

## THE NOTION OF BECOMING IN MASS-HOUSING COMPLEXES; THE CASE OF MORTAFA HOUSING, MASHHAD, IRAN (1)

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### INTRODUCTION

Mass-housing projects are forming the urban morphology of suburbs in metropolises, especially in developing countries, which are struggling with housing shortages. Not only are social housing and low-income complexes built in the suburban areas, but a considerable number of luxurious gated housing estates are also built on the outskirts of the cities. Over time, projects and their social/physical contexts start to change, as the borders of cities expand and the suburban housing is merged with and become parts of the main city, while residents experience judgmental social challenges and rapid changes of spatial structures. Problems arise when the paradox between the complex and the context becomes so critical that it requires various actions in any type of urban intervention such as renovating the physical appearance, gentrification, re functioning or even demolishing the complex and constructing a new one. Refunctioning of a housing complex is rarely an option, due to the inflexible spatial organization of a residential complex. Renovation requires a considerable budget and gentrification has its socio-cultural contradictions. In most cases apartments have been sold to owners, therefore even the demolishing of the complexes seems impossible. This decisional dead-end is the result of considering places as fixed entities and neglecting the becoming notion of mass-housing complexes throughout the decades of their lifetime.

Considering mass-housing as a united whole and a unique place, the present research is based on a novel post-phenomenological theory of, place as assemblage, introduced by Dovey (2010), in which place is considered, not as a static product, but as an ongoing dynamic process in the state of constant becoming. Approaching the concept of place as an assemblage of people, materials, links and relations, this paper aims to provide a context-dependent knowledge about how the process of becoming occurs in the case of a suburban mass-housing project and raise questions on what the micro and macro forces of this becoming are; to what

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extent the residents are aware of this process; how the individuals explain the process of becoming, and so on. Prominently, how the analysis on the multi-scalar and multi-disciplinary notion of place as assemblage should methodologically be designed?

Over the past four decades, Iran has also faced a critical challenge due to the rapid growth of population, dramatic shortage of housing and therefore, an upsurge in the construction of suburban mass-housing projects. Mashhad, which is the second-largest city of Iran and the religious capital of the country, is also known as the second religious city of the Islamic world. The city's suburban area has a large amount of mass-housing, multifamily housing and disorganized urban developments, becoming attached to the cities physically, nonetheless, remaining socio-culturally detached.

Mortafa Housing complex was chosen as the case study, for the purpose of this paper due to its longevity, interesting history, iconic characteristics and potential for uncovering unexpected forces of becoming. The chosen case is one of the most significant national projects, visited twice by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, during its construction period before the Islamic revolution (1978). The project investor is Astan Quds Razavi, Iran's most well-known religious establishment. It was the first and still is the most well-known high-rise mass-housing in Mashhad, designed in the mid-70's as a 550-unit luxury gated complex in the empty suburban land. For decades, it was a focal point of the city's skyline and known as a symbol of modernity, apartment lifestyle and mass production. Today, the complex is located in the central high-rise zone of the city and has been transformed into a long-standing residence of seniors, single mothers and low-income families. The former suburban context has changed noticeably, and the complex is located on what is now a prime real estate in the city centre, although the complex does not fit into its new context, either socially or physically. The contrast will eventually create a serious problem with respect to the future developments of the district.

After a brief review on the theories of phenomenology of place, global sense of place and place as assemblage, the methodology of the research and the deployed techniques are explained, which indicate the theoretical framework of the study within inter-related sections of phenomenology, discourse analysis and spatial analysis. The main body of the article is dedicated to the results of the case study analysis, in which the notion of becoming in the complex is explained in detail. Finally, the methodological findings and the case study results are evaluated in the conclusion.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The Phenomenology of Place -known as the most significant turn in the history of place theories- was explored by humanistic geographers in the 70's, based on Heidegger's (1927, 1954) ontological primacy of place. While phenomenological reading of place was focused on an individual's experience, perception and meaning, Lefebvre (1974) started to discuss the social aspects of space and place. Later, other post-structural philosophers/geographers, such as Massey (1992; 1994), Harvey (1993; 1996), Sack (1997), Casey (1998), Malpas (1999) and Pred (1984) have criticized the phenomenological approach, in order to establish a non-idealistic and non-essentialistic understanding of place (Lea, 2009, 373; Rose, 2006; Wylie, 2006, Dunham, 1986).

Within all post-phenomenological efforts on the re-conceptualizing place, Massey and Dovey proposed novel approaches toward the concept of place. Massey (1994) has explored a theory of, “a global sense of place” in which place is considered as a processual social construct and Dovey (2010) has proposed a theory of “place as assemblage” based on the Deleuzian philosophy of “becoming-in-the-world”. Following is a review on the main hallmarks of the three mentioned theories on place.

### **“Phenomenology of Place” by Humanistic Geographers**

Based on Heidegger’s (1954) phenomenology and his spatial ontology of “being-in-the-world”, geographers such as Relph (1970; 1976), Tuan (1974; 1977), Buttimer (1974; 1976), Seamon (1979) and Buttimer and Seamon (1980), criticized former definitions of place as, mere location. For humanistic geographers, place was more than a mere location; by adding the existence of human beings to the scene, they differentiated space from place (Cresswell, 2004). Relph (1976) has defined place as an interaction between physical setting, activities and meanings. According to Tuan (1977, 6, 3), “place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for a location to be transformed into a place”, “Place is security, space is freedom”. In brief, the phenomenological place is based on experience, as it is clear from Tuan’s book title (1977): *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*.

Along with the importance of phenomenological place in geography, the discipline of architecture has been also influenced by this approach. This novel geographical reading of place, theorized as “phenomenology of place”, was the key-source for architects’ involvement with phenomenology, and it affected architectural and urban theories on place, sense of place and place-making (Talebian and Uraz, 2018).

For more than three decades, debates and critiques have targeted the three main limitations of phenomenological place. First: the fixity and stability of place; criticized by Massey (1991) and Pred (1984). Second: neglecting socio-cultural and historical factors, explored by Feminists, Marxists and Post-structuralists. Third: phenomenological search for an essence, such as Norberg-Schulz’s (1980) concept of *genius loci*, criticized by scholars such as Dovey (2010) and Massey (1994).

Aside from the critiques on the phenomenological reading of place, still the phenomenological methodologies are known as the most suitable methods for understanding place from the individual’s standpoint. Phenomenology has brought back the concept of place from academic laboratories to the context of everyday life and tied it with the human experience. It has also been modified constantly. According to Adams and van Manen (2008, 616), “further developments in phenomenological methodology share a concern with the concrete particulars of everyday life, but they are now more sensitive to subjective and intersubjective roots of meaning, complexity of relations between language and experience, to the cultural and gendered contexts of interpretive meaning, and to the textual dimensions of phenomenological writing and reflection.” Theorizing “place as assemblage”, Dovey (2010) has criticized the idealism and essentialism of phenomenological reading of place, but he does not ignore the vital role of phenomenology as a method in place studies.

### **“A Global Sense of Place” by Massey**

Massey (1991; 1992; 1994; 2005) has theorized the concept of place towards a dynamic and open intersection of movements and relations. “A global sense of place” invites us to think of place as an event, open to change rather than a bounded, authentic and fixed entity (Cresswell, 2004; Dovey 2010). Massey believes in the processual notion of place and focuses on both the dynamic/hybrid and mobile aspects of place along with the social powers involved in its formation. Massey’s example for rejecting the fixity of place is remarkable, she has chosen a mountain named “Skiddaw”, as a nomad of a fixity, to explain how in the wider sequence of a history, the seemingly fixed notion of the mountain has always been in the continuous state of becoming (Talebian and Uraz, 2018).

According to Cresswell (2004, 13), Massey’s extroverted reading of place criticizes, “the whole history of place as a centre of meaning connected to a rooted and authentic sense of identity forever challenged by mobility”. Rejecting the notion of stable and authentic entity, Massey privileges routes and flows rather than roots and essences (Dovey, 2010, 5). In a similar approach, Harvey (1993) also emphasizes the socio-political aspects of place formation. According to Harvey (1993, 5), ‘The first step down the road is to insist that place in whatever guise, is like space and time, a social construct. The only interesting question that can be asked is, by what social process(es) is place constructed?’ Whilst Massey has approached the concept of place as a social construct, Harvey has been more focused on the economic and political aspects of place formation, under the impact of capitalism. However, both Massey and Harvey have criticized the phenomenological reduction of place to a mere individual’s experience and the elimination of extroverted forces shaping places.

### **“Place as Assemblage” by Dovey**

In contrast with the Heideggerian ontology of “being-in-the-world”, assemblage theory is based on the Deleuzian notion of “becoming-in-the-world” (Dovey, 2010, 6). Assemblage is not a mere “thing” or collection of unrelated parts, but it is best known as a “state of affairs” (Dovey, 2010, 16), or in the words of De Landa (2006, 5), it is a united whole, “whose properties emerge from interaction between parts.” Assemblage is not an organized system, in contrast to necessary roles of parts in an organized system, the parts of an assemblage act as contingent, so they can be detached from and attached to another assemblage. Each of the components of an assemblage has its own individual role - materially or expressively - but the whole assemblage is irreducible to material or expression (Dovey, 2010; De Landa, 2006).

“Place as assemblage” as stated by Dovey (2010, 16), “is an attempt to avoid all forms of reductionism – both the reduction to essences and reduction to text”. In this view, place is conceptualized as, “a territorialized assemblage, defined by connections rather than essences... place is a dynamic ensemble of people and environment that is at once material and experiential, spatial and social” (Dovey, 2010, 7). Dovey (2010, 16) has ignored a binary opposition between materiality and expression by emphasizing that this relation is not dialectic; “assemblages are always at once both material and expressive”. An intensive multiplicity of place is similar to a cup of soup (Dovey, 2010), which has an overall flavour, changing gradually with the addition of new components. “A house, neighbourhood or city is an intensive multiplicity. When different people move in, new buildings

or rooms are added, the sense of the larger place changes" (Dovey, 2010, 27). Therefore, an intensive multiplicity of place is analyzable only by considering place as an assemblage, irreducible to its components. The methodology deployed in this article tries to avoid the decomposition of place into its individual, social and spatial components by appreciating place as a wholly merged assemblage of links and relations.

## METHODOLOGY

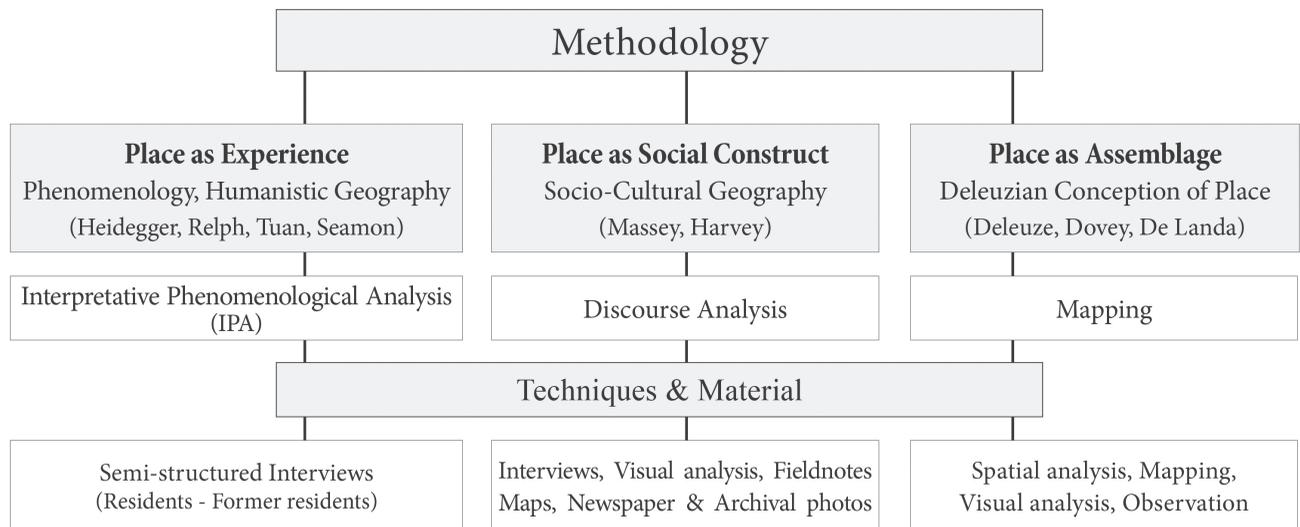
Regarding methodology, the paper attempts to expand and examine Dovey's (2008; 2010) proposed triangular methodology for case study analysis in practice.

According to Dovey (2010, 8); "Different methods, including interviews, observation, morphological mapping, discourse analysis and spatial syntax analysis, will prove useful in different contexts. In methodological terms, research on place is interdisciplinary and spans the humanities and social sciences" (p. 8). Dovey (2008; 2010) has mentioned three layers of investigation; places are at once phenomenologically experienced, discursively constructed and spatially structured. Therefore, a holistic analysis of any kind of place and its formation requires a combination of the three interrelated methodologies; phenomenology, discourse analysis and spatial analysis. Although Dovey (2010) has emphasized on the context-dependent and interdisciplinary notion of place studies and mentioned various adjustable techniques, he has not clarified how these different methods and techniques can be combined in practice.

While "place as assemblage" has been theorized in 2010 as a novel approach towards place, only a few scholars have tried to examine it in a real case study research, trying to put it into action, seeking for operational techniques (Dovey, Woodcock and Wood, 2009; Waghorn, 2011; Pafka, 2013). Consequently, the theory is still suffering from a lack of actual techniques, clarifying how the three mentioned methodologies can be merged and support each other in order to create a new adjustable method for analyzing the becoming notion of place as an assemblage.

The used methods, objectives and techniques have shown with the schematic explanation for further connections (**Figure 1**). The phenomenological analysis aims to understand the individual's understanding of becoming in the case of their housing complex. While the context of the phenomenological study is the micro-scale of individual experiences, the context of social discourse analysis is the macro scale forces such as social/political/cultural powers and meanings attached to the complex. The spatial analysis aims to map the effects of both the micro and macro scale forces on the spatial formation and physical aspects of the case study. Mapping has been used as a technique for analysis and illustrating the various effects of both internal and external forces on the spatial formation of the complex.

As stated by Dovey (2010), the Deleuzian approach toward place; titled as "place as assemblage", is able to encompass the three mentioned methods in order to establish a framework for a comprehensive place analysis. The deployed methodology is an attempt to clarify how the phenomenological concepts of meaning, sense and behavior are formed and transformed by the socio-political forces of war, revolution and religion. Furthermore, how this transformation of meanings and senses of place affect the spatial qualities and physical characteristics of it. Over again, the physical changes



**Figure 1.** Methodological framework for studies on "place as assemblage"

became into new forces, changing the individual's experience of place and raising new socio-political forces of change. This is the story of "becoming", rhizomatic changes in essence, with no beginning and no end. Merging tangible and intangible, shattering dualities and binaries.

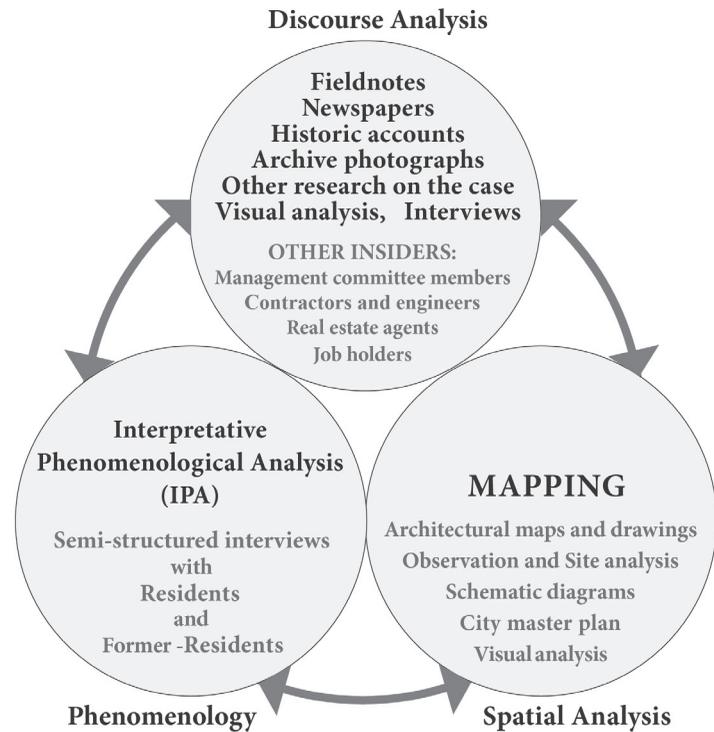
It is understood from Dovey's (2010) explanation that there should be a hierarchical order; at first, introverted phenomenological analyses of "place as an experienced", which paves the way for deeper research on the extroverted and social construction of "place as social construct". Finally, the results of the aforementioned methodological sections, making it possible to study on the whole spatial construction of "place as an assemblage"; a network of relations between individual, social and physical components of "place". However, in practice, various relations rise, merge and intertwine amongst the methodological sections, and there should be a bi-directional backward-forwards movement, similar to a constant dialogue between the interrelated phases of research. There is no hierarchy or priority in between, each section has its own context, scale, and target. The results of one are followed and traced in the others. Since the interrelated results are interwoven, complementary and explore the processual becoming notion of place, it is impossible to examine the results separately. Therefore, the linear explanation or fragmented divisions of the results is replaced by the non-linear story of the case, divided into nine sequences, which explain the main and major forces of becoming based on time-events, extroverted large-scale forces and introverted transformation of the residents' social status.

**Figure 2** is a schematic diagram showing the triangular methodology and techniques used in the present research.

The following explains the way in which, the three mentioned methods have been applied to the case study, explaining techniques, materials and target groups.

#### **Phenomenological Reading: Individuals' Experience of Residents**

In order to capture an individual's experience of place in their real everyday life, in-depth interviews were conducted and analyzed based



**Figure 2.** Target groups and techniques; inter-relations in nonlinear triangular methodology for studies on “place as assemblage”

on Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). In order to identify as many different perspectives as possible, the snowball sampling technique was used for the pilot study on interviewees and the final selection of the participants was based on participants’ length of residency, age, gender and their residential blocks. Interviews were initiated with 13 current residents of the complex, who then also introduced the authors to five former residents. A total number of 18 interviews were conducted in order to understand the extent to which people are aware of changes in and the stability of the housing complex and the way in which they experience and describe the becoming notion of a residential complex. They were also asked to discuss the forces which they felt affected their housing complex and the way in which residents have reacted against these forces. **Table 1** is the demographic description of those residents who participated in the interviews.

### **Social Discourse Analysis: Socially Constructed Aspects of a Housing Complex**

Based on Massey’s (1991) theory of, “A global sense of place”, which appreciates the socially constructed aspects of place formation, the discursive analysis attempts to understand how the housing complex is formed and transformed under the effects of extroverted links, forces, connections and relations. Morphological changes of the urban fabric surrounding the complex, changes in the social status of the residents, political forces posed by the state, changes decided by the management committee and also the transformation of the public mental image, have been the main focuses of discursive analysis. Narratives and memories of residents derived from interviews along with new interviews with outsiders, archive photographs, historical accounts, news, other research on

Participants	Number	Age (years)	Length of Residency (years)	Gender F/M	Marital Status	Block Number	Floor Number	Housing Status	Choice of residency
Resident (R)	13	70	25	F	M	5	2	own	voluntary
		45	23	F	Single Mother	7	4	own	voluntary
		40	25	F	S	3	2	own	voluntary
		20	20	M	S	7	4	own	non-voluntary
		40	10	F	Single Mother	10	7	rent	voluntary
		35	7	F	M	9	9	rent	non-voluntary
		39	4	M	S	10	4	rent	non-voluntary
		72	12	M	M	4	9	rent	voluntary
		65	4	F	M	10	4	rent	voluntary
		75	31	F	M	2	5	own	voluntary
		68	29	M	M	6	10	rent	voluntary
		71	33	F	M	1	8	own	voluntary
		55	18	F	Single Mother	1	1	rent	non-voluntary
Former Resident (FR)	5	36	11	F	M	9	6	own	voluntary
		37	15	F	M	5	2	rent	non-voluntary
		65	25	M	M	8	3	own	voluntary
		29	3	F	S	11	9	rent	voluntary
		22	11	M	S	4	3	rent	non-voluntary
Total	18	<30: 3 30-60: 8 60<: 7	<10: 5 10-20: 6 20<: 8	F: 12 M: 6	S: 5 M: 10 SM: 3			rent: 10 own: 8	voluntary: 12 non-voluntary: 6

**Table 1.** Demographic description of the participants (residents)

the case study and architectural maps of the complex, were investigated in the discursive analysis.

Current and former residents were asked to nominate other actors who had been involved - or were highly familiar with the process of complex formation. A total number of ten interviews have been conducted with other agents:

1. Real estate agents, who can provide detailed and valuable information about the social transformation of residents and the periodical changes in the value of the apartments and the land.
2. Contractors and engineers, who have been involved with the complex from its inception provide essential knowledge about the urban context before the existence of the complex, and initial decisions made by investors, designers and policymakers at the beginning.
3. Job holders who work inside the complex, who are observing the becoming process of the complex, day by day, although they are not resident in the complex.
4. Management committee members, who are not only aware of the current problems and the socio-cultural status of the residents but also are actively involved with the becoming process of the complex through their administrative decisions.

**Table 2** shows the demographic description of participants, explaining their role, the length of time they have been familiar with the complex and whether or not they are residents of the complex.

### **Spatial Analysis: Mapping a Housing Complex and the Network of Socio-Spatially Structured Form**

Spatial analysis approaches place as a network of socio-spatially structured and ordered form. Instead of reducing place to a text or searching for an essence, Dovey (2010) proposes mapping as a key method for extracting connectivities, rather than stable territories. According to Corner (1999,

Participants	Number	Description	Length of Involvement	Residency
Job Holders	4	Barber	25	Former Resident
		Security Guard	30	Non Resident
		Grocer	28	Resident
		Architect	5	Non Resident
Project Contractors	3	Civil Engineer	40	Non Resident
		Mechanical Engineer	38	Non Resident
		Project Manager	40	Non Resident
Real Estate Agents	2	Located inside the complex	25	Resident
		Located nearby the complex	20	Non Resident
Management Committee Member	1	The head of Committee (2012-2014)	2	Non Resident

Table 2. Demographic description of the participants (other insiders)

225), mapping is a process of “digging, finding and exposing on one hand, and relating, connecting and structuring on the other.” That is why it is suitable for analyzing the changing notion of processual becoming of place. Mapping is chosen as an innovative method for revealing the hidden relations and potentials of the case study.

Like assemblage, mapping is discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), not as a method for describing a fixed entity, but as a rhizomatic and pragmatic attempt to unfold the process of formation-transformation-reformation of place. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987, 12-13), in contrast to tracing, which is a passive abstraction of what is already known, mapping is an active, systematic, analytical and creative act, in search of a hidden network of interactions between forces in time; it is not backward-looking, but it tries to understand how the place might act and change in the future (Corner, 1999; Dovey, 2010). Rather than only describing how things are, mapping is in search of how things work, act, evolve and transform. As stated by Corner (1999, 228), “Mapping entails processes of gathering, working, reworking, assembling, relating, revealing, sifting and speculating”. According to Vaughan et al. (2011, 268), “A simple term such as ‘map’, which can be both a verb and a noun, is understood quite differently by an artist, an architect, a geographer or digital visualizer”. Mapping acts instrumentally and enables us to focus on both the micro and macro scales (Waghorn, 2011). Therefore, it is a suitable technique for analyzing the temporal process of becoming and relations between the spatial configurations and sociocultural forces of place. A variety of materials derived from the phenomenological and social discourse analysis -plans, diagrams, notes, pictures, visualized narratives, historical accounts and memories- have been merged in order to map the various aspects of becoming.

### CASE STUDY ANALYSIS: MORTAFA HOUSING AND THE PROCESS OF BECOMING

There has always been a theoretical bond between the concepts of “place” and “home” (Dayaratne and Kellett, 2008). This conceptual linkage is rooted in the work of the humanistic geographers, who have discussed the aspects of “home” as a core issue of the phenomenological reading of

“place” (Habraken, 1972; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Canter, 1977). Within the numerous types of “home”, the mass-housing complex has been chosen as an adequate scale for the case study analysis, since it is the more independent type of neighbourhood, more legible in terms of form and boundaries and also appropriate for investigating the network of various socio-cultural relations. However, the becoming notion of mass-housing is overly slippery to be mapped. In the case of the Mortafa Housing complex, mapping is used in the search to uncover unseen realities and unfolding unimagined potentials. It is concerned with more than just what appears on the surface and moves beyond what already exists.

This section explains the main forces of becoming in nine sequences based on time-events, starting from the very first days of the complex’s construction, continues through the four decades of its lifetime and ends with the current status of the complex. Each sequence is focused on the extroverted large-scale forces and various introverted transformations and is supported by diagrams and maps as well as direct quotes from the interviews. The following paragraph is an example of what can be derived from the case study analysis by considering the becoming notion of the place as assemblage:

A regime has changed in Iran in 1978 (Political), Islamic religious beliefs became appreciated (Cultural), society started to change the social appearance of public places (Social), the open pool and night gathering of the complex is omitted from the original plans (Program), residents have lost their center of social activities (Feelings), they recognized the main vehicle road as a new zone for their social activities (Behavior), the management committee has blocked the road and changed its direction (Physical), residents’ presence at the new center supported the markets nearby the road (Behavior), the blocks facing the new center become more valuable (Values), the flat rent increased rapidly in these blocks (Economical), the social class of the residents in these blocks changed to upper-middle-class families (Socio-economical) and in this way the rhizomatic changes continuous from one context to another.

### **Social Beliefs and the Early Signs of Becoming (1974-1978)**

The becoming notion of place has been monitored by citizens from the very first days of the project. According to a few senior residents, who remember the construction period of the complex in 1974-1980, the steel structure of the project was an attractive symbol of a new era. While no one was clearly aware of the truth about the huge structure, which was becoming a myth, everybody knew that something was happening or changing in the western suburb of the city.

“... The structure was so high that it could be seen by almost everybody, the average height of buildings was not more than two storeys at that time. Although the structure was at some distance from the city, you could see it from every street. I don’t know if its name was originally Mortafa [means high-rise in the Persian language] or they named it because everybody was calling it as Mortafa.” (Senior Resident)

Both the discourse analysis and interviews with the residents demonstrate that the very first impression of the majority of the locals towards this high-rise construction could be described as excited, proud and full of admiration. The structure was also a sign, defining and clarifying the direction of the city’s development in the future.



**Figure 3.** Above: View of the project located in the distance from the city, (Private archive; Navid Contractor Company, 1978). Below: Mortafa housing complex, street view, (Authors, 2014)

The starting moment of the construction was the beginning of the surge in land prices around the site. Not only did the whole area start to become different physically, but also locals became socially involved in this transformation. Therefore, while the project's visual image was only a few high columns of steel, the basic requirements for the formation of a public mental image started to form through the narratives and rumours:

“... There were rumours about the company and the contractors; no one believed that Iranians were capable of such a high project. I believed that it was a German work of art. They had designed several buildings in this city when I was a kid. There were even debates about the future residents of the complex; some people said that Americans or Germans were going to live there.” (Real-estate agent)

While the project's main client, “Astan Quds Razavi” represented the well-known religious establishment of the city, the locals tried to make the project mysterious and mythical by emphasizing and exaggerating about the role of foreigners in it, as a symbol of modernity. Surprisingly, a review of the local newspaper shows that the rumours were not limited to that particular time; recently, in 2013, the head of the management committee of the complex claimed that the project was designed by an Italian and a French company. He also stated that beneath the high-rise blocks there is a large hidden survival shelter for natural disasters and war bombings, capable of hosting all the residents (Karami, 2013). This statement has been

rejected by the project's mechanical engineer, who has been interviewed for the present study:

"... There was no war at the time and no one special was supposed to live there. This was only a speculation..."

This false information has been published in the city's newspaper, "Shahrara" and shows the lack of accurate information about the history of the complex, even among the current management committee members. In reality, the complex was designed by Dr. Ali Adibi Consulting Engineering Company, which is an Iranian firm and it was built by two main Iranian civil consulting engineering companies of that time; Navid and Mahsaz.

### Political Forces of Becoming: Iran's Islamic Revolution (1978)

In 1978, the whole country was caught up in the revolutionary atmosphere. As stated by Sepehrdoust (2013), two years after the Islamic revolution and due to the high rate of inflation, the housing market transformed into the most valuable investment in Iran. Meanwhile, the anti-imperialist revolution aimed to change the public's view of modernity and all signs of Westernization, including wearing ties, sitting on sofas and, of course, living a consumer/luxury life. Therefore, the high-rise apartments with their shiny red facades became a symbol of the Western lifestyle. This shift in the public's belief was supported by the state and was strengthened by promises of land ownership, which encouraged the lower-income classes to raise their voice according to their new civil rights. As a result, a large number of rural and poor people occupied the Mortafa Housing complex project illegally, dwelled in the luxury, but unfinished apartments, and transforming the gardens into their farmyards, whilst the country was suffering from the chaos and anarchy of the post-revolutionary era. **Figure 4** is the front page image of Iran's best-known newspaper, promising free lands to all Iranians.

### From High-Rise and Luxury Apartments to Farm; Unexpected Forces of Becoming (1979-1980)

There are many local stories and beliefs about the occupation of the Mortafa Housing complex by poor and rural people. Participants told stories about how the illegal occupiers were using the elevators to transport their sheep and goats upstairs to keep them on their balconies, and how the



**Figure 4.** Keyhan newspaper front page headline (19.12.1979): "Do not Buy a House; We Will Make Everybody a House-Owner". (Keyhan Newspaper archive, 1979)

large luxury bathrooms were transformed into barns. This is the significant point in the history of the project, and it changed the planned and estimated becoming process of the project towards an unpredictable future.

“... I heard that the whole complex and its garden had become a large farm! Rural people started to ruin everything; while the contractors were trying to push them out, they took out all the installations inside the units, whatever they could take for themselves or easily sell on the market.”  
(Senior resident, age 75, length of residency: 31 years)

Some of the interviewees believe that the complex was illegally occupied for two years while the study shows that it took less than one year for the project's owner to evacuate the complex with the help of the military. Consequently, it took more than a year for the contractors to clean up the mess and damage, renovating the units and finalizing the uncompleted parts.

The majority of the units were pre-sold, and finally, in 1980, the first owners were permitted to move into their units. Although the complex was located at some distance from the city, and not completed as luxury as it was planned initially, the value of the apartments had still been far more than that of the detached houses in the city. Also, the public image of the project changed due to the rapid socio-cultural changes which took place following the Islamic revolution. Meanwhile, due to the dramatic inflation rate of Iran's currency, the Rial, people were not in a position to predict their own financial status. The result of the study shows that many apartments remained empty because the investors and initial owners were unable to sell or rent their units. Along with the economic and cultural concerns, safety became the main concern after the war started between Iran and Iraq in 1980.

#### **Iran-Iraq War and the Social Influences on the Becoming of the Complex (1980-1988)**

As a result of countless air raids during the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), people were reluctant to take the risk of living in high-rise apartments, which were at some distance from the city and a target for Iraq's air force. Also, they were hesitant to show their wealth by living in a luxury complex while the war was ongoing. Although Iraq's air force did not bomb Mashhad, nevertheless, the value of the apartments gradually decreased on account of the aforementioned reasons, many of the owners, who moved out, were forced to leave them empty. The results show that it took a decade for the first residents of the complex to resume their normal lives, this only happened when the two sociocultural and physical changes occurred. Firstly, the price of the units decreased so much that the middle-classes were able to buy them. Secondly, the physical borders of the city developed and extended so much that the complex became part of the city. **Figure 5** is a schematic time-event map, illustrating the main sociopolitical forces and events affected the becoming process of the Mortafa Housing complex over the last four decades.

#### **New Ideologies; Changes in Meanings, Activities and Physical Appearance**

As previously explained, the Islamic Revolution and the war were the two main forces, reshaping Iranian's social, economic and political status. All the large-scale projects in the country were affected by ideological changes and the lack of finance. The second phase of the Mortafa Housing complex, which was as large as the first phase, was cancelled and changes were

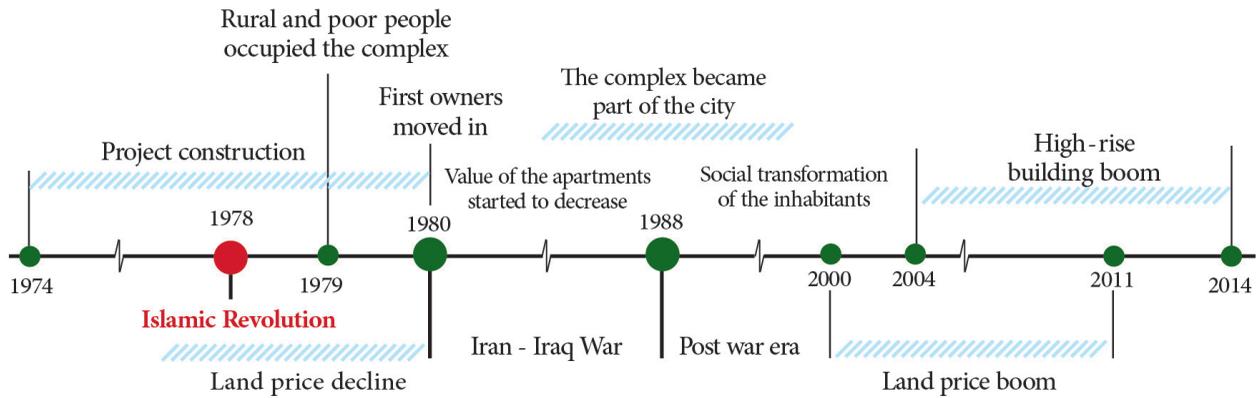


Figure 5. Schematic time-event Map for the main socio-political forces

posed in the original plans, by the state and the new Islamic culture. Since these changes affected the meanings, activities and physical characteristics of the place, they should be considered in analyzing the notion of becoming in the case of Mortafa Housing complex. Moreover, analysis of the forces which brought about the aforementioned changes will unfold the assemblage notion of place and clarify the inter-relationship between the socio-cultural, political and physical aspects of the place.

The main change was the removal of public spaces, in which activities could take place which were assumed to not be in keeping with the Islamic



Figure 6. Original site plan of the complex (Ali Adibi Consulting Engineering Company, 1974)

culture, from the original plans; places such as open gathering spaces, swimming pools, open solarium, ice skating, gym, open bar and even lobbies of the blocks were all erased from the original plans. As is shown in **Figure 6** and **Figure 7**, a mosque has been added to one of the block's hallway and the leisure zone, located in the northern part of the complex, which could acts as a neighbourhood centre, was also completely removed. The blocks' hallways were also amended as commercial spaces in order to increase the earnings of the complex. These modifications in programs and activities created other changes posed by residents.

### The Residents' Reaction Towards the Posed Changes

Whilst the behaviour of the residents posed some physical changes to the complex, there was also some resistance. In an interview with the local newspaper, the lack of adequate finance was identified by the committee members as the main obstacle in respect of renovating the mechanical heating systems and the block's facades (Askari, 2011; Ghasemi, 2010). There is a strong debate between residents; senior residents remembered the bright red colour of the facade as providing the "identity" of the complex and they believe that the material, colour and texture of the facades are the main characteristics, which should be kept as they have been during the last 35 years. On the other hand, the majority of the new residents disagree and believe that the renovation will re-identify the complex in a positive way.

**Figure 7.** Mapping the posed changes and also those changes created by the resistance of the residents. (Current Site Plan of the Complex, 2014, Ali Adibi Consulting Engineering Company, Edited by the Authors, 2014)

**Figure 7** is a map showing the changes posed to the original plan and the changes brought about by the reaction of the residents. As is shown, the activities and behaviour of residents gradually forced the management



committee to block the main road between the northern and southern parts of the complex. Therefore, the central driving road was transformed into a pedestrian road, which also acted as a semi-private gathering node. Inescapably, the vehicular link between the eastern and western parts of the complex has relocated to the northern edge of the complex. Finally, the residents succeeded in transforming the central road into their neighbourhood centre. The present study shows that this area has become the most sustainable and active heart of the complex over a period of more than two decades. Children can be found playing on the road, riding bicycles and skating, elders like to sit on the benches facing the road in the afternoons, and young couples are usually jogging there in the mornings. This informal road-plaza has been described as the most memorable, unforgettable and enjoyable place of the complex by former residents, who were interviewed for this study.

As the vehicle road transformed into the activity centre of the complex, the aforementioned behaviour of the residents created other changes in the function and programme of the places, which were spatially connected to the road. As is shown in **Figure 7**, there are four commercial zones in the complex. The two in the middle support the central road-plaza spatially. While the other zones have lost their value and have been altered several times by new tenants, these two zones in the middle have achieved their maximum capacity of economic and cultural sustainability. Shops, such as two daily markets, a grocery store, a taxi station, a barbershop and a real estate agency, all facing the road-plaza have survived for more than 25 years; some have not even changed since the complex was constructed.

#### **Becoming Attached to the Complex; High Sense of Place-Attachment and Low Rate of Mobility (1988-2000)**

The degree of “mobility” is a strong indicator of the feeling of residents in respect of their housing complex. According to Korteweg (1987), “mobility” can be interpreted as both the reason and the result of the main problems assigned to high-rise housing complexes. “A high mobility rate can affect the social climate, the physical characteristics, and the management of housing” (Korteweg, 1987, 29). Conversely, however, he also explains that a low rate of mobility cannot always be a sign of a high rate of user satisfaction.

In the case of the Mortafa Housing complex, a high rate of place-attachment and a low rate of mobility has altered the population structure of the complex into housing for seniors. The information derived from interviews demonstrates that the majority of the residents prefer to stay in the complex for, at least, another five years, despite the fact that they are constantly complaining about the old mechanical heating system or the poor communal services. The results of a similar study on four housing complexes in the city of Mashhad have demonstrated the highest level of social participation, place attachment, sense of belonging and feeling of security in the case of the Mortafa Housing complex (Mahdavinejad and Rashti, 2013). The main reasons for these results derived from interviews are as follows:

1- Residents are pleased with their communal life, place identity and their social bond with their neighbours and job-holders. Various types of informal communities have been established throughout the long lifetime of the project. As Cited in Hargreaves (2004, 50), “the sense of belonging to a group or community may not refer to the geographic features of

place at all, instead, common interests can provide a foundation on which association and identity are established" (Dunham, 1986).

2- The complex is now located in the heart of the city and connected to the main axes; residents prefer to live in an old apartment in the wealthy parts of the city rather than move into a newer or bigger house in the suburbs.

3- Rental fees for the apartments are now less than the average rent in the surrounding area.

4- Plan types ranging from 1 to 3 bedrooms offer the opportunity of moving to smaller or bigger units within the complex, without changing the neighbourhood. Therefore, as was explained by the real estate managers who were interviewed for this study, the rate of internal mobility in Mortafa Housing complex is much higher than in similar mass-housing projects nearby.

5- Safety, calmness and the rich green areas are further reasons for a strong, well-developed sense of neighbourhood, and therefore, strong place-attachment. Many of the participants mentioned the rich greenery and the views of the fruit gardens surrounding the complex as the main reason for their place attachment.

While a strong sense of place and place attachment are normally viewed as positive, some disadvantages were also mentioned by the new residents. Residents who have moved into the complex in the past eight years declare that the majority of the neighbours have simply become used to the serious problems, such as an ageing facade, dirty garbage repositories, deformed pedestrian roads, the lack of play equipment for children, the cooling and heating problems and the unsafe elevators. The newer residents stated that they feel unable to make changes and move forward because the senior residents are relatively unaware of the chronic problems within the complex. Moreover, strong place attachment, which is more understandable in the case of the more senior residents, has transformed the age-class of the complex into a senior-friendly housing, more suited to the retired and the elderly. Real estate managers have confirmed that there are lots of requests to rent the flats by elder people. Statements made by a variety of different users are as follows:

"... It is becoming a nursing home. I don't mean that in a bad way, but we should face the reality of what is happening. They have different needs, but so do we." (Student, age: 35, length of residency: 7 years)

"... Of course, older people are more comfortable in this complex. I mean the social services are awful here, but who can live with this kind of garden in this part of the city? In our age, we need the sunshine and the flowers more than before." (Job holder (barber), age: 50, tenant for 20 years)

"... I have been in this complex for thirty years; I know many people who have grown old here. We know each other, and we visit each other every evening. We are like families to each other." (Senior resident, age 71, length of residency: 33 years)

"... We cannot force the children to play in restricted zones; I know that they are shouting and making a noise but what else can we do? They [elders] should be glad to see the children playing." (Single mom, age 45, length of residency: 23 years)

#### **Urban Growth and Spatial Forces of Changes (2000-2014)**

There were two main characteristics attached to the Mortafa Housing Complex: being high-rise and being luxurious. From the year 2000 until

now, the two mentioned characteristics of the complex have noticeably changed, due to the new boom of high-rise building development in the district and also problems raised by the ageing complex.

High-rise buildings are only high-rise in comparison with their surroundings. When the nearby built environment becomes higher, then the height of the building is decreased in the eye of the observer. This is exactly what has happened to the Mortafa Housing Complex. While the context was becoming higher every year, the eleven-storey blocks of the Mortafa Housing Complex seemed to become shorter. Finally, and due to the recent growth of high-rise buildings in the city, the Mortafa Housing Complex has lost its title as the tallest building in the city. The location of further high-rise zones nearby the complex in the city's master plan depicts that these further developments will ultimately dwarf the complex.

**Figure 8** maps the speed and direction of the city's urban growth over the last four decades. As is shown, the project was originally constructed out of the borders of the city. Over time, the city has spread from the old city centre around the *Imam Reza Shrine* towards the North-East. Therefore the Mortafa Housing Complex is now located in the new centre of the city. The **Figure 8** also shows the three high-rise zones of the city's master plan and the location of the complex in the middle zone.

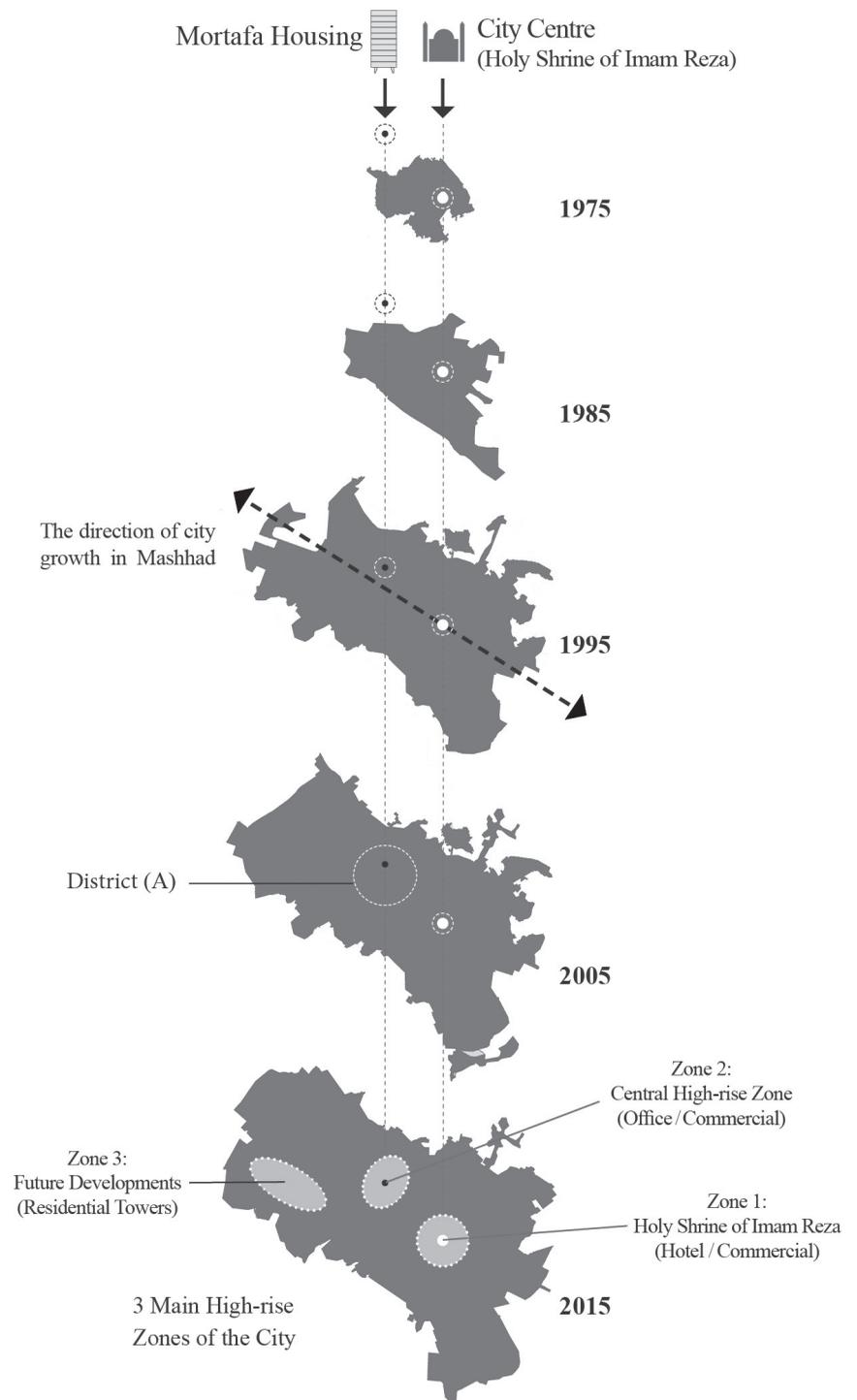
**Figure 9(a)** is a schematic sectional map, comparing the height of the Mortafa Housing complex with the average height of the city's buildings in the past four decades. It also illustrates the city's urban growth towards the complex. **Figure 9(b)** shows the future of the city's skyline in 2025 and the location of the Mortafa Housing complex within the central high-rise zone of the city.

Aside from the contemporary high-rise buildings and empty land nearby, large gardens surrounding the complex have been drained, and valuable old trees have been pulled out in the last few years in order to prepare the land ready for future high-rise constructions. **Figure 10** shows how the complex is surrounded by empty land, which is the site for the construction of the highest towers in the city.

### **From Luxury to Low-Income: Social Forces of Change**

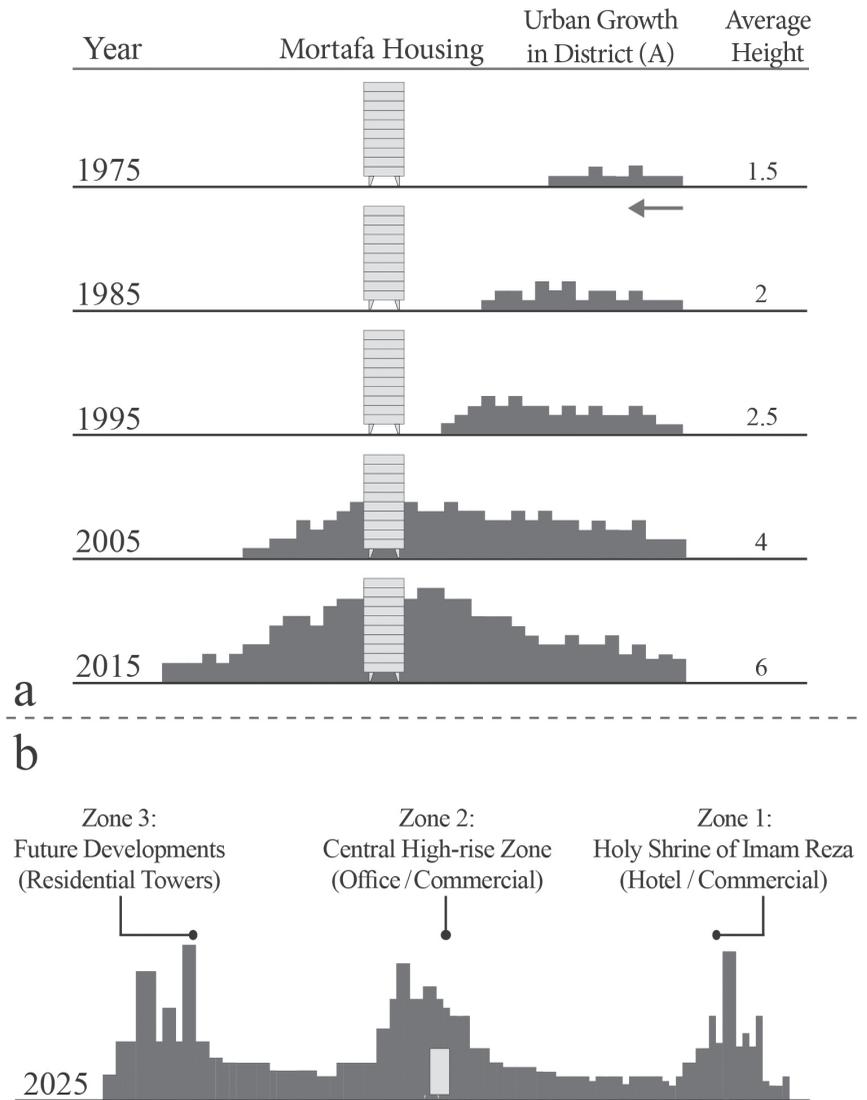
The shift from high to low-income families is the most vivid social transformation in the complex. This process is still ongoing, and it is accelerating. The social class of the residents has a direct relation with the value of the apartments and the physical characteristics of the complex. The whole complex has lost much of its physical and social value. Luxury flats from the 70's cannot be described as a luxury today, not only because the flats have become old and outdated, but also because of the social transformation of their residents. **Figure 11(a)** is a schematic map which compares the value of a double bedroom (112 m<sup>2</sup>) apartment from the Mortafa Housing complex with a detached house (250 m<sup>2</sup>) in the proximity of the complex over the past four decades. While the unit's value was equal to the value of two detached houses in the 70's, today, one single detached house is worth almost as much as three apartments, which means the value of the flats in the complex has dropped six times. In the words of a real estate agent, who has retained his office inside the complex for 25 years:

"10 years from now, there will be no free land around the complex; this will increase the land prices, but the Mortafa Housing complex will be 50 years old in 2025, and therefore, the apartment's value will decrease dramatically."



**Figure 8.** Schematic map; mapping the urban growth of the city, the location of Mortafa housing complex throughout the last four decades and the three high-rise zones of the city

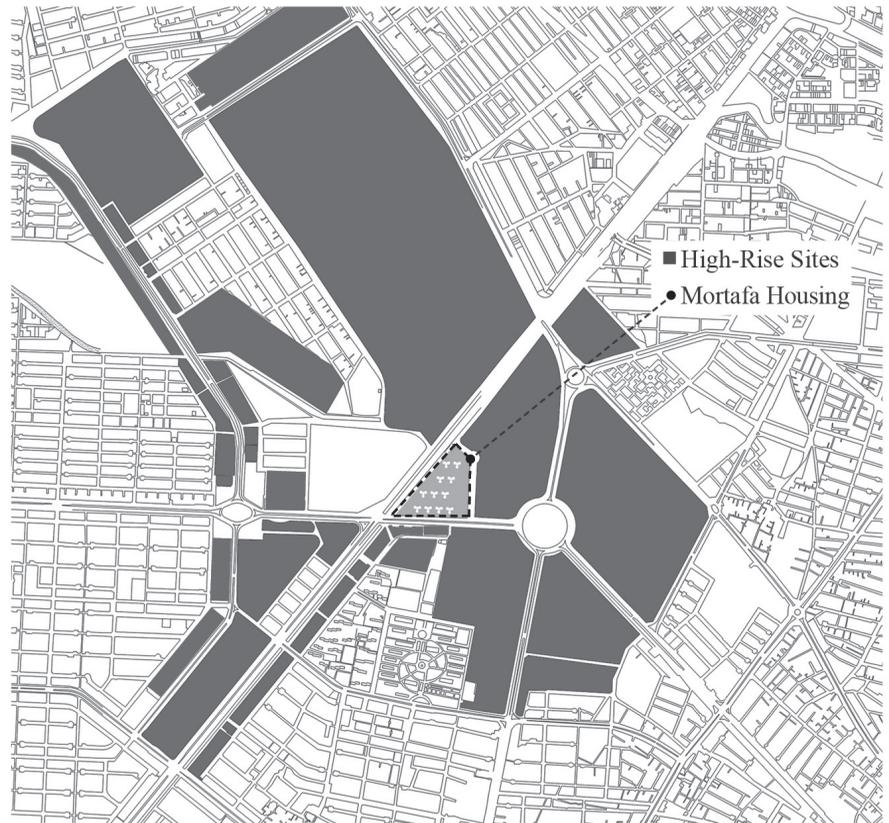
As a result, the two main characteristics of the complex, (being high-rise and being luxurious), which formed and sustained the former identity of the complex, have now changed on account of the aforementioned forces of becoming. In the process of becoming, there is no control over the power of “time”, which changes all tangible and intangible aspects of a place as an assemblage.



**Figure 9.** Schematic map: a) Mapping four decades of vertical and horizontal urban growth in the district (A). b) Map for anticipated city skyline in 2025 and the location of the Mortafa housing complex in the central high-rise zone

## CONCLUSION

The notion of becoming in the case of Mortafa Housing Complex has been explored in this study, based on the Deleuzian ontology of “becoming-in-the-world” and Dovey’s theory of “place as assemblage”, place as a three-folded assemblage, which is individually experienced, socially constructed and spatially structured. Dovey (2008; 2010) has discussed the methodological aspects of the new conception of “place as assemblage”; places are at once phenomenologically experienced, discursively constructed and also spatially structured. Therefore, a holistic analysis of any kind of place formation requires a combination of three interrelated methodologies; phenomenology, discourse analysis, and spatial analysis. Trying to develop Dovey’s (2010) triangular methodology, the study proposes a nonlinear case-dependent design of data collection techniques, which is focused on the process of becoming, itself. The aim was to clarify how the individual, social and spatial aspects of a place are intertwined, and how the becoming process of a place can arise challenges with its context. Mapping has been designed as an innovative technique and

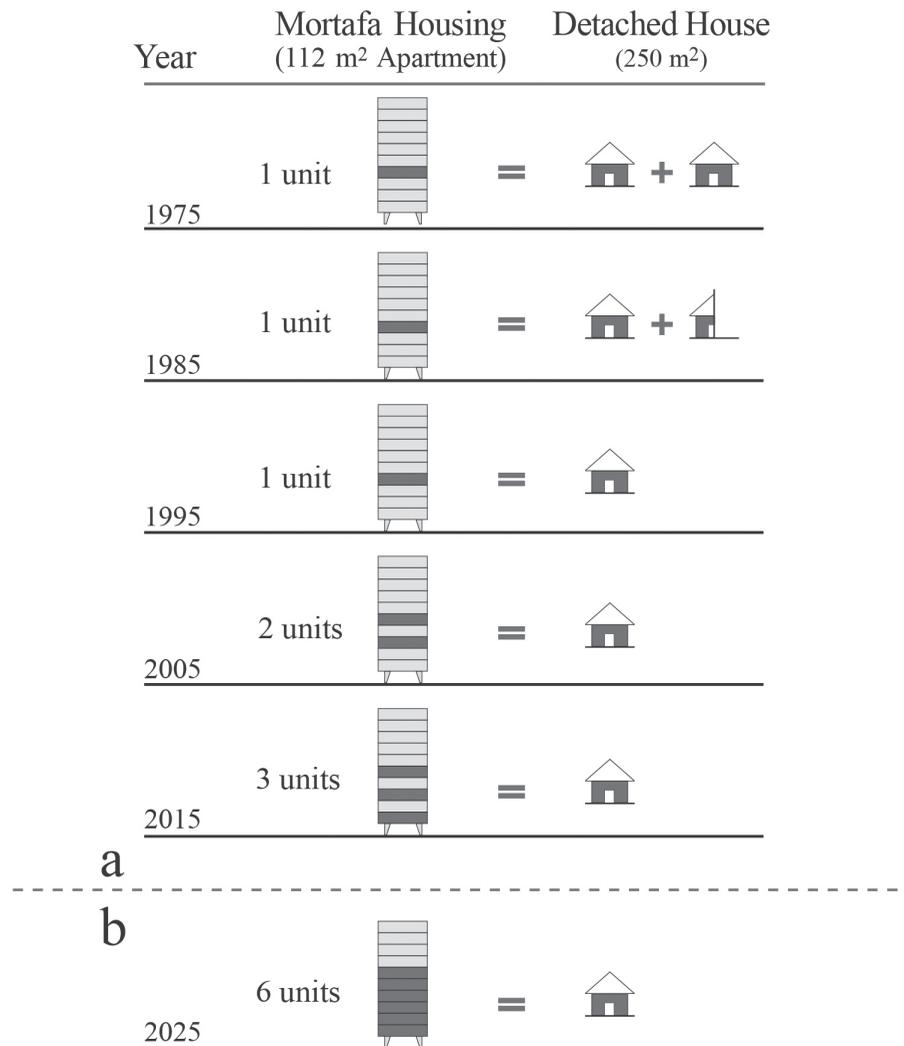


**Figure 10.** Mapping the central high-rise zone of the city: the existing and forthcoming high-rise sites surrounding the Mortafa housing complex

schematic diagrams are created in order to encompass and illustrate multi-scalar results derived from the research.

The result of the study shows that the Mortafa Housing Complex has transformed from a suburban, luxurious and modern complex to an old block of apartments in the centre of the city for people on low incomes. However, this is not the only transformation, various transformations have accrued during the long life of the complex; political transformation of the state, social class transformation of the residents, transformation of the religious beliefs after the Islamic revolution, urban transformation of the context from the suburb to the town center, from low to high rise, gardens surrounding the complex are transforming to shopping malls, luxurious character of the complex is transforming to an old residential for elderly, physical appearance of the complex is changing to an outdated façade, transformation of meanings, feelings and senses of place, as a result of the changes in the public's mental image and et cetera. Moreover, all these transformations are affecting each other's process. That is why the Deleuzian ontology of "becoming" is emphasized in the research, since the concept of becoming is more comprehensive, covering all these constant changes and transformations.

By unfolding the network of interactions between rhizomatic forces over time, mapping provides a knowledge which supports understanding of the paradoxes between the complex and its context in the past, and how it might behave in the face of upcoming forces and new challenges in future. As can be seen from the mapping of the case study, the processes of becoming are ongoing in a paradoxical way between the Mortafa Housing Complex and its context. Therefore, it is predictable that the complex will



**figure 11.** a) Schematic map: the reduction of the value of the Mortafa housing apartments in comparison with a detached house in the district (A) over the last four decades. b): Predicting an apartment's value in 2025

face a decisional dead-end in the early future. The management committee is unable to finance the renovation of the physical appearance of the complex (2). The flats have been sold to individuals, the senior residents are strongly attached to their homes, and there is no way to convince them to consider demolishing the blocks and building a new complex. The state or municipality is also unable to take action to renovate or demolish the complex.

There are some methodological findings of the research trying to develop Dovey's (2010) proposed methodology in terms of possible techniques, visual diagrams and narratives. More importantly, the way that different methods have the potential to be encompassed via the assemblage theory. This research shows that any research on place can start even from the time that place was not established as it is today. In this sense, the paper is starting to analyze the case from the time when the complex was only a dream, a vague decision for the religious establishment who was the land owner. The study also shows that after 40 years, still the valuable data can be derived from the contractors, designers and decision-makers, who were there when the idea was being born. It also shows that the selection

2. In interviews with the local newspapers, the lack of adequate finance was identified by the committee members as the main obstacle in respect of renovating the mechanical heating systems and the block's facades (Askari, 2011; Ghasemi, 2010).

of participants in the studies on place can change the whole direction of the study. Variety of the participants in terms of their relationship with the place should be the main criteria for participant's selection. People experience places and express their feelings based on their individual's direct relations, so the former residents of the complex can tell us stories from other time sequences. Moreover, the job holders, who are not living in the complex, but have daily contact with the residents, are more comfortable in expressing their feelings about the social changes within the complex.

The Mortafa Housing Complex has been analyzed as an example of the first generation of Iran's detached large scale mass-housing projects, which are now struggling to be integrated, accepted and adopted by their new contexts. Decisions about the future of such complexes will become more valid by considering "places as assemblages" as being in a state of constant change, and conducting a similar analysis on the becoming processes of both complexes and their context.

This research has attempted to pave the way for further research on the assemblage notion of place by analyzing the becoming process, itself, through the context-dependent design of the methodology. The further research can be carried out in respect of seeking practical ways of decreasing the paradoxes between the mass-housing complexes and their constantly changing contexts, leading the processes of becoming towards a more sustainable setup or proposing strategies for overcoming or avoiding any possible impasses in the future.

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**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Becoming/oluş; toplu konut; fenomenoloji; asamblaj/ tekilliklerin kümelenmesi olarak yer; haritalama.

## TOPLU KONUT KOMPLEKSLERİNDE 'BECOMING/ OLUŞ' NOSYONU; MORTAFA KONUTLARI ÖRNEKLEMİ, MASHHAD, İRAN

'Yer' zaman içerisinde durdularak sınırlanamaz. Toplu konut kompleksleri ve kentsel bağlamları ise sürekli değişim durumunda oldukları için tamamlandıkları andan itibaren bile değişmeye devam ederler. Bu değişiklikler, farklı düzeylerde ve çeşitli etkenlerle kademelenerek ortaya çıkmaktadır. Deleuze tarafından ortaya atılan 'becoming-in-the-world' ya da 'dünyada oluşmak/ dönüşmek/ devinmek' kavramları üzerine kurulan ontolojiye göre, yerin 'asamblaj' ya da 'tekilliklerin kümelenmesi' olarak ele alındığı bu kuram, devinen bir değişime sahip olan dinamik bir kavrayış anlayışına dayanmaktadır. Yer, böylece, kişisel olarak deneyimlenen, sosyal olarak inşa edilen ve mekansal olarak yapılanan üç katmanlı bir tekillikler kümesi olarak kabul edilmektedir.

Bu çalışmada, İran'ın Mashhad kentinde bulunan, inşa edildiği yıllarda, modernitenin ve kentsel gelişimin sembolü olan ve o zamana göre en yüksek katlı lüks banliyö kompleksi olan Mortafa Konutları'nın sosyo-fiziksel özelliklerini kaybetmesi ve düşük gelirli kişiler, yalnız anneler ve yaşlılar için bir barınak haline dönüşmesi nedeniyle yaşanan becoming/ oluş sürecinin incelenmesi hedeflenmiştir. Uygulanan metodoloji, Dovey'in fenomenoloji, söylem analizi ve mekansal analiz yöntemlerini içeren üçlü/ karma metodolojisine dayanılarak geliştirilmiştir. Böylelikle, araştırma yer'e ilişkin üç önemli teori olan 'yerin fenomenolojisi', 'yerin küresel algısı' ve 'asamblaj olarak yer' üzerine yapılan kuramsal incelemeler üzerine temellendirilmiştir.

Araştırma, kuramları aynen kabullenmek yerine becoming/ oluş nosyonuna odaklanarak, yer'in asamblaj kavramına göre sorgulandığı ve sınırlı sayıda mevcut çalışmaya katkı sunmaya çalışmaktadır. İlave olarak, makale, seçilen örneklemin yaşam süresi boyunca oluşma sürecinin nasıl analiz edilebileceğini kavramak için Dovey'in üçlü metodolojisini uygulamaya çalışmıştır. Vaka inceleme analizi, bireylerin oluşum sürecine içeriden dahil olma deneyimleri, açıkça okunamayan sosyo-politik güçlerin süreci dışarıdan etkileme durumları, içe ve dışa dönük güçlerin konut kompleksinin mekansal yapısını etkileme biçimleri araştırılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, komplekste 'oluşan/dönüşen/devinen' çeşitli durumlar, haritalama tekniği ile görselleştirilerek ifade edilmiştir. Ayrıca çalışma, uygulanan metodolojinin, yer kavramındaki asamblaj nosyonunun gelecekteki diğer araştırmalarda kullanılma olasılığı ile izlenebilecek olan farklı yolları açabileceğini dile getirmektedir.

Makale, teorik olarak farklı ve paradoksal yaklaşımlara sahip olan araştırma yöntemlerini birlikte kullanmanın mümkün olduğunu göstermekte ve yer kavramında oluş nosyonu üzerine bütünsel bir değerlendirme sunmaktadır. Yer'in oluşum süreçlerinin Mortafa konut kompleksi ve bağlamı arasında süregelen paradoksal durum, vaka çalışmasının haritalanması yoluyla görsel olarak ifade edilmektedir. Kompleksin alınacak kararlarla bir çıkmazla karşı karşıya kalmasındaki kaçınılmazlık ise böylelikle tahmin edilebilir kılınmaktadır.

**THE NOTION OF BECOMING IN MASS-HOUSING COMPLEXES;  
THE CASE OF MORTAFA HOUSING, MASHHAD, IRAN (1)**

Places are not frozen in time, both mass-housing complexes and their urban contexts are in the state of constant becoming, they begin to change from the very moment they are completed. These changes happen gradually, due to various forces, and at different levels. Based on the Deleuzian ontology of, becoming-in-the-world, the theory of place as assemblage, explores a dynamic conception of place, which is in the state of constant becoming. Place is therefore considered as a three-folded assemblage, which is individually experienced, socially constructed and spatially structured.

The present paper aims to explore the process of becoming in the case of an Iranian mass-housing complex known as Mortafa Housing. The process by which this high-rise and luxurious suburban complex, which was the symbol of modernity and urban development, has lost its socio-physical characteristics and has been transformed into an aged residence for low-income, single mothers and seniors. The deployed methodology has been developed based on Dovey's triangular methodology of phenomenology, discourse analysis and spatial analysis. Therefore, the paper starts with a theoretical review of the three related theories on place; Phenomenology of place, Global sense of place and Place as assemblage.

The contribution of the study to the limited existing literature grounding the theory of place as assemblage, is to focus on the notion of becoming, itself, rather than take it for-granted. Furthermore, the paper attempts to develop Dovey's triangular methodology in order to understand how the process of becoming can be analyzed in the lifetime of a case. The case study analysis explores the ways in which individuals experience the process of becoming internally, how the hidden socio-political forces affect the process externally and how these introverted and extroverted forces affect the spatial construction of the complex. It also explains how the deployed methodology can pave the way for further research on the assemblage notion of place.

The paper demonstrates that it is possible to merge the methodologies, which have theoretically different or even paradoxical approaches toward place, and reveal a holistic assessment about the becoming notion of place. The mapping of the case study clarifies that the processes of becoming are ongoing in a paradoxical way between the Mortafa housing complex and its context. It can, therefore, be predicted that the complex will soon be faced with a decisional dead-end.

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