

Block Study

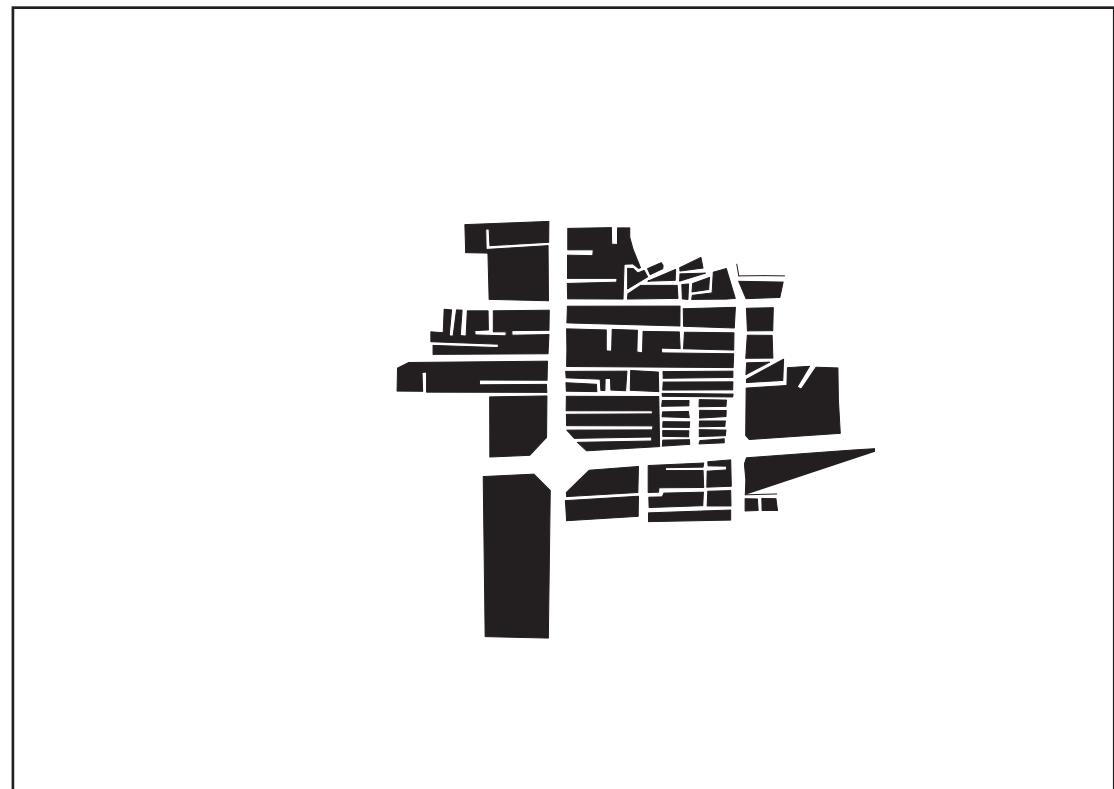
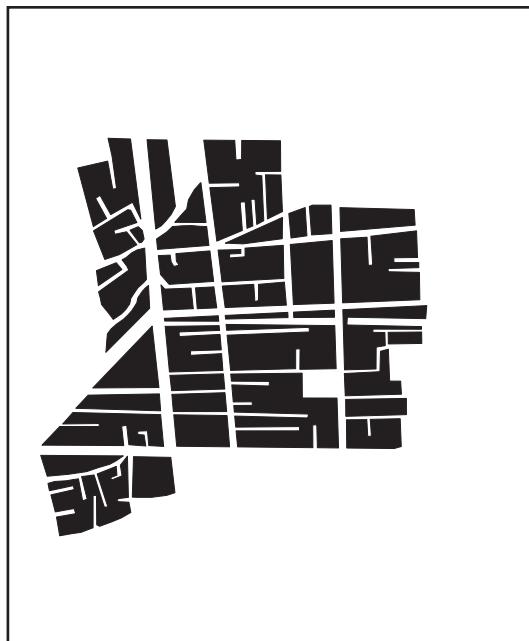
**Blocks****ISFAHAN**

*The Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

**Isfahan Blocks**

In Isfahan as in all traditional cities, a block never made any sense before. All it was, the tied dense fabric that was woven in a way that nothing was distinguishable. Although, today, new developments along with new streets have created some kind of a block pattern for the city.

Both, place-making and that great basic contact with nature, achieved so effortlessly in the new Isfahan of Shah Abbas, are manifestly absent from the new developments which have been spreading into agricultural land surrounding the city. Thus to the south, opposite the university campus, four-storey walk-up flats, stand grimly facing one another in a regimented layout that pays scant regard to a glorious view. To the east development is mainly private and haphazard.



*Irregular blocks caused by old fabric*

*New developments south of the river*

**Isfahan Blocks: The modern city**

New residential development takes several forms. By far the most damaging is the destruction of large old courtyard houses which enables the owner to make a quick return by selling the sub-divided plots, or to achieve more lasting financial gain by building multi-storey blocks of flats. In 1970s a person who pulled down his/her old house and built a new one was exempted from taxation for three years. Intended as an incentive to slum clearance, this law has become a serious threat to the heritage. Its effects have been more evident in Julfa where land was plentiful and individual property large. In last three decades, much of this Armenian quarter has changed in character, its introverted and contiguous grain. Nowadays, lock development can be seen everywhere.

Symptomatics of this change is the fact that inhabitants of Julfa having no longer any use for the water channels which irrigated the new unwanted gardens, did nothing to prevent the authorities from diverting the water elsewhere. Today, all the channels are dry and gardens which survive barren and ready for the concrete mixer. Another form of residential development is the new housing which is everywhere expanding the limits of the city. Invariably, it goes against the tradition by catering for a European style of life in flats or two-storey apartments.

Courtyards admittedly are often appended to new housing blocks as a kind of a buffer space between the living quarters and the street. Courtyard plan is recognizable with its axial arrangement of rooms around an open space centered on a pool.

*Madar-e-shah Caravansarai in the past*



*Madar-e-shah Caravansarai 1950s*



*Madar-e-shah Caravansarai present*



*A contemporary master plan for new developments*



*An example of new master plans for new developments*



*Concrete buildings in new developments*