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## DISSERTATION

### CULTURE AND PLACE IN TRANSFORMATION. THE CASE OF DARBAND, TEHRAN, IRAN

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## Abstract

This research deals with challenges posed by the rapid transformation of contemporary urban landscapes in the globalisation era compared to their pre-modern counterparts. This phenomenon causes a crisis of identity due to transformations in the collective identity of users. The focus of the research revolves around the question of how the attitude towards the built environment in the case-study-area of Darband, Iran, has been changing due to global influences. Tracing the historical trajectory of studies exploring the values embedded in cultural landscapes, two selected approaches are applied to investigate shifts in users' values: cultural analysis (i.e., Rieger-Jandl, 2006; Rapoport, 1969; 2008) and the role of place in globalisation (i.e., Relph, 1976; 2009). The dissertation centres on the Darband Neighbourhood of Tehran, Iran.

The research aims are to

- analyse the evolving values held by the users of the Darband urban landscape amidst cultural globalisation, by employing a participatory approach.
- create a set of guidelines and recommendations for future developmental initiatives by governing bodies.

My fieldwork adopts a mixed method of qualitative research methodologies and fieldwork techniques for data collection, namely semi-structured interviews, observations, a comprehensive literature review, surveys of households, and comparisons of maps and images from both traditional and current Darband, accompanied by dialogues with experts. Interviews, Photo Recognition, and Sketch Maps facilitate the investigation of place meanings. The emergence of common themes enables my comparative analysis, shedding light on the nuances and disparities across distinct socio-economic groups.

My empirical analysis indicates that the values held by the residents of Darband embody a dynamic interplay of continuity and change, profoundly shaping the built form amid its ongoing transformation. My research unveils the focal values that demand attention in future planning endeavours. Most studies exploring cultural landscapes tend to be confined to Western settings, often adopting singular analytical approaches. In the realm of non-western contexts, this field of research remains relatively uncharted. Furthermore, empirical inquiries into the dynamics of transforming cultures and the built environment are sparse.

The thesis findings indicate the significance of participatory approaches as an invaluable tool for deciphering the values and aspirations of residents prior to commencing planning processes. Moreover, the results highlight the imperative need for careful observation in the face of

developments and transformations that could lead to radical alterations in the urban landscape, potentially culminating in a sense of placelessness. This theses develops strategies that harmonize the preservation of cultural heritage with the imperative for development and progress.

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# Introduction

This dissertation aims to understand users' values of a cultural landscape facing the transformation of cultural globalisation through a participatory approach to propose future planning guidelines. To reach this aim and objective, it goes through the cultural and place identity of users of such a cultural landscape. The research consists of two parts. Part I is a theoretical discussion. First, there is a discussion on the history of the studies on the values of landscape and their different approaches. This discussion leads to the two approaches towards understanding the values of the cultural landscape in this dissertation, namely *culture* and *place*. A discussion of selected approaches leads to a research framework. The process of application of the framework in form of a field study in summer 2021 and the results are provided in Part II of the thesis as the section devoted to the empirical analysis.

My research emerges in the context of how we should deal with valued cultural landscapes as part of the transformation. A theoretical discussion led to a combinational research framework to understand the cultural values/place meanings embedded in the cultural landscape.

## Problem statement and research question

Considering the era of globalisation, a significant challenge facing contemporary urban landscapes, compared to the pre-modern contexts, is accelerated transformation. The enormous speed of the current transformation process creates unknown problems in all spheres of life (Rieger-Jandl 2006). It also causes a crisis of identity due to transformations in the collective identity of users of landscapes and, respectfully, their values. Due to these changes, the question is not, 'What is the attitude towards the built environment in this culture'? However, the question is, 'How is the attitude towards the built environments changing in this culture'? (Rieger-Jandl 2006, Abstract).

Throughout the history of landscape study, there have been a variety of approaches towards understanding the cultural landscape or the values of its users. These discussions started in the nineteenth century. After the Industrial Revolution, many experts discussed the challenges and issues faced due to urban development. They believed that urban development had caused problems for environmental quality, regional identity, and community ties to the environment. To respond to this issue, they attempted various approaches to see how they should evaluate the city and urban landscape. These approaches have had a variety from those approaching the city and urban landscape from very abstract viewpoints such as iconography of landscape (e.g.

Duncan 2008 ), reading the city as text (e.g. Duncan 2008), studying the psychological aspects of landscape through phenomenology, and approaching the landscape from the viewpoints of heritage, to postmodernism and formative interpretation of past architectural forms in the architecture.

However, a group of these scholars went further and argued for the importance of a deeper involvement with users to comprehend the urban landscape from the bottom up. Many believed that urban renewal projects were failing since they removed a context's cultural diversity and identity due to top-down approaches that did not involve users' attitudes. For instance, Jacobs (1961, cited in Lee 2009, p.20) argues, "A successful city stands on the mutual support of a good city planning and active communities". She argues that we should involve the users.

In this context, such trends of approaching the landscape as a cultural landscape emerged, further developed through the discussions on users' cultural values or place values. Sauer (1925) saw the landscape as the reflection of the culture of its users and started a significant trend of analysis in the cultural landscape. He was the start of a trend of studies that was later followed by discussions of cultural analysis. i.e. Rapoport (1969) in the study of vernacular landscapes and later on cultural landscapes, Lehner (1995) and Carsten (et al. 1995) through cultural analysis of vernacular buildings, Rieger-Jandl (2006) in the anthropological study of houses in transforming contexts, and urban sociologists such as King (1984) in the study of the city as a social, political and economic system. Among those who discussed the place approach, Relph (1976) can be named as an influential author of later works on the cultural landscape.

In recent works, such trends argue for combinational approaches to cultural landscape evaluation (e.g. Armstrong et al. 2001, Dovey 2009). They believe that we cannot resolve the issues of the contemporary cultural landscape by approaching it only from one point of view. This is why I also provide a combinational research framework in my thesis.

Rieger-Jandl (2006) states that many urban renewal projects fail due to not involving the users. Most landscape studies traditionally belong to Western contexts (King 1984, Shamsuldin 1997). This urges us to analyse non-western contexts. Rieger Jandl (2006, p.41) has urged us to understand the change of values in non-western contexts that face transformations. Besides, we cannot assume that the results of studies conducted in Western contexts can also be valid in non-Western contexts. Rapoport (1969, p.129-130) argues that to analyse the non-western contexts, we should 'look at them in terms of the local way of life, specific needs, and ways of doing things, rather than applying Western concepts'. Thus, I have followed my study in a non-western context case study.

My dissertation focuses on changes in the values of users through transformation. The reason

for this approach selection is that Castells (1997, cited in Rieger-Jandl 2006, p.21) argues that we have been facing conflicting challenges due to new forms of identity caused by transformations of globalisation. Besides, Rieger-Jandl (2006) argues that we should evaluate how the attitudes and values of users towards the built environment are changing through these transformations. She argues that 'studying traditional and new settlements is not enough to deal with the progressively complex situation regarding the definition of collective identity. Analysing a culture's historic and regional specificity is insufficient (Rieger-Jandl 2006, p.72-73). Instead, the questions are: 'What do the users want today?'; 'How are they influenced by recent changes in their environment?'; 'Have their desires and requirements changed, and if so, how?' (Rieger-Jandl 2006, p.127). 'The fieldworker has the difficult task to mediate between traditional continuities, the imperative of change and his/her role as an outside agent of guided change' (Rieger-Jandl 2006, p.152).

The transformation has caused even more intensified issues for valuable cultural landscapes which face problems such as new developments and changes in the landscape values of users. This raises the question, how should we deal with valued urban landscapes as part of the transformation? Failing to recognise community values and place meanings in planning can result in irreversible urban degradation (Lee 2009, p.20). The questions are; 'How can one understand such [cultural] landscapes?'; 'What are the meanings such preferred [cultural] landscapes and changes to them have, and their role in identity?' (Rapoport 1992, p.34, 96). 'What are the values of different groups of users of the [cultural] landscape?'

In this dissertation, I examine the meanings of the cultural landscape under the transformations from two different perspectives of 'culture' and 'place' to provide practical solutions for issues of transforming cultural landscapes. This approach selection has been done due to the limited time framework of a dissertation and the practicality that these approaches can offer to be applied to comprehend a contemporary urban landscape.

Culture has been variously cited as an essential factor in understanding the identity of a context. The importance of dealing with the term culture and its meaning in the fast-changing contemporary context has been variously emphasised (i.e. Rieger-Jandl 2006, p.41). Thus, my thesis focuses on the cultural values of the landscape.

My thesis also focuses on the place meanings of the urban landscape. The notion of "place" holds extensive applicability as an evaluative metric in critiquing urban environments and serves as a novel framework for comprehending the contemporary urban landscape (Lee 2009, p.14). Lee (2009, p.20) states that the inclusion of humanistic values in the assessment, design, and construction of the built environment has been influenced by the concept of place within

cultural landscapes. Lee (2009, p.20) asserts that the notion of place transcends a mere theoretical framework that addresses the meanings, values, and emotional bonds associated with cultural landscapes. Instead, it encompasses understanding cultural landscapes as individuals experience them, perceive them as fundamental necessities, and inhabit them as integral members of collective communities. Regrettably, planners regularly possess inadequate comprehension of community perceptual values, impeding their ability to discern the most crucial elements of town and neighbourhood character according to the users' perspectives (Green 2010, p.6).

Moreover, there is a scarcity of effective planning methods and tools to safeguard and enhance the distinctive features of a place (Gurren et al., 2005, p.7 cited in Green 2010, p.6). Despite the practical and insightful perspectives that can be gained from this outlook, a substantial portion of the literature concerning place centres more on the theoretical and philosophical aspects of human-environment inter-relationships than each place's unique and specific qualities. Respectively, this approach proves to be restrictive in investigating personal experiences and subjective understandings of place. The planning process seldom benefits from interpretations of places divorced from the users and their socio-cultural contexts. Disconnected viewpoints rarely yield useful information (Lee 2009, p.20).

Emerging in the argued context, the central questions of my dissertation are,

- How are the values and meanings of the built environment of Darband, Tehran, changing due to transformation and cultural globalisation?
- What are the meanings of such a cultural landscape, its changes, and its role in identity?
- What values should we emphasise regarding its transformation due to cultural globalisation?

## **Aims and objectives**

My dissertation aims to

- understand and analyse the values of users of the urban landscape of Darband facing the transformation of cultural globalisation through a participatory approach
- propose guidelines and recommendations to be applied by the authorities for future developments

## **Methodology**

I applied the following methodologies during the data collection procedure of my study;

Fieldwork was conducted in August-November 2021. I used a Mixed method of data collection;

- Collecting cultural/statistical data from publications/reports/organisations on the

traditional/contemporary context of Darband/Tehran/Shemiran and detailed information about family structures, way of life, and religion.

- Conducting qualitative methods and fieldwork techniques. To evaluate the users' values of Darband through transformation, I compared the values of long-term and new residents between the traditional/contemporary cultural landscape of Darband in 2 age groups: 35-45 and 65-75. I examined the comparison of cultural factors through interviews, designed based on certain essential cultural factors on the relation between house and settlement (i.e. Rapoport 1969, 2008; Rieger-Jandl 2006). I conducted 56 interviews, including 47 semi-structured interviews with the residents. Observations, literature review on traditional/contemporary contexts in Iran, Tehran, Shemiran or Darband, survey, taking pics and comparison of maps and pics of traditional/current Darband and discussions with experts to compare the cultural factors or to confirm the responses by the participants were also followed. To understand place meanings in Darband, based on arguments (i.e. Relph 1976; 2009), semi-structured interviews, Photo Recognition and Sketch Map went through the experience of the residents of Darband on place through an empirical analysis. It also resembled how the values have changed under the transformations.

- Survey: In sampling, I tried to show the typical layout of the current Darband. The current built environment of Darband consists of the buildings in 3 periods: the 1950s as the traditional style of Shemiran, the 1960-70s as modern-period housing, and the 2000s onwards as the contemporary period (transformed houses or contemporary apartments). I surveyed houses of three periods of transformation as a random sample of households in the old core and new areas of Darband. Traditional houses were depicted from the memory of old residents. I also visited the main street, shops, market alley, and cafes. I also visited Pasghale Village, which resembles the old Darband, to compare it with the newly established areas of Darband.

- Data gathered was analysed through thematic analysis (Miles et al. 1994, cited in Alhojailan 2012; Braun Clarke 2006). Common themes across interviews were examined to compare for similarities and differences across informants in both the culture and place parts. Data was exposed in charts and diagrams to represent how data regarding the current/former situation of the respondents and data regarding different groups of interviewees were different. The number of people and the percentage of each category for the variable in question were provided by frequency in frequency tables and diagrams to interpret and understand easily (Rapoport 1969, Rieger-Jandl 2006). Plans of surveyed houses were digitised. Much helpful information was gained through the analysis of the surveyed plans. The results led to the recommendations and guidelines proposed to authorities for future developments on Darband.

The direct task of my work was to provide a framework to understand and analyse the values of users of the cultural landscape facing the transformation of cultural globalisation through a participatory approach. In order to test the outcome of such a framework, I developed an outline for a fieldwork study in the Darband neighbourhood, Tehran, Iran. Amazingly, much information could be gathered during the fieldwork, which could be of much help in the future decision-making of planners and the local authority on planning for this context. The results of my study suggest the practicality that the two approaches of cultural analysis and identity of place within the studies of the cultural landscape can offer for understanding a cultural landscape under transformation.

Based on the empirical analysis, it could be concluded that the users' values of Darband contain elements of both constancy and change, which affect the subject of built form during the transformation. It was shown what values are essential and should be emphasised for future planning. The input of experts and literature review supported this finding.

## Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of two parts;

Part I is a theoretical discussion. First, there is a discussion on the history of the studies on the values of cultural landscape and their different approaches. This discussion leads to the two chosen approaches towards understanding the values of the cultural landscape in this dissertation on two different levels. Level one goes through a discussion of selected approaches of cultural analysis (i.e. Rieger-Jandl 2006, Rapoport 1969). Level two goes through a discussion of approaches towards place in globalisation. Discussions of level one provide a research framework to understand cultural values and how they are affected by transformations caused by cultural globalisation. Level two provides a research framework to understand place values and meanings and how they are affected by transformations caused by cultural globalisation. These two frameworks are applied in part II as an empirical part of my dissertation in analysing a case study through fieldwork. My study is being followed in the case of the Darband neighbourhood in Tehran, Iran, as a valued non-western cultural landscape under the transformation of cultural globalisation and urban development.

## Definitions

**Culture:** Culture in this research is used as “a set of common values, beliefs, accomplishments, behaviour patterns, and also material artefacts, created within a specific social context and transmitted from one generation to the next” (Rieger-Jandl 2006, p. 16).



**Cultural landscape:** In my dissertation, the term ‘landscape’ has been referred to as cultural landscape based on arguments by Schein (2009). The perspective on cultural landscapes presented in this statement suggests locations as being “stamped with a distinctive landscape and social character and organised as segments of spatial systems, all of which can be examined consistently at scales ranging from the local to the global” (Meinig 1978; Sauer 1925, cited in Schein 2009).

**Transformation:** Transformation in this thesis refers to the changes in the built environment and demographic, economic, cultural and social characteristics of the cultural landscape due to urban developments and cultural globalisation.

**Globalisation:** The case of Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and its challenges with the global market and Western countries makes it different from many other non-western countries and their globalisation. Due to this issue and the subject of this research, this dissertation approaches the globalisation of Iran in terms of cultural rather than economic globalisation. It seeks to represent the evidence of the process of cultural globalisation in Iran.

**Social interaction:** I use the term “Social interaction” as a general expression for interaction with someone outside the household when he/she comes for a visit. It is different from family relations of the same household. Social interaction in settlement means when someone meets with somebody from outside the house in the settlement of Darband.

# Part I- Theoretical discussion

In this part, I shall explore the theories to define the focus of this research. It provides the theoretical background for the conduct of this research in Darband. This discussion is divided into the following sections. It begins with theories on different realms of landscape meaning to define the broader context of research- that this thesis is part of- and the necessity of this research. The second section explains the concept of “culture,” going through the cultural transformation of globalisation, followed by a discussion on “place” to build up the theoretical framework of the concept. It will lead to the section on research design and methodology. The result of the theoretical discussions will be a research framework consisting of two parts: culture and place. The literature review also assists in the choice of methodology for this research. The research framework will be applied in part II of the fieldwork in the case study of Darband.

## Different realms of landscape meanings

This section goes through theories on different realms of landscape meaning to define the broader context of research- that this thesis is part of- and the necessity of this research. This discussion is divided into the following sections. It begins with contrasting definitions and conceptualising of the term 'landscape.' It continues the conception of landscape as a cultural landscape, followed by approaches to understanding landscape meanings.

Duncan (et al. 2009) goes through contrasting definitions and conceptualising of the term 'landscape';

The landscape has been derived from the German word *Landschaft*, meaning the shape of land (Duncan et al. 2009, p.3). Hartshorne (1939, p. 65) defines landscape as a 'restricted piece of land'. Lowenthal (1986, p.1) states that landscape includes 'everything around us'. Alternatively, Schama has defined landscape as a way of seeing, i.e., memory, and landscape as a way of looking at nature and culture (1995, p.10). Most landscape definitions continue to focus on human agency, culture and vision. Daniels (1989, p. 218) suggests that landscape is material and ideological (Duncan et al. 2009, p.1).

Sauer examined the ways cultures had shaped the natural landscape historically. His influential work, "Morphology of Landscape," established a trajectory for numerous subsequent generations of scholars who examined the landscape as an outcome of human activity that has moulded the natural surroundings. His famous statement is, "Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result" (Sauer 1963, p. 343, Duncan et al. 2009, p.2-3). Sauer read landscapes as evidence of the past. In other approaches to landscape studies, landscapes were seen as palimpsests - documents that have undergone partial erasure and have been layered with newer forms and patterns- holding a wealth of information and clues to their histories by those who were able to recognise significant features and relate these to a more extensive system of landscape features. American cultural and historical geographers such as Meinig and J.B. Jackson and British geographers and historians H.C. Darby, Oliver Rackham, W.G. Hoskins, and Richard Muir saw the landscape as a profoundly layered palimpsest, a priceless archive '(Zelinsky, 1993, p. 1295), a record of change '(Darby, 1948, p. 426), a continuous process of development or of dissolution and replacement '(Sauer, 1963, p. 333) that can reveal past cultural/environmental histories '(Duncan, et al 2009, p.4).

Vidal de La Blanche's French historical geography adopted a similar perspective, considering landscape as a palimpsest. Vidal perceived landscapes as visual manifestations of human-natural environment connections, each bearing the imprints of a distinct *genre de vie* or way of

life. Similarly, Meinig (1979a, p. 164–92) regarded landscapes as reflecting cultural values. He regarded landscape as a valuable historical record, decipherable through archival records, novels, paintings, postcards, and other popular representations of symbolic landscapes (Duncan et al. 2009, p.4).

The concept of landscape as a textual composition or palimpsest, where it is written, partially erased, and overwritten, has been present for a considerable duration. Pierce Lewis (1979, p.12) refers to the landscape as "our unintentional autobiography." While certain landscape features, such as monuments, are purposefully designed to communicate and commemorate specific values, numerous material remnants of everyday life are inadvertent. Nonetheless, these traces can represent valuable insights into values, power dynamics, and material conditions (Duncan et al. 2009, p.5).

According to Samuels (1979), the landscape can be read as created by individuals who deliberately shape it to reflect their life stories. In contrast, Cosgrove (1992: 7) argues that landscapes typically emerge from many individual and collective decisions rather than being solely dictated by a single person or governing body. Schein (1997) and Duncan (et al. 1988) examine how landscapes are read inattentively in the context of everyday life (Duncan et al. 2009, p.6-7).

Over the decades, there have been other complex landscape study trends, including political, social-psychological and economic practices and processes by critical cultural geographers. Landscape research also has ranged from structural semiotics, in which the researcher is an expert decoder of landscape, to post-structural studies of historical and cultural differences in meaning, emphasising ambiguity, multi-vocality, instability of meaning practices, and the interplay of power relations (Duncan et al. 2009, p.1-3).

Considering the multitude of landscape definitions, asking a few conceptual questions before selecting the most suitable research approaches is beneficial. For instance, the landscape should be defined to separate it from connected concepts like place, environment, ecology, and region. Various approaches to answering "What are landscapes?" will yield different investigation methods. Ideally, methodologies should remain open-ended and firmly rooted in empirical evidence, enabling the resulting research to provide novel viewpoints (Duncan et al. 2009, p.2).

Why does my study focus on the 'landscape'? According to Schein (2009, p.381), there is significance in interpreting everyday landscapes, as they can provide answers to cultural inquiries that cannot be attained through alternative analytical approaches. This is because such questions often operate within the realm of the landscape itself.

In my dissertation, the term "landscape" has been utilised as a cultural landscape, drawing upon

Schein's (2009) arguments. The conception of cultural landscapes in this context can be traced back to the scholarly lineage loosely associated with the work of Carl Sauer. This lineage is highlighted by the notion that locations are "imprinted with a distinct landscape and social character and organised as components of spatial systems, all of which can be consistently examined at various scales from local to global (Meinig, 1978; Sauer, 1925, cited in Schein, 2009). Drawing from Meinig's insights (1986), Schein (2009, p. 380) asserts that the crucial aspect of exploring the idea of cultural landscapes lies in investigating specific landscapes. This entails understanding their emergence and evolution, contemplating how they are perceived and lived in, exploring their significance and impact, and unravelling how they work. The notion of landscape and the interpretation of specific landscapes encompass diverse approaches, subjects, and theoretical stances regarding examining everyday landscapes (Schein, 2009, p.381). Numerous historical works have delved into the question of what landscapes mean, which will be further clarified in the subsequent section.

Urban areas are undergoing significant changes in their demographic, economic, cultural, and social characteristics, particularly in countries experiencing rapid urbanisation (Jenkins et al., 2007). The rapid growth of modern cities, coupled with the recent transformations of traditional urban spaces, has resulted in a disconnect between the physical attributes of urban environments and their cultural identities. Consequently, there is a growing need to recognise the importance of focusing on the cultural and social aspects of transforming places within urban design and planning (Ziyae, 2018, p.21).

During the nineteenth century, there was a strong emphasis on quantitative growth in massive urban development, which raised concerns about the diminishing quality of the environment, eroding regional identities, and weakening community bonds with their surroundings. Scholars recognised the need for a closer examination of how urbanisation and landscape development impacted individuals. It became evident that urbanisation was not solely a physical transformation but also a complex social phenomenon. Due to the failure of many urban renewal projects in the twentieth century, there was a growing recognition of the importance of community building and preserving cultural diversity. Jacobs (1961) criticised insensitive urban renewal initiatives that destroyed established neighbourhoods, cultural diversity, and thriving social environments. She argued that a flourishing city requires a harmonious blend of thoughtful city planning and an active social milieu. These social critiques not only emphasised the significance of acknowledging the influence of landscapes on people but also served as a reminder that neglecting community values and the meanings attached to places in the planning process could lead to irreversible urban degradation. Numerous design practices, such as

Regionalism, Critical Regionalism, New Urbanism, and Everyday Urbanism, have stressed the importance of building place and recognising the unique local landscape values. A common principle in these design approaches is the development of designs that align with a place's specific characteristics and cultural values. Furthermore, these designs aim to foster a strong connection between people and the landscape while nurturing a sense of community (Lee, 2009, p.20-21).

In this particular context, the emergence of studies on the concept of cultural landscape can be observed. The groundwork for later research on the sense of place was laid by late 19th-century French and German geographical studies, which coincided with phenomenological studies. Sauer (1925) introduced the concept that landscapes reflect the activities and aspirations of cultural groups. Subsequent scholars acknowledged that landscapes serve as repositories of signs and symbols, representing customs and values (e.g., Jackson, 1951, 1952). These studies focused on how customs, traditions, and ways of life infuse both urban and rural landscapes with a distinct sense of place. Additionally, cultural geography research delved into landscape meanings and values (Burgess et al., 1988; Cosgrove & Daniels, 1988; Penning-Roswell & Lowenthal, 1986).

Relph (1976) expanded on the study of place. This later influenced Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) to explore the relationship between iconography and the landscape. Relph's work influenced examining collective values connected to landscapes, drawing inspiration from humanist geographers interested in vernacular places, such as J.B. Jackson (1984) and the familiar and everyday places discussed by Meinig (1979). Meinig's work in 1979 offered valuable perspectives on comprehending the values linked to vernacular places, specifically through Lewis's essay on the axioms or principles guiding the reading of the cultural landscape. Altman and Low (1992) advocated for a cultural understanding of place attachment, asserting that attachment entails the conversion of spatial experiences into culturally significant and shared symbols, marking the transition from mere "space" to meaningful "place." A crucial element of this definition is a symbolic relationship between a specific group and the place where place attachment is established (Armstrong et al., 2001, p. 2-5, 7) (Figure 1).

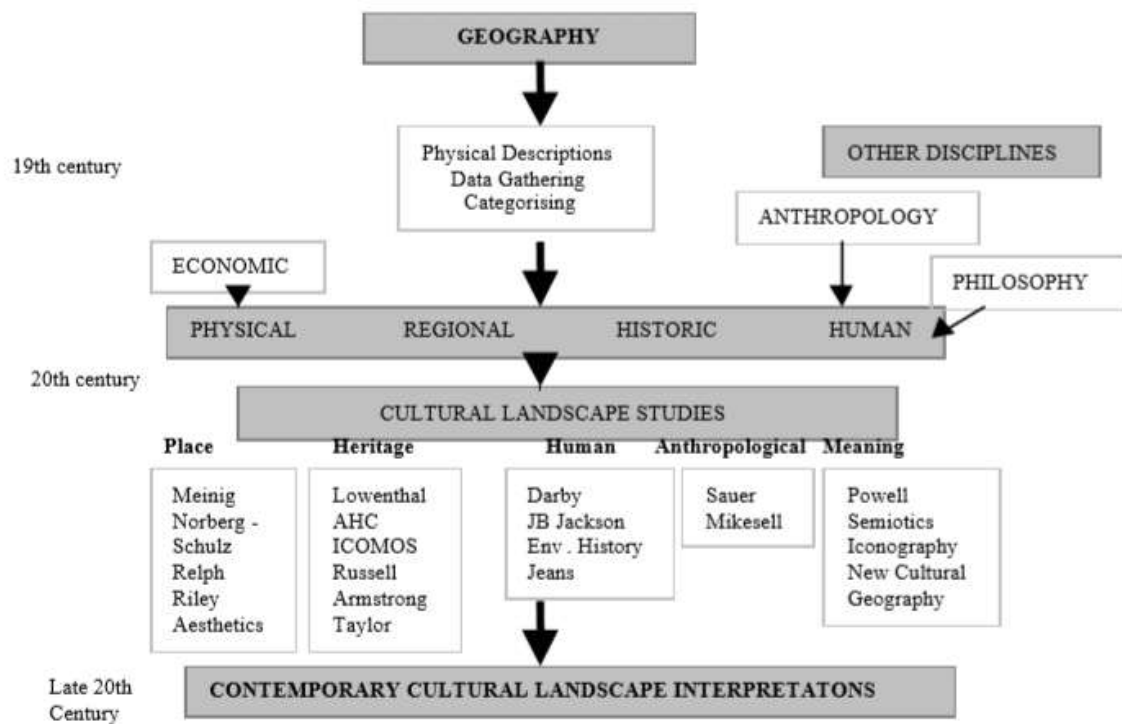


Figure 1. Changing theoretical positions about cultural landscape

Many studies in landscape research delve into the question of what landscapes mean. Peirce Lewis (1972, p.12, cited in Schein 2009, p.381-382) argues that the "human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, values, aspirations, and even fears in tangible, visible form." This perspective involves working backwards from the landscape to understand its cultural significance. However, exploring landscape meaning can take different approaches, such as examining individual and group meanings and identities through thematic approaches. This includes investigating how landscapes contribute to a sense of belonging (Price 2004; Trudeau 2006), as emphasized in historic preservation efforts (Alanen et al., cited in Schein 2009, p.381-382). Landscape meaning can also be intertwined with regional identity (Brace 2003). Additionally, landscapes are viewed as contested spaces where competing values and interpretations are negotiated (Johnson 2003). Such mediation often extends beyond the specific landscape to encompass broader cultural challenges at different scales (Schein 2009, p.382).

Different approaches also exist for analysing the urban landscape regarding femininity and masculinity constructions. Some studies explore cultural landscapes as enabling and mediating political, social, cultural, and economic intentions (Schein, 2009). Landscape studies also involve interpreting design, considering its intended meanings and the degree of success in achieving them. Recent research trends explore the landscape through structural and post-



structural approaches, treating it as a text shaped by complex histories in partially traceable cultural discourses. Additionally, some Marxian cultural historians emphasize the ideological role of the landscape in legitimizing political power within capitalist systems, as well as studies that delve into intertextuality and discourse analysis. According to Mitchell (1994, p.1), landscape should be approached as a verb rather than a noun. Researchers are encouraged to inquire about what landscape is or means and how it functions as a cultural practice. This perspective involves exploring the social and economic relations that are materialized within the landscape (Harvey, 1985; Zukin, 1991; Schein, 1997; Duncan et al., 2004). Cultural landscapes play a pivotal role in the practices and performance of place-based social identities, community values and social distinction (Lowenthal, 1991; Cosgrove, 1993; Daniels, 1993; DeLyser, 2003, 2005). Unique landscapes play a vital role in creating a place-based sense of community, and they can be utilized to both uphold and challenge individual and collective identities. Moreover, these landscapes can serve as a means to pursue political or economic objectives (Duncan et al., 2009, p. 6, 7, 11, 12, 14).

Recent works have emphasized the need for combined approaches in evaluating landscapes (e.g. Armstrong et al., 2001; Dovey et al., 2009). These scholars argue that addressing the complexities of contemporary landscapes requires considering multiple perspectives rather than relying on a single viewpoint.

Furthermore, Groth (2000, p.6-7) suggests that ongoing debates in cultural landscape interpretation revolve around the contrast between diversity and uniformity. In the past and 1950s-60s, landscape studies primarily focused on interpreting overarching national or regional identities, seeking unified meanings. However, it has become evident that landscapes also reflect the influences of individual and local subcultures, not solely national cultural values that are dominant. Since the 1970s, a new generation of scholars has perceived the landscape as a collection of multiple coexisting texts or fragmented expressions, acknowledging the presence of cultural and class conflicts alongside cultural unity.



# Culture and built-environment

This part of the dissertation discusses the necessity of cultural analysis in a transforming context. To understand the values of the cultural landscape from the viewpoint of culture, it goes through arguments by Rapoport (1969) and Rieger-Jandl (2006). It focuses on the essential socio-cultural aspects embedded in the built form and how they affect the relation between house and settlement. This is followed by discussions on culture and transformation, the cultural transformation of globalisation and contemporary cultural-environment studies trends. This discussion leads to a research framework for the methodology of the thesis. The reason for focusing this part on the arguments by Rapoport (1969) and Rieger-Jandl (2006) is because these arguments can provide a framework to analyse the fundamental cultural factors within a built environment. Such a framework would be helpful to understand what socio-cultural factors are embedded in the urban landscape. How do they affect the relationship between house and settlement? How have they been affected by the forces of globalisation during rapid urbanisation?

## Culture, house and settlement

Why should we focus on *culture*? In his work from 1984 (p. 2-3), King suggests that cities and buildings can be comprehended by considering social and cultural factors, as well as the distribution of power. They are the outcomes of political, economic, and social procedures. To truly grasp the city as a social entity, it is essential to understand the society in which it exists rather than focusing solely on its physical aspects. King (1984, p.3) argues that previous research in urban sociology has primarily focused on the economic and social processes that govern urban development, exploring the interest groups involved in urban redevelopment. However, these studies have limited their scope to the city itself and have not examined the meanings that users associate with the built environment. Moreover, much of this research has been followed in Western contexts, often downplaying the significance of cultural factors. Consequently, King emphasises the need for future studies to address the question of culture and its influence on cities and buildings.

According to King (1984, p.1), the construction of buildings and the overall built environment can be seen as products deeply rooted in social and cultural contexts. Buildings are created in response to societal requirements and serve multiple purposes, encompassing economic, social, political, religious, and cultural functions. Physical factors like climate, materials, or topography do not solely determine their characteristics, such as size, appearance, location, and

form. Instead, they are heavily influenced by a society's ideas, economic and social structures, the allocation of resources and authority, activities, and prevalent beliefs and values during a particular period.

Rapoport (1992) suggests that comprehending a cultural landscape requires us to refrain from subjective judgments based on personal preferences. Instead, it is crucial to approach understanding a cultural landscape analytically, exploring what it is, how it can be conceptualised, and why it is the way it is. He argues that landscapes are varied culturally as they are closely tied to specific social groups. As a result, they have the potential to serve as distinctive markers of these groups. This can be observed through various elements such as house forms, village and field forms, street patterns, gardens and plant choices, and other elements.

Now the questions become: What is the relationship between built form and culture or, as argued, between material culture and society? How can we understand such a relation? To address these questions, it is necessary to deconstruct culture into its constituent elements. According to Rieger-Jandl (2006, p.41), linking the built form to culture as a comprehensive concept is challenging. However, it can be easily correlated with factors such as family structure, religious institutions, social hierarchies, gender roles, and similar aspects. Moreover, Rieger-Jandl (2006, p.142) suggests that to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the cultural context in a specific area, gathering detailed information about family structures, ways of life, and religious practices is crucial, as these aspects can provide valuable insights.

According to Rapoport (1969, p.47), taking into account the distinctive traits of a culture, such as the accepted norms, the socially unacceptable ways of doing things, and the underlying ideals, is crucial since they affect housing and settlement form. This encompasses both subtle aspects and more evident or functional elements. The significance lies not only in what a culture naturally encourages but also in what it prohibits, explicitly or implicitly, as it often shapes possibilities and limitations.

## **Socio-cultural forces and house-settlement**

Socio-cultural forces can be observed from various perspectives. Max Sorre's "genre de vie" concept encompasses all the cultural, spiritual, material, and social aspects influencing form. Houses and settlements, therefore, can be seen as the physical manifestation of the genre de vie, representing their symbolic nature. Socio-cultural forces become crucial in understanding the relationship between man's way of life and the environment (Rapoport, 1969, p.47). Thus, my research aims to analyse fundamental cultural factors briefly. It aims to search the

interconnections between group culture and living sites. This contribution considers the possible interconnections between certain cultural factors and the built environment. This leads us to a research framework that will be further applied to examine certain cultural factors in both the traditional/contemporary cultural landscape of Darband.

Rapoport (1969) states certain cultural factors regarding the interconnections between houses, settlements and users. Besides, Rieger-Jandl (2006) primarily focuses on the *house* in a cultural term. My dissertation approaches the relation between house and settlement to further this discussion. The built environment reflects collective identity as cultural values (Rapoport 1969, Rieger-Jandl 2006, p.75). Rapoport (1969) argues that even though people no longer build their houses, the houses they buy still reflect their values since they are being sold.

According to Rapoport (1969, p.69-70, 73), houses, settlements, and landscapes are interconnected outcomes of the same cultural system. Rapoport asserts that the fields of geography and architecture have traditionally treated the study of houses and settlements as separate entities. However, recognising the importance of understanding the house within a broader framework emphasises that the house is understood by its relation to its surroundings and overall context. The discussion dealing with the separation of domains and social interactions implies that isolating the house from the settlement is inadequate; instead, it should be regarded as an integral component of a comprehensive social and spatial system that interconnects the house, lifestyle, settlement, and even the cultural landscape. The house should be examined, considering its relationship with the town, its monumental parts, non-residential areas, social gathering spots, and how they, along with urban spaces, are used. The house should be considered an integral part of the comprehensive social and spatial settlement system. This system encompasses the house, way of life, settlement, and even the cultural landscape. People reside within the entire settlement, and how they use the settlement impacts the form of the house. He states certain cultural factors that influenced the formation of the traditional cultural landscape and through which he could evaluate the relation between cultural landscape and the users. He asks whether these cultural factors will also be influential in contemporary contexts.

Concerning traditional settlements, Rapoport (1969, p.47) argues that the desired environment is shaped by many socio-cultural influences, encompassing religious beliefs, family and clan structures, social organisation, and social relations between individuals. Buildings and settlements represent the importance of various aspects of life and the diverse perspectives through which reality is perceived. The house, village, and town symbolise societies' shared goals and life values. According to Rapoport (1969, p.48), when examining the reasons behind

the forms of houses and settlements, it can be helpful to perceive them as physical embodiments of an ideal environment. He provides examples illustrating the impact of socio-cultural forces on the built environment, including activities inside and outside the house, relationships between genders, site selection, religion, family structures, hierarchical relations, the role of women, privacy, and social interactions. These factors shall be discussed in more detail in the following lines.

## The site and its choice

The influence of a site's symbolic, religious, or cultural values on buildings and their consequences can be significant. The initial selection of a site introduces a variable that affects the form of the building (Rapoport, 1969, p.74). What was the basis of the selection of the initial site? When making the initial site selection in traditional settlements, factors such as availability of food or water, wind exposure, defensive capabilities, preservation of land for agriculture, and transportation options can all be considered<sup>1</sup>.

Socio-cultural values heavily influence the selection of a site. For example, the positioning of a site can be connected to the correlation with the six cardinal points and sacred directions, the structure and grouping of families or clans, the relationship with animals and the spatial relations with them, the association with grain, perspectives towards nature, the necessities for magic and sacred orientation, and the symbolic significance of landscape features, and way of life<sup>2</sup>. Instead of being determined by practical or physical considerations, the choice of sites may be based on myth, religion, and way of life.<sup>3</sup> According to Rapoport, intricate religious beliefs and attitudes can shape the village pattern, house locations, and site selection (Rapoport 1969, p.74).

The attitude towards nature and the site can influence the creation of the house form or its

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1: e.g. In the selection of site in the traditional settlement, the selection of a defensive location might involve opting for a prominent position along a river's curve, the shoreline of a lake, or a steep hill. When it comes to trade, the existence of a ford may be taken into account, while in jungle environments, the proximity to a riverbank can play a significant role in transportation (Rapoport 1969, p.74).

2: For instance, consider the case of Malekula, a significant island in the New Hebrides, where human habitation is forbidden. Instead, the inhabitants reside on smaller neighboring islands and must travel to the larger island for various activities such as farming and accessing water (Rapoport 1969, p.75).

3: For example, when considering mountains, the perception of them as either "favorable" or "unfavorable" involves making a choice based on this perspective. Rapoport provides instances of cultures where people constructed their settlements on flat land or terraces, while others opted to build on hills and mesas. Similar decisions are made regarding building near river banks or avoiding them, utilizing the desert like the Bedouin, or avoiding it altogether (Rapoport 1969, p.74).

modification by the site<sup>4</sup>. Understanding the relationship of humans to the landscape is paramount, and it can be categorized into three distinct attitudes: religious and cosmological, symbiotic, and exploitative. In the first two attitudes, nature is regarded as a collaborator, while in the third attitude, nature is seen as a resource to be manipulated, exploited, and utilized (Rapoport 1969, p.75-76).

The impact of primitive man on the landscape is relatively limited, especially from an individual perspective. In primitive societies, the relationship between humans and nature, including the landscape and site, is deeply personal. There is no clear demarcation between humans and nature, and the prevailing worldview emphasizes harmony rather than conflict or domination on nature. This perspective influences attitudes towards the division of labour and specialization in both work and spatial considerations, ultimately shaping the siting practices found in primitive and preindustrial cultures (Rapoport 1969, p.75-76).

The perspective expressed shapes both the form of the house and the settlement, as demonstrated by Rapoport's examples of landform villages adapted to their specific sites. The deep connection between the house's form and the surrounding landscape reflects the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. The holistic view extends to the entire landscape, including the dwelling. They hold a sacred significance. This view profoundly influences every aspect of people's lives through relation to the environment. Cultivating plants is a religious act and an essential part of their spiritual existence. This mindset guides the shaping of the house's form, siting, and relation to the land, highlighting why these structures enhance rather than disrupt the landscape. Structures are thoughtfully placed and formed to blend with the landscape, reflecting cultural, symbolic, and practical considerations (Rapoport 1969, p.76-77).

Rapoport (1969, p.77-78) compares traditional villages and new townships in Africa, noting the superior physical standards of the latter. He highlights the changing relationship with the land, where traditional villages achieve harmony with the landscape through houses related to the landscape through the geometry, where flowing lines of the buildings sit on the natural contours, allowing the houses to blend with natural elements like rocks and trees. In contrast, the grid-like layout of new townships destroys the link with the land, and visual elements fail

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4: The physical characteristics of a site, including its slope, rock or soil type, vegetative cover, and microclimate, can exert a significant influence on the siting of buildings and their forms and relations. For example, a steeply sloping site directly impacts the form of the structure. When considering what constitutes a desirable site, there are inherent physical effects that come into play, often requiring certain adjustments. An illustration of this is found in Blixen's account of her experiences attempting to plan out grids for African workers' houses on her ranch. The workers, instead of adhering to these grids, carefully studied the land's configuration, including its hills, hollows, rocks, and creeks, ultimately adapting their house placement to harmonize with the site (Rapoport 1969, p.74).

to convey the relationship between people, land and their surroundings.

## Use of space

In his case studies, Bethel (1989) examined the spatial arrangement of houses to explore the reciprocal relationship between human behaviour and the environment. He used these studies as a basis for making recommendations in architectural planning. He concluded how spaces should be adapted or planned based on the collective behaviours of specific cultural groups. For instance, when women visitors congregate in the kitchen, Bethel suggested the need for larger kitchen areas (Rieger-Jandl 2006, p.96-97). Each culture possesses unique expectations for its dwellings and organises domestic spaces to reflect its members' social structure, traditions, and daily routines (Oliver 2003, p. 166).

According to Rapoport (1969, p. 69-70), the house is just one part of the entire settlement in which humans reside, and how people use the settlement influences the form of the house. For instance, the choice of a meeting place, whether within or outside the house in the settlement in a street or plaza, can impact house form. The form of a house is influenced by the extent to which one lives in it and the variety of activities that occur within it, as the living pattern consistently extends beyond the boundaries of the house to some extent<sup>5</sup>.

Various classifications have been proposed for settlements, but most authors acknowledge the challenge of defining them and that most forms combine different types. The type of settlement itself can affect the form of houses. The occurrence of activities within the house or the broader settlement can impact the form of the house. For example, the entire settlement can be viewed as the backdrop for daily life, with the dwelling serving as a more private and sheltered section within it. Conversely, the dwelling can be seen as the primary setting for life, while the village or city functions as connective tissue, almost "waste" space and secondary space to be traversed. Between these two extreme types lies a continuum involving varying degrees of outside space use<sup>6</sup>.

The differentiation among these types could be attributed, in part, to explicit or implicit laws that restrict specific behavioural patterns in public or private domains while permitting others.

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5: e.g. The widespread practice among peasants in developing countries, where the house primarily serves as a sleeping area, storage space, and shelter for animals, while most daily activities occur outside, has significant consequences for the form of houses (Rapoport 1969).

6: e.g. Rapoport (1969) characterizes the Latin or Mediterranean village or town as representative of the first type, while the Anglo-American city, with Los Angeles serving as an extreme illustration, is seen as typical of the second type. In Western culture, Rapoport argues that the Anglo-American city only uses the private realm, comprising the house and backyard (not considering the use of parks and beaches as using the city). He further suggests that, within a specific cultural framework, the vernacular tradition can be considered emblematic of the first type, while the grand design tradition is more aligned with the second type.



Such regulations reflect the prevailing worldview and various attitudes, ultimately connecting culture to the use of space by people. Additionally, religious beliefs can influence differentiation, which shapes social attitudes and familial dynamics, thereby contributing to the separation of domains<sup>7</sup>.

Rapoport provides a wide range of ways of using the city in different cultures<sup>8</sup>.

According to Rapoport (1969, p.72), there are three distinct settlement patterns: compact, semi-compact, and semi-vacant. In the last, the central area is reserved for ceremonies, while most people reside and work in ranchos, maintaining two households. Each settlement exhibits unique customs, behaviours, and attitudes, including distinct gender relations. These variations are evident in the forms of the houses, although direct causation cannot be definitively established.

The houses, settlements, and cultural landscapes are interconnected elements of the same cultural system and worldview, making them integral parts of a unified system<sup>9</sup>.

To fully comprehend the significance of a house, it is crucial to examine it not only within the context of the fundamental distinction between different types of settlements and their varying degrees of use of space but also as an intrinsic part of the specific system it belongs to. This entails considering its relationship with the town, including its monumental sections, non-residential areas, and social gathering spaces, and understanding how these spaces and urban

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7: Rapoport (1969, p.70-71) draws a comparison between various cultures by likening them to scattered single family farmsteads and highly organised settlements, where the focal point is the house. He presents examples of cultures where communal life is minimal, and individuals rely on their houses as the primary setting for their lives. In contrast, there are cultures that reserve the use of their villages solely for festivals, considering the house as the central settlement. Lastly, there are cultures where the entire settlement serves as the setting for life, with the house being used primarily during nighttime. Additionally, he cites the Kabylie culture as an example where the house represents a small portion within a larger realm and serves as its private space.

The use of the settlement is contingent upon the climate, yet that alone does not provide a complete picture. In Paris, for instance, the entire city is used during the winter, although this pattern is shifting due to the waning popularity of cafes. Conversely, Australia and California predominantly focus on outdoor activities such as beaches, parks, and sports facilities, with minimal use of settlements or towns. Nevertheless, Australia's landscape is gradually transforming due to the influence of European immigrants, leading to resistance from the Anglo-Saxon establishment (Rapoport 1969, p.71-72).

8: According to Rapoport, the streets in England are seen as "the empty street, the lonely street." However, this perception does not fully apply to working-class streets, which represent a more vernacular setting where the street is used, although to a lesser extent compared to Latin countries. A similar differentiation can be observed in the United States, where the working class tends to use the street more extensively than the middle class.

9: For instance, in traditional Japan, the separation of domains leads to the isolation of each house and the freedom for each household to act as it pleases, as long as common values are upheld. This variation in house forms within an order yields positive outcomes. However, when these shared values diminish or disappear, the same attitudes contribute to the visual disorder prevalent in Japanese cities today. The public area remains largely unused within the broader living realm, which leads to a lack of responsibility by individuals for its maintenance. Notably, the Japanese term for town is the same as that for street, highlighting the fact that the city was never intended for citizen use. As a result, both the city itself and its houses are perceived differently in comparison to Western societies (Rapoport 1969, p. 73).

spaces are used<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, we must consider the transitions from the house to the street and other parts of the settlement (Rapoport 1969, p. 73). Rapoport (1969, p.73) provides the diagram of the house-settlement system in the Muslim town of Isfahan, Iran (Figure 2).

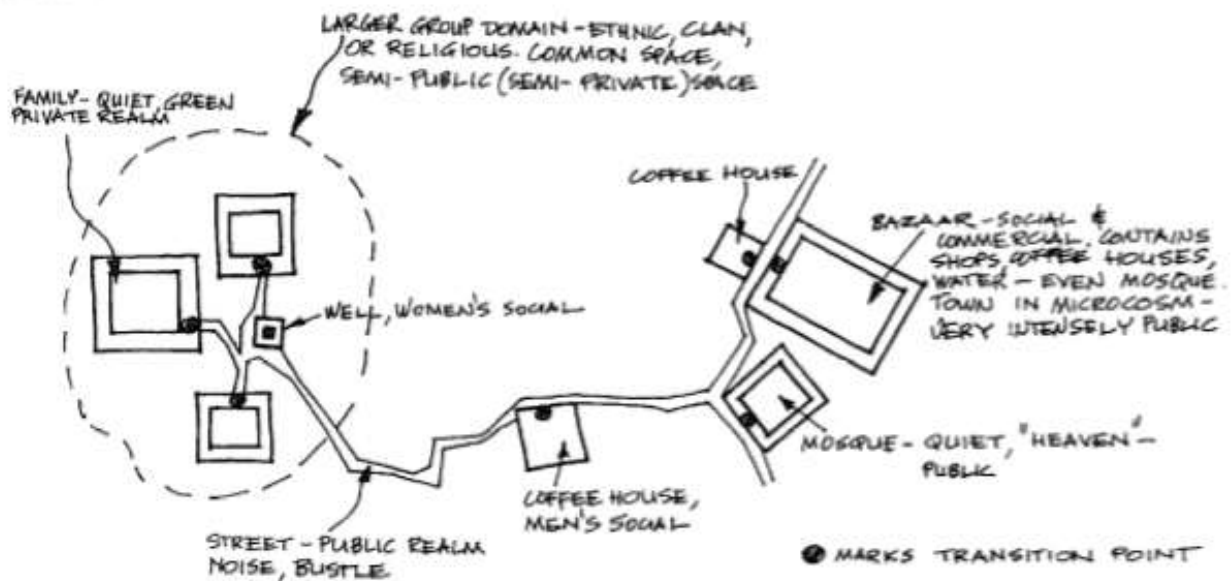


Figure 2. Diagram of the house-settlement system in the Muslim town of Isfahan, Iran. It also shows some of the activities

## Social intercourse

According to Rapoport (1969, p. 68-69), social interaction and people coming together are among the basic needs. Understanding where and how these interactions occur is crucial in determining the form of the living environment. Is it within the confines of the house itself, or does it occur in communal spaces such as cafes, wells, baths, or even the street within the settlement? Rieger-Jandl (2006, p. 246-247) illustrates how the use of the cultural landscape for public activities reflects cultural preferences, where meeting places are unique to each specific culture. Rapoport (1969, p. 68-69) presents examples of cultural transformations where the meeting places shift from external locations to inside the home, resulting in increased house use, consequently influencing both house form and the city. In certain regions, occasional promenades or gatherings lead to expanding the social area beyond its usual use boundaries. This dynamic represents a more temporal than spatial solution, yet it encompasses elements of both dimensions, resulting in a complex aspect of the urban environment (1969, p. 68-69).

10: To understand this concept, we can consider the contrasting ways in which dwellings are used in Paris and Los Angeles (Rapoport 1969, p. 73).



## Family structure

The family structure can affect the form and pattern of houses and settlements (Rapoport 1969, p.63, 73; Rieger-Jandl 2006, p. 177-178).

## Position of women

Differences in gender relations are evident in various settlement patterns and house forms (Rapoport 1969, p. 70-72). Rapoport (1969, p. 65-66) and Rieger-Jandl (2006, p. 259-260) offer examples that demonstrate how the position of women can influence the form of houses and settlements. For instance, the courtyard houses found in the Mediterranean region can be attributed to a particular social factor, such as the vital need for women's privacy in a cloistered environment. These courtyard houses incorporate specific features like windows and roofs designed to deter any intrusion into the private space of the house. Additionally, in some instances, house doors positioned on opposite sides of the street are deliberately oriented so they do not directly face each other.

Another example can be seen in the external staircase of a different type of house, which is also influenced by the position of women. In the case of the Ulufs of Senegal, their dwellings are arranged within an earth enclosure, ensuring that houses remain concealed from view at the entry point and providing protection for the privacy of wives. Islamic culture, driven by the practices of purdah and the harem, generally impacts the form of houses and settlements. It is not uncommon for them to be separate domains for men and women within a settlement (Rapoport, 1969, p. 65).

## Privacy

Rieger-Jandl (2006, p. 57, 72, 99) presents examples illustrating how privacy can significantly influence the satisfaction derived from the form of a house or be manifested through the built structures themselves. According to Rapoport (1969, p. 66), the concept of privacy is influenced, at least to some extent, by the role of women<sup>11</sup>.

Besides considerations of sexuality and modesty, other factors such as self-worth, territoriality, and the perception of an individual's place in society could potentially impact attitudes towards privacy. These latter factors determine whether a communal dwelling remains open and undivided, is partitioned, or even incorporates separate smaller enclosures within its layout.

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11: e.g. Certain cultures, like the Sherpas of Nepal, seem to have a different perspective on the importance of privacy due to their attitudes towards sexuality. Similarly, traditional Japan, prior to Western influence, had distinct notions of modesty and, consequently, privacy. In the summer, individuals would openly appear naked in public and partake in communal bathing. Furthermore, during this season, it was possible to see directly through farmhouses (Rapoport 1969, p. 66).

The aspiration for privacy can also manifest through the separation of domains. For instance, there is a notable tradition of inward-facing buildings in Iran, contrasting with the outward-facing design commonly seen in Anglo-American houses. This architectural pattern is observed regardless of the climatic conditions or location, spanning urban and rural areas. In India, it is customary for each house to be enclosed by a low wall or the elements of the house to be arranged around a central courtyard with a solid wall facing the street. Interestingly, in South India, where the influence of the Islamic viewpoint of privacy is less prevalent, the central courtyard is utilized less frequently, and the houses exhibit a more open design.

This architectural pattern also observed in Iran and other locations, creates a clear separation of domains, effectively separating the house and its activities from the street and neighbouring residences. It establishes a distinct transition from the bustling public realm to the serene and private domain, from the outwardly plain, modest, and controlled exterior to the potential luxury within. The happenings on the street hold little significance, primarily to access fields, wells, and shops or to delineate ethnic and caste divisions. The small, shaded streets within traditional settlements come alive with activity, serving as hubs for social functions. For instance, in the Punjab region, streets connect three vital elements: the village house, the temple or mosque, and the bazaar. By widening the streets, space is created for a small tree or a well, which in turn becomes a focal point for activities such as storytelling or setting up a small market, contributing to the social function of the street (Figure 3). In this case, the transition between the street and the private area of the houses gains significance (Rapoport 1969, p. 66-68) <sup>12</sup>.

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12: The notion of privacy, characterized by distinct separation of spaces, is also commonly observed in Africa. A notable example is the Yoruba people of West Africa, who reside in mud-walled thatched houses within extended family units. These houses are typically arranged in interconnected groups of four or more, enclosing a square compound accessed through a single entrance, similar to the Kabyle or houses found in India. The exterior features a solid mud wall with only the entrance serving as an opening, while the interior facing the courtyard consists of a continuous verandah. These clusters of compounds are closely situated, forming villages or towns surrounded by walls. The spaces between the compounds function as streets, and there is a gap between the compounds and the main walls. Among the Hausa people, constructing a wall around the compound takes priority (Rapoport 1969, p. 68).

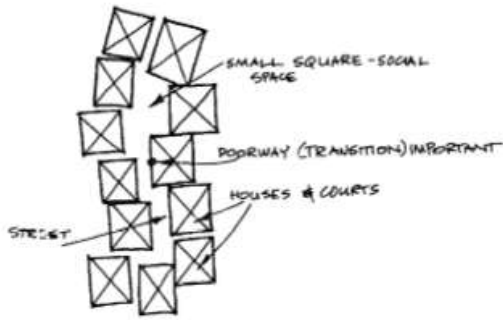


Figure 3. Diagrammatic plan of Punjab village

A contrast can be observed between the Muslim perspective on cities, characterized by introverted houses and streets formed by chance, and the Christian approach, where streets take precedence, and houses are oriented towards the outside (Rapoport 1969, p. 67) (Figure 4).

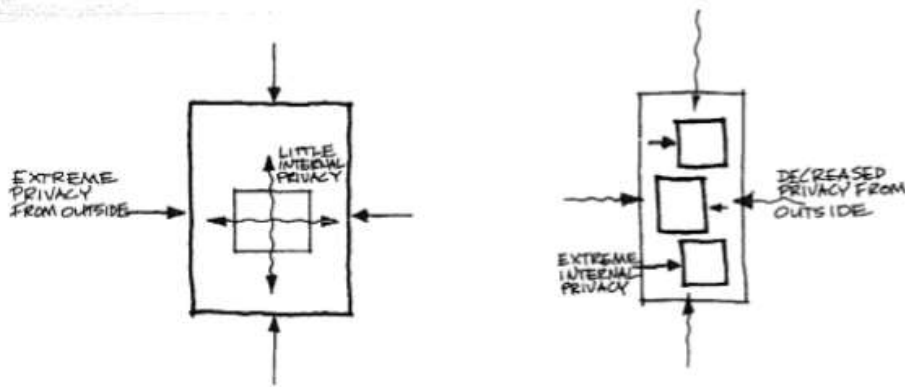


Figure 4. Privacy reals: Left) Japanese house; Right) Western house (Angelo-American)

Rapoport (1969, p. 80) suggests that the significance of the threshold stems from the ongoing necessity to define territory, although the specific methods employed to define it differ across cultures and periods and constitute the element of change. How thresholds are delineated may differ, and their exact location within the overall space varies<sup>13</sup> (Figure 5). Nevertheless, the threshold that separates the two domains is consistent in every instance.

13: e.g. The compound in India, or the Mexican or Muslim house, put the threshold further forward than the Western house does, and the fence of the English house puts it further forward than the open lawn of the American suburb (Rapoport 1969, p. 80).

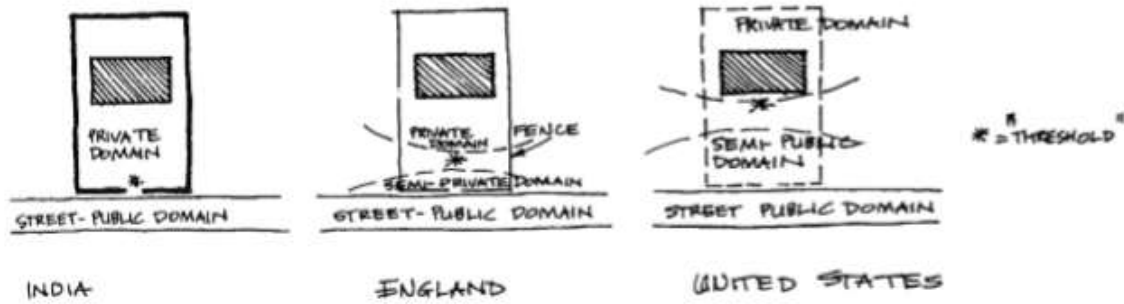
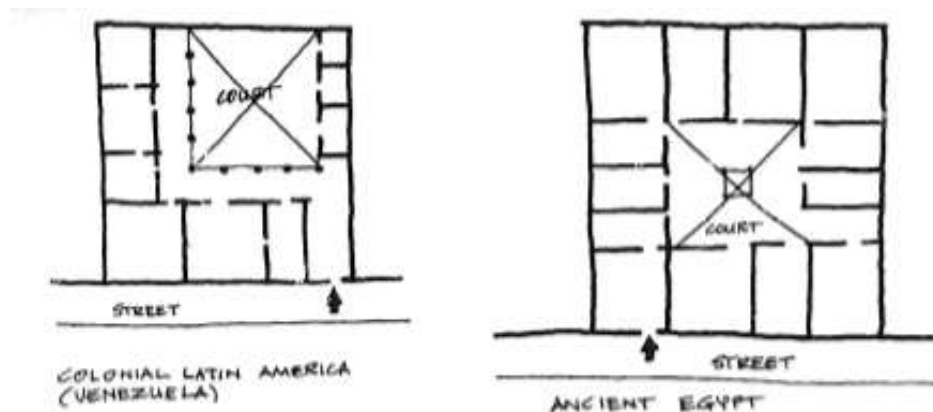


Figure 5. Positioning of the "threshold" in three different cultures

According to Rapoport (1969, p. 80-81), establishing territorial boundaries may be connected to feelings of security and the ability to defend oneself. Another aspect of territoriality relates to the experience of crowding, which can generate stress as one's personal space is encroached upon. To cope with these stresses, individuals employ various defences. The effectiveness of dealing with crowding differs across cultures, and both the houses and settlements serve as successful devices in addressing this issue. Variances exist among different cultures in their ability to manage noise and other consequences of crowding. The Japanese house, for instance, functions as a mechanism for alleviating tension. This could explain why the Japanese resisted shared walls, employed entry "locks" similar to those in Isfahan and other Muslim regions, and incorporated gardens and tea houses. One could argue that these devices become more prominent as one considers dwellings along a scale of increasing crowding. Attitudes towards noise and privacy may differ due to their role as social defence mechanisms.

Courtyard dwellings and the separation of domains are commonly found in crowded and hierarchical cultures, suggesting a shared necessity (Figure 6). The underlying concept and their form exhibit remarkable consistency across extensive regions and extended periods. Their motivation is to provide an escape while remaining within the familiar territory of the family or clan surroundings, accomplished through the separation of domains. This architectural development is not observed in cultures lacking an overall hierarchy.



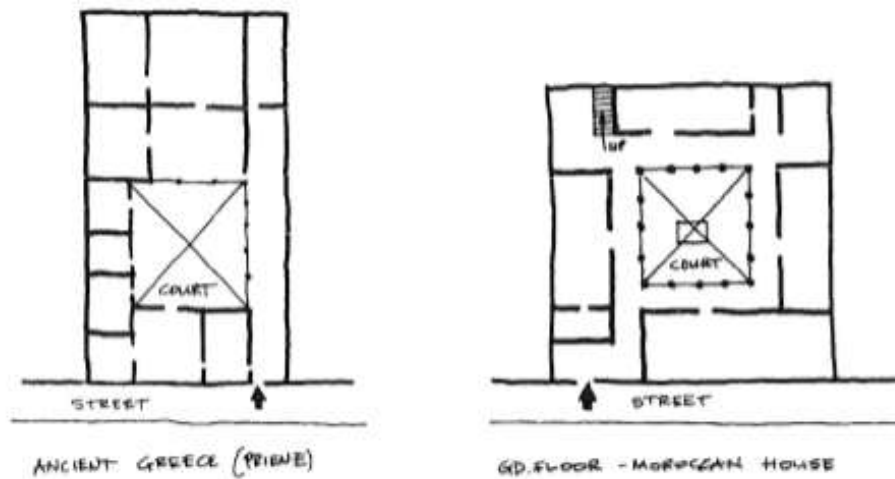


Figure 6. Diagram of Courtyard houses and separation of domains in different cultures

## Religion

Rapoport (1969, p.49-52) and Rieger-Jandl (2006, p.103) argue about the impact of religion on the house and settlement. Religion can affect the village pattern, location of houses, choice of site, form and orientation of the house (Rapoport 1969, p.74). Rapoport (1969, p.51-52) contends that within traditional settlements, religion plays a significant role in determining the orientation of houses, serving as a ritualistic practice across numerous cultures. This orientation is influenced by cultural and religious beliefs rather than practical physical considerations. Even in cases where comfort misaligns with religious requirements, the importance of religious aspects supersedes comfort. This system closely intertwines with the overall culture and, guided by the principles of geomancy, governs various aspects such as the direction of roads and water-courses, the positioning, form and height of houses, and the arrangement of villages and graves in the mystical surroundings, including auspicious natural features like trees and hills. These cosmological beliefs hold utmost significance as they reflect the core values of the community<sup>14</sup>.

## Hierarchal relations

According to Rapoport (1969, p.58), settlement patterns can be influenced by various factors such as kinship ties, caste differentiations, hierarchical relationships based on economic status, and religious sanctions. He illustrates how caste distinctions and social structures can impact settlement patterns by determining the positioning of houses and other structures within the

14: e.g. The impacts of religion and Qibla on orientation of traditional settlements of Iran and building regulations after Islamic Revolution can be mentioned. Even when the grids were applied in urban planning of Tehran in 1965 within the era of modernism, they were affected by Qibla according to Madanipour (1998).

settlements<sup>15</sup>.

According to Rieger-Jandl (2006, p.98), the form of houses is significantly influenced by social structures, with housing often reflecting the varying social ranks or castes within a community. This relationship gains even more significance in a consumerist and financially driven society. Additionally, social structures can impact the overall spatial organisation of a settlement.

## **Culture and transformation**

Now, the questions are: How are cultural values changing? How is the relationship between built-form and culture changing? Rapoport (1969) argues that the primary cultural factors influence traditional settlement. However, he asks how they will be in contemporary contexts. Will they still be influential or not?

### **Constancy and change**

Rapoport (1969, p.78) suggests that when a culture or way of life changes, its forms lose meaning. However, numerous artefacts remain valid even after the culture that produced them has vanished, such as housing and settlement structures that remain functional despite significant changes in their associated meanings. Rapoport presents examples of old settlement patterns and house forms that are still habitable. This implies that certain aspects of behaviour and way of life endure or evolve gradually and that the substitution of old forms may be driven by the prestige desire of novelty rather than a lack of practicality or an inadequate connection to the way of life. Similarly, accepting old forms may be attributed to the prestige value placed on old items rather than their forms' continued practicality or relevance. In both cases, although cultural factors influence attitudes towards old forms, there appears to be an underlying element of constancy that warrants further exploration or, at the very least, merits consideration.

One could argue that the nature of man and his institutions comprise elements of consistency and change, influencing the realm of the built form and warranting examination concerning human biology, perception, and behaviour. It could be suggested that both constant and changeable elements exist. We can acknowledge certain constant, unchanging elements that possess significant criticality, yet the specific manifestations of these needs are culturally

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15: e.g. In a typical settlement, the affluent Brahmins and Nayars occupy distinct houses situated within their own enclosed compounds, loosely clustered around temples and ceremonial bathing tanks. On the other hand, the dwellings of low-caste artisans form one or more distinct hamlets, while those of agricultural laborers are scattered throughout the rice fields. The arrangement of houses belonging to Brahmins and Nayars adhere to specific religiously sanctioned guidelines for their respective castes. The compound is divided into four sections, with each area allocated to the houses, quadrants, burial grounds, cowsheds, bathing tanks, and sheds, placed in specific cardinal directions on the land. The house itself consists of four blocks surrounding an open rectangular courtyard, accompanied by verandas on all sides (Rapoport 1969, p.58).

contingent and subject to change, with comparatively lesser significance<sup>16</sup>.

The attitude towards built form embodies elements of both constancy and change. Therefore, discerning between what remains constant and what is subject to change provides valuable insights into comprehending the form and driving factors behind individual dwellings and larger settlements. The differentiation between constant and changeable elements can have far-reaching implications for residential homes and cities (Rapoport, 1969, p.79).

Within this context, the study by Saleh Al Mohannadi (et al., 2019) examines socio-cultural dimensions within traditional and contemporary Qatari houses, offering insights into the impact of globalization and urbanization on Doha's architectural landscape. It underscores a shift towards catering to global market demands over preserving local architectural identity. The research reveals how privacy, gender segregation, and hospitality persist as pivotal factors shaping the spatial configuration of Qatari houses.

The research findings highlight that privacy is manifested through various established connectivity patterns within traditional houses. The first scenario involves gradual connectivity, where the degree of connectedness varies across different spaces, with private rooms being the least connected and the central courtyard being the most connected. Positioning the courtyard within a secluded central area of the housing unit amplifies its societal function as an open-air space for socializing and engaging in activities. The second scenario represents intermediate connectivity by incorporating transitional features such as entrances, porches, corridors, and arcades. These elements facilitate seamless connections between the open-air courtyard and the adjacent small rooms.

However, in contemporary houses, the highest level of connectivity is observed in the outdoor yard spaces beyond the main villa block, such as parking, landscaping, or outdoor seating. Being underutilized, these spaces have the potential to be transformed into vibrant areas, similar to the lively courtyards of the past, where social interactions can be enriched through built form. Moreover, the corridors and pathways encircling the villa exemplify intermediate connectivity characteristics. Nevertheless, they resemble a diminished influence on the spatial flow of inhabitants and facilitating transitional connections compared to the porches and arcades of traditional courtyard houses, which exerted a more significant impact on the use of space.

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16: e.g. The cultural influence on attitudes towards privacy remains significant and profoundly influences the form of dwellings. These attitudes however, exhibit variations across diverse subcultures and evolve over time, as highlighted by Rapoport (1969, p. 132).



In terms of the role of women, gender segregation is reflected in the spatial layout of the modern house, where specific areas are designated based on the user's gender. The outdoor Majlis unit primarily caters to male users, while the indoor Majlis area is specifically designed for female guests. Women generally refrain from using the outdoor yard area due to concerns about exposure to the outside and the fact that male drivers utilize this space.

The result of this research is compatible with Rapoport's arguments mentioned above. It highlights how certain socio-cultural factors continue to shape the spatial configuration of houses and are constant during the change. The study also showcases the evolution of these factors over time, particularly in response to globalization and urbanization pressures. The study illustrates how privacy is expressed differently in traditional and contemporary Qatari houses. While Rapoport provides theoretical insights into the broader implications of cultural change on built forms, Al Mohannadi's study offers empirical evidence of how these factors manifest within the specific context of Qatari housing. Thus, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of Qatar's complex interplay between socio-cultural forces and architectural design.

One could contend that historical constraints, such as climate, limited technology and materials, traditional influences, and economic limitations, have given way to a different set of constraints in the present. The present constraints stem from high population density, stringent controls implemented through codes, regulations, zoning protocols, and requirements imposed by banks or mortgage authorities, insurance companies, and planning bodies. Consequently, even in today's context, the designer's freedom to shape forms is significantly constrained (Rapoport 1969, p.59).

Another example of continuity is the persistence of historical solutions. New original proposed solutions often mirror those employed in older cultures<sup>17</sup> (Rapoport 1969, p.81-82; Rieger-Jandl 2020). In conclusion, constant and changeable elements affect the form of dwellings. The entire issue of constancy and change in built-form can be explored across multiple variables. Rapoport contends the continued effectiveness of employing traditional forms with significant success since architectural forms exhibit remarkable stability<sup>18</sup> (Rapoport 1969, p.81-82).

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17: Examples of such usage of past solutions can be found in the work of the department of Baugeschichte und Bauforschung at TU Wien, i.e. Rieger-Jandl (2020) where traditional mud architecture is being studied to be used for cotemporary designs.

18: e.g. Can we re-interpret the traditional form of courtyard houses in new designs? Rieger-Jandl (2006) also provides examples of re-interpretation of old form in new designs.



## The case of contemporary houses

Rapoport (1969, p.127) categorizes the buildings into three categories: High style includes those designed by architects, folk art includes vernaculars, and masscult includes modern non-architect-designed buildings. Folk art is the product of a community, created by the people themselves, whereas masscult is imposed from above onto atomized individuals as mass. The houses people purchase more closely reflect popular values and aspirations rather than those of the design subculture. These houses make up the majority of the constructed environment. This is although people no longer construct their own homes. Rapoport suggests that the popular press and architectural journals discuss entirely different sets of criteria regarding the values associated with houses.

In the present era, individuals continue to possess their myths, and the diverse forms of houses they create are motivated by socio-cultural factors that share similarities with the past. The variations observed in the American, English and French built environments can be attributed to specific cultural attitudes. The United States embraces a laissez-faire, open-ended approach mindset. In France, the urban tradition extends beyond towns, influencing the rural landscape with urban-like qualities. On the other hand, England follows an "anti-urban" tradition, contributing to its urban areas' distinctive character. Consequently, the enduring quest for an ideal environment persists, with the house as a physical manifestation. The contemporary American trend to design residential communities and "new towns" centred around recreational amenities reflects an old-fashioned ideal in a modern form (Rapoport 1969, p. 127).

## Developing countries

In developing countries, the current challenge lies in the overwhelming abundance of choices, leading to the erosion of folk art. This decline can be attributed to the absence of limitations, making decision-making excessively difficult. The issue of choice extends beyond this realm and can shed light on understanding the intricate relationship between built structures and the respective cultures. This highlights the significance of cross-cultural analysis when examining houses and the built environment. In other regions, it is crucial to avoid the potential pitfall of employing Western ideas, which represent only a single option among many possibilities. Instead, a more practical approach involves studying them within the context of local ways of life, specific needs, and established practices (Rapoport 1969, p. 128-129).

Charles Abrams frequently highlights the tendency of experts to criticize traditional approaches to the built environment and housing, disregarding their evident social and climatic benefits. A noteworthy example he mentions is adopting the English slogan one family-one house in

Ghana. Abrams emphasizes that the concept of family in Ghana differs significantly, and its relationship with housing differs. This is a compelling example of the significance of considering the unique characteristics of each situation. It becomes apparent that traditional housing might be far more acceptable than previously assumed, presenting an enriching avenue for researching housing attitudes in developing countries (Rapoport 1969, p. 129).

## **Cultural factors in a contemporary context**

Rapoport (1969, p. 130-135) goes through some of the cultural factors and examines them in the contemporary context and popular housing;

- Regarding the popular house and use of settlement, Rapoport asserts that the use of neighbourhoods as integral parts of settlements by American working-class individuals aligns more closely with the Mediterranean than the Anglo-American tradition. This distinction significantly influences the perception of the forms of houses and settlements. However, advertisement and planning tend to prevail the norm of the white, middle-class family consisting of parents and two children. As a result, this narrow perspective excludes sub-cultural differences by neglecting big groups of people within other value systems that do not conform to this standardized model.
- Regarding the family factor, Rapoport mentions the new types of popular housing to reside people outside the "standard family", e.g. a new type of apartment development for middle-class single people in urban areas.
- Regarding the use of space and popular housing, behavioural patterns and form remain intertwined, as evidenced by the continued influence of certain activities on the physical structure. For instance, the widespread presence of barbecues in Los Angeles has a broader impact beyond shaping the form of houses. The growing popularity of using the backyard space, complete with barbecues and swimming pools, positions it, along with the house, as the central hub of daily life.
- Regarding orientation and choice of site in popular housing, Rapoport suggests that the contemporary house exhibits a shift in orientation, prioritizing panorama, shoreline, and sunlight. In this context, the orientation towards these elements and incorporating picture windows substitute the religious and symbolic orientations observed earlier. Consequently, a fresh emblem emerges, emphasizing well-being, sunshine, and outdoor activities. It can be argued that pursuing health becomes a new form of devotion, akin to a religion in the United States.
- When it comes to privacy and threshold, Rapoport discusses the concept of private residences

and suggests that a fenced-private house could represent territorial behaviour, albeit in various manifestations. Understanding the role of territorial symbols in addressing challenges such as the issues of excessive population and crowding is significant.

- Regarding the separation of domains in popular housing, Rapoport (1969, p.133) suggests that attitudes can impact symbols representing privacy. He illustrates instances where development is distinguished from other neighbourhoods primarily by its enclosing walls. The enclosure signifies a secure and prestigious community, evoking a positive response from individuals. The pursuit of prestige plays a significant role in the present-day selection of housing sites, as evidenced by the concept of "trendy" regions. The transformation of these areas within a city, driven by social rather than physical factors, offers revealing insights. Likewise is the phenomenon of shifting fashions in towns and specific sections within them. The concept of fence also serves as an illustrative example. Australian and English visitors often express surprise at the absence of fences in American suburbs, finding it challenging to comprehend. While the front fence in those other nations may not provide tangible visual or acoustic seclusion, it represents a frontier and obstruction. For the British people, the fence signifies an individual marking their territory, claiming their small portion of land. Regardless of its size, people desire their distinct frontier. Historically, fences have not enjoyed popularity among Americans. However, fence sales have notably increased recently, possibly due to an association of fences with privacy—a quality increasingly valued as a status symbol (Rapoport 1969, p.133).

Drawing from his observations, Rapoport (1969, p.133-135) asserts that contemporary housing symbols are as powerful as old ones and maintain a greater importance than physical ones. However, they hold varying characteristics compared to the past. Compared to the past, physical limitations have diminished now, allowing us to accomplish much more than was previously possible. Consequently, we face the challenge of excessive options and difficulty discerning or establishing the previous natural constraints. This newfound freedom of choice and the fact that the form of houses can now be influenced by fashion highlights the predominance of socio-cultural factors.

## **The cultural transformation of globalisation**

The impacts of globalisation have been a subject of contemplation among scholars for quite some time. In addition to the ongoing socio-economic and political dialogues, globalisation profoundly impacts our understanding of culture. It reshapes and reconfigures spaces, interactions, and relationships across the globe, within nations, and at an individual level.

Concurrently, infiltrating Westernization/Americanization into local cultures via consumerism obscures indigenous traditions and experiences (Magu 2015, p.630).

Culture is inherently fluid, undergoing constant transformations. Specifically, individuals acting as cultural agents engage in ongoing interactions with one another. These transformations are facilitated by diverse mechanisms, historically including economic, social, political, and religious factors. Advancements in transportation, communication, and technology further underpin these processes. Notably, globalisation hastens cultural interactions and facilitates the transfer of values from one group to another (Magu 2015, p.632). Globalisation is commonly defined as the process of expanding, deepening, and accelerating global interrelation across various aspects of current society, encompassing cultural, criminal, financial, and spiritual realms (Tomlinson 1999, p. 2; Pieterse 2009, p. 65; Held et al. 1999, p. 51). Recently, globalisation has witnessed a rapid and significant escalation. It encompasses historical and present-day dimensions, and three main perspectives—hyper-globalisers, sceptics, and transformationalists—emerge from analysing its implications. The transformationalist perspective holds particular persuasiveness, asserting that globalisation is generating transnational, multifaceted, and simultaneous group identities and affiliations that demonstrate the features of glocalization (Magu 2015, p.632).

In what ways is globalisation perceived to impact nationality, culture, and identity? Tomlinson suggests that globalisation is deeply intertwined with modern culture. Discussions surrounding the specific nature and outcomes of cultural globalisation reveal considerable divergence. Some interpret cultural globalisation as the global homogenization influenced by American popular culture or Western consumerism. This indicates that cultures cannot make careful choices or be particular. They are not perceived as having the capacity to selectively navigate the influence of Western/American consumerism and incorporate only those elements and products that align with their own cultural values or further the progress of their respective cultures. While Americanism/Western consumerism has a significant worldwide impact, its target cultures do not always entirely adopt it. On the contrary, transformationalists describe the intermixing of different cultures and diverse populations as a catalyst for the creation of cultural hybrids and the formation of novel global networks of culture (Tomlinson 1999, p. 1, 327; Magu 2015, p.632).

According to Pieterse (1999), globalisation is a multifaceted occurrence that operates on multiple levels and disciplines, leading to different interpretations depending on the educational domain. In cultural studies, the critical indicators of globalisation are global communications and the establishment of universal cultural standards (Pieterse 2009, p. 65–

66). Rather than viewing globalisation as a singular and uniform process with consistent effects and results, this perspective understands it as a multidimensional phenomenon with varying manifestations and consequences across contexts. According to Featherstone (1990, p.1), a compelling argument is made that "third cultures" are evolving, serving as channels for diverse cultural flows. Third cultures embody and merge the fundamental and practical aspects of global cultures. In communication within a globalized society, individuals actively navigate the formation of a "third, hybrid identity" by drawing upon characteristics derived from their acquired collective identities and group memberships. This negotiation occurs through the interplay of socio-political, economic, and socio-cultural processes.

Appadurai (1996, p. 32) asserts that the fundamental issue in the current worldwide interplay is the conflict between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization. While a wealth of empirical evidence supports the notion of cultural uniformity, Appadurai acknowledges its rationale while offering a contrasting viewpoint. Appadurai emphasizes the dynamism of culture and the incorporation of novel cultural attributes into pre-existing cultural contexts. This underscores various cultural elements' ongoing transformation and indigenization (Magu 2015, p. 633).

Concerning the evolving dynamics of identity, social interactions, and status, Rapaport (2007, cited in Mokhtarshahi Sani et al., 2013, p.230) argues that there has been an increase in diversity, adaptability, and dynamism. Discussing the impact of cultural globalisation on values, Rieger-Jandl (2006, p.75) suggests a notable transformation. The link to the physical environment has changed now. Previously, the discussions were focused on individuals with shared traditional values and specific connections to a particular physical environment (as discussed by Malinowsky in 1944, p. 60). However, the concept of lifestyle groups no longer suffices with today's rapid change. Instead, individuals affected by these changes face a fundamental shift in their way of life.

As the physical manifestations of culture, buildings and settlements' relationship to the broader cultural context are significant as they provide the spatial framework for human activities (Feest et al., 1986, p.103, cited in Rieger-Jandl 2006, p.117). Channels like media, tourism, and migration cause the infusion of Western ideas into Eastern contexts and trigger shifts in expectations concerning the built environment. As Western concepts infiltrate established systems of the built environment, new needs arise, leading to extensive transformation within the existing institution (Rieger-Jandl 2006, p.117).

According to Rieger-Jandl (2006, p.41), the discourse surrounding culture in the context of globalisation encompasses a wide range of subjects, including transformation, the erosion of

cultural boundaries, the interplay between homogeneity and heterogeneity, and the emergence of imagined cultures. New forms of identity formation arise as identity creation is no longer confined to a specific region. Rieger-Jandl (2006, p.23-25) contends that globalisation can lead to inevitable consequences, including Westernization and modernization, individualism within collective cultures, and the proliferation of consumerism. The significance of housing as a means of showcasing personal affluence has rapidly grown. The symbolic functions of showcasing affluence and social status are increasingly paramount. This trend is closely linked to the concept of consumption. She refers to James Duncan (1989, p. 230), who argues that there is a direct link between modernization and Westernization and the rise of individualism and materialism. This causes changes in opinion on the function of the house from the residence of a family unit towards a symbol of prestige and wealth status.

## **Contemporary trends of culture-environment studies**

In contemporary culture-environment studies, culture is increasingly recognized as an essential variable researched in many disciplines. There are developments at a highly theoretical level, e.g. the role of culture in the evolution of societies by Richardson (et al., 2005). One issue discussed in cultural variables today is the increase in migration and the consequent presence of many immigrant groups with different levels of acculturation in many countries. One another example of new ideas being studied is that environments can become a form of "propaganda" (Diamond 2003). This trend explores how newly designed built environments tend to communicate power. For instance, a newly designed mosque is built in a massive size with a high minaret and the capacity to host 10000 people. This is due to Sufi Islam's resurgence, which aims to communicate power rather than religious beliefs (Chivers 2006).

Another example is the discussion of capital cities (e.g. Rapoport 2004; Kehoe 2002). A further study involves universal means of communicating messages and how specific images are communicated today through culturally adapted means within this field; e.g. Modernity is communicated through the competition to build the world's highest tower, as well as introducing glass skyscrapers and freeways in third world countries (Rapoport 2008, p. 25-28). One other example of new studies is the non-residential environment. Unlike past studies, the new studies in the culture-environment field consider such matters as the adoption of high-tech as culture-specific. It is to be expected that more variability will be formed in shops, markets, and open spaces in neighbourhoods. Drinking and eating patterns may also vary in dining settings. Cultural change and changes in the components and expressions of culture have significantly impacted the English pub (Vassey 1990). Cultural specificity is marked in many



cities through the specific intensity of use, use of outdoor areas and behaviour at the neighbourhood scale, streets and other urban spaces (Rapoport 2008, p. 21-22).

Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space at TU Wien (SKOUR) also focuses on the following issues (SKUOR 2021): The contemporary field of research on urban culture encompasses a range of subjects, including cultural discourse and the development of urban areas. It explores various facets, such as the impact of structural changes on urban economies, the dynamics of ethnic diversity and integration, and the complexities of everyday life in cities. The present approach to understanding culture and space encompasses diverse perspectives, including the examination of urban cultural challenges and the significance of public spaces, evaluative scrutiny of urban development within the framework of capitalist systems throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, and the exploration of the lived space in which city dwellers experience their daily lives. Today, urban planning is viewed as a multidimensional and interdisciplinary field of action, recognizing the city as a socio-historical process unfolding across different scales.

The domain of cultural diversity and ethnicity revolves around a comprehensive grasp of urban culture as a fundamental framework for urban development. It encompasses city dwellers' mundane realities and everyday behaviours, who comprehend the built environment and planning. Planners base urban development on considering users' normative values and individual biographical foundations. This approach integrates a cultural-scientific view, accommodating various methodological approaches to investigate scientific-oriented research on urban culture.

The primary emphasis lies in transdisciplinary engagement, which involves the exchange of ideas between theoretical frameworks and practical applications. Furthermore, a current approach to addressing cultural heritage amplifies the inclination to reinterpret the cultural aspects of daily life within urban environments.

Cultural viewpoints in urban planning bring forth two distinct advantages: firstly, they present many methodological instruments and avenues to alter and escalate urban planning methodologies, thus fostering the development and enrichment of building and planning cultures. Furthermore, they promote an all-encompassing planning discourse that embraces the concept of inclusivity and acknowledges the coexistence of diverse communities within the urban landscape. This fosters an open and constructive dialogue concerning various dimensions of differentiation, such as religious beliefs, social hierarchies, ethnic origins, gender identities, and educational backgrounds.



Urban society research also encompasses the position and involvement of planners in the planning and participatory processes. It explores the spatial needs, challenges, and aspirations of marginalized groups within the city, besides those of the larger society. Moreover, it emphasizes the dynamic interplay between planned and constructed urban structures and their multiple impacts on social action, shedding light on the impacts of social action on constituting spaces.

In their study, Hou and colleagues (2013) utilize a framework incorporating transcultural placemaking, interdisciplinary inquiry, and a transnational outlook. They explore by scrutinizing a collection of case studies by a multidisciplinary group of scholars encompassing architecture, urban planning, urban studies, art, environmental psychology, geography, political science, and social work. This exploration delves into the dynamics of intercultural interactions and the consequential cultural transformations that unfold within the urban spaces. Tornachi et al. (2015) raise criticism regarding the conventional approach to understanding space, which predominantly views public space as a mere external structure or container, focusing primarily on its physical form and practical functions. Consequently, the dynamic and ever-evolving meanings, their contested or non-traditional uses, and the ongoing contextual interactions among social actors, their cultures, and their conflicts have been largely disregarded. Scholarly investigations and professional practitioners have overlooked the pivotal role of space in facilitating social engagement, the ever-changing nature of its social significance, and the varying degrees of "publicness" it embodies. Consequently, these aspects remain unexplored realms of study. In response, the authors propose an alternative perspective that redefines public spaces within the urban environment, shedding new light on their significance and function.

## **Rapoport in the contemporary context**

In his 2008 discussion, Rapoport discusses some of his older thoughts;

- Regarding the criticism of his work, he argues that his earlier theories might be considered primary concerning the development of studies in culture-environment studies (Rapoport 2008, p.20).
- Rapoport (2008, p. 20) confirms that studies on culture are empirical since its role may vary with the type of environment over time, for different groups, in different situations and contexts.
- He sticks to the idea of components of culture and argues that the concept of culture is too complex and abstract to be studied at once. Therefore, we can dismantle it into components.

He provides a diagram of the Dismantling of 'culture,' relating its expressions to the built environment. He believes each component can be examined and linked with specific aspects of the environment. For instance, we can examine each cultural value regarding a particular environment, such as cultural landscape. In this diagram, cultural landscape and system of settings are examples of built environments to work with ( Figure 7).

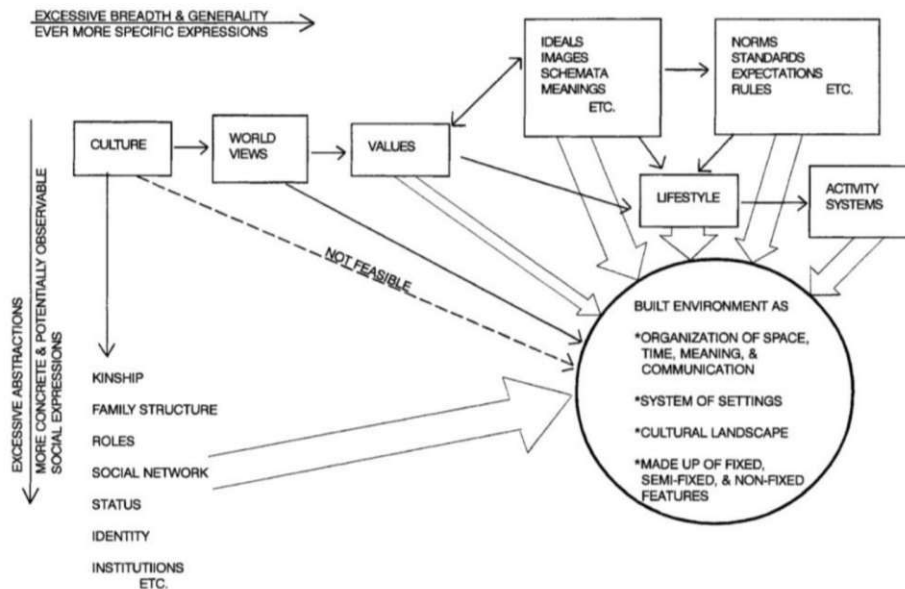


Figure 7. Diagram of the dismantling of culture, relating its expressions to the built environment as discussed on p. 32

He also re-confirms that we can continue working on the organisation of settlement since aspects of dismantling culture may be expressed by particular organisations of settings. Considering types of environments for studies of culture-environment, Rapoport argues that the examples used are usually of housing (in the broad sense of systems of settings for living, including neighbourhoods, their urban spaces, and other setting types). This is because the role of culture is decisive there (Rapoport 2008, p.20).

My study compares the contemporary built environment of Darband with its traditional context since, according to Rapoport (2008, p.21), a large number of the studies in the field of culture-environment tend to be on the traditional and vernacular, where the role of culture is still more decisive. Also frequently used are spontaneous settlements—today's vernacular. There is limited research on the role of culture in other kinds of built environments. Future research can include the role of culture in different types of environments.

- Rapoport (2008, p.17) also sticks to his previous discussions about change and culture; He argues that culture has both changeable and constant elements. Even some changeable aspects are manifestations of underlying constant elements. He regards how this is important in

practical studies of culture and environment.

Rapoport (1983, cited in Rapoport 2008, p.24) also provides theories about cultural change, environment and globalisation. He proposes a distinction between the culture core and the culture periphery. Being fundamentally important and among integral aspects of the identity of a group, the culture core undergoes few changes at a low pace or not at all. The culture periphery, however, undergoes fast change. He argues that if the core is kept, due to reasons such as communicating identity, there is variation in the elements of the core which are kept. He illustrates case studies where the dwelling's settlement pattern or spatial organisation is considered primary. He suggests that general, global elements affect the cases, providing comfort, environmental quality and meaning as communicated by the appropriate image.

He suggests using the concept of core/periphery in studies on culture and patterns of culture change. Culture, dismantled into its components, has a core and periphery. This results in the importance of different elements in different case studies. The case studies can range in various scales and include various contexts, groups, setting types, and elements. The critical elements can be analysed through empirical studies.

Rapoport (2008, p. 23-24) provides examples of local and global conflict within the contemporary context. An instance is the conflict between high-style frameworks and culture-specific small urban areas (Figure 8). In this instance, the modern framework includes car space. However, the smaller-scale neighbourhood provides slow-speed human spaces aligning with residents' culture, behaviours, and activity systems. The mentioned areas may occasionally prevail due to human nature. Alternatively, their images and meanings can be considered harmful due to conflict with modernity. In this case, planners and users may try to remove or redevelop them. Different neighbourhood groups may form different opinions, some trying to preserve them and some to redevelop them <sup>19</sup>.

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19: Rapoport (2008, p.23) provides examples in this regards; Despite their good functioning, rickshaws are not allowed in Jakarta due to conflict of their image with a capital city, provided in the redevelopment in-place.

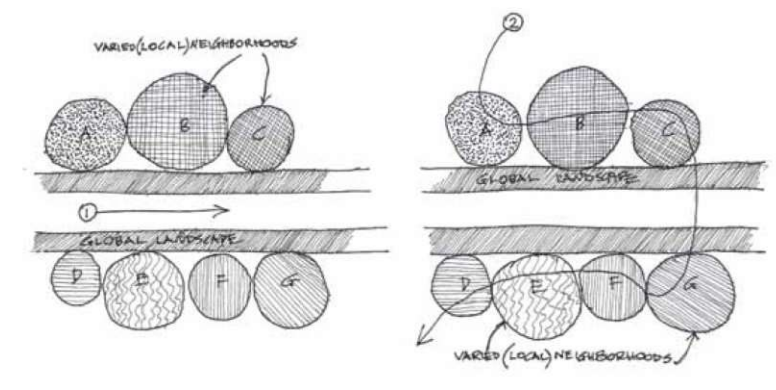


Figure 8. Neighbourhoods hidden behind a highway. Path 1 resembles the global landscape, while Path 2 reveals local neighbourhoods A-G

- Rapoport's 1969 study has been applied constantly until recently. There are 65 citations to Rapoport's 1969 study in contemporary articles on Google Scholar. We can mention two peer-reviewed papers and one PhD dissertation among these citations. These studies have been conducted similarly to my research using concepts by Rapoport (1969), whether outside the house and settlement or inside the house and in a different scope. They provide instances that concepts of Rapoport's study of 1969 are valid and work in the context of my study, too.

- The first study is a PhD dissertation conducted at McGill University in 2008. It is based on a sociocultural and spatial analysis of the old settlement of Ghat. It explores the social meanings of public and private spaces to examine how spatial organisation and use convey social practice and social values. Jamal (2008, p.24, 27) explores chosen social aspects of life. He reviews concepts of culture and privacy and presents scholars' views regarding sociocultural aspects of the built environment. In the conceptual design of his theoretical framework, he refers to Rapoport (1969) excessively concerning his different arguments on the relation between culture, house and settlement, including organisation of the built environment, privacy, social intercourse and their effect on the built environment, and house as part of the settlement system and set of activities.

- The second study is a paper published in a peer-reviewed journal. Based on Rapoport's framework, Jabareen (2005, p.134) dismantles "culture" into different components, assessing their importance as indicators of housing preferences in Gaza City. According to Jabareen (2005, p.135), houses embody cultural values. This is conveyed through their deliberate designs or their everyday use. Citing the works of Rapoport (1969), Bochner (1975), and Ozaki (2002), Jabareen argues that through their architectural designs, their spatial organisation, and overall spatial arrangement within a settlement, houses foster or disrupt the cultural values of their residents. The initial study revealed key aspects encompassing attitudes towards the housing environment, social interactions, family connections, gender roles, governance, and

religious convictions. In addition, the participants' socio-economic and demographic variables were also taken into account as significant predictors.

- The third study, "An Analysis of the Role of Social Class's Lifestyle in the Pattern of Housing, case study: The late Qajar and early Pahlavi house in Ardabil", was published in 2019. Mohamadhoseini (et al., 2019) references Rapoport (1969) for his conceptual design. He refers to Rapoport's argument on considering culture the main factor in the formation of the houses' physical form, and he argues how social factors are among the modifying factors. The paper examines the role of social class and hierarchal relations in house formation in Ardabil.
  - Besides these arguments, I argue that by applying the theories put forward by Rapoport in my dissertation, I am analysing certain essential factors to consider how the relationship between culture, house and settlement is changing. I want to see how these fundamental values have changed and affected the urban landscape in the transformation of Darband. I think the theory, concept and cultural values that Rapoport has put forward are ethos. These factors are always valid as principles, whether in 1960 or now.
  - Another concern is that many of these contemporary studies mix other cultural factors with Rapoport's argued sociocultural factors. For instance, they add political views to other cultural factors for study (e.g. Jabareen 2005) or mix Rapoport's study with other researchers' studies (e.g. Forouzmand 2013). However, this is out of the scope of my study. It would make a complexity because, in addition to culture, my study also goes through a study on place.

# Place

This part goes through different theories on place, including theories on placelessness, the transformation of place values, theories on place and globalisation, and theories on a practical approach to place, concluding with a need for a practical empirical approach to study place. It concludes with concepts related to the identity of place, which leads to a research framework that will be further applied in the fieldwork on Darband.

Since the 1970s, there has been a widespread perception of the crisis of place (Ng 2012, p.104). This narrative of loss resembles a prevailing sense of placelessness (Augé 1996; Casey 1997; Jackson 1970; Kunstler 1993; Ley 1989; Relph 1976, cited in Ng 2012, p.104). In light of the extensive literature on the erosion of identity and meaning in places, scholars have raised numerous theoretical speculations regarding the concept of place. These studies have sought to conceptualize place as social and cultural constructs (de Certeau 1984; Giddens 1990; Harvey 1990; Massey 1997), place as lived experience (Relph 1976; Tuan 1977; Casey 1996; Norberg-Schulz 1980; Harries 1997), and post-structuralist perspectives on the 'otherness' of place (Foucault 1986; Deleuze & Guattari 1987; Soja 1996).

Placelessness is an outcome of a place-making where there 'is essentially no sense of place, for it involves no awareness of the deep symbolic significances of places and no appreciation of their identities (Relph 1976, Dovey 1985, cited in Ng 2012, p.105-106). However, the term "place" has posed ongoing challenges and remained an unresolved concept due to its inherent obscurity (Adams et al. 2001; Rapoport 1994), compounded by the emphasis on theoretical speculations surrounding its meaning (Casey 1997, cited in Ng 2012, p.104). More recently, various approaches have emerged to conceptualize place concerning the processes of globalisation (Featherstone 1993, cited in May 1996, p.194). The discussions within this section of the dissertation reflect the necessity for empirical analysis of place and identity, given the intricate complexities of contemporary place identities (May 1996, p.194). It is vital to consider the importance of place and its associated identities for its users. Relph's work has underscored the risks of neglecting a place's distinctive identity. The absence of a true sense of place, coupled with a lack of awareness regarding the profound symbolic place significances and appreciation for their distinct identities, gives rise to placelessness as a result of inadequate place-making practices (Relph 1976, Dovey 1985, as cited in Ng 2012, p.105-106).

## Disappearing place

This part of the study goes through different theories about placelessness by scholars.



There is a serious concern within the existing body of literature concerning place over the current trajectory of urban landscape development and growth.

They share the presupposition that the fast transformation of urban landscapes causes negative impacts, such as the disappearance of the vernacular landscape while removing the distinctive regional landform and urban landscape characteristics. This form of urban development has been recognized as a primary agent responsible for weakening urban places (Lee 2009, p.25). According to critics, contemporary spaces are guilty of hyperproduction, excessive consumption, and perpetual transformation, resulting in the removal of meaningful settings of place (Relph 1976, Auge 1995, Harvey 1989, Sorkin 1992, cited in Lee 2009, p.25). As a result of these prevailing trends in contemporary urban landscape development, a notable outcome emerges: urban landscapes are undergoing a process of homogenization, losing their distinctive and noteworthy characteristics. The decline in visual particularity within the urban landscape diminishes the ability to create memorable sites. Moreover, the absence of physical markers in the urban environment poses challenges for individuals seeking to connect with their past landscape memories, experiences, and history, ultimately weakening the bonds between people and their surroundings (Lee 2009, p.25; Ng 2012, p.104).

Relph (1976, p. 90) proposes the concept of placelessness as 'the weakening identity of places, a situation where we neither create nor experience places'. This notion portrays the absence of place quality within post-industrial urban landscapes. According to Relph (1976, p. 141), two contrasting geographies exist: one defined by diversity and meaning recognized as the geography of places, and the other, a puzzling expanse of indistinguishable similarities known as placeless geography. The placeless urban landscape is marked out by its flatness, stereotypical nature, artificiality, lack of authenticity, mediocrity, and the imposition of external planning.

Relph (1976, pp. 118-119) presents a classification system to describe the absence of place identities in urban landscapes. He identifies different manifestations of this phenomenon: places directed by others, uniform and standardized places, places lacking human scale and order, places subjected to destruction, and places marked by impermanence and instability.

Within the field of architecture, the concept of placelessness has garnered significant attention and is closely intertwined with the ideologies of "modernism" and "postmodernism." Modernism is linked to establishing uniform and homogeneous spaces that manifest a sense of "nowhere," whereas postmodernism is associated with the emergence of other-directedness in architecture. The degree of inauthenticity serves as a measure of the extent of placelessness.

Relph's research has shed light on the perils associated with architectural practices that neglect



to preserve a place's unique identity. An inauthentic approach to place-making can lead to placelessness. On the other hand, authenticity entails a genuine and heartfelt disposition towards place, while an inauthentic stance reflects a complete absence of place consciousness. It signifies a lack of awareness regarding the profound symbolic significance of places and an inability to appreciate their distinctive qualities. Instead, it is a disposition that aligns with social convenience and societal norms. It involves unquestioningly embracing stereotypes without critical examination or analysis. It represents an intellectual or aesthetic trend that can be adopted superficially, without genuine engagement or sincere investment (Relph 1976, p. 90; Dovey 1985 as cited in Ng 2012, p.105-106). Relph defines the ingenuity of landscapes in two levels of inauthenticity;

The initial category is referred to as 'Kitsch.' The prevailing condition is characterized by a lack of self-awareness, wherein inauthenticity arises from and is controlled by mass values that fail to stimulate personal contemplation. Conventional means of mass communication and popular culture are accused of acting as conduits for spreading uniform preferences and unexamined mass values. This refers to the uncritical embrace of mass values commonly observed in the surroundings and characteristics tailored for consumption by the general public, as exemplified by aspects related to mass tourism (Relph 1976, p. 82). The representation of place through mass images starkly contrasts the public identity associated with that place. Instead of emerging from collective and individual encounters, mass identities are imposed by influential individuals known as "opinion makers," who offer prepackaged identities to the masses. These identities are spread through mass media and mainly through advertising. Mass identities rely not on meaningful symbols and shared values but on shallow and artificial stereotypes that are arbitrarily and even artificially constructed (Ng 2012, p.104; Lee 2009, p.26; Green 2010, p. 15).

The second category is referred to as "Technique." It involves a conscious and purposeful approach where inauthenticity is deliberately generated through explicit intention, planning, or positivist functionalism. An illustrative instance can be observed in tourist spaces, where the landscape is intentionally constructed for the benefit of outsiders, namely tourists, rather than prioritizing the perspectives of "insiders," aiming to generate economic profits (Relph 1976, p. 87; Ng 2012, p. 104; Lee 2009, p. 26; Green 2010, p. 15). According to Relph (1976, p. 88), treating places as centres with high significance or concerning their qualities is severely limited within these approaches. Instead, such methods rely on quantitative analytical and manipulative techniques that rely on the average behaviours of individuals within an economic framework. Furthermore, these approaches adopt a disinterested and objective stance towards both the

places themselves and the people involved. Relph cites Walter Gropius's statement (1943, p. 155) highlighting the similarity in dwelling and living needs among most citizens in a particular country. Gropius questions why our homes, like our clothes, shoes, or automobiles, do not exhibit a similar sense of uniformity. This notion reflects the standardized strategies employed in placemaking to cater to mass society and mass culture. Relph (1976) identifies the prevalence of technique-oriented planning, prioritizing functional efficiency, objective organisation, and manipulative approaches as the root cause of placelessness.

Augé (1995) presents an alternative perspective to Relph regarding the disappearance of the place. Augé focuses on the transformed anthropological nature of living within the postmodern era. Augé (1995) suggests that 'super modernity' is associated with an excessive state. He categorizes human experiences within a non-place by three distinct phenomena: "the overabundance of events, spatial overabundance, and individualization of references". The initial pair of phenomena resemble the commonly discussed concept of time-space compression within the postmodern era. Enhanced modes of transportation and the rapid production of spaces enable individuals to access diverse events, spaces, and occurrences. The third phenomenon focuses on the interplay between non-place environments and individuals. Pre-established instructions within non-places guide human interactions. Typical societal regulations commonly encountered in ordinary commercial settings include 'no smoking' and 'cash only'. Adhering to these rules is essential to uphold an individual's entitlement to remain within a non-place and prevent the possibility of displacement.

Within the domain of non-places, the dynamics between humans and their surroundings take on a contractual essence, necessitating individuals to demonstrate validating actions, like acquiring a ticket or presenting an ID card, to gain entry into diverse modern environments. In the realm of non-place, the identity of individuals is distilled down to fundamental personal identifying details, encompassing aspects such as profession, contact number and date of birth. Under these circumstances, traditional places are gradually replaced by what Augé refers to as 'non-places,' characterized by their lack of identity, history, and urban connections. Augé directs his critique towards the realm of tourism and other modern environments. Non-places encompass transient spaces that serve the purposes of movement, interaction, and consumption. These spaces include hotels, financial institutions, shopping centres, highways glimpsed from inside vehicles, expressways, dining establishments, fuel stations, expansive grocery stores, duty-free shops, and waiting areas for travellers in global airports (Lee 2009, p.26; Ng 2012, p.104).

Other scholars have approached loss of place differently. According to Casey (1997, cited in

Ng 2012, p.105), the Western monoculture has led to the erosion of the "difference-of-place" and the emergence of a "sameness-of-place" phenomenon. This transformation has resulted in places lacking identity, character, and historical significance. Instead of meaningful places, we are confronted with many mechanical impersonal spaces. Regarding this as a "narrative of loss," Arefi Mahyar (1999) suggests that both meaning and the interconnectedness between locations and human interactions within those places have been lost. Featherstone (1993, p. 178, cited in Ng (2012, p. 105) links the "thinning out" of local culture to the impacts of globalisation. The essence of local culture lies in the sense of belonging, shared experiences, and cultural forms unique to a specific place. Local culture commonly encompasses the cultural practices specific to a compact and defined region, wherein inhabitants regularly engage in direct interpersonal exchanges in their daily lives. However, the boundaries of these local cultures have become increasingly permeable and challenging to uphold, leading some to claim that everywhere is becoming homogenous. Consequently, there is a lack of a sense of place, with a noticeable absence of emotional and symbolic affection towards everyday life's physical structures, environment, and social practices.

Some scholars argue that the commodification of place leads to the erosion of meaning in place, whereby places are transformed into marketable goods under the impact of capitalism. Commodification fails to provide a genuine foundation for place-based identities, although it may heighten the value of place, as noted by Harvey (1993, pp. 7-8). The pursuit of creating and reviving significance in place became constrained to methods that disregarded historical and geographical contexts. For instance, during the 1980s, structures such as retail complexes, museums, harbours, and amusement parks surged. These constructions evoked a sense of disorientation, awe, and fascination by attempting to replicate fragments of bygone customs, futuristic elements, and imaginative aspirations of childhood (Featherstone 1993). Sorkin (1992) characterizes this state of place as universal and generic, lacking geographical diversity. Like the contemporary city, the place has ceased to be a hub of communal bonds and human interactions. Instead, it has morphed into visually deceptive imitations reminiscent of theme parks (Sorkin, 1992). These pseudo-places, as labelled by Relph (1976), embody the traits of being 'Disneyfied, museumized, futurized,' and 'subtopia.' They lack any historical connections and bear no connection to the cultural or physical milieu in which they reside (Ng 2012, p.105). Tuan (1977) contemplates the impact of a mobile society and constant movement on the overall experience, highlighting the emergence of a shallow sense of place.

Jencks (1973) suggests a relentless shift in architecture, moving from symbolically abundant systems to impoverished ones, where utilitarian functionality has replaced cultural

significance, and space is increasingly substituted for place. Ley (1989) puts forth a similar perspective, discussing the ongoing battle for understanding the meaning of the built environment. According to Janik & Tumin (cited in Ley 1989, p. 47), practical application has replaced meaning. The establishment of "utilitarian rationalism" as the guiding principle of the modern movement has resulted in the exclusion of intangible aspects, metaphysical considerations, and even cultural elements in favour of an objective and functional approach. This has led to the creation of spaces rather than meaningful places, emphasizing quantity over meaning (Ng 2012, p. 106). According to Green (2010, p. 21), maintaining a sense of continuity in a place is crucial for creating significant experiences. Furthermore, when there is a disruption in this continuity, which can happen due to swift environmental transformations, it can lead to the perception of those places as placeless.

## **Theories of place and globalisation**

In the 1990s, scholars started investigating what happened to the notion of place in terms of increasing transformations brought about by globalisation.

### **Binary opposition and global sense of place**

Previous discussions on place and placelessness have often centred around the concept of binary opposition. Within these discussions, critiques of the binary opposition in Relph's (1976) ideas have emerged, challenging the notions of insider/outsider and authenticity/inauthenticity. The emphasis on authenticity highlights the experiential aspects of insiders, where traditional landscapes are shaped and maintained by those who share a collective use of the landscape rooted in established culture and traditions. On the other hand, inauthenticity is affiliated with outsiders, representing the modern urban landscapes driven by quantitative growth, functional maximisation, and economic gains, detached from stable traditional and cultural values.

The dichotomy between insiders and outsiders is fundamental to the differentiation between the two. Insiders encompass individuals who are part of a cohesive community, bound by shared social norms, cultural practices, historical knowledge, and deeply rooted traditional values, all confined within well-defined geographic and social boundaries. On the other hand, individuals considered outsiders are not recognised as members of any particular social faction, nor do they partake in the collective values and cultural practices shared by others. The criticisms put forth the argument that the classification of a landscape as placeless or not is often predicated on binary speculation, setting the modern against the traditional, inauthenticity against authenticity, and insiders against outsiders. However, this binary approach to

understanding place fails to acknowledge the intricate nature of the contemporary urban landscape. It oversimplifies the situation by promoting a tendency for authenticity while disregarding inauthenticity. In reality, authenticity and inauthenticity can simultaneously exist within the urban fabric. Such binary thinking tends to overlook the nuanced aspects of the issue. It can lead to the misguided belief that reinstating the past and traditional elements alone can rectify inauthenticity and refill the absent sense of place in our contemporary living environments. This method of landscape healing has been deeply ingrained in prior place-making approaches such as Regionalism and New Urbanism. Nevertheless, continuing past elements cannot fully revitalise the vibrant sense of place nor engender socially vibrant places (Lee 2009, p.27-28).

Critics have frequently questioned the relevance of the placelessness theories, arguing that the traditional division of insiders and outsiders does not align with the complexities of today's culture. In contemporary societies characterised by hybridity and high mobility, the boundaries between insiders and outsiders are blurred, and defining a culturally pure insider becomes difficult. Instead of strictly categorising individuals as insiders or outsiders, a potential approach emerges: modern individuals can be seen as insiders and outsiders. They are insiders by residence in a specific geographic area and participating in shared regional cultural values. Simultaneously, they are outsiders due to their continuous exposure to new landscape experiences and values facilitated by current media (Lee 2009).

Conversations arose that played a role in establishing a contrast between a "parochial, bounded, and reactionary notion of place" versus a "global, unbounded, and relation one." Massey's concept of the "progressive sense of place" offers a fresh perspective on place construction in today's society. Massey challenges the commonly accepted idea of a place rooted in Heidegger's notion of an unchanging and fixed understanding of the place (Massey 1993, Massey, Jess, & Open University 1995, cited in Lee 2009, p.29-30).

According to Massey (1993, cited in Lee 2009, p.29), the previous conceptualisation of place emphasised the quest for and preservation of an essential essence tied to history, culture, and physical forms. However, this introspective and inward-looking approach has been criticised for fostering reactionary nationalism. Massey further challenges the essentialist perspective that treats place as a fixed entity, instead proposing a dynamic understanding of place in constant flux and motion. She asserts that the specificity of a place emerges from a unique configuration of relationships at a particular location. Massey (1991, p.29) argues that while the distinctive character of a place has not changed, it is no longer shaped solely by internalised histories and entrenched cultures but rather by continual dynamics of material and social

interplay with the broader global context (Antonsich 2011, p.331-345). Consequently, the concept of place as an "unbounded, plural, dynamic, and multi-scalar socio-spatial construct" has garnered significant interest (Staeheli 2003; Cresswell 2004, cited in Antonsich 2011, p.331-345).

In exploring the progressive sense of place, the focus shifts to examining the sense of place within a broader cultural framework, adopting an outward-oriented approach that considers individual experiences and relationships in broader social settings. At the core of Massey's theory lies the emphasis on the particularity of place rather than its universality. The particularity is intricately linked to users' encounters and specific individual circumstances. Stakeholders' perspectives are seen as a collage of social connections and interactions with the environment. This perspective places stakeholders at the heart of the discussion, emphasising the importance of comprehending the concept of place based on how stakeholders perceive and experience landscapes within their distinct sociocultural backgrounds. (Massey 1993, cited in Lee 2009, p.29).

Nevertheless, numerous critics contend that the misinterpretation of Relph's concepts, rooted in binary opposition, has resulted from misconceptions (e.g., Seamon et al. 2008, Dovey 2009). Relph (1976) has advocated for a continuum between complete insiders and outsiders. Theoretically, the spectrum also encompasses the possibilities of individuals existing at the far ends.

Furthermore, Relph (2009) puts forth a fresh perspective that encompasses both concepts within an environment in his later arguments in response to the criticisms regarding the dichotomy between place and placelessness. He adheres to certain aspects of his earlier arguments, contending that the complete contrast to place is placelessness, a non-place property evident in inhomogeneity, conformity, and detachment from its surrounding context. If a location represents a specific place, placelessness can be found anywhere. However, he argues against the oversimplified notion of perceiving place and placelessness as opposing landscapes. For example, contrasting the uniqueness of a quaint village on the Costa Brava with the placeless industrial suburb of Toronto and assuming that place is inherently positive while placelessness is lacking. Instead, place and placelessness are intricately intertwined, forming a geographical fusion where nearly all locations exhibit both aspects.

Place manifests specificity and locality, whereas placelessness embodies generality and mass production. Hence, within the context of placelessness, even amidst its standardised uniformity, a distinctive attribute invariably exists, exemplified by factors like the spatial arrangement of buildings. We gain valuable insights by perceiving place and placelessness as



existing on a continuum, coexisting in a delicate balance. At one end of this spectrum, particularity takes precedence, diminishing the influence of uniformity, while at the opposite end, uniformity prevails, suppressing individuality. Between these extremes, an abundance of potential configurations emerges. In principle, they are regarded as equivalent at the midpoint, but identifying such equilibrium proves challenging in the complexity of real landscapes.

## Global and local

How are global and local working together to interpret place in globalisation? Various theoretic approaches emerged to argue for the relation between global and local in place in globalisation. The emphasis on openness, connectivity and network characterises another primary interpretation of place in the age of globalisation. Massey, Castells and Sack are the three primary authors of this trend.

Castells' trilogy (1997; 1998; 2000, cited in Antonsich 2011, p. 5-6), which explores the ascent of post-industrial society, stands as a significant body of work in this trajectory. Castells delves into the concept of a dual spatial framework – "space of flows" and "space of places" – as characteristics of such a society. The distinction between these two frameworks lies in the existence or absence of physical connectedness.

The predominant spatial framework of the global economy, referred to as the "space of flows," is distinguished by international circuits of digital transactions, networks, hubs, and nodes. Conversely, the "space of places" embodies a contrasting logic that remains highly prevalent even in societies at the forefront of technological advancement concerning how individuals lead their lives. People still reside in spaces perceived as distinct places, where their form, purpose, and significance are contained within physical proximity (Castells, 2000, p. 441-42, 453, cited in Antonsich, 2011, p. 5-6). Even in the contemporary information age, the emergence of the new "space of flows" does not supplant the traditional "space of places"; rather, these two spatial dimensions coexist and interact.

The issue at hand pertains to comprehending the concurrent operation and interrelation of these two spatial frameworks. The prevailing interpretation among geographers (Thrift 1996; Swyngedouw 1997; Brenner 1999; Jessop 2000; Dematteis 2001) is the acknowledgement of the influence of local places on shaping and being influenced by processes of globalisation. However, Castells appears to struggle to settle these two aspects. He identifies a state of "structural schizophrenia" characterised by the divergence between the timeless, horizontally oriented "space of flows" and the profound vertical connections individuals establish with their respective places (Castells 2000, p. 459). Castells propagates globalisation as being



orchestrated by a select group of experts, financial leaders, and managers who hold influential positions. These individuals appear to be disengaged from the concerns, requirements, and livelihoods of people and the places they inhabit (Castells 2000, p. 446). His perspective stems from Marxist ideology, highlighting the inherent conflict between capital and society. This, in turn, secondarily fosters the notion of place as a focal point for resistance (Routledge 1996; Cox 1997; Pile and Keith 1997, cited in Antonsich 2011, p. 5-6).

Sack's exploration also significantly contributes to this particular line of thinking. Sack distinguishes between "thick places" and "thin places." The prevalent socio-spatial structure emerging in simple or traditional contexts includes thick places. The concept of thin places captures the "spatial segmentation" in response to the impact of modernity on the organisation of life. Thick places exhibit a dense amalgamation of human activities within time and space. They are living, reserved, holistic environments where nature, meanings, and social connections are intricately entwined. "They are 'thick' with meaning" (Sack 1997, p. 8, cited in Antonsich 2011, p. 6). In contrast, thin places represent the segmented yet interconnected locales that shape the fabric of modern life, such as residences, educational institutions, workplaces, and more. Individuals frequently choose these functional spaces, yet their meanings gradually diminish and "thin out."

Sack does not find either thick or thin places to be desirable environments. Thick places may be linked to exclusionary practices and narratives targeting others, while thin places contribute to cultural homogenisation, erasing local distinctions and promoting uniformity. For Sack, the optimal location is moderately thick, featuring flexible boundaries that facilitate the exchange of differences rather than merely preserving them (Sack 1997, p. 8, cited in Antonsich 2011, p. 6-7).

These three scholars highlight openness, connectivity, mobility, and exchange as the fundamental aspects of place in the era of globalisation. Massey regards these aspects as what defines a "progressive" place. In contrast, Sack contends that they facilitate the liberation and empowerment of individuals, as they can expand their social networks and enhance self-consciousness (Sack 1997, p. 10). The absence of these identical aspects, on the other hand, can contribute to the perception of a place as "thick, regressive, and reactionary" (as described by Massey and Sack), "resisting the 'dis-placing' logic of global mobility, connectivity and flowing" (as discussed by Castells). Harvey (1989) articulated the enduring conflict between these two interpretations of place through a contradictory lens. Compared to the past, the process of globalisation has given rise to a perception of places as less steady and safe, leading individuals to develop stronger attachments to their localities. Expanding on Harvey's

observations, Massey (1993) delved into how individuals become immersed in the dynamic space of flows. Some individuals possess high mobility and can effortlessly transit between different places or identities due to their education or socioeconomic advantages. In contrast, others lack the same social or financial resources to escape their local circumstances or identities. Consequently, they often adopt a defensive and protective stance towards their place of residence (Massey 1995, p. 48-49; Morley 2001, p. 427; Antonsich 2011).

## **Place as a social and cultural construct**

Studies of the 1990s aimed to address the notion of 'placelessness' and the concern for the loss of place. These studies approached place as a dynamic process shaped by spatial and cultural practices, emphasising the active role of individuals in constructing a place. These understandings of place underscored the in-betweenness of places, where the boundaries between space and place (de Certeau 1984; Giddens 1990; Harvey 1990), the interplay of global and local dynamics (Featherstone 1993; Massey 1997), and the interconnection of specific and universal perceptions of place (Entrikin 1990) converge and intertwine. Moreover, research on place advocated for "change and process" concepts, highlighting how place emerges through iterative social practices (Ng 2012, p.108).

Within the framework of place as a social and cultural construct, there is a particular focus on the interplay between space and place. In his work, de Certeau (1984) explores the concept of place as an ongoing process of everyday spatial practices. He highlights the dynamic nature of space and place, emphasising that these concepts interact and intertwine. He proposes that place is a space actively shaped through practice (Certeau 1984, p. 117, cited in Ng 2012, p.108).

Harvey (1989, cited in Ng 2012, p.108) asserts that "place is a social construct". He contends that both space and place hold importance within the framework of capitalism, and competition between different places is an essential aspect of capitalist modes of production. In order to uncover the underlying connections between social and political elements of place, Harvey (1989, cited in Ng 2012, p.108) delves into the examination of the social construction of place. He argues against perceiving "place" as an empty vessel that awaits occupation and proposes Lefebvre's spatial triad as a tool to contemplate constructing and experiencing places as tangible artefacts. This triad also sheds light on how places are represented in discourse and serve as representations of contemporary culture. The triad emphasises that activities' true significance can be fully grasped through everyday social practices. This re-emphasises the role of place in social life (Harvey 1993, p.5, cited in Ng 2012, p.108).

In contrast, challenging the views on insecurity associated with places, Massey (1997, cited in Ng 2012, p.109) opposes the views that a sense of place would become reactionary." Massey (1997) advocates for an "outward-looking," "progressive," and "global sense of place." This understanding of place highlights the ideas of transformation and progression, wherein place is formed through repeated social practice. Massey's (1997) perspective on place underscores the following points: places are not fixed; they are dynamic processes involving social connections and interactions; external factors rather than boundaries define a place; place serves as a space for diverse identities; and the distinctiveness of a place is shaped by its interplay with its surroundings.

In addition to the interplay between space and place, the discussion on place also goes through the complexities of global and local identities, resulting in tension between the two in the construction of place. Giddens (1990, cited in Ng 2012, p.109) establishes a connection between the concept of place and the global forces that shape our daily lives. Giddens explores the essence of home and the impacts of globalisation on our daily lives. According to Giddens (1990, p. 92), the significance of local place relations lies in the imperative of "ontological security". Most individuals possess a deep-seated trust in the uninterrupted perseverance of their selfhood and the steady persistence of the social and material surroundings in which they engage amidst the dynamic interplay of the global and local contexts. The comfort derived from the familiar, crucial for a sense of ontological security, is juxtaposed with the realisation that what is convenient and close is an outcome of remote events and has been inserted into the local environment rather than organically emerging from it. The local shopping mall serves as an environment where a sense of ease and safety is fostered. However, all shoppers there know that most stores are part of chain establishments (Giddens 1990, p. 140-1). This phenomenon relates to the global forces that shape daily life. Consequently, the experience of place becomes growingly imaginary. As a result, social influences originating from distant sources mould localities, resulting in a profound intermingling of the universal and regional, the familiar and the unfamiliar (Giddens 1990, p. 108).

Featherstone (1993, cited in Ng 2012, p.109) underscores a similar tension between the universal and regional, underscoring the interconnectedness of universal and regional cultures. Featherstone (1993, p. 169) asserts that while globalisation unveils the world as a singular entity, one unexpected outcome is not the creation of uniformity but rather the cultivation of heightened diversity and an expanded appreciation for local cultures. Featherstone (1993) posits that the historical fluctuations in the interplay between the universal and the regional

indicate that the postmodern era should be perceived not as a fixed and eternal state but as a dynamic and continuous progression. He proposes that the interplay between localised and globalised economic forces paves the way for fresh opportunities in defining place, highlighting the importance of meticulously examining their day-to-day endeavours and liminal practices. Zukin (1991) terms this state of spatial ambiguity as "liminal spaces," which encompass transitional and ephemeral locations that resist fixed identities, impeding their integration with established places. Zukin (1991) extensively investigates the mingling of urban landscapes with vernacular elements, emphasising the predominant reconstruction of the city as a hub for postmodern consumption—a "dreamscape of visual consumption".

Apart from perceiving place as a social and cultural construct, the understanding of place also encompasses the role of individuals in its construction. Entrikin (1991, cited in Ng 2012, p.109-110) contends that the importance of locality in contemporary existence is linked to the reality that, as participants, we are perpetually positioned within specific spatial and temporal dimensions. The circumstances surrounding our actions shape our sense of self and, consequently, our feeling of "centeredness." According to his argument, the dialogue surrounding places grapples with a conflicting dynamic between the specific and the universal: the subjective and objective perspectives of place, which he terms as "the betweenness of place." The centred perspective, referred to as the former, encompasses our collective inclusion within the place and time, while the decentred viewpoint, denoted as the latter, involves our aspiration to surpass the immediate present and locality. This divergence between decentred universality and centred specificity constitutes an integral aspect of the recognised modernity crisis.

The place is also shaped through recurrent sociocultural processes, as indicated by the engagement of individuals in the construction of space. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) explore revitalised attention towards exploring place and culture, emphasising that the connections between place, individuals, and culture involve dynamic social and historical processes that merit comprehensive examination. The focal point is the examination of the social mechanisms involved in place-making, understood as embodied practices moulding identities. Low (1994) presents a definition of place as a "culturally meaningful space" within the field of anthropology. According to Low (1994), there is a lack of adequate attention given to the symbolic and experiential dimensions within the sufficient scholarly literature addressing the topic of place. To address this gap, Low proposes utilising ethnography as a conceptual framework to explore the concept of place attachment. Ethnography enables us to analyse the

convergence of subjective and objective actualities of place and direct attention to the resulting dynamics.

## **Empirical analysis of place**

The complicated nature of place in the globalism era has led to debates highlighting the need for empirical analysis of the role of place in today's contexts. Relph's (1976) concept of "placelessness" and Augé's notion of non-place address almost identical concerns. Nevertheless, a distinct contrast exists between these two conceptions. Relph's notion of placelessness is founded on the current trends in landscape development and commercial practices in the modern era and their detrimental influence on traditional landscapes and values. However, Augé acknowledges the phenomenon of non-place as an unavoidable result of existence in the modern world. Diverging from Relph's (1976) pessimistic view of the present-day landscape, he adopts a neutral position in appraising contemporary spaces. He acknowledges that the average individual's existence in today's society invariably entails encounters with non-place phenomena. Rather than relying solely on theoretical frameworks, he conducts in-depth observations examining the distinctive attributes of non-place experiences to enhance his understanding of the urban place being constructed within the modern era (Lee 2009, p.27-28).

Lee (2009, p.28-29) contends that these debates have neglected the exploration of the individual human element and their subjectivities concerning the experience of the environment. This is the case of participants' outlook towards the current landscape to investigate how they experienced, used, and perceived it. Regarding the notion of placelessness, participants are merely divided into insiders or outsiders. As for the concept of non-place, users are regarded as passive participants within systems formed through social constructs. The omission of human initiative, personal sociocultural backdrop, and subjectivity is apparent when determining placelessness and non-place in either situation. Attention is absent to the inhabitants and other participants of the landscape. Additionally, exploring the notion of place in the current landscape primarily revolves around tangible environmental circumstances and commonplace landscape experiences.

Within this framework, Antonsich (2011, p.331-345) explores users' contemporary comprehension of place through a qualitative empirical investigation conducted in four distinct European regions. He chooses affluent individuals in political, institutional authority, or social prominence roles within their respective local communities as the sample of his study. He actively explores the binary oppositions of bounded/unbounded, progressive/regressive, and

thick/thin. The qualitative data is examined to delve into the concept of place from the ground in the globalisation era. The findings are structured into two separate divisions, labelled as "thickness" and "thinness", intending to grasp the broader contrast between ideas of sociocultural rootedness and the concept of 'bounded-ness', on the one side, and notions of functionality, connectivity, and mobility conversely. Additionally, he navigates the integration process into the worldwide network (referred to as the space of flows), reinforcing the locality's identity (known as the space of places).

In his research, Shamsuddin (1997) examines the inhabitants' understanding of the attributes that contribute to the identity of a place. Shamsuddin (1997) aims to unveil potential divergences in the perceived factors among distinct sociocultural groups through his research in the heart of Kuantan City, Malaysia. Considering the unique features mentioned, it can be inferred from the residents' accounts that the physical attributes played a pivotal role in shaping their perception. Activities and the meanings and associations contributed to amplifying the recognizability of these physical attributes. This impact was particularly pronounced when the physical characteristics were less prominent—recognising distinct physical attributes exhibited only a marginal difference among the different cultural groups. There was a noticeable variation in perceptions concerning ethnicity, cultural background, and age. Analysis within the different sexes affected the outcome slightly. Notably, the impact of meanings and connections on perception exhibited noteworthy divergence within the three sociocultural categories, with the age group standing out. Specifically, it was evident that the older inhabitants of the aged town centre attributed meanings and associations to the physical elements, underscoring their unique viewpoint.

In contrast to their older counterparts, the younger residents held divergent views. Their understanding of the physical attributes was confined to their tangible characteristics and associated activities. The results indicate the distinct meanings and associations that diverse sociocultural groups ascribe to the features in the urban centre. Furthermore, it can be deduced that the duration of residency in the urban centre impacted the inhabitants' understanding of these distinct features. Hence, it is essential to consider the varied interpretations that different groups attribute to the environment's elements to foster a more inclusive and vibrant environment for all cohorts.

May's (1996) research also reveals contrasting perceptions concerning Stoke Newington, an urban locality in London, among different factions of new and established inhabitants. Advocating for favourable or unfavourable changes, they engage in a discourse where the researcher examines the reasons behind the preference/dislike of these argued modifications,



considering them as the contextual backdrop for such imagery. The author illustrates how a bounded understanding of place can align with a global sense of place. The results indicate that stakeholders may not conform to Harvey's (1989) concept of an exclusively bounded sense of place or Massey's (1991a and b, 1992) more progressive interpretation. Instead, it appears feasible to construct a distinctly bounded and, consequently, reactionary perception of place by adopting a specific perspective on those global interconnections.

Sharing nostalgic images and offering narratives of loss, the elderly inhabitants rely on their comprehension of the area grounded in the interwoven fabric of local community networks. They compare the current state of the neighbourhood to the past, using images that depict its deterioration, undermining the cherished fabric of neighbourly customs and eroding the essential local institutions like the corner shop that fostered community cohesion; the transformation of the area disrupts the traditions of togetherness. Expressing deep sentiments of deprivation, the elderly inhabitants witnessed the complete transformation of the area, where they spent their formative years, beyond recognition, leading to a deep sense of loss. Through their narratives, they described how the familiar landmarks, which had shaped their sense of place, are now being claimed by others. In moments when they feel devoid of a place to attend, it becomes apparent that others effortlessly acquire a readily-made sense of place.

The perception of place identity varies between long-time and recent inhabitants. The long-term inhabitants perceive the neighbourhood's sense of place as deeply rooted in a vanishing Englishness. On the other hand, many newer middle-class inhabitants are drawn to the area precisely because it evokes imagery of a lost England—an idyllic and tranquil England characterised by historic chapels and pastoral landscapes. They find the area a sanctuary away from the urban chaos and skyrocketing housing prices prevalent in alternative revitalised districts. The charmingly rustic atmosphere generated by such seclusion expands beyond the public imagery of Church Street, adorned with its chapels, park, and medieval burial ground. It permeates into the intimate interiors of these newly settled residents' dwellings.

According to May's argument, various resident groups struggle to shape the perception of the place concerning a specific historical narrative. The portrayal of the historical background of the district, particularly its literary affiliations, appeals to a new social class that prides itself on its progressive values. Consequently, city councils and commercial enterprises leverage these associations to attract investment into the area. They accomplish this by renovating storefronts and rebranding pubs to harmonise with the literary ambitions of the locality. Additionally, the municipal authority installs a series of classic British gas lanterns along the



entire stretch of the street. The adjoining streets were also bestowed with the status of conservation due to the insistence of the new inhabitants, who aspire to broaden the geographical expanse of its historical heritage.

Certain newly arrived inhabitants shared their narratives regarding the factors that drew them to the locality. They claimed the area had visible remnants of its past, and the houses had unique features and proportions that gave them a special charm. They perceived the area as a representation of history and a means to purchase and experience the old time. Instead of focusing on its current state, a particular portrayal of the area's old era defines its essence. Conversely, some additional recent inhabitants advocated for an alternative image of the area as an archetypal English village. They expressed their affinity for English culture and the distinct qualities it embodies. While they acknowledged and accepted the presence of a multicultural society, they admitted that they might feel uneasy living in Stoke Newington if it were to undergo a significant shift towards a predominantly Muslim atmosphere. This perception, along with negative portrayals of new foreigners from older inhabitants, explicitly targeting individuals of Kurdish and Indian descent, restricts the space for embracing cultural diversity in the community.

May's research implies that examining the link between this imagery and a specific interpretation of the locality's history and the political implications associated with this reading is crucial. Disputes concerning an area's past play a pivotal role in shaping the local politics of place (Massey 1991b, as cited in May 1996). The images of place held by different users are mapped onto the local map of the neighbourhood to resemble their present place identity (May 1996, p. 197).

In exploring Busan's commercial districts in South Korea, Lee (2009) undertakes an empirical analysis that uncovers distinctive meanings associated with the place, countering the perception of placelessness. According to Lee's argument in 2009 (p. ii), while the current urban landscape characterised by commercial activities is commonly perceived as lacking a sense of place, this study suggests that even these seemingly unremarkable locations serve as reservoirs for vibrant community values and significances. In pursuit of a deeper understanding, this study expands the analytical framework beyond the physical space. It delves into the stakeholder's use, unravelling a vibrant living environment's long-term, affective, and experiential dimensions. Notably, the examined commercial area holds importance as it is presently marked by prevailing impersonal commercialisation. However, it possesses a rich social history minimally

evident in the existing physical environment. Through interviews with elderly inhabitants, memories of the district's anonymous urban development resurface. At the same time, careful observations highlight the ongoing resistance within the area as individuals strive to reclaim public space, contend with high-end branded establishments, search for other avenues for socialising and relaxation, and navigate the delicate balance between tradition and modernisation.

Applying Lefebvre's theory of spatial triad, Bertuzzo (2009) has investigated the urban landscape of Dhaka. Bertuzzo proposes several hypotheses within this analysis: innovative strategies and adaptive survival mechanisms are emerging in response to the demanding urban landscape. Inhabitants come together in specific spaces by embracing or being embraced by subcultures characterised by shared values within segregated communities. These spaces undergo a notable transformation, evolving from utilitarian spaces to ones imbued with distinctive identities. Through intentional uses, religious and symbolic transformations, and the amalgamation of constructive activities by the residents, space in Dhaka assumes an inherent agency and influence. By offering empirical illustrations, Bertuzzo (2009) demonstrates how globalisation introduces novel values that resonate with the younger generation while concurrently prompting a revision of traditional customs and cultural characteristics. For instance, the Bengali identity, regarded as the rightful inheritance of independent Bangladeshis, is being reassessed, while the historical influences of Hindu and British cultures are being disregarded. Additionally, the Muslim identity is reclaimed after encountering challenges amidst ongoing modernisation within the social and political realm.

## Measuring the identity of place

Based on our previous arguments regarding the debate on place, there has been an ongoing discussion that place has been in a state of crisis from the 1970s onwards. Different scholars describe placelessness differently (e.g. consumption, hyper-production, homogenized urban landscapes, urban landscapes not responding to users' values, urban landscape detached from the history and geography of users, and urban landscape not obtaining particularity). This is followed by complex theoretical discussions on place and globalisation (such as the relation between local and global, the hybrid forms formed through a mixture of global and local, and the thinning out of thick places previously filled with values).

Lee (2009) argues that despite this approach's practicality, much of the literature on place goes through theoretical approaches rather than subjective experiences of place. Besides, May (1996) urges us to study place from empirical viewpoints. Thus, my dissertation will focus on

empirical analysis to evaluate the identity of place by users rather than focusing on more theoretic assumptions. In his argument, Relph (1976) posits that the identity of a place is a product of the experiences of its participants. Place identity encompasses the qualities that render an environment unique to its users, comprising specific elements and components. Rather than categorizing these components based on preconceived theories, Relph emphasizes the need for clarification, which can be achieved by actively seeking users' perspectives and encouraging them to share their experiences.

## **The shift of paradigms in the postmodern era**

According to Relph (2009), the postmodern time has witnessed a transformative paradigm change when contrasted with the preceding modern time. The transition becomes apparent through the rising governmental and lawful opposition to established practices, the heightened importance placed on safeguarding cultural heritage (where modernism disregarded the past), the recognition of the inherent worthiness of a wide range of differences (as opposed to modernism's emphasis on similarity) and promoting women, aboriginals, and underrepresented communities (countering the gender-biased and imperialistic traits of modernism). In postmodernity, various perspectives and viewpoints are valued and considered. Instead of privileging a single discourse, diverse voices and perspectives are recognised. No singular method, including the impartiality of scientific inquiry, is deemed superior. The postmodern viewpoint claims a contextualised understanding of each situation in its unique terms. In juxtaposition to the comprehensive problem-solving approach of modernist planning, postmodernity demands strategies that work out to accommodate the unique needs of individuals, groups, and situations. In principle and application, the postmodern approach prioritises inclusivity and acknowledges the importance of place.

## **A practical sense of place**

How should we approach place in the transformation of globalisation from the ground? Relph (2009) contends that despite the complex and far-reaching issues of the 21st century, their effects will manifest in diverse ways at the local level. Relph advocates for a pragmatic sense of place to tackle these worldwide complexities effectively.

Relph (2009) posits that adopting a pragmatic mindset involves recognizing the inevitability of change and embracing diversity. He illustrates this by highlighting the collaborative nature of current scientific research, supported by both organisations and the state, with the expectation of producing practical outcomes. Taking a pragmatic stance entails actively involving individuals in meaningful conversations about place and striving to achieve practical

and adaptable understandings regarding the most appropriate approaches to tackle the challenges as they influence distinct localities.

The pragmatic sense of place encompasses an admiration for the distinctiveness of a locality while also recognizing its interconnectedness within local and global frameworks. It embodies a dual perspective that emphasizes the significance of place while considering its broader geographic implications. This practical perspective acknowledges the “extensibility of postmodern life” and recognizes the global dimensions of its issues. Its goal is to identify suitable local strategies to address emerging far-reaching issues. While not a novel paradigm, some aspects of this approach have permanently been embedded in the fabric of place experience but are now more widely recognized. This can be observed in contradictory scenarios, ranging from the designation and conservation of World Heritage sites to artistic creations and cultural events rooted in the local community that evoke a sense of place, to the promotion of retailers that offer locally sourced groceries, and supporters of the sustainable food movement and local cuisine. The foundation for understanding this place lies in the lived experience of individuals and the contextual backdrop of today’s daily life.

To effectively implement this strategy, it is crucial to adapt and tailor approaches to each specific area, setting, and social group. A pragmatic understanding of place can facilitate these adjustments, fostering a broader awakening of place consciousness and reinforcing the essence of a place in its diverse expressions. This approach allows diverse groups to manifest their identities. It is important to note that a universal theory is inadequate for this purpose. Instead, an ongoing process of place-making is essential, driven by a curiosity for the unique spirit of each place, a willingness to draw insights from regional understanding and a genuine appreciation for diverseness (Relph 2009).

## **Place, change and time**

Places undergo a cycle of growth, vitality, and decline as their significance evolves or declines through activities, structures, and contextual relevance. Significances of place can be constant during the periods, and the emergence of present-day places often supplants earlier ones, akin to landscapes rebuilt upon the remnants of past environments. Consequently, each new city represents the continuity and novelty of the place compared to its predecessors. Some places may cease to thrive altogether (Relph 1976, p.32). The meanings attributed to places are continuously assessed and redefined, influenced by evolving social and physical relationships with place and between people (Chow & Healey 2008).

Consequently, the role of place in shaping identity is ever-changing, ensuring its impact is

never static (Twigger-Ross et al., 2003; Hauge 2009, p. 36).

Additionally, Relph (2009) emphasizes the transformative nature of the sense of place throughout history. Prior to 1800, the majority of individuals resided in rural regions, and their social circles were limited to a few hundred acquaintances. Communication relied on spoken language, and travel was infrequent, with individuals seldom venturing far from their place of birth. This geographically-centred existence fostered deep connections to specific places, where each person, dwelling, field, road, and tradition held familiarity and was named accordingly. While traces of this profound familiarity persist in select remote regions and nostalgic convictions, it predominantly represents a pre-modern encounter. In stark contrast, our contemporary sense of place sprawls across the globe. The modern era has witnessed a remarkable increase in people's willingness to travel long distances for work, surpassing the cumulative journeys of individuals in pre-modern societies. Attending conferences on distant continents, indulging in vacations in far destinations, and engaging in digital exchanges with colleagues across the globe have become routine occurrences. In less than a century, firsthand and vicarious encounters with different places have profoundly expanded. It is now commonplace for a significant portion of the population to explore hundreds of locations and interact with thousands of individuals throughout their lives. In the depiction of Paul Adams, the term 'extensibility' captures the contemporary reality of lives effortlessly expanding across multiple locations at various scales, ranging from regions throughout the world. With the aid of current communication networks, individuals are constantly situated in broader contexts and encouraged to compare their places with far places they may have personally experienced or encountered through media channels.

Consequently, the perception of place today is widely dispersed and diffused, contrasting with the deeper associations that were once taken for granted by previous generations. In some ways, the present-day sense of place appears more simplistic, as individuals have not had sufficient time to develop the profound connections inherent in the experiences of earlier times. Therefore, the contemporary understanding of place diverges from the rooted experiences of the pre-modern era.

## **Binary opposition**

Relph (2009) argues, "If a place is somewhere, placelessness can be anywhere". Nevertheless, there is a temptation to view place and placelessness as contrasting types of landscapes, assuming that place is desirable and placelessness is inherently lacking. However, this simplistic way of thinking oversimplifies the matter. Instead, place and placelessness are

intricately intertwined, forming a geographic entwining wherein nearly every location encompasses elements of both.

## **Related concepts to the identity of place**

Relph's research confronts the prevailing emphasis in planning on methodical and objective portrayals of places. According to his argument, such viewpoints fail to provide a comprehensive understanding. Categorizing places into predefined classifications and hierarchies imposes fabricated constraints, disregarding the interplay and intertwining of place experiences with other places and experiences (Relph 1976). As a result, places become receptive to many simultaneous evaluations based on individual experiences. He suggests that instead of categorizing places, clarifying them through the lens of place experience is credible, thereby unveiling the underlying significance or intrinsic essence connected to specific places. Relph (1976, p.7) looks at the place without preconceived ideas about its characteristics or structure. He understands that a place can have many meanings and identities, just like how people perceive and understand it. Within the scope of my dissertation, I endeavour to investigate the identity of different groups of users of Darband with it. The primary objective is to establish the 'common ground of agreement about the identity of that place' (Relph, 1976). This study is based on the premise that the diverse interpretations associated with a particular landscape concept stem from various individuals observing it. Consequently, each perceived landscape is a product of an individual's subjective experience, incorporating intangible aspects that reflect the meaning and value attributed by him/or her (Mattiucci 2010, p.16).

This part provides a theoretical background on the identity of place, how it can be recognized and what its elements are. This will lead to the thesis's research framework, which will be further examined in the fieldwork on Darband.

Relph (1976, p.42) describes a place "as the centre of special significance." When engaging with a space, people shape their perception of the world as a domain to be influenced, selectively focusing on specific elements. Our everyday reality exists within an interpersonal realm. This commonplace world encompasses a multitude of meanings and forms a framework of significance for us. It arises from the interplay of meaning that we establish through our activities in the daily sphere.

Additionally, people partake in a collective sense of place alongside their social or cultural groups. According to Relph (1976), the differentiation between place and space occurs through unique interactions and personal encounters, forming noteworthy and meaningful connections based on concentrated meanings. Similarly, the place is characterized by Low and Altman



(1992, cited in Green 2010, p. 13) "as space given meaning through personal, group or cultural processes." Low (1994) further defines place as "culturally meaningful space." Lozano (1974, cited in Shamsuddin 1997) additionally points out that the understanding of the environment involves a socio-cultural aspect, resulting in such understanding being subjectively influenced and intricately tied to specific cultural contexts. Duncan (2000, cited in Antonsich 2011, p.331-345) also describes the place as "a portion of geographic space filled with social relations, meanings and identities." Low (1994) contends that while ample literature exists on the subject of place, the experiential aspects have not been adequately emphasized.

Relph (1976, p.12) presents the concept of "lived space" as the internal configuration of space as it reveals itself through our experiences as members of a cultural collective. As an intersubjective phenomenon, lived space can be embraced by all individuals within the group, as they have all undergone socialization influenced by a shared range of experiences, signs, and symbols. This space undergoes constant creation and reconstruction through individual encounters. It encompasses meaningful arrangements and constructions resulting from the development of urban centres, rural settlements, dwellings, and the moulding of landscapes. The spatial organisation of a landscape of a cultural group is intuitively crafted to align with a diverse array of social convictions and practices. Each individual of the cultural group possesses a conscious understanding of the significance attributed to different elements within the landscape and interacts with them respectively. Through my fieldwork in Darband, I examine whether the concept of lived space also applies to a contemporary context.

What is the essence of place? A place represents a focal point where we engage with the significant occurrences of our being. The distinction of events and actions is inherently tied to specific locations, and they are imbued and impacted by the character of those places as they actively participate in shaping them (Relph 1976, p.29). As the deep cores of human beings, places derive their fundamental meaning and essence from the innate and subconscious intentionality that clarifies them. Practically, every person has a profound affiliation and conscious recognition of the places associated with their birth and upbringing, their current residence, or significant transformative moments. This bond represents a crucial foundation for individual and cultural identity, imparting a sense of security (Relph 1976, p.43). From the viewpoint of Manzo (2005), crucial are the places wherein events unfold, leaving a lasting impact and marking people's unique experiences in new and exceptional ways. These experiences, whether positive or negative, are considered growth experiences as catalysts for personal growth, propelling individuals forward in their life's journey. As concluded by Manzo (2005), subjective encounters within specific places shape individuals and are also shaped by



their relationships with others, society, and the specific settings they inhabit. Furthermore, these subjective experiences with places also contribute to and are influenced by the development of place bonding, as observed by Vorkinn and Riese (2001).

What is the identity of place? According to Relph (1976, p.45), identity is characterized as the quality of being similar and unified, enabling differentiation from others. Just as individuals possess unique personalities, all places have distinct character, manifested through the diverse socio-physical attributes that distinguish them from one another (Tuan 1974, cited in Green 2010, p.13). While each person may allocate identities to specific places, these identities converge collectively to form a shared sense of identity. This collective formation occurs due to shared experiences with objects and activities, as well as cultural influences that emphasize specific qualities of a place. Through our subjective experiences of these qualities and objects in a place, we shape our perceptions of its uniqueness, strength, and genuineness of the identity of those places. Identity is a fundamental aspect of our engagement with places, simultaneously shaping and being shaped by our experiences. Therefore, the significance lies not only in the identity of a place but also in the identity that individuals or groups establish with that particular place (Relph 1976, p.45).

The components of the identity of place, as identified by Relph (1976), are the constitutive elements that shape the identity of a place and organise our experiences with it. As per Shamsuddin (1997, p.41-42), there is a general agreement among various scholars regarding the three fundamental components of identity. These constituents encompass the static physical setting, activities, and meanings (Relph 1976; Garnham 1985; Schulz 1980; Rapoport 1990; Banz 1970; Teo et al. 1996; Teo 1996 cited in Shamsuddin 1997, p.41-42). Among them, the component of significance and meaning presents the most significant complexity. Although the meanings attached to places may find their roots in the physical environment, objects, and activities, they are not inherent properties of these elements; instead, they emerge from the intentions and experiences of subjects. The intentions of participants determine the meaning attributed to a place. While each component is distinct in its own right, they synergistically influence the identity of a place, necessitating a comprehensive consideration of their interconnectedness. A place description can reveal these components (Relph 1976, p.47).

In Relph's view (1976, p. 48), the interplay of physical setting, activities, and meanings is essential and interconnected. A cohesive structure is formed when these components engage in a series of dialectics. If physical context and activities blend, they resemble the functional circles observed in the animal kingdom. Likewise, combining physical settings and meanings contributes to landscapes or urban environments' direct and passionate experiences.

Furthermore, activities and meaning converge to shape social activism and collective histories that may transcend the physical setting. Within a place, these dialectics interact, merging to establish its distinctive identity. The physical appearance, activities, and meanings serve as the foundational elements for a place's identity, and the dialectical links between them constitute the fundamental structural relationships of that identity.

An additional, crucial aspect of identity that connects and encompasses other aspects emerges. Named as either the "spirit of place" or "genius of place" (*genius loci*), this concept indicates the character or personality (Relph 1976, p.48). Today, the spirit of place generally pertains to a secular quality, natural or constructed, that bestows a particular identity upon a particular setting. This refers to a landscape or location's distinct atmosphere and character, constituting an intrinsic quality subject to change. As a landscape becomes deserted, structures crumble, and the spirit of place diminishes.

Conversely, as an area is developed and inhabited, the spirit of place expands. Thus, even a seemingly nondescript suburban area slowly forges its unique identity over time, resonating with many inhabitants (Relph 2009). Remarkably, the spirit of the place can endure despite extreme shifts in the fundamental components of identity. Despite numerous socio-cultural and industrial upheavals, Italy, Switzerland, Paris, and London have managed to preserve their identities. The intangible and delicate nature of the spirit of a place persists through transformations, defying formal analysis and conceptual definition. However, its undeniable presence becomes evident in our experiential connection to these places, embodying their individuality and unparalleled uniqueness (Relph 1976, p.48).

The faculty of seizing the spirit of place is embodied in the "sense of place", enabling us to recognize and value the likeness and variance among various environments. It encompasses solitary and collective properties, intimately intertwined with community and individual memories and self. Notably, this attribute exhibits variability, as Relph's 2009 research exemplified.

There are differences between the individual images of the place and group or community images of the place. The dynamic interplay of experience, emotion, memory, imagination, current context, and intention within an individual gives rise to diverse interpretations of a specific place, leading to its perception in many different ways. A place has the potential to possess numerous identities for a single individual. It is plausible to consider that a place's relatively persistent and socially embraced attributes serve as anchor points for perception. Moreover, more significant disparities in perspectives towards a place arise among personal viewpoints. The exact location can elicit different perceptions from different people, and each

individual possesses a unique image of a specific place. This diversity arises from each person's encounters with a place in unique moments of space and time and from their fusion of character, recollections, emotions, and intentions. These elements converge to infuse their perception of a place with a distinctive identity (Relph 1976, p. 56-57).

Individual images undergo continuous acculturation by employing common languages, symbols, and shared experiences. The collectively accepted characteristics of a location are employed as a frame of reference. The shared groundwork of this alliance differs in terms of its strength and profundity. The highest level of unity is achieved when images are profoundly intertwined through an intersubjective connection, resulting in sociality in communion. It confers upon places an identity akin to the profound yet shared experience encountered in sacred and holy sites (Relph 1976, p.57).

The degree of community exists on a spectrum between individuality and mass involvement, particularly during the phase of "secondary socialization." This phase revolves around attitudes, interests, and experiences within a group. It is essential to distinguish between communities and groups. Communities arise spontaneously, embodying fluid and ever-changing social forms of knowledge, while groups are structured and formally organised. However, groups' structure can be embraced by communities.

Nevertheless, by employing interest groups, such communities have the potential to grow and present an image wherein the identities of crucial locations tied to that group mirror the group's interests and prejudices. Hence, the identity of a city experiences considerable diversity based on whether one dwells within its impoverished areas, marginalized neighbourhoods, or residential outskirts or aligns oneself with groups such as developers, urban planners, or grassroots citizen organisations. These identity distinctions become especially pronounced in conflicts between various groups. Places assume different identities for various groups and communities with distinct interests. The dominant image projected by groups can often override individuals' attitudes, potentially in pursuit of gaining practical and political advantages or the sense of personal reassurance that comes with being a group member (Relph 1976, p.57-58).

Despite different groups attributing distinct identities to a specific place, a consensus identity that encompasses communal and collective aspects emerges. Two distinct manifestations exist to this common ground of agreement: the public and mass identities. The public identity encompasses the recognized physical characteristics and other demonstrable components of places within a society, which are commonly agreed upon by diverse interest communities. This consensus identity evolves through the amalgamation of group opinions and individual

experiences at liberty, with descriptive regional geography supplying a factual foundation for this shared understanding. However, the public identity of a place primarily serves as a prevailing form of social cohesion within a community, operating at an apparent level of interest integration and connecting the group perceptions of places (Relph 1976, p. 58).

Social and cultural background can influence the perception of a place's image and identity. Different sub-groups can shape diverse images, and to fully comprehend these perceptions, it is imperative to acknowledge the presence of distinct sub-groups. In order to identify the most prominent identity features, it is crucial to uncover the similarities and disparities in perception among these varied groups. This variation must be ascertained to justify developing a collective place image (Shamsuddin 1997, p.70-71). The literature review encompassing these aspects has been considered when designing the interview structure and selecting respondents. Within cultural background, this research classifies respondents based on the following criteria: life cycle, socioeconomic status, gender difference, length of residence and degree of experience.

- Drawing from previous research, it is widely acknowledged that the perception of place is influenced by the life cycle, with distinct sub-groups at different stages exhibiting unique engagements with the environment and placing emphasis on diverse elements (Downs et al. 1973; Moore 1976; Shamsuddin 1997, p.66-67).

- Further investigation is warranted to explore the influential role of socioeconomic status in shaping perceptions of identity. Studies conducted in America and the United Kingdom indicate that individuals from higher social status tend to incorporate a more significant number of city areas into their mental maps and display higher accuracy in describing objective features. However, Appleyard's research in Guyana (1969) discovered that lower socioeconomic groups depicted maps with greater detail and complexity. This can be attributed to the necessity for the less affluent to commute longer distances to their workplaces or stores, in contrast to the wealthy, who often have their essential needs conveniently located nearby. Thus, the extent of interaction and familiarity with the environment impacts the formation of the image rather than merely the social class itself (Shamsuddin 1997, p.66-67).

- Gender difference is also among the influential factors that must be analyzed further. For instance, some studies suggest that different genders provide different levels of detail while arguing for the image of place (Krupat 1985, cited in Shamsuddin 1997, p.66-67).

- Further examination is required to investigate the fundamental impact of length of residence and experience level as factors that shape perception. Krupat's 1985 research illustrates examples that underscore a noticeable likeness between maps sketched by new inhabitants and those generated by youthful inhabitants. Lynch's 1960 study uncovers that individuals with

limited familiarity with the city primarily utilize its topography, major neighbourhood areas, established features, generalized characteristics and broadly defined directional relationships. In contrast, those who possess a more profound knowledge of the city rely on specific pathways and place greater emphasis on more minor landmarks rather than more generalized areas or routes. Devlin's study conducted in 1976 illustrates that as individuals live in a specific place, their mental maps encompass a higher level of detail, and the significance of their home territory becomes less pronounced than their previous maps. As argued previously, the study conducted by May in 1996 presents divergent findings concerning the contrasting perspectives of different cohorts of new and established residents. Hence, it is of utmost significance to inspect the disparities in perception among residents with varying residence lengths, as Shamsuddin underscored in 1997 (p.66-67).

- The extent of an individual's involvement in different city areas, driven by their social roles, can significantly influence their image of place. As Webber (1964, cited in Shamsuddin 1997, p.70) described, those labelled "localities" concentrate their social interactions within a bounded neighbourhood surrounding their dwelling location. Consequently, their perception is constrained compared to "cosmopolites" whose life experiences are extended across various districts beyond their immediate neighbourhood.

## Research design and methodology

This chapter explains the research methodology employed in this research. It discusses the research frameworks of the dissertation and their application. The choice of methodology is based on a review of previous methodologies applied in similar studies and the nature of the research. The research procedure follows this in the process of data collection and data analysis. My research aims for a brief analysis based on fundamental cultural factors and their possible interconnection with the built environment. It consists of two chosen approaches to understanding the values of the cultural landscape in this dissertation, including cultural analysis (i.e. Rieger-Jandl 2006, Rapoport 1969; 2008) and place in globalisation (i.e. Relph 1976; 2009). This provides two research frameworks to understand the cultural/place values and how they are affected by transformations of cultural globalisation.

These frameworks are applied in Part II as the empirical part of the case study analysis. The reason is to propose future planning guidelines based on people's expectations of their environment rather than deploying a top-down approach. My thesis uses a participatory method via interviewing residents and documenting houses to determine critical factors that define the unique character, culture and significance of the cultural landscape.

My data collection process involved the following:

- a) Collected statistical data from participants,
- b) Gained insights towards the current state of Darband's built environment and compared it to its past, focusing on the cultural values and place significance to participants,
- c) Gained insights into what residents expect and desire for the future.

## Research frameworks

The research framework of cultural analysis is designed based on the previous discussion on culture (See 'Culture and built-environment' on p. 8) and consists of the relevant factors examined in the dissertation fieldwork (Figure 9).

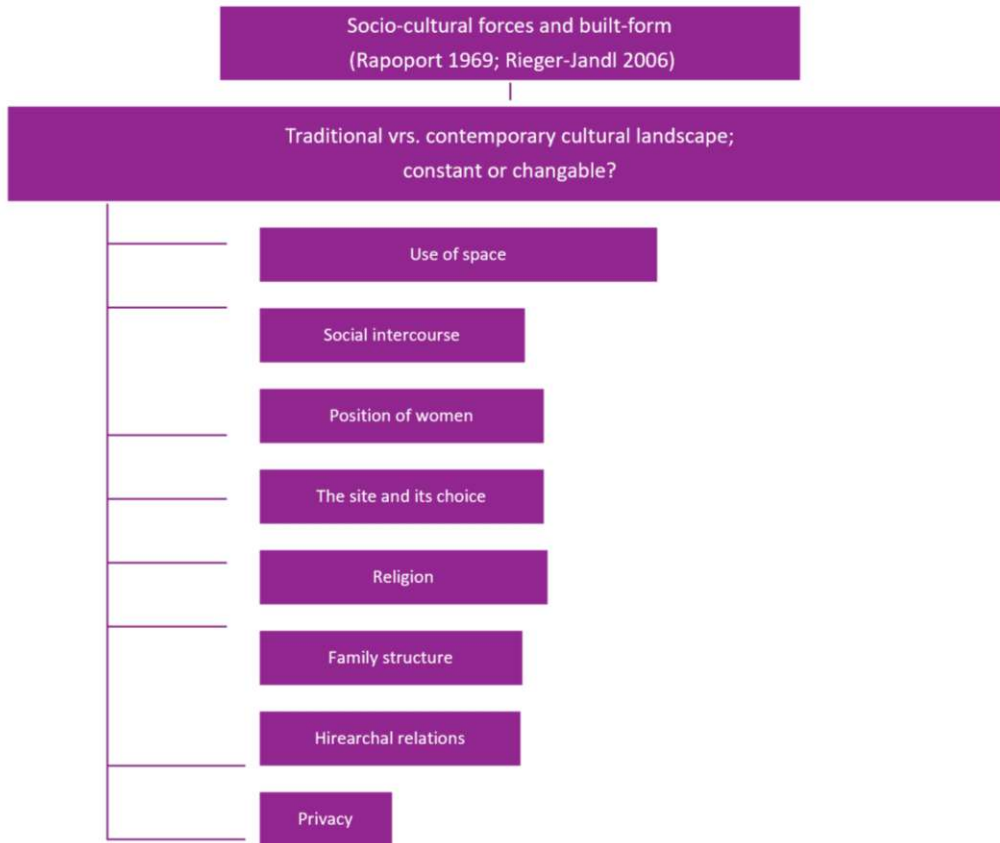


Figure 9. The research framework of the dissertation in cultural approach

Besides, in the analysis of place, a research framework is developed based on the concepts related to the identity of place defined in theoretical discussion on place (See 'Related concepts to the identity of place' on p. 57) (Figure 10). These are the factors that are examined in the fieldwork.

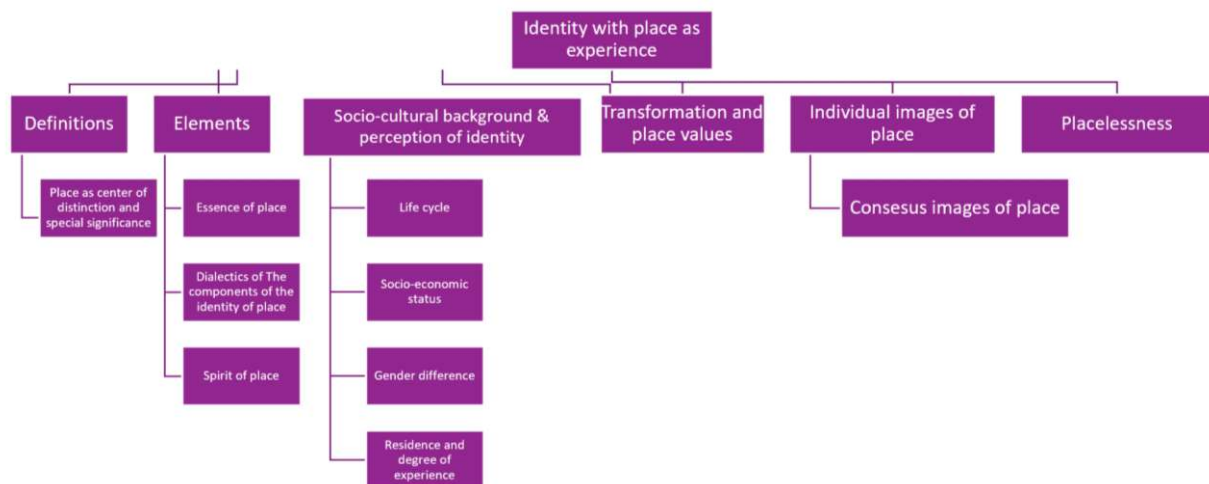


Figure 10. The research framework of the dissertation in place approach

## Data collection procedure



## Data collection in cultural analysis

### Review of the previous methodology

Many studies have been conducted in the field of culture and built environment. Among them, the following studies helped me choose the methodology of my study. Although the scope of their research was different from mine, they were insightful since they were similar to my research;

- Rieger-Jandl's (2006) study is insightful in researching cultural aspects and built-form in a transforming context. She conducted semi-formal interviews openly and narratively. She also conducted participant observation and house surveys. Since cultural data is not distinct from economic or sociological data, the empirical material was enhanced by secondary data from publications and reports. Villages and rural situations were compared to the urban ones. Through a comparative analysis, she approached the transformation of the users' values by comparing their answers regarding both traditional and contemporary built-form through interviews. The results of the interviews were presented in diagrams/charts that resembled how data regarding the current/former situation of the respondents and data regarding different groups of interviewees were different.
- Saleh Al Mohannadi (et al.2019) study also examines the socio-cultural aspects embedded in the built form. A comparative analysis gained valuable insights into the transformation of cultural factors influencing housing development in Qatar in the preceding few decades. This investigation focused on chosen socio-cultural aspects and spatial arrangements in a small sample of both pre-modern and current Qatari houses.
- Eigner (2014, p.6-7) also provides a good example. She gathered data for her study by employing qualitative research methods of fieldwork such as participant observation and structured interviews. Additionally, she sketched the houses and compounds, utilizing laser measurements to estimate their approximate dimensions. This research proved invaluable as it provided a framework for sampling, with a specific focus on a section of the city chosen to represent the typical layout. This particular section encompassed the historic area of the city, as well as the bustling main road with its array of shops, a bustling market street, and various residential properties. Moving from one house to another, she conducted concise interviews. Furthermore, she ventured to a neighbouring newly developed town to compare the organically evolved settlement and the recently established one.

## **The methodology adopted in this research**

Regarding data collection in the cultural analysis in my study, based on Rieger-Jandl (2006), since cultural data is not distinct from economic or sociological data, secondary data from publications, reports, news media and primary data from a total of 56 interviews were gathered regarding the cultural data of the traditional/contemporary context of Iran, Tehran, Shemiran or Darband and detailed information about family structures, way of life, and religion. Based on Eigner (2014, p.6-7) and Rieger-Jandl (2006), my study applied qualitative methods and fieldwork techniques to collect data. My research compared long-term residents' values in the traditional and contemporary cultural landscape of Darband through 47 semi-structured interviews to evaluate the users' values of Darband through transformation (Rieger-Jandl 2006). . Besides, a literature review on traditional/contemporary contexts- in Iran, Tehran, Shemiran or Darband-, a participant observation, a survey of houses, taking pics and comparison of maps and pics of traditional/current Darband and discussions with experts also were used to compare the cultural factors or to confirm the responses by the participants.

I went through different settlements in and around Darband (Mir-Mahalleh, Kenar-Mahalleh, Bagh-Shater, Sarband, Pasghale, and Tajrish) to sense the settlement and housing pattern. In addition, I researched publications in the Tehran University database about Qajar period structures, sources from the Cultural Heritage Office, and publications on the architecture of the Pahlavi era.

I interviewed experts to analyse traditional built heritage and the development of architectural patterns in Tehran and the settlements of Shemiran and Darband. I also studied the development of architectural patterns of religious structures in Shemiran through interviews with experts and guardians of Imam Zadeh Ghasem Shrine and Friday Mosque of Darband. I reviewed the history of the old mosques of Tehran and Iran. I also analysed the transformation of the landscape in Darband by using documents and publications on the fabric of Shemiran in different stages of transformation, Malek Garden, the pattern of *Koushk*, and old gardens.

## **Data collection in place analysis**

In my study, data collection in place analysis includes interviews, photo-recognition and sketch maps. All this helped me deeply understand residents' experiences and connection to the place. It also resembled how the values have changed under the transformations. The following discussion explains why these methods have been applied;

## **Review of the previous methodology**

According to Shamsuddin (1997, p.80-81), when it comes to uncovering the identity of a place, previous research indicates the existence of two distinct approaches. The first approach utilises qualitative methods, exemplified by Lynch's (1960) work. Scholars employing qualitative approaches employed diverse techniques, such as conducting interviews, sketch maps, employing photo recognition, and engaging in field observations and recording.

The collected data is then analysed qualitatively. These scholars regularly work with relatively small sample sizes, typically around thirty respondents, and the resulting open-ended data is subject to the researcher's interpretation. The research using this approach typically has a descriptive and explanatory character. On the other hand, the second approach applies a quantitative methodology, as demonstrated by Appleyard's studies (1969, 1970). In this case, similar techniques are employed. However, the gathered data is analysed statistically.

Consequently, the focal point of their findings revolved around the variables that impacted imageability. A larger sample size, comprising three hundred respondents, was employed. The primary focus of the findings was on establishing the relationship between the variables that impacted imageability.

Moore (1976, cited in Shamsuddin 1997, p.80-81) posits that specific methods like interviews and sketch mapping have gained increasing acceptance as reliable techniques for investigating individuals' perceptions of their surroundings. To interpret the identity of the place, Lynch (1982) suggests applying tests involving recognition, recall, and description. According to Nasar (1990), individuals remember places that evoke emotional responses. Lynch (1982) further suggests that to discover the identity of place, it is necessary to prompt respondents to recognise photographs and verbally or graphically recall places. Afterwards, additional information is provided as field descriptions, which specify the locations and events being recollected. Harrison et al. (1990) also employed the frequency of recall of a particular feature to indicate its role in shaping the place image. According to Canter (1977), the procedure entails inviting individuals to describe using their vocabulary or following the researcher's prescribed adjective ratings. This technique yields abundant information. Thus, when examining the characteristics of the urban environment, one can rely on people's ability to describe, recognise, and recall (Shamsuddin 1997, p.81-82).

## **Adopting Qualitative method**

Due to the previous arguments regarding the necessity of analysing research questions using a grounded approach, my thesis employs a qualitative grounded methodology. According to

Relph (1976), place identity is intertwined with individuals' experiences of a specific place. Uncovering people's encounters with a place can only be accomplished through interviews. Previous studies examining urban areas' perception primarily relied on spontaneous verbal descriptions or sketching. Both techniques offer open-ended responses and pose coding challenges. Therefore, they are most effectively examined through qualitative analysis. Instead of examining the correlation between variables, the research questions aim to elucidate phenomena.

Consequently, these descriptive analysis inquiries are best addressed using qualitative grounded approaches. Although quantitative methods offer extensive coverage by incorporating larger population samples, qualitative methods offer more comprehensive insights. They present a more intricate and genuine portrayal of the social interconnections within a group. Hence, the aim is to gain a more profound comprehension of influential variables rather than carrying out conclusive examinations of well-established hypotheses (Shamsuddin 1997, p. 83-84).

My thesis adopts a mixed method within a qualitative approach. "Multiple research strategies" refers to utilising various methods to address a research problem. This approach is traditionally known as triangulation, which involves employing multiple investigative methods and data sources (Brannen 1992). The reason behind combining methods is that each research approach has inherent limitations. By integrating methods, the intention is to mitigate the weaknesses of the chosen research methodology (Burgess 1982).

## Sampling

The first step was the selection of areas to be sampled from the Darband urban landscape. In sampling, I tried to show the typical layout of the current Darband (i.e. Eigner 2014, p.56- 65). Regarding the house form, Rapoport (1969) does not consider classifying forms of high value. Oliver (2003, p. 66) argues that rather than identifying various form types of houses in a solely typology-based study, asking whether there are any generic plans or form types is necessary. Thus, in my thesis, the house typologies were categorized based on their generic form types defined by Madanipour (1998, p. 125). He classifies the house forms in different stages of transformation of modernism of Tehran according to the changing pattern of buildings in Tehran from (1) an inward-looking, low-rise courtyard house to (2) an outward-looking, medium-rise house with a courtyard to (3) high-rise apartment buildings (Figure 11).

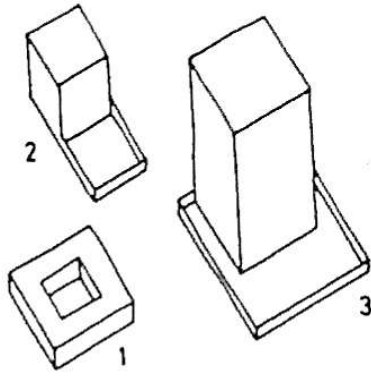


Figure 11. Typology of houses in Tehran

My study considers typologies according to eras of transformation, albeit considering the site's existence within the Shemiran context with its different typologies compared to Tehran. The typology of traditional houses in old Shemiran and Darband is also defined based on the interview of the author with experts on Shemiran, i.e. Shakouri (Interview in 2017 and 2021) and as depicted from memory of old long-term inhabitants of Darband (See 'The traditional house' on p. 153). The current built environment of Darband consists of the buildings in 3 periods: the 1950s as the traditional style of Shemiran, the 1960-70s as modern-period housing, and the 2000s onwards as the contemporary period (transformed houses or contemporary apartments). My family and I surveyed and photographed 23 houses built during three periods of transformation as a random sample of households in Darband. This included old and new houses. I tried to resemble them throughout their transformation as well. Due to the limited number of traditional houses remaining on the site, they were depicted from the memory of old residents. The plans of House No. 23 were provided directly by the residents, who were among the developers of the residence.

My fieldwork was conducted in the Mir-Mahalleh neighbourhood, along the historic Miri and Fakhery axes and in an old Kenar-Mahalleh settlement. Additionally, I extended my investigation to newly developed areas like Bagh-Shater and conducted observations along Darband's main street and the market street, featuring shops, eateries, and cafes. A visit to Pasghale Village, which resembles the old Darband on its north, offered a contrasting perspective, highlighting the differences between the old and newly established areas of Darband.

The selected profile of Darband was divided into alleys. A sample of the alleys was drawn, and the households on each alley were listed. A random sample of households within each alley



was then drawn. Members of households participated in the interview. The selection of this person(s) was done voluntarily by the households. However, I was sometimes forced to designate certain household members to participate to ensure equal representation from all age groups and the two genders. Interviews, participant observations, and surveys were conducted with residents on different floors in a multi-flooring house. I made sketches of houses and compounds with approximate dimensions. I also represented how the house sits within the settlement, surrounding houses, and paths. I finally included the map of the selected houses on the profile, with images and sketches of each household (Figure 12) (See 'Appendix no.2' on p. 354) for typologies of the houses surveyed; Pasghale: house 1; Mir-Mahalleh: houses 2-7, 13, 21, 23; Kenar-Mahalleh: houses 9-11, 22; Bagh-Shater: houses 12, 19-20, garden houses; 8, 16-18).

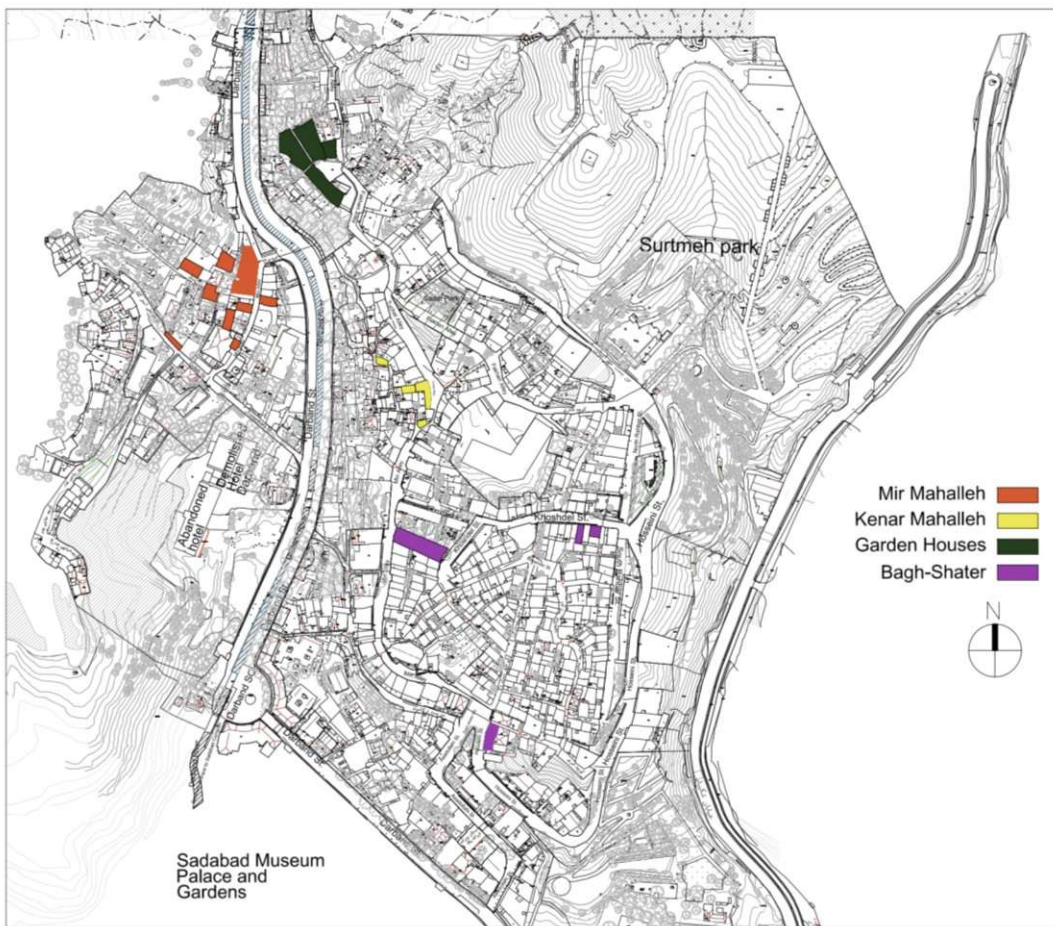


Figure 12. Map of the location of surveyed houses in this study within Darband

Walker (1985) suggests that an appropriate sample size for qualitative analysis involves conducting between 20 and 40 in-depth interviews. Unlike quantitative research, which employs rigorous sampling procedures, qualitative work necessitates a different approach due to the unique character and scale of the study. The sampling design in qualitative studies is

intentional, wherein individuals with distinct characteristics, behaviours, or experiences are purposefully chosen. This intentional approach facilitates the ability to make meaningful comparisons between significant groups.

In my research, I selectively chose participants based on specific criteria fitting the research topic. I intended to study the transformation of people’s values during the transformation, so I decided to conduct my research in an environment with long-settled residents who have experienced the transformation. This includes targeting long-term residents residing in the area for over thirty years who are over 35 years old, ensuring they possess first-hand experience of the traditional Darband and its subsequent transformation. Additionally, the respondents were diversified across various age groups, genders, educational backgrounds, and economic statuses to facilitate data comparison for identifying similarities and differences (Shamsuddin 1997, p.103-104). The respondents included two age groups, 35-45 and 65-75, to compare their similarities and differences. For comparison, I interviewed both long-term and new residents of the Darband neighbourhood.

I conducted 56 interviews, including 47 with the residents (See Table 1 for a list of all the interviews). I interviewed building developers of Darband to learn about building rules and regulations and real estate marketing. I found interviews with experts who have previously been part of heritage or planning teams on Darband and Pasghale very insightful. To learn about Darband’s specific condition, I also spoke with taxi drivers, café workers, and estate agents.

*Table 1. Structure of interviewees of dissertation (Author 2022)*

Questioned households in Darband	Nr.
Male residents 65-75 years old	9
Female residents 65-75 years old	12
Male residents 35-45 years old	7
Female residents 35-45 years old	6
Female residents 20-25 years old	2

Questioned households in Pasghale	Nr.
Male residents 65-75 years old	1
Female residents 65-75 years old	1
Male residents 35-45 years old	1
Female residents 35-45 years old	1



Interviews with others	Nr.
Manager of café in Sarband	1
Café workers in Sarband	2
Real estate agent	1
Developer of Darband	2
Taxi driver in Darband Sq	1
Guardian of Imam Zadeh Ghasem Shrine	1
Guardian of Friday Mosque of Darband	1

Interviews with experts	Function
Mrs. Farzaneh Ebrahim Zadeh	Architectural historian on Tehran and Shemiran
Dr. Taraneh Yalda	Architect and planner- University professor- Expert employed in Master plan of Tehran-Expert on Darband
Dr. Reza Shakoury	Architect- A university professor- Expert on Shemiran
Mr. Mahmoudi	Architect and planner- Founder of Akhir Architects- Expert employed in the Organisation Plan of Bagh-Shater
Mr. Bijhan Zahabi	Architect -Expert on Darband
Dr. Eskandar Mokhtary	Senior Heritage Consultant at former Cultural Heritage Office of Tehran-University professor- Expert on Darband
Mr. Masoudi	Urban sociologist and planner-Baft-Shar Consultants-Advisor of District 1 and Darband

## Development of semi-structured interviews

Bryman and colleagues (2011) discuss the existence of two primary interview types in qualitative analysis: the unstructured interview and the semi-structured interview. The interviewer organises essential questions for the semi-structured interviews to direct the interview process. However, there is a likelihood that some questions may not be asked while new ones may emerge during the interview. Conversely, in an unstructured interview, the researcher refrains from using predetermined questions, allowing the interviewee to express their understanding of the topic under investigation willingly. For my study, I opted for the

semi-structured interview approach as it allows the collection of comparable data and facilitates the interviewer in directing the discussion towards the research topic, in contrast to the unstructured interview method. I did not opt for a structured interview because questions would be pre-given and do not offer the flexibility for narratives and ideas that were not questioned. I opted for a semi-structured interview since this allows for open-ended questions (See 'Appendix No. 1' on p. 349 for the sample interview). The questions were formulated in an open-ended format to encourage participants to discuss their values openly. This helped identify respondents' themes for each factor and form comparable data. Audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed (Silverman 2011). I tried to conduct the interviews primarily within the daytime, between 10 and 18. Interviews were conducted in Farsi. The interview development process comprises three distinct sections: the first focuses on gathering socio-cultural data from the participants, the following section delves into the cultural analysis, and the final section explores the place analysis.

The first part, devoted to the respondents' socio-cultural data, includes years living in Darband, sex, education, profession, age, and economic status (i.e. based on Rieger-Jandl 2006). This information establishes a socio-economic profile of the respondents for the interview. Through this, I could compare the values related to different socio-cultural groups.

In the cultural analysis, the cultural factors on the relationship between house and settlement are asked (See further 'Appendix No. 1', on p. 349).

In the place analysis, interviews are developed based on verbal description and recall. Based on the last discussions on the complexity of the identity of place in contemporary cultural landscapes and the need for an empirical study, my study goes through an empirical analysis of place. Rather than having pre-assumptions, I developed specific open-ended questions in an interview to ask the users to discuss the elements and patterns that form their identity of place. The respondents are asked to provide their opinion regarding the identity of the place during the transformation, e.g., has the place been lost? Have new elements been replaced by the previous elements that were important to them? What do they associate with place or placelessness? The different elements of the research framework are examined through specific questions devoted to each, as shown in Appendix No. 1 (on p. 349).

## Sketch map

Following the interview, the respondents were asked to produce a sketch map of Darband and the places they remembered vividly. The maps were analysed according to the types of elements drawn and their locations, the areas covered in the maps and the sequence of their

drawings (See further 'Appendix No. 1', on p. 349 and 'Sketch Maps' by residents on p. 298). This method is chosen since not every place can be recalled and remembered through verbal description and recall. A further approach to stimulate participants to recall particular places is to task them with creating painted maps depicting that area's distinctive landmarks, buildings, and streets (Shamsuddin 1997).

## **Photo recognition**

Besides asking for verbal descriptions, specific pictures of Darband St. before and after the transformations are shown to respondents in the interview to examine their reactions. These photos resemble the transformation of Darband. Lynch (1982, cited in Shamsuddin 1997, p.91) suggests that One practical approach for assessing the identity of a place involves employing a technique wherein respondents are asked to recognize photographs or other representations. The speed and strength of recognition are worthy of consideration. The participant's ability to recall is then quantified. This technique, also applied by Milgram (et al., cited in Shamsuddin 1997, p.91), utilizes the recognition test due to various elements that cannot be easily conveyed through drawing or verbal recall but can be recognized when presented in a photograph.

As per Green's findings (2010, p.151-152), there is potential to mitigate the challenges confronting cherished place attributes. However, the lack of a clear understanding on the part of governing bodies regarding what should be regulated has hindered progress in this area. Consequently, accurately predicting the reactions to proposed environmental changes concerning their alignment with the place's character has proven problematic. The reason for this is that prevailing methods of evaluating the character of a place rarely give due consideration to community perceptions and values and attempt to reconcile them with other planning factors. Considering that both environments and people transform within periods, it is crucial to regularly monitor the perceptions of local surroundings and neighbourhoods to ensure the ongoing validity of evaluations. Documenting the alterations occurring at the depicted sites over time becomes feasible by regularly capturing photographs at consistent locations. Following that, community members can actively appraise the depicted attributes or sites' influence on shaping the locality's distinctiveness.

One can ascertain the influence of transformations on the perceived urban character by analysing the perceptual responses pre and post-transformations. Once these effects are recognized, suitable planning measures can be implemented to mitigate future comparable transformations.

## Data analysis procedure

Much useful information was gained by analysing the surveyed plans (Eigner 2014). Data was analysed through thematic analysis (Miles et al. 1994, cited in Alhojailan 2012, Braun Clarke 2006). During the analytical process, recorded interviews were transcribed and coded. Coding was done based on recurring subjects, themes, places, and activities. Common themes were analysed across interviews to compare for similarities and differences across informants in culture and place by examining data compiled by codes. Coding was done manually rather than through the use of a software program. Due to the nature of research as an empirically grounded approach, coding was data-driven rather than theory-driven. The content of the entire data set was coded to identify certain attributes of the data set concerning specific questions on the cultural/place values of respondents.

In some cases, contradictions within the data set and the final conceptualisation of the data pattern represented these inconsistencies. Data gathered was exposed in charts and diagrams to represent data from different socio-cultural groups or the transformation of cultural values in housing. The number of people and the percentage of each category for the variable in question were provided in frequency tables and diagrams to interpret and understand quickly (Rapoport 1969, Rieger-Jandl 2006). According to participants' responses on specific cultural values, former/current Darband maps were also provided. The research outcomes were cross-checked with site experts and the available literature to check for accuracy. The results led to the recommendations and guidelines proposed to authorities for future developments on Darband.

### Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is chosen as the method for data analysis (Miles et al. 1994, cited in Alhojailan 2012, Braun Clarke 2006). Steps being followed included;

#### Data reduction

The process begins with transcribing the data, ensuring it is ready for word-by-word analysis. Reading through the data is crucial to grasp the text's essence and actively seek out prevalent themes and patterns. The sentences of interest from each respondent should be distinguished with highlights while always keeping the study's questions in mind. Next, the highlighted sentences are utilised to break down the data into smaller segments or themes to effectively set up the initial themes. To effectively compare, contrast, and explore any previously undisclosed information within the first level of themes, it is advisable to revisit the complete content thoroughly. The initial themes should be extracted and stored in a new Word document.

Subsequently, it is essential to arrange and structure the data to facilitate the identification and categorisation of the second level of themes, commonly called "codes." In my research, the interviews were fully transcribed in Persian at this stage. The interesting sentences from every participant were highlighted. Initial themes were captured and restored in another Word document to search for the emerging codes.

### **Data display**

It is necessary to arrange and present all data associated with each question sequentially. This facilitates the researcher in searching for disparities, similarities, and correlations by classifying the data into conceptual clusters for analysis. Diverse techniques can be employed to exhibit the data, including figures, tables, graphs, charts, category maps, narrative text, and quotations. Additionally, direct quotations can lend supportive meaning to the interpretation of the data, particularly concerning certain statements. In this stage, all data associated with each question on cultural/place values were presented in a table. I made a concerted effort to identify and assign codes for numerous potential themes or patterns. Additionally, within the table, I incorporated direct quotations supporting the data interpretation, ensuring that a portion of the surrounding data was included.

### **Data drawing and conclusions**

This stage includes grouping or classifying related information and recognising connections between factors and variables. In this stage, the analysis takes a broader perspective by examining themes rather than individual codes. It involves categorising the different codes into potential themes and consolidating all the relevant data extracts coded within them. Essentially, the focus shifts towards analysing the codes and exploring how they may combine to create overarching themes. A theme represents a vital aspect of the data concerning the research question, reflecting a discernible pattern or meaning within the dataset. While having several theme occurrences throughout the dataset is ideal, the number of instances does not necessarily indicate its importance. The theme may appear in a relatively limited portion of the dataset. The significance of a theme lies in its ability to capture something crucial concerning the overarching research question.

During my research, this phase entailed the organisation of diverse codes into prospective themes. I considered the interrelation between codes, themes, and various levels of themes. As a result, main overarching themes and sub-themes within them emerged. Nonetheless, there were instances where specific codes did not fit within the main themes. A comprehensive assessment was conducted, comparing themes against one another and cross-referencing them

with the original dataset. This process involved blending, refining, separating, or discarding themes as necessary.

## Study approach

Before arriving in Iran and Darband, I prepared an interview questionnaire in Farsi. I also provided a schedule of the necessary fieldwork tasks within the limited available timeframe. I ran an online meeting with Prof. Nourian, my advisor in Iran, to consult about conducting the fieldwork, accessing data, and finding relevant contacts. I arrived in Iran in the first week of August 2021. I decided to finish the conduct of the study before the mid-autumn when days are shorter, and the weather of Shemiran gets cold and wet. As a person who used to live in Shemiran, I was familiar with the living environment. Previously, I had studied architecture and worked in the architectural practices and planning field in Tehran. This helped me to gain more knowledge about building, planning and developments in Tehran and Shemiran. I also gathered much background information about Tehran, Shemiran, and Darband in my previous field trips to Iran. Within approximately three months of fieldwork in 2021, I tried to gather the most critical data from Darband to propose future planning guidelines.

## Course of the field study

### a) Week 1-2 - Familiarization Phase:

- I began by exploring Darband, capturing photos of its diverse settlements to gain insight and identify prime locations for my research.
- Initiating contact with locals, I joined their social events to build rapport and find families eager to participate in my study.
- I contacted Darband Community Centre and Tehran's city council for detailed insights into the area's built environment and planning.
- Regular discussions with my academic advisor in Iran provided valuable guidance and support for my fieldwork.
- I aimed to assemble a team of students to assist with the field research process.

### b) Week 3 to 9- Empirical Study:

- Conducting interviews with Darband residents, I surveyed their houses and took photographs to grasp how cultural values evolved amid cultural globalisation. I inquired about how Darband cultural landscape responded to their cultural/place values in the past and present and their future expectations.

- I focused on tracking the evolution of architectural styles in Shemiran and Darband, paying particular attention to residential and religious structures through various stages of transformation.
- I analysed changes in Darband's landscape, focusing on areas like Malek Garden, the pattern of *Koushks*, and the transformation of old gardens.
- I gathered cultural and statistical data about Darband, Shemiran, and Tehran from multiple sources to enrich my study.
- An extensive literature review was conducted to understand the local response to cultural shifts in Darband and Shemiran.

C) Week 10 to 11: the research focused on consolidating gathered data:

- Interviews and surveys in Pasghale were conducted, offering insights into the lifestyle within a settlement akin to Darband.
- Engagements with Darband's more affluent residents helped discern disparities in living standards among different social strata.
- Consultations with scholars and a review of additional academic materials assisted in refining the collected responses.
- Discussions with property developers provided an understanding of the prevailing construction norms, legal frameworks, and real estate trends.
- Conversations were held with professionals who had previously contributed to heritage and urban planning projects in Darband and Pasghale.
- Casual chats with taxi drivers, café staff, and real estate agents enriched the study with diverse perspectives.

## Methodological considerations

My approach was to strategically select the most influential research methodology tailored to the study's unique constraints and the specific characteristics of Darband. I integrated theoretical frameworks from the first part of this volume, adapting them to the contextual nuances of the region. One critical task in my study was to create a practical field study scenario that utilised the versatility of semi-structured interviews, enabling people to give their narratives through open-ended questions while benefiting the comprehensive insights of participant observation and house surveys.



In conducting research involving people, knowing which questions to ask and the best way to pose them is crucial. Finding and evaluating the right questions and answers and integrating them as a guideline for future planning requires a good understanding of skills and research methods. For the semi-structured interviews in my study, I carefully prepared the questions, drawing on the theories from the first part of my study, examples from similar research, and guidance from my advisors. Sometimes, during the fieldwork, I had to modify specific questions or how I asked them, especially if participants found them hard to understand. This often happened with questions about the place's identity and privacy aspects.

In conducting my research, I realised the importance of utilising diverse methods and asking varied questions to analyse the identity and character of the place in Darband effectively in an empirical analysis. It became evident that merely asking residents to describe Darband was insufficient. I employed several approaches, such as asking questions in different ways, requesting residents to create sketch maps of Darband and comparing old and new images of the area. Each technique provided more profound insights into residents' perceptions of Darband's unique identity and character of place.

In the interview process, I discovered diverse answers to the same question. During my analysis of these responses through thematic analysis, clear patterns often emerged, reflecting common opinions among many participants. Sometimes, there was just a slight trend in the responses, while in other cases, the answers varied too much to draw a clear conclusion.

Understanding people's responses requires more than accepting their answers at face value. It was crucial to delve deeper and explore their reasons. Using a variety of methodologies helped in this regard. For example, participant observation was precious. It allowed me to understand the rationale behind specific responses and observe real-life behaviours, primarily when these differed from what participants claimed.

# Part II- The field study

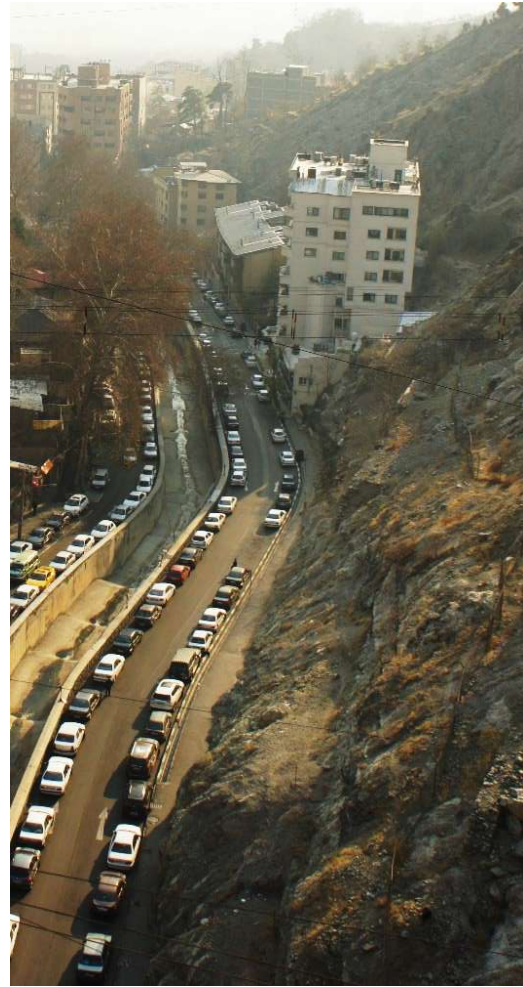
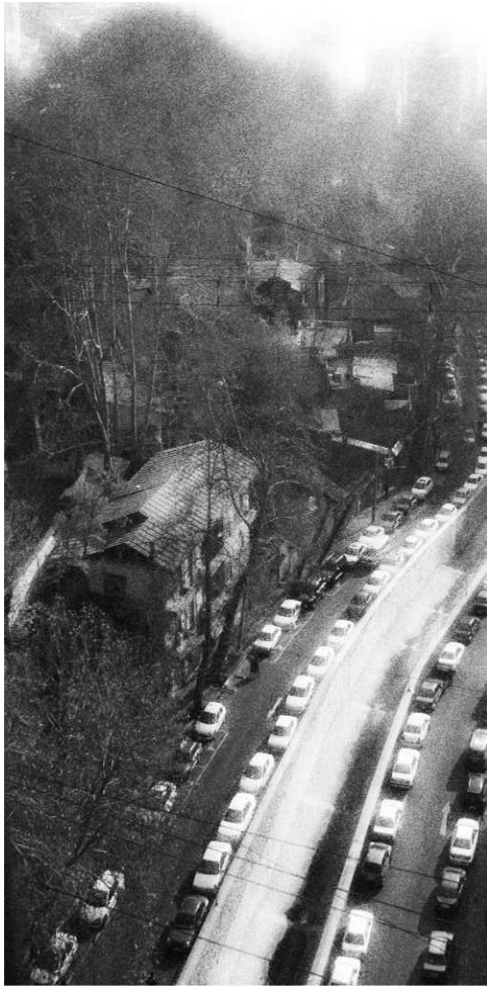


Figure 13. Transformation of Darband

# Introduction to the field

The following part will overview how I approached and analysed the research environment. I will also present how I conducted my field study and collected data in the context of Darband. This includes an exploration of Darband and Tehran's evolution and the impact of cultural globalisation on a local cultural landscape. The theoretical foundation from part I was pragmatically applied to my fieldwork. This research demonstrates that culture-place analysis within the cultural landscape can generate tangible, practical planning guidelines when applied in the field.

## The research environment

For this case study, the Darband neighbourhood was chosen as the case study. Darband is located in Tehran, Iran (Figure 14) (See 'The land' on p. 97 for more info on the locations of Tehran and Iran).



Figure 14. Iran and neighbouring countries

## Shemiran

Darband is also located within Shemiran. Traditionally, Shemiran was not a city area. It consisted of villages on the southern foot sides of the Alborz mountain, surrounded by gardens and farming lands, outside the gates of the city of Tehran. Shemiran was a summer resort separated from Tehran (Morovati et al. 2014, p.7) (Figure 16).

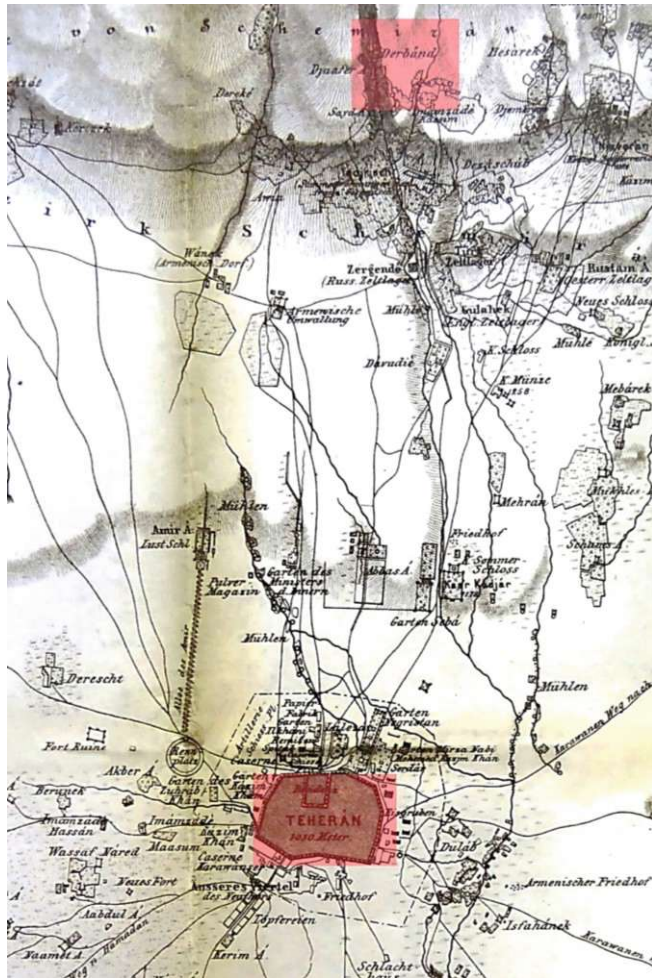


Figure 15. Tehran and its surroundings in 1857-1858. Tehran and the location of Darband within Shemiran on its north have been highlighted by the author

Alborz Heights currently bound Shemiran from the north, Lavasanat from the east, and Tehran municipality's District 2 from the west. Today, the southern border of this region does not have a specific boundary and includes the District 3 of Tehran Municipality. Shemiran consists of all of District 1 of Tehran municipality and all of District 3 (Ijazi 2018) (See 'Administration' on p. 101 for more info on the locations of Tehran districts). There is no official map available regarding the boundary of Shemiran. Unlike conventional administrative districts with clearly defined boundaries, Shemiran's demarcation is more fluid, rooted in its historical evolution and cultural significance. Its boundaries are not rigidly delineated in administrative documents but are understood through historical narratives, cultural heritage, and urban development patterns. To study Darband, it is vital to situate it within the context of Shemiran first. Darband's historical significance underscores its integral role within Shemiran. As a gateway to the Alborz Mountains, Darband epitomises the rich tapestry of cultural and natural heritage that characterises Shemiran. Understanding Darband within the broader context of Shemiran sheds



light on its socio-cultural dynamics, architectural heritage, and urban morphology. By delving into the historical, cultural, and geographical connections between Darband and Shemiran, we gain valuable insights into the intricate fabric of Darband's urban landscape. In many cases, since historical and socio-cultural data has been limited on Darband, I had to refer to data available on Shemiran, especially regarding the cultural factor of family and data on the transformation or old Darband.

The stories of Shemiran and Tehran differ from the socio-cultural and ecological perspectives. Shemiran, with its unique climate and topography, has historically had a built environment distinct from the rest of Tehran. Shemiran, while not recognised as an official administrative district, holds significant historical and cultural importance. It functions as a cohesive geographical and cultural entity, encompassing various neighbourhoods, among which Darband is a prominent example. Shemiran, situated in Tehran's northern mountains, enjoys a mild mountain climate, ideal as a summer retreat for residents seeking to escape Tehran's intense heat. The term "Shemiran" itself implies coolness. However, the connection between Shemiran and its southern neighbour Tehran has been longstanding, with their histories intertwined. Shemiran gained prominence when Shah Tahmasb I of the Safavids recognised the strategic significance of Tehran, building a tower in 1554 AD that transformed the verdant area into a burgeoning city. As Tehran expanded, Shemiran's territory shrank to the extent that now, after about 200 years as the capital, the historic villages and districts of Shemiran have merged into Tehran's urban fabric neighbourhoods, blurring the lines between the two areas (Dehghani et al. 2021; Sotoudeh 1995, p. ii). By 2019, Shemiran's population exceeded 600,000 (IRNA 2019).

## **District 1 of Tehran**

Darband is also part of municipal District 1 of northern Tehran (Figure 16). It is essential to understand that its location in District 1, the most expensive district of Tehran, where investment in building development is very beneficial, has had implications for its built

environment, leading to the destruction of its old fabric and the rise of high-rise apartments.

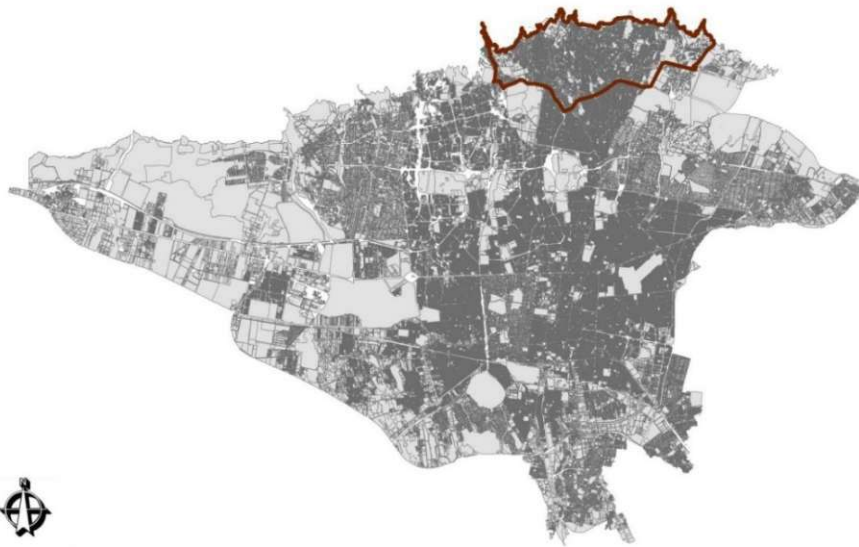


Figure 16. Tehran and District 1

## Darband neighbourhood

Darband was formed approximately 200 years ago as a village on fertile lands within the mountain and close to the river, which served as the water source. Darband, once a village in Shemiran, is now an urban neighbourhood perched 1,700 meters above sea level on the southern slopes of the Alborz mountains. The Tajrish district flanks it to the south, Pasghale village to the north, and the Golabdarreh neighbourhood to the east. Cafes are located near the river's mountainous paths (Figure 17, Figure 18, Figure 19).

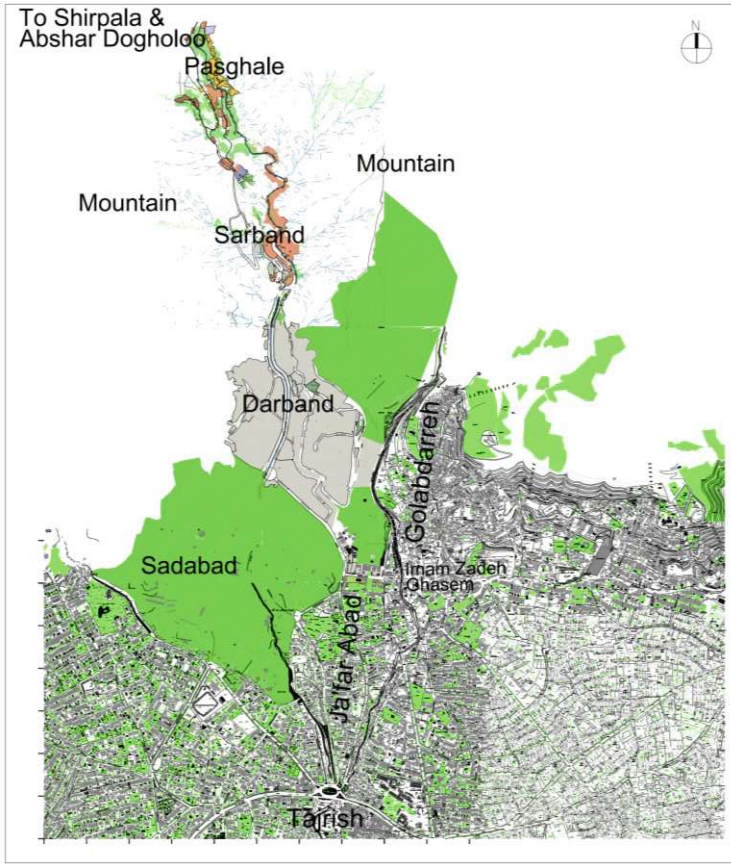


Figure 17. Map of Darband and its surroundings



Figure 18. View to Darband St. in 2014



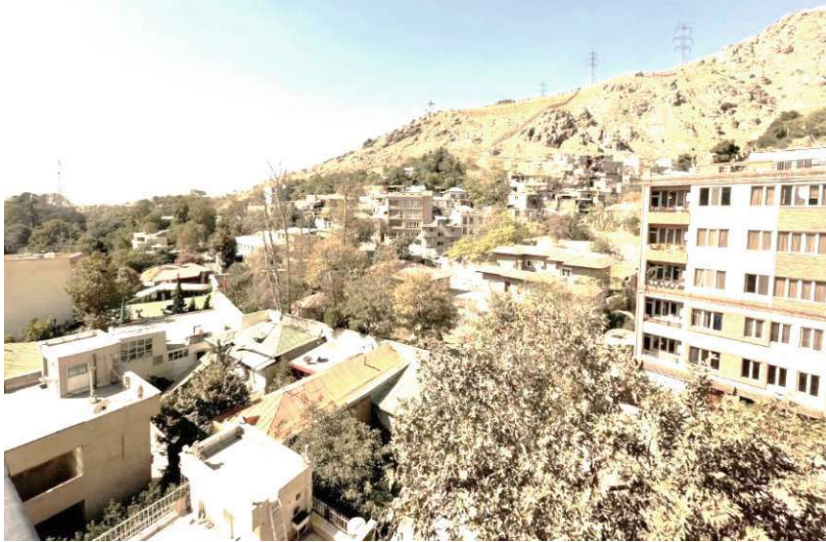


Figure 19. View to Darband

Hotel Darband, to the west of Darband, is now an abandoned site. There is a sports field on the top side of Hotel Darband that young people mostly use. Darband has luxury sports clubs in the Bagh-Shater area, but long-term residents do not attend them. Most services, such as grocery stores, are located in Tajrish, and few are available in Darband. Long-term inhabitants often express concerns about the new high-rise buildings, the mass creation of cafes, limited access paths due to traffic and tourist congestion, and unauthorized settlements.

Each area of Darband has a religious structure. Tek Yeh Darband and Friday Mosque are located on the western side of Darband in Mir-Mahalleh, Darband's old core and primary residence of Sadats. These old religious institutes continue to be the centre of social interaction in the Darband neighbourhood. Kenar-Mahalleh, Bagh-Shater, Sarband area, and Pasghale each include their mosque, mainly located at the centre of the context. Many long-term residents, originally from the village, are devout Muslims. Following the Islamic revolution, families from the Pahlavi court and army, who were typically less religious, left Iran. Currently, there is no comprehensive data about the religious beliefs of the new residents or other long-term residents. However, based on the interview data, the newer residents might not be as devout as the long-term residents (Figure 20, Figure 29, Figure 22).

After the revolution, properties previously owned by courtiers were confiscated, and lands associated with Hotel Darband were abandoned. This led to the emergence of unauthorised structures in some areas of Darband. High-rise structures have been increasingly constructed in alignment with the urban regulations of Tehran Municipality. Old gardens have been the victims and have been demolished vastly to accommodate these high-rise buildings. On the

bright side, a few old gardens have now been converted into public parks, and the municipality has created new green spaces for the community.

Historically, in Mir-Mahalleh, land plots were typically under 200 m<sup>2</sup>, with a significant portion dedicated to yards. Darband old garden houses are situated on extensive lands ranging from 1000 m<sup>2</sup> to 5000 m<sup>2</sup>, mainly on the eastern side. Kenar-Mahalleh features homes on plots of 100 m<sup>2</sup> or smaller, while unauthorized homes in Bagh-Shater are on plots between 50-100 m<sup>2</sup>. These are steadily being replaced by high-rise buildings on plots exceeding 200 m<sup>2</sup>, often lacking green spaces and comprising various apartment sizes. The lands around Hotel Darband have also seen a rise in unauthorized constructions, with plot sizes varying from 200 m<sup>2</sup> to 5000 m<sup>2</sup>. The size of an apartment or home often reflects the economic status of its residents, as land becomes an increasingly precious asset. Many long-term residents are relocating to more affordable parts of Tehran, making way for new residents. This shift has caused the remaining long-term residents to have a negative attitude towards the newcomers.

While Darband has a Community Centre, locals seldom use it for communal activities. This limited use is partly because it does not have much space for large gatherings. Additionally, many residents see it as an institute set up and owned by the municipality rather than a space formed by the community. The Friday Mosque and the *Tek Yeh* of Darband are central gathering points, while religious events are long-term residents' most important community activities. The old cemetery, now a park, is also notable as the site for Ashura religious ceremonies (See 'Social Interaction' on p. 235 for further details).

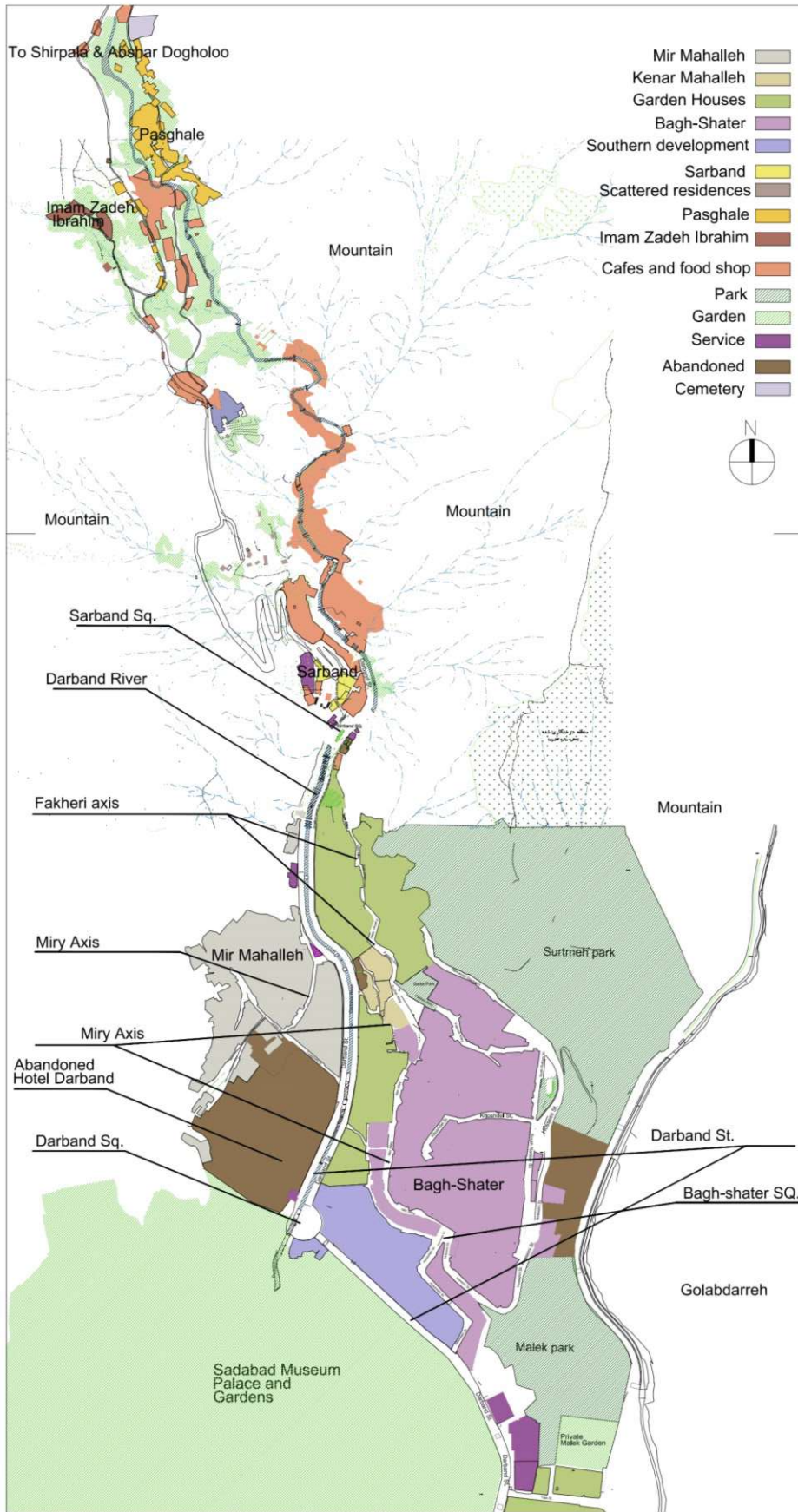


Figure 20. Map of current settlements of Darband



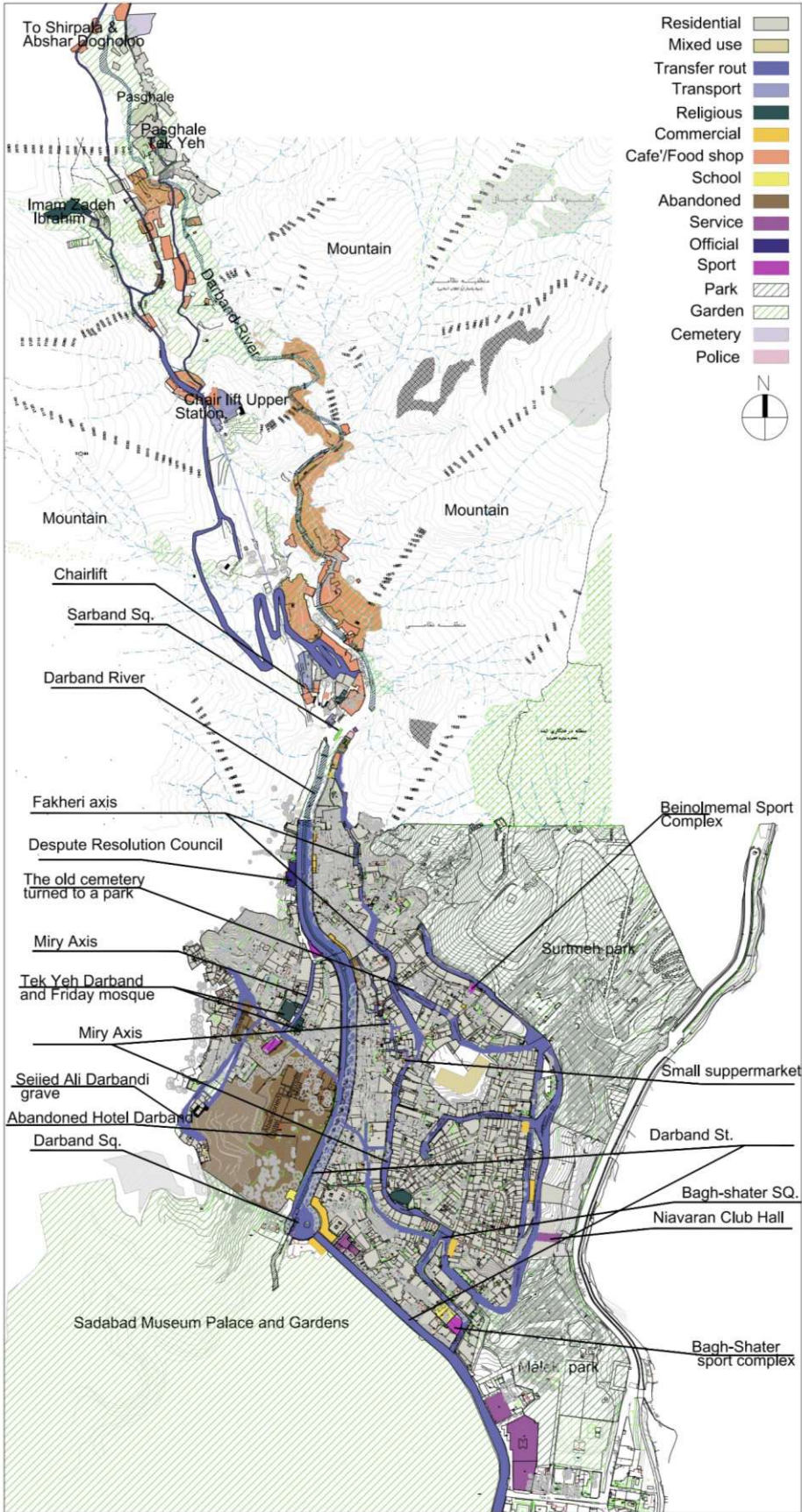


Figure 21. Map of land use in Darband and its surroundings

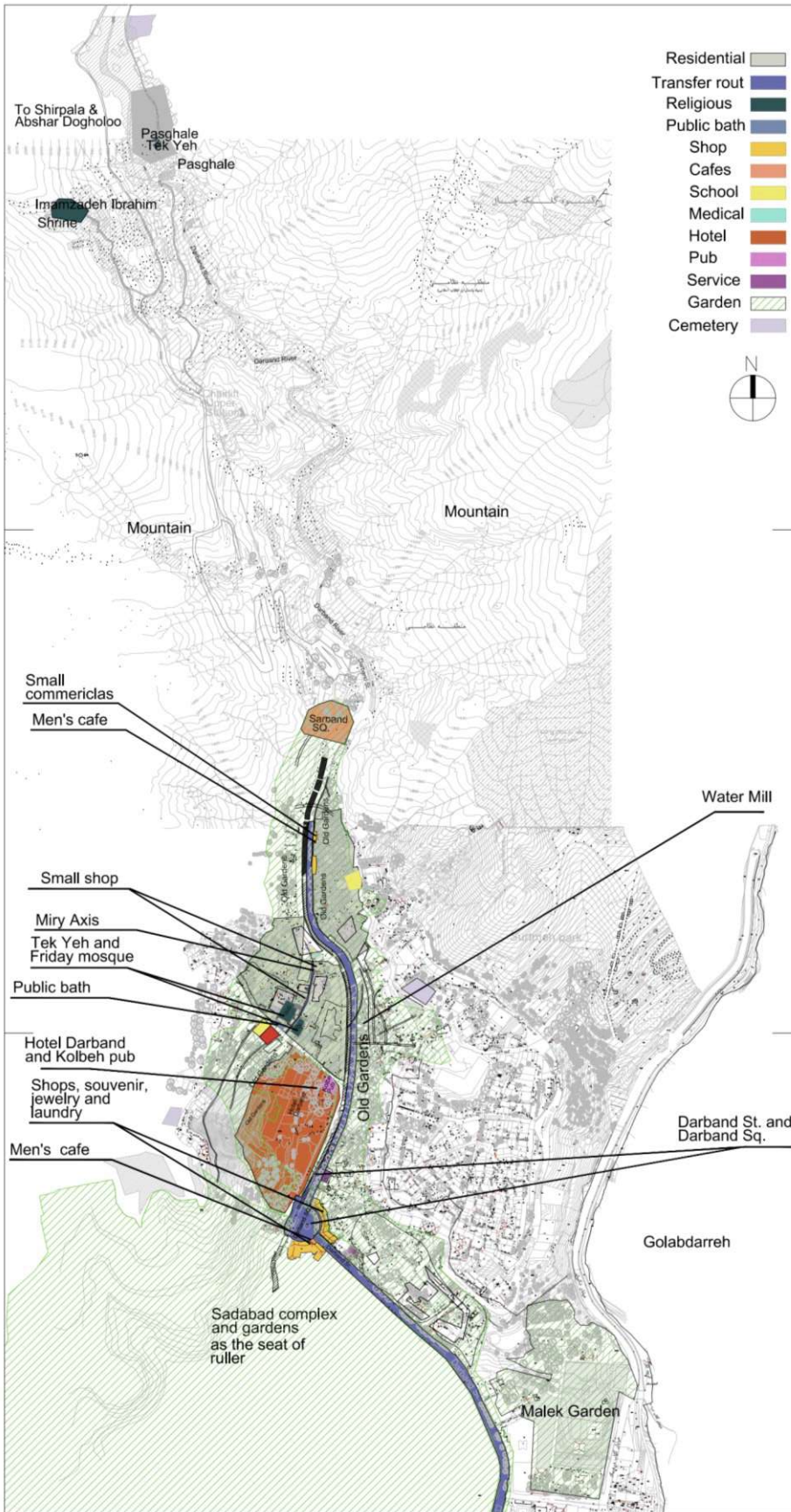


Figure 22. Map of land use in traditional Darband and its surroundings



My research unfolded within the Darband neighbourhood, prompted by a question I was often asked: Why Darband? This choice was intentional. Iran represents a non-Western context experiencing the transformative waves of cultural globalisation (Figure 14). My thesis examines the shifting values and meanings within such a context. Located in Tehran's District 1 (Figure 16), Darband stands out as a valued old neighbourhood cherished in the collective memory of Tehran's residents. It is seen as a neighbourhood whose established character is perceived to be at risk from the forces of development and urbanisation—a repeating pattern among urban planners (Figure 17). Darband's continuous position as a summer retreat for many Tehranis and its frequent mentions in popular culture, such as pop songs, underscore its cultural relevance. As a focus in Tehran- Iran, it is an example of broader regions where recent developments have dramatically altered cultural values and the building process. The early 20th century marked the onset of Iran's modernisation, which saw the adoption of Western social and built environment features. This period witnessed accelerated change across various facets of Iranian life (Forouzmand 2013, p. iii). As Haeri (1997) and Soltanzadeh (2005) noted, Iran underwent substantial socio-economic and cultural shifts at the time that significantly influenced its way of life. Most identity-related research has been conducted in countries with social and cultural landscapes distinct from Iran's, highlighting the need to explore this particular context more deeply.

The scope of my dissertation extends beyond proposing planning guidelines for Darband's future but also articulating the issues facing its residents and offering strategies to safeguard the remaining cultural heritage, balancing this with recognising inevitable cultural transformations amid the relentless wave of modernisation and globalisation that characterise this region.

## **The people of Darband**

The original inhabitants of Darband were farmers and gardeners (Sotoudeh 1995, cited in Mohajer Milani et al. 2005, p. 108). They migrated from Taleghan, an area northwest of Tehran within Alborz province (Interview with Miry in 2021). Darband became the seat of rulers and courtiers in Pahlavi's period. After the Islamic revolution, they left Iran, while many village inhabitants remained. According to Baft o Memary Consultants (2009, p.138), Fars and Turk ethnicities were among 87% of the area's local population in 2009. Due to the desirable condition of inhabitancy in some areas of the context (especially in the western edge and some parts in the eastern and south of Darband), high-status people have increasingly moved to

Darband regardless of ethnic orientation and occupation. The newcomers are from Tehran or other cities.

Among the households I interviewed in my field research, more than 60% of respondents lived close to their lineage members. The rate of marriage and having children was relatively high among the respondents; however, marriage and childbearing have decreased in Tehran and Shemiran (including Darband). 47% of the inhabitants aged 20-45 were unmarried or had no children. The average household size among the respondents was 2.9, but I also observed many single-occupancy households. I will explain the family structure and the reasons for its transformation in detail in the section 'Family' on p. 240. From the education level, 55% of the respondents have graduate/post-graduate degrees, highlighting a strong participation in education (Figure 23).

While many long-term residents have modest means, those in garden houses and newer residents often have higher incomes, looking for better homes and living standards. I observed these economic differences first-hand when I visited the homes of both groups. My conversations with real estate agents and local interviews highlighted a wide gap between different social structures, leading to dissatisfaction among lower-income people (See 'Hierarchical relations' on p. 267 for detailed discussion).

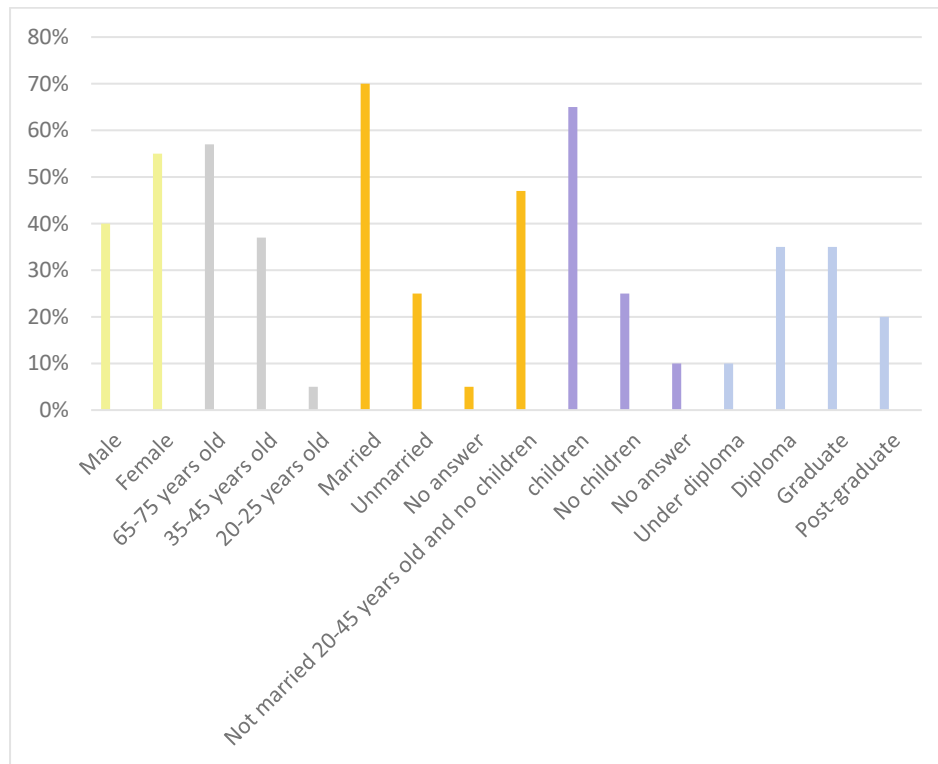


Figure 23. Structure of residents of households interviewed in this thesis, as described on p. 93



Of the residents interviewed, 59% were employed, 22% were housewives, 12% were retired, and 7% were university students. These residents worked across sectors such as government, commerce, education, construction, gardening, café or shop ownership, sociology, Mosque and *Tek Yeh* trustees, and transportation. Significantly, 60% of the female respondents were either students, currently employed or had previously worked and were now retired, highlighting female solid participation in society (Figure 24). However, residents raised concerns about unemployment and drug addiction issues among youth. Some residents indicated that their well-educated offspring were unemployed while new work patterns emerged, with some young people engaging in programming for international clients or working late shifts. Additionally, the declining value of the Iranian Rial has prompted many, including professionals from the medical field, to seek employment in neighbouring countries.

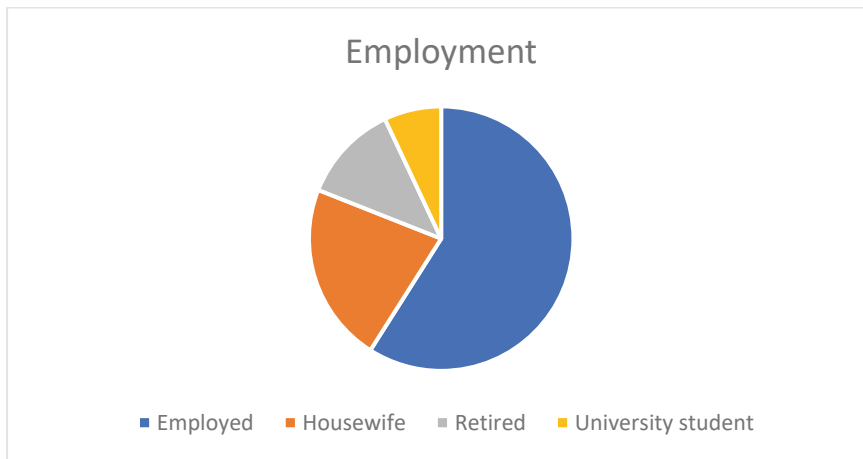


Figure 24. Employment of residents of households interviewed in this thesis, as described on p. 94

## Transformation of Tehran and Darband

In this study, the term "transformation" refers to the notable changes within Iran due to the globalisation process. However, Iran's unique position in the global market and its relations with Western countries, especially after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, distinguish its experience from other non-Western nations. Thus, this dissertation focuses on cultural globalisation in Iran rather than economic aspects. It aims to showcase the evidence of cultural globalisation's impact. The subsequent sections will explore how Tehran, Shemiran, and Darband have transformed, as explored through an extensive literature review.

Over the past 200 years, Tehran has experienced significant changes, reflecting Iran's broader societal and political shifts. This journey, marked by periods of modernisation and demodernisation, mirrors the complexities of an evolving modernising-globalising Islamic

culture in a global context. The city's transformation can be divided into distinct eras: the Qajar period (up to 1925), the era of Pahlavi I (1925-1941), Pahlavi II (1941-1979), and the era following the Islamic Revolution (from 1979). Each period has left a distinct mark on Tehran's urban landscape, serving as a physical testament to the significant socio-political shifts within modern Iran (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004).

In the Qajar period, Iran transitioned into modernity, adopting Western culture and significantly changing Tehran. During the 1860s/1870s and then in the 1930s, Tehran transformed radically to meet its growing population's needs and improve transportation. This modernisation aimed to make Tehran a global city. The most extensive growth, however, happened after World War II, turning Tehran into a large metropolis (Madanipour 1998, p.44-45).

Tehran underwent significant changes in its social and spatial dynamics. During the societal restructuring of the Pahlavi after 1941, an evident income polarisation emerged, splitting the city into northern and southern regions. This division was not just geographical; it mirrored stark differences in income levels, environmental quality, and infrastructure. This new urban landscape contrasted with the past, where various income groups coexisted within the same neighbourhoods. Westernization added to these shifts, creating social tensions and drastic changes in Tehran's built environment (Madanipour 1998, p.44-45; Marefat 2004, p.12).

Post-1979 Islamic Revolution, Tehran remained a hub for critical decisions and attracted many migrants hoping for better opportunities. However, the city now confronts serious challenges such as pollution, traffic jams, overpopulation, and high living costs. The population boom and reinvestment of oil funds in urban lands have caused land prices to soar, leading to denser populations in Tehran (Marefat 2004, p.15; Madanipour 1998, p. 80).

Global connections have grown in recent years through immigration, media, and various digital platforms. This has dramatically changed local customs, leading to a new national ethos quite different from past traditions (Azad Armaki 2007). Women's societal roles have evolved, decreasing their time on home duties and childcare (Mirmoghtadaee 2009). This shift has reshaped social and cultural aspects, introducing new paradigms, fresh career paths, hobbies, and activities into Iranian society. It has also altered how people, families, communities, and citizens interact. The urban setting, the stage for modern life, has undergone significant transformation. Technological progress, especially in communication, has changed how members of society connect (Forouzmand 2013, p.75).

In the present day, the rapid emergence of tall buildings has significantly altered historical areas like Darband Valley. Tehran's urban expansion has changed Darband's historic gardens into modern, high-rise buildings and commercial structures designed for easy sale. This shift has

also influenced the local culture, impacting the beliefs and customs of the residents due to the sudden influx of city urbanites (Interview with Pasban-Hazrat in 2000). These transformations in Darband will be explored in greater detail in the upcoming sections, drawing on the findings from the field study.

## About Tehran



Figure 25. A view towards northern Tehran

*Tehran has extensive gardens where all kinds of fruits can be found. Due to the hot weather, they must be picked up and sent around for sale in the morning.[...] It is located on the road to Firuzkoh, and its streets are watered by streams that are extremely large in number. These wide and narrow, short and long streams are also used to irrigate gardens. The streets are full of plane trees, all of which are thick and beautiful. I must say that I have never seen so many beautiful, thick plane trees in my entire life.*

This is how Pietro Della Valle (Della Valle 1993), the Italian traveller, describes Tehran in the Safavid era in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, this is not how Tehran is experienced by a



wanderer today. Tehran has undergone significant transformations after its modernization from the Qajar era, which has affected the whole urban landscape.

## The land

Located in Asia, Iran is bounded to the north by Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan, and the Caspian Sea, to the east by Pakistan and Afghanistan, to the south by the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, and to the West by Turkey and Iraq (Afary 2022) (Figure 26).



Figure 26. Iran and neighbouring countries

Tehran province shares its borders with the provinces of Mazandaran, Qazvin, Semnan, Markazi, and Qom. As the capital of Iran, the city of Tehran, located amidst the Alborz mountains and the northern edge of the central desert, stands on a flat plain. It stretches south and southwest into the plains of Shahryar and Varamin, and its northern and eastern borders touch the mountain's natural limits. Two rivers, the Karaj and Jajroud, flow through this area, merging near the southeastern Namak desert (Broadcasting Organization of Iran 2008). Tehran, situated in the north-central part of Iran, graces the southern slopes of the Alborz mountain alongside the coast of the Caspian Sea. Tehran holds a central position within Iran's geographical landscape. The city spans diverse elevations, with its northern peaks reaching about 1,700 meters and southern areas around 1,100 meters above sea level, presenting a remarkable 600-meter height variation within an expansive area of approximately 730 square

kilometres. The urban landscape of Tehran, shaped by its proximity to mountains and desert and the substantial contrast in height, has profoundly affected its social and physical characteristics. In 2016, the population of Tehran was over 8.6 million, embodying about one-tenth of Iran's total population. The province of Tehran, with a density of 921 people per square kilometre, is much higher than the country's average of 48 individuals per square kilometre (Madanipour 2022; Mehrnews 2015).

Tehran province's climate varies distinctly across three zones:

- Above 3000 meters, the northern highlands have a humid, semi-humid, and cold climate with long, harsh winters.
- The mountainous climate at 1000 to 2000 meters elevations features a semi-humid and cold environment with extended winters.
- The semi-arid and arid zones, below 1000 meters, experience short winters and hot summers, becoming drier with decreasing altitude.
- As the altitude diminishes, the surroundings progressively turn drier (Broadcasting Organization of Iran 2008).

Tehran city's climate falls in a mix of northern mountains, mild, moderately humid conditions in the north and hotter, drier weather elsewhere, with cold touches in winter under the influence of southern plains. Influenced by Siberian high-pressure in winter, Tehran sees mild weather centrally and south, while the north endures colder temperatures, often sub-zero. In summer, a thermal low-pressure from the central desert brings hot, dry air. With a low average annual rainfall of about 246 mm and roughly 36 freezing days, Tehran's historical temperature extremes span from a high of 43°C to a low of -15°C over 45 years (Broadcasting Organization of Iran 2008).

Tehran's varied climate has shaped its social geography, with historically affluent residents favouring the cooler, tree-abundant northern foothills as a summer retreat. At the same time, the south, closer to the desert, endures hot, dusty summers with fewer trees. The 20th century's transportation advances integrated the northern heights more fully into the city's urban spread (Madanipour 2022).

## The people

In 2016, Tehran's urban population comprised 99% of its residents, with men and women in almost equal numbers. This contrasts with Iran's overall census, where 74% of the population resided in urban areas and 25.9% in rural settings. However, the male and female populations were nearly equal (Statistical Centre of Iran 2016). Tehran's social fabric today showcases

significant diversity. During the late 20th century, a substantial majority, 60%, of Iranians relocating chose the capital as their new home. Migrants, particularly from the historically affluent and populous central and northern parts of Iran, converged on Tehran. The city saw a rise in immigrants due to regional turmoil, including invasions in Iraq, the occupation and conflicts in Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union's dissolution in the 1980s and '90s. By the start of the 21st century, while many Tehran residents were city-born, many originated from various regions across Iran. This reflects Iran's multi-lingual and multi-ethnic character, with Persians as the majority, living alongside significant minorities like Azerbaijanis, Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, Lurs, and Baloch (Madanipour 2022).

In Tehran, a kaleidoscope of ethnic and linguistic groups creates a vibrant mosaic. Persian, or Farsi, part of the Indo-Iranian language family, is the majority tongue and is Iran's official language. Schools also teach English and Arabic. Iran's diverse origins are home to various ancient beliefs and ethical systems, including Mithraism, and Zoroastrianism. The 7th-century Arab invasions transformed the historical and religious landscape, leading to the establishment of Islam as the predominant faith after the fall of the Sasanian Empire. Most of Tehran's population identifies as Muslim, predominantly Shiite, alongside religious minorities like Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians. Post-1979 Islamic Revolution, Islam's role in social life was amplified, prompting migration for those not aligned with societal norms (Madanipour, 2022; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022; Mahdi Nejad et al., 2017; Forouzmand 2013, p.46).

The authoritarian regime of Pahlavi adopted a cultural policy of suppressing differences. Built upon nationalism, they aimed at creating a unified nation-state over a multi-ethnic empire. This policy prioritized "national" identities over ethnic or religious distinctions. After departing from feudal fragmentation, the Pahlavi rulers focused on centralizing power and consolidating economic and political disparities. After the revolution, the Islamic government replaced Pahlavi's secular nationalism with Shi'ite internationalism. The rapid convergence of unfamiliar individuals in Tehran, without a communal sphere for shaping new social interactions, has led to fragmentation and volatility. Tehran's social fabric, both pre-and post-revolution, is not seen as a harmonious mosaic of diversity but rather as a dynamic cultural fusion. In the city's ongoing quest for social hierarchy, being an immigrant is often stigmatized compared to being Tehran-born. Established middle-class residents view migrants as agents of chaos and cultural erosion (Madanipour 1998).





Figure 27. *Walkers in Tehran*

## Historical profile

Throughout history, Iran has maintained a prominent position in the region, initially as a dominant power, later benefiting from strategic geography and oil wealth, drawing the attention of colonial powers like Britain and Russia. The country's unique culture and society stem from its Achaemenian roots around 550 BCE. Various local and foreign conquerors and migrants - Persian, Turkish, and Mongol- have historically sculpted Iran or Persia's identity. However, the 7th-century Arab Muslim conquest profoundly influenced its trajectory, with the Safavids later establishing Twelver Shiism as the state religion, significantly shaping its culture and identity in the 16th century, leading to a fusion of Persian culture and Shiite Islam (Afary 2022). The Qajar dynasty ascended to power in 1796 post-Safavid. Iran experienced European interference, leading to consequential adversities in economic and political domains. Simultaneously, the Shiite clergy gained a rising influence in social and political matters. Iran witnessed the Constitutional Revolution and the formation of a parliamentary system, signalling the onset of modernity within Qajar's era in the early 1900s. Various factions formed the revolution, leading to significant changes that impacted all segments of society. The arduously preserved old order, championed by King Naser al-Din Shah Qajar, was ultimately

supplanted by a wave of new institutions, innovative avenues of expression, and a transformed social and political structure (Afary 2022).

Qajars were followed by the Pahlavi dynasty, which modernized Iran under the leadership of Reza Shah (1925-1941) and Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979) in Pahlavi II. They were disrupted by the 1979 Islamic Revolution, establishing a hybrid Islamic theocratic democracy administered by the clergy. Subsequent isolation due to war with Iraq and an Islamic republic led to reformist movements in the 1990s, seeking re-engagement with the global community (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Iranica 2011; Afary 2022).

## Administration

Iran operates as a unitary Islamic republic with a singular legislative body. The 1979 constitution initiated a governance structure blending the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, all under clerical influence. The Supreme Leader, a cleric with state head powers, alongside an elected president who forms a council with legislative approval, manages the country's administration. The Islamic Consultative Assembly is the unicameral legislature elected by the people (Afary 2022). Despite changes, Tehran's municipal system, established post-1906 Constitutional Revolution, has remained stable, with the city now divided into 22 districts, each with its municipality under the giant Tehran municipal umbrella (Madanipour 2022) (Figure 28).

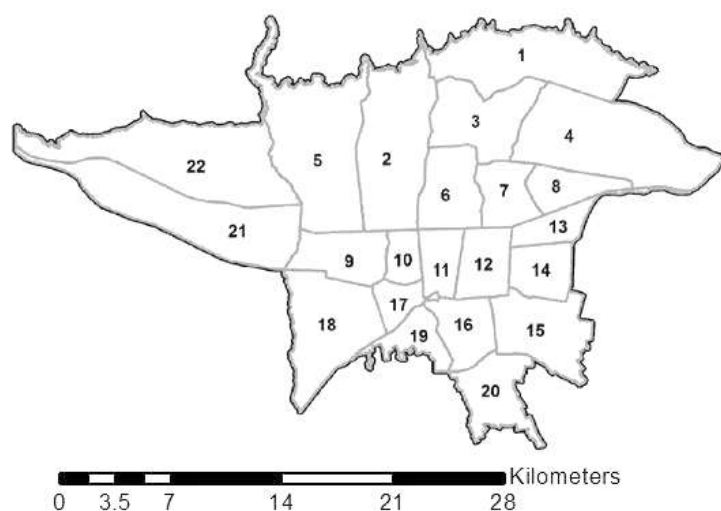


Figure 28. Map of districts of Tehran city

## Economic situation

From its humble beginnings as a village on the historic east-west trade route of the Silk Road, Tehran's transformation into the Qajar dynasty's capital in 1786 marked the beginning of its

rise to prominence. This transition occurred during a time characterized by the global movement of Western capital and the rise of colonial power. Tehran in the Qajar era was both insular and private, influenced by medieval Islamic elements and centred around the traditional Islamic economic institution of the Bazaar. The residential quarters exhibited parochial social systems, fostering stronger connections among the inhabitants of each neighbourhood or *Mahalleh* through their tribal social organization rather than with neighbouring areas. With the city's population exploding during the Qajar era, trade and industry expanded. Tehran was a restrained central authority for an empire formed by loosely connected provinces of self-reliant agrarian economies and multi-ethnic communities in the mid-19th century. Iran experienced significant territorial losses to Russian and British advances. These losses altered Iran's role in the global capitalist system, transitioning from a subsistence economy to one focused on exporting raw materials. Alongside this shift, the Imperial Bank of Persia was established as a new economic institution with global connections, distinct from the traditional bazaar-based economic framework (Marefat 2004; Madanipour 1998; 2022).

Tehran's economic landscape evolved, with its advantageous position along vital internal trade and the royal court's allure attracting many traders and shopkeepers (Ettehadieh 1983), transforming the city into a global metropolis and a centralized power nexus. Political centralization efforts aimed at overcoming the decentralization from feudalism and resisting international pressures marked the governance landscape. The 1953 coup d'etat cemented Iran's economic dependence on global capitalism, with oil becoming the heart of its economy as a single-product structure. However, this reliance also made Iran susceptible to global market fluctuations, leading to economic stagnation in the late 20th century. The city's transformation continued through agricultural restructuring and land reforms in the 1960s, leading to an urban concentration of capital and labour, further accelerated by oil revenues. Driving industrialization and enhancing transportation and communication were also undertaken to bring change. The dismantling of parochial and communal societal structures led to a new order where financial privileges defined individuals' interactions. This resulted in social polarization, marked by disparities in both wealth and influence (Habibi ?, p.192; Madanipour 1998).

In the late 1970s-80s, Iran faced economic challenges such as revolutionary movements, war with Iraq, declining oil prices, disinvestment, inflation, and loss of capital and skilled workforce. However, economic conditions improved in the 1990s with liberal reforms, better relations with the West, foreign loans, and rising oil prices, re-establishing Iran in the global marketplace, with Tehran at the core of its economic activities (Madanipour 2022).

Following the 1979 revolution, Iran aimed for economic self-reliance and improved quality of life. Still, it faced obstacles, including a doubled population with more youth and declining agricultural production, leading to migrations towards the most prominent cities. Despite impressive education and life expectancy levels, the country struggled with high unemployment and inflation rates, around 20 per cent annually. Efforts have been made to diversify the nation's economy. However, the heavy reliance on petroleum posed challenges in providing opportunities for the educated young workforce (Madanipour 2022, Mostofi 2022). The government has actively pursued the development of Iran's communication, transportation, manufacturing, and energy infrastructures. Iran faces a significant economic challenge due to its prolonged isolation from the global community. This isolation, driven by concerns of conservative politicians and international sanctions, hampers market expansion, limits access to advanced technology, and deters foreign investment. Despite efforts by progressive Iranian politicians, the impact of these sanctions has persisted into the early 21st century (Mostofi 2022). Ongoing dialogues within Iran aim to prioritize international tourism to foster economic growth. However, Iran's extensive tourism legacy and diverse cultural and natural heritage remain obscured by its negative reputation in numerous countries, magnified by Western media (Seyfi et al., 2018).

## **Stages of transformation**

Iran has undergone significant transformations due to modernisation efforts that began in the 19th century. This matter is not unique to Iran, as cultural globalisation has affected many other regions. Tehran, originally an Islamic city during the Qajar dynasty, embraced modernisation during the Pahlavi dynasty but experienced what some consider a de-modernisation after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. The early 20th-century modernisation efforts in Iran introduced Western social and architectural elements. These changes led to rapid changes in Iran's social framework, cultural norms, and individual lifestyles, which were shaped by widespread changes in society, the economy, and culture (Marefat 2004; Haeri 1997; Soltanzadeh 2005; Forouzmand 2013, p. iii).

Over the past two centuries, Tehran's built environment has experienced significant changes since becoming Iran's capital. The city's spatial structure has shifted dramatically, including street patterns, land use, and building form. The governments have made drastic changes to support the growing population, improve transportation, and connect the city to the global market. In response to Western influences, Tehran has seen social unrest and significant transitions. Many factors have driven the transformation of Tehran and Iran. However, it is



clear that Tehran has gone through distinct transformation phases over the past two centuries (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004). These stages include the Qajar era, Pahlavi I and II, and the post-Islamic Revolution (Figure 29). I will next outline the historical phases of Tehran's transformations to explain its present state.



Figure 29. Transformation of Tehran from Qajar to the contemporary era. The red line resembles the boundary of Tehran before Qajar's major transformations until 1865. The yellow line refers to the developed boundary of Tehran in the Qajar era after 1866. This is projected onto the Google Map of Tehran in 2014.

### Transformation of Tehran in Qajar (1785-1925)

Iran has been part of a dynamic history of change, shaped by its leaders, conquerors from other lands, and various immigrants. Records from the 11th century first mention Tehran, describing it as a small village north of Rayy. Rayy was once the Seljuq empire's capital in the 11th century on the historic east-west Silk Road trade route. The rise of the Qajar dynasty in 1785 was a pivotal moment for Tehran, as it was then chosen as the dynasty's capital (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004). During the Qajar era, Tehran's transformation preserved a private, inward character with medieval Islamic features. The city expanded in the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, it kept the traditional elements of an Iranian Islamic city. Its urban fabric was dense, with narrow, winding streets often covered in dust. The city's structure remained closely tied to the natural landscape and regional ecology. The enclosed city was structured along an axial plan, showing clear functional organisation. It included a political seat at the

royal compound, an economic centre in the active bazaar, a religious landscape at the mosque, and residential quarters for citizens, divided into four sections. A citadel, strategically located to the north, was a notable feature, acting as the administrative centre (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004).

This layout reflected the classic power dynamics of medieval Iranian cities, blending political, religious, and economic spheres. The city plan connected closely with the entrance to the Hazrat Abd al-Azim shrine, forming a central axis that aligned with the lively bazaar. Significant religious structures, such as the Friday and Shah imperial mosques, were linked along this axis.

Beyond this central line, the cityscape comprised four residential quarters, fostering close-knit social structures. Within these quarters, community ties were strong, often reinforced by tribal relations within the *Mahalleh* (neighbourhood), more profound than those with adjacent districts (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004).

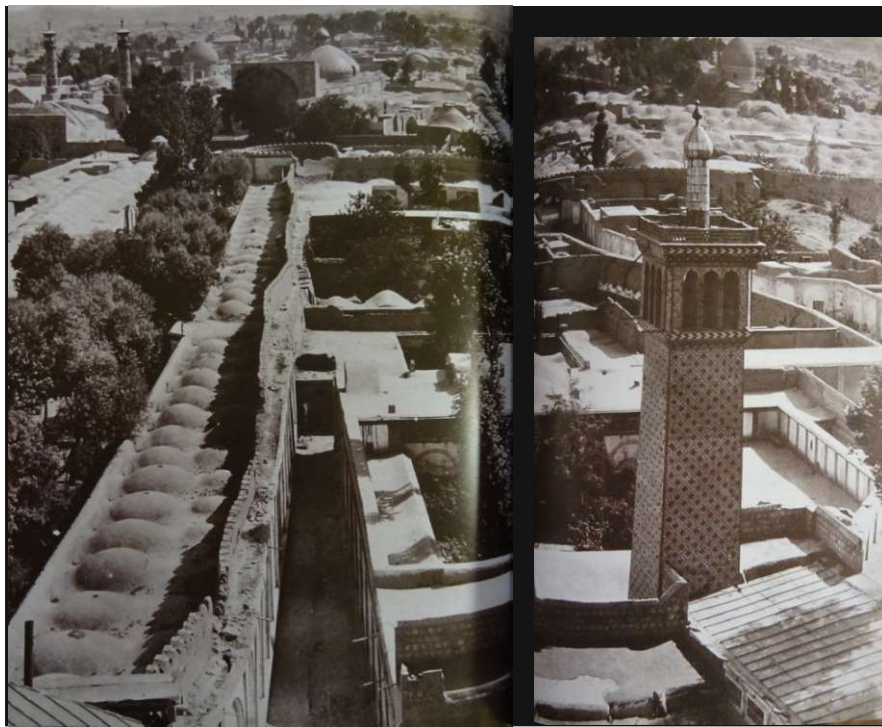


Figure 30. Tehran in the Qajar period

Iran embarked on a modernisation journey during the Qajar era, embracing many Western cultural paradigms. The Qajar dynasty rose to power during Western capital influx and colonial influence. To maintain their rule, the Qajars reinforced the traditional alliance of religion and politics while selectively adopting modern elements, such as contemporary concepts and institutions. The Turkamanchai Treaty of 1828, which saw Iran cede land to Russia, catalysed these reforms, highlighting Iran's subordinate position to the West. This spurred a push towards



technical, artistic, scientific, and socio-economic advancements inspired by Europe. The military's inadequacy against more dominant forces led to a reform movement in the 1830s, initiated by Prince Abbas Mirza to modernise the military. Later, influential figures like Naser al-Din Shah and his progressive prime minister, Amir Kabir, were instrumental in implementing these reforms.

The city's transformation involved reshaping its urban fabric, leading to a new urban structure. The Imperial Bank of Persia was established, introducing a financial institution with international ties, contrasting the traditional bazaar-based economy. Further changes included the creation of Dār ul-Funun, a progressive educational institution, and the introduction of healthcare facilities, a central mint, a standardised police force, and municipal services. Tehran's landscape expanded to include hotels, European-style shops, and a telegraph house. The population increase led to the city's northward expansion as the aristocracy preferred this area for their residents. Iranian architecture's transformation in the Qajar era stemmed from diplomatic relations with Europe and increased contacts with Tsarist Russia and Europe. European embassies and the influence of European Modernism on Iranian architecture became evident. Iranian monarchs also started visiting Europe. Despite the implemented reforms, Naser al-Din Shah showed little enthusiasm for disseminating modern ideologies. However, their impact remained remarkable. This led to dissatisfaction and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911. At this time, some Iranians, educated or engaged in European commerce, urged Iran's leaders to adopt reforms. This advocacy contributed to establishing Iran's constitution and parliament, challenging the Qajar rulers' attempts to consolidate power (Mahdi Nejad et al. 2017; Maxi 1983; Madanipour 1998; Marefat 2004; Newman 2020).

### **Transformation of Tehran in Pahlavi I (1925-1941)**



Figure 31. Tehran in Pahlavi I

Reza Shah Pahlavi, an ex-officer of the Iranian military, became the first Pahlavi monarch in 1925. He pursued a vision to modernize Iran, initiating radical changes, particularly in Tehran. The city's urban landscape was extensively redeveloped to shift from a traditional Oriental image to a more globally recognizable one, affecting the urban fabric's morphology. Tehran became a centralized administrative hub, moving away from Persian traditions with new institutions and structures. State-funded construction provided for these institutions, including Tehran University. Essential services like water and electricity were also expanded. Inspired by Haussmann's Paris, Reza Shah's urban reforms created wide, paved boulevards with separate lanes for pedestrians and vehicles. The labyrinthine layout of the traditional neighbourhoods was replaced by a grid of orthogonal streets, symbolizing a break from clerical dominance. Traditional institutions such as the bazaar now faced the challenge of adapting to the new urban landscape as merchants moved to the new street fronts. The older bazaar streets, unfit for vehicle traffic, were at risk from this redevelopment. The new street grid became the main transportation network, replacing the old maze-like paths (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004). Reza Shah established a unified transportation system to centralize control over Iran and Tehran. In Tehran, the development pursued specific objectives; the main goal was to improve the mobility of the armed forces in the city, thus enhancing the government's power. It aimed to transform the urban landscape into a network allowing accessible goods and capital movement. The plan also sought to overcome old feudal boundaries by linking different residential areas into a unified structure promoting unity. A new road network was established, featuring wide, tree-lined streets intersecting at right angles. This change aimed to dismantle the diverse social fabric of communal neighbourhoods (Figure 32). While urban space commercialization began in the initial stage of Tehran's transformation, the second phase fully integrated the market economy into the city's fabric. The extensive urban development during this period laid the foundation for a new land and property market (Madanipour 1998).

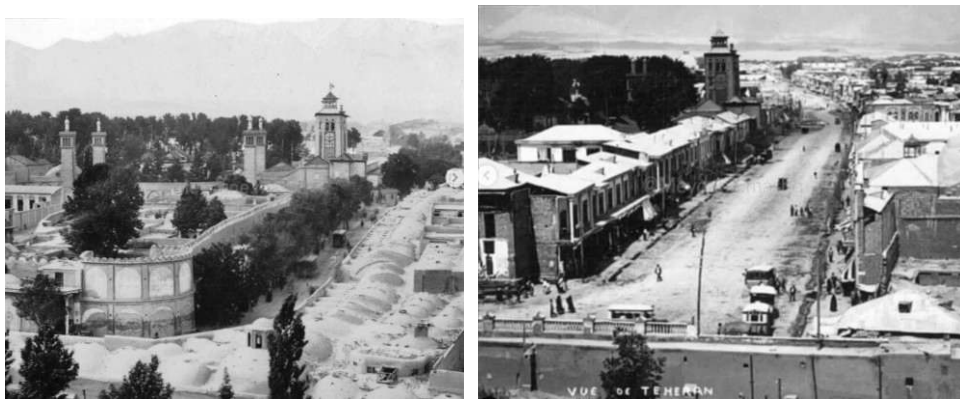


Figure 32. Transform of the street in Naser Khosro St. in Tehran as an example of the transformation of the street from Qajar to Pahlavi I

The trend of suburbanization began in the 1850s with nobility building extensive gardens outside Tehran's borders and accelerated after World War I. Merchants continued their bazaar trade but moved their residences to the suburbs, seeking better northern and western climates. The Sadabad Palace in northern Tehran became the ruler's residence. Smaller palaces were built for the royal family surrounding it. Nearby, high-ranking officials, military bases, and government buildings were established (Madanipour 1998).

Reza Shah's efforts were a powerful demonstration of using architecture to support secular ideals. Establishing Iran's National Bank was critical in asserting economic independence, ending the British bank's long-standing control over Iran's finances and breaking colonial ties. State architecture during this period replaced dominant religious motifs from the 19th century with deliberate pre-Islamic symbols, honouring the grandeur of ancient Persian rulers. These structures, influenced by Early Modernism and German historicism, displayed elements of the Achaemenid legacy. Architects, often educated in the West, adopted the "Ancient Orientation" approach, drawing inspiration from historical monumental designs. With the forced unveiling of women in the 1930s, Tehran's architecture shifted from an inward focus to an external one, reflecting Reza Shah's concern with Western perceptions of Iran and his commitment to modernization and global trends. Seeking to reduce the Western influence, he encouraged the growth of Iranian expertise, resulting in the construction of state buildings by foreign architects from Europe and the emergence of a new cadre of Iranian architects trained abroad and at home. Reza Shah's refusal to expel German engineers during World War II, aiming to counteract British and Russian influences from the Qajar era, led to the Allied occupation of Iran in 1941 and his subsequent exile to South Africa (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004; Interview with Mokhtary in 2017).

### **Transformation of Tehran in Pahlavi II (1941-1979)**



Figure 33. Tehran in Pahlavi II

Mohammad Reza Shah ascended to the throne at 21, following his father, Reza Shah. Post-World War II, Tehran expanded rapidly and without regulation. From 1941, over the next 45 years, the population increased 8.6 times and the city area 12 times, leading to haphazard urban sprawl. Tehran grew outward, absorbing nearby suburban villages and satellite towns. The suburban and intra-urban gardens vanished due to the fast urban expansion, being divided and reconstructed. The Pahlavi rulers' secular focus and the prominence of oil significantly contributed to Tehran's integration into the global economy and its architectural evolution. Tehran became an economic centre and a haven for those escaping the 1970s economic difficulties in the West. The Shah was committed to transforming Tehran into a symbol of modern grandeur. The abundance of oil wealth drew prestigious international architectural firms to Tehran to devise plans that matched the Shah's eclectic aspirations. New local architectural practices formed, often partnering with these foreign firms. Farman-Farmaian's firm, in collaboration with the American company Victor Gruen and Associates, developed the new Tehran Master plan. Numerous private and public developments sprang up to meet the soaring housing demand. Tehran transformed into a bustling global hub, attracting capital, goods, information, and people, creating a cosmopolitan environment. However, the city's infrastructure struggled to keep pace with the rapid growth, leading to a lack of proper sewage systems, public utilities, and public transportation (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004).

Tehran developed a marked physical and social division, separating the north from the south. This split was rooted in environmental and infrastructural differences and income levels. Where mixed-income neighbourhoods once stood, a divergent cultural landscape emerged. The southern part of the city, housing the older quarters, became the centre for religious and traditional communities, typically of lower economic status. In contrast, the secular and modern middle and upper classes were drawn to the north with proximity to the mountains, water origins, and better environmental conditions. In 1956, the southern region reached a high population density of 610 persons per hectare, while the north consistently had a lower density (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004).



## Transformation of Tehran after the Islamic Revolution (1979 until present)



Figure 34. Contemporary Tehran

Tehran's history intertwines traditional and religious disputes with modernity. After nearly fifty years of modernization and globalization, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 transformed Iran into an Islamic State with Tehran as its capital. This shift led foreign architects to leave, severing the city's Western connections established by a long-standing open-door policy. The secular bureaucracy of the Pahlavi era quickly adapted to the Islamic regime's by-laws and principles. Once forced to unveil, women now incorporated veils into their dresses (Figure 35). Gender-based segregation became official, with public buildings introducing separate entrances for men and women. The Islamic Republic instituted laws echoing Reza Shah's secularization efforts. After the revolution, Islamic slogans replaced pre-Islamic and Neo-Achaemenid images on public monuments. The U.S.-backed Iraqi invasion aimed to limit the spread of Islamic revolutions, igniting an eight-year war with a global impact. New mosques proliferated in Tehran, aligning with modern housing developments. These mosques became vital for distributing food coupons and political orders during times of scarcity and conflict, extending their role beyond religious and social gathering spaces. Murals of clerics and martyrs became prominent on building exteriors (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004).



Figure 35. Transform of women's clothes in public in Tehran; From left to right; A) late Qajar; B) Pahlavi I; C) Pahlavi II; D) Contemporary

Currently, Tehran is the central point for decision-making, the economic engine, and the administrative core of Iran. It continues to draw many seeking opportunities. The city features an extensive metro and public transport network, making travel between areas efficient. Tehran's expansion reflects social class divisions, growing along two distinct trajectories.

In Tehran, the wealthy continue to build homes in the northern district, while the eastern and southern quarters are populated mainly by those of lower socioeconomic status. The cityscape is rapidly changing, with permissions for constructing high-rise apartments being readily approved. Surprisingly, apartments are now emerging on mountain slopes, challenging the steep terrain. Departing from traditional practices, the replication of Western architectural styles continues under the present government, reminiscent of past policies. A new generation of Iranian architects, educated both locally and abroad, are designing large-scale projects. Many architecture schools throughout Iran match this architectural drive (Madanipour 1998; Marefat 2004, p.15).

Tehran has evolved from a small village into a vast city, mainly due to the influx of migrants. Its expansion has absorbed nearby towns and villages, expanding its boundaries. Currently, most of Tehran's residents come from various parts of Iran. Urbanization has commercialized social ties and fostered individualism, with people becoming less bound by social and



environmental ties. However, the family institution maintains its significant role in society (Madanipour 1998).

In Iran, the progression of information and communication technology started with the telegraph in 1857. This was followed by the telephone in 1887, radio in 1930, television in 1957, computers in 1962, mobile networks in 1983, and internet services in 1989. Over the years, these technologies have become increasingly accessible to the public (Borna News 2021). Unofficially, satellite dishes are widely used in Iran, connecting people to global TV channels. Despite some government efforts to isolate culturally, Iran and Tehran are curious about and engaged with the world (Marefat 2004, p.15). Migration, media, and communication link nations and reshape traditions, leading to new national ethics (Azad Armaki 2007, cited in Forouzmand 2013, p.37). New paradigms and professions are changing Iranian society, affecting how people interact. These changes have also transformed Tehran's urban landscape, with communication technologies altering social engagement (Forouzmand 2013, p.75).

With urban life progression, family life and the concept of home have significantly changed. Traditional activities such as dining, entertainment, socializing, and hosting events are increasingly occurring outside the home. Restaurants, cafes, country getaways, parks, event spaces, stadiums, movie theatres, streets, shopping centres, and other public spaces have taken over roles once confined to the home environment (Forouzmand 2013, p.84).

The high land cost has led to the development of smaller, more compact homes (Madanipour 1998, p. 91). Urbanization and development have shifted housing from traditional personal homes to modern apartments and complexes. Building patterns have changed from detached, low-rise houses with courtyards to outward-looking, medium-rise buildings with courtyards, followed by prevalent high-rise apartments with vertically connected units and extroverted designs. Traditional spatial features of Iranian homes are being replaced by attributes that suit modern life. Changes in social dynamics, individual views, and cultural paradigms are shaping new living styles (Madanipour 1998, Forouzmad 2013, p.7-8; 99-100). These changes will be explored in detail in the forthcoming dissertation, including findings from fieldwork.

## **Challenges and opportunities**

The transformation of Tehran has led to both opportunities and distinctive challenges. As Marefat (2004, p.15) notes, the city's evolution is characterized by conflicting movements towards modernity and a return to tradition, resulting in a complex mix of modernizing and globalizing Islamic culture. This dichotomy has caused a form of "cultural schizophrenia," where Tehran is torn between being modern and traditional, often incorporating Western

elements while ideologically opposing them. Consequently, Tehran finds itself uniquely positioned to be both connected to the global scene and isolated.

In the 1920s and 1930s, power in Tehran became more centralized, expanding the military and administrative bodies and drawing more people to the city. The 1960s saw economic growth spurring a population influx as traditional ties to agriculture weakened and industrialization accelerated, with Tehran as the focal point of this development. The 1970s brought a boom in construction due to the oil industry's prosperity, attracting construction labourers to Tehran. Post-revolution, the new government's policies of providing complimentary or affordable services and housing encouraged further migration. The war in Iran's southwest also drove many to seek safety in larger cities like Tehran. This influx of people from varied ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds has resulted in continuous social influx. In this changing environment, old institutions have been reshaped or replaced by new ones. These shifts, indicative of the fluidity of social norms, can be seen within the context of the Iranian revolutions (Madanipour 1998).

Living in the capital city of Tehran presents challenges such as pollution, heavy traffic, dense population, lack of an adequate sewage system, water shortages, and high living costs. Previously, the state was the primary sponsor of urban development, but now it funds only a fraction. The city's former mayor, known for his creativity, sparked significant debate by seeking unconventional solutions to Tehran's chronic and new problems. For example, certain city areas ban personal car use, and new highways have been built to improve transportation. Despite these efforts, traffic congestion continues to plague Tehran, along with persistent sewage issues (Marefat 2004).

Tehran's population growth and the reinvestment of oil revenues in urban land and development demand have led to rising land prices and higher population densities. Although planning regulations traditionally control density, requiring a specific allocation of open space in new developments, the potential for high rents incentivizes developers to exceed the permitted construction levels. The municipality has allowed surplus development in exchange for financial compensation, facilitating the expansion of low-density areas or the construction of high-rise luxury apartments to manage this. Sometimes, the municipality partners with private developers to profit from selling these apartments.

However, such practices often lead to issues that provoke public dissent, including the violation of planning rules by the authorities, increased neighbourhood density without infrastructure improvements and parking provisions, loss of green and open spaces, and invasion of residential privacy. The municipality has proposed four- to six-story height restrictions to

address these problems. However, the municipality's financial dependence on land and property development for revenue makes it vulnerable to property market fluctuations, with potential reductions in income during market downturns (Madanipour 1998, p.79-81).

The difference between the poor and the rich in Tehran is becoming more expansive, noticeable in the city's structure. Experts are worried that social media is creating new desires, pushing Iran toward more consumerism and a focus on luxury. This emphasis on consumption and material values could make wealth and consumption the central values, which might become more important than other values or areas of life, such as social relations. This could show more people displaying wealth, a more significant divide between social classes, and more social inequality (IMNA 2021). At the same time, Iranian women are playing a more significant role in society compared to the past. They do less housework and spend less time raising children, leading to significant changes in social and cultural life (Mirmoghtadaee 2009; Forouzmand 2013, p.75).

## **Family**

Historically, the family has been the core of many social activities like working, consuming, learning, socializing, having children, playing, and home life in Iran. The extended, patriarchal family has been influential in giving social and financial support to people of all ages, including those who are married. There is a strong tradition of encouraging family life based on family values from Islamic beliefs and pre-Islamic customs. It has historically been customary for people to get married early in life (Aghajanian et al. 2018, p.1).

The shift from extended to nuclear families became more common in Iran in the early 21st century. This shift was partly due to economic changes from farming to industry and services. Government interventions like housing policies and wartime ration distribution also emphasized the importance of the nuclear family. Higher land costs made smaller households more common. The rise of nuclear families led to a decrease in the average family size to about four members. Other changes included older ages for first marriages and higher divorce rates. Despite these changes, family and kinship remain essential, especially for socialization and as support networks to help with economic and social challenges (Madanipour 1998).

There is a noticeable drop in the rate of marriages in Iran, alongside a rise in informal temporary relationships, as noted by Aghajanian et al. (2018, p.1). These trends suggest a shift towards views that favour a more contemporary outlook and challenge traditional expectations around marriage. They also reflect changing attitudes favouring individualism, secularism, and the intentional delay of starting a family.

Between 1975-1980 and 2005-2010, Iran experienced the most significant percentage decrease in fertility rates globally, according to the United Nations Population Division. A vital aspect of this rapid fertility decline is the change in how people form unions, with a marked increase in the age at first marriage for both men and women (Aghajanian et al. 2018, p.1).

Polygamy has traditionally been a practice among affluent or influential Iranian men, typically under specific economic and cultural circumstances and associated with status. However, the recent promotion of polygamy by a traditionalist minority as a solution to the growing number of unmarried women has sparked widespread protests in Iran and on social media. This opposes the contemporary woman's view towards marriage and desire for economic independence (Karbalai 2019).

## Environment and health

The central government and Tehran's municipal authorities face considerable pressure to provide essential services amidst high population density. Despite the public and private sectors striving to improve housing quality and pursue rapid development, meeting the rising housing needs remains a significant challenge. Water access is critical; far from major rivers, Tehran's location necessitates reliance on distant water sources. Significant dams have been constructed on the Karaj, Jajrud, and Laar rivers in the Alborz Mountains to address this and supply the capital with water. However, the absence of a comprehensive sewage treatment system has led to contamination and depletion of groundwater. The mismanagement of this polluted water mainly affects the city's southern areas (Madanipour 2022).

Tehran is grappling with serious environmental issues like air and water pollution, land degradation, and noise. Emissions from vehicles, household fuels, and industrial activities cause air pollution. The city's proximity to mountains and limited rainfall prevent polluted air from dispersing. Much of the year, pollution from fossil fuels is trapped under a dome of warm air. Without solid north winds to clear the air, prevailing winds from the west, south, and southeast bring more pollution from industrial areas (Madanipour 2022).

## Education

Before modern education emerged in early 20th century Iran, children learned under a religious teacher in a *Maktab*. From about age five to ten, both girls and boys studied together. After that, girls who continued their education went to a separate *Maktab* for girls. However, for most girls, education usually ended at that point (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Iranica 2011). The 19th-century push for modernization in Iran led to the establishment of Daar al-Fonun in Tehran in 1851, with many instructors from Austria and France teaching technological

subjects. The founding of the University of Tehran in 1934 was a pivotal event, followed by the creation of various universities, teacher colleges, and technical schools. After the Revolution, many private higher education institutions were nationalized and merged into more prominent universities. The Ministry of Higher Education and Culture oversees universities, while the Ministry of Education and Training manages the public school system. Education is mandatory for children aged 6 to 11, with literacy rates around 80% for men and 66% for women. After primary school, students enter a three-year guidance cycle before high school, receiving a diploma (Figure 36). A competitive national exam determines university admission. Since 2000, women have made up over half of the new university students (Madanipour 2022; Mostofi 2022).



Figure 36. Transformation of school in Tehran from a) *Maktab* in late Qajar; b) A girl school in late Pahlavi I; c) A contemporary girl school

Young people in Iran face hurdles in finding jobs. The mismatch between education and job requirements is a significant issue in the labour market. This problem exists despite considerable investments in training human resources, particularly in higher education, in line with national policies of recent years. Graduates' employment is affected by this mismatch and a lack of focus on job skills needed in the market. As a result, unemployment rates for those with higher education are higher than in other groups. Employment chances are also limited by a reduction in public sector jobs (Aghajanian et al. 2018, p.1; Dartoomi et al. 2017).



Since the 1979 revolution, many educated Iranians have emigrated due to economic difficulties. In recent decades, scientists, scholars, artists, and intellectuals have left for better opportunities abroad. Many Iranian students stay overseas after their studies, contributing their skills to their new countries. This brain drain takes away vital intellectual capital that could help Iran's struggling economy, which also suffers from international sanctions. The trend suggests to those remaining that better jobs are found elsewhere. Iran's infrastructure has also struggled to keep up with the population, which has doubled since 1979 to 83 million. Research from Stanford University indicates that emigration from Iran has tripled during this time (Mahmoudi 2021).

# The built-environment



Figure 37. Darband in 2021

The focus of this thesis is on Darband. I will explore the evolution of Shemiran's and Darband's built landscapes throughout the transformation and suggest planning guidelines for future enhancements. This analysis will extend beyond individual houses to include the broader architectural context and local settlement activities. I will first identify various elements of the settlement's architectural heritage, such as religious buildings, historical graveyards, public baths, gardens, *koushks*, *Qanats*, coffeehouses, shops, and residential structures. After examining the transformation of the house, I will discuss the transformation of traditional building materials and methods.

The urban planning section will address the spatial organisation of the settlement in Shemiran and Darband, the urban planning strategies employed during different historical periods that have impacted Tehran and Darband, specific urban plans that have influenced Darband, and the growth of Darband through the expansion of its settlements.

## Traditional architecture

This part goes through the different architectural elements of settlement in Shemiran and Darband, following their respective transformation to give a background for analysis of the settlement of Darband.

## Religious structures and symbols

This section offers a brief overview of the building traditions surrounding religious buildings in Shemiran, including their transformation and development. It also touches on how locals treat these sacred monuments, giving insight into the lifestyles of Shemiran's residents. Presently, Shemiran hosts diverse structures with spiritual significance, such as mosques, *Tek Yehs*, *Imam Zadehs*, and *Sagha Khanes*.

### Location of religious structures

Mountains have always held a special significance for the ancients due to their height, echoes, and grandeur. In Iranian culture, certain mountains are noted for their symbolic and mythical importance, and structures built upon them, particularly significant ones, were often considered sacred (Dariush et al., 2018, p. 30). Historical accounts suggest that a Zoroastrian castle and fire temple from the pre-Islamic religion of Iran were situated north of Darband and in Pasghale, within the mountains (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021).

Rayy was among the first areas to become a settlement for Shiite Muslims<sup>20</sup>. Starting in 945, with Rayy as the capital under the Shiite Buyid dynasty, the nearby Alborz mountain region also developed into settlements for Shiite communities, including religious shrines. This trend continued under the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736), leading to the formation of religious structures such as *Tek Yehs*, mosques, and shrines. Many villages in Shemiran are known for their specific shrines, highlighting the role of religion in the area. For instance, Imam Zadeh Ibrahim to the north of Darband in the mountains and Imam Zadeh Saleh in Tajrish to the south are notable examples (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021). Historically, Darband was home to renowned religious Sadats, known for writing prayers, creating a religious community centred in the old core of Mir-Mahalleh. Qajar kings would visit some of these figures. The grave of Seied Ali Darbandi is located in an alley where long-term residents still visit to pray and pay respects (Figure 21).

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20: The City of Rayy was located south of current Tehran. It was one of the capital cities of Iran before and after the conquest of Islam (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica).

## Mosques

A mosque is where believers of Islam line up and face the *Qibla* to pray. Like a church, it also serves as a gathering place (Ghaedan 2007, p. 112). In Islamic communities, each neighbourhood typically had a mosque. Beyond religious practices, the Friday mosque also played critical political and social roles. The Prophet Muhammad's first mosque in Madinah had a large courtyard leading to a covered hall known as the *Shabestan*, directing towards the Kaaba. This layout became the standard for future mosques. Both the courtyard and *Shabestan* are used for prayer, with the *Shabestan* housing the *Mihrab*, a niche indicating the *Qibla*, often adorned with decorations. The mosque's furnishings are simple, with the *Minbar* being the preacher's seat. The mosque also has carpets, low tables, elaborate lighting, Qurans, and a space for ablution.

Historically, as the largest building in an Iranian settlement, the mosque did not have standout features. As settlements grew, entrances were raised, or a *Menareh* tower was added for visibility. The *Menareh* is where the call to prayer is made (Habibi 2008; 2009).

Over time, from the earliest mosques in the Islamic world and Iran to Today, the elements and details of these structures have evolved. Various mosques followed the Prophet's first mosque pattern two hundred years after Islam's inception. Traditionally, a mosque is where the open space leads to the semi-open space followed by closed space through a hierarchal pattern. The main structural elements of the traditional mosque include:

- An entrance with a portal and corridor, sometimes leading to ablution spaces.
- The *Sahn* (courtyard) with gardens, *Iwans* (porches), and a path to more enclosed areas. *Sahn* was a relaxing space with a pool- *Hoz* - away from the hustle and bustle of the street and alley to do ablution and relax before entering the praying area.
- *Shabestans* or seasonal prayer halls, and *Sagha Khane* near the *Sahn* or entrance.
- *Menarehs* around the *Gonbad*, dome or by the entrance portal.
- *Hojre* as the living quarters for the cleric or mosque caretaker.
- A *Gonbad*.
- An upper balcony in the *Shabestan*.
- The *Mihrab* and *Minbar* within the *Shabestan* (Habibi 2008; 2009).

Inscriptions or *Katibeh* are among the most significant pieces of Islamic art being followed in mosques, where calligraphy is used as an ornamentation, and most of the time, it quotes part of the Quran on the mosque's wall. Tiling of the mosque's *Mihrab* may also include engravings and flowers symbolically referring to heaven. The ornamental arts became more elaborated

during the centuries. Since drawing the human body is not accepted by Islam, the mosque artists created abstract and semi-abstract patterns. Geometrical shapes, flowerly patterns called *Eslimi*, usage of relaxing colours in tiling and *Katibeh*, plastering and use of glass and mirrors as *Aineh Kary* have evolved during the centuries and became more elaborated in the *Mihrab* and *Gonbad* (Habibi 2009, p. 13-15; Habibi 2008, p. 37, 42). Other elements were added with the improvement in construction techniques and the needs that the mosque could fulfil. Mosques were combined with schools, including *Hojre* or rooms for students and scholars, a library, prominent ablution places, public baths, and kitchens (Habibi 2008, 2009) (Figure 38).

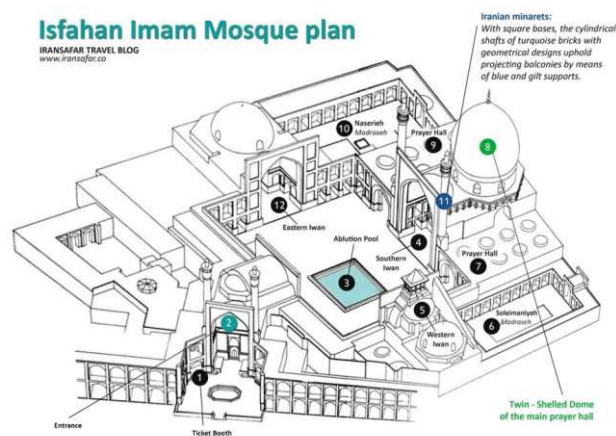


Figure 38. Shah Mosque in Isfahan, Iran, was built in the Safavid era

Post-1979 Islamic Revolution, reinvigorating religion in daily life became a focus in Iran. Numerous new mosques were established across cities. Religious architecture during this period often emphasised decorative elements, drawing on historical religious motifs, including arches, domes, and tilework (Marefat 2004, p. 15; Mahdi Nejad et al. 2017). Contemporary Iranian mosques, including those transformed old mosques in Tehran, have been adapted to include new spaces like trustee offices, kitchenettes, funeral halls, and storage for religious ceremony items. The *Sahn* (courtyard) in these mosques has often been reduced or enclosed to expand indoor space. Restoration efforts sometimes lack precision, leading to the replacement of original tiles and calligraphy (Habibi 2008; 2009).

In Shemiran, each neighbourhood traditionally had several mosques, but most old mosques are now abandoned, transformed, or rebuilt. Traditional mosques used local materials, often sourced from specialised workshops. However, contemporary renovations frequently incorporate modern materials like concrete and brick to enhance safety and longevity (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021).



## Small mosques

Traditionally, in Shemiran's centres of historic fabrics, essential community facilities like markets, baths, and mosques were typically clustered together. It was common for individuals to dedicate a space adjacent to their home or business for communal prayer, leading to the construction of small mosques. These buildings might not have looked like traditional mosques, but the community recognised them as such. Accessible at all hours, these mosques served as sanctuaries for needy travellers. Often, they bore the name of the founder or their tribe, a legacy left by the benefactors. Such mosques also became gathering places for individuals sharing the founder's social status or profession (Shahre man shemiran 2022). The Pasghale mosque is an example of this community-built mosque, featuring an entrance with ablution facilities and a prayer room (Figure 39).

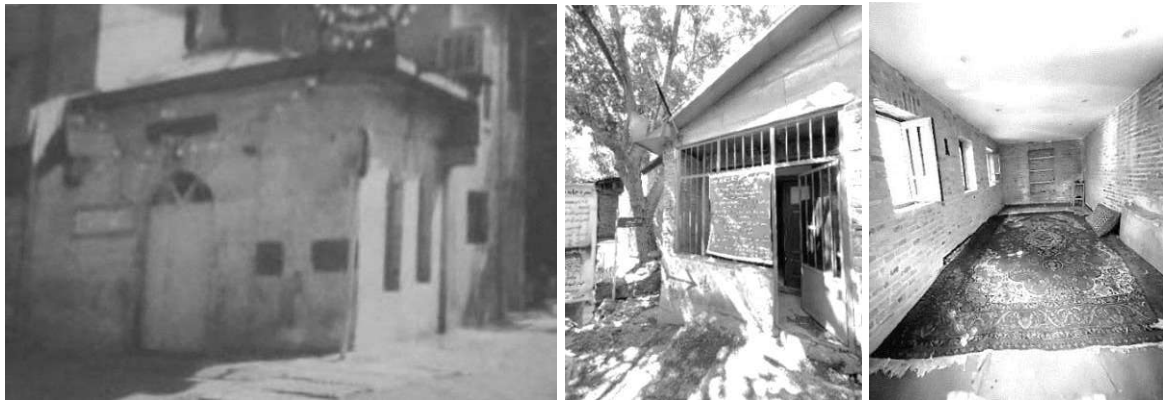


Figure 39. From left to right: a) Small mosque of Agha Sheikh-Ali in Shemiran; b & c) Mosque of Pasghale

## Friday mosque of Darband

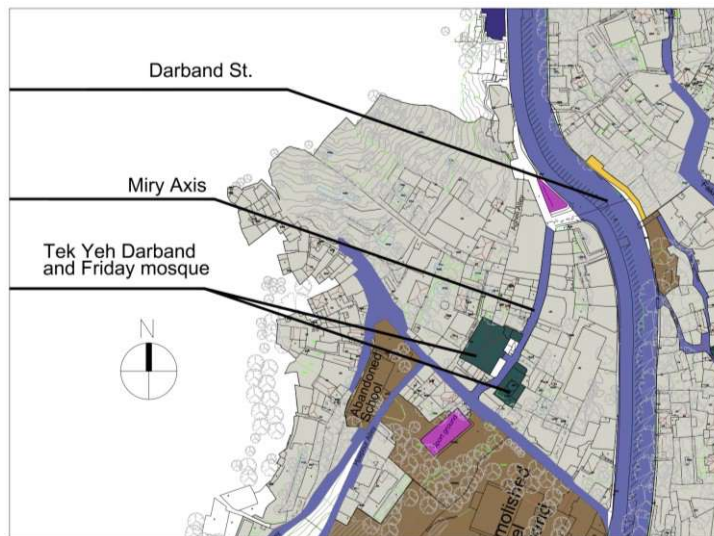


Figure 40. Friday mosque and Tek Yeh Darband in Mir Mahalleh

The Friday mosque in Darband is nestled in the old axis of Miry Alley at the heart of the historic core of Mir-Mahalleh. According to insights from long-time residents and specialists, this

mosque, like many in Shemiran, initially lacked a *Menareh* and *Gonbad*. Its traditional design featured a high ceiling, a tin galvanised gable roof, thatch walls, and wooden columns. The men's wooden entry led to a large courtyard (*Sahn*) with a pool (*Hoz*) for ablutions, while women traditionally performed ablutions at home. Darband's water channels flowed into the *Hoz*, and at the corners were a few toilets and a small kitchenette in a corridor for tea preparation. Men entered the *Shabestan*, a room with three wooden doors or *se-dary*, through the *Sahn*. The *Shabestan* housed a *Mihrab*, and women accessed a separate area through their own entrance, divided by a curtain on the same floor. As the population grew, a circular staircase was added for women to reach a balcony over the men's *Shabestan*. Many prayers would be done in the *Sahn*, especially those of celebrative *Eids*. Reflecting Shemiran's architectural style, the old mosques, with their gable roofs, expressed a mutual sense of Shemiran-ness among the Shemiran community rather than the individual expression of the religious community. The traditional mosque was reconstructed in 2006 due to safety concerns. The new design, featuring a *Gonbad* and entrance portal, aligns more with typical Iranian mosques and has a more Muslim identity look, reflecting the Islamic government's influence. The contemporary mosque boasts a larger *Shabestan* and a reduced open space area, possibly to increase the revenue from funeral services. It incorporates durable contemporary materials like concrete structure, granite decorative stones, metal doors and windows, and ornamental tiling, particularly around the entrance. The new *Shabestan*, beneath a high-ceiling *Gonbad*, has a *Mihrab* and a curtain dividing the space for men and women. Women access their balcony via stairs. The men's entrance remains in the exact location but now features a metal door. The area previously housing toilets now includes more toilets and ablution facilities. Adjacent to the women's entrance is a large kitchen for use during prayers, ceremonies, and funerals. Inside the mosque, the *Shabestan*'s tiles display Quranic verses, with quotes from the Qoflie prayer to the right of the *Mihrab* and the Faraj prayer for Imam Zaman, the last Imam of Shiites, to the left. The ceiling above the *Mihrab* showcases *Aineh Kari*. Group prayers are held at noon and evening, attended by both men and women (Interview with Miry in 2021; Mousavi Zadeh 2019) (Figure 40, Figure 41).



Figure 41. Friday mosque of Darband

## ***Tek Yeh***



Figure 42. Ashura religious ceremony in Tek Yeh Darband

The *Tek Yeh* in Darband is a significant cultural and spiritual hub where many religious ceremonies are held. Historical accounts from long-term residents reveal that the traditional *Tek Yeh* featured walls of thatch and a large veil known as *Kheimeh*, which would be reinforced with ropes. During the reign of Pahlavi I, religious ceremonies were suppressed, leading people to enter through concealed doors and conduct their practices in interconnected rooms. The prohibition was lifted in the era of Pahlavi II, allowing for the free practice of religion once again. This resulted in the demolition or reconstruction of many traditional *Tek Yehs* dating back to the Qajar period in Pahlavi I and II, respectively. These structures were typically quadrangular or hexagonal in Shemiran (Interview with Miry in 2021; Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021) (Figure 43).



According to Mehrabi (2016), Haddadi (2021), Mousavi Zadeh (2019), an interview with Ebrahim Zadeh (2021), and long-term residents of Darband and observations, the land and water resources for the *Tek Yeh* were often endowments by individuals, and significant clans sometimes collaborated in their construction. The *Tek Yeh* of Darband believed to be around two centuries old, is situated opposite the Friday mosque in the old axis of Miry (Figure 40). It has green gable roofs similar to many old *Tek Yehs* of Shemiran with a central skylight. The gable roof made from galvanised tin was added during the first Pahlavi period and was later adorned with *Lambeh Koubi* woodwork in 1983. Restorations have introduced modern materials like concrete and stone while maintaining the traditional poplar wood columns, with additional support added more recently. The *Tek Yeh* houses several small rooms, *Taagh Nama*, and an enormous *Talar* hall for clerics and local trustees, elevated 1.5 meters above the other areas. These *Taagh Namas* are traditionally associated with the different clans of Darband, serving as social gathering spots. The *Tek Yeh* is designed with a high platform for the *Ta'zieh*—a form of Condolence Theatre commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hussein. The ground floor, dedicated to men, features a kitchen, Mihrab, and library, with an area for women separated by a curtain. Women can access a private dead-end alley and ascend to a balcony that provides a view over the men's area, shielded by wooden latticework. *Tek Yeh* Charity for Women and the library have separate doors from another dead-end alley. Art and homage play a significant role in the *Tek Yeh's* atmosphere, with pictures of late clergies, anecdotes honouring Imam Hussain, and paintings of his shrine. Memorials for Iran-Iraq war martyrs are also present. The *Tek Yeh* holds an *Alamat*, the artefact for the recitations of Imam Hussain, a *Hejle* for mourning the young deceased, and a cradle representing Hazrat Ali Asghar. During Muharram, the *Tek Yeh* becomes the centre of commemoration for Imam Hussain, offering food prepared by families who hold vows, believing that sharing this food can bring healing. The *Nakhl Gardani* ceremony, symbolising the burial of Imam Hossain's body, is also observed here (Figure 43).

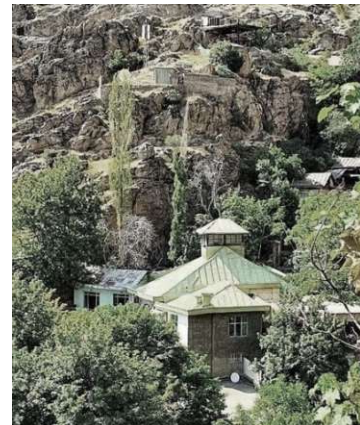




Figure 43. From left to right; a) Traditional Kheimeh in Tek Yeh Sadat Akhavi; b) Current view of Tek Yeh of Pasghale; c) View to Tek Yeh Darband

## Shrine or *Imam Zadeh*

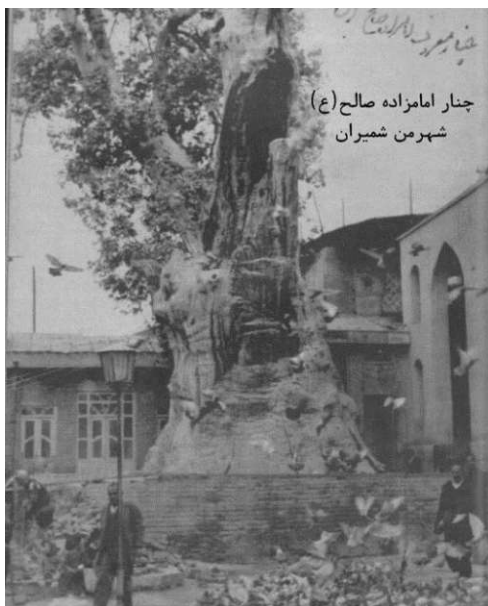


Figure 44. Imam Zadeh Saleh in Tajrish, in the south of Darband, and its famous plane tree in Pahlavi I

An *Imam Zadeh* refers to a descendant of a Shia imam and their burial site (Moin Encyclopaedia Dictionary). Historians note that the migration of Shia Imams' descendants to Iran was due to the nation's security from the 2nd century AH, away from the turmoil of Baghdad and Syria (Jafarian 2006, p. 159). Shiites believe *Imam Zadehs* can perform miracles and cure illnesses. To grant wishes, people make vows and give away items like chocolates, sandwiches, and nuts. Visiting rituals at *Imam Zadehs* include taking a purifying bath, reciting praises to God, kissing the shrine's entrance, and prostrating, among others. These practices are encouraged by religious leaders and are widespread among visitors (IRNA 2013). Older *Imam Zadehs*, built during the Safavid era, have been restored in the Qajar era, with each period's domes and decorations reflecting its style. Nowadays, it is expected to see *Imam Zadehs* being wholly rebuilt, especially the courtyards, leading to the enlargement of closed space and the destruction of old graves (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021). To reach Imam Zadeh



Ibrahim, one must hike 3km from Sarband square, ascend 151 steps at 1975m elevation, pass by a flowing river to the west, and Pasghale village to the east (Figure 45).

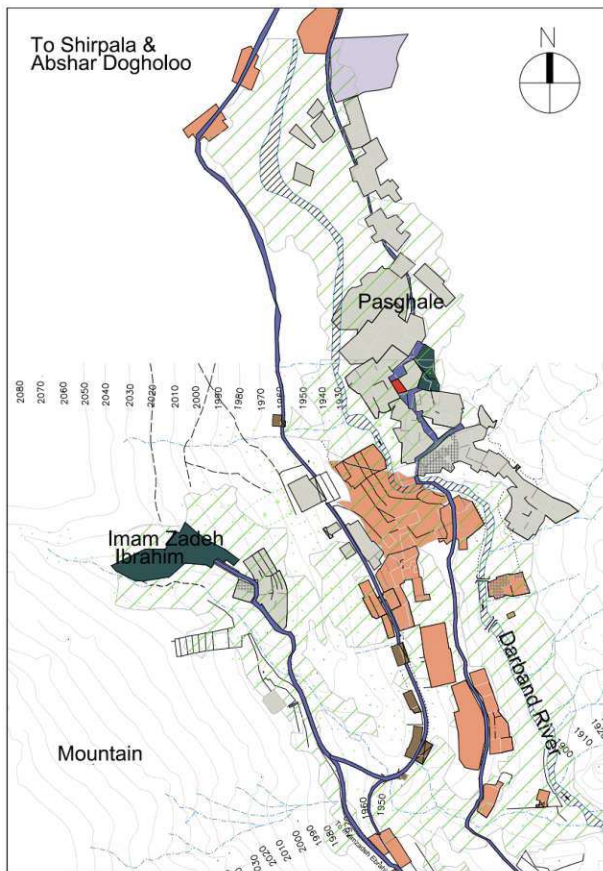


Figure 45. Location of Imam Zadeh Ibrahim

Before renovations, *Imam Zadeh* featured a brick gateway with a green metal door, a small trapezoidal courtyard of 30 m<sup>2</sup>, and a quadrangle stone shrine measuring four by four meters. An eastern *Iwan* served as its entrance. The grave lay within a wooden lattice structure known as a *Zarih*. The *Imam Zadeh's* endowments included a *Sagha Khane*, a traditional teahouse called *Sofreh Khane*, and a garden. It used to have a green-pitched roof. The housekeeping of *Imam Zadeh* has been within the Abshary family for three generations now. The structures have been rebuilt into a broader area starting in 2015 for safety reasons with new materials and a dome, expressing a more Muslim look now. The *Imam Zadeh* now sits in a large, old courtyard which accommodates family graves from Pasghale and memorials to Iran-Iraq war martyrs. The original *Sagha Khane* is gone, replaced by an expanded tea house. The room for supervising has been added along with an electric post, the housekeeper's house, and toilets. Due to the increasing number of visitors, the entrance of women is separated from the men, unlike in the past. The wooden *Zarih* was demolished over the years. Paintings such as the blessed engraving of Imam Ali (AS) on the skin and the pilgrimage of the heir as *Ziarat-e-vares*

are among the historical works that decorate the shrine's walls (Sotoudeh 1995, Mostafavi 1952; Adousi 2019; Interview with Abshary in 2021; Le Du 1996) (Figure 46, Figure 47).



Figure 46. Imam Zadeh Ibrahim and Zarih before the renovation



Figure 47. Imam Zadeh Ibrahim after the transformation in 2021

## *Sagha Khane*

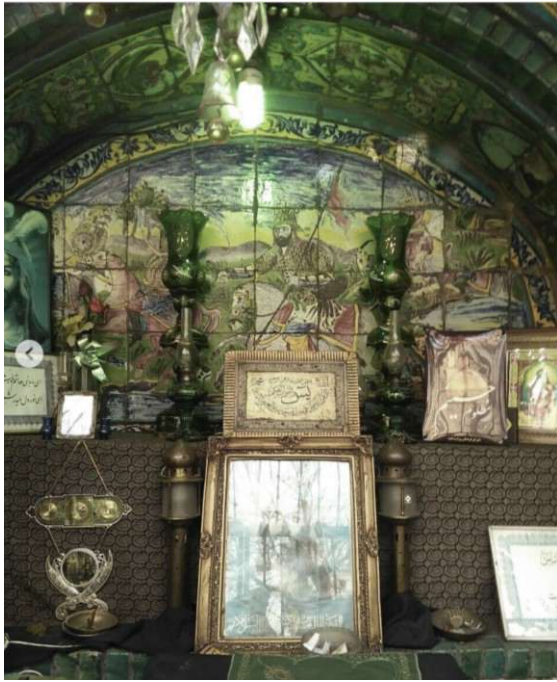


Figure 48. *Sagha Khane of Karbalai Abas Ali in Tehran*

A *Sagha Khane* is a spiritual place found along public paths where water is provided to quench the thirst of passersby, reminding them of Imam Hussain's suffering in the desert of Karbala. The water element is central to a *Sagha Khane*, symbolising the ancient Persian water goddess Anahita. It also commemorates Hazrat Abbas's role in providing water at Karbala. The word *Sagha* means the provider of water. People often greet Imam Hussain and Hazrat Abbas before and after drinking. During Muharram, especially on Asura day, water and juice are distributed symbolically among mourning groups. The tradition of *Sagha Khane* likely began in the Safavid era with the officialization of Shia Islam. These structures, often endowed by benefactors, are not for sale. Wealthy believers build and endow drinking fountains to leave a legacy and earn merit for the afterlife. Many stories and miracles of *Sagha Khane* are part of popular lore, including the belief that lighting a candle there can fulfil wishes, such as helping unmarried girls find a spouse (Haghighi Rad 2022).

*Sagha Khane*'s architecture can be categorised into three typologies: cube-shaped, cylindrical, or octagonal structures with facades on all sides with sliding doors and windows; shop-shaped structures common in Tehran; and shelf-shaped niches integrated into adjacent buildings. Stone and brickwork, often around entrances, are vital decorative elements. Tiling, sometimes depicting Ashura events and figures like Imam Hussain and Hazrat Abul Fazl, is common. Mirrors and *Aineh Kary* are also featured in décor. Tools in *Sagha Khane* are simple and include items such as the *Sangab*, a hollow stone for water drainage, and inscribed bowls.



Symbols like candles, locks, paws, and the colour green, representing Shia Islam, are customary (Haghighi Rad 2022; Atiabi 2004).

Today, few *Sagha Khanes* remain visible in cities, with many destroyed or neglected. The advent of water piping has reduced their traditional role, but modern equivalents, such as water coolers, continue this legacy in public spaces. Some are adorned with religious symbols such as tiles with greetings on Imam Hussain or a golden bowl with a paw (Haghighi Rad 2022) (Figure 49).



Figure 49. From left to right; a & b) *Sagha Khane* in Tehran; c) The former *Sagha Khane* of Imam Zadeh Ibrahim before the renovation; d) The contemporary water cooler in Sarband as the endowment of the martyrs of Darband in Iran-Iraq war

## Old cemeteries of Darband

The old cemetery of Darband has been converted into a public park in Bagh Shater, where only a few graves remain. Many long-term residents gather here for religious observances during the Ashura festival. The area, especially Mir-Mahalleh, became known for its religious community due to renowned Sadat prayer writers, attracting Qajar royalty for visits. The grave of Seyyed Ali Darbandi, a noted prayer writer, lies in the middle of an alley in the western part of Mir Mahalleh, marking what is left of the old Darband graveyard (Figure 50, Figure 51).

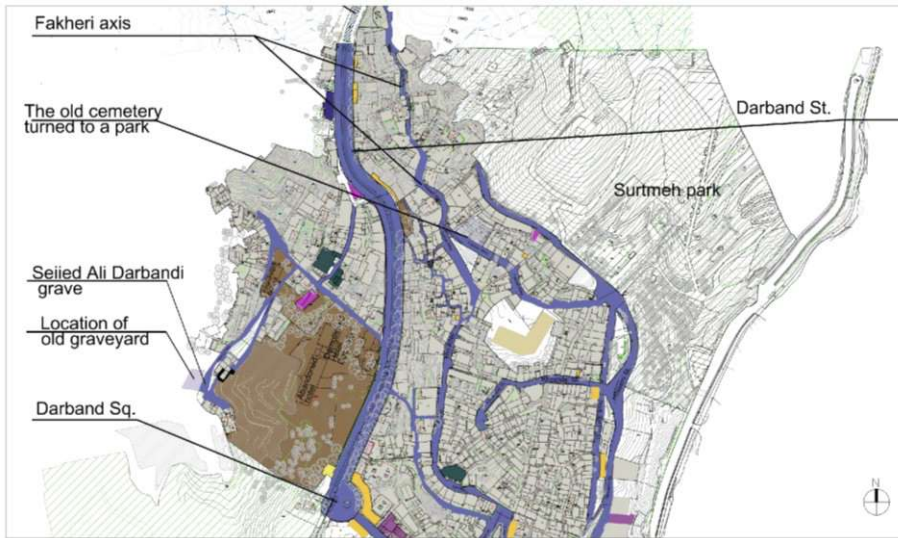


Figure 50. Location of old cemeteries of Darband



Figure 51. From left to right: a) The place of the old cemetery in Bagh-Shater in Ashura; b) The Grave of Seyyed Ali Darbandi in Mir-Mahalleh

The Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum is also situated southeast of Darband. Mirza Ali Khan Dulawi Qajar, known as Zahir al-Dowleh, served as the Minister of Special Ceremonies under Nasir al-Din Shah and married Shah's daughter. He became a disciple of Safi Ali Shah, adopting the ascetic lifestyle of a dervish. Upon Safi Ali Shah's death, Zahir al-Dowleh succeeded him in the title. He constructed a monastery where he and his disciples gathered, which became his final resting place upon his death. The site was henceforth known as "Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum." Due to his wide acceptance across various social strata, numerous artists, politicians, and scientists chose to be interred in this mausoleum. Burials were halted there in the 1960s (Hamshahri Online Newspaper, 2019) (Figure 52). Today, the Zahir al-Dowleh



Mausoleum remains a popular site for visitors and art enthusiasts in Iran.

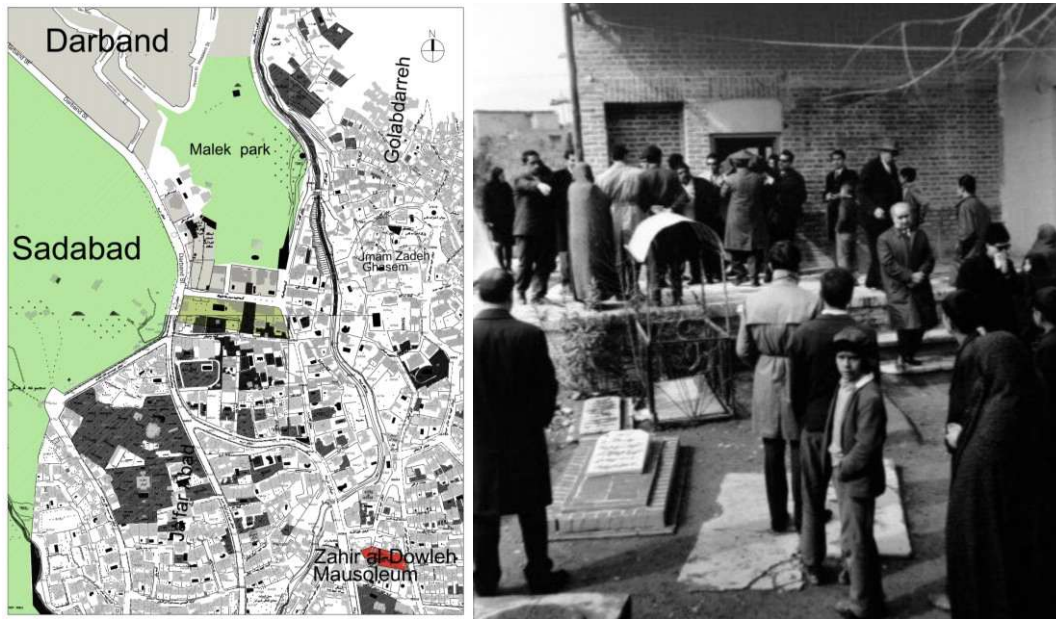


Figure 52. From left to right; a) Location of Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum; b) Funeral of a famous poet, named Forough and the presence of famous artists and poets in Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum in 1966

## Public baths



Figure 53. A traditional public bath in Iran

Iranian traditional baths, typically situated below ground level, utilised the earth's natural insulation to maintain a comfortable temperature. The distinctive domes of the *Sarbineh* (changing room) and *Garm Khane* (hot bathing area) were visible above ground, with skylights illuminating the interior. The baths' architecture featured a sequence of spaces: an entrance leading underground through a twisting corridor to contain heat and block direct line of sight from outside; *Dehliz* or a dark vestibule acting as a transitional area; the *Bineh* or dressing room with a central basin and fountain; the *Mian Dar*, flanked by platforms for bath items and the start of a path to the toilet; and the *Garm Khane*, brightly lit and steamy with three water tanks

for different temperatures, heated by a large pot and external firehouse. The *Sarbineh* was often domed and surrounded by *Taagh Namas*, recessed areas with platforms for dressing and resting, situated under which was space for shoes. These were segregated by social status, with tea or hookah offered post-bath (Karimi 2019) (Figure 53, Figure 54).

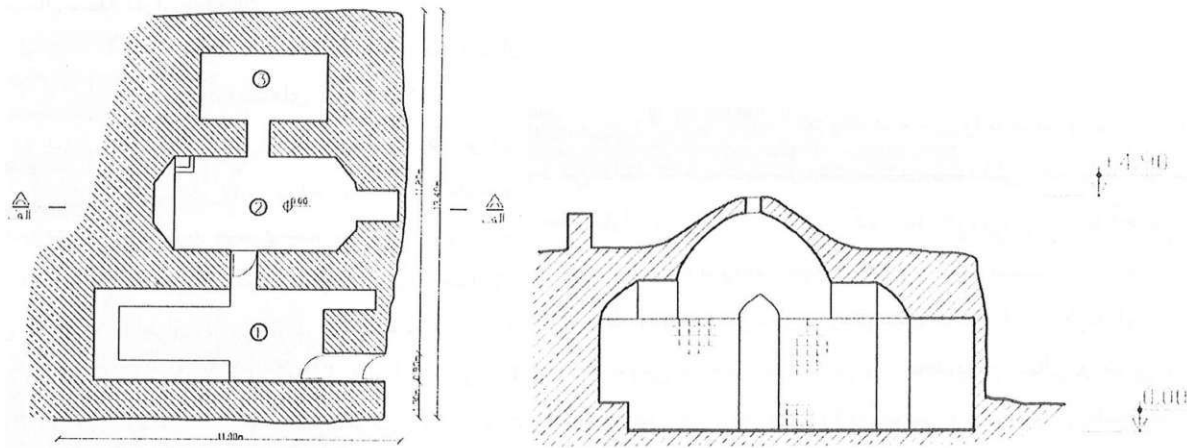


Figure 54. A traditional public bath in Shemiran including 1: *Sarbineh*, 2: *Garm Khane*, 3: *Khazineh*

Public baths' central location in neighbourhoods near bazaars and mosques made them key social hubs, encompassing hygiene, beauty, health, entertainment, and ritual practices. Baths hosted various activities, from cleansing and grooming to medical treatments like bloodletting and dental extractions. Life events and rituals, such as Henna ceremonies, childbirth, and mourning, were also observed in baths (Kermani 2017).

Materials like rubble stone, traditional plaster, and lime mortar were used in Shemiran baths, with renovations over time introducing tilework up to the dome arch and cement finishes (Pazouki 2003). In Darband, the traditional bath, now demolished, was once a central fixture near the *Tek Yeh*, shops, and Friday Mosque, according to long-term residents (Figure 55). It had coal and oil storage for heating, shelves in the changing area, a corridor, and deep *Khazineh* for bathing under a skylit dome. The traditional houses did not include baths. Thus, mornings and afternoons were devoted to the men's and women's baths, respectively. The bath was an endowment and evolved over time to include modern showers.

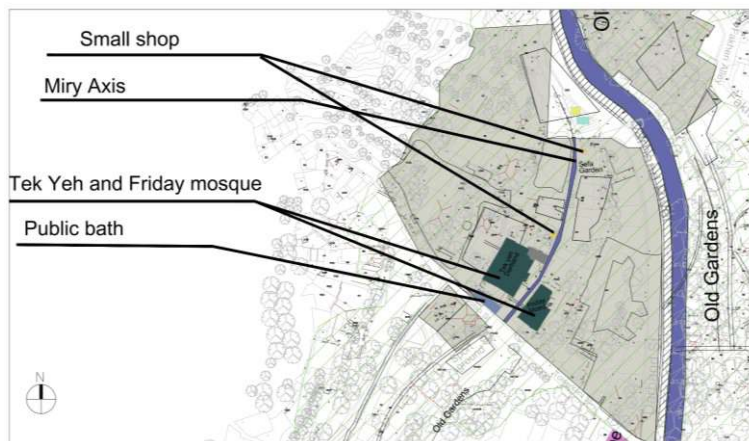


Figure 55. Location of the public bath of Darband in the traditional settlement of Mir Mahalleh, projected on the current map of Darband

## Gardens and public parks

The history of Shemiran, Darband, and Tehran's formation is intricately linked. During the Safavid era (1514-1576), King Shah Tahmasb Safavi encircled Tehran with walls known as Hesar-e-Tahmasbi due to the expansive gardens. These gardens were predominantly green spaces with fewer residential structures, featuring pavilions called *Koushks*, a Safavid garden style that persisted into the Zand era (18th century). The gardens were introverted from the outside. In the Qajar era, Tehran was dubbed a garden city, characterised by aristocratic garden houses and widespread pomegranate and plane tree plantations. The city was largely open spaces and farmland. However, with population growth in late Qajar times, gardens were subdivided for housing, leading to the loss of Tehran's garden city status (Morovati et al. 2014; Interview with Shakouri in 2017).

Persian gardens were not exclusive to royalty but were part of everyday dwellings and settlements. Despite size differences, the design principles remained consistent. Persian gardens are celebrated in literature, poetry, carpets, and miniatures, reflecting the cultural importance of these verdant spaces. Their design, rooted in both pre-Islamic traditions and Islamic beliefs, revolves around a quadripartite structure called *chahar-bagh*, resulting in a rectilinear layout divided by waterways and walkways, with pavilions at the intersections, symbolising the paradise with four rivers as described in the Quran (Mahmoudi et al. 2016) (Figure 56).



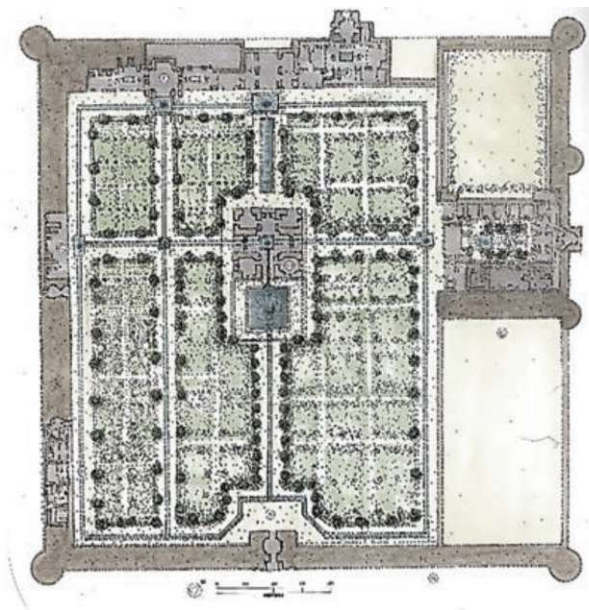


Figure 56. From left to right: a) Persian garden in miniature; b) The geometrical structure of the Persian garden; the Plan of Fin Garden in Kashan

The Persian garden, viewed as a representation of earthly paradise, revered water as a sacred and valuable element due to its scarcity and preciousness in ancient Persia. Water served both functional and aesthetic purposes in these gardens, essential for irrigation and contributing to their beauty (Organisation of Iranian Cultural Heritage 2010). The quintessential *chahar-bagh* layout included intersecting water channels constructed with a slope to facilitate irrigation (Khansari et al. 1998; Pirnia 1994). The garden's design, influenced by its water system, often featured a large pool in front of the *Koushk* pavilion, reflecting the architectural splendour and linking the earthly with the divine. The terrain's gradient allowed for water movement, flowing over steps and creating waterfalls and fountains in the basins' centre, enhancing the garden's tranquillity. Visitors entered at the lowest point, gradually ascending alongside the mainstream through a staircase that led to the elevated platform where the *Koushk* pavilion awaited. The garden's entryway often boasted a lintel as a building or a viewpoint. It provided a visual guide towards the pavilion and doubled as a reception area. Persian gardens' paths were strictly orthogonal, perfectly aligned with the garden's axes. The pavilion and pool were positioned at the intersections of these walkways along the garden's primary longitudinal axis. Flanked by trees, these linear networks offered a captivating perspective, guiding visitors from the entrance to the pavilion. *Koushks*, designed with extroversion, had multiple vantage points over the garden, serving as dwellings or leisure spots for enjoying the garden's splendour, usually placed at a strategic focal point within the garden (Mahmoudi et al. 2016) (Figure 57).

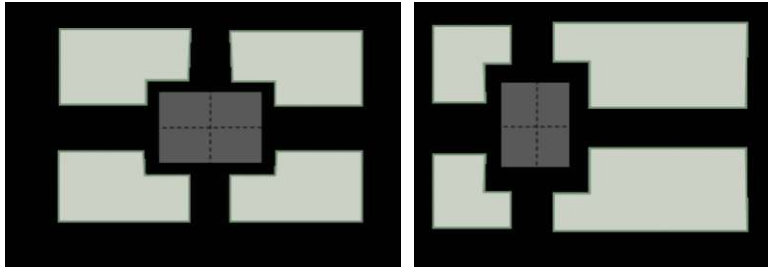


Figure 57. Schematic patterns of Koushk and axes in Persian gardens

Persian culture values introversion, reflected in the traditional architecture, including Persian gardens. These gardens are surrounded by walls that create a secluded oasis, contrasting with the harsh environment outside. The layout from the entrance to the pavilion reflects a hierarchy seen in traditional Iranian homes and public buildings, moving from public spaces to more private areas (Mahmoudi et al., 2016) (Figure 58).

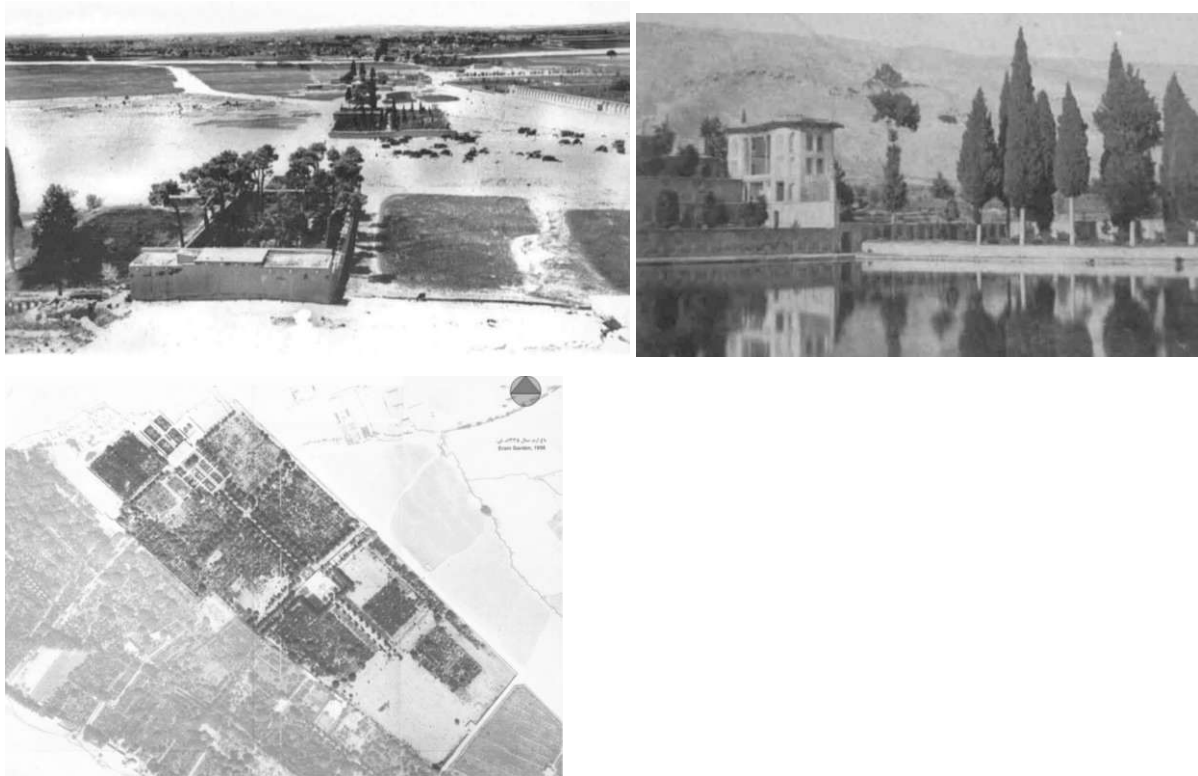


Figure 58. From left to right; a) Garden city in Iran resembling gardens of Tek Yeh Haft Tanan and Chehel Tanan a century ago; b) Water channel and Koushk in Takht Garden in Iran; c) Eram garden in Iran in 1953

Historically, Shemiran, located north of Tehran, was renowned for its lush gardens, particularly those of plane trees, making it a favoured summer retreat for Tehran's residents due to its cooler climate (Morovati et al. 2014, p.7). During the Qajar dynasty, nobles and high-ranking officials constructed gardens with leisure mansions in Shemiran. Under feudal arrangements, the local populace maintained these gardens and provided services to Tehran's elite. This patronage led to the prosperity of Shemiran, with investments in *Qanat* systems for water management, enhancing the area's agriculture and garden development (Interview with Shakouri in 2017).



These *Qanats* channelled water from Shemiran's villages to the city of Tehran (Sotoudeh 1995). Gertrude Bell, a noted English traveller, recorded the striking views from the *Koushk* in Malek garden towards Shemiran and Tehran in the 1890s (Soudavar (Farmanfarmaian) 2010, p.20):

*"That scene consisted of little gardens down the hillside, with clusters of walnuts and poplars shading the villages through which they had ridden, and beyond that the brown plains and barren hills that stretched all the way to the trees of the gardens of Tehran where the sun blazed."*

According to Samuel Greene -An American diplomat- in the 1880s (cited in Sotoudeh 1995, p. xx), the gardens of Shemiran also followed the pattern of Persian gardens, as having a long axis to reach the *Koushk*, being introverted, while applying water in different forms. One example of the Qajar Persian garden in Shemiran and Darband is the Malek Garden based on the descriptions by Bell in 1890<sup>21</sup> (Bell 1928, p.43 cited in Soudavar (Farmanfarmaian) 2010, p.13-14) and observations of its plan and structure (Figure 59, Figure 60). Water flowed on the steps, and small fountains were in the middle of the basins. The entrance was located at the lowest level of the garden, and the visitors walked beside the main stream and climbed the stairs to reach the *Koushk* at the higher level.



Figure 59. The Qajar walled Malek garden and its entrance in Darband

21: Bell describes Malek garden as the following; “At the foot of the mountains we stopped before a long wall, less ruinous than most, a bare mud-wall, straight and uncompromising, with no arched doorway in the midst of it. At our knock the double panels of the door were flung open, disclosing a flight of steps. Up these we climbed and stood at the top amazed by the unexpected beauty which greeted us. The garden ran straight up the hillside; so steep it was that the parallel lines of paths were little but flights of high narrow stairs – short flights broken by terraces on which flower-beds were laid out ... Between the two staircases, from the top of the hill to the bottom, ran a slope of smooth blue tiles, over which flowed cascades, broadening out on the terraces into tiny tanks and fountains where the water rose and fell all day long with a cool refreshing sound and soft splashing of spray. We toiled up the stairs till we came to the topmost terrace, wider than the rest. Here the many-coloured carpet of flowers gave place to a noble grove of white lilies, which stood in full bloom under the hot sunlight, and the more the sun blazed the cooler and whiter shone the lilies, the sweeter and heavier grew their fragrance.”



Figure 60. Malek Garden, Koushk and application of water on the axis in Qajar

In the 1950s and during the reign of the second Pahlavi, Tehran's identity as a garden city had diminished. Nonetheless, the affluent class's affinity for gardens persisted. With limited space in Tehran, new gardens developed in the Shemiran area (Morovati et al. 2014). The Pahlavi era saw the emergence of gardens in Shemiran, used seasonally or for residential purposes. These included fruit or tree gardens with simple structures, some designated for marriage ceremonies and others owned by the elite and high-ranking officials. Darband was also home to parallel gardens along the river, featuring stepped terraces of flowers and greenery, separated by walls constructed out of rip rap, mud or brick and with villas nestled within. Notably, the Zandian garden was surrounded by similar gardens in Mir-Mahalleh, and the lands stretching from Hotel Darband to Sadabad comprised terraced gardens. Eastern Darband, now known as Bagh-Shater, hosted summer retreats for the wealthy and military leaders. The commodification of land during the Pahlavi era led to the decline of agriculture and feudalism, resulting in the dismantling of farming lands (Sotoudeh 1995; Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021). On the eastern side of the Darband River, which is the Bagh-Shater area now, summer gardens were located, such as Malek Garden, Bagh-Shater (Shater Garden), and Bagh-Kashk (Kashk

Garden), which were the summer gardens of wealthy families or heads of the army in Pahlavi. Darband had farming lands, which were gradually destroyed with the commodification of land in the Pahlavi era when agriculture and feudalism lost their importance (Baft o Memary Consultants 2009).

Contemporary observations and resident interviews indicate that many historic gardens have been divided or demolished for apartment construction, with some transformed into public parks (See 'Relation with nature and settlement of Darband' on p. 198). The Malek garden, for instance, has been partially converted into a park with a new design, neglecting its original Persian garden layout, with portions remaining walled and private and structures built on the western sides (Figure 61). During Pahlavi I, Reza Shah amalgamated the existing Sadabad Qajar gardens into a cohesive European-style landscape in an organic pattern, establishing his palaces there. In the subsequent Pahlavi era, Sadabad continued as the ruler's residence and, post-1979 revolution, was repurposed into a museum complex open to the public (Sotoudeh 1995) (Figure 62, Figure 63).



Figure 61. The current situation of Malek Garden





Figure 62. From left to right: a) Sadabad Gardens in Pahlavi I; b & c) Gate and Green Palace in current Sadabad

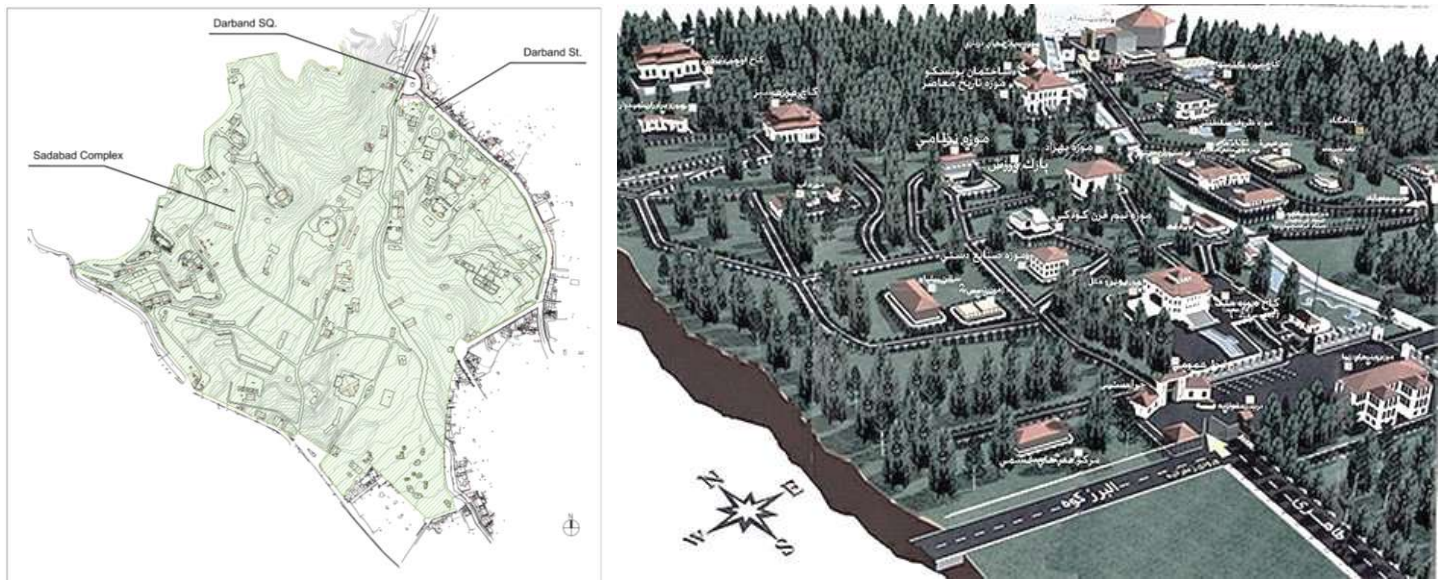


Figure 63. Map of current Sadabad complex and gardens

Today, some gardens have become popular for holding wedding ceremonies. Usually, these gardens have an axis for the bride and groom to walk, halls devoted to ceremonies, dining, dancing, service areas, toilets, dressing rooms, and parking areas. They are furnished with seating areas for guests. These gardens are usually located in remote regions (Figure 64).



Figure 64. A garden for the wedding in Shemiran

A vast area of wasteland has also been turned into Surtmeh Park east of Darband. In 2013, a sledding track was opened. This sledge travels more than 850 m with twists and turns (Figure 65).



Figure 65. Surtmeh Park



## *Koushks*



Figure 66. *Koushk of Ahmad Shahi in Shemiran, a late Qajar Koushk*

"*Koushk*" refers to an elevated structure typically situated within the centre of a garden, offering panoramic views of the surroundings. This architectural feature represents the concept of outward-facing design within a private, walled garden. Historical records suggest that the traditional design of the *Koushk* predates the Qajar era, manifesting in three distinct patterns: Residential *Koushks*, which were used for daily living with servant quarters in the surrounding areas of the garden or in the surrounding areas outside the garden; Recreational *Koushks*, employed periodically for leisure rather than everyday living; and royal *Koushks*, which were a separate category, likely more grand and elaborate (Interview with Shakoury in 2017).

The *Koushk*, an architectural centrepiece of Persian gardens, typically adopted a symmetrical design, often square or octagonal, including the eight-part "*Hasht-Behesht*" variant, and rarely was circular. These structures commonly featured uniform physical characteristics across all four primary faces, although sometimes one facade might be emphasized due to better climatic positioning, views, or other advantageous features. The "*Hasht-Behesht*" pattern resembled the four-sided designs in a square or octagonal plan with peripheral porches as *Iwans* facing outward. The plan, with two perpendicular axes, created a nine-section layout. This central square, topped by a dome, was considered the core of the *Koushk* (Motedayen et al. 2015, p.36) (Figure 67).

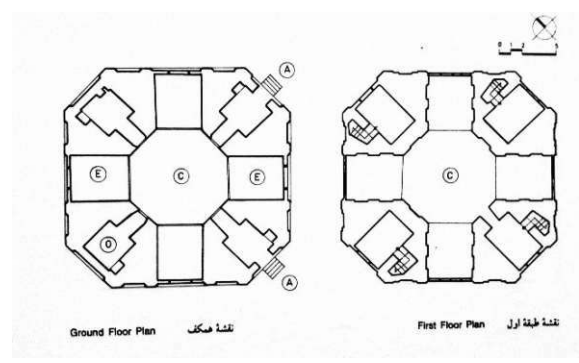


Figure 67. Examples of Hasht-Behesht Koushk, from left to right: a) Koushk of Jahan Nama garden and its plans; b) Koushk of Hasht-Behesht in Isfahan

During the late Qajar and early Pahlavi eras, the Neo-classical style gained popularity in Iran, with mansions and palaces showcasing European influences combined with Iranian architectural principles. Nobles' palaces in gardens and estates reflected this trend, featuring grandiose halls for entertaining guests alongside distinct areas for dressing and services. Women's and children's quarters were often separated from the main *Koushk* (Ghobadian ?, Interview with Yalda in 2021). Architectural elements like prominent fireplaces, Western-style stucco, expansive lobbies, central ceremonial staircases, classical windows, European pilasters, and facades decorated with Western paintings contributed to an eclectic style. This period marked a shift in Qajar architecture, as traditional Persian elements were replaced or blended with Western motifs, leading to a distinctive fusion of styles. Semi-circles and crescents created columns aligned with the facade of the building, creating an element of visual emphasis on the vertical axis of the main façade or entrance, eliminating the traditional elements and substituting similar decorative motifs (Kiani 2004) (Figure 68).



Figure 68. Ferdows Garden's mansion in 1879 as a Qajar mansion in Tajrish, south of Darband

The Sheikh Khaz'al Koushk, dating back to the Qajar and early Pahlavi periods, is situated in Darband's southern area. Neo-classicism influences its architectural style, partitioning a layout into two distinct sections. Architecturally, the plan incorporates a semi-octagonal shape combined with a rectangular form, with two pillars on either side featuring intricate plasterwork that demarcates these areas. The southern part includes a high-ceiling guest area, the main hall under the gable roof, windows on all sides, and a columned *Iwan* for accepting guests. The centre of the layout showcases Aine Kari work, while two staircases on the northern end ascend to the upper floor. The staircases serve a decorative function, a common feature in many Qajar-era mansions. The upper level hosts a corridor with bathrooms and two rooms on each side overlooking the big saloon. After renovation, the Sheikh-Khaz'al Koushk has transitioned from a summer retreat and noble residence to a public dining garden. Similarly, the *Koushk* of Malek Garden, another late Qajar era construction to the southeast of Darband, now serves as a picturesque backdrop for wedding photography (Golkar 2003; Hosseini 2001; Interview with Yalda in 2021) (Figure 69, Figure 70, Figure 71).

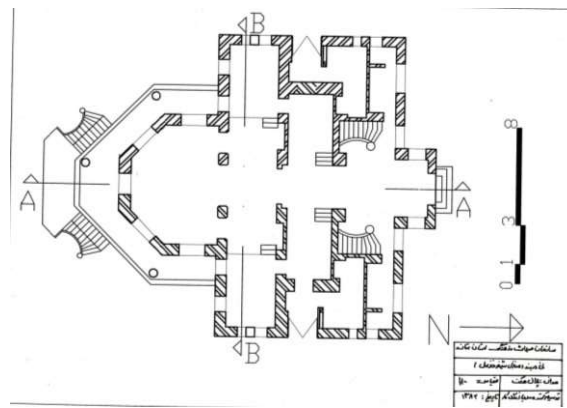


Figure 69. *Koushk* of Sheikh Khaz'al



Figure 70. *Koushk* of Malek Garden in Qajar era





Figure 71. Koushk of Malek Garden in 2021

## ***Qanats***

Water, especially in hot and arid regions like Persia, has historically been a resource of great value, necessitating innovative methods for its utilization and conservation, whether incorporating it within the Persian gardens or creating settlements within mountains. One such method is the *Qanat* system, which is believed to have originated in Persia in the first millennium B.C. This ancient and environmentally sustainable system consists of underground channels that gravity transport water from highland aquifers to lower-lying lands. *Qanats* are not only an engineering feat but also represent cultural and communal heritage, reflecting a tradition of sustainable water management that requires collective effort and expertise to maintain. Unfortunately, many *Qanats* have fallen into disrepair or become dry due to sediment buildup, the urban migration of younger generations, and a dwindling number of craftsmen knowledgeable in their maintenance (The Middle East Institute 2022) (Figure 72). In areas like Darband and Shemiran, numerous *Qanats* and waterways are deteriorating. The section addressing the Relation with nature will further discuss the *Qanats* specific to Darband.

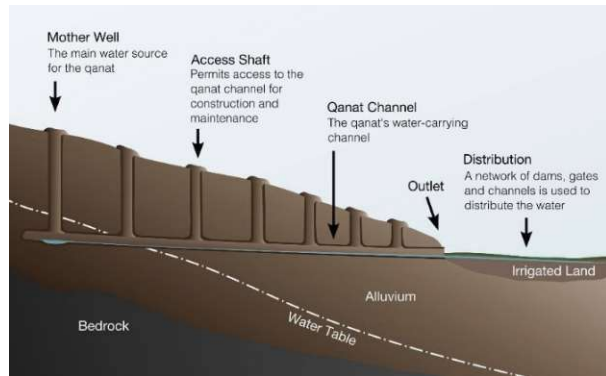
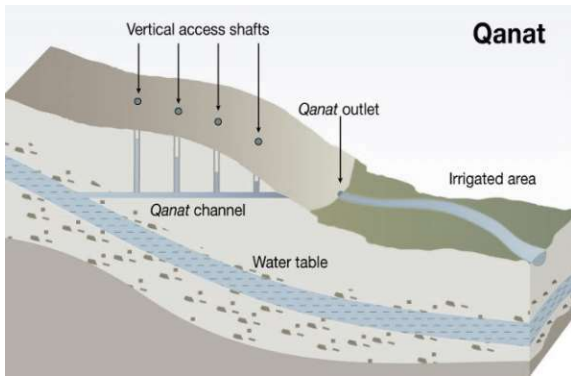


Figure 72. Qanat system and its cross-section

## Mountain



Figure 73. From left to right; a) Chairlift of Darband; b) Mountain hikers over Sarband; c) Mountainous paths next to cafes over Sarband

Darband, situated at the southern slopes of the Alborz Mountain range, is a favoured destination for hikers due to its scenic mountain trails starting from Sarband Square. Among the popular spots is Shirpala shelter, perched at an elevation of 2750 meters, and the Twin Waterfall or Abshar Dogholoo, both of which are common goals for trekkers. Some adventurers spend the night at Shirpala to experience the mountain fully. Tuchal Peak, rising to 3963 meters, is a challenge for more seasoned climbers and is part of the Simorgh Plan by the Iran Mountaineering and Sport Climbing Federation, aimed at encouraging the pursuit of mountaineering badges. The northwest area of Pasghale, known as Osoon, is home to lush gardens and serves as a tranquil retreat for visitors within the mountain. Additionally, a chairlift at Sarband Square offers a convenient means for tourists to ascend to higher



points in the mountainside (Figure 73).

## Coffee house



Figure 74. A coffee house in Upper Darband

Traditional Iranian coffee houses, also known as tea rooms, teahouses, or *Ghahveh Khane*, were the precursors to modern cafés. Central to the social life of traditional Iran, they played a crucial role in shaping social cultures, traditions, and customs. These coffee houses emerged as the first social gathering spaces in Iran's urban society, drawing men from their homes and workplaces into public communal areas. They became popular hangouts for various social and occupational groups, particularly guilds. Religion significantly influenced the atmosphere of these coffee houses. For instance, during Ramadan, they would close during the day and reopen in the evening until dawn. These establishments served as community centres for elders to discuss and decide on neighbourhood matters. However, some coffee houses also facilitated harmful activities, like opium use, gambling, and revelry (Bolukbashi 2014; Alizadeh et al. 2017).

Traditionally, coffee houses offered tea, soft drinks, light meals, and facilities for smoking water pipes (*qalyān*). Until World War II, they remained popular for news dissemination, chess, and listening to recitations. Storytelling and *Shahnameh* readings were common until the advent of radio in 1940, which shifted the focus to global news, leading to the decline of traditional reciters (The Editors of *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 2022).

Architecturally, Iranian coffee houses varied, reflecting local styles and cultures. Some affluent ones mimicked public baths with percussive domes and stone or brick columns. They featured spacious areas with platforms for seating, where patrons enjoyed tea, coffee, and smoked *qalyān*. Common features include decorative tiling, central pools with fountains, and platforms for *Shahnameh* recitations. These spaces were adorned with antique objects and unique Coffeehouse paintings, a particular genre of Persian folk art. Coffee houses typically had two sections: a covered area for colder

seasons and an open garden area for warmer months, often featuring a central pool and singing birds (Basooli et al. 2020; The Editors of Encyclopaedia Iranica 2022; Bolukbashi 2016) (Figure 75).



Figure 75. From left to right: a) A painting depicting a traditional coffeehouse; b) A Qajar traditional coffeehouse as represented in Hezardastan movie

In the 1920s, as Iran's ties with Europe in commerce, industry, and culture grew, the European café culture began to influence Tehran and other major Iranian cities. This led to the emergence of cafes, attracting intellectuals, writers, poets, artists, and professionals from various backgrounds, including both men and women. Although these cafes were theoretically open to all ages and genders, they catered to specific social groups. People accustomed to the traditional coffee house culture found it challenging to adapt to the café environment, which was seen as not aligning with their cultural practices. Coffee-houses' role and cultural significance in Iran have evolved over time (Bolukbashi 2014; Alizadeh et al. 2017). Today, alongside traditional cafes, modern cafes and restaurants have become popular. The youth particularly favours the contemporary Iranian coffee shop, a leisure space for socializing and entertainment. These coffee shops are often the setting for mixed-gender interactions, friendships, and entertainment activities. "Café-goers" are those who are not traditional people. For example, on Gandhi Street in Tehran, a line of cafes has become a popular youth hangout spot. Some of these coffee shops offer live guitar or pop music performances, serving Western-style food and beverages like various pasta dishes, espresso, cappuccino, and other coffee varieties (Azad-Armaki et al., 2006; Sohrabi 2015) (Figure 76).



Figure 76. A café-restaurant in Tehran

Interviews with long-term Darband residents reveal a few cafes in Sarband Square and higher elevations during Pahlavi. These traditional cafes featured multiple rooms and a yard for summer use, equipped with traditional beds for seating. During winter, patrons sat on the floor in rooms heated by wood burners. Some cafes, often Armenian-owned, sold alcoholic beverages during the later Pahlavi period. Darband, a summer retreat, drew visitors for local treats like roasted corn (*Balal*), garden-fresh berries, and traditional dishes. Key gathering spots for local men, such as Shabbon Ali Coffeehouse in Darband Square and the middle of the current Darband Street, offered tea and a venue for Dorna-Bazi, a traditional game played during Ramadan. The number of cafes above Sarband Square has significantly increased recently (Interview with Miry in 2021; Interview with Zahabi in 2021). Darband's cafes continue to be popular, attracting a mixed-gender clientele.

Miry's coffee house, a traditional local spot in Shemiran, features tiled lower walls with paintings and old neighbourhood photographs above. Its kitchen houses large samovars for brewing tea, frequented mainly by men (Figure 77). Café Sheidaii in Sarband Square offers indoor and outdoor seating for different seasons, maintains a traditional ambience and *Hoz* with modern furnishings, and attracts diverse gender-integrated groups even during the middle of the night (Figure 77). Besides a few cafes in Darband St, mainly in the form of shops, most cafes are located along the Darband River north of Sarband Square (Figure 78).





Figure 77. From left to right: a, b, c) Miry café; d) Sheidai café in Darband St.

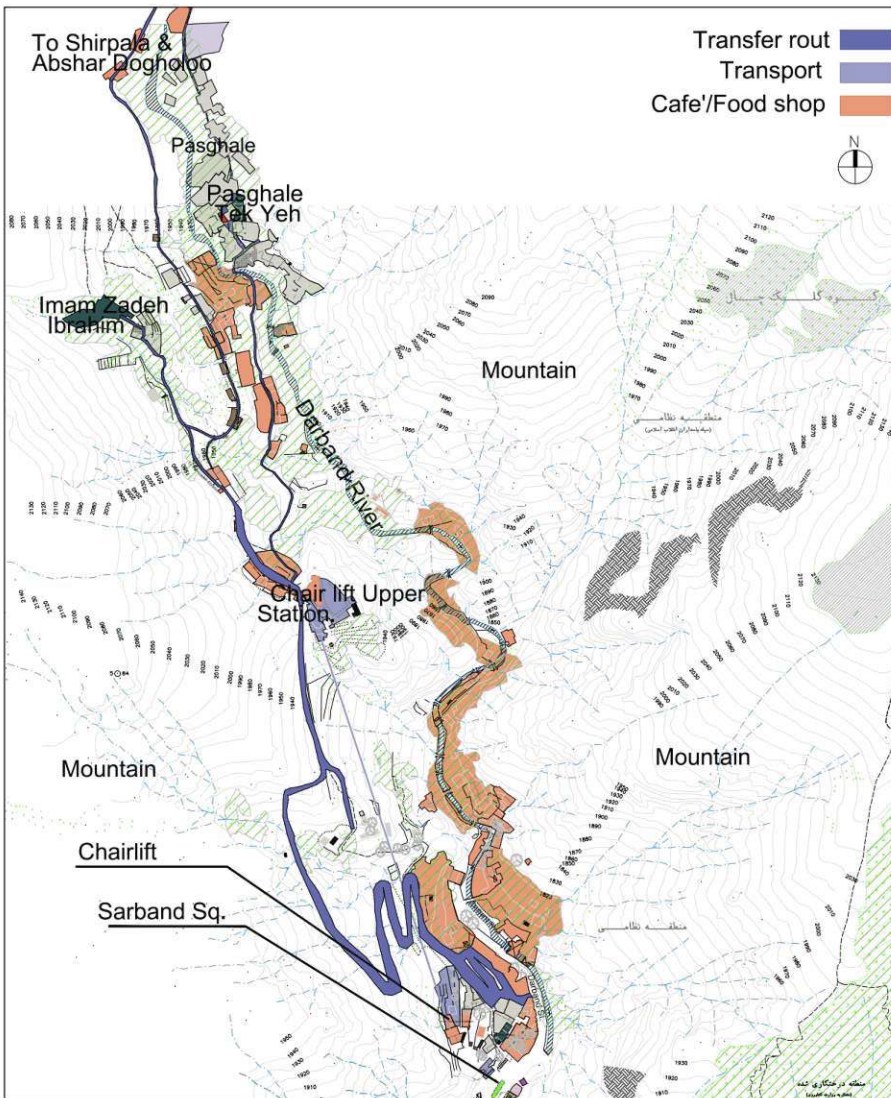


Figure 78. Coffee houses above Sarband Sq.

Cafes have developed organically on the levels of topography. They include steps to reach other levels. Most of the cafes provide a traditional atmosphere, located in the greenery, having *Hoz* and traditional beds for seating while serving traditional foods, such as Kebabs, tea, watermelon and hookah. On their shop fronts, they also sell traditional snacks such as *Lavashak*, baked broad beans



(*Baghali*) and baked beetroot (*Labu*) in the winter. Groups of different ages and genders attend them (Figure 79). Darband also has modern restaurants similar to those in the West. An example is the Roast café on the chair lift (Figure 80).

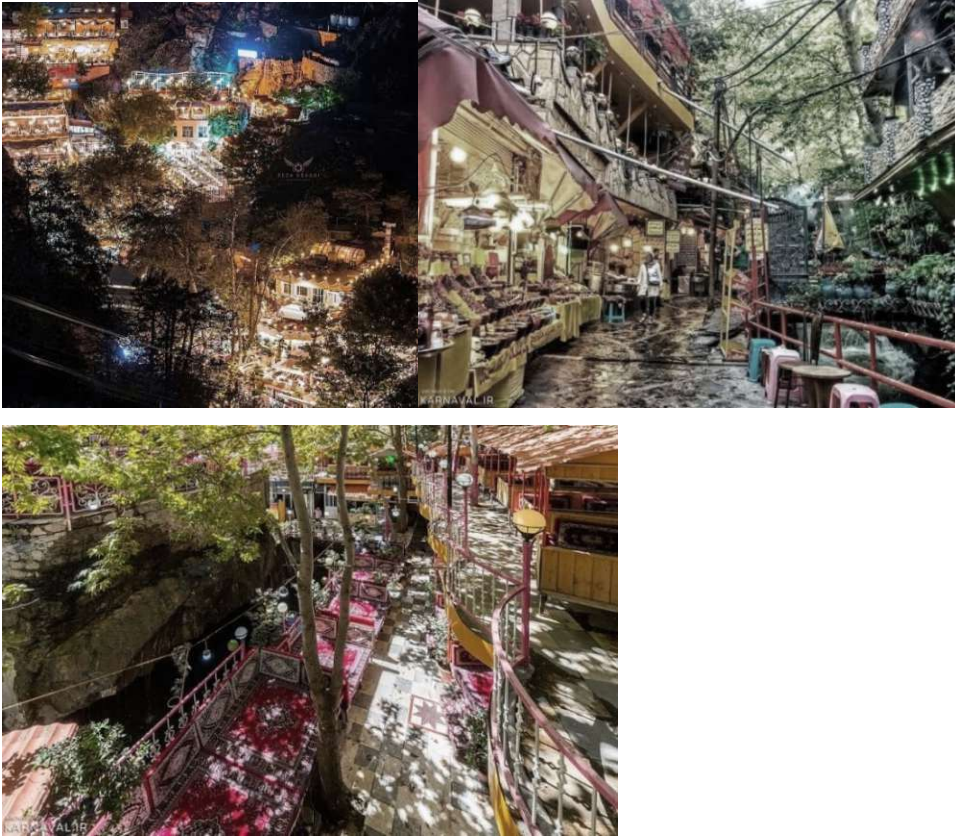


Figure 79. Cafes and food shops above Sarband



Figure 80. Roast Café in Sarband Sq.



## Shops

Mir-Mahalleh and Kenar-Mahalleh, historic neighbourhoods of Darband, each housed a few local shops. In Mir-Mahalleh, shops were situated along the central old axis, Miry Alley, featuring the *Tek Yeh* and the Friday Mosque. These included a shoe shop, fruit shop, and local dairy shops. These establishments typically had wooden doors and gable roofs. The small grocery stores, or *Khar-bar forooshi*, sold various items, including foodstuffs and herbal medicines. In the Pahlavi era, additional small shops appeared along main routes like Darband Street and Darband Square. Residents relied on Tajrish or Tehran's city centre for a broader range of products. Darband Square also had shops for souvenirs, nuts, laundry, and jewellery for the foreigners staying at the Hotel Darband.

Pas-ghale still has a few shops along the central axis, including the *Tek Yeh* and the Mosque. Darband Square continues to host essential shops like bakeries, butchers, supermarkets, and banks. Along Darband Street, there is a mix of supermarkets, real estate agencies, car repair shops, taxi services, cafes, and an arts and crafts workshop, though many old shops have been closed. Kenar Mahalleh features a small supermarket offering fresh groceries weekly, akin to traditional *Khar-bar forooshi*. Bagh Shater Square hosts small grocery stores and real estate agencies, with supermarkets scattered throughout the area. Affordable groceries are available at municipal open fairs, with the closest to Darband located in Tajrish. The Aghdasieh hypermarket, situated southeast of Darband, provides a more upscale shopping experience. Tajrish also has the old bazaar and modern shopping centres for various goods like clothing. Prices generally range from cheapest at municipal fairs to moderate in small groceries and highest in hypermarkets (Figure 81).

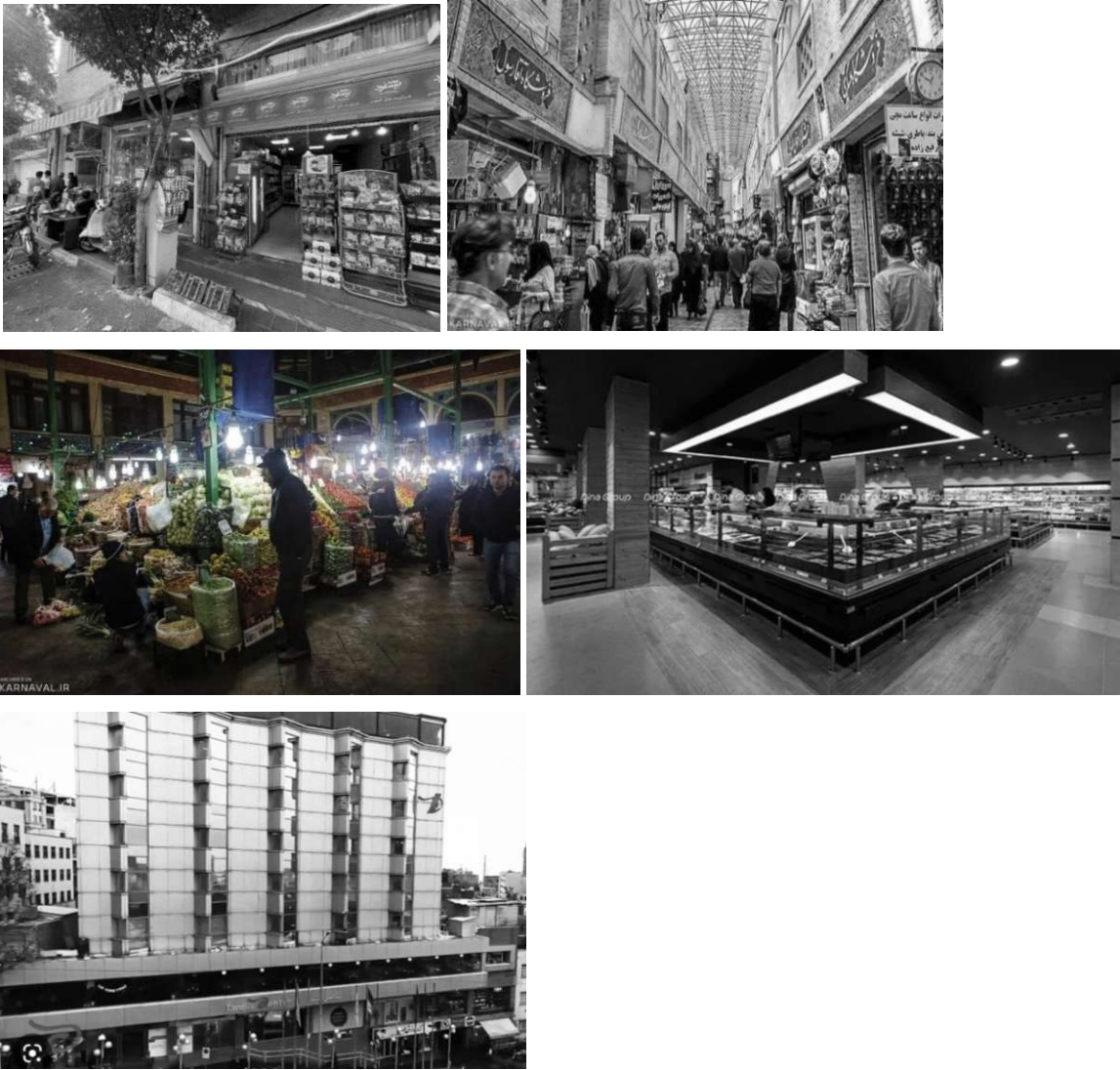


Figure 81. From left to right: a) *Khar-bar forooshi* in Darband; b) *Shops of Darband Square*; c) *Old Bazar of Tajrish*; d) *Shopping Centre of municipality in Tajrish*; e) *Hyper Star near Tajrish*; f) *Tandis Shopping Centre in Tajrish*

## Traditional house

Traditional Tehran houses were typically courtyard houses, designed with an inward focus towards an internal courtyard rather than facing the streets. These houses were largely self-sufficient, often featuring a water cistern and a small vegetable garden within the premises (Marefat 2004, p.7). The entrance led to a vestibule called *Hashti*, followed by a corridor known as *Dallan*. This buffer zone guided residents to the courtyard, a semi-private space central to the house's layout. A veranda flanked the courtyard, surrounded by interconnected rooms, each serving different functions and opening towards the courtyard. Rooms such as the three-door *Sedari*, the five-door *Panjdari*, and the hall or *Tallar* were typically decorated. The courtyard was a vital area where the family conducted many daily activities and social gatherings, a characteristic differing from traditional houses in Shemiran (Pirnia 2001; Forouzmand 2013) (Figure 82, Figure 83).

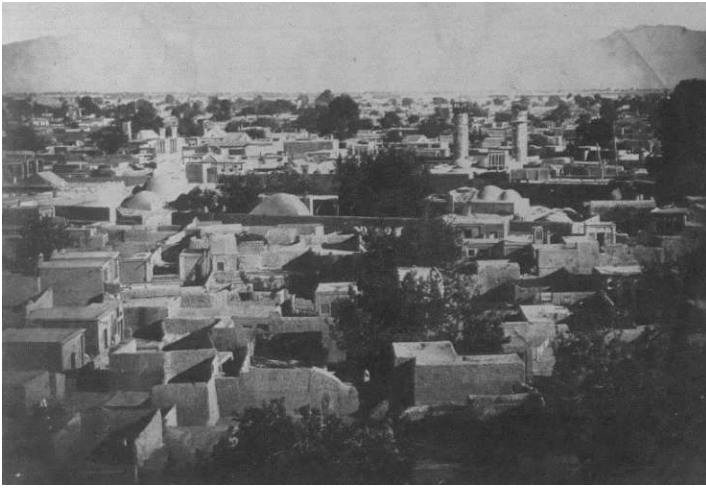


Figure 82. Tehran in Qajar Period

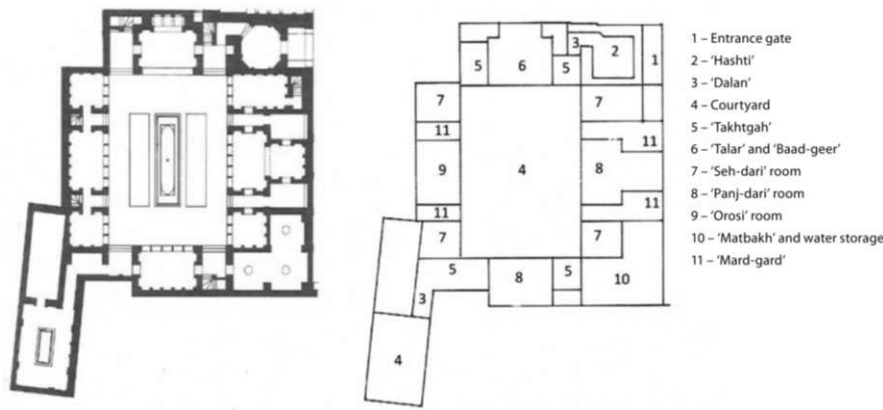


Figure 83. Plan of a traditional Iranian courtyard house

In traditional Darband, the steep terrain led early settlers to seek lands with gentler slopes for their homes. Due to the scarcity of flat land, residents often had to cut into the mountains to create suitable building spaces. Houses typically faced southwest to southeast and were backed against the mountain. Preference for farming was given to lands unsuitable for construction or those located away from residences (Interview with Yalda in 2021; Sotoudeh 1995; Le Du 1379; Mohajer Milani et al. 2005). Extended family living was common in traditional Darband, with families either sharing a house, living on parental land, or residing close to other family members (See 'Family' on p. 240). Oliver (2003) suggests the importance of understanding generic plans or form types in housing beyond typological studies. The typical spatial organization of a traditional house in Shemiran and Darband involved interconnected rooms as modules, with a veranda called *Iwan* in the yard. Toilets and kitchens (*Matbakh*) were usually separate, located in the yard or underground. According to the interview with old residents of Darband and discussions with experts, initial housing often started as a single-room structure with a veranda situated in a yard in the garden or parental property. Over time, as families expanded and wealth accumulated, more connecting rooms were added around this core, while the yard, *Iwan*, and external service areas remained constant. More sophisticated landlord compounds culminated in this gradual expansion, with room sizes varying according to residents'

social status (Interview with Shakoury in 2021) (Figure 84). In 1966, official statistics indicated that in Shemiran, 34.8% of households had one room, 23.8% had two rooms, and 41.4% had three rooms (Shemiran County Board 1973, p.VI).

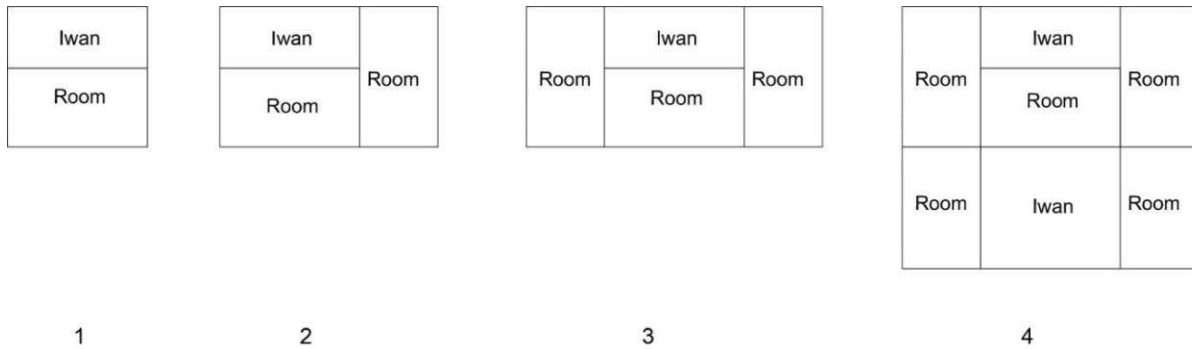


Figure 84. Diagram of the generic plan of a rural vernacular traditional house in Shemiran

Shemiran's traditional village houses mirrored the Iranian mountain vernacular, with two distinct types based on income levels:

- Lower-Income Houses (*Khaneh-ie-raiaty*): These houses typically had flat roofs and followed the mountainous house typology common in Iran. Some were two-story structures with animal stables on the ground floor and living spaces above. Residents used snow for insulation before the introduction of gable roofs, a feature of modern architecture in Iran.

- Higher-Income Houses (*Khaneh-ie-a'iani*): These featured gable roofs, a design element introduced from the West during the Safavid era (before 1736), as seen in structures like the Chehel Sotoon Palace in Isfahan. In Shemiran, initial gable roofs were made of tin and later galvanized. Shemiran's gable roofs were distinct from the houses of Tehran. Gable roofs became more prevalent in palaces from the era of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar (1769 - 1834) rather than the primary houses of Tehran (Interview with Shakoury 2017).

Due to high rainfall and humidity, other traditional houses in Shemiran also adopted gable roofs covered with galvanized tin. Following an ecologic house form, considering the sloped land, these houses were often two stories, cubic in shape, with gable roofs; some were single-story. The house entrances and rooms were typically raised above alley level to prevent floodwaters from entering. Alternatively, the yards were built lower than the alley. Facades were constructed with yellow or red *Ghazaghi* bricks, plaster, or thatch. Residents used the upper floor in summer and the ground floor in winter, with the northern part of the houses often embedded in the soil for warmth. The ground floor had thicker walls and smaller windows to minimize temperature exchange. Winter rooms faced south for maximum sunlight. The organic yards often featured pools (*Hoz*), water cisterns, and gardens with cherries, blackberries, and persimmons. Houses typically had two doors, one opening to the yard and another to the house (Shakoury 2017, Interview with Miry 2021, Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh 2021) (Figure 85).



Old houses were built on rock foundations using cairns and *Sarooj* mortar between ripraps (Le Du 1996). Older buildings had numerous small openings, adjusted according to climatic needs: fewer openings for heat retention in winter and more for ventilation in summer. Windows often had sunshades, and thick walls with low room heights were common, contrasting with contemporary constructions favouring wide glass openings, often disregarding climatic compatibility (Saiidy et al., 2014).



Figure 85. A shemiran traditional house

An L-shaped plan was a widespread house plan with a balcony on its front. The plan may consist of modules that form connecting rooms separated by bearing walls (Shakoury 2017, Interview with Miry 2021, Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh 2021, Interview with Zahabi 2021) (Figure 86).

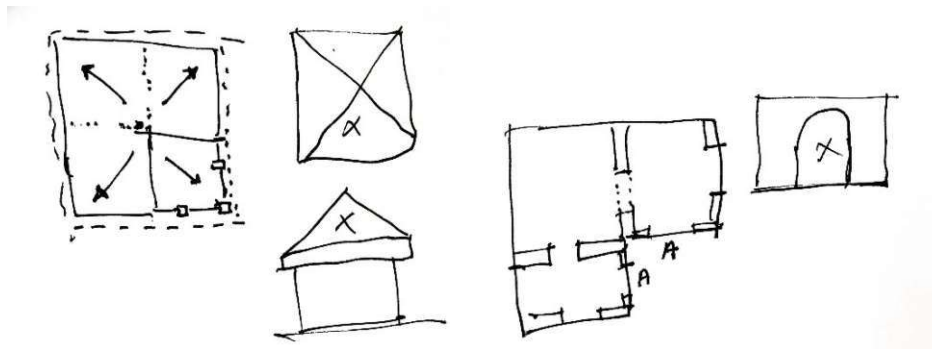


Figure 86. Diagram of a Shemiran traditional house, its plan, roof and elevation

The pattern of connecting rooms was also followed in the well-to-do houses. The placement of staircases varied, either positioned at the front or on the side of the building. Some houses also featured an internal staircase to the side, leading to the second floor. The upper level typically mirrored the ground floor's layout, with connecting rooms and a veranda. In some cases, the staircase entered the second floor from the side. A common feature in these houses was the guest room, known as *Mehman-khane*, often on the upper floor. The windows in these homes were designed with multiple sections or lats, such as two-section windows (2 lati). The toilets and kitchens were either in the basement or as separate outbuildings, accessible through the garden, maintaining the traditional architectural style of the time (Interview with Shakoury 2021) (Figure 87, Figure 88).



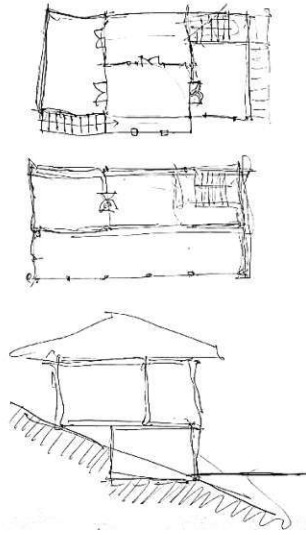


Figure 87. From left to right: a) Example of a diagram of a well-to-do house in Shemiran; b) A well-to-do house in Shemiran

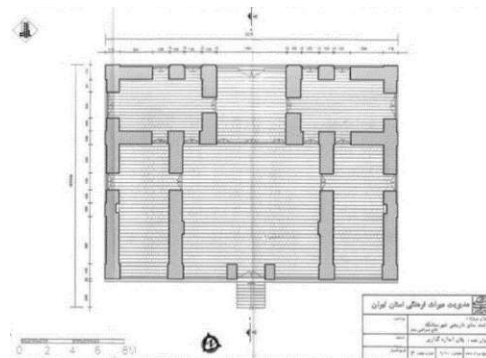
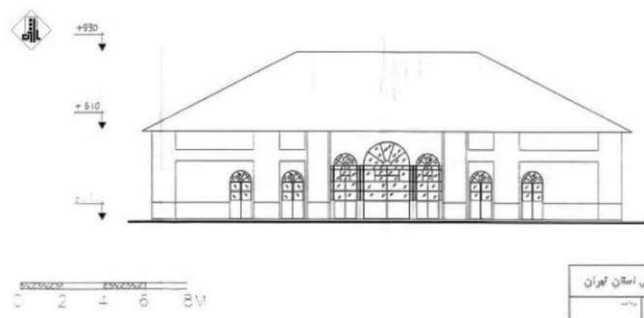
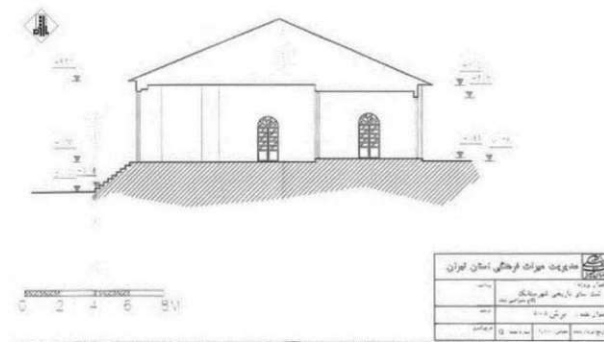
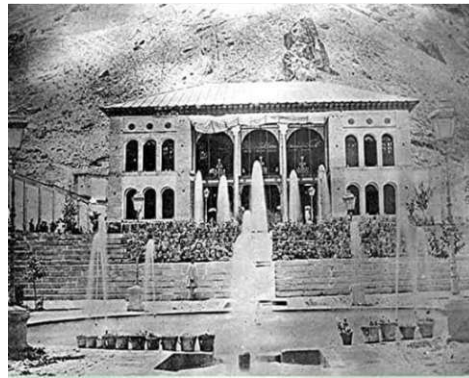


Figure 88. Shahrestanak Palace or Emarat-e-Shahrestanak, an example of a traditional well-to-do house in Shemiran

Traditional houses of affluent families in Iran typically comprised two distinct sections: *Andarouni* and *Birouni*. The *Andarouni*, or the core private area, was secluded from public view, ensuring complete visual privacy. This section was primarily for female family members and *Mahrams* - those members of the family who could see women without Hijab as per Islamic customs. Access to *Andarouni* from the street was only possible through the *Birouni*. The *Birouni* area, often frequented by male members, served as an intermediary space between the *Andarouni* and the main entrance. This clear demarcation between private and semi-public zones and the spatial organization of these traditional houses underwent modifications with the emergence of modernist architectural trends (Kiani 2004; Nabizadeh 2017; Interview with Yalda 2021) (Figure 89).

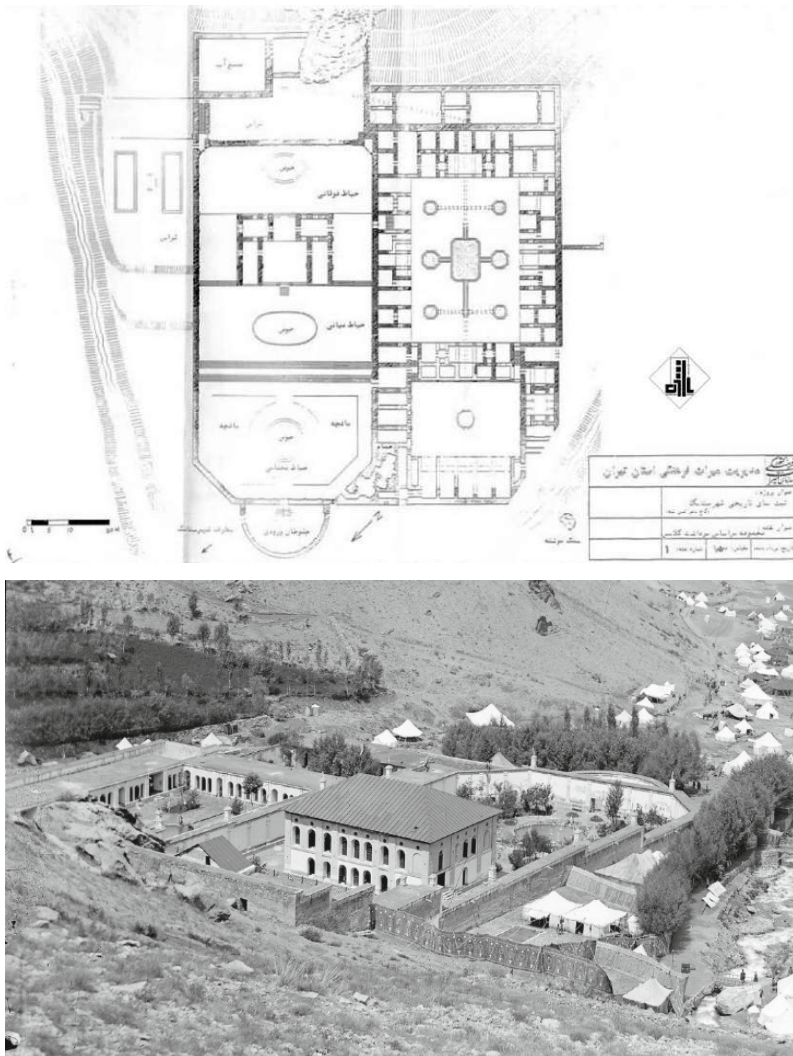


Figure 89. *Andarouni* and *Birouni* in *Shahrestanak* palace; *Birouni* was located on the eastern section and had yards in 4 levels and a circular entrance. *Andarouni*, on the West, had spaces around its own yard

Based on observations and interviews with residents, the current renovations and transformations of houses in Darband typically involve several adaptations. These include adding an extra room or storey, obscuring the house's view with plastic boards, covering yards, applying cement to thatch walls, restoring or removing gable roofs, and replacing wooden doors and windows with aluminium fixtures. Due to the region's cold winters, many functions traditionally located in the yard, such as

access steps, toilets, and kitchens, have been moved indoors in these transformed houses (e.g., House No. 7 and 9).

## Transformation of traditional house

From the second phase of the Qajar dynasty, a notable shift began in Iranian households, especially during Pahlavi I's modernization efforts (Forouzmand 2013, p.60). This era, marked by rapid population growth, saw an increased emphasis on the housing sector. Familiar with international architectural trends, European-trained architects influenced Iran's urban planning and residential design. This period saw a departure from traditional architectural patterns to modern styles, influenced by Western designs and Reza Shah's inclination towards Western patterns. Traditional housing designs were replaced with new spatial layouts and plans, introducing Western plans devoid of local or cultural assimilation. The traditional spatial relations within structures were dramatically altered, with staircases and corridors becoming pivotal in organizing inner spaces. Modern houses featured halls and lengthy corridors flanked by rooms connecting different areas. Modern houses had rooms designated for particular purposes, such as bedrooms, dining rooms, and living rooms, diverging from traditional spaces' flexible and multi-purpose nature. Influenced by architects like Le Corbusier and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, these changes reflected an outward-oriented international modern period architecture style with expansive windows. Commercial trades would construct such buildings by buying lands and dividing them into smaller plots. (Bani Masoud 2009; Nabizadeh 2017; Kiani 2004; Interview with Yalda in 2021).

Tehran's housing landscape evolved into villas, row houses/townhouses, and apartment typologies. New urban grids, construction materials, migration to Tehran, and the rise of the middle class drove this shift. Courtyards, once central in traditional houses, gradually lost their prominence and became mere connections between buildings and streets. Kitchens, storage rooms, and toilets were repositioned inside, and garages were added. The traditional *Hashti* in entrances vanished, creating more elaborate street-facing facades with decorative brickwork and larger openings. Despite Western influences, some traditional elements persisted, like transforming the *Birouni* section into a guest room (*Mehman-khane*) and introducing a central living room (*hall*) to facilitate family interactions and casual gatherings and to connect different house sections such as the entrance, staircase, living and service area. In this sense, the hall was similar to the central role of courtyards in traditional Tehran houses. New materials such as concrete, steel, and glass were integrated into building construction (Forouzmand 2013; Marefat 1988; Saremi 2013; Nabizadeh 2017) (Figure 90).



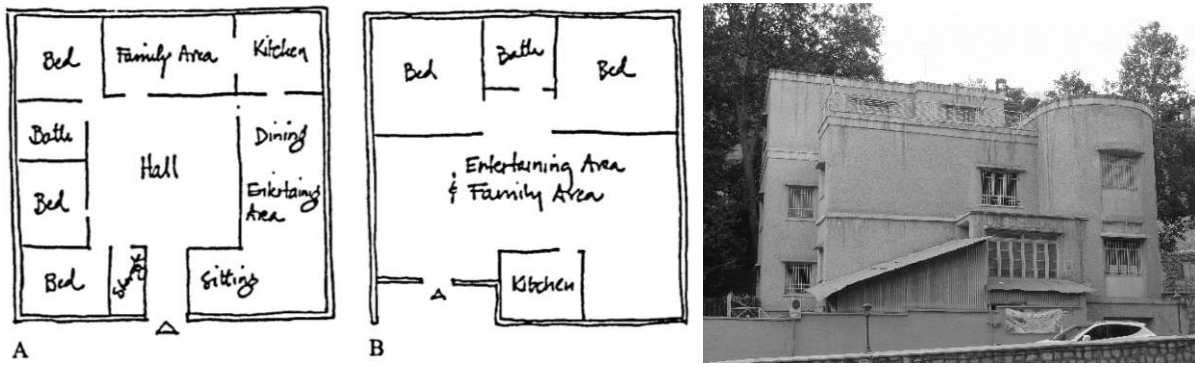


Figure 90. From left to right: Plan of two modern houses in Tehran. A) Similar plan to a courtyard with a closed reception area. B) Open plan modern apartment; C) Villa of the modern era of Pahlavi I in Darband

Post-1960s, Tehran's transformation deeply impacted Shemiran, particularly shifting the primary livelihood of its native inhabitants from traditional agriculture and horticulture to service and industrial activities. This shift also led to changes in residential unit forms. The new developments and influx of new residents into Shemiran's villages created a socio-cultural complexity, blending low-income native residents with high-income newcomers. These new residents, mostly belonging to the petty-bourgeois class, often owned their second homes in Shemiran. Their development approach differed from the previous residents; while they preserved the natural environment, they did not establish feudal relationships with the natives. Typically, these new residents purchased lands ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 square meters to construct villas or houses within enclosed gardens, often including garages for their cars (Saiidi et al., 2015; Interview with Shakouri in 2017). These house gardens and villa gardens, or *Khane-baghi*, usually featured a yard, a veranda, and a small pool. Despite the changes, yards remained significant for both resident groups during this period (Figure 91).

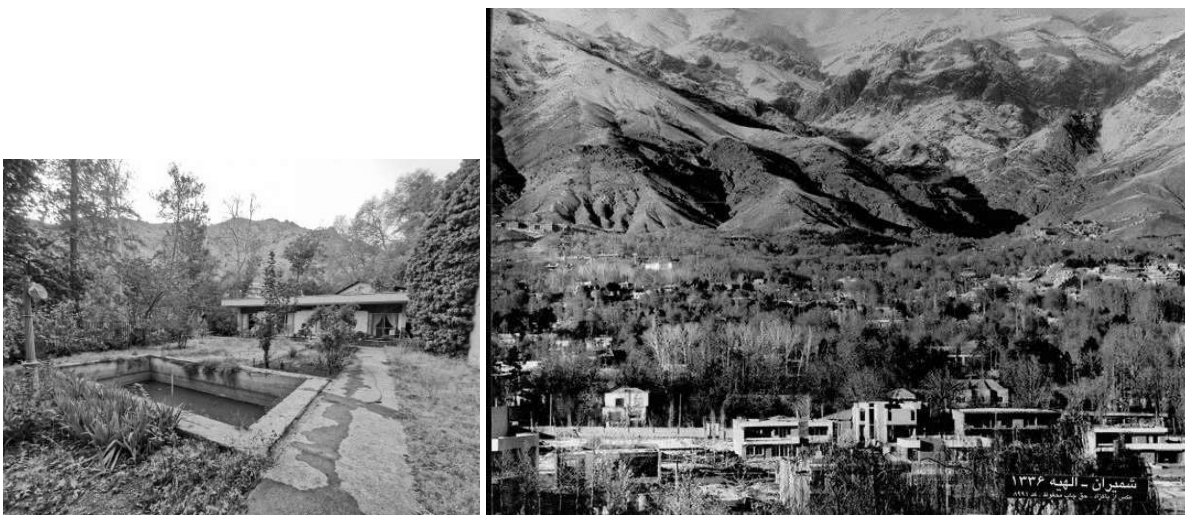


Figure 91. From left to right: a) An example of a garden house of Pahlavi II in Darband; b) View towards Shemiran in the early 1960s

The 20th century marked a period of notable global transformations, particularly in communication, that profoundly impacted Iranian society. These changes encompassed shifts in urban structures,

population growth, and the emergence of new professions. As a result, not only did lifestyles undergo significant changes, but there was also a surge in the construction of small-scale houses. The evolution of building patterns in Tehran can be observed as a progression from inward-looking, low-rise courtyard houses (1) to outward-looking, medium-rise houses featuring courtyards and terraces (2), and ultimately culminating in extroverted high-rise apartments (3) (Forouzmand 2013; Marefat 1988; Saremi 2013; Kiani, 2004; Nabizadeh 2017, p. 97; Madanipour 1998) (Figure 92).

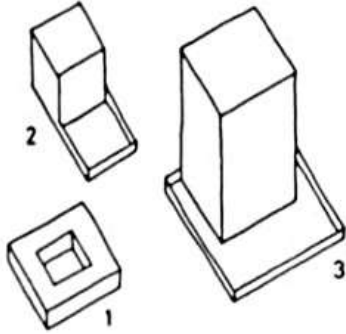


Figure 92. Changing pattern of housing in Tehran

Contemporary high-rise dwellings have arisen to address the escalating housing demands in the nation, characterized by vertically interconnected housing units within multi-story buildings. The presence of open, semi-open, and enclosed spaces reminiscent of traditional dwellings can still be identified in modern apartments. However, their functions have evolved significantly. Apartment plans primarily revolve around enclosed spaces, including rooms and service areas, with smaller semi-open spaces like balconies or open areas like yards and rooftops. As a result, the previous significance attached to open and semi-open spaces has diminished (Forouzmand 2013, p.63-65, p. 67) ( Figure 93) (e.g. House No. 20 and 21).



Figure 93. An example of a current apartment in Darband

Urbanism and urban life have given rise to regulations governing construction practices, land parcel



definitions, and building placements, which significantly impact the spatial layout of houses. Streets and automobiles, serving as primary modes of transportation, have emerged as influential elements in the architectural scenery and the spatial organization of contemporary residences. Based on the comprehensive plan of the 1960s, a series of urban regulations have been imposed by Tehran Municipality. These regulations require buildings to be constructed on the northern side of the land parcel, with a maximum of 60% coverage for construction and 40% preserved as open space. These changes have shifted attention towards streets and alleyways, replacing the once homogeneous appearance with elaborate facades and using expensive materials (Madanipour 1998; Forouzmand 2013).

This is also the case of Darband, which has altered the whole urban landscape. Urban design patterns and pathways have impacted the distribution of open and enclosed spaces. These factors have brought about alterations in the formation of contemporary houses. Enclosed spaces are more important in current dwellings, while open and semi-open spaces have diminished or completely transformed. Spatial organization in homes now primarily revolves around the building and yard. The term "yard" refers to the open areas between the street and the building or between buildings in the northern and southern sections. Courtyards, which have shifted from their traditional central position, are now typically located at the front or back of the building (Mirmoghtadaee 2009; Haeri 2010; Forouzmand 2013).

Access to the building varies depending on its position relative to the street. The closed part is situated in the northern section of houses with the street south of the land, and entry is gained through the yard. In some residences, the yard extends beneath the closed section. To access higher levels, stairs or elevators are utilized, and the entrance is accessed through corridors (Forouzmand 2013).

In terms of spatial organization, living spaces can be classified into two distinct groups: combined and separated areas or public and private areas;

- Combined spaces: In current apartments, public spaces include the entrance, living room, dining room, and guest room. Boundaries between these areas are unclear, allowing for a sense of visual and spatial continuity. The degree of continuity between these spaces is influenced by the configuration of the surfaces that separate and connect them or is restricted by the presence of a separating plane through providing variations in level, contrasting surface materials, or textures between the spaces. A notable example of this occurs between the kitchen and living room. Although the kitchen is predominantly an open space, the view can be partially obscured, or a division in the space can be established by including a counter (Figure 94).



Figure 94. Examples of combined spaces in current apartments in Darband

- Separated spaces: Unlike the openly accessible public spaces, private spaces are enclosed areas within the house that remain hidden during an initial visit. These spaces, such as bedrooms, bathrooms, and toilets, are separated by walls and partitions. They possess independence and are not immediately discernible when their doors are closed (Figure 95).



Figure 95. Examples of separated spaces in current apartments in Darband

- Within a house, a transitional space acts as a link between two other areas. This transitional space can differ in form and size compared to the adjoining spaces. In apartment layouts, for instance, there is often a corridor (a transitional space) connecting the bedrooms (private spaces) to the living room

(a public space). The corridor is a shared zone connecting these distinct sections with private and public characteristics (Haeri 2010; Forouzmand 2013). Construction in Tehran follows strict municipal guidelines, which address various aspects such as floor height limits and parking requirements, restrictions on the number of floors, provisions for closed, open, and semi-open spaces, building structures, fire safety measures and energy conservation practices. These factors significantly influence the spatial layout of buildings. In compliance with these regulations, neighbours' privacy must be considered, especially regarding window placement (Forouzmand 2013). In Darband, however, it has been observed that not all houses adhere to these privacy regulations, leading to potential overlooking issues. These municipal rules also dictate the structural and spatial arrangements within apartments, impacting the overall design of entrance areas and internal circulation, such as imposing grids that affect the spatial arrangement within the apartments (Forouzmand 2013). This is also the case of Darband's apartments.

## **Traditional materials and techniques**

### **Transformation of traditional materials and techniques**

Data on the construction techniques of traditional Shemiran homes is scarce. Conversations with long-term residents and experts, alongside literature reviews and observations, point to using natural materials. Typically, ordinary homes featured a blend of thatch, stone, and wood. The old houses were built on foundations from cairns, raised platforms of brick or stone, being built on the rocks. Sarooj was used as the mortar between ripraps. The walls were initially thatch and timber and later brick. Roofs were commonly thatch and flat, with residents using rollover stones *sang-e-ghaltoon* on mud roofs for integration during rainfall. Windows and doors of yards were wooden, and tins wider than the thatch walls were placed atop garden walls to channel rainwater away (Interview with Mahmoudi in 2021; Le Du 1996).

Iranian traditional architecture prioritised self-sufficiency, sourcing materials locally for sustainability, ease of construction and repairs and high compatibility with the surrounding natural environment (Pirnia 2001). However, modernisation shifted this approach. Traditional buildings were often constructed using raw clay, plaster, and straw. Thatch mortar, a straw, clay, and water mix, was used to prevent cracking. After wheat threshing, the remaining straw mixed with clay formed mud bricks or layers for the *Chine* wall, the bearing wall made of mud. This wall was prevalent in the rural houses and the surrounding garden walls. Thatch for roofs contained less straw but more sandy soil for strength against rain, while wall thatch had more straw for smoothness and fewer cracks. Though once adapted to local conditions, these techniques are no longer prevalent in Iran (Ostovarsazan 2021).



Figure 96. Earthen techniques in Iran, Darband and Pasghale

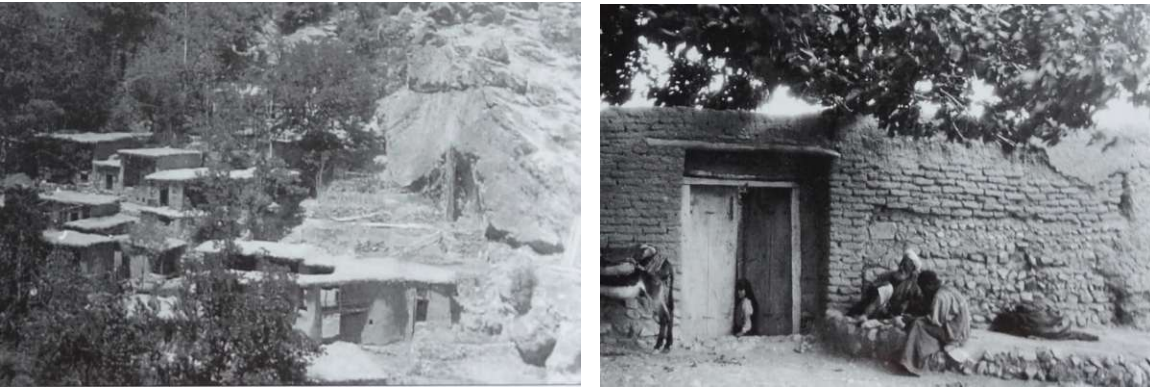


Figure 97. Traditional house of Shemiran and its materials in the Qajar era

According to the interviews and observations, in the Pahlavi era, brick gradually replaced mud. Gable roofs of galvanised iron with wooden beams underneath became more prevalent (Figure 98).





Figure 98. Material being used in walls, roof, foundation, windows and doors in Darband and Pasghale

The construction methods underwent many transformations during the modernisation of Iran in Pahlavi. More modern materials such as glass, concrete and cement replaced the previous materials and metal structures were applied (Figure 99).



Figure 99. Example of structures in Pahlavi I in Darband

Iran must construct roughly 1.5 million new homes annually by 2025 to meet its housing demand. Official statistics from 2014 reveal a significant rise in residential construction, from 693,670 units in 2007 to 770,410 units in 2013, averaging around 705,000 units per year since 2007. The construction of contemporary apartments often employs reinforced concrete and steel framing. The walls are built using various materials, including cement and clay blocks, autoclaved aerated concrete, perlite blocks, bricks, cement, stone, and various adhesives (Hashemi et al., 2015)(Figure 100).





Figure 100. Examples of current constructions in Darband

The construction sector in Iran has undergone considerable evolution, leading to many material options for current apartments. Common construction materials include cement, lime, plaster, asbestos, decorative stones, bricks, tiles, sanitary fittings, glass, steel, lumber, and metalware. Iran's abundant natural resources, such as limestone and gypsum, facilitate cement production, while its energy resources make it a cost-effective process. Iran's stone industry, rich in decorative stones like granite and marble, is also encouraged by the government for further development (Floor 2009).

The construction industry in Iran has witnessed a surge in investments and the escalating profitability of developers. Despite this richness in resources and materials, the construction industry faces challenges in maintaining quality. Traditional masonry skills, once a hallmark of Iranian construction, have declined, affecting the durability and safety of buildings, which now often have a lifespan of only about 30 years. This decline is attributed to several factors, including the devaluation of construction work, now regarded as inferior manual labour and the influx of less-skilled labourers. The industry is also marked by a focus on rapid construction and a preference for quantity over quality, often resulting in buildings that are not earthquake-resistant (Hashemi 2014; Fatemi 2009).

While national standards for construction materials exist, enforcement and compliance are lacking. The push for cost reductions has led to compromised building practices and a lack of proper oversight. There is a call for using standardised, factory-made materials that offer better quality control and efficiency to address these issues. Though initially more expensive, these materials could lead to long-term cost savings by reducing waste and facilitating easier dismantling and recycling. They represent a shift towards sustainable construction practices that could significantly benefit the Iranian construction industry (Rezazadeh et al., 2022).



Figure 101. Low building quality in Iran

As noted in the research by Rezazadeh (et al. 2022) in Iran, the quality of a building is influenced by various factors, including the condition of design, material selection, and construction standards. The capability of labourers and contractors plays a crucial role in determining the quality of each aspect.

The industry is segmented into four key groups:

- Educated engineers and experts with formal education and specialised knowledge.
- Technicians who act as intermediaries, bridging the gap between engineers and workers.
- Skilled Workers with extensive practical experience.
- General Laborers who carry out the basic manual labour on-site.

A gap in the training programs often results in hiring inadequately trained personnel, leading to substandard building quality and a lack of adherence to established standards. Architectural and structural teams prepare the designs and secure necessary permits from local authorities during construction. Building officials intermittently oversee the construction process, conducting limited inspections at the end of each phase rather than consistently monitoring the entire process. Regular, thorough inspections by informed and skilled experts throughout construction are critical to ensure the buildings meet the required standards and quality.

## Recycling

Embracing new building technologies and materials has addressed several global environmental concerns related to construction waste. These innovations aid in energy conservation, resource preservation, and reduction of pollutants through the recycling and reuse of materials. They also enhance the longevity and resilience of building materials. However, Iran faces Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste management challenges, with a small fraction of C&D waste being recycled annually, contributing to pollution and financial burdens in metropolitan areas like Tehran. For sustainable development, minimising resource use and waste in construction is crucial (Colin et al. 2018; Winkler 2010; Afzali et al. 2018).

Despite the potential for recycling C&D waste for environmental sustainability, obstacles in Iran include a lack of awareness about recycling benefits, a focus on financial benefits from demolition

and rebuilding rather than conservation, traditional construction methods, shorter building lifespans, and the absence of robust government policies to promote recycling among contractors and users. These barriers highlight the need for comprehensive strategies to encourage recycling construction materials (Rezazadeh et al., 2022).

## Urban planning

### Spatial ordering of the settlement

The main structure of Darband's formation is the current Darband St., which is stretched along the Darband River in the middle and goes up to the mountain on its north. On the sides, the houses are separated by stepped and sloped alleys amid greenery. The settlement has developed in layers, adjusting to this main structure. Analysis of the settlement of Darband shows that it has been formed based on the geography and topography of the land, forming a stepped landscape of houses, paths, and trees. The houses, with their backs to the mountain, were directed from southwest to southeast on the ground that is layered to terraces. The river was also in the middle. Gardens were stretched along the Darband River. Initial settlers prioritized lands with gentler slopes for habitation, reserving steeper, less construction-friendly areas or those far from the residences for agriculture. When flat land was scarce, inhabitants would modify the terrain, carving into the mountainside to create level plots. Shemiran's fabric traditionally comprised key urban nodes as neighbourhood centres like mosques, *Maktab*, *Tek Yeh*, *Qanats*, baths, and shops, often situated along the old axis. The network of water channels stemming from the mountains wove the houses together, passing through water mills before joining the Darband River. The local accesses or access to homes typically involved navigating inclined pathways or stone staircases, integrating seamlessly with the landscape (Interview with Yalda in 2021; Sotoudeh 1995, p. 108; Le du 1996, p. 109; Mohajer Milani et al. 2005, p. 183; Saiidi et al. 2015, p.20).

### Stages of urbanization of Darband within Shemiran

Upon entering Darband Square, the southern gateway opens to the grand Sadabad complex, while to the north stretches Darband Street, bustling with car traffic ascending towards the mountain. Flanked by towering trees and buildings from diverse eras that seem disconnected at first glance, the street is bordered by stepped and inclined alleyways. Recent high-rise developments now obscure the once-clear view of the mountains, and a river runs through a concrete channel at the centre of the street. Darband Street culminates at Sarband Square, where vehicular passage typically halts, save for permit holders. Ascending further, the path is lined with an array of cafes nestled amongst the lush greenery and adjacent to the river, climbing into the mountain.

Today, Darband presents a mosaic of urban fabrics, a collage of structures built from varying materials and typologies. At first, these elements appear disjointed, but a deeper understanding of

urban development reveals that each segment evolved from distinct urban planning approaches relevant to their period. Together, they weave the contemporary urban fabric of Darband, standing in stark contrast to the scene described by Bell in the 1890s, which was marked by narrow, winding dirt pathways and secluded walled gardens.

### **Qajar era: an organic village in Shemiran**

From the photos, travelogues, diaries, and maps, it appears that Darband was traditionally a stepped village with many gardens. Regarding Darband and Shemiran in the 1890s, Bell- The English administrator- (Bell 1928, p.43 cited in Soudavar (Farmanfarmaian) 2010, p.13-14) explains;

*We rode along dark winding paths, under sweet-smelling walnut-trees,  
between the high mud walls of gardens, splashing through the tiny  
precious streams which came down to water fields.*

She (Bell 1928, p.43 cited in Soudavar (Farmanfarmaian) 2010, p.20) describes the view underneath Shemiran and Tehran;

*That scene consisted of little gardens down the hillside, with clusters of  
walnuts and poplars shading the villages through which they had  
ridden, and beyond that the brown plains and barren hills that stretched  
all the way to the trees of the gardens of Tehran where the sun blazed.*

Darband, once a village cradled within the mountains, was profoundly shaped by its terrain. Its main road was shaped along the river, with essential urban nodes such as a mosque, *Tek yeh*, *Qanat*, public baths, shops, and a *Maktab* lining its historic axis. This layout resonated with typical Islamic neighbourhoods, as outlined by scholars like Madanipour (1998) and Habibi (2008), where communal facilities were centrally located. The agreeable climate of Shemiran made it a favoured spot for the gardens of the elite, absent of formal streets. Instead, it was defined by pathways—one for transit, known as *Kuche-baghi*, and another, more secluded and culminating in dead-ends, called *Kuche-ekhtesasi*, serving a few residences.

In keeping with the vernacular style, the rural homes of Shemiran were constructed from natural materials like clay and thatch and set amidst lush gardens. These dwellings were enclosed within thatched walls, compact and closely knit, interconnected by their very roofs (Figure 102). The original inhabitants of Darband created intricate paths across the rugged landscape to navigate their lands, with steps carved into the slopes leading to the river. Among the main paths was a path along the Darband River, reinforcing its role as a guiding landmark to lower areas. The rural alleys of Darband were very narrow, winding dirt paths, characteristic of its mountainous location and the precious land it occupied, following the contours of the landscape. The settlement's steep slopes and undulating terrain dictated the configuration of these paths, often narrow and just meters wide. In most cases, the

main passages are formed parallel to the topographical lines and sub-passages and accesses perpendicular to them. Access to homes was typically via inclined planes or stone steps, hinting at a modest width of about 1 to 2 meters (Le Du 1996; Mohajer Milani et al. 2005; Saïdi et al. 2015).



Figure 102. View to traditional Lavizan in Shemiran, consisting of compact houses which had connecting roofs

### **Pahlavi I: start of modernization**

During the reign of Pahlavi I, Shemiran and Darband were connected to Tehran via the expansive north-south Pahlavi Street (now known as Vali-asr Street). This connection began a new era for Darband, with Sadabad transforming into a royal residence. The establishment of the Sadabad Palace drew aristocratic families and military officials to the area, spurring the construction of villas and gardens and introducing novel urban elements. Darband Street emerged, mirroring the introduction of broad, paved boulevards that accommodated both pedestrian walkways and vehicular lanes, a manifestation of Reza Shah's vision for urban planning. This new order imposed an urban grid, prioritizing the automobile, leading to a shift from introverted traditional dwellings to new, outward-facing homes. As Darband adapted to these changes, it began to host new institutions catering to an international clientele, including the notable Hotel Darband, which served as a cosmopolitan retreat. Shops of Iranian antiques, sweets, nuts and jewellery for Europeans, the post of duty and post office, and laundry for the Westerners were also located in Darband Square and along the main path of Darband St. The organic development of Darband gradually stopped. Hotel Darband was a night resort in Tehran as well. This hotel demanded adherence to Western dress codes, symbolizing the sweeping modernization. Furthermore, the construction of monumental structures on the street, like the post of duty, which bore the hallmarks of state architecture and pre-Islamic Achaemenid influences, underscored this shift. The streetscape of Darband, once characterized by indigenous architecture, now paraded the modern attires of its pedestrians, starkly contrasting with its vernacular past. These modern edifices and facilities, alien to Iran's traditional landscape, conspicuously asserted the new, Westernized architectural narrative (Sotoudeh 1995; Interviews with Masoudi 2014; Le Du, 1996; Mokhtari, 2017) (Figure 103).



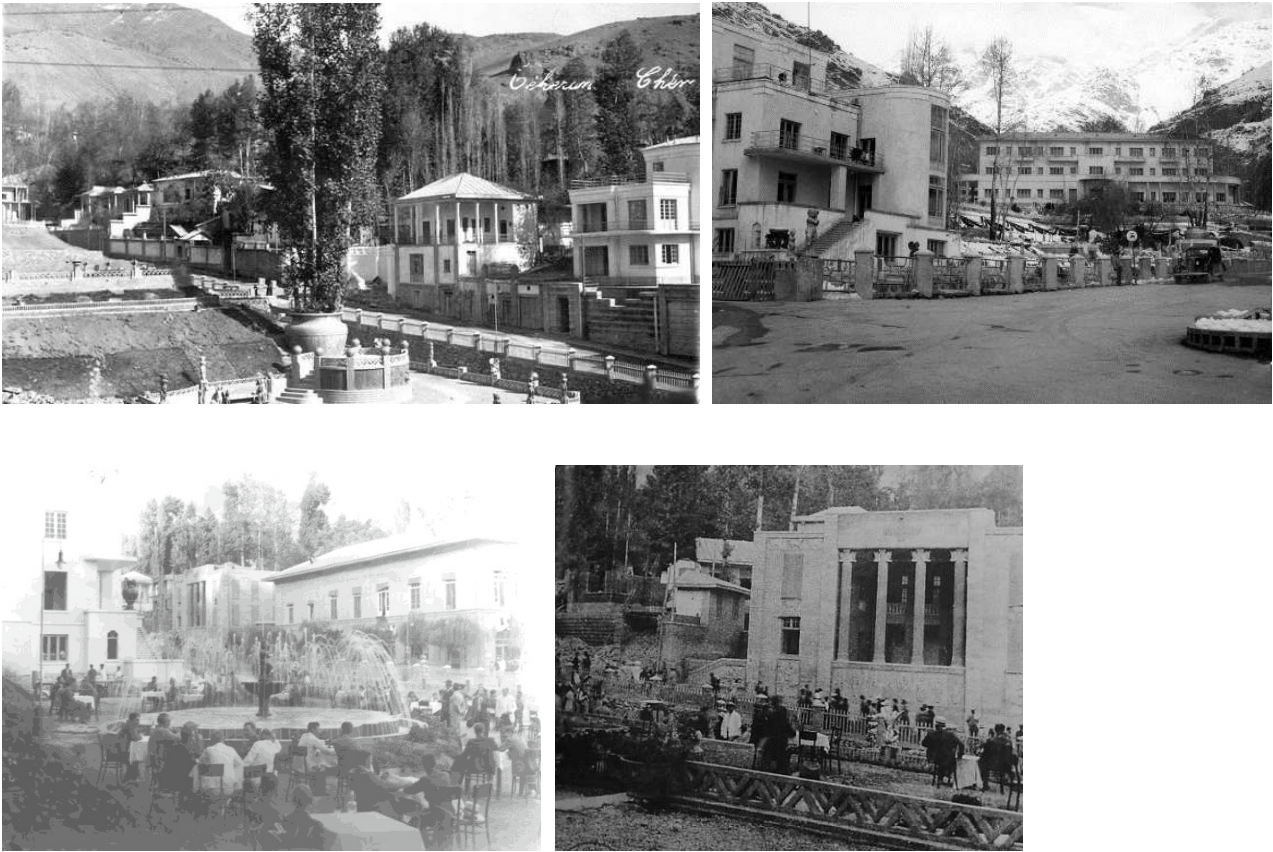


Figure 103. From left to right: a) Darband St., b & c) Hotel Darband and its villas, d) Post of duty of Darband in late Pahlavi I in 1940s

## Pahlavi II: division of gardens in a westernized urban Landscape

The urbanization trends initiated by Pahlavi I continued to reshape Shemiran during the era of Pahlavi II. With its sweeping land reforms, the White Revolution of the 1960s led to the decline of agricultural pursuits and the disintegration of feudal structures. As a result, traditional gardens were dismantled, and Sadabad maintained its status as the seat of power. Government officials and affiliates favoured Darband for constructing secondary residences, typically nestled within gardens ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 square meters, with the dwelling centrally placed and often accompanied by a garage, reflecting the prevalent extroverted housing style of the period. Street widening and expansion were also characteristic of the time. Some streets were transformed into a grid pattern, while others, like Darband Street, retained their organic layout. In the case of Bagh-Shater, the grid pattern is evident. Ali Madanipour notes that town centres within these expanding settlements began to emerge around high streets or main street intersections, providing fundamental services. However, residents still depended on the city centre for a more comprehensive array of needs. This observation aligns with the development of Darband, where basic amenities were situated along the main street and in Darband Square. However, the locals had to travel to the city centre for more comprehensive services. As part of the urban transformation, the original Hotel Darband was demolished to make way for new construction. The Kolbe pub and restaurant were established in its vicinity, marking a new chapter in

the evolution of Darband's urban landscape (Interview with Shakoury, 2017; Saiidi et al., 2015; Madanipour 1998) (Figure 104).



Figure 104. Kolbe pub in Pahlavi II

### **After Islamic Revolution: a profit-oriented urban landscape**

Following the Islamic Revolution, Darband's urban landscape underwent significant changes. New street patterns were constructed primarily for vehicular traffic. The widening of passages, including Darband Street, also continued. Religious structures such as mosques and *Tek Yehs* remained crucial urban nodes, undergoing reconstruction and restoration in recent years. Meanwhile, traditional elements like public baths and *Qanats* were demolished. Cafes in the north of Darband were developed increasingly. Tehran Municipality imposed a series of urban regulations based on the comprehensive plan of the 1960s. This introduced a new pattern of urban development, emphasizing apartment buildings. According to these regulations, buildings occupied 60% of the land to the north, leaving 40% as open space. This shift marked a transition from a traditional nature-oriented to a profit-oriented urban landscape, reflecting the increasing value of land as a commodity.

Over time, the population in Darband surged, leading to the demolition of most gardens on the east and west sides. The current urban fabric of Shemiran includes remnants of the old rural fabric, now often decayed amidst urban development in recent decades (Madanipour, 1998; Saiidi et al., 2015, p.17; Musavi Bojnoordi et al., 2014). These newer areas consist of tiny, densely packed houses from the Pahlavi era, garden houses within 1000-1500 m<sup>2</sup> gardens from the Pahlavi era with organic access within introverted neighbourhoods, and more recent apartment complexes constructed after the revolution on larger plots compared to the older small dense fabric. Many of the older shops along Darband Street are decaying, and the site of the former Hotel Darband and its surroundings have been left abandoned since the departure of the royal family and Pahlavi courtiers. Lands and villas owned by these courtiers were confiscated, and illegal settlements emerged. Many garden houses are empty, overseen only by caretakers as their owners have left Iran. High-rise apartments now obstruct views of the mountains. The transformation of Darband's landscape includes the conversion of the traditional Bagh-Shater cemetery into a park, serving as a public space for religious ceremonies. The

private Malek garden and adjacent northern dry lands have also been converted into public parks like Surtmeh Park. Sadabad Palace now functions as a museum. Accompanying these developments are new buildings with various functions, including shops, banks, sports salons, schools, administrative buildings, and cafes, all contributing to the diverse and evolving urban character of Darband (Madanipour, 1998; Saiidi et al., 2015; Musavi Bojnoordi et al., 2014) (Figure 105, Figure 106, Figure 107, Figure 108, Figure 109).





Figure 105. View towards Shemiran within the stages of transformation from 1920s to 2019









Figure 107. Transformation of view towards a Shemiran village from the 1920s to 2017

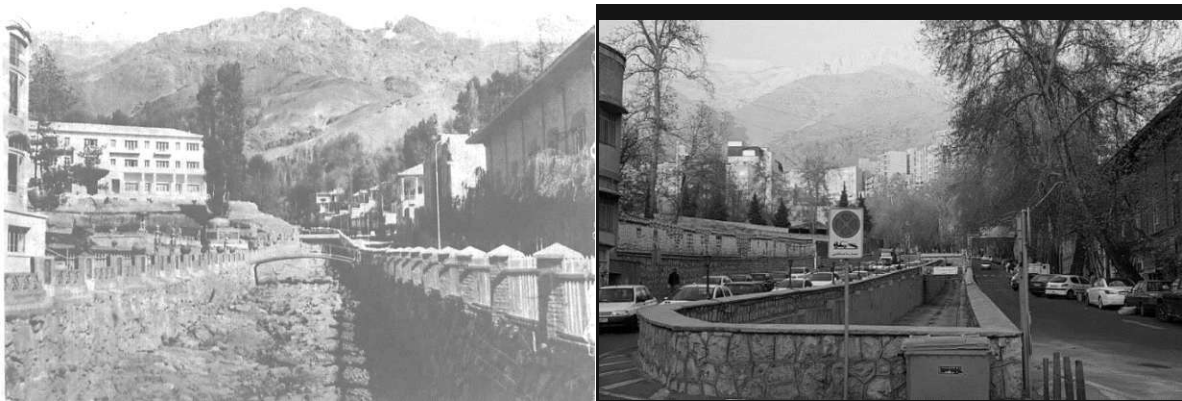


Figure 108. The transformation of view towards Darband St. and Hotel Darband in Pahlavi I vs present



Figure 109. The transformation of view towards Darband St. in early Pahlavi I vs present

## Urban Plans for Shemiran and Darband

### Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization of Tehran

Before the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, there was no established legislation for protecting cultural heritage, and such heritage held little significance in the public consciousness. Naser al-Din Shah Qajar's exposure to European museums and historical sites greatly influenced his perspective. After his first European visit in 1811, he created a museum within the royal citadel. The Ministry of Culture and Arts, established in 1964, managed various departments related to cultural heritage, including the General Directorate of Museums, the Iranian Archaeology

Center, and the General Directorate of Historical Monuments. In 1985, the Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran was formed, later evolving into the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization and eventually becoming the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism in 2019. Post-1979 Revolution, there was a period of neglect concerning cultural heritage and the protection of listed monuments. This neglect is evident in the ongoing discourse among cultural heritage experts in the media, criticising the disregard for the organisation's regulations and listings. In 2002, the National Security Council approved regulations for protecting cultural heritage, establishing a commission to safeguard buildings, lands, and textures and combat crimes against cultural and religious heritage sites. However, these regulations have not been effectively implemented even after 20 years (Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization of Iran 2019; Muzeha Magazine 2002; Mohit Tabatabaai 2021).

In 1994, the Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicraft Organization of Tehran conducted a study on Darband, assessing the potential for protecting heritage sites. The study identified historic buildings, provided detailed guidelines, and proposed designating the Darband axis as a historical and natural axis within a conservation area. Significant sites like Sadabad Palace and Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum were listed with defined boundaries for protection (Hamshahry 1994). Observations on site indicate that despite these efforts, the rapid construction in the area afterwards largely ignored these guidelines. Efforts to protect Darband's old gardens, such as the Malek Garden, were undertaken by cultural heritage experts such as Dr Taraneh Yalda and Dr Eskandar Mokhtari and the Tehran Neighbourhood Advisory Council (2008-2013). These efforts aimed to limit the proliferation of cafes and protect the gardens. Unfortunately, these attempts were unsuccessful, as the cafes continued to expand, and parts of the Malek Garden were destroyed and sold (Interview with Masoudi in 2017). A significant obstacle in protecting heritage sites in Darband is the high land value and the lucrative nature of construction projects, which often overshadow the cultural value of heritage sites in the minds of property owners.

### **Master Plan of Tehran**

Different urban plans have been proposed for Darband. The most substantial one is the Master Plan. The Master Plan for Tehran, which includes specific provisions for Darband due to its unique organic morphology, has faced challenges in its implementation. According to an interview with a developer (Mozafari, 2021), each land parcel in Darband is subject to special regulations under the Master Plan available on the Tehran City Council website. However, due

to the high land value in Darband, many of the surveyed and observed current apartment constructions have not adhered to these urban regulations. Developers often negotiate with the council, paying specific amounts to build with greater height and density than the regulations allow. Experts have expressed dissatisfaction with the implementation of Tehran's Master Plan. The plan has undergone several revisions over the years, and many proposed regulations have not been effectively implemented (Interview with Yalda, 2021).

The master plan suggested that local plans should be developed for each neighbourhood to facilitate its implementation. Nonetheless, smaller local plans for Darband and Bagh-Shater, such as the Bagh-Shater Organization plan by planning practices, have encountered similar issues. Protected green areas and historic fabrics were destroyed, and buildings exceeding permitted heights were constructed (Interview with Mahmudi, 2021). The earlier versions of Tehran's Master Plan, proposed in 2010, set specific goals for District 1 of Shemiran. However, fieldwork observations in Darband in 2021 and interview results indicate that these goals have not been fully realised in Darband (Table 2).

*Table 2. Tehran's Master Plan and its implementation in Darband*

Aims of Master Plan for Shemiran in 2010	Observations on site of Darband and interviews in 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing it as the zone of tourism and leisure, e.g. the touristic axis of Darband</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Darband is very crowded with visitors. Gradually, Darband is changing to the residence of high-status groups, demolishing the historic fabric and structures.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining the structure of the neighborhood as the residence of privileged classes</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revival of the residential and vernacular identity of the area</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protecting natural characteristics such as river valleys, gardens, and Alborz hillside. The areas around river valleys may be protected, and linear parks should be proposed. The northern city mountain is considered a special protection zone as a green belt.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The River valley of Darband has been filled with residential structures and many cafes, disregarding the advice of the Master Plan. The river has become polluted. Many old gardens have been divided or demolished and constructed. Residential structures have been built above the permitted height of the northern green belt construction beyond the city limit of 1800 m.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The protection of heritage sites of the region;</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first criticism is the few structures and</li> </ul>

<p>Palace-museum of Sadabad, Hotel Darband, Darband Square, Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum, Malek Garden, and Sheikh Khaz'al's Garden should be preserved. Constructions should not be permitted near heritage sites or, in case of permission, only after providing facades following historical fabrics.</p>	<p>gardens listed here, disregarding the area's rich heritage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The second is that although the conservation areas included certain construction limitations in their surroundings, on-site observations indicate that the Master Plan has not been followed. Hotel Darband was destroyed. Malek Garden has been divided after several fires by descendants, and part of it is still in private custody. Many of its historic structures have been demolished. The rest has been rearranged as a public park, disregarding its historic spatial order, trees and structures. Construction in the conservation area has no particular relation to historic fabric.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Darband neighbourhood is defined as both valuable rural and deteriorated residential fabric (mainly in the Bagh-Shater area). Regarding the Bagh-Shater area, the small scale of plots, their location on high land slopes, the impossibility of accessing them with vehicles, and the low durability of structures are the challenges they face. The site's residents should do renewal of the neighbourhood in deteriorated fabric through aggregating building blocks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few instances of Darband's rural heritage have remained. Contrary to the usual small-scale structures of the area, large-scale structures have been constructed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipation of service centres and transfer routes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The area has not provided service centres and transfer routes, and locals should travel to Tajrish to obtain the required services. Transfer routes are not adequate for the population. Besides, due to the high crowd of visitors to Darband St., an ambulance cannot transfer in an emergency.</li> </ul>

## Rapid urbanisation problems

With Tehran emerging as the epicentre for administration and economic vitality, it has become



a promising destination for those migrating in search of opportunities. As the city underwent its transformation, the population growth has been high. Nevertheless, Tehran now grapples with many issues, including pollution, congested traffic, overpopulation, and the soaring cost of living (Madanipour 1998). The table below shows the growth of Tehran's population from 1883 to 2016 (Table 3).

*Table 3. Population growth in Tehran*

year	1883	1903	1923	1943	1963	1983	2003	2023
Population of Tehran	250,000	272,500	297,750	492,000	1,617,000	5,073,000	7,170,230	19,001,043

Since the Qajar era, Tehran's population has surged, leading to significant expansion and migration towards its northern areas. The Qajar elite favoured the north for its superior climate, establishing grand residences there. This trend of suburbanisation intensified after World War I, with traders and retailers relocating their residences from the Bazaar to the cooler northern suburbs. Pahlavi I's designation of the Sadabad palace in the north as the official ruler's residence further cemented this area's status. As a result, other grand appointees assembled near these opulent residences, followed by the establishment of military installations and administrative functions. Following World War II, Tehran's expansion accelerated under Pahlavi II, absorbing nearby suburban villages and satellite towns into its urban sprawl. This swift urban expansion led to the loss of many gardens within the city and suburbs as they were divided and developed for housing. The result was a cultural divide unlike the previous mix-income neighbourhoods: the southern, older city areas became home to the religious, traditional, lower-income communities, while the northern regions attracted the secular, modern middle and upper classes, who preferred the northern region's more favourable environmental conditions and proximity to the mountains and water sources. As a result, in 1956, the population density in the southern areas reached its highest point, with 610 individuals per hectare, while the northern districts consistently maintained lower population densities throughout (Madanipour 1998, Marefat 2004).

Post-1979 Islamic Revolution, Tehran continued to expand, absorbing towns like Rey and Shemiran. As a capital, Tehran's influence transformed the structure and fabric of these surrounding areas from rural landscapes and gardens within mountains into densely populated urban spaces. Shemiran, known for its unique environmental qualities, attracted diverse populations. Despite the land constraints, settlements have emerged wherever feasible, drawing

not only the native inhabitants but also garnering increased attention from privileged social classes in later periods, owing to the area's environmental and climatic advantages. This area's ecological appeal led to increased construction activity from significant investors and ordinary households, creating challenges for long-term residents and urban planners during the last few years. Investments in construction were exceptionally high in Shemiran compared to other Tehran areas due to higher potential returns (Saiidi et al. 2015).

High population density and pollution in Tehran have driven many, especially the privileged classes, to seek refuge in quieter suburban areas like Shemiran. This migration has further increased construction and population density in Shemiran. The influx of new residents, often from higher economic groups, has led to socio-cultural conflicts with the native, long-term residents. Despite attempts by natives to preserve their local culture and relationships, the intensified process of "urbanisation" of the small village settlements, the construction boom and the arrival of new residents have drastically altered both the physical and socio-economic landscape of these settlements. The area now faces disharmony in construction, foreign to the natural landscape, disproportion in passages, and a strain from increased population and vehicular traffic. Limited land availability and high prices have prompted constructors to maximise land use, exacerbated by insufficient regulations and oversight. Another problem regards the traditional narrow roads despite the relative motorisation of society (Saiidi et al. 2015). This trend is evident in Darband, where the population has increased thirty-two times over 75 years, with rapid development continuing post-1979 (Table 4).

*Table 4. Population growth in Darband*

year	1941	1956	1996	2006	2016
Population of Darband	1,000	1,658	13,549	13,048	32,056

Rapid population growth and relentless construction have led to increased population density and intensified neighbourhood crowding in Tehran. The lure of real estate profits pushes investors to build beyond permissible limits, raising concerns such as inadequate infrastructure and parking provisions, loss of green spaces, and privacy encroachments (Madanipour 1998). This trend is evident in Darband, where escalating land prices and the area's attractiveness to contractors have threatened this historic district's organic fabric and greenery. Recent years have seen the demolition of old houses and gardens, the cutting of trees, and the construction of new roads for increased vehicle traffic. Many original Darband residents, compelled by

rising land values, have sold their properties, leading to uncontrolled construction. Amidst post-war recovery and population growth, the government struggled with effective regulation. Consequently, construction permits were granted without adequate regard for the area's unique needs, as the municipality faced financial constraints and prioritised profit-driven decision-making. Today, Darband's landscape has transformed, with broad streets and high-rise buildings replacing its traditional coexistence with nature amid its organic development. The current urban landscape prioritises the construction of profitable high-rise buildings, streets, and vehicular access. As a result, the prevailing influence of the real estate market has led to a situation where the distinctiveness of the new Darband is scarcely discernible from other areas in Tehran (Mirsadeghi 2014).

In the place of former gardens, many high-rise apartments have also been built on both the eastern and western sides of Darband. The traditional household system has substantially changed. Family size, form, lifestyle changes and higher expectations impact Darband. Extended families living together in one household are less common, with younger generations preferring separate households or individual floors of the same apartment. After parental deaths, properties are often divided, leading to the construction of smaller homes and the destruction of gardens, altering the area's housing typology. Additionally, numerous cafes have sprung up in northern Darband upper Sarband Sq., catering to visitors but straining local infrastructure, parking, and services.

## **Expansion of Darband and its settlements**

### **Traditional settlements of Darband**

Darband was traditionally composed of seven neighbourhoods until the establishment of the Sadabad complex in the Pahlavi I era. The most significant were Mir-Mahalleh and Shah-Mahalleh, forming the old core of Darband. Mir-Mahalleh, the neighbourhood of the Miry families, was situated west of the Darband River. At the same time, Shah-Mahalleh, named for its proximity to royal lands, lay where the Sadabad Palace now stands, west of the current Darband Square. Darband's natural landscape was a primary factor in its initial settlement. The high slopes of land made the first inhabitants search for land with lower slopes to make their residences, especially in forming Darband's neighbourhood centre, Mir-Mahalleh, on the western side of Darband's river. Mir-Mahalleh gained prominence due to the Sadats (descendants of Prophet Muhammad) residing there, fostering a religiously inclined community further consolidated by establishing the Friday Mosque and Tek Yeh Darband. The neighbourhood was characterised by thatched houses with flat roofs, yards adorned with

greenery, and traditional *Hoz* (pools). The other neighbourhoods of Darband included Toosh-Mahalleh, north of Shah-Mahalleh, Mogh-Mahalleh (named for its poultry) around Sarband Square, Kenar-Mahalleh on the Darband River's east (the neighbourhood on the side), and Bagh-Mahalleh, known for its extensive gardens near Darband Square. This latter area and gardens in the southeast of the current Darband square, like Malek Garden, Bagh-Shater (Shater Garden), and Bagh-Kashk (Kashk Garden), contributed to Darband's green landscape. Pasghale was a small village north of Darband (Interview with Miry in 2021; Mohajer Milani et al. 2005).

Analysing Darband's settlement through old maps, aerial photos, literature, and interviews with long-term residents reveals that Darband Street is the neighbourhood's primary axis and structural backbone. The other parts of the neighbourhood's fabric have been formed adjutant to it. The main structures and axes include the axe of Miry on the western side and the Miry and Fakhery axes on the eastern side. Other elements have been formed adjutant to these, with a significant evolution until 1956. The significant gardens have also been located adjacent to this neighbourhood and along Darband Street (Interview with Miry in 2021; Baft o Memary Consultants 2009; Mohajer Milani et al., 2005) (Figure 110).



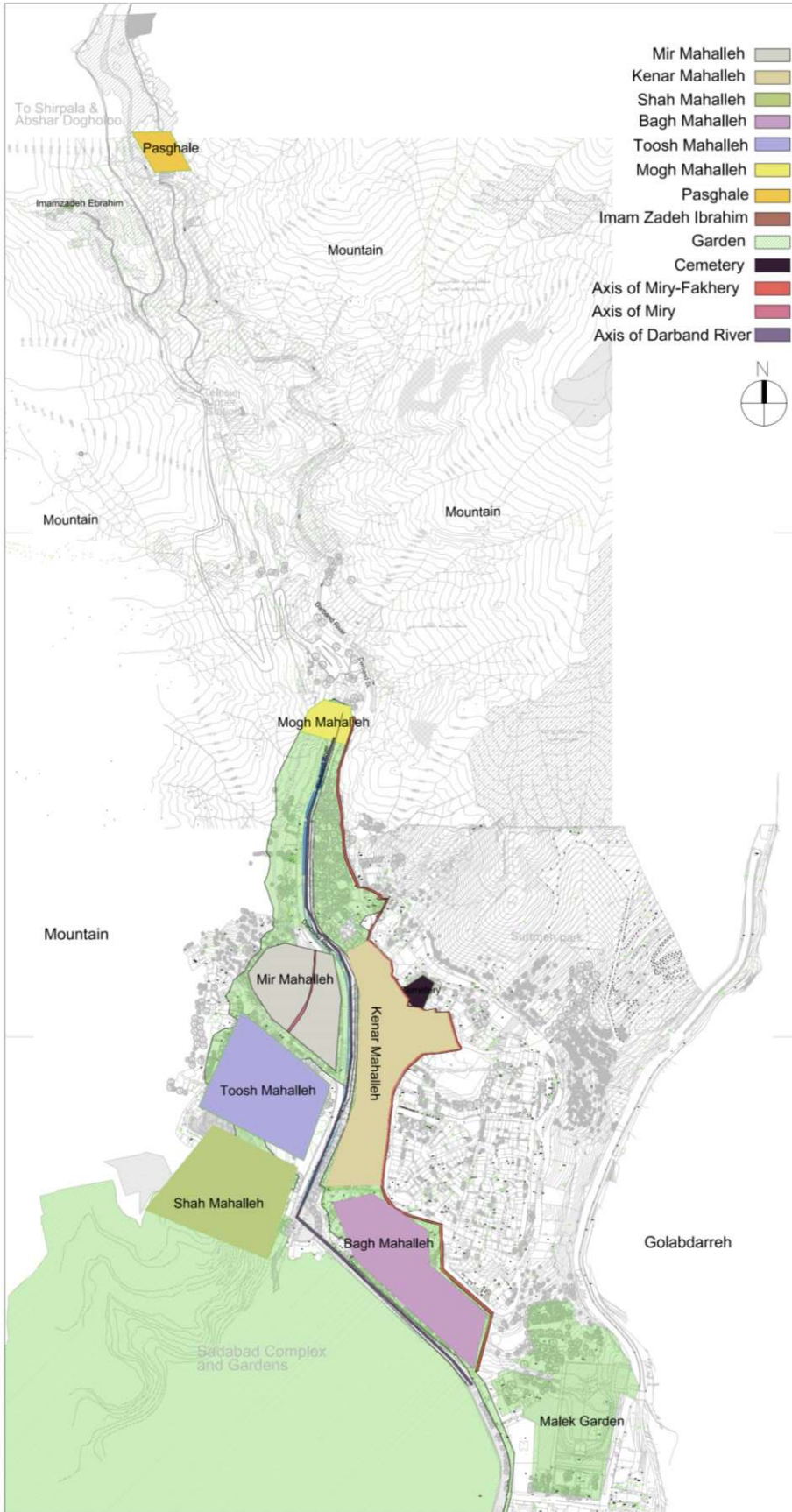


Figure 110. Map of traditional settlements of Darband, projected on the current map of Darband

## Current settlements of Darband

While Darband was formerly a traditional stepped village, many of the gardens on the east and west have been divided, and high-rise apartments have been increasingly constructed. Cafes have also been increasingly developed on its northern side. Currently, Darband includes Mir-Mahalleh west of Darband River, garden houses, Kenar Mahalleh and Bagh Shater east of Darband River, Sarband, and scattered settlements on its north. Pasghale is located on its north as a small village. The urban morphology of Darband consists of the organic and urban grid morphologies. Urban blocks of organic morphology follow irregular patterns (Figure 111, Figure 112, Figure 113).

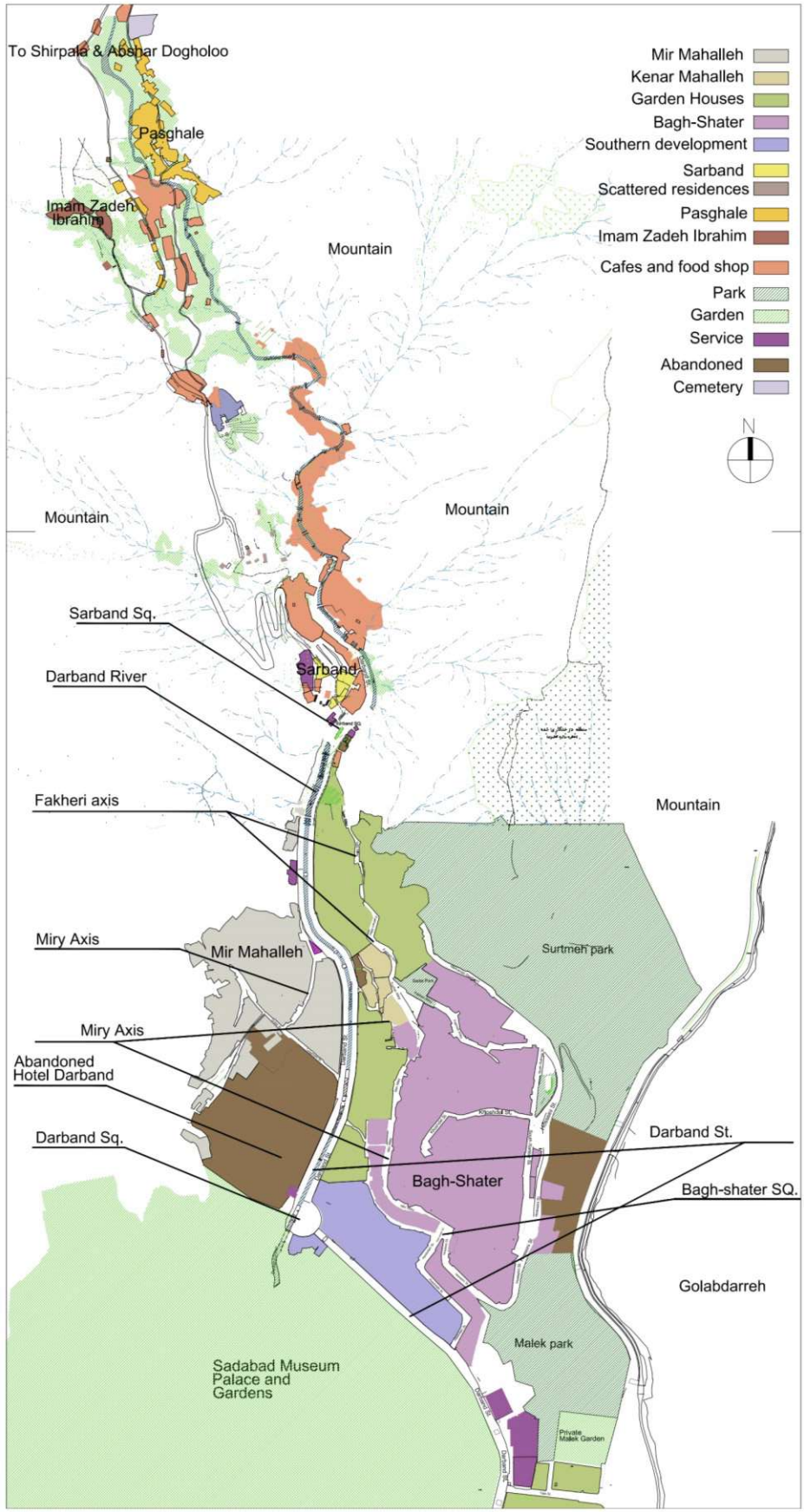


Figure 111. Map of current settlements of Darband



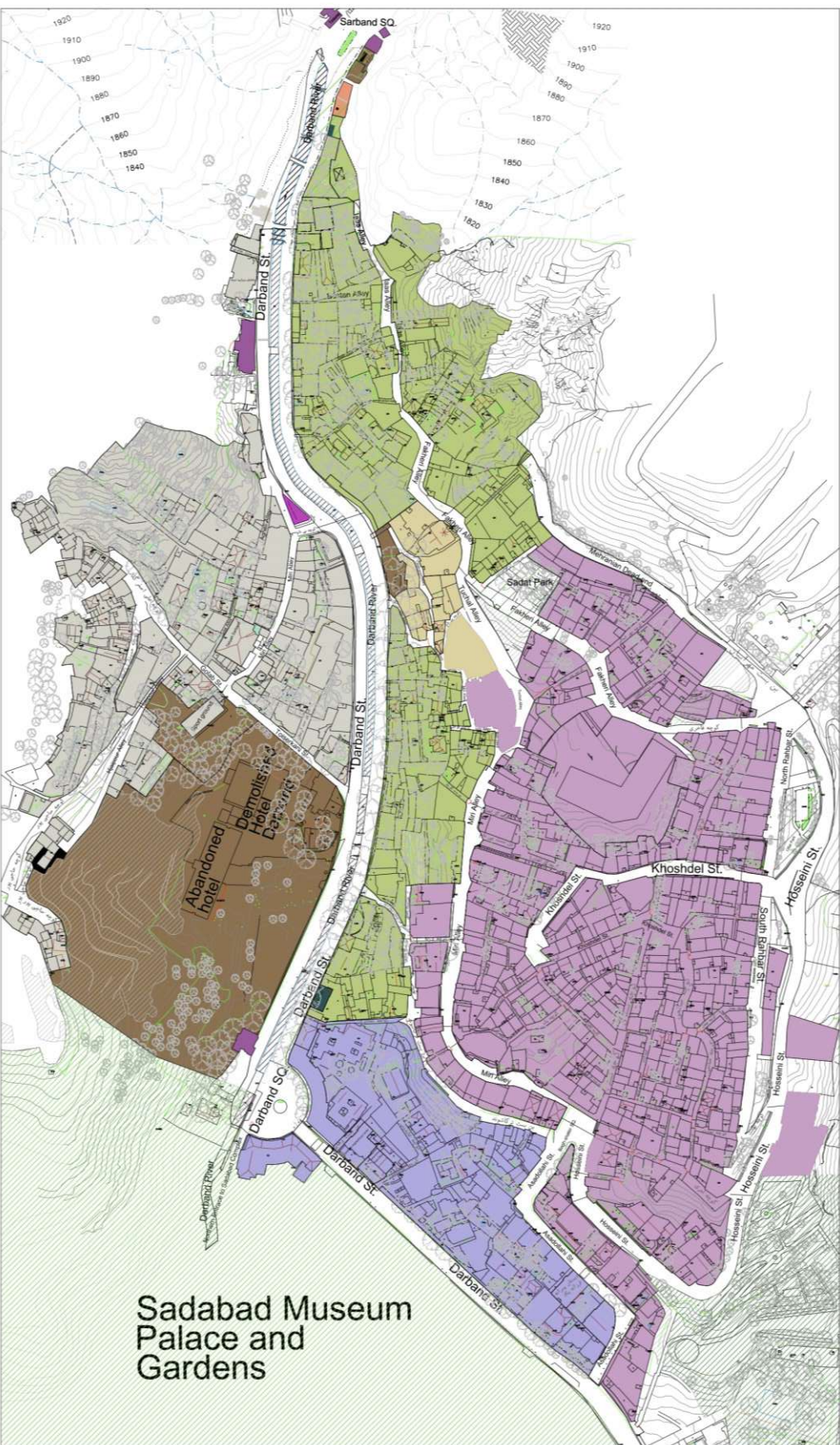


Figure 112. Map of urban morphology of current settlements of Darband



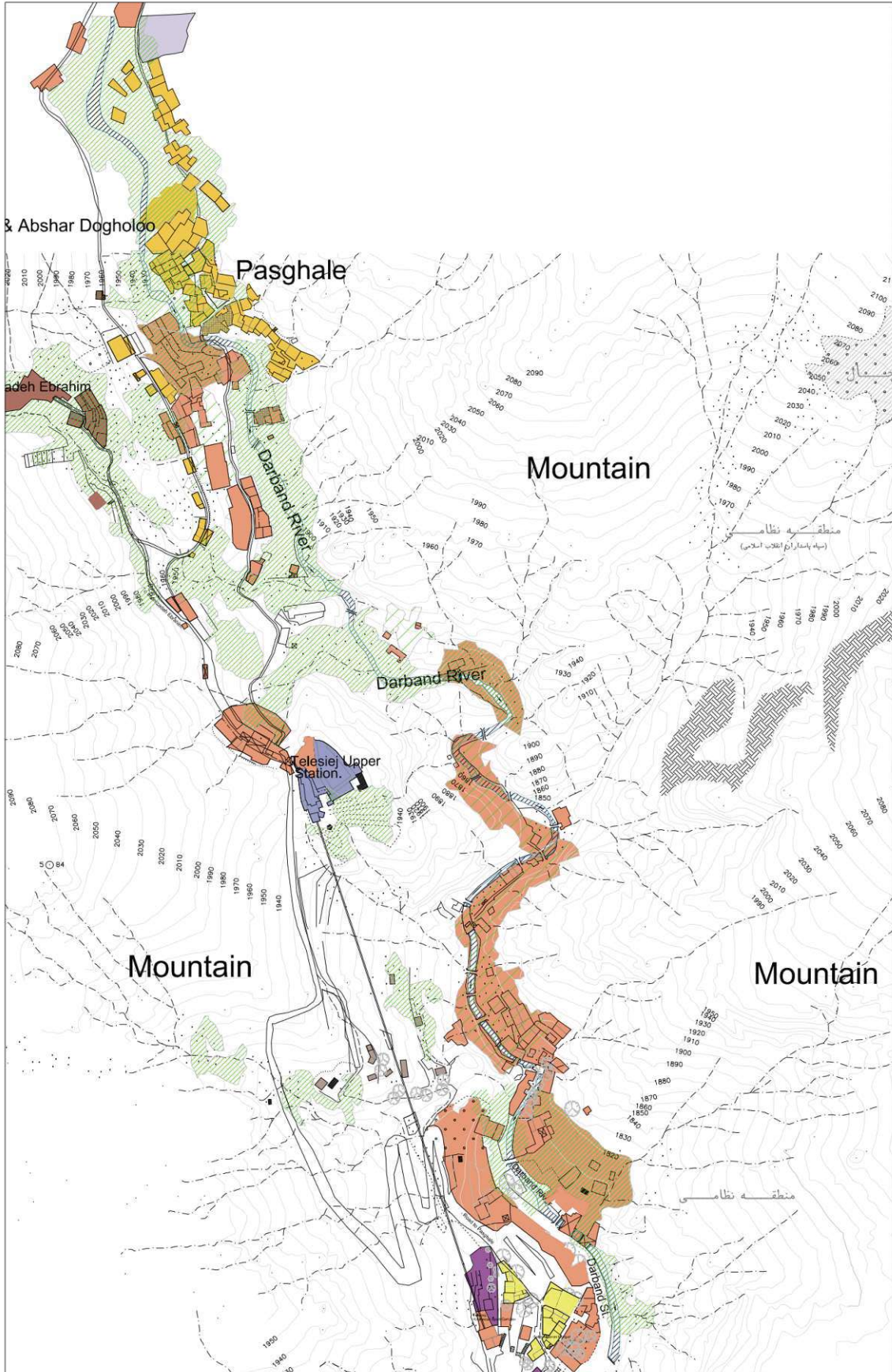


Figure 113. Map of urban morphology of current settlements of Sarband and Pasghale

A very destructive flood happened in Darband in 1987, destroying lots of houses.<sup>22</sup> This led the council to make concrete bedding for Darband River while destroying many houses and gardens on the western edge of the river to widen Darband St.

Observations within the site, survey of houses and maps resemble that, at present, the urban fabric of Mir-Mahalleh as the old core includes the remnants of the old rural fabric, which are often decayed. The urban development in recent decades has filled them with other fabrics. Mir-Mahalleh primarily consists of dense houses built in the Pahlavi era. Developments after the Revolution also consist of apartments, which have increasingly been constructed on more considerable lands than the older small, dense fabric (e.g. Houses No. 3 and 5). Confiscated lands and houses are an issue for the current Darband. Recently, some people also built houses illegally surrounding the former hotel Darband (Figure 114).



Figure 114. View towards Mir-Mahalleh

Previously, garden houses or *Khane-baghi* were in the eastern and western sides of Darband. Many of Pahlavi's army commanders had summer houses inside the gardens there. After the Revolution, some of these houses were confiscated, and new residents live there. Many of the gardens have been divided. Many other garden houses are either empty due to being owned by owners outside Iran or rented to housekeepers to look after them (e.g. Houses No. 17 and 18) (Figure 115).

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22: In 2022, destructive floods happened again in Shemiran, which were arguably related to destructing the nature and trees along with constructing high-rise structures and cafes in the catchment of river.





Figure 115. View towards garden houses on the eastern side of Darband St.

Following the construction of Sadabad Palaces in the Pahlavi I era, residents of Shah-Mahalleh were relocated, with lands in the mountainous eastern areas of Kenar-Mahalleh and Bagh-Shater allocated as compensation (Mohajer Milani et al., 2005). Kenar-Mahalleh was traditionally known for its stepped houses and organic pathways (Interview with Miry in 2021). Kenar-Mahalleh was characterised by tiny houses within an organic fabric post-Islamic Revolution. Most of these residents were locals with solid ties to the neighbourhood, especially on the western side of Darband St. Most of the old core was located on the west side near *Tek Yeh* in Mir-Mahalleh (Interview with Yalda in 2021). Current observations, surveys, and maps show that Kenar-Mahalleh now consists of various housing and apartment buildings from different eras, connected by organic alleys (e.g. Houses No. 9 and 10) (Figure 116).

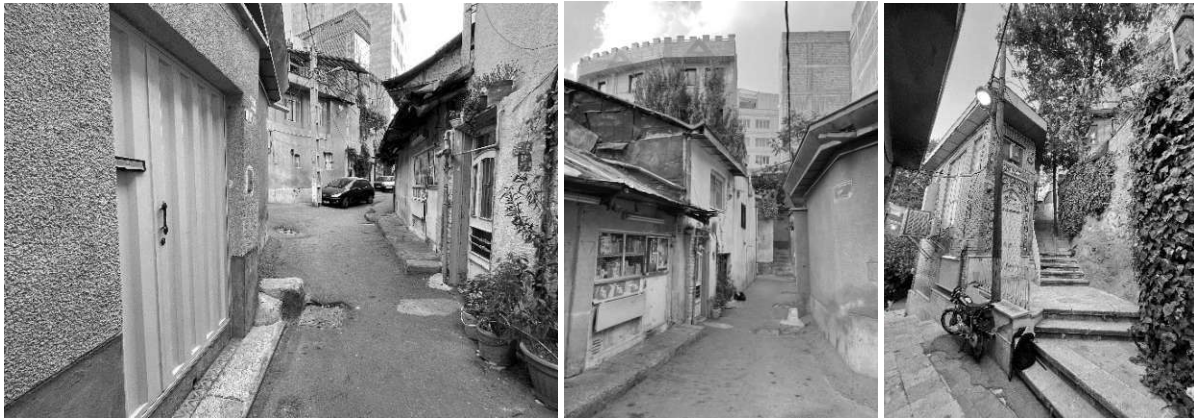


Figure 116. Views towards Kenar-Mahalleh

Significant construction in old Bagh-Shater and Bagh-Kashk began in the 1950s. The landowner subdivided the steeply sloped lands into small parcels, typically 50-100 m<sup>2</sup>, selling them through promissory notes. A lack of official deeds until 2009 meant many residents could not sell their homes in subsequent years. This situation led to a complex mix in Bagh-Shater, characterised by older, smaller residences coexisting alongside newer, larger high-rise

apartments. The houses in Bagh-Shater predominantly represent a small, dense typology set within an organic fabric, with some featuring small courtyards or none (e.g., House no. 12). Certain areas adhere to an urban grid layout, typically less dense (Baft o Memary Consultants 2009).

Post-revolution, lands were often illegally occupied, leading to the construction of tiny, unauthorised houses in Bagh-Shater and on lands above the legally permitted construction height within the mountain range (Interview with Yalda in 2021). The Master Plan identified Bagh-Shater as an area with a deteriorated residential fabric, facing challenges such as small plot sizes, steep slopes, limited vehicle access, and low structural durability. The plan recommended urban renewal through the aggregation of building blocks by residents. Many illegal settlers sold the land that they inhabited. This led to the development of large-scale high-rise structures, contrasting the area's traditionally smaller scale (e.g., House No. 22). Furthermore, as Darband was designated for the privileged class in the Master Plan, new constructions increasingly cater to higher-status groups, creating a socio-economic contrast with the local inhabitants who generally do not belong to high economic groups. Today, real estate agencies note that the eastern side of Bagh-Shater is becoming a high-value area due to specific developers' construction of expensive high-rise buildings (Figure 117).



*Figure 117. View towards Bagh-Shater*

A small, stepped settlement has formed around Sarband Square north of Darband. This is followed by the stepped cafes and houses, randomly scattered within gardens parallel to the Darband River inside the mountain. After the hiking path, Pasghale is located as a stepped village (Figure 118). Pasghale mainly consists of organic fabric, including traditional rural houses and gable roof houses of the Pahlavi Period, which resemble old Darband according to the old residents. Villas have also been constructed recently (e.g. House No. 1).





Figure 118. From left to right, views towards: a) Sarband, b) Cafes above Sarband, c) Pasghale

## The field study in Darband



Figure 119. People in Darband

This thesis goes through a field study, the purpose of which is to propose future planning guidelines based on people's expectations and wants in Darband.

The best method to share the results of this field study for the future planning of Darband is to provide a narrative of my impressions of what people said and how they behaved in the cultural landscape of Darband as their actual living environment. Referring to Meinig (1986), Schein (2009, p. 380) argues that; “regarding the idea of cultural landscape, what matters is investigating particular landscapes-to understand how they have come to be, to wonder how they are received and lived in and through, to ask how and why they matter, and to figure out how they work”.

### Analysis of cultural factors

This section explores the cultural factors and examines the transformation of cultural values within Darband. The analysis is structured into two parts for each cultural factor: the first focuses on the inside of the houses, and the second considers the settlement of Darband. In the discussion about houses, we detail the impact of specific cultural values within individual households. In the settlement analysis, I address the cultural effects within the larger Darband community setting. This comprehensive analysis is conducted in the houses of the three eras of transformation.

### The site and its choice

How was the initial site for houses in Darband selected? Was there a connection between the

village pattern, house locations, site choices, and cultural factors? According to the analysis results, factors such as the relation with nature, defence, religion, family structures, and hierarchical relations influenced the positioning of houses in Darband.

Table 5. The site and its choice, past and now

Old Darband	Current Darband
The houses' sites were chosen based on their relation to nature. Mountains were symbolically considered positive in the old times. Houses were stepped, formed based on the topography, forming a stepped organic settlement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The site of the houses is chosen based on its relation with nature. The same tendency, however, does not affect the settlement pattern and house form in the same way as in the past. High-rise apartments have blocked the view into the mountains. Apartment design does not follow an ecologic pattern (See 'Relation with nature' on p. 198)</li> <li>• Urban planning rules affect the location of houses and settlement patterns.</li> <li>• Financial income affects the selection of the house site.</li> </ul>
Religion was influential on the settlement pattern and orientation of houses.	Religion continues to affect the settlement pattern and orientation of houses.
Many long-term residents were staying in the catchment of their family members.	Many long-term residents are still staying in the catchment of their family members.

The mountain has symbolically obtained a positive place in Persian mythology. Its defensive function would also add to this importance. This was also the case in Shemiran (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021). The ancients highly regarded the mountains for their exceptional qualities, such as their towering heights, resounding echoes, majestic presence, and the profound emotions they inspired when experienced up close or viewed from a distance. In the Iranian highlands, these mountains played a crucial role as freshwater reservoirs, thanks to the geographical characteristics of this area. Considering the significance of water as the primary determinant for the growth of civilizations, a multitude of villages in numerous significant cities tend to have been formed in the foothill areas.

Throughout history, mountains have also fulfilled defensive roles, offering sanctuary from natural and manufactured disasters to those dwelling in the foothills. Mountains also contributed to creating pleasant climates and served as a means of sustenance. The multifarious functions of these majestic peaks have prompted Iranians to ascribe varied connotations to

them (Dariush et al., 2018, p. 30).

Several mountains have been acknowledged for their symbolic and legendary roles. The mountainside structures, particularly those found on majestic and distinctive peaks, were also considered sacred (Dariush et al., 2018, p. 30). Based on historical texts, a Zoroastrian castle and fire temple-religion of Iranians in ancient Persia- were located in the north of Darband and Pasghale in the mountains before the entrance of Islam to Iran (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021). Darband in Persian means valley, fortress and a narrow passage in the mountain, which refers to its geographical location. This village was probably called Darband because it was located at the northernmost residential point of Qasran Zahar. After that, the Alborz mountains prevented the creation of more villages (in Bani Jani 2019). Darband was particularly important due to its location in the gorge of one mountain pass that connected Middle Alborz to the plain of Ray. A strong fort, Shemiran Castle, a little distance north of this village, guarded the passage mentioned (Bani Jani 2019).

Shiite shrines, located in the mountainous areas of Shemiran, were another factor contributing to the formation of Shiite settlements in the mountains. Raay was one of the first places to become the settlement of Shiite Muslims. From 945, when Ray became the capital of Iran during the Buyid empire as a Shiite government, the surroundings were also affected. The surroundings of Alborz Mountain also became residential settlements of Shiite inhabitants and shrines. This continued in the reign of Safavids (1501 to 1736), leading to the formation of religious structures such as *Tek yeh*, mosques and shrines. All the villages of Shemiran have shrines specific to them, which shows the importance of religion. Religion has always been an essential factor in the village pattern of the traditional settlement in Iran, as in sacred orientation towards Qiblah. The houses were usually directed towards the southwest, toward Qibla (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021).

Based on the literature review and interviews with old residents in the traditional settlement of Darband, relation with nature was also influential in the selection of the site due to the pleasant weather, access to water and fertile lands for farming and building houses and resources. Ancestors of the Darband people had migrated from Taleghan, an area northwest of Tehran within Alborz province, 200 years ago. Those lands that could not be used for housing were selected for farming, and gradually, the edge of River Darband was filled with houses (Mohajer Milani et al. 2005, p.109; Interview with Miry in 2021). Analysis of the settlement of Darband shows that it has been formed based on the geography and topography of the land, forming a stepped landscape of houses, paths, and trees. Houses, with their back to the mountain, faced



southwest to southeast, while the river was also located in the south, which is still apparent in Mir-Mahalleh as its old core (Interview with Yalda in 2021). Interviews with old residents also indicate that hierarchical relations were also effective in the location of houses. In traditional Darband, Shah-Mahalleh was the residence of locals from families with higher economic status. This was unlike the Kenar-Mahalleh, where mostly lower classes lived.

In the Pahlavi era, Reza Shah seized Shah-Mahalleh and its gardens from inhabitants to build Sadabad. Courtiers and army commanders occupied gardens and villas in Darband. Reza Shah gifted the eastern areas of Kenar-Mahalleh and Bagh-Shater to the locals. Owing to the agricultural needs on the neighbourhood's eastern side, the landowner, Arbab-Reza, redirected the stream from Sarband square eastward, allowing farming on these lands. This began a neighbourhood centre on the eastern side of the Darband River. The expansion of Sadabad moved the inhabitants of Shah-Mahalleh and Mogh-Mahalleh to areas like Bagh-Mahalleh, increasing the population on the river's eastern side. The river divided this community in two. Since each segment needed to communicate, mosques were established in the eastern part and Mir-Mahalleh (Mohajer Milani et al. 2005, p.142, 184-185; Interview with Miry 2021).

After 1941, Tehran was continuously transformed and expanded in the image of the West during Pahlavi II. Unlike the agricultural system, the gardens were divided into smaller plots to sell, as land became a valuable asset. The quarter system went under change. The houses were transformed to the modern extroverted type (Madanipour 1998). After the Islamic revolution, the Tehran Comprehensive Plan (1966), which was before the revolution, forced new regulations for construction. As the institution in charge of setting rules for construction, the municipality imposed rules for the size of the land that could be used for construction. A new morphology of the built environment was formed due to the regulations of the municipality and the Islamic government, forming mostly 3-4 story cubic buildings with a shared yard. In the current Darband, urban regulations of the Tehran Council are effective, e.g. the building must be constructed 60% north of the land, based on its location towards the alley. This also affects the definition of land parcels and the location of the building, which have a significant impact on the space organisation of the houses (Forouzmand 2013, p.71).

Due to its environmental-ecological characteristics, Shemiran has always attracted different groups of people. Considering land limitations, settlements have formed wherever it was possible. Such settlements have not only attracted their native residents, but in later periods, environmental and climatic privileges attracted more attention from privileged classes of society. Continuing this trend has led to intensified construction in recent years. High population density, different types of pollution, especially bio-environmental pollution, noise

and urban congestion and similar difficulties for many of the capital's residents, including the privileged groups, create the basis for decentralization and taking refuge in the quieter areas of the suburbs. With its pleasant climate, taking refuge from the city of Tehran in Shemiran is a well-known phenomenon among the residents of Tehran. As a result, the influx of urban dwellers into this area has caused construction expansion and more population density (Saiidi et al. 2015, p. 12-13; 35-36).

The interviews and observations show that many long-term Darband residents live on the same site as their ancestors' homes, with family ties being a critical factor in site selection. In contrast, newer residents mentioned relation with nature as a primary reason for moving to Darband. They described Darband as a tranquil village near Tehran and Tajrish, away from crowded and polluted Tehran. It is in a mountainous region with pleasant weather and scenic views of garden homes and the river. These newer residents often come from wealthier backgrounds, influencing their choices. Meanwhile, Pas-ghale's inhabitants mentioned that younger generations tend to relocate for work and easier access to amenities like schools and hospitals.

## Relation with nature

### Relation with nature and settlement of Darband

#### Relation with nature and Settlement pattern

The relation to nature has consistently influenced the placement of houses and settlement formation in Darband (See 'The site and its choice' on p. 194). However, the emergence of apartment-style lifestyle and modern urban planning has impacted this relationship. My analysis has identified several themes related to Darband's relation to nature and settlement patterns, outlined in the table below and illustrated in the maps (Table 6, Figure 120, Figure 121). It will be elaborated in the following section. The maps will illustrate the relation with nature in the old and current Darband, respectively.

*Table 6. Settlement pattern and relation with nature, past and now*

Old Darband	Current Darband
House form and relation with nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ecologic pattern of houses</li> <li>• Relation of the house with land and topography</li> <li>• Old green yards</li> <li>• Application of natural local materials</li> </ul>	House form and relation with nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The un-ecologic pattern of current apartments</li> <li>• Loss of relation of house with land and topography in current apartments</li> <li>• The decline of yards in current multi-sharing apartments</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevalence of application of new construction techniques</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settlement pattern: organic stepped</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settlement pattern and streets compatible with transfer with car</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gardens in old Darband</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condition of old gardens; divided and demolished or converted to public parks</li> <li>• Established green spaces in the current Darband</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water paths and <i>Qanats</i> of old Darband</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Condition of old <i>Qanats</i> and water paths: dried, blocked or in a state of despair</li> </ul>

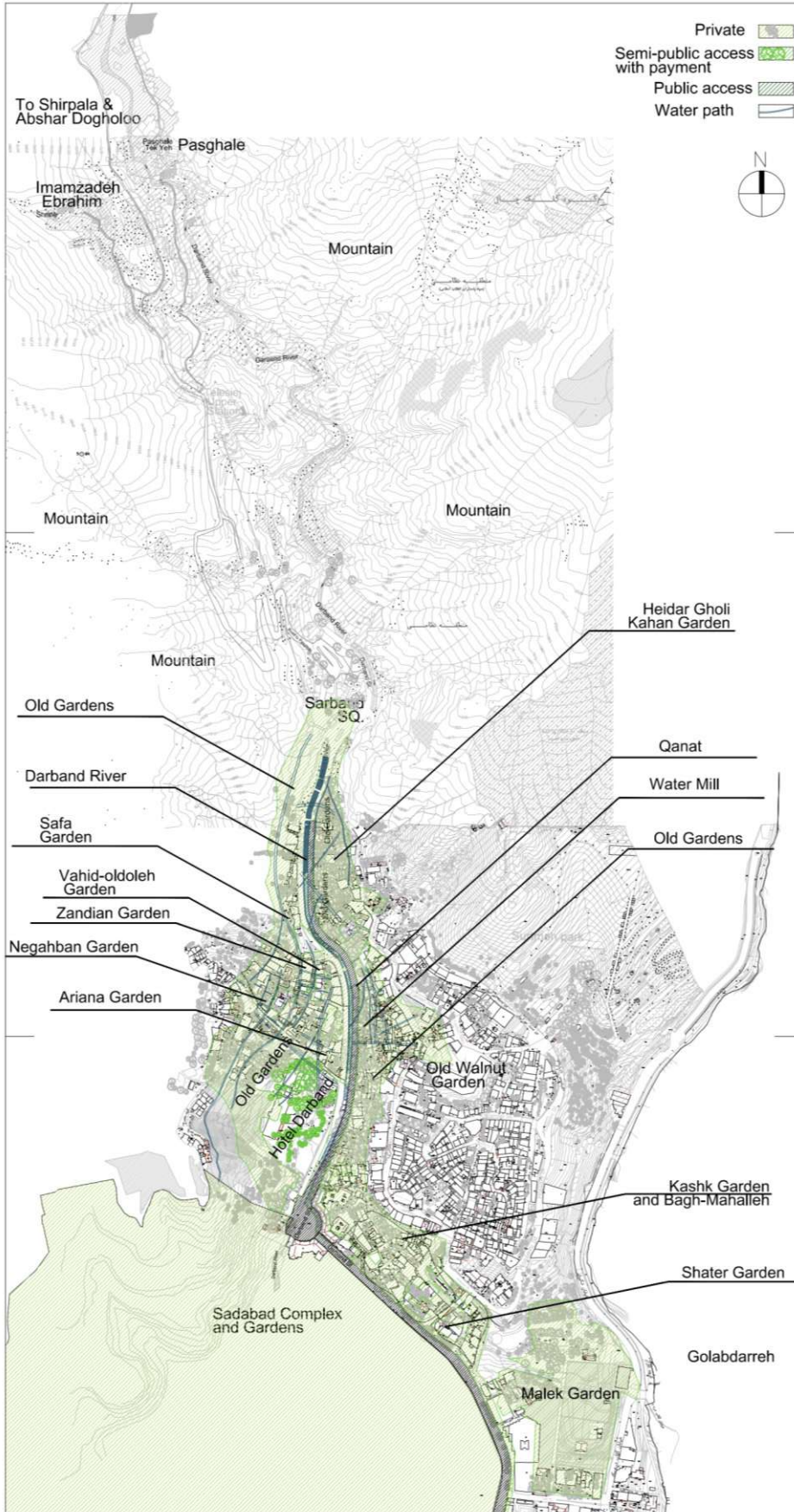


Figure 120. Map of relation with nature in the old Darband



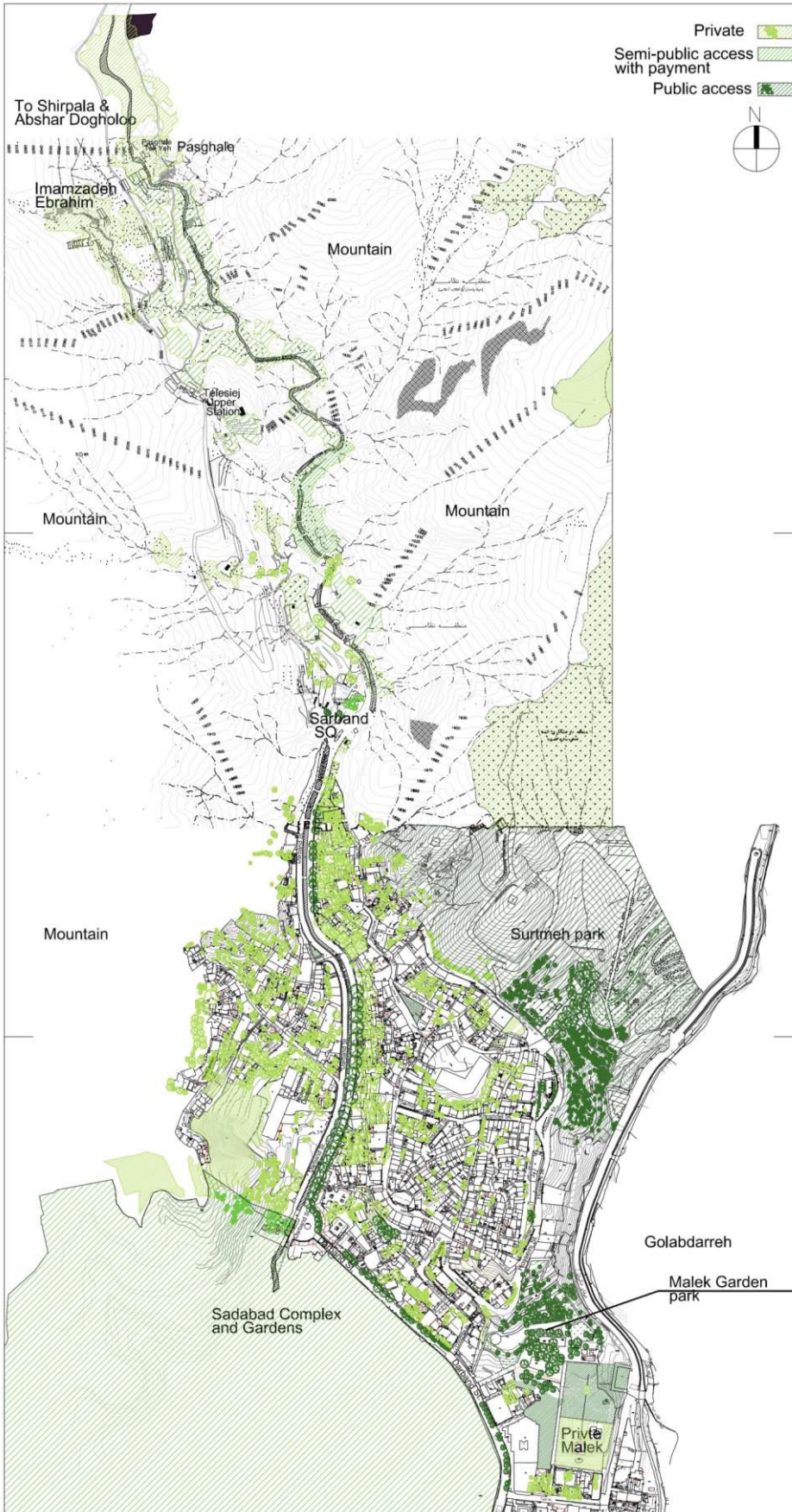


Figure 121. Map of relation with nature in the current Darband

During the Pahlavi era, Darband's settlement featured stepped houses and garden residences constructed from thatch or brick. These houses often had flat or gabled roofs, accompanied by yards and greenery, and were interconnected by water paths. Steps were constructed inside the houses or the larger settlement to reach the sloping terrain. The connection with the mountains and the development of the stepped landform settlements aligned with the topography and organic pathways further emphasized the connection with nature. Additionally, holy or protected sites within the mountain are other factors concerning the relation with nature (See 'The site and its choice' on p. 194 and 'Urban planning' on p. 162). In the remnants of Darband's organic layout today, streets are narrow, with staircases marking the steep terrain, suggesting that this urban structure was established before cars became common (Mirsadeghi 2000).

During the contemporary period, with the advent of modernity, many people started their lives up the mountains, and people's attitudes towards the mountains changed. Technology has allowed people to conquer the hills. A tangible example is the Alborz Mountain- the geographically and mythically important mountain in Iran (Dariush et al. 2018, p. 30). When presented with images showcasing Darband's transformation during interviews, most long-term inhabitants expressed their discontent, noting that the mountain views from Darband have become obstructed due to the construction of high-rise buildings. Another notable concern observed was the inconsistency of the new high-rise apartments due to their enormous densities with the surrounding small-density structures and the land's topography and form. This misalignment can be attributed to construction approvals given by the municipality, often overlooking the Master Plan's stipulations. Organic paths have also gone under transformation in the contemporary period (See 'Urban planning' on p. 169). The traditional Darband settlement's close connection with nature is evident in the original Friday mosque's design, which included a large courtyard with trees, a pool, and mud and brick walls. However, the mosque has been reconstructed with a modern design featuring more roofed areas and new construction materials.

### **Gardens**

The approximate location of old gardens in the Pahlavi era has been shown on the Map of relation with nature in old Darband according to the historical documents (Sotoudeh 1995; Mohajer Milani et al. 2005), interviews with long-term residents and old maps (See 'Gardens and public parks' on p. 134) (Figure 120).

Article 50 of the Iran Constitution and Article 1 of the Law on Preservation and Expansion of Green Space in Cities are currently devoted to protecting green space. According to law, the municipality must protect its green spaces, including trees. However, observations and discussions with experts and developers indicate that this law has not been effectively implemented in Darband. Usually, landowners try to dry the trees in the gardens since it is more economically beneficial that the land -which will be constructed- cannot be considered a garden. One of the main reasons is that the permitted construction density is much lower in gardens.

Tehran Municipality has argued that it has tried to buy the old gardens to transform them into public gardens to protect them as part of the cultural identity of Tehran and prevent them from being demolished to become high-rise apartments. However, this is contrary to what is seen in Shemiran and Malek Garden. The famous Malek garden, within an area of 35000 m<sup>2</sup>, follows the pattern of Persian gardens, including perpendicular garden paths, central *Hoz*, and *Koushk* inside a walled garden. It was proposed by the City Council of Tehran to be listed, protected and restored as a vernacular organic Persian garden. However, Tehran Municipality bought two sections of this divided garden, and the most crucial part, its *Koushk*, remains in private ownership. After several fires, many old trees were destroyed, and a modern park was built, disregarding the traditional garden pattern.

Interviews with residents and observations also indicated that many of the old gardens had been divided or demolished to make room for constructing high-rise buildings. For instance, despite its importance in the memory of long-term residents, the Zandian garden was demolished and replaced by a high-rise with a small yard. The Heidargholi Khan garden has been divided and sold as a family garden with different garden houses. Residents of garden houses also stated that they routinely receive lucrative offers to sell their land to developers. Else, the poor security of extensive gardens to theft and the overlooking apartments were also stated. Experts attempted to protect Malek Garden but were unsuccessful (Mokhtary 2013; Interview with Mahmoudi in 2021) (Figure 122). Walnut gardens remain north of Pasghale in the Osoon area. The map of the transformation of green space in Darband shows that compared to the old Darband, public green spaces such as parks have replaced the former private and private-owned gardens. Houses provide less green space as well.





Figure 122. Condition of some of the old gardens in the current Darband. From left to right: a) former Shater garden, b) former Kashk garden, c) former old gardens above Hotel Darband, d) Malek garden

### ***Qanats* and water paths**

Water has been essential for Iranians from the distant past because of the warm and dry climate in most of the country's space. This impacted the clever ways to use it, whether inside the garden or even establishing settlements inside the mountain as the water source.

Reza Shah ordered a water channel from Abshar Dogholoo (The Twin waterfall) in the mountain to Sadabad Gardens. Water routes from the mountain connected to house yards, pools, and gardens. Some flowed under houses, pouring into Darband River, Sadabad Gardens, and Hotel Darband. Homes also had cisterns linked to these routes. Drinking water came from *Qanat*, which was stream water. Some water routes, *Qanat*, and water mill locations are shown on the map using interviews and site observation. Sadabad, Malek Garden, and Darband St. had *Qanats* (Interview with Mahmoodi, 2021; Miri, 2021).

Piped water brought an end to many Darband water paths and *Qanats*. Many trees near water routes died when water paths got blocked or construction dried them. The water mill is gone now. In interviews, older residents (65-75) said water paths were crucial. They shared their sadness about Darband losing its water paths. Experts also shared attempts to save some water paths from construction, but Tehran Municipality ignored their requests (Interviews with Mahak, Miry, Yalda, and Zahabi in 2021)(Figure 123).



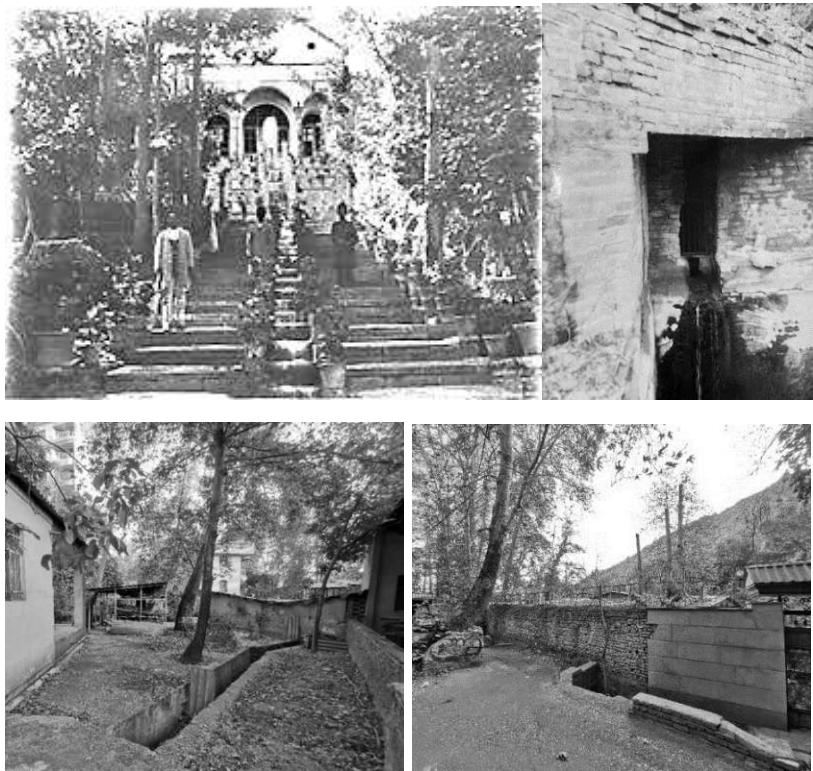


Figure 123. Darband Qanats and water paths, before and now; from left to right; a) Malek garden water paths in Qajar 5; b) Qanat of Malek Garden in 2002; c) Water path in the yard of an old house in Darband in 2021; d) Remaining blocked water paths in Fakhery alley in 2021

## Materials

Interviews indicated that in the past, Darband houses were made of natural materials like mud, brick, and stone, with gable roofs and wooden doors. Organic paths were dirt roads or had steps made of stone. Shemiran's *Tek Yehs* had wooden roofs and beams. All these materials came from Shemiran resources. Today, building methods and materials have changed. Homes now have metal doors. Instead of wooden bridges, there are ones made of metal and concrete. Paths are now asphalt roads or made of cement bricks. After a flood in Tajrish, the river got a concrete base, changing its natural look. These material choices have reasons. The main one is that new materials last longer, and people rarely use old-style materials now because they are generally considered inferior to modern materials (See 'Traditional materials and techniques' on p. 164, Interview with Miry in 2021; Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021) (Figure 124).

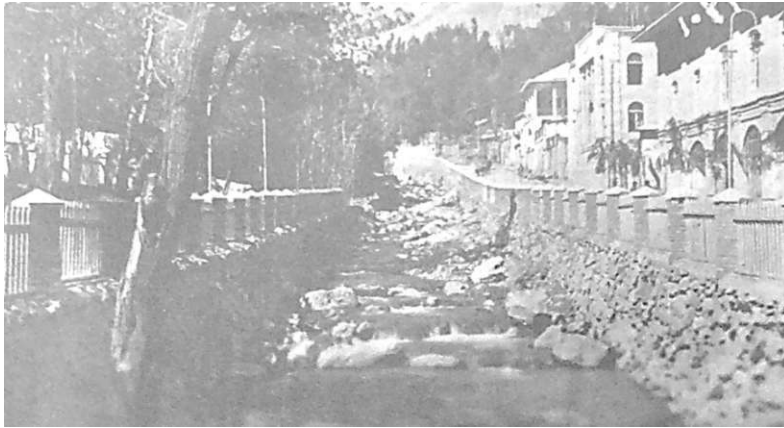


Figure 124. Transformation of materials used at Darband River from Pahlavi I until 2021

### **Relation with nature and use of space**

Relation with nature has also influenced the use of space in the Darband settlement. Shemiran and Darband were summer resorts from the distant past. Forty years ago, the prevalent image of Shemiran was that of a village distinct from the city of Tehran. This image is still prevalent among the long-term inhabitants. Pasghale is still a village. Darband continues to be a summer recreational resort filled with cafes and pleasant weather, used by visitors from Tehran and other areas. The cafes and the organic hiking path located next to the river, with the sound of water and the trees, are attractive points for visitors. Although visitors still love the mountains and cafes, long-term residents rarely talk about enjoying Darband's nature or the mountain nowadays. They believe the mountain path and river have been destroyed, and too many visitors crowd the area (See 'Use of space in settlement of Darband' on p. 231). Residents of Pasghale view this change negatively as building steps instead of the natural mountain path, allowing cars close to the village, and many cafes by the river have changed Pasghale's village to a more urban area.

## Opinions of residents concerning the relation with nature

The diagram below resembles satisfaction/dissatisfaction with relation with nature in the current Darband compared to the past, based on the results of the interviews (Figure 125).

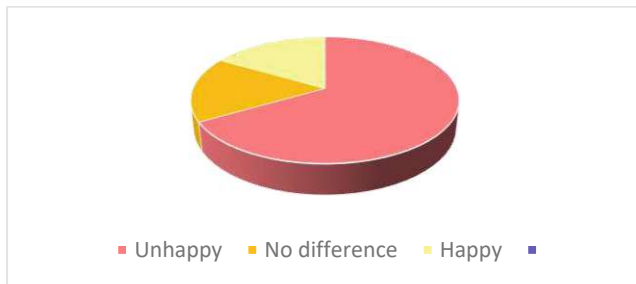


Figure 125. Satisfaction with relation with nature in current Darband

The results of interviews show that 64% of interviewees are unhappy. They mentioned different reasons for this; Darband was previously a natural mountainous area, where the form of houses, yards, water paths and gardens would reinforce social interaction and daily use of space within nature. However, in today's Darband, the loss of courtyard, *Hoz* and green spaces of old houses, the destruction and loss of trees and old beautiful gardens such as Bagh-Zandi and Bagh-Safa, water paths, organic mountainous paths and the sound of water along with cleanness of river and mountain within Darband, replaced with high-rise buildings. The view to the mountain is blocked now and less snowy in winter.

Some residents spoke about their dream for Darband's future, hoping to prevent the death of garden trees and constant constructions or preservation of historical fabrics. They also wished to maintain the garden pathways and keep the alleys clean. However, they felt this dream might be out of reach. Experts also explained how they contacted Tehran Municipality, expressing concerns over the potential destruction of valuable soil, trees, water paths, Malek Garden, and other natural resources due to the mass construction and increasing land excavation. Despite their advice to preserve Darband's unique rural stepped historic fabric in the Master Plan, renovate existing old houses, and promote them as tourist spots, their suggestions were disregarded. They stated their dissatisfaction with how the stepped houses of Darband, which had yards and terraces, were demolished to be combined to construct high-density high-rise apartments above the permitted density. This changed the old fabric, where yards of neighbouring houses also became dark spaces between high-rise apartments. They stated that laws could be implemented so constructions would follow a stepped green pattern. Suggestions to convert some structures of Malek Garden into public-use facilities were also ignored. Only 20% of Darband residents are happy with their current relation with nature. Different reasons were mentioned for this. Younger long-term residents, while not actively engaging with nature,

claim they do not harm it either. They appreciate the new concrete riverbed and the ambient sounds of nature, the pleasant weather and the prevalence of cafes inside mountainous paths close to the river and nature. New residents chose their location in Darband for its natural tranquillity and scenic beauty. Darband was described as a calm rural place next to the city with good weather, a view of the river, mountains, nature, and the sound of water, chickens, and dogs. It was also described as a summer resort. Meanwhile, 16% believe their bond with nature has not changed, as they keep their indoor plants and have no issue with being unable to use the yard or balcony.

## **Relation with nature and the house in Darband**

Analysis of interviews showed other themes concerning the relation with nature and the house in Darband. These themes encompass house form, use of space concerning nature, summer/winter use of space, and relation with animals.

### **House form**

House form is one of the attributes of relation with nature in Darband houses in the interviews. Observed in surveyed houses, the literature also confirmed this (See 'The traditional house' on p. 153). A significant characteristic of housing in traditional Shemiran is the ecological pattern, which is affected by factors like climate (especially humidity, precipitation, and heat), the sun radiation angle, wind and its direction, topography, slope, and form of land. Historically, houses in Darband were built with porches on raised platforms and gabled roofs to address challenges like humidity, snow, and rain. Additionally, rooms were built with thick walls and low-height to protect against the cold. However, contemporary construction deviates from these traditions due to high land costs and the use of modern heating systems. The diagram below illustrates the observed house trends from three periods in Darband: landform houses, including yards and semi-open spaces (Saiidi et al., 2015) (Figure 126).



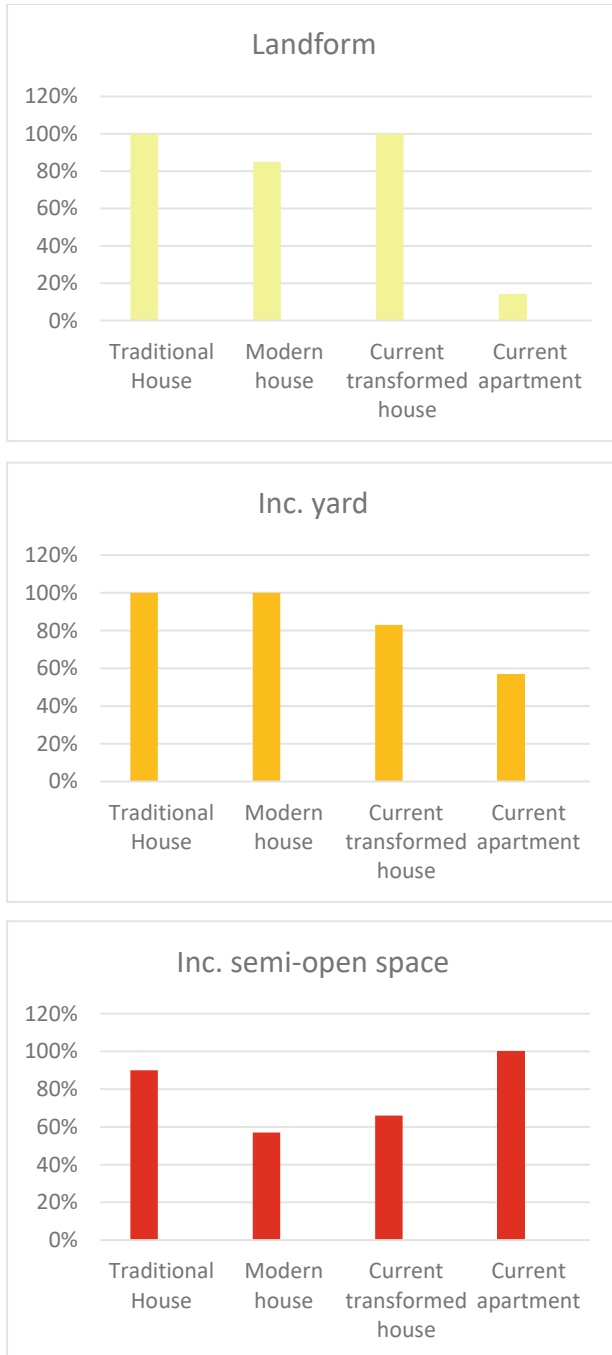


Figure 126. House form and relation with nature in the surveyed houses

The first trend was regarding the landform houses, which included alignment with the natural land and topography. The prevalent form of a traditional house in Darband was a stepped house, formed according to the land. Various building techniques were employed to achieve this integration. In some instances, the yard was situated lower than the nearby alley, and the rooms were constructed above ground level to prevent water from entering the living spaces. For example, House No. 2 followed this approach. Alternatively, the stepped house was built above the alley to prevent flooding. Steps were commonly used to access different levels of the house, like House No. 6. These traditional houses typically did not have basements. Instead, they

featured a masonry stone sleeper wall, often ranging in height from one to a few meters. The sleeper wall was usually constructed up to the point where the land slope became level. Today, this type of design is replaced by stairs in modern construction (Saiidy et al., 2014, p.17).

The surveyed houses of the modern period showed a reduced alignment with the natural land and topography. While the current transformed houses maintained their connection to the land, contemporary apartment buildings often no longer follow the stepped landform pattern. Instead, builders excavate land for parking and basement levels like Houses No. 21 and 23. Since land is considered highly valuable, they construct the whole land possible. An exception is a villa apartment (House No. 19), where apartment flats are arranged on stepped levels with individual yards and green spaces. As Forouzmand (2013, p.71) argues, urban roles in contemporary houses in Iran have determined the location of closed and open spaces. Experts suggest that Tehran Municipality could mandate stepped construction as a better fit to the land slope, but their suggestion was not considered. These observations and expert recommendations determine the need for new urban regulations that include compatibility with the local climate, land, and nature in future house patterns in Darband. For instance, in forming stepped pattern houses based on the land slope, the villa-apartment typology (House No. 19) can serve as a model for future design guidelines. Additionally, research should be conducted to develop innovative designs for private yards in shared apartments.

Traditional houses in Darband typically had yards, greenery, *Hoz* (ponds), and water cisterns. Water paths connected the houses through the pools. In the modern era, Darband's houses were house gardens and villa gardens, still incorporating yards, greenery, *Hoz*, and water paths. Yards remained significant for both residents and those as their second homes. The last stage of transformation includes the current transformed houses and apartments. Many current transformed homes under survey in this research have kept their yards. While urban regulations mandate allocating a maximum of 60% of land for buildings and 40% for yards and open space in apartment construction, surprisingly, 43% of the surveyed apartments in Darband did not have any yards, which contradicts Tehran Municipality's regulations. This is primarily due to the high economic value of the land. All of them had provided one semi-open space for each flat.

### **Use of space concerning nature**

Another output from analysing the themes is the decline in the use of open and semi-open spaces within the houses (See 'Yards, verandas and roof gardens; Declining the importance of open and semi-open spaces' on p. 223). Instead, many residents mentioned keeping pots of

plants inside the houses or on the walls of the yards and roofs. Water paths within the yards have also been blocked or not used any more.

### **Use of space and summer-winter pattern**

The interviews and house survey outputs show that seasons significantly influenced space usage patterns in Darband houses. In traditional houses, daily activities shifted to the yard and *Iwan* (terrace) during the summer and indoors during the winter, with the yard, *Iwan*, and roofs serving as spaces for sleeping under mosquito nets during summer nights. Rooms were adapted to become semi-open spaces during the summer. Specific rooms were chosen for winter, including a room close to the kitchen, facing the sun or on the ground floor. While the former was naturally warmer, the latter had thicker walls while located in the soil.

Some Tehran residents used Darband as their second home during summer. Some well-to-dos had winter houses in Darband, too. Located in the same garden, winter houses had more enclosed spaces with smaller windows, while summer buildings featured larger windows and open spaces for relaxation. Summer gardens like the Malek Garden were also used during Qajar and Pahlavi I.

For some residents, this tradition continued into the modern period, like House No. 14. They used the southern room in winter and the northern room in summer for the breeze. On summer days, they would sleep in the hall with open doors for airflow. The hall lacked windows but had indirect light. Summer nights were spent in the *Iwan* after watering the yard. Some experts think the hall was a connecting area for collective daily activities, replacing the former yard (Figure 127).

However, interviews and surveys suggest that the traditional summer-winter use of space has become less common in current Darband houses. The transformation from a traditional village to an urban neighbourhood, along with the availability of modern heating and cooling systems, has shifted lifestyles.



Figure 127. Hall in a house of the modern period in Tehran

## **Relation with animals**

Another aspect of the relation with nature in Darband houses was the relation with animals. Traditional houses in the area often included barns, especially if residents had livestock or used mules for transportation. Due to the cold and humid climate, these barns were often located on the ground floor, with resident spaces built on top to preserve the heat. Some houses in Pasghale still retain barns, and mules are used for transporting goods. However, the relationship with animals has changed in Darband, and most residents no longer keep livestock. Cars have replaced mules, and the former stables have become parking spaces. Some new residents in apartments have pets, a practice that long-term residents criticized in interviews due to concerns about the perceived impurity of animals inside the rooms, which is rooted in Islamic beliefs.

## **Guidelines of experts for the future design of houses in Darband**

Interviews with experts, knowledgeable architects and planners familiar with Shemiran and Darband (i.e. Mahmoodi in 2021) discuss how houses in Darband can be designed to harmonize with nature and Shemiran's historic fabric. Recommendations include:

- Opting for a gable roof over a flat one for better air insulation.
- Limiting the size of windows due to the local climate.
- Using materials like brick or gravel to blend with Shemiran's environment.
- Reusing facade materials from old houses when demolishing.
- If old water paths exist at the construction site, they should not be blocked but facilitated.
- Incorporating *Iwan* in the design.
- Creating underground spaces with skylights as cool summer areas would mirror traditional Iranian homes.

The use of costly decorative stones in apartment construction was also criticized as they do not fit Shemiran's environment and reflect unnecessary luxury and display of wealth by developers.

## **Traditional village vs contemporary settlement in Darband**

A comparative diagram is created to compare traditional and contemporary Darband settlements (Table 7) from analysis of the literature review regarding the planning and settlement of Tehran, Shemiran and Darband (i.e. Madanipour 1998; Saiidi et al. 2015), interviews with Shemiran and Darband experts (i.e. Interview with Yalda in 2021) and long term residents.



Table 7. Diagram of comparison of traditional village and contemporary settlement in Darband

Old Darband	Current Darband
<p>Living spaces served as interconnected social and physical entities formed through communal bonds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living quarters are increasingly shaped by the cohabitation of multiple families representing diverse ethnicities and origins, primarily influenced by their financial resources and economic standing.</li> <li>• The concept of individualism becomes closely associated with living quarters as the prevalence of a money-based economy grows. This results in a heightened competition for coveted locations and the transformation of land into a commodity.</li> <li>• There is an ongoing trend of escalating residential densities and soaring housing prices.</li> </ul>
<p>The form and layout of the alleys were shaped by various factors, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The inherent qualities of the natural environment.</li> <li>• Their gradual development over significant periods.</li> <li>• Cultural reflections that emphasize establishing a coherent connection between public, semi-public, and private domains (See 'Privacy and settlement of Darband' on p. 249)</li> <li>• The conventional structure primarily revolves around facilitating pedestrian mobility and the movement of goods through animal transportation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The urban scenery has undergone a profound shift to accommodate the emergence and widespread ownership of motor cars, adapting to this revolutionary technological advancement.</li> <li>• The arrangement and alignment of streets are increasingly structured in a rationalized manner, guided by the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- new instrumental rationality</li> <li>- assertion of the evolving individualism</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>Patten of old alleys:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A hierarchical spatial layout was characterized by a network of narrow, meandering pathways that converge into clusters of buildings within a dead-end</li> <li>• Winding alleys compatible with the topography and landscape</li> </ul>	<p>The pattern of the new street:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paths are widened. Some paths have kept their organic form, while in other cases, a geometric and orthogonal non-roofed network of roads has been introduced, gradually getting rid of dead-ends.</li> </ul>
<p>Patten of traditional house and settlement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The settlement was shaped organically. Single-family, low-rise houses were designed to face each other indirectly, limiting visibility into the interiors.</li> </ul>	<p>Patten of current apartments and settlement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising land prices and a growing gap between market and practical values have led to the demolition of older houses.</li> <li>• Newer multi-unit apartment complexes feature flats of different sizes with an</li> </ul>

	<p>outward-facing design, yet they are still enclosed by walled yards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-rise apartments are constructed to face the structures opposite them, adhering to urban regulations. They occupy 60% of the land in the northern part, aligned with the alley.</li> <li>• The new buildings are shaped based on the new land division system, with standardized land plots aligning with perpendicular blocks and streets.</li> </ul>
The green areas within the city were primarily made up of the old gardens and courtyards of traditional houses, which added a touch of nature to the urban landscape.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The loss of extensive farms and gardens can be attributed to the emergence of high-rise apartments.</li> <li>• Apartment complexes offer limited green spaces for residents.</li> <li>• Courtyards are often shared among occupants. Terrace areas are reduced in size.</li> </ul>
Local building materials	Expected high-quality and durable materials

Traditional neighbourhoods, known as "*Mahalleh*," were a core element of Islamic cities, representing a mix of various social classes. These areas offered deeper connections among inhabitants, rooted in tribal social structures rather than proximity to neighbouring communities. The formation of neighbourhoods was not predicated on a hierarchical system in the Islamic period. They formed around common tribal ties, ethnicity, religious views, or sects, showcasing the community's rich diversity (Habibi 2008, p. 49; Madanipour 1998, p. 30). From the mentioned analysis, the traditional Darband neighbourhood was a unified community with strong ties, as Madanipour (1998) argues about traditional neighbours of Tehran. Today's Darband is more diverse, representing a fusion of individuals with various ethnicities and historical backgrounds, constantly changing, with older institutions evolving or crumbling, giving way to novel ones. This reflects Madanipour's description of contemporary Tehran neighbourhoods, influenced by polarisation and individuals' access to financial resources.

## Use of space

### Use of space inside the houses of Darband

How can spaces be adapted or planned according to the collective behaviour of a cultural group? Is it possible to shape a space that aligns with people's behaviours, use of space, and daily activities? Considering a house as a setting for everyday activities, this part of the study

addresses the following questions concerning transformation: What are the various spaces within a Darband house? How are they organized? How do they cater to the basic needs of the residents? From my research in Darband, I observed vital aspects such as flexibility, reduced significance of open and semi-open spaces, perspectives on the kitchen, new spaces, and transformed houses. This section will discuss these observations to suggest design guidelines for future Darband houses.

### **Entrance**

Literature reviews, house surveys, and interviews show that entrances to Darband homes have always provided privacy amid cultural globalisation changes. Traditionally, many Shemiran homes had dual entrances: one to the yard and another to the home's interior, ensuring separation from strangers. This design continued in modern times, with garden houses featuring entrances to both communal and private areas. Modern homes also introduced a small waiting space with patterned doors blocking direct views inside. In contemporary Darband apartments, entrances usually lead to a brief stop area with minimal visibility to the home's private sections (Figure 128, Figure 129).

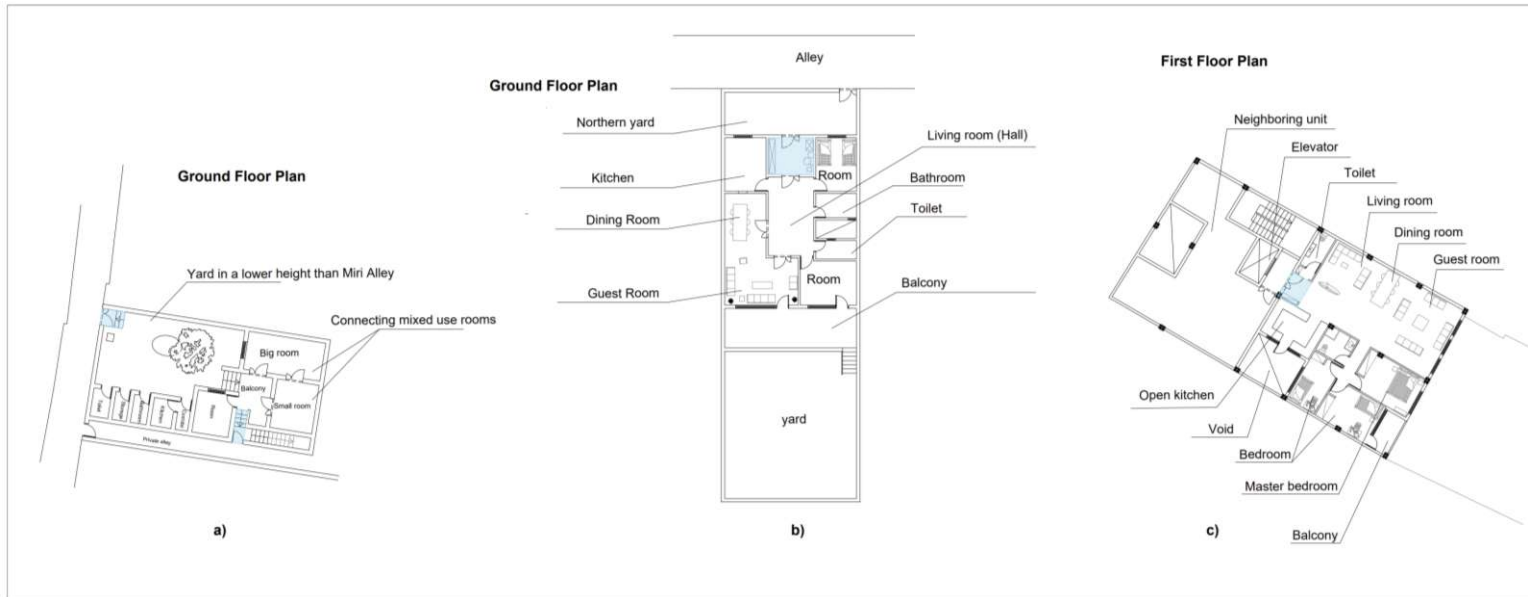


Figure 128. Providing privacy through entrances in houses of Darband in a) a traditional house, b) a house of the modern period, and c) a current apartment



Figure 129. Providing privacy through entrances in houses of Darband in a) a traditional house, b) a house of the modern period, and c) the current apartment



To prevent the view into the interior, traditional houses often had corridors—mainly long, narrow, stepped, or organic—following the entrances. These corridors typically led to areas with limited interior visibility. Additionally, homes were sometimes elevated above the alley, with entrances succeeded by stairs. This dominant design in traditional houses remains visible in modern Darband houses (Figure 130).

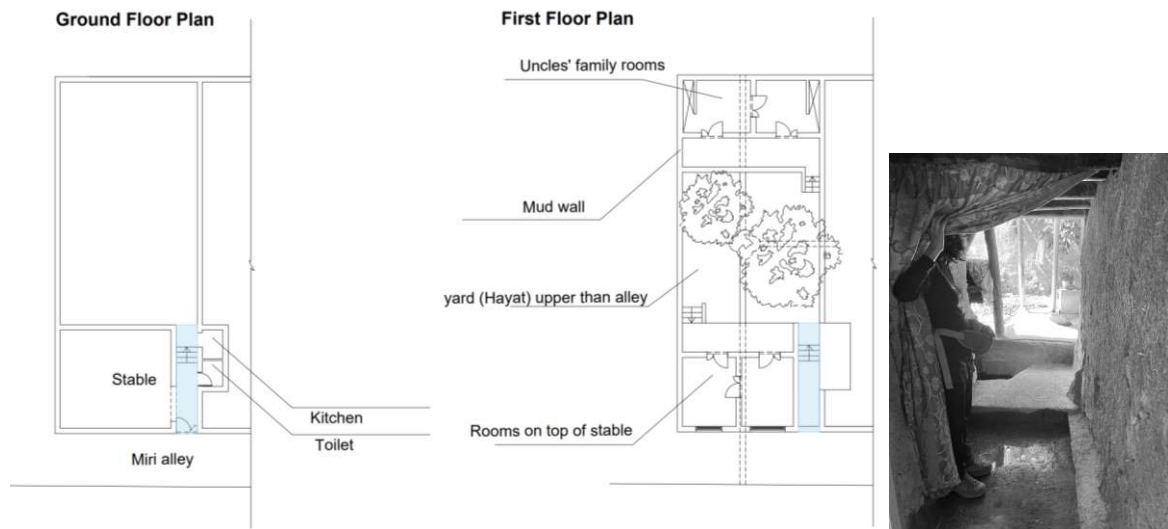


Figure 130. Providing privacy through corridors following entrances in traditional houses of Darband

## Room

Surveys and interviews with experts and old residents of Darband show that the traditional houses in Shemiran and Darband had interconnected rooms, known as "*Too-Dar-Too*." These rooms had multiple functions, and private bedrooms were not common. Before gas heating became available, rooms were warmed using old-style heating methods such as "*Aladdin*" and "*Korsi*" - a low table in Iran equipped with a heater beneath and covered with blankets. People would sit around the *Korsi* on floor cushions, with the blanket draping over their laps, creating a cosy environment as it was common by Darband's long-term residents while sleeping or at night gatherings (Figure 131).



Figure 131. From left to right: a) Aladdin heater, b) Korsi

With modernisation, the traditional layout of houses has transformed. Increasing individualism has resulted in the introduction of bedrooms, replacing the old multi-purpose rooms. In the renovated homes, the once-interconnected rooms are now divided by walls or used in a non-connecting pattern (Figure 132, Figure 133).

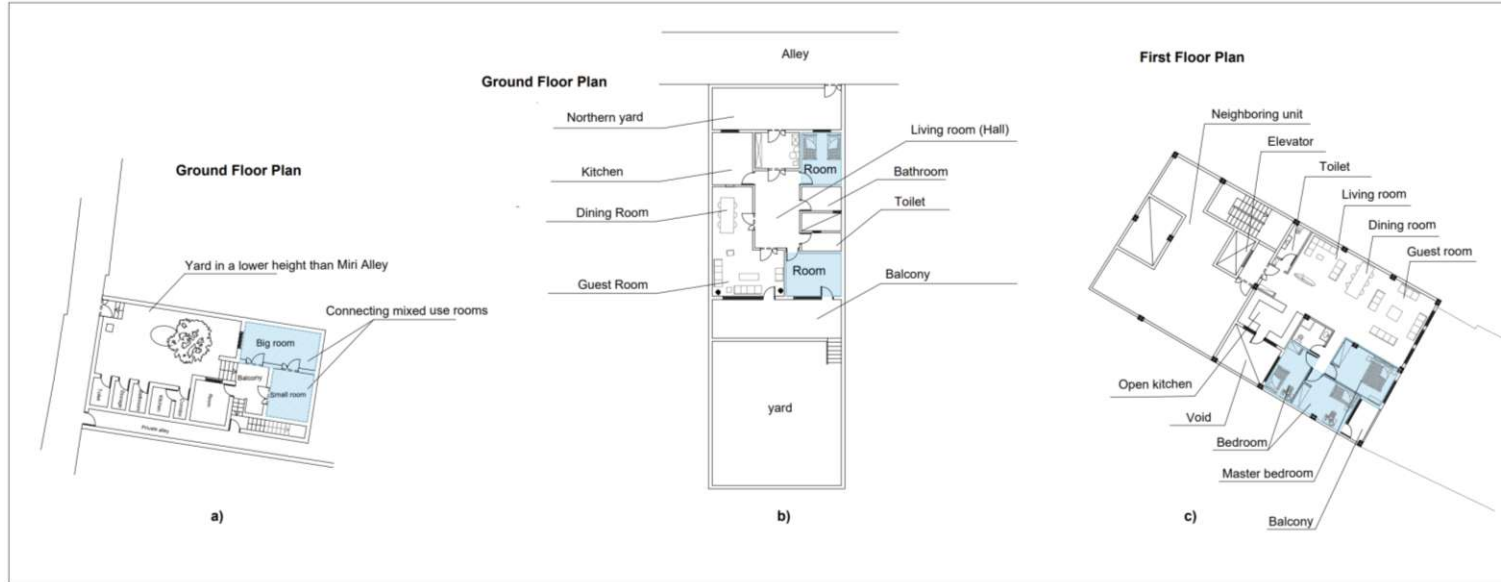


Figure 132. Transformation of rooms in the houses of Darband in a) traditional house, b) house of modern-period, c) current apartment



Figure 133. From left to right; a) Blocking the connecting rooms in the contemporary use of space in the house); b) Emergence of the private bedroom in the transformed house in Darband

## Guest room

In many houses, the room designated for guests is often furnished with the best items. In traditional homes of average families, there might (not) be a distinct room for guests, often with delicate rugs and cushions. Various designs were employed to keep guests separate from private areas, such as positioning the guest room on a different floor like House No. 1 (See 'The need for privacy' on p. 256). Wealthy families had distinct sections in their homes: the *Andarouni* (private) and *Birouni* (public). Guests typically did not access the private sections. In the grand house, a separate structure called “*Koushk*” was dedicated to dining and hosting guests, away from the living areas of women and children.

In the Pahlavi era, homes usually had dedicated guest rooms, sometimes locked and only used when guests arrived, like House No. 14. In contemporary homes, the living room, as the public sphere, often serves as the guest area. This pattern seems to have persisted over time. In most observed contemporary houses in Darband, guests were welcomed in the living room, which also served as the family's regular gathering area. In larger homes, a distinct guest space is near the living room, furnished more formally but without a separating wall from the main living area (Figure 134).



Figure 134. Guestroom in houses of Darband



## Flexibility

In terms of use of space, traditional Darband homes prominently featured multi-functional rooms. Activities like sleeping, dining, and socialising took place in the same space, especially with no separate guest room. These rooms were typically unfurnished but carpeted. Seating was provided by cushions, known as "*Mokhadeh*," placed around the room. A mat called "*sofreh*" was spread on the floor for dining. Essential facilities like the kitchen and toilet were situated in the garden area (Figure 135).

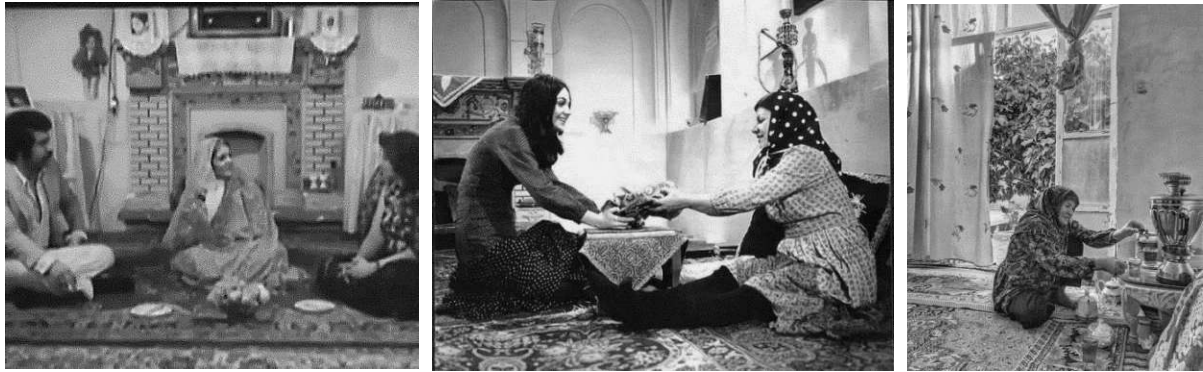


Figure 135. Mix use of rooms in Iranian traditional houses, as depicted through old Persian movies and current social media

According to the interviews with experts and old residents of Darband, traditional homes were typically single-roomed with a front balcony and garden setting. The use of space was climate-responsive: interiors for nighttime and balconies for daytime use. Given Darband's cool climate, many rented their rooms to Tehran visitors during summer. Families often lived in one room, cooking inside or on the balcony, as seen in House No. 10. Some larger homes had shared yards and multiple connecting rooms for communal living (See 'The traditional house' on p. 153). While the one-room design could be expanded to have additional rooms, families might still occupy just one room, sharing facilities like the kitchen and toilet with extended family members (as seen in House No. 2). In affluent homes, rooms were often allocated based on gender: one for male family members, another for females, and a separate one for the parents.

During the reign of Pahlavi I, Iran experienced significant architectural and urban reforms as platforms for expressing social, political, and economic ideals as part of the Shah's modernisation plan. This shift pursued to distance Iran from its Islamic and Qajar roots and align it with Western architectural styles. Modern houses became symbols of these new secular values, promoting a contemporary lifestyle to the public (See 'Transformation of traditional house' on p. 159) (Bagheri 2013; Nabizadeh 2017).

As a result, functional rooms replaced the multi-functional and flexible traditional spaces. Interestingly, the architectural attributes associated with elite and middle-income urban dwellings were introduced into houses intended for lower-income social classes without adequately considering whether the residents could seamlessly adapt to these features from a cultural standpoint. Literature and interviews reveal that, despite the modernisation of Iran, specific individuals chose to preserve their traditional lifestyle within the modern house. As an illustration, they repurposed the living room into a sleeping area at night by arranging mattresses and blankets on the floor. On the other hand, the dining area and formal dining table were exclusively utilised when guests were present. In everyday circumstances, most families opted to sit on the floor while having meals or savouring a cup of tea (*Architecte* 1948; Nabizadeh 2017).

Including a central hall in these houses fostered a connection between the surrounding spaces. Some experts argue that the hall replaced the former courtyard, as residents engaged in daily activities collectively like a yard. The guest room, which took the place of *Birouni*, assumed the role of the largest room in the house, adorned with Western furniture. While many families continued to embrace traditional furnishings throughout the interior spaces, the allure of European furniture soared, particularly among middle-class households. As European furniture gained prevalence, the once-prominent tradition of floor sitting gradually waned. In the process of transforming their traditional houses, residents discreetly concealed or modified certain domestic traditions and habits to harmonize them with the modern atmosphere of their dwellings' spaces (Nabizadeh 2017).

Interviews suggest that in Darband, traditional living patterns persisted. For example, though House No. 14, as a house of the modern period, had distinct rooms like bedrooms and guest room, the inhabitants retained traditional living habits. The extended family used the north-facing room for summer and the south-facing one for winter. The guest room was reserved for visitors. The daily activities of the whole family were done in a shared hall, similar to the previous yard usage in the traditional house. To manage the summer heat, the family rested in this hall, benefiting from its natural ventilation, and slept on the balcony.

Early 20th-century global changes such as advancement in communications, transformations of urban structure, growth of population, and rise of new careers have led to massive changes in the lifestyles of Iranians (Forouzmand 2003) within its cultural transformation of globalization. I observed some instances during my field study in the current houses of Darband where the inhabitants still used the spaces in the flexible mixed-use pattern. Some interviewees argued that they had problems with a space dominantly for single-purpose use, such as a

specific place to sleep. This is despite the trend of individualism happening due to separate bedrooms. For instance, in House No. 3, a grandparent or male kid would sleep in the guest room without sufficient bedrooms at night (Figure 136). This was an evident pattern among various houses I visited and residents I talked to. Due to these observations, I recommend that a flexible design that allows for mixed use of space replaces a total functional design for the house in Darband.



Figure 136. Mix use of rooms in the current house in Darband

### **Yards, verandas and roof gardens; Declining the importance of open and semi-open spaces**

From the 1960s, sparse urban space in Tehran pushed a shift towards apartment living, reducing the prominence of yards and open spaces in homes (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021). This has been the case in Darband as semi-open and open spaces have diminished in modern apartments compared to traditional homes. For example, apartments have a noticeable preference for enclosed spaces. The table below illustrates the evolving use of open/semi-open spaces concerning nature and social interaction based on interview outcomes from the case study (Figure 137).

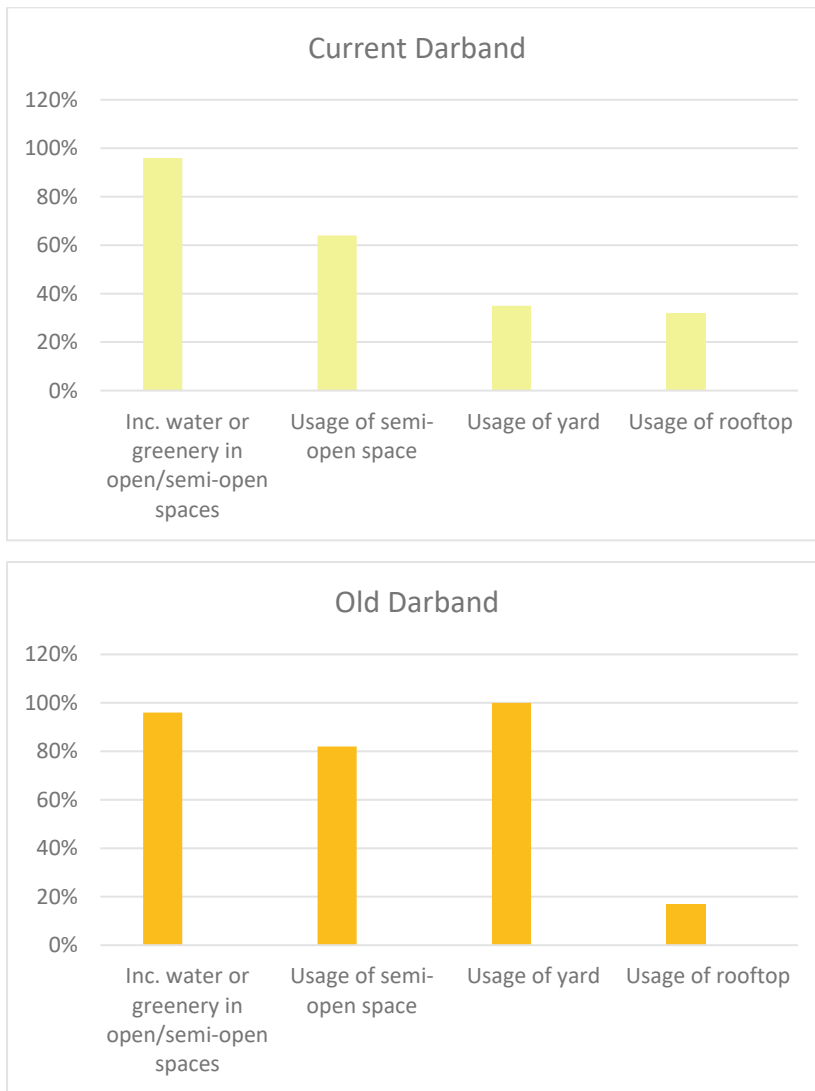


Figure 137. Use of open/semi-open space in houses concerning the nature and social interaction by interviewees in both present and past according to the result of interviews, as described on p. 223

Traditional homes in Darband were organically designed with courtyards featuring “Hoz” (ponds) and greenery. These yards were used for daily activities, social gatherings, and sleeping during summer nights. The connection with green space and yards continued during the Pahlavi era. However, a significant 43% of surveyed apartments no longer have courtyards (e.g. House No. 8 and 22). However, even in those houses with yards, many inhabitants (65%) avoid using shared yards, feeling they lack privacy due to neighbours' views. These yards are now being repurposed as parking spaces with the rise of overlooking apartments. The current design trend of apartments directly overlooking one another, combined with shared yards, does not meet resident preferences. These once-vibrant yards are now underutilized (Figure 138). However, interviews suggest that many long-term residents, especially older ones, miss it. As such, there is a need to reconsider yard designs in the future.





Figure 138. Yards of houses in different periods

The analysis in (Figure 137) shows a decrease in the use of semi-open spaces for social interaction in nature, from 82% in the past to 64% presently. Traditional Darband houses featured verandas known as "*Iwan*". These covered structures were attached to two or more sides of the main building, serving as areas for social interaction, eating, resting, and other daily activities. Residents often sprayed the *Iwan* by sprinkling water, using it for relaxation or sleeping during summer nights. These verandas were designed for privacy, typically enclosed or situated within walled gardens.

In contrast, modern apartments feature " Terrace " balconies, which are more like added extensions on upper floors rather than integral parts of the structure. These balconies lack the privacy of the traditional *Iwan*, often being repurposed as storage or enclosed for added privacy. Unlike in the past, they are seldom used for social interaction in Tehran. However, interviews reveal that 64% of Darband's residents still value using semi-open spaces. Observations in Darband indicate that verandas are still present in modern apartments where space allows. Residents expressed satisfaction with the spacious, private veranda overlooking the mountain, substituting the yard. Interestingly, another group of residents also enjoyed their balconies for dining and relaxation, benefiting from the privacy provided by their elevated position in the area (Figure 139, Figure 140).

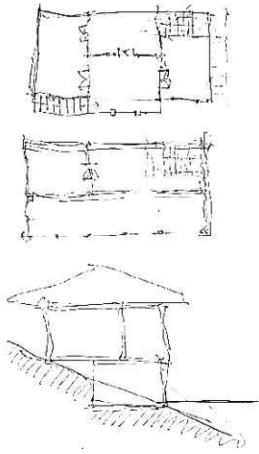


Figure 139. Iwan in traditional house of Shemiran



Figure 140. Balcony and veranda in the contemporary house of Darband

Flat roofs in old Darband were places for children to play, drying herbs and sleeping on summer

nights. This continued in the Pahlavi era, too. In current Darband, 32% of inhabitants use the rooftops of houses or roof gardens of apartments as a place for social gatherings or daily activities. In the case of houses, the roofs were covered to provide privacy. In the case of apartments, barbecue stations and furniture were provided within a walled roof space (Figure 141). Residents used the roof gardens because they were private. In crowded complexes, residents had to book the roof garden for their social gatherings and family guests in a scheduled timeline due to its popularity.

In light of the findings, it is evident that the traditional approach of incorporating private yards, verandas, and roof gardens in every unit of multistory apartment buildings in Darband may not be feasible due to spatial constraints and residents' privacy concerns. However, addressing the challenge of underutilised communal spaces is crucial, as they hinder social interaction and community engagement. Innovative solutions are necessary to overcome this obstacle effectively.

Rather than simply providing private outdoor spaces for each resident, which may not be practical, a more nuanced approach is needed. This involves exploring design strategies that prioritise privacy while fostering social interaction. One potential solution is to introduce flexible and multipurpose communal spaces that can accommodate various activities and interests. These spaces could be designed to be adaptable and easily configurable, allowing residents to use them according to their preferences.

Additionally, drawing inspiration from architectural examples in regions like Spain, where creative design elements such as stepped patterns or rotated plans enhance privacy within apartment complexes, can offer valuable insights. Such design strategies could be adapted to suit the context of Darband, promoting both privacy and community engagement.

Therefore, while acknowledging the limitations of providing private outdoor spaces for every resident in multistory apartment buildings, exploring innovative alternatives that address residents' privacy concerns while fostering social interaction and community cohesion is essential.





Figure 141. Roof garden in the current apartment in Darband

### **Kitchen: Attitudes towards the kitchen**

Surveys and interviews with experts (i.e., an Interview with Shakoury in 2021) and old residents suggest that traditional houses in Shemiran and Darband had kitchens, called *Matbakh*, outside in the yard, mainly because coal or firewood was used as the primary fuel for cooking. These kitchens had unique features like a pigeonhole on the wall for dishes and a brazier called *Ojagh* for baking bread. Usually, the whole extended family would use *Matbakh* (e.g. House No. 2). However, from the 1960s in the Pahlavi era, kitchens moved inside homes equipped with modern amenities like gas and fridges. These new kitchens were enclosed and separated from public areas to maintain women's privacy. However, now, many houses have open-plan kitchens connected to living rooms. This change shows a shift in societal norms, with women becoming more central in homes, and contact between non-related men and women is no longer taboo. Modern kitchens also benefit from better light and ventilation compared to traditional ones (Figure 142, Figure 143)



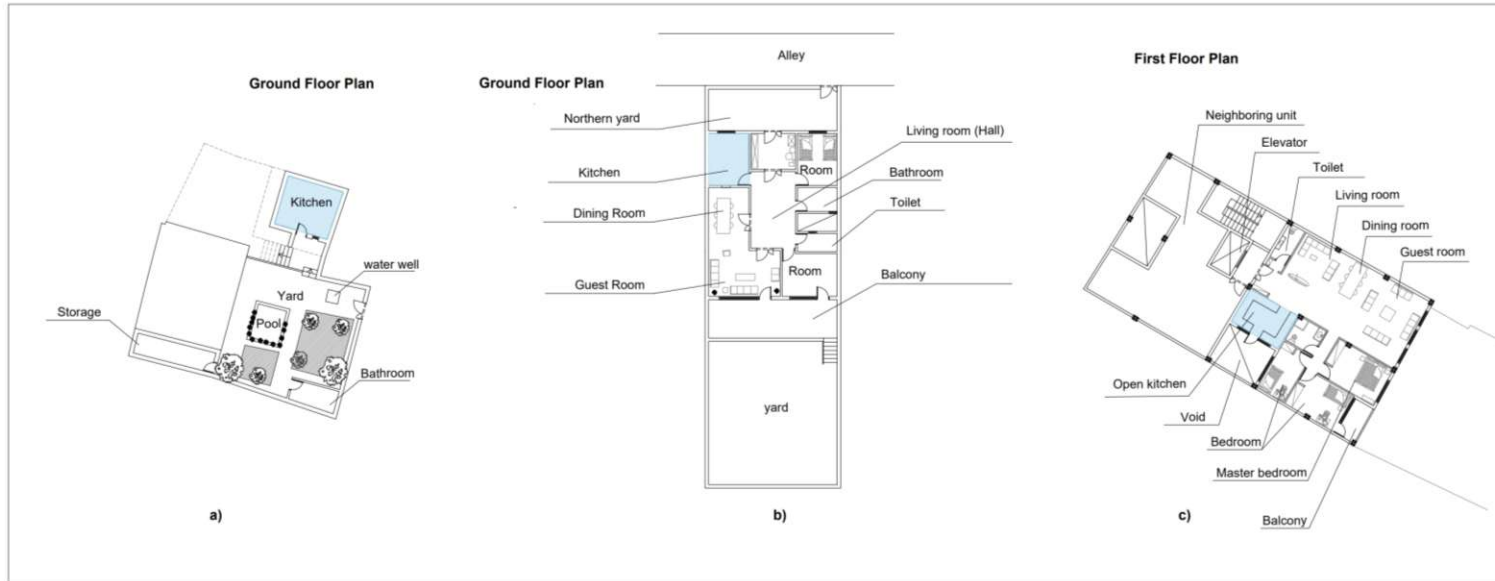


Figure 142. Transformation of the kitchen in the houses of Darband in a) a traditional house, b) a house of the modern period, and c) a current apartment



Figure 143. Kitchen of houses from three periods of transformation in Darband

From the interviews, two clear perspectives emerged about open kitchens. Due to their religious beliefs, some residents found open kitchens challenging as they needed to wear a Hijab in front of male guests. This resonates with Rapaport's idea that adopting new forms might be more about valuing novelty than genuine fit with people's behaviour and traditions. Future Darband house designs might reconsider kitchen layouts. Indeed, some modern homes are already adapting, using designs like L-shaped plans to maintain some kitchen privacy. There is even an instance of a "faked kitchen" for guests, with the actual cooking space hidden away (House No. 20). On the other hand, many newer or less-religious residents appreciate open kitchen plans. They enjoy the ease of watching over kids, interacting with guests, or watching TV while cooking. Some interviewees were happy with relocating the kitchen inside the house since accessing the kitchen during the cold winters was tough. However, instances were seen that the kitchen was still in the yards of some old houses, mostly belonging to old residents. It is also noteworthy that modern lifestyles in Darband see some people ordering food regularly instead of cooking at home.

### **Bathroom**

Surveys and interviews with older Darband residents and experts, like Shakoury in 2021, showed that toilets might not face Qibla due to religious attitudes. Traditional homes usually had their toilets outside, often in the yard or underground, with no attached bathrooms (e.g. House No. 2). Instead, people regularly used public baths. However, after the modernization wave during the Pahlavi era, bathrooms and toilets were moved indoors (e.g. House No. 14 and 21). While some older homes in Darband still have external toilets, these are mainly occupied by elderly residents (e.g. House No. 6).

Feedback on this shift was mixed. Many appreciated the convenience of indoor facilities, especially during cold nights or winters, which proved especially beneficial for the elderly. However, others missed the outdoor arrangement. Their reservations were tied to concerns about odours, religious views on cleanliness, or the refreshing experience of using traditional outdoor washing basins. Such diverse opinions suggest that future home designs in Darband might benefit from rethinking the placement and integration of toilets, mixing indoor and outdoor elements.

### **New spaces**

In contrast to traditional homes, modern apartments often feature additional spaces like underground parking (as seen in House No. 21). Some luxury complexes even provide

amenities like a lobby, gym, swimming pool, billiard room, gathering lounge, and a roof garden, (as seen in House No. 23).

### Transformed houses

In my exploration of Darband homes, I have noticed a few recurring trends in how older homes were transformed to be compatible with today's living. Many homeowners have enclosed their outside kitchens and toilets inside for convenience. Instead of having separate kitchen spaces, there is a shift towards open-plan designs. Homes that used to have interconnected rooms now have individual doors for privacy. Yards and verandas, which used to be open, are now often covered or enclosed. Moreover, unsurprisingly, modern amenities like bathrooms have been added, just like in Houses No. 5 and 7.

### Use of space in the settlement of Darband

The table below resembles the use of space in the settlement of the current Darband based on the results of the interviews (Figure 144).

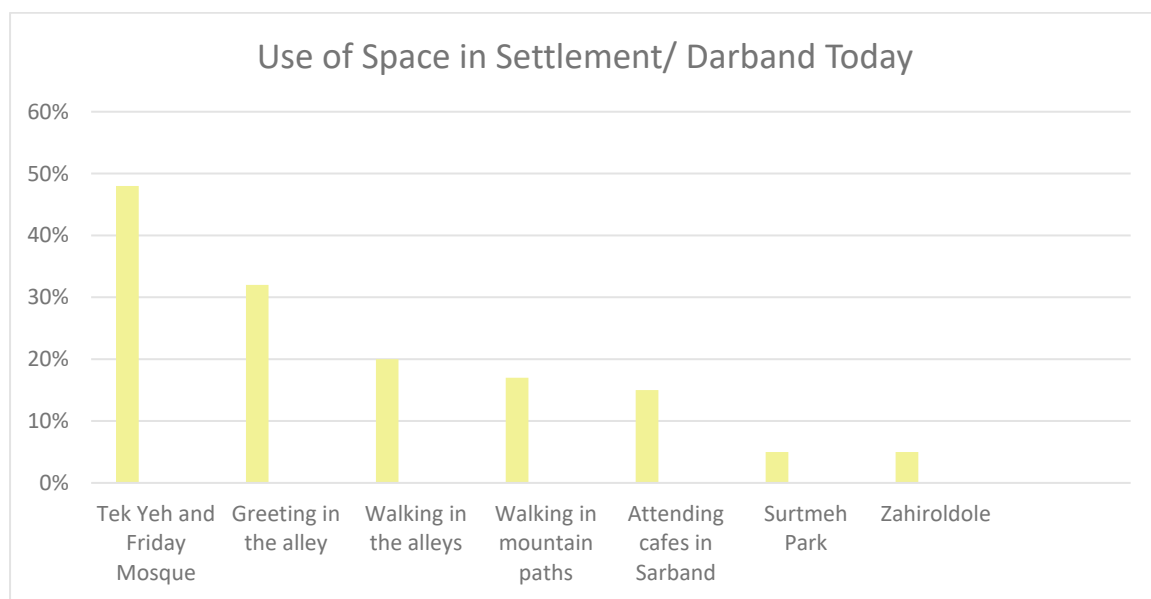


Figure 144. Use of space in the settlement of Darband today, as described on p.231

From my observations and conversations with long-term residents, it is clear that the dwelling is the primary setting for life in Darband. Most social interactions occur within the confines of the home. The level of social interaction within the settlement has reduced over time (as further discussed in the "Social interaction" section on p. 235). Residential areas are either private or connective tissue. Except for semi-private neighbourhood centres between the fabric, streets and alleys are mainly used for brief exchanges or transit that could be attributed to religious customs that discourage blending between unrelated men and women. This might explain why private community centres like *Tek Yeh* and the Friday mosque are the main hubs of activity

(Figure 145). It is a sentiment echoed by Rapoport, who believes that cultural norms and religious beliefs are pivotal in shaping how people use space. While influencing the separation of domains, they restrict specific behavioural patterns, affecting the type of settlement. The map of the use of space in old Darband supports this, showing a pattern where most of the settlement was rather connective and private tissue, consisting of private spaces like gardens, homes, *Tek yeh*, and the Friday Mosque (Figure 146). This trend seems to have remained consistent over time.

*Tek Yeh* and Friday mosque are stated by 48% of the interviewees as community centres today. In Shemiran, the importance of religion remains steadfast, especially when considering spaces that ensure women's privacy and their separation from men. Notably, the Tek Yeh Darband hosts a charity formed by female volunteers from the long-term residents who meet weekly to assist underserved communities in Iran. However, during the Ashura festival, it becomes a gathering spot for religious ceremonies along with the old cemetery of Darband, which long-term residents attend. Other notable religious sites include the grave of Seied Ali Darbandi, the Imam Zadeh-Ibrahim Shrine, and the Mosque of Pasghale with its *Tek yeh*, both continuing to serve as places of community bonding and religious observance. However, new residents do not frequent these places, possibly because they are not as deeply rooted in religious practices as their long-standing neighbours and due to the low interactions between the two groups.

In Darband, the primary activities in alleys and streets revolve around brief greetings, walking, buying groceries and children playing. These interactions mainly occur in specific neighbourhood centres formed in the Miry axis and Fakhery Alley rather than in private lanes. Long-term residents recall when social interactions were more frequent in these alleys.

Today, many of them only use these paths to reach another location, seeing Darband as a dead-end with limited routes.

Many old long-term residents shared reasons for not spending much time in the Darband settlement anymore. Traditional gathering spots like public baths and men-only cafes have been torn down. In the past, men would meet at these cafes, especially during the religious month of Ramazan, to play games, drink tea, and smoke. Women, on the other hand, gathered in private places like homes or the Friday Mosque. Another issue is the influx of visitors and cars, making the area crowded. They also miss the greenery; apartments have replaced many gardens.

On the other hand, new residents appreciate Darband's natural setting, away from Tehran's hustle and bustle. They enjoy walks near the cafes of Sarband, the old alleys with historic garden homes, and the stepped paths of Bagh-Shater, especially during less busy times. While younger long-term residents used to play in Darband's mountains and alleys as kids, many are



now too busy with their duties to hang out. While life was primarily centred in Darband in the past, the mobility of residents and access to other parts of the city have increased. Darband has upscale salons and sports clubs. However, these residents often go to places outside Darband or near Tajrish. The high entrance fees at these facilities might be a barrier for long-term residents who typically have lower incomes.

Some older female interviewees, aged 65-75, mentioned that they do not do the shopping; their husbands do. This might be because of past religious customs that kept women from being seen by strangers in Darband. Some women now order for home delivery. Today, many people shop in Tajrish since Darband lacks sufficient stores. Long-term residents often shop at the affordable Tajrish fruit market, while wealthier new residents prefer the Aghdasieh Hypermarket. These insights point to a potential need for a new grocery market in Darband's future plans.

In Darband settlement, the transformation of the use of space is also caused by abandoned buildings. The famous Hotel Darband, a hub for the king's foreign guests during the Pahlavi era, is a highlight. Locals recall watching concerts there from the land above. However, it was demolished to make way for a new high-rise hotel. However, the hotel was left unused after the revolution and the royal family's departure. Adjutant Kolbe pub, popular with foreign visitors and the Pahlavi army, was shut down post-revolution. Similarly, Darband once had a well-known medical clinic. Many residents now express concern about the lack of medical facilities, leading them to seek services in Tajrish.

Despite the importance of Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum for visitors and artists, very few interviewees argued for attending there. Surtmeh Park was mentioned a few times as a place of walking. Surprisingly, none of the interviewees claimed they attended Sadabad or Malek Park. This is even though these are the extensive green areas of the site. This might be due to the enormous scale of Malek Park and the insecure feeling of being abandoned. Sadabad also has an entrance fee.

Darband was popular as a summer getaway because of its beautiful nature. Qajar kings and their followers used it for summer breaks, horse riding, and hunting. Before the Pahlavi era, Sadabad consisted of Qajar courtier's summer gardens. During the Pahlavi era, Darband locals rented their rooms to visitors from Tehran in the summer. As Darband became more connected to the city, it became an urban area. Summer gardens were mainly divided to make rooms for apartments or became public parks. Located inside mountains, its cafes are still popular summer spots today. Recently, there has been a rise in cafes above Sarband Sq., especially becoming very crowded on weekends. While visitors flock to these cafes, locals do not use

cafes at the same rate. Many long-term residents feel that the natural beauty of Darband has gone. The organic stony paths and mountains have been replaced with smooth roads and cafes. The river is now dry and polluted, and the Sarband area is often very crowded. Darband, with its mountainous trails north of Sarband Square, has always been a popular spot for hikers. It gets bustling on weekends. Some hikers start their trek early in the morning to avoid the crowds and return by noon. Interestingly, not many Darband residents currently hike these trails or visit Pasghale. However, long-term residents recall frequently visiting the mountains and Pasghale to socialize or enjoy nature.

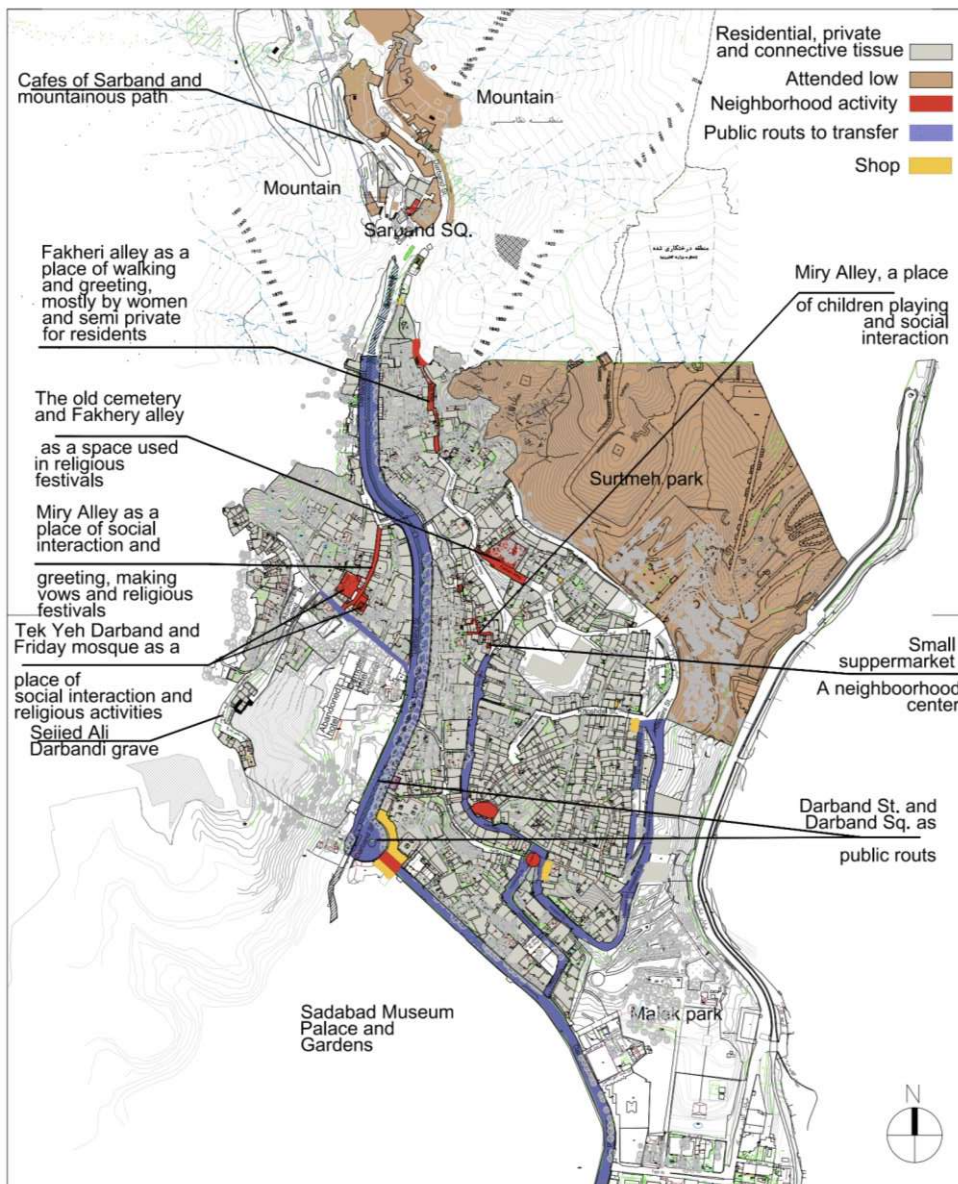


Figure 145. Map of use of space of long-term residents in the current settlement of Darband

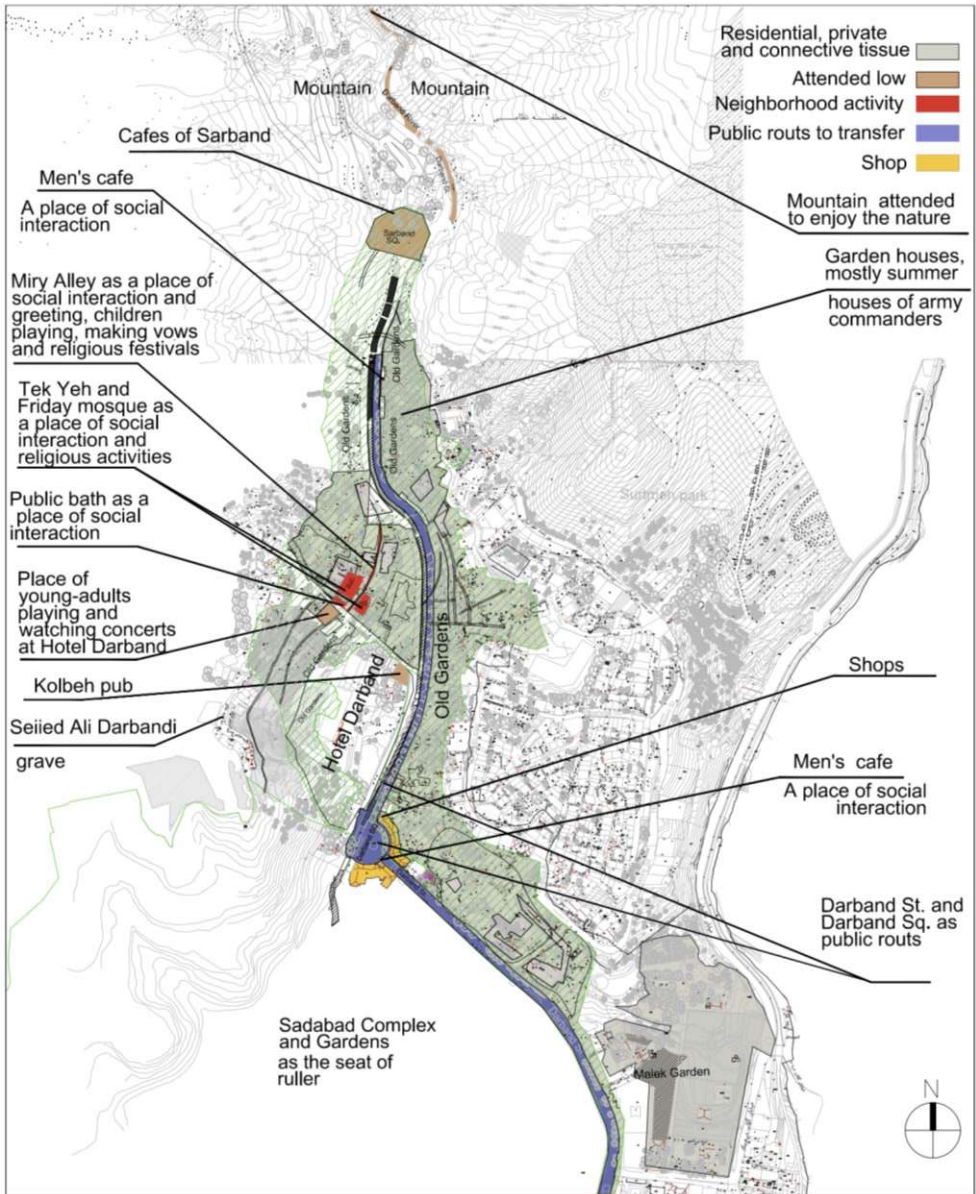


Figure 146. Map of use of space of long-term residents in the traditional settlement of Darband, projected on the current map of Darband

## Social interaction

I referred to "Social interaction" as engaging with someone outside the household when they visit. It is distinct from interactions within the same household. In the context of Darband, it means meeting someone from outside one's home within the Darband area. Based on interview results, most social interactions in Darband have consistently occurred at home. A diagram (Figure 147) shows the percentage of these interactions in both current and old houses compared to the Darband settlement. Why do residents prefer this? A significant reason might be the strong religious beliefs of many Darband inhabitants. Even newer residents tend to value their privacy and limit interactions with others.

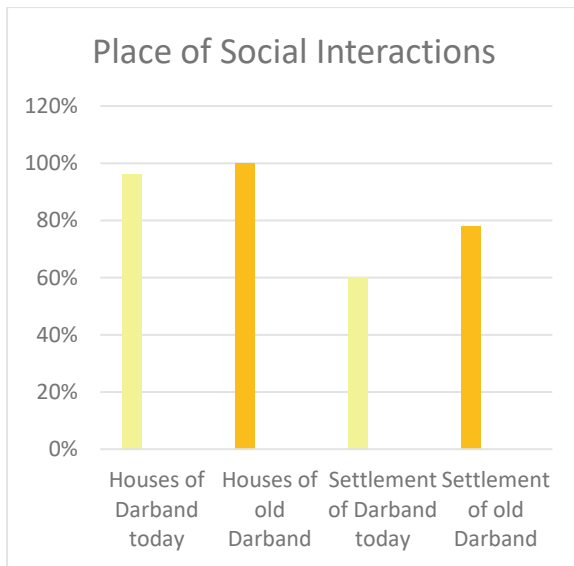


Figure 147. Diagram of the division of social interaction in the house and settlement in Darband, as described on p. 235

### Social interactions in Darband houses

In Darband, my interviews and observations highlight various ways people socialize at home. This includes hosting guests, family gatherings, and parties. People often meet with relatives on weekends, special occasions like the Persian New Year, or funerals. Homes with spacious dining and living areas might host birthday parties with up to 20 guests. Women sometimes come together to assist the host, like preparing food. There are also mixed-gender parties where young men and women mingle freely, dance, and do not observe traditional dress codes like the Hijab.

### Public and private distinction

Another observation regarding social interactions was public/private distinction (See 'Public/private distinction' on p. 256).

### Adaption of traditions

Another observation was how traditions have evolved in Darband. For example, residents still use the *Korsi* during social gatherings. However, instead of the traditional method of using hot coals for warmth, they now use electricity to heat up. Interestingly, it is not always used for its primary purpose of heating rooms but sometimes during gatherings like young people's parties.

### Transformations of social interaction

From the interviews, it is clear that social customs in Darband have evolved over time:

- Older residents fondly recall winter gatherings called *Shab-Neshin*, where locals would huddle around a *Korsi*, reciting Hafiz's poetry and munching on nuts. These cosy floor gatherings have been replaced by socializing on modern furniture.



- Traditional social spots like yards and verandas have given way to guest rooms and living rooms.
- Whereas once big celebrations or religious events, such as weddings or Ramazan feasts, were hosted at homes with scores of guests, today's events are often held in outside venues like wedding gardens, restaurants or salons. This change means fewer large gatherings in personal homes (See Figure 148).



Figure 148. Iranian wedding; from left to right; a) wedding at house in Pahlavi period, b, c, d) wedding in wedding garden today

- A majority of 65% expressed concerns about the decline in social interactions in the neighbourhood. Various reasons were mentioned, like changing lifestyles, shifting towards more extravagant gatherings and display of wealth, migration of long-term residents, rising prices, unfamiliarity with newcomers, and a general loss of trust. The dissatisfaction with the current social interactions has led to nostalgia while forming a bounded community reluctant to engage with new neighbours.

- Global influences have also introduced new ways of socializing. People now celebrate events like Halloween and Valentine's and often connect through mobile apps like WhatsApp and Instagram. Computer games have become a popular pastime for young adults, replacing traditional outdoor play.

## Social interactions in Darband settlement

The diagrams below show the kinds of social activities people engage in at Darband settlement, both now and in the past. These findings come from interview responses, specifically when asked about their social interactions in Darband (Figure 149).

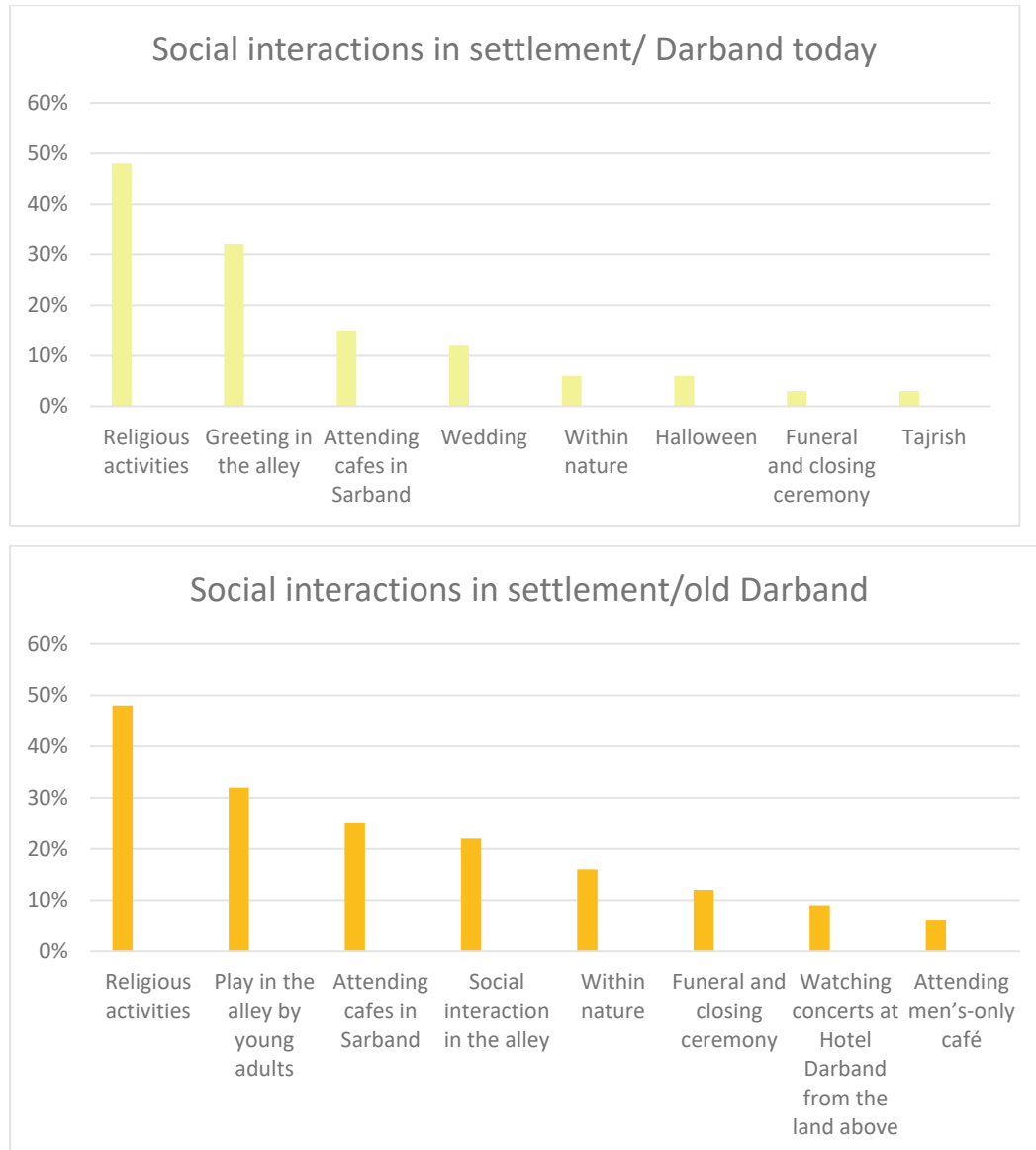


Figure 149. Diagram of type of social interaction in settlement of current Darband vs past, as described on p. 238

According to these diagrams, in Darband today, religious gatherings are the most common form of social interaction. Greeting neighbours in the alley comes next, followed by visiting cafes. Religious activities have consistently been prevalent in Darband's social scene, reflecting the permanent importance of religion. However, these religious events are mainly attended by long-term residents. Newer residents typically do not join these gatherings or socialize in the alleys. This could be because the two groups have not integrated well, or the newer residents are less religious than the older ones.



Figure 150. Social interaction within the settlement of Darband around shops and cafes

My study involved 47 participants, primarily aged 65-75 and 35-45, from long-term and newer Darband residents. However, this does not capture the entire Darband community. After the revolution, many secular individuals, including the royal family and courtier, left Iran, which may skew my findings.

To show the transformation of Darband, I focused on long-term residents still in Darband, mainly villagers who have lived there for years. I could not include those who left Iran. For example, only 3% mentioned visiting dance venues like Kolbe and Klip Kolah pub. My findings cannot represent all of Iran. Different results might emerge in another Tehran neighbourhood with more secular residents. Still, it is worth noting that Shemiran has a deep religious history, evident in its shrines (See 'The site and its choice' on p. 194).

The chart on current social interactions in Darband shows that while Darband is famous for its cafes, outdoor dining, and natural beauty, only 15% of residents mentioned using cafes for socializing, and these residents were not from religious groups. There could be various reasons for this:

- Shemiran's religious culture emphasizes privacy, especially for women. According to Noori (2010, p. 117), there is a strong divide between public and private life in Islamic cities. This is why most social gatherings in Darband occur in places like the Tek Yeh Darband or Friday Mosque, where women can be in private and separate spaces. This tradition is not new. Nabizadeh (2017, p.89) notes that during the Qajar era, there was clear gender separation in public spaces in Iran. It was uncommon for unrelated men and women to mix publicly. Instead, people usually socialised with those of the same gender. Women's public presence was minimal.

- Many Darband locals are unhappy with the mass crowd of visitors, mainly cafe-goers, blaming them for increased pollution, busyness, and environmental harm. As a result, they prefer to keep their distance from these visitors and avoid using cafes.

- Most interactions among the residents happen around religious activities, mainly because of the long-term residents' solid religious ties. These activities are also free, which is preferable since visiting cafes can be costly, and many long-term residents are not financially well-off. From an urban planning perspective, consumerism has occupied most open spaces. Urban planners should aim to reallocate these spaces for the public, allowing them to gather and socialize without consuming something. Many people from lower-class groups cannot afford to visit cafes or restaurants frequently, which can exclude some from social interactions. Instead of building more cafes, the focus should be preserving open areas. This means creating parks or other communal spaces for everyone, as discussed with Rieger-Jandl in 2022.

Another observation in Darband was regarding festivals. Rapoport (1969, p. 69) argues that there might be periodic promenades or gatherings in which the social area expands over a larger area than is commonly used. It becomes an important and complex aspect of the urban setting. In Darband, instances of this can be found in the religious commemoration of Ashura during Muharram, as the martyrdom of Imam Hossein. Many longtime residents begin the ceremony at Tek Yeh Darband and walk through Miry Alley, Darband St., and Fakhery Alley to reach Sadat Park, which used to be Darband's old cemetery. At the park, large crowds gather to participate in the ritual of Sineh-zani. After the ceremony, they return to *Tek Yeh* for prayer and lunch (Figure 151).



Figure 151. Ashura is a religious festival, as described on p. 240

## Family

From the 1950s-60s, family structures in Iran began shifting from extended to nuclear families. This change was driven in part by governments modernization efforts. Whether by intention or



not, various governments, including the Islamic one, have pushed for nuclear family units through housing, policies, wartime rationing hook, and other measures. Rising land prices further encouraged smaller homes. Additionally, the marriage age is increasing due to factors like extended education, job challenges, housing shortages, and the high cost of living (Madanipour 1998, p.91, Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021). This trend is supported by interviews with longtime residents, insights from urban planning experts, and the statistics pointing to a shift in family structures in Darband, Tehran, and Shemiran (See Table 8).

Table 8. Transformation of family relations in Tehran, Shemiran and Darband from past to present

Old Darband	Current Darband
The predominant form of the family in 1950-60 was the extended family (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021)	The predominant form of the family is the nuclear family (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021)
Historically, the age at marriage has generally been relatively low (Aghajanian et al. 2018, p.1)	The age of marriage has increased in Tehran (Madanipour 1998, p.91). 47% of residents between 20 and 45 were unmarried in this field survey.
The average number of household members in Iran in 1966 was 4.8 (Tehran Municipality ICT Organization 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The average number of household members in Iran in 2018 was 3.3</li> <li>• The average household size in District 1 of Tehran in 2018 was 2.9 (lower than the average of the whole country) (Tehran Municipality ICT Organization 2019)</li> <li>• The average household size among the respondents in Darband was 2.9.</li> </ul>
The total fertility rate in Iran was 7.7 children per woman in 1966 (Tasnim New Agency 2020).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The total fertility rate in Iran was 1.8 children per woman in 2011 (Tasnim New Agency 2020).</li> <li>• The total fertility rate in Tehran province was 1.23 children per woman in 2021 (The Islamic Republic News Agency 2021).</li> </ul>
Divorce was viewed as very prohibited in the traditional pattern of the family (Interview with long-term residents).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of divorces in Iran in 2011: 16%</li> <li>• Number of divorces in Iran in 2020: 33% (IMNA News Agency 2021)</li> <li>• Number of divorces in 2018: For every 100 marriages in Shemiran,</li> </ul>

	there are 67 divorces (Hamshahri Online Newspaper 2018).
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Shemiran is in District 1, the city's priciest area. Notably, its divorce rate is about 67%, double that of Tehran's less expensive southern part. This suggests that financial factors are not the leading cause of divorces<sup>23</sup> (as per Hamshahri Online Newspaper 2018). The high divorce rate also indicates a growing trend towards individualism in both Shemiran and Darband.

### **Family and the settlement of Darband**

Family has been an influential factor in the settlement of Shemiran. This confirms Oliver's (2003) argument: "The complexities of kinship ties and marriage rules have undoubted implications on settlement patterns." The area is organized into neighbourhoods, each largely influenced by specific long-standing families. Ebrahim Zadeh mentioned in 2021 that each family has a lodge in *Tek Yeh*, overseeing various *Tek Yehs* throughout Shemiran. For instance, in Darband, families like the Miry, Mirjani, Marzooghi, Ommi, and Khaleghi are prominent, while Pasghale also recognizes the Abshary family. Many long-term residents believe that the original settlers in Darband were closely related and likely came from Taleghan. In the past, marriages often occurred within the clan or nearby neighbourhoods, but today, people tend to marry outside these traditional circles. Notably, almost half of the residents interviewed aged 20-45 were single without children. However, many interviewees still live near family members (Figure 152). This family-centric community structure is similar to the Islamic model Rapoport described in 1969, where towns are divided into quarters based on ethnicity and clans.

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23: The data indicates that reasons for divorce have changed over time, while previously attributed to factors like lack of resources, addiction, and unemployment, today's leading causes include lifestyle shifts, cultural clashes, and class differences. Shemiran Welfare Center highlights that many divorces in Shemiran stem from couples' unfamiliarity with life skills, influence of certain Western cultural aspects, treating marriage as a mere transaction, and excessive family interference (as reported by Hamshahri Online Newspaper in 2018).

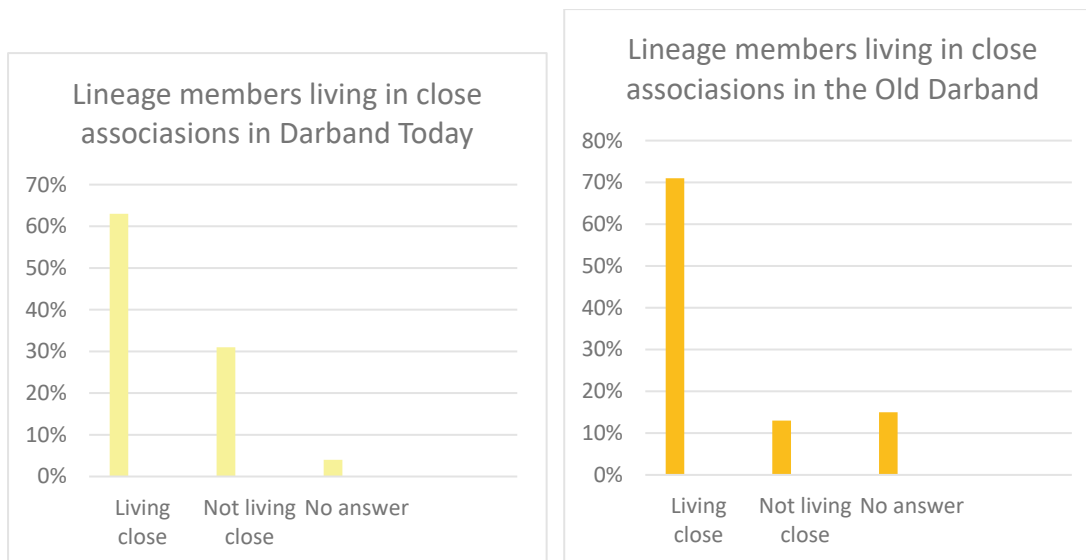


Figure 152. Diagram of lineage members living in close association in Darband in past and present, as described on p. 242

The same tendency, however, does not affect the settlement of Darband in the same way as old Darband. Darband has evolved over the years, especially in its traditional household system. As family sizes and lifestyles change and expectations grow, fewer extended families live under one roof. Younger generations often choose separate living spaces or different floors in the same building. When parents pass away, descendants divide the property, leading to smaller plots and homes. This shift has resulted in the loss of gardens and older homes, altering the area's housing typology. Based on the above results and these observations, it is clear that family is influential in the settlement of Darband. It is recommended that planning for multi-family housing in Darband be considered.

### Family and the house in Darband

According to the interviews and surveys, in traditional Darband, lineage members often lived near each other, separated by yards, sometimes with a fence or wall (like House No. 10). It was not uncommon for three generations, including grandparents, to live together. Sometimes, uncles, their wives, and children would join, resulting in a large extended family living in one dwelling or housing complex. The house form often reflected this family setup, with marriage playing a role in how the house evolved.- Traditionally, a new couple might start with a single room and *Iwan* in the parents' garden. As the family grew, they would expand by adding more rooms. Each stage of the house's growth was self-sufficient (See 'Traditional house' on p. 153) (Interview with Shakoury in 2021).

- If the family home was large, a son might remain there after marriage, while daughters moved to their husbands' homes. Less wealthy families might buy or rent a nearby home for their son.

In some cases, brothers and their families lived in adjoining rooms, sharing common spaces like the yard and kitchen with their mother (e.g. House No. 2).

- In wealthier setups, multiple homes shared the same garden, sometimes separated by low walls or fences. Given these insights, we are prompted to ask: How can we take cues from traditional family homes for future multi-family housing designs?

In the Pahlavi period, although the government tried to modernize houses and lifestyles by planning modern houses, interviews show that some inhabitants followed a traditional family pattern in the modern house. For instance, in the House No. 14, there was a tendency towards individualism. The design of the house included separate bedrooms, a separate guest room, a dining room, and a kitchen. However, the pattern that they used the modern house was traditional. All of the extended family stayed in the same house. They would stay in the northern room in the summertime because of the direction towards the sun. The room facing south was their winter room. They shared the yard and Hall as well.

53% of the interviewees closely associate with their lineage members in the same house in the current Darband. Extended families may live in different garden houses within the same walled garden (as in House No. 16) or on different floors of the same apartment (as in House No. 3).

Another observation was regarding single-family houses. In Darband, there has been a significant transformation towards smaller families and a stronger sense of individualism. Some families, even though they live separately, still choose to stay in the same building or facility. Traditional homes that once housed extended families now accommodate individual family members (e.g., House No. 1). In one case, family members each had their own 220 m<sup>2</sup> flat with three bedrooms in the same apartment building. The single-family lived in the same facility a nuclear or extended family would live in, and the house's form has stayed the same.

The findings lead us to this question: Is this transformation trend here to stay? Should we design specifically for single-family homes? In the latter example, each family member chose to stay in a large flat to be near family members, even if it meant unused space. This indicates that while people become more independent, they still value family proximity. Based on these insights, there is a demand for compact homes that cater to individual needs but also foster family connections. We should look into designing homes that offer shared spaces for single households, ensuring they are both efficient and tailored to modern lifestyles.

I noticed that in multi-family houses, especially apartments, neighbours often do not communicate. Here, the religious and cultural attitudes of not interacting with strangers and *Namahram* has also been influential. In the past, the Darband neighbourhood was a "more coherent social and physical entity, shaped based on communal bonds", as in Iran's most



traditional areas. Now, it is about individuals from diverse backgrounds living together, often shaped by their financial means, which is compatible with Madanipour's (1998) arguments. Given these observations, I suggest we reconsider the multi-family housing and neighbourhood design in Darband to fit these cultural characteristics better.

## **Position of women**

In Iran, the role of women has undergone significant reforms and historical transformations over the years. Before we delve into the Darband, we must recognize these shifts with a brief review.

In the late Qajar era, reformers began to challenge the scarce role of women in public life and their customary veiling. Influenced by European ideas, they saw gender segregation as a barrier to modern progress. They believed that for Iran to modernize, old customs, like keeping women only in domestic roles, needed to change. Encouraging women to participate in public life and not veil became vital. Changes in marriage laws during the 1930s and 1940s further supported this shift under Pahlavi I's rule (Nabizadeh 2017, p. 86, 89).

European designs were embraced to provide a sleek, modern look to both the modern Iranian woman and the contemporary house. This woman was seen as educated, professional, and modern. Her modern home reflected this by being clean, minimal, and functional, while traditional homes were criticized for not being comfortable, hygienic, or modern enough. Modern architecture also moved away from the strict divide between public and private spaces, adopting an unveiled and liberated architectural style that avoided the weighty designs of the Qajar period (Nabizadeh 2017, p. 89-90).

The Pahlavi State believed education would empower Iranian girls, enabling them to excel as mothers and wives while entering the professional realm and gaining greater prominence in the public sphere. However, some groups, including religious leaders, resisted these new ideas. Therefore, Reza Shah started the Women's Awakening organization between 1936 and 1941. This group wanted to help women get an education, find jobs, and change family laws. They also wanted women to adopt the principles of modernity in their daily lives and publicly appear without veils. However, the focus was primarily on women's outward presentation and did not address the dynamics within their homes, which remained largely untouched by the secularization of law. Even with new laws of the secular court system exerted, religious leaders still controlled family matters. The mandate for women to remove their veils unintentionally forced some women, mainly from religious or less wealthy backgrounds, to avoid public places because they felt uncomfortable without their veils.

Conversely, when professional women began appearing unveiled in public, their behaviour was closely watched. Newspapers even advised how men and women should shake hands, but this did not stop the strict separation of men and women in public places from fading. Meanwhile, Feminists demanded equal rights for women in society (Nabizadeh 2017, p. 90-92; 99-100). However, it all changed after the Islamic revolution while wearing veils mandated by the state. Still, women kept pursuing education and careers. Today, women and men interact and work together, even though some traditional or government groups oppose it.

## **Position of women and settlement of Darband**

The section describes several key themes that emerged from interviews and observations about the role of women in Darband: changes in women's lifestyles, their jobs and education, their public responsibilities, gender relations, and overall satisfaction with women's current status.

### **Transformation of women's lifestyles**

In Darband, people are getting married at older ages than before, and the number of children per family is decreasing (See 'Family' on p. 240). I did not find any examples of polygamy, temporary marriage, or relations outside of the marriage among the people I spoke to. However, these topics are private and not often discussed openly in Iran. Many residents mentioned that modern kitchen tools, like microwaves and gas cookers, have made daily life easier. Some even said they cook less now and often order food from restaurants. As open kitchens become more common, women are more visible and active in the public sphere of the home.

### **Women's job and education**

Traditionally, both boys and girls in Darband attended *Maktab*. Many village girls studied until 6th or 9th grade during the Pahlavi II era, while some pursued higher education. The lifestyle was simple, and most women focused on household duties like cooking, cleaning, and raising children. A few progressive women obtained their high-school diplomas and took on roles as nurses, teachers, or public servants. A lady founded the semi-private school of Darband, and very open-minded women would travel to foreign countries to be educated. Today, women's roles have evolved. Many interviewees noted that women are better educated now, with many attending university for higher education. Over half of the female participants in the survey are either students, employed, or retired professionals. Some even have advanced degrees and prestigious careers. Students of philosophy and international law, building construction, sociologists, historians and planners were among the occupations of the interviewees. In Pasghale, it was once frowned upon for women to live alone, but that has changed, and nowadays, women manage tasks in fruit gardens and even hire help.

## **Public responsibilities**

After the Islamic revolution, Darband's local women collaborated to shop and prepare dowries and even formed a cooperative. In the 1990s-2000s, Tehran's city officials funded women's empowerment initiatives and projects in Darband. This facilitated women's participation in sports and travel together, which was well-received by the community. They often exercised together in schools without wearing *Chador* and took group trips. However, these programs have since been discontinued.

## **Gender relations**

The roles and relationships between genders, especially women, have influenced the house form, settlement and domains of men and women in Darband.

These factors have also guided measures to ensure privacy, including behavioural mechanisms. This is further discussed in the section "The need for privacy."

## **Satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the current position of women**

Some interviewees expressed contentment with the changing role of women today. Older women who are not strictly religious mentioned that due to younger generations' education and marrying more open-minded individuals, residents are shifting away from strict, expected religious behavioural codes. Others noted that while life was more challenging in the past, the situation for women has improved. Many also shared positive memories of previous initiatives by the Tehran Municipality to empower women.

Conversely, many religious long-term residents of Mir-Mahalleh feel that women today face more challenges than before. They believe having jobs and public roles has added to women's responsibilities. These residents fondly remember a time when life was simpler and happier. They also miss the days when religious norms were more strictly observed, particularly interactions between women and men who were strangers.

## **The need for privacy**

Some did not initially grasp the question when I asked interviewees about privacy or "*Harim*". As interviews progressed, various interpretations of privacy emerged. While I anticipated most people would highlight physical barriers to ensure privacy, as Rapoport (1969) suggested, many respondents spoke about behavioural mechanisms to maintain it. Literature and further discussions with experts also highlighted two main ways people achieve privacy: through behavioural means and by ensuring visual privacy.

## **Behavioural mechanisms to regulate privacy**

Privacy, the behavioural mechanisms employed to regulate it and the scope of public and

private domains vary across cultures (Altman 1977). Hisham and Rahim (2008) suggest that privacy is about setting boundaries between individuals. It is a way to manage social interactions.

In Western views, privacy differs from the Islamic perspective. In Islam, as Mortada (2003) points out, privacy is about respecting others' rights and spaces, as the Qur'an emphasises. The Qur'an advises believers to always seek permission before entering someone's home. This guidance stresses the value of separating private and public spaces. This originates from the emphasis on gender segregation. The faith outlines specific rules about how men and women should interact. This includes clear regulations concerning relationships, dressing, modes of behaviour, and contact between them. Unrestricted mixing between unrelated individuals of opposite genders is prohibited. This concept is known as "*Mahram*", which defines relationships by marriage or blood ties. Those outside this category are seen as strangers, termed "*Namahram*" (Wahid et al. 2008, p.1-2). This attitude, adopted mainly by the religious people, has changed due to the process of transformation and modernisation in Iran.

Addressing the need for personal space is fundamental to obtaining privacy. The domain of personal space, referred to as interpersonal distancing, addresses the individual's capacity to assert control over their bodies during social interactions". "It serves as a means of communication, enabling individuals to establish and maintain a suitable or desired level of contact". According to Altman (1975), "the observation of personal space is closely connected to the contexts in which social interactions occur. Additionally, age, gender, personality traits, and cultural distinctions significantly shape personal space dynamics" (Madanipour 2003). Territoriality is a behaviour mechanism to create and manage privacy by setting boundaries with markers. Altman (1975) describes it as a way to mark a place to show it belongs to someone or a group. He also highlights clothing and personal space as tools for privacy, seeing privacy as the central factor connecting these with verbal or para-verbal behaviour (Alemzadeh Noori 2010, p. 108).

### **Visual privacy**

Kodmany (1999) defines visual privacy as "the ability to engage in daily activities without being observed by outsiders or experiencing apprehension from their gaze". This kind of privacy is critical in Islamic cultures, where protecting the privacy of family members, especially women, is crucial. The design of buildings, including their layout, orientation and arrangement with varying heights, can affect the visual privacy residents experience. Carmona (2003) believes there is a correlation between visual privacy and physical and visual



permeability between public and private spheres. A building's facade, its outer layer, is a barrier that offers physical and psychological protection for those inside. This barrier helps maintain privacy and controls how much outsiders can see into a home. So, beyond just controlling light or temperature, a facade is critical to ensuring privacy and influencing the transparency of the house's boundaries. Architects can adjust this level of privacy by changing the transparency of a building's exterior.

## **Privacy and settlement of Darband**

From the observations of my study and the results of the interviews, privacy is provided through different strategies in the settlement of Darband;

### **Public-private hierarchy of settlement**

In traditional Iranian settlements, privacy was achieved through a system of public-private spaces. This patriarchal hierarchy was evident in the layout of alleys and homes.

In desert regions, the hierarchy was clear and emphasized in a physical pattern. It began with broader public areas, primarily male domains, and paths were narrowed down to dead ends as private spaces intended for families and women. Despite rapid growth, Tehran maintained this traditional layout from the 19th to the 20th century during the Qajar era, as confirmed by experts like Shakouri and references like Marefat 2004.

In traditional Shemiran, the hierarchy was related to the origin and destination of alleys. Some alleys were meant for passing through to another destination, while others, called *kuchekhtesasi*, were private and led to dead ends with homes. A close group of families typically used these latter private alleys. Because Shemiran is mountainous, paths were shaped by the land's slope and topography. This would transform the morphologic order followed in flat desert areas. In the organic pattern of paths, alleys could not necessarily be narrower due to the hierarchy of privacy. Still, residents would agree on how to use these paths (Interview with Shakouri in 2021).

In today's Darband, longtime locals say that as pathways expanded due to urban planning and new apartment types emerged, many previously private dead-end alleys became unused spaces between buildings or turned into parking areas. The rise in cars, residents and visitors has transformed these once-private alleys. Now, they are often filled with fast-moving vehicles or parked cars, disturbing the residents' privacy.

### **Gender relations and spaces**

In the Darband settlement, gender dynamics influence the domains of men and women. Interviews and observations show two distinct tendencies due to the influence of religious

attitudes. As the long-term village residents, domains of men and women for social interactions within the settlement have been different from traditional Darband until now. Places like the Friday mosque and Tek Yeh Darband have separate areas designated for men and women. For instance, men and women pray on separate floors. Even during quieter times, a curtain is used on the ground floor to keep the genders apart (See Figure 153).



Figure 153. Current gendered spaces of social interaction within Tek Yeh Darband

Religious spaces in Darband have become more gender-segregated over time. For example, in the quieter area of Pasghale, there is a small mosque where both men and women pray together. Imam Zadeh Ibrahim Shrine once had a shared entrance for both genders, but recent renovations have separated them. The previous un-segregated usage might be similar to the several families working together like members of one family while socializing in one place in rural areas, as Bromberger (1989) suggests. However, Tek yeh Pasghale has always had separate sections for men and women, possibly because people from surrounding areas join in during the Muharram religious months.

Traditionally, women socialized at mosques, private areas, and near rivers, where they washed dishes and clothes. Men would gather at tea houses, enjoying tea, smoking Chopogh, and playing Dorna-bazi during Ramazan. Yards were often spots for same-gender gatherings. While older and middle-aged residents recall mixed-gender play in alleys or at the *Maktab* when they were kids, younger generations seem to interact more separately within the settlement, possibly due to religious expectations and the stated lower modesty in behaviours. Public baths had designated times for each gender. While most schools separated boys and girls, a few exceptions existed during the Pahlavi era, like the Private and Pasghale schools. The latter eventually closed due to low enrolment.

During the Pahlavi era, Hotel Darband and Kip Kolah pub were popular social spots for army officials and foreigners and welcomed men and women within gender-integrated spaces. Nowadays, Darband's mountains, cafes, and restaurants are places everyone visits, attended by

people of various ages in mixed or separate gender groups. However, some older religious long-term residents disapprove of the younger visitors, feeling they do not follow the expected pattern of moral and religious behaviour, especially when they come with their partners. Cafes, open late into the night, are popular with younger visitors and families but are not frequently visited by religious long-term locals due to cultural norms about women's presence in public places (See 'Social interactions' on p. 235). In Darband, mixed and separate-gender wedding celebrations have been familiar to date. Open-minded families often held mixed-gender weddings in homes or gardens in old Darband.

In contrast, deeply religious families preferred separate-gender ceremonies. In this pattern, men and women were separated in neighbouring houses or the yard and inside the house. Nowadays, while weddings at home are less common, there are unique venues for separate-gender weddings, and mixed-gender celebrations often occur in gardens around Tehran.

### **Territorial behaviours**

Privacy in Darband was followed by creating physical barriers and living close to family and *Mahrams* to limit interactions with strangers. This has been a constant in Darband's history (see 'Family and the settlement of Darband' on p. 242). Newcomers are sometimes seen as intruding on this privacy. Restricted spaces for groups of high status have provided privacy both in the past and today. For instance, in the past, army commanders and factory owners attended places like Hotel Darband, while today's wealthy frequent upscale salons, gyms, and restaurants.

### **Behavioural strategies for managing interactions**

Privacy and modesty are communicated through spoken words, tone, body language, clothing choices, visual restraint and cultural customs. Islam provides clear guidelines on interactions, dress, and behaviour between men and women, defining who is considered a "*Mahram*" or a close relative (Wahid et al. 2008; Alemzadeh Noori 2010). In Darband, particularly among long-term religious residents, these principles are evident as the expected behavioural codes. For instance, women wear hijabs and limit their interactions with unrelated men. These practices are rooted in respect and modesty, referred to as "*Hojb-o-haia*." Traditionally, women kept a low profile in public spaces, a norm followed even by some non-religious local women. Older religious generations kept these traditions, often interacting only within homes or mosques and relying on male family members for tasks like shopping even today. However, newer generations in Darband have started to adopt different practices and behaviours.

The dress code through the Hijab is central to the *Mahram-Namahram* relationships in Islam and refers to the modest attire worn by Muslim women. Its purpose is to conceal and obscure

from view. "Hijab" comes from Arabic, meaning to hide or veil. Over time, its interpretation has changed based on social and cultural contexts. In the Qajar period, urban women wore a full black *Chador*, sometimes covering their faces. However, rural areas witnessed diverse practices as the full veil became a status for the wealthy, while working-class women adapted their attire to their needs (Alemzadeh Noori 2010). During Pahlavi I, the government forced women not to wear the Hijab. Some religious individuals chose to wear hats instead of scarves or preferred to stay indoors (as per Interview with Miry in 2021). In the Pahlavi II era, women were free to dress as they pleased (see 'Figure 35 on p. 100). However, unlike the high-status groups of army commanders and courtiers, many local women in Darband still wore the *Chador*. Interestingly, even the *Chador* was worn more casually, with some women removing it for short interactions with neighbours (Figure 154). Over generations, the strict dress code has evolved, with younger women opting for lighter mantles or not covering their heads.



Figure 154. *Chador* in a relaxed way by women in Shemiran in Pahlavi II

In Darband, privacy is often maintained through certain behaviours. From the interviews and observations, it is clear that people value personal boundaries and mutual respect. They understand the importance of recognizing their limits and respecting others. They also tend to avoid discussing personal topics or details about their homes as private places. Another significant aspect of the interviews is viewing privacy as a means to ensure the safety and security of homes and the community.

### **Satisfaction with privacy in the settlement of Darband**

A small percentage (5%) of Darband's long-term residents feel happy with their current privacy. They remembered safety and quiet, especially those in dead-end alleys. The latter might be related to the house's location in the last stage of the hierarchy of privacy in the settlement as a dead-end alley. Concerns were raised about increased traffic and noise from visitors and cars. Some religious long-term residents were dissatisfied due to not following the



expected religious behavioural codes by new residents and visitors. This also included dissatisfaction with the loud sounds of music during holy months and not respecting the privacy of women. Some believed that the presence of newcomers has led to a decline in neighbourhood safety. Besides, the low safety of houses due to the overlooking apartments was stated. As a result, many opt to live in apartments for added security. In contrast, new residents seem happy with the privacy in Darband, noting its peacefulness and absence of intrusive buildings. The results suggest that future planning for Darband should prioritize maintaining a sense of privacy for its inhabitants.

### **Privacy and the house in Darband**

Based on my field study observations, house surveys, and interview findings, it is clear that homes in Darband use various methods to ensure privacy.

#### **Visual privacy in houses of Darband**

The strategies to maintain visual privacy in Darband houses are as follows:

- Strategies affecting the house form, e.g. separation of domains or building homes below the alley level.
- Strategies affecting the internal organisation of the house, focusing on the distinction between public and private spaces, entrances, and kitchens.
- Modifying windows to limit outside views.
- Specific alterations made to enhance privacy.
- Reducing the use of open and semi-open spaces to ensure privacy.

#### **Strategies affecting the house form**

- Separation of domains: The boundary between the open public sphere and the protected private sphere was defined in traditional houses of Iran. These houses were often enclosed within tall walls with no direct openings to the outside (Alemzadeh Noori 2010, p. 128). Literature review, observations, and interview results show that in Darband, this design choice of enclosed spaces with perimeter walls has been a consistent feature for defining thresholds from historical times to the present. Referring to the alleys of Shemiran in the Qajar era, Bell (1928, mentioned in Soudavar (Farmanfarmaian) 2010, p.13-14) commented on this aspect in the 1890s.

*We rode along dark winding paths, under sweet-smelling walnut trees, between the high mud walls of gardens.*

Samuel Greene (cited in Sotoudeh 1995, p. xx) describes the introverted gardens of Shemiran;

*One of the main characteristics of these summer mansions is that no one can understand inside these gardens from outside of the garden or from a place that has a view to it. It is due to the high walls surrounding the gardens and the lands of the gardens that are not even and flat. Moreover, high plain trees are planted around all of these gardens, and they prevent others to understand the beauty of the inside of garden.*

Bell (1928, cited in Soudavar (Farmanfarmaian) 2010, p.13-14) also describes the Malek garden:

*At the foot of the mountains we stopped before a long wall, less ruinous than most, a bare mud wall, straight and uncompromising, with no arched doorway in the midst of it.*

Interviews indicate that in the traditional one-room houses of Kenar-Mahalleh, houses and yards were separated by simple low hedges made of wood, stone, or thatch as *Parchin*, where neighbours were often from the same lineage. Later, house surveys show that introverted courtyard house was a prevalent form of the traditional house in Darband (e.g. House No. 2). Traditional houses in Miry Alley had tall walls, about 2-3 meters high, made of mud, stone, and brick, surrounding homes, blocking the view towards the houses and yards. Low-rise houses were enclosed within gardens with trees blocking the view.

Based on conversations with older residents and experts, the pattern of enclosed houses within walls continued during the Pahlavi eras (Interview with Ebrahim Zadeh in 2021). Some modern houses had lower walls, allowing close neighbours to see into the property (e.g. House No. 8). However, since neighbours were close-knit, this was not seen as a problem.

Today's apartments and houses in Darband have tall walls around their yards for privacy. Even roof gardens, which often replace traditional yards, are enclosed by walls. While older houses were settled within walled gardens, some residents missed the greenery replaced by mere walls, as noted in interviews (Figure 155, Figure 156).



Figure 155. Walled houses of Shemiran in 3 periods, From left to right; a) Traditional houses; Shemiran in 1956; Current Shemiran

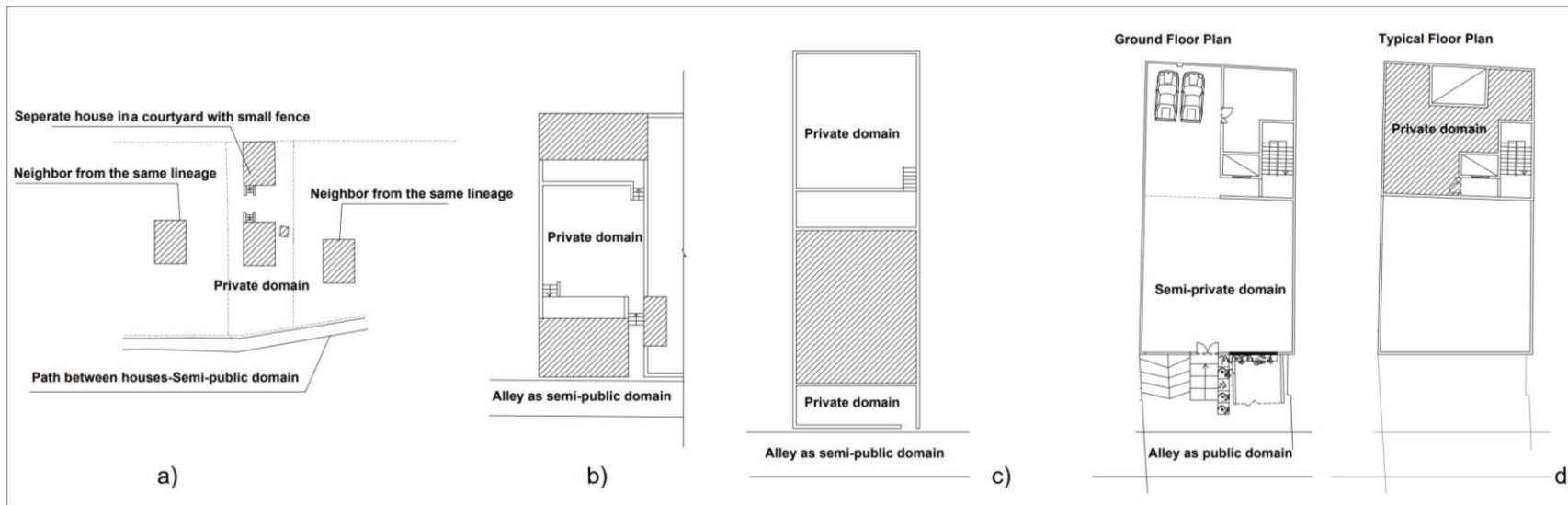


Figure 156. Separation of domains in houses of 3 periods in Darband; From left to right: a) Very old traditional one-room house; b) Traditional house; c) House of modern period; d) Current apartment

- In Darband, one method to ensure privacy in older homes was to build them below street level. This design blocked outside views. To enter these homes, one would descend stairs from the street leading to courtyards below the alley (Figure 157).



Figure 157. The traditional house below the ground in Pas-ghale

### Strategies affecting the internal organisation of the house

- Entrances: Throughout Darband's three periods of transformation, entrances have been designed to ensure house privacy (See "Use of space inside the houses of Darband" on p. 214).

- Kitchens: As mentioned earlier, many modern apartments and transformed homes now feature open-plan kitchens. During interviews, two distinct opinions about these open kitchens emerged (See "Kitchen; Attitudes towards the kitchen" on p. 228).

- Public-private distinction:

Khatib-Chahidi (1993) compared three types of Iranian homes, affluent, average, and modern, regarding the delineation between the public and private realms (Figure 158). House A represents the typical house of wealthier individuals in the past, where strict adherence to the *Mahram-Namahram* rules and severe limitations on visual contact with family members and women were enforced. This type of dwelling often resulted in women experiencing more splendid seclusion than the less affluent women residing in comparable regions. House B was a typical traditional Tehran home, with a clear separation between private spaces for family members and the entertaining area designated for *Namahram* male guests. House C, representing a modern era, had some traditional spatial division but more relaxed rules about shared spaces for mixed-gender interactions. This shift shows changing social attitudes over



time.

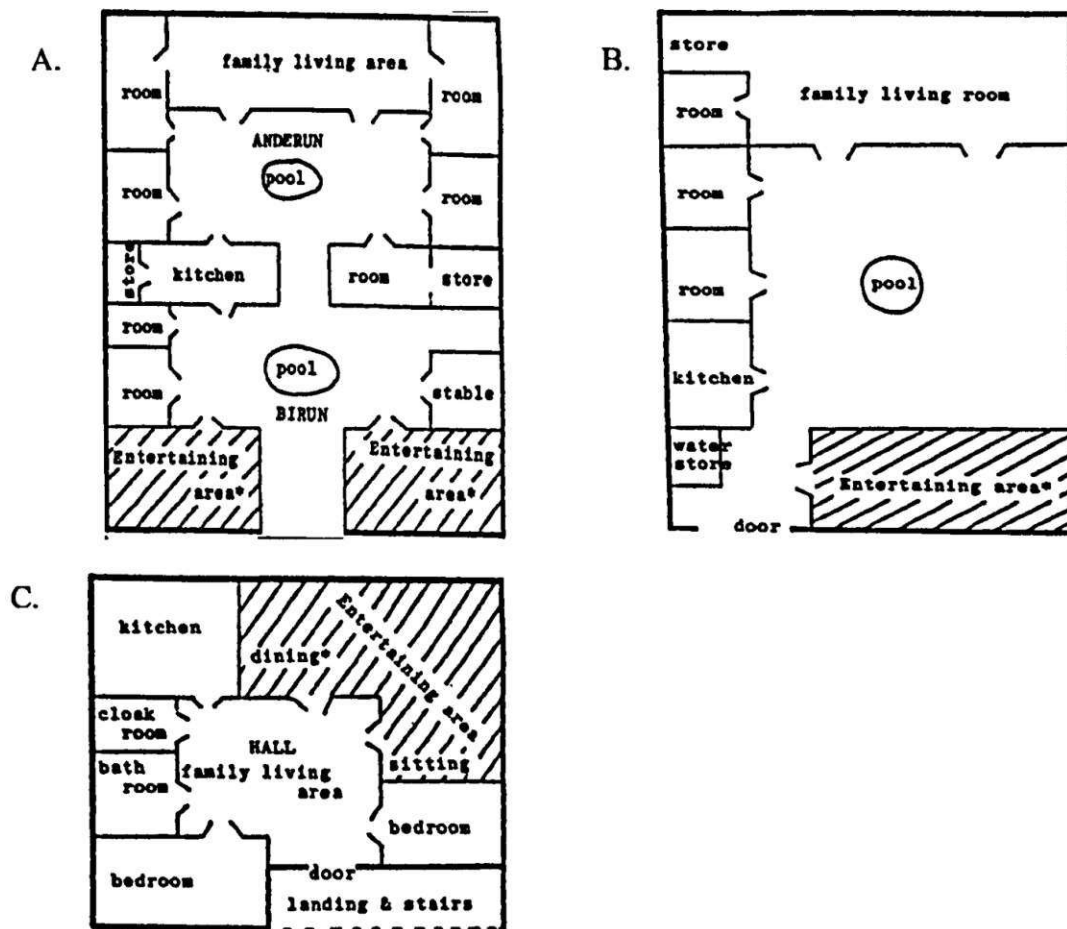


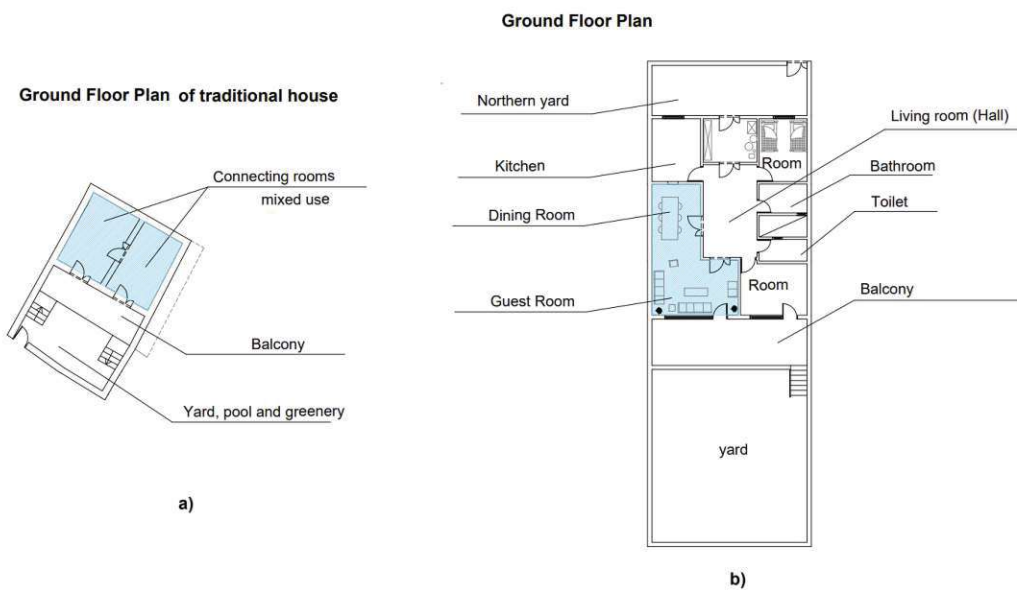
Figure 158. The public-private distinction in; A) a traditional wealthy house, B) a traditional typical house and C) a house of modern-period in Tehran

The results of my field study show the evolution pattern of how private and public spaces were distinguished within the houses of Darband in three eras of transformation. Initially, traditional houses of commoners had just one room where all activities took place. This meant the house had privacy from the outside. However, guests were often received in the same space used for daily family activities. Some traditional houses with connecting rooms had designated guest rooms to create more privacy. In the flexible use of space, close neighbours and relatives were accepted in the same room where other family activities were performed. Guest rooms were sometimes on a different floor, at a distance from the house's living spaces, or had a separate entrance to keep strangers, especially males, away from the private family areas. There was a clear separation of the public and private spheres in the houses of the upper classes. They had *Birouni* and *Andarouni* (See 'The traditional house' on p. 153). The strangers, especially men, would not enter the private area of the house. In grand houses, *Koushks* were even separate

structures just for dining and hosting guests, keeping them away from where the women and children lived.

During the modernization of Pahlavi, Iran brought patterns of Western plans and social practices to the houses. Homes were designed with modern layouts. They often included a guestroom, as the public area of the house that was occasionally locked and only opened for visitors. Despite these changes, the distinction between public and private spaces remained. However, gender segregation was less strict than before. Old long-term residents mentioned that men and women would sit together in one room, especially around the *Korsi*, only with close guests. However, the women would still cover their heads.

Today, in apartments, there are both private and public spaces. Socializing typically occurs in the living and dining rooms, which are open to guests as the public areas. This practice has roots in the past. Most observed houses in Darband have a living room where family gatherings and guest visits occur. A dedicated guest room with formal furniture is next to larger homes' more casual living room. Both rooms are usually open to each other without any separating walls (Figure 159).



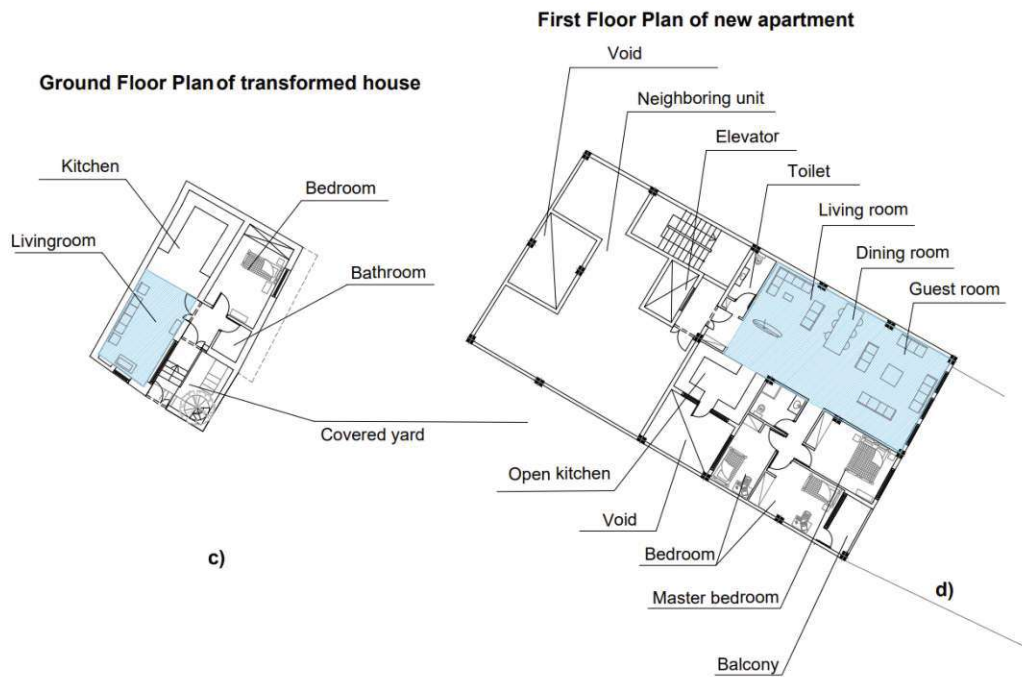


Figure 159. Public area or guest area in houses of Darband, from left to right; a) a traditional house, b) a modern house, c) a transformed house, d) a current apartment

In one example (House No. 20), the main living space and kitchen were on one floor of the apartment, while the guest room and a just-for-show kitchen were on a different floor, accessible by an elevator. In today's Darband houses, other social interactions also often occur in public areas:

- Events like Chahar Shanbeh Souri or Samanou Pazon are often held in open spaces like yards, sometimes extending to alleys.
- Some apartment buildings have roof gardens with barbecues and outdoor seating. These spaces offer a place for family parties and gatherings while providing beautiful views of the mountains and river, like in House No. 23. This also allowed for the separation of guests from the private area of the apartment.
- Some residents use the shops below their apartments for socializing, keeping guests separate from their private living areas, replicating the concept of *Andarouni-Birouni*.
- These observations resemble a continuous pattern, with an increased tendency towards privacy and public/private distinction from the past. I suggest maintaining a clear public/private distinction in the future design of spaces for social interaction in the houses of Darband.
- Even though current Darband homes lean towards individualism with separate bedrooms, it is essential to remember the need for flexible spaces (See 'Flexibility' on p. 221).

### **Modifying windows to limit outside views**

Interview results indicate that traditional Darband houses used various methods to block the view to the inside of the house. Traditional one-room houses had small windows facing the narrow paths and larger ones facing the yard. Later, traditional houses elevated more oversized windows to upper floors or placed them towards private areas like yards, ensuring limited view from the outside. The winding layout of alleys also prevented direct views into homes. Most houses were low-rise and the same height, so they generally did not overlook each other. Unlike the current apartments, houses were placed not directly facing other houses within the organic alleys, preventing being overlooked. Many residents mentioned that they could not see into neighbouring homes. In certain areas like Pas-ghale, while some houses were more visible, women still wore Hijab.

During the modernization era under Pahlavi, houses began featuring large glass windows opening to the public realm following the International style, a shift from previous designs (Interview with Yalda 2021). This modern style, typical in upscale and middle-class urban homes, was also introduced in homes for the less affluent. However, the design did not usually consider cultural compatibility and the residents' ability to adapt. Due to their traditional and cultural backgrounds, many felt uncomfortable showcasing their private lives through these large windows (Figure 160). Scholars saw this Western-inspired design as a sign of a societal identity crisis. Field studies showed that residents often covered these big windows with materials or curtains for privacy. Women in these homes continued to wear veils to maintain their privacy indoors (Nabizadeh 2017, p. 97-98).



*Figure 160. Covering expansive windows in houses of the modern period in Tehran*

Many Darband residents mentioned that their older homes had patterned windows on the ground floor facing the alleys. Others added that even with normal glass windows, people



outside generally did not look inside due to the expected behavioural code of modesty. Modern apartments have larger windows, but many residents still value their privacy. For example, they use reflective windows or curtains to keep prying eyes out. Also, most are uneasy if neighbouring apartments have a direct view into their homes.

### Specific alterations made to enhance privacy

From observations and interviews with experts and residents, it is clear that religious long-term residents in currently transformed houses in Darband take measures to increase their privacy, especially with nearby overlooking apartments. Some use plastic boards to shield yards, enclose open spaces, block windows, raise wall heights, prolong gable roofs, and enclose balconies (Figure 161). These alterations highlight how much Darband's residents value their privacy, which should be factored into future design and planning guidelines.



Figure 161. Alteration in the current houses of Darband to achieve privacy

### Reducing the use of open and semi-open spaces to ensure privacy

From my observations, surveys and discussions, it is clear that the appreciation for open and semi-open spaces in Darband's modern apartments has decreased compared to traditional homes. The reduced use of spaces like terraces and yards, often due to nearby overlooking

apartments or shared spaces with unfamiliar neighbours, highlights the need to rethink the design of these areas, ensuring privacy (See 'Yards, verandas and roof gardens; Declining the importance of open and semi-open spaces' on p. 223).

### **Gender relations and spaces**

In Iran, traditionally, there is a strong emphasis on gender separation, influencing the interactions between genders and spatial organizations. This practice is deeply rooted in the country's cultural and religious beliefs. However, as society modernizes and women play more active roles, these boundaries become more flexible (Alemzadeh Noori 2010, p. 31, 181). From interviews, it is clear that in Darband's traditional homes, certain religious ceremonies like the 'Roze' were women-only events held within the confines of the house. Each household would have a designated day for this event every month. Such practices continue today, though less frequently.

Yard and inside the house were places for women's gatherings. Separating male strangers entering the house was done through different scenarios, such as the distinction of public/private spheres of the house and *Andarouni* (See 'The need for privacy; Public-private distinction' on p. 256).

The degree of closeness with guests determined how men and women interacted in homes. In smaller, traditional wealthy houses, *Birouni* was the guest room for interacting with outsiders and strangers, while connecting rooms were the gathering place with close guests. For significant events like weddings, the use of space within the house would be changed to gender-segregated spaces through different strategies, like using different floors or neighbouring homes. During the Pahlavi era, army officials in Darband held men-only or mixed-gender parties in their summer residences.

Traditionally, in places like Shemiran, men and women slept in separate spaces. In today's Darband homes, if there are not enough bedrooms, women usually get the bedroom, while men might sleep in public spaces of the house like the living room.

### **Gender integrated spaces**

In Darband, the level of closeness with guests influences whether men and women socialize together in homes. Historically, long-term residents often gathered in mixed-gender groups, especially with close relatives, while still observing dress codes like hijab when needed. In traditional settings, even if residents were not directly related, they socialized together, such as Shab-Neshin gathering around the *Korsi* in winter. This close bond is attributed to their daily interactions, making them feel like one big family. Alemzadeh Noori (2010, p.132-133) argues

that this happens especially in rural areas, where several families work together like members of one family. Because of this close daily cooperation, they regard each other as next of kin. Thus, in social gatherings, they sit, eat, and socialise in one place. Even so, an unspoken level of privacy was maintained. In the above case, the "unseen privacy" is more visible. For example, neighbours could enter each other's yards during the day, even if women were present. Current Darband apartments, with their open-plan kitchens and living areas, reflect a more relaxed approach to mixed-gender interactions. Some younger residents even host mixed-gender parties without adhering to traditional privacy norms, unseen privacy or hijab.

Modernization in Iran has changed how people view privacy, especially regarding gender segregation in homes. The prevailing concept observed in practice is called "unseen privacy." Traditionally, physical barriers separated genders in Iranian homes. Now, many women maintain their privacy through adopting personal space strategies, like personal choices in clothing, behaviour and following social rules that keep distance between genders. In shared spaces, seating arrangements ensure that men and women sit separately but in the same room, like in open-plan settings. This means family and guests sit in specific spots based on gender. Opposite genders of close family members, *Mahrams*, and outsiders or *Namahrams*, ensure they do not sit side by side to maintain this privacy (Alemzadeh Noori 2010). In Darband, long-term residents have followed this "unseen privacy" trend. In past gatherings, they would sit around a *Korsi* with men on one side and women on the other. This practice continues today, where typically, men sit together on one side and women on the other.

### **Behavioural mechanisms to regulate privacy**

Based on the results of interviews, surveys and observations, I identified the following themes on behavioural mechanisms of achieving privacy in houses of Darband: Desire for privacy is communicated through verbal, para-verbal behaviours, and non-verbal communication cues (See 'Behavioural strategies for managing interactions' on p. 251). Territorial behaviours and managing interaction are among other ways of regulating privacy. These themes are going to be discussed further;

- Managing interactions: New residents living in apartments mentioned they prefer to keep interactions with neighbours minimal. They also emphasized the importance of not making loud noises and respecting neighbours.
- Territorial behaviours include;
  - Limiting the presence of strangers at the house: from old times until now, long-term residents have interacted mainly with close friends, neighbours, and family.

Religious residents even now tend to avoid interactions with *Namahrams*, although, in the past, they were more open to such interactions with neighbours. Today, safety concerns may also drive the emphasis on limited interactions.

- Long-term residents live near other close family members and *Mahram* people in the same house (See 'Family' on p. 242).
- Religious people traditionally expect distance between unfamiliar men and women in a household. However, these practices have been evolving over time.
- In Darband, many religious long-term residents follow the dress code of the Hijab, especially in areas like the terrace and yard where neighbouring apartments can see in. This is to maintain privacy around non-family members, even during social interaction or activities like cooking in an open kitchen. However, the way the Hijab is worn has evolved over time. Older residents often wore the full *Chador*. Middle-aged folks lean towards a mantle-scarf combination, while many younger individuals opt not to wear the Hijab (Figure 162).



Figure 162. Two dress codes by women in houses of current Darband

### Satisfaction with privacy in houses of Darband

From interviews, a third of the people were happy with the privacy of their homes, while most lived in apartments. They like features like the clear privacy of the house from the outside, the clear hierarchy of public to private spaces and the use of reflective windows and curtains to block outside views. The majority stated they were satisfied with not being overlooked by other apartments. Many also mentioned the change towards individualism among the younger generation, as seen in the preference for having separate bedrooms.

Other positive factors included living near family while keeping interactions with neighbours to a minimum. On the other hand, most house residents were not pleased with their privacy levels. They were concerned about being overlooked by neighbouring apartments and missed having tall trees to block the outside view. Using solid walls instead of trees was also a point of discontent.



## **Conclusion**

My field study in Darband shows the significance of privacy as a cultural factor. This element should be carefully considered when designing future homes and urban planning in the area. In Darband, privacy is not just about physical boundaries; the physical and behavioural forms of privacy and their implementation within the houses and settlements are deeply rooted in cultural and religious perspectives. Modern trends also influence how residents understand and maintain privacy. This has resulted in changing patterns of physical and behavioural patterns during social interactions. Overall, privacy in Darband materializes in clothing, living spaces, architectural choices, and proxemic behaviour.

## **Religion**

### **Religion and settlement of Darband**

During the field study, participants were asked about their views on Darband's houses and settlement concerning their religious beliefs compared to the past and whether they were more or less satisfied. Some participants found these questions challenging or sensitive and felt uneasy answering them. Despite the respondents' hesitancy, it was clear from the conversations that religion played a significant role in the lives of residents and influenced various cultural aspects. As a result, its impact should be recognized when planning for Darband's. In some instances, insights on religious sentiments were derived from responses to other cultural questions. From these discussions and observations during the field study, several key themes emerged regarding the impacts of religion in Darband's settlement, which will be explained further.

### **The religious communities of Shemiran and Darband**

The significance of religion in Shemiran and Darband was highlighted in previous literature and expert discussions (See 'The site and its choice' on p. 194). Interviews reinforced this, showing Darband's deep-rooted religious community. The ongoing presence of Shiite Sadat's origin and the religious names of many older long-term residents are clear examples.

### **Religious minorities**

Few religious minorities have lived in Darband over the years. Some Iranian Armenians, who were Christians, ran cafes in Sarband during the Pahlavi era. The 1966 Annual Census, mentioned in the Shemiran County Board report (1973), indicated that 95.7% of Shemiran's population were Muslims. Historically, Iran had diverse beliefs, but Arab invasions changed this. Today, most of Tehran's residents are Shiite Muslims. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution,

which emphasized Islam in Iranian society, many who felt out of place chose to leave (See 'The people' on p. 98 for more details).

### **Impact of religion on the settlement**

Literature review and discussions with experts had previously shown that Religion had a significant role in the formation and pattern of the settlements and institutions of Shemiran and Darband (See 'The site and its choice' on p. 194). The interview feedback indicates that religion has consistently influenced Darband's settlement patterns. This influence is evident in the emphasis on privacy, separation of domains through walled enclosures, public-private settlement hierarchy, and provision of visual privacy (See 'The need for privacy' on p. 247). Many residents value this privacy, and its lack has led to discontent. Furthermore, religious sites like the Friday Mosque, Tek Yeh Darband, and Imam Zadeh Ibrahim have remained central for community interactions and religious ceremonies. Historical practices like *Ta'zieh*, Muharram rituals and making vows continue to be observed. According to experts, traditional Iranian settlements, including Shemiran, were designed with houses oriented towards Qibla. This design principle was even incorporated into Tehran's 1966 Master Plan. Post-Islamic Revolution policies also emphasized strengthening religious institutions like mosques.

### **Impact of religion on other cultural factors and sense of place**

The influence of religion on other cultural factors was another theme from the results of the interviews. As stated before, the need for privacy has been highly influenced by the Islamic views of the residents. The physical and behavioural form of privacy and their implementation within the houses and the settlement are related to the degree of religiousness of the residents. For example, religion has affected the Hijab, segregation of sexes within mosques and public spaces, social interactions such as *Roze*, and behavioural strategies to achieve privacy. Although urban regulations of Tehran municipality were designed to accord with Islamic rules to ensure privacy, today, only 5% of long-term residents are happy with the level of privacy they have in Darband (See 'The need for privacy' on p. 247).

Religion has affected our worldview towards our relationship with nature. The Holy Quran states that God creates plants and animals and should be protected, which was the theme in some interview results. Religion has also affected the factors of social interaction and use of space within the settlement of Darband. Many social interactions are religious-based. The Friday Mosque and Tek Yeh Darband have long been centres of social and religious activity with importance in the sense of place of long-term residents. The Muharram religious ceremonies at *Tek Yeh* and the old cemetery are significant for the religious group of long-term

residents, mentioned as the essence of the place within years due to creating a solid community spirit over the years. Even residents who have moved away or are not particularly religious often return for these gatherings, emphasizing the deep community ties. Moreover, the respect for clergies and Sadat in Darband has historically influenced the community's social hierarchy.

### **Transformation of religious attitude**

Religious views have changed over time. Older community members recall a time when deep religious sentiments influenced daily life, including marriage proposals during religious events. They have noticed less religious commitment in younger people and fewer wearing the Hijab. This change is attributed to influences from Western culture through satellite media and the arrival of newer residents. Newcomers generally express less religious inclination, leading to limited social interactions between long-term and new residents.

### **Religion and the house in Darband**

Observations, surveys, discussions with experts, and interview results indicate that religion greatly influences houses in Darband. Historically, religion has shaped Darband homes. For instance, traditionally, homes face Qibla. Toilets, however, do not face this direction. Religion also impacts privacy needs in Darband homes, affecting their forms, enclosure within walls, spatial organization, windows, and the relative segregation or integration of sexes during social interaction. This also extends to dress codes and behaviour norms (See 'Privacy and the house in Darband' on p. 253 for more details).

## **Hierarchical relations**

### **Hierarchical relations and settlement of Darband**

Fieldwork shows that social structures have influenced Darband's houses and the settlement over time. This relates not only to house sizes and their placement but also to the separation of social groups and how spaces are used, which led to some lower-income residents being unhappy about this. Observations, surveys, and interviews led to the following topics, which will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### **Social structures within Darband and the location and form of their houses**

During the Qajar era, Darband was a traditional village. The long-time residents shared that most locals were farmers. The village had a leader called *Kadkhoda*, who had ties to the king. In the Pahlavi era, the residents were primarily peasants of similar economic status, living simple lives. Many were not highly educated. Some worked at the Sadabad palace, Hotel Darband, or owned cafes in Sarband. The community greatly respected the older generation

and religious leaders. The more affluent in Darband were associated with the Pahlavi court or army. Doctors, university teachers, business people, landowners, and legal system workers were also there.

In the old Darband, social structures would affect the settlement, location, or form of houses. Members of a family lineage often lived close to each other. In traditional Darband, there were different neighbourhoods for different income levels. The "Shah-Mahalleh" was where the rich lived. The "Morgh-Mahalleh" was for middle-income families and had areas for keeping chickens. The "Kenar-Mahalleh" was for those with lower incomes. Associates of the Qajar kings had summer gardens at the southern or south-eastern of the current Darband Sq. However, when the Pahlavi royal family came into power, they settled in Sadabad Palaces. The Qajars lost their influence and wealth. Many of their gardens were sold, often to military commanders who lived near the Pahlavi family. Many of the garden houses, especially on the east and west of the Darband River, belonged to the army commanders of Pahlavi. Some of these commanders had local families living with them as caretakers. For instance, Bagh-Shater was a garden given to Shater Bashi by Reza-Shah because he was the head of carriers of letters. Another garden, Malek, was owned by the wealthy Malek family. Having simple lives, most ordinary locals lived in Mir-Mahalleh, Kenar-Mahalleh, and Sarband. This information comes from interviews with long-term residents, experts and historical records (Mohajer Milani et al. 2005; Interview with Shakoury in 2017).

After the Islamic revolution, many garden-houses were taken over because the royal family and their associates left Iran. Most of Darband's long-term residents are from local villagers who have always lived there.

This community still respects older and religious leaders. Today, Darband has a mix of homes for both rather wealthier newcomers and rather less wealthy long-time residents. Older residents mention that the value of land in Darband has increased. For example, large garden areas in Bagh-Shater were once cheaper than tiny houses in Kenar-Mahalleh. However, with the commodification of land during Pahlavi and after the Islamic revolution and Darband being in a pricey part of the city, land here is now precious. There is a clear difference in the social structures within Darband. Long-time residents say that areas like Shemiran and Darband are getting costly. They point to rising costs in rent, taxi fares, and groceries compared to other parts of the city. Many of these locals are moving to cheaper areas after selling their properties. Wealthier newcomers are replacing them. Newer apartments often house these wealthier individuals, while long-time locals in areas like Mir-Mahalleh and Kenar-Mahalleh are not of high-economic groups. Some of the wealthier locals owning garden houses live abroad, leaving



their homes in the care of housekeepers. During the 1990s, Bagh-Shater mostly had illegal settlers. This is changing. Many smaller properties are being combined for new apartment buildings, and more affluent individuals are now moving in. Cafe workers in Sarband come from different parts of Iran. They live in these cafes and send money back to their families. Often, migrants from neighbouring countries work as housekeepers or garden workers. In Pasghale, locals note a distinction between the upper and lower village residents. This division, where upper village residents behave differently than those in the lower areas, is common in many traditional Iranian villages.

### **Segregation of different social structures**

Interviews with long-term residents suggest a clear segregation between the lower-income people and high-ranking officials like army commanders during the Pahlavi era. Many locals rarely interacted with these high-ranking officials or visited their homes. These commanders often kept to their circle in the settlement or inside their garden houses, leading separate lifestyles.

Segregation of social structures has been continued in the current Darband, too. Long-time residents, who are more traditional and religious, have disagreements with newcomers. These newcomers sometimes do not follow the same religious behavioural codes. For example, while the original residents keep early bedtimes and enjoy quiet nights, the newcomers might play loud music, especially during the religious months of Muharram and Safar. They also host mixed-gender gatherings late at night and keep pets in their apartments.

There is a clear economic difference between the newcomers with higher incomes and the original residents with lower incomes. This has created a bounded community, particularly in Mir-Mahalleh, as the original residents barely mix with the newcomers. Before, everyone knew each other, and the community was close. However, newcomers moved in when some original residents moved to more affordable parts of the city. These newcomers are often viewed as out of place and blamed for destroying the community's fabric, nature and social relations, especially when they build high-rise structures. Some long-term residents mentioned that even though they might want bigger homes, they would not want to combine their houses to construct a high-rise apartment. They fear this would change the fabric, lead to the emergence of new residents and reduce closeness. Even if living in Darband becomes costly, many original residents do not want to move because they value safety, peace, and strong community ties. However, wealthier original residents are not happy about low-income visitors in the area.

## Use of space by different social structures

Social structures affected how people used the settlement of Darband through their economic status. Army leaders liked meeting in their garden houses during the Pahlavi era, especially on holidays. They visited the private bars at Hotel Darband and the Kip Kola Club. Visitors from other countries and guests of the royal family stayed at Hotel Darband and its villas. Local villagers usually did not go to these fancy places. Regular people from Tehran liked to go to cafes and buy food and snacks from street vendors around Sarband, like walnuts and corn on the cob. Most kids from regular families went to public schools, but kids from affluent families often went to private schools.

In current Darband, hierarchical relations are also effective in the use of settlement. Long-time locals usually shop at the cheaper municipal food markets in Tajrish, but newer, wealthier people prefer the giant hypermarket in Aghdasieh. Even though there are fancy salons and sports clubs in Darband, the younger locals who have been around for a while tend to go elsewhere for these services, often near Tajrish. Different kinds of people hang out in Darband's cafes and on nature trails, but these cafes are not too popular with the long-standing residents, possibly because they are expensive. Since the Tajrish metro station opened, more visitors from other cities, from lower income groups, are coming to Darband due to the affordable access. Some wealthier, long-time locals are not too happy about this change.

### **Transformation from a modest society towards the display of wealth**

In the interviews, long-time residents explained that locals of Darband during the Pahlavi period had simple lives and were mainly peasants. Even if some had wealthy relatives or important jobs, they did not show off their wealth within the neighbourhood. This tradition of modesty, where people do not flaunt their wealth, was common in traditional Iranian neighbourhoods. Houses were usually simple on the outside, respecting the Islamic belief in equality, which values modesty and not revealing one's wealth or status (Madanipour, 1998). This idea goes back to the Qajar era; for instance, Malek Garden belonged to the wealthy, but from the outside, it looked just like any other house, keeping the richness inside hidden (Bell (1928, cited in Soudavar (Farmanfarmaian) 2010)

The geographical segregation of social classes started in Tehran during the Pahlavi era. Different social groups found spatial arrangements based on a north-south divide. With the dismantling of the parochialist structure of society in Tehran, it was replaced by one in which individuals' access to money defined relations (Madanipour 1998). Currently, there is a wide gap between different social structures within Darband. Long-term residents argued that life

was generally less complicated and less focused on materialism, display of wealth and consumerism in old Darband than now. In the past, people did not worry about having many clothes or fancy things in their homes. Now, rich people show off with expensive cars, lifestyles, and stylish homes. Kids used to play together in the streets, but now they join sports clubs to show how wealthy their families are. Before, rich and poor neighbours lived side by side, and if someone helped another person, they did it quietly. Today, if someone gives money to help others, they often talk about it a lot, which can embarrass those who need help. Many longtime Darband residents have feelings of nostalgia towards the old days and the simple way of life. They also point out that just because someone has an expensive car does not mean they are wealthy. People respect those with expensive cars more, seeing it as a sign of higher social status.

### **Dissatisfaction with current hierarchical relations**

The people living in the area expressed unhappiness with the current hierarchical relations because:

- Low-income visitors are replacing the important army commanders and wealthy people from before.
- Many wealthy newcomers show off their money, which was not how things used to be.
- The new money is leading to more materialism and consumerism, a change from the simpler way of life people used to enjoy.
- The long-term residents and the new ones have cultural differences and wide economic gaps, which can be hard to reconcile.
- People are missing their old neighbours who have moved away and are replaced by strangers.
- The cost of services and living in Darband has gone up a lot.

### **Hierarchical relations and the house in Darband**

Surveys, observations and interviews with residents show that social structures have impacted the houses of Darband. This includes the house form, size, facilities, materials, and site size. In the traditional Darband, rich people's houses in Shah Mahalleh were in a better state than the other thatched houses and had more rooms because they had bigger families. The simplest spatial structure of traditional houses had just one room and a porch in a garden. With the development of marriage and family and accumulating wealth, they added more connecting rooms to the central part of the house. Elaborately built estates for landlords were constructed

as the last stages of ordinary houses from the ground. The size of rooms as modules shaping the plan of the houses was changing according to the status of the residents (Interview with Shakoury in 2021 and see 'The traditional house' on p. 153). Wealthier people like *Kadkhoda* had larger homes with more land and better amenities than ordinary people's houses (Ebrahim Zadeh's interview, 2021).

Qajar royal associates had summer homes with guesthouses called *koushks* in extensive gardens, like the ones owned by Sheikh-Khaz'al and in Malek garden (See '*Koushks*' on p. 142). Rich people's homes had separate areas for men and women, and the very rich even had a *Koushk*. However, poorer families' homes were simpler, with fewer private spaces separating men and women (Yalda's interview, 2021, see Figure 163).

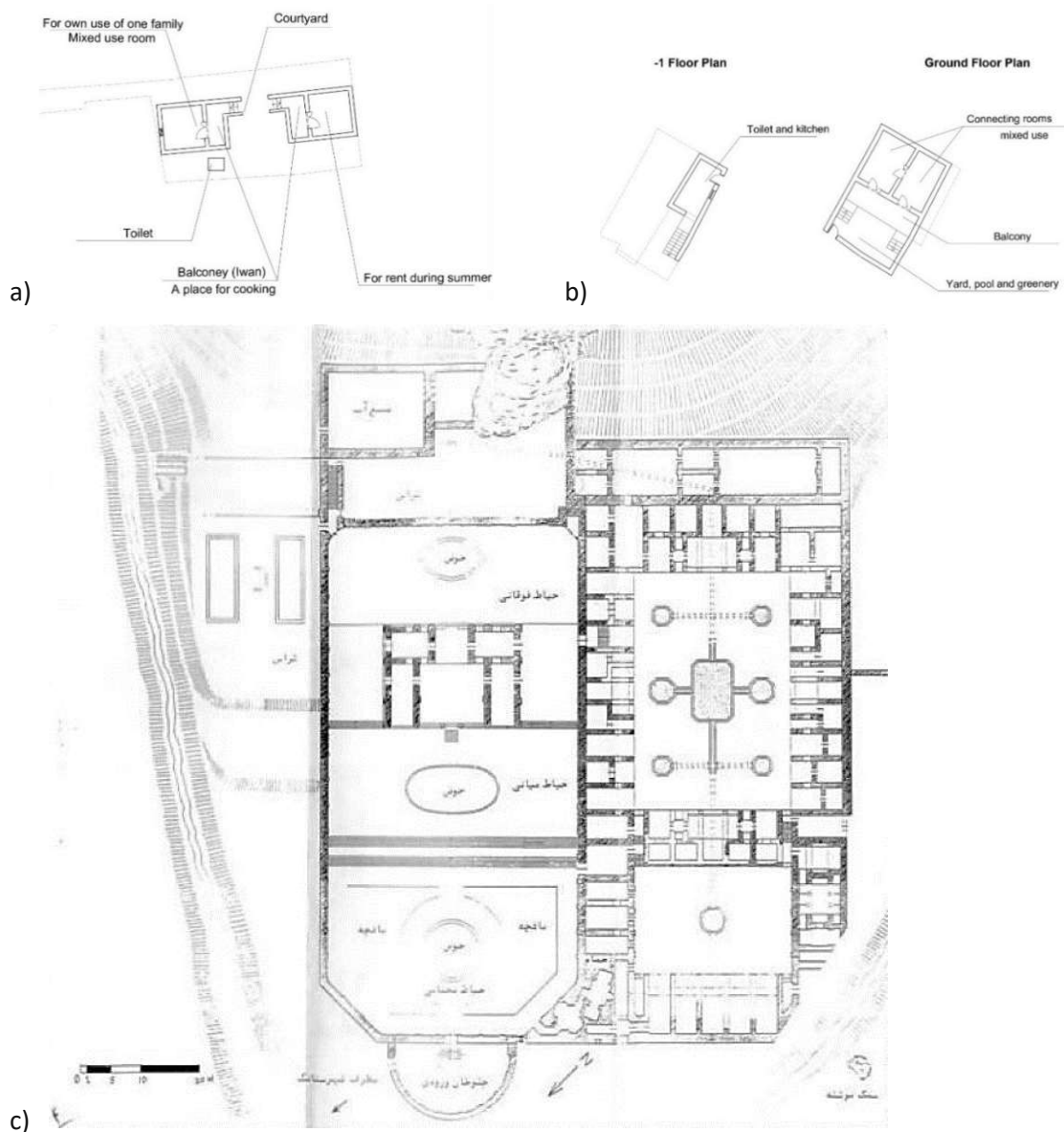


Figure 163. Traditional houses and hierarchical structures in Shemiran, from left to right: a) Traditional one-room house, b) Traditional house of commoners, c) Wealthy house of Shahrestanak palace including Andarouni and Biruni



During the Pahlavi era, people with lower incomes in Darband used oil to heat their homes and rode mules for transportation. Those with better economic status had cars, larger homes with guest rooms, and extensive gardens, and they decorated their guest rooms with lovely cushions and carpets. The more affluent residents often had large summer garden houses with gable roofs and a small, thatched cottage for the caretaker at the end of the garden. These wealthy families started to adopt the structure of modern architecture earlier than local villagers in Pahlavi II, changing from the thatched materials. Switching to gas for heating, they had larger homes with additional buildings for gardeners and caretakers. The very rich might have had separate houses for summer and winter in the same garden or extra structures for their extended family. They employed cooks and maids. An example is the Malek Garden, a luxurious estate with vast structures for the extended family and a special pavilion.

In Darband, the size and quality of homes show the residents' social status. Lower-income groups often live in smaller, older homes or apartments that give less room for each person. Higher-income groups live in larger apartments or houses with more space, better materials, and stylish furniture (Figure 164, Figure 165). The affluent new residents often have a second home in another location and like having pets and expensive cars. On the other hand, many locals may only have an essential car, and some people do not have enough money for taxis, so they walk where they need to go. Lower-income groups still reside in tiny houses with Bagh-Shater. Many garden houses have housekeepers, and residents live outside Iran.

Data from Real estate agents in Darband shows the average price for an older apartment, around 15 years old, is usually \$1900 to \$2300 for each square meter. The price can increase if the apartment has been renovated with new facilities like kitchen cabinets and better tiles in the living areas. Some people have even been offered up to \$3000 per square meter by builders who want to knock down old houses. This is because developers would demolish the old house, considering it a *Khune Kolangi*, to construct a new high-density apartment, and it is very beneficial for them to buy the old houses. New residents argued that having a house with a yard is likely unaffordable for them due to the high prices, and that is why they have bought a flat in their apartment, despite preferring a private house with greenery.



Figure 164. Examples of lower income residence in current Darband: a flat for the living of 5



Figure 165. Examples of current luxurious flats for sale in Shemiran and their spaces

## Identity of place in Darband

This section identifies elements that residents associate with the identity of place or placelessness in Darband. The first section presents the findings of interviews with residents concerning their perceived significant changes in Darband during the transformations and their desired future of Darband. This is followed by themes such as the loss of identity and meaning of place in Darband. This discussion continues by presenting interview results regarding the essence of place and elements of the identity of place. Next, the results of the analysis of sketch maps are presented along with highlighting the variations in perceptions of different socio-economic groups of the residents. This is followed by the global and local identity of place in

Darband. The last part concludes the results obtained on the identity of place in Darband during the fieldwork and the possibility of establishing a pragmatic sense of place in Darband.

## Transformation of Darband

I interviewed both long-term and newer residents of Darband to gauge their perceptions of change in the area. The primary changes they noted are depicted in the accompanying diagram (Figure 166). These include urban development altering the settlement pattern, shifts in lifestyle, reduced social interaction, a changing relation with nature, population growth and a busier neighbourhood, more cafes and tourists, higher land and product prices, issues with confiscation and unlawful houses, vacant properties, a lessening adherence to traditional behavioural norms, and a perceived reduction in modernity within Darband.

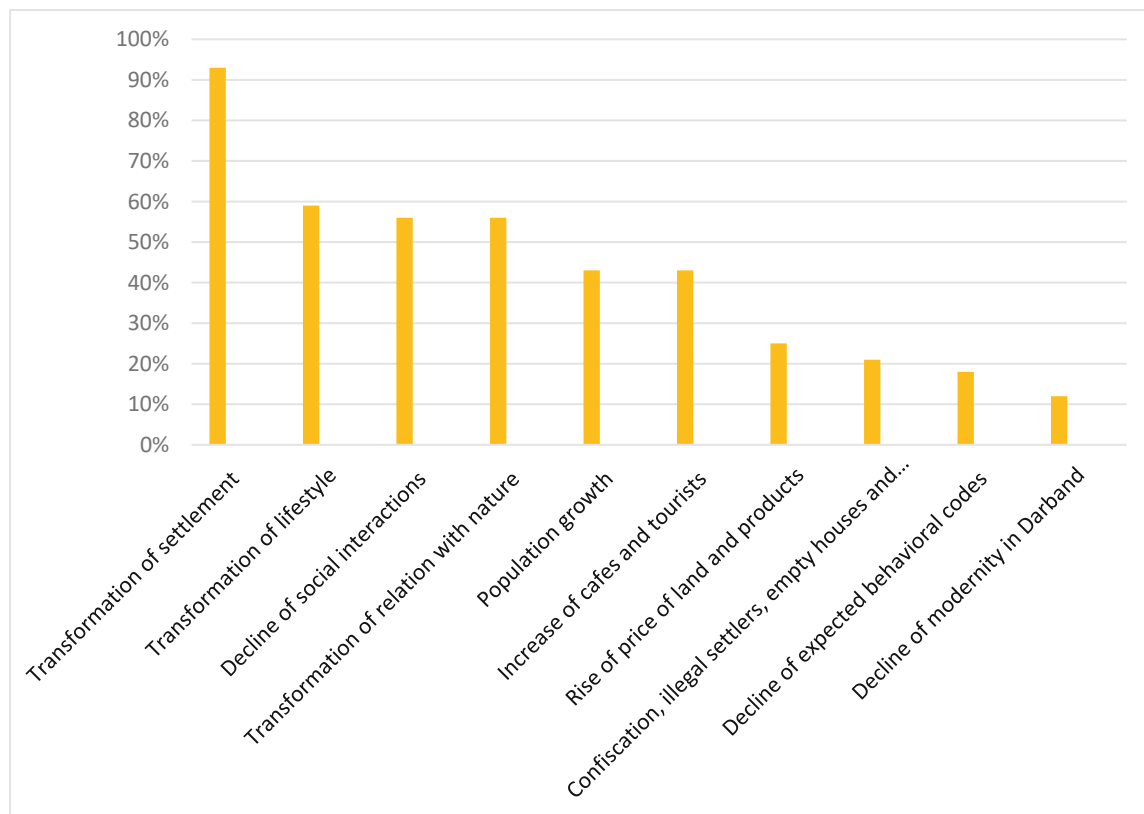


Figure 166. Diagram of transformations in Darband today, as described on p. 275

### Transformation of settlement due to the urban landscape development

The interviewees mentioned the transformation of settlement in Darband as a significant transformation. They argued how, during the urban landscape development, the form of the settlement has changed, accompanied by modernizations and destruction of the old fabric. Thatched and gable-roofed dwellings with yards and *Hoz* were gradually demolished. The view of the mountain was blocked due to the construction of apartments. Narrow lanes were

broadened or demolished to introduce new patterns of alleys and streets to accommodate vehicle traffic. Old gardens were divided and ruined, and water canals between houses were destroyed due to the new pattern of settlement and housing. Notable landmarks like Hotel Darband, the local bathhouse, and the Friday mosque were torn down or completely rebuilt. Historic graveyards were repurposed; one became a park, and another part of a military zone, off-limits to the public. Following the 1987 Tajrish flood, further changes included widening Darband Street, introducing a concrete riverbed, and demolishing garden houses, gardens, and a medical clinic on the western side of Darband St.

### **Transformation of lifestyle**

Transformation of lifestyle was another mentioned theme. Modern housing trends show a shift from traditional houses with yards to apartments, leading to less frequent use of old garden houses. Young people now often choose apartment living, valuing privacy and their own space, which has changed the dynamic of large families living together. Social media and online games have replaced playing outside, reducing face-to-face interaction and play among children. With increased social interactions through phone apps, face-to-face social interactions and gatherings in the houses have decreased. Cars have lessened neighbourhood chats, and pets are now more common in flats. Open-plan kitchens are more frequent, with modern appliances like microwaves and dishwashers. Western influences, spread by satellite TV, are shaping the lifestyles and beliefs of the young, moving away from traditional religious practices.

### **The decline in social interactions**

Another mentioned transformation was the loss of social interactions due to the loss of family members and long-term neighbours. Long-term neighbours were increasingly replaced with new residents. The migration of long-term neighbours and young residents was also mentioned.

### **Transformation of relation with nature**

The interview analysis uncovered a significant shift in the relationship with nature. Modern developments like apartments and cafes have obscured mountain views, caused pollution, destroyed traditional gardens, blocked water channels, and led to the removal of historic houses with green spaces and water features. Many old trees, especially plane trees, have been cut down, the riverbed replaced with concrete and natural stone walkways turned into paved roads. Livestock keeping is fading, and climate change has reduced snowfall. The region's ecosystem, including the water mill, has transformed, and the rural character has merged into the urban landscape, as in Pasghale.



## **Rise in price of land and products**

Prices for land and housing in the area have soared, making it too costly for many long-term residents to stay in Darband. The Iranian currency has weakened due to sanctions, leading to more expensive goods and services, like food and healthcare. This hike in living costs, especially in the pricier District 1, has pushed residents to move to more affordable places or even abroad for work. As a result, wealthier newcomers have moved in, changing the neighbourhood's social makeup. The original residents, often from less affluent backgrounds, now find themselves out of place among those with fancier homes and cars. The emphasis on wealth also affects how neighbours interact and the relationships among the younger people.

## **Confiscation, illegal settlers, empty houses and sites**

The confiscation of houses and the emergence of illegal settlers are another transformation theme. Old garden houses have been left empty and are taken after by housekeepers. Darband has vast abandoned sites, such as the site of Hotel Darband and the upper site of the former school.

## **Decline of following the expected behavioural codes**

Religious long-time community members have noticed that newer residents and younger people are not following traditional behavioural codes. They are not giving the same respect to elders, those from the respected Sadat family line, or religious practices. The community used to value privacy and a particular way of interacting, especially between men and women who do not know each other well, but this is changing. Now, there is more focus on material things than the spiritual and religious beliefs that were once very important here.

## **Decline of modernity in Darband in comparison to the past**

Some residents think Darband is not as modern as it used to be. They remember when the old Hotel Darband was around; it was a popular spot where people from other countries, even army leaders, would get together for events and music shows. This helped make the area feel more contemporary. Back when Iran had closer ties with Western countries, people often rented their homes to these visitors, so there was more contact with people from other countries.

## **Attitudes of residents towards transformation**

The chart shows what part of the community views changes positively, negatively, or has no strong feelings. Most people including all ages and genders and newer and long-standing residents, see the changes negatively (See Figure 167 for details).

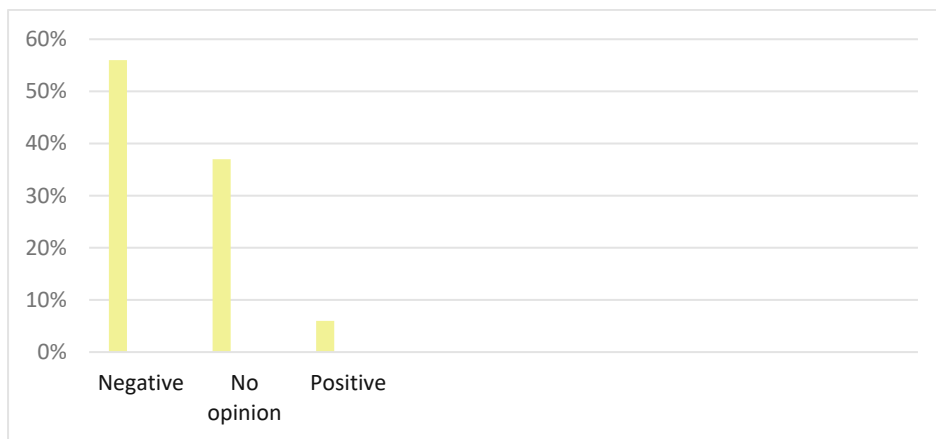


Figure 167. Diagram of attitudes towards transformations in current Darband, as described on p. 277

I asked people to look at old and new photos of Darband side by side and share their thoughts on how Darband has changed over time and whether these changes have impacted its significance [of place].

The photos were shown in pairs, an old one next to a current one (See 'Appendix No. 1' on p. 349). After seeing the old pictures, many people who have lived in Darband long longed for the past. They spent much time looking at the old photos; some even asked if they could keep them. A few people had nothing good to say about the changes or how the place looks now.

Despite the changes and emergence of modern elements in Darband, not everyone sees them negatively. Almost half of the locals talked about the sound changes or modern elements, like new amenities, even though they missed how things used to be, especially the natural water features and open spaces of their homes. For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**“Darband is always unexpected. Look, it has Saad Abad Palace. The most privileged tourists in the world, mostly Europeans, come to visit it. It has mountains, peaks, hiking, rock climbing, and chair lift. Darband Street itself is so beautiful if you take a walk. [...], you remember the old days. The trees, all the trees, are gorgeous. There are several buildings left from the old days. You see gardens, narrow alleys and garden alleys, which are very beautiful. [...] River, well, river, is like this now. For flood, I mean, they have done a great job by constructing the anti-flooding system! And this is a nice job! Some stuff needs to be updated. It is a matter of human life. The river is so beautiful when it is spring, this snow melts, this river is magnificent... For example, above Bagh Shater, there is Tehran's Surtmeh Park. It is for tourists; it is a park. They have constructed a big park. It is wonderful there. There is the Tajrish shopping centre too. You can get there quickly. Tajrish Bazar is also a big shopping centre in Tehran. You can find everything there. There are several shopping centres there. In many cases, there is progress in Darband now. It has**

been three to four years since they have constructed a pharmacy here. That is very good. The restaurants above are good. People come and enjoy. There has been progress. It is not all bad. Well, look, how can I say it? Not all of the transformations are bad. The sports clubs are excellent. They are very well equipped. There are pools which are clean and good. Darband has coffee shops. It has many good things. Darband has got the city sewage system. It has got gas, electricity, water, and telephone. It has got a Darband community centre now. There are municipal services. They have improved the waterways. Because it is the foothills, it is mountainous, it rains and snows here, and all the streets are full of water. Some of these are improvements. However, the population has increased. Buildings are increasingly constructed, trees are cut, gardens are gone.”

Some say that modern apartments make life simpler and cleaner, especially compared to the old houses in Darband, where it was tough to get to the bathroom and kitchen in winter. They prefer not having to look after extensive gardens and yards. Many have either built new apartments or changed their old homes to fit this more manageable way of living. Others are drawn to apartments for these conveniences and the financial advantages. They find it makes sense to build apartments to give family members their space, especially since families do not stay together in one big home anymore after the children marry.

## **Future of Darband**

Residents were asked what they hope for the future of Darband - what should stay and what might need to change. From their answers, several key points were identified. First, many want to keep Darband as it is without more changes and developments. They also want to fix problems with traffic and overcrowding, especially from tourists, and make sure there are enough facilities. There is a strong desire to protect Darband's historic areas. People also highlighted the importance of religious and personal privacy values. Some did not have specific ideas for the future. Others mentioned the need to lower costs and ensure the community stays close-knit. These points are shown in a chart with their percentages (See Figure 168).

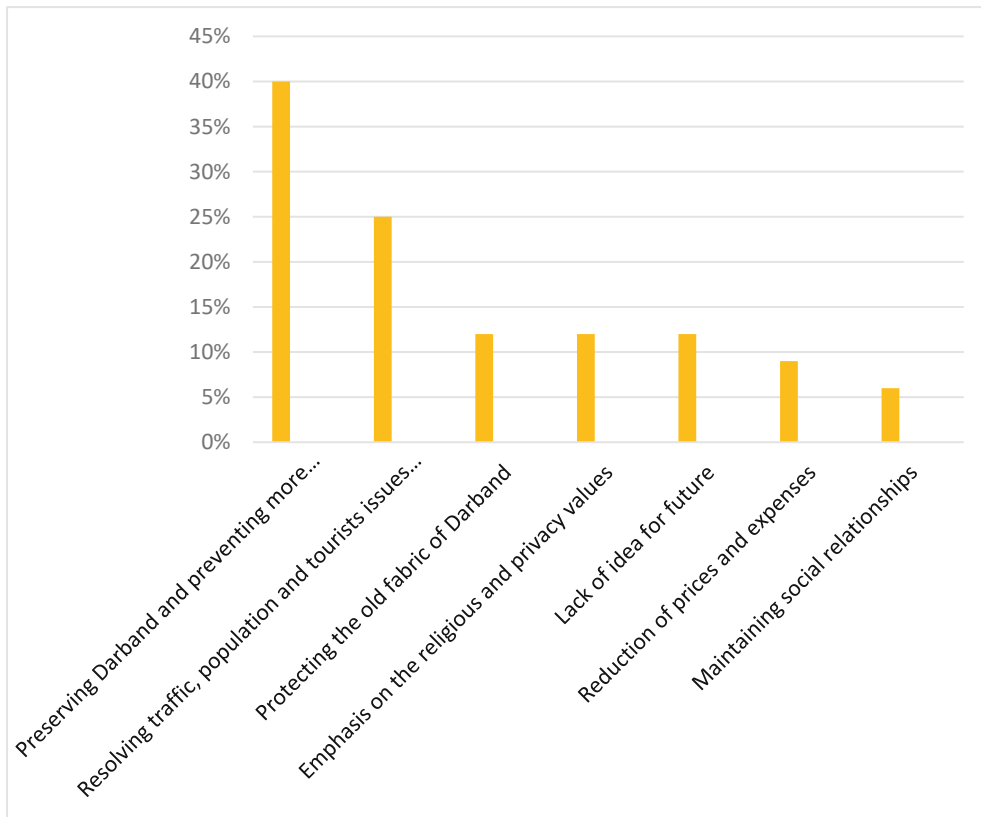


Figure 168. Diagram of the desired future of Darband, as described on p. 279

## Preserving Darband and preventing more developments

People living in Darband strongly want to keep their area as it is without more new developments. They feel that too many transformations and developments have changed the urban landscape beyond recognition. They associated increased construction with the increased presence of new residents. Considering new constructions and new residents as elements of weakening the identity of the place, they worry that more buildings will harm the close relationships they have with each other. Even though some people need bigger homes, they still prefer to maintain the area's current charm. They are also concerned about practical things like increased traffic, insufficient parking, and losing green spaces and good weather. Additionally, residents value their community's traditional appearance and natural feel and wish to preserve it. Unlike the organic stepped settlement, the undesirability of the new settlement pattern, alleys and apartments was also stated.

## Resolving traffic, population and tourist issues and providing facilities

The interviewees stressed the importance of addressing Darband's urban problems and the need for more amenities like medical clinics, local markets, and parking spaces. They highlighted that pollution and the river's condition need attention. Challenges created by Tourists crowding



need to be managed. They pointed out that the congestion makes it difficult for ambulances to get through. The residents recalled when special permits made it easier for locals to move around and would like a similar system reinstated. People from Pasghale also emphasized the urgent need for a clinic and a school in their area.

### **Protecting the old fabric of Darband**

A group of residents argued how the old fabric, built heritage of Darband, and old garden alleys were significant elements of its authenticity and reminders of the past, which should be protected. However, they seemed hopeless that this desire could be achieved in future due to the high number of new developments and constructions underway.

### **Emphasis on religious and privacy values**

Religious long-time residents felt that newcomers and visitors were not respecting their religious and privacy customs. They pointed out issues like too many tourists, loud music, and men and women who are strangers mixing freely. They expressed a wish to stick to their traditional customs.

### **Lack of plan for the future**

Some people interviewed found it hard to envision a positive future for Darband. They felt this way for various reasons. A few felt they had nothing left in Darband that mattered to them. Others were upset by changes such as splitting garden houses and altering alleyways to accommodate car traffic, which brought more congestion.

### **Placelessness**

The interviews were conducted with two groups of long-term/new residents. The results show the following themes concerning the loss of identity and meaning of place in Darband (See Figure 169). Transformation of the urban landscape, loss of relation with nature and loss of social interactions are the most important causes associated with the sense of placelessness. Long-term residents feel nostalgic towards the past, leading to a reactionary sense of place among some.

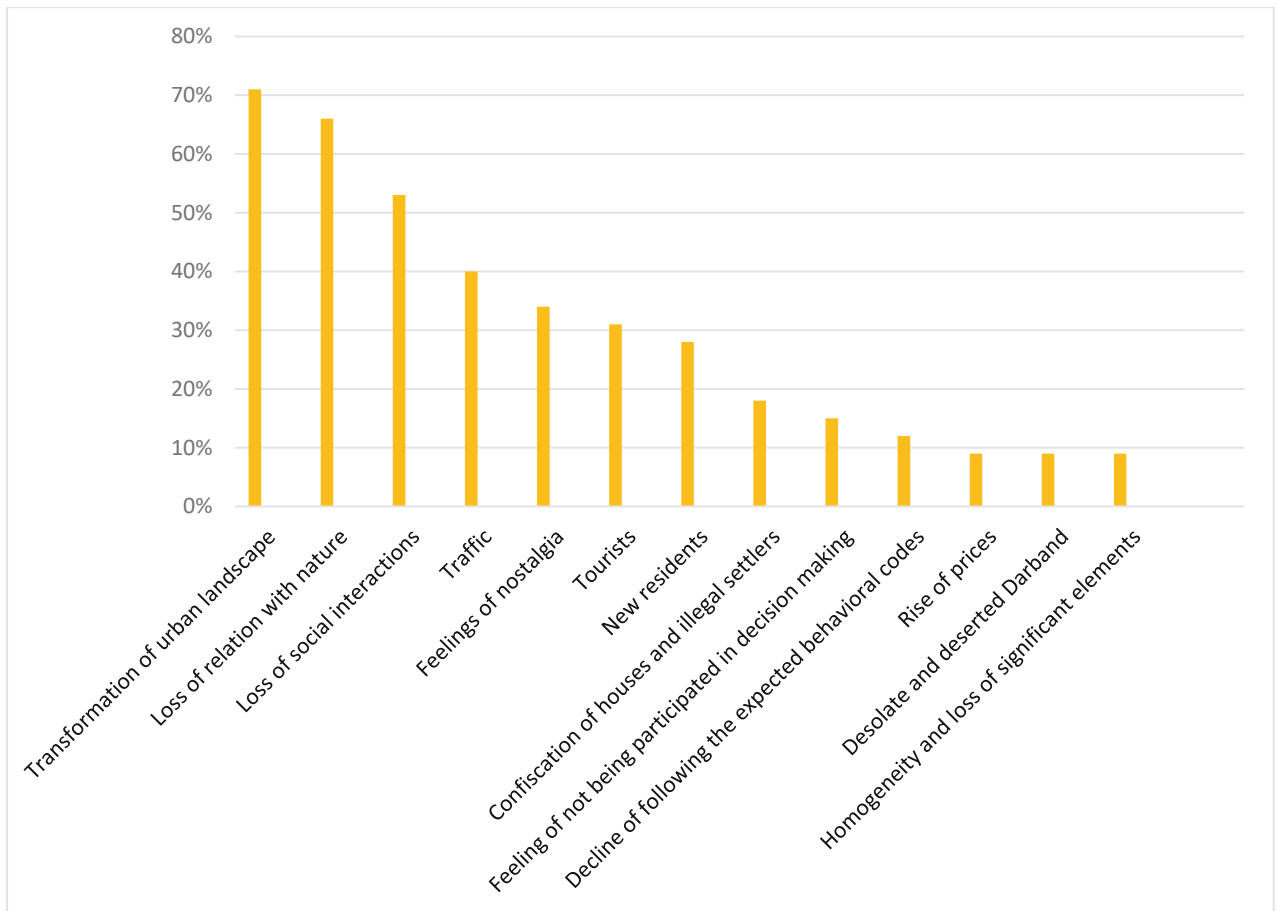


Figure 169. Diagram of themes of placelessness mentioned by interviewees in Darband today, as described on p. 281

## Rapid landscape transformation

Interviews show that rapid changes in urban landscapes are a significant source of weakening the identity of a place due to the constant removal of place settings. Contemporary urban development has changed the form of the old settlement and the neighbourhood. Most residents (71%) see this as unfavourable. The old fabric has been destroyed due to the modernization of the settlement. Traditional paths are widened for cars, and old houses, including thatched ones with gable roofs, are torn down to make way for new apartments and cafes. This development also harms the connection with nature, as old gardens, views of mountains, yards and natural water features of water paths and *Hoz* are disappearing. For instance, long-term residents argued;

**“ Our old yard was small but was beautiful. We could see the river, Darband Street and far away. My brother had come one night. It was dark. He said, "What kind of car goes through those many trees?" My mother - God bless her- replied that a road was among the trees. You know! There were so many trees! Hmm... Our windows have been entirely blocked by walls now. Lots of**

structures have been constructed. Our yard is tiny now. They have cut down all the trees in Darband...all the trees. I am really sad about this. “

“There used to be a school and a clinic at the beginning of this alley. You know! Saad School...We had a big clinic with everything. They were forced to remove them when the flood came. This alley, now like a highway, used to be narrower! Do you see this huge apartment? All the land of this property to the far above had dry stone walls. Different plants and flowers, between the walls, would go up far above...Hmm..what beautiful flowers! It was a garden [...]. There was a villa in the middle of the garden. Above this garden was another garden. [...] It used to be called Zandi Garden. Even now, if you tell someone to address you to Zandi Garden, he will bring you here.”

The interviews showed that recent developments have not protected the unique character of the local area and have been unsympathetic to the significance of the place of residents. People who have lived there for a long time feel that essential landmarks, which were part of their community's identity, like the public bath, Hotel Darband, and Sa'd school, are being taken down or changed. They have seen beloved places like gardens, a medical clinic, the old cemetery, and even the Old Friday Mosque be drastically altered or destroyed.

The mentioned transformations have led to a feeling of 'placelessness,' where residents feel disconnected from their surroundings because everything changes quickly. This supports the idea by Green (2010) that rapid landscape transformation, which re-urbanizes the urban landscape in a form that lacks the region's past landform and characters, can result in placelessness. However, this character and landscape may not necessarily be vernacular and can include modern elements. Keeping a sense of history and familiarity in a place is crucial for people to feel connected to it. It also confirms the general concern over place destruction in the place literature.

My observations support the idea that the development of the contemporary urban landscape often means losing physical landmarks, making it harder for people to connect with their memories, experiences, and history. This can weaken the bond between people and their surroundings. It makes us wonder how we can re-interpret the lost significance of place in the future planning of Darband. However, as Lee (2009) pointed out, we must remember that the mere continuity of the past will not necessarily restore a lively sense of place or create social places.

### **Loss of relation with nature and pollution of the neighbourhood**

The area changed in ways that were not desirable. It lost its natural touch and got polluted.

Gardens, trees, and natural pathways disappeared, with the view of the mountain and the river's natural flow. The old charm of houses with their courtyards and water channels was gone. Despite having sore feet, the older adults who had lived there for a long time would walk a long way to pinpoint where the old water canals used to be. Water used to be very important there. For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**“While sleeping at home, we could hear water flowing over the stones. [...] However, now they have stopped the water. They have changed the river's natural state and straightened it with cement bedding. There were not so many cafes over Sarband. The river was always flowing. It was never dry in the summer... Hmm.. Unfortunately, the cafes above have made the water dirty. There were few cafes in Sarband in the past, but I went there after sometime recently, and I was surprised because I remember the paths we used to walk were rocky. However, now, they have dug the ground to make room for cafes... Well, you know... Hmm... It has become beautiful, but it has lost its originality. We used to sit in cafes close to the river. These are all gone. The river is dry. They throw so much garbage in the river.”**

The results also confirm Harvey's (1993, pp. 7-8) argument on the loss of meaning of place due to the commodification of place. Although parts of Darband have been commodified with the increasing development of cafes, it has been regarded by many of the residents as a negative development rather than contributing to a place-based identity.

### **Loss of social relations**

The interviews showed that social connections are critical to how people understand place. People who have lived in the area for a long time feel a sense of loss, as their view of the place is tied to the local community networks. When these residents were asked to picture their neighbourhood, they remembered it as it was, with the homes of neighbours who have since passed away. This shows that a drop in socializing is a common issue in the neighbourhood.

### **Undesirable transformations and negative perceptions**

Darband has changed in ways some residents do not like. Confiscation, illegal houses, and vacant properties were mentioned. There are too many people, with tourists and new residents making it crowded. Prices for land and property have increased a lot. The roads are too busy, and it has gotten so bad that ambulances cannot get through when there is an emergency. The neighbourhood is not as quiet as it used to be because of all the cars, making it hard for people to have privacy. Some people who have lived in Darband for a long time feel that the type of



tourists has changed. Instead of the high-class visitors like army officers and foreigners, they used to have, there are now more tourists who do not always behave the way locals expect, which can cause some tension. The rise in the price of land and products is a significant factor leading to the migration of long-term inhabitants.

Considering the decline of following the expected behavioural codes by long-term residents as undesirable transformations, the results also confirm Relph's viewpoint on placelessness caused by negatively affected traditional values by contemporary landscape developmental patterns and commercialism.

Some residents feel Darband is a lonely, hard place to live in because mountains surround it, with old buildings and narrow streets. Others said they did not have a say in making decisions about the area or protecting the significance of the place. Some stayed in Darband because they could not move elsewhere, even though they were unhappy there. Others thought that Darband did not have anything special about it anymore. Being homogenized, it had lost its unique identity, history and character.

About 12% of the people living in Darband said they do not feel connected to Darband and are okay with moving away. They have various reasons for this. Some think that, unlike people who moved away, they are not making any economic progress in Darband. Others find life challenging because it is too busy, there is no privacy due to overlooking apartments, and the steep streets are hard for older people to walk on. A few people mentioned they might sell their homes because they could benefit more economically by building apartments with better facilities elsewhere. Also, some from the Pasghale area said many neighbours have moved out because of insufficient essential services like clinics, schools, or jobs.

### **Feelings of nostalgia**

People who have lived in the neighbourhood for a long time provided narratives of loss and shared images of nostalgia. They feel the area has changed so much that it is hard to recognize, and they miss their old “lost heaven”. They fondly remember the old settlement, homes, gardens, strong community bonds, good neighbours, and shared traditions.

### **Reactionary sense of place**

A bounded and reactionary community has formed among some of the long-term residents of Darband. About one-third of the people think the newer and long-term residents are not mixing well. The long-time locals used to look out for each other, but now they see the newcomers as outsiders disrupting peace and privacy. They have loud parties, do not respect the rules, and

their behaviour during religious times bothers others. Plus, with not many original Darband residents left, the neighbourhood's originality is fading. For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**“Nobody likes these big new apartments. These changes transformed the fabric. They have changed the intimacy of long-term neighbours. We do not know people anymore. We do not know the residents anymore. We can't communicate with them. They are strangers to each other, too. They don't even know each other. However, our locals are not like this. Everyone knows each other. Every time I go out, I say hello to hundreds of people. I see everyone greeting each other. However, if everyone becomes a stranger, this will disappear. Life will become mechanical then”.**

This negative image some longtime locals have about newcomers makes it hard to integrate the new residents within the old community. It is also important to point out that many new residents do not hold the same religious beliefs and are not interested in joining the religious activities that are important to the longtime locals. This shows the different ways the two groups see things.

The study also supports what Featherstone said in 1993. Featherstone “associates the ‘thinning out’ of local culture to the effects of globalization. The sense of belonging, the common experiences and the cultural forms associated with a place are crucial to local culture. Local culture often refers to the culture of a relatively small bounded space in which individuals who live there engage in daily, face-to-face relationships. The boundaries of local cultures have become more permeable and difficult to maintain”.

Considering the particular case of globalization of Iran and the Islamic revolution, unlike a Western context, the results also confirm Harvey's (1989) viewpoint that globalization makes places appear less stable and secure than before, making people feel more attached to their places. This was observed in the long-term residents who had seen the transformation of Darband. This, however, does not confirm Massey's (1993) viewpoint on how people react to the ‘space of flows’. Massey had argued that less mobile residents would reproduce a defensive and protective attitude towards the place where they live, unlike the high-mobile people. However, the defensive and protective attitudes towards the place were shared by a highly mobile younger generation of long-term residents and less mobile older generations.

The results indicate that the identity of place in Darband has become parochial, bounded and reactionary by some. This raises the following question: How should we contribute to constructing a global, unbounded, and relational identity of place in Darband?

## Essence of place

34% of interviewees, in both age/sex groups and both long-term and new residents, provided narratives of their deep association and place bonding as well as a sense of belonging with Darband, leading to the following themes;

- Image of Darband as *heaven*: This was assigned to both current Darband and old Darband. The latter was seen as a lost, beautiful landscape of thatched houses, gardens and water paths, with houses in the alley named by the deceased neighbours' names.

- Image of Darband as *home* and *fatherland*; For instance, a long-term resident argued; **“Especially sometimes when it's fall or winter, I wish I was walking on that dried leaf of Darband St. I would imagine myself walking to Tajrish. I don't miss anyone but those alleys. It's kind of special. It cannot be described. It is a passion, a sweat. It is a special prejudice. Darband is my home.”**

- Image of Darband being unexpected and unique; For instance, a long-term resident argued; **“Darband is always unexpected. I mean it...seriously. I would not say I like living in another neighbourhood since it has been built so that you see everything in it. [...] Look, it has Saad Abad Palace. The most privileged tourists in the world come to visit it. It has mountain peaks, offering mountain climbing, rock climbing, chairlift, river, etc. Darband Street itself is so beautiful. If you go walking, it is wonderful, especially during this season.”**

- Darband provides a feeling of freedom; This was associated with living at the house they have been living in for many years in contrast to apartments of others in other areas.

- The residents of Darband experience a sense of calm for various reasons. For instance, living near their family and the strong community ties among long-standing residents contribute to this peaceful atmosphere. Additionally, the area's natural setting as a mountainous retreat beside a river, distanced from the city's chaos and stress, is highlighted by newcomers as a source of tranquillity.

- Darband was seen as a safe and secure place where the long-term residents knew and protected each other. New residents and tourists were seen as dangers to this safety.

- Image of Darband as a place of deep community bonds and social interaction; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**“We all know each other here. If something happens, for example, ... some neighbour would come to my shop and ask, "Do you have this"? Or they call me and ask, "Can you bring us ten loaves**

of bread? We have a patient at home." These are just examples... but you can't see this in other areas; for example... hmm... imagine the Hafte Tir district neighbourhood. Neighbours don't know each other there. Even if they know them, it wouldn't be for more than 5-6 years... However, you know, this is what we have here!"

- Darband as a reminder of the old days; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

"Darband Street itself is so beautiful. If you take a walk, it is gorgeous, especially during this season. When you take a walk, you'll remember the old days. The trees... All the trees are lovely. There are several buildings left from the old days. Gardens, narrow alleys, and garden alleys... And they are very beautiful."

Several interviewees expressed their deep attachment to Darband, indicating they could not imagine living elsewhere. When asked about significant places in Darband that held importance for them, various themes came up, illustrated in the accompanying diagram (Figure 170).

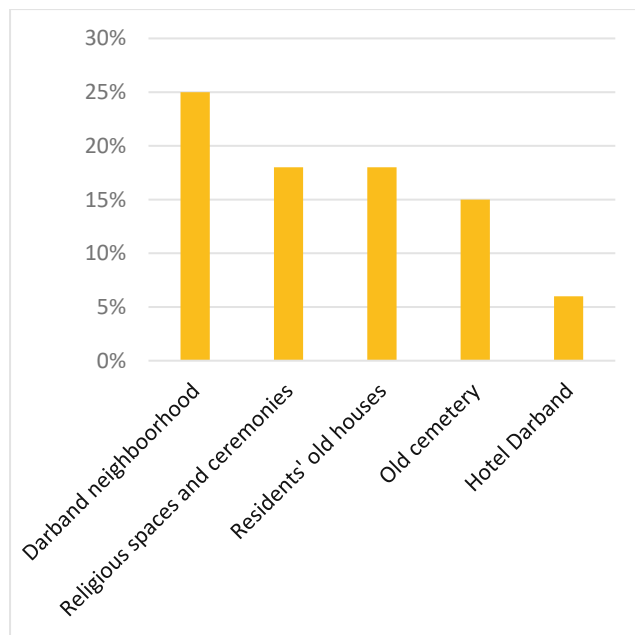


Figure 170. Diagram of significant/important places, as described on p. 288

- For a quarter of the people interviewed, Darband was a special place in their hearts. Their affection came from as Darband was seen as a slice of paradise, a cherished home, a homeland and a unique place that offers surprises. It is a sanctuary that gives them peace, safety, and a nostalgic connection to the past. They also cherish it as a community rich in deep social ties. This sentiment highlights Darband's significance as more than just a neighbourhood; it is a cultural and social tapestry woven by the people there. This also confirms Duncan's (2000) attitude on defining place as 'a portion of geographic space filled with social relations, meanings and identities'.



-The interviews found that 18% of respondents emphasised the importance of religious spaces and ceremonies in their community. Notably, they mentioned the significance of the Friday Mosque and *Tek yeh* for long-term residents, highlighting their roles as centres of social interaction and religious events. *Tek yeh* was also mentioned for its historical beauty and religious decorations. I also observed a trend where former residents of Darband returned for the Ashura religious ceremonies, enjoying both the communal activities and the shared sense of community. This importance of religious spaces was not unique to Darband, as residents of Pasghale expressed similar interest. While resembling the importance of religion for residents, these findings support de Certeau's (1984) theory of place as a social and cultural construct and Low and Altman's (1992) definition of place as a space imbued with meaning through social and cultural processes.

- 18% of participants spoke fondly of their old homes, including even those that had been demolished. These homes held significant sentimental value, and many respondents still maintained relationships with former neighbours, now living outside Iran. For some, these childhood memories were pivotal in shaping their character and future interests; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"I love this house. This reminds me of my childhood. That is why I became interested in mountain climbing."**

Some also argued how their old present house had provided the feeling of freedom, unlike life in apartments in other areas. This result confirms Relph's (1976, p.29) argument that a deep association is formed with the places where residents were born and grew up and where they live now. 15% mentioned Bagh Shater's old cemetery, now a park. Many Darband locals had relatives buried there. They expressed sadness over the graves removed from the park. Long-term residents recalled gathering near the cemetery for Asura religious ceremonies, a tradition from past to present. This supports Low's (1994) idea of place as a space with cultural meaning recognised by a cultural group. It also aligns with Low and Altman's (1992) concept of place as space made meaningful through personal, group, or cultural processes.

- 6% mentioned Hotel Darband as the symbol of modernism and the presence of foreigners and army commanders in Darband.

When asked about significant moments, experiences or happenings in Darband, several themes emerged:

- Some did not have an answer. They either misunderstood the question or could not recall such

an experience. The concept of an event or significant occurrence was unclear to them.

- Another typical response was about religious gatherings near the old cemetery.

- A different theme recalled the Tajrish flood in 1987 and a subsequent earthquake. These events strengthened community ties among long-term residents, leading to joint rescue efforts and meetings at the old mosque and Tekyeh. For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"I remember the flood. It happened here, in this alley [...] The flood came. There was no Red Crescent, fire brigade or other rescue groups that are so common now ... You know! We were all mobilised. Elders went to the mosque. We helped to wash the dead bodies that were brought ... Mud was everywhere... Everyone worked hand in hand.... There were also those people who were hurt. We were all mobilised to help."**

- The last theme was regarding old wedding ceremonies; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"The weddings were beautiful at those times. For example, hmm,...you know, when they had ceremonies,... for example, one day was for registering in the afternoon. They would serve sweets and fruits. They would ask everybody to come to their house. They would arrange tables and chairs in big houses. Wealthier would bring musicians. The wedding celebration was at night. The bride and groom were in their parents' house. They would come to take the bride then. It was beautiful."**

The results mentioned above regarding place bonding and the essence of place show that people in Darband deeply connect with where they were born and live, as in the case of old homes. This ties to Relph's belief that such places form our identity and give us comfort. Darband's sense of security, calmness, and togetherness reflects this idea. Also, Manzo's (2005) thoughts hold true; places where key events happen become part of our personal stories. "Subjective experiences within particular places shape and are shaped by people's relationships with each other and specific settings. Such experiences also construct and are constructed by the development of place bonding". In Darband, this is clear in its religious spots, the Tajrish flood, the homes of our youth, and local weddings.

## **Elements of the identity of place**

In interviews, I asked locals questions to discover elements of the identity of the place and to explain their reason for such an answer (See 'Appendix 1' on p. 349). I used the free recall

method to see what unique features people remembered. Their ability to recognise these features was used as a measure of identity. This ability relates to the distinctiveness of the elements and the amount of meanings attached to the place (based on Lynch 1960 in Shamsuddin 1997). I looked at how much people engaged with local facilities and activities to understand the place's identity. This level of involvement served as an indicator of the meanings attached to the place (Teo and Huang 1996 in Shamsuddin 1997). The reasons provided by participants to remember things that were unrelated to the physical characteristics or activities helped us see the personal meanings and associations people attach to their environment (Harrison and Howard, 1980 in Shamsuddin 1997).

Place identity includes the physical space, people's actions, and their meanings, as noted in my study.

It also shows how these components are interconnected. Experts agree that place identity comes from how these elements interact, as shown in past studies like Shamsuddin's (1997). My work did not focus on how each component affects identity alone, but it agrees with other studies that say the interrelation of components is complex (see Shamsuddin 1997). Sometimes, locals associate the identity of a place with a specific dialectic of components or a particular atmosphere created by how these elements interrelate. The interview results raised these points about what makes Darband unique to its people:

### **Elements of identity of place related to social interactions**

In the interviews, place identity was often tied to how people interacted or specific activities. This supports Low and Altman's (1992, mentioned in Green 2010) idea that a place gets meaning from group or cultural interactions. For example, in places like traditional coffeehouses and public baths, what people do there or around there shapes how residents view these spots. These activities are a big reason why residents see some buildings as unique.

#### **Social interactions**

Social interactions in old Darband were among the characteristic elements of place; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"All relatives were good with each other in those days. Normally, when they saw each other, they would do greetings, [asking,] "How is the sister? How is the brother? How are you?" We used to go to each other's houses for Shab Neshin. We would also go to each other's house for the new year."**

Compare with this argument as well; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"We had many guests at that time. My mother-in-law and brother-in-law, for example, would come from their city. My husband was from Ardabil. My husband liked social interactions, and our house was always filled with guests. Until my mother-in-law died, and then my husband had an accident. Hmm... All of this happened five years ago. Then, Covid came! Now, I have remained alone within these four walls. Are you going to write everything that I tell you?"**

Long-term residents all talk about the close-knit community there. They still call houses by the names of families who used to live there, even if they are gone. Mental maps also clearly show this. Older folks remember sharing a collective way of life with their neighbours. Still, they worry that the originality of Darband is fading as fewer original residents remain. For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"Neighbours were like sisters. It was not like now. No one would see her family much. Everyone was friend with their neighbours. They would cook, sit together, and talk. That was unlike what is expected now [She looks sad] "**

Other residents shared the deep social bond that is still persistent within the community of long-term residents, where everyone cares for others and tries to help in case of difficulty. Because of this deep caring, they felt that Darband was providing them safety and security.

### **Old coffeehouses**

Old male long-term residents remember the coffeehouses as key spots. They recall these places as the heart of social life for the local men in the past; For instance, a long-term resident argued; **"We used to have a coffeehouse named Sha' bun Ali Coffeehouse. Yes, as the youths, we all used to go to the coffeehouse, drink tea, and smoke hookah. It wasn't hookah, then. We would smoke Chopogh. We would go there during Ramadan to play Dorna Bazi and Gol Bazi. Do you know what Dorna Bazi is?"**

### **Public bath**

The demolished public bath was another central spot mentioned by older generations; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"One of the things that has changed a lot now is the public bath. It was exciting. [He says with emphasis]. Morning after morning, [ He laughs] you would see people carrying a little clothing. Both women or men... It didn't matter. They used to get up early in the morning and go to the public bath. The bath is where you went, where that tall building has been constructed. It was exciting."**



## Identity of place as a dialectic of the components

The interview findings back up Relph's 1976 views on how different components of a place's identity interact. They led to insights into how the place's physical aspects, activities, and meanings are all connected in dialectics.

### Religious beliefs, ceremonies, places and old cemetery

Nearly 40% of Darband's long-time residents, in both sex/age groups, see religious aspects as part of what makes their place unique. They agree with Low and Altman's idea from 1992 that a place is meaningful through shared cultural processes. Places like the mosque and *Tek Yeh* have always been social hubs here, as confirmed by the Pasghale people. They were also points of orientation within the mental maps that residents drew. Ceremonies of Ashura and Muharram are particularly significant. Traditionally, people would walk through Darband's alleys to the old cemetery, now a park, for these events, then return to *Tek Yeh* for more of the ceremony, offering food and drinks. This fits de Certeau's thoughts on the production of space, turning functional spaces into ones with a unique identity. Some also mentioned the daily prayers at the mosque, showing how spatial practices on an everyday basis shape a place, as de Certeau suggested. However, there is a feeling that religious devotion is waning, especially among the young, as materialism grows. Elders and Sadats once held more esteem. This change mirrors global trends, where new values reach the young, altering traditions, as noted by Bertuzzo in 2009. However, for some newer locals, the call to prayer brings back childhood memories, a sound that resonates through the mountains as a comforting reminder of the past.

### Hotel Darband and Darband Square

Around a quarter of long-time residents, in both age and sex groups, recall the famous Hotel Darband. Many know it from images and films, if not firsthand. They retell their elders' stories of the concerts there, with people sometimes watching from spots above the hotel. Women remember music filling the night air. This hotel symbolised Darband's modernisation, a place visited by foreigners, courtiers and musicians, both local and international. It was also known for the dances hosted by Kolbe for the elite. The hotel stood out for its unique look and the vibrant events and music it housed. People also associated meanings to the hotel, such as grand and splendid; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"Of course, hotel Darband was magnificent at that time. Everything was much more beautiful than before. Darband was popular in those days. It was a beautiful area. It was very different. Because of this Darband square, you didn't think it was Tehran. There was a gold shop, a jewellery shop, nut shop, cloth shop, grocery- whatever you thought."**

## Current cafes of Sarband

18% of residents perceived Darband as a recreational area where visitors attend cafes in Sarband. This was a dialectic of the physical natural setting and cafes, as well as the activities of mountain climbers; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"Well, it's mostly a summer place used by Tehran inhabitants and other cities because of its climate. It is famous for its coffee houses and its river. It always has a recreational atmosphere. There are many climbers over weekends... I always see them sitting at the cafes and eating when they get tired."**

## Atmospheric identity of place

When talking about their connection with nature, residents of Darband often describe an atmosphere that comes from how different elements come together. The place's identity comes from the interrelation of natural elements, the geographical setting, and landscape features. Darband's position in the mountains near a river shapes people's perception of it.

More than half of Darband's long-standing residents, in both age and sex groups, believe that nature is part of what made their place unique. They remember old Darband as a terraced getaway, a rustic mountain spot by the river; For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"Darband was a summer resort. The houses,.. for example, everyone would stay in one room in the summer and would rent the rest of the rooms. Everyone, everyone... Most of them would be rented to these Tehran inhabitants who came. Well, Darband was popular [...] because of its nice weather and cafes within the mountain."**

Compare it with this quote from a long-term resident;

**"While sleeping at home, we could hear water flowing over the stones. [...]The river was always flowing. It was never dry in the summer. [...]We used to sit in cafes near the river."**

Due to its good climate, it was also the place of kings and courtiers in the Qajar and Pahlavi periods. Residents provided narratives of lovely old gardens. For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"You see this huge apartment? All the land of this property to the far above had dry stone walls. Different plants and flowers were between the walls, which would go up far above...Hmm..what beautiful flowers! It was a garden [...]. There was a villa in the middle of the garden. Above this garden was another garden. [...] It used to be called Zandi Garden. Even now, if you tell someone to address you to Zandi Garden, he will bring you here."**

Water was an important element, too. For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"Darband had good water in the past. The water was from the Darband River or the Twin Waterfall within the mountain. The water that came from the mountain would be split. It would pass through the stepped alley above us throughout the hill with a gentle slope. This would turn the wheels of the two water mills."**

Water paths between the houses, water wells, water mills, *Qanats* and old trees, especially those of plane and cherry trees and unique mountainous plants such as ramsons, were mentioned along with old houses with green yards and *Hoz*. The lifestyle was living in houses and having relationships with nature and livestock. For instance, a long-term resident argued; **"Darling! When there is a pond, you hear the sound of water and a stream. Could there be a higher pleasure? We used to lay carpets and to put beds. We were all in the yard in the evening. In the morning, we were mostly in the yard."**

Organic stony paths would be filled with snow during the winter.

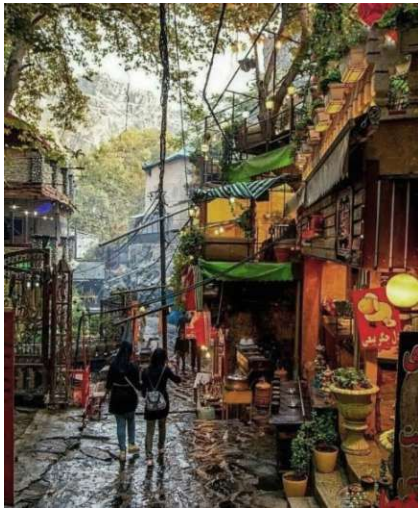
Half of the locals say that nature is a characteristic of place in Darband today. However, they also see that these natural parts are lessening because of city growth. People from Pasghale share this image. They point to Darband's cool weather away from the city, nestled in the mountains and places like Shir Pala and Tochal peaks, trails by the river, spots for hiking, rock climbing, and the chairlift. They talk about the river, Surtmeh Park, some old trees still standing, old gardens like the Malek garden, and the waterways. A young, long-time resident from Kenar-Mahalleh mentioned this, too:

**"[...] Darband is a village, or it was at least in the past. It may have become an urban neighbourhood on the outskirts of Tehran now. However, it is a very isolated dead-end indeed. It still is.... We are now on the ridge of a hill, and most people know the valley of Darband. The upper hill and the adjutant valley of Golabdarreh are calmer. There used to be a watershed in the upper lands, between Darband and Golabdarreh, which has been turned into a huge park called Surtmeh Park. The upper parts look like an amusement park. They are still in a natural state. However, Darband Valley is almost ruined. The river has turned into a cement canal. The trees are alive to some extent.... I mean the old plane trees... However, one dries occasionally because there is much garbage in the water. Buildings are constructed. The trees dry up and fall occasionally, and not many trees have been planted in their place yet. That's why the main valley of Darband is in decline, in my opinion. It is still better here."**

Others provided narratives of their relation with nature. For instance, a long-term resident

argued;

**"It's the weather that makes Darband special for me. Well, it's very cool. It's because Darband is right in the middle of the mountain. Some of the cafes are just in the heart of the mountain. Then, wherever there was a drop of water, it quickly became a café or other place. That's it... You go by the river and hear the sound of flowing water. It feels good when you are walking."**



*Figure 171. Cafes over Sarband within mountain*

A new resident also argued;

**"Darband, in my opinion, well, what interests me is a peaceful natural mountainous area with beautiful features. They include its nature and peace due to its population and mountainous nature... It is the closest place for living next to Tehran where the peace people want is provided easily."**

Another new resident argued;

**"I came to live here because I loved nature. I mean, I didn't think that I would be able to afford this place. When I came, I said I only wanted this apartment, this unit. Can you see the lovely view of nature from this window? I mean, I fell in love with nature. I like the sound of dogs at night and chickens laying eggs during the day. It was exciting for me. I mean, it is the nature, the sound of water... The river may be dry at the moment, but the sound of water in winter is lovely. It's like a summer resort for me."**

## **Physical attributes of place in Darband**

### **The valuable fabric of Darband and its old houses**

A quarter of the residents talked about Darband's valuable fabric. They mentioned the terraced landscape, stepped alleys and homes, rural fabric, and the old buildings as positive elements. They often mentioned the garden alley along Fakhery leading to Sarband Square as a favourite spot. This shows how much they feel connected to these places. For instance, a long-term



resident argued;

**"Well, if you walk, Darband Street is so beautiful. It is very beautiful, especially during this season. When you take a walk, you'd remember the old days. The trees, all the trees, are very beautiful. There are several buildings left from the old days. Gardens, narrow alleys and garden alleys.... They are very beautiful. There is an alley called Rah-Posht [meaning back alley]. From Sarband Square, there are three steps, and it goes behind Darband St. to Fakhery Alley. [...] It is very beautiful. There are a few streets and alleys that are not accessible by car. You should take the steps. They are beautiful."**



*Figure 172. Rah-Posht Garden Alley*

New locals shared why they were drawn to the area. They said that within the blend of old and new fabric, 'signs of history' were everywhere. To them, the historic homes and texture bring a unique 'spirit' to the area. They value the old garden alleys and garden houses. For instance, a new resident argued;

**"We go for a walk with my wife in the afternoons. We go up to the cafes.[...] We also take a walk in the alleys. The alleys of the neighbourhood are old. We also go to the eastern side of Darband that leads to Bagh Shater...This interesting area takes about 300-400 steps, connecting the upper part to Darband Street. [...] They are constructing a lot, but its old places are very beautiful. There are lots of old places. For example, look at the house in front of us! It's very old. It has chickens and roosters. Alternatively, look at that house! That is really old. It means it has a mixed fabric, both new and old. I wish the old ones would be preserved. I mean, I mostly came here because of the rural atmosphere. The memories of the village came alive for me. Although our apartment is newly built, we are mixed with the old texture. This is interesting for us."**

21% of Darband's people pointed out its old homes as key features. They often talk about two. One was a grand home owned by a notable figure and is still known as the House of Ariana. It

is a point of orientation for giving directions. Another is a renovated home called the House of Kenar Mahalleh, which people see as a nod to the neighbourhood's past because it has kept the old name alive while renovating the old house.

The Tajrish Bazaar, right in Tajrish Square, came up too. It is seen as vital, just like the new malls where "everything is at hand." This echoes Lee's 2009 findings that reveal unique place meanings instead of the common perception of the contemporary commercial urban landscape as placeless.

### **Other physical attributes of place**

Only 18% of Darband's residents see Sadabad Palace as a defining feature. Some mention it because it draws European visitors; others see it as part of Darband's modernisation history. Its exclusivity, with gated access and an entry fee, might be why fewer people mention it. Another 15% talk about Surtmeh Park as a notable spot. The exact number recalls Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum and Imam Zadeh Ghasem, linking them to the notable figures resting there. Lastly, 9% remember the old, now-closed or torn-down schools of Darband and Pasghale.

### **Sketch Maps by residents**

Interviewees were asked to draw a map of Darband based on their thoughts, including the names of places, streets and buildings. Surprisingly, these maps lined up with Lynch's idea of the image of the place from 1960, though this was not the focus of my thesis. Lynch argues for a corresponding set of mental images in the mind of people who experience a city based on five qualities: Paths, Edges, Districts, Nodes, and Landmarks. Darband's residents often drew the paths and nodes as crucial components in their perceptual structuring of the area. This supports Shamsuddin's 1997 theory that people in small areas tend to focus on elements that facilitate orientation. In the mental maps created by the residents, they often marked Darband Street as a primary path. Sarband Square and Darband Square were commonly highlighted as central nodes. 61% drew Darband St, 47% Sarband Square, 38% Darband Square, 33% Sadabad palace, 31% drew Bagh-Shater, 33% Tajrish, 23% Pasghale and 23% Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum.

The mental maps suggest that locals orient themselves using the routes they often take to their homes, drawing different ways in if starting from another area. They think of a specific part of Darband as their own district and mark it clearly. They also usually draw the specific alley of their home. Interestingly, Darband Street, Sadabad Palace, and Zahir al-Dowleh Mausoleum appeared more in these maps than in spoken interviews. Sadabad Palace and Zahir al-Dowleh

Mausoleum might stand out in people's minds as landmarks that help them orient, likely because of their location.

### Perception of different socio-cultural groups in mental maps

How long people had lived in Darband did not change how detailed their map was. Sometimes, new residents' maps had more details than those who had been there longer. Many long-term residents did not include many specifics (see Figure 173). They oriented to more extensive areas and general features. This is different from what Lynch said in 1960. He argued that "those who know the city least orient themselves by topography, its larger districts, generalised characteristics and broadly defined directional relationships. Those who know it better refer to specific paths and rely more upon smaller landmarks rather than more generalised regions or paths".

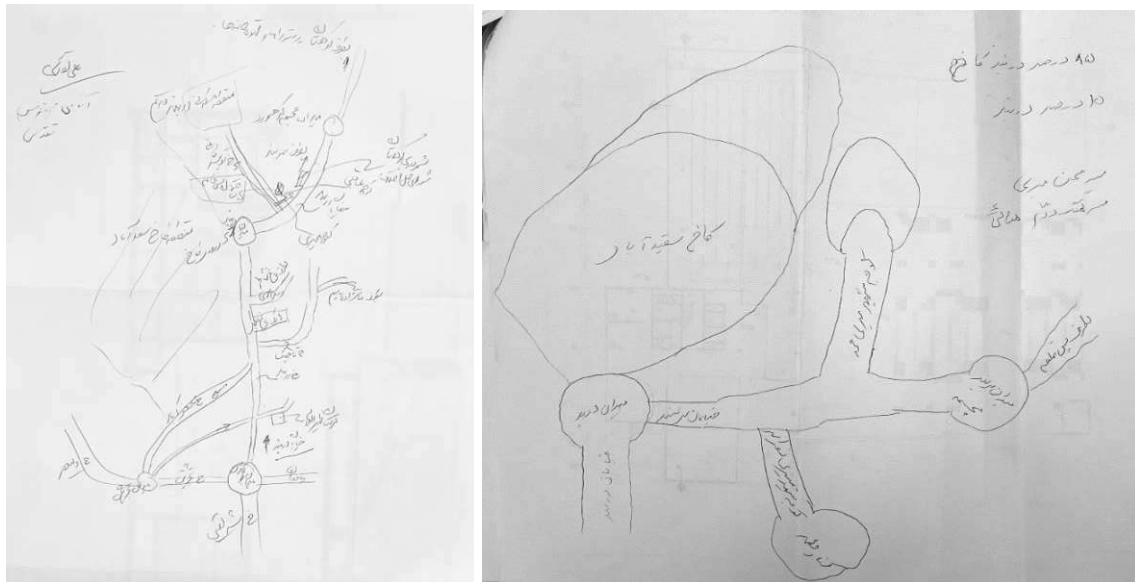


Figure 173. From left to right: a) a Detailed mental map by a new resident of Darband; b) a Less-detailed mental map by a long-term resident

No difference was seen in the mental maps provided by younger and older generations of residents in terms of the elements perceived in the case study (Figure 174).

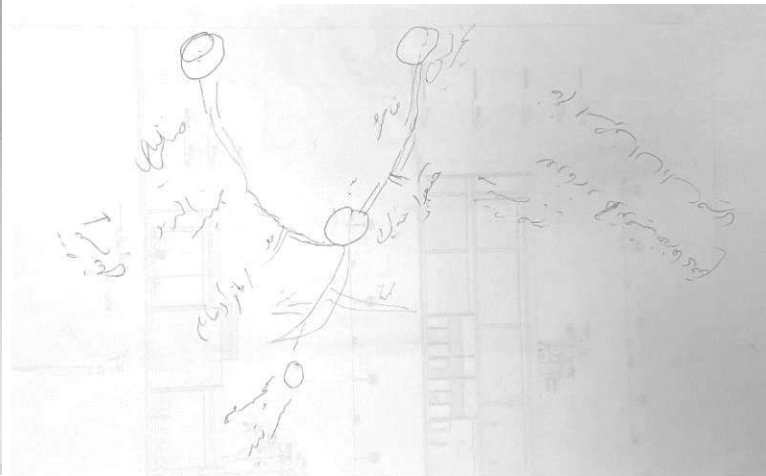
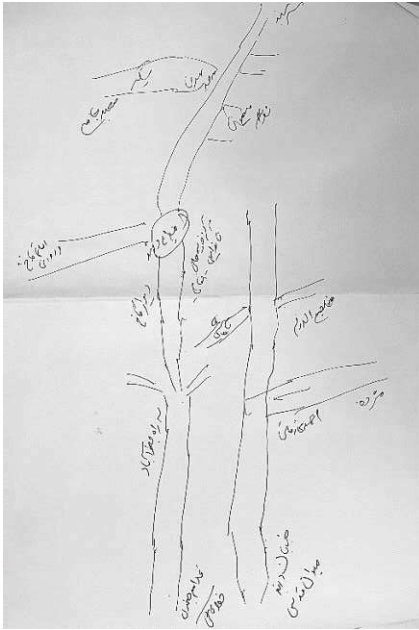


Figure 174. From left to right: a) Mental map of a young resident; b) Mental map of an old resident

The level of detail in the mental maps was not influenced by gender, challenging Krupat's findings from 1985, which suggested that men and women differ in their image of place. Similarly, socioeconomic status did not affect the map details. Regardless of class, both groups drew detailed and less detailed maps and both broad and specific parts of Darband (Figure 175). This is unlike studies from America and the United Kingdom, where those with higher status often have more comprehensive and accurate mental maps of city areas.

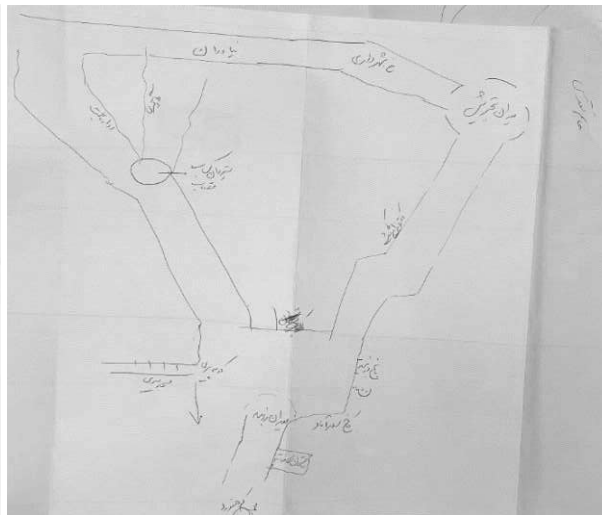
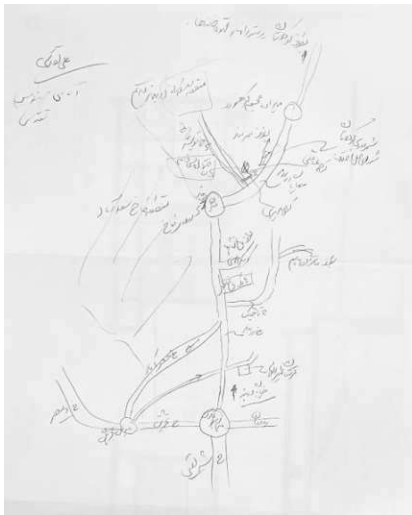


Figure 175. From left to right: a) Detailed mental map by high-status groups of residents of Darband; b) Less-detailed mental map by high-status groups of residents of Darband

The results of my study may suggest that the extent of interaction, mobility and familiarity with the environment impact the formation of the image rather than merely the social class, gender or years of stay in the neighbourhood. Groups with higher mobility, who commute longer

distances to their workplaces, stores, or even to explore the neighbourhood when walking, may present more detailed maps compared to those who do not interact much with the area and who often have their essential needs conveniently located nearby. Appleyard's research in Guyana (1969, cited in Shamsuddin 1997) also suggests this.

### **Perception of lived space in mental maps**

Comparing these sketch maps does not fully explain a lived space or "the spatial organisation of a landscape of a cultural group" within Darband. We might need more data to see if the idea of lived space fits a contemporary context. Further studies employing more participants could shed light on this.

### **Global and local identity of place**

Instances were observed that residents provided narratives of socio-cultural rootedness and 'bounded-ness', as well as notions of functionality, connectivity and mobility at the same time; Some simultaneously provided narratives of socio-cultural rootedness and positivity of openness and connectivity with others, forming a progressive sense of place. For instance, while they appreciated the importance and beauty of the remaining old fabric, old gardens, old garden alleys and old structures, they provided narratives of the positivity of connectivity, such as the presence of European tourists in Sadabad and the presence of visitors at cafes over Sarband. For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"Darband is always unexpected. Look! It has Saad Abad Palace. The most privileged tourists in the world, mostly Europeans, come to visit it. [...] Darband Street is so beautiful if you walk. [...] You'd remember the old days. There are several buildings left from the old days. Gardens, narrow alleys and garden alleys and they are very beautiful. [...] The restaurants above are also good. People come and enjoy. "**

This was continued by providing a narrative of notions of functionality along with the narrative of socio-cultural rootedness, which also resembled the co-existence of thick and meaningful spaces along with more functional and thin spaces. For instance, a long-term resident argued;

**"River, well, the river is like this now. For flood, hmm, they have done a great job constructing the anti-flooding system! And this is a nice job! Some stuff needs to be updated. It's a matter of human life. The river is so beautiful. The snow melts in the spring ... [...] Tehran's Surtmeh park is above Bagh Shater. It is touristic. They have constructed a big park. It is very beautiful there. There is also the Tajrish shopping centre. You can get there quickly. Tajrish Bazar is also a big**



shopping centre in Tehran. You can find everything there. There are several shopping centres there. In many cases, there is progress in Darband now. It has been three to four years since they have constructed a pharmacy here. That is very good. [...] There has been progress. It's not all bad. Well, look! How can I say it? Not all of the transformations are bad. The sports clubs are excellent. They are very well equipped. There are pools, [which are] clean and good. Darband has coffee shops. It has many good things. Darband has got the city sewage system. It has got gas, electricity, water, and telephone. There is the Darband community centre now. There are municipal services. They have improved the water paths because Darband is a foothill. It is mountainous, it rains and snows here, and all the streets are full of water. Some of these are improvements. However, the population has increased. Buildings are increasingly constructed. Trees are cut. Gardens are gone."

Compare it with this argument from another long-term resident;

**"Darband has improved a lot. You live more comfortably now. However, at that time, there was much more intimacy and kindness. Darband is special. It is like a village. Everyone knows each other. It is like a family. It has a big *Tek yeh* and a mosque. It is much better now. Back then, it was not even an apartment. Living in an apartment is very easy for me now."**

Some others also argued that life has become more comfortable with the development of apartments and new forms of family, although admitting the importance of the old houses of Darband and feeling their loss.

Some new residents also provided narratives of socio-cultural rootedness and notions of functionality at the same time,

**"They are building a lot, but its old places are very beautiful. There are lots of old places. For example, look there in front of us! That house is very old. It has chickens and roosters. Alternatively, look at that house! That is old. It means that it has a mixed fabric. Both new and old together. I wish the old ones would be preserved. I mean, I mostly came here because of the rural atmosphere. It would bring up the memories of the village for me. Our apartment is newly built but mixed with the old texture. That is interesting for us."**

These discussions highlight the notion of change and progress in place and place in the process of becoming. They also support Castells' 2000 idea that modern "spaces of flows" coexist with traditional "spaces of places." Residents' narratives offer the possibility of establishing a pragmatic sense of place. However, they note that for the young, the spaces of flows are increasingly overtaking the spaces of places, as more time is spent on computers and phones than on in-person socialising.

Despite the argued more global sense of place, some arguments show that Darband's identity of place has become bounded, 'regressive' and 'reactionary' by some long-term residents to the point of desiring exclusion of others (See 'Reactionary sense of place' on p. 285).

## Conclusion

A combination of physical attributes, activities, meanings, and associations influences the perception of Darband's place identity. Physical characteristics play an essential role in the residents' perception of elements. For instance, the valuable fabric of Darband, which was physically distinctive and recognisable, was mentioned. Additionally, activities, meanings, and associations enhance the distinctiveness of these physical elements, such as the historical gardens, current religious structures, and the old cemetery. Residents associate various meanings with Darband, including freedom, tranquillity, safety, and beauty. All groups of sex, age, and new or long-time residents in the area attribute specific meanings to their perceptions of Darband's identity. Activities such as religious ceremonies like Ashura and daily prayers are other components of the place's identity. These interviews reveal that the identity of Darband is a complex interplay of these various components, underscoring the multifaceted nature of residents' perceptions of the place.

Consideration of the meanings attributed by various groups to elements in Darband is essential to create a more inclusive environment for all residents. An analysis of the differences between the elements mentioned by two groups, namely new and long-term residents, reveals the following insights:

- New residents tend to develop a strong sense of place bonding with Darband, often emphasising the physical attributes and elements related to the valuable fabric and nature of the area. However, their perception of the place's identity is not closely linked to collective activities and the social construction of space, in contrast to long-term residents.
- New residents also do not mention religious activities or places as characteristic elements of Darband, which may be due to their lower religious involvement and lack of participation in the religious activities of long-term residents or religious spaces in Darband.

This highlights that different groups can associate meanings to different areas and elements within the same place. Few new residents also mentioned the previously demolished elements of the place, such as old gardens, public baths, Hotel Darband, and men-only coffeehouses, argued by those who had seen the transformations.

The consensus image of the place for both new and long-term residents appears to revolve around nature and the valuable fabric of Darband. Many residents answered affirmatively when

asked if certain place-specific features have persisted during the transformation process. However, a unanimous consensus could not be reached due to the diversity of specific features mentioned.

Some of the narratives presented suggest the potential for establishing a pragmatic sense of place in Darband. However, in some cases, Darband's identity has become regressive and reactionary.

## Summary of results and planning recommendations

The methodological approach and its implementation have been detailed in the preceding chapters. In this section, I will provide a concise overview of the field study's outcomes and practical recommendations for future planning in Darband. This summary is designed to serve as a brief reference for planners and local authorities. The chapter encapsulates the findings and recommendations from the field study, specifically focusing on how the cultural transformation driven by globalisation has influenced attitudes toward the built environment. My research findings affirm that this transformation has given rise to significant challenges for Darband, a cherished landscape facing issues such as new developments and shifting landscape values among its users.

The outcomes underscore the arguments put forth by planners, highlighting that urban renewal efforts can falter when they overlook community values. Furthermore, they emphasise that a failure to acknowledge community values and the meanings associated with places in the planning process can lead to irreversible urban deterioration, as exemplified by the loss of place significance and the cultural dimension of privacy in Darband. However, as I mentioned in the introduction, a crucial question to address is how we should manage valued landscapes as part of the transformation process. The study has revealed that certain aspects of behaviour and lifestyles remain constant while others undergo change due to the influence of contemporary social trends.

To conclude, this chapter offers recommendations tailored for planners and local authorities to integrate into their planning exercise in Darband. These recommendations draw from an analysis of specific cultural factors and place values. My thesis utilised a methodological approach that can be easily adapted for implementation in the planning process, with minor adjustments, particularly in non-Western contexts. Although the core approach remains unchanged, it will require fine-tuning to align with the unique regional context.

### Transformation in Darband

This study is concerned with the question of planning for Darband as a transformed culture that has not existed before. The study dealt with the cultural transformation of globalisation. It focused on planning for residents whose cultural heritage was loosened and whose horizons were influenced by images from the other side of the world. The empirical study was undertaken specific to the context to understand how people's values have transformed, how attitudes towards the built environment and how sociocultural factors and place values during

the cultural transformation of globalisation have changed. These results indicated the presence of specific instances of modernisation, individualism within the collective culture, and the cases of consumerism and display of wealth in social interactions and houses as possible outcomes of the cultural transformation of globalisation in the case of Darband in contrast to the past. The results align with Rieger-Jandl's (2006, p.23-25) arguments.

Transformations have led people to adopt new ways of living. For example, the field study output shows that people in Darband now value semi-open and open areas in shared apartment complex spaces less than in traditional houses. Experts and a review of past studies backed up this observation. In the 1960s, as urban space became limited in Tehran, new lifestyle patterns emerged, leading to the flourishing of apartments, reduced yards and open spaces in homes. With these transformations, people started valuing indoor rather than outdoor spaces, with new apartments mostly having closed-off spaces and fewer open or semi-open spaces. The study also shows that the use of open/semi-open spaces concerning nature and social interaction has declined compared to the past.

The results also support the arguments by Rapoport (1969) on constancy and change of cultural factors. The cultural factors within the transformation of Darband contain elements of both constancy and change which affect the subject of built form;

- Some of the cultural factors are still effective, as in the case of family and religion. However, the same tendency does not similarly affect the form of settlement and housing. For instance, regarding the cultural factor of family, the results show that families have greatly influenced the settlement of Shemiran. Presently, many of the individuals interviewed live near their relatives. The traditional household system has changed significantly due to variations in family size and structure, lifestyle, and higher expectations. Large extended families no longer commonly live together in one household. The younger generations prefer to live in a separate household or on a different floor of the same apartment. Following the demise of their parents, the descendants divide the houses and gardens among themselves, resulting in the construction of smaller houses on smaller plots of land. Consequently, this has led to the destruction of gardens and old houses and a shift in the typology of houses into more apartments.
- Certain factors remain constant and may hold high criticality, but the particular expressions of these needs are culturally dependent and subject to change. Cultural



influences heavily shape privacy attitudes, making them vary over time. The field study on the cultural factor of privacy in Darband found that privacy is highly valued in the community due to its Muslim roots. The physical and behavioural form of privacy and their implementation within the houses and the settlement are related to several elements, one of which is the degree of religiousness. The influence of modern social trends among residents also plays an essential role in this complex relationship, leading the residents to adopt new physical and behavioural patterns while socially interacting. Privacy is multi-dimensional and has ethical, visual, and physical components, reflected in dress, space, architecture and proxemic behaviour, and concerns two core issues of women and family. Alternative behaviours have replaced traditional privacy patterns with the rise of modern lifestyles and the popularity of modern apartments in Iranian society. Gender-segregated privacy and social interaction within the house are mediated by dress code, behavioural patterns, and unseen privacy rather than physical barriers.

- Some cultural factors that were effective in the traditional form of the settlement and house are now less effective, such as the element of relation with nature. For instance, relation with nature has affected house forms of traditional Darband by their ecologic pattern, the relation of houses with land and topography, and green yards. This has been substituted by an un-ecologic pattern of current apartments, loss of relation of house with land and topography and decline of yards in current multi-sharing apartments of Darband.
- The results also confirm that certain aspects of behaviour and the way of life are constant or experience very slow changes. For instance, this is the case of the cultural factor of privacy, separation of domains through walled houses, and public/private distinction within the house. The field study results show that constructing high walls to separate open public areas from private spaces has been a long-standing custom in Iranian dwellings. This architectural feature is still evident in contemporary buildings in Darband, where walls surround yards to ensure privacy for social gatherings and prevent outside views. Even with yards being replaced with roof gardens today, the role of walls remains untouched.
- The replacement of old forms can also be motivated by the perceived value of modernity and prestige rather than a direct response to functional requirements or a

need in lifestyle. This is the case of adopting new design elements like open-plan kitchens observed in contemporary architectural trends in Darband. Despite the rising popularity of open kitchens in Darband's newer homes, some religious residents used these designs while expressing discomfort. The open kitchen layout makes it difficult to maintain privacy, particularly when observing the Hijab in the presence of male guests, highlighting the tension between modern design preferences and traditional cultural practices.

- Conflict of global and local elements was also observed, e.g., some long-term residents resist the construction of apartment buildings, keeping negative views towards urban landscape transformation and modernisation efforts, such as widening roads for vehicle traffic. These residents prefer to preserve slower-paced, human-centred spaces that align with the local culture, behaviour patterns, and activity systems.

## **Future guidelines for planning for Darband**

The following provides a concise overview for planners at the local authority regarding the most critical issues they must address in the planning process for Darband. This summary and comprehensive background information should serve as a valuable resource for guiding future planning decisions in Darband.

### **Use of space**

Regarding the cultural factor of the use of space, I recommend adopting a flexible design approach that allows for mixed use of space instead of a rigid functional design for houses in Darband. Many residents utilise the house space in a flexible and mixed-use manner. Some interviewees expressed discomfort with spaces strictly designated for a single purpose, such as a specific room solely for sleeping. This preference for flexibility in space utilisation aligns with the traditional houses of Darband, where rooms serve multiple functions, including sleeping, dining, and social interaction. Despite modern transformations and the emergence of specialised functional spaces, this tradition of multifunctional rooms stays among many long-term residents of Darband. Experts in house design also support the need for flexibility in future housing planning.

### **Privacy**

The field study findings highlight the cultural significance of privacy in Darband, and it is crucial to prioritise privacy considerations in future house design and planning practices. The current settlement pattern, where apartments directly face and overlook other residences, is not

in harmony with the cultural values of the residents. Many residents expressed discomfort with this arrangement and blamed it for diminished privacy in Darband. Consequently, residents have taken actions such as covering yards and semi-open spaces, reducing the use of these spaces, or even demolishing old houses to construct apartments. To preserve the cultural importance of privacy, future planning and design should address this issue and provide solutions that align with the residents' preferences for privacy.

We need new ways to design and plan shared apartment housing in Darband. The locals do not like living in multi-family homes where they have to share spaces. They do not use communal yards or spaces. Instead, we could build walled private roof gardens, yards, and *Iwans*. The study shows that people use these because they offer privacy. So, the new design lets people have their own private open or semi-open private spaces. The study notes that shared spaces are not used much. This is because people feel these spaces lack privacy, as outsiders can see them. The local culture and religious beliefs also play a role. They prefer to limit contact with strangers and non-family members. This is true for both long-time and new Darband residents.

### **Public-private distinction**

I recommend to continue facilitating a public-private distinction of spaces within the future houses of Darband since residents continue to interact socially within the house's public sphere rather than in the private sphere. The fieldwork and literature highlight the long-standing tradition of distinct public and private spaces in houses, especially in those of affluent families. This distinction has grown more significant during the transformations. Current apartment layouts and renovated homes strongly reflect this increased emphasis on separating public and private areas.

### **Religion**

The results show that Darband's future planning should value religion. Religion is the core of culture in many long-term residents of Darband. Religious structures such as Tek Yeh Darband and Friday mosque of Darband should be preserved as places of social interaction and religious acts since they were stated as places of social interaction with importance in the sense of place of long-term residents. Muharram religious months and the rituals within *Tek Yeh* and the old cemetery should also be acknowledged as important for the religious group of long-term residents, mentioned as the essence of place within years due to the formation of community spirit. Planners should note that faith levels shape local cultural values, so they must plan for the needs of all residents, regardless of how religious they are. It is recommended that planners

consider the influence of religion on cultural factors and the settlement pattern in plans for Darband. Religion has continuously affected the settlement pattern from the past until now. This has been through the continued presence of religious structures and settlement orientation towards Qiblah. Religion has influenced many areas of life for residents, including the need for privacy, the Hijab, and the segregation of sexes in public spaces. These were confirmed while discussing with site experts.

## **Family**

It is recommended that planning for multi-family housing in Darband be considered. The study shows that family ties influence settlement and housing in Darband. Many people live near their relatives. The recommendation is to plan for smaller, flexible homes in Darband that support family closeness while honouring the reality of individualism. New patterns of housing should evolve to offer smaller, multi-sharing flats for individual family units, with fewer bedrooms but more areas tailored to a single household's lifestyle. Studies indicate a trend towards shrinking family size and a rise in individualism, leading to new family forms. For example, each person in a nuclear family may have their own fully equipped unit within a larger home. Despite living separately, they choose flats close to relatives, even if very spacious, balancing private life with family proximity.

The recommendation is to adjust Darband's multi-family housing and neighbourhoods to fit the local culture. Apartments as multi-family homes where neighbours are not from the same family and do not communicate with each other is an observation in Darband. Here, the religious and cultural attitudes of not interacting with strangers and *Namahram* have also been influential.

## **Identity of place**

It is recommended to limit further developments within Darband. Rapid landscape transformations should be considered carefully in future plans and developments. Guidelines on how future development should consider the area's existing character should be employed. A rapid landscape transformation re-urbanising the urban landscape in a form lacking the region's past landform and characters can result in placelessness. When asked about the desired future of Darband, preserving Darband and preventing more developments were central themes in the analysis of interviews by residents. This result confirms Green's (2010) argument that loss of continuity with a place due to rapid changes can result in a sense of placelessness. A sense of continuity with place is essential in establishing meaningful place experiences in

Darband.

It is highly recommended that future developments and planning in Darband should not be unsympathetic to the significance of the place of residents. The results suggest that place significances in Darband that were important to residents but got lost in transformations and developments should be revived in future plans. The area's existing character, which is distinctive to the residents, must be retained. Garden alleys, stepped alleys, and remaining old gardens and old structures should be designated within a conservation area to the extent possible. That is also the case of Rah-Posht Alley. Residents stated these were distinctive elements of the identity of place within Darband. Conservation can be achieved through the adaptive reuse of buildings, wherein new purposes are incorporated into the existing structures, aligning them better with current needs.

- Designated landmarks need a broader interpretation; they should include buildings, landmarks and landscape features that are important to the residents and are not designated as landmarks now. That is the case of water paths, *Qanats*, and old trees, which are in a state of decay. We should designate and revive them to the extent possible.
- The findings suggest that in places of historical importance in Darband where structures no longer exist, there is potential for new public art or open space to recall their past significance. This applies to the old cemetery, Hotel Darband, the public bath, men's coffeehouses, and the Zandian and Safa gardens, where, although these sites were meaningful to locals, they have been torn down.
- Establishing an anthropological museum or cultural centre in Darband is suggested to showcase the area's history and daily life as it was for past village generations, including men, women, and children of the Shemiran ethnic group. This space could reflect the cultural norms around the public bath and men-only coffeehouses, the traditional landscapes, and homes with courtyards and green spaces connected by water paths. The museum could feature audio recordings with local narratives about traditional weddings, public bath and the Tajrish flood. Additionally, screens could display animations depicting the historical settlement pattern of Darband.

The field study suggests that the former developments and transformations have been unsympathetic to the significance of the place for the residents. Long-time residents shared narratives of how landmarks that shaped their sense of place were taken down. The loss of place significances like the public bath, Hotel Darband, the Zandian and Safa old gardens, and garden houses by the river has been felt deeply. Even the Old Friday Mosque has been entirely



rebuilt, and historic gravestones in the old cemetery have been removed. Such significances is now lost, and residents struggle to connect with the Darband of today, feeling nostalgia towards the familiar landmarks of the past. This has created a reactionary sense of place.

These observations also confirm the general concern of many scholars, as discussed in Lee (2009, p.25), that one common consequence of the contemporary urban landscape developmental trends is that the loss of physical signposts in the urban landscape makes it hard for people to relate themselves back to their past landscape memory, experience, history, and eventually weakens ties between people and environments. Raised by 71% of residents as a negative development, this included the modernisation of the settlement, the destruction of the old fabric, and the widening of old stony organic paths and private alleys to make room for the new pattern of alleys and streets to allow the traffic. Construction of cafes and apartments, demolishing of thatched, gable-roofed and other old houses, change of pattern of houses to new apartments, and destruction of relation with nature, old gardens, view to the mountain and organic river as well as *Hoz*, yard and water path of old houses were also mentioned.

Discussions with experts confirmed this view. They expressed frustration as many of their suggested guidelines for Darband's Master and local plans, which aimed to safeguard its valuable stepped rural and historic fabric, were disregarded. Experts criticised the demolition of traditional stepped houses with courtyards and terraces, set among water and greenery, which were replaced by densely built apartments exceeding recommended limits. These developments altered Darband's historic fabric, turning once-open courtyards into shadowed gaps between towering buildings.

## **Relation with nature**

My recommendation for Darband's future planning, with a focus on relation with nature, would be as follows:

- New patterns of housing and apartments that are ecological and based on the area's climate should be proposed. This pattern should allow the establishment of private greenery, yards, *Iwans* and roof gardens while following relation to land and topography. However, it should be adaptive to using cars and applying more natural materials. Traditional house forms of Shemiran can provide valuable lessons for implementing this new housing pattern.
- Laws and policies should be passed to restrict future developments. Developments should follow a stepped, organic pattern and not destroy relations with nature. Organic

paths should be revived and should not be widened more than necessary and in a way that destroys the relation with nature.

- Old gardens and trees under decline should be revived while allowed to be used and appreciated by the public. This is also the case of water paths and Qantas, which should be revived to the extent possible in public paths and areas as valuable characteristics of the landscape of Darband. This is also recommended for the water mill site on the eastern side of Darband. Considerations must be given to revive the organic bedding of the river while providing flood prevention facilities.
- The remaining eastern side of Malek Park should be revived as a valuable Persian garden. Attempts should be made by the local authority to buy the private *Koushk* to connect the whole garden as a Persian garden.
- Planning tasks should be undertaken so that extensive green areas of the sites, such as Malek Park and Sadabad, become more accessible and favoured by the public. There should be tasks devoted to increasing the security of Malek Park as well.

These recommendations stem from the decline of relation with nature, which has been among the central themes of residents' loss of place identity in Darband. My surveys show a reduction in the relation with nature in the house forms, and residents reminisce about the old yards, *Iwans*, waterways, and gardens that were once integral to their homes. Experts agree and argue that Tehran Municipality has overlooked their planning advice for Darband to preserve its unique rural, stepped historic fabric and greenery-rich stepped houses, including *Hoz*. Darband's traditional settlement and housing patterns were compatible with nature, with stepped settlement and paths following the mountainous topography, integrating yards, *Iwans*, and greenery connected by water paths, all constructed with natural materials. Unfortunately, these elements have been vastly altered or removed, with old trees and gardens being destroyed during the transformations.

### **Limiting tourists and cars and providing facilities**

In planning Darband's development, it is crucial to include additional facilities like clinics, markets, and parking. Environmental concerns, notably pollution, must be considered as well. With tourism increasing, issues around residents' privacy, emergency services access, and traffic have emerged; thus, strategies to address these challenges are needed. Ensuring safe, efficient movement for locals and tourists is essential. Car use could be minimised with permits for residents and public transport options for visitors to reach cafes and the mountains. Site

experts also echoed these community insights.

## Limitations

Given this study's qualitative, empirical nature and limited sample size, the findings cannot be generalised to other contexts. Nevertheless, this research demonstrates the practicality of using cultural analysis and place identity approaches in studies on cultural landscapes to incorporate community values into planning recommendations. Additionally, it is suggested that a broader, quantitative survey be conducted to obtain more generalisable insights on specific topics.

The limitations encountered while conducting my PhD research and its fieldwork did not have significant effects, as they were successfully overcome without compromising the quality of the results.

Despite my extensive efforts, organisations such as Tehran Municipality and Darband Community Centre did not cooperate as anticipated, which limited my research. Information about current and past urban planning for Darband was sourced from experts with prior involvement in the site's decision-making processes. The Darband map from Tehran Municipality was out-of-date and needed significant updates to be valid. Also, there was no recent map for Pasghale village. I made a new map using the latest aerial photographs to overcome this.

Initially, the plan was to recruit students from Tehran University to help with fieldwork and data collection. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges, forming a team was impossible, so I used my family's help.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, conducting interviews and visiting homes was challenging due to health risks and local concerns. However, during the Muharram religious events, particularly on Ahura day, I connected with many residents who attended the *Tek Yeh* and Miry Alley ceremonies. The welcoming atmosphere at Tek Yeh Darband charity, often visited by long-standing female residents, helped build trust, allowing me to interview them and survey more homes. The Friday Mosque and *Tek Yeh* also became key spots for meeting and talking to locals. Thanks to Mr Bahmany, Mr Taghadossi, and Dr Taraneh Yalda, I met more community members and experts who let me survey their homes.

## Suggestions for further research

For further research, I recommend more empirical studies on how culture change affects the built environment due to a gap in existing research and the need for more detailed clarification. Most studies on cultural landscapes and cultural and place analysis are rooted in Western

settings, and theories are often derived from these environments. Non-Western regions with different environments and cultural dynamics have not had many empirical studies conducted. My thesis provides a comparison point and a foundation for examining cultural landscapes in a non-Western context. Also, I discussed the cultural and place values primarily from Western scholars. It would be insightful to explore whether these attributes influence other non-Western contexts. Compared with Western settings, more empirical research on cultural change and the built environment in transforming non-Western settings could highlight parallels, distinctions, and the relevance of theoretical frameworks.

My thesis explores specific cultural and place factors within the context of cultural landscape studies. It does not cover all possible factors due to its defined scope. Future research could expand this scope by incorporating additional factors and elements relevant to analysing and interpreting cultural landscapes, specifically the everyday ones, as they significantly impact such landscapes. The variety of landscape definitions affects how it can be studied. Different approaches, subjects, and theories apply to interpreting and studying everyday landscapes. Future research could read urban landscapes as facilitators and mediators of political, social, and economic intention since distinctive landscapes can be mobilised to advance the attainment of political or economic goals.

Cities and buildings can be understood by looking at social, cultural, and power dynamics. Future research could examine the economic and social processes shaping city development and the interest groups behind urban redevelopment. Additional studies might use other combinational approaches to evaluate contemporary urban landscapes. In recent culture-environment research, culture is a crucial factor studied across many fields. Future research could also examine immigrant communities with different levels of acculturation.

My research compares the contemporary residential built environment of Darband with its traditionally built environment through the lens of the transformation of values. Many culture-environment studies focus on traditional or spontaneous settlements, but the influence of culture on other kinds of built environments is not as extensively researched. Future studies could broaden the scope to include a variety of settings, particularly non-residential ones.

My study focused primarily on long-term residents' experiences, with additional insights from field experts. Future research could broaden the participant pool to include more individuals engaged in the cultural landscape, such as policymakers and various visitor groups, to draw contrasts with resident perspectives. Cultural landscapes are places where differing values and

interpretations are negotiated, often mediating broader cultural issues across different scales. They demonstrate the influence of both specific local subcultures and dominant national cultural values. Future studies can examine the cultural landscape as multiple, coexisting texts or competing fragmentary expressions.

Future research could focus on the sustainable development of urban landscapes experiencing cultural transformation and the urbanisation process, aiming to address and plan for ecological, economic, and social issues that emerge with urbanisation. There are also opportunities to investigate alternative regeneration plans for challenging urban areas through participatory approaches.



## Conclusions

My research developed in the context of addressing valued cultural landscapes amidst transformation. A theoretical discussion led to a combinational research framework to define the cultural values/place meanings embedded in the cultural landscape. I conducted a qualitative empirical study by engaging with residents of Darband—a neighbourhood in the northern part of Tehran, Iran—through semi-structured, open-ended interviews to explore its transformation as an urban heritage landscape.

I carried out observation, surveying houses of three eras of transformation and comparing maps/pics of traditional/current Darband. The goal is to assess how the values of Darband's urban landscape users have shifted in the face of cultural globalization and to determine which values should be emphasized in response to this transformation. I also aimed to offer planning recommendations for the local authority. The study revealed that Darband's user values exhibit both constancy and change, impacting the subject of built-form throughout its transformation. I identified which values hold significance and should be emphasized in future urban planning. Expert consultations and a review of the existing literature reinforced these conclusions. The distinct aspect of my research is its examination of cultural landscapes from a dual perspective of place and culture within a non-Western context. Predominantly, studies in this area are carried out within Western environments, utilizing singular analytical approaches and scarcity of such research in non-Western settings. Furthermore, empirical studies that examine the evolving dynamics between transforming culture and the built environment are limited. My thesis seeks to address this gap by integrating an extensive literature review with methodological research to deliver empirical insights and frame recommendations for future urban planning within this context.

## Contributions of research

The value this thesis adds to academic discourse comes from the empirical study of the transforming cultural landscape and the introduction of a multi-dimensional research framework that forms together cultural elements and place context for such exploration. This framework, consisting of certain selected factors, provides a more holistic understanding of the cultural landscape rather than a single approach, supported by the practical results obtained and the deduction of my observations within the field study. The methodology developed in this research offers a practical tool for planners and policymakers to consider the cultural and place dimensions in planning processes, which can contribute to more sustainable and culturally

responsive developments.

The results also support the importance of dealing with culture and its meaning in the fast-changing contemporary context. The study demonstrates that utilizing a research framework focused on the fundamental social and cultural factors within the built environment, as discussed by Rapoport (1969) and Rieger-Jandl (2006), is adequate for understanding the evolving values of a culture in transition.

Additionally, my thesis has revealed that the cultural factors assessed are significant and have a real effect on both the house and settlement in Darband, both traditionally and in its current state. This is especially true for the cultural value of privacy, which has maintained its importance in influencing both the house and the broader settlement from the past to the present. The disregard for this cultural value in urban planning and existing planning guidelines has led to widespread resident dissatisfaction with the level of privacy in Darband. Addressing this could involve creating planning guidelines that honour the cultural values of residents, particularly shaping the settlement and housing pattern to reflect these values. Moreover, the factors analysed are fundamental and can be employed to analyse a cultural landscape, effectively highlighting its key cultural components within the house and settlement context.

## **A Synopsis of research findings**

My analysis examined the cultural landscape's meanings amidst the transformation of Darband, viewing through the lenses of 'culture' and 'place' to offer practical solutions for the area's challenges. By exploring cultural values, I identified the residents' needs and how these have evolved through the transformation, which informed my planning recommendations. I also noted that place analysis offers a practical approach to understanding the contemporary urban landscape, revealing how residents experience the landscape. For instance, disregard for the place's significances has often resulted in adverse impacts and a reactionary sense of place among residents. Recognizing this, future planning can revive the lost place's significances, aligning with the residents' values and what they consider essential.

This was a limited study with a small sample. However, I observed that this yielded practical results for incorporating the values of residents in planning. By identifying what adversely impacts residents' values, we can craft future planning guidelines that create an urban landscape responsive to residents' values. Therefore, I recommend that subsequent research in the field of planning adopt a similar approach for urban landscape analysis. Studies with larger samples could further validate this thesis's approach's effectiveness and applicability on a broader scale. I infer that the approach outlined here can be employed effectively in various case studies,

especially in non-Western contexts, with some necessary customizations to address regional conditions. Part II of the thesis presents a practical implementation of such research in the case study of Darband. It is essential to acknowledge that when utilizing this approach in practice, certain factors must be carefully considered to ensure its effectiveness;

- In order to ensure effective collection of qualitative data, it is crucial to employ a wide range of methods. To achieve optimal results, a suggested approach involves utilizing a mixed-methods strategy that incorporates cultural data collection, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and surveys.
- Before conducting the field study, adequate preparation is vital, encompassing the formulation of interview questionnaires and establishing a data collection and analysis plan. It is essential to develop a well-structured plan that delineates the specific data to be gathered and the potential sources from which it can be acquired. Invaluable insights into cultural data, such as family structures, religion, and ways of life, can be derived from various sources, including council studies, statistical centres, governmental institutions, or building departments. However, it is essential to acknowledge that some sources may have limitations in terms of accessibility, which requires the research methodology to be adaptable. To determine and collect the essential information, it is crucial to establish well-defined objectives for the research and identify the specific group of individuals from whom the required data should be gathered.
- Engaging experts well-versed in the specific region and cultural context or conducting extensive research beforehand is recommended. This proactive approach allows a deeper understanding and a broader pool of knowledge to be gathered.
- Tackling the obstacles to effective communication between fieldworkers and the community, such as cultural differences, different viewpoints between professionals and residents, and a range of attitudes and expectations about the built environment, is crucial. It requires methodological knowledge to pinpoint the right questions, apply the correct inquiry techniques, and accurately interpret and use the responses to inform planning guidelines.
- The field research methods used in this study offer numerous ways to gather information by actively engaging with individuals, analysing the data collected, and incorporating it into the planning process. It is essential to understand that asking questions will lead to a wide range of responses. Sometimes, these responses will show a strong agreement among most participants, a general trend in some cases, and a blend

of differing and indeterminate answers in others.

- Researchers might need to use various methods and questions to fully understand specific aspects of a study. The surface-level responses may only tell part of the story. A deeper exploration into the reasons behind people's answers is often required. Using different research strategies, like participant observation, can be particularly revealing, helping to uncover the motivations behind given answers or gain insights beyond the explicit responses in real-life situations. Recognizing that there might be discrepancies between what people say and what they actually do is crucial, as it adds layers of complexity to the data analysis.
- The findings derived from a fast evaluation should be cautiously approached, as they do not represent an absolute truth. It is vital to consider the inherent limitations associated with the collected data.

Effectively communicating research findings to formulate practical planning recommendations is essential. After gathering field study results, seeking feedback from planners and area experts is beneficial. This helps in refining the findings and verifying their validity. Finally, my thesis supports Rieger-Jandl's (2006, p.72-73, 127) stance that addressing the complex dynamics that define collective identity in empirical studies of cultural transformation due to globalization demands an all-encompassing approach. This approach must transcend mere comparisons of traditional and contemporary settlements or explorations of historical and regional cultural intricacies. Investigating people's current aspirations in their rapidly evolving contexts is essential. Research should focus on understanding how transformation is shaping their needs and desires. We must assess how the attitudes and values of users towards the built environment are changing through these transformations. "The fieldworker has the difficult task to mediate between traditional continuities, the imperative of change and his/her role as an outside agent of guided change".

In addressing the transformation of valued cultural landscapes, my thesis has highlighted intensified issues in Darband. It demonstrates how overlooking community values and the meanings of place has adversely influenced the urban landscape. Unsympathetic planning and development processes have led to the loss of many of the place's significances. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating the place's significance in development planning within valued landscapes. Additionally, future planning should strive to find ways to revive and reinterpret these lost significances within such landscapes.

## Implications and guidelines

My thesis findings advocate for participatory methods to recognize the values and aspirations of residents before initiating planning. This can prevent many potential future issues. Additionally, the results underscore the need to carefully consider developments and transformations that drastically alter the urban landscape, as these can lead to significant problems like placelessness. Such issues can be mitigated by evaluating the residents' values and necessities and executing planning that respects these values. This strategy is especially beneficial in rapidly transforming contexts and, as demonstrated in the case of cultural globalization transformation, it can aid in planning that both preserves cultural heritage and encourages development and progress.

The findings from this research also show that place studies can be effectively used in analysing cultural landscapes and informing future planning. They offer practical insights into how people perceive the contemporary urban landscape, marking a shift from theoretical to empirical approaches in place studies.



# Glossary

## Persian and Shemiran expressions

### General

*Ajil-e-moshkel-gosha*- special nuts thought to solve the problems

*Ashura*- the martyrdom of Imam Hossein

*Baghali*- a traditional dish of baked broad beans

*Balal*- grilled sweet corn

*Chador*- a kind of full covering for Muslim women

*Chahar Shanbeh Souri*- the Persian ceremony of jumping over fire before the new year

*Dorna-Bazi*- a traditional game

*Hafiz*- A famous old Persian poet

*Harim*- privacy

*Hijab*- covering

*Hojb-o-haia*-modesty and respecting the privacy of strangers while behaving

*Imam Hossein*- He is the third Imam of Shia Islam

*Kadkhoda*- village chief

*Karbala*- The city, best known as the location of the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD, or for Hussain and Al Abbas shrines, is considered a holy city for Shia Muslims.

*Labu*- beetroot

*Lavashak*- a snack made of berries in Shemiran

*Long*- traditional towels used in public bath

*Mahram*- are those members of a family that could see the women without a Hijab according to Islam.

*Miniature*- Persian traditional painting

*Muharram*- the religious month of martyrdom of Imam Hossein

*Namahram*- those members of family or strangers that could not see the women without the Hijab, according to Islam.

*Nazri dadan*-to make an offering.

*Roo-hozi* was a traditional Persian wedding where the pool of the yard was covered with a bed. This would form a stage for singers, traditional Tar players and dancers.

*Samanou Pazon*- a traditional ceremony for offering a food called Samanou

*Shab-Neshin* is a traditional nightly gathering in the wintertime around *Korsi* in Shemiran.

*Shahnameh*- A series of traditional Persian poems by Ferdowsi

*Sineh-Zani*- A collective ritual during Ashura

*Roze'*- the religious ceremony for the recital of the tragedies of Karbala

*Sadat* is considered to be the descendant of the Prophet Muhammad.

*Ta'zieh*- Condolence Theatre and religious ceremonies for the recitation of Imam Hussain

### Regarding settlement

*Abshar Doghooloo*- the Twin Waterfall at the heights of the mountain over Sarband

*Aineh Kary*- plastering and using glass and mirrors as an ornamentation

*Bagh-Shahr*-garden city

*Bineh*- dressing room in the public bath

*Chahar-Bagh*- a geometric quadripartite division that gives rise to square shapes in the Persian garden

*Dehliz*- vestibule

**Garm Khane-** an ample bright and warm space after the middle door with water tanks in the public bath

**Ghahveh Khane-** traditional coffee house, also known as a tea room, teahouse

**Gonbad-** The dome of the mosque

**Hesar-e-Tahmasbi-** the walls surrounding Tehran city built by King Shah Tahmasb Safavi

**Hojre-**room

**Imam Zadeh-***Imam Zadeh* is the child or descendant of one of the Shia imams and their tomb.

**Lambeh Koubi-** wooden work underneath a gable roof in Shemiran structures in the Pahlavi era

**Khar-bar Forooshi-** small grocery shop

**Katibeh-** Inscriptions as pieces of Islamic art in the mosques, where calligraphy is used as an ornamentation

**Khazineh-** the water tank in the public bath

**Kheimeh-** a big veil made up in traditional *Tek Yehs* as a roofing

**Koushk** is a building located in the middle of the garden with a view of the inside of the garden on four sides.

**Kuche-baghi-**garden alley

**Kuche-ekhtesasi-** private dead end alleys in traditional Shemiran

**Mahalleh-**traditional Persian neighbourhood

**Maktab-** traditional intermediate school in Iran

**Mian Dar-** meaning middle door, had platforms to throw wet towels and place other bathroom items.

**Mihrab-** a niche indicating the Qibla in the mosque

**Menareh-** The tower of the mosque where the call to prayer is made

**Qanat-** traditional underground water systems used in Iran

**Qiblah-** The direction of the Kaaba (the sacred building at Mecca), to which Muslims turn at prayer.

**Sagha Khane-**an spiritual place located in public paths for providing water to the thirsty passers-by

**Sahn-** The courtyard of the mosque

**Sarbineh-** dressing room in the public bath

**Shabestan-** The seasonal prayer hall of the mosque

**Sofreh Khane-** traditional tea house

**Taagh Nama-** small open room

**Tek Yeh-** is a place where many religious ceremonies are conducted.

**Zarih-** the wooden nest surrounding the holy grave in *Imam Zadeh*

### **Regarding house**

**Andarouni-** private zone of the house with complete visual privacy from the public gaze. This zone belonged to the female members of the family.

**Birouni-** occupied mainly by men, was the interlinear space between the *Andarouni* and the main entrance.

**Dallan-**corridor

**Hashti-** vestibule

**Hoz-**the traditional pool in the yard of Iranian houses

**Iwan-**veranda

**Khane-baghi-** garden house

**Khaneh-ie-raiaty-** traditional house of low-income people

**Khaneh-ie-a'iani-** traditional house of high-status people

**Korsi** is a type of low table found in Iran, with a heater underneath it and blankets thrown over it.

**Khune Kolangi**- a term used by developers regarding old houses to demolish them to construct a new high-density apartment that is very beneficial

**Lat**- section

**Do latti**- 2 sections

**Matbakh**-traditional Persian kitchen

**Mehman-khane**- guest room

**Mokhadeh**- Traditional cushions put around the room for seating.

**Ojagh**- a brazier to bake bread or food in the traditional house of Shemiran

**Parchin**- low-rise hedges- constructed out of woods, stones or thatch that separated the houses and yards in traditional Shemiran

**Panjdari**- a traditional room with five doors

**Pastoo**- closet in the traditional house

**Sang-e-ghaltoon**- a rolling stone used by residents on the mud flat roofs of traditional houses to make them integrated during the rain in Shemiran

**Se-dary**- a traditional room with three doors

**Sofreh**- traditionally, people would throw a mat called *Sofreh* on the floor to dine.

**Talar**-hall

**Too-dar-too**-connecting

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## Appendix No.1

### Semi-structured interviews with long-term residents

Please compare your answers for Darband's current state and how it was over 30 years ago.

#### Respondent's personal information

1. Gender: Male/female
2. Please tell me your name, age, education, and occupation.
3. How long have you been living in the Darband area?
4. How do you describe your family's financial status? (e.g. low-income, middle-income, high-income)

#### Questions regarding house and settlement from the cultural approach

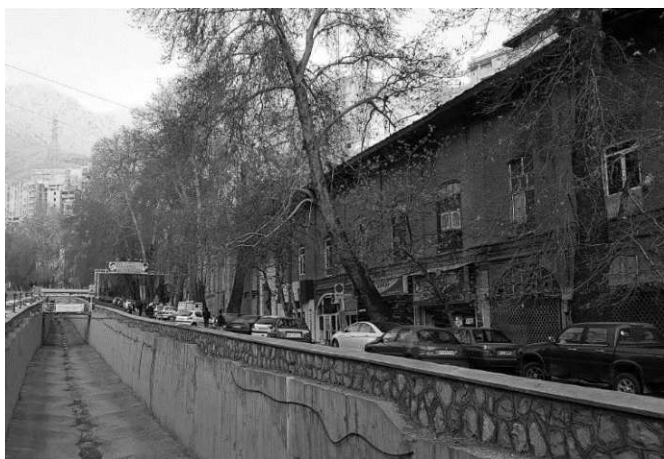
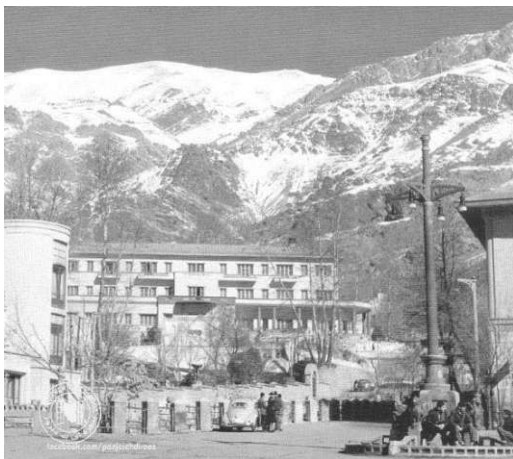
5. Please describe your daily activities in the Darband area inside and outside your home. Where and how often are you doing your activities? Have they changed compared to the past? Is it more/less satisfying compared to the past? Yes/No/Why?
6. Regarding the answer to the previous question, if there is a change, does it affect how you use your house now? Yes/No/Why? Please describe.
7. Where do you usually undertake social interactions in Darband? What activities are you doing during social interaction? Have ways or locations of social interactions changed compared to the past? If yes, is it more/less satisfying compared to the past? Yes/No/Why? If there has been a change, has it affected how you use your house?
8. Besides the routine social interactions, are there any other social interactions, e.g., periodic promenades or gatherings you attend in Darband? If yes, where and how do they take place? Have they changed compared to the past? If yes, is it more/less satisfying compared to the past? Yes/No/Why?
9. In your opinion, please explain the position of women in Darband in the past. How is it now? Has the position of Women affected current/old Darband? Is it more/less satisfying compared to the past? Yes/No/Why? Please explain.
10. Compared to the past, do you think today's houses and settlements in Darband provide privacy for women? Yes/No/Why? Please explain. Is it more/less satisfying compared to the past? Please explain.
11. Please describe why you chose the location of your current/old house in Darband.
12. Please explain your relationship with nature in Darband and your house compared to the past. Has the general public's attitude towards nature affected the houses or settlement in current/old Darband? Is it more/less satisfying compared to the past? Please explain.

13. Compared to the past, how do you consider the houses, settlement and urban regulations in Darband concerning your religious viewpoints? Are they more or less satisfying compared to the past? Please explain.
14. Who do you live with in your house now? Has it changed compared to the past? If there was a change, please describe it.
15. Are you living near any member of your family or relatives in the Darband area? Has it changed compared to the past? Is it more/less satisfying compared to the past? Yes/No/Why?
16. In your opinion, in the past, did social structures differentiate in the Darband area in specific ways? How is it today? Please explain. Is it more/less satisfying compared to the past? Yes/No/Why?
17. In your opinion, does the Darband area provide a sense of privacy? How about your house? Please describe it. Do you think the situation has changed since the past? Is it more/less satisfying compared to the past? Yes/No/Why?

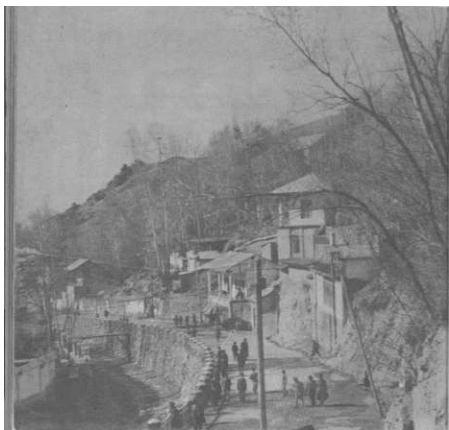
#### Questions regarding the character of the place

18. Can you describe Darband for me, please? Is Darband unique in specific ways for you? Yes/No/Why. Please describe.
19. Is there something that disturbs this image? Yes/no/why? Please explain.
20. Are there any particular place(s) in Darband that are significant to you for any reason? Yes/no/why? Please describe.
21. Do you remember any special or significant moment, event or happening in Darband? What was it? Where/how did it happen?
22. In your opinion, has Darband changed over the period you lived there? Yes/No? Why? How do you perceive changes? Positive/negative/why? Has anything stayed persistent throughout the changes? Yes/No? Why? Please describe.
23. Please describe your thoughts when you compare each pair of old and new Darband pictures. Do you think that the significance of Darband has been affected by the changes over the years? How do you perceive changes? Positive/negative/why?

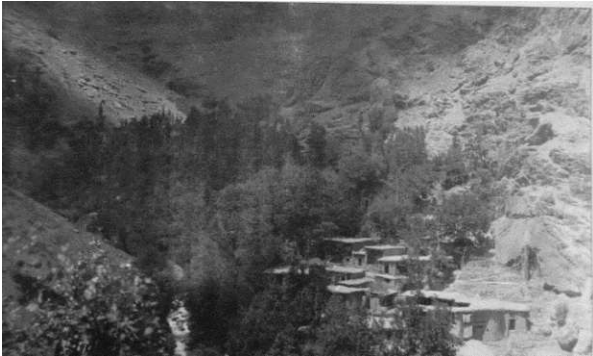
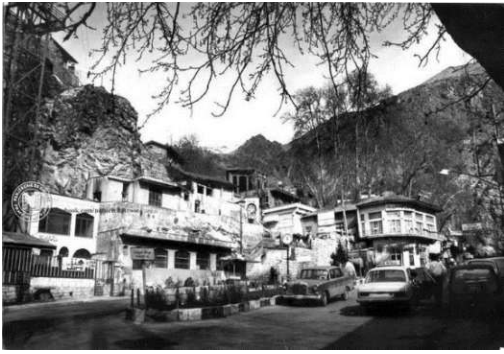












24. How would you like Darband to be in the future? What are the things that should be preserved or abandoned in future developments?
25. Based on your thoughts, can you please draw a map of Darband with the names of places, streets and buildings?

## **Appendix No.2.**

### **Surveyed and observed houses**



# House no. 1



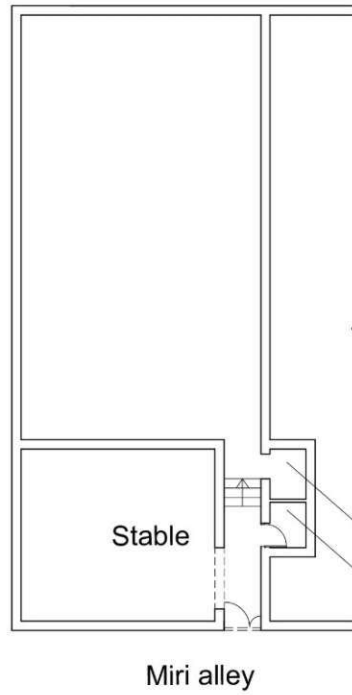




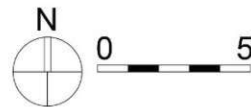
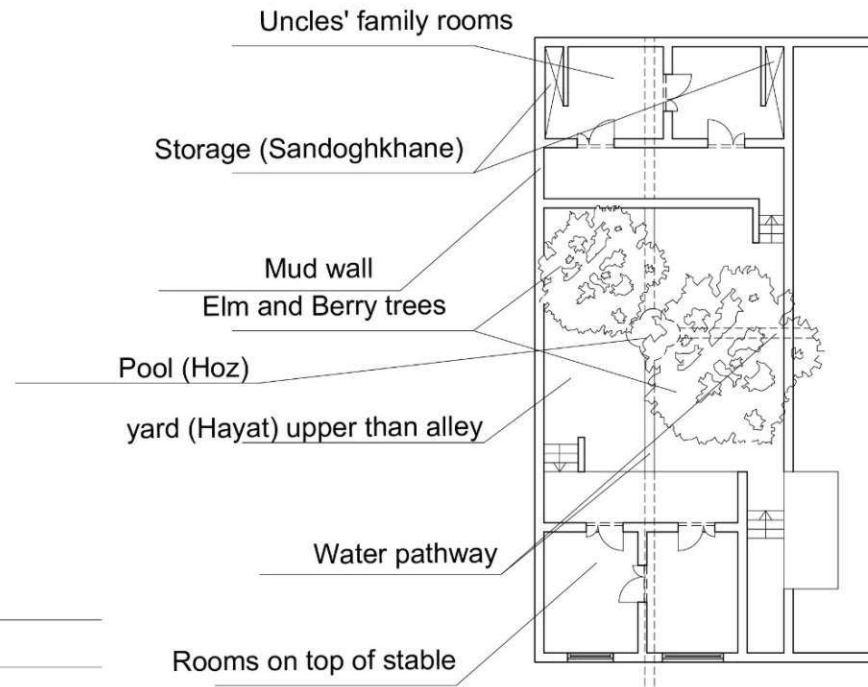
# House no. 2

## Plan of old house

**Ground Floor Plan**



**First Floor Plan**

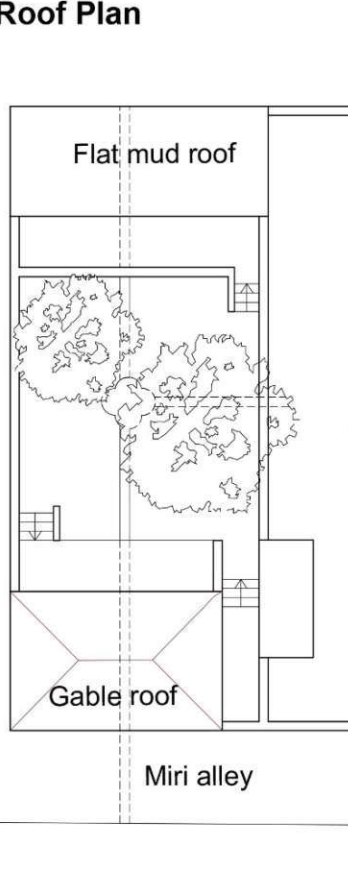




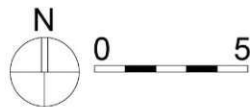
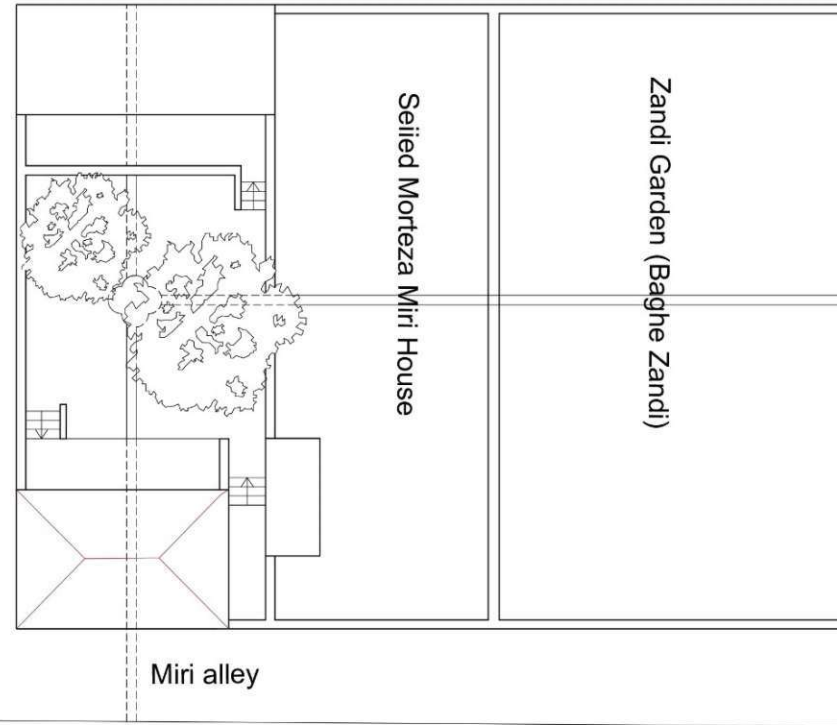
# House no. 2

## Plan of old house

**Roof Plan**

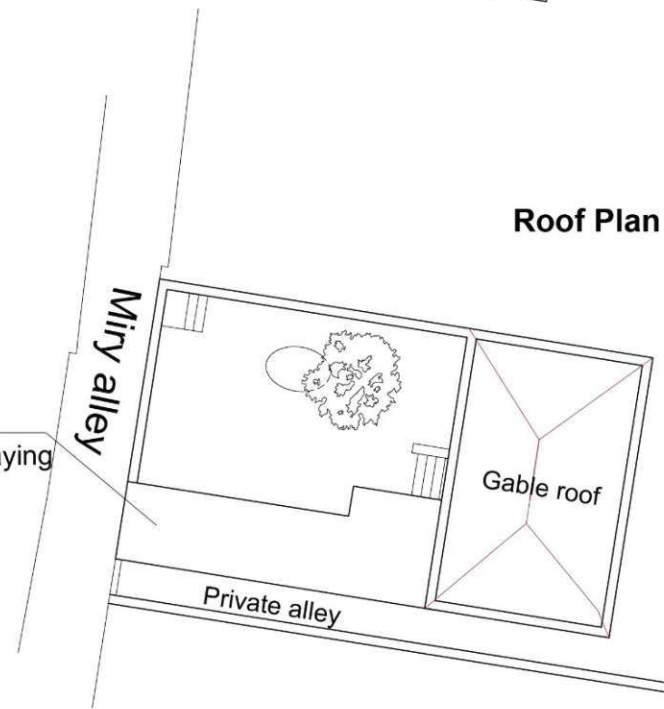
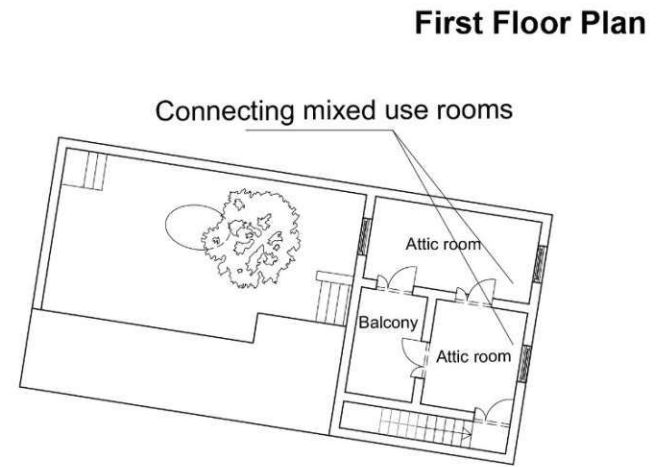
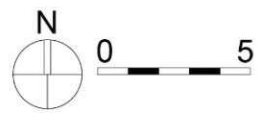
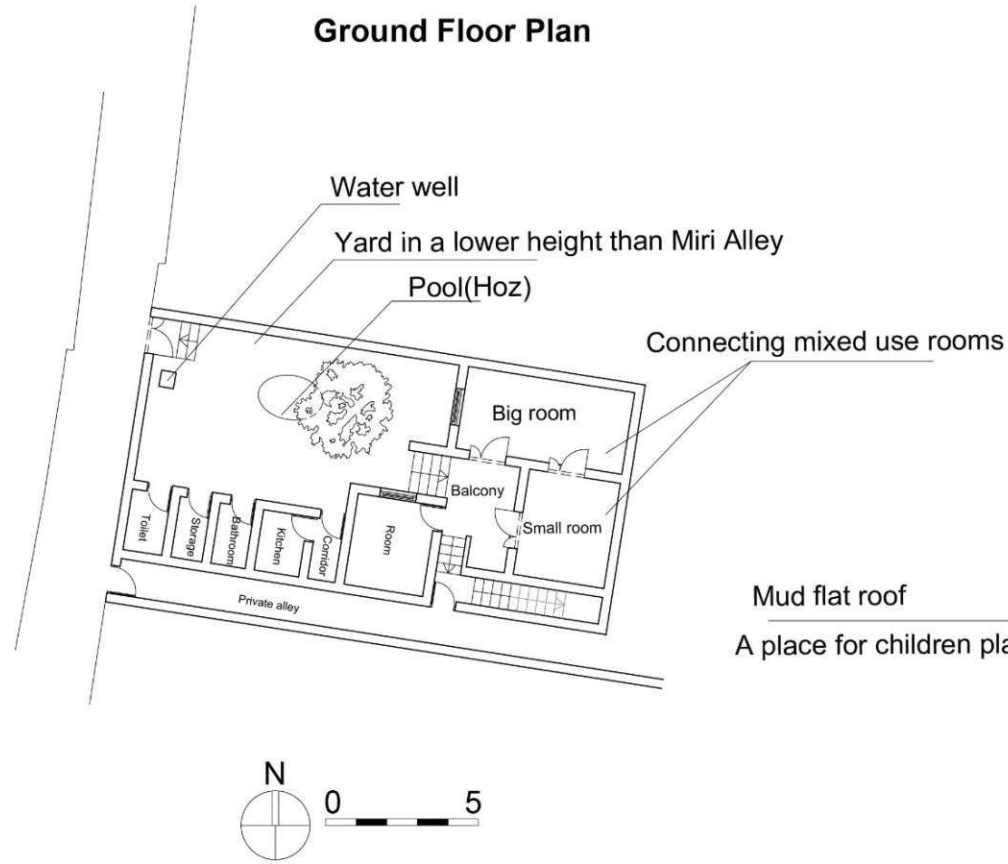


**Site Plan**



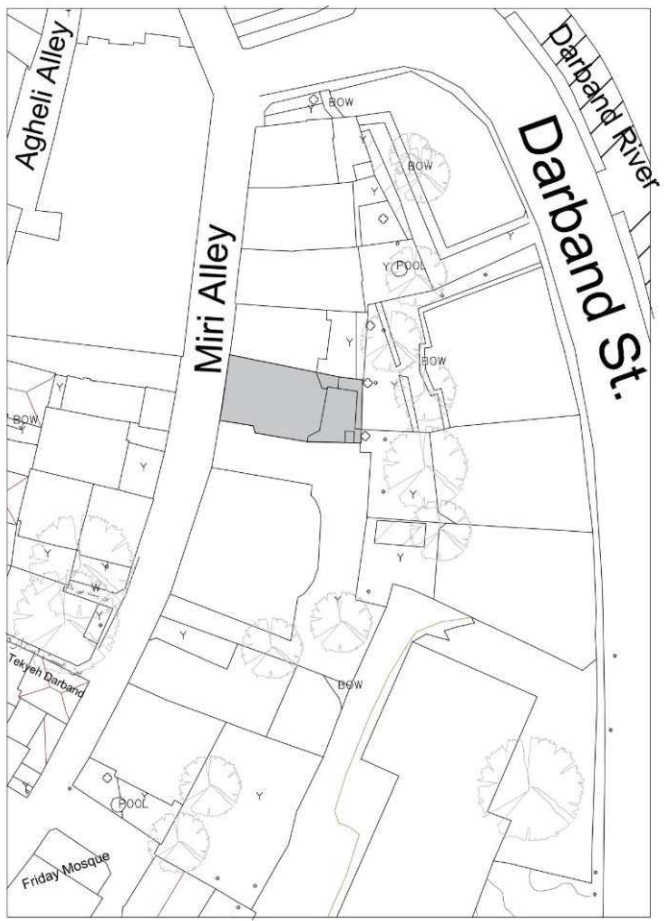
# House no. 3

## Plan of old house



# House no. 3

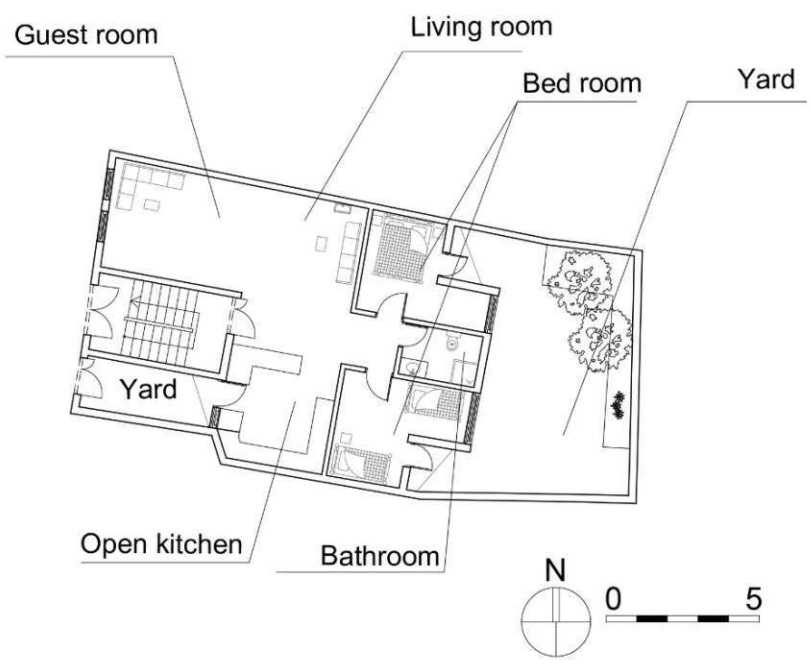
## Plan of new house



Site Plan



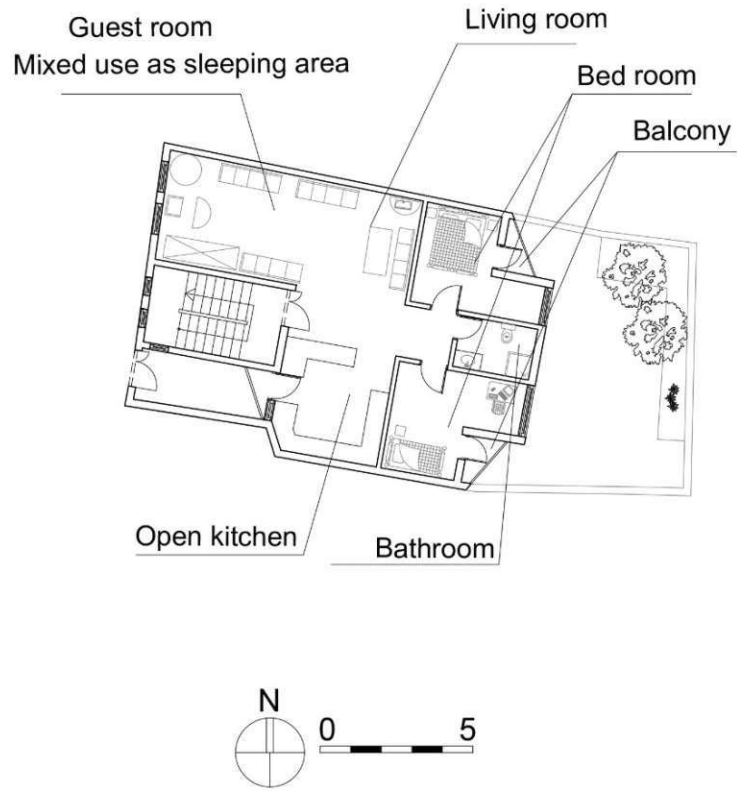
Ground Floor Plan



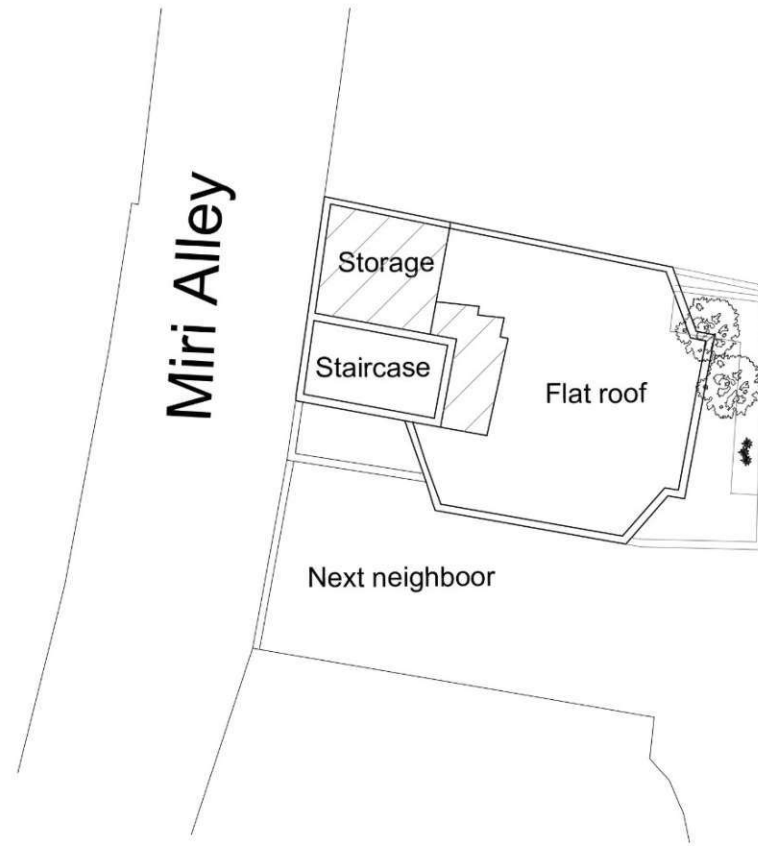
# House no. 3

## Plan of new house

### Second Floor Plan



### Roof Plan





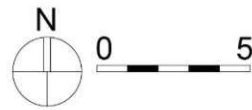
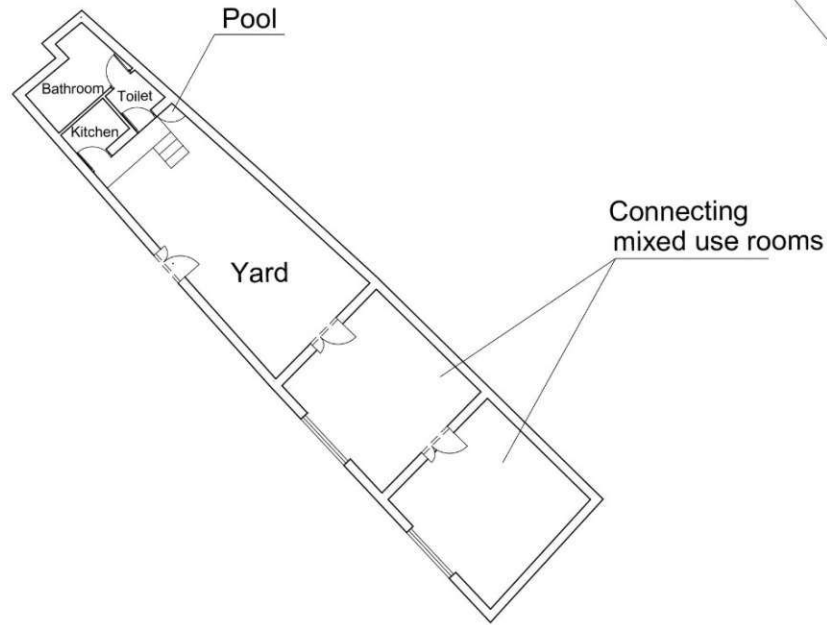




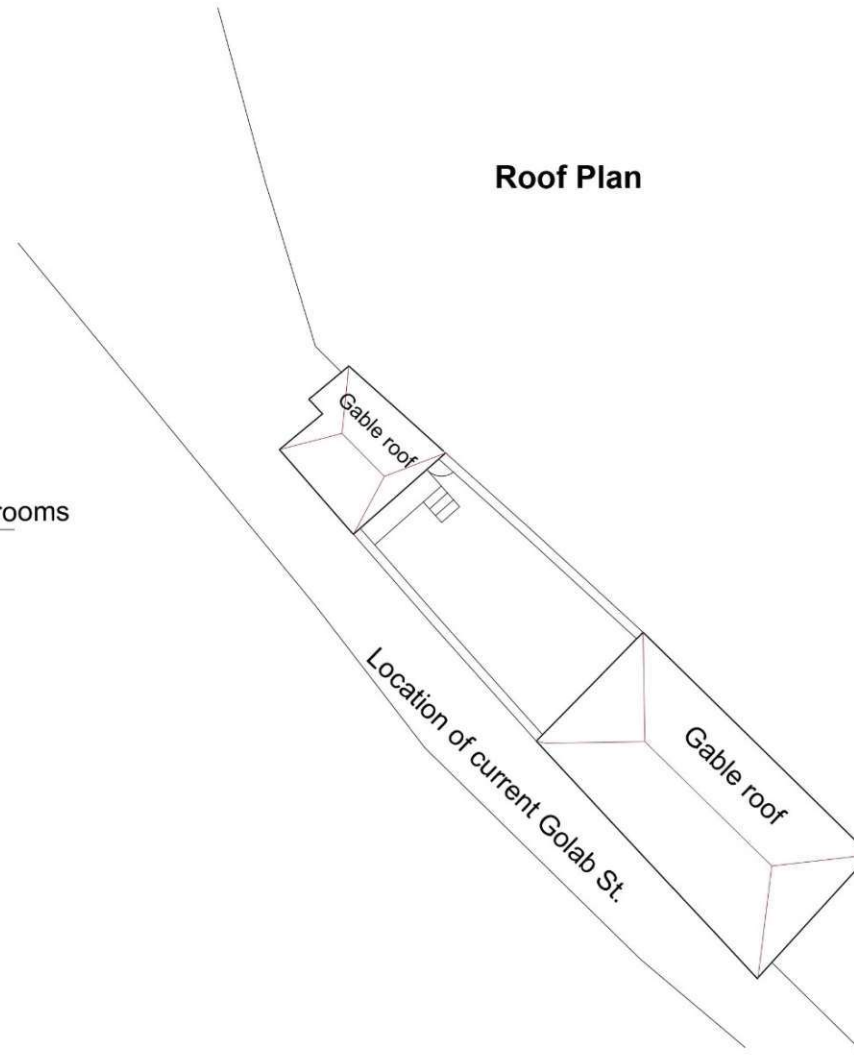
# House no. 4

## Plan of old house

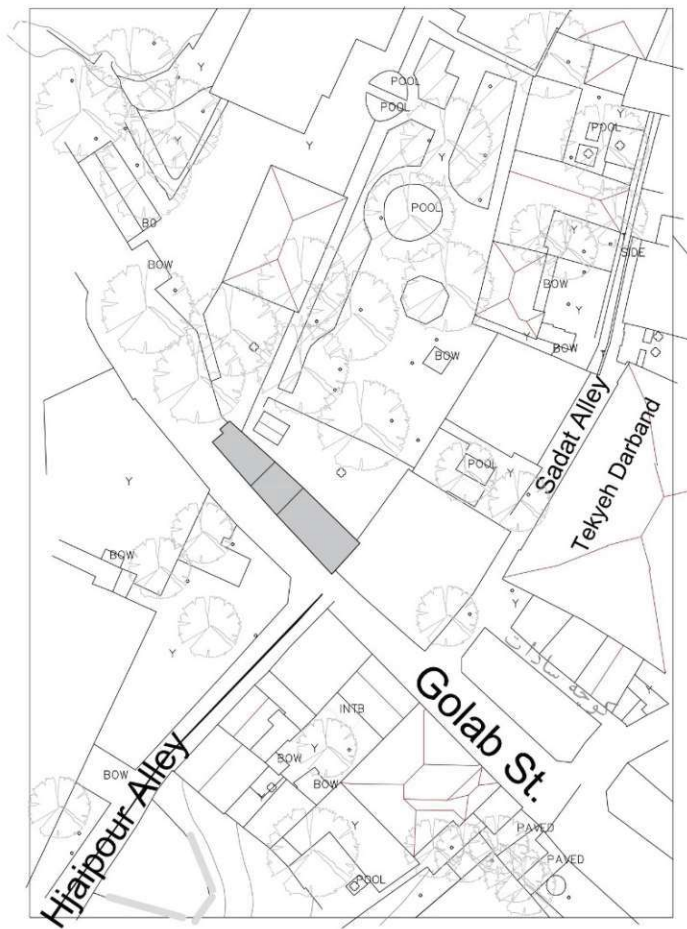
### Ground Floor Plan



### Roof Plan



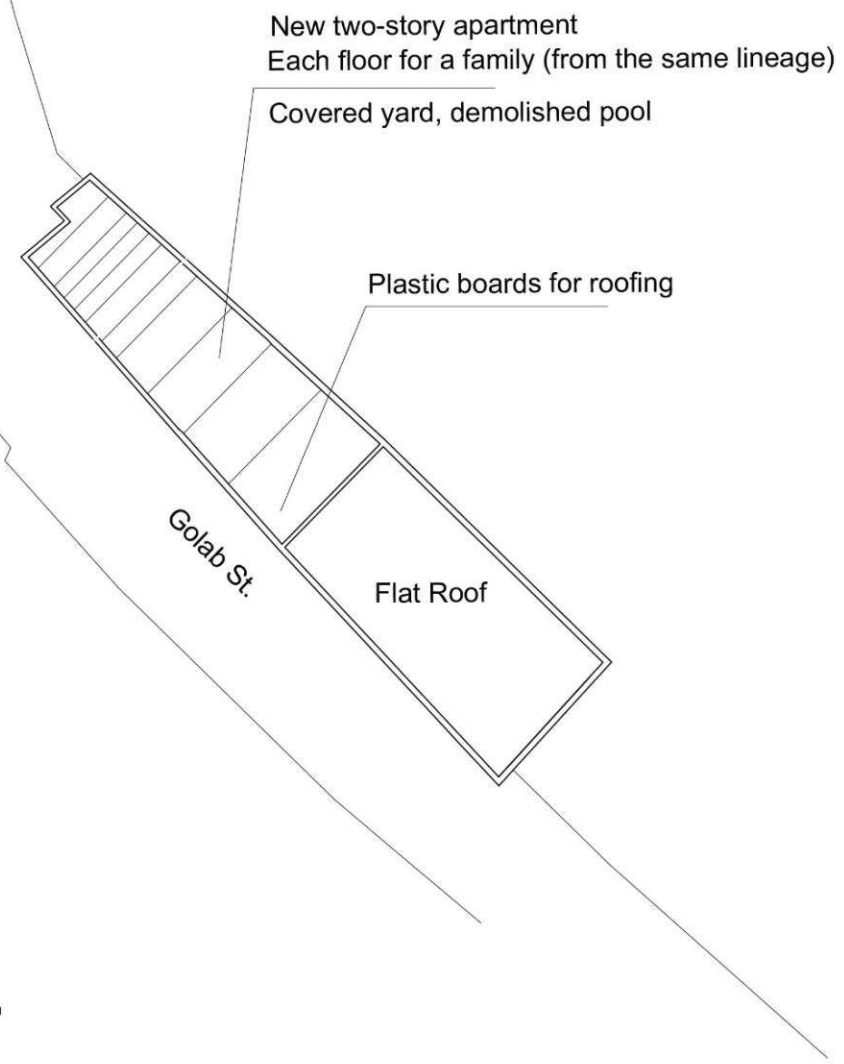
# House no. 4 Plan of new house



Site Plan



## Roof Plan of New House



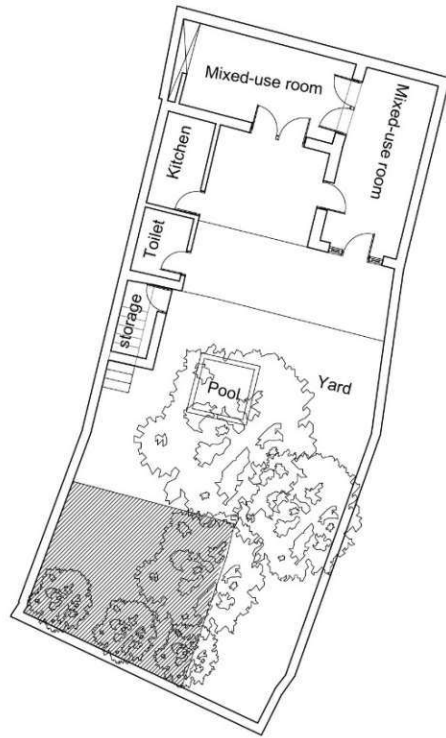
## House no. 4



# House no. 5

## Plan of old house

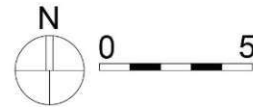
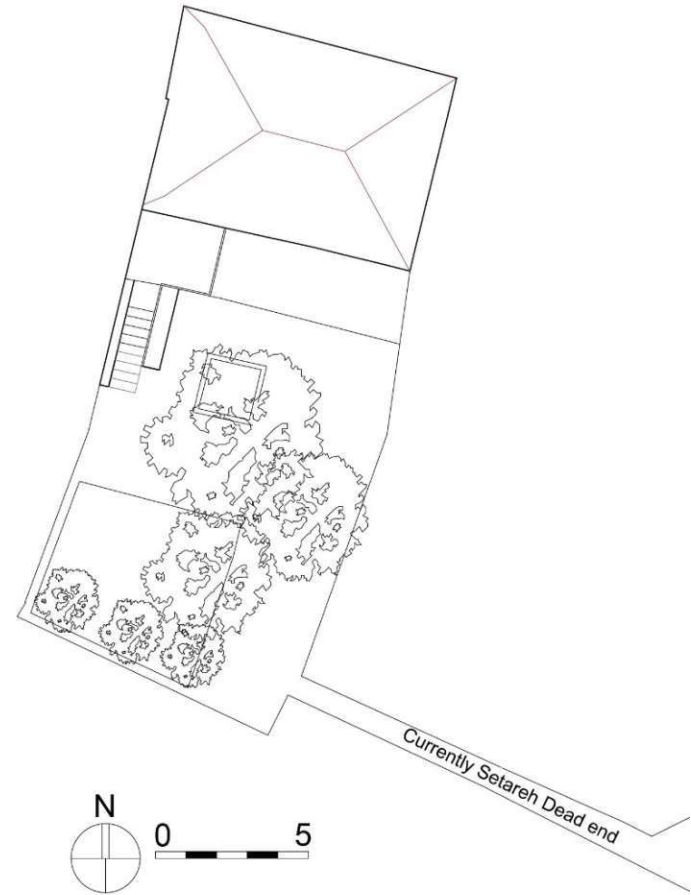
Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



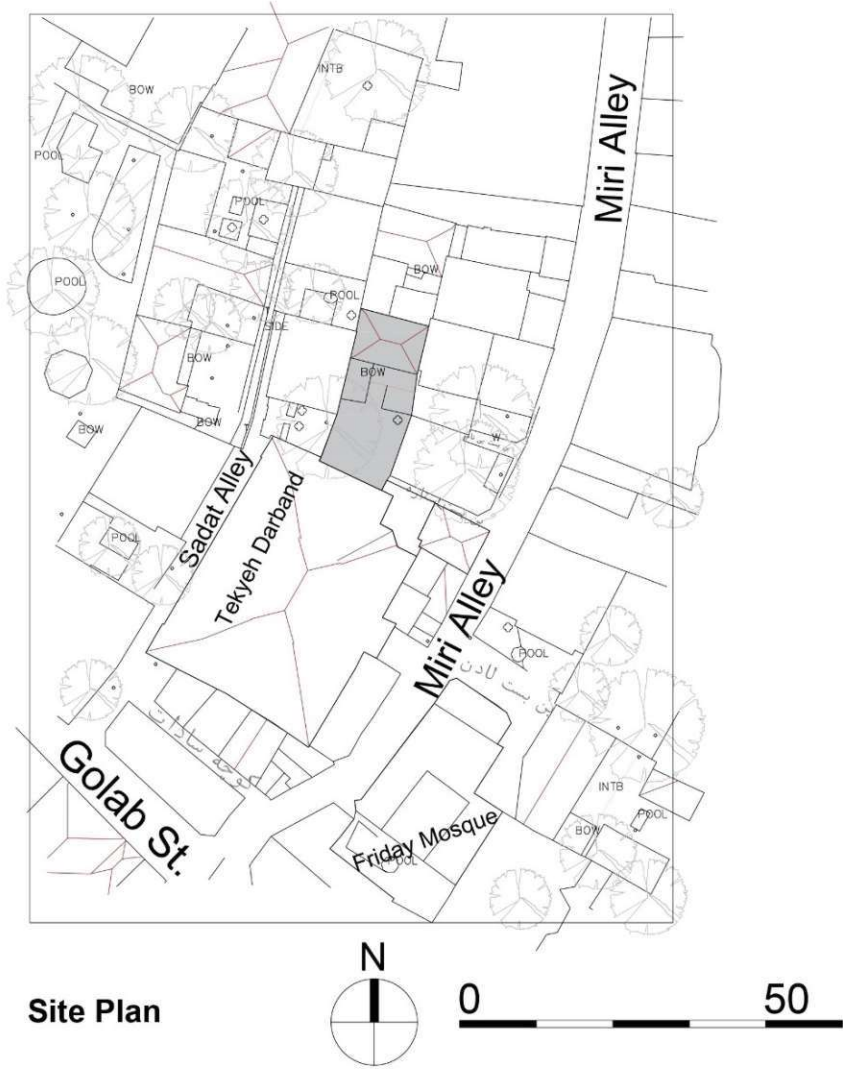
Roof Floor Plan



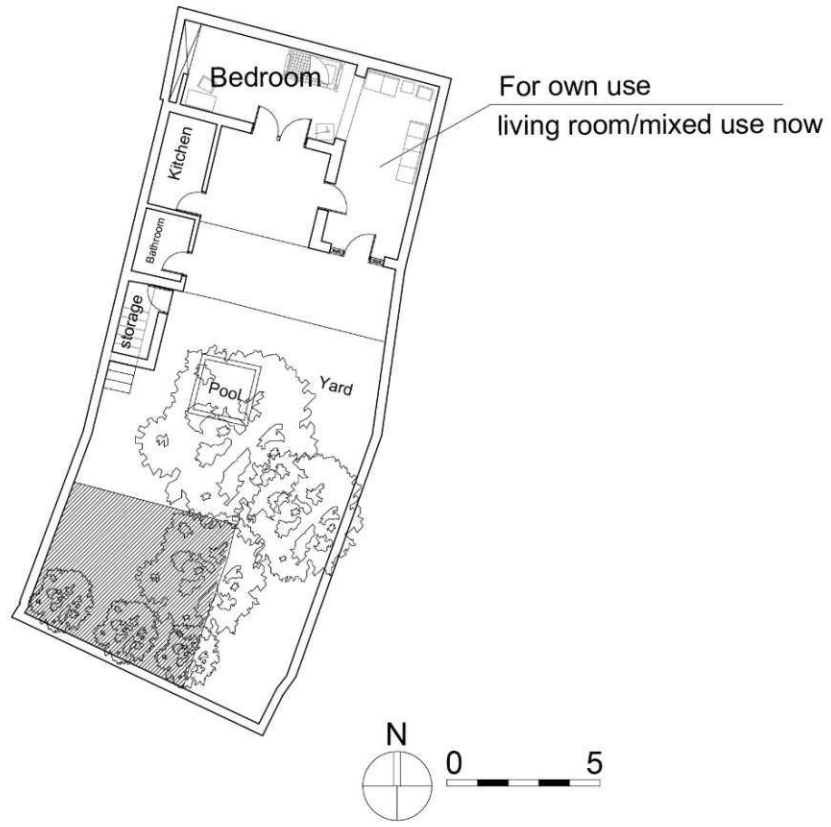


# House no. 5

## Plan of transformed house



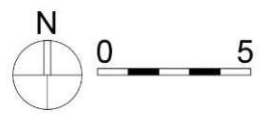
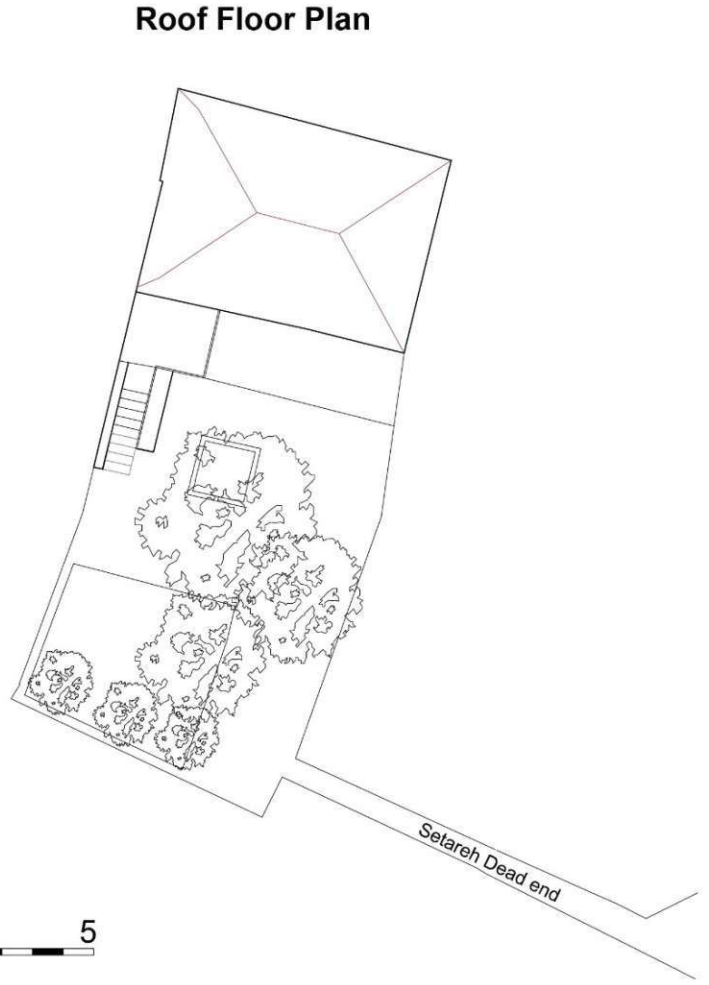
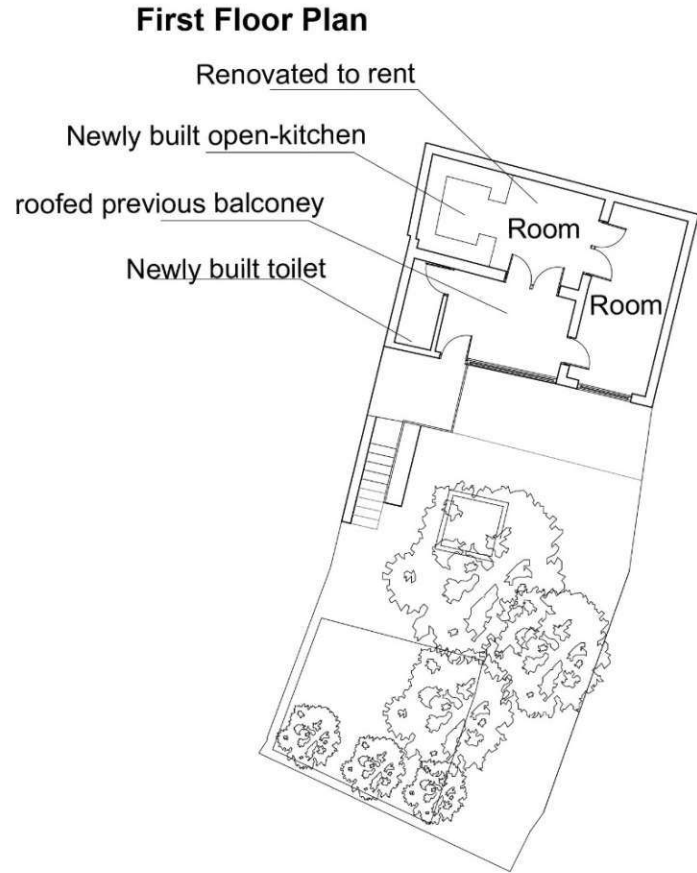
**Ground Floor Plan**

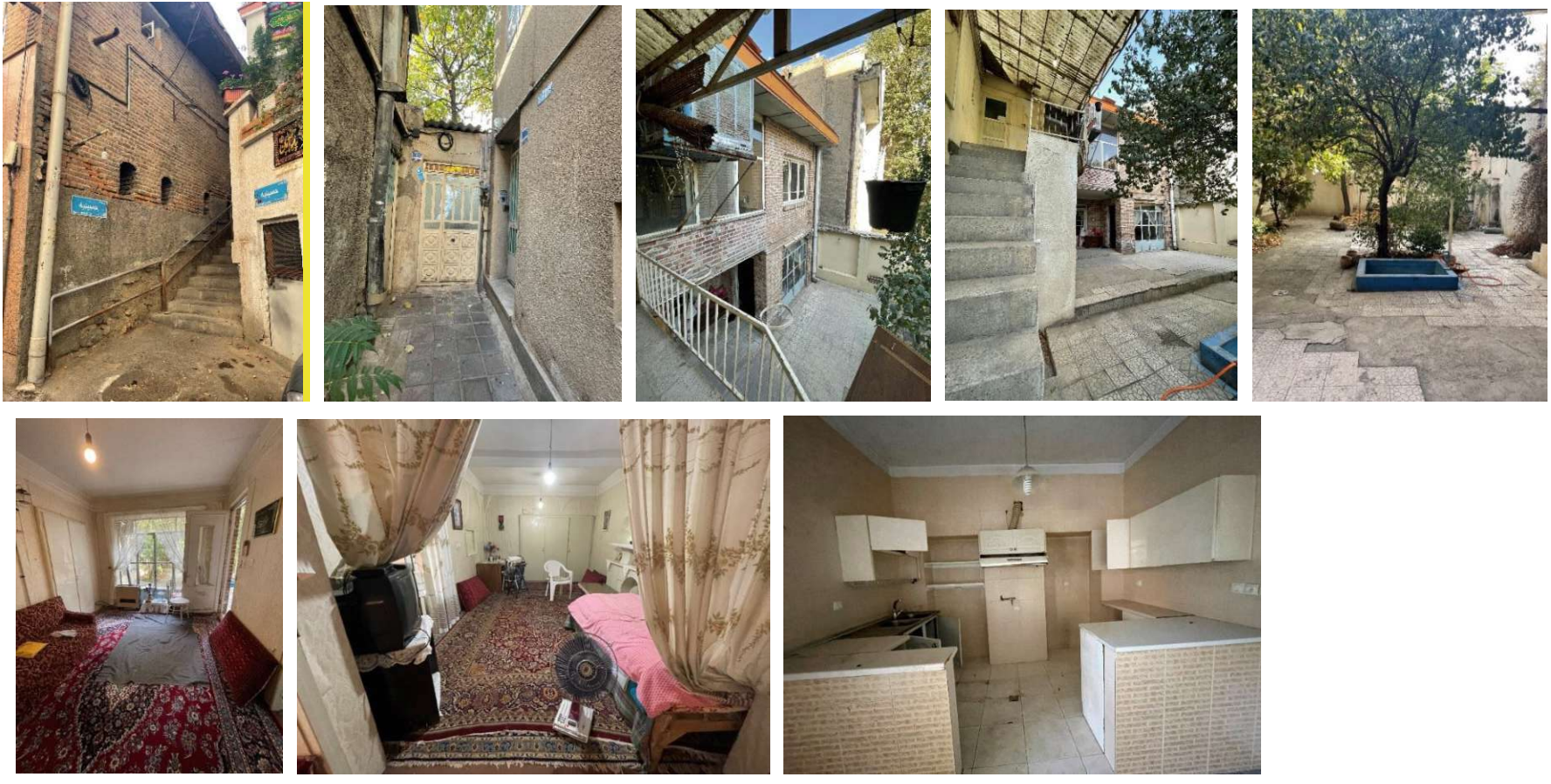




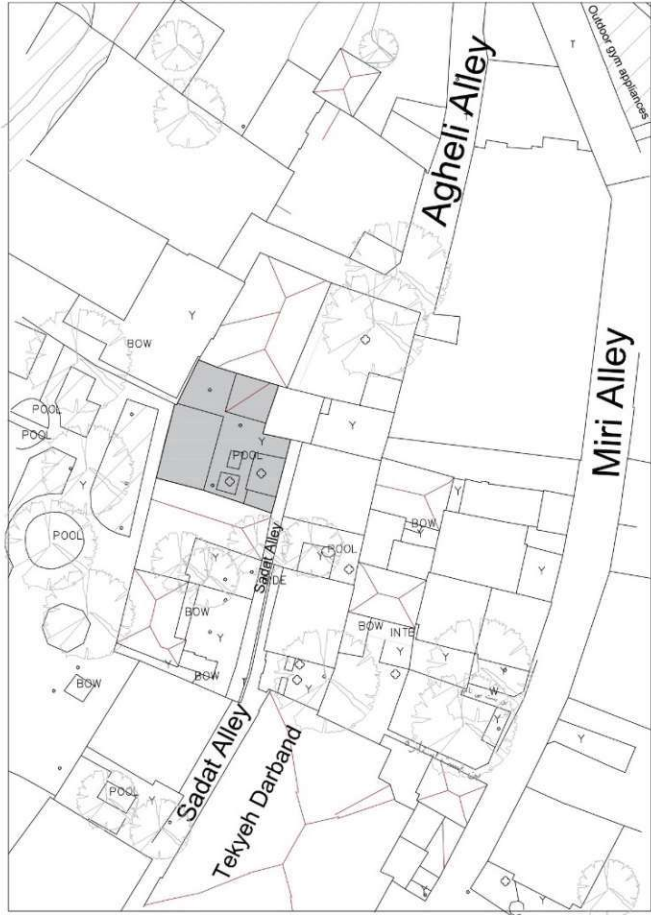
# House no. 5

## Plan of transformed house



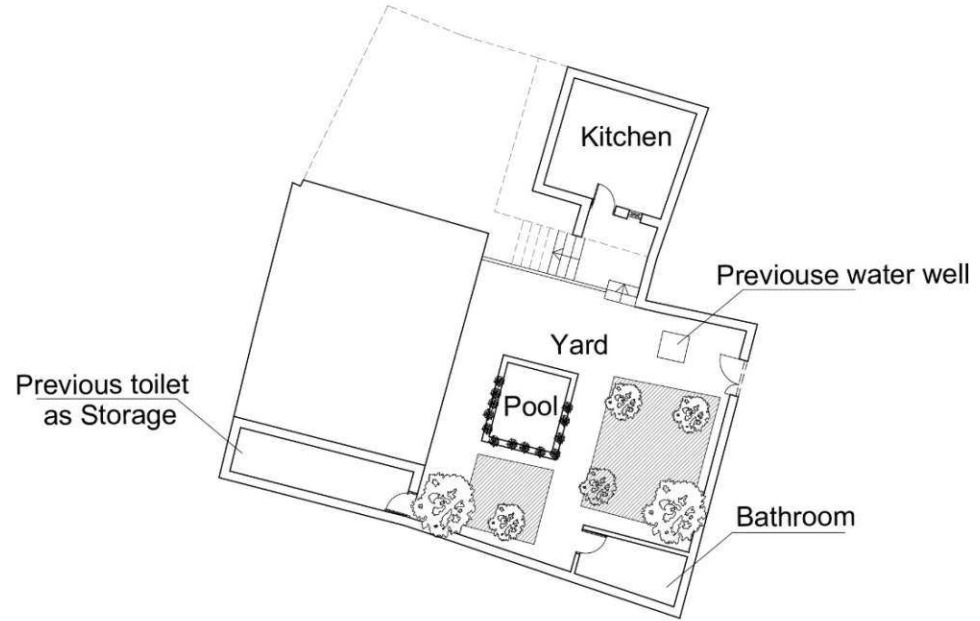


# House no. 6



Site Plan

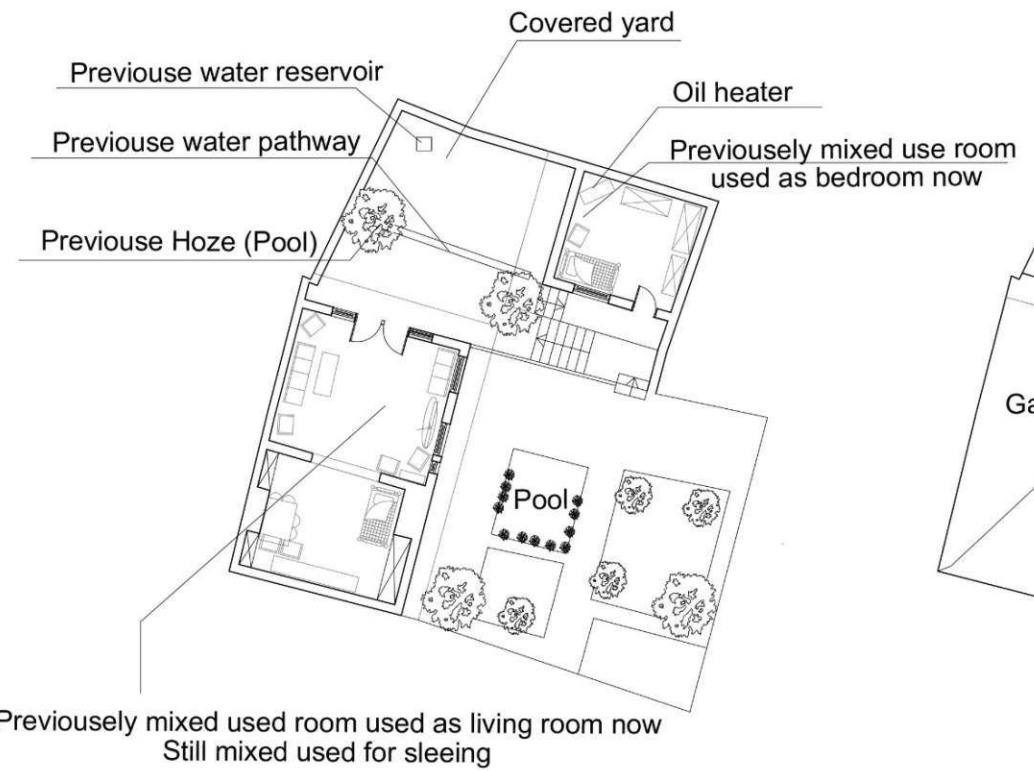
## Ground Floor Plan



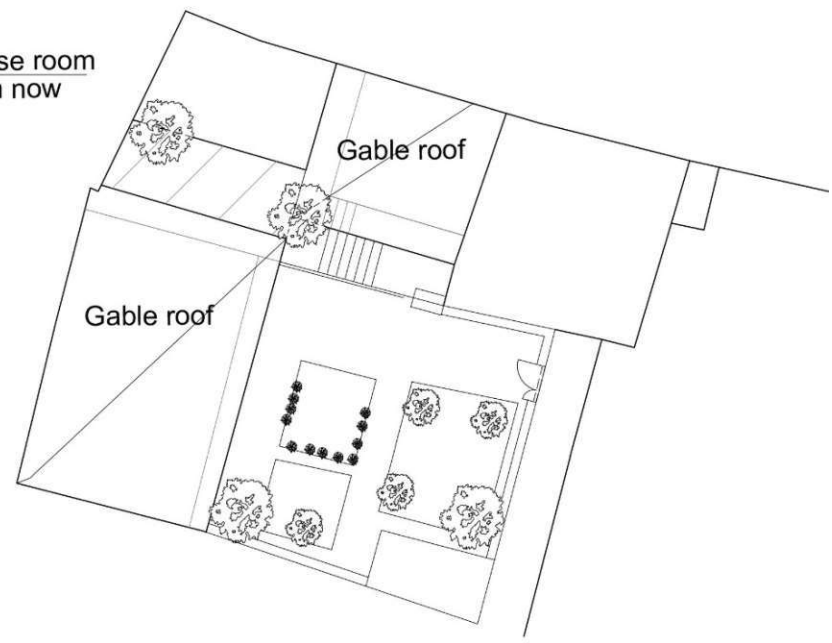


# House no. 6

### First Floor Plan



### Roof Plan



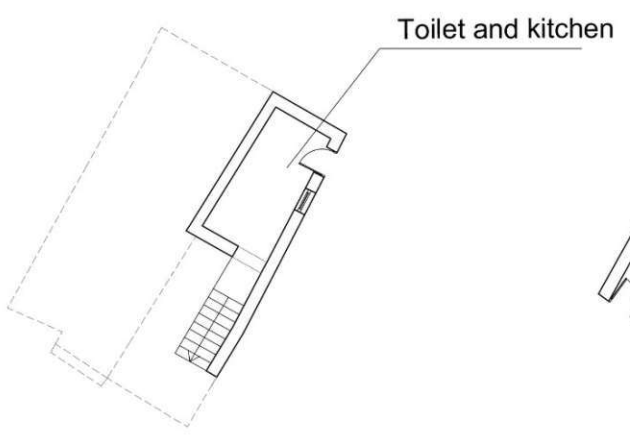




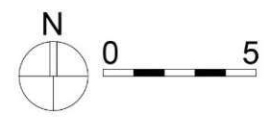
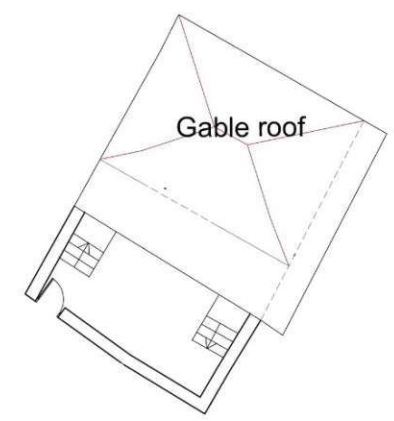
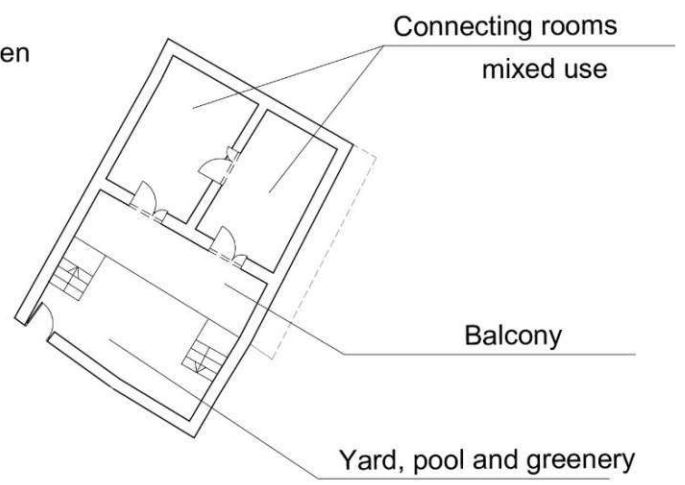
# House no. 7

## Possible plan of old house

**-1 Floor Plan**

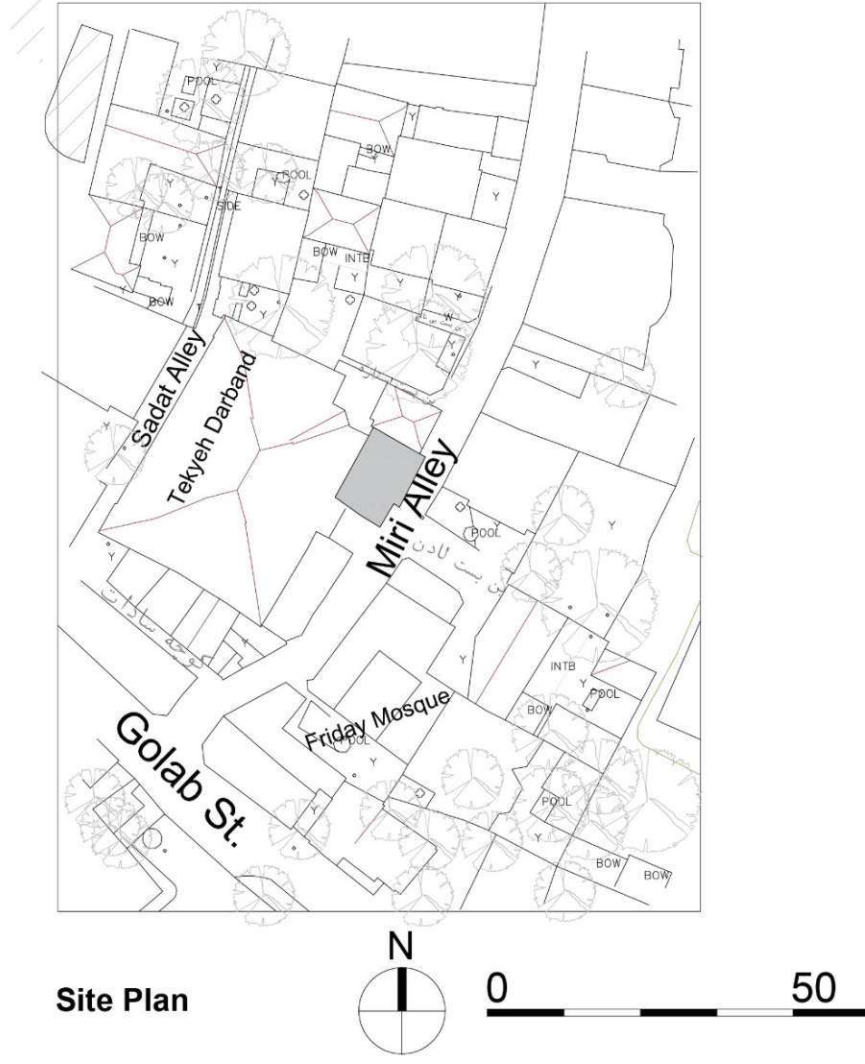


**Ground Floor Plan**

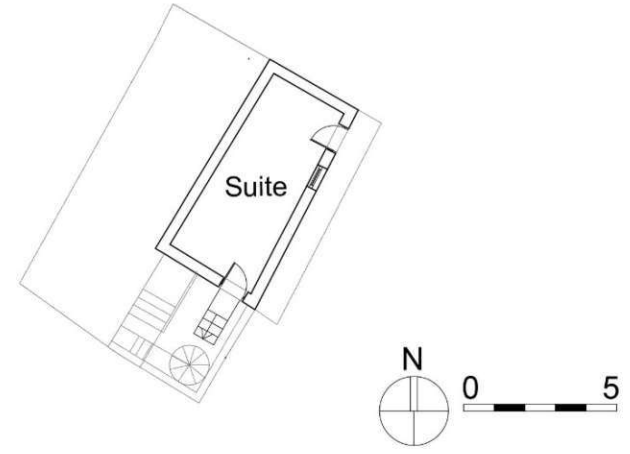


# House no. 7

## Plan of transformed house

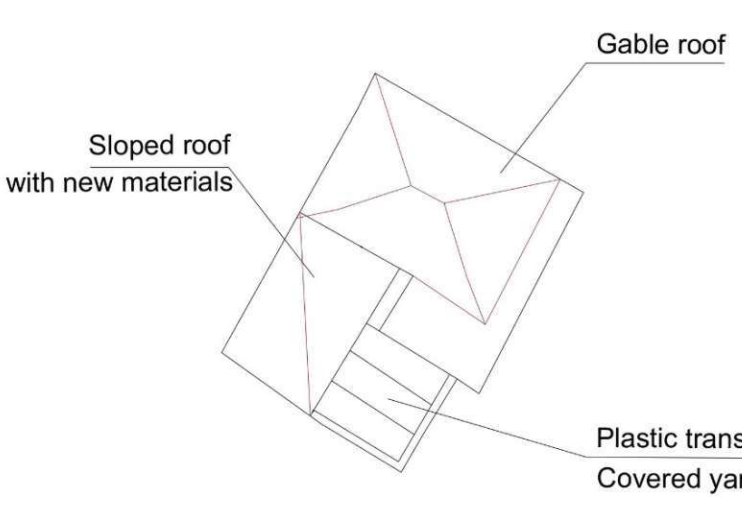
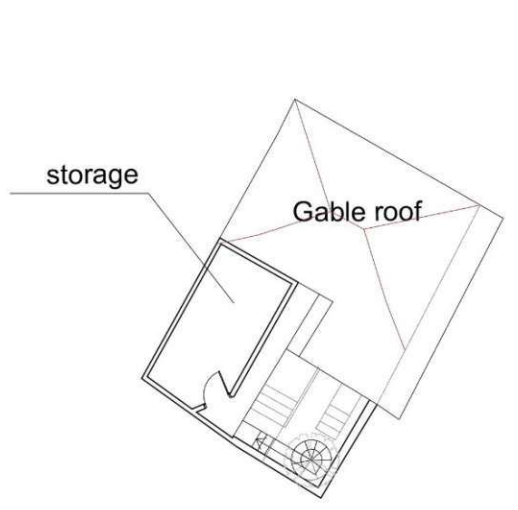
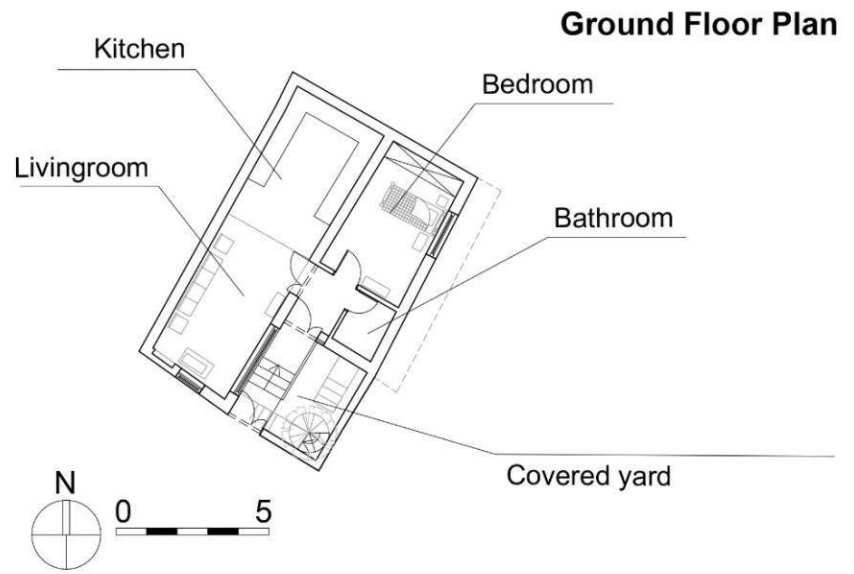


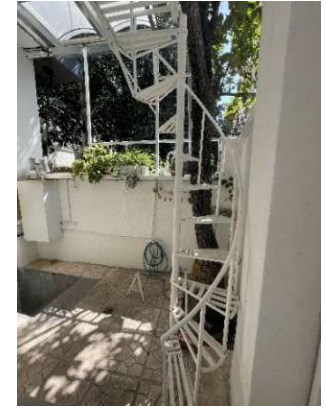
### -1 Floor Plan



# House no. 7

## Plan of transformed house



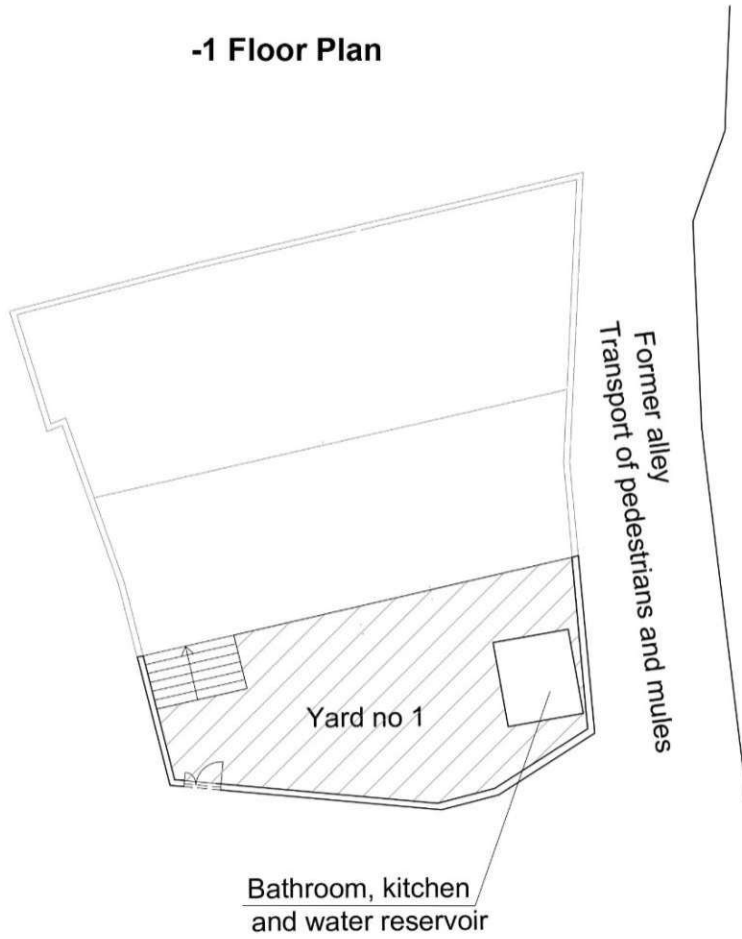




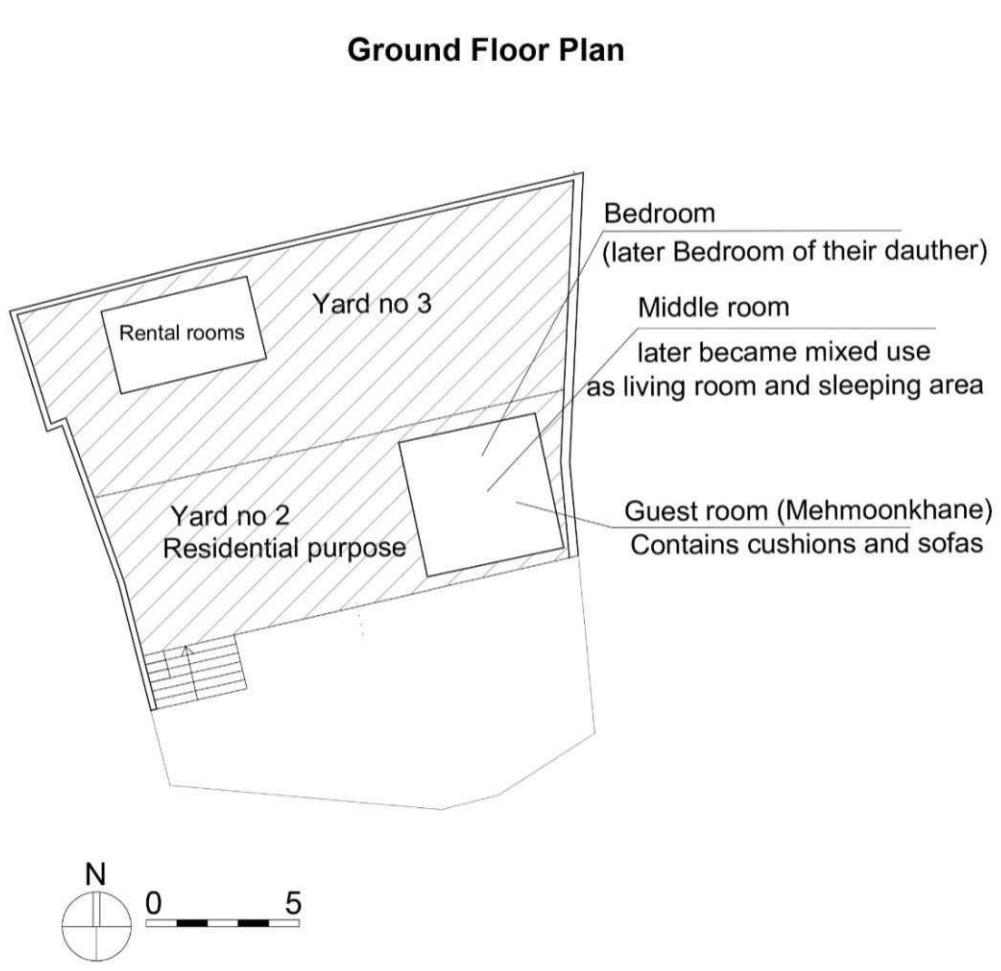
# House no. 8

## Plan of old house

### -1 Floor Plan

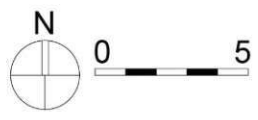
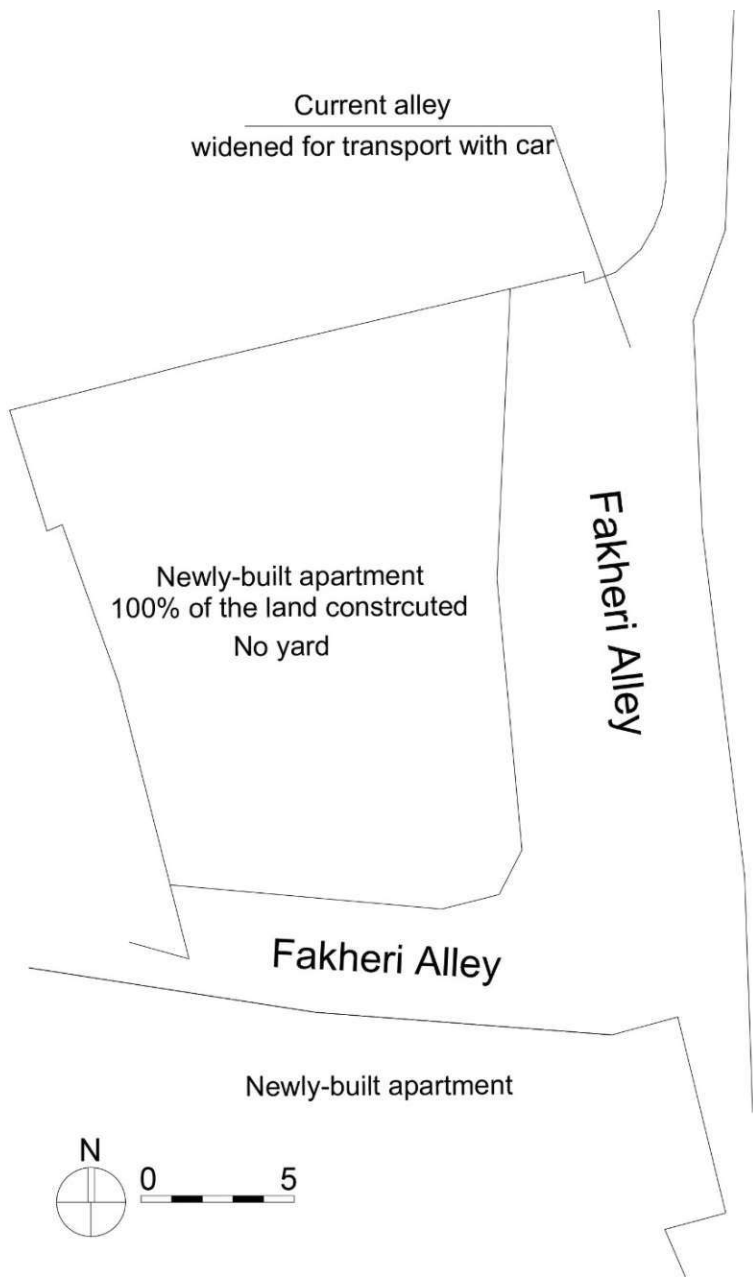
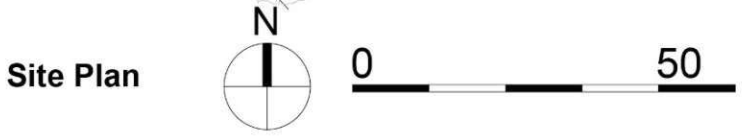
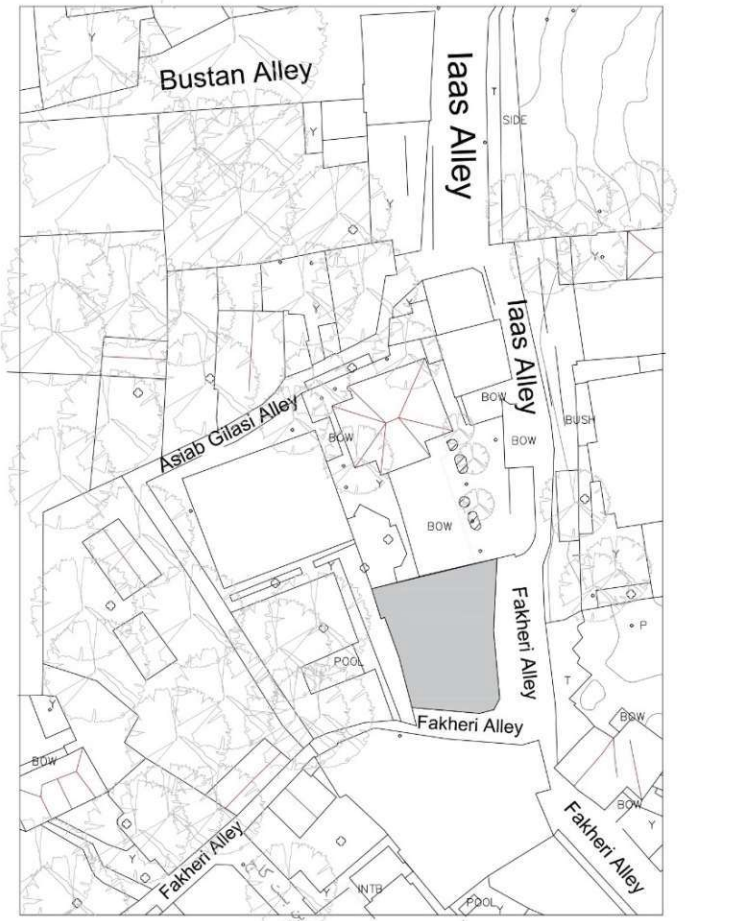


### Ground Floor Plan





# House no. 8 Plan of new house



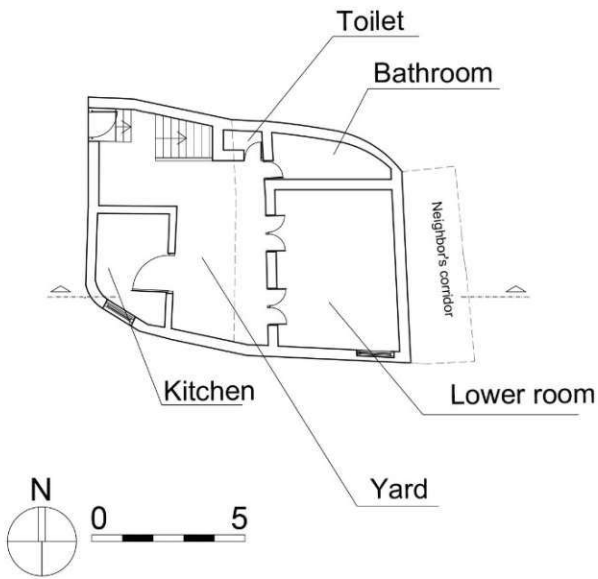
# House no. 8



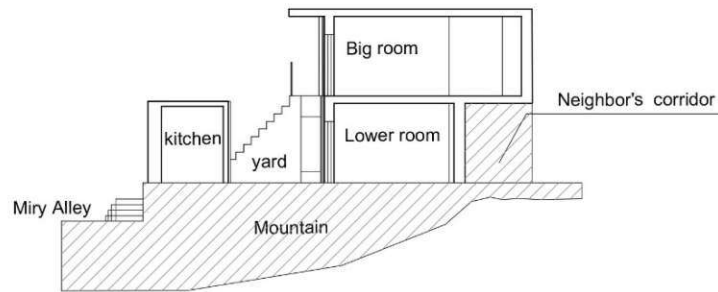
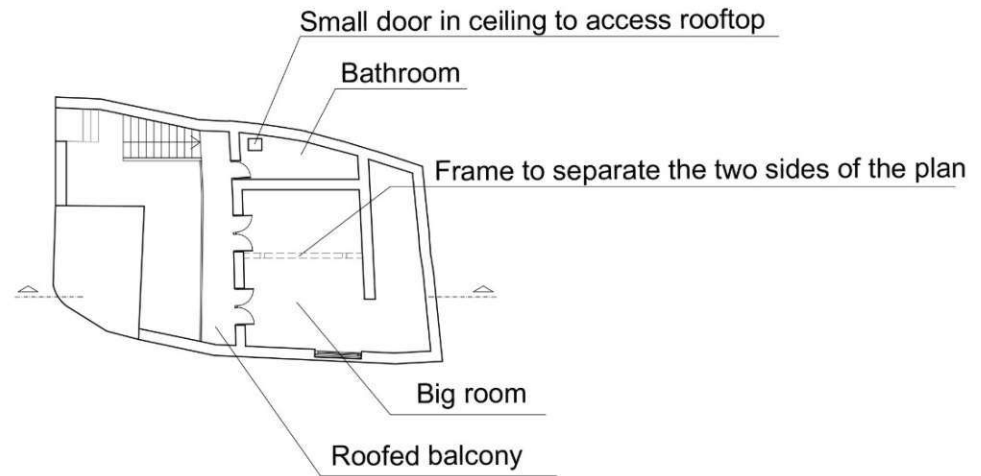
# House no. 9

## Plan of old house

**Ground Floor Plan**



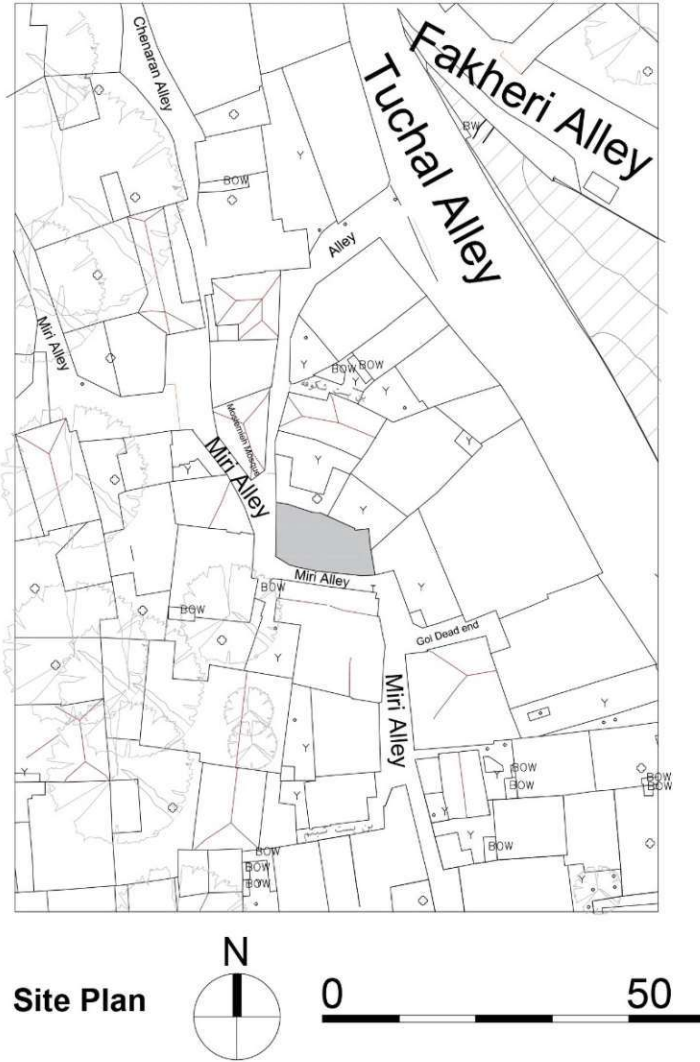
**First Floor Plan**



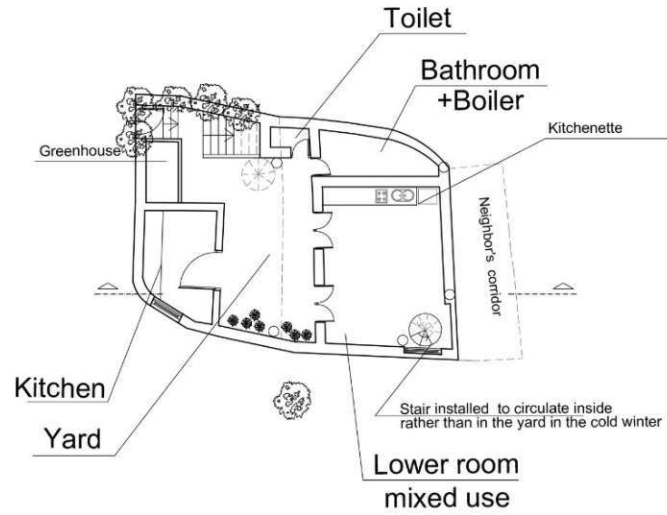


# House no. 9

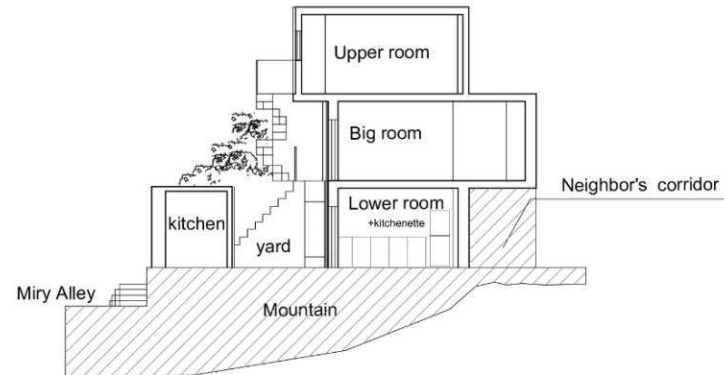
## Plan of transformed house



### Ground Floor Plan



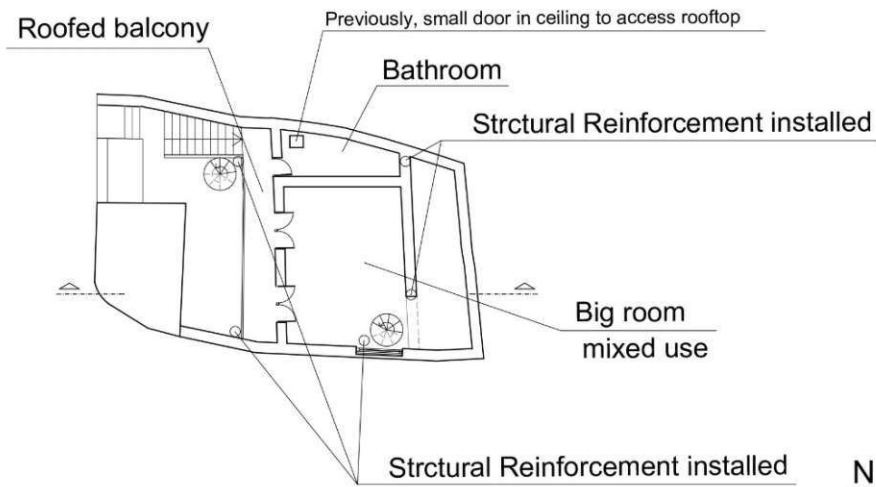
### East-west Section



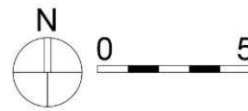
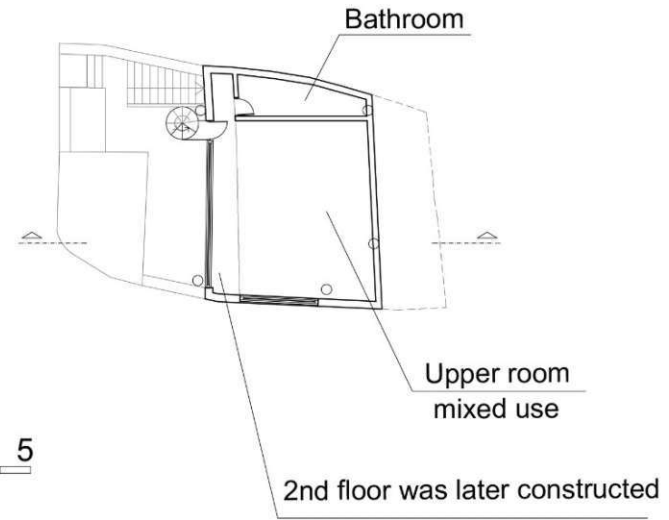
# House no. 9

## Plan of transformed house

### First Floor Plan



### Second Floor Plan





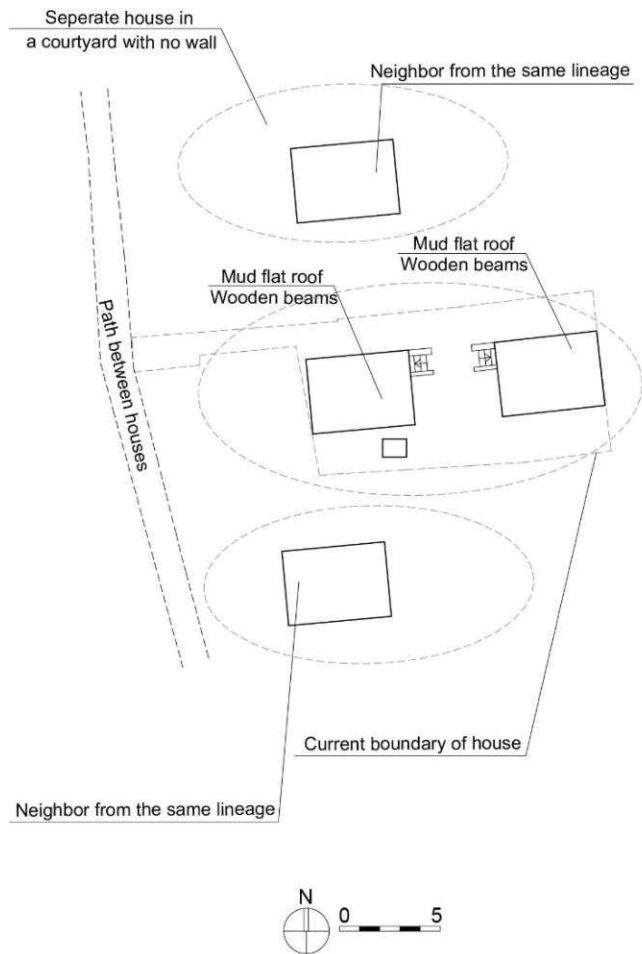
# House no. 9



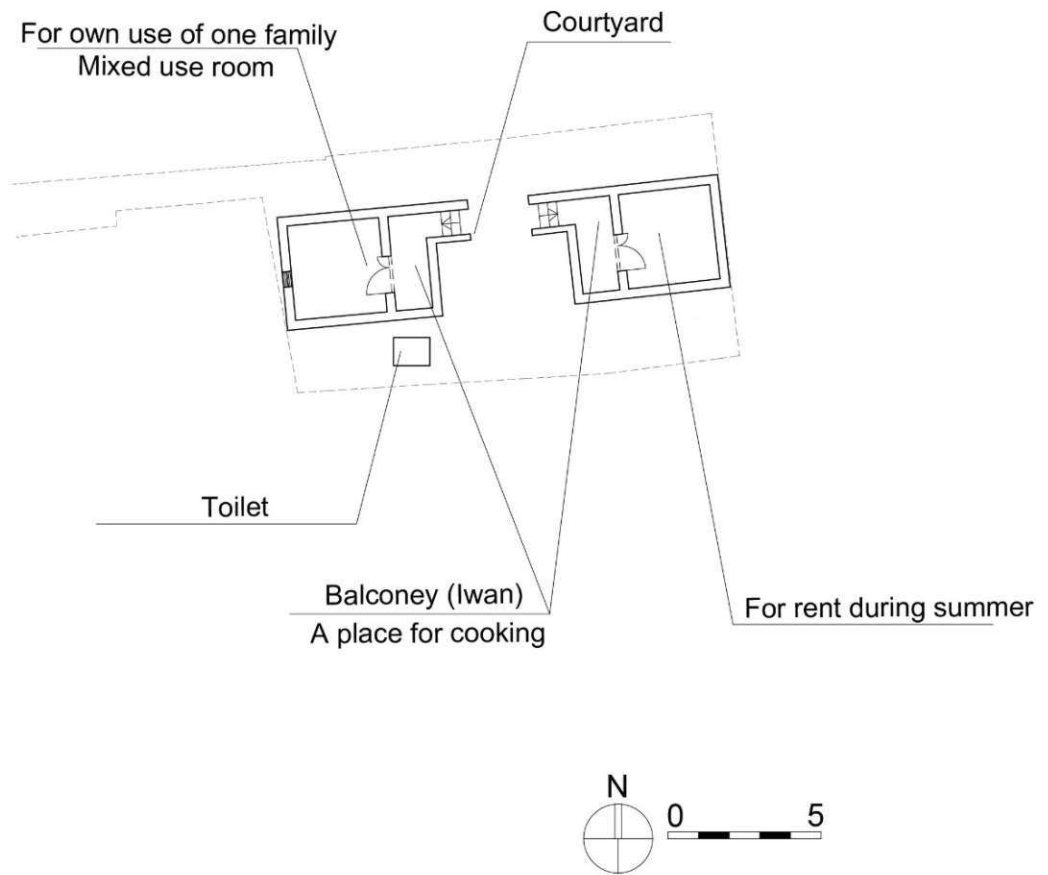
# House no. 10

## Plan of old house-First period

### Site Plan

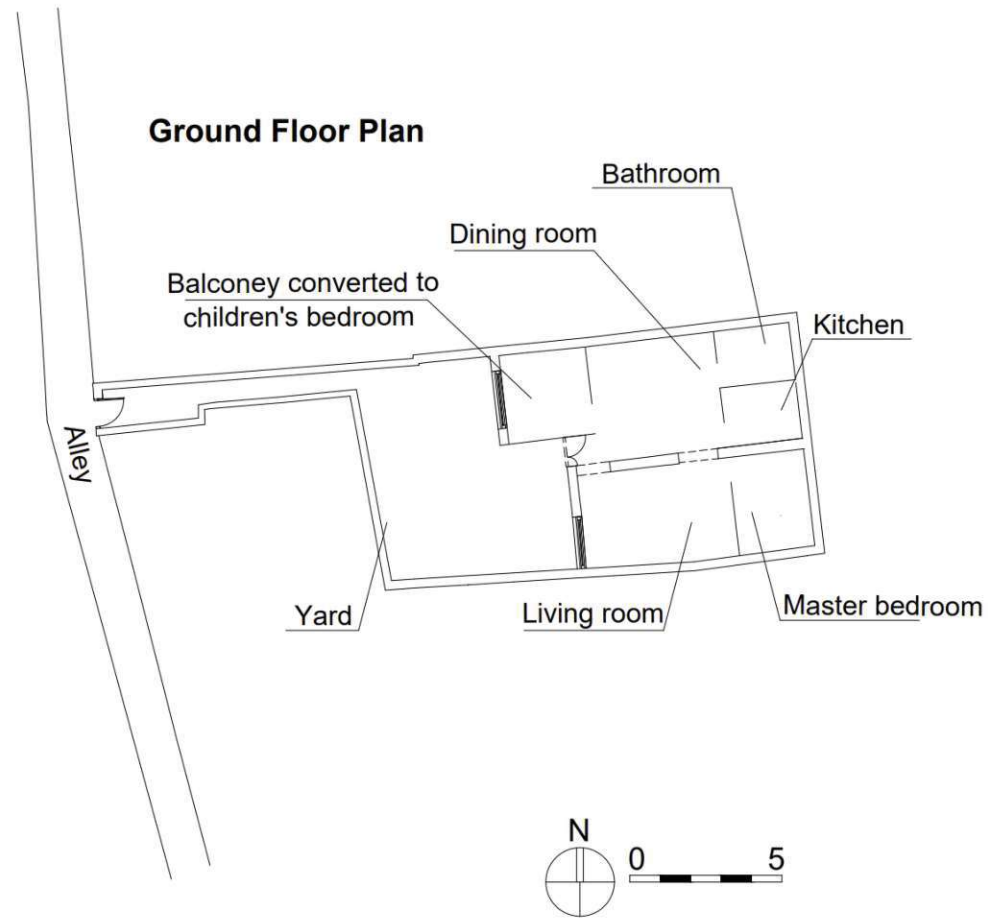


### Ground Floor Plan



# House no. 10

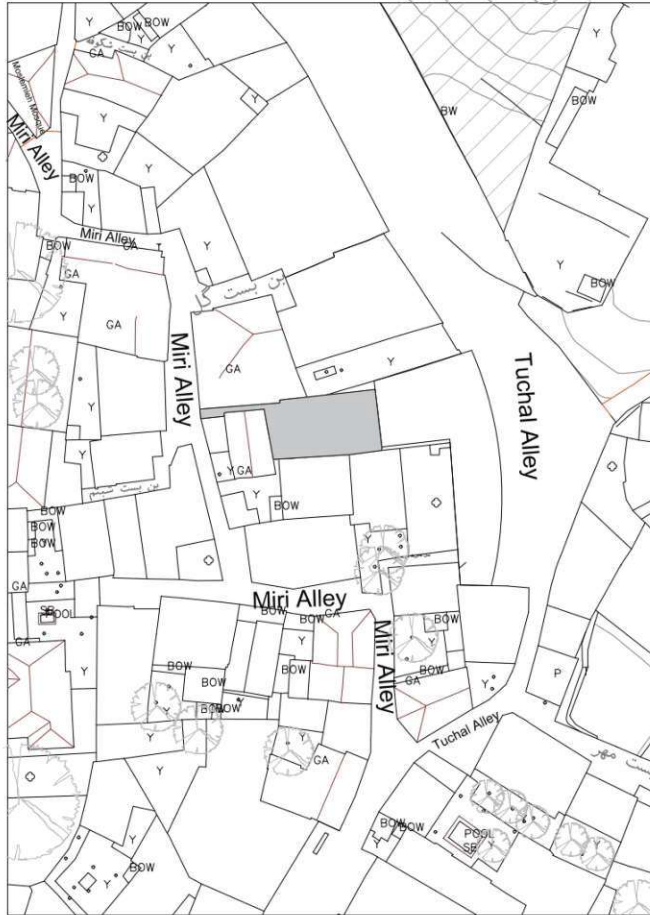
## Plan of old house-Second period





# House no. 10

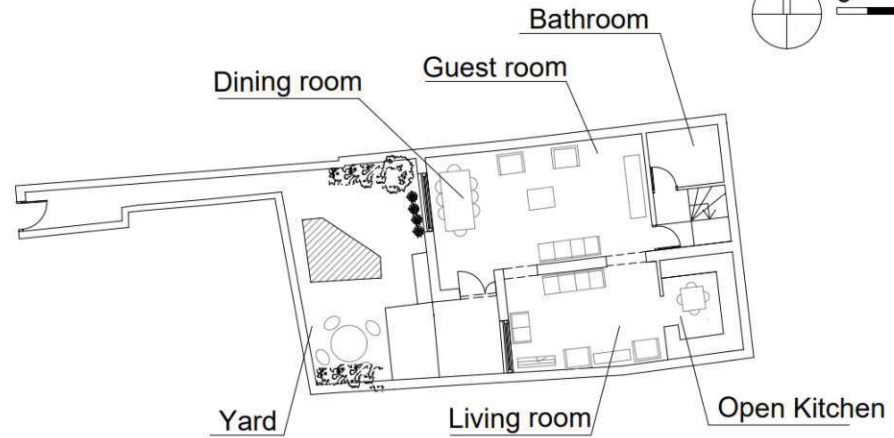
## Plan of transformed house-current



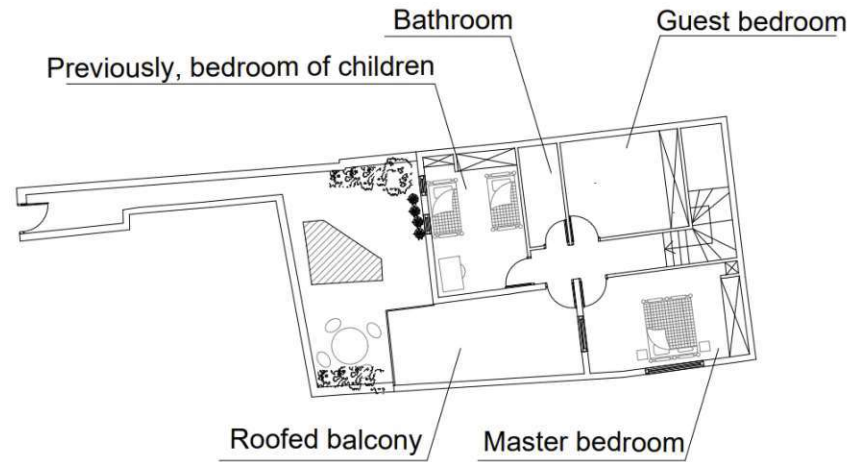
**Site Plan**

A north arrow pointing upwards and a scale bar marked from 0 to 50.

**Ground Floor Plan**



**First Floor Plan**



Second floor was constructed when children grew.

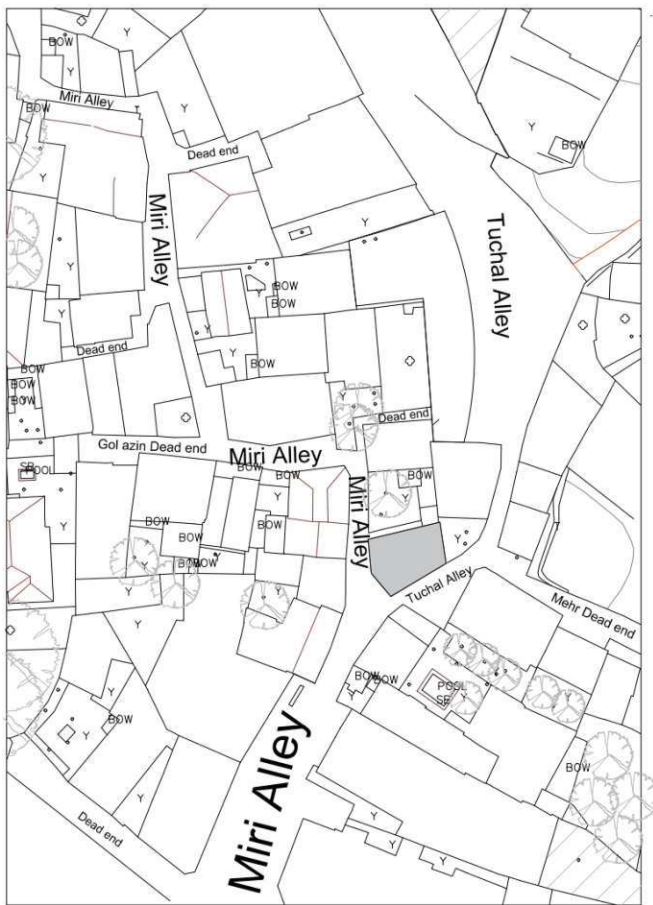
# House no. 10



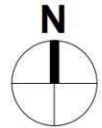


# House no. 11

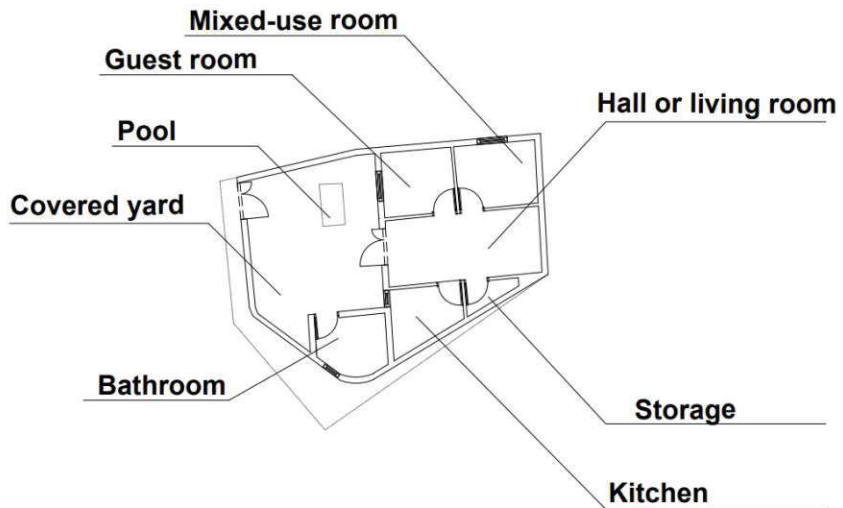
## Plan of current house



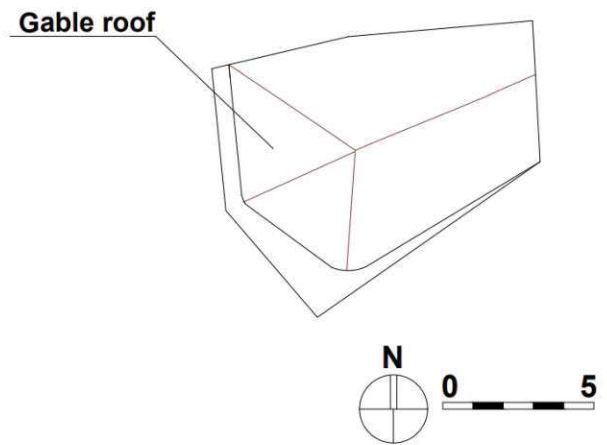
Site Plan



Ground Floor Plan



Roof Plan



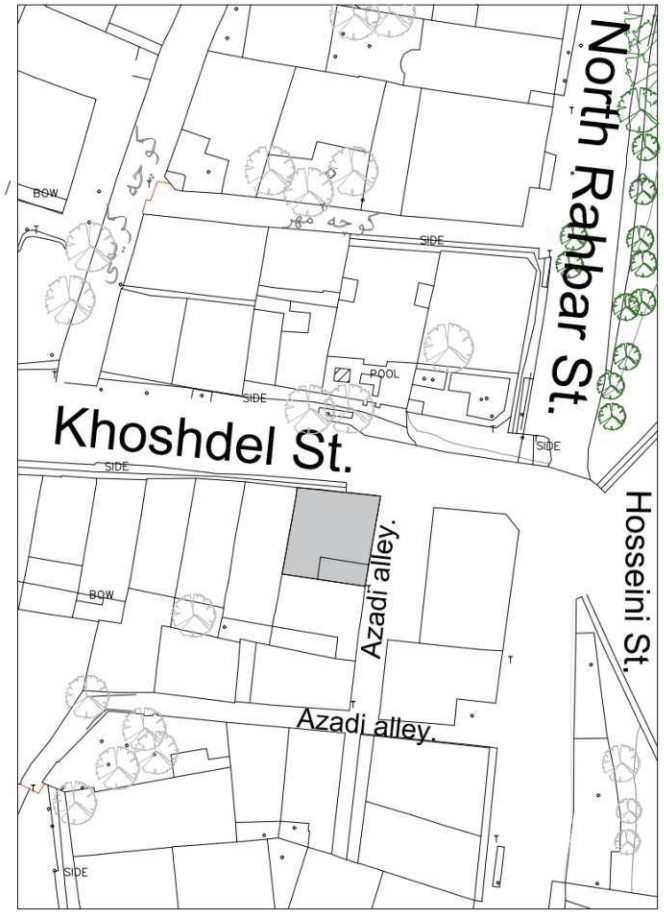
# House no. 11



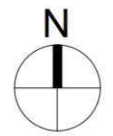


# House no. 12

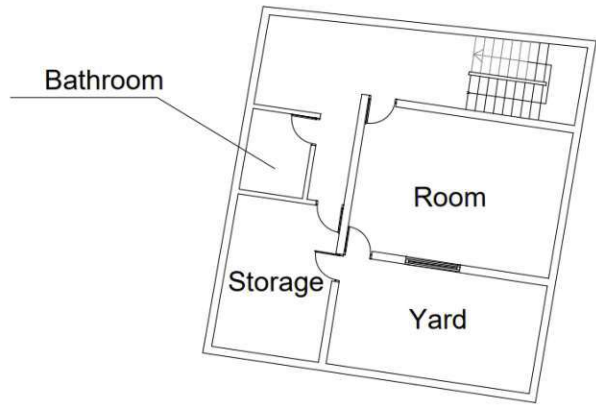
## Plan of current house



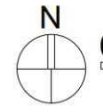
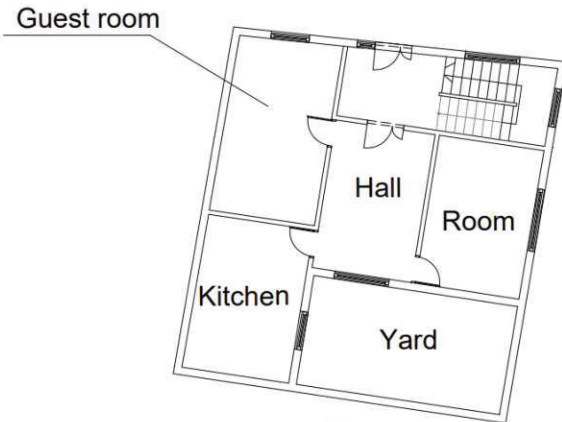
Site Plan



-1 Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan

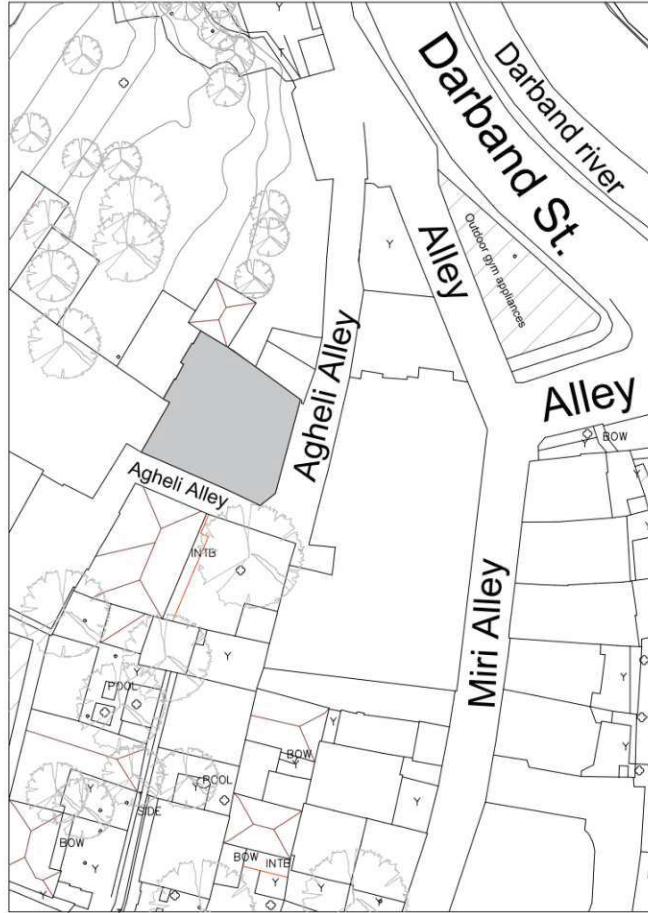


## House no. 12



# House no. 13

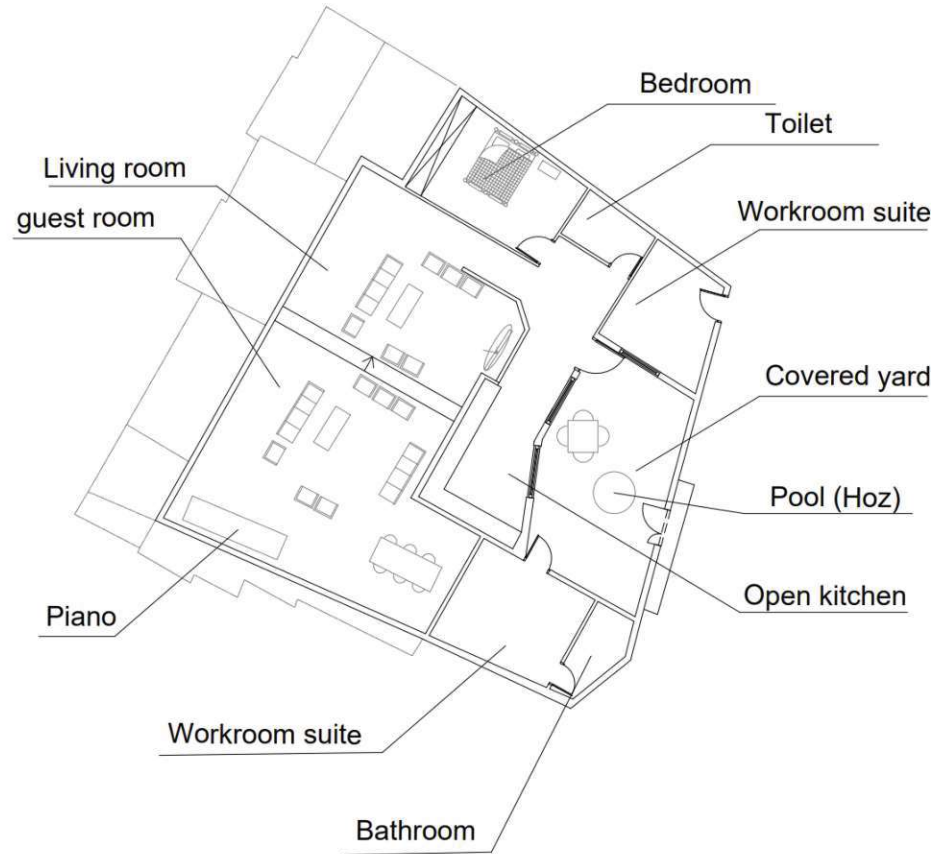
## Plan of transformed house



Site Plan



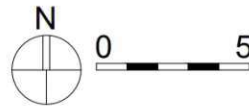
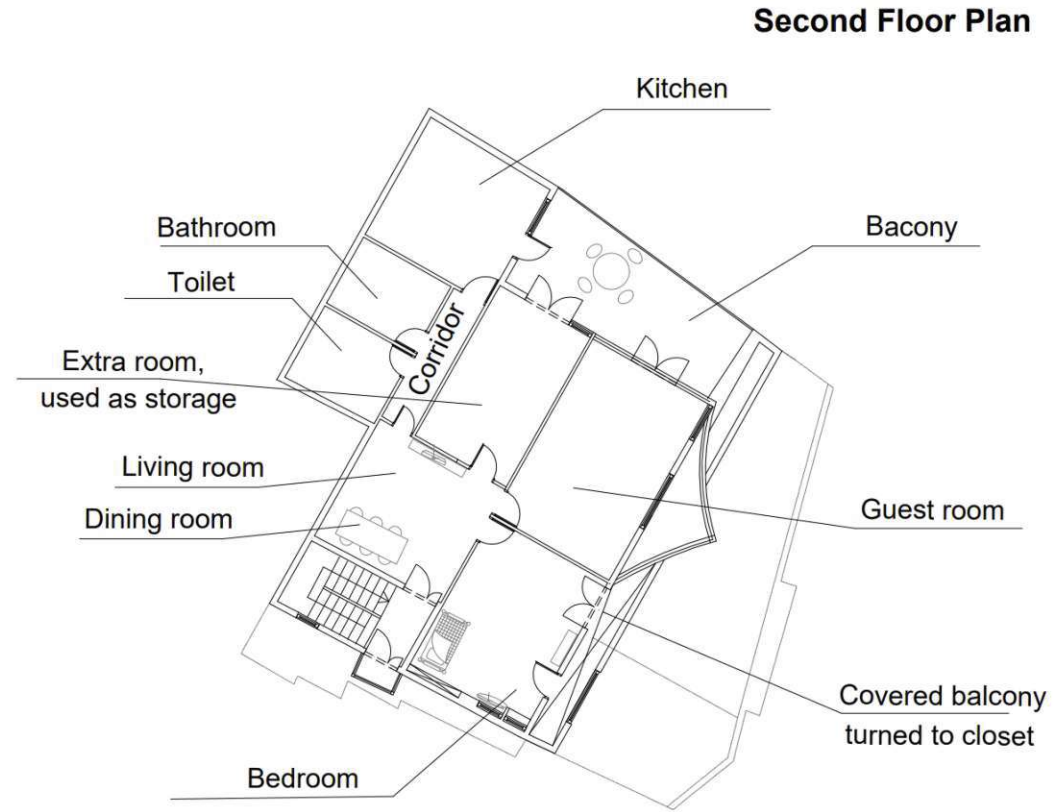
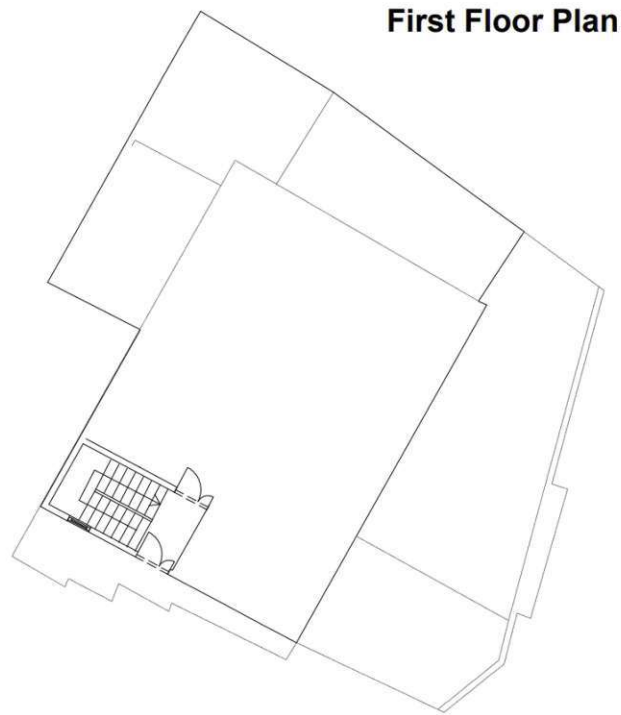
Ground Floor Plan





# House no. 13

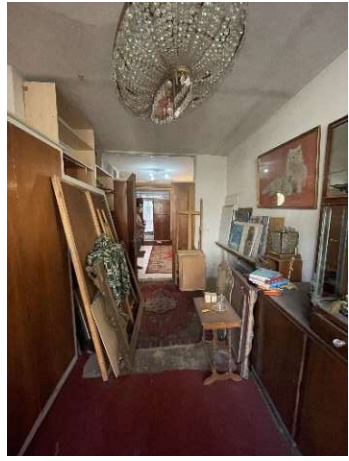
## Plan of transformed house



## House no. 13



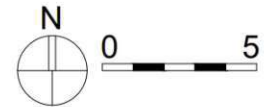
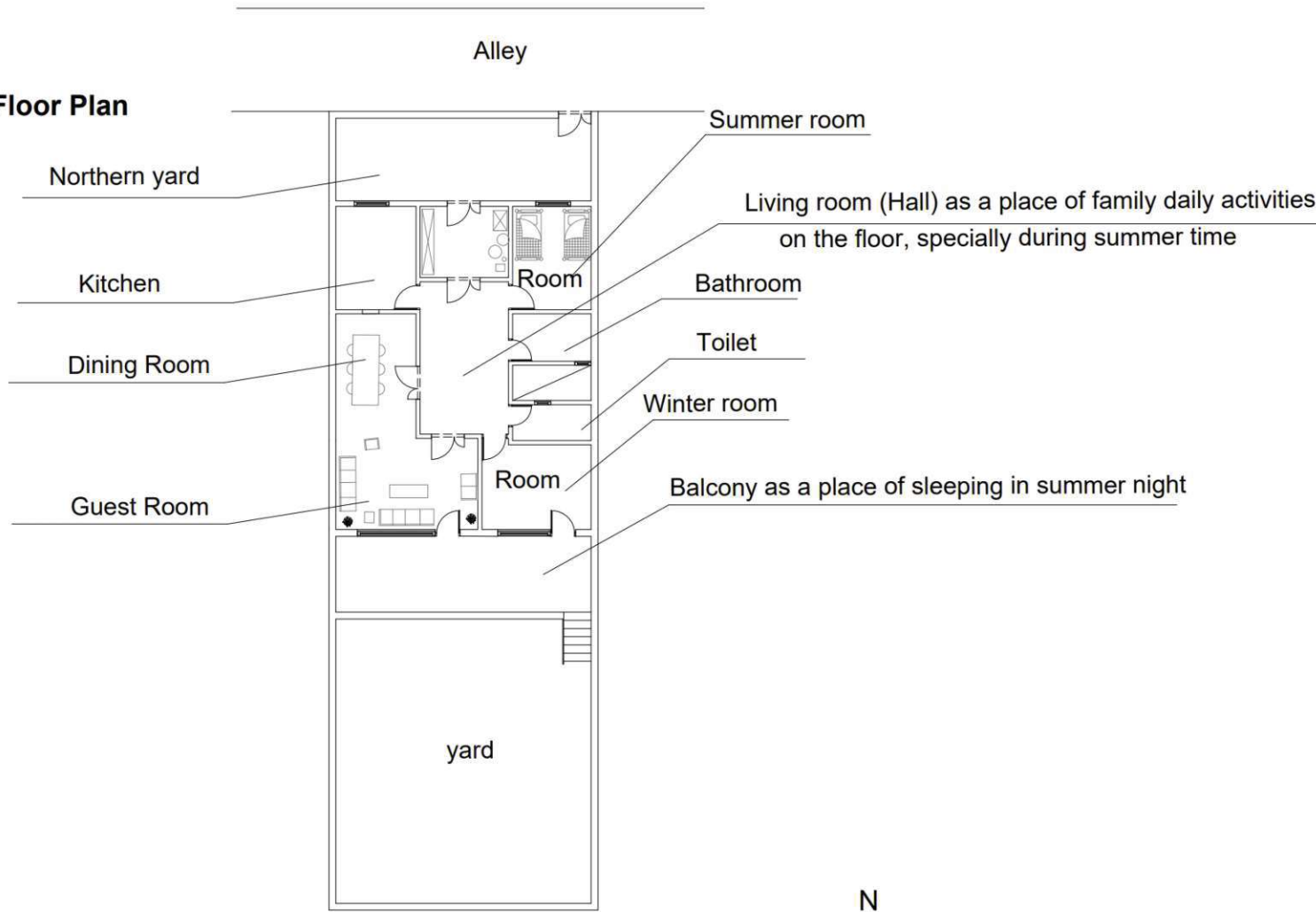




# House no. 14

## Plan of old house

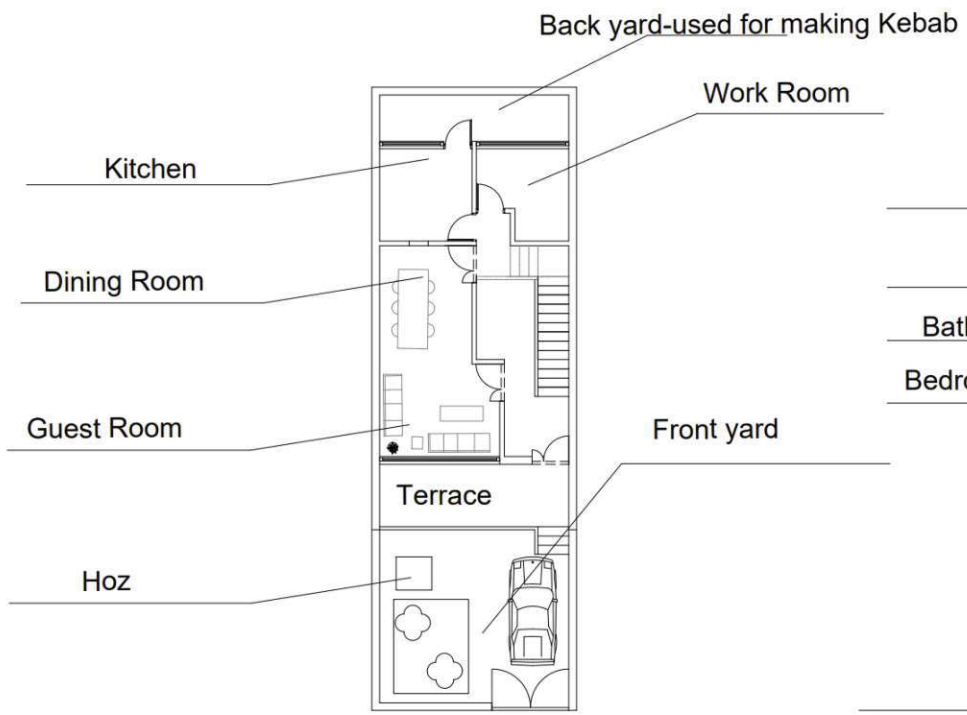
### Ground Floor Plan



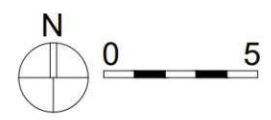
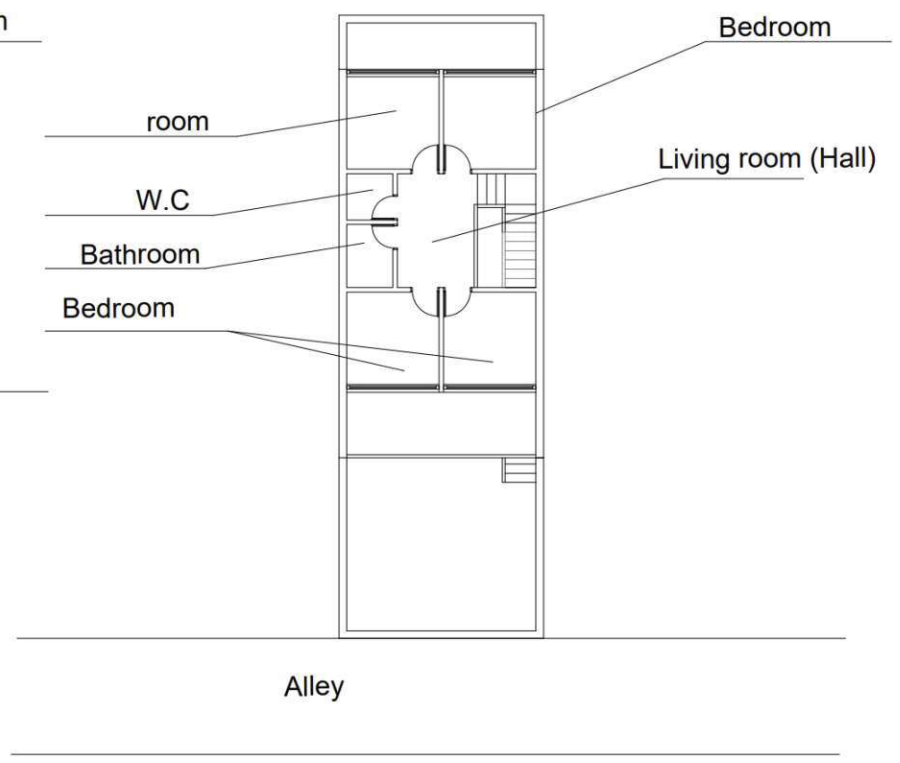
# House no. 15

## Plan of old row-house

### Ground Floor Plan



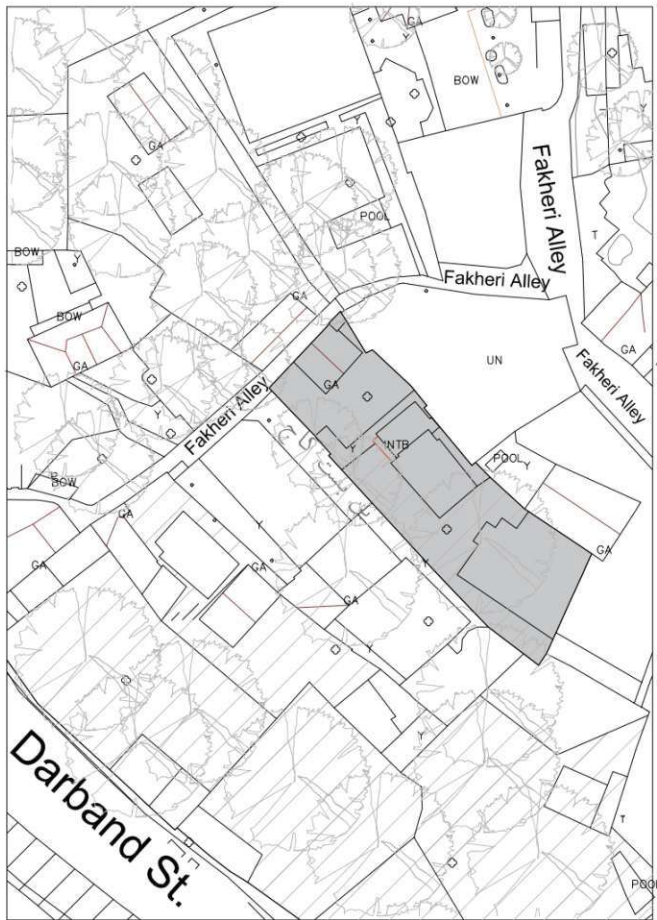
### First Floor Plan





# House no. 16

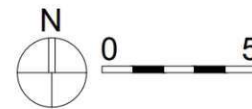
## Plan of current garden house



Site Plan



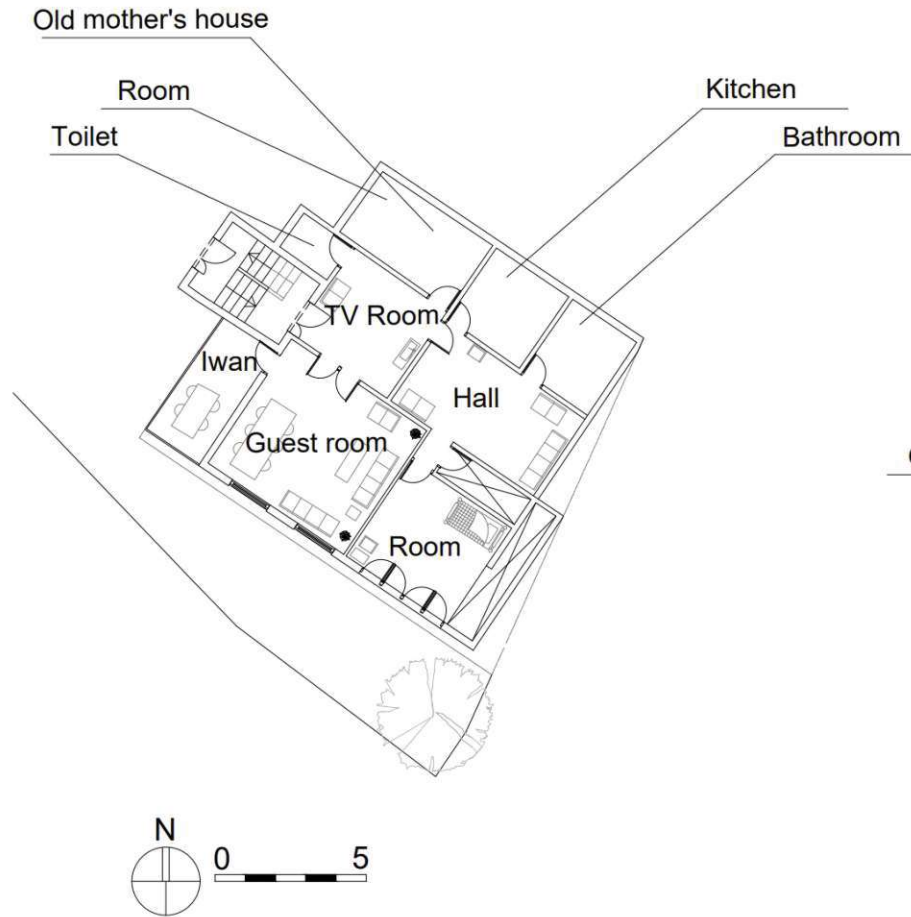
-1 Floor Plan



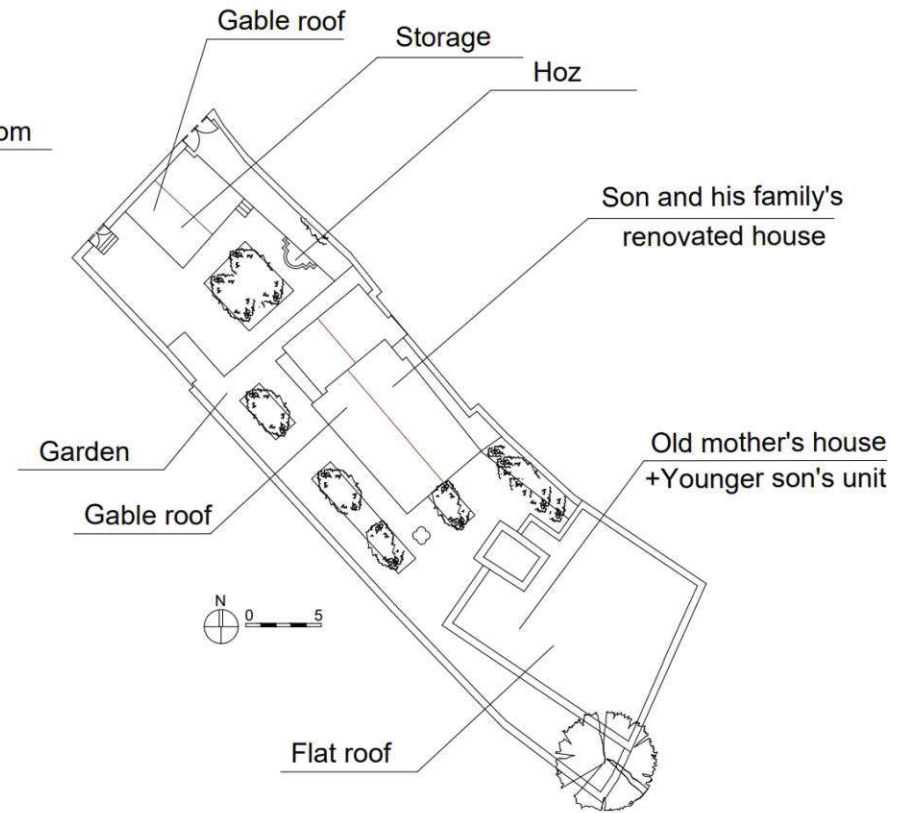
# House no. 16

## Plan of current garden house

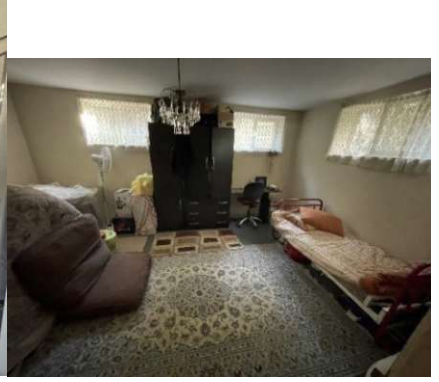
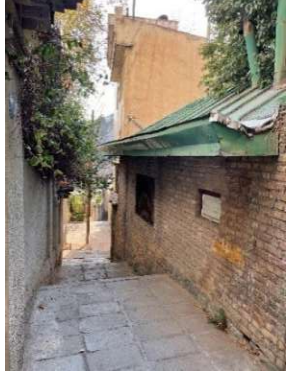
### Ground Floor Plan



### Roof Floor Plan

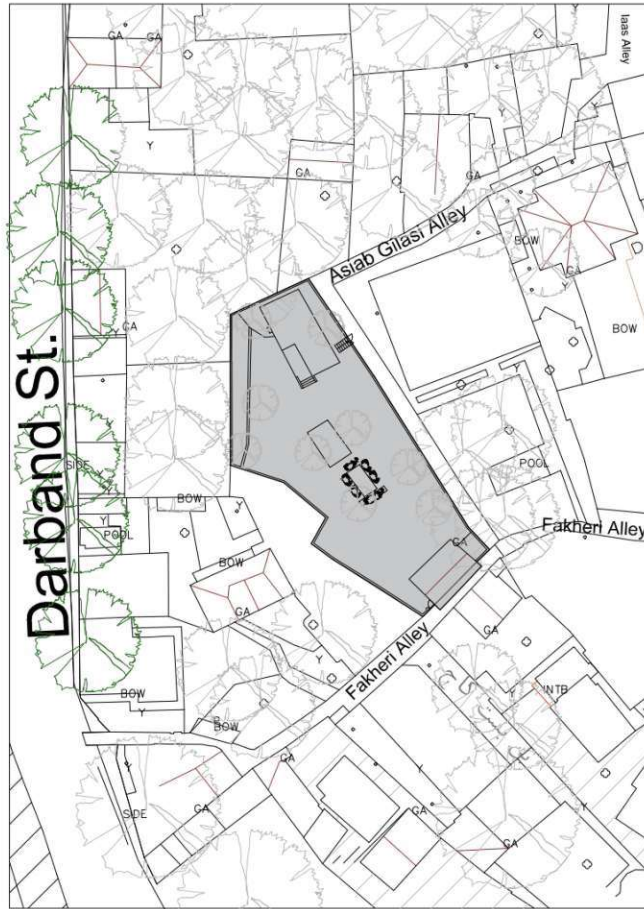




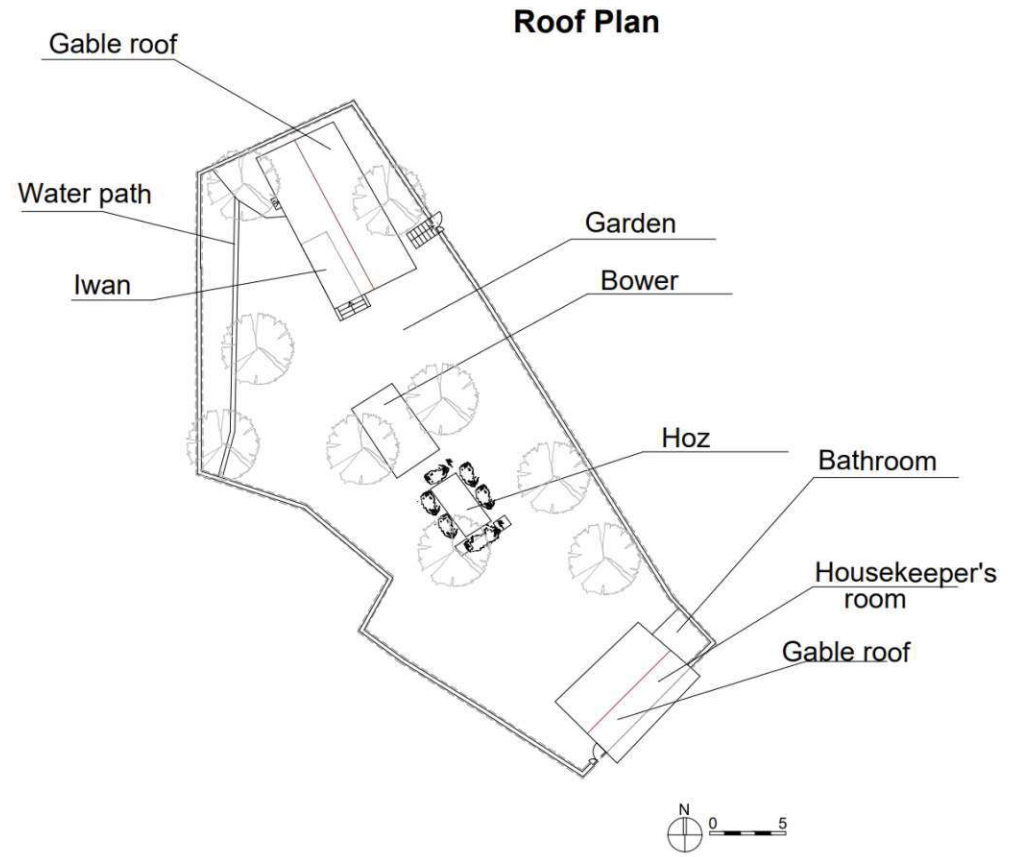


# House no. 17

## Plan of garden house



Site Plan



Roof Plan



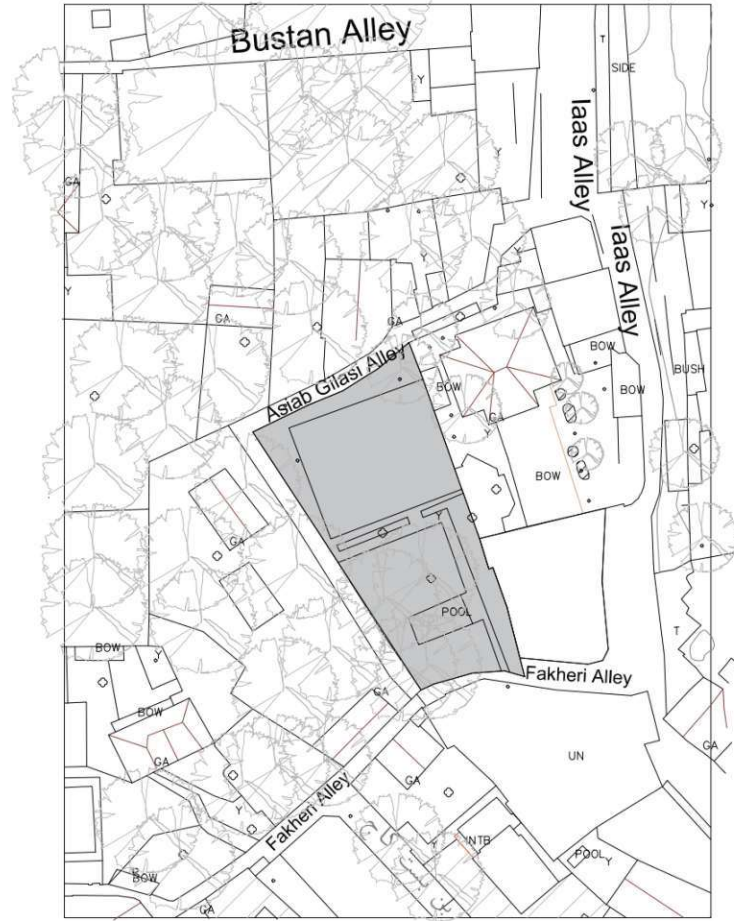
## House no. 17





# House no. 18

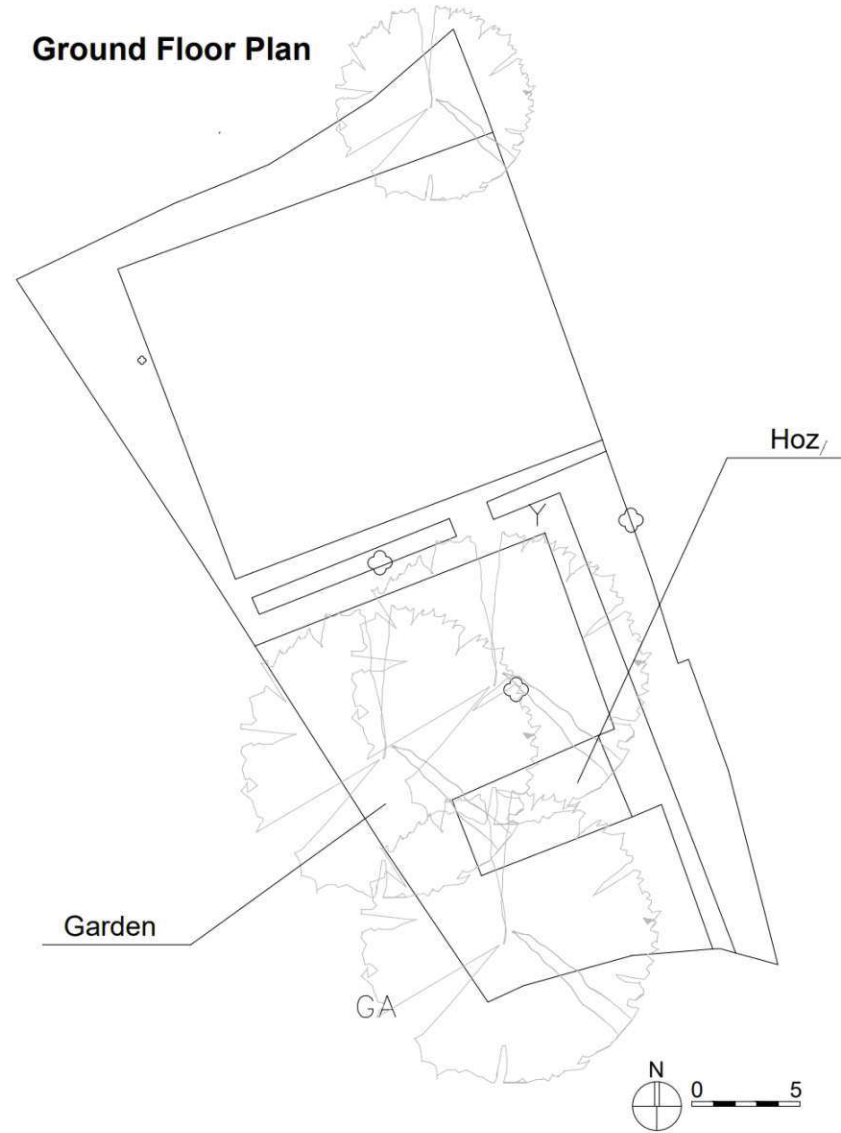
## Plan of current garden house



Site Plan



Ground Floor Plan



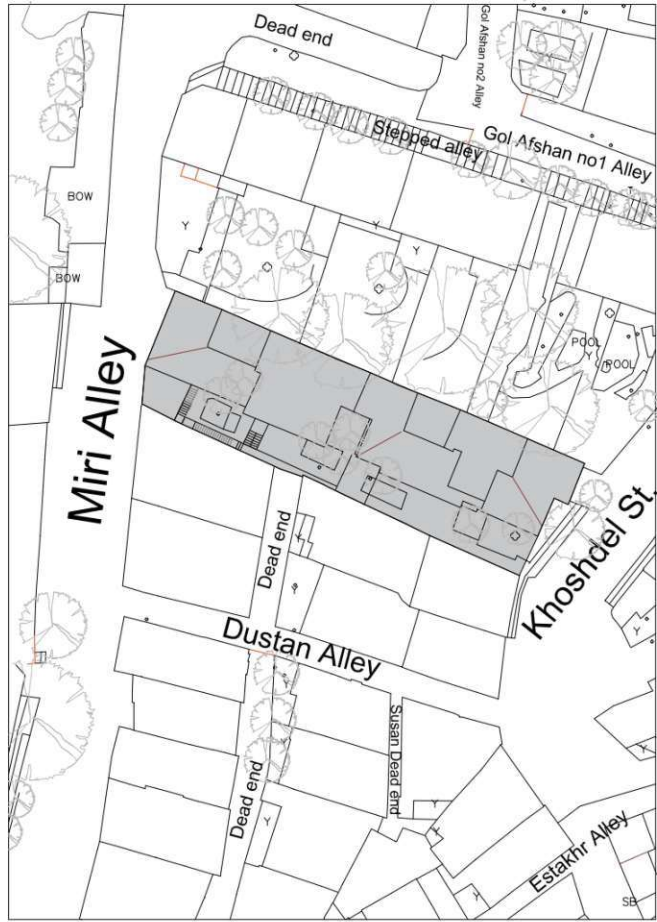
## House no. 18



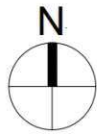


# House no. 19

## Plan of the current villa apartment



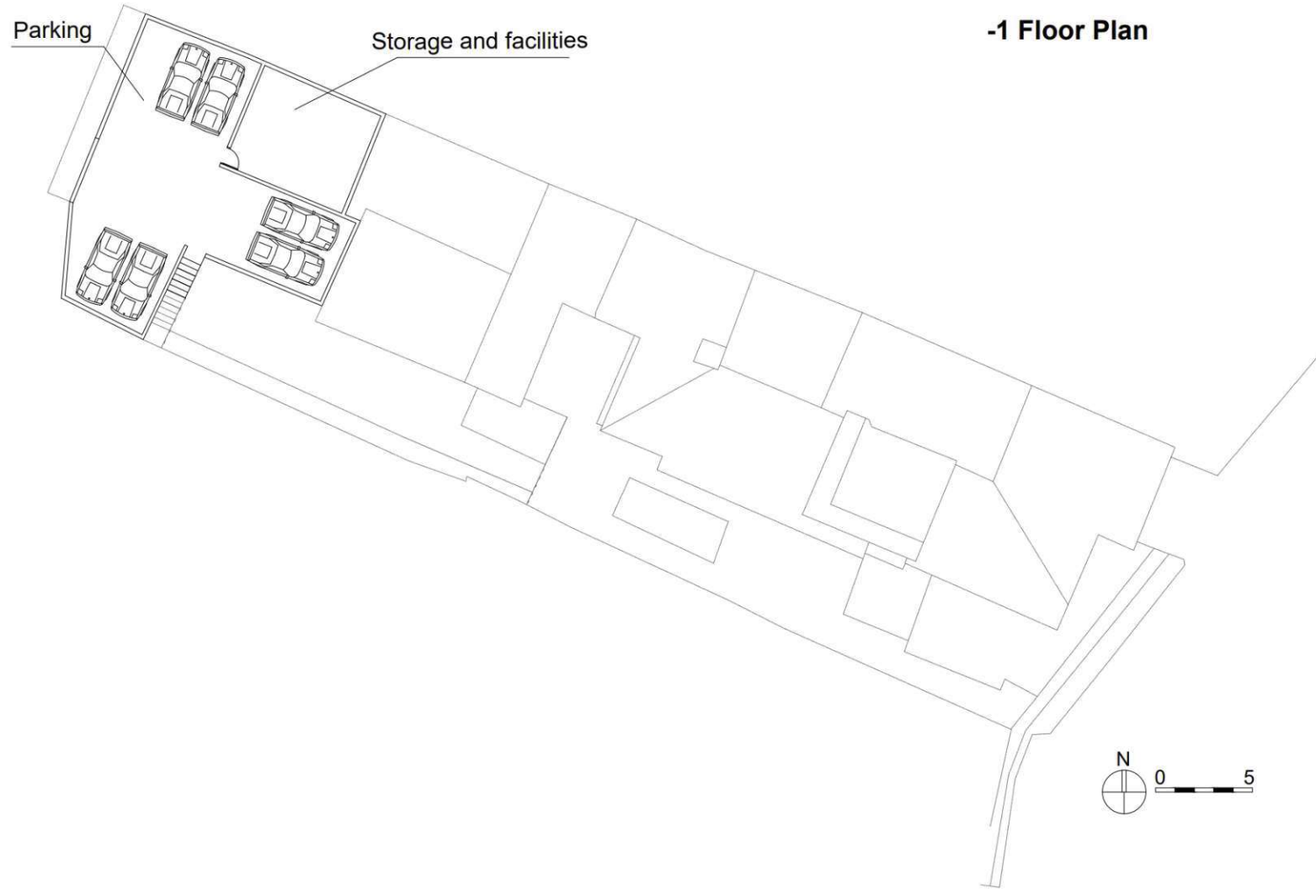
Site Plan





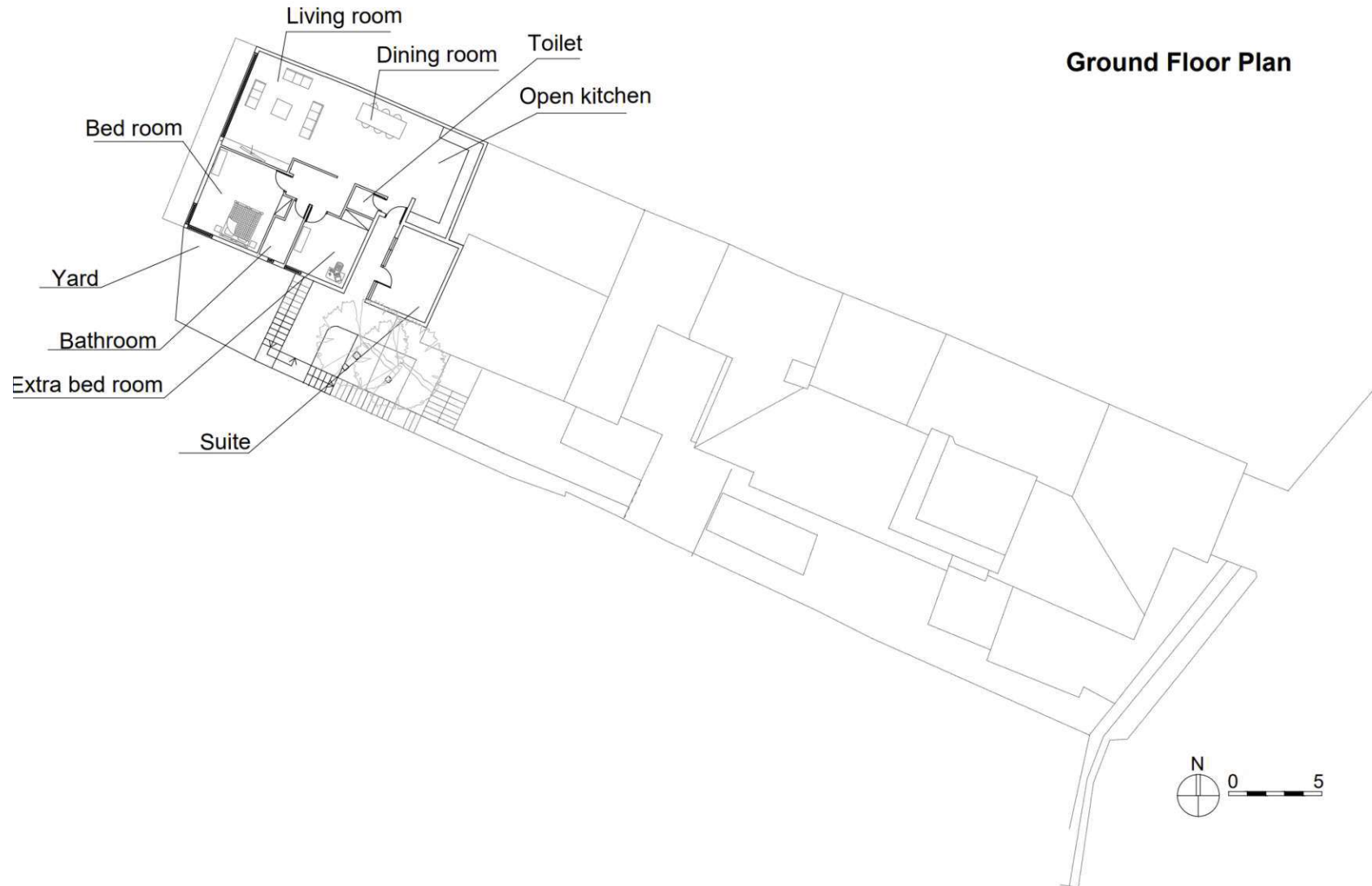
# House no. 19

## Plan of the current villa apartment



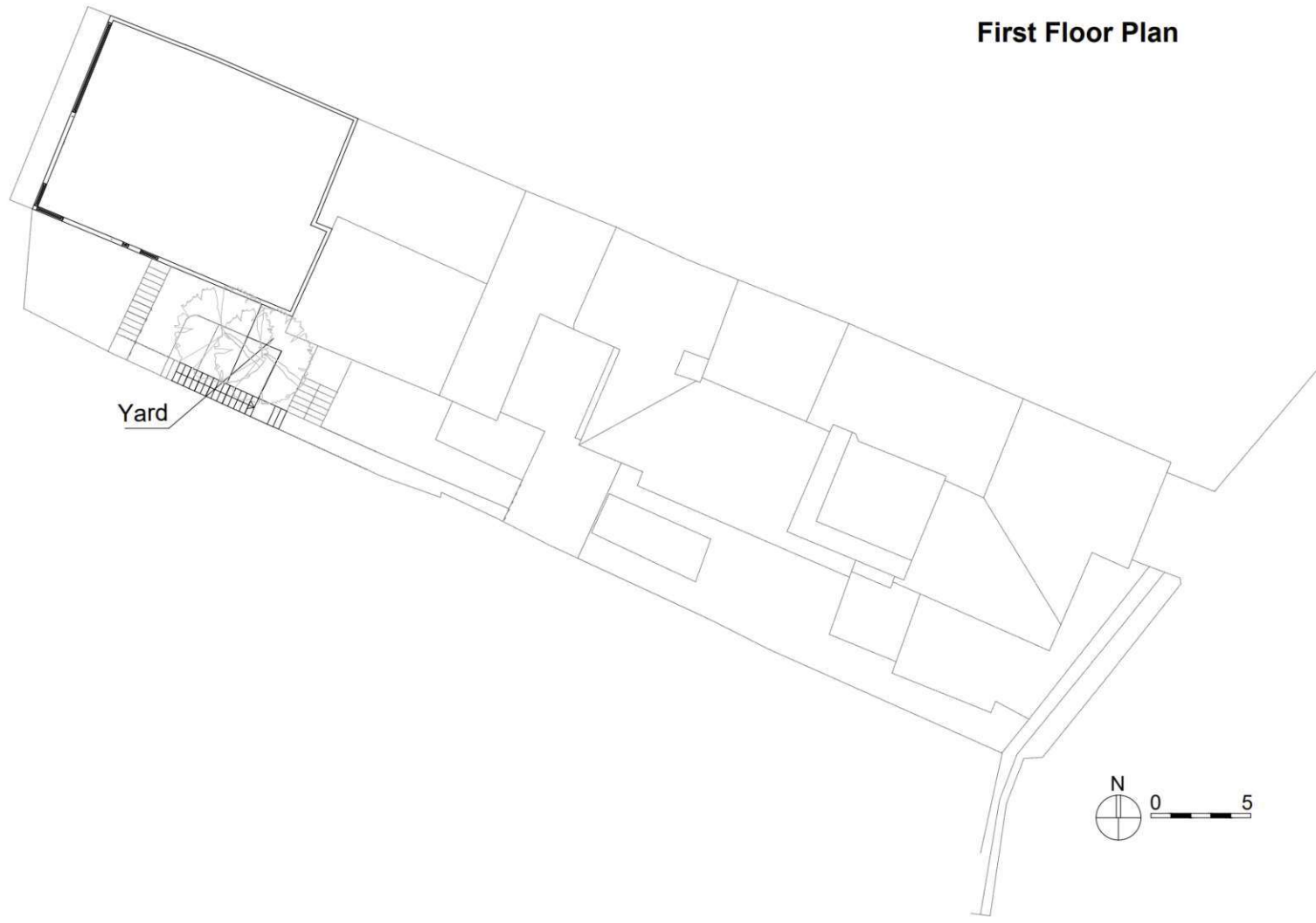
# House no. 19

## Plan of the current villa apartment



# House no. 19

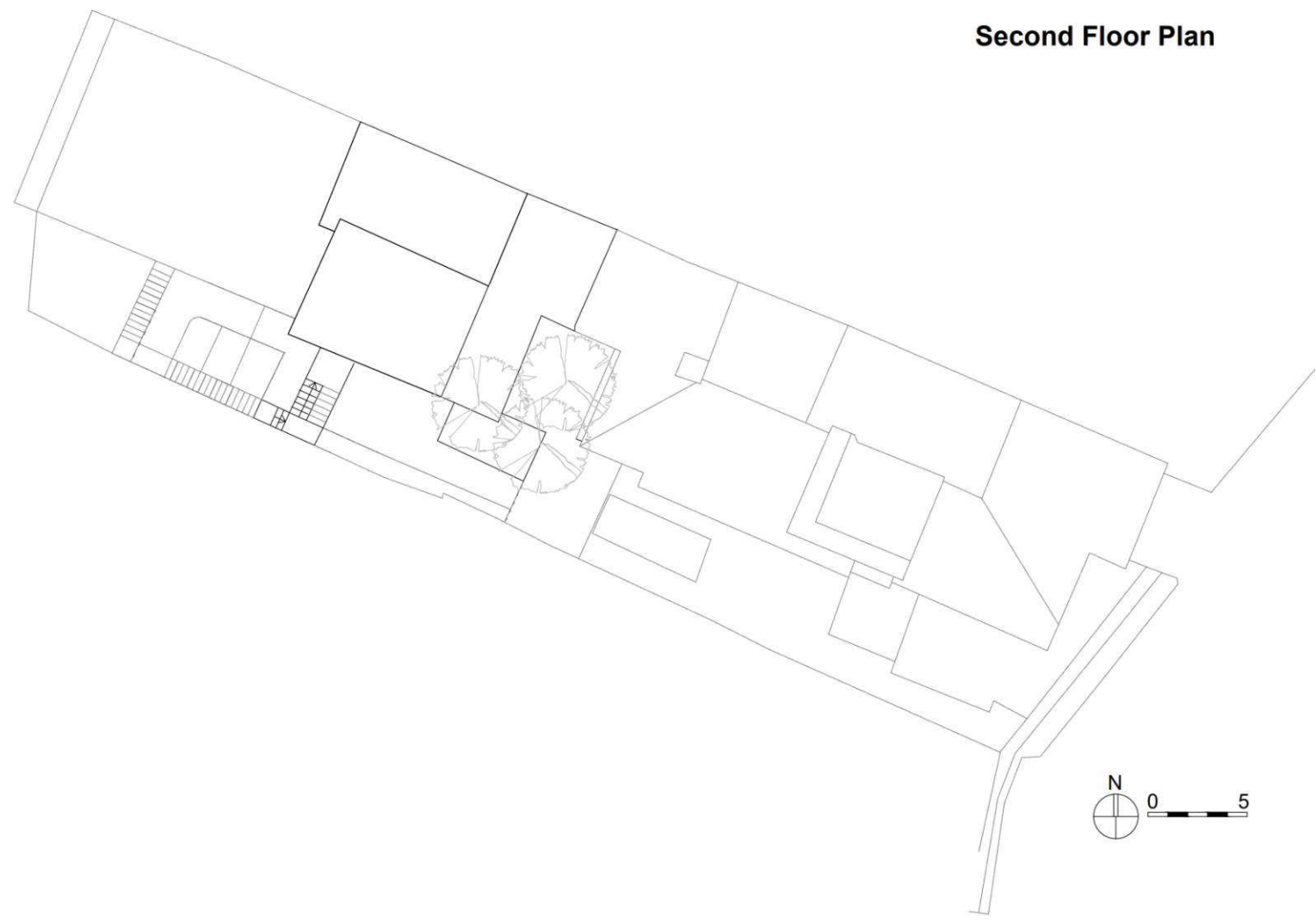
## Plan of the current villa apartment



**First Floor Plan**

# House no. 19

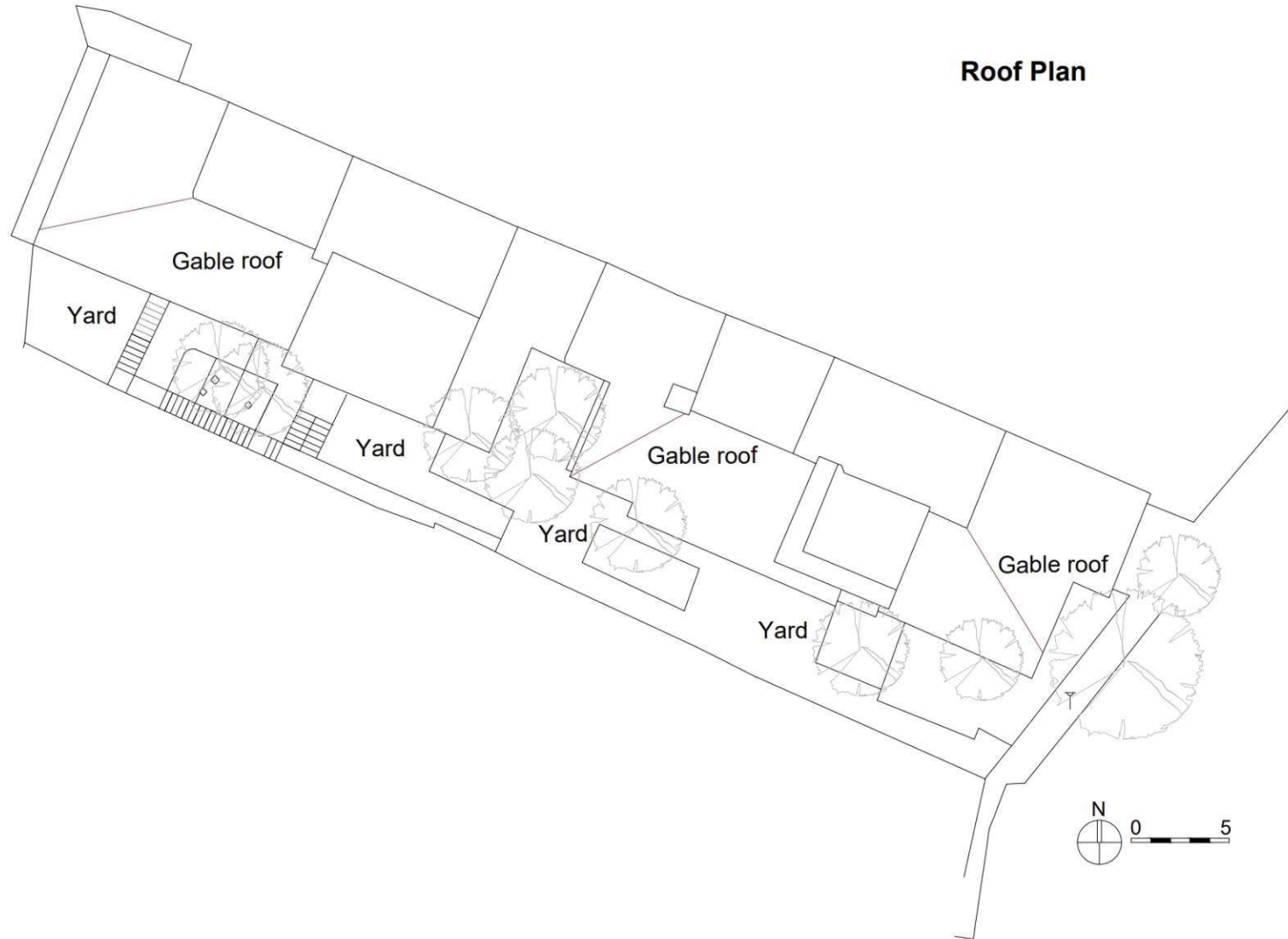
## Plan of the current villa apartment





# House no. 19

## Plan of the current villa apartment

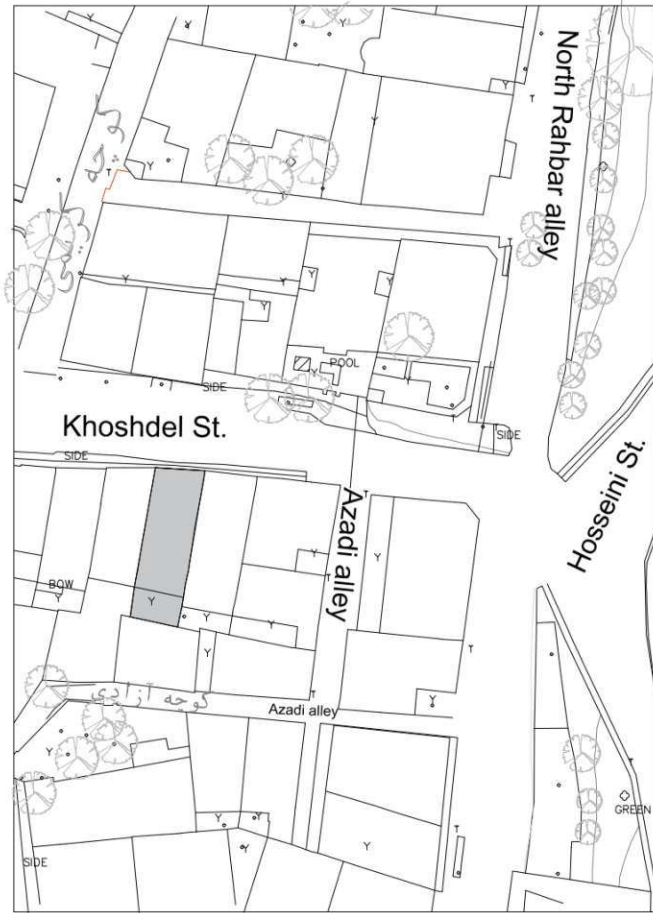


# House no. 19



# House no. 20

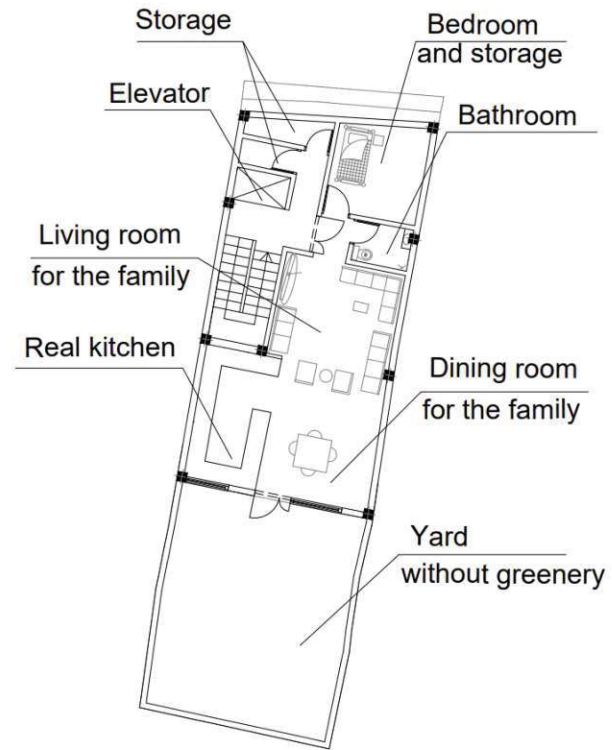
## Plan of the current apartment



Site Plan



-1 Floor Plan

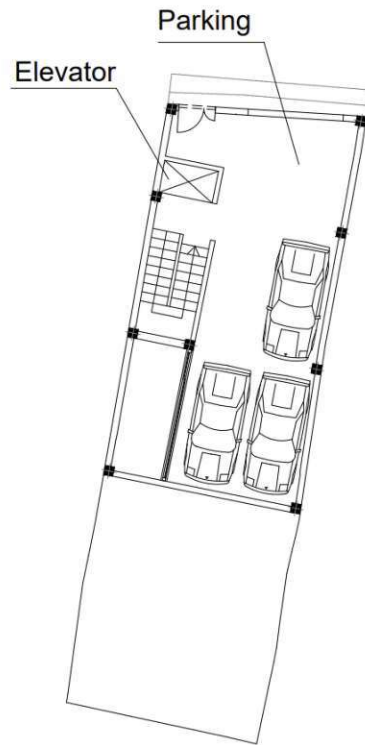




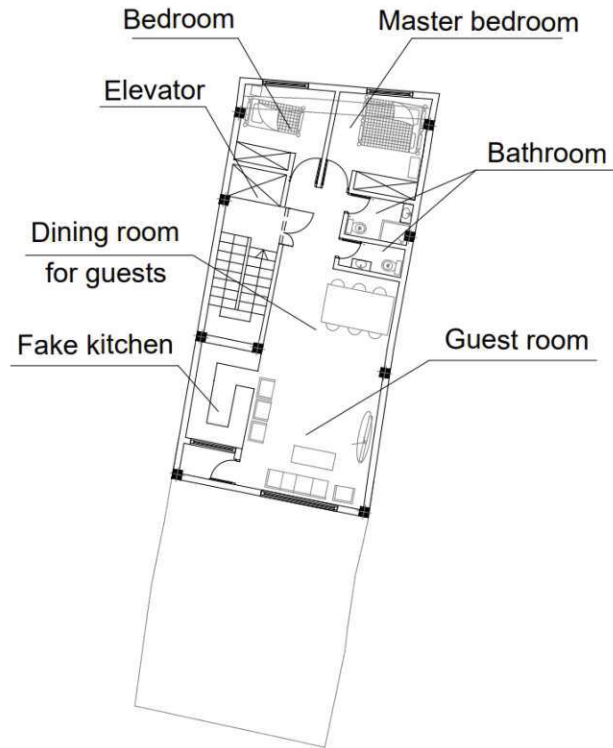
# House no. 20

## Plan of the current apartment

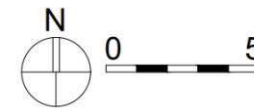
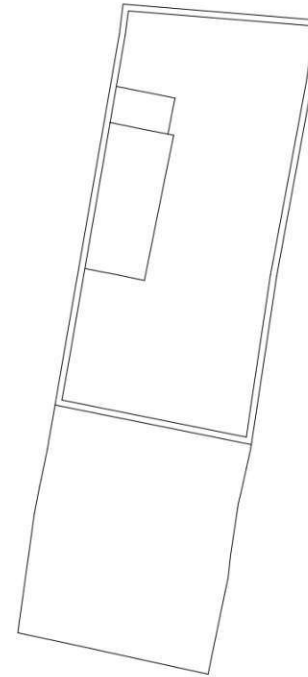
Ground Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



Roof Plan



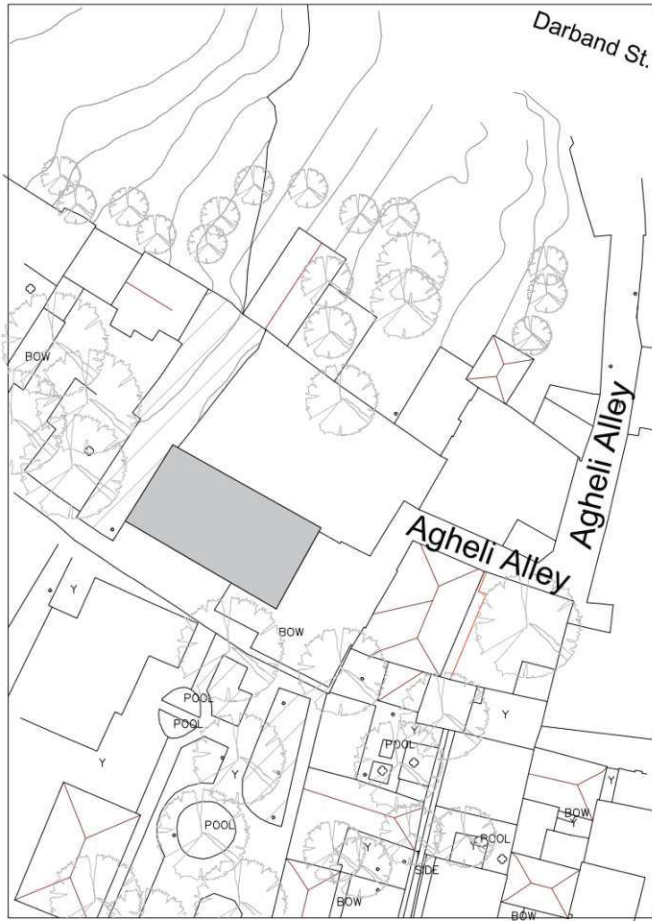


## House no. 20



# House no. 21

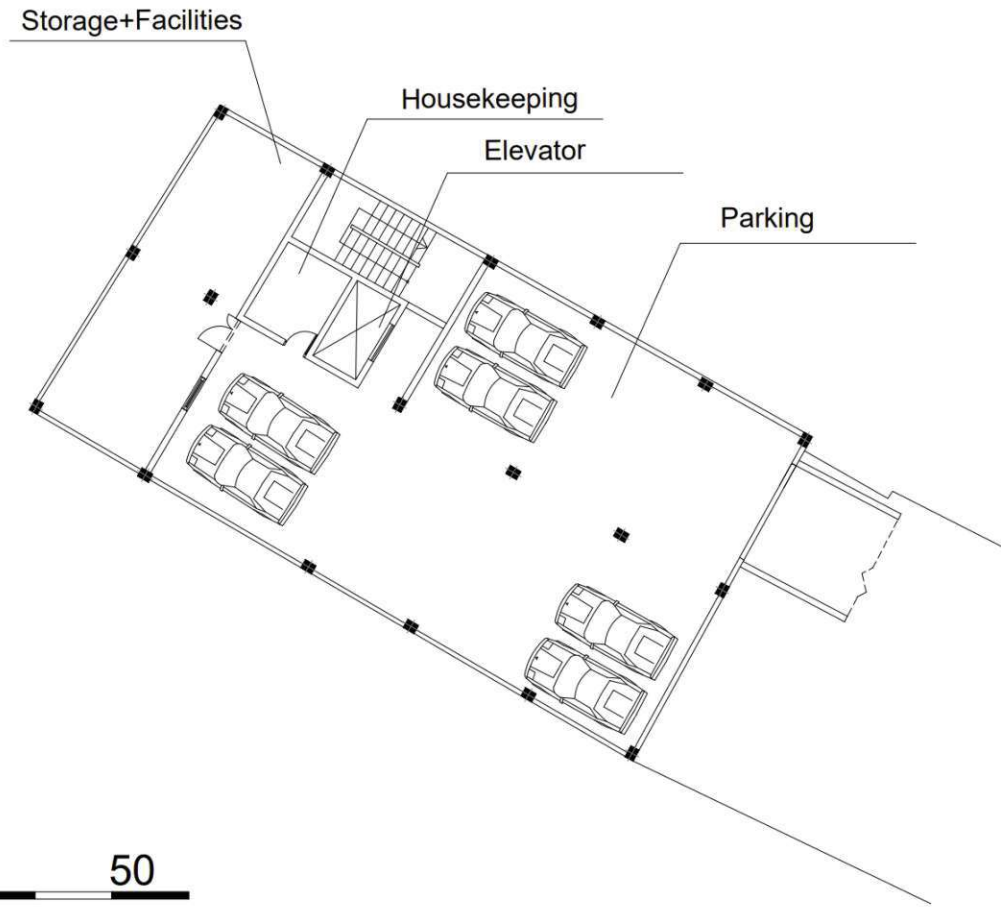
## Plan of the current apartment



Site Plan



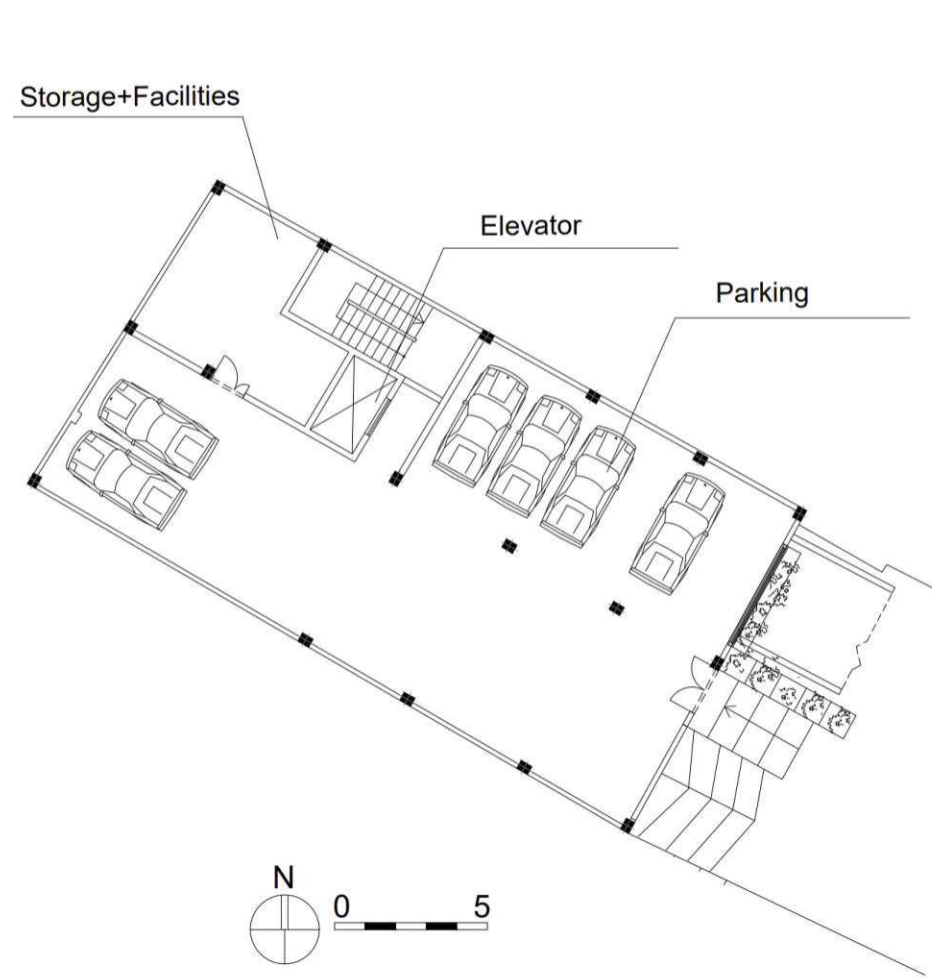
-1 Floor Plan



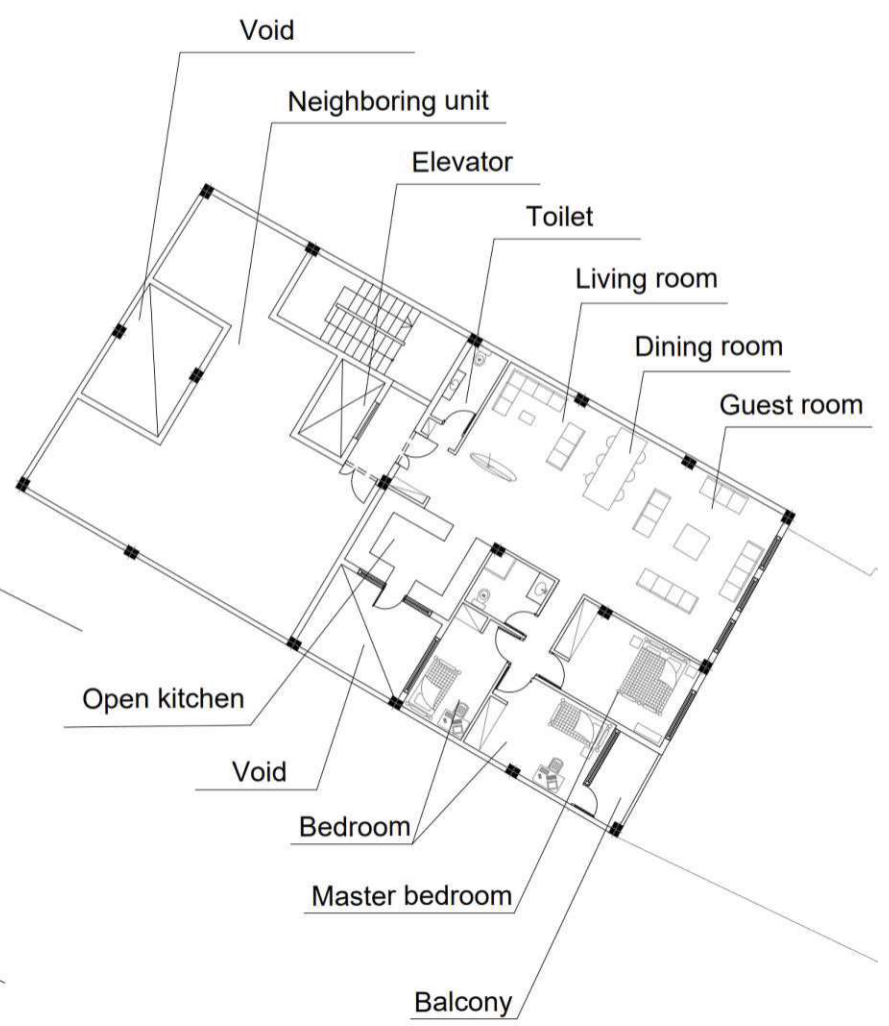
# House no. 21

## Plan of the current apartment

### Ground Floor Plan



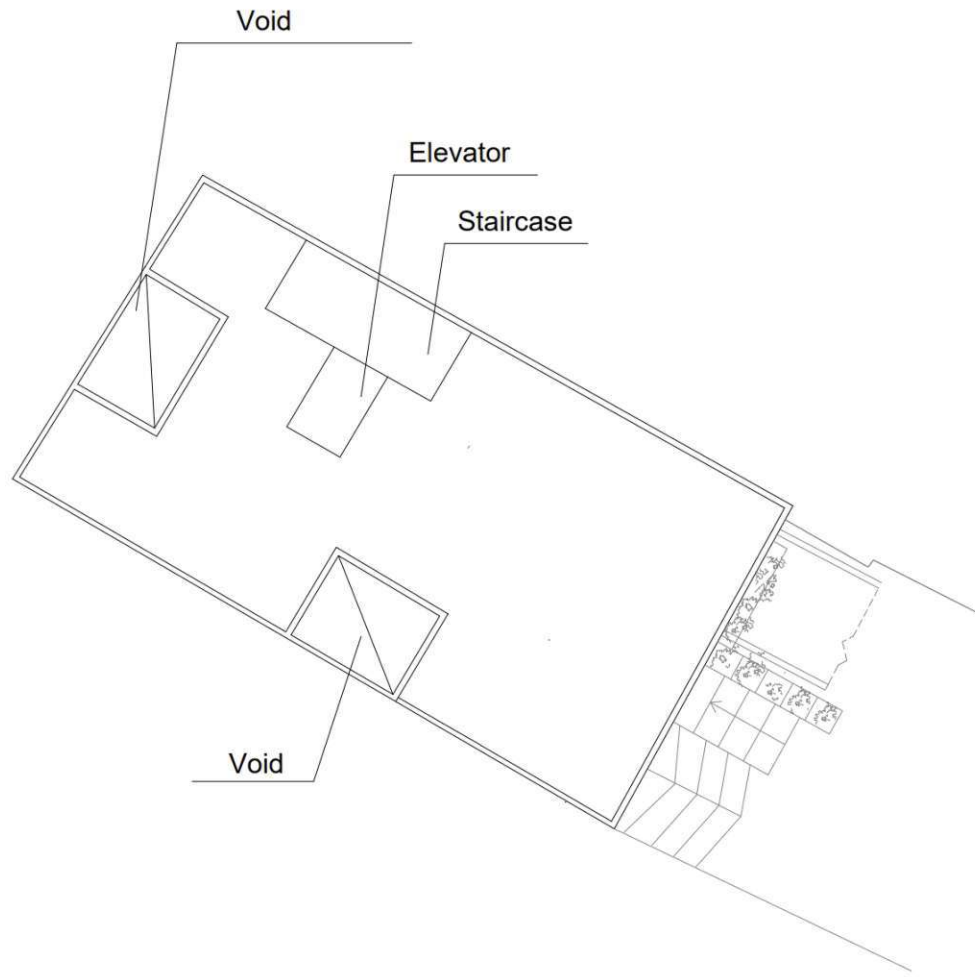
### First Floor Plan



# House no. 21

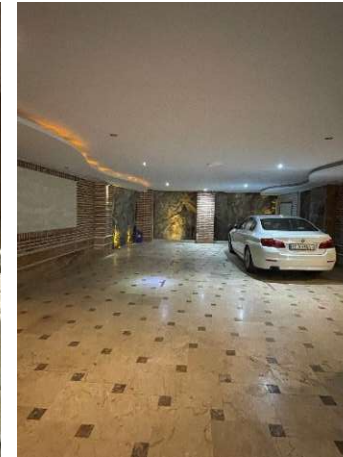
## Plan of the current apartment

### Roof Plan



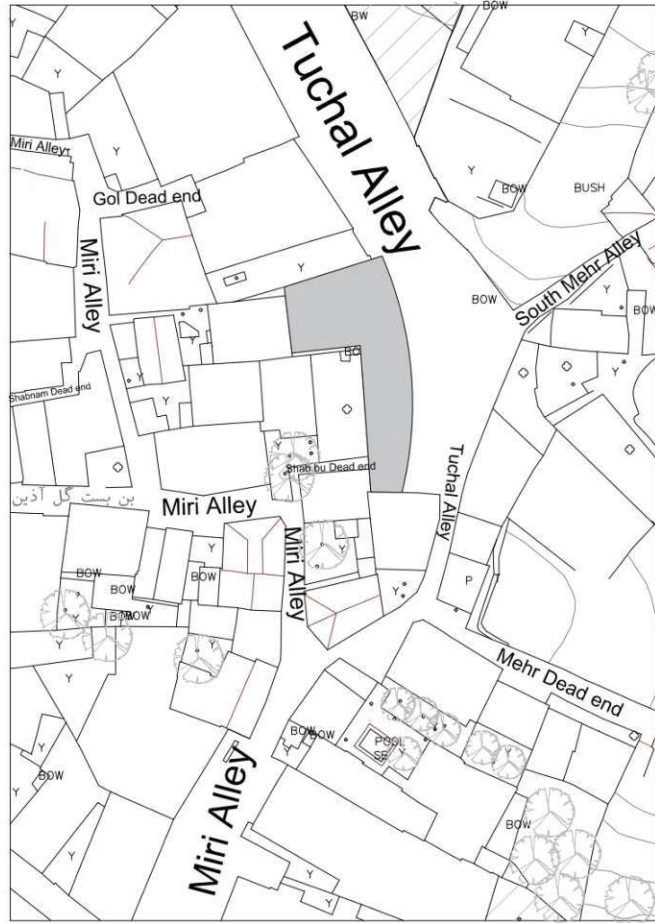


## House no. 21



# House no. 22

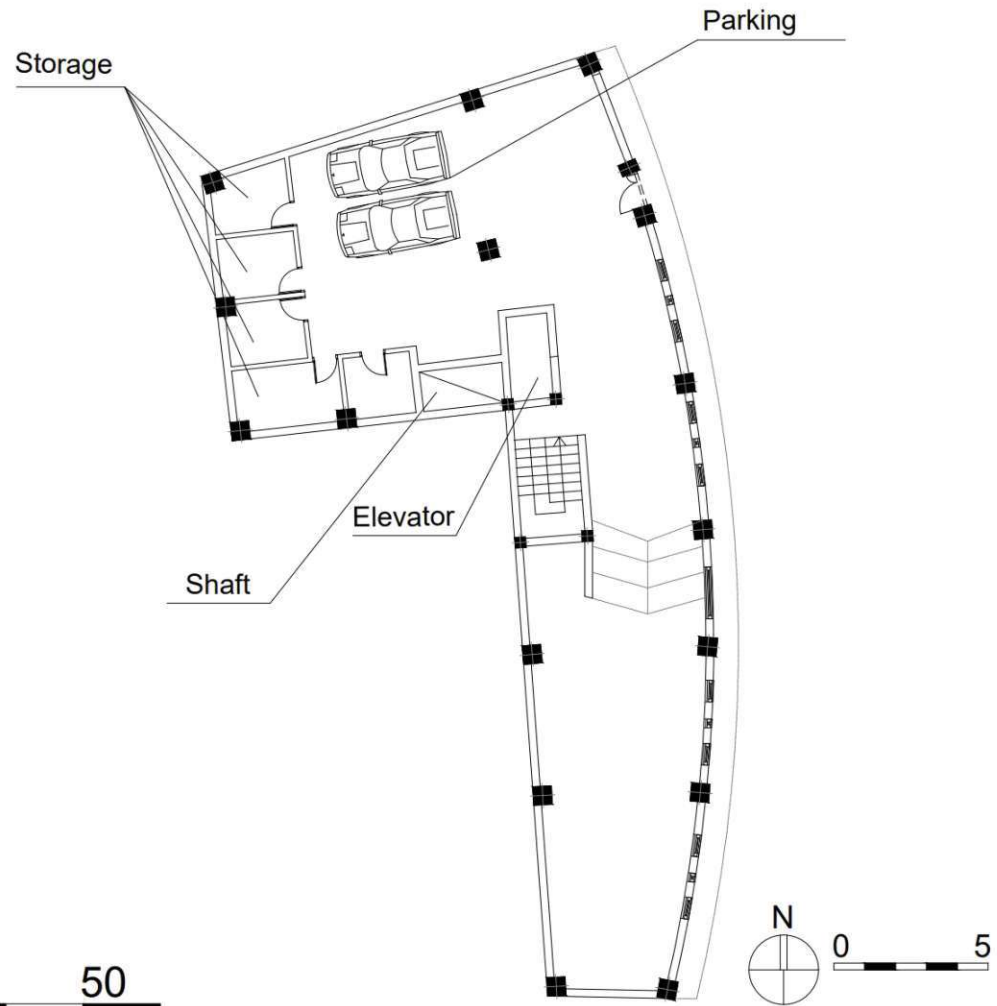
## Plan of the current apartment



Site Plan



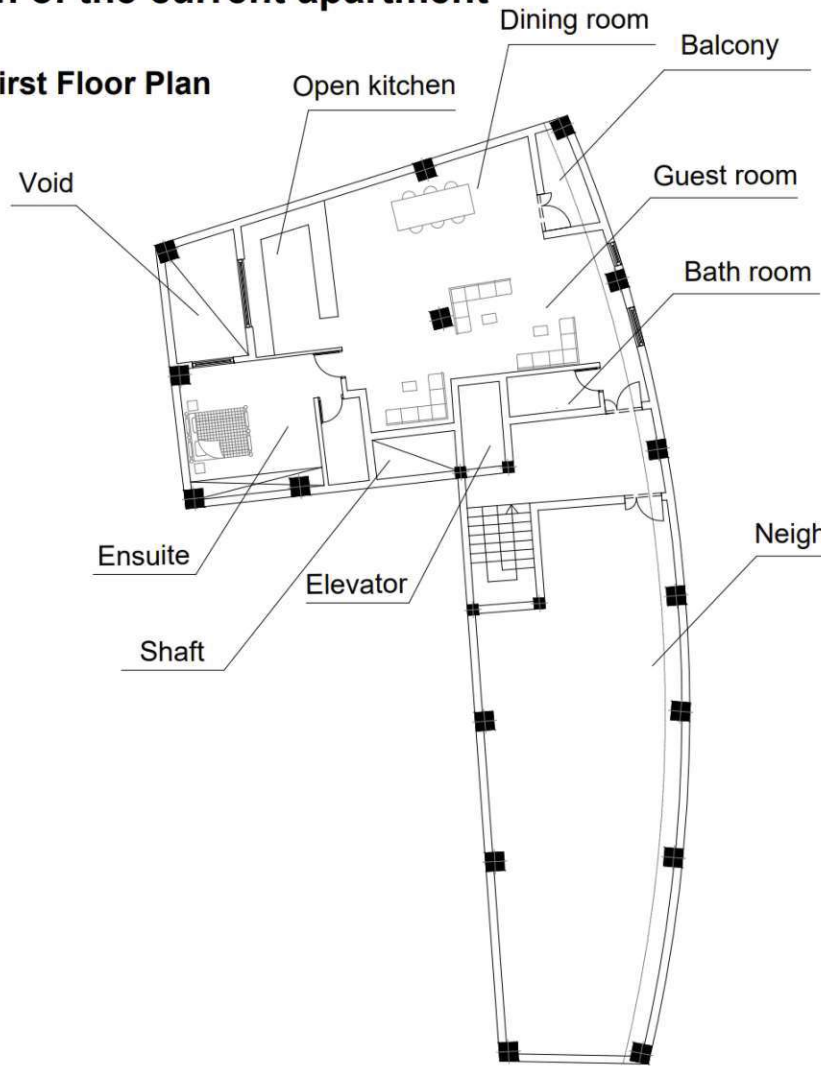
## Ground Floor Plan



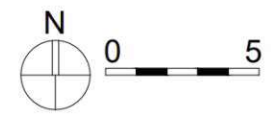
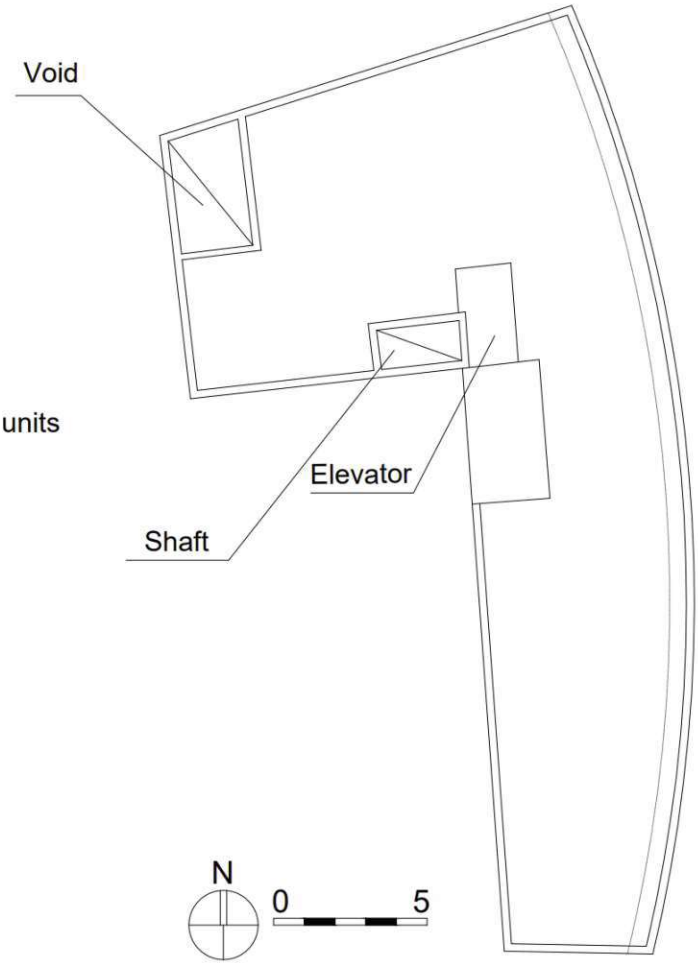
# House no. 22

## Plan of the current apartment

**First Floor Plan**



**Roof Plan**





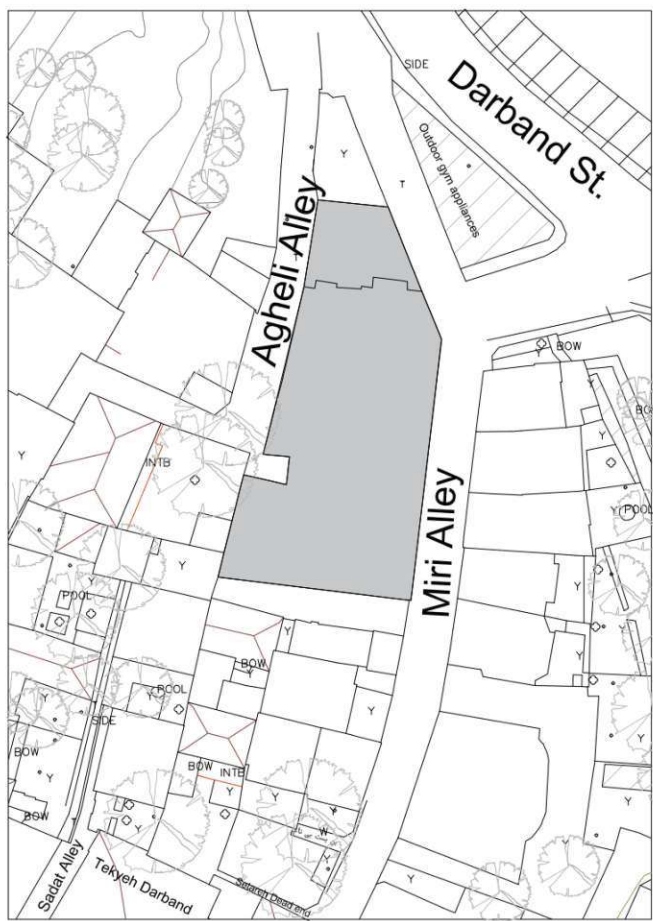
## House no. 22





# House no. 23

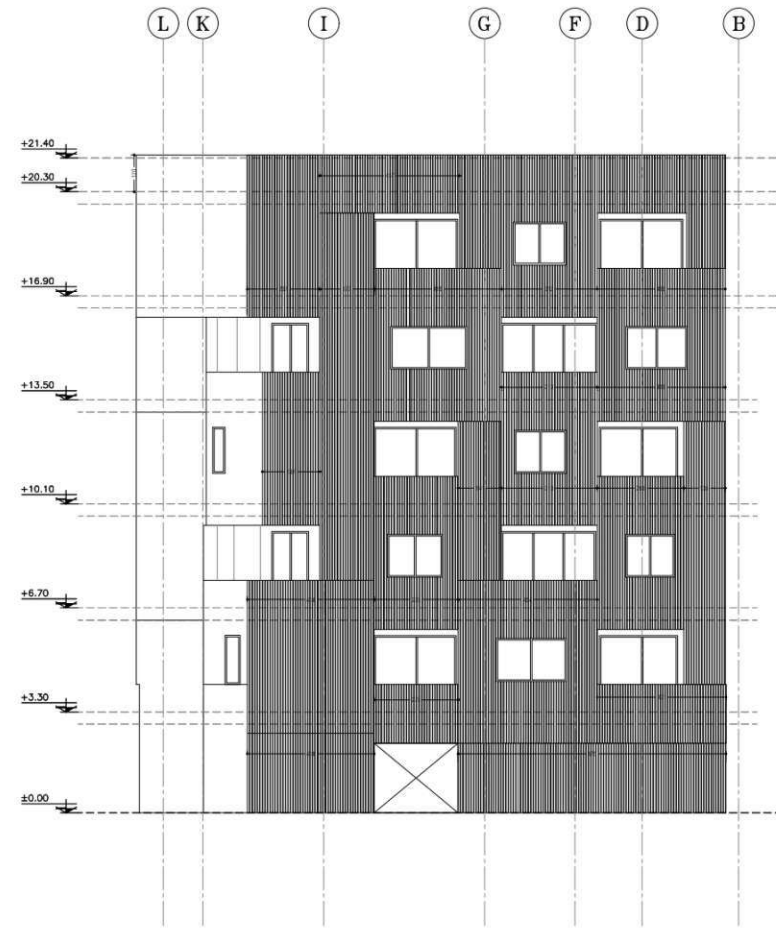
## Plan of the current apartment



Site Plan



### North Elevation

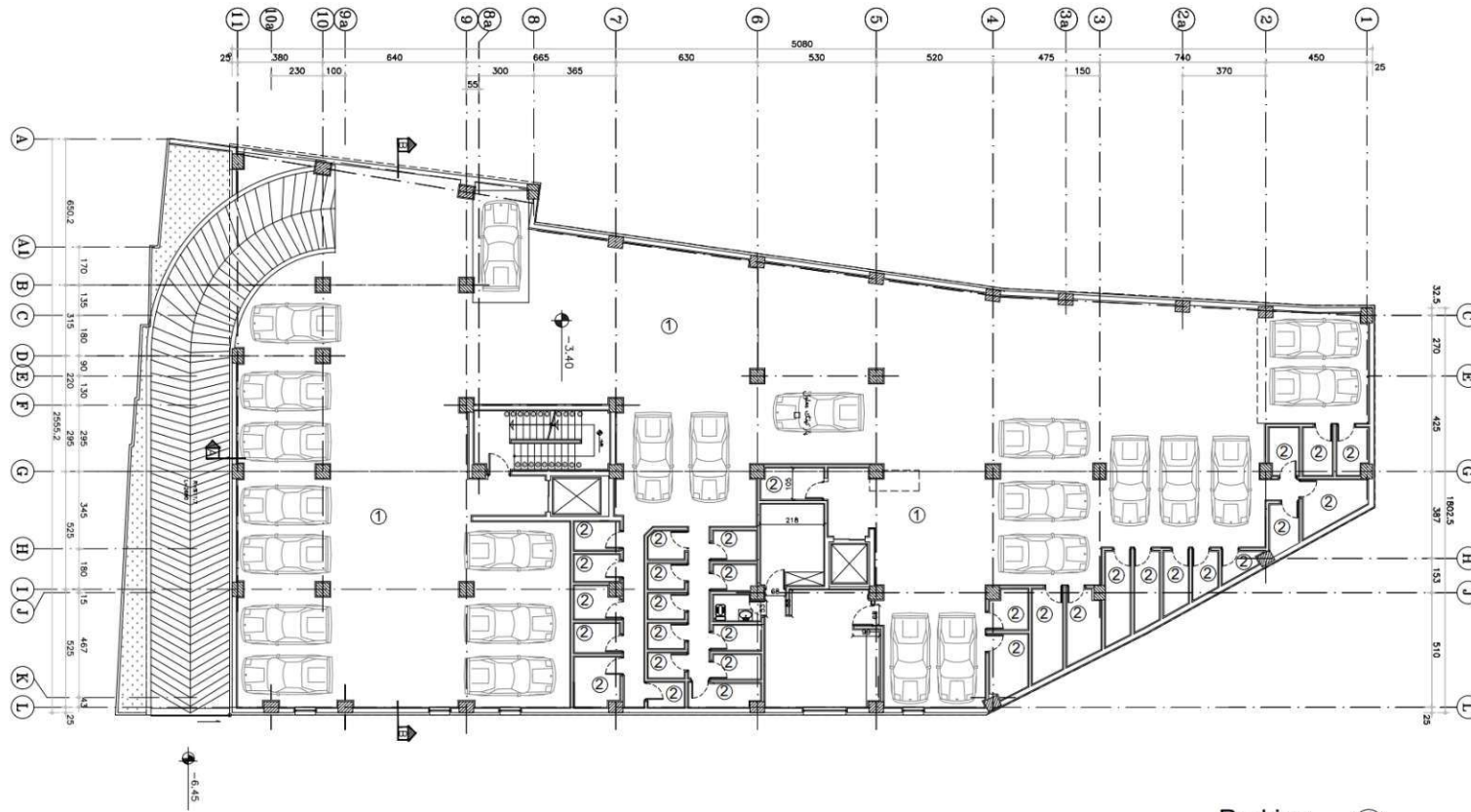




# House no. 23

## Plan of the current apartment

-1 Floor Plan

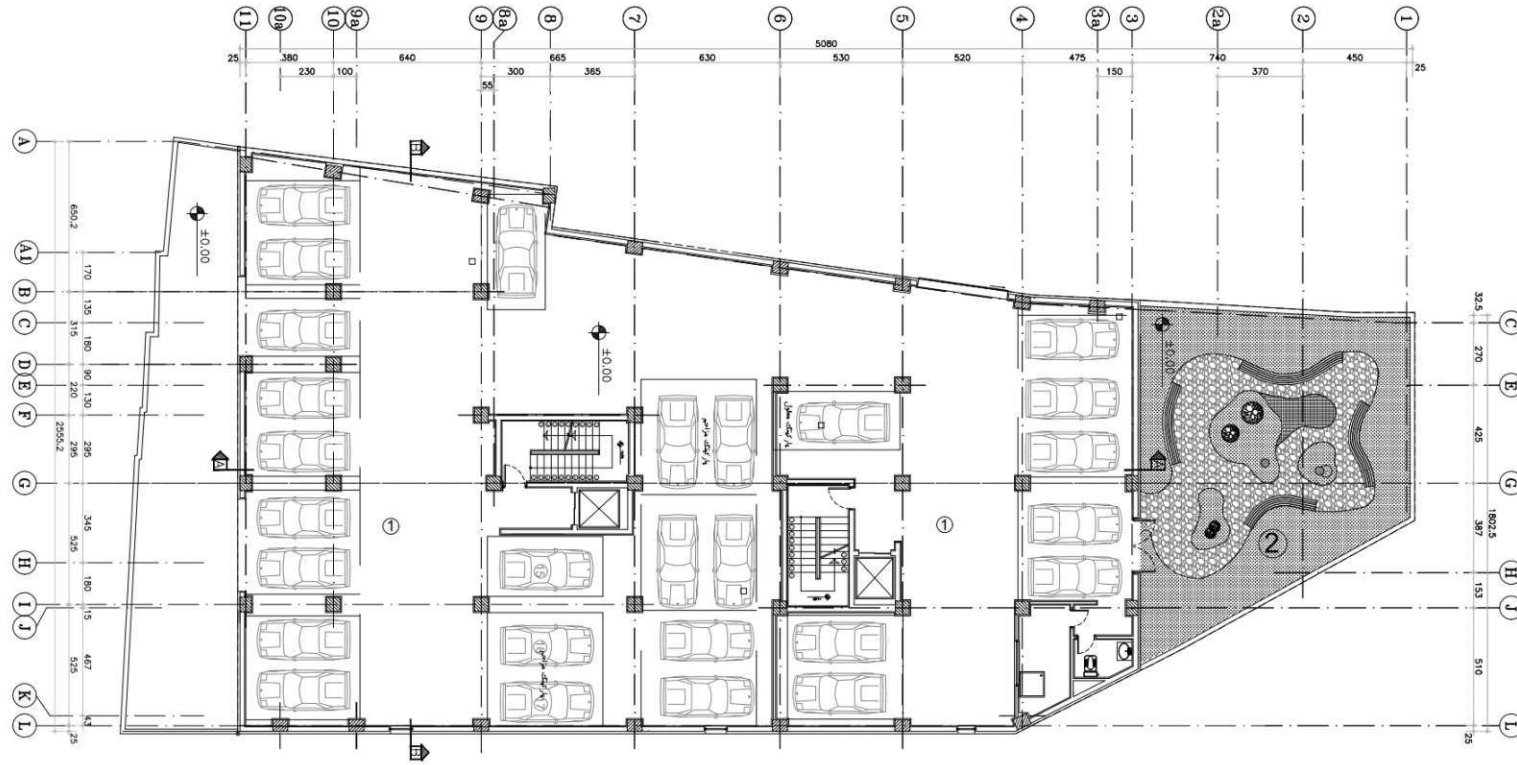
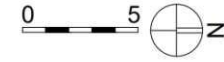


- Parking ①
- Storage ②

# House no. 23

## Plan of the current apartment

Ground Floor Plan



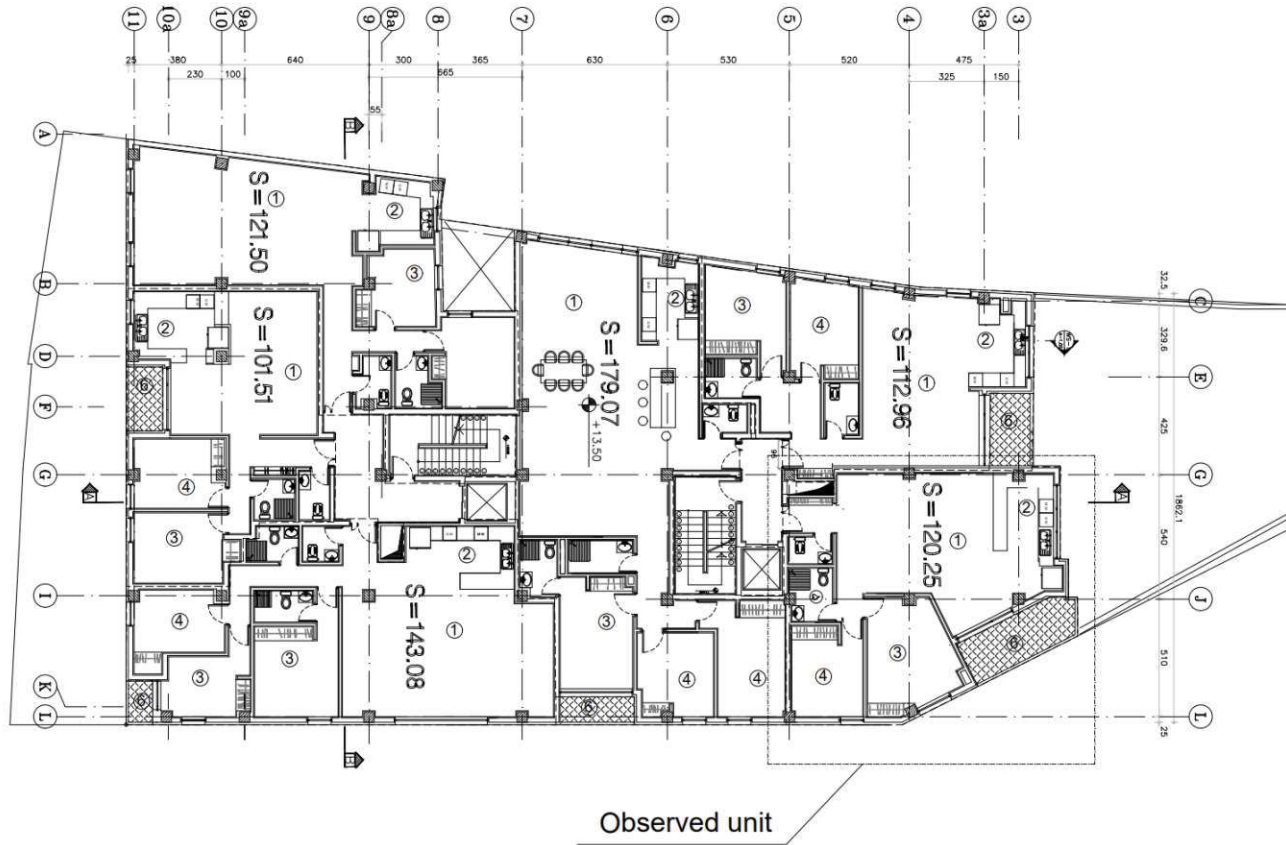
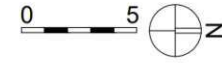
- Parking ①
- Yard ②



# House no. 23

## Plan of the current apartment

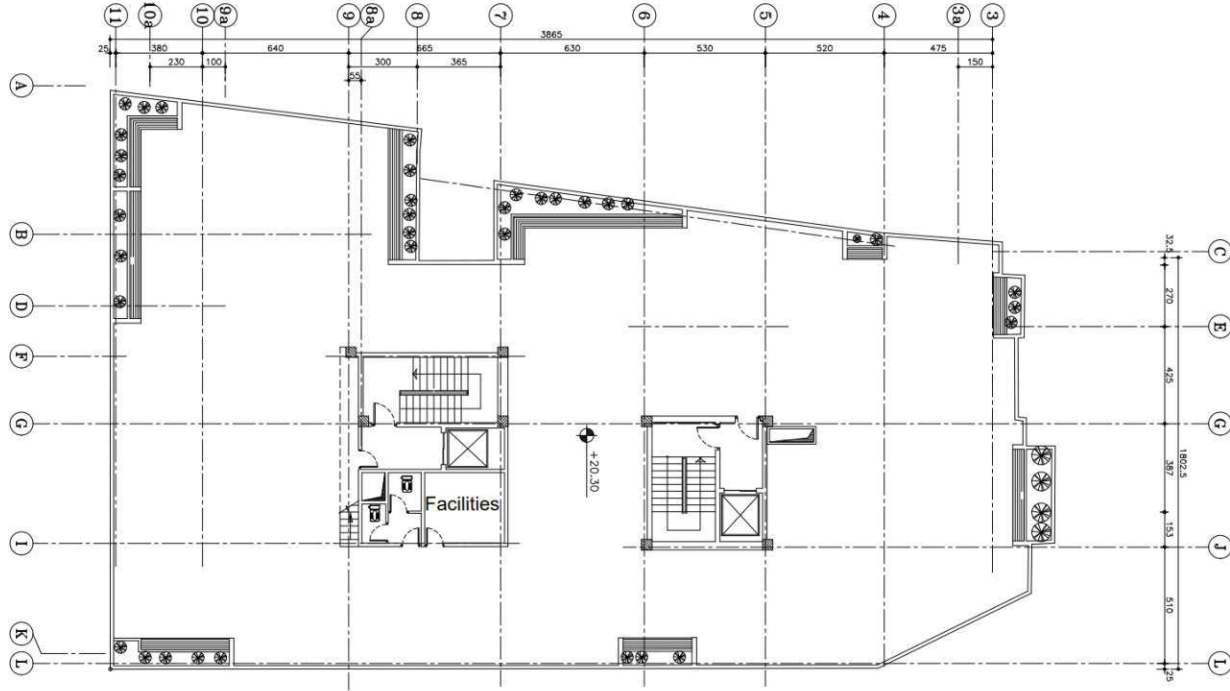
### Fourth Floor Plan



- Living room ①
- Kitchen ②
- Master bedroom ③
- Bedroom ④
- Bathroom ⑤
- Balcony ⑥

# House no. 23

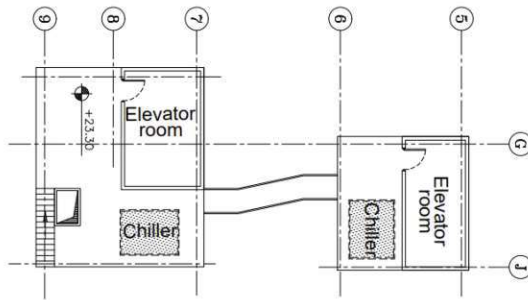
## Plan of the current apartment



Roof Plan



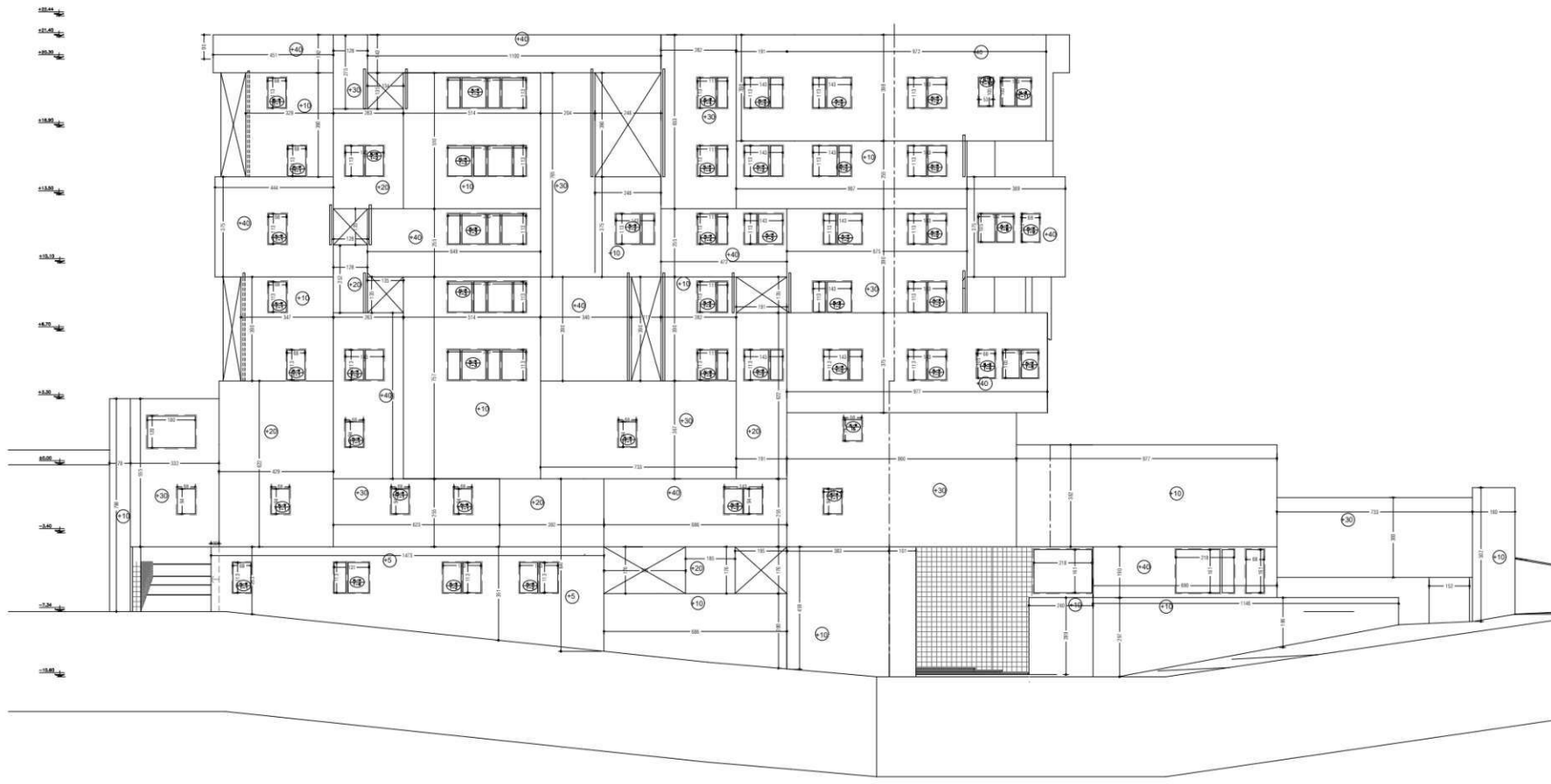
Ridge Plan



# House no. 23

## Elevation of the current apartment

East Elevation





# House no. 23

