

individual buildings, beautified facades, or, as I will discuss in the case study chapter, graffiti art that leaves a socio-spatial mark on the city's engagement with its past can be considered elements of urban heritage planning.

Underlying concepts

Urban heritage assemblage

To fully comprehend the evolution of the academic and professional field of conservation, it is necessary to examine the material role played by historic places, urban spaces, urban infrastructure, and the environment, in addition to analyzing heritage discourses. Within the field of urban planning, scholars have situated heritage planning processes within socio-spatial¹² assemblages.¹³ Also, scholars in heritage studies have studied heritage assembled within national and local socio-economic contexts,¹⁴ and as discursive-material processes.¹⁵

-
- 12 When assemblage theory is utilized to examine cities and the social processes within them, it takes into account both the social and spatial elements involved. Consequently, it perceives urban processes as socio-spatial processes. See: Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London & New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006).
- 13 Jean Hillier, 'More than Meat: Rediscovering the Cow beneath the Face in Urban Heritage Practice', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 31, no. 5 (2013): 863–78; Shulan Fu and Jean Hillier, 'Disneyfication or Self-Referentiality: Recent Conservation Efforts and Modern Planning History in Datong', in *China: A Historical Geography of the Urban* (Springer, 2018), 165–91.
- 14 Sharon Macdonald, 'Reassembling Nuremberg, Reassembling Heritage', *Journal of Cultural Economy* 2, no. 1–2 (2009): 117–34; Pendlebury, 'Conservation Values, the Authorised Heritage Discourse and the Conservation-Planning Assemblage'.
- 15 Solmaz Yadollahi, 'Prospects of Applying Assemblage Thinking for Further Methodological Developments in Urban Conservation Planning', *The Historic Environment: Policy & Practice* 8, no. 4 (2 October 2017): 355–71; Harrison, 'Conclusion: On Heritage Ontologies: Rethinking the Material Worlds of Heritage'; Har-

These approaches are grounded in the framework of assemblage¹⁶ and actor-network¹⁷ thinking, which posits that non-human actors also hold agency within social processes. An assemblage can be described as a symbiotic gathering of heterogeneous players, whether human or non-human, co-functioning and forming alliances for a period of time.¹⁸

In this book, I present the trajectories of conservation and heritage planning in Iran as an assemblage unfolding and changing over time. Like other assemblages, academic and professional fields are historical socio-material entities.¹⁹ Hence, the field of conservation and heritage planning is presented as the evolving assemblage of urban spaces, heritage discourses, communities of practitioners and scholars, organizations, research- and practice-oriented laboratories and workshops, and finally, the common public that engages with urban heritage.

In this context, knowledge of the field comprises two dimensions—'knowing that', acquired through the teaching of conservation theory, and 'knowing how', an embodied knowledge that relies on the material medium and practical experience.²⁰ The book sheds light on specific sites that, owing to their distinct local material characteristics, have played a pivotal role in shaping the technical know-how of conservation in Iran. These locations have served as workshops and laboratories where the craftsmanship of working with stone and mud brick has been taught and learned. For instance, cities like Isfahan, Yazd, Shiraz, and Bam have been instrumental in training numerous

risson et al., *Heritage Futures: Comparative Approaches to Natural and Cultural Heritage Practices*.

- 16 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*; Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).
- 17 Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford university press, 2005).
- 18 DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 DeLanda explores various forms of knowledge and highlights the significance of the material medium in the process of acquiring knowledge. Ibid.

practitioners and scholars who later pursued careers elsewhere in the country. Consequently, the material and discursive contributions of these places have profoundly influenced the preservation of spaces throughout the country. In essence, these sites have co-worked with heritage discourses, influencing the field's scope of interest, as well as its methodological traditions.

To ensure a more coherent and articulated investigation and presentation, the book directs its attention towards distinct domains of where the key players tend to be present. The first domain centres on the overarching socio-economic politics in the state, which operate independently at a higher level than urban planning and heritage policies. The second domain includes the official urban heritage planning policymaking sphere, encompassing the dynamics within the parliament, organizations, and ministries. The third domain pertains to academia, and the fourth domain explores the intersection of official policies with everyday urban life, often involving implemented conservation projects.

Visually thinking (see Figure 1), we can identify how these four key domains intersect at certain areas along their boundaries. These areas serve as arenas where actors from different domains interact. Within these arenas, we often find the presence of players such as places, social media platforms, professionals, and local branches of governmental institutions. Actor-network-inspired policy researchers believe that institutions sometimes use 'boundary objects' to reduce tensions between two or more distinct domains.²¹ The arenas in which boundary objects can link actors from different domains to each other are at times intentionally created by the government; at others, they emerge spontaneously as a result of socio-economic and political transformations. Throughout the book, I use the term 'boundary action' to describe

21 See: Susan Leigh Star and James R Griesemer, 'Institutional Ecology, Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, 1907–39', *Social Studies of Science* 19, no. 3 (1989): 387–420; Linda Fox-Rogers and Enda Murphy, 'Informal Strategies of Power in the Local Planning System', *Planning Theory* 13, no. 3 (2014): 244–68.

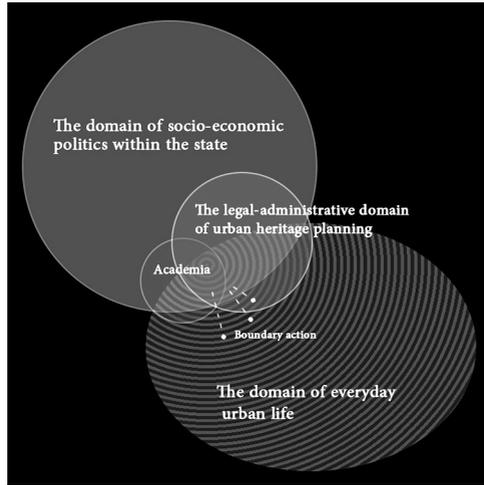
intentional and spontaneous activities occurring within intersecting areas.

For instance, in some sections of the book, I employ this concept to explain the episodic strategies that the government adopts to encourage the participation of non-governmental actors. Boundary action helps to explain how the government tends to employ social media accounts, historic buildings, and local private consultants in non-governmental settings as a means to engage with actors who would normally be sceptical or distrustful of the government.

The concept is also related to a method that I frequently use to investigate the intersection of policymaking and the implementation of projects. Throughout the book, I make references to certain influential scholars as 'bureaucrat-academics', highlighting their dual role within both academic and governmental domains. I attempt to estimate the disparity between theory/policy and practice by triangulating the data obtained from various sources, including academic publications of bureaucrat-academics, their statements in newspapers, on television and radio programmes, academic events, my interviews, and empirical observations of project outcomes in the city. Regarding the term 'bureaucrat-academic', I draw upon sociologist Mohammad Fazeli's concept of the 'sociologist-bureaucrat'.²² Fazeli employs this term to characterize sociologists who are actively involved in public administration. By identifying as one himself, Fazeli asserts that although these individuals may not possess the freedom to openly criticize the government, they can contribute valuable insights into the intricate workings of the governance system.

22 Mohammad Fazeli, *Iran Bar Labe-Ye Tigh, Coftar-Ha-Ye Jameshenasi-Ye Siyasi va Siyasat-e Omumi* [Iran, on the Edge of the Blade Essays on Political Sociology and Public Policy] (Tehran: Rozaneh, 2021).

Figure 1: The overlapping spheres of influence in urban heritage planning



A 'Body Without Organs'

Assemblage theory offers a valuable perspective for comprehending the behaviours and tendencies of socio-material formations while avoiding generalizations. Drawing on the concept of stratified and smooth space introduced by Deleuze and Guattari,²³ Manuel DeLanda contends that in social relationships, including those that shape cities, we can consistently detect variations between organized, coded structures and those that are spontaneous and flexible.²⁴

DeLanda proposes a concept involving an imaginary knob that researchers can utilize to describe the level of rigidity observed in socio-material formations.²⁵ By using this metaphor, I analyze the interplay between various actors, both human and non-human, as they

23 Deleuze and Guattari 1987.

24 DeLanda 2016.

25 DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*.

exert forces either pushing the assemblage towards territorialization or pulling it towards de-territorialization. I focus on examining these behaviours during periods of stability, as well as those of political or economic shock. The underlying notion here is that every assemblage must undergo a process of experimentation to find its optimal position on the knob. In other words, the assemblage needs to strike a balance to avoid the pitfalls of becoming excessively rigid at one end or descending into chaotic disarray at the other.

Another noteworthy proposition of assemblage thinking is that studying the historical behaviour of assemblages (or the recurrent behavioural patterns exhibited by actors within specific contextual circumstances) allows researchers to identify certain habits or tendencies. Understanding these enhances the predictability of behaviours that the socio-spatial assemblage might manifest under similar circumstances in the future.²⁶

To illustrate the collective behaviours and tendencies of the administrative, academic, and socio-spatial actors involved in urban heritage planning in Iran, I depict their collective assemblage as a body.²⁷ When placed in certain circumstances, the metaphorical body undergoes transformative shifts and assumes diverse manifestations. Occasionally, it exhibits flexibility and openness, readily embracing novel forms, while in other instances, it becomes self-destructive and unyielding. It undergoes periods of growth and, alternately, periods of fracture. It can demonstrate cancerous tendencies when the proliferation of rigid structures becomes uncontrollable, much like the uncontrolled proliferation of cancer cells. It can also show a pathological lack of appropriately structured organs to support its proper functioning.

26 DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory*; Gert De Roo, Jean Hillier, and Van Wezemael, 'Complexity and Spatial Planning: Introducing Systems, Assemblages and Simulations', in *Complexity and Planning: Systems, Assemblages and Simulations*, ed. Gert De Roo and Jean Hillier (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 1–36.

27 In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari occasionally use the term "body" interchangeably with the term "assemblage".

In this conceptual context, a 'Body without Organs' explains a state of openness to new forms of expression and possibilities. This openness should not be confused with pathological chaos or disorder. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the 'Body without Organs' is a body that is not organized according to pre-existing norms or structures but is nevertheless capable of organizing itself in new and creative ways. In this book, I employ this concept when explaining a historical point where nearly all activities of an assemblage come to a halt, awaiting the emergence of new structures. I specifically emphasize the correlation between the revolutionary socio-political transitions in Iran and the conservation and urban heritage planning assemblage entering a state of a 'Body Without Organs'.

Methods of data collection and analysis: Unravelling the book's structure

In its methodological approach, this book primarily adopts an inductive, empirical stance to explore, explain, and critically analyze the investigated phenomena, which are exemplified through a single embedded case study.²⁸ Source triangulation serves as a fundamental approach to ensuring the reliability of the collected data and its subsequent results. Nevertheless, when required, method triangulation (or, in this research, triangulation of data collection techniques) is applied to verify and validate qualitative findings.²⁹ For data analysis, the technique of thematic coding is employed to effectively categorize, cross-check, and triangulate data gathered from various sources, facilitating the interpretation of the research findings.³⁰

28 Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2009).

29 For different types of triangulation, see: Ibid.

30 See: H Russell Bernard, Amber Wutich, and Gery W Ryan, *Analyzing Qualitative Data: Systematic Approaches* (Los Angeles: SAGE publications, 2016); Uwe Flick, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research* (Sage, 2009).