

# Sustaining the Social Memory in a Historic Neighborhood: The Case Study of Uch Dukkan Neighborhood in Ardabil City in Azerbaijani Region of Iran

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**Abstract**—Conservation of historical urban patterns in the traditional neighborhoods is a part of creating integrated urban environments that are socially more sustainable. Urbanization reflects on life conditions and social, physical, economical characteristics of the society. In this regard, historical zones and traditional regions are affected by dramatic interventions on these characteristics. This article focuses on the Uch Dukkan neighborhood located in Ardabil City in Azerbaijani region of Iran, which has been up to such interventions that led its transformation from the past to the present. After introducing a brief inventory of the main elements of the historical zone and the neighborhood; this study explores the changes and transformations in different periods; and their impacts on the quality of the environment and its social sustainability. The survey conducted in the neighborhood as part of this research study revealed that the Uch Dukkan neighborhood and the unique architectural heritage that it possesses have become more inactive physically and functionally in a decade. This condition requires an exploration and comparison of the present and the expected transformations of the meaning of social space from the most private unit to the urban scale. From this token, it is argued that an architectural point of view that is based on space order; use and meaning of space as a social and cultural image, should not be ignored. Based on the interplay between social sustainability, collective memory, and the urban environment, study aims to make the invisible portion of ignorance clear, that ends up with a weakness in defining the collective meaning of the neighborhood as a historic urban district. It reveals that the spatial possessions of the neighborhood are valuable not only for their historical and physical characteristics, but also for their social memory that is to be remembered and constructed further.

**Keywords**—Urban integrity, social sustainability, collective memory, social decay.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**S**USTAINABLE development is a concept, which has been researched from its economic and environmental aspects. Today, it is also a matter of research under the social and humane aspects of community sustainability. In other words, social sustainability today has a prominent role in sustainable development [1]. In this regard, sustainable development

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causes real setbacks in social structure and environment and emphasizes that Middle East and developing countries are facing social problems in urban areas. According to Norgaard [2], modernism deceives communities and hinders environmental and social problems arising in the development process. In recent researches on social sustainability, it has been indicated that there is no sustainability in urban transformation of Iran's traditional regions. The studies have shown that there is lack of sense of belonging, security problem and crime in traditional regions [3]. Sachs claims that social sustainability in communities should be assessed within the criteria of social homogeneity, fair income, services and access to employment and, also, stresses the importance of cultural and political sustainability in the process [4]. In this study of social sustainability in traditional neighborhoods, the social and humane aspects of sustainable development are discussed in details and, then, physical sustainability of cultural heritage is tackled as a matter of neighborhood identity and a must to be passed down to future generations.

This study discusses the process of sustainable development with its social dimension and effect in the Uch Dukkan neighborhood in Ardabil city located in Azerbaijan region of Iran. Even though the concept of sustainable development has a social content, the economic and environmental matters are considered in scientific studies. However, based on the Uch Dukkan neighborhood case study, besides the human and social dimensions of sustainable development, preservation concept is analyzed in this study. The study reveals the problems and ravages in the neighborhood's spatial-functional elements upon determination of current data in the Uch Dukkan neighborhood. This case study is explanatory as it reflects the neighborhood setup and collective memory of the social dimension of sustainability.

According to the research on the history and identity of the Iranian Azerbaijani Region (IAR), Turkish governance led to the establishment of many architectural works in IAR during the period of their control [5]. Uch Dukkan neighborhood with its houses and neighborhood structure is one of the best samples of this period. The Grand Bazaar (Seljuk period), Friday (Juma) Masjid (Seljuk period), and the Sheikh Safi Al-Din Ensemble (Safavid period) were built during the time of Turkish control, which was dominated in the region. These places are the main elements of Ardabil city and have an essential role in the formation of the general appearance of

Ardabil city. In this regard, as a result of personal observations, it has been found that historical neighborhoods developed around the main spatial elements of this city. However, historical neighborhoods of Ardabil have faced many changes and interventions over time. Nonetheless, some of these neighborhoods have maintained their identity and existence. One of the six neighborhoods is Uch Dukkan neighborhood which is located in the historic district of Ardabil city and that carries traditional identity in physical forms. It is observed that Uch Dukkan neighborhood, with its organic form, narrow and winding walkways, spatial elements, as well as, its integrated structure, carries a traditional identity. Therefore, in this paper, Uch Dukkan neighborhood will first be analyzed in light of the criteria of social sustainability and second through sustainable preservation.

This study is mainly a qualitative and quantitative research. Data for this study were gathered through the exploration of a wide array of relevant literature, survey study and personal observations. During the literature research, theses, books and articles regarding IAR were provided from the libraries of Ardabil Azad and Mohaghegh Universities and the Ardebil Cultural Heritage Organization. For this paper, our focus is on the social dimension of sustainability and sustainable preservation. First, we reviewed some of the previous research on social sustainability to extract the basic criteria for the assessment of social sustainability. Later, we conducted a comprehensive research of historical places of Ardabil and on our case study Uch Dukkan Neighborhood, through content analysis of related documents, survey research and observation of Uch Dukkan neighborhood in Ardabil city. During a personal visit at Uch Dukkan neighborhood for six days, various locations during the morning, noon and evening hours were photographed. According to these photographs, the neighborhood was analyzed based on the criteria of social sustainability.

## II. SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE PRESERVATION

The relationship between the responsibilities of people on present and future generations is called sustainability. In this regard, Gilman [6] stated that Sustainability is a system which does not lose its functioning with regard to the future and does not exhaust its resources. Hempel [7] explains the concept of sustainability from another point of view. According to his explanation, due to the fact that societies will not last forever, defining characteristics of sustainable communities is a very difficult matter. He also adds that the concept of sustainable community is a relative issue and that there are different definitions for different places. Despite the social aspect being accepted as the most important element of sustainability, as pointed out, there is a relatively limited number of literature that focuses specifically on this dimension of sustainability. Another essential issue is that there is no consensus between the social dimensions of sustainability. We reviewed some of the relevant researches to gain a thorough understanding of social sustainability. The criteria of social sustainability used by researchers are as follows; social equity, engaged governance, social interaction, interpersonal relations, social

cohesion, attachment to place, community stability, health and well-being, inclusion, and security. According to the results of various studies on the social sustainability of the urban and local, important criteria of social sustainability are stated as equality, cultural identity, collective memory, and sense of place, fair distribution of income, social services, security and cultural heritage.

The concept of collective memory has been evaluated in different forms by considering its social and urban characteristics. This concept is known factor in the social sustainability of the urban communities. In this regard, Rossington [8] stated that collective memory is like memories that are shaped by the society and culture. In this regard, Basa [9] about the Sustainability of urban memory stated that the spatial elements play an essential role in the formation of the collective memory of urban society. In another study on the collective memory, Lynch [10] stated that architecture of cities identifies urban identity and memory.

The cultural identity is an essential criterion that provides the sustainability of the social relations of urban communities [11]. From a sociological standpoint, the concept of identity is a necessary measure for the formation of social partnership. In terms of urban and architectural identity, the concept of identity comes to the forefront with its visual and pictorial dimensions [12]. In this regard, Lefebvre [13, p.77-80] has emphasized that the city's artifacts, monuments and all its spatial features are the projection of society on the earth. Therefore, it is possible to state that the cities and their spatial features symbolize the identity and collective memory of the communities.

The main effect on the historical places and neighborhood's social sustainability is capitalism and places consumption. The main function of the place is consumption, this places where collective consumption is required for the reproduction of labor that it is defined as an urban place [14]. Sengul [15], who agrees with Harvey in the regards of capitalism and urban relativity, stated that capitalism is observing and transforming cities with their own point of view. In other words, capitalism observes the cities not only as living spaces but also as elements of exchange value. Urban places became attractive for living people with the development of capitalism in the early 20th century, and after this period the growth rates have increased [13, p.80-120]. According to the United Nations report on this subject in 2009, 30% of the world's population was living in cities in 1950, while the urban population reached 47% in 2000, and this figure is expected to reach 60% by 2016 [16].

In the past 10-15 years, various scientific studies on sustainable preservation have been carried out in the Middle Eastern cities. In this regard, the local identity and broad participation principles of the cultural heritage were taken into account in the historical urban places and traditional neighborhoods [17].

## III. COMPONENTS OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE IAR CITIES

Urban areas in pre-modernization period in the IAR cities were suitable for stopping, integrating and watching.

However, after modernization, the presence of automobiles and vehicles in all regions of the city caused an increase in the speed, eliminated participation and interaction opportunities.

#### A. Uch Dukkan Neighborhood

The historical region of the Ardabil city includes the bazaar (Bazaar), Friday (Juma) Mosque, Shaikh Safi Al-Din complex and six historical neighborhoods. The Uch Dukkan neighborhood is located in the central and historical district of the city and beside the Grand Bazaar. According to Safari [18], the Uch Dukkan neighborhood was one of the most important parts of the city, with caravanserais and rest areas. Today, there are not any caravanserais buildings. However, people who are living there, still have the memories of the city entrance and caravansaries that happened to be there once.

#### B. Uch Dukkan Neighborhood Historical Houses and Spatial Features


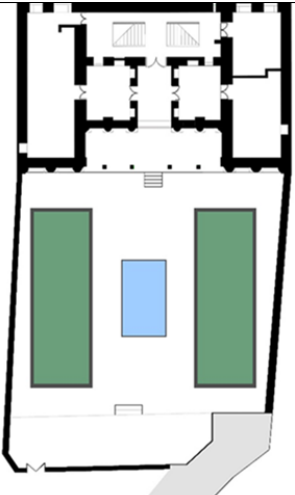
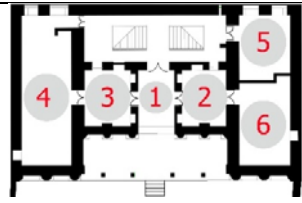

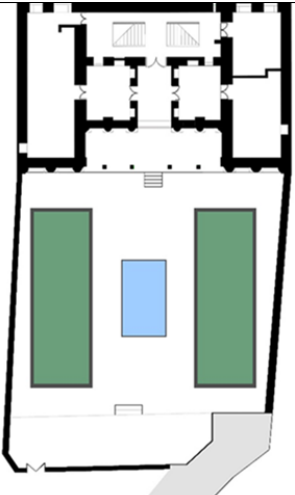
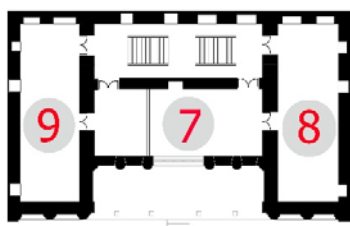
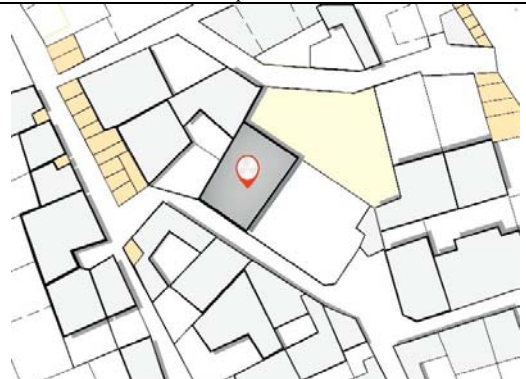
Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization purchased the six historical houses located within the boundaries of the Uch

Dukkan neighborhood on the Iranian cultural heritage list. These houses were built during the Qajar dynasty (1785-1925) and designed in accordance with the spatial characteristics of this period [19]. Nowadays, due to immigration and death of residents, these residences have been used for various purposes such as education and administration. In this paper, two of these six houses are specified with their location in the borders of the Uch Dukkan neighborhood and examined based on their spatial features.

TABLE I  
 CLASSIFICATION OF THE URBAN SECTIONS BASED ON THEIR COMPONENTS, SOCIAL CHARACTER AND PHYSICAL FORM

Urban area Neighborhood	Components	Social Character	Physical Form
Living Units	House	Private area	Organic
Center of Neighborhood	1. Mosque 2. Neighborhood 3. Bazaar 4. Hamam	Public Area	Organic
Connection Networks	1. Street 2. Blind Alley	Semi Public Area	Organic-Linear

TABLE II  
 RIZAZADE HISTORICAL HOUSE LOCATION AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Name of house	Situation plan	Plan of house	Spatial element
Rizazade			 GROUND FLOOR 1. Dalan 2/3. Rooms 4. Talar 5. Kitchen 6. Room
Uncertain/ Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925)			 FIRST FLOOR 7. Living Room (Private) 8. Bala Hane 9. Gushvar
Dimension			
928 M2			

EXPLANATION:  
 The view and column of the Rizazade historical house was constructed by brick and at the middle of Garden has been embedded a rectangular ornamental pool. The view and construction method of building reflects the Qajar dynasty's architectural perspective.

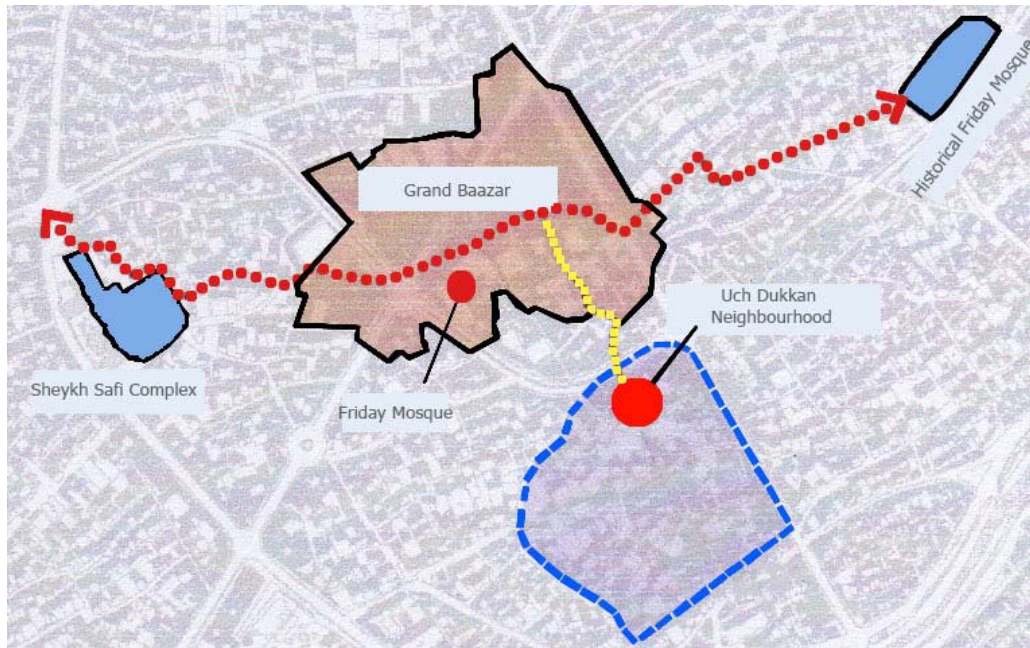


Fig. 1 Center of Ardabil city and location of Uch Dukkan Neighborhood

TABLE III  
RIZAZADE HISTORICAL HOUSE'S VIEWS FROM DIFFERENT SIDES

VIEW OF HOUSE (North East)



VIEW OF STREET



VIEW OF HOUSE (South West)



VIEW OF STREET



TABLE IV  
 KAHDIM BASHI HISTORICAL HOUSE LOCATION AND PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS


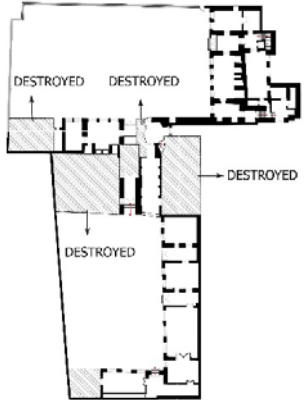






Name of house	Situation plan	Plan of house	Spatial element
Khadim Bashi			
Year of construction			
Uncertain/ Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925)	<p>  Khdim Bashi Historical House   Uch Dukkan Mosque   Uch Dukkan Bath   Education Field   Empty Land                 </p>	<p><b>EXPLANATION:</b>                      The Khadim bashi house is included two important parts, the internal "Andaruni" and external "Biruni" parts that it is most important feature of this house. In addition that View of the house has been constructed by brick. However, somewhere of the house have been destroyed but the house is available in Uch Dukkan neighborhood. There has not done restoration.</p>	
Dimension	1320.20 M2		
	<p>                         1. Talar /Living Room                          2. Hashti/Gushvar                          3. Gushvar                          4. Kitchen/Pastoo                          5. Internal Garden (Private)                          6. Dehliz-7. Room                          8. Room-10.Talar/ Living Room                          9. Living Room- 11. External Garden                     </p>		

TABLE V  
 KADIM BASHI HISTORICAL HOUSE'S VIEWS FROM DIFFERENT SIDES



#### IV. CONCLUSION

The discussion on the value of the traditional planning is carried out by the urban scholars and architectures worldwide. The analysis of traditional places enables us to identify the failures and achievements of these patterns, lessons of traditional and historical residences, and adapting these lessons in today's life to achieve more sustainable communities. In historical and traditional places, neighborhood (Mahalle) is a successful model for social sustainability. Neighborhoods are located around community centers (Baazar, Friday mosque) and squares. In these places, residents feel socialized and know each other, as well as there are sense of security, attachment, and collective action.

In this paper, we focused on the social and physical sustainability and researched how the historical neighborhood forms and its spatial features can affect the social sustainability. In traditional neighborhoods, various main elements have functioned as a whole. The neighborhood's integrated structure has made it possible for the residents to have equitable access to facilities. There were also strong relations based on familiarity, religion and economic desires which facilitate sense of community. In addition, the historical and traditional neighborhoods had a compact and mixed structure, while safety was thought in the design stage. In these neighborhoods accessibility, equality, housing, privacy, social relations and collective action were the main needs successfully achieved. As a result of the personal observations and survey on the Uch Dukkan neighborhood, it was highlighted that the neighborhood was under risk from the physical and social sustainability point of view. Capitalism has affected the identity and structure of Uch Dukkan neighborhood. Personal observation presented that commercial units with various aims have been increased through modernism in the neighborhood. The other finding is that modernism is followed by the traffic in the neighborhood, and the structure of the neighborhood has started to change and transformed, where many places of the neighborhood are currently used for parking purposes. According to the survey results, immigration from the Uch Dukkan neighborhood have increased in last 20 years, and in this regard, the immigration flows have been a factor in social sustainability. Based on the literature research, personal observation and comparative discussion, it is found that the authorities preserved certain cultural heritage of particular period, whereas they overlooked certain cultural heritage of another period and ruined this part in line with the same mentality. The paper concluded that social and physical sustainability faces challenges, the neighborhood's physical and social sustainability is at risk and it is observed that changes and transformation will cause more challenges and problems in time.

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