identity of urban facades.	The qualitative study uses written materials to support its conclusions, which are reached by applying logical and philosophical reasonings.	This article aims to find the philosophical cause for the sense among urban experts and practitioners.
Jokar et al., 2021	Assessment of urban identity in newly built neighbourhoods.	The Pardis neighborhood's identity components are examined, and the neighborhood's status is evaluated and examined in light of the urban identity indicators examined in the literature.	Evaluating elements of identity in newly built neighborhoods raises cognizance of researchers and city managers to find effective plans to solve their problems.
Farhad et al., 2021	Architectural identity and spatial belonging in historical neighborhoods.	A questionnaire survey was administered to a sample of 300 respondents as part of this quantitative study to evaluate the associations between the elements of architectural identity and place attachment.	Examining the relationship between architectural identity supplementary tie pattern, symbol, and ornament) and the attachment of the space.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research focuses on the Iranian case in two essential components. First, it aims to demonstrate the awareness of legal tools in the scope of the necessity of the continuity of facade identity and silhouette. Then, it reveals the real implementations in urban areas, which show the loss of identity and continuity in the urban facade and silhouette. Since architectural development and urban areas are always subject to social and political development, the period after the Islamic Revolution of Iran, as one of the most important political, social, and cultural events, is selected for evaluating the place of urban facades, identity, and city and architectural interface development in the urban legal sources. A comprehensive literature review is used in this study to analyze the selected period, visual resources, and legal sources, including laws and regulations, supported by visuals to compare laws and real implementations.

The analysis is based on revealing the difference between the urban legal sources and the implementation in urban areas by considering the binding nature of the legal sources for everyone. It is a frequently mentioned subject in the literature that architecture and urbanism are affected by socio-political events. Therefore, the period after the revolution was chosen because it was the beginning of an important socio-political era in Iran. Islamism and anti-Westernization characterize the period after the 1979 Islamic revolution, which is the subject of the analysis in this research (Fazeli, 2005).

Case Study

As an ancient civilized country, Iran has a long history of modern urban planning. A country with a top-down planning framework has a highly centralized governance system (Shahab et al., 2021; Alvanchi et al., 2021). Although Iran is historically strong, its social, political, and economic fields have witnessed significant changes, especially from the Pahlavi period to the present day. Iran, with its strategic position (between the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea), has played the role of an East-West link (Golkarian, 2019). Sariolghalam (2007) defines identity in Iran as a kind of harmony between Iran, Islam, and Western liberalism (Figures 1 and 3). In this regard, Iran and Iranian culture are sources of territorial and historical identity, Islam is a source of spiritual identity, belief, and a broad socio-political worldview, and Western liberalism is a philosophical resource with economic, political, and cultural applications.

These processes and changes brought different institutional organizations as well as time-oriented policies, which implicitly affected urban management systems as well. Increasing power and state system concentration, the White Revolution (Enghelabe Sefid), the 28 August 1953 coup, the implementation of development programs,

and increased economic and cultural exchanges with the West are examples of these changes. The result was the emergence of scattered and uncoordinated urban planning and architectural rules in the country, which manifests in the appearance and facades of the cities (Figures 1 and 3).

The formation of urban governance has also been affected, resulting in spatial and identity consequences. The following analysis reveals contingent historical events and intersections or junctures that make up the Iranian cities and architecture interface. The main factors that played key roles in the development trajectories in the planning area of Iran fall under three main headings: (1) actors, (2) urban planning systems and regulations, and (3) other external events. In this study, the laws and regulations introduced—rather than the role of the actors—are discussed in different historical events, especially in the period after the Islamic Revolution.

The real feature of Iranian cities was presented by Dr. Abbas Akhondi, Iran's Transportation and Urban Development Minister (2013-2018), who stated: "...When you walk in the city, it is as if the buildings are slapping you, and they have ridiculed your whole identity and being..." (Setavin, 2020).

I would like to emphasize the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) statement in contrast to this paragraph: "Iran has been home to organized urban settlements since at least 4000 BC, and even from those times, the history of Iran has been intertwined with the history of the region as a whole" (Arefian & Moeini, 2016). Iran, as a modern developing country with a complicated national system, faced different political periods and unfair capitalism growth and modernization throughout history, which have influenced Iranian restructuring (Valadbaygi, 2020; Ziyae, 2018). The country has experienced modern aspects of life in traditionally developed cities (Ebrahimpour, 2011). Iran also experienced a rapid transition from a traditional civil society during the First Pahlavi¹ (Nationalism-Nativism) era and testimony to the Islamic Revolution (Islamism-Anti Westernization) and war (Iran-Iraq war) (Fazeli, 2005). These contingent historical events shaped and reorganized urban management and structure systems, causing a shift from path dependence to new path creation at a critical juncture of the era. In this context, the Pahlavi dynasty was one of the most complicated and revolutionary periods in Iranian political and social history. The First Pahlavi era monarch tried to destroy the traces of Islamic identity and characteristics in the national identity and highlight the identity of Iranian culture (Soheili & Diba, 2011) (Figure 1). With the social transformation and the construction of industrial and modern Western buildings and houses, neoclassical facades replaced the old buildings on the wide streets that were characteristic of the European model (Hashemi, 2019).

The legalization of these practices in the cities was through

the Street Widening Law of the period. The process of modernization accelerated after the 1960s with the White Revolution reforms during the second Pahlavi era. In this period, two factors contributed to changes in attitudes towards building materials and technology. First, the modernist view led architects to simplify exterior views and internal components. Second, there was a necessity for construction using fast and cheap instruments (Hasanpour & Soltanzadeh, 2016). Therefore, to manage the population crisis in urban centers, the resulting technology provided the basis for the emergence of a type of building characterized by a box-shaped volume with a vaulted roof, constructed with the help of iron beams and bricks. This process continued to evolve in the following years (Hasanpour & Soltanzadeh, 2016). The second Pahlavi period marked the development of modern architecture and the international style, which led Iranian architecture to move away from the old Iranian concept of extroversion and embrace high-rise construction, a new practice previously not possible in Iran.

These contingent historical events and external changes brought about new urban legal sources, institutional structures, and management systems. The period after the victory of the Islamic Revolution was marked by intensified changes. The values of the revolution, the influence of Western postmodern pluralist ideas, and the production of paradigms different from the traditional culture of society caused many transformations in architecture and the urban landscape (Habib & Hoseyni, 2010). In this context, Iranian cities' views, urban facades, architectural characteristics, identity, and quality became—and remain—the most important issues, similar to other developing countries.

These changes can be discussed using the example of introversion, an ancient feature of Iranian architecture that distinguishes it from other architectural styles (Figure 4) (Gharehgheshlaghi, 2019). The priority of constructing public and industrial buildings alongside social transformation was an indication of the westernization of

the country. The focus was on reconstructing the old core of Iranian cities. New westernized buildings and homes with neoclassical facades replaced old buildings, and wide avenues were introduced, following the characteristics of the European pattern. These projects were generally funded by the urban elite, which began the socioeconomic degradation of the urban environment (Hashemi, 2019). Tehran, the capital city during this era, was completely transformed into a modern and industrialized city. The source of these reforms was abundant oil income. As mentioned, the Street Widening Law, under the purview of the Ministries of Justice and Interior, legalized these implementations during the First Pahlavi era. Since then, city management and physical planning have become the focus of municipalities. The westernization of Iran can be interpreted in this way: it was an event that did not take the form of an invasion or attack but was accepted by the majority of people (Japalaghi et al., 2019; Farzaneh, 2011).

While the second Pahlavi government placed a strong focus on the preservation of cultural assets, it also began to restore and protect historical sites. Traditionalist and Islamic architectural approaches, Iranian archaism (national style), and modern architectural approaches were all reflected in the urban facade and architectural characteristics of Iranian cities during the First Pahlavi era. In contrast, the Islamic and traditionalist architectural approaches, modernism, and Iranian quasi-modernism were reflected in the urban facade and architectural characteristics of Iranian cities during the second Pahlavi era (Haghjou et al., 2019). These periods had spatial, visual, and aesthetic effects on urban facades and architectural areas, which gradually led to the loss of continuity in urban facade identity. Interestingly, this issue has frequently been mentioned by decision-makers and practitioners and is referenced in Iranian urban legal sources. Table 2 summarizes some of the legal sources of Iran that address the lack of urban quality and uniqueness in different forms.

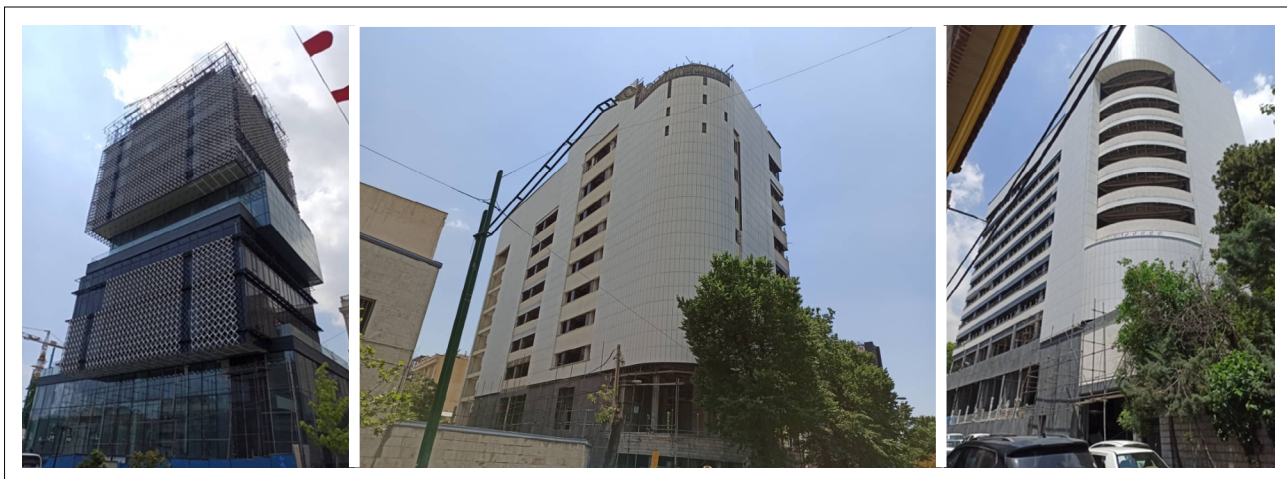


Figure 4. Today's facade of buildings under construction, Tehran, Iran.

Table 2. Emphasis on the loss of urban identity and continuity through laws analysis, the case of Iran (The Era after the Islamic Revolution).

Law/Legal Sources	Approval Year	Related Content/ sentence on the subject	Approval authority
Enactment on the Preventing the Increase of City Limits.	November, 1999	Increasing the area of cities causes the destruction of agricultural lands, scattering and ugliness of the appearance and landscape of the city.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Enactment on the National Document of Architecture and Urban Planning of Islamic Iran	April, 2015	The need to improve the quality of the building and the landscape of cities and as a result to improve the architecture and urban planning of the country.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Enactment on the Competitiveness Plan of Cities	March, 2017	Accelerated process of urbanization and urbanization of settlements.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Enactment a New Approach to Preparing Comprehensive Urban Plans	June, 2018	The trend of quality reduction of cities during the last 2 decades.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Enactment on Unauthorized Constructions in Urban Areas	August, 2018	Irregular and illegal development of cities.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Enactment of the National Document of Architecture and Urban Planning of Islamic Iran	August, 2020	The need to recover the Iranian-Islamic identity, The importance of orderly and integrated organization of urban spaces at different scales; school mosque house interactions.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development

In other words, it has been accepted that Iranian cities, especially megacities such as Tehran, lack urban identity and quality. Providing continuity in urban identity is possible through the definition of the framework and requirements in urban laws and regulations, which serve as sanction tools. In this context, many laws and regulations were enacted to ensure urban identity and continuity in Iran. Some of the most relevant laws are summarized in Table 3. As shown in Table 3, most of the laws enacted after the Islamic revolution emphasize the preservation of Iranian-Islamic architectural features and their reflection in urban designs.

Many features of Iranian architecture have decreased or disappeared in today's structures (Figure 4 and Figure 5). "Urban identity" and "architectural identity" are two interrelated issues because if the architectural process loses its connection to Iranian civilization and culture, it creates space for the supremacy of a type of disconnected, incompatible, and imported architecture (Ghorbaniyan, 2004; Amiri, 2017). Stuart Hall² believes: "Identity is a process of change that is a cause for certification and recognition. Some know identity as a communicative concept that gains meaning with similarities and differences with others." Iranian architecture and urbanism are testimonies to regaining their special status as they face a developing

society experiencing processes of industrialization, globalization, and networking.

The adaptation from the traditional to the modern city and from the modern city to networking is updating the whole world and creating both positive and negative effects on societies. For example, some hallmarks of Iranian urban design were simplicity, introversion, and anthropomorphism. Islamic ideology has changed the scale, patterns, and architectural morphology by combining building style and urban development with the Islamic ideology of privacy as intimacy (Farzaneh, 2011). Iranian cities also experienced rapid adaptation from conventional society to modern society without creating the necessary scientific, engineering, cultural, and artistic infrastructures. In such cases, a network society emerges in Iranian cities (Ghorbaniyan, 2004; Amiri, 2017). Many Iranian intellectuals understand Iran's current identity as a society comprising three layers: religion, national culture, and modern culture and civilization. These layers are inherent in each Iranian's essence, and the proper connection of these three layers, in proportion to the spirit of time and space, can be instrumental in completing the contemporary identity of Iranian society (Amiri, 2017). Urban planning and architectural rules in Iran are scattered and uncoordinated.

Table 3. Related laws for the necessity of ensuring the urban identity, the case of Iran, (The Era after the Islamic Revolution).

Law/Legal Sources	Approval Year	Related Content/sentence on the subject	Approval authority
Rules And Regulations of The City Facade	November, 1990	The need for aesthetically and harmoniously Building facades with displaying high-quality materials, in the passages.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Rules and Regulations of Iranian-Islamic Architecture and Urban Planning	October, 1996	Consideration of the mosque as a central landmark of cities in all plans.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Rules and Regulations for Increasing and Improving the Quality of Appearance and Urban Landscape	November, 2008	In cities with sloping cover, the color of the material and the slope limits should be in harmony with the appearance and urban landscape, In submitting the volumetric plan of buildings to obtain a building permit, coordination and harmony between volumes in terms of material and color of materials, morphology in neighborhood units is required.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Enactment on Improving the Quality of Appearance and Urban Landscape	December, 2011	The need to consider the natural, historical, and cultural characteristics of the region in urban design and the characteristics of Iranian Islamic architecture.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Enactment on the Competitiveness Plan of Cities	March, 2017	Improving the quality of life and economic and social development of cities and creating contextual differences in cities. Changing the approach in the urban management system, the importance of urban competitiveness.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Enactment a New Approach to Preparing Comprehensive Urban Plans	June, 2018	Prioritize urban regeneration policy Paying attention to historical and cultural and natural capacities of the cities. Paying attention to the specific conditions of each city such as historical and culctural and economic.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
General Criteria for the Installation of Tall Buildings in Iranian Cities	August, 2019	It is necessary to build tall buildings in the city in terms of alignment with the landscape and the role defined for the city.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
Enactment of the National Document of Architecture and Urban Planning of Islamic Iran	August, 2020	Creating the grounds for the continuation of Iranian Islamic thought and culture in contemporary architecture city by compiling and approving the principles and indicators of Iranian-Islamic architecture and urban planning based on the common spiritual heritage of Islamic Iran based on rationality and using the techniques, skills, and methods in the periods of Iranian history and responding to the needs and requirements of the present era in line with the Iranian-Islamic model of progress. Preservation and revival of Iranian-Islamic urban architectural patterns.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development

Table 3. Related laws for the necessity of ensuring the urban identity, the case of Iran, (The Era after the Islamic Revolution) (Cont.)

Law/Legal Sources	Approval Year	Related Content/sentence on the subject	Approval authority
Enactment Regarding the Design of Urban Passages	June, 2021	Improving the quality of urban sidewalk design.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development
General Criteria for Designing Facades of Urban Buildings	March, 2024	Improving the quality of the urban appearance as a public right, creating grounds for the realization of Iranian-Islamic architectural indicators and native architecture, providing the context for the emergence and development of the identity of the place in the urban facades, the coordination of the facades of the buildings with the characteristics of the natural, historical and cultural background of the city, and reducing visual inconsistencies.	High Council of Architecture and Urban Development

**Figure 5.** Facade/view, and city/ building interface of Tehran, Iran.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

The 1973 legislation creating the Iranian High Council of Architecture and Urban Development is the most significant application in the field of architecture and urbanism (Rezafar, 2023; Asemanabi, 2020, Mejlis 96910, 2020). The goal of the law was to raise people's standard of living, support Iranian architecture as an art form, promote identity and traditional architectural styles, and showcase the distinctive qualities of that architecture by incorporating new scientific and technical advancements while also taking local needs, lifestyle preferences, and weather patterns into consideration. Thus, the emphasis on qualitative issues in urban contexts is reflected in the law's goals. The council is the primary body that considers urban design and qualitative concerns in the city's later comprehensive planning stages. The council first brought the need for "aesthetically and harmoniously building facades with high-quality materials in the passages" to the agenda in 1990.

Shortly after the rate of urbanization began to rise, the council (1999) criticized the "scattering and ugliness of the appearance and scenery of the city" and focused on stopping

the expansion of city borders. The most effective regulations in the field of ensuring urban identity were implemented in 2008 by the council. The regulation emphasizes the harmony of color, material, and slope limits with the appearance and urban landscape. The need to consider the area's natural, cultural, and historical features was consolidated into a comprehensive document by the council in 2011. In 2015, the council took the matter of bettering the nation's architecture and urban planning seriously and voiced its criticism. The loss of continuity in urban facade identity, along with the need to ensure identity, was highlighted in the legislation and regulations passed from 2017 to 2020 by the council. Laws and regulations have been passed specifically to protect urban identity beyond 2020. The most recent regulation, "General requirements for designing facades of urban buildings," was approved in March 2024. This regulation clearly emphasizes the need to reduce visual inconsistency (Tables 2 and 3). Compared to the preceding political regimes, more urban rules and regulations have been passed since 1978, demonstrating that there are complications, particularly with urban planning, facade design, continuity, and identity management.

Figure 4 reveals the current facade of the structures that are being built in Tehran. It can be said that these facades have little to do with the Islamic architecture of Iran, which is emphasized in the laws and regulations. This situation (Figure 4) demonstrates problems in implementing the laws and regulations and controlling facade designs in urban areas. Urban development during this time reflects the government's traditionalist attitude and preference for modernity, even in the face of the enforcement of Islamic laws and regulations in all areas of administration (Madanipour, 2006). The lack of specialized design policies in the field of urban planning, together with a lack of coordination and cross-sectoral cooperation among relevant institutions, can be highlighted as obstacles to ensuring the continuity of urban facades' identity in Iran.

Cultural, social, economic, technological, and political dynamics have caused growth, transformation, and even the loss of city identities. The loss of historical background, urban silhouette, facade, and context has affected the continuity of urban facade identity and the city and architecture interface. Iranian distinctive, traditional architecture with identity was influenced by architectural art, which was greatly affected by Iran's profound contact with the West. As a result, Iranian towns looked very different from those of earlier periods before the Pahlavi, and modernity was infused into Iranian architecture through the repurposing of Western art.

The phenomenon of urban identity plays an important role in today's urban planning and design agenda. While legal frameworks emphasize the importance of preserving historical continuity and ensuring urban identity, challenges persist in the effective implementation of these regulations. The most reliable way to reveal this is through urban silhouettes and facade visuals. In this study, the actors playing a role in urban planning were not considered. However, considering that the laws are mandatory for everyone, it reveals that the actors who implement urban regulations or control the implementation of these regulations should play a more effective role. Otherwise, as seen in the country, a board such as the High Council of Architecture and Urban Development may be the only institution that approves both the destruction and loss of urban facade identity and the need to ensure urban facade identity at the same time. This may mean that a single institution is insufficient to ensure the continuity of urban facade identity. To ensure the continuity of urban facade identity, conscious decision-makers, along with mandatory laws and regulations, are needed simultaneously.

NOTES

¹Pahlavi era: 1925–1941 is considered the First Pahlavi era, and 1941–1978 (The Islamic Revolution) is considered the Second Pahlavi era.

²Stuart Hall is one of the most influential theorists of British Cultural Studies. Stuart Hall is a Jamaican immigrant who focuses on ideological and cultural themes, but he also has important opinions and suggestions on these concepts in the field of communication (Gökgül, 2022).

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