

In Search of the Childhood :
Re-imagining Street Children Care Centers in
Tehran

by
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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The phenomenon of street children is a serious social issue in developing countries such as Iran. Despite the unavailability of official statistics, unofficial data determines that over 200,000 street children currently settle in Iran's large cities.¹ These children face various risks and obstacles, including poverty, hygiene problems, mental health issues, delayed development, and education based on gender, age, ethnicity, and disability.² Moreover, most of them are not granted the privilege and right to have a safe home and attend public school, resulting in their social misconduct in the future. Among them, street girls are more vulnerable to ongoing physical and physiological harm such as sexual violence.³ This group also faces stricter social and cultural limits than males, which restrain their freedom and development in various ways. Thus, the space in which they spend time for rehabilitation should be cautiously programmed and designed, ensuring their safety, comfort, and freedom of activities through their healing process.

1 Ahmad Khaniha AR, Hakim Shooshtari M, Mohammadian M, Bidaki R, Pourrashidi Boshrabadi A. Familial characteristics of street children in tehran, iran. *Iranian journal of psychiatry and behavioral sciences*. 2014;8(2):86-89. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25053962>.

2 Zarezadeh T. Investigating the status of the street children: Challenges and opportunities. *Procedia, social and behavioral sciences*. 2013;84:1431-1436. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.768>. doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.06.768.

3 Thomas de Benitez S. State of the world's street children: Violence. Consortium for Street Children; 2007. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/43736/>.

Through Archival research, case studies, and based on the literature on street children's needs and architecture specifications for them, the proposed child center will be designed to rethink the typology of existing centers to be a place more than a shelter or a classroom. It will be developed to become a safe place that reconnects the children with their actual needs and livelihood. The center also hopes to take long-term social measures by offering programs that target illiterate and unemployed mothers in the community.

This thesis aims to use architecture as a device to improve the quality of living and educational experience in street children's facilities to accelerate their rehabilitation process through spatial design, connection with nature, and introducing Iranian cultural values and metaphors.

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I would like to thank my supervisor, Terri Boake, for her constant commitment and encouragement and many insightful thoughts. This thesis would not have been possible without your ongoing support and motivation. I am grateful to my committee member, Tracey Eve Winton, for her inspiration and guidance from the beginning of this project. Thank you for sharing your valuable insights and knowledge that goes beyond architecture.

Thanks to my dear husband, Meisam, for his belief in me, constant encouragement, and unconditional love. And last but not least, I would like to thank my extraordinary parents, Parvaneh and Behnam, and my brother, Ali, for their unconditional love and support. You have always been the backbone of all my success.

Dedication

To the children of my country, Iran

Table of Contents

Author's Declaration	iii
Abstract	v
Acknowledgments	vii
Dedication	viii
List of Figures	xii
Introduction	1
Part I: Street Children	7
Street Children Definition	10
Street children in Iran	13
Contributing factors: Structural and Individual causes	15
Street children in Tehran	17
Precedents Walkthrough	30
The role of environmental design in children's behavior	42
Part II: Site and Urban Analysis	51
General Information about Tehran	55
Site Selection	68
Site and Urban context	72

Part III: Design Proposal	77
Program	79
Why Girls?	80
Massing, Relation to the City & Building Program	82
Gradient of Public to Private	88
Screens	92
Simurgh-The Magical Bird	94
Conclusion	138
Bibliography	142

List of Figures

Fig. 1.1	The Street Girl	8
	https://iranintl.com	
Fig. 1.2	Global estimates of child labour	10
	New global estimates on child labour. . 2002;45(3):653-656. http://www.econis.eu/PPNSET?PPN=35910326X	
Fig. 1.3	The working child	11
	https://www.rferl.org/a/24925171.html	
Fig. 1.4	Street Child studying on the streets	12
	https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1399/12/04/2457959/85	
Fig. 1.5	Main structural and individual factors leading to the street children phenomenon	16
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 1.6	Street children Gender	17
	HA, Salihu. The growing phenomenon of street children in Tehran. UKH Journal of Social Sciences. 2019;3(1):1-10.	
Fig. 1.7	Street children age distribution in Tehran	17
	HA, Salihu. The growing phenomenon of street children in Tehran. UKH Journal of Social Sciences. 2019;3(1):1-10.	
Fig. 1.8	Street children Parental Information	18
	HA, Salihu. The growing phenomenon of street children in Tehran. UKH Journal of Social Sciences. 2019;3(1):1-10.	
Fig. 1.9	Street children Parent Employment	18
	HA, Salihu. The growing phenomenon of street children in Tehran. UKH Journal of Social Sciences. 2019;3(1):1-10.	

Fig. 1.10	A girl selling flowers on streets	20
	https://www.irna.ir/news/84317396/	
Fig. 1.11	Boys working at shoe making workshops	20
	https://www.irna.ir/news/84317396/	
Fig. 1.12	Pattern of Violence diagram	24
	Thomas de Benitez S. State of the world's street children: Violence. Consortium for Street Children; 2007. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/43736/ .	
Fig. 1.13	Girl Playing with bubble , “Children of heaven”	26
	https://www.imvbox.com/casts/amir-farrok-hashemian	
Fig. 1.14	Childen without identification documents	27
	https://jsnews.ir	
Fig. 1.15	Child Houses	31
	https://sosapoverty.org/	
Fig. 1.16	Informal Schools	31
	https://www.mashreghnews.ir/photo/789341/	
Fig. 1.17	Charity Programs	31
	https://koodakancharity.ir/author/administrator/page/15/	
Fig. 1.18	Temporary Shelters	32
	https://www.behzisti.ir/news/5785/	
Fig. 1.19	Community centers, mothers Educational facilities	32
	https://sosapoverty.org/	
Fig. 1.20	shelters in Besat Center	33
	https://www.bartarinha.ir/fa/news/910469/	
Fig. 1.21	Play Area situation in Besat Center	33
	https://www.bartarinha.ir/fa/news/910469/	
Fig. 1.22	Classroom in street children center	34
	https://www.bartarinha.ir/fa/news/910469/	
Fig. 1.23	Dining area in street children center	34
	https://sosapoverty.org/	

Fig. 1.24	Noor E Mobin Primary School	35
	https://www.archdaily.com/911483/the-noor-e-mobin-g2-primery-school-fea-studio	
Fig. 1.25	Noor E Mobin School courtyard	36
	https://www.archdaily.com/911483/the-noor-e-mobin-g2-primery-school-fea-studio	
Fig. 1.26	Noor E Mobin Primary School, the informal spaces between classrooms	37
	https://www.archdaily.com/911483/the-noor-e-mobin-g2-primery-school-fea-studio	
Fig. 1.27	Amsterdam Orphanage aerial view	38
	https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/book-of-the-month-aldo-van-eyck-orphanage-amsterdam-building-playgrounds	
Fig. 1.28	Amsterdam Orphanage	39
	https://arquitecturaviva.com/articles/el-laberinto-y-la-vida-3	
Fig. 1.29	SOS Children's Village	40
	https://www.archdaily.com/773319/sos-childrens-village-in-djibouti-urko-sanchez-architec	
Fig. 1.30	Organic surveillance in children play spaces	41
	https://www.archdaily.com/773319/sos-childrens-village-in-djibouti-urko-sanchez-architects	
Fig. 1.31	Human social boundary diagram	42
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 1.32	Sitting in the shade	44
	https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/alfred-parsons-ra	
Fig. 1.33	Si-o-Se Pol bridge, Isfahan, Iran	46
	https://www.eneshat.com/	
Fig. 1.34	Children playing with friends	47
	www.irna.ir	

Fig. 1.35	Children painting the walls	48
	www.sobherouyesh.com	
Fig. 1.36	Crowded spaces in street children center	49
	www.irna.ir	
Fig. 2.1	A general view of Tehran	52
	https://www.rokna.net/	
Fig. 2.2	Location of Tehran map	54
	Base map taken from www.adventureiran.com and edited by Author	
Fig. 2.3	View of Tehran Northern skyline	55
	https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/google_map_iran.htm	
Fig. 2.4	Tehran Urbanization Satelite maps in 1985 and 2009	57
	https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/google_map_iran.htm	
Fig. 2.5	Tehran urban context map	58
	Information source https://atlas.tehran.ir/ map edited by Author	
Fig. 2.6	Elahie, District 1-North of Tehran	60
	www.moaser.com	
Fig. 2.7	Hassan Abad, District 12-South of Tehran	60
	www.isna.ir	
Fig. 2.8	Illiteracy Rate in Tehran	62
	www.atlas.tehran.ir edited by Author	
Fig. 2.9	Tehran Employment Rate map	64
	www.atlas.tehran.ir edited by Author	
Fig. 2.10	Tehran Activity zones map	64
	www.atlas.tehran.ir edited by Author	
Fig. 2.11	Child working in Bazaar	66
	www.irna.ir	
Fig. 2.12	Site general Location	69
	Information source https://atlas.tehran.ir/ map modified by Author	
Fig. 2.13	Street Children work, live, center location map	70
	Information source www.sosapoverty.org map modified by Author	

Fig. 2.14	Site Location map	72
	Base map taken from google maps and edited by Author	
Fig. 2.15	Existing Building images	73
	Images taken by Meisam Taghizadeh	
Fig. 2.16	Site Location in relation to the public spaces	74
	Base map taken from google maps and edited by Author	
Fig. 2.17	Mahallati street view	75
	Google maps	
Fig. 2.18	Narrow alleys in the neighborhood	75
	Google maps	
Fig. 2.19	Old urban fabric around the site	75
	Google maps	
Fig. 2.20	Wide walkways of the main access	75
	Google maps	
Fig. 2.21	Old urban fabric around the site	75
	Google maps	
Fig. 2.22	15 Khordad street view	75
	Google maps	
	Google maps	
Fig. 2.23	Mahallati street view	75
	Google maps	
Fig. 2.24	Historic fabric of the Grand Bazaar	75
	Google maps	
Fig. 3.1	Design objectives diagram	79
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.2	Boys in the street children center	80
	https://www.mashreghnews.ir/photo/789341/	
Fig. 3.3	Girls in the street children center	80
	https://www.mashreghnews.ir/photo/789341/	

Fig. 3.4	Massing development diagrams	83
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.5	Aerial view	84
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.6	Proposed program diagram	86
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.7	Privacy gradient diagram	88
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.8	North-South Section-diagram	90
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.9	The Corridor view from the screen towards the public courtyard	92
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.10	Screen wall	93
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.11	Simurgh and Zal illustration	94
	https://asia.si.edu/learn/shahnama/zal-and-the-simurgh/	
Fig. 3.12	Zal rescued by the Simurgh	95
	https://wsimag.com/chester-beatty-library/artworks/44385	
Fig. 3.13	Zal returning to his father, Sam	97
	https://asia.si.edu/learn/shahnama/zal-and-the-simurgh/	
Fig. 3.14	Zal in the Simurgh's nest	98
	https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/zal-in-the-simurgh-s-nest- folio-from-a-shahnama-book-of-kings-abu-l-qasim-firdausi/qAGI- FtXrK8EAw?hl=en	
Fig. 3.15	Overglaze luster-painted tile with the Simurgh, Takhti-i Sulayman, Iran	99
	https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/446207	

Fig. 3.16	Tile with Simurgh image	99
	https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_G-217	
Fig. 3.17	Pattern Form Creation	100
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.18	Screen design in different zones	102
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.19	Second floor Semi-Open space	104
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.20	Screen assembly structure	106
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.21	Agha Bozorg mosque entrance, Kashan, Iran	107
	www.farsicad.com	
Fig. 3.22	The Main Entrance View	108
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.23	The use of screens to provide privacy	110
	https://www.archdaily.com/904176/ozgol-apartment-hooba-design-group	
Fig. 3.24	Site Plan	111
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.25	East Elevation Facing 17 Shahrivar street	112
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.26	Ground Floor Plan	113
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.27	Second Floor Plan	114
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.28	Children Living zone diagram	116
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.29	The Private (Living) Courtyard view	118
	Graphic by Author	

Fig. 3.30	Fin Garden, Kashan, Iran	120
	https://irandoostan.com/fin-garden-in-kashan-a-great-sample-of-persian-gardens/	
Fig. 3.31	Shazdeh Garden, Kerman, Iran	120
	https://www.visitiran.ir/fa/attraction	
Fig. 3.32	Fin Garden, Kashan, Iran	121
	https://www.irandestination.com/kashan-fin-garden/	
Fig. 3.33	Boy sitting in the pond	122
	https://www.imvbox.com/casts/amir-farrok-hashemian	
Fig. 3.34	The open Learning Space-Outdoor Gardening	123
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.35	Learning zone diagram	125
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.36	Second floor Semi-Open space	127
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.37	The open Learning Space-Outdoor Gardening	129
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.38	East- West Section	130
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.39	Community zone diagram	132
	Graphic by Author	
Fig. 3.40	Public events	134
	https://www.iribnews.ir/fa/news	
Fig. 3.41	Family workshop interior	136
	Graphic by Author	

Introduction

Most street children are not granted the privilege and right to attend public school and having a safe home.¹ This lack of education and growing without proper supervision deprives them of adequate development and acquiring skills that may support them to improve their future lives. Childhood is the critical time for a person's mental development and nurturing as an efficient member of society. Being deprived of their fundamental rights such as healthcare, education, and safe home, street children face an extreme risk of individual and social traumas. The devastating impacts of this issue extend far beyond childhood and negatively affect all aspects of adulthood and society.² Thus, paying attention to children in need and providing adequate facilities will promote their wellbeing.

As children's mental health corresponds closely to the environment that embodies them, a comprehensive program and facility design for the specific needs and characteristics of these children will encourage more social engagement, education, and development in them. This thesis will investigate the role of architecture and the built environment

1 HA, Salihu. The growing phenomenon of street children in Tehran. UKH Journal of Social Sciences. 2019;3(1):1-10.

2 FT. Ara and F. Tavasoliara and S. Bashiri . The role of behavioral sciences in environmental design: An emphasis on the need for collaboration between psychologists and architects. J. Appl. Environ. Biol. Sci. 2015;5(11S).

of the care centers in the rehabilitation process of street girls of Tehran.

This thesis aims to use architecture and cultural metaphors as devices to improve the quality of living and educational experience in street children's facilities to accelerate their rehabilitation process by providing some insight into practical architectural solutions. The designed children's center will stand out as a public facility, aiming to have long term contribution to the situation of street children. The scheme demonstrates cultural, educational, and civic intentions with a robust social integration objective.

I believe that architecture can improve social well-being and try to make a change, move from deprivation to privilege, and encourage charity organizations to benefit from the added values of architectural solutions.

Methodology and Scope of Work

There is a significant gap in the street children's research that focuses on architecture and built spaces. Studying the current responses in Iran reveals that most of the existing facilities offer short-time care or education to children under different programs that discourage them from interacting with the place or people.

While some of these children are provided shelter and education, most of these temporary accommodations lack the required environmental and programming qualities to support the children's, especially girls', physical and psychological well-being. While being practical for immediate social responses, these temporary facilities often fail to bring a sense of belonging to users and offer long-term solutions. Thus, aiming to rethink the concept of temporary centers to a place where they live, be loved, play, develop, and interact with the community, I will investigate several case studies to understand each project's typologies, programs, and potentials.

Building upon previous work on orphanages, schools, and child centers, this thesis will propose a typology that focuses on adding the concept of home and belonging to the places where these children live and study. Thus, the new typology will be designed as an environment that provides services, learning centers, activities, and opportunities for social connections to children and their parents through comprehensive programming and a child-friendly atmosphere.

My thesis investigates the role of architecture in children's rehabilitation and nurturing process through how a childcare center can go beyond a shelter and offer long-term solutions to both children and parents. The research will refer to the significant and symbolic relationship between the architecture of the built environment and the human mental condition. It means that our outdoor living space is closely related to the inner area of our mind. Thus, the meaningful interaction between architecture and our mental well-being is undeniable.³

Following this information and being aware of the limitations, specific needs, and shortage of girls' rights in Iran, the target group for this thesis will be girls on the streets of Tehran with the age range of 10-17 years old. The culture-specific

3 FT. Ara and F. Tavasoliara and S. Bashiri . The role of behavioral sciences in environmental design: An emphasis on the need for collaboration between psychologists and architects. J. Appl. Environ. Biol. Sci. 2015;5(11S).

program and design not only provides immediate support to girls at risk but also targets the reasons behind the issue such as parents' illiteracy, lack of skills, and re-establish the bond between parents and children, hoping to reduce the number of children on the street in the foreseeable future.

The design will be based on research on the background of the issue, street children's specific psychological and physical characteristics and needs, their current situation in Tehran, and different responses to the issue in Iran and other countries. Moreover, the site being in Tehran, Iran, the environmental, cultural, and site-specific requirements and ideas will be studied by generating images, diagrams, and maps. Statistical data and guidelines will be used to develop the program and design.

Part I

Street Children



Fig. 1.1 The Street Girl

“At its best, architecture not only reflects but also serves society; it has a duty to provide for those with the greatest need and the fewest options”⁴

Sam Davis

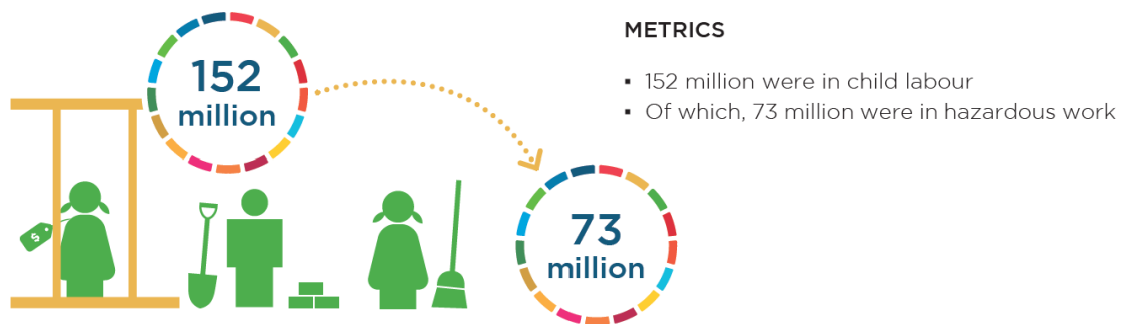
⁴ Sam Davis, *Designing for the Homeless: Architecture That Works* (London: University of California Press, 2005).

Chapter overview

The first chapter is an introduction to the phenomenon of street children. It discusses the definitions and the situation in Iran and the world. The main factors that result in this issue and the specific characteristics of street children are investigated to support the program and design.

Street Children Definition

The phenomenon of street children is a serious social issue facing global communities where a total of 152 million children—one in ten of all children worldwide—are forced to work or live on streets.⁵



REGIONAL PREVALENCE OF CHILD LABOUR

■ Africa	19.6%
■ Americas	5.3%
■ Arab States	2.9%
■ Asia and the Pacific	7.4%
■ Europe and Central Asia	4.1%



Fig. 1.2 Global estimates of child labour: Results and trends, 2012-2016

⁵ New global estimates on child labour. . 2002;45(3):653-656. <http://www.econis.eu/PPNSET?PPN=35910326X>

The first step to solve a problem is to define it, however, determining a single accepted definition for street children has been a serious challenge for academic scholars and international communities.⁶ The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) defines street children as boys and girls under 18 for whom streets have become home and/or source of living and are insufficiently guided or protected (Black, 1993).



Fig. 1.3 The working child

6 HA, Salihu. The growing phenomenon of street children in Tehran. UKH Journal of Social Sciences. 2019;3(1):1-10.

Based on this definition, street children are categorized in two main groups, street living children are those who live and sleep in public spaces, and street working children who spend a lot of time on streets during the day but return to their families or supervisors at night (Szanton Blanc, 1994; Gomes da Costa, 1997)⁷. This thesis embraces an inclusive understanding of street children as children for whom the streets have an critical role in their living situations.



Fig. 1.4 Street Child studying on the streets

Many street children attending informal educational programs, spend their days on the streets.

⁷ Thomas de Benitez S. State of the world's street children: Violence. Consortium for Street Children; 2007. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/43736/>.

Street children in Iran

The demographic and socioeconomic situation of Iranian society has been undergoing significant modifications through the past few decades resulting in vast population growth, economic crisis, poverty, unemployment, and social inequality. These have resulted in one of the most challenging social concerns in the country: the ever-growing number of street children in major cities.⁸ Despite the unavailability of official statistics, unofficial data determine that over 200,000 street children currently settle in Iran's large cities. More than a decade ago, the unofficial estimations revealed that about 20,000 street children were living in Tehran, the country's capital city.⁹

Paying attention and studying street children is a recent subject in Iran, not older than two decades. Starting in 2000, Iranian society was experiencing rapid growth in the number of small children working on the streets of large cities. They often tend to sell things or do small jobs like waxing shoes. This unexpected social situation resulted in some rapid and insufficient decisions and policies regarding its origins and the probable solutions. Implementing these programs that

8 Salihu, street children in Tehran.

9 Vameghi M, Sajadi H, Rafiey H, Rashidian A. The socioeconomic status of street children in Iran: A systematic review on studies over a recent decade. *Children & Society*. 2014;28(5):352-365. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1099-0860.2012.00456.x>. doi: 10.1111/j.1099-0860.2012.00456.x.

required law enforcement agencies and municipalities to collect children on the streets and send them back to their homes neglected the problem's origins. This process of elimination resulted in a cycle of gathering children on the streets and their immediate return (Vameghi,2006)¹⁰

The legal age to work in Iran is 15, based on the Iranian labor law. Many NGOs are suggesting that this number should increase to 18 to prevent child labor in Iran. Despite the rules, the statistics show the increasing number of children working in Iran. This issue has complicated reasons such as economic difficulties, family structures, and irresponsible parents.¹¹ One of the significant difficulties in the phenomenon of street children has been the uncertainty in determining the number of these kids. This unclear number is caused by different factors, including the multifaceted nature of the problem and definitions of it and varying statistics due to their constant relocations and the lack of identity cards in many cases.¹²

10 Vameghi and Rafiey and Sajjadi and Rashidian. Disadvantages of a street child.

11 G Keshavarz Haddad. Parents' decision on child labour and school attendance: Evidence from iranian households. *Journal of education and work*. 2017;30(6):612-631. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13639080.2017.1341044>. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2017.1341044.

12 AR Ahmad Khaniha and M Hakim Shooshtari and M Mohammadian, R Bidaki, A Pourrashidi Boshrahadi. Familial characteristics of street children in Tehran, iran. *Iranian journal of psychiatry and behavioral sciences*. 2014;8(2):86-89. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25053962>.

Contributing factors: Structural and Individual causes

The multifactorial nature of this phenomenon makes categorizing the involved causes a complicated task. According to the recent findings of researchers, officials, and civil society, the main reasons for children spending time on the streets are considered poverty and low parental income and education.

On the other hand, some experts believe this phenomenon mainly emerged from familial disruption.¹³ Many studies suggest that the main factors resulting in street children's issues can be classified into two main groups: socio-economic factors and family factors. Also, natural disasters, rapid urbanization and unplanned immigration, HIV/AIDS, wars and conflicts, domestic violence, parental death, and peer pressure are considered other problems related to the situation of street children.¹⁴

13 Vameghi and Rafiey and Sajjadi and Rashidian. Disadvantages of a street child.

14 Ibid

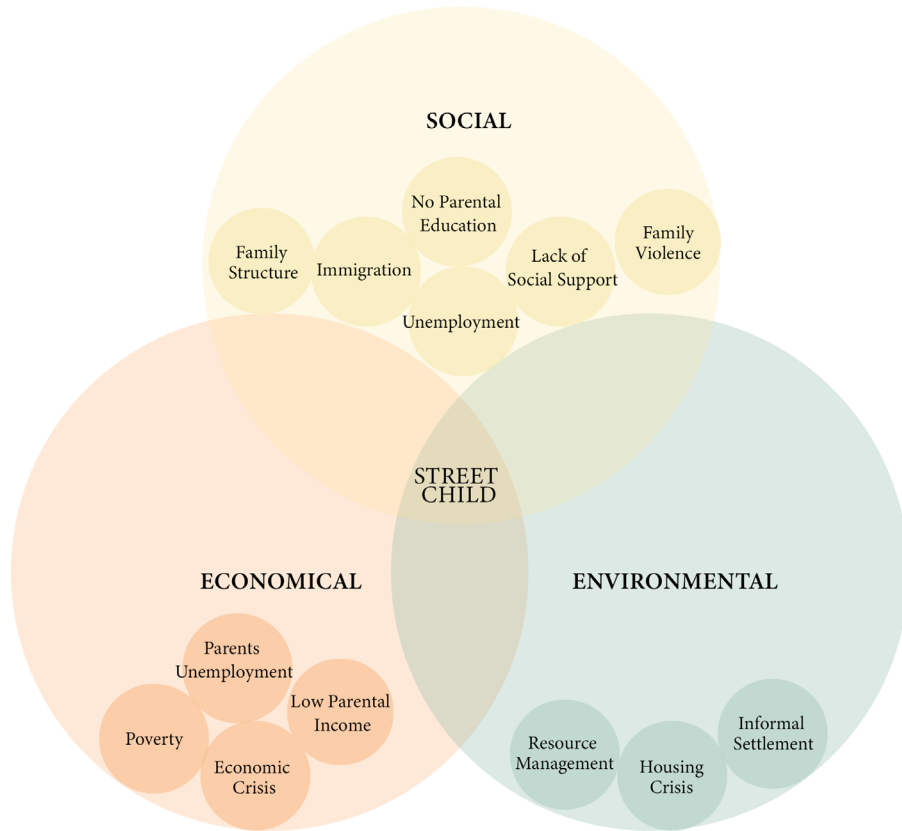


Fig. 1.5 Main structural and individual factors leading to the street children phenomenon

Family's financial and employment condition is an essential factor in school attendance and work decisions for children. This creates a cyclical social issue since child labor increases poverty among the next generation by reducing education.¹⁵

15 Keshavarz Haddad. Parents' decision on child labour

Street children in Tehran

Being the capital city of Iran, Tehran has a population of over 8.3 million (around 18% of the people of Iran). It is the political, administrative, commercial, and economic center of Iran.¹⁶ According to the research conducted by Salihu, 2019, the age range of street children of Tehran was categorized into two groups: 4-10 years old and 11-17 years old. The majority of them are between 4 and 11 years old (63%), and 37% are between 11 and 17 years old. In addition, the results show that the majority (96%) of street children in Tehran do not attend any formal school or informal vocational training¹⁷.

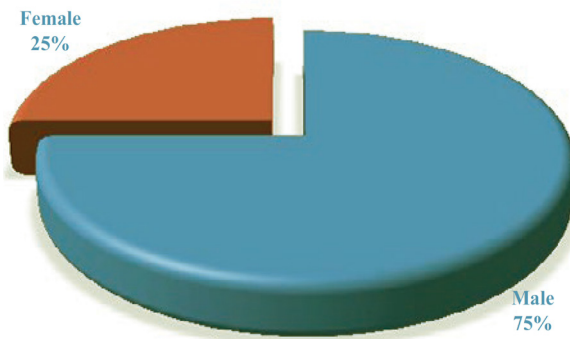


Fig. 1.6 Street children Gender

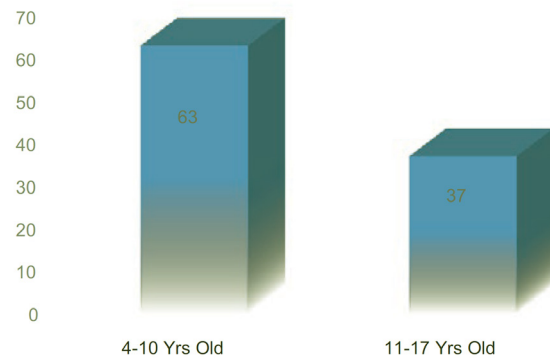


Fig. 1.7 Street children age distribution in Tehran

16 Salihu. street children in tehran.

17 Ibid

Recognizing the specific characteristics of the street children is one of the critical elements of supporting them. In research that analyzed the familial background of these children in Tehran, it was found that 40% of their parents were illiterate.¹⁸ Also, studies indicate that 72% of children live with their parents and 28% are orphans. Moreover, while 74% of these parents do not have any sources of income, 26% of them do casual jobs such as cleaning and selling petty items that help them earn limited income. Based on this analysis, the majority of the street children in Tehran have at least one living parent, and most parents are unemployed.¹⁹

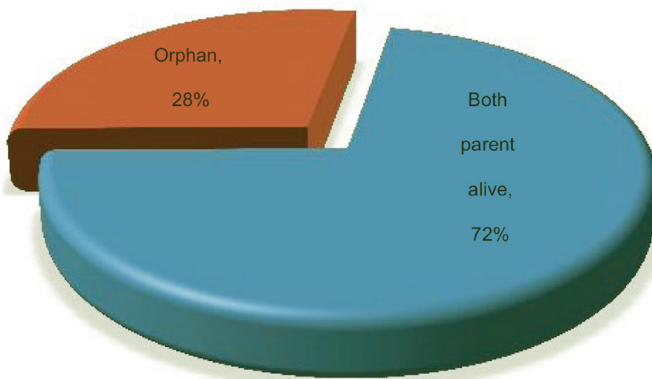


Fig. 1.8 Street children Parental Information

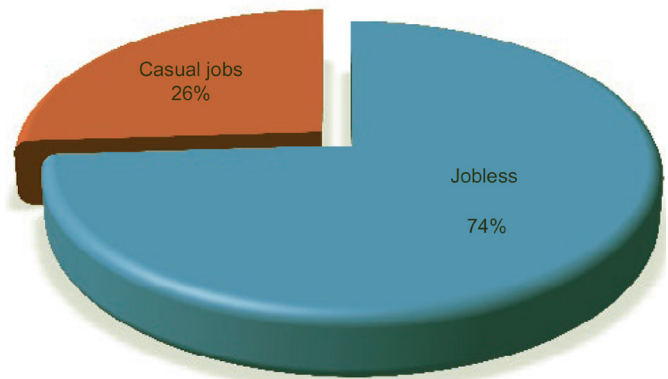


Fig. 1.9 Street children Parent Employment

18 Ahmad Khaniha AR, Hakim Shooshtari M, Mohammadian M, Bidaki R, Pourrashidi Boshrabadi A. Familial characteristics of street children in Tehran, Iran. Iranian journal of psychiatry and behavioral sciences. 2014;8(2):86-89. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25053962>.

19 Salihu, street children in Tehran.

In addition, the studies show that there are two categories of street children in Tehran:

- 1- Children on the streets
- 2- Children of the streets

The first category, that is 64% of street children, returns home at night to sleep, while some reported they sometimes sleep outside. While 73% of the children are sent to work on the streets by their parents, 27% of them mentioned they go to the streets since they do not have any other place such as school to go during the day. Thus, it can be understood that the main reason for children to spend time on the streets is to support the family's financial situation.²⁰

On the other hand, 36% of street children belong to the second category, who live on the streets and do not return home. This group includes the orphans and children who have been abandoned by their parents or have run away from home. Thus, the need to survive is the most common reason for these children to be on the streets.²¹

20 Ibid

21 Ibid

Type of work

According to Salihu's (2019) research, street children are involved in different activities to earn money. 42% of them reported selling small items such as handkerchiefs, socks, belts, nail cutters, shaving blades or razors, cookies, flowers, fruits, and cigarettes. At the same time, 26% engage in activities such as waste collection. However, the interviews showed that nearly all of the street children in Tehran had begged for money.²²

Moreover, the results of the research by Salihu (2019) revealed that a large number of street children in Tehran (67%), both boys and girls in all categories, had engaged in delinquent behaviors such as stealing and shoplifting. Also, 31% of girls said they had been involved in prostitution for financial and security reasons.²³



Fig. 1.10 A girl selling flowers on streets



Fig. 1.11 Boys working at shoe making workshops

22 Salihu, street children in Tehran.

23 Ibid

Street Children's obstacles

Street children face different challenges based on their characteristics, such as age, gender, parental guidance, and the amount of time they spend on the streets. Generally, they have trouble getting basic needs, including nourishing food, shelter, and healthcare. Also, the lack of parental supervision and protection- even for those who communicate with their families regularly- result in inadequate moral, cultural and emotional support that is required for children to grow (Lugalla and Mbwambo, 1996). These kids are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and extortion by grown-ups (Patel, 1990; Nte et al., 2000)²⁴. According to the United Nations, girls are the most vulnerable group towards sexual abuse, and they are prone to any kind of infection. In addition, this group is often an easy target for human traffickers (UNICEF, 2001)²⁵. Due to their specific requirements in Iran, their urgent issues, and their vulnerability, street girls are the target group for this thesis which aims to offer a safe space for street girls where they can discover their actual values and skills.

24 Salihu, street children in Tehran.

25 Ibid

Based on the global report, children on the streets have similar experiences worldwide, both in rich countries where child protection systems are in place and poorer countries with weaker support frameworks ²⁶. Literature on street children in different countries mentions physical, mental, and social problems as common issues that these children encounter.²⁷

Van-Rooyan & Hartell (2002) argue that apart from being exposed to different diseases and other physical problems, these children's psychological health and growth have been ignored. Studies by Adalf and Zdanowiczin (1999) indicated that 30-40% of street children had experienced depression, paranoid ideas, conduct disorder, and suicide. These hazardous situations force street children to involve in begging, drug trafficking, stealing, prostitution, or survival sex (offering sex for food, shelter, and medicine) (Save TheChildren,2005). Overall, several studies identify that street children are prone to extreme physical, intellectual, and social obstacles.²⁸

26 Thomas de Benitez S. State of the world's street children: Violence. Consortium for Street Children; 2007. <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/43736/>.

27 Vameghi and Rafiey and Sajjadi and Rashidian, Disadvantages of a street child.

28 Ibid

Violence

Street children are considered at high risk of violence worldwide. (Pineiro, 2006: 13). The extraordinary harsh situations in which they work and live have been underlined by UNICEF's annual State of the World's Children report for many years. Although their appearance on the streets makes them visible to the public, they often suffer from neglectance and vulnerability²⁹. Street children are exposed to different types of violence from early ages in different environments. Their hazardous situation is often overlooked in policy development and services delivered for them.³⁰

29 Thomas de Benitez, Violence.

30 Ibid

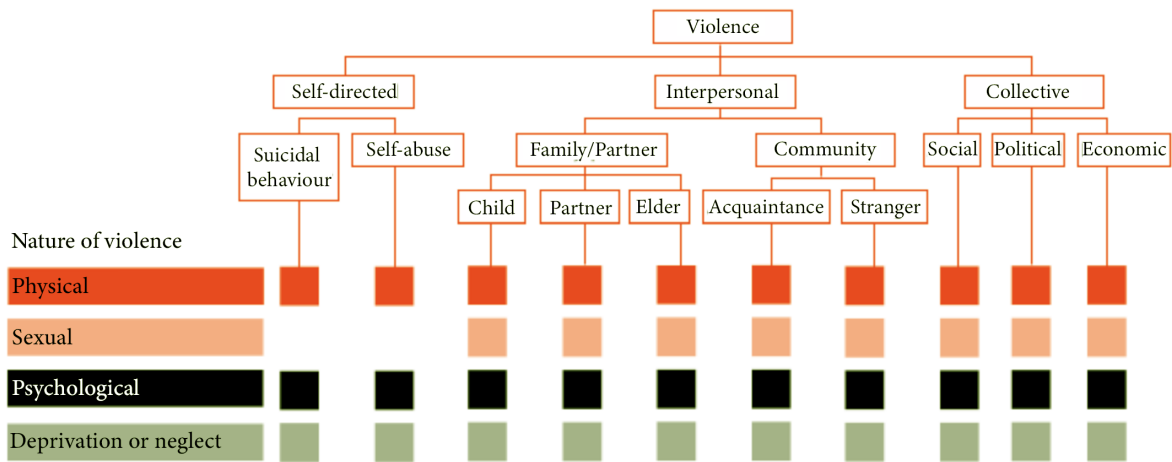


Fig. 1.12 Pattern of Violence diagram

Street children often have complex experiences of violence as victims, witnesses and perpetrators. A simplified pattern of this complex issue is prepared by The World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Society for Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN). (table) In this typology study, violence is classified by different types, including self-directed, interpersonal, or collective, and the nature of the violent activities such as physical, sexual, and psychological.³¹ Violence, neglect, and abuse by primary guardians have devastating effects on children's development and their abilities to care for themselves later in their lives. However, a constructive relationship with a mentor, even in later years, has been proved to have a significant impact on their abilities to have healthy and stable social and individual relationships.³²

31 Thomas de Benitez, Violence.

32 Ibid

Child's mental health

A considerable number of studies that focus on the mental health of street children reported mental issues related to depression and suicide. Based on the Ghasemzadeh (2003) report in Tehran, conducted through interviews with children, 45% of them were experiencing depression. Another research by Ahmad-Khaniha (2002) showed a 61.4% history or presence of depression (86.7% in girls and 48.2% in boys). Moreover, it was reported that 6.3% of street children had suicidal attempts.³³

Regarding other psychological problems, Ghasemzadeh (2003) reported the feeling of inferiority, anxiety, and instability, a tendency to retaliation and violence, suspicion, identity problems, and concentration issues among 50-90% of street children. In addition, as Salmani-Barugh (2003) showed, more than 80% of these kids have a negative self-conception.³⁴

33 Vameghi and Rafiey and Sajjadi and Rashidian, Disadvantages of a street child.

34 Ibid



Fig. 1.13 Girl Playing with bubble , “Children of heaven” Film, Majidi, 1997

Overall, being from the low socio-economic class of society, street children in Iran spend much time on the streets to support themselves and their families to survive. At the same time, the high rate of parent’s separation (29.3%), and drug abuse (59.8%), and violence in families show that both factors of poverty and severe familial conditions play significant roles in forcing children to find the solutions to their problems on the streets.³⁵

35 Ibid.

The issue of identity

The lack of identity documents is one of the biggest obstacles that street children face. This issue deprives them of many rights, including education, health care services, social security, marriage, according to the research by Malakouti (2018). Among the various reasons associated with this issue, the lack of a responsible guardian or parent, having irresponsible or addict parents and severe financial problems are the most common in Iran.³⁶



Fig. 1.14 Children without identification documents

36 Malakouti M, Talebi A. The issue of identity in children without identity card: A grounded theory study from Tehran, Iran. *J Hum Rights Soc Work*. 2018;3(2):62-71. <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2015530438>. doi: 10.1007/s41134-018-0055-6.

A large number of street children without identification documents do not have access to education in Iran. The process of self-identification often starts and develops through connections and communications with other members of society. As one of the first communities that children experience, schools have a significant role in the identification process of the young generation. Therefore, the lack of this experience affects their skills, individual and social development and disrupts the self-identification process in these children.³⁷ Moreover, these children are deprived of the most fundamental citizenship rights due to the lack of identity documents. These rights include attending public schools in Iran, finding a job after the legal age, and using health and social services.³⁸

37 Malakouti and Talebi, children without identity cards.

38 Ibid.

Women's Bargaining Power and Children's Schooling

According to studies on the relationship between Women's bargaining power and the children's situation, this factor has a considerable impact on the mother's role in making healthy decisions. Several items have been recognized as factors that determine the mother's bargaining power in a household, including non-wage income, cultural acceptance of violence against women, woman's schooling, and other structural and individual factors.³⁹

Keshavarz Haddas's (2017) research argues that a higher level of parent's education results in less child work.⁴⁰ The study examines the role of household poverty and the mothers' bargaining power to determine their impact on child labor and school attendance decisions in Iranian families.⁴¹ His study indicated that the family's financial situation is not the only reason for child labor in Iran. Aside from the factors such as poverty, the number of children in the household, and the employment situation, a mother's bargaining power has been proved to be a significant element influencing the child's work and school attendance.⁴²

39 Keshavarz Haddad G. Parents' decision on child labour and school attendance: Evidence from iranian households. *Journal of education and work*. 2017;30(6):612-631. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13639080.2017.1341044>. doi: 10.1080/13639080.2017.1341044.

40 Keshavarz Haddad, Parents' decision on child labour.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

Precedents Walkthrough

As the next step through my research process, I investigated several cases in two man groups to understand the typologies, programs and potentials. First is analyzing the current responses to this social issue in Iran, and the next one is a broader study into projects with different programs, ranging from schools, orphanages, childcare centers and shelter.

Current Responses

Different Types of Responses in Tehran



Fig. 1.15 Child Houses

Buildings that provide living spaces, education facilities, and sometimes play and sport areas.



Fig. 1.16 Informal Schools

The majority of these kids cannot attend public school because they do not have identification documents, or they have quit school for working. These schools are specifically designed and allocated to these children.



Fig. 1.17 Charity Programs

There are some informal programs provided by NGOs.

They usually offer sport competitions, Workshops, and service to both parents and children.



Fig. 1.18 Temporary Shelters

They are usually provided by social welfare governmental organizations. In most cases, it is for children who run away from their families.



Fig. 1.19 Community centers, mothers Educational facilities

There are some community services, which do not specifically work for children, but have a separate part for them. They usually offer psychological consultants, art classes and sport facilities.

Besat Center, Center for street children

Besat Center is a house for street children in Tehran. It is a renovated building, housing 26 boys who age between 7 and 12 years old. The program includes classrooms, living quarters (more than 6 kids in a room), a small library and workshop, communal space and health center.



Fig. 1.20 shelters in Besat Center



Fig. 1.21 Play Area situation in Besat Center



Fig. 1.22 Classroom in street children center



Fig. 1.23 Dining area in street children center

Noor E Mobin Primary School

FEA Studio, 2017



Fig. 1.24 Noor E Mobin Primary School

The FEA architects designed this school for the Non-governmental organization as a part of an educational complex in Semnan, Iran. In the project, the school's classrooms are arranged as an “educational neighborhood”, with streets and alleyways connecting individual volumes.⁴³

Program:

- Educational neighborhood
- Various views and landscapes, green spaces, playgrounds, and rest spaces
- Open educational/play space
- Multipurpose workshops, Atelier, Laboratories
- Bring sense of place, independence, and uniqueness
- Variety of options

⁴³ Daniel Tapia, “The Noor e Mobin G2 Primery School / FEA STUDIO,” ArchDaily (ArchDaily, February 14, 2019), <https://www.archdaily.com/911483/the-noor-e-mobin-g2-primery-school-fea-studio>.



Fig. 1.25 Noor E Mobin School courtyard

The courtyard as open educational space and play area, learning can take place anywhere.

Courtyards can be used as sports pitches and for outdoor learning. The courtyard with stepped seating can be used as a play area, for ball games, or as an amphitheater. The building layout offers the variety of options in each part of the site. Mixing different programs and zones, breaks down the scale of the project to a human-kid scale. Bringing them sense of place and sense of independence.



Fig. 1.26 Noor E Mobin Primary School, the informal spaces between classrooms

Children can play together in the alleyways between classrooms, where they can have their own private, magical and “hidden” territory. Children are encouraged to play in these pathways and the playgrounds in between study spaces. I believe, this makes the school closer and closer to the idea of the neighborhood, where different functions, living, playing, commuting and gathering can blend.

Amsterdam Orphanage

Aldo Van Eyck, 1960

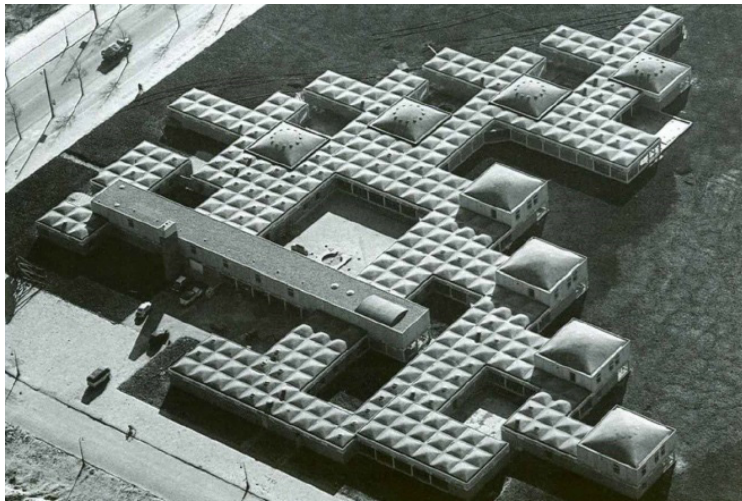


Fig. 1.27 Amsterdam Orphanage aerial view

“A house must be like a small city if it’s to be a real house, a city like a large house if it’s to be a real city”⁴⁴

Aldo Van Eyck

⁴⁴ Michiel van Iersel, “Book of the Month: Aldo Van Eyck Orphanage Amsterdam Building & Playgrounds,” *Architectural Review*, October 2, 2020, <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/book-of-the-month-aldo-van-eyck-orphanage-amsterdam-building-playgrounds>.



Fig. 1.28 Amsterdam Orphanage

The Amsterdam Orphanage was commissioned as an orphanage for children of all ages and includes sleeping quarters, a kitchen, laundry room, gymnasium, library, and administrative spaces. Van Eyck spoke of the Orphanage as a small urban study. He wrote “a house must be like a small city if it’s to be a real house, a city like a large house if it’s to be a real city.” So, van Eyck’s designs for the Orphanage were those of both a home for the children, as well as the plan of a small city. He created a decentralized urban mode with many points of interaction within the plan and many in-between conditions to break down the hierarchy of spaces.⁴⁵

Within the Orphanage, units are laid out on an orthogonal grid. Each individual unit is then neighbored by its own outdoor space. A larger courtyard is offset diagonally from the residential spaces, and the entrance and administrative spaces connect with the street, the large courtyard, as well as the residential units. Van Eyck avoids creating a central point within the Orphanage by allowing for such fluid connections between all spaces.

45 Ibid

SOS Children's Village

Urko Sanchez Architects, 2014



Fig. 1.29 SOS Children's Village
A Miniature Walled City For Orphans
by Urko Sanchez Architects

*“Going against the contemporary flow of minimal open space, we made sure every house had an open area that was private enough for it to become an integral part of the home and everyday life”.*⁴⁶

Urko Sanchez Architects

⁴⁶ Cristian Aguilar, “SOS Children's Village IN DJIBOUTI / URKO Sanchez Architects,” ArchDaily (ArchDaily, December 2, 2020), <https://www.archdaily.com/773319/sos-childrens-village-in-djibouti-urko-sanchez-architects>.



Fig. 1.30 Organic surveillance in children play spaces

The project is designed as a home for vulnerable children. The large cluster of buildings consists of fifteen separate homes, each with room for ten children, along with additional units for staff, services, and a home for the center's director. So, with its open spaces and maze-like network of streets this Village is designed to foster a sense of community for the orphaned and in-need children who live there. Homes are arranged to balance the desire for the creation of private space with the need for security and “organic surveillance” by the SOS staff who look after the children.

The role of environmental design in children’s behavior

Environmental psychology studies the interrelations between humans and their physical environment. This knowledge helps designers to assess the collective and individual activity of people in the built environment before the construction.⁴⁷

Mental health indicates the possible relation between people and the environment in empowering their abilities to undertake required social and cultural roles. Thus, “behavior” can be defined as people’s way of life in a place. Identifying the issues and obstacles these children have, and how architecture can react to them helps to find tangible and intangible architectural components that can effectively react to their specific needs.

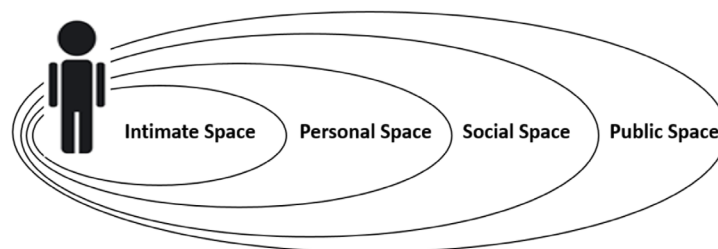


Fig. 1.31 Human social boundary diagram

47 Ara FT, Tavasoliara F, Bashiri S. The role of behavioral sciences in environmental design: An emphasis on the need for collaboration between psychologists and architects. J. Appl. Environ. Biol. Sci. 2015;5(11S).

Private zone

The private zone is considered to be a mechanism that offers any individual or group a changeable boundary in space. Both isolation and crowding situations are considered to be unpleasant for people, therefore, the common idea should be the design of adjustable places that create the effortless transformation between an individual's specified territory and social communication.

Privacy is an important factor in environmental psychology as it is a basic need in humans. It is mentioned that privacy has close relation with the concepts of personal space and territory. The main feature in its definition is the potential of controlling visual, auditory and olfactory relations with others. So, it has reached when a person has the control of their desired social interaction in a place. However, it should not result in the separation and isolation. In other words, privacy brings independence; releases sensations; improves self-evaluation; while limiting social interactions. Therefore, it is an essential factor in the relationship between the individual, group, and the rest of society.⁴⁸

48 Ara, Tavasoliara, Bashiri, "behavioral science"

Simon Unwin in the book “Children as place makers” has identified the interrelation of a psychological state, spatial atmosphere and architectural design.



Fig. 1.32 Sitting in the shade

We might sit under the tree or in the cave. They become “Houses”. The tree and the cave become architecture by reason of our occupation of their space, by our inhabitation of that space as place.

In prehistoric times we lived sheltering under overhanging cliffs rather than caves. These spaces protected people from sun and rain while enjoying light and views. Modern humans also find rock shelters to inhabit. When it rains, we run into a nearby roofed area or refuge under the ineffective leaves of a tree.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Simon Unwin, *Children as Place-Makers: The Innate Architect in All of Us* (Routledge, 2019).

The private spaces in Iranian Architecture have always been a favorite place for individuals to socialize or have personal time. It allows us to identify “places” in our surroundings quickly as our basic architectural impulse. Those without the resources to find themselves places to rest choose to occupy doorways, porches, recesses of modern buildings in the contemporary world. There is a mutual relationship between we and the place. We discover it. It accommodates us. Our presence, our bubble expands to fill the place.⁵⁰

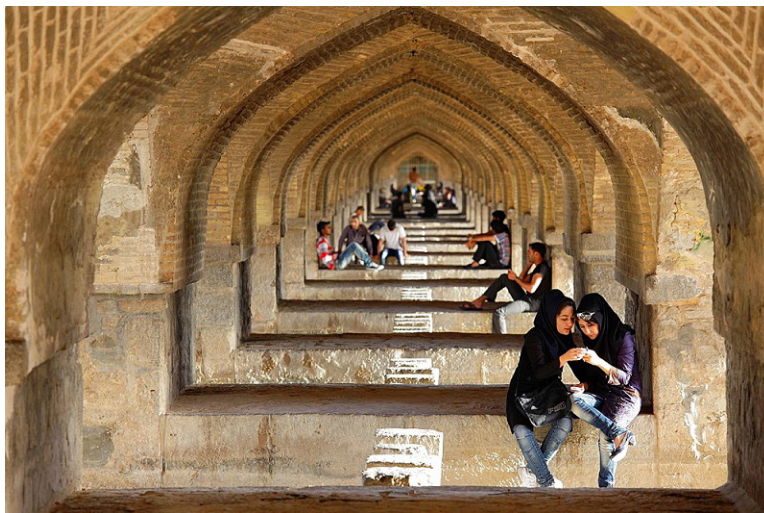


Fig. 1.33 Si-o-Se Pol bridge, Isfahan, Iran

Different types of social gatherings in the shaded part of the bridge.

50 Ibid

Making a Place with our friends

“I am the seed and the subject of Architecture. I am its perpetrator and its content. Before I make buildings, I make places with myself. Sometimes I make places with my friends-by being in some formation together-or with my enemies in confrontation or conflict.

Architecture is possible using nothing but ourselves.”

Simon Unwin, Children as space makers



Fig. 1.34 Children playing with friends

children reinforce their occupation and, therefore, identify a place by assembling their friends closely around them and identifying a communal area.⁵¹

⁵¹ Unwin, Children as Place-Makers

Inhabiting a place, taking possession

Occupying space actively allows us to give it identity, make it our place. This can be done by leaving traces of our presence with different impressions. We can provide identity to an area by signing it in many forms. It can involve drawing a picture or symbol on the wall or leaving a footprint on the soft earth.

We might wish we could define our place more clearly, more tangibly, and more permanently. Perhaps we want to establish our site in the world, actually and metaphorically.⁵²



Fig. 1.35 Children painting the walls- Leaving traces of their presence

52 Ibid

Crowding

Crowding is another important factor influencing children in complexes and centers. It might result in stress and social pressure because of the autonomy restriction which often causes negative behaviors. Thus, it is recommended that behavioral places should limit the number of people to provide adequate personal space and territory control to individuals.⁵³



Fig. 1.36 Crowded spaces in street children center

53 Ara, Tavasoliara, Bashiri, "behavioral science"

Part II

Site and Urban Analysis



Fig. 2.1 A general view of Tehran

Chapter overview

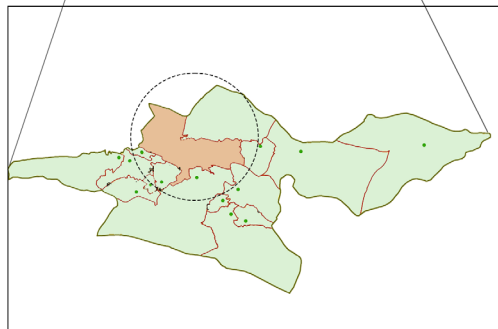
This chapter takes a closer look into the urban context of my thesis, Tehran, Iran. It begins with introducing the geographical, socio-economic, and cultural characteristics of the city. These data will support the site selection process and analysis of the selected site for the design proposal.



Iran/Middle East-Asia



Tehran province-Iran



Tehran City, Tehran Province

Located in the Middle East, Iranian society's demographic and socioeconomic situation has been undergoing significant modifications through the past few decades. These changes are more visible in the large cities, especially the capital, Tehran.

Fig. 2.2 Location of Tehran map

General Information about Tehran

Tehran is the capital of Iran and Tehran Province. With a population of around 8.8 million in the city and 15 million in the larger metropolitan area of Greater Tehran. Tehran is the most populous city in Iran and Western Asia and has the second-largest metropolitan area in the Middle East.

Tehran is a mountainside city located on the southern slopes of Alborz, and in approximately equal distance from eastern (Afghanistan) and western (Turkey, Iraq) borders, sitting on the ancient and famous City of Rey. These distinct elements, i.e., mountain, mountainside, and desert, have formed the region's landscape as well as its natural, social and cultural environment: from high to low, from cold to warm, and from summer resorts to winter resorts.¹



Fig. 2.3 View of Tehran Northern skyline

¹ “Geography, Climate and Demographics,” Tehran, The official website of Tehran municipality, <https://en.tehran.ir/Services/About/Geography-Demographics>.

Climate

Tehran region has a dry climate. The contrast between mountain and desert, and even between north and south of the City, prevents weather crises from taking shape in any part of the year. The significant change of weather in different seasons is ultimately pleasing and allows a great variety of activities, either agricultural or recreational, to take place.²

Urban development

Urban development has often relied on access to water sources in Iran. In Tehran, the wealthy have built their houses in higher elevations of the City closer to mountains in the north to enjoy a cleaner and more copious water supply. This water flows through several rivers and flood canals toward the desert in the south. This has shaped a complicated geographical situation: the City center with a higher population density is now facing a decrease in residential population. In the 20th century, Tehran faced a large migration of people from all around Iran; the vast growth in population resulted in the creation of suburbs around the City.³

2 Ibid

3 Ibid

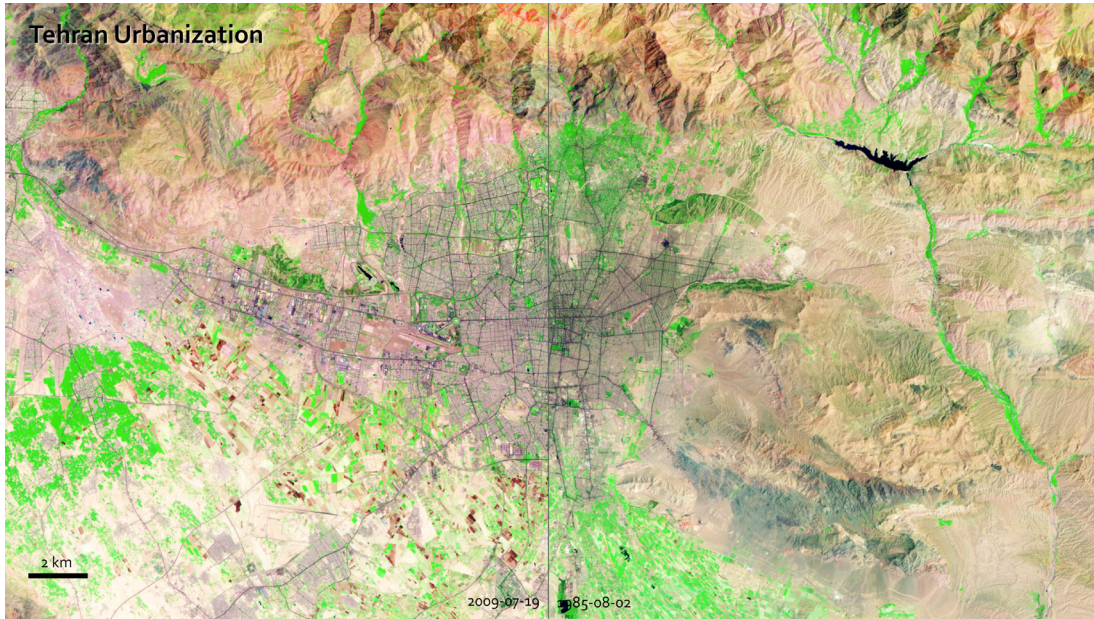


Fig. 2.4 Tehran Urbanization Satellite maps in 1985 and 2009

In both images, vegetation appears bright green, urban areas range from gray to black, and the barren regions appear brown. Whereas non-urbanized areas fringe the earlier picture, urbanization fills almost the entire frame of the later image. Major roadways crisscrossing the city in 1985 remain visible in 2009, but many additional routes have been added, mainly in the North.⁴

⁴ “Tehran Urbanization,” NASA hyperwall, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center. Last modified October 17, 2013.

<https://svs.gsfc.nasa.gov/30182>.

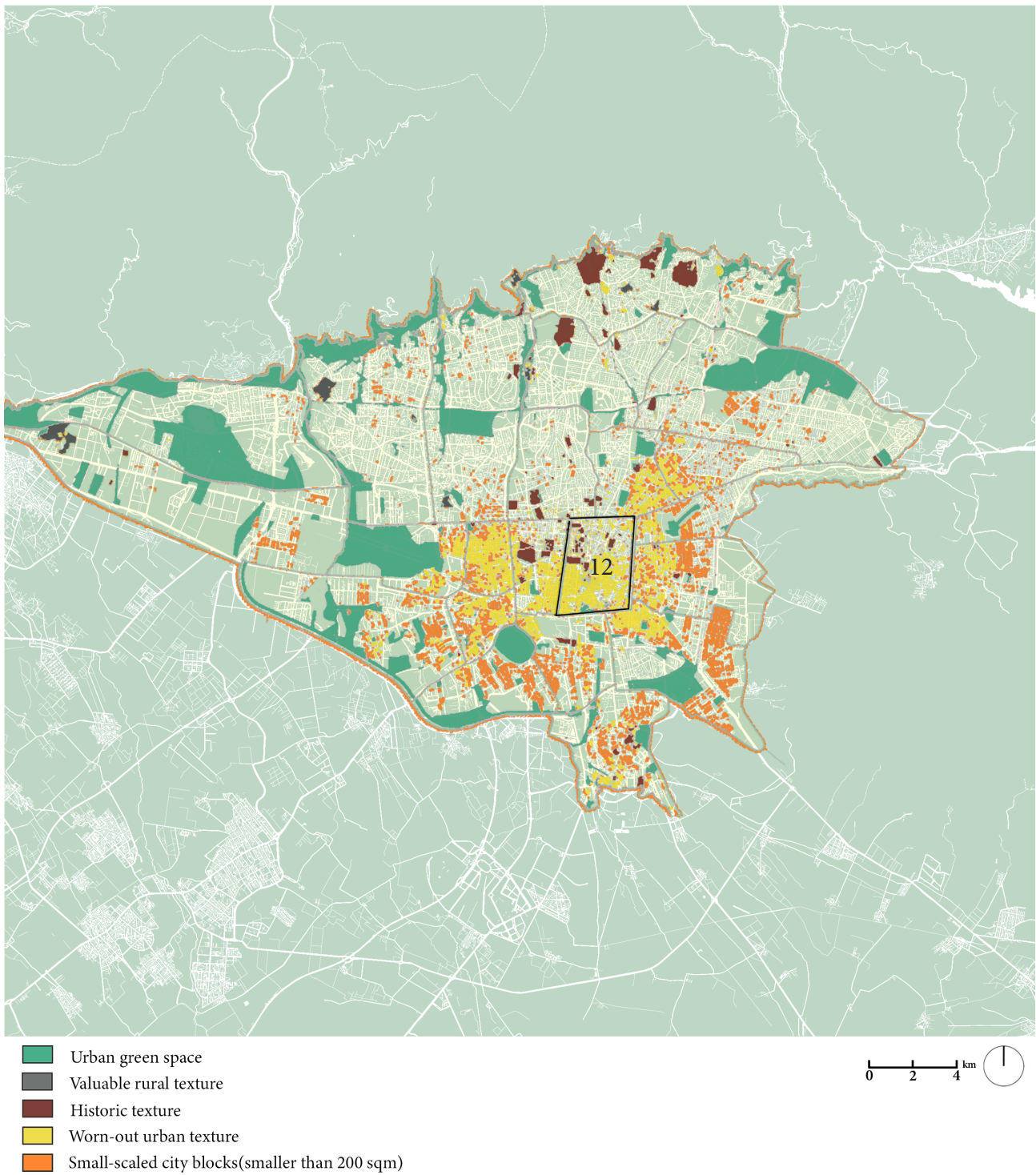


Fig. 2.5 Tehran urban context map

The map shows five crucial environmental factors of the city: urban green spaces, valuable rural texture, historical texture, worn-out texture, and small-scaled city blocks.

Urban conditions

Analyzing the city's urban fabric gives us an essential understanding of the urban condition in different districts and neighborhoods. By moving along the city's north-south axis, the number of small-scaled city blocks increases from north to south, and the city becomes more densely populated. At the same time, the area of green space decreases considerably.

Looking closely at District 12, we can see that the concentration of worn-out buildings, very small-scale urban blocks, and the lack of green space are the most significant physical characteristics of this part of the city.



Fig. 2.6 Elahie, District 1-North of Tehran



Fig. 2.7 Hassan Abad, District 12-South of Tehran

The considerable difference in the built environment and urban context of the northern and southern parts of the city can be seen in these two images. The concentration of high rises in the north, and the historic texture of the central and southern parts of the city.

Social and cultural conditions

The importance of educational and cultural factors in social issues like street children is undeniable. The analysis of these factors gives us a better understanding of the community's requirements, contributing factors to this issue, and essential data that help program social services in this area.

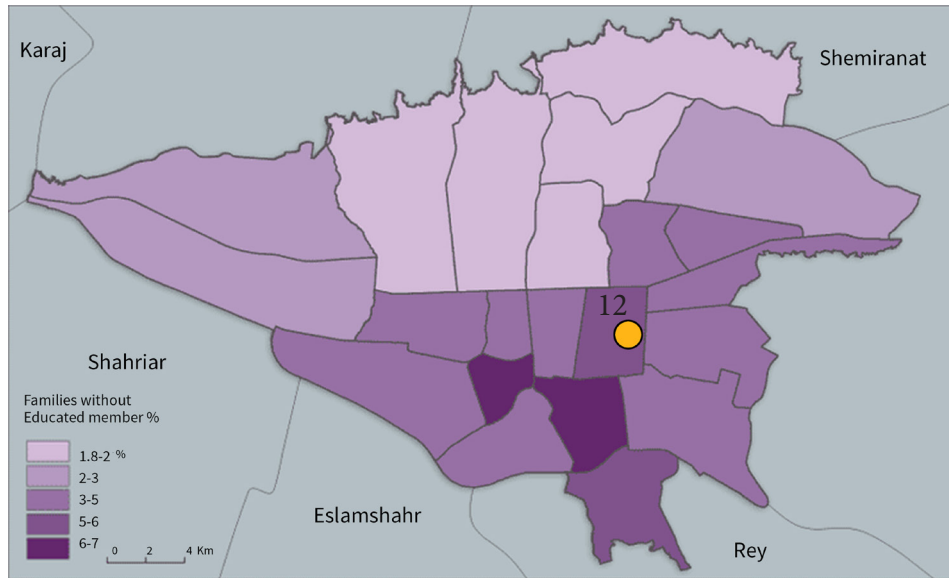


Fig. 2.8 Illiteracy Rate in Tehran

Data about Families without educated members reveals that illiteracy is a crucial problem in southern parts of the city. [2.8] It can be seen that 5-6% of families living in district 12 do not have any educated members and are all illiterate. This gets more important when we discuss a social phenomenon like street children. The illiteracy of parents creates a cycle of unemployment and poverty in the family, resulting in child labor. Children in these families drop school or never attend it to help themselves and their families to survive.

A significant cultural factor is the religious state of people in different parts of the city. Moving from north to south, the number of religious facilities increases, with the most concentration in District 12 and the old parts of the city. These centers, called Tekye or Hoseinie in Farsi, indicate the religious and cultural states of people living there. More large religious ceremonies and gatherings such as Ashura-Tasua are held in the central and southern parts of the city compared to the northern neighborhoods.

Therefore, being Muslims, the importance of the religious and traditional factors is considerable. These beliefs mainly require stricter Hijab in public spaces for women, the visual and physical separation of men and women, and the limitations in women's activities in public.

Economic development of the city

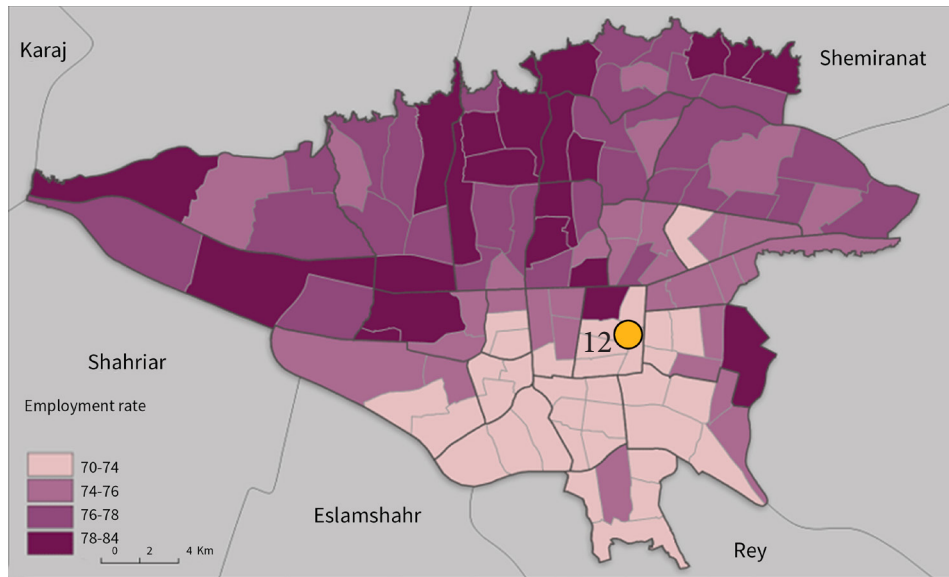


Fig. 2.9 Tehran Employment Rate map

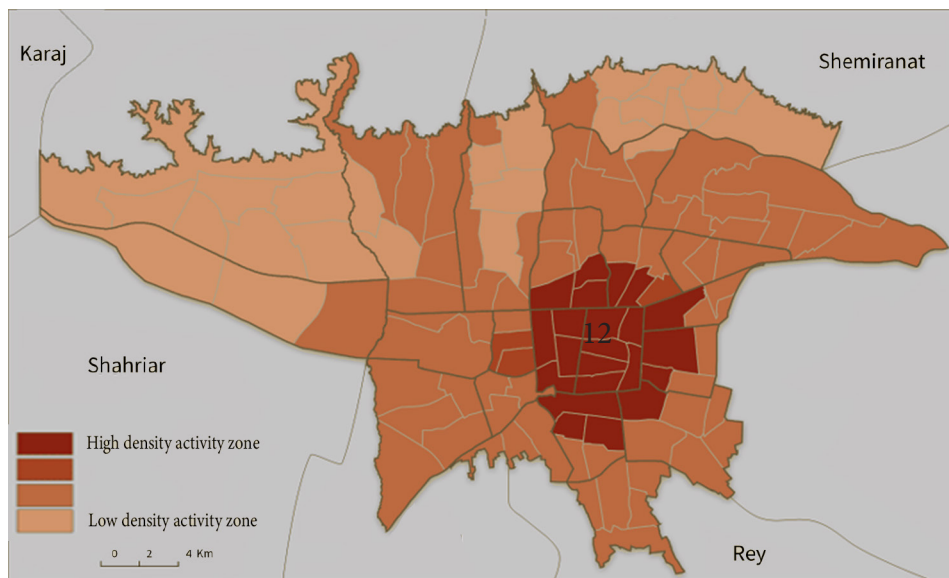


Fig. 2.10 Tehran Activity zones map

As unemployment can be a contributing factor to street children's issues, analyzing the city's economic situation is critical. The map of the economic development of Tehran shows that most economic activities are developed and centered around the ground bazaar in the heart of the city. So, District 12 and its neighboring districts have the highest economic activities throughout the day. However, the employment data show that these parts of the city have the highest unemployment rates.



Fig. 2.11 Child working in Bazaar

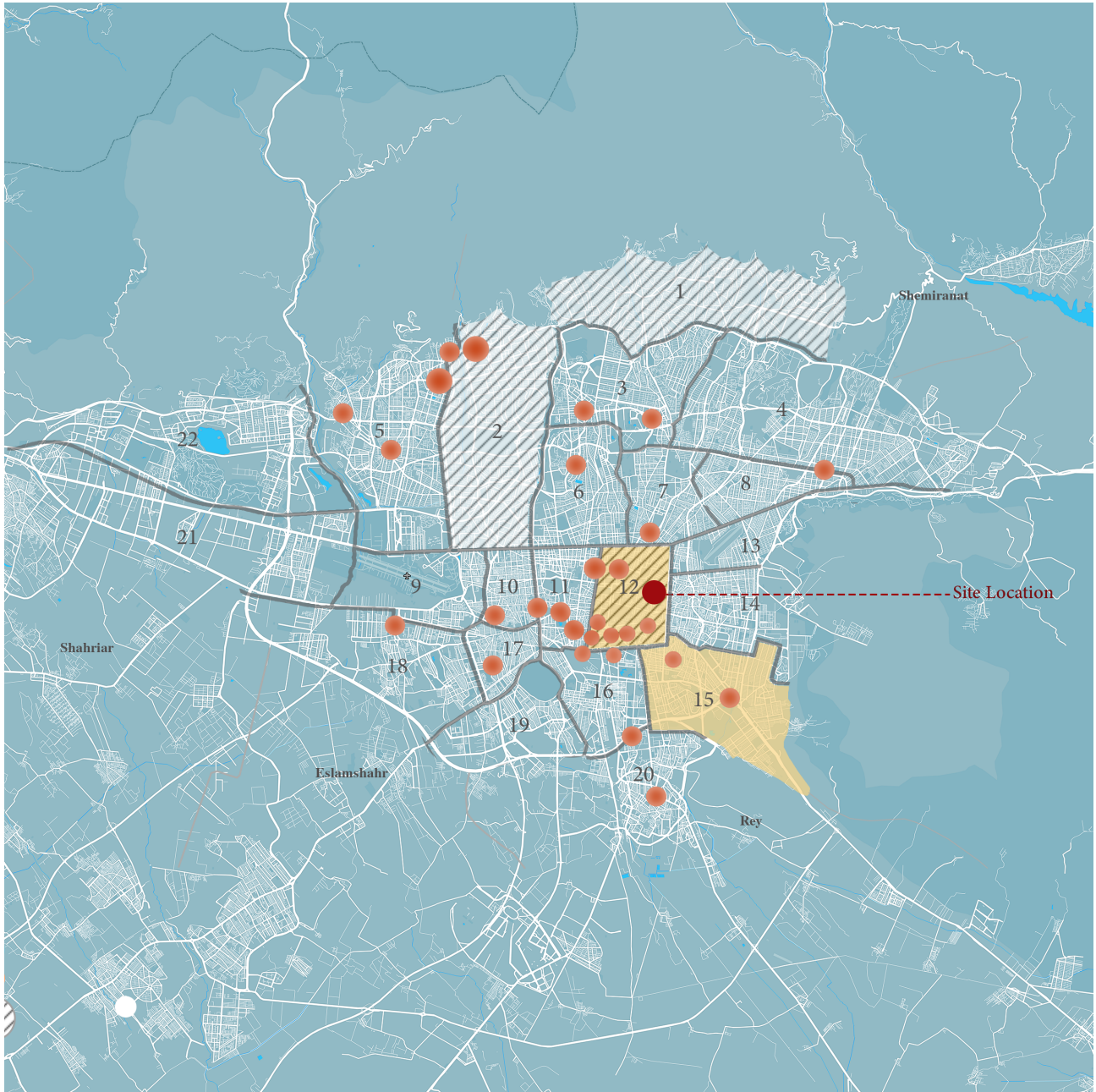
This data shows the significance of District 12 in the street children-related measures. The high unemployment rates of parents put the children at risk of quitting school and becoming a source of income for families. Moreover, the concentration of economic activities such as shoe workshops makes this district a destination for working girls and boys.

Site Selection



Fig. 2.12 Site general Location

Selecting the appropriate site for the proposed design is an important step in producing a vibrant community that responds to the needs of street children. So, after analysing the data about the concentration of street children in different neighborhoods, their working and living spaces and other related information, the potential site is chosen in downtown Tehran, District 12.



- Centers supporting Street children
- Areas where more than 1/3 of street children live
- Areas where the most street children work

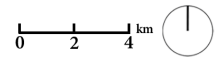


Fig. 2.13 Street Children work, live, center location map




The map of Tehran illustrates the locations of street children support centers, areas where they work and places where they live in. The blue dots are the locations of street children centers. There is more concentration in the middle and southern part of Tehran, the low-income areas. The hatched part shows districts with the greatest number of children working there. The orange color points out 2 districts where more than 1/3 of working children of Tehran live.

Districts 1, 2 and 12 are the most popular destination for street children to work. Districts 1 and 2 are the most affluent parts of the city, where street children spend their days working. District 12 is the economic heart of the city. It is where the Grand Bazaar is located, with all the smaller retails and workshops. Many of these kids work in the workshops like shoe making workshops. By analyzing this data, we see that District 12 is the intersection of all these three factors, an area with the largest number of street children working and living.

This set of data is used to select the potential site for the street children center in District 12 of Tehran. The concentration of worn-out buildings, very small-scale urban blocks and the lack of green space in this area are the most significant physical characteristics of this part of the city.

Site and Urban context



-  Main Access to the Site
-  Secondary Access to the Site
-  Public Space

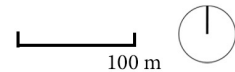


Fig. 2.14 Site Location map

The site selected for the design proposal is located on the corner of Mahallati and 17th Shahrivar street. This working-class residential neighborhood is located in the eastern part of District 12 and has a high proportion of lower-income families.



The existing main entrance to the yard



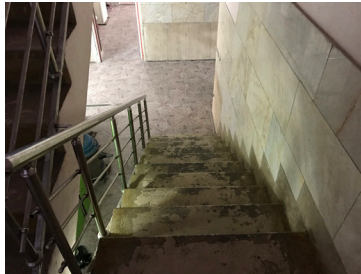
The existing entrance to the building



The existing second floor corridor



The existing children's room



The existing stairs



The existing locker area

Fig. 2.15 Existing Building images

It should be mentioned that due to the scarcity of vacant lots in Tehran, especially in the central parts, the proposed site is a non-operating center for children in need that is going to be demolished and rebuilt.

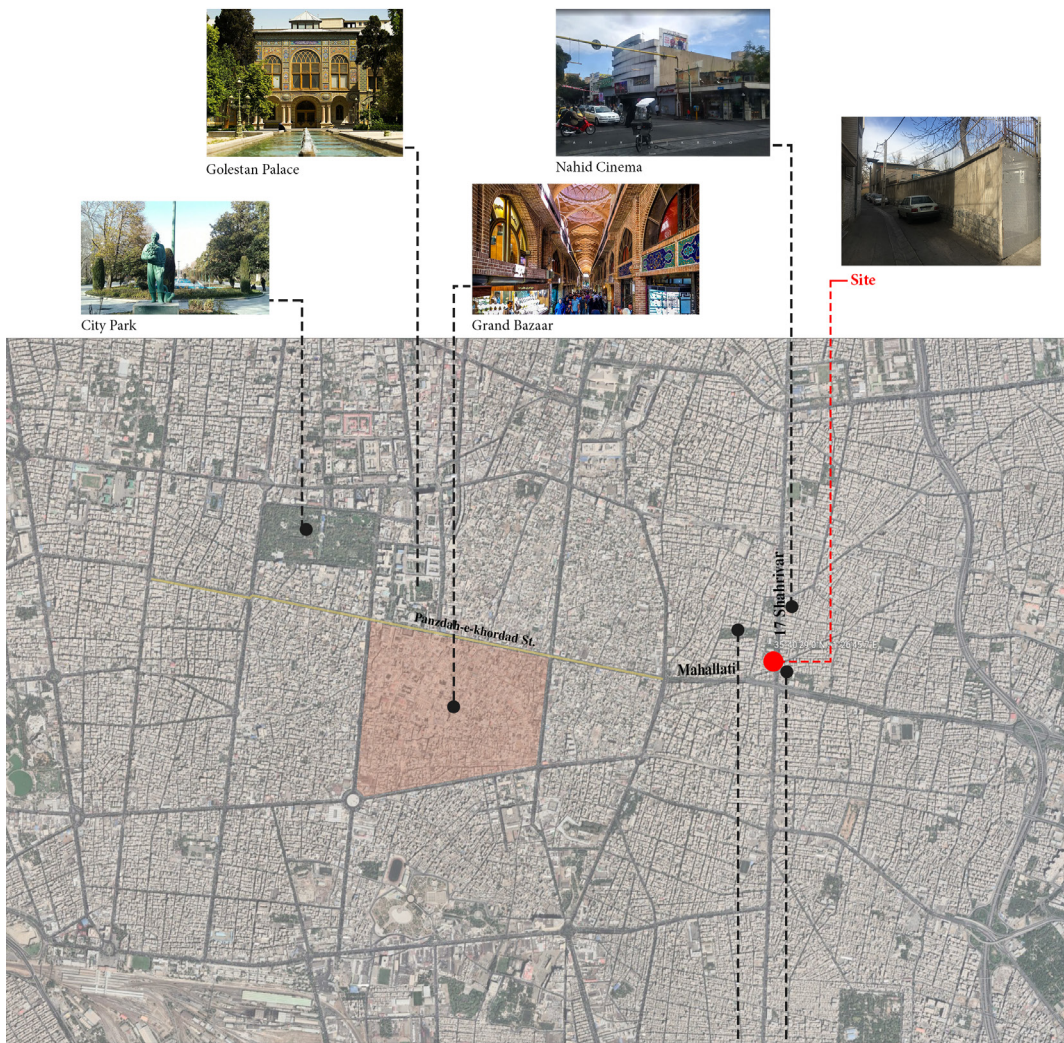


Fig. 2.16 Site Location in relation to the public spaces



Ziba park



Abol-Hasan Mosque

The site is located at an appropriate distance from the spaces where street children work and live, such as the Grand Bazaar. [Fig 2.16] Therefore, it can be conveniently accessed by children and their parents, while the neighborhood protects them from possible threats such as addicts, abusing people, and hazardous situations. The wide range of public spaces and services in the area, along with being pedestrian-friendly and other mentioned qualities, make this site an ideal location for a public facility that supports street children and their families.

Site Context images



Fig. 2.17 Mahallati street view

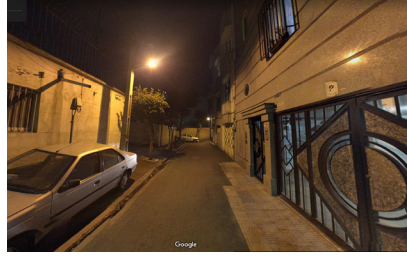


Fig. 2.18 Narrow alleys in the neighborhood



Fig. 2.19 Old urban fabric around the site



Fig. 2.20 Wide walkways of the main access



Fig. 2.21 Old urban fabric around the site



Fig. 2.22 15 Khordad street view



Fig. 2.23 Mahallati street view



Fig. 2.24 Historic fabric of the Grand Bazaar

Part III

Design Proposal



This chapter assembles lessons from previous parts to develop an ‘inclusive Street Children Center Typology in Tehran.’ The development applies an urban-based program strategy to respond to Tehran’s Street children’s needs while considering possible long-term contributions. The chapter will describe a selection process for the program and massing based on obstacles faced by current responses and continues to discuss primary design principles.

Program

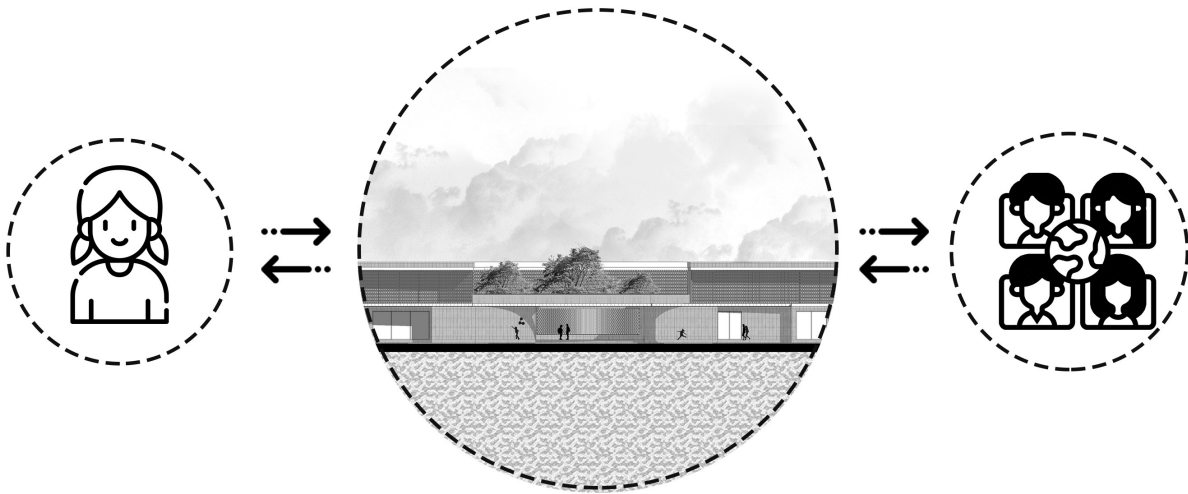


Fig. 3.1 Design objectives diagram

The objective of the design is to rehabilitate the street children with interpersonal development skills through education, physical care, developing their self-esteem, social living skills, and connecting with their cultural heritage. The design thesis aims to develop a street children's care facility in Tehran, which primarily supports teenage street girls and their mothers and women in their community.

Why Girls?

The limitations proposed by the government, people's religious beliefs, and the country's culture make street girls a vulnerable group in society. The center designed for girls will provide enough privacy and comfort to experience childhood, play, learn, and rehabilitate faster. For example, the images below show one of the existing mixed-gender streets children's schools in Tehran, called "Agh-Tappeh." The different ways that boys and girls occupy space can be seen in this example. Fig 3.2 shows the boys playing in the yard freely, while girls have stricter dress codes and are gathered in front of the washrooms, a place they have chosen to have more privacy away from the boys (Fig 3.3). This behavior is rooted in the culture and religion of these children, and these two images illustrate the importance of the center for girls, where they can have their own private and intimate space during the times they spend in the center.



Fig. 3.2 Boys in the street children center

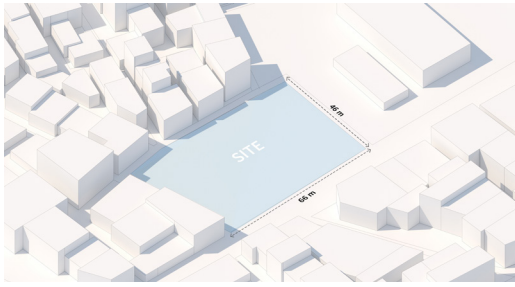


Fig. 3.3 Girls in the street children center

Considering these social and cultural factors, the proposed center will accommodate street girls and the women and mothers who seek social service to develop their skills, hoping to improve street children's familial crisis and have a long-term contribution to the community. Therefore, as a child's mental health correlates closely to the environment that embodies them, it is hoped that the programs, spatial characteristics, and cultural and social tools and motifs equip children with skills and psychological states that enable them to live responsibly in the community.

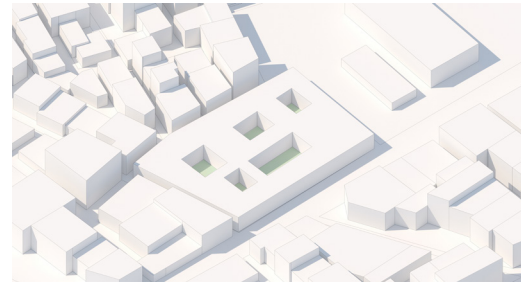
Massing, Relation to the City & Building Program

The building program intends to attract the street girls and women in the surrounding community to create a vibrant atmosphere where the girls are comfortable and safe and women are taught the skills to improve their living conditions. This program allows for a more attractive environment for girls, with fewer limitations from society, to empower their skills and express themselves. Moreover, this women-specific program will increase safety and healthier interactions, which is critical for society's less privileged girls and women.



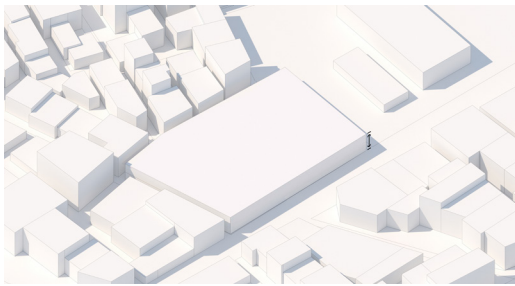
1

The selected site in its urban context



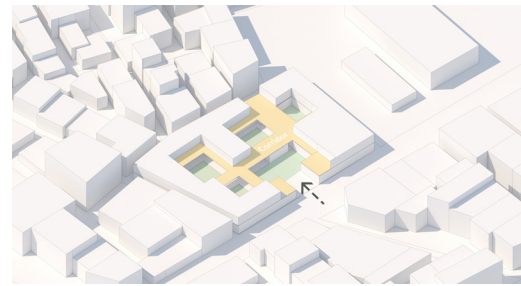
4

Larger areas could appear intimidating to children, while smaller open spaces suggest a more intimate setting and invite dialogue, playfulness, and sharing.



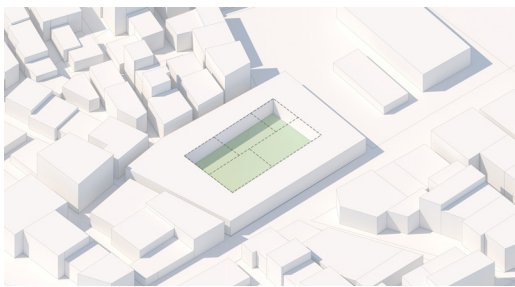
2

Having human scale, and modest architecture that blends into the context
The two-story building connects well with the surroundings and provides tangible and well scaled spaces for children.



5

The spaces on the second floor are connected with semi open corridors that are open down to the courtyards. This creates a vertical connection and relationship between spaces.



3

Being in a urban area, the open spaces play the very important role in the design. The central courtyard, provide adequate connection with outdoors while ensuring the required privacy of the users.



6

The final form consists of five separate courtyards, connected vertically and horizontally.

Fig. 3.4 Massing development diagrams



Fig. 3.5 Aerial view

This massing, with the central courtyards and semi-open corridors, creates a vibrant atmosphere, and the desired balance between the introverted spaces of the building with the outside.

Program

The building program offers various types of programmatic spaces in the two-story building. They intend to create a vibrant atmosphere where the girls are comfortable and safe, and women are taught the skills to improve their living.

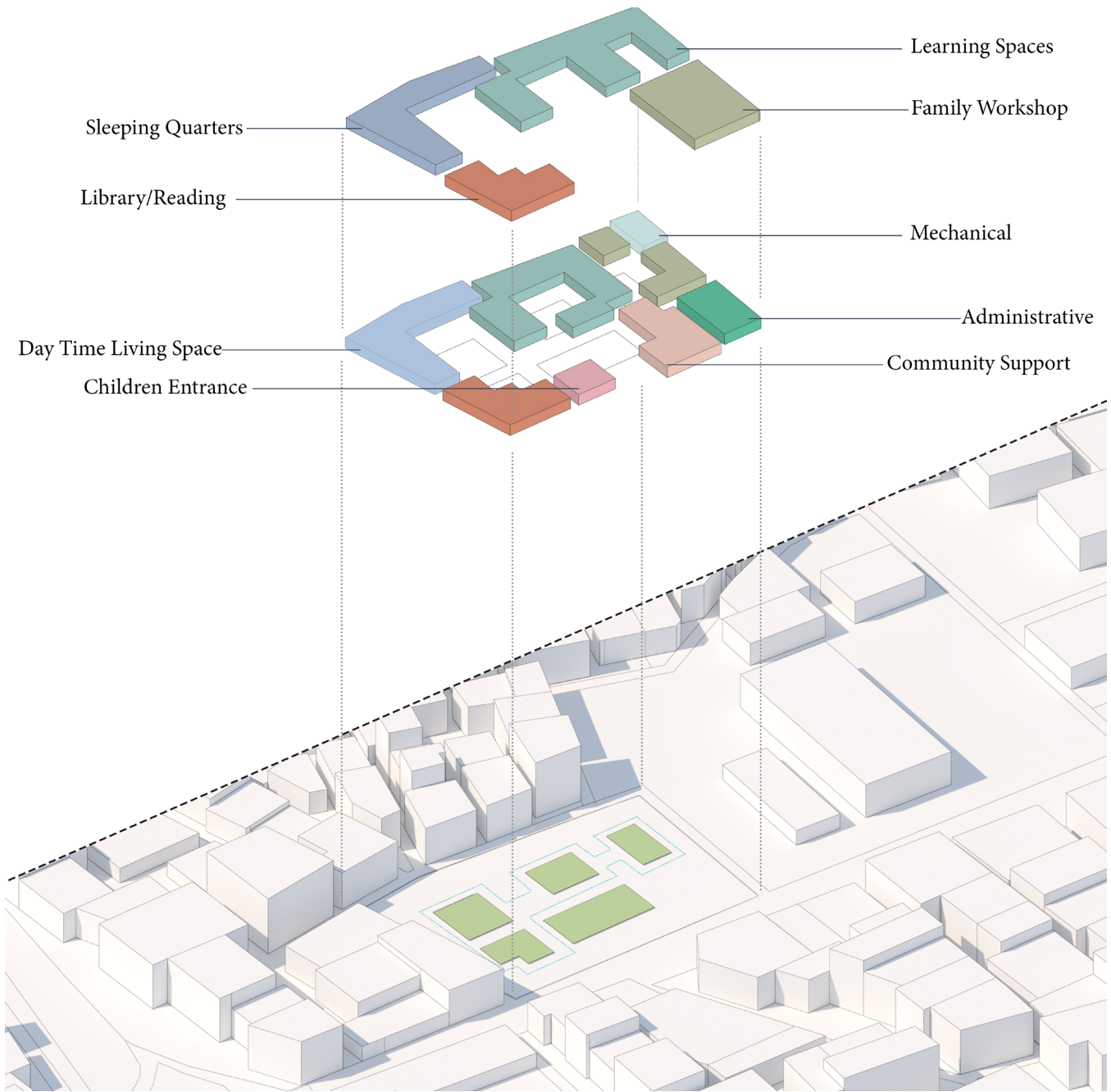


Fig. 3.6 Proposed program diagram

The program includes living spaces for girls, which offers daytime facilities and temporary sleeping areas. Learning spaces and library, Women literacy classes and workshop spaces, Community support, and staff area

A comprehensive programmatic response

The design targets three types of users and activities based on their relationship with the more extensive community to provide a comprehensive response to the program requirements. The leading group of users includes teenage street girls. As discussed earlier in the book, this means girls under 18 for whom streets and public spaces of the city have become the source of living and are insufficiently guided or protected. The program offers learning and living spaces for girls who use the center. The goal was to provide an adequate level of privacy and connection for each area to ensure the users' comfort.

The second group of users is women in need, including the mothers of street children. The design offers semi-public areas for their literacy classes, community room, and workshops. It is hoped that this can positively impact their social situations to have a long-term contribution to society. The center will also host some public events such as the Norouz Festival and Yalda Night and charity events in the semi-public courtyard.

The following street children's care center combines vocational and educational programs for children and women seeking to learn, daytime facilities, and counseling services with emergency shelters accompanied by public event spaces that bridge the users to the larger community and neighborhood.

Gradient of Public to Private

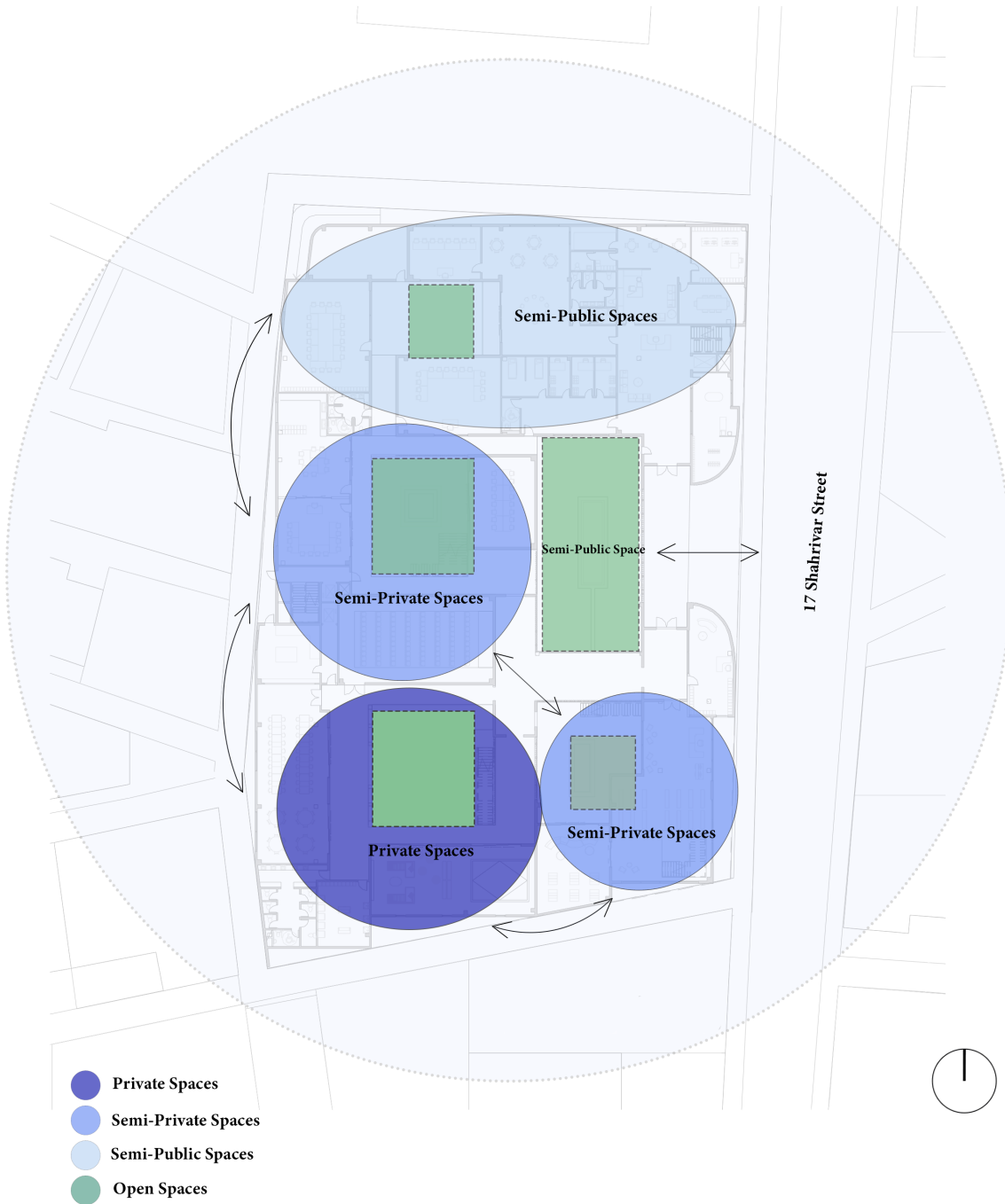


Fig. 3.7 Privacy gradient diagram

Considering the vibrancy of zones and programmatic components in the building, a significant part of the design decisions was related to the development of the design in a way that the public services do not interrupt children's privacy, safety, and home-like living spaces. One of the primary decisions towards this was the location of each zone in relation to the main street on the East side of the site. As shown in the privacy gradient diagram (Fig 3.7), the semi-public and semi-private zones are located closer to the street, allowing for easier community access.

On the other hand, the more private parts like living areas that require filtered access and view are distanced from the main street and are surrounded by semi-private zones with educational activities like the library and the administrative regions to obtain the necessary privacy for these spaces. Furthermore, the sleeping quarters which are the most private part of the complex, are located on the second floor to achieve the highest level of privacy.

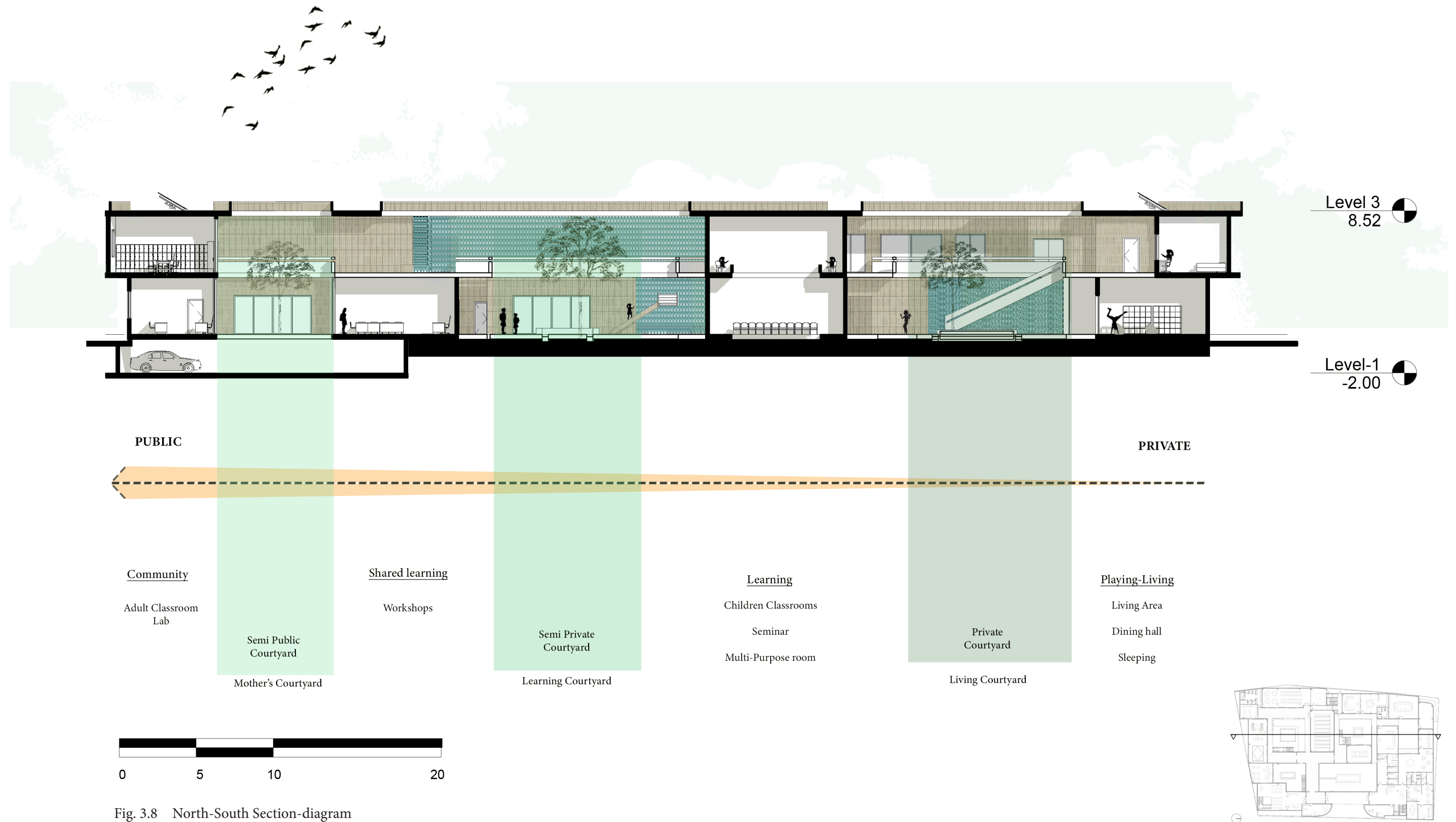


Fig. 3.8 North-South Section-diagram

The other decision towards the programmatic organization of the building was the positioning of open spaces. This design thesis decided to have several smaller yards rather than one large open space. Each zone of the program is located around a central courtyard that supports the activities of the curtain zone and provides an excellent connection with open space. Thus, every two programmatic zones are separated by a semi-open or open space. This supports the privacy gradient in the design, which flows throughout the building as the users explore the place.

The interior courtyards around each program zone and the privacy gradient create the desired Controlled Physical and visual connection. This also Creates a Journey from Public to Private for the users. The journey starts in public, going from community support to semi-public areas such as family learning spaces. Then continues to the semi-private zone, which are children's academic areas to the most private part, the living and playing spaces.

Screens

From the initial design steps, I developed the idea of using screen walls to control the level of physical and visual connection between spaces without blocking the entire relationship. The screens in this design are architectural elements that represent the privacy gradient in the building, allowing users to understand the zone they are in without being isolated.



Fig. 3.9 The Corridor view from the screen towards the public courtyard

Introducing Cultural Metaphors

I had the idea that the motif used on the screen could be a symbol that children in the center remember, a symbol that is tied to the cultural heritage that will remind them they are being protected and loved. Even when they are out, on the streets, or after they return to society and live everyday life, this metaphor on the facade will evoke their memories and remind them that they have a safe place where they will be supported mentally and physically. This idea led me to the story of Simurgh, one of the most popular stories in Shahname, the poem by Ferdowsi.



Fig. 3.10 Screen wall

Simurgh-The Magical Bird

Simurgh as a mysterious bird is the symbol of flight and movement and is culturally tied to the sense of responsibility, protecting children and healing.¹ The story of Simurgh and Zal, is one of the most popular mythical stories in Iranian history.



Fig. 3.11 Simurgh and Zal illustration
Iran, Tabriz, Safavid period, ca. 1525- Opaque watercolor, ink, and gold on paper

¹ Ph, Of Linguistics. The simurgh myth in shahnameh according to barthes's five main codes. 1949663311.



Fig. 3.12 Zal rescued by the Simurgh

In the first parts of the story, Simurgh saw the homeless and abandoned albino child whose father is ashamed of his son's strange appearance. She decided to take the homeless Zal to her chicks as food. However, such an unbelievable affection and connection between them made her take care of the abandoned child. So, Zāl was raised in mount Alborz in Simurg's nest for years.

Years later, his father, Sam, who had heard about the courageous young man who lives on the Alborz(Gaf) mountains, decides to return him to the throne. At first, Zal is reluctant to leave Simurgh and the only home he has ever known, but Simurgh persuades him to go with his father Sam. Then, the magical creature gives Zal one of her feathers to burn whenever he needs her help. So she would be present to support Zal in any hardship that he might encounter in his life. In this story, fire can be seen as the symbolic code of awareness and alerting others.

Simurgh's maternal love and Zāl's advice in life's essential steps are good patterns for today's humankind. Although Sam (Zal's father) imprudently abandoned his newly born child because he thought Zāl would bring shame and dishonor to his life, there is a kind and caring bird (Simurgh) who gives Sam a chance to make up for his mistake, look for his son and bring him back home. Simurgh symbolizes people with sincerity and wisdom whose aim is to save those who have been misled.



Fig. 3.13 Zal returning to his father, Sam



Fig. 3.14 Zal in the Simurgh's nest

“When the time comes for you to take the position of the crown and of the highest rank, of the sovereign honors and the diadem, this eyrie will no longer be worthy of you. Yet make a trail of fortune. I part from you for no reason of enmity; I doubt entrust you to an empire. For me it would be good if you remained here, but the other course is better. Yet take with you a single feather from my wing and with it you will continue to be under protection of my influence. If ever a difficulty overtakes you or any dispute arises over your actions, good or ill, then cast this feather of mine into the flames and you will at once experience the blessing of my authority. I will come as a black cloud, with speed, and transport you unharmed to this place.”¹

2 Ph, Of Linguistics. The simurgh myth in shahnameh according to barthes's five main codes. . 1949663311.



Fig. 3.15 Overglaze luster-painted tile with the Simurgh, Takhti-i Sulayman, Iran



Fig. 3.16 Tile with Simurgh image

The simurgh has several illustrations in Iranian art, it can be seen in books, tiles, painting, etc. Simurgh's feather is a symbol of love, protection and endless support. So, I decided to use this Iranian cultural and historical element as a metaphor in the design.

Screen pattern design

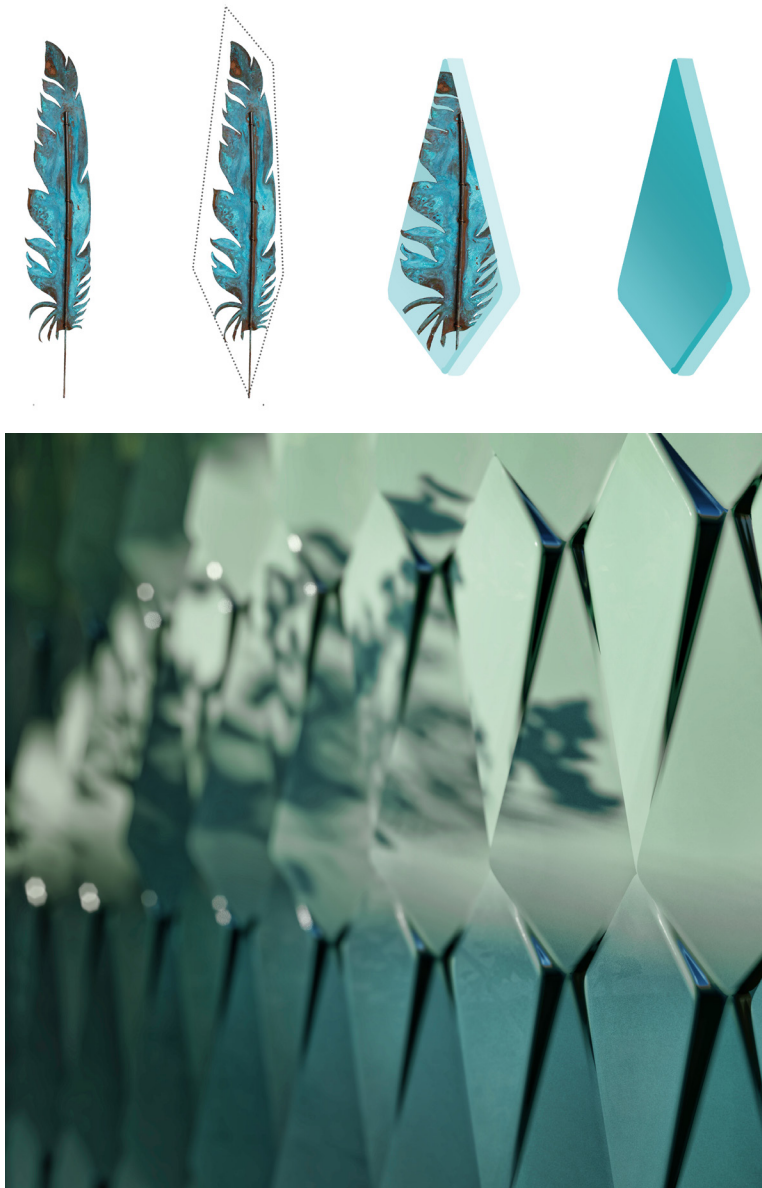
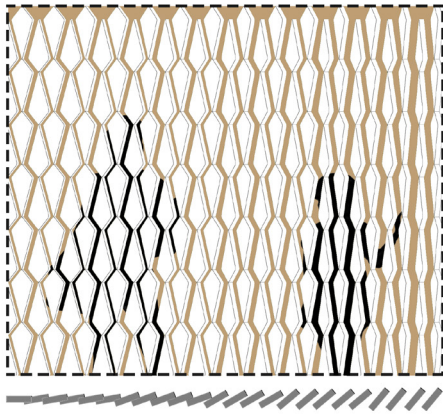


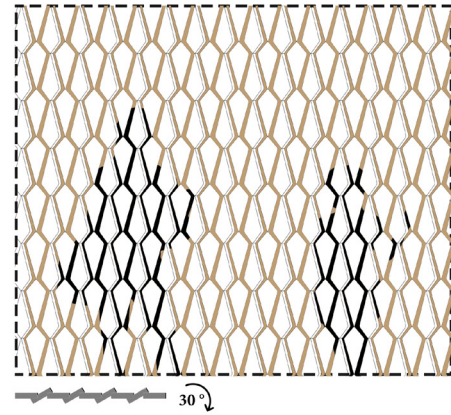
Fig. 3.17 Pattern Form Creation

This cultural motif is introduced through the shape of the screen that expands in the whole project design. The form of the screen pattern is developed so that it symbolizes the feathers of Simurgh, each being individually recognizable, while lying on top of each other to create the complete whole.



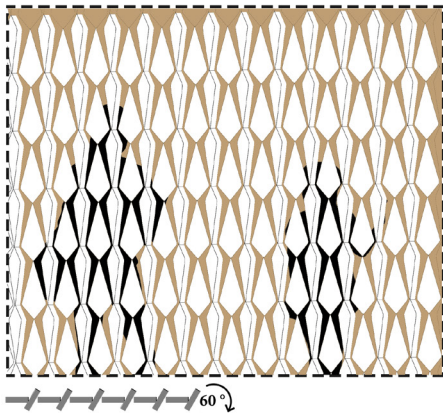
Pattern Type: Entrance

The tiles are set as a gradient to symbolize the diversity of activities inside, encourage children to join the community, and ensure the girls' required privacy.



Pattern Type: Private

The private screen is round the living spaces, and with 30 degree rotation, blocks most of the unwanted views, while providing interesting light and shadow in the space.



Pattern Type: semi-Private

The semi-private screen is located in semi-private zones such as learning. With the 60-degree rotation, these tiles are partly transparent, to allow the limited visual connection.



Pattern Type: Public

This is the most transparent screen in the building. It is located in around the events courtyard, where the less closure is required.

Fig. 3.18 Screen design in different zones

To establish the required privacy through the building, I designed screen walls in transitional areas between different activities and zones. As the users go through the building, they can see the screen changing, based on the level of the privacy of the spaces. It is meant to add privacy by controlling the undesired views from outside, while letting the natural light and fresh air pass through.

Moreover, the screens lead to a better sense of place for children, as it gives them the opportunity to recognize different parts of the building easier and in a shorter time. Following this goal, the pattern is designed in four types, each type with rotated tiles to provide the required transparency.



Fig. 3.19 Second floor Semi-Open space

Resembling the cultural values, motifs, and materiality, these screens are made from the glazed terracotta tiles which are commonly used in Iranian architecture. Figure 3.19 shows the open space in the second floor, and illustrate how the screens create the vibrant and filtered facade where the building is facing the outside.

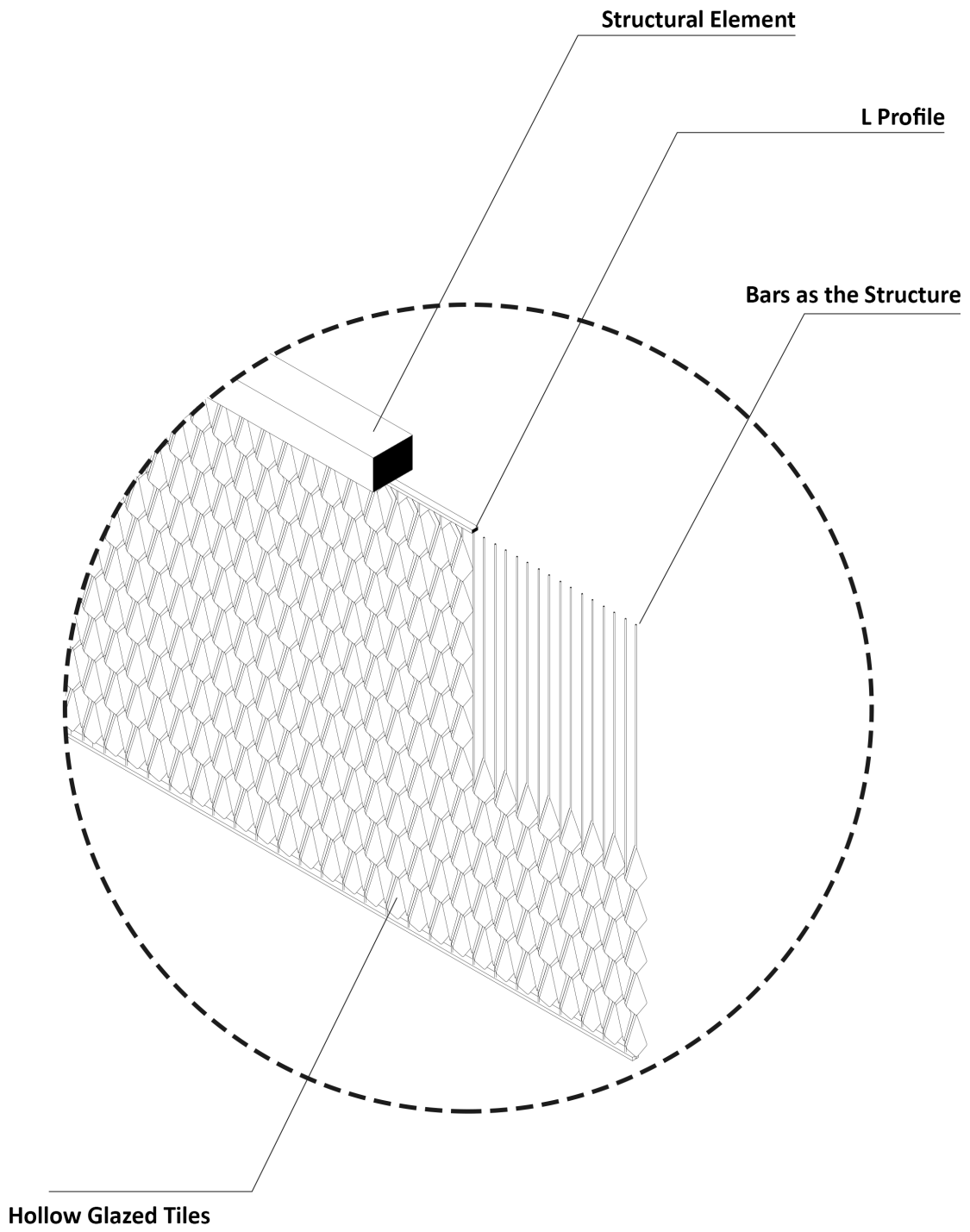


Fig. 3.20 Screen assembly structure

Entrance

As a social services building, the inside representation, Intimacy and being encouraging are important factors. However, ensuring the privacy and security of the users must be considered, so no direct view or connection to inside is suggested.



Fig. 3.21 Agha Bozorg mosque entrance, Kashan, Iran

Welcoming

Peace and Joy

Protection and
Privacy

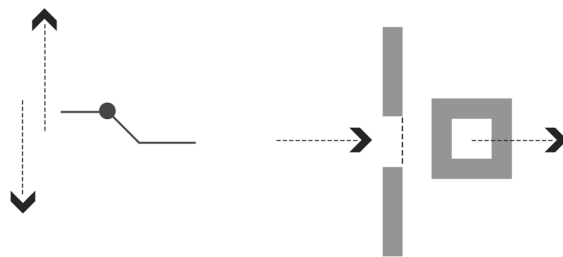




Fig. 3.22 The Main Entrance View

Open Spaces

Courtyards are the main form of open space in Iranian Architecture. They foster the sense of intimacy between space and people, while providing adequate amount of privacy and security. Courtyards can be in various sizes, each creating a unique sense of place.

In this design, avoiding one big central courtyard is divided into five smaller ones, to accommodate different activities, different levels of privacy and to act as filters between zones. Each courtyard is surrounded by public, semi-public, semi-private or private indoor spaces. This creates a gradient of open spaces through the building that have their own programmed activities.



Fig. 3.23 The use of screens to provide privacy, while getting natural light and ventilation in Iranian Architecture

The inter-connection between public and Private

The program requires the design to have a clear separation between public and private zones. This gives the girls using the space maximum convenience without being limited by Hijab. The presence in public means limitations in activities, sounds, dresses and social communications for girls.



Fig. 3.24 Site Plan



Fig. 3.25 East Elevation Facing 17 Shahrivar street

Legend

- 1- Entrance
- 2- Security
- 3- Library
- 4- Story Telling
- 5- Reading courtyard
- 6- Living
- 7- Dining Hall
- 8- Kitchen
- 9- Courtyard
- 10- Laundry
- 11- Washrooms
- 12- Seminar
- 13- Classrooms/workshops
- 14- Learning courtyard
- 15- Community room
- 16- Adults Courtyard
- 17- Waiting Area
- 18- Administrative
- 19- Mechanical
- 20- Health Center
- 21- Store
- 22- Community Courtyard

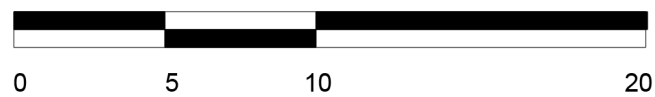
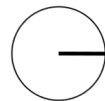
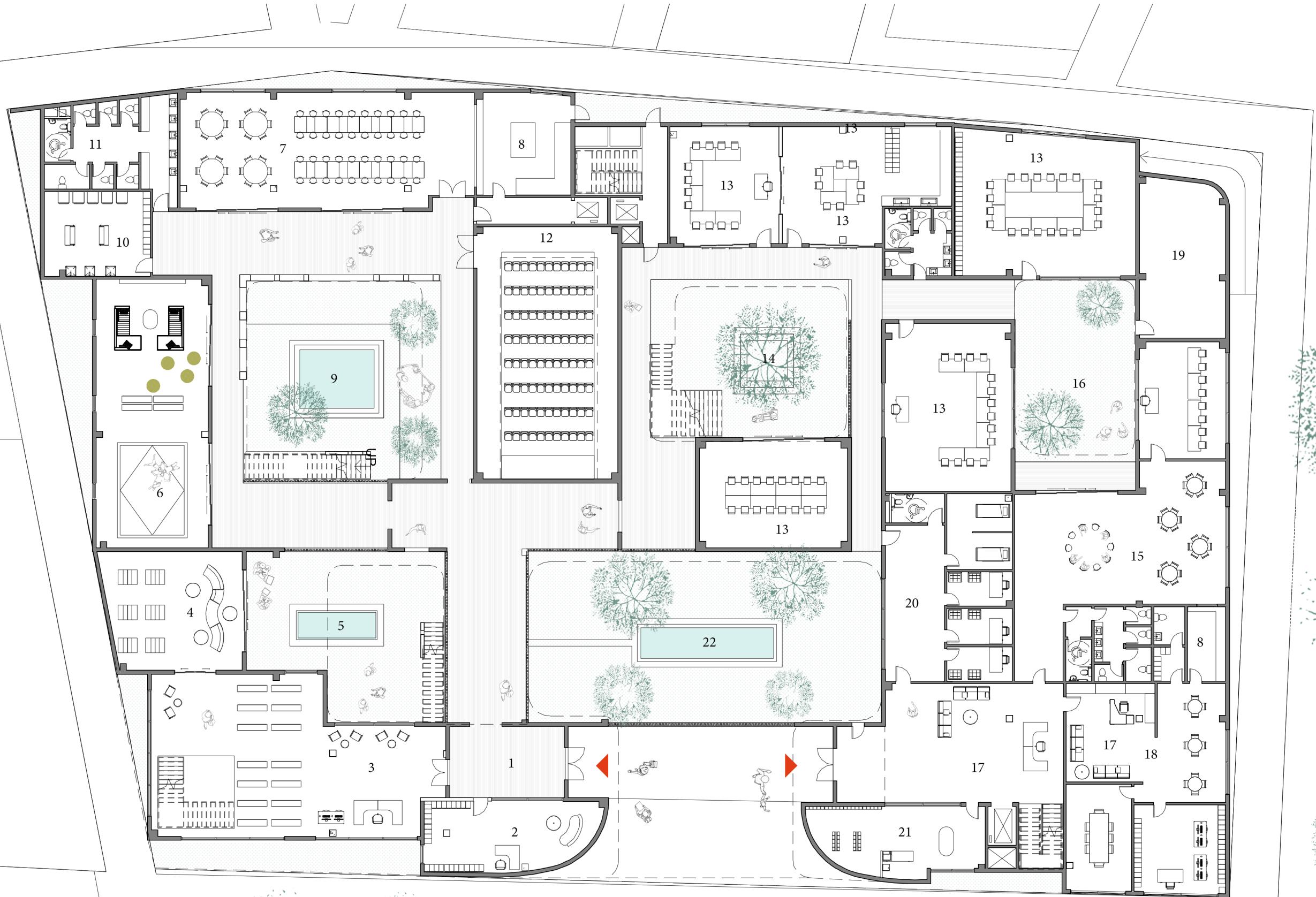


Fig. 3.26 Ground Floor Plan



Legend

- 1- Sleeping quarters
- 2- Group/individual Reading
- 3- Green House
- 4- Outdoor Gardening
- 5- Multi-purpose room/Lab
- 6- Family Workshop
- 7- Lockers
- 8- Showers
- 9- Washrooms

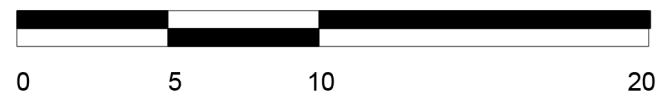
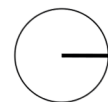


Fig. 3.27 Second Floor Plan

Living facilities

Day time spaces and emergency shelter

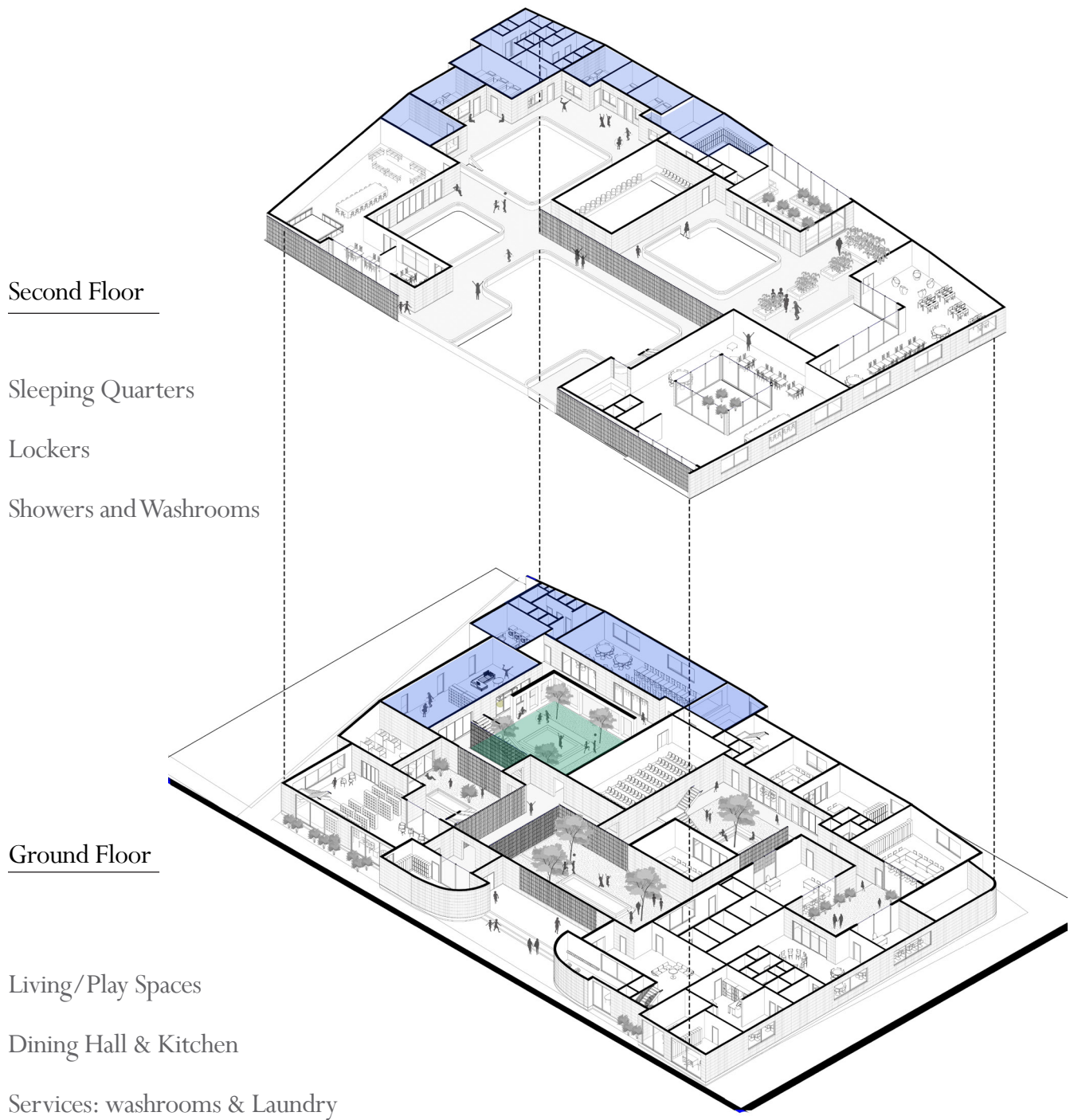


Fig. 3.28 Children Living zone diagram

The living zone of the center offers spaces for children to play freely, dine and spend time with their peers in a safe environment. The dining hall and kitchen, living room and services such as laundry and washrooms are provided for girls to use. They are located on the ground floor, around the play courtyard, which is the most private open space in the facility.

Meanwhile, the sleeping quarters are on the second floor to accommodate more privacy and comfort for users. These rooms are designed as temporary sleeping areas for any street girl who needs nighttime support. The smaller capacity of children in each room, maximum 4, allows for a more intimate experience than the large emergency shelter rooms. The girls using the sleeping rooms have access to all the facilities, including the reading areas on the second floor of the library, the lab, and other services. The open space in front of the bedrooms offers a private play area for girls, which is designed to block all unwanted external views perfectly, so the maximum comfort, privacy, and freedom of activity is achieved for girls. Also, the services such as laundry, showers, washrooms, and lockers are designated to support the living zones. They are distributed on the two floors, based on the requirement of each program.



Fig. 3.29 The Private (Living) Courtyard view

The play courtyard is an essential part of the living space. The presence of earthy material, water, greenery, and being open to the sky conveys a unique sense of connection with their traditional values, feelings, and architecture. The shallow pond in the courtyard resembles Persian gardens and generates a pleasant refreshing environment for girls to play, cool down, and enjoy their time being in there. The seating areas in the thick brick walls create a delightful seating experience for children. These spaces can be occupied for group activities or as an intimate and private space for a person.

playing areas

Private gathering spaces allow children to come together, play, and express themselves. Smaller and informal spaces suggest a more intimate setting and invite dialogue, playfulness, and sharing, while larger areas could appear more intimidating. Thus, as a part of the healing process of street children, the program offers a variety of formal and informal living and playing areas. This includes semi-private spaces for children, as well as informal open and semi-open areas throughout the building. These spaces are designed to increase the sense of belonging of children while providing enough support and privacy away from the limits of social norms for girls.

The semi-open spaces around the courtyards offer an informal experience of occupying the area for girls. These transitory spaces connect the indoor activities and yards and can be informally occupied by children to play and experience the place. The freedom of activities and the intimate setting in the transitory areas allow for children's self-development and advances the healing process. These gathering spaces allow children to interact with their peers, express themselves through art and games, and reconnect with the Iranian traditional collective memory of home.



Fig. 3.30 Fin Garden, Kashan, Iran



Fig. 3.31 Shazdeh Garden, Kerman, Iran

Historically, the Iranians tend to celebrate the presence of water, air, light, and earthy materials in their houses and gardens. In the geographical situation where the water has always been scarce, Iranian people used to bring it into their living spaces and honor its presence in various ways. These materials were brought together in the proposed design to empower the experience of place for the girls, accelerate their healing process and benefit the environmental advantages.



Fig. 3.32 Fin Garden, Kashan, Iran
celebrating the presence of water



Fig. 3.33 Boy sitting in the pond
“Children of Heaven” Film, Majidi, 1997

The existence of water in the Iran’s climate also helps to reduce the temperature of space during hot summer days. So, the ponds became an excellent spot for children to play and escape the heat.



Fig. 3.34 The open Learning Space-Outdoor Gardening

The living area and dining hall open towards the courtyard, allowing indoors to expand into the landscape and enhance the indoor-outdoor connection. These informal spaces perfectly connect the indoor and outdoor and create a playful, exciting, and inspiring casual space for girls to occupy as they wish. Moreover, they act as a natural cooling system by providing shadow and air movement.

Learning Spaces

Based on the research conducted by Salihu, 2019, which was discussed earlier in the book, the majority (96%) of street children in Tehran do not attend any formal school or informal vocational training. Thus education is one of the primary functions of the designed center. The crucial part of education in improving the situation of street kids, along with its preventing qualities, make it a necessary part of the street children's care facility.

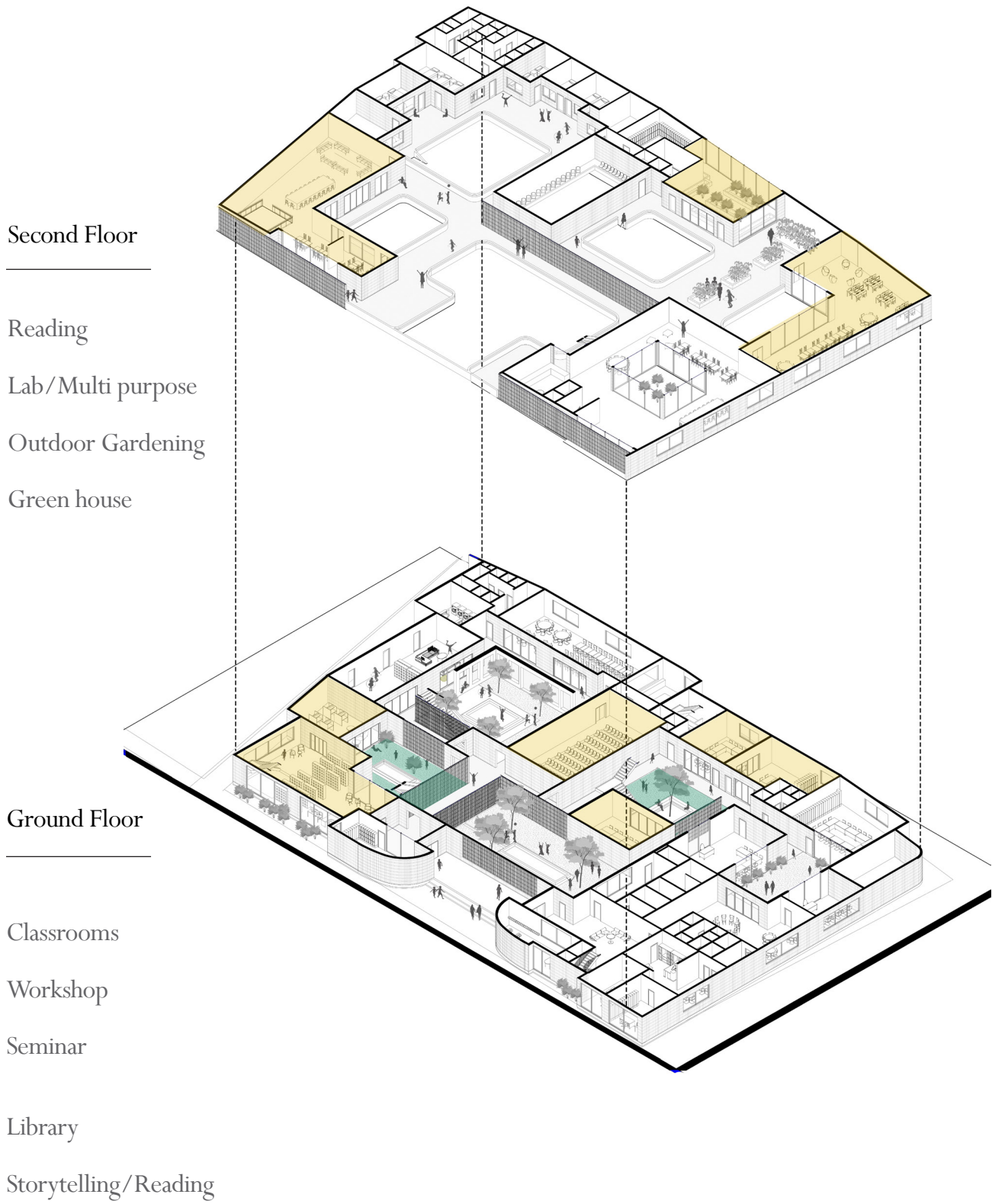


Fig. 3.35 Learning zone diagram

The educational zone of the complex is programmed to support the street children who do not have access to formal and public learning opportunities in the community.

A variety of programs are offered around two educational courtyards. In the center, the classroom courtyard is being surrounded by Classrooms, workshops, and seminar hall.

In the other part of the site, the library courtyard hosts more quiet activities. Also On the second floor, we have the reading area, computer lab and multi-purpose room and educational gardening spaces.



Fig. 3.36 Second floor Semi-Open space - Being around a courtyard increases the connection between the classrooms and the outdoors. This relationship also allows for informal learning events, classrooms, or gatherings in open space.

Library and story telling

The library is on the street corner and connects the complex with the public. It symbolically and programmatically expresses the educational nature of the facility and accepts people who have the permit from the center. It gives street children the opportunity to engage more with the academic environment. Library members can access it through the primary children's gate, while it is also internally connected to the educational and living zone of the building.

A storytelling or reading area is connected to the main library hall, which offers a more casual experience for individual use or group events. Both the library hall and storytelling area are open to the reading courtyard, a semi-private courtyard—the possibility of extending the reading activities into a yard creates an energetic and encouraging atmosphere.



Fig. 3.37 The open Learning Space-Outdoor Gardening

The open space corridors on the second floor can host different activities such as outdoor gardening. As you can see, the semi private screen filters the unwanted external views, without blocking the connection entirely.



Fig. 3.38 East- West Section



Community support

Visitors, outreach, and administrative areas

The role of the community and public in this type of social service facility is to enhance vitality and provide a long-term contribution to the issue. Common spaces allow reconnections and exchange with others and break the isolation of women in society. Those spaces create an opportunity to interact with one another in a casual intimate setting.

The center aims to have a strong connection with the community, so the public zone of the building hosts different activities. The staff area is located close to the semi-public or adult entrance of the building. It is connected to the main reception and waiting area, counseling rooms, and community room.

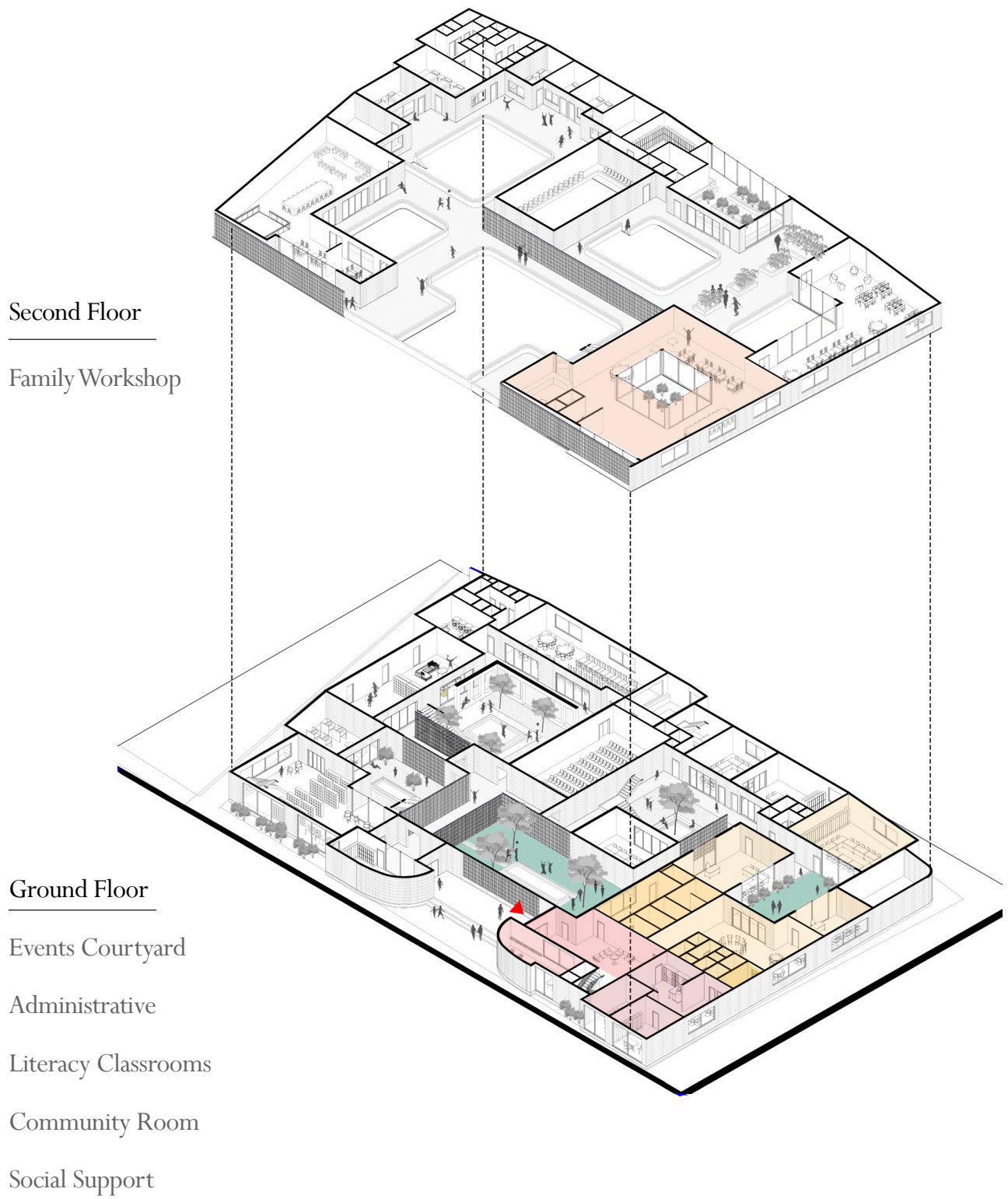


Fig. 3.39 Community zone diagram

Visitors, outreach, and administrative areas

The outreach center of the program helps provide the support network of basic individual requirements and development through educational programs, counseling, and cooperative activities to create an ongoing atmosphere of hope and support for women. The program includes literacy classes, Community room, workshop and counselling services.

The ground floor staff area provides security, administrative services, and support to the users and visitors. This zone is connected to the communal and outreach area through the main reception. The health room consisting of consultation offices is accessible for both children and visitors. It is further connected to the learning spaces through the semi-open corridors and the courtyard to extend and consolidate trauma-related program space. The staff lounge and kitchen serve all the staff members and are a part of the administrative area that provides on-site staff with privacy away from clients. However, the staff entry is through the same lobby as the adult users to provide more security and informal contact between staff members and the women who visit the complex.



Fig. 3.40 Public events

The events courtyard which is located between two main entrances of the complex, is accessible for children and mothers all the time. However, it will host community in specific public events such as the Norouz Festival and fundraising events. In these cases, the complex will be open to men and women, and they will enter through the entrance in the administrative zone to obtain the required security.

The family workshop is located on the second floor and is accessible for both mothers and children. The internal open space in the center, emphasizes intimacy and home-like atmosphere. It allows reconnections and exchange with others and break the isolation of women and girls in society in a casual intimate setting.



Fig. 3.41 Family workshop interior

Conclusion

While the issue of street children is a social problem and cannot be solved through architecture, a thoughtful design strategy can support these children's experience in a social service center and allow for a shift in public views. As we have seen through precedent studies, neither the architecture alone nor a single service delivery model has enough influence to make a significant difference in the living experience of children in need. This thesis illustrates how informed and appropriate spatial design paired with a comprehensive programmatic response can positively impact street children's situations.

The proposed center design aims to use architecture as a medium to rewrite the narrative of street children's lives through a community where girls can spend time together. It is a place where they can experience childhood, learn life skills, work skills, academic education, and discover a new sense of self. The design also provides community services for women and mothers to stimulate their economic self-sufficiency as a preventative step and raise their social and individual status.

The social facilities that support street children should understand the cultural, social, and educational struggles these children go through and be prepared to provide the necessary support. With this goal in mind, this thesis intends to design a model of a street children's care center in Tehran that enhances the sense of belonging, privacy, cultural values

and encourages positive interaction and bonding between children, their peers, and mothers. This approach sees the center as a means of empowerment and not simply as a service.

This thesis takes a strong position on the essential spatial arrangements required for empathetic and dignified design. The design provides a secure and private physical environment that supports girls' collective and personal activities, stimulating emotional and social growth. The girls' required privacy is achieved by introducing the Privacy Gradient through the Sequence of Spaces and Patterned Screens between each zone. These considerations and the courtyard designs allow for a more dynamic atmosphere and a strong indoor-outdoor connection in the center. In addition, I believe implementing social tools, and cultural references in the built environment helps to re-connect the children with their community and improve the quality of their living and educational atmosphere. Thus, the Simurgh and its feathers are cultural metaphors that resemble the supporting nature of the center for girls. These symbols will foster the relationship between children and their cultural heritage and empower the poetic dimensions of the space.

The proposed design project is specific to its site and the context of the urban fabric of Tehran. However, the strategy of creating a safe space for girls and women where they can find privacy, convenience, and support is universal and can be applied to any children's social services, shelters, or transitional housing design. This approach encourages growth among street children, has long-term contributions to society, and inspires hope in the community.

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