

BA NAMAK

Tehran's new urban form بانصک

by
Catherine Papst

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BA NAMIAK

بانصک

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*O Thou, whose face, moon in appearance, the fresh spring
- of beauty;
Whose mole and down, the center of grace, and the circle
- of beauty!*

*Hidden in Thy eye full of intoxication the fascination of sorcery;
Revealed on Thy restless tress, the rest
- of beauty.*

*Not a moon shone like Thee from the mansion of goodness;
Not a cypress arose like Thy stature from the stream
- of beauty.*

*By Thy darkish beauty, joyous became the age of heart-ravishingness;
By Thy grace, expanded became the season
- of beauty.*

*From the snare of Thy tress, and the grain of Thy mole, in the world,
Not a bird of the heart remaineth, not become the prey
- of beauty.*

*Fresh and fresh is the violet about Thy lip, of that reason,
That it keepeth drinking the water of life from the fountain-source
- of beauty.*

*Hafiz served desire when he seeth Thy equal;
There is none save Thy face in land
- of beauty.*



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AFFIDAVIT

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Date

Signature

Graz, May 2017

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For my beloved sister Jasmine

Still unfinished and in continuous development the city seems to grow by itself without any clear direction. Houses are rising up at the foot of

the Alborz mountains, trying to hold their heads above the thick smog that lies like a veil over the city. It is impossible to see where it ends or where it all will end.



Fast urbanisation of farmland and city expansion have already been seen in Asian megacities. The following text puts a focus on Iran, the centerstage of the Middle East. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the country has been undergoing strong modernisation, in urban planning and in social structures. Tehran, the capital of Iran, has been growing physically in size and density as well as in its social demands. The neighbouring city, Karaj, is located approximately 40 km north-west from Tehran and within a short space of time, Karaj has grown to a 1.6 million people city and has become a second center in the area.

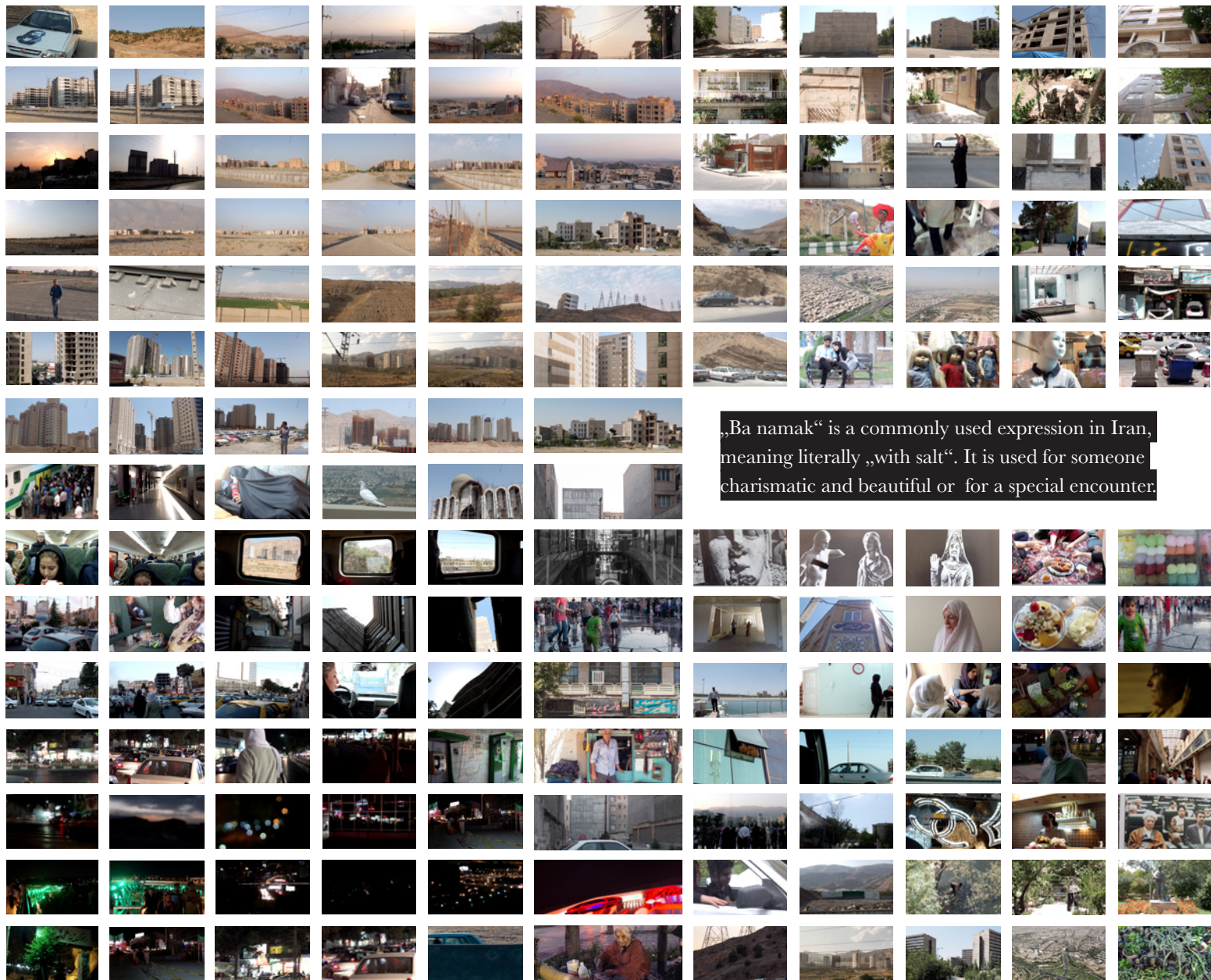
The distance is becoming vast between public spaces and generations. Huge parks are constructed far from new residential housing complexes and the streets life is slowly directed into shopping malls. At the weekends, people try to escape from the overcrowded city or meet in private locations.

This thesis is a documentation of how the simplification of architecture seeks to take over the complexity of our lives during a time of increasing population.

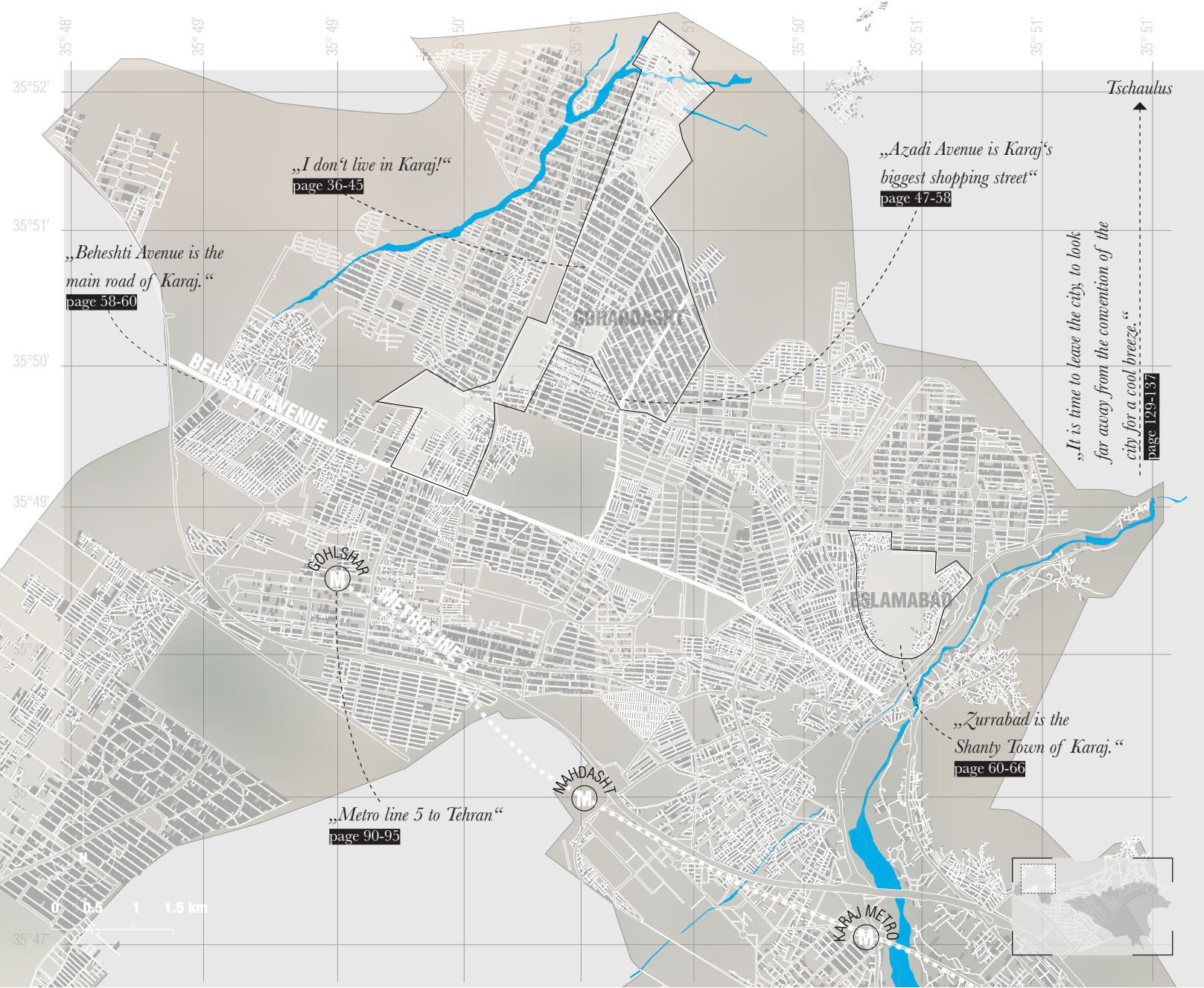








„Ba namak“ is a commonly used expression in Iran, meaning literally „with salt“. It is used for someone charismatic and beautiful or for a special encounter.



„I don't live in Karaj!“
page 36-45

„Beheshti Avenue is the
main road of Karaj.“
page 58-60

„Azadi Avenue is Karaj's
biggest shopping street“
page 47-58

„It is time to leave the city to look
far away from the convention of the
city for a cool breeze“
page 129-137

„Metro line 5 to Tehran“
page 90-95

„Zurrabad is the
Shanty Town of Karaj.“
page 60-66

Tschaulus

0 0.5 1 1.5 km





„A new urban concept“
page 80-85



35°46'
35°45'
35°44'
35°43'
35°42'
35°41'
35°40'

50

50° 55'

50° 56'

50° 57'

50° 58'

51°

51° 15'

„The biggest shopping mall in the Middle East - IRAN MALL“
page 20-40

„Persian Gulf Martyr's Lake“
page 102

„District 22 is the biggest manifestation of urban growth in Tehran.“
page 101-109

„Chitgar Park“
page 102

TEHRAN

DISTRICT 22

GARM-DARFI
M

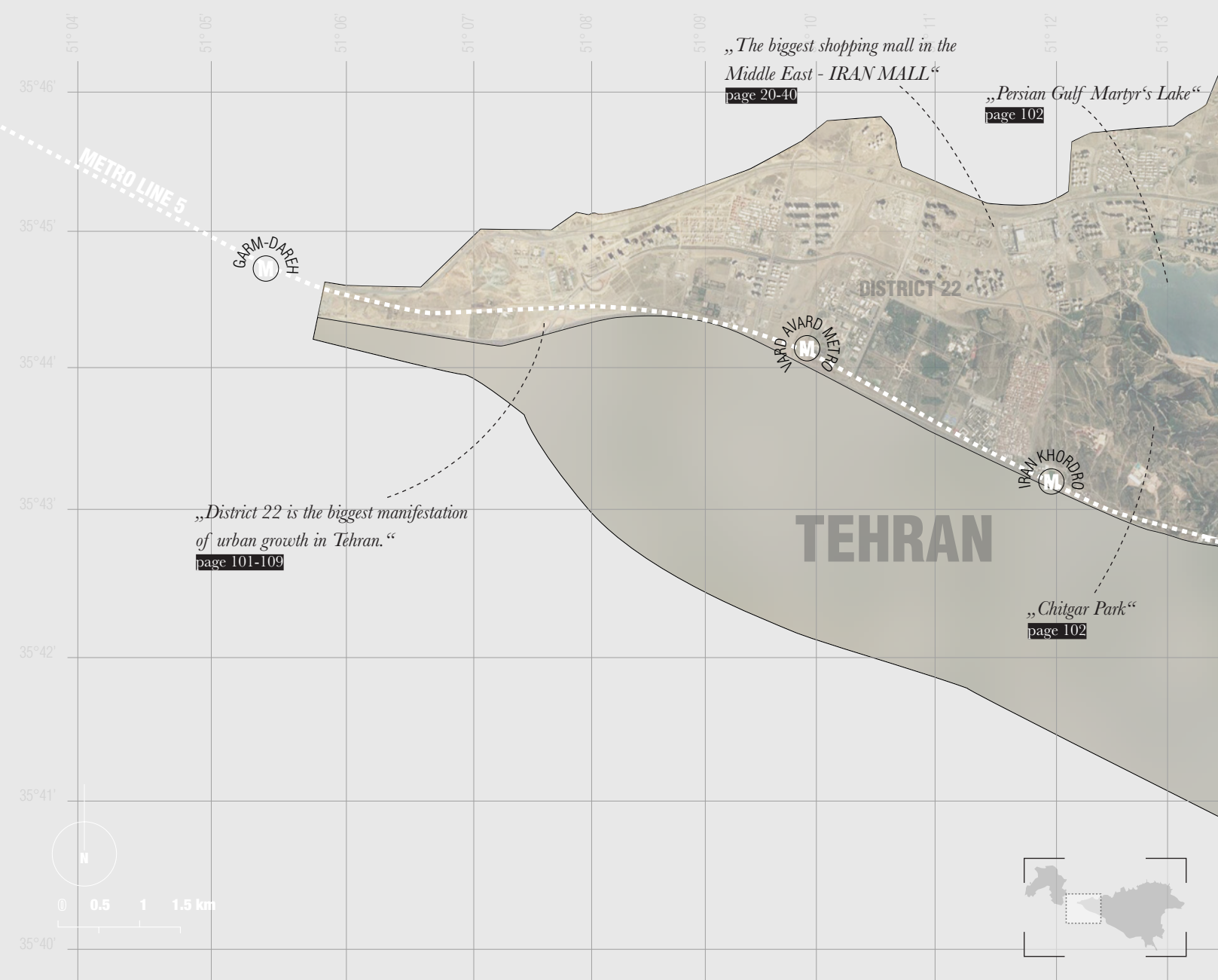
KARD AVARD METRO
M

IRAN KHORDO
M

METRO LINE 5



0 0.5 1 1.5 km



TEHRAN

DISTRICT 22

CHITGAR METRO
M

ERAM-E SABZ
M

METRO LINE 5

SADDEGHIEH METRO
M

EKBATAN

„Built on the former outskirts in the west of Tehran, on a blank canvas, Ekbatan City rises.“
page 95-99

„Mega Mall“
page 20-40

35°42'

35°41'

35°40'

51°14'

51°15'

51°16'

51°17'

51°18'

51°19'

51°20'

51°21'

51°22'

51°23'

0 0.5 1 1.5 km





Although the temperature is over 40 °C, I do not sweat in the sizzling and dry heat. Her apartment, with its vast and deep rooms, is like a dark and cool cave I can find refuge in at the hottest time of the day.

I am confident that the heat will not be a problem for me in the month I will be staying with her. Since half an hour I have been sitting now on the balcony reading Marc Augè's „Non-Places“¹, which seems, after 9 hours of flight and 3 hours of transit in Dubai, to be the right book. And while reading the words „the Anthropology of the now“, I am enjoying sweet black tea and cookies. Every time I look up from the book, I am surprised to find myself finally in Karaj, the small neighbour of Tehran. With almost 2 million inhabitants the city is comparable in size to Vienna. However, Karaj has no clear city center and consists of independent neighbourhoods connected through the highways, which cut the city into parts. Karaj is steadily growing and changing in a constant tempo, detaching parts from and attaching new parts to the grid. Under the Shah Regime, Karaj was the hotspot for the Iranian industry and became a working-class town, without any social importance and filled with immigrants and former

¹ Augé, 1995.

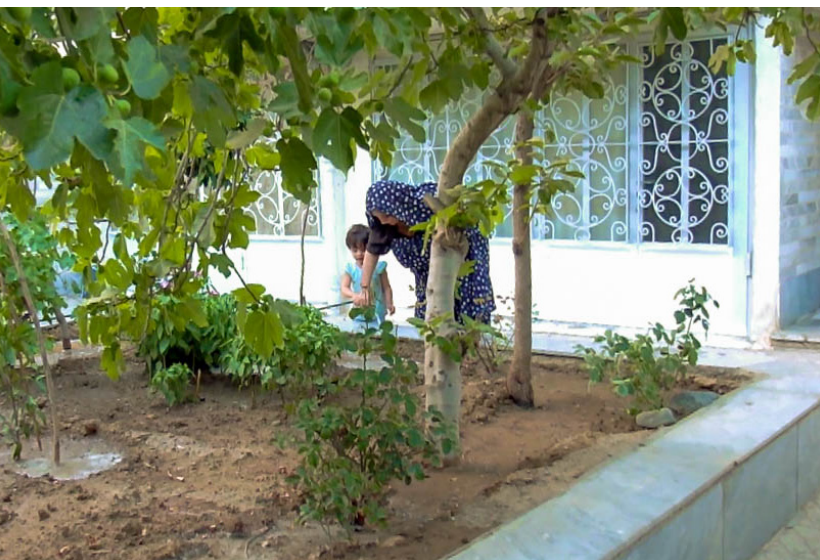


peasants searching for an opportunity to make a living. After the White Revolution and the civil war in Afghanistan, Karaj, as a booming industrial city, offered employment and cheap housing opportunities near Tehran. Later in the late 60s, the high plateau of Karaj would become the focus of interest for the rich people in Tehran due to its better air quality. With its size it is the biggest city in the Tehran Metropolitan Area and is currently developing to a new center of the area.

My base for the next month is located in the north of Karaj, in the lively neighbourhood Gohardasht. From here I will analyse Karaj's development and growth to the outskirts of Tehran, where new cities come to being.

„ I DON‘T LIVE
IN KARAJ“
STORIES FROM A
POLYCENTRIC
CITY





Thinking of the project ahead of me, I let my eyes roam over the small marble tiles which are forming different patterns on the house front in the dead-end street.

Each of the three story houses in the street have a south-west garden enclosed by three meter high, solid walls to protect this patch of green from this hot and hostile environment.

My host for this time is the 75-year old Tooran. My view from her balcony includes a window into our small paradise - a garden with a flowered square in the center. With my arrival, the figs on the trees are ripe and I have the honor as the guest to enjoy the sweetness of fruits. Every level of the house contains one apartment. The ground floor is Chanum S.'s apartment. She is over 80 years old and rents Tooran's apartment. From her living room she is able to exit in the garden. When she is at home, the door is open and a thin white curtain blocks the heat from entering her apartment. Before we leave for shopping, we drop by. My host gently says „Khohar, khohar“² through the curtain in order not to wake Chanum S. up if she is asleep. Sometimes Chanum S. tiredly, but pleased, looks through the curtain and sometimes there is no response. The house resembles a community that takes care of each other and where all the people in the house take responsibility for the housekeeping and share the garden

2 Farsi: sister

too. The house is intimate and the dead-end street is like a village where everyone knows each other. On the top floor lives an older couple. On the first floor, I reside with Tooran, who occupies a spacious, two bedroom apartment with 80 m². She lives alone. When I ask her about her living situation, she tells me that her previous house was much larger and that she likes spacious residences. Space is a luxury. Before, when her children still lived in Iran, she used to live in a single house with her family. The whole family used to live more north in Gohardasht when Gohardasht was still a community of rich people. Now the house has been torn down and made space for a multiple story housing complex. For fifty years she has lived in Gohardasht. When I ask her she says that she is from Gohardasht, not from Karaj to be clear.

Similar to a multitude of other people at her age, she is living alone now. After the children had left Iran after the war, they started new families abroad. Our conversations clarify that she is not pitying her situation or feeling lonely. The social structure and family relations in Iran are strong. The ringing of the telephone is a constant background noise and relatives, no matter how close or distant, call or have to be called. She proudly tells me how big her family is and that she needs to keep in contact with them. People of the house meet in the courtyard, invite others and chat. It is very natural to get invited for tea. The park nearby becomes a meeting point for all the people of the block in the evening and a hideout for young couples.

Prior to my journey to Iran, I was told that taarof³ didn't have the same importance as it used to have. But it seems common for people to act according to the taarof. The way you greet, invite and decline politely is important for your next encounter and your reputation. Now it is 12 am and the sun has silenced the streets. However, while I am reading, a few voices are drifting from the street up to me to the balcony and I can hear crystal clear „Befamoid"⁴, a word from the taarof which is of major importance for the act of inviting.

From the Azadi Avenue, Gohardasht's main road's small hidden bazaar streets are leading us north-east.

Tooran is going to show me where her family used to live before she moved to her current home. In the fifties, mostly workers and refugees settled in Karaj. Later, as Tehran grew more chaotic and the smog started to bother people, a lot of wealthy people built a second residence in Karaj. But instead of saying that they lived in Karaj, they emphasized the area where they were living in order to segregate themselves from the poorer society in Karaj. After Shams Palace had been built for the sister of the Shah in Mehrshah, also Gohardasht became a wealthy area. Tooran's husband worked for the

³ Taarof is a polite etiquette, which you use to show respect and thankfulness.

⁴ Farsi: welcome





military and had a good income. Thus, when the family relocated from Ahwas near the Iraq border to Tehran, Tooran's husband bought a big house in the new area of Gohardasht, with diplomats, famous actors and singers as their neighbors. At this time, the area was encapsulated and separated from Karaj with farmlands surrounding Gohardasht. Multiple story buildings with shiny stone façades and romantic, postmodern ornaments are framing the streets now. Some of the high-rises are still under construction, others newly built. As we are walking further north, small one-family homes start to appear once in awhile. The former building typology of Gohardasht and small security posts are a window into the Shah era. As we reach the location of the former house, we see what used to be the one-story building, which is now a sleek six-story building with multiple apartments. The building next to the house, is still original. Tooran points at it and says that her home is exactly the same and rings the doorbell. A lady at the age of 70 draped loosely into a white chador⁵ opens the door. The former neighbors haven't seen each other for years and give each other a tight hug. She invites us and shows us her garden and her house. The garden is a small paradise and much bigger than Tooran's shared garden. Moreover, the house seems to be enormous, with big heavy furniture, small windows and very deep rooms. Almost impossible to maintain, for one person. Under the living area is a cellar with windows into the garden. It is an extra apartment. After the White Revolution,

⁵ A chador is a big square piece of cloth, that women wear over their clothes. Wrapped the right way it covers a woman from head to toe.



many people sold their land after becoming landowners and searched for work in Tehran and Karaj. Their parents stayed behind and continued as independent farmers. In the winter time, when the farming season ended, the parents visited their families in Tehran. They could live for free as housekeepers in wealthy family houses and be close to their children. Now things have changed. Standing in her small paradise, we look to the neighboring houses. Regarding the density of this area and rising ground prices as well as her knee problems, she will sooner or later sell her home. Someone then will most probably try to squeeze the most money out of the land and build a multiple story residence on it. For the same price suddenly 10 families will live at a place where now just one lives. Her house is an exception. With a nostalgic look on her face, Tooran remains silent for a while. All her children are abroad and she lives alone. Her son in Austria was reluctant to let me see his former home. For over thirty years he has been living now in a different country and his native city has changed. He gives Tooran restrictions over the phone that I am forbidden to visit the places he grew up at. I understand that he is scared. I see him as Marco Polo from Italo Calvino's "The invisible Cities" saying:

*"Memory's images, once they are fixed in words, they are erased. Perhaps I am afraid of losing Venice all at once, if I speak of it. Or perhaps, speaking of other cities I have already lost it, little by little."*⁶

⁶ Calvino, 1974, 87.



Gohardasht's main road is sleeping during the day. The metal volleys are closed and leave Azadi street abandoned.

People use the hidden bazaar streets in order to avoid the sun and not to be exposed to sun on the sidewalk. But after sunset, the tiles on the sidewalks are radiating heat, which is mixed with a mild breeze. The former empty hot sidewalk suddenly turns into a place crowded with people. The perfect time for shopping, business, running errands or meeting friends for dinner. Cars suddenly become shops and all the stores have their blinds open trying to attract customers with blinking lights like flies.

The irregular sidewalks have water channels running alongside them. Holes and concrete poles make it hard for Tooran to walk. In the night, she just walks on the street. The cars honk, the rapidly passing lights and the noises make you disorientated and scared at first to cross the street. The cars honk to warn Tooran not to step further into the street. All the time, she would fearlessly cross the street, wherever she likes. One arm stretched out, she stops the cars from hitting her and crosses as fast as the pain in her knee allows her. The whole city has a speed limit of 80 km/h and the traffic on Azadi Avenue in Gohardasht peaks from 6pm to 12pm. At that time, the traffic police, with its blue uniform, is placed on the square near the Saviz Cinema to control this mass of cars. It's Azadis Avenues rush hour.

It is Gohardasht's biggest shopping street.

Walking north on the Avenue, most of the buildings have three levels. On the ground floor is the shopping zone with its glass front. A variety of colorful signs are placed over the small, narrow entrances, so potential customers will also find the tiny shops in the basements and deep inside the buildings. The upper levels are apartments owned by the shop owners and rent out for extra money. Rents from different apartments are important revenues. The upper parts of the buildings look homogenous, with their brownish concrete facade and the mirroring windows. Sometimes, because of a lack of space, signs are also placed in-between the upper windows. On account of the high square footage price, most of the shops are narrow and deep. Everything becomes a blend of signs. The street signs are named after people who died in the Gulf war, the first war of the young Islamic Republic. Their faces printed on the signs looking down to the passers-by are a constant reminder of the sacrifices for the people of the Islamic Republic. The Supreme Leaders as well as other iconic war scenes of the Iran -Iraq war ornament the empty concrete walls. At night, the shops light up the streets and the sellers take their places on the sidewalks. Under the eyes of the Supreme Leader, you can buy fake Dior bags and the latest Hollywood blockbusters as well as classics such as „The seventh seal“ from Ingmar Bergman. If you have a certain wish, you can hand it to the seller and he will download it for you. Many Iranians do not have internet and people who have it are still stuck in the bitrate of the late 90s, which

renders downloading almost impossible. A regular customer wants to know my movie taste. He is a huge Bergman fan and asks me about Austrian directors. I suggest Peter Haneke. The movie seller does not know him but is interested. He jots it down and says it will be here by tomorrow. A soldier walks by but does not seem to take any notice. There is no copyright for foreign music or films, which makes the selling of the movies legal or at least semi-legal. I am walking on past the flickering, colorful lights. The dense traffic makes the confusion perfect. A man is trying to sell me small coloured chickens. He mistakes my shocked face with the interested face of a customer. While I am watching them eating each other alive, he is smiling at me saying “Take one”. A man is blowing soap bubbles into my face while another is trying to sell me “Kale pache”, a grey soupe made of sheep head and sheep feet. When I stop, I usually get a honk from one of the illegal taxis. This street is an absurd mix of a bazar and the Las Vegas Strip. 50 years ago, Azadi Avenue was a bazar street. In the course of the years, the demand has slowly changed the street. Now, mostly telephone and fashion stores are represented on Azadi Avenue. The need for goods and new fashion seems unable to cease for the steadily growing population of Gohardasht. Small labyrinths leading through the houses are passages with stores inside. These shortcuts are leading you to other streets as well as to the main roads with the big malls. But also on Azadi Avenue, now and then, a big mall would break the building structures with its multiple stories. In the malls, the stores are more expensive. Through an interior made of polished stone and shiny escalators, guards take a stroll. In comparison to the street life, the



malls provoke a feeling of clinical cleanness and emptiness. However, there are still numerous shops inside the shopping centers that are empty and some floors that are even unbuilt. In the streets, the malls give the impression of being out of proportion. Their architectural language differs from the rest of the homogenous street facade. With their postmodern shapes and big ornaments, they also differ in materiality and proportion and stand in contrast to the filigree small tiles and signs that decorate the houses. Even though the shopping centers are still empty, there seems to be an endless process of building new shopping centers. The biggest shopping mall on Azadi Avenue should be completed in the autumn of 2016. It has more than 25 stories and will mainly be a furniture store. This development of high-rise shopping malls diverges from the usual Iranian selling arrangement. Goods are traditionally distributed in the streets. First, products are bought on the Grand Bazar and then brought to Karaj. One street sells lamps and the other just sells carpets or chairs. This also has the effect that the stores are regulating their prices and there will be no monopolization of one company. Now, one single shopping center can have the same function as a whole street. With more square footage, the glass tower can offer a larger variety of furniture than one street could provide. Some people are showing me the famous lamp street. The streets that sell the same product are slowly becoming a tourist attraction and losing their main practical function. They cannot compete with the variety of goods offered in the malls or on the main road. The building itself is still mute and mirrors the lights of the street in its glass facade at night. Azadi Avenue is constantly changing through a consume

driven mechanism. There is no historical center and no need for it. The new centres for meeting are shopping malls. They offer all the things the young society seems to desire.

Azadi Avenue is the perfect venue for the beautiful Iranian girls in the warm evening light.

Most of them show the plasters on their noses with pride as a proof of their nose job. Their colourful light mantauxs⁷ and rousaris⁸ are fluttering in the wind. The headscarf is almost sliding down their heads showing their hair. It is fashionable to have the hair open underneath the scarf, which is lightly draped around their heads.

On the crowded sidewalks of Gohardasht, you also encounter women wrapped in a black piece of cloth just showing their nose and eyes. They either hold it tightly with both hands or clamp it between their teeth in order to have their hands free. The chador's fluttery textile turns them to black shadows in the evening sun. The contrast between them and other women seems paradoxical. Tooran tells me not to wrap my scarf too tightly around my head since it is not fashionable. I frequently sit without a headscarf and with short-sleeves on the balcony. I feel like on display. She says I should not care. "This is home". She tells me that old

7 Farsi: a long coat.

8 A light headscarf.



ladies wear the hijab⁹ even at home when guests come, so that they won't see their grey hair or bald spots. She keeps saying in a serious voice "You don't need that". Suddenly the hijab becomes a piece of their vanity. The girls try to make an accessory out of it because they have to wear it. Old women are hiding under it. A man sells them in the street together with perfume and makeup. All these dressing rules have contributed to the development of a particular style of fashion - how to wear the headscarf or whether the mantoux is transparent or open. The girls test the borders and rules everyday, and push them to the limits. After the Revolution, a multitude of women were demonstrating against the hijab and chador, which were dictated by law. Just some years before, the Shahr had forbidden the Chador leaving the female part of society confused. First, religious people tried to convince them to give up resistance, then women got attacked with acid and even ultimately imprisoned. The female supporter that came from abroad quickly noticed that they had to leave the country if they did not want to be imprisoned as well. Now, I see young women with confidence. They try to express and differentiate themselves from the older generation - a search for independence and resistance which manifested itself in fashion. Basij¹⁰ are looking for girls who are dressing to lightly. They turn their heads in order to pick out a girl from the mass. These girls are easy to recognize with their stiff clothes. Still, the girls walk with high heels through the streets

9 Islamic headscarf.

10 Basij are guarding the goals of the revolution. A volunteer organisation that exists since the Islamic Revolution and is subordinated to the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution.



telephoning and talking to friends.

They fight with their boyfriends in the park, sit in the grass chatting or walk down the streets holding hands with boys. The slow traffic is perfect to roll by to hand out numbers. At night, the streets are full of young people. The average Iranian age is about 30 years. Walking through the streets of Gohardasht, these young people want to enjoy themselves in the evening heat without having any fear.

Through Karaj runs a straight highway from west to east and divides the city into north and south. Beheshti Avenue is the main road of Karaj.

Blue and orange colours are flashing by as we are going through the tunnels. Everything is reachable with cars. From taxi to taxi we make our way to Karaj. Tall concrete and steel structures are rising in between the houses. Nothing seems older than 10 years. A roundabout, the first cinema in Karaj and no possibility to get out of the car. Beheshti Avenue is the centre of “Karaj”. The city centre is now a traffic junction next to the river, which runs down from the Alborz Mountain.

There is no main square. “Once in a week I go to Karaj, for administrative errands” Tooran explains. But there is nothing that would require her to get to downtown or what she can’t get in Gohardasht. For everything else she goes to Tehran. There is no historical centre. Karaj has grown in independent parts over the last century. On the one hand,

the city is a summer resort for rich people and on the other hand a city for day workers. In 1930, Karaj became a central place in the industrial development plan of Iran as the centre of the Iranian steel production. Unfortunately, the steel industry didn’t boom. Already in the 1940s, the plan was given up. The materials for building the steel mills could not be delivered due to the Second World War. The British stopped the delivery from Germany at the Suez Channel. Nonetheless, Karaj became the industrial centre of Iran. The stretch between Tehran and Karaj is filled with large factory halls. Iranian minorities from Azerbaijan and Armenia came to Karaj and settled there, in search for work. Subsequently, other parts were established for the upper class of Tehran. These parts were called “saraks”. In 1976, these saraks became shahr, independent municipalities. Only in 1996, these parts have been reunited to a greater Karaj. All the master plans that were approved of between 1977 and 1990, could not be realised because of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Likewise, the Iran-Iraq war from 1980 to 1988 made it impossible too. This caused Karaj and Tehran to grow without regulations. Moreover, refugees from the southern border of Iran settled in Karaj due to cheap housing prices. In 1999, Karaj had its first elected city council. However, over 2000 ha of agricultural land have been taken up by the uncontrolled housing development in the past 40 years due to the White Revolution land reform in 1970. Former peasants became landowners. In many cases, the parcels that had been distributed by the Shah’s executives were too little profitable, so most of the people decided to sell their land to developers and to work in the industry in Karaj. “Everything north of

Gohardasht was farmland. Gohardasht only had a main road as well as 13 streets west of it and 13 streets east of it. In the south, there was a controlled gate.” Tooran wonders about how fast the city grows. Earlier, just one road lead down to Karaj. “Early in the morning, day workers from Karaj come up to Gohardasht and wait at the roundabout at Azadi Avenue to get hired for the day.” The times have changed. The valuable farmland of the Iranian greenbelt is slowly vanishing, which is a crucial development for a lot of people. The green land is slowly changing into a desert of concrete and the precious parks are sold up to private investors. The urban future of the two provinces is rising on former farmland. The mind wanders “You search for laborious” I here and see Abbas Kiarostami’s Taste of Cherries.¹¹¹²

Looking at the map at the western part of the city, there is a form of a horseshoe and tight structures emerge out of the rectangular street grid of Karaj.

Looking at the map at the western part of the city, there is a form of a horseshoe and tight structures emerge out of the rectangular street grid of Karaj. Eslamabad rises on a hill

11 Taste of Cherry, Abbas Kiarostami. Iran 1997 (DVD: The Criterion Collection, 1999)

12 Bernard Hourcade: Karaj i. Modern City, 15.12.2010 <http://www.irani-caonline.org/articles/karaj-city-modern-city,15.05.2017>

in the south-west over Karaj. The tight steep and crooked streets make it hard for cars to climb the hill. The driver is afraid of ruining her twenty-year old Citroën and keeps cursing while forcing the car up the hill. She points at a group of guys hanging around in the street “Look at these hard working men.” She makes fun of them. She can’t understand why someone would want to visit “Zurrabad”, as it is called unofficially. “Zurr” means violence. People just settled in Eslamabad and built homes without official permission. It is a shanty town, which differs in its structure from the rest of the city - dense and unregulated it is the perfect place to hide in the middle of the city.

Workers with no steady income, mostly former peasants and refugees, started to squat in the caves alongside the river. Due to the building boom after the land reform, informal settlements were constructed alongside the river. The private housing development helped “Eslamabad” to grow in high speed. “Just in 30 years this area has become so dense”, the driver is chatty. She shakes her head. As the car pulls up the hill, we have a look inside the narrow alleyways. Women are sitting on naked stones in front of the houses and children are playing in the alleys. It conveys a calm feeling, not an image of a shanty town. “It is actually pretty nice here”, she remarks. It seems she doesn’t come here at all. The constantly demanding housing market bears a loophole. Since the 70s, after the housing boom, the prices have soared and become too high for the poor and the structure of Eslamabad started to form itself. Now it is known to be the poorest area in Karaj, rough and dangerous. Strangers are not trusted.

The municipality wanted to take down the structure more





than once. Now this is valuable land for the housing market and the city is slowly trying to take back this area in order to sell it. The northern part of Eslamabad has been torn down and already rebuilt with new houses. As a response to questions, what happened to the people who lived in the former houses, the driver shrugs her shoulders. We see construction sides and big bags of cement lying next to the street. People live their lives and repair their homes. The police has problems to control the area. Men are maneuvering on their motorcycles through the narrow streets and vanish in the structure. It is not clear how many people live in Eslamabad but the mass of people the structure is containing is too big to just relocate. On the peak of “Zurrabad”, the only sound comes from the children and the hammering sounds of a hammer hitting metal. The whole city is growing as well as Eslamabad. A woman in chador is sitting on the street in front of a house entrance, enjoying the evening sun and children start to gather around us. Most of the time, the children shout. “Don’t take a picture”. But these are curiously looking at us. A little girl with short hair and golden earrings is especially curious. During the Iran-Iraq war, the Iraqis bombed Eslamabad, mistaking the narrow structure for the city centre. Karaj is changing the buildings and its size as well as Eslamabad but the shanty town is doing it in its own pace and pattern. Similar to a village in the city. To give a better view over Zurrabad we climb Asimir, a hill north of Zurrabad. The driver is angry. This might be the last hill her car climbs up. The view from this hill shows half finished houses and cranes through the orange fog that is generated through the smog. I see a lot of cars and young people who

try to hide here. “See how beautifully they cleaned this place”, the driver remarks. Later, I recognised that she was talking about people.

“We would never go to Karaj, we would rather go to Tehran”

, not just Tooran keeps saying this, everyone agrees that the Bazar in Tehran has everything you desire. The sweet neighbour E who is in her early twenties says that everything gets distributed at the Grand Bazar in Tehran. “There you can find things cheaper.” The Grand Bazaar is not just the old city centre of Tehran but also the commercial centre. People go into the dense structures of the Bazar in order to bargain and make business. But not only the Bazar connects Karaj and Tehran. One major thing for which to criticise Karaj, is its lack of cultural and social activities. The city harbours a great amount of higher educated people and middle class households but offers almost no cultural activities.

A young man who does his military service is following us for the day. He is a tall guy of about 1,90 m who has outgrown his uniform.

The department of cultural heritage made it possible for us

to visit Karaj’s historical building as all historical sites, except for a stone bridge in the Safavid area, unfortunately are not publicly accessible. The bridge has recently been restored and is the first finished project in Karaj. It is the first tourist attraction in Karaj. The city prepares for future tourism, with help from the The Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Iran¹³. The bridge once marked the major road into Karaj. Now a modern bridge with multiple lanes runs alongside the old one. Under the bridge in the water, a man is washing his naked upper body. As he bends down and washes his neck in total peace, our ears are ringing from the sound of the cars that roll over the new bridge.

Walking into the department as a foreigner with a genuine interest in the history of Karaj helps a lot. After a good amount of tea on almost every floor of the building, we are granted permission to see all historical buildings. The young man will be our shadow for the day. A two-year, and low paid, military service is obligatory for every young man in Iran. He seems to have calm days working for the department. There is just one exception for those whose fathers did an extra voluntary year of military service during the Iran-Iraq war. This lucky individuals get a free pass and do not have to do the military service. Two other historical monuments can be found in Karaj: A Caravanserai, also in the Safavid area and a summer residence, the Solemei Palace, which was given to the School of farming by Nasreddin Shah and is located in the centre of Karaj, formerly surrounded by farmland.

¹³ The Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization of Iran, established in 1985, is a governmental funded organisation, that oversees all publications and collaborations connecting to all museums in Iran.

Karaj consists of islands, which were formerly encapsulated by their use and hierarchy. The densification of the area breaks through to these islands and rejoins the city into one architectural vision. Small and older elements are rapidly erased and replaced with a homogeneous building structure. The downtown of Karaj cannot be no longer only inhabited by the working-class. The city grows more homogeneous in appearance and diverse in people, it breaks the class system that was subconsciously established during the Shah Regime. There is no place for a shanty town and even this structure that barely exists since 30 years gets replaced with the same

architectural carpet that seems to lay over the whole city. However, through this simplification of the urban form arises a discourse of Iranian identity and westernisation. Through the modernisation old structures are erased, which leads to a preservation instinct and the need for finding Karaj's identity. A major problem the Regime is constantly facing, is the highly educated Iranian youth who is looking for social life and cultural activities. The lack of cultural activities has become a prominent and constant point of criticism. But the strict renewing and densification process obviously leaves no physical space for the growing population of Karaj.





New buildings rise up Asmir







Gohardasht

NEW TOWN, A NEW URBAN CONCEPT





The car rolls down the highway and cuts straight through the dusty plain.

On the right hand side three power plant reactors appear. The wind is strong and throws dust into the air. As we finally reach our destination, we go out of the car and dust blows into our clothes. My headscarf is flying off and my companion says “I hate the wind” and shakes his head.

South of Karaj lies Andisheh New Town, an unfinished plan city. Its full capacity is predicted to be 132,000 residents. Now we are in the heart of Andisheh, between three enormous housing blocks, which ends we can't see. Each block has a different form and color that personalizes them. The landscape is flat and hot, there are no plants and vegetation, just dust gets picked up by the wind. Dark shadows are rising in the north. The silhouettes of the Alborz mountains helps us to orientate ourselves. A look on the phone tells us that we are right now in Andisheh Town Phase 3 and a fox runs over one of the construction sites to welcome us.¹

After 1950 the population of Tehran grew steadily and with it also problems.

The whole country centralized on the capital, which developed fast to a Metropolis. The social contrast between

¹ Arafian/Moeini 2016, 211.

Tehran and the rest of Iran became bigger. The city started to be overcrowded. The consequences were informal settlements and high prices per square meter. This made living in Tehran impossible for many people. Plans were made to regulate the city planning, but because of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 and the and the Gulf war 1980 to 1988, it was hard for the government to take action. 1981 the government started build cities outside Tehran to release the pressure from the capital. New cities would be established, that could exist self sufficiently.

Andisheh New Town is one of these cities. It is the most popular New Town² in the surrounding of Tehran. The city stretches out on a plain and has no natural protection against the wind. It lies 14 km south-east of Karaj and is reachable by car or bus on the highway. East of Andisheh are the old factories, which are stretching between Qods and Tehran. The whole project is split in different construction phases. Some of them are still unfinished. Initially the idea was to establish an independent city, but studies make clear that a lack of work possibilities, commercial centers, as well as medical and health support, people are still commuting to Tehran and in some cases to Karaj.

„In order to study the first supposition on Andisheh new town resident's dependency to Tehran, the working place of residents were studied. Six choices were offered to the interviewees: Tehran Metropolitan, Andisheh new town, Karaj Road, Shahriar & Suburb, Karaj and others. [...] The results show that 38% of people were commuting to

work on their private cars, 20% by booking cars, 17% by bus, 17% by taxi, 7% on foot and 1% by underground train. Thus we can say that daily commute of about 48% of Andisheh new town adds to Tehran metropolitan traffic, crowd and pollution.“³

The housing prices in Andisheh are lower than in Tehran, but the main focus still is on the capital. Daily commuting cause the traffic system to fail. The study shows that there is also a huge lack of public transport and accessibility to the public transport. The environmental effects on the cities are fatal. On some days in the winter the schools close, because of high danger for children and old people.

„The studies showed that about half of the population, that is 55% of the total households were going to Tehran to fulfill their demands, 12% to Shariyar and 8% to Karaj. Only 25% of the studied population meets the questioned demands in Andisheh new town.“⁴

Many years ago its borders had been determined. Without taking social changes and needs into account the city is still growing with an unstoppable force in acceleration.

2 A New Town is a plan city, mostly built on a patch of undeveloped land.

3 Ajza Shokouhi M./Gharakhlou M./Khazaei Nejad F., 12.

4 Ajza Shokouhi M./Gharakhlou M./Khazaei Nejad F., 12.

Karaj is criticized for its lack of social activities and the same can be said about Andisheh.

The New Towns don't meet the cultural requirements we are used in European cities. Still New Towns are viewed upon as a solution to the Tehran housing problem. West and south of Tehran and all around the Tehran Metropolitan Area, New Towns are popping up. These plan cities are huge gambles and built on land speculations. The train line, subway and highways are the premises of most of the housing speculations. Planned completely from scratch these complexes are labeled to be sustainable, modern with better air quality like the Hashtgerd New Town project.⁵ With new methods of building from Europe energy is saved during construction and building got more efficient.

South from Tehran at the Imam Khomeini Airport lies the city Parand. Even though finished the city is half empty. Years ago a rumour circulated that the train line will be extended to the airport. Now that the subway is in construction Parand is already built and half sold.

For a lot of people housing speculation is a lucrative investment. People own multiple flats and make profit by buying cheap and hoping for the value to rise.

⁵ Vgl. Rudolf Schäfer, YOUNG CITIES - Developing Energy-Efficient Urban Fabric in the Tehran-Karaj Region, 31.01.11, https://www.wanacu.tu-berlin.de/menue/activities/associated_activities/young_cities_hashtgerd_iran/, 10.03.2017

So a lot of Iranians have bought an apartment in Parand. Even Tooran tells me "Yes, I also own a flat in Parand" Tooran owns three flats. She lives in one herself, the other two secures her constant revenues are an important part of her pension.

Speculation on the housing market has been a great issue in the capital. In 2013 the housing prices in Tehran suddenly dropped, because people found cities like Karaj better to live in. The bad air quality and the traffic, mixed with to high housing prices, made moving to cities with good traffic connection to tehran more lucrative. As a consequence housing prices in Tehran are dropping and prices in neighbouring cities are rising.

The online newspaper Al Monitor published in 2015 that more than 1.6 Million housing units were finished but vacant. Even though the population is constantly growing there are still ghost towns. Since 2017 developers have to pay 33\$ on each square meter for every day the unit is finished and not inhabited. This law is supposed to stop the speculations on the housing market and make the economy more stable.⁶

There is no metro connection inbetween Parand and Tehran yet. It lies on the wide plain, in nowhere land. There are no trees, no parks, no vegetation just one highway. The car drives for one hour on a straight highway south. The street cuts through the empty desert. Suddenly a sign appears asking you "airport or Parand?"

⁶ Bijan Khajehpour, 19.04.2015, Iran's housing bubble, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/04/iran-economy-housing-construction-property-inflation.html>, 8.05.2017



Parand

In Karaj there are no timetables for buses.

We stand and wait. Tooran asks a woman who waits with us “How long have you been waiting?” “Five minutes” she answered. Tooran is unsettled that the bus may not come. So in the end the best is to take a taxi. There are two different taxis. One kind is stopping like a bus on certain stops in the city and the other kind honks at you to see if you might jump in. A wave with the arm into the stream of cars is enough and a car rolls to the sidewalk. It looks like a private car and has no seat belts. Also the front passenger seat is secured with a chain. Tooran asks “How much to Golshahr?” The driver nods his head “500!”

Currently the city is working on an metro system for Karaj. The current public transport is unreliable and exhausting. Finally at the metrostation of Golshahr, a modern concrete building, we board the train to Tehran.

Everyday people commute from Karaj by fast train to Tehran. Tehran is still the economical center on which people depend on for work all around the Alborz and the Tehran Province. In the 1970s Tehran planned to build a metro, but because of the revolution and the war the construction phase extended and the first Tehran Metro Line 1 opened in 1999. Soon more lines followed. The last finished line 5 connects Tehran and Karaj. From Golshahr it departs every 10 minutes and takes about 30 min to it is end station Tehran (Sādeghieh), where it connects to Line 2. Next to the train runs the highway, which connects Karaj to Tehran. It runs

from north-west through Karaj to Tehran and is the fastest, as the oldest connection to the capital. The section between the two cities is said to be the busiest highway in Iran.

The modern train has an own woman’s car, where just women and children are allowed. In the other cars women and men can sit together. Tooran tells me “When I am tired I go to the men’s car. I always get a seat there.” In that car men and women are barely speaking and the only thing you can buy is chewing gum and water. But the women’s compartment is a wild place. As we find finally a place to sit down, we can watch the sales women getting ready to do business. Quickly they put on their make up and sort their clothes and makeup to sell. The train has just been searched before we could board it. One woman was thrown out of the train and her stuff was confiscated. Selling goods in the metro is forbidden and sometimes women get caught at the stations. Still the business is running good. As soon as the train departs the station, suddenly everywhere in the compartment woman stand up and start shouting to get attention. From all sides I hear: “Chanumah chanumah!”⁷ One woman is selling trousers, the other one makeup, another headscarves and also bras are flying in the air. In seconds the women turn the train to a bazaar. As long as the train is in movement we are in a bazaar ruled by women. Woman unveil to showcase scarfs with modern prints or do make up tests on each other. After 10 minutes on the train the woman next to me has already bought a scarf. People say “It’s annoying! They shout and you

⁷ Farsi: women





can't relax", but almost everyone has bought something on the train.

As the dusty soft hills of the Alborz Mountains become the backdrop for a dense mesh of steel structures and empty highrises, the feeling of entering a dystopian world arises. Old industrial buildings covered with dust are rushing by. People in Karaj worked and are still working in this factories as the base for their existence. The Iranian car brand Pekan was produced here, but after the revolution General Motors stopped sponsoring the Iranian car industry. Nowadays pharmaceutical products for Bayer, textiles and motors for Peugeot are produced here. In the 60s, the shah decided that this former farmland to be the industrial center of Iran. Now the company's facilities are framing the view from the train

and highway.

Slowly the brown mountains get drowned in the smog as we proceed our descent to Tehran. Steel structures and unfinished residential complexes get more frequent. Placed on the plain, scarcely, yet without streets to connect them, the monoliths stand out in contrast to the shadow of the mountains. Suddenly they become denser and as the train passes Ekbatan we know we are soon arriving.

Built on the former outskirts in the west of Tehran, on a blank canvas, Ekbatan City rises.

Named after an ancient city in the west of Iran, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi wanted Ekbatan to be a new cornerstone in the history of Iranian civilisation and a monument to himself. The goal was to build the most modern housing block in the world. On a tight schedule the complex was constructed in 3 phases and finished in 1976. It stretches out over 2,208,570 square kilometers and has 15,500 apartments. Ekbatan City is designed by the Iranian architect Rahman Golzar and the American architect Jordan Gruzin. The constructor for phase 1 was the American Starrett company, that built the Empire State Building and also the large housing project Stuyvesant Town in New York. During the modernisation process of Iran the Shah Regime relied strongly on American and European support. American urban planners laid the foundation for the highway structures



of Tehran. Parallels to the Los Angeles highway system are obvious. Straight long and big highways cut through the city, that twists themselves into big swirly knots and invite large scale buildings into the city structure.⁸

Ekbatan City consists of not only housing but also multiple grocery stores, mosques, schools, sport facilities and a hospital. The housing blocks are framing small public parks, which are famous for harbouring a lot of cats. Ekbatan City has now become fully integrated in the city structure and turned into a small district of Tehran. Two metro stops

connect Ekbatan City to Tehran but the most important connection is the highway. A big difference between Ekbatan City and contemporary housing structures is the integration of parks and the building height. Even though a high rise, the structure is quite low.

“I am scared of cats” S keeps her distance to the cats of Ekbatan City. A lot of Iranians don’t like cats and dogs. It is not usual to keep pets and especially dogs are regarded as dirty in the islamic world. Tooran said “We had a dog years ago in the garden and we just went for walks in the night” Now in the park I see all the cats strolling around us. We buy ice cream from a juice and ice cream store at the corner and stroll through the area enjoying the cool climate under the trees. The ground floor of the buildings has arcades and women in Chador with flower patterns are inviting eachother for tea, some are just out to buy bread at the corner. Even though Ekbatan City has a dramatically big scale, people are meeting and talking in the courtyards. There’s a sense of strong community. As we walk through the blocks people recognize us as strangers.

S leads the way to her car. She is 30 years old, studies while working and has a car, as most of the Iranians have. She is unmarried and lives with her parents, a classic constellation until marriage. The average Iranian population is 30 years old and has a university degree. S takes me to her home in District 22.

⁸ Brian Ackley: Super Center: Life in Tehran’s largest housing development, 2006, <http://bidoun.org/articles/life-in-tehran-s-largest-housing-development>, 19.04.2017





Looking at the map you see Tehran stretching out to the west alongside the mountains to Karaj. District 22 is the biggest manifestation of urban growth in Tehran.

After the Revolution in 1979 the area was a military base. Considering the possible expansion and future development that the municipality are planning, District 22 is yet another blank canvas to develop a new city on.

Now this area should represent the modern society of the Islamic Republic of Iran and is an ambitious project. It holds a forest you can ride horses in, a gigantic artificial lake, the biggest future mall in the Middle East, and an amusement park. District 22 should be the new commercial, economical and touristic center of Tehran.

Multiple straight highways connect District 22 with the rest of Tehran. As we roll down the highway to S's home, the metal structures appear as black thin sculptures against the orange evening glow. As we drive further in the direction of Karaj more unfinished housing complexes come into our view. In between the high rises we see mosques under construction, easy to recognize with their dome. Still in bare concrete they look through the generic housing structures, reminding us that we are in an Islamic country, as the only building typology that never changes.

30 years ago the whole area did not exist.

In 2001 District 22 was planned for 300,000 people, but the current estimations say that approximately 1 million people live in the area. Still many housing complexes are in construction or finished but empty. The Tehran mayor Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf stated in 2014 that the population of District 22 would not grow over 1.5 million inhabitants. But still there is no end of construction in sight. The land is vacant and the space until Karaj is vast. As long as there is demand there will be construction.⁹ Strangely this area was not constructed to be mainly a residential quarter of Tehran, but still residential buildings are getting constructed all over District 22. The big “Persian Gulf Martyr’s Lake” is an ambitious project. A huge artificial lake that should help the city not to overheat during the hot times of the year. Designed like a gigantic air conditioner, the warm winds from the west come in over the lake, get cooled down by it and blows cool air into the city. This mechanism doesn’t quite seem to work though. The density and height of the generic highrises are blocking the wind from entering the city center and trap the wind between the buildings. The determine building height for the towers was initially lower, but most of the developer built the towers higher anyway. The penalty fees for the extra levels are lower than the profit they gain from renting out the extra floors. The

9 o. A., 16.08.2015, Tehran district grows by leaps and bounds
<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/tehran-district-22.html>,
8.05.2017

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buildings create falling winds that introduce new problems for the people living in the towers. Sand storms started to be more frequent. In order to build this area the existing vegetation had to be removed. Now there is nothing to hold down the sand. There are no parks in walking distance of the towers, but a big forest that should be like central park for the whole of District 22.

The living room is a large, square room with an open kitchen. A big carpet covers the whole floor and alongside the wall are standing the “moble”¹⁰ facing a large flat screen on the opposite side of the room. S’s mother prepares the dinner and the delicious smell occupies the room. The AC is running and its noises blends with the music of the television. The new music video of Googoosh. Even though forbidden most of the people have satellite TV that connects to Iranian TV stations outside the country. Two small windows in the kitchen bring almost no light into this deep room, so lamps are already on in the morning. S spreads out the sofreh¹¹ on the big space between couch table and TV. While she lays the plates on it her father tells me “I drive every morning to the park to go running”. He means the big Chitgar Park. “It is not so far we live quite close” Sitting on the sofa the AC over the TV blows cold air into my face and makes me shiver. “It is really cold on the spot you are sitting in, watch out so you don’t get a cold”. We are on the 7th floor. Looking outside the window we

10 Moble is farsi and describes the big furniture, that is part of many iranian households.

11 A piece of cloth that is not allowed to be touched with the foot and functions as a table.



see the sunset through other generic towers. Steel structures and cranes turn to black lines in the horizon. The high rises seem introverted and show no sign of inhabitation. There are no balconies on the towers and the windows are shaded and reflective. The windows stay closed, the apartments are artificially acclimatized. Before night falls it is impossible to know if the residential towers around are inhabited or not. Privacy is important and guests are deeply trusted if they are allowed to enter someone's home. The family don't know their neighbours. The social interaction that Tooran has with her neighbors, with all their evening meetings in the park does not exist for S's family. S's mother brings the food. Everyone, no matter which age gather comfortably around the sofreh. The apartment is too small for a dining or kitchen table, so we eat on the floor around the sofreh. Sitting on the floor is usual in Iranian households. The new buildings are made out of concrete, as a consequence bladder infection from sitting on the cold floor has become a common illness. S's father leaves his comfortable chair and sits down on the floor. We have a traditional home cooked meal fesenjan, rice with tardic, sabzi, salad shirazi and doughr to drink. The music from the TV is running in the background. After the dinner, the sofreh is cleaned and stored away. We sit down again on the sofa and have tea with dates. The apartment has three bedrooms a big living area, a traditional toilet and a hammam with a modern toilet. S is chatting with her friends on the phone. The times are changing young people are growing more independent. Families are reduced in size and the marriage age for women increased. Internet, especially through the app Telegram connects young people. They organize where and when to



meet for parties or just for having an afternoon smoke in a hookah lounges.¹² They search for leisure time and privacy from their parents.

Even though S is in her early 30's the parents would be upset if she comes home after 10 pm., wondering what she has been doing up till so late and worried to death.

Huge grocery stores are placed between the towers cold windowless halls where, people can buy everything a household might or should need under the fluorescent lights.

Malls have been popping up in this area. In the center of Ekbatan City, Mega Mall a huge shopping complex is constructed. But the biggest mall is soon to come. Iran Mal is still under construction. The Tehran design firm PADYAV is currently constructing the biggest shopping mall in the middle east. The capacity of the mall should be 2000 people¹³. Six of the 12 halls have been already constructed, half hidden in clouds of dust. The rendering shows a big water pond in

front of the mall. The area is in full construction mode, and around the mall cranes are moving girders and hammering sounds echoes through the site. Iran mall is the commercial center of Tehran. The Lake is the a tourist attraction, soon also an amusement park and the area is complete. The paths around the Lake have elaborate ornaments. The investments in District 22 are as big as its expectations. A guard controls that no one is stepping too close to the lake. Armed with a whistle he is taking control of the lake. A man tries to take a selfie, while climbing up the fence. A loud whistle. He got caught. Seagulls are bathing calmly in the lake. Swimming for humans is not allowed.

Walking on the path makes us tired. The scenery around the lake is unfinished buildings. Everything in this area is oversized. Bigness is the concept. Too big to control, it developed its own scale, beyond human capacity and filled with rules. There is no end, continuously it stretches further out towards Karaj, but it is still Tehran. In the last years the borders of Tehran and Karaj has been revised over and over again. Borders are made, but not fixed. Nothing in District 22 is settled, just its scale and ambition.

12 In a hookah lounge you can smoke hookah/shisha, drink tea and eat sweets to its. You can enjoy the hookah on platforms in gardens with water fountains and wireless internet.

13 Vgl. PADYAV, 2015, <http://www.padyav-stage.com/en/index.php?newsid=29>, 10.05.2017

We see a man in a car driving on the dusty road. His eyes search the construction site in front of him. He drives past pits and machines. He is searching for someone that can help him, that will do almost anything for money. One of the daily workers, that struggle to survive. Through his eyes we see behind the mute facades of the high rises of Tehran, a terrain where everything is possible. Not just Abbas Kiarostami links Tehran's urban developments to social changes, disadvantages and advantages. A constant topic in Iran's contemporary cinema is the urban landscape of Tehran. A lot of Afghan people work as namaki, daily workers. They keep the cities

clean and live like shadows, without social status. The residential towers and the capitalistic analogy that the towers support, are tearing holes in the social structures. In this modern city public space becomes private space, in which you behave in a certain way, like in taarof. The young people can organize themselves through internet and create pop up places all over the city. Everything is possible everywhere. New restaurants appear after western role models. An infiltration of western culture and globalisation changes the social expectations. Young people want to live their own life as they intend to and architecture makes a clear

break in society. The north is seen as modern and rich, with the new residential towers, and the south is seen as poor with strong believers that are living in the old housing structures of Tehran. The large scale leaves place for people to separate themselves from the social demands they have to uphold.



Chitgar



Chitgar

آرمان



Chitgar





Area around Persian Gulf Martyr's Lake

THE WAY
TO ENJOY
LIFE





In the park the temperature drops 5 degrees. The trees build a roof and trap the cool air produced by the small water stream that runs like an artery through the park.

During the hottest times of the day it is comfortable to walk through the park. Elmira's father goes to the park to play chess and other people exercise on metal training machines. Elmira's father talks about philosophy. We sit on a bench in the park, watching a family spreading out a carpet on one of the stone plateaus. We watch them carrying pots, glasses and plates. In an instant they have turned the plateau into their living room. Our eyes wander to the gardener watering the flowerbed. A comfortable lassitude possesses this place. The beautiful and cool park is a welcome contrast to the dusty hot streets in the neighbourhood. We seem to have been brought back to the time of Hafez¹. Iranians identify themselves with the poet and feel a strong connection and relevance of his work in their lives. His poems are uplifting and light. On the streets you can buy the poems. Young afghan children sell them on the street. Like fortune cookies the small extracts of the poems tell your fate or the theme of your day. Elmira's mother says: "When you are sad, you can be comforted by Hafez". In the flowery description of a young girl you can

¹ Hafez (Muhammad Hāfez-e Shirāzi) is a persian poet from Shiraz, who lived during the 14th century in Persia.

interpret your own likeability. The name Hafez means “the one who knows the Koran by heart”. It is a title of honour, that Hafez used in his work.

Sitting on the bench and in shadow of the tall trees, Elmira’s father moves his head from one side to the other “Western philosophers float in space and don’t touch the ground. If they would touch the ground they would understand the world. Iranian philosophers touch the ground because they think with god on their side”.

Parks in the cities are starting to disappear. More land gets sold to investors. The small neighbourhood parks are vanishing, because the land gets more and more valuable and the land price in Karaj is rising. Fate Park is a garden that was donated to Karaj. But because of the high demand the city is now selling it to private investors piece by piece.

This is something that happens to all the small parks. These spaces are like vents for the people to take some of their private lives into the public spaces. You bring a carpet, you take off your shoes and you become invisible in your transparent home.

Gardens and parks have a long tradition in Iran. While the small neighbourhood parks in Karaj slowly disappear, there are new big park complexes being constructed in Tehran. Next to Chitgar park, with the huge Persian Gulf Martyr Lake is the Ab-o-Atash Park (water and fire park). The park is more of an attraction than a traditional park with 24,000 square meter of restaurants, places to play with the water, fire towers and also the Nature Bridge, a large pedestrian

bridge. Going to the park is an event and the park gets totally overcrowded at dusk. Located on a plateau it is situated above the traffic. From the park you see the steel structures and cranes of the north. The new parks are heavier controlled and have more rules. After a water gun event 10 people were arrested for inappropriate behaviour. Other parks in the does not have as good reputation as the new parks. The misuse of opium is a permanent problem in the south of Tehran.²

It is uncomfortable and hot in the cities. Parks don't have the capacity to accommodate all people. It is time to leave the city, to look far away from the convention of the city for a cool breeze. Maybe also to take a swim. Impossible to do that in a public park.

The street is packed. Everyone seems to have the same idea. The people from Karaj and Tehran take the same road to Tschaulus. We barely move. The street vendors having their prime time, maneuvering between the cars, selling stuff that

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<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/tehran-district-22.html>,
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Ab-o-Atash Park



you might need on your short trip, like shades or airbeds. The mother of Sina leaves the car and walks over to a small shop. We roll slowly. She buys a huge watermelon. In the time she is gone we have not even moved a meter. The goal is to reach a place next to Tschaulus river. Alongside the road, restaurants are lined up next to each other. The cars are packed with families and food. Everything is prepared and the old cars groan under the weight. Travelling with car takes a long time. “A white car is not getting dirty” is a saying in Iran and about 90% of all cars are surprisingly white and the rest silver. Slowly we flow in the dense white wave of cars. The distance is not even 20km but we have already been on the road for over 1 hour.

Small plateaus are build into the river bank. All the plateaus are crowded with people. A small water reservoir and a huge grill next to it makes up the center point, the shared kitchen. 10 men stand around the grill and prepare their chuche kebab³. Finally we find a nice place lower down, close the water and we roll out our carpet. Carpets touch each other and families are almost sitting back to back. Next to us a man is deeply immersed in his prayer, while his wife cuts the cucumber for the salad. To our left a woman is washing her socks in the water. The water is cold and comes from the mountains. “One week ago a boy drowned here” a woman explains. “The stream is fast and cold.” On the other side a rock face is rising straight out of the river. Young men are climbing the wall and make a show for us. For each jump

³ Chuche kebab is a in lemon and saffron marinated, grilled chicken.





we clap and whistle. Young women play in the water. Fully dressed, but wet from head to toe. Everyone prepares the same food, cutting salad and putting the lemon and saffron marinated chicken meat on the metal sticks, for barbecuing. The rice is prepared. Drinks and watermelons are put into the cold water to chill. After the meal everyone sleeps and enjoys the coolness of the river. Everything is calm until a woman screams and man jumps into the water. A small girl is taken by the stream, but luckily the man catches her. She is crying. No one knows her. Her family must be further upstream. Desperate she screams for her father. Later another boy almost gets carried away by the water too, but people catch him before anything happens. A man climbs up the rock higher than anyone before him, he want to put on a show for

138 „The way to enjoy life.“

us. Half an hour he stands there with his naked upper body, exposed in the blazing sun. Too scared to jump and too proud to say he is scared.

There are no regulations, no rules and no security. A place far from away from the city, with all its advantages and dangers.

Asimir is the highest point in Karaj and also called the bam⁴ of Karaj.

With Elmira and a friend of hers we enjoy the view all over the city. Tooran is afraid that we, three women will get abducted. “It is dangerous at night”. But the atmosphere feels safe. A man is accompanying himself on the guitar while singing off key. Young people and couples try to enjoy themselves with all the red, blue, green colors and the white moving lights of city at their feet. They are smoking hookah and laughing loudly. Asimir is a place to meet for young people after dark. Still having a shady reputation at night, the older generation is not going to the bam of Karaj. But for young people it is attractive to meet here. On the highways to players in the mountains, the car could be stopped. Young men and women mixed in one car, out in the night on a highway far from the city? The police would call the family to pick up their children. Asimir is still in the city and far away from the parents and they can meet, without them knowing. Parents worry and Iranian parents even more so. There is

⁴ The highest point in a city is called “bam”.



no limit of asking questions, worrying and wanting to know. Privacy and trust is a privilege.

Young people search for places that fit their demands. Through internet they are able to connect and meet. All can be arranged on the app Telegram. Even though some apps and sites are blocked on the phone, people found ways to elude those barriers. Everyone carries a smartphone and is connected to the world. It is possible to find modern bars, serving western food. In the restaurants you hear speakers Lana Del Ray's "Summertime sadness" from the speakers. Western music is forbidden. A mojito without alcohol is served to our pasta dish. It's the new in drink. You want alcohol? Just order it on the phone and pick it up.

We go in a taxi to a rooftop restaurant. Elmira uses taarof with Tooran and insists that she should come with us. Tooran politely declines and stops the taxi. She resists to be taken home by the driver. As she disappears into the darkness far from home, she leaves us worried in the taxi. If she loses sight of us she thinks we are lost, even though it is she who is lost herself. The black dark night, swallows her right in front of us and we can only trust, that she is home when I return tonight.









Bakery next to a car mechanic



Ab- o-Atash Park

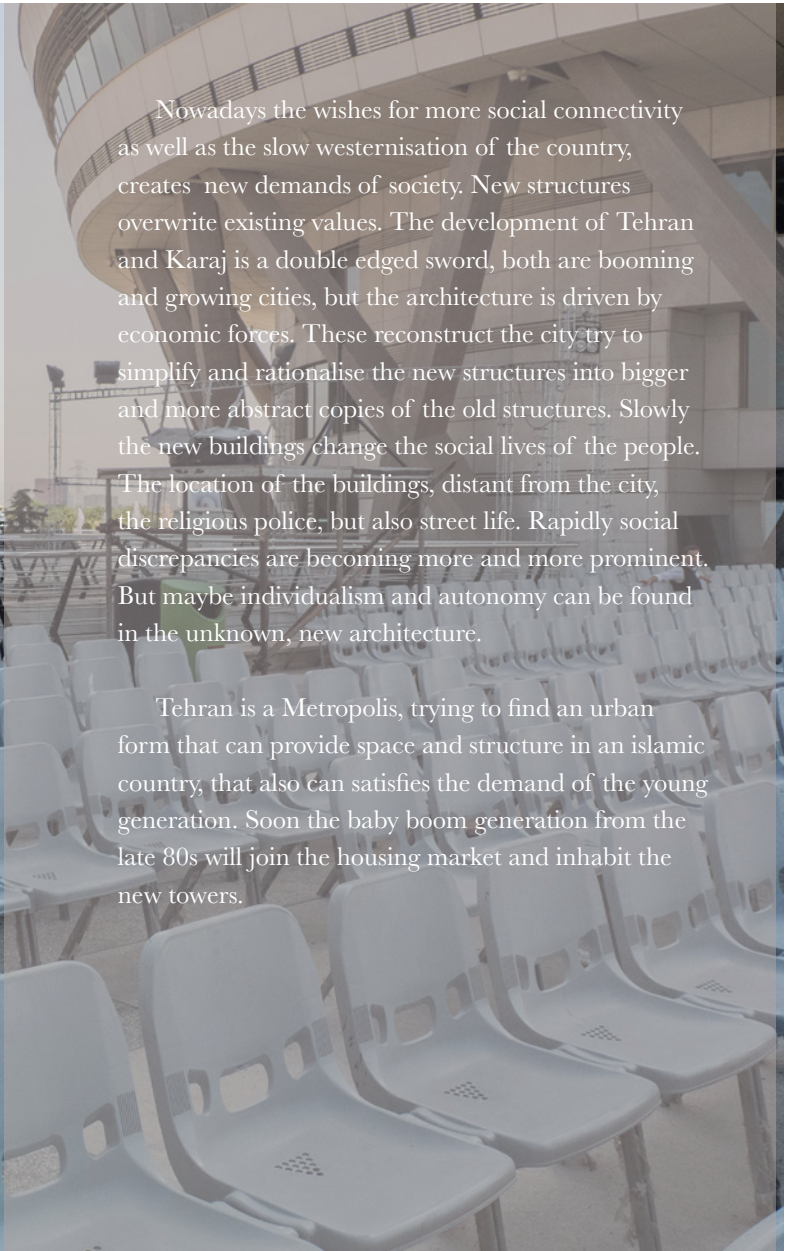


Park in Gohardasht



Nowadays the wishes for more social connectivity as well as the slow westernisation of the country, creates new demands of society. New structures overwrite existing values. The development of Tehran and Karaj is a double edged sword, both are booming and growing cities, but the architecture is driven by economic forces. These reconstruct the city try to simplify and rationalise the new structures into bigger and more abstract copies of the old structures. Slowly the new buildings change the social lives of the people. The location of the buildings, distant from the city, the religious police, but also street life. Rapidly social discrepancies are becoming more and more prominent. But maybe individualism and autonomy can be found in the unknown, new architecture.

Tehran is a Metropolis, trying to find an urban form that can provide space and structure in an islamic country, that also can satisfies the demand of the young generation. Soon the baby boom generation from the late 80s will join the housing market and inhabit the new towers.



IRAN

Iran's population has been growing steadily over the past decade and developed 12 times faster than the world average in the past three decades. Since 1979, the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran has been under tough sanctions. As a solution the country searched for an independent economy to come out from recession. Now Iran is one of the biggest raw oil exporters in the world as well as the youngest and most educated people in the world. The former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, stated 2010 that the sanctions would just strengthen the technological development of Iran. Its physical development peaks in Tehran, which has

become a center point for this fast growth. For almost half a century the country has centralized its infrastructure to Tehran. This made the capital of Iran to a magnet for people searching for new opportunities. In a short time the city has become a cultural melting pot with a dense population. Since half a decade Tehran seems to suffer from a permanent housing crises. As the population of the city has undoubtedly been growing, the housing market has become a field of speculation. Three historical points in the last decade have influenced and provoked the contemporary socio-urban landscape of Iran, which we are facing now. These turning points

formed intermediate space as an imprint of Tehran social changes.



TURKEY

ARMENIA

AZERBAIJAN

CASPIAN SEA

TURKMENISTAN

UZBEKISTAN

IRAQ

IRAN

AFGHANISTAN

KUWAIT

PERSIAN GULF

PAKISTAN

N

SAUDI ARABIA

QATAR

EMIRATES



MOUNT DAMAVANT

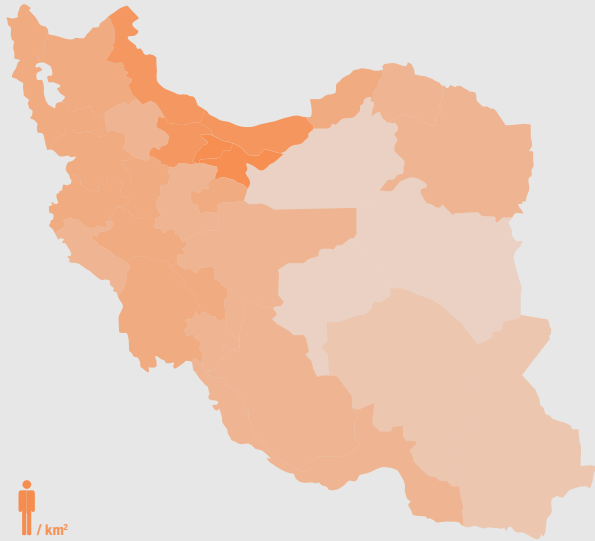
5,601m

ALBORZ MOUNTAIN CHAIN

KARAJ

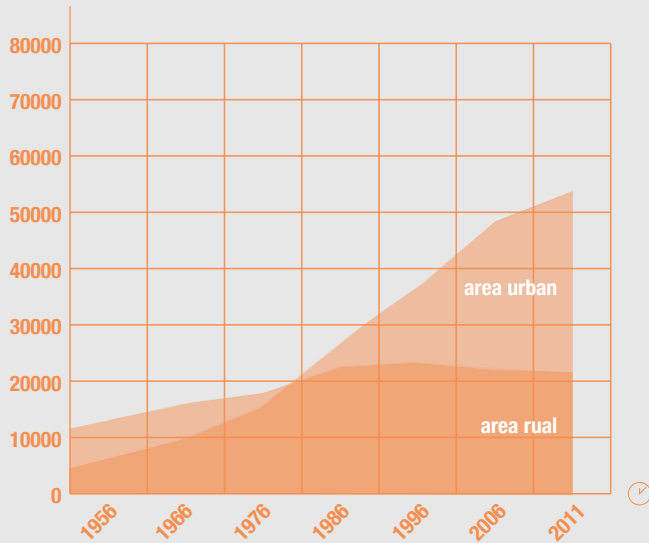
TEHRAN

0 5 10 15 km

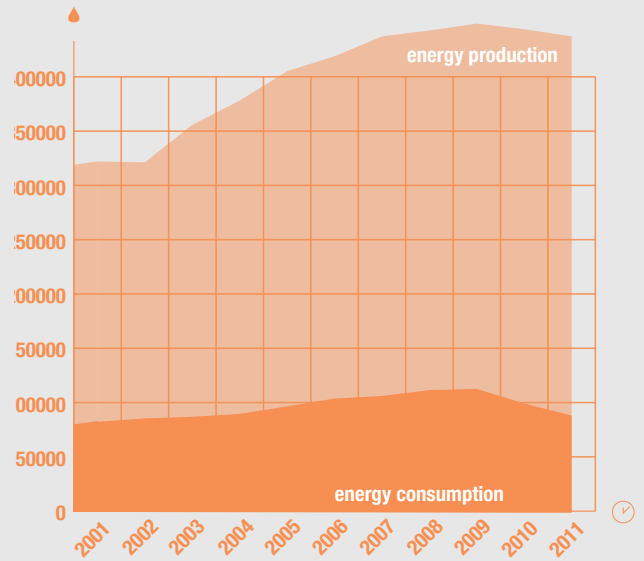


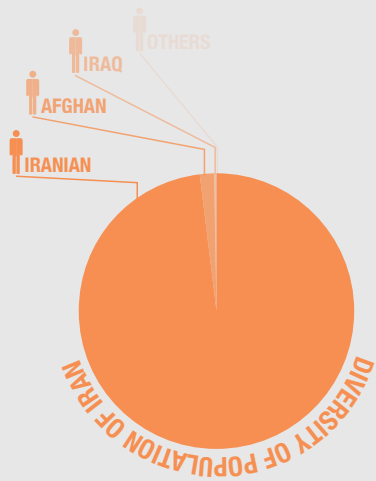
USED AREA

m²

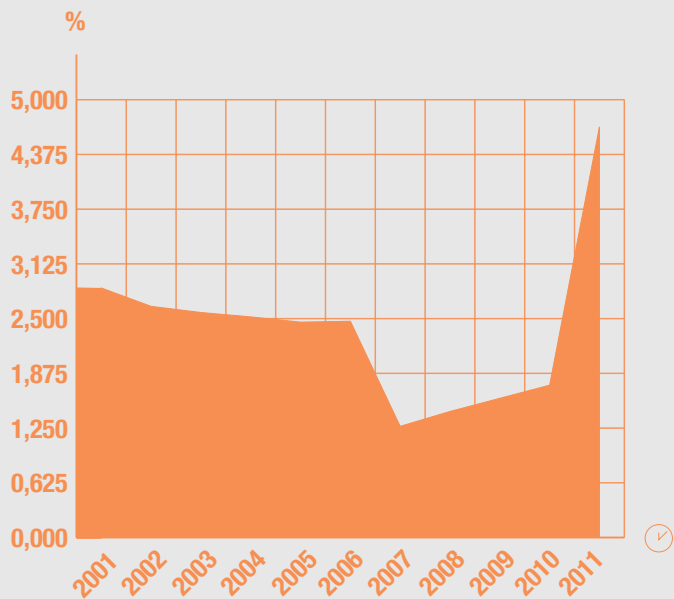


COMPARISON OF ENERGY PRODUCTION AND ENERGY CONSUMPTION

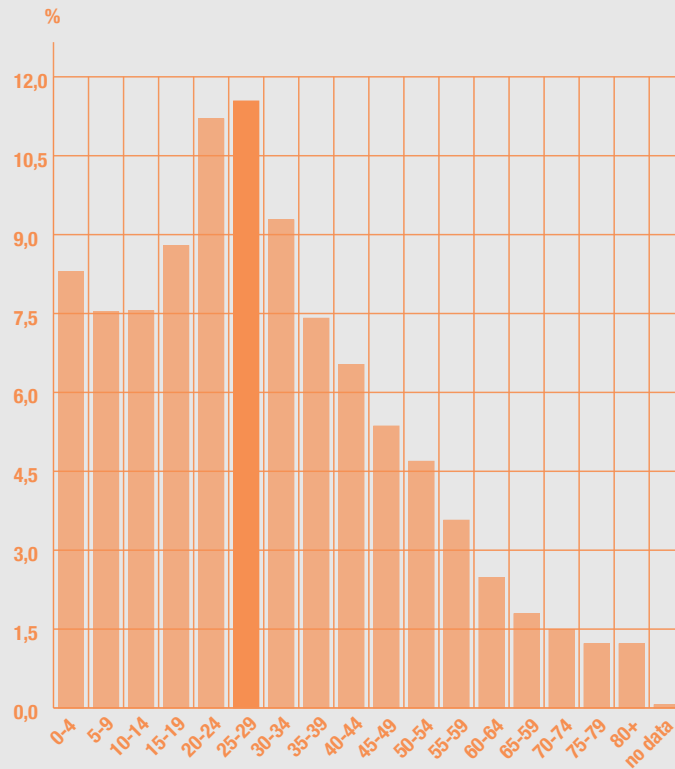




ANNUAL GROWTH RATE OF URBAN POPULATION



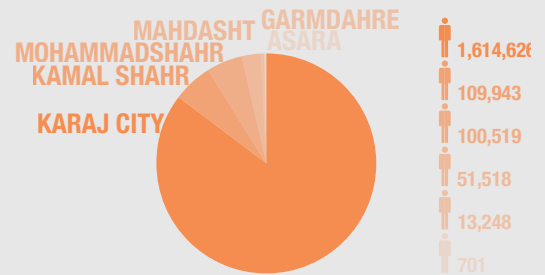
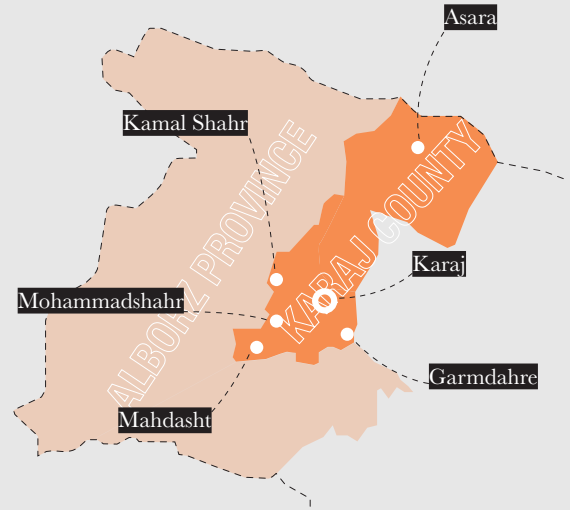
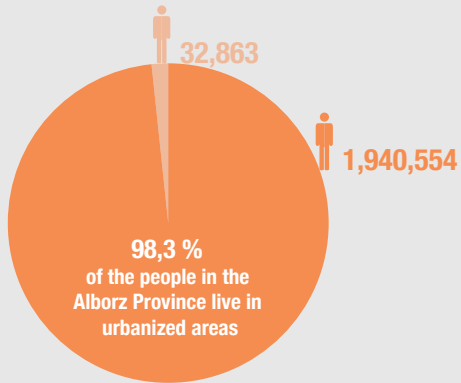
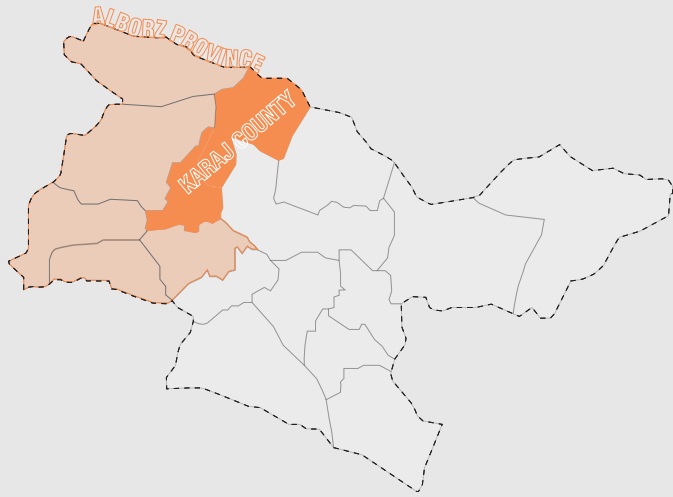
POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS



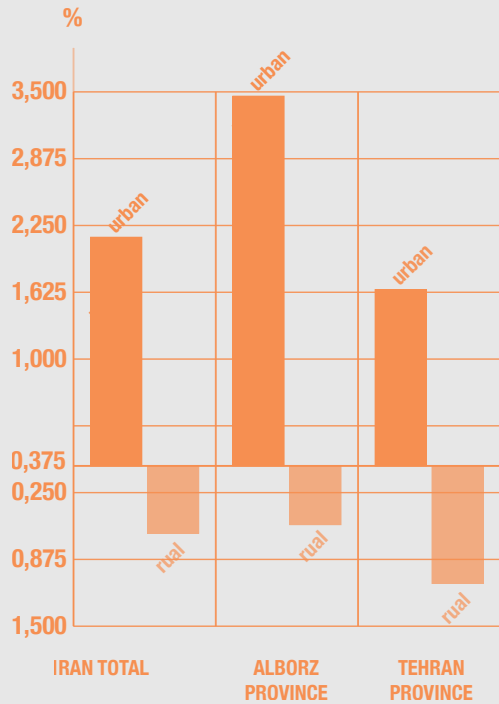
KARAJ

In the north of Iran at an altitude of 1300m lies Karaj. On a plateau at the feet of the Alborz mountain chain the city is situated slightly over its big neighbor Tehran. Soft hills are the northern border of the city. In the past years the small city has become the fastest growing city of Iran, which is now home to about 2 million people. Because of these developments Karaj turned from a suburb of Tehran to be the capital of its own province. So with its new position in the Alborz province, Karaj has become more independent from Tehran, but at the same time the two cities are approaching a physical reunion as they successively grow together. With small satellite cities and

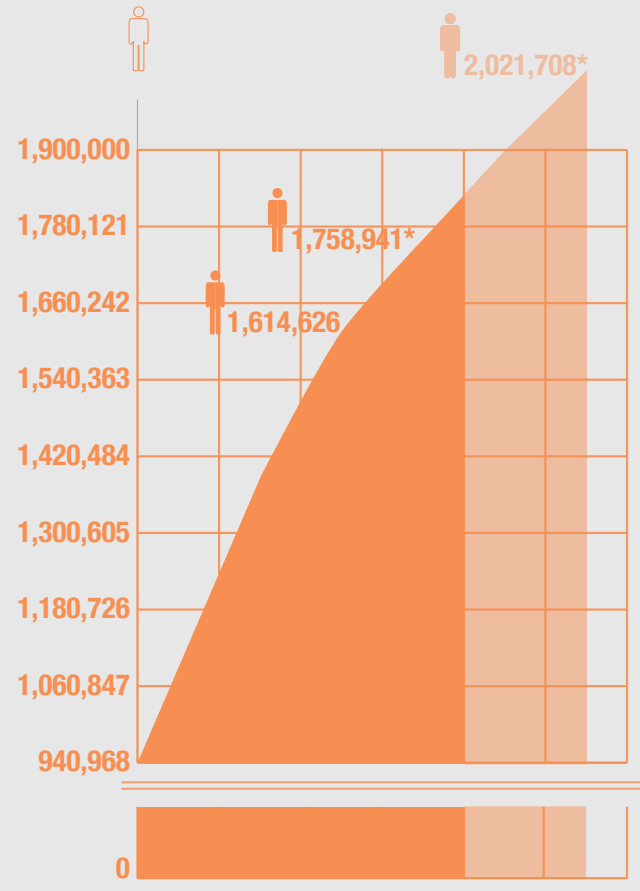
new housing projects in the area in between Karaj and Tehran the whole area has about 15 million inhabitants.



AVERAGE ANNUAL POPULATION GROWTH RATE



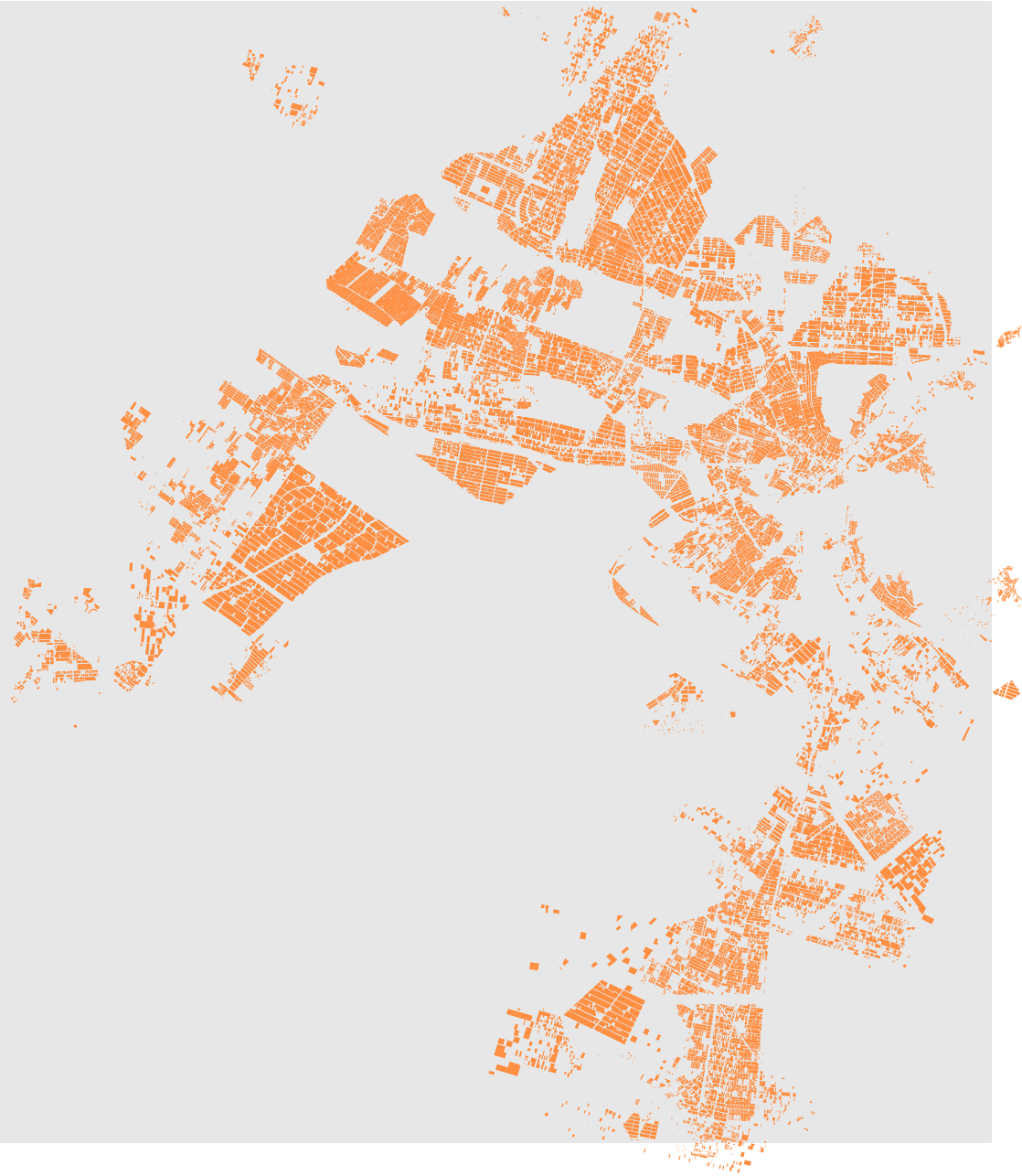
POPULATION OF KARAJ CITY



STREETS OF KARAJ CITY



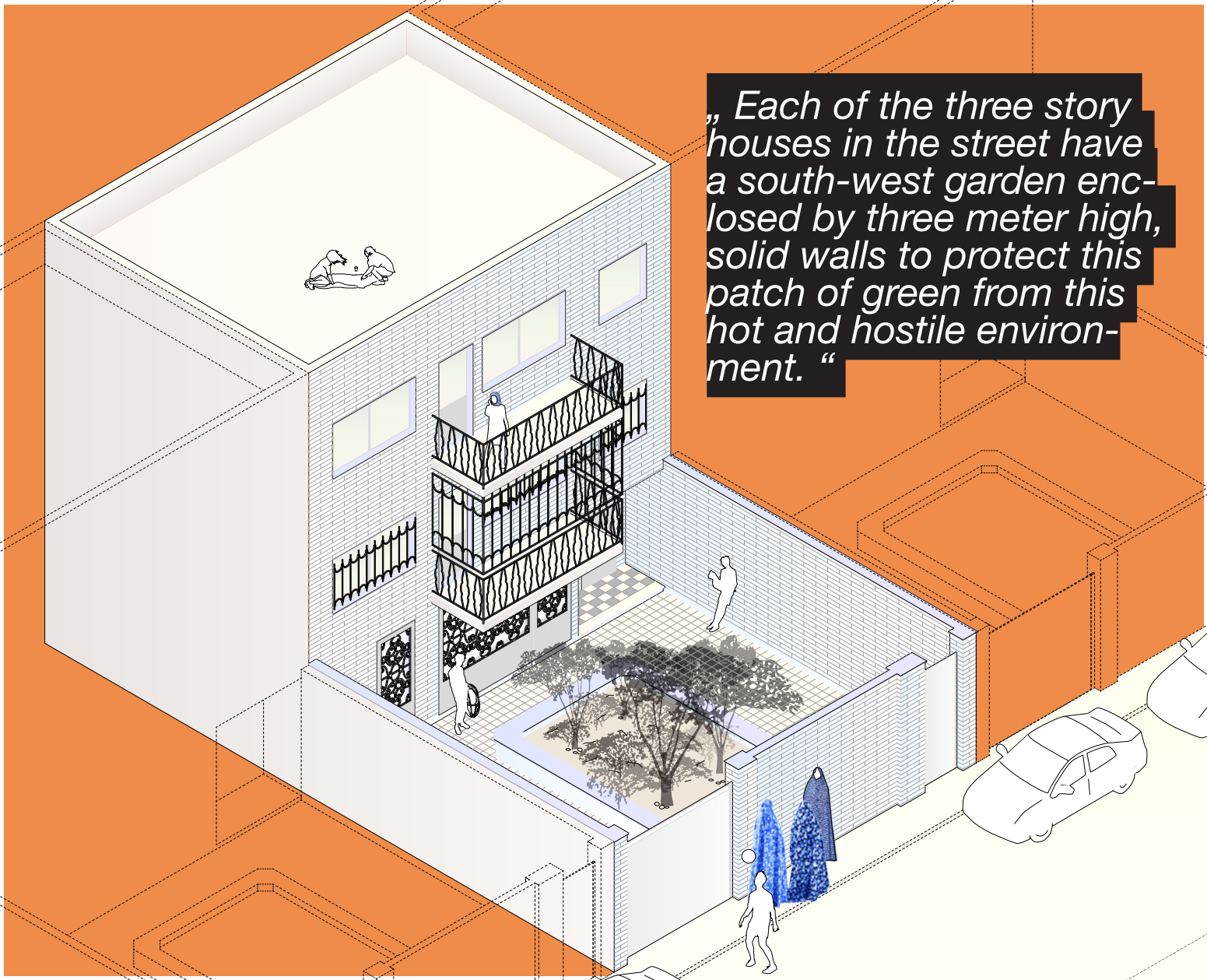
BUILDINGS OF KARAJ CITY



KARAJ CITY



„ Each of the three story houses in the street have a south-west garden enclosed by three meter high, solid walls to protect this patch of green from this hot and hostile environment. “



MONARCHY TO REPUBLIC

Since the start of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1878, Tehran was under a strict pattern of modernization. In the early 50s Mohammad Mossadegh became a representative figure of Iran as elected prime minister who lead the country into autonomy. The time of the great kings seemed to be over. Reza Shah made Tehran to a metropolis, with a new city grid, introduction of public spaces and new typologies of housing. He transformed the city. In the middle of the 19th century the urban landscape of Iran was confronted with new social structures introduced through economic wealth. Previously poor people could live in neighborhoods with rich people in the old parts of town. But after the

demolition of the old city walls Tehran opened for national and international migration. The city was divided with the traditionalists in the old poor part of town in the south, and the new part with rich part in the north. This laid the foundation for the dialectic situation in Tehran which is still true today. And after 50 years of urban planning and non planning this division manifests itself even more and has become the backbone of Tehran's urban structure. Nowadays rich people's houses in the north are slowly climbing up the side of Albroz mountain. The better air up in the mountains and the rising land value closer to the city are supporting this development. Because of the oil industry gaso-

line is cheap and everyone old enough to drive has a license or a car. This makes the commuting radius to Tehran steadily increasing. New roads are made to connect suburbs with the new metropolis Tehran and the booming building industry constantly searches for new areas to densify or places for new satellite cities. Also the people are searching for better living conditions. With unaffordable housing prizes people slowly are driven out of Tehran. The city of Tehran can't work without its surrounding. Daily 15 million cars are on the road to Tehran and back and form Greater Tehran.

1 Akbar E. Torbat: Industrialization and Dependency: the Case of Iran, 27.12.2010, <http://www.ecosecretariat.org/ftproot/Publications/Journal/2/Industrialization%20and%20Dependency%20-%20the%20Case%20of%20Iran%20d%20by%20Akbar%20Torbat.doc>, 3.10.2016

ABADAN CRISIS

Iran has been torn in its politics through decades. As a proud country it tried to liberate itself over its modern history from the influence that the Western world tried to impair on it. The peak of the fight over the autonomy and independence was the „Abadan Crisis“ in 1951. The city Abadan lies in the south-west of Iran, at the border to Iraq. After visiting Abadan in the year 1947, the British prime minister concluded:

*“a bit of hell pushed up ... no vegetation of any kind, no greenery, no water, no nothing- but these eternal hills... one horrid desert knoll after the other...”*¹

The British “Anglo-Iranian Oil Company” (AIOC) owned the oil refineries in Abadan and extracted oil since 1909. Over 70,000 Persian and 4,500 British workers were employed by the AIOC. Due to the unequal treatment, discrimination as well as racism, the first strikes by persian workers occurred in the 1920s. British employees were used to better treatment than their native coworkers in all the now called “third world countries”. Abadan slowly evolved to the center stage for the fight for Iran’s independence. In 1950 Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh demanded a nationalization of the oil refineries in Iran. During that time Iran just became about 20% of the Iranian rough oil worth. Mossadegh was known to be a strong nationalist, in political decision unpredictable as well as

¹ Cable 1991,10



fierce. His own party the “National Front” consisted of mainly conservatives and royalists, but nevertheless he also had been supported by the communist “Tudeh party”, which shared his determination for the nationalization of the Iranian oil. Mossadegh was of the opinion that all agreements, that minimize Iranian rights should be called off. After hard debates in the parliament and protests in the streets, the nationalization of oil was made public. Showing his devotion for the Iranian people he was elected to be Prime Minister of Iran in 1951. The British protested and filed a complaint at the International Court of Justice in Haag, because of the breach the D’Arcy contract made in 1933, based on which the British exploited the land. The contract should have still been valid until 1993. Mossadegh on the other hand stated that the contract in Haag was not made between two countries, but between a private British company and Iran, furthermore he explained this as an internal affair and not a matter for the ICJ. This was an important step for Iran’s independence and new nationalism. The turnout of this event harmed the British-Iranian relations in the long term. Mossadegh gained power in Iran and as well as popularity and sympathy in the Middle East and in the West. The Times magazine named him “man of the year” in 1951, in compassion for the country in the Middle East and its fight for independence.²

„This political genius not only precipitated Iran’s bid for independence but also advanced anti-colonial in the Middle East“³

SHAHED

² Vgl. Elm 1992, 190-193

³ Elm 1992, 193

192 **top I** Tudeh Party of Iran
bottom II President Harry S. Truman visits Primeminister Mohammad Mossadegh for a possible oil-deal and upsets the British.





IV Primeminister Mohammad Mossadegh (second from the right), Nasrollah Entezam, fifth president of the UN General Assembly in 1950/1951 (second from the left) and the Iranian delegation in The Hague at the ICJ.

But to be fair it must be said that Iran never experienced an total heteronomy, like other countries in the Middle East.

In contrast to his popular reputation he became a serious threat in the eyes of the British. Furthermore the Tudeh party demanded the end of the monarchy and caused the Shah to exile in 1953, which disqualified the Shah for any political decision making and branded Mossadegh as an aspiring dictator. The British turned to the Americans for help. As a result Mossadegh had to leave his position the 19th of August 1953, due to a coup d'état in the course of intervention of the American secret intelligence, CIA. Later in year 2000 the US Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright admitted the role the US played in the 1953. The Shah's importance changed from a representative figure to a politic relevant personality as the CIA had planned. The intervention of the Americans, led to a strong national solidarity, as well as skepticism towards the US and a profound sympathy of Mossadegh. The knowledge about the interference of the American's in the Iranian political laid the foundation for the hostility against the Shah Regime in the following years. Mossadegh had searched for independence by stopping the foreign exploitation of Iran's resources by building a national oil industry. The establishment of the National Iranian Oil Company had a symbolic character for Iran, as an act of liberation from colonial exploitation and the building of an independent economy and international respect. But suddenly the country's political landscape took a drastic change of direction, with the Shah on the politic top. In order to makthe Shah hold his power the CIA established the SAVAK⁴, due to Iran's ignorance of secret intelligence.

After Mossadegh was removed by the American intelligence agency and the parliament newly ordered, he was sentenced to death. But the Shah pardoned Mossadegh, who then vanished from the political stage. Now that the Shah was given absolute power, a strong relation with the US was founded.

WHITE REVOLUTION

During the cold war Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the second king of the Pahlavi dynasty searched for political closeness to the US and the British, in order to cut the power of the communistic and forbidden Tudeh Party. The alliance between the Shah and the USA exposed the country to the american consumer culture and neoliberal doctrine. From Washington under the Presidency from J. F. Kennedy he got instructions how to modernize the country. Instead of finding an own identity as a modern Iranian society, the Shah tried to quickly modernize Iran with western civilization as its role model. The most important issues in this development process were on one hand to get rid of the communist party and its supporters and on the other hand to lower the influence of the religious elite, which opposed the West. Due to american advice the Shah regime worked out a referendum which was adopted in 1963 after a public vote that for the first time included women voters, "Enghelab

198
4 The SAVAK (Organization of Intelligence and National Security) was the secret intelligence of the Shah Regime.



200 V Women voting the first time in Iranian history in 1963, on the decision whether or not adopting the referendum.



Shah va Mardom”¹ or “Enghelab-e Shah va Mellat”², but outside Iran mostly known as the “White Revolution”. The referendum was at first a six point program, which expanded over the year and got the name “Davozdah azl-e Enghelabe”³.

- 1 The land reform : the expropriation of the feudal lords and the ending of the feudal structures
- 2 Nationalization of forests and springs: to prevent possible private misuse
- 3 Privatization of nationally owned factories: to finance the compensation pay for the feudals lords
- 4 Social security workers in industry as well as profit sharing up to 20%
- 5 Voting rights for women
- 6 Sepah-e Danesh (The Army of Knowledge) to fight analphabetism in the rural areas of Iran
- 7 Sepah-e Behdasht (The Army of Health) for free health care
- 8 Sepah-e Tarvij va Abadani (The Army of Reconstruction and Beautification) to improve infrastructure in villages
- 9 Rural courts of justice
- 10 Nationalization of the waterways
- 11 National reconstruction
- 12 Educational and administrative revolution

The main part of the referendum was about the land reform, which should end the feudal structure of the country

1 “Revolution of the Shah and the People”

2 “Revolution of the Shah and the Nation”

3 “The 12 principal Revolution“

and lead to more efficient agriculture. Almost 70% of the Iranian population were farmers. In the still hierarchic and feudalistic structure, the peasants were working for the landlord and did not own the land. Short term the americans were afraid of a communist revolution by the farmers and urged the Shah to act. The feudalist ruled the villages independently and made their own legislation. Moreover 20% of the land was owned by the religious caste, whose influence was still imminent on the countryside population. With the help of the “White Revolution” the Shah redirected all the power that previously was distributed over Iran and its elite, to himself in an attempt to stabilize his power in Iran. Inducing efficient agriculture and industrialization in rural areas was also supposed to benefit the economy, which was mainly build on the oil export. But as a matter of fact the referendum caused an unforeseen mass migration from the countryside to the center of westernization, Tehran. Which led to an urban crisis that the Shah Regime didn't know how to handle.⁴⁵

As part of the land reform, government officials were sent to the villages and distributed the land from landlords to the peasants. The size of the parcels were determined by the size

4 Ali m. Ansar: The Myth of the White Revolution: Mohammad Reza Shah, „Modernization“ and the Consolidation of Power, Middle Eastern Studies, 04.07.2001, https://mideast-africa.tau.ac.il/sites/humanities.tau.ac.il/files/media_server/mideast_africa/untitled%20folder/The%20Myth%20of%20the%20White%20Revolution_Mohammad%20Reza.pdf, 9.11.2016
5 o. A.: IRAN'S WHITE REVOLUTION: A CRITIQUE OF MODERNISATION THEORY, 14.11.2012, https://intelliconn.wordpress.com/2012/11/14/irans-white-revolution-a-critique-of-modernisation-theory/#_ftn43, 25.11.2017

of each family in the villages. The feudal lord got the land payed off and big share of the land. Still a lot of people were working for the previous feudal lords, but as paid workers. The Shah regime hoped for an end of the tribal situation in Iran and the establishment of an absolute monarchy “Nezam-e shahan shahi” and a modern industry as well as an agricultural economy. A lot of state money was invested in the industrialization and commercialisation of agriculture. Even though studies showed that farmers with governmental aid were more motivated and more efficient, the government decided to invest in industrial farming. Other people turned to religion, which supported the religious caste - the biggest opponents of the “White Revolution”, with Ruhollah Khomeini as their leader. Seemingly the Regime tried to exchange the peasant-landlord relationship with a farmer-capitalist owner relationship, but didn't support the individual farmers, that were included before in the socio-cultural economy of the villages. The changes on the countryside broke open the social and cultural structures and left the farmers on their own. With the end of the tribal character of the villages, the social needs of the individual farmers stayed unattended. Finally many people decided to sell their land and migrate to the cities. A development which seemingly hadn't been foreseen like that by the Shah Regime.⁶

6 o. A.: IRAN'S WHITE REVOLUTION: A CRITIQUE OF MODERNISATION THEORY, 14.11.2012, https://intelliconn.wordpress.com/2012/11/14/irans-white-revolution-a-critique-of-modernisation-theory/#_ftn43, 25.11.2017



10% of the oil on the world's market was Iranian oil and thanks to Mohammad Mossadegh Iran had the monopoly on it. Now the money fueled the westernization process, a development Mossadegh probably would have largely objected to.

The building industry searched for cheap labour and found them in former farmers and immigrants. Undoubtedly the "White Revolution" marked the start of the then unknown end of the monarchy, arguable it would maybe have been possible for the Shah to modernize and westernize the country at a slower pace, but the asynchronicity of the vast countryside and the city made it hard for both sides to understand each other. Especially the enormous size of the poor quarters of Tehran in comparison to the expensive luxury ones shows an unequal distribution of wealth. The privatisation of the state owned industry led to speculations and corruption, which became such a great problem, that the Shah had to dissolve the parliament.

Another important factor, which probably influenced the end of the monarchy, was the middle class. The middle class in Tehran was the beneficent of the westernization, but was excluded from important political decisions. Also the SAVAK threatened and spied on people and was famous for their brutal pursuit of communists. Women got the right to vote and the young educated middle class wanted to be more involved in the political landscape of the country. The frustration with the Shah regime made the young people oppose the west and found resonance in the Iranian culture and Shia faith.

Finally it also can be said that the TV and the new western



VII Pavillions for the 2500 year celebration of the Persian-Empire in Persepolis
VIII Interior of one pavillion

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

1979 was the year of yet another revolution, the Islamic Revolution⁷. The dissatisfaction with the Shah regime had peaked in demonstrations in the year of 1978. The Shah was held responsible for brutally ending a protest and after this incident he exiled and left the stage free for the former exiled Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to return to Iran. Again the social structure of Iran would change. From an outside perspective the country was growing steadily since the 1950s, but the strict modernization process was taken control of. Dr. Mossadegh formed a national sentiment and pride, Shah Pahlavi searched for international support and respect through modernization and westernization, but now a new type of islamic nationalism was born or awoke in the people. Changes that had been progressing in the previous 20 years were now again reversed. The country tried to distance itself again from the west. As a reaction the newly established Islamic Republic was put under heavy sanctions by the west. The newly formed parliament needed time to get rid of the corpse of the Shah regime and set out to renew the country. In this weak state Saddam Hussein attacked Iran in 1981 and started a war which should have been a “Blitzkrieg” but turned out to be a war that dragged out over 8 years until the final peace in 1989.

Arguably the war managed to form a new Iranian identity.

⁷ “Enqelāb-e Eslāmi”



consumer culture that got introduced by the Shah regime was partly a reason for its own demise. The Shah used it as his own propaganda platform and promoted westernization, but left most of his people with incomprehension and fed the anti Shah policy of the religious groups. In 1977 the country watched in disbelief the Shah have a toast with president Carter on tv, with alcohol. And his self staging in Persepolis to the 2500th celebration of the Persian kingdom, where he invited political relevant people but excluded the public. Walking in his parade uniform and watching processions, that showed the glorious moments of Iranian history, without the Iranian people. Television programs and cinema proclaimed an westernized lifestyle that made the social gap between the poor and the middle class even bigger.





212 XI 1979 political key figures photographed, while the Shah's statue is being toren down: Ayatollah Taleghani, Ayatollah Beheshti, Hojjatoleslam Rafsanjani, Abolhasan Banisadr.



The prosecution and execution of the former Shah putschists ended, to build up a new militair to fight in the war. The Iran-Iraq war united the country in the hate of Saddam Hussein and the disappointment in the Western world. The Islamic Republic hoped that the United Nations would intervene when Iraq used lethal gas, but was left disappointed. The Islamic Republic of Iran, managed to keep its independence and position itself in the World. The country has a stable economy and is a safe place, in the highly conflicted Middle East. Having a rich history and national pride the cities of Iran search for a urban form that suits a modern Islamic Republic.

MEMO- RIES FROM THE 1970S

From time to time he told me about his childhood, when he visited his grandparents in the summer. At the beginning of the “White Revolution“ he was a child 13 years old. He remembered the food packages everyday in school. No child should suffer from hunger. He lived in Ahwaz. A city close to the border of Iraq in the south west of Iran. Ahwaz was rich and profited from the oil industry. A modern city, which was under British influence for a long time. He lived in „Camp low“ and english words had found their way into his farsi. In the summer his parents would send him to a village in the south of Tehran. So he could escape the heat in Ahwaz. He said that once his bicycle tires melted on the hot pavement, when he rode home. He said another time he saw an eagle on the street, which had fainted and he decided to take it home. As a boy he was adventurous and full of energy. He said he could never sit still and was constantly on expeditions. But during the summer break on the days with over 50 °C, too hot to go outside, his parents home couldn't contain his energy. So he would spend his summer in the village. In a whole day's car ride his family would drive up north to leave him in the village. Both of his

grandfathers were feudalist lords and shared one village. One grandfather was the Kahn and ruled in the village, the other one owned more land and more peasants. He told me they would never speak and strongly opposed each other. The Kahn was the father of his grandmother and lived in the castle on the hill. In the morning after breakfast a horse would wait for him outside, with a podium next to it. One of his legs was stiff and he needed the help to mount the horse. In his youth, wealthy and interested as he was, he travelled a lot. He even made his way all the way to China. He was modern but yet a traditional man. On the horse the Kahn would invite him to join and he would take the place behind his grandfather and ride with him through the land. The Kahn watched the peasants, but would not address or talk to them, what he needed to know he would ask later the caretaker. The farmers were paid in crops after the size of the family. Everyone saw the boy holding on to the Kahn. Later when he would stroll through the fields and forests alone, they politely greeted the young boy. No one dared to say anything to the grandchild of the Kahn, when he would take fruits from the field or play with the cattle. Not even when he came into their houses. They even served him food and offered him a place to rest. He said he wandered around the whole day, fished in the river and took long walks through the fields. In the evening before sunset he would return home exhausted, but satisfied, finding the Kahn on the roof watching the village square through the telescope. All the men gathered to talk, drink tea and smoke hookah. They had to sit so they all faced the Kahn's castle. Through his telescope he could see them laughing and all their gestures and the words the lips formed would make a story for him. A mixture of control and curiosity kept the Kahn staring through the telescope. The peasants were uncertain whether they were watched or not. They could feel the telescope sliding over their faces and tried to be composed and polite, just showing their feelings to their families. Later the caretaker would come and speak the words and the gestures he had seen

through the telescope. While the caretaker was speaking, the Kahn decided to give some of the farmers presents, which was mainly extra food. The boy from Ahwaz was too tired to concentrate. His grandmother prepared a bed on the rooftop for him and while looking at the stars he would fall asleep to one of her stories.

After the "White Revolution" his grandparents lost a lot of their land. He told me that the respect for the Kahn and his other grandfather never vanished. But now the farmers had their own land and for the first time they owned the land with all the possibilities and decision, that comes along with it. Some would sell their land and go to Tehran. Others would work for money for their previous feudal lord, and still treat him with the same respect.

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