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Professional paper

OWNERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF *KAPIJIK*: A SPATIAL PHENOMENON IN TETOVO

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Abstract

Different religious and ethnic groups have lived and shaped the city of Tetovo for centuries. As a result, different social backgrounds are accepted as the cause of different spatial experiences and configurations.
The gardens of the houses, which are private spaces yet also open to public activities, present us with a different definition and experience of space.
This article explores the relationship between space and people. Consequently, we record the human experience of space and the significance of social traces in space as crucial concepts. Based on interviews with city inhabitants, the experience in the space within the element of the kapijik creates an intermediate space between private and public. The experiences of the people are recorded from interviews with individuals living in the city of Tetovo, who are or were users of the kapijik. Such experiences are essential for fulfilling fundamental human needs, particularly those related to a sense of belonging and safety within the neighbourhood context.
Ownership plays a key role in the discussion. Kapijik enabled people to stay in communication without emphasizing their differences. The presence or absence of a kapijik is a personal decision by garden owners. While practical reasons occasionally guide its construction, collective moral values primarily guide its existence.

Keywords: Tetovo, kapijik, spatial configuration, experience, phenomenon.

1. Introduction

Organic cities consistently attract the attention of researchers, as they effectively reflect the lifestyle of their inhabitants. The kapjik was created during the city's organic period, but it affects how the city is perceived. Documenting and reading social traces have led to a deeper understanding of how it organizes people and their lives in space. Architects' research reflects phenomenologists' interest in the space experience. This research helps reveal the type of spatial experience that the kapijik provides. This article will solely discuss the concept of ownership.
What distinguishes this study is the presence of *kapijik*, small gates, which contribute a unique spatial and social dimension to the urban fabric. These elements offer information about patterns of pedestrian movement and the experiential qualities of the city. Originating from a period characterized by organic urban development, *kapijiks* played a significant role in the everyday lives of local inhabitants. Following World War II, the gradual erosion of the historical urban structure placed them at risk. Nevertheless, due to the incomplete implementation of modern urban plans, several *kapijiks* have endured, serving as tangible remnants of the city's pre-modern spatial organization.
A phenomenological analysis, shaped by our presence and merging temporal with spatial realities, will shed light on the stages *kapijiks* have undergone in Tetova, as conveyed through the narratives of those who lived there throughout history.
Although the city of Tetova is historically quite old, sources discussing its urban development are scarce. The first challenge of this research was the lack of maps depicting the city's development before 1937. Given Tetova's prominence in the region during the Ottoman Empire, it is reasonable to assume that documents illustrating the city's physical formation might exist.

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However, research conducted in the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul (Presidency of the Republic of Turkey, Directorate of State Archives) yielded only a few isolated records of individual buildings, detached from a broader urban context. Due to such existential limitations, the earliest map we were able to use as a reference is one obtained from the Tetova Municipality, dated 1937. We construct the dataset by documenting kapijiks, as no prior data on this topic exists.

A *kapijik* is a small gate located in the garden walls of homes belonging to Tetova residents (see Figure 1.1). Once documented, we are able to analyze how the *kapijik* network has influenced the spatial organization of the city and the meanings attributed to these spaces.

Figure 1.1: a), b) Kapijik, A.Limani**.**

The initial approach involved documenting the *kapijiks* found on site using a contemporary map. In addition to recording the kapijiks during the field visit, we also collected the residents' personal experiences and narratives about them. Based on these observations and accounts, a theoretical map of the organic period (1937) was drawn, and the positions of the *kapijiks* were mapped accordingly.

Throughout Tetova's entire urban development history, *kapijiks* have never been systematically documented. Various sources have only mentioned them as small gates that facilitate communication between neighbors (see Kojic, 1976). This raises questions about the potential impact *kapijiks* may have had on urban configuration and experience in space. Hence, the central aim of this research is to uncover the social traces that have shaped the city. It is important to note that the *kapijik* emerged not through planned interventions but as a spontaneous initiative by residents themselves.

To this day, several *kapijiks*, which have frequently shifted positions within parcels, have remained in use. Fieldwork to identify and record these *kapijiks* began on August 23, 2019. However, due to adverse weather conditions, work was paused during the winter months and could not resume until September 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of *kapijiks* per parcel varies depending on neighborly relationships and changes in parcel shapes

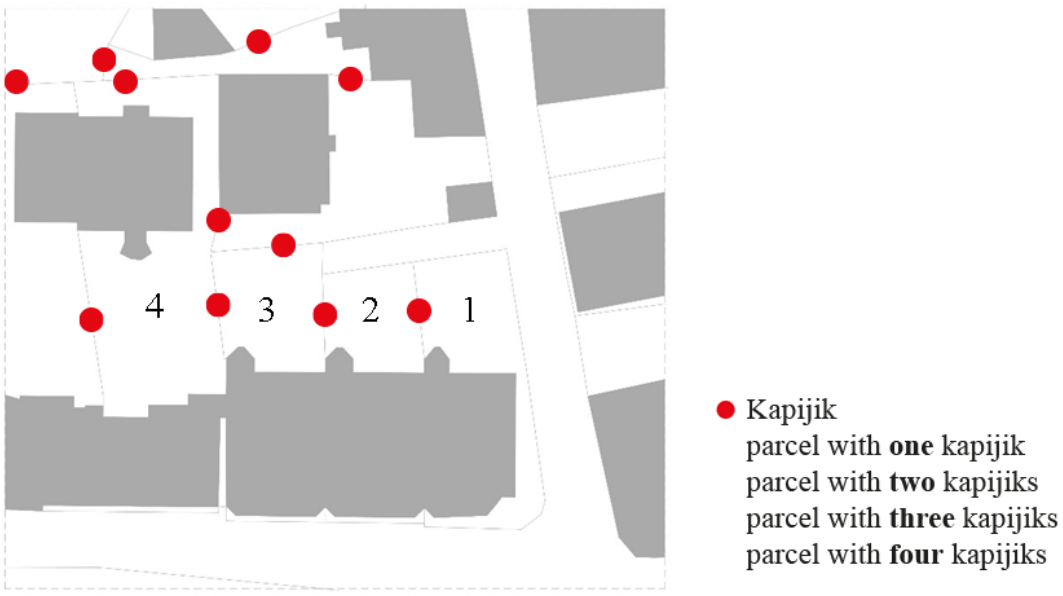

Figure 1.2: Photo shows number of kapijiks per parcel, A.Limani.

The existence of a *kapijik* is conditioned by the presence of a garden within the parcel. A single house may have several *kapijiks* (see Figure 1.2). Over time, parcels that have become fully built-up, reaching 100% construction coverage, have lost the *kapijik* element. Today, *kapijiks* can still be found in neighbourhoods that were not subjected to post–World War II urban redevelopment, as well as in certain areas of cities where traditional modes of living have been preserved. Property is often passed down through generations, and neighbors are regarded as an extension of the family. The relationship with neighbors is preserved, and specific times of day are customarily shared with them. Oral histories suggest that *kapijiks* were once used as secret passageways, even by political fugitives.

Today, the narrative of the *kapijik* is closely tied to the collective memory of residents. For this reason, oral storytelling is considered a reasonable method for conveying its history (Lewicka, 2008). Stories about *kapijik* are consistently centered on neighborly relations. It is not merely a door in a garden wall, but also a catalyst for interpersonal interaction. Historically, Tetova has been known as a city inhabited by people of various ethnic and religious backgrounds. Accordingly, the narratives surrounding the *kapijik* differ among these groups. In neighbourhoods formerly inhabited by non-Muslim populations, *kapijiks* have nearly vanished. While the younger generations are often unaware of their existence, elderly residents recall them with nostalgia. These areas typically contain fewer *kapijiks* than historically Muslim neighbourhoods. In the context of non-Muslim communities, the *kapijik* symbolized a more isolated lifestyle.

"In my opinion, the kapijik dates back to Ottoman times," said a 60-year-old city resident. In Muslim neighbourhoods, high walls separating private and public spaces were made permeable through the presence of the kapijik. In contrast, such features were deemed unnecessary in non-Muslim areas, where open spatial configurations and the absence of boundary walls between neighbors were the norm (B.R., age 60).

The changes experienced in the 1960s with the introduction of new urban plans also brought alterations in the relationships between people and space. The *kapijik* began to disappear, and with it, the nature of human-to-human and human-to-space interactions took a different direction. Locally, the type of relationship facilitated by the *kapijik* was on the verge of being forgotten.

When examining contemporary examples of the *kapijik*, a common characteristic is that a significant proportion of a family resides within the same neighbourhood. Typically, the closest

neighbor is another family member, such as a sibling, uncle, or cousin. The*se familial ties sustain the continued existence of the kapijik today.* Because neighbors have known each other across generations and view one another as extensions of the family, the use of *kapijiks* remains indispensable.

'My neighbor would come over, we'd prepare lunch together, and then the two families would eat lunch as one,' recalled N.S., age 70.

The city's older neighbourhoods are known as the "old town quarters,' predominantly inhabited by locals. Most residents have known each other for generations, and the kapijik is an integral part of their identity. When a new family moves into the neighbourhood, they attempt to integrate. If the new family occupies an old house, they preserve the existing *kapijik*; if they build a new house, they construct a new *kapijik*. In these contexts, a strong sense of belonging to the neighbourhood has developed, which is considered part of residents' identities and social relationships.

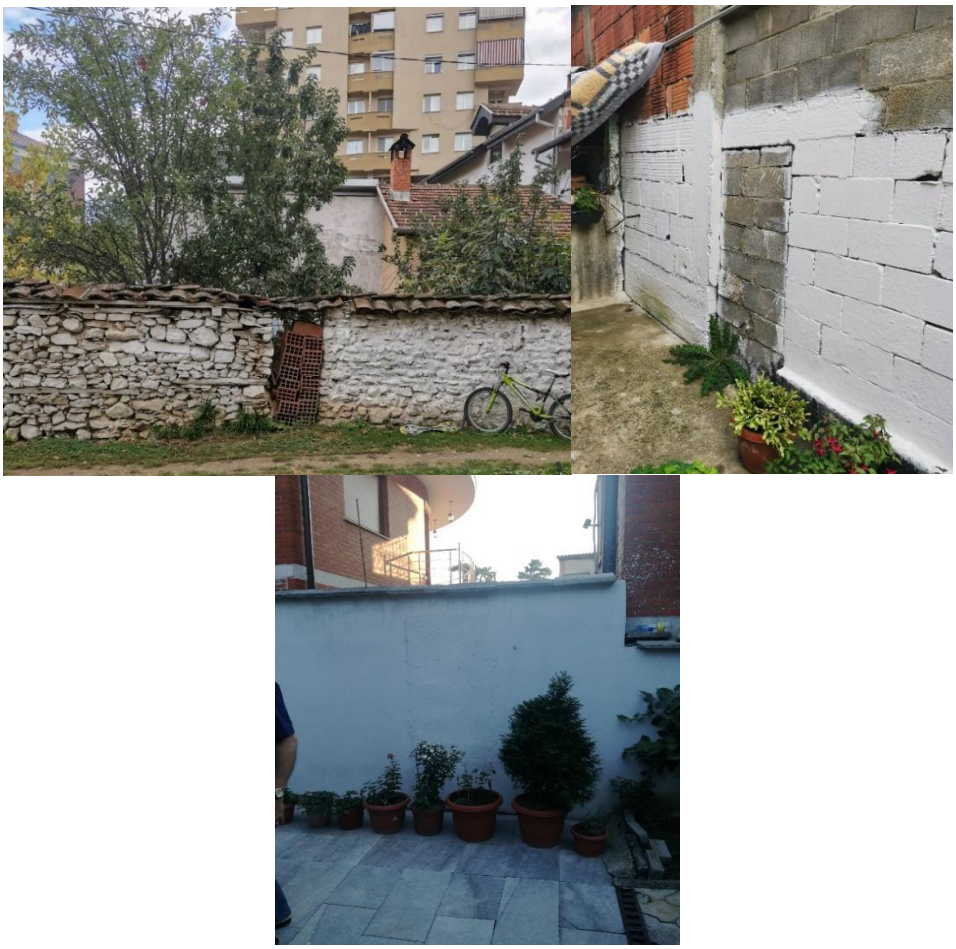

Figure 1.3: a), b), c) The traces left on the wall from kapijik, A.Limani.

Residents of neighbourhoods in the city center share interesting stories, shaped and redefined by the construction of public buildings after the destruction of World War II. Some of the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods migrated, while others relocated to new neighbourhoods within the city. Nevertheless, despite the different physical configurations of the new neighbourhoods, traditional neighborly customs have persisted. Although few, kapijiks have continued to function in some houses as doors within wire fences or as openings amid greenery. Events experienced in the street where one lives foster a sense of belonging to that place, transforming it from just another street into a personally meaningful one. Individuals identify themselves with the places they inhabit; thus, their identity is an extension of the space itself.

As Tuan (2002) emphasizes, the external world in which people live and interact is a realm imbued with values that are directly connected to them, one in which actions are grounded in lived human experiences and shaped by real-life moments.
The street can be characterized as a semi-public, semi-private space, especially in certain geographical regions. This phenomenon is particularly prominent in Turkey, Egypt, and the Balkan countries, and is largely dated back to the Seljuk and Ottoman periods. Some scholars, such as Uğur Tanyeli, argue that in the formation of the medieval Anatolian Turkish urban fabric, the dichotomy between private and public space had not yet emerged (Uğur Tanyeli, 1987). However, Tanyeli's comparison focuses on the market-household duality and does not specifically address the street within this framework (Fındıklı, 2016). In fact, in both Seljuk and Ottoman cultures, this dichotomy is even reflected in official texts such as 'tarik-i amme' (public road) and 'tarik-i has' (private road) (Aygen, 1992). Historical urban planning laws in North African countries such as Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco reflect a similar situation.

2. Ownership boundaries

The city of Tetova demonstrates that the division between private and public spaces is not sharply delineated, and both types of spaces are perceived within a hierarchical system. They are not strictly separable; rather, they are permeable (see fig. 2.1). People share their private areas with other residents of the neighbourhood, resulting in a distinctive spatial organization. The neighbourhood functions as a threshold, and the scale of privacy differs accordingly. Private space extends beyond the house to the edges of the neighbourhood, while the boundaries of public life correspond to the limits of adjacent neighbourhoods.

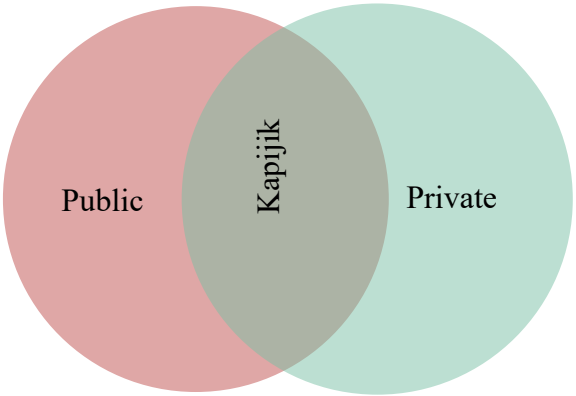

Figure 2.1: Position of the kapijik between public and private spaces, A.Limani.

The garden, officially registered as private property, is experienced by other members of the neighbourhood in daily life in ways that differ from its legal status, such as a shortcut, a space for socializing, or celebrations, thus positioning it within a different hierarchy and experience akin to that of a public pathway. Sh.S (63 years old) expresses his perspective as follows:
"For me, kapijik is a significant phenomenon, and I actively use it."
M.D. (73 years old) describes the journey between the kapijiks as follows:
"It felt like being at home, as if you were in your garden. No one would say anything—what that was, I don't know, for God's sake… We knew everyone, and there was no difference between us and those who lived in those houses. Are you hungry? Please, sit at the table.' None of that was an issue… We said "welcome" when we went to the kapijik and when the neighbors came out. Sali's mother was very special; she would immediately say, 'welcome.' Let's say I passed by a few minutes ago, but then I had to pass again, and without any hesitation, you could come and go freely as if you were at home…"

Figure 2.2: The kapijik connects the garden, which is a private space, with another garden, forming a link between public and private spaces, and is used by many people in the neighbourhood for communal needs.

It has become a shared space, where, while sitting in your garden during daily life, a door to your garden may open, and the visitor is someone from the neighbourhood. Sometimes meals may be eaten in the garden, or cleaning may take place, and these special occasions are shared with others from the neighbourhood. Under these conditions, the sharing of a private space transforms it into a semi-private space, establishing a different hierarchy. SH. S. (63 years old) describes this situation as follows:

"In the past, when we passed through the kapijiks, we would greet our neighbors; because new brides would clean the garden every day… New brides would not meet on the street, but in the garden."

Yerasimos (1999) initially discusses the concept of "fina" in Ottoman cities. The term "fina," which denotes a gradual transition from one spatial unit to another, characterizes a semi-public, semi-private space. Yerasimos highlights the ambiguous hierarchy extending from the market (çarşı) to the neighbourhood (mahalle). Such conditions enabled the emergence of informal spaces. The street entrance belongs to all residents living there, and any form of use requires the consent of all residents. Although the street stays within property boundaries, it operates privately within a public framework. Although Yerasimos' view is important, the concept of "fina" did not originate exclusively in the Ottoman context; it was also observed earlier in Arab cities. The term itself is of Arabic origin, and one of the first scholars to address this topic was Salah Al-Hathloul through his work at MIT University (Saleh Ali Al-Hathloul, 1981).

The distinction between public and private is a way to understand and interpret the social and spatial organization of the city (Madanipour, 2003). It is difficult to treat these two types of space as entirely separate, since they define each other. Neighbourhood residents develop a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, accompanied by a sense of responsibility, which in turn shapes the neighbourhood's self-governance.

According to Newman (1978), the hierarchical organization of spaces in residential areas contributes to making these spaces more defensible. His theory of defensible space emphasizes that neighbourhood residents must be key actors in ensuring safety within the neighbourhood. He argues that the more people share a territory, the less individual ownership or control each person feels over that area. Newman categorizes residential spaces hierarchically as private, semi-private, public, and semi-public (see Fig. 2.3).

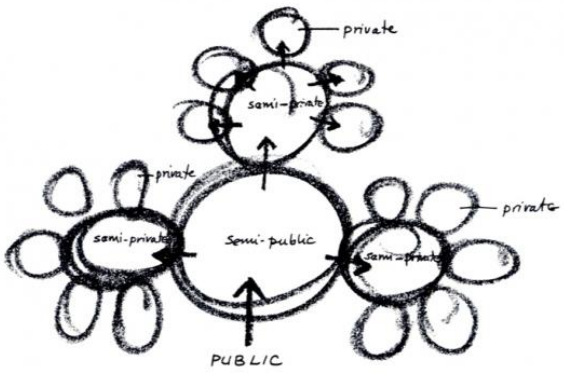

Figure 2.3: Schematic representation of hierarchy in residential areas: (URL-1)

The garden, known as a private space, within kapijik, emerges in a different spatial hierarchy due to its public usage. The garden is a space accessible to other residents in the neighbourhood. In this way, it strengthens the sense of belonging among residents, which in turn ensures natural surveillance and security. As Jacobs (1961) famously stated, "If there are eyes upon the street, you are safe." M.D. (73 years old), a native of the city, relates the presence of the kapijik in old neighbourhoods directly to security, explaining that:

"They never locked their kapijiks or the front doors facing the street, and they always felt secure. But when they moved to new neighbourhoods built in the 1970s and 1980s, this was no longer the case, which resulted in burglaries. The new houses did not have kapijiks, the relationship with neighbours was not as active, and social interaction was maintained mostly through the public street. The new neighbourhoods' previously left-open doors posed a threat to security.

Sh.S. (63 years old) describes how the garden provided safety and protection for children:

"While my neighbour and I were drinking coffee, the children would play in the garden right in front of us."

The kapijik, situated between public and private spaces, creates a new spatial hierarchy When people pass through the kapijik, their proximity to both the private garden and the public street facilitates social interaction (Bentley et al., 2001). Referring to Newman's spatial hierarchy, the combination of the house and its garden with the kapijik transforms these spaces into a semi-private spatial hierarchy (Table 2.4). (Gehl, 2011) The subdivision of residential areas and the transition from private to public spaces foster greater security and a stronger sense of belonging, extending beyond the boundaries of private property.

M.D. (73 years old) expresses that in neighbourhoods, everyone would step outside their homes to clean the streets as well:

"Everyone cleaned their gardens, then if a neighbour needed help, we assisted. The girls would go out to clean the street and polish it. Every day, they would paint the street walls white and clean it thoroughly. We had animals, and so did they: cows, horses, and fieldwork. If we couldn't finish the work, we would immediately call on neighbours for help."

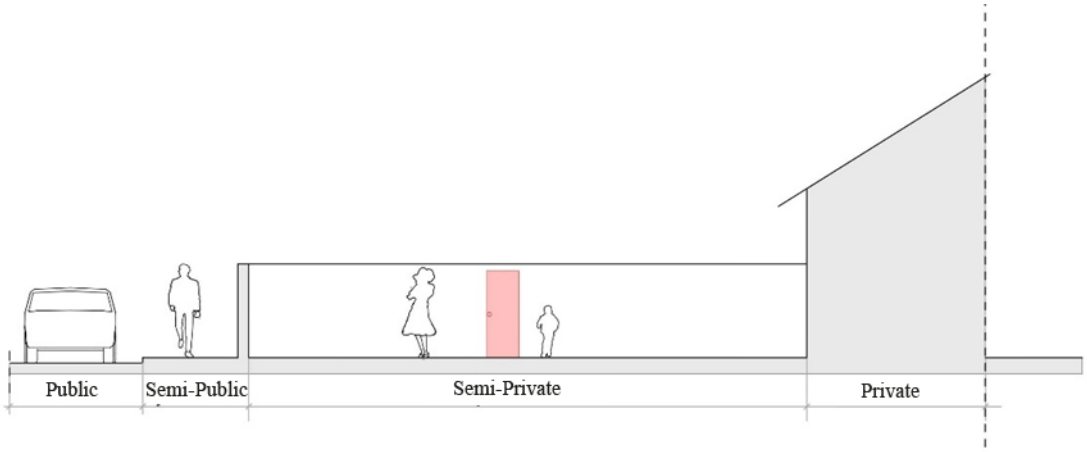

Figure 2.4. Spatial hierarchy in residential areas formed with the kapijik in the city of Tetova, A.Limani.

When assessed within this framework, it becomes evident that as one moves from the home toward the centre of the neighbourhood, the rights and responsibilities regarding spatial use are gradually reduced. Sloped streets, dead-end alleys, and high walls have protected residents from the surveillance of central authorities. Narrow streets that open into residential areas have changed in character depending on their proximity to monumental centres such as large squares or bazaars, which are typically surrounded by mosques, bathhouses, and other public-purpose buildings. Public life varies according to the social coding of a society and is generally aimed at fulfilling essential human needs. The kapijik phenomenon, and the transitional spaces that form between them, indirectly manifest its role in shaping the city. The spatial configuration of these areas reflects public life as an expression of the community. Inhabitants of the neighbourhood are often considered an extension of the family, and private spaces are shared with them. H.J. (57 years old), M.D. (72 years old), and Sh.S. (63 years old) emphasize the significance of collective life that emerges from the fluid boundaries of private space and the sharing of daily life with all members of the neighbourhood. H.J. (57 years old) expresses his perspective as follows:

"On the right side of our house, we had three kapijiks. We got along very well with Uncle Ismailaki's family—we never picked the apples from the field or prepared our winter preserves alone, nor did we ever eat anything alone."

This form of life also leads to a distinctive type of experience. The intimacy that stems from shared experience creates an emotional bond (Sharr, 2013). Indeed, when H.J. speaks of the past, she notes that she felt deeply connected to her neighbours despite not being related by blood, and even after moving away from the old neighbourhood, they still stay in touch, visit one another, and extend invitations on special occasions. In this context, the presence of the kapijik supports social life. People strive to access the interface between public and private spaces, as it enriches their lives (Bentley et al., 2001). When women living in the city were asked why they chose to use these pathways, many reported that it was to avoid the gazes of men gathered at the central coffeehouse, and because the homes they passed through belonged to familiar people, they felt safer (T.M., 67 years old). The kapijik thus enables women to participate in public life securely. Although some thinkers, such as Arendt, have criticised private life, it is also widely accepted that it forms an essential part of human existence. The private domain, therefore, is that which lies outside public observation, formal knowledge, and state control, and is a sphere where the individual exercises personal autonomy.With the presence of the kapijik, Tetova can be seen as a city shaped by a kind of dual standard: while the importance of private life is emphasised, private gardens are simultaneously opened up to

public use. As such, Tetova's unique social structure should be understood through the phenomenon of the kapijik.

Conclusion

Changes in the economy and science, wars, and climate change all influence the transformation of cities. Today, we often classify cities morphologically according to the periods during which they emerged or developed, using concepts such as "traditional mediaeval city," "modern city," or "city with hybrid characteristics." However, cultural differences and collective memory cannot be overlooked. The experience of different types of urban spaces also varies accordingly. Spatial organisations change according to culture. Uğur Uğur Tanyeli says that different cultures understand this idea in various ways and points out that 'Ottoman intellectuals looked for ideas that, although not the same, had similar meanings within the private rules created by their culture' (Tanyeli, 2005). While Tanyeli is correct regarding cultural differences, what he describes as complexity and ambiguity in his writing is, in fact, a different order. This difference manifests itself beyond the public-private dichotomy in the existence of semi-public, semi-private spaces.As an urban element created by bottom-up processes in organic Tetova, Kapijik offers a different experience in space. It seamlessly integrates people from various parts of the city, ensuring they remain unseen on public roads. They are safe while travelling from one point to another in the city because they are in someone's garden, which is supervised by the owner, and the user is also safe. As they transition from one garden to another, they engage in social interactions and gain knowledge about the city's happenings.The space's hierarchy is vague; the public is the border with another neighbourhood. Thus, the neighbourhood is where you belong and create your identity, which are vital for humans.The preservation of kapijiks, which are no longer actively used but still hold a place in the city's collective memory, is crucial for their continued existence within the dynamics of contemporary urban life and for their transmission as cultural memory to future generations. The safeguarding of kapijiks also implies the preservation of the social codes associated with them, as expressed by the local population. This, in turn, is significant for both the identity of the city and the identity of its inhabitants.

Acknowledgment

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