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پدیدارشناسی معنای ذهنی کوه‌های البرز از نگاه ساکنین شهر تهران

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## Undesirable Relationship between Alborz and Tehran A phenomenological Study of Alborz Mountains' Meanings in the Minds of Tehran's Residents

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### Abstract

Mountains have been the sources of blessing and mercy for human beings since long ago. In ancient civilizations, most of the religious rituals were held on top of the mountains because they were considered as the closest place to the sky and the position of the gods. Moreover, living in the mountain has been a sign of detaching from the earthly belongings and attaching to the otherworldly interests. But, due to geographical reasons, the mountain has been of greater importance for Iranians. Mountains' being the source of water has been the most important function for the Iranians and, additionally, their defensive and sustenance-provisioning functions and pleasant weather and other contextual functions have caused these mountains to have mental meanings for Iranians apart from being objective and contextual elements. To Iranians, the mountain is a center and a symbol of paradise and Iranians used to engage in worship in the mountains; in various historical epochs, mountains have always been praised by Iranians. But, with the pass of time and entry of religion and modernity in two historical stages, the importance and functions of this historical-natural element have been reduced for Iranians. We are currently witnessing that the reduction in the mountains' functions and their importance in the people's lives have led to the decrease of their significance in the minds of the people residing the piedmonts of Alborz in such a way that, despite a great many of emphases in the scientific studies and comprehensive urban plans, Tehran's residents cannot presently enjoy the blessings and advantages of their northern mountains and they have also become indifferent to the destruction of them. The authors of the present study believe that these mountains currently have numerous meanings in the minds of the people from Tehran but these meanings are not so accentuated to render Tehran's residents sensitive to the destruction of and abuse to the mountain and, in general, this issue is not currently a priority and a demand for the people of Tehran. Thus, the present research paper aims at finding the mental meanings of Alborz in people's minds through the use of a phenomenological study. The findings will be subjected to theme analysis based on hierarchical categorization according to the theories by King, Ryan, and Bernard.

**Keywords:** *Alborz Mountains, Tehran, mental meaning, phenomenology, theme analysis.*

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whereon they are based, and their social-economic structures have all been intensively influenced by their geographical positions. Mountains account for one-fifth of the earth's visage; they are the habitats of at least one-tenth of the world's people; one-third of the world's people are dependent on mountains from various aspects (food, electricity, wood, and minerals); half of the world's people are hopeful in mountainous aquifers for the supply of the water needs. Mountains are amongst the most beautiful and most effective dominant faces of the earth. They provide life to the plains and form the biological bases of a huge population of the world's people and they source the rivers that are the vital veins of the human communities" (IUCN, 2004).

Besides, there are many studies and research articles in both international and national levels that show the adjacency of a natural element, like a mountain, is a huge advantage for a city. Due to the particular geography of this region in Iran's plain, mountains are the sources of freshwater the existence of which is the first and the most important factor of the cities' formation in the foothills in Iran. However, the mountains also had other properties for the establishment of the large populations at their sides, including the followings: mountains were defensive barriers against the enemies' assaults; they protected the human beings against the natural disasters; they had pleasant weather for life; they acted as signs for the cities in the foothills and the existence of alluvial soil in the mountains' sides made them suitable places for farming. Additionally, as testified by the paintings and images inserted in the itineraries, Alborz has been one of the most important identity-building elements in this city. For its specification of the city's primary stretches, this natural element is very effective in the creation of a continuous whole and revitalization of Tehran's natural, historical and artificial identity (Alehashemi, 2014 & Yarahmadi, 2010). The mountains' being signs and the city's being stretched on an inclined line (as a result of

being situated on the side of these mountains) have bestowed orientation and legibility to the city to the extent that the mountainous landscapes and the city's slope have become Tehran's identity. These capacities have been also underlined in the comprehensive urban plans. The first comprehensive urban plan for Tehran was enacted in 1968 and realizes the mountains in the north of Tehran as being equal in rank to Athena's Lycabettus Hill and Paris's Montmartre; it has been stated therein that the mountains in the north and east of Tehran are the strongest elements of Tehran's regional countenance which is recounted as a novel landscape in terms of urban engineering. Moreover, the necessity to pay attention to Alborz Mountain Range as a natural and identity-endowing element and as one of the most important natural elements constituting the spatial organization existent in the city of Tehran has been underlined in the main document of Tehran's current comprehensive urban plan, passed in 2007. Based on the comprehensive plans, the access points and the views and landscape of the mountain should be open in many of the routes (Dariush, 2017).

However, in spite of all the emphases, no practical measure is taken and we are witnessing the people and the officials' indifference to Alborz Mountain Range. As an example, the cutting of several trees in Tehran suffices the formation of several campaigns and commotions as completely legitimate interventions (Khajepiri, 2014); this is while Bibi Shahrbanoo Mountains, in the south of Tehran, are being destroyed by cement factory with nobody even making a sound. We are also bearing witness to the destruction of and abuse to the mountain's limit and everybody is speaking about it to the extent that it has resulted in the coinage of such a term as "mountain-grabbing" (Afshar, 2014). This is while Alborz Mountain Range has originally been a ground for the formation of Tehran on its lap and the residents and the context of Tehran are not and have never been aside from it meaning that Tehran has been formed

### Introduction and problem statement

The primary problem of this study is the current relationship between Alborz and Tehran and, as shown in the evidence and investigations, this relationship is presently not in a suitable status. To assert ideas about the current relationship between two phenomena, the historical trends of that relationship as well as the functions and interactions between the two phenomena are investigated over time.

In the past, most of the religious rituals were held on top of the mountains because they were envisaged as the closest place to the sky and the position of gods and life in mountain marked the detachment from the worldly possessions and attaching to the otherworldly interests (Eliade, 1996). The importance of the mountains has been frequently underlined in the holy Qurans and mountains have been recounted with such words as anchor, shelter, nails, and absorber of the earth's vibrations (Dariush, 2017). Mountains have had a particular position in the Iranians' thoughts. Herodotus writes the following words about Persians' worshipping during Achaemenid Era: "worshipping was conducted not in large temples but in open space and on top of the mountains. In Menog-I Kherad [the spirit of wisdom], the sage asks about the reason for the construction of the mountains and he receives the following statements in answer: "these mountains of the world are some stimulator and some preventer of the wind; some are the position of the raining cloud and some the beater of the Ahriman and others the supporter and enlivener of the god Ormazd's creatures" (Pourdawoud, 1993).

As the most important mountain, Alborz Mountain Range has been of great importance for Iranians. The descriptions presented by the authors of Yashts about Alborz are reflective of the idea that Alborz is not a geographical mountain but an ethereal mountain and a sign of heaven. The herald's house is spontaneously lit with stars, the moon, and the sun revolving about it (Rashed Mohassel, Behnamfar & Zamanipour,

2012, 125). Furthermore, based on Iranians' beliefs, the holy mountain of Alborz is in the middle of the earth and it is connected to the sky and it is known according to an ancient belief that lightning has been given birth by two stone segments in Alborz. Činvat Bridge, as well, that ancient Iranians believed to be the passageway of the human beings' souls for reaching heaven or hell has also been in Alborz (Mousavi & Khosrawi, 2008). In Iran, the mountain has been a primary source and, if there has been no mountain, there would have been no water and forest and Iran's plain could have not been formed the way it looks now. Thus, a great many of Alborz's functions and its invincibility have caused it to have many meanings for Iranians in the past and this issue is well evident in the Mithraism period as well as in Zoroastrianism and Islamism eras. However, despite all those functions and meanings, it seems that the only relationship between the people and the mountain is an objective one featuring recreational and sport-related functions that are just limited to the holidays.

Ann Sgard, a Geneva University professor and an expert in mountain landscaping, believes in a visit of Tehran that "visiting Tehran's mountains cannot be finished within a couple of days and the thing that can be seen in the first glance is a large city with ubiquitous trees and business centers that are spread all around the place and one notices exactly when the mountains are seen that how close they are to us" (Sgard, 2014, 67). On the other hand, the adjacency of the city and the mountain is a privilege for the city. "The world's mountainous regions have been the ground and birthplace of very valuable and original civilizations. The special environments wherein the people of these regions have lived in the course of history have caused the emergence of special behaviors, situations, and relations between the human and nature and they have been the cornerstones of all the civilizations. The myths created by these civilizations, the values

significance for Tehran: the article “urban edges: investigation of the role of the edges in the actualization of landscape goals” deals with the importance of the urban edges’ role in the citizens’ minds and introduces Alborz as one of the most important identity-building edges in Tehran (Yarahmadi, 2010); the article “view tunnels, the landscape’s identity-granting element” enumerates Damavand Apex and Alborz Mountain Range as the main indicators of the landscape and the strategic turning points of Tehran as well as a capacity, particularly for Tehran and states that no appropriate plan has been adopted for these elements to be seen (Alehashemi, 2014); the article “the capacities of mountainous landscapes on Bibi Shahrbanoo Mountain” realizes the geographical, historical and human aspects of the mountain as having high importance for the residents of Ray but the author believes that these mountains have lost their functions and have been isolated from the city (Khajepiri, 2014). There are also other researches looking for the reason why the people of Tehran have become indifferent towards Alborz and are ignoring the importance and position of these mountains, including the followings: The article “Alborz Mountain in Tehran’s comprehensive plan” states that the negligence of the mountain’s mental functions and the contextual approach towards it as a living environment has been the reason for the low attention paid to the mountain in plans and interventions introduced in Tehran’s comprehensive plan (Dariush, 2017); the article “mountain’s landscape in blank Persian poetry” has been conducted with the objective of investigating the position of mountain in the blank Persian poems and realizes violation of the traditions and change in the ideology as the factors that have given rise to the variations in the meaning of mountain in the blank Persian poetry (Dariush & Atashinbar, 2018); the article “position of mountain in Iran’s literature in the course of time and the effect of modernity thereon” shows that mountain has been an objective

and subjective (landscape-related) element in the past for Iranians and, as a cultural and semantic element, it has not been immune of the modernity’s entry into Iran; furthermore, the results of the study signify that the ground had been set for the reduction in the mental and spiritual role of mountain a lot earlier than the entry of the modern culture into Iran and, as the authors opine, the reason for such a diminishment has been the decrease in the power of the then society’s cultural genesis (Dariush & Motedayen, 2019); the article “the relationship between Tehran and Alborz from the perspective of the experts” deals with the reasons for the unsuitability of the relationship between Alborz and Tehran through interviews with experts and offers results about the primary and secondary themes in the form of classifications (Ibid).

As has been mentioned in the classifications, there are carried out researches about the importance and capacities of Alborz Mountain Range for Tehran and its residents as well as the reasons for the current unfavorable relationship of these mountains with Tehran. Meanwhile emphasizing on the importance of Alborz Mountain Range for Tehran and its residents, the present study seeks for finding Alborz Mountains’ mental meanings in Tehran so that a relationship can be figured out between the mental meanings of these mountains in the people’s minds and the paling of this meaning in the people’s minds and their indifference towards these mountains.

### Research Method

Due to the innovativeness of the study subject and considering the study goals, the phenomenological method has been made used for information gathering and of theme analysis method for information summing. Based thereon, the data collection, sampling, and findings’ analysis have been carried out following these methods and through the principles defined in them. Considering the innovativeness of the research on the relationship between the city

in the context of Alborz and cannot be apart from it. But, unfortunately, it has to be stated that these mountains have lost their importance in people’s minds.

The reduction in the importance of Alborz Mountains in the minds of their residents has not come about all of a sudden and it has occurred at various times due to different problems. These mountains have seminally lost their functions for the people and the city and the villages in its periphery and their meanings have secondly been reduced in the people’s minds (Dariush & Atashinbar, 2018). The entry of religion in the first place and the entry of modernity and technology (coinciding in Iran) in the second place have been amongst the historical reasons for the reduction in the function and mental importance of the mountain for the people. The entry of religion caused the reduction or destruction of the mountain’s sacrosanctity and the entry of modernity and technology provided the people with the possibility of satisfying their needs by the mountain’s gifts and wholly capture it.

As an example, the mountain has had a defensive function in the past for the city but it is not anymore needed with the formation of the national army (as one of the modernity’s accomplishment); or, for example, the need for the springs and aqueducts in these mountains has been satisfied by, saying, the transmission of water from Karaj River to Tehran; or, the advent of modernity and technology has changed the lifestyle and sustenance model of the people in Tehran and the mountain and its sides are no longer the dominant sources of the people’s supply of their sustenance; the villages inside and in the adjacency of the city have also undergone changes in their sustenance model and, worst of all, technology has enabled the construction of high-rise buildings blocking the view of the mountain from many spots in the city (Dariush & Taghavian, 2019).

This trend of indifference towards Alborz Mountain Range has been moved forward to the extent that we are witnessing in some of the scientific resources that

Alborz Mountain range that was once considered as the source of water and life has been introduced as the source of pollution in Tehran. As shown in the results of two studies, “Alborz mountains bar the western winds in the north and northeast of the city and cause all the pollutants to remain in the city”; “considering the existence of the mountains that are standing against these wind streams like barriers, the pollutants are accumulated in a thin surficial layer on Tehran” (Naghavi, 2011 & Safavi & Alijani, 2006). Generally, the relationship between Tehran and Alborz Mountain can be divided into three stages over time: in the first relationship, the mountain was considered as a shelter for the city and as a ground for water supply and there has been a subtle mental relationship between the people and the mountain; the second relationship includes the development of the city towards the mountain and there has still been a friendly and deep relationship between them with the city having been inclined towards the mountain; in the third relationship which pertains to the present time, the mountain’s values have been forgotten by the city residents and the city and its residents have engaged in the destruction of the mountain and abusing of its limits and this relationship have become rather hostile. Of course, this should not be taken as meaning that the mountain does not matter much to the people. Surely, the mountains in the north of Tehran have a lot of meanings for the people of Tehran but these meanings are not so strong in the people’s minds so that they can be convinced to take measures against the destructions of and abuses to its limits. The present article seeks finding the meaning of mountain in the minds of Tehran’s citizens thereby to be possibly able to find out why the current meaning cannot return mountain as a priority to the lives of the people in Tehran.

### Literature review

Part of the previous studies shows that Alborz Mountain Range possesses neglected capacities and

seeing a mountain gives you good feelings. Bahram states that “watching a mountain tranquilizes me”. Amir, a 31-year-old man, says: “mountain attracts and draws the observer”. Amir, a 33-year-old man says: “mountain is magnificent and watching a mountain from a distant place induces the observer with a feeling of splendor and grandeur”. Babak believes that “he is bewitched upon going to the mountain”.

#### - Advantages of Seeing the Mountain

All the respondents stated that seeing the mountain is good but the intensities were different. Behzad who does not have much feeling about these mountains states that “it is good to see a mountain but it does not make me extol it”; but he continues with saying that “there is a mountain right across from my workplace and we have not installed a curtain on the window to always see the mountain”. Pejman who has a lot of feelings about these mountains says: “I like to see mountains white and full of snow”. Meysam says: “it is not so much important for me

to see a mountain from far away; instead, I like to experience the presence in the mountain”. Bahram and Amir, both 31 years old, believe that seeing the mountain is clean and lucid air is good, and watching a mountain when the air is polluted does not have any advantage. Amir, 33 years old, says “I discern the power of God upon seeing a mountain and I think that the mountain’s view gives value to a property”. Fatemeh says “I like to see the mountain from any place in the city”. Bahram says “seeing the mountain is the prelude for presence therein and watching a mountain from a far distance meets my need for nature”. Naser says “the mountain’s snow causes a change in its color in various seasons and enhances its beauty”.

#### - Mountain Nostalgia

Nostalgia and memories about the north’s mountains were the points made by four of the interviewees. Mr. Vahid who has experienced living abroad says “there was no mountain around our city place of living in Canada and we would surely remember

and mountain in Iran and with an emphasis on the exploratory approaches, two macro-level questions have been utilized: how have you experienced the mountains in the north of Tehran? And, how is your relationship with these mountains at present?

#### Sampling and Data Gathering Methods

The present study has been conducted based on a phenomenological method. It is implicitly assumed in the phenomenological studies that the world we are living in has been created in our awareness (Craib, 2006, 124) and the mental meanings are the foundations of the society’s objective properties (Ritzer, 2003, 326). Thus, considering the aforesaid presumption, phenomenology is a theory and a method that can be used as long as we recognize the meaning and mentality as the basis of reality and seek discovering mentality and its transformation into reality. This method is qualitative and emphasizes on human beings’ personal experiences. So, the interviewee should have experience with the study subject. Based on the general principle of the qualitative studies, use has been made herein of the theoretical saturation method regarding the number of interviews. “Essentially, the sample volume of the qualitative research incorporates a cohort that provides answers to the study question to an adequate amount” (Marshal, 1996). Questions are offered in a deep interview format and ten individuals are interviewed in adherence to the principles of the phenomenological method. In this study, the interviewees have been selected purposively and based on their different personality types and lifestyles.

#### Information Analysis Method

“Theme analysis is a method for recognizing, analyzing, and reporting the existent patterns of the qualitative findings. This method is used for analyzing the text data and transforms the scattered data into rich and detailed ones” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In

the theme analysis method, there is no need for a theoretical or conceptual framework to be existent” (Abedi Ja’afari, Taslimi, Faghihi & Sheikhzade, 2011). “Theme analysis goes beyond the counting of vivid words and expressions and concentrates on the recognition and explanation of the explicit and implicit ideas” (Braun and Clarke, 2006). “Theme indicates important information about the research data and questions and somewhat reflects the meaning and concept of the pattern existing in a collection of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006). “Theme is a repetitive and distinct feature of a text that expresses the special experience and perception regarding the study questions as far as the researcher of the present article knows” (King & Horrocks, 2010). “Theme is a pattern existent in the available findings and it introduces at least the organization and description of the observations and at most the interpretation of certain aspects of a phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998). There are different titles and classifications for themes according to the diversity of the methods used in theme analysis and the diversity of the specialists’ notions. In this study, theme analysis has been carried out based on hierarchical classifications and based on King, Ryan, and Bernard’s theories; theme’s hierarchy within the format of primary and secondary themes’ classifications (Ryan & Bernard, 2000 & King, 1998).

#### Study Findings

As expressed in regard to the study method, based on the hierarchical categorization of the themes, the findings of the present study’s interviews can be divided into six primary and 19 secondary themes.

Table 1: categorization of the findings in the primary and secondary themes (Table 1).

#### • Experiencing the Mountain’s Visit:

##### - Internal and Individual Feelings about Seeing the Mountain:

All of the interviewees pointed to the seeing of a mountain from a distant place. Fatemeh believes that

Table 1. categorization of the findings in the primary and secondary themes. Source: Authors.

Primary themes	Secondary themes
Experiencing the mountain’s visit	Individual and internal feelings upon seeing the mountain Benefits of seeing the mountain Mountain nostalgia
Experiencing the presence in the mountain	Individual and internal feelings about the presence in the mountain Mountain’s panorama Comparison with the other elements of nature
Mental relationship with mountain	Expressing the general feeling about the mountain Participation in the issues related to mountain Sport-related aspects of mountain climbing
Functional aspects of mountain	Recreational aspects of mountain climbing The symbolic function of the mountain Mountain’ panorama
The subject of mountain-climbing	Personal reasons Easy and rapid access possibilities Position of the government and city officials
Mountain protection	The role of individuals People-driven formations The role of the government and city officials

mountains are used as signs of assessing air pollution as well as signs of navigations. Babak and Fatemeh say that they have frequently used mountain for navigation. Naser, as well, states that “I notice how polluted is the air every day by looking at the mountain”.

#### - **Mountain's Landscape**

Amir, 31 years old, Naser, Babak, and Pejman realize mountain as a good thing for the city and pointed to the pollution and buildings that block the view of the mountain.

### **The subject of Mountain-Climbing**

#### • **Personal Reasons**

Personal reasons have been frequently mentioned amongst the reasons for going or not going to the mountains with one of the most frequently stated reasons being the change in the lifestyle as a result of urban life, including work-related busyness, people's entanglement with the urban life and their extreme demand for comfort. Babak and Amir, 33 years old, realize the family responsibilities as the reason for not going to the mountain. Amir, 31 years old, and Behzad realize the change in the type of recreations as the reason for not going to the mountain. Behzad says “there are beautiful galleries in the city and I do not see any need for going to the mountain for recreation”.

#### • **Easy and Fast Access Possibilities**

The issues related to the access costs and difficulties include the following: the absence of proper public transportation, traffic, and shortage of parking spaces which have been mentioned amongst the study participants' lower rates of the trip to the mountain. However, meanwhile protesting to the facilities' shortages, Babak and Pejman say that “nothing can stop them if they decide to go to the mountain”.

• **Position of the Government and Urban Officials**  
Meysam and Babak believe that the government is obliged to facilitate mountain-going and mountain-climbing for the people's happiness and

psychological and physical health. Meysam believes that the government intentionally exercises default in this regard and says “like cultural matters, people's mountain-climbing is not amongst the government's priorities” and believes that the “government should pay subsidies for encouraging the people to go to the mountains”. He also states that the officials do not feel any attachment to Tehran's mountains because they are mostly not originally from Tehran.

### **Mountain Protection**

#### • **Role of Individuals**

Six of the interviewees pointed to the role of individuals in the mountain's conservation and protection. Fatemeh says: “sense of attachment to the mountain and my conscience make me refrain from doing any harm to the mountain”. Bahram realizes the mountain as the holy mother and says “a stain in nature is huge damage” and believes that the mountain should remain intact; he says “those who harm the mountain are selfish persons”. Behzad says “I do not myself harm the mountain but I cannot do anything about the damages others do”. Amir, 33 years old, says “I do not damage the mountain for both moral reasons and also for I know it as belonging to me”. Pejman says “those who harm the environment when they go to the mountain are not mountain-climbers and they pretend that they are so”. Meysam says “people knew about the history and stories of these mountains, they would never damage them”.

#### • **People-Driven Formations**

Four individuals pointed to the issue of formations and people-driven campaigns. Fatemeh and Behzad say “these institutions cannot do anything”. Babak says “formation of people-driven institutes is good” but he asserts that these formations are played by the politicians and that he is not optimistic about them. Amir, 33 years old, as well, says that he would surely take part in any formation constructed for mountains' conservation.

the mountains in the north of the city when we talked about Tehran with the other Tehrani residents of Canada”. Naser spoke about his adolescence memories and his then recreational activities in the mountain. Pejman remembers the snow on the mountain as a memory. Babak states that “he does not have a good memory about mountain climbing because his memories about mountain are associated with his early wake-ups during the holidays”.

#### • **Experiencing the Presence in the Mountain**

##### - **Internal and Individual Feelings about Presence in the Mountain:**

All the interviewees pointed to this issue. Fatemeh says “presence in the mountain gives me a feeling of grandeur and when we go there, I do not want to leave it; mountain-climbing gives me a feeling of success”. Bahram who has grown up in a mountainous region and another city says “the mountains in the north of Tehran do not give me the feeling induced by the mountains in our city”. Babak says “I do not have any motivation for going to the mountains but I feel good when I go there; I like to see mountains from far away rather than going to the mountain”. Meysam says “going mountain-climbing strengthens the human spirit”. Pejman divides the presence in the mountain into two parts: “the path and the apex” and he describes his different feelings about each.

#### • **Comparison with Other Elements in Nature**

Several of the interviewees pointed to such a subject as a comparison of the mountain with forest, sea, and desert. Fatemeh says “I like mountain more than any of the other natural elements”. Pejman says “I search for something in the mountain that I cannot find in the jungle and sea and that is silence”. Amir, 33 years old, says “we do not have jungle and sea in Tehran and we only have Alborz”.

#### • **Mountain's Panorama**

Amir, 31 years old, Meysam and Pejman pointed to the mountain's panorama and enumerated watching the city and landscapes from the top amongst the

fascinations of mountain climbing.

#### • **Mental Relationship with Mountain**

##### - **Expressing amount of Interest in and General Feeling about the Mountain:**

All of the respondents had a general idea about mountain and that was positive but they had variable rates of relationship with the mountain. For example, Pejman believes that the natural human being should have relationships with the nature. He says: “to get connected to the mountain, one should garnish his or her inside and I believe that mountain reduces the individual's distance to the sky and God”.

#### • **Participation in the Issues Related to Mountain**

Only three of the interviewees were ready to take measures for making the mountain's current conditions better. Amir, 33 years old, says he is ready to pay some money for placing dust bins in the mountain. Pejman, as well, says that he had been picking up the others' garbage to the maximum possible extent on his way back to the mountain foot. Babak says “I am ready to write and give lectures for helping the mountain and improving the relationship between the people and the mountain”.

### **Functional Aspects of Mountain**

#### • **Sport-Related Aspects of Mountain-Climbing**

Some of the interviewees pointed to the sport-related functions of the mountains. Fatemeh says “going mountain-climbing is a sport and a challenge for me” and Babak, as well, realizes mountain-climbing as a sort of sports activity.

#### • **Recreational Aspects of Mountain-Climbing**

Amir, 33 years old, Behzad, Bahram, Amir, 31 years old, and Meysam all realize the recreational aspects of mountain-climbing as being more important and point out that good air and natural attractions make mountains a good place of recreation; in the meanwhile, all the interviewees emphasized on the group and collective recreations.

#### • **Symbolic Signs of Mountain-Climbing**

From the perspective of the interviewees, these

Table 2. Shows the characteristics of the people interviewed in this study. Source: Authors.

Row	Name	Level of education	Age	Gender	Occupation
1	Babak	PHD	38	Male	Faculty member
2	Fatemeh	Masters	41	Female	Social Science Researcher
3	Meysam	Masters	41	Male	Cultural affairs expert
4	Amir	Masters	33	Female	Municipal Civil Engineer
5	Pejman	PHD	39	Male	Municipal middle manager
6	Amir	Masters	31	Male	veterinarian
7	Bahram	Bachelor	29	Male	Architectural expert
8	Vahid	PHD	50	Male	Head of Research Center
9	Naser	PHD	46	Male	Faculty member
10	Behzad	Bachelor	39	Male	Expert of the National Steel Company

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Two individuals pointed to this subject that the government falls short of conserving the mountains' limits. Behzad says "this task is so huge that the people cannot accomplish it". Babak, as well, says that the government and municipality should protect these mountains based on urban and regional planning.

### Conclusion

It seems that the people of Tehran are currently going to the mountain for they are looking for something they cannot find in the city such as tranquility and good air and this is the answer repeatedly heard in the interviews with the mountain-climbing people on TV and radio. However, the authors of this article believe that the mountains in the north of Tehran are phenomena beyond tranquility and good air and they can be something more important than geographical entities for the people of Tehran. The study literature, as well, indicates the abundant neglected capacities of the mountain (beyond the current enjoyment of the people and the city thereof) for the city and its citizens and it seems that the people have become indifferent towards the mountain. The study findings indicated that the mountain has a lot of meanings in the minds of Tehran's people. These meanings have been all extracted from experiencing the presence in or observation of Alborz Mountain Range by the interviewees and their current relationships with these mountains. Due to the nature of the questions, answers have predominantly emphasized on the individuals' individual and mental perceptions of these mountains except for the part of the answers that deal with the providing of no protection for this environment and damaging of them. The findings of this section that deal with the relationship between the other individuals and these mountains are reflective of the idea that the people expect the government and the municipality to perform

something in this regard and facilitate mountain-going for the people and prevent the destruction and daily pollution and contamination of the mountain. However, the important issue here is that the officials and authorities are part of the residents of this same city that has become generally indifferent to the mountain and the people do not posit serious demands to them in this regard. These mountains have a lot of capacities for the people, but the important issue is the comprehensive recognition (drawn on a holistic approach) of this natural environment and its contextual and semantic capacities. Alborz Mountain range is a natural objective-subjective element and it seems that the mountain's capacities can be properly employed for the city and the people and the mountain's destruction can be at the same time prevented if the mountain range is wholly recognized and if a holistic relationship is established therewith. Therefore, paying attention to and dealing with the mountain's mental issues and realizing it as a cultural phenomenon helps Alborz Mountain Range find its position in the minds of the people from Tehran. Most of the interviewees had seriously pointed to the mental and contextual meanings of the mountain as well as its importance but their answers to the question that how much time or cost they are willing to spend on mountain conservation indicate that their objective-subjective relationships with these mountains are not so robust to make them take measures in this regard. This is while cutting several trees in Tehran leads to serious interventions by the local or specialist associations and occasionally results in the rebuking or deposing of the urban officials. In the end, it seems necessary to point out that the authors repeatedly encountered the following expressions in the course of information gathering: collective recreation, collective mountain-going and collective memories. It appears that the reduction in social relations that stems from the new lifestyle has also influenced the people's mountain-going and their relationships with the mountain, as well (Table2).

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