

Assessing the Role of Collective Memory in the Process of Rasht's Saqarisazan Houses and Old Texture Revitalization*

Mahmoud Ananahad^a- Hamzeh Gholam Alizadeh^{b**}- Farzaneh Asadi Malek Jahan^c

^a Ph.D. of Architecture, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Islamic Azad University, Rasht Branch, Rasht, Iran.

^b Assistant Professor of Architecture, Faculty of Architecture and Art, University of Guilan, Guilan, Iran (Corresponding Author).

^c Assistant Professor of Architecture, Faculty of Engineering, Islamic Azad University, Rasht Branch, Rasht, Iran.

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ABSTRACT

The valuable old textures in Rasht, including the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood, are considered as the ground for the occurrence of events and reminder of the individual and collective memories of the citizens that play an important role in kinship and rendering the urban environment's meaningfulness. The playing of the intended role entails the existence of identifiable codes in the old textures that have undergone depreciations in the course of time. The current research paper investigated the collective memories of the residents in the revitalization of the valuable and old Sagharisazan's houses and buildings. After dealing with the existent theories in the area of the collective memory and performing a case study with an analytical approach, the hypothesis was tested. The present study's question pivoted about the idea that is it possible to benefit from the citizens' collective memories for the revitalization of the architecturally valuable old houses and textures or not? Moreover, the present study's focal point has been drawn on the assumption that the continuation and preservation of the overall identity of Sagharisazan's texture seems to be dependent on the citizens' collective memory and sense of attachment in the intended texture. The goal of the present study was finding practical suggestions for increasing quality in the valuable old textures and, since the qualitative elaboration of the environmental factors and axes aimed at the achievement of executive suggestions, the present study's research method was consequentially descriptive-analytical and the information has been gathered through searches in the library resources. To investigate the study sample volume's vernacular houses and buildings, a questionnaire was prepared and arranged for assessing the indices that was administered to 47 residents in this old texture and the acquired information was analyzed using SPSS¹. The results indicated that the old texture has been abandoned and many of the memories of this neighborhood have lost their color due to the urban management's paying attention to new constructions. The role of collective memory in the revitalization of the valuable old textures can be actualized through citizens' participation and acquiring of their cognitive amps in respect to place, preservation of the rites and rituals and holding of memorable ritual exhibitions in religious places and conservation of the valuable and old vernacular elements and applying them in the new constructions demanded by the modern statuses of the citizens.

Keywords: Collective Memory, Sense of Place, Sense of Attachment, Old Textures, Sagharisazan, Rasht.

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** E-mail: H.Gholamalizadeh@yahoo.com.

1. INTRODUCTION

Old textures of the cities remind of the memories that possess a persistence stance in the citizens' minds regarding the continuous events and incidents. Undoubtedly, individual and collective memories have an important effect on the preservation of the individuals' identities, especially creation of a sense of attachment (belonging) to a place wherein the memories have been formed. Therefore, the places lacking transpersonal meaning and experience cause the negligence of the citizens' common memories in the old textures and such memorable places would subsequently undergo metamorphosis. Thus, the creation of richer places and habitats is needed and the existent places should be also more effectively used and the role of the places should be improved in today's life of the human beings. Ignorance of the revitalization of the collective memory in line with the citizens' sense of attachment to the old architectural textures would be followed by irreversible outcomes, including identity crisis in architecture and urban engineering and it is highly important to pay attention to the reasons why this issue has been left unattended. Various factors are involved in forming and remembering the individual and collective memories. In this regard, the memory is essentially related to the performance of individual and collective behaviors having a greater deal of effect on the individual emotions. The intended behaviors occur in a special place and are transformed to memory after being recorded in the long-term memory. In this regard, the place and its related features play essential roles. Since remembering the contents of the long-term memory happens through association, it is accordingly imagined that the experiencing of the properties of a place wherein the behaviors related to the citizens' individual and collective memories are exhibited, can set the ground for memories' association. In fact, the present study was found necessary as explained in the following cases:

A. The importance of protecting the memorable places for creating identity values and better identification of the essence of urban engineering and architectural identity and culture

B. Finding practical solutions for increasing the quality in the old and valuable texture for augmenting the sense of attachment towards the intended spaces

Here, the question is raised as to whether the citizens' collective memories can be utilized for the revitalization of the architecturally valuable old houses and textures? What roles do the citizens' collective memories and sense of attachment play in the continuation and preservation of the texture's identity of choice?

2. ETHODOLOGY

Considering the nature and vastness of the subject in various stages of the research, the descriptive-

analytical method was chosen as the approach governing the study methodology and the required information was collected through searches in the library sources and field activities. Based on this study method, the analytical results have been presented within tables, diagrams and writings. Of course, qualitative and quantitative approaches have also been adopted in parts of this research and the data have been analyzed using SPSS Software. The correct selection of statistical test in SPSS is very important. Therefore, a large volume of the statistical data was collected as the study sample volume based on which answers can be found to the study questions and hypotheses. In the present study, the type of the test used in SPSS was chosen according to the 18-month time span through statistical inference and calculation of estimations from the population's parameters such as mean or variance of the population through sample statistics (like mean or variance of the sample volume). In other words, the data analysis method in this study has specifically been intellect and reasoning. Considering the fact that the data have been collected, evaluated and analyzed through deductive reasoning, simulation and modeling of all happen by the assistance of thinking, contemplation and logics. The present descriptive-analytical study, meanwhile offering the existent information, elaborated the quality of the problem and its dimensions. When there was no information available regarding the population's variance and/or the success or failure likelihood of the variable, the statistical formulae could not be used for estimating the study's sample volume; so, Morgan's table would be one option. This table gives the maximum number of the sample volume (S = sample volume and N =the population's volume). In selecting the samples according to Morgan's table and the population residing the neighborhood's texture, the study sample volume (N) included the old houses above 50 years of age; at present, 55 households were found living in the old houses of Sagharisazan Neighborhood (efforts were made in the selection of the statistical population to take into account all of the social classes using the native and old and valuable houses situated in Sagharisazan Neighborhood including the houses with residents and the houses with land use changes and reconstructions) and the study sample volume (S) was selected equal to 47 households in the old and valuable texture of Sagharisazan according to Morgan's table.

3. BAKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Systematic study of the quality of a residential environment is a rather new topic and it is generally specific to the second half of 20th century. Carp and Zawadski have divided the studies carried out in this regard into two sets: A) some of the preliminary studies are secondarily associated with the subject of environment quality. The characteristic and

background of such studies are more related to the investigation of the mutual relationships between the individuals and their immediate environment and the effects of the residential units' physical adjacency on the social behaviors of the individuals; B) some of the other studies carried out on the environment quality have been concentrated on the characteristics of the individuals residing in a neighborhood as neighbors (Carp & Zawadski, 1976, p. 240).

In some of the studies, it has become clear that the properties of the individuals residing the neighborhood are a lot more important than the physical indices of the neighborhoods for the determination of the residents' satisfaction rate. Generally, the researches on the quality of the urban environment were seminally commenced from the quality of the house and the rate of satisfaction in the immediate residential environment had expanded to the vaster areas in neighborhood, local community, city, region and country levels. Therefore, the importance of reconstruction showed itself in the revitalization of the architectural contexts for restoring life in the urban economy and communities as well as improvement of the old lands and current inefficient activities therein and creation of modern opportunities and better environment for the future generations.

Memory was posited first by Maurice Halbwachs, a French sociologist, in the book "social frameworks of memory" (Wilson, 2005, p. 9). Attentions to the preservation of spiritual and social experiences, rites and customs and vernacular knowledge have been delineated in Xi'an Declaration (2005). Specific attentions to the concepts of the place spirits can be seen in this period in the dedication of Quebec Declaration (2008) to the subject. This announcement has defined such components as context, spirituality and human being in interaction with building as factors giving meaning, value and feeling to a place (Quebec Declaration, 2008)². On the other hand, the research programs have been placed atop of the agenda of Gilan Province's Housing and Urban Engineering Office under the supervision of the governmental housing and urban engineering organizations and institutions in the area of the old urban textures with certain applied objectives, evaluation and classification of the historical places so that a concentrated and national information bank can be created for these places by the Revitalization Fund of the organization. Amongst these studies, the comprehensive plan of Rasht in May, 2006, by Tarh-e-Kavosh Engineering Company can be pointed out that was implemented for the revitalization of the old textures in Rasht. The results obtained from the investigation of the subject's background indicated that there are not performed many studies regarding the effect of collective memory for the revitalization of the valuable old houses and texture and that the research on the old texture and collective memory is always posited in separate.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1. Conceptualization of the Sense of Attachment to a Place

Many of the people who have taken a lot of trips in their lives express an increasingly subtle need for return to their roots in the rest of their lives. This need can be envisioned as a need for identity and sense of attachment to a place or, in other words, the need for settling down in a place (Lawson, 2012, p. 19). The spaces that accommodate a large number of individuals are the loci for the expression of behaviors that are predictable to a large extent because the thing that matters in such spaces is not the behaviors of every individual member rather the important thing is the behavior exhibited by the individuals who have gathered around as a whole. In case that our physiological and security needs are sufficiently satisfied, we would pay attention to such needs as belonging and affection. The satisfaction of the need for belonging is more difficult in the communities that are increasingly variable. A few of us live in a neighborhood that we have grown up and are still having the primary school friends; therefore, we have lost the possibility of developing roots and fostering the sense of attachment. Many of the individuals endeavor to satisfy the sense of belonging in other forms like by going to the church or historical places (Shultz & Shultz, 2014, p. 397).

Undoubtedly, the preservation of the identity in respect to a place that has given a perception of the existence and being to certain persons cannot be accomplished if it is not recognized. Based on Canter's Model, a place is a part of the constructed space or natural space which is the result of the mutual relationships between three factors: A. human behavior; B. meanings and concepts; and C. contextual specifications and distinction as well as remaining constant and persistent (keeping on) and belonging to the group. Sense of attachment is a higher level of sense of a place that plays a determinant role for the enjoyment and continuation of a person's presence in place. This sense leads to the bond between the individual and the place wherein s/he finds oneself a part thereof (Sarmast & Motavasseli, 2010, p. 137). Shamai introduces seven stages as the ranks of sense of place and the first three primary of them are belonging to a place, attachment to a place and commitment to a place and so forth to the seventh stage. These levels include the application of sense of place from indifference towards a place to sacrifice for a place as explained in the following stages:

1. Indifference to a place: It is used in assessing the sense of a place.
2. Awareness of being in a place: The individual knows that s/he is living in a distinct place according to the symbols s/he recognizes in that place, but there is no sense of the place to make him or her associated with the place.

3. Sense of place: In this level, the individual knows the name of the place's symbols and feels existence and respect with the place in respect to the events occurring in the place.

4. Attachment to the place: In this level, the individual develops deep affectionate feelings towards the place which becomes meaningful and the axis of the individuality for him or her. Furthermore, the collective experiences and identity of the individual along with the meanings and symbols give personality to the place.

5. Uniting with the place's goals: This level reveals the individual's attachment to the place's needs that create zeal, love, support and self-sacrifice in him or her towards the place.

6. Presence in place: It is the highest level of sense of place and the individual feels so much commitment towards the place and exhibits a lot of sacrifice in various situations for preserving the values, freedoms and welfare.

7. Sacrifice for a place: This level is the highest level of a sense of place and the individual has the deepest commitment towards the place and exhibits a lot of sacrifice for the attitudes, values, freedoms and welfare in various situations. In this level, the individual is ready to leave his or her individual and collective interests for greater interests of the place (Shamai, 1991, pp. 347-358).

Schultz confirmed the past architecture of the human life wherein the meanings were interlaced with the place and the human beings generally felt attachment even with the life difficulties and social injustice and announced the creation of a central space or an existential space wherein the individual could adapt oneself to the environment and feel sympathy towards it as the goal of architecture. In defining the nature of the place, he named it a general whole consisting of contextual objects and elements and the thing that is indeed considered as the spirit or nature of the place.

4.2. Memory and Collective Memory

In Dehkhoda Dictionary, the term "memory" has been defined in the following words: "the things an individual has experienced and has traced in his or her mind". Longman Dictionary has defined memory as "an individual's ability in remembering things, places, experiences and so forth". Webster Dictionary has the following words as the meaning of memory: "ability and/or process of remembering or reproducing of the taught and memorized materials". Based on the literal definitions, it can be stated that "memory is remembering of the past incidents and events by the individual through remembering individuals, objects, places and experiences". We often consider memory substantially as a personal and individual concept; but, it should not be forgotten that the memories have a lot of effects on the individual life as well as the social life. It is the memories that create a sort of attachment to the

past, present and future in us (Grütter, 2014, p.178).

The majority of the theoreticians agree on the idea that the creation of affective bonds with the place is amongst the prerequisites of psychological balance that entails domination over the identity crises and can set the ground for the people's engagement in local activities (Lewicka, 2008, p.211). Collective memory is a set of associations that exist in the community in the form of narrations and create a sense of attachment between the members of a community. In addition, one of the other functions of collective memory is bestowing of identity to the individuals (Rico, 1995, p.49). Therefore, the individual's collective memories in the human habitats obey the experimental events in the area of social behaviors and the spaces they have in their minds from the past. These memories can considerably contribute in a transpersonal manner to spatial and social coherence and sense of attachment to a place and enhancement of personal identity.

4.3. The Relationship between Collective Memory and Sense of Attachment to a Place

The historical buildings are constantly enlivening memories of their contexts in the minds of the society members whereas such a reviving of the memory observed by an individual in respect to the peripheral environment might be voluntary or involuntary. Such a revival of the memories might form occasionally in individual form and occasionally from the internal group and transpersonal nature. Thus, the individual's relationship with the environment gains a particular importance in the first place.

The individual's relationship with the environment depends on the environment, on the one hand, and on the human beings' characteristics, on the other hand. The individuals are related and connected to their peripheral environment in various respects. The connection to and dependency on the environment is established not by a tangible factor but by abstract factors. These abstract factors include environmental information as well as tendency for showing a special behavior and creating a change in the environment. In between, we occasionally coordinate ourselves with the environment's properties and occasionally change the environment based on the mentalities we have previously constructed of this environment. It is the environment that sometimes navigates the behaviors and it is the behaviors that bring about changes in the environment and these effects and impressions are going on constantly and continuously.

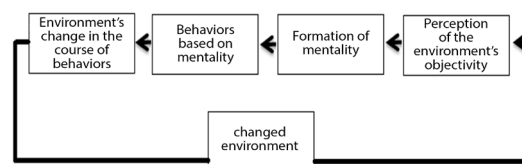


Fig. 1. The Process of Human-Environment Relationship (Grütter, 2014, p. 45)

According to the studies performed by Halbwachs, the thing that resides in the form of common and compact collective memories in the individuals' minds is retrieved in the process of individual memories of each person and reminds of a great many of our personal memories. The historical memories generalize the extents of these memories that stem from the individuals' personal experiences. These cases are the things individuals have in their minds (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 51). In his mind, memories need a framework and this is per se in need of remembering the memories. He gives this same memory framework as the name of community and quotes August Conte to offer a more comprehensive explanation in this regard and asserts that "our peripheral environment includes our and other's signs so objects are parts of the society" (Halbwachs, 1950, p. 2). Aldo Rossi recounts city as history and adopts two historical approaches to the city: the first one is that "the city is an artificial and material element on which the traces of the time can be seen" and the second one is that "history is a shaped structural study of the urban artefacts" (Rossi, 1982, p. 128). Besides the individual memory, we also have a collective memory that incorporates memories, beliefs, values and the opinions we share with the others. Although memory is a personal and individual concept, it should not be forgotten that the memories have a large deal of effect on both of our individual and the social life. Memories can cause the sense of attachment in the past, present and future.

4.4. The Relationship between the Old Textures and Increase in the Sense of Belonging

The old texture starts forming in the periphery of the city's preliminary cores, i.e. the historical texture, and attached thereto. This part of the city that has been formed in the interval between transitions from calm urbanization to fast urbanization is neither so much historical nor so much new. Even its organization is something in the spatial span between the historical and new textures. The past architectural works are more persistent that the artists and architects themselves have caused the continuation of the architectural tradition because the architect finds oneself an intermediary of the architecture's formation and speaks of his or her belonging to the past architecture (Nadimi, 2014, p. 253).

Place is a ground of activities and generally features a cognitive identity. It also incorporates diverse social worlds and possesses a history interweaving the past, present and future. Each of these aspects is of a certain amount of importance. Relph writes in the book "the place and the placelessness" that "places are combinations of the natural and human orders and they are considered as the important centers of our immediate experiences of the world". In his idea, the primary attribute of the place is spatially latent in its ability for organizing and concentrating on the human

intentions, experience and behavior (Partoy, 2013, p. 75).

The concept of sense of a place determines the nature of the place and it can be found in places serving certain and distinct functions. The spatial experiences are essentially time-oriented and memory-driven and give a sense of living in the environment featuring certain boundaries and identity. Sense of a place is the common feeling of the human communities. In other words, it is a common feeling of life in an environment that possesses specified borders and a bioregional life identity.

The various levels of familiarity with a place are:

A. Very deep familiarity with the place: This level comes about when the individual is per se present in the place and unconsciously experiences it.

B. Ordinary familiarity with the place: This level includes an unconscious experiencing of the place and it is more collective and cultural than being individual and embraces the subtle and unthought participation in the views of a place.

C. Superficial familiarity with a place: It is the experience by a sensitive but unfamiliar individual in a place and it is following the perception of this subject that the place finds a certain form and meaning for the individuals living therein (Falahat, 2006, p. 59).

Therefore, it can be stated that sense of place deeply and permanently influences the people and the memory of the place corroborates the human beings' identity and power. In fact, the sense of attachment and belonging to a place is a higher rank of sense of a place that attains a determinant role in every situation and space for the mankind's enjoyment thereof and his continuation of presence in place. From the perspective of Sethalow, belonging to a place can be interpreted from psychological and identity aspects. In psychology, belonging to a place refers to the cognitive relationship between an individual with an environment or a special space and, in identity terms, belonging to a place is the individual's identity and belonging relationship with the social environment wherein s/he lives. In fact, attachment to a place is the symbolic relationship created by individuals towards a place that gives common emotional, affective and cultural meanings to a given space. In fact, the individuals relate the places to the cultural properties in such a way that a space can provoke the human experience and create values for the old buildings in the cultural meanings and concepts. Meaning depends on the form of space and its quality; in the meanwhile, it also depends on the culture, position, experience and current destination of the observer, as well. With this perspective, a special place would seem different to various spectators (Lynch, 2014, p. 167). Generally, a place can even have a symbolic concept beyond its memorability-based function or a given event. This is actualized when the place is expressive of a thing more than its main content. We see everything related in our minds with its environment and we often assess

it not only in respect to the environment but also exactly in respect to a place and this is of great help to our collective and mental memories. This mental

relationship becomes clearer when we see a lot of changes in the nature and structure of an architectural building and old texture in contrast to the past.

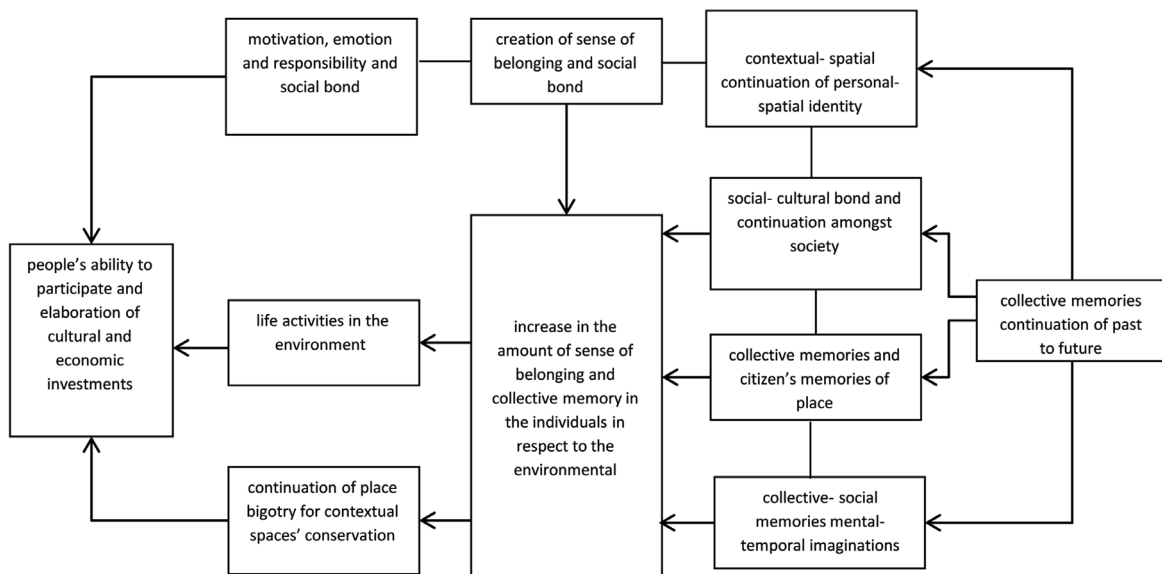


Fig. 2. Analyzing the Theoretical Framework and Application of Collective Memory in the Revitalization of the Valuable Urban Textures

5. RECOGNITION OF THE REGION AND FIELD STUDIES

5.1. Region of the Study

Rasht County is situated in the center of the province which shares borders with the Caspian Sea and Anzali Province in the north, with Rudbar County in the south, with Siahkal, Lahijan and Astaneh Ashrafiyeh Counties in the east and with Some'eh Sara, Fuman and Shaft Counties in the west. The county is about 1427 square kilometers in area. Gilan Province is divided

into six districts, seven cities, 18 suburban regions and 293 villages; the population of the province is 918445 people out of whom 698014 individuals live in the cities and 220431 individuals live in the villages (government of Rasht, 2015, Gilan, <https://rasht.gilan.ir>). It is worth mentioning that there is above 2500ha old texture in Gilan province with 965ha of it being positioned in Rasht alone in such a way that old texture accounts for about 7% of the entire city area and 38% of the entire provincial area (<http://gilan.mrud.ir>, ministry of roads and urban development of Islamic Republic of Iran, Gilan, 2015).

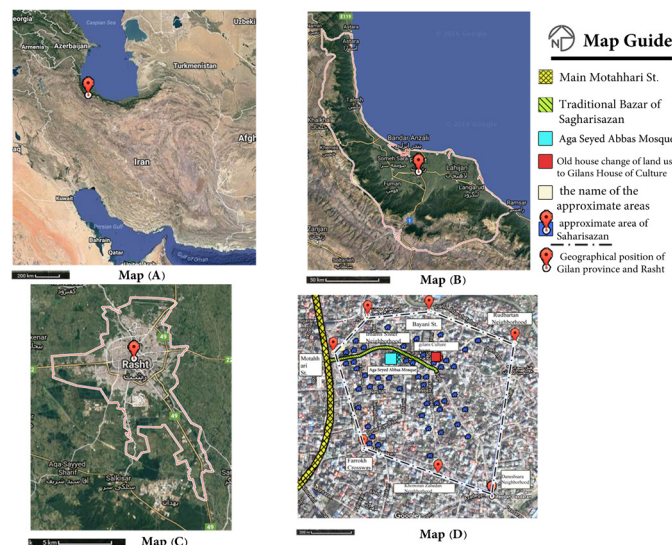


Fig. 3. Geographical Position of the Old Sagharişazan Neighborhood in Rasht in Respect to the National, Provincial and Urban Scales in 2019
(<https://www.google.com/maps/place/rasht>)

5.2. Old Sagharisazan Neighborhood

Sagharisazan is one of the old neighborhoods in the city of Rasht and it is located in the large region of Khamiran Zahedan. The construction of this neighborhood and its residential and nonresidential buildings dates back to more than one and a half centuries ago and part of it is considered as an old urban texture. The neighborhood has been constructed and used gradually and with no prior plan following the lead of Rasht's old bazar during Safavid Era in the periphery of the bazar by the residents. This neighborhood is consisted of a row of stores and shops forming the bazar. Sagharisazan is amongst the few neighborhoods in Rasht that has largely preserved its traditional texture. Amongst the

other specifications of the neighborhood, the existence of several religious centers and vernacular houses dating back to long ago can be pointed out. The oldness and tradition are the important and considerable features of Sagharisazan wherein the rich and the poor used to live at each other's side without any separation; it is currently considered as a worn-out and, in the meantime, historical and valuable texture part of which has undergone changes and many of the affluent social classes have moved away from it. The important elements of the neighborhood are old and valuable vernacular houses, Sagharisazan's Goldesteh Mosque, Aqa Sayed Abbas and Ismail Mausoleums and Haji Bathroom.

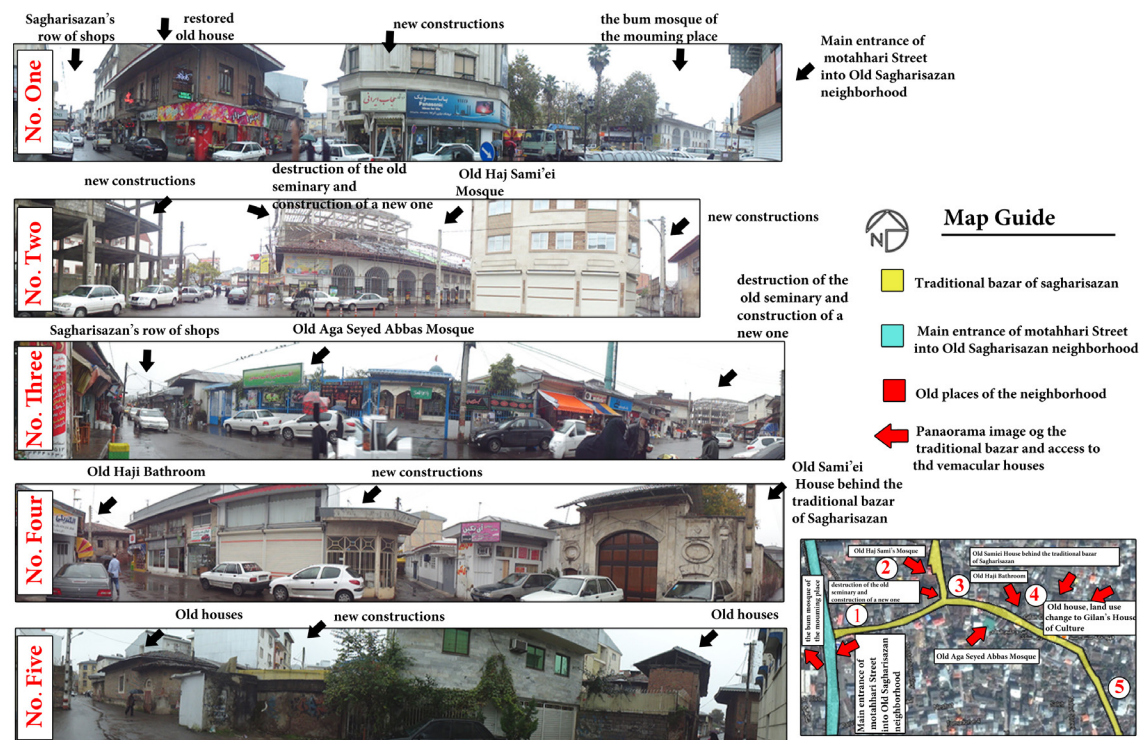


Fig. 4. Analyzing the Panorama Images of the Old Sagharisazan Neighborhood's Walls and the Accentuation of the New and Immethodical Constructions

5.2.1. Position of the Selected Old Houses in Sagharisazan Neighborhood

Every limitation is defined by border. Heidegger states in this regard that "the place and realm of neighborhood cannot exist without borders and its relationship with the adjacent environment" (Sun-Young, 2003, p. 26). The following table has been drawn on the question as to "where do you think the border and realm of Sagharisazan Neighborhood lies?" In total, 47 individuals were interviewed and it was observed in

the answers that several borders have been pointed out in various directions of the neighborhood. The majority of the interviewees provided more than one reply and, since the interview was performed based on an open-end response method, the old residents of the neighborhood were more comfortable in introducing the border but the new residents had scattered and variegated responses due to their short period of residence and use of the environment in such a way that it was difficult for them to separate Sagharisazan's border.

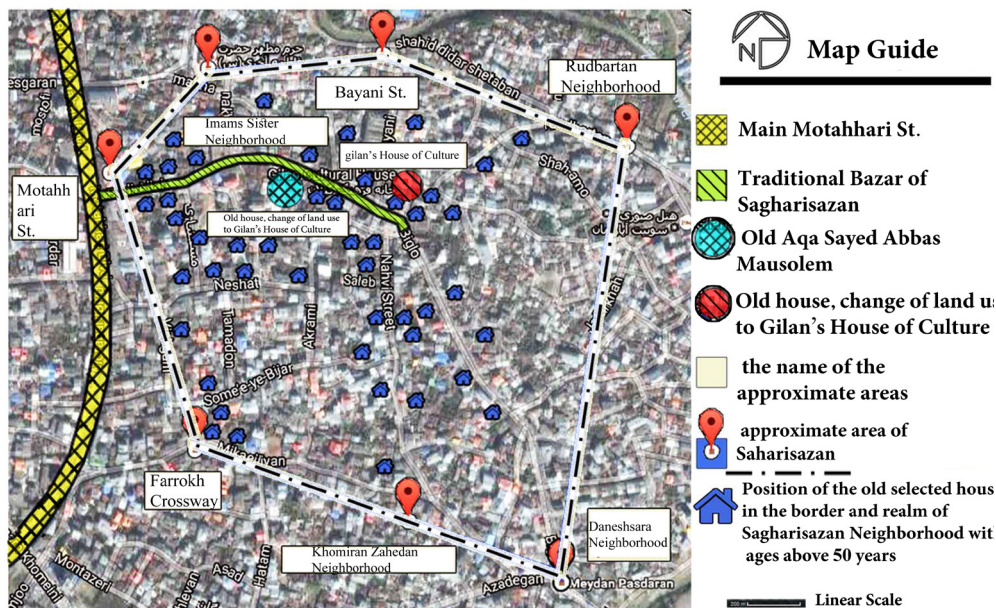


Fig. 5. Limits of Sagharisazan Neighborhood and the Position of the Selected Old Houses in the Border and Realm of Sagharisazan Neighborhood in 2019

5.2.2. Assessing Collective Memories of the Citizens in Old Sagharisazan Neighborhood

In the first question of the questionnaire, the study of the approximate limits of this old neighborhood in the mental maps of the citizens residing it showed that more than 60% of the entire received cognitive maps belong to the traditional Sagharisazan's bazar as well as the religious buildings' areas (holy shrine of Imam's sister and Aqa Sayed Abbas and Sayed Ismail Mausoleums and Goldasteh Mosque) and old houses in the traditional bazar's domain. The citizens' answer to the first question of the study was per se a testimony to the idea that a few percentages of them know in their cognitive maps that the Motahhari Street's entrance into Sagharisazan Neighborhood or Iraw Bridge Neighborhood towards Sagharisazan has been within the area of the neighborhood and the old texture

of Sagharisazan; therefore, it can be concluded that the existence of the traditional bazar's row of shops at the side of the old houses and religious buildings has left a permanent image in the citizens' memory of this old texture. In answering the second question of the questionnaire "think about the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood for a while; what places of it do you remember?", the majority of the respondents pointed to the traditional bazar of Sagharisazan and the old neighborhoods and alleys (25% to the traditional bazar of Sagharisazan and 20% to the old neighborhoods and alleys). In between, such historical buildings like Aqa Sayed Abbas Mausoleum and Goldasteh Mosque and holy shrine of Imam's sister and the old houses accounted for a lower percentage due to the immethodical and new constructions lacking the proper identity at the side of these valuable works.

Table 1. The Citizens' Frequency of Responses to the Second Question: "Think About the Old Sagharisazan Neighborhood for a Moment, Which Places do you Remember in it?"

Number of interviewees	Traditional Sagharisazan Bazar	Old houses	Holy shrine of Imam's sister (PBUH)	Aqa Sayed Abbas Mausoleum	Gilan's house of culture	Old alleys and neighborhoods	Goldasteh Mosque	Old coffee shops	Haji Bathroom
47	12	4	7	6	5	9	2	1	1
100%	25%	9.5%	14%	13%	10.5%	20%	4%	2%	2%

Also, these citizens more frequently pointed to the old bazar of Sagharisazan and historical monuments like Aqa Sayed Abbas Mausoleum upon hearing the third question that "what mental event or image or what place comes to your mind upon hearing the name 'old

Sagharisazan texture'?" A small percentage of the citizens had pointed to the elements of the historical district of the texture and the old houses and even Haji Bathroom in comparison to the new constructions. But, unfortunately, this is per se indicative of the

marginalization of the vernacular architectural elements in the individuals' mental images. In answering to the questionnaire, the individuals who have been residing this old neighborhood for longer years most frequently voted for Haji Bathroom and traditional houses and they based their reasons for selecting these places on the idea that they had not had private bathrooms in their houses and had to go to public bathrooms when they were younger so they have made a lot of uses of Haji Bathroom and they even had more sense of belonging to the old houses and alleys.

This attribute is indicative of the overshadowing of the neighborhood's texture by the immethodical and new residential and business constructions and reduction of the inter-neighborhood spatial connection. Although the spatial structure of the neighborhood has been disrupted by the immethodical constructions in the individuals' minds, the citizens' paying of attention to the events and activities like purchasing from the traditional bazar and mourning groups in the precinct of Aqa Sayed Abbas and holy shrine of Imam's sister and Goldasteh Mosque as well as visiting of the other regions like Gilan's house of culture (an old house

that has been changed of its use case in Sagharisazan Texture to Gilan's House of Culture and subjected to repair and restoration) is reflective of the idea that these are the most important incidents in line with the preservation of the identity and values of this neighborhood. Therefore, this ancient ritual structure has been given a particular stance in the minds of the citizens.

In replying to the fourth question, i.e. "what do you think is the most important event that takes place every year in the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood?", the majority of the citizens pointed to the mourning ceremonies held on Tasu'a and Ashura on the precinct of Aqa Sayed Abbas and holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH)'s sister.

In responding to the fifth question of the questionnaire, i.e. "if you are told that you can live in any place in the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood, which one would you choose?", the majority of the citizens, as well, pointed to the regions near Badi Allah Junction (Motahhari Street) and the traditional bazar of Sagharisazan and alleys with low traffic and some of the newly constructed villas (Table 2).

Table 2. The citizens' responses to the fifth question, i.e. "if you are told that you can live in any place in the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood, which one would you choose?"

Number of interviewees	Traditional bazar of Sagharisazan	Iraq Bridge	Khamiran Zahedan	Some'eh Bijar Alley	Danshsara	Rudbartan	Imam's Sister Holy Shrine	Badi Allah Junction	Farrokh crossway	Newly constructed villas	Old houses	Newly constructed apartments	Does not differ	I do not know
47	6	1	3	4	3	2	1	8	3	7	3	4	1	1
100%	13%	2%	6%	9%	6%	4.5%	2%	17.5%	6%	15%	6%	9%	2%	2%

Moreover, in answering the sixth, seventh and the eighth questions of the questionnaire regarding the most beautiful, the most unpleasant contextual view and landscape of the buildings and the most memorable place in the neighborhood, the citizens pointed to the old houses restored based on the old styles and newly constructed villas in the old texture as the most beautiful

places and mentioned the old alleys along with the ruining old buildings as the most unpleasant places; they also realized the religious places as the most memorable elements of Sagharisazan Neighborhood considering the fact that religious ceremonies are held therein.

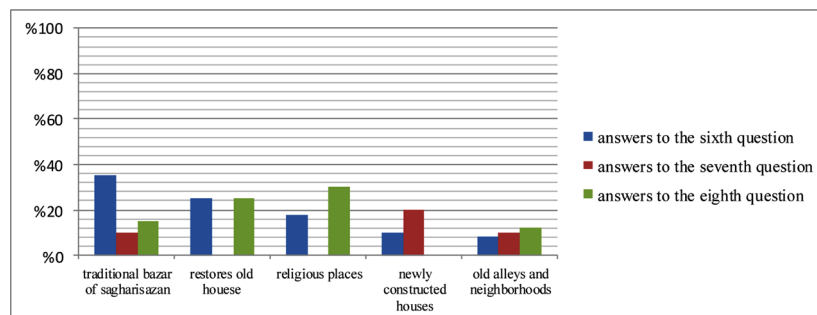


Chart 1. The Citizens' Response Frequencies to the Sixth, the Seventh and the Eighth Questions

As it is demonstrated in Table 3, based on the analyses of the answers to the three first questions,

the paling of the historical context and visage and elements in the citizens' mental images, domination

of the new constructions over the historical context and elements of the neighborhood in the mental images of the citizens, diminishing of the coherence in the structure of the neighborhood's texture can be identified as the most important weaknesses existent in the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood in Rasht; these cases are somehow the outcomes of reduction in the sense of place in this old neighborhood. Based on the few studies performed on the old texture of Sagharisazan Neighborhood, the adoption of solutions like conservation, restoration and foregrounding of the valuable historical buildings through lighting and environmental signs, creation of integrated identity via designing and applying specific environmental signs and so forth as well as the enhancement of the contextual quality according to the identity of the past countenance along the throughfares, alleys and old houses can be accompanied by the solidification of the neighborhood texture and enhancement of the sense of place in the old neighborhood and, simultaneously, accentuate the presence in this old and valuable neighborhood in the mental images of the citizens. The citizens' answer to the fourth question signified that the accentuated presence in the mournings and religious rituals in the religious places is suggestive

of the social solidarity and the effect of such rites and religious places on the collective memories of the citizens and increase in the sense of belonging to such environments. Here, in order to emphasize on the preservation of the urban identity and social solidarity existent in the place, the conservation of places with a valuable and well-known identity can be pointed out as a solution; amongst these buildings, the holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH)'s sister, Aqa Sayed Abbas and Aqa Sayed Ismail Mausoleums and Goldasteh Mosque in Sagharisazan can be pointed out. The analysis of the citizens' answers to the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth questions is somehow reflective of the negligence of the contextual quality in the historical texture of this neighborhood, shortage of urban facilities, domination of the constructions and immethodical apartment constructions in the old neighborhood and the effect of this factor on the citizens' mental images and, finally, the paling of the historical residential and non-residential elements in the mental images of the citizens that is per se a result of the reduction in the sense of belonging to a historical place featuring a well-identified identity and reduction of the sense of place in the citizens' minds.

Table 3. Qualitative Analysis of the Questionnaires Presented to the Citizens Regarding the Old Sagharisazan Neighborhood in Rasht and Inferring to the Weaknesses and Threats as Well as the Offering of the Suggested Solutions

Row	Questions of the questionnaire	Type and frequency of answers by the citizens in the neighborhood	Existing weak points and threats	The effect of functions on the individuals' collective memories	Suggested solutions
1	Please draw a closed polygon around the approximate area of old Sagharisazan neighborhood in the following map and tick the approximate area of the neighborhood in the following supplementary table.	More than 60% of all of the received cognitive maps pertain to the area of the traditional Sagharisazan's bazar and the area of the religious buildings Iraq Bridge Neighborhood and Motahhari Street's entrance into Sagharisazan Neighborhood (new constructions and elements) are realized as components of the old texture's area.	Paling of the identity-endowing architectural elements according to new constructions	Reduction in sense of belonging to the old places	Enhancement of contextual quality and creation of integrated identity through designing. Restoration and revitalization of the pavements. Improvement of the exterior view of the business and residential units and making no use of constructing façades without identity.
2	Think for a while about old Sagharisazan Neighborhood, what are the places you can remember therein? Why?	Traditional bazar of Sagharisazan (25%). Old houses (9.5%). Holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH)'s sister (14%). Aqa Sayed Abbas Mausoleum (13%). Gilan's house of culture (10.5%). Old neighborhoods and alleys (20%). Goldasteh Mosque (4%). Old coffee house (2%). Haji Bathroom (2%).	Domination of the new constructions in the old neighborhood and the historical elements of the neighborhood. Domination of the ruining buildings and old alleys of the neighborhood.	Reduction in the sense of belonging to the place in the old neighborhood	Cleaning of any writings on the walls and electricity posts. Elimination of the miscellaneous advertisement tableaux.

3	What are the events or mental images or places you remember upon hearing the name "old Sagharisazan texture?"	Traditional bazar of Sagharisazan (25%) Old houses (15%) Holy shrine of Imam Reza (PBUH)'s sister (15%) Aqa Sayed Abbas Mausoleum (15%) Gilan's house of culture (6%) Old neighborhoods and alleys (10%) Goldasteh Mosque (10%) Old coffee house (2%) Haji Bathroom (2%)	Domination of the new constructions in the old neighborhood and the historical elements of the neighborhood	Reduction in the sense of belonging to the place in the old neighborhoods	Increase in the cleanliness and brooming and sweeping of the neighborhood area. Preventing the wandering of the free animals in the neighborhood. Creation of information kiosks and police patrols.
4	What do you think is the most important event that takes place every year in the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood?	Purchases and sales in the traditional bazar (45%) Mourning and unique religious rituals in the religious places (35%) Artistic presence and gatherings in Gilan's house of culture (15%) The raid of the travellers and tourists into the neighborhood (5%)	-----	Creation of social solidarity and bond between the people and the old religious contexts	Holding of mourning ceremonies and religious theatres in the precinct of Imam's sister and Aqa Sayed Abbas and Goldasteh Mosque.
5	if you are told that you can live in any place in the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood, which one would you choose?	Traditional bazar of Sagharisazan (13%) Iraq Bridge (2%) Khamiran Zahedan (6%) Some'eh Bijar Alley (9%) Daneshsara (6%) Rudbartan (4.5%) Holy shrine of Imam's Sister (2%) Badi Allah Junction (17.5%) Farrokh Crossway (6%) Newly constructed villas (15%) Old houses (6%) Newly constructed apartments (9%) It does not differ (2%) I do not know (2%)	Reduction in the contextual quality of the constructions in the old neighborhood	Reduction in the sense of belonging to the place in old neighborhoods	Holding mourning and religious theatre ceremonies and religious exhibitions in the precincts of the holy shrine of Imam's sister and Aqa Sayed Abbas Mausoleum and Goldasteh Mosque. Reconstruction of the old residential and non-residential buildings. Restoration and repair of the old buildings and changing of their use cases as group cultural places. Application of the artworks of the native artists for the enhancement of the quality of the collective spaces.
6	Which is the most beautiful place in terms of view and urban context in the old Sagharisazan neighborhood?	Traditional bazar of Sagharisazan (35%) Old reconstructed houses (25%) Religious places (18%) Newly constructed houses (10%) Old alleys and neighborhoods (8%) Old ruining buildings (4%)	Paling of the historical elements in the citizens' mental images	Reduction in the sense of belonging to the place in old neighborhoods	Organizing of the urban countenance according to the vernacular identity-bestowing elements. Use of CCTVs in the neighborhood.
7	Which is the most unpleasant place in terms of view and urban context in the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood?	The traditional bazar of Sagharisazan (10%) Old reconstructed houses (0%) Religious places (0%) Newly constructed houses (20%) Old alleys and neighborhoods (10%) Old ruining buildings (60%)	Reduction in the contextual quality in Sagharisazan Neighborhood	Reduction in sense of belonging to the place in the old neighborhoods	Laying walls around the abandoned buildings and unusable lands and fencing. Creation of shopping and artefact centers. Holding ritual ceremonies in the old mosques.
8	Which one is the most memorable place in Sagharisazan Neighborhood?	The traditional bazar of Sagharisazan (15%) Old reconstructed houses (25%) Religious places (30%) Newly constructed houses (0%) Old alleys and neighborhoods (12%) Old ruining buildings (18%)	Reduction in the contextual quality in Sagharisazan Neighborhood	Reduction in sense of belonging to the place in the old neighborhoods	Creation of information-provisioning paths and installation of tablets of the cultural works. Exhibition and advertisement of the restored works of the old buildings on the urban walls of the neighborhood.

6. CONCLUSION

According to the theoretical and field analyses, it can be stated that the definitions of the sense of belonging to the place show the imaginations inside the human mind regarding the manmade environment. This concept is, on the one hand, rooted in the phenomenological structure and the mental experiences like memory, culture, history, tradition, community and so forth and it is, on the other hand, influenced by the objective and external approaches to the environment like empirical sciences and designing and so on. This is per se reflective of the idea that sense of belonging to a place and collective memory are complicated concepts of the human emotions and attachment to a constructed environment that is created as a result of the social and behavioral interactions and human beings' use of the place; therefore, collective memory is the shared memories between the individuals according to the experienced events and incidents that have occurred within the social and spatial framework in a place. As for the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood in Rasht, the studies have been most predominantly based on the cognitive and mental questionnaires administered to the citizens. Thus, it was made clear meanwhile identifying the weak points and the strengths existent

in this old texture that no intervention has been performed in the area of the urban management and engineering due to the negligence and ignorance of the responsible persons. The present field study has been somehow able to show the quality of taking advantage of the citizens' collective memories in line with the revitalization of the old and valuable textures in the old Sagharisazan Neighborhood in Rasht. Some of these solutions and preparations can benefit from the collective memories in respect to the revitalization of the valuable texture so the participation can be enticed in the citizens and their cognitive maps can be acquired in regard of the place so as to take measures parallel to the conservation of the rites and holding of ritual and memorable ceremonies like mourning theatres in the religious places and application of vernacular elements of the neighborhood in the new constructions that are also additionally demanded by the citizens based on the contemporary needs of the time. However, the specific analysis and classification of the deigning and technical solutions and suggestions by which the collective memories of the citizens can be strengthened in respect to the urban visage and cotnext, are beyond the present study's scope and need more subtle research for the accomplishment of such goals.

END NOTE

1. SPSS Data Collection.
2. Amongst the other meetings related to this subject are ICCN's 2014 summon in Isfahan as well as ICOMOS meeting with the central topic of "identity threats: loss of the traditions and collective memories, 2015" in Japan.

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