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Assessment of Decline of Tehran's Old Neighborhoods

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Abstract

By the beginning the second decade of twentieth century, a new regime came to power in Iran. While considering the Iranian society, her institutions, mechanisms and structures as a backward and dysfunctional one, the new regime started to set up a new order, based on modern values. In this case, old urban structures were among those aspects of the Iranian culture and society which were selected a bit earlier to be transformed. The old version of housing, neighborhood and life style did not fit to their assumption of development, which was mostly based on modernization and capitalism. Such approach became the main instruction of the bureaucracy of not only this regime, but also the Islamic regime, in spite of their different discourses. This bureaucratic system, despite of some short-lived and pretended achievements, was unlikely to conduct an even and sustainable development. In fact, their policies provoked a condition of decoupling from the former local and accepted institutions and mechanisms. Besides that, the structural expansion stemmed by the modernist and top-down activities of the state did not fit to the context of Iran. Meanwhile, the old neighborhoods of Tehran, which used to function as the commercial, cultural and political center of not just the capital, but Iran suffered largely. They lost many of their senior dwellers, one third of their population decreased, and many of its valuable historical buildings were deteriorated or became storage areas for commercial products. Therefore, not only they did not upgrade to the new order, but also they lost their former identity and functionality.

Keywords: Old Neighborhoods, Rational Actorhood, Modernization, Decoupling, Iranian Urban System.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Currently, around 54% of the global population live in urban areas and this trend will continue. Evidence suggests that by 2045, 6 billion people will live in urban areas. 80% of the global GDP generates in urban sector. Through providing an efficient space for innovators, sustainable growth would be largely accessible within cities (World Bank Website). Urban population growth, however, has provoked many problems for human life in the modern era, like poor quality or lack of housing and urban segregation.

Tehran, as the prime and capital city of Iran, has seen unprecedented changes in the course of twentieth century. Its population dramatically increased and its size significantly enlarged. Meanwhile, the old spatial dimension of Tehran has largely been transformed. Old neighborhoods -which based on current urban divisions locates in region 12- have suffered from some of the most radical redevelopment programs during the last century. The old spatial structure was rationally related to the traits of the inhabitants' daily life (Habibi 2011: VI). Imported urban development plans provoked plenty of imbalances between different ingredients of Iranian cities, people and their former division of labor and culture from one hand, and modern rational actorhood oriented policies and values, from the other hand.

Table 1. (Tehran Atlas Website)

	Tehran	Region 12
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1956	1,560,934	-
1966	2,719,730	-
1976	4,530,223	301,701
1986	6,058,207	230,657
1996	6,758,845	189,625

With regard to the above table, it is obvious that while Tehran’s population grew rapidly during the recent decades of twentieth century, region 12 lost almost one third of its population. Since then, the use of some areas of region 12 shifted from a residential area to a storage area for commercial commodities. Generally, the current dwellers are not originally from these neighborhoods or even Tehran, but they are descendants of the new comers and immigrants, came from rural areas (Khatam 2005: 129-130).

In this research, while reviewing the historical background of Iranian economy, politics and urban planning during the twentieth century, the applied procedures in modernizing Tehran in general, and its old and historical neighborhoods, in particular, would be analyzed. Historically, the core of the analysis is Between 1920s to 1990s, however, in order to elucidate the main socio-economic features of the Iranian urban life, sometimes and inevitably, other historical era might be covered.

1.2. Research Questions

My main research question is: ‘Why do the old neighborhoods of Tehran including the historical region and the grand bazaar, despite of having a remarkable number of cultural facilities and economic opportunities, constantly moved towards decline, while its fabric deteriorates and its inhabitants are impoverished?’

In addition to the above question, I have several relevant, but secondary questions, which contribute to a better scrutiny within the research:

‘What has happened to the quarter system during the last century?’

‘To what extent top-down interventions has transformed the process of life in the old neighborhoods of Tehran?’

1.3. Methodology

Since this is a historical research, the author endeavors scrutinizing past happenings or a combination of historical events in order to receive and deliver a clear account of the given happening and its context (Johnson & Christensen 2012: p 411). Also, by doing research on a historical subject, it supposes meeting these aims during and at the end of it:

1. Uncovering the unknown
2. Answering questions
3. Identifying the relationship that the past has to the present
4. Recording and evaluating the accomplishments of individuals, agencies, or institutions
5. Aiding in our understanding of the culture (current situation) in which we live (ibid: p 412).

With regard to the mentioned factors, by investigating the contemporary history of urban redevelopment programs of Iran, the author planned to discover the reasons behind the decline of the quarter system, existed throughout the old neighborhoods of Tehran. Besides that, the damaging consequences of top-down interventions in the Iranian urban areas, which has not contributed to the creation of a functional form of urban life, would be shown. In fact, many of the current problems with which urban authorities in Iran face, root in the performances of the former policy makers. Most of these changes in the urban spaces of Tehran, especially the old parts of the city, stemmed from the modernist and interventionist approaches of the Iranian governments throughout the twentieth century.

As mentioned, this research is mostly based on secondary documents. Because of that, it is important to highlight some of the advantages of the secondary documents for this research. Alan

Bryman (2012) names the main advantages of secondary documents in his book. The author put his emphasis on those advantages, which are more relevant to the nature of the research.

1. Cost and time: researchers have the opportunity to deepen their analysis and a great deal of time and money would be saved.
2. High-quality data: though few, in the course of the research, there might be found a number of valuable economic, social and historical assessments of the targeted neighborhood.
3. Opportunity for longitudinal analysis: in order to provide an efficacious analysis of the current condition of the targeted urban fabric, scrutinizing the contemporary history of the Tehran's inner city is quite necessary.
4. More time for data analysis: throughout a research, researchers are to allocate a great deal of time and energy for data gathering. Because of that, they lack time and energy, required for their analysis part. Secondary analysis will help researchers to concentrate more on their analysis. By relying on secondary analysis, researchers have the opportunity to deepen their analytical thinking.
5. Reanalysis may offer new interpretations: reviewing secondary analysis may provide a good opportunity for the researchers to interpret data, gathered by the others from a new perspective.
6. The wider obligations of the social researcher: gathering primary data and documents usually push researcher towards a one-dimension research. Studying secondary analysis done by others, may provide an opportunity for the researchers to concentrate on other subjects and even, moderate the research subject (Bryman 2012: 312-5).

1.4. The Purpose of the Research

In this research, the author seeks to find those reasons explaining the decline of old neighborhoods of Tehran, which were formerly a place of the most dramatic political, cultural and socio-economic upheavals of the country. Besides that, the internal conditions and transformations of the old neighborhoods during an era in which modern policies have been

enforced in the Iranian society, would be analyzed. Through that, the functionalities and impacts of the modern state directed urban interventions on the old neighborhoods would be studied.

Despite of their different area of research, John W. Meyer and Chicago school urban sociologists are likely to have some similar concerns and approaches. They both consider rationality as an important and inseparable part of modernity. Building a functional theoretical framework through combining their relevant ideas would improve the author's analysis of the targeted era.

1.5. A Historical Background of Iran's Socio-Economic and Political Conditions during the Targeted Era

In nineteenth century, the total population of Iran was around 10 million, more than 55% of them lived in rural areas, 25% were nomads and less than 20% lived in cities. There rarely existed any secure and convenient route between cities and villages. A large number of cities, villages and tribes were in a total socio-economic exclusion, economically self-sufficient and had no connections with the other parts of the country. Similar conditions existed in the cities. In cities, people were divided between different neighborhoods. Ethno-religious criteria had the main role in neighborhood segregations. Local self-sufficiency and poorly shaped transportations had mutual relations. Urban dwellers provided their foods through the adjacent villages. Luxury commodities were usually the most tradable products, which were traded between big cities and in the next level, exported to Europe. There are plenty of reasons, describing the above conditions. The natural geography of Iran was a crucial factor in decelerating development of road networks. Besides that, ethno-linguistic diversity reinforced heterogeneity within the society. And also, religious differences made the situation more complicated. With regard to the stated issues, Ervand Abrahamian viewed the pre-modern Iranian society as a 'social mosaic' (Abrahamian 2010: 10-17). In cities, social differentiations and diversities could be more complicated. Each craftsman, storekeeper or merchant belonged to a particular guild. These guilds ran by their heads who were picked up by the elders. These guilds had the responsibility to monitor the performances of their members, solve their problems and internal quarrels. They

generally behaved like a gated community, they used their own and special public baths, coffee or tea houses, markets, mosques, *zurkhanehs* (gymnasium) and cemeteries. Their heads and elders were the representatives of their communities, groups or guilds and they allocated a great deal of time and energy to protect their interests, which sometimes contrasted to the other groups' interests (ibid: 21). Such forms of differentiations and groupings led to unending disagreements and conflicts within the pre-modern society of Iran. These continuous clashes, however, rarely became a widespread class conflicts due to the fact that classes were largely separated from each other and people were deeply involved with their groups' competitions. As a result, class conflicts rarely happened and even if it happened, it had a very limited influence on the society (ibid: 32). In the middle of nineteenth century, the Qajar dynasty, which ruled Iran, endeavored to develop a powerful central bureaucratic system. Concerning to the mentioned problems, the newly created bureaucracy could not improve the Iran's condition. In fact, the administrative system was totally collapsed and the central state had no control on other parts of the country. Therefore, the king carried out his reign through the policy of 'divide and rule (or conquer)', by which weakened his enemies and hampered their likely alliance (ibid: 35-9).

The absence of a powerful central state capable of managing the socio-economic and political issues and challenges the country encountered with, contributed to the rise of discontents amidst different sectors of the society, particularly the newly shaping middle class, which were mostly from the bazaar people. Given that the western colonial powers augmented their influence in Iran through not just political presence, but also economic concessions, the mentioned group were largely losing their interests.

Also contacts with west was not only limited to diplomatic and economic relations, but also cultural. A newly shaped group of people, called intellectuals, advocated modern education and concepts which derived by values of modernity. Intellectuals desired to modernize the state and increase its functionality through utilizing western based concepts and institutions such as freedom, constitution, parliament and etc. (ibid: 46-7). While the general conditions of the country were deteriorating, the mentioned groups could persuade other influential groups of the society like clergies to revolt against Qajars and restrict the power of the monarch through constitutions and parliament. Due to interventions done by colonial powers (Russia and Britain) (ibid: 87) and internal disagreements between revolutionaries and conservatives, intellectuals

were unable of running their targeted reforms. Accordingly, many of them were inclined to a powerful general, who later crowned as Reza Shah, the first king of Pahlavi dynasty (ibid: 93). He conducted modern reforms and largely transformed the Iranian society. His power was stabilized on three pillars: new modern army, governmental bureaucracy and support provided by his court. Within his reign, it was aimed to fight against the presence and influence of Islamic teachings. Therefore, a set of newly established institutions came along with that approach. A semi-European education and a new economic system were established, through which public factories, road networks, investors banks and chain stores were largely developed. Justice system, not by the clergies, but the juristic educated in western academies were managed (ibid: 128).

Within his reign (1925-1941), cities functioned as the main location for capitalist mechanisms. The spread of capitalist relations, however, was limited to urban sector and rural areas remained nearly intact (Hesamian 1985: 17-8). Hesamian categorizes the urban growth of Iran into two important historical periods. First, 'slow urbanization' (between 1920-1960) and second, 'rapid urbanization' (between 1960-1980). Within the first period, the growth of capitalism was not immense. The traditional mechanisms of economy were still dominant in villages and cities were forcefully redeveloped towards assisting the rise of capitalism. In second level, the growth of capitalism in cities were so wide-spreading that villages could not still live with their former economic conventions as past. Although the state planned to replace subsistence agriculture by commercial agriculture, the gradual reliance to oil income contributed to the neglect of other sectors of economy. During 60s, urban population dramatically increased, particularly in large cities and the capital city due to the large number of migrants from rural areas (ibid: 19-20).

The state directed land reform in 60s was not the beginning, but the deepening of the collapse of traditional economy of Iran, which mostly dependent to the productivity and inhabitant and labor forces of rural areas. In this time, while the central government achieved a highly unprecedented control on the nation, particularly urban inhabitants, aimed to expend her domination into rural areas. Notwithstanding that the land reform tremendously decreased the productivity and functionality of the agricultural sector, the government could gain a hegemonic power over the villages. The rising oil revenues had a pivotal role in strengthening central government. In

reaction to the difficulties resulted by the land reform, huge waves of rural dwellers to the cities, seeking for job and success (Hooglund 1982: 178-182, 204-206, 217).

1.6. Neighborhood in the Old Iranian Urban System

Quarter system was the key sector within the urban life of old cities of Iran. Each quarter functioned like a city with separated plazas, bazaars, mosques and teahouses. Inhabitants of each quarter were recognized not by their economic class or their level of income, but by their ethno-religious similarities (Bayat 2010: 101).

Each neighborhood had a semi-autonomous system, which provided its requirements. In a usual neighborhood, there existed a mosque, public bath, grocery store, butcher shop and *ab anbar* (water reservoir). Some of them –bigger ones- were so well-fixed that functioned like a city for their dwellers and added to the mentioned facilities, they might have *maktabkhaneh* (school), *khanqah* (a building designed for the gatherings of sufi brotherhoods), markets and caravanserais. Construction of public facilities like mosques, plazas, baths, water reservoirs and caravanserais were done usually by the public participation. The expenditures were provided by people, themselves or aristocrats and wealthy people. Each residential quarter had a main road or *gozar* (passage), which connected them to the main sights of the city, like bazaar. In addition to the communicational advantage, *gozar* kept away the neighborhood from the crowdedness of the public areas of the city. Also, it helped people to secure their neighborhoods. Strangers did not tend to enter areas in which had no business or acquaintance, as a result, everyone knew each other and every movements were controlled by the inhabitants. With regard to the paternalistic structure of the society in the past, such security was likely to provide a condition for women to freely sit outside of their houses and spent their time with their neighbors (Soltanzadeh 2011: 199-208). In fact, quarters were under the eyes of their dwellers. Houses were generally compatible with each other, whether in terms of their heights and sizes or their architectures. In other words, the Iranian architecture had harmony with the geographical and local elements in the neighborhoods.

Based on Soltanzadeh's approach, socio-economic and ethno-religious linkages were generally the most important factors leading to the establishment of neighborhoods. Nevertheless, he claims that religious connections were more important than other factors since they reinforced social cohesion within neighborhoods. Although such version of social cohesion had no potentiality to suit the common goods of the whole society or even the whole city, but just the interests of particular neighborhood. There usually existed many conflicts, rivalries and disagreements between neighborhoods. These issues had damaging consequences for the urban life in Iran (ibid: 199-200).

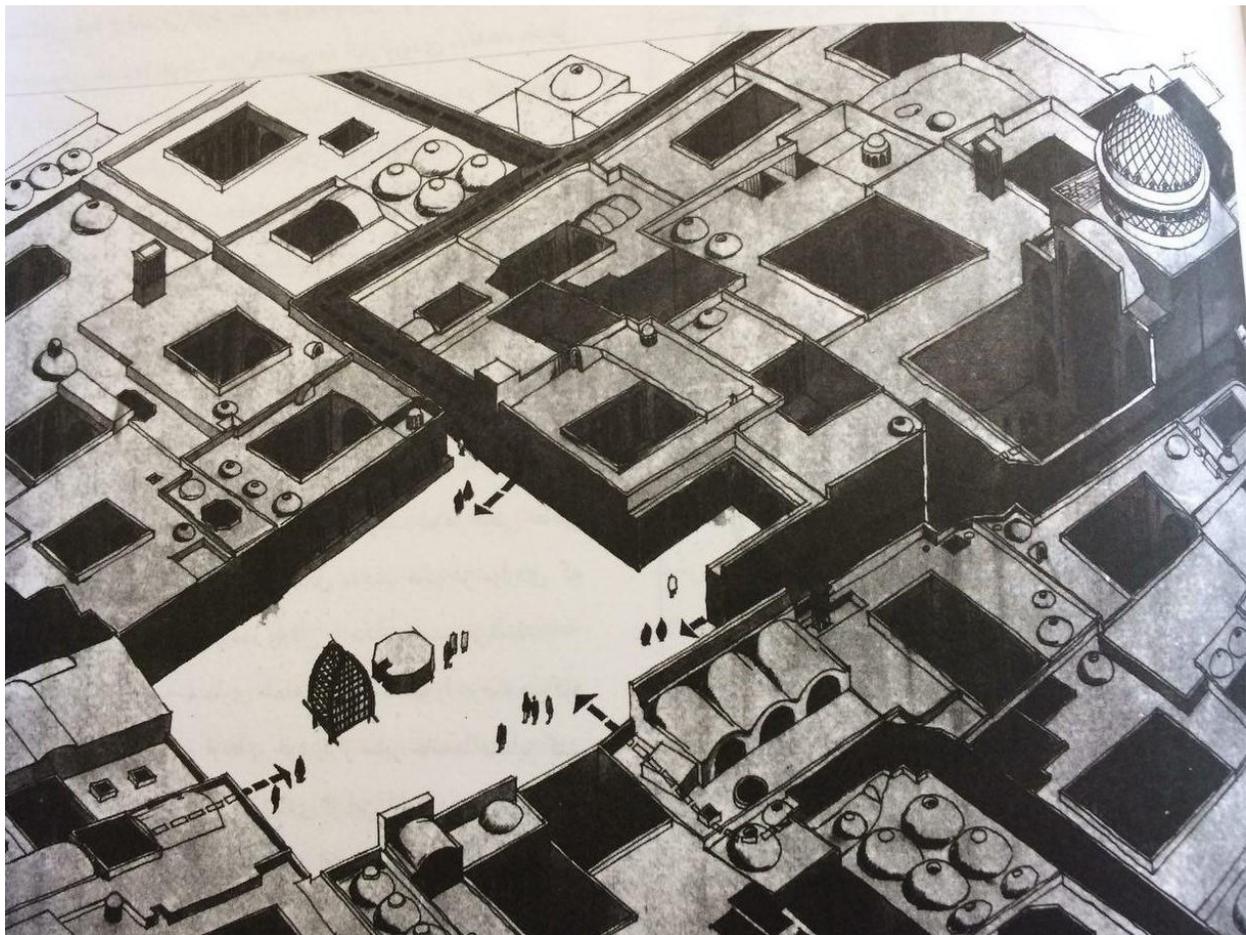


Image 1. An Iranian Urban Neighborhood Reconstruction (Soltanzadeh 2011: 203).

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Meyerian Perspectives

John W. Meyer's theories on formation of nation-states within periphery of the world society, delivered in 1997 influential essay 'World Society and the Nation-State' has an important role within the arguments of the thesis. Meyer et al. introduce the chief features of nation states, shaped gradually by the end of the Second World War. First, nation states are considerably similar within their policy formulations. They call it 'isomorphism'. Second, they attempt to apply and implement modern values, 'rational actorhood'. Third, since they intend to run their territories through imported and non-local values, they encounter with inconsistency between the purposes and frameworks of their local environment and the external oriented targets, 'decoupling'. Fourth, peripheral countries conduct a great deal of structuration of new organizations, based on external ideas, in order to promote their –often- weak status in the world society. However, their efforts and purposes are usually so ambitious and unrealistic that overpass the existing capacity of their society, 'expansive structuration' (Meyer et al. 1997: 151-7).

The author intends to examine the process of enforcement of modernity in Iran in the twentieth century through applying pathological concepts of Meyer et al. (1997), like decoupling or structural expansion.

2.2. Georg Simmel and his American Urban Sociologists Successors

Regarding to the fact that the research subject is also an urban issue, several theories of urban sociology has been used. The intellectual achievements of Robert Ezra Park and Louis Wirth, both from Chicago school of sociology, and Georg Simmel, the well-known German sociologist are likely to underlie the urban theories of the research. Simmel in his classical essay 'Metropolis and Mental Life', authored in 1903, addresses the chief features of mental life of urban dwellers in modern urban environments, their individualism, their loneliness and their emotional pressures which made by the high pace of exchanges and uncertainty of life, especially in the area of commercial transactions. He argues that mental life in metropolis is basically rational (or as he calls 'intellectual'), while in small cities is mostly emotional. Metropolis is the seat of money economy and due to the nature of money, which measure everything based on their exchange value, rationality and money economy have a perfect coexistence in metropolises. One of his arguments which has had an important impact on Chicago school, is about division of labor in cities. He considers cities as the main site of most advanced forms of economic division of labor. Due to its large size, city is likely to provide a diverse set of products and achievements. Within cities, individuals' efforts to attract customers increase the level of professionalization and this also allows them to prosper without eradicating other people's economic activities.

Park and Wirth view division of labor as a vital issue for the progression of cities in modern era. They highlight the point that cities receive a large number of immigrants from everywhere. Notwithstanding having different ethno-religious groups of people, cities with large and powerful markets tolerate, assimilate and even reward the new comers. These people have different abilities and potentialities. They can be useful for other citizens. In addition, they are likely to reinforce division of labor and specialization of occupations which are important options for cities' cohesion in Europe and United States of America (USA). They also notice that division of labor between not only citizens, but also organizations in cities is to a great extent supported by the modern rationality (Wirth 1938: 10, 13, 17).

In his definition, Park (1925), considers city not simply as a physical and human made construction. He highlights the mental life of the cities as well. He views cities as a container formatting people's mentality, traditions, feelings and tendencies. He highlights the role of division of labor in shaping the cities in the modern era. By that, different components of cities, like organization, machines, human beings, buildings and so on are organically related. As a

purely artificial construction, the structure of cities, however, roots deeply in people's moral system, customs and habits (Park & Burgess 1925: 1-4).

3. Analysis

3.1. Encountering Modernization

During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Qajar dynasty, which reigned Iran, started to apply the European principles of urban planning in Iran. While demolishing old gates and defending walls, Tehran was redeveloped and enlarged in order to provide enough physical space for new comers. Different groups of people were among the new comers ranging from foreign diplomats to poor emigrants from rural areas. Besides that, having easier control over the crowd was another reason for the redevelopment of the city. Baron Hussmann's renovation of Paris was the essential source of inspiration for such projects. As Habibi states, such renovations were generally an integration of western and eastern (Iranian) principles of architecture. However, during Qajar's reign, the eastern spirit was more visible (Habibi 2013: 157).



Image 2. One of the old gates of Tehran, which no longer exists (Bartarinha Website)

3.2. Radically Modernizing the Face of Iranian Cities

From the very beginning of the new dynasty (Pahlavi) (1925-1979), the former policy became upside down. Pahlavis encouraged architects and urban planners to pursue western patterns.

Bayat claims the interventions made by government intended to demolish the rooted and old quarter system and replace it by imported zoning patterns based on class segregation (Bayat 2010: 102). The western based rationality was to a great extent opposite to the Iranian mentality. In the Iranian tradition of urban planning, mosque, bazaar and neighborhood had pivotal roles within the institutional structure of the Iranian cities and were largely relied to each other (Ashraf 1975: 18-9, 24) People tended to live around their ethno-religious counterparts, whether rich or poor. This pattern were dismantled by the beginning of the new era.

Image 3. A modern square, based on western tradition of architecture (Lenzor Website)



Since then, streets were built in the heart of old neighborhoods (Habibi 2013: 163). The former connections between the mentioned institutions in neighborhoods were broken down. Local and traditional bazaars were largely damaged within this process, which were generally dependent on products made by villagers. In fact, as Ahmad Ashraf demonstrates, throughout the old order, the urban bazaars was highly dependent on rural labor and products (Ashraf 1975: 10, 41). Most of the population used to live in rural areas and they provided products which contributed to the urban commerce. By Iran's gradual integration into world economy from the nineteenth century

onwards (Hooglund 1982: 28-9), this balance started to break. This imbalance was deepened in the aftermath of Second World War due to large economic reliance on oil revenues. New order could not formulate policies towards developing a new and local system of division of labor.

3.3. Analyzing Decline of Old Neighborhoods

Those experts whom their findings on Iran have been exploited in this research, have noted to the incompatibility existed in Iran between modernist governments conducted top down developmental interventions and local institutions. Nevertheless, those analysts rarely provide a precise theoretical framework being capable of explaining the reasons behind the gradual and continuous decline of old neighborhoods located at Tehran's region 12 concerning to the weakness of their local organizations. For instance, Azam Khatam points to the dramatic rise of construction industry in Tehran, which ran their activities in marginal lands adjacent to the main body of the city. Construction industry became one of the most profit generating activities in Iran, which in fact, was the consequence of accepting and applying mechanisms of capitalist system by the modernist regime. Also, two comprehensive plans (first approved in 1968-9 and second approved in 1991-2), -which were inspired from European and American urban comprehensive plans- determined new locations for commercial, political and cultural centers of Tehran. In addition, Shah of Iran's decision to reside in his newly built palace, located at north of Tehran, far away from central part of the city and the main body of Tehran's population worsened the situation. Such relocation had unprecedented impacts on Tehran in the 60s and 70s, for example, a large number of merchants and royalty abandoned their ancestral neighborhoods and inhabited in the newly built ones, located at north. Following that, public offices and private companies transferred their main part of activities to the newly shaped city center, again located at north. Consequently, these neighborhoods lost their commercial centrality (Khatam 2005: 127-130, 134). In accordance with Khatam's arguments, Hourcade points to the Shah's plans to create a super modern capital city on Abbas Abad hills 'Shahestan Pahlavi' (within framework of first comprehensive plan), located at north of old city center. This project was supposed to portray a modern image from Iran (Hourcade 2009: 20-25).



Image 4. Shahestan Pahlavi (Hourcade 2009: 22)

After 1979 revolution, decline was exacerbated due to municipality's second comprehensive plan in which the western waste lands of Tehran were programmed to host the main commercial and administrative organizations (Khatam 2005: 140). Arang Keshavarzian, an expert of contemporary Iranian political economy who has studied Tehran Bazaar' evolution –locates at the heart of Tehran's old neighborhoods- in the contemporary era, argues that unlike other traditional bazaars in other cities, the Pahlavi regime did not demolish or intervene in Tehran Bazaar. As a result, the bazaar could thrive during the first half of twentieth century. The social life in bazaar and neighborhoods in which bazaari people lived, continued. However, he points to the rise of total population, especially in Tehran, from 1960s onwards, during which the bazaar and its surrounding neighborhoods were started to decline. Because of the large number of migrants, these neighborhoods became too populated. Due to the high density of population and buildings, constructing new roads had too much costs. Traffic and chaos were prevalent. The existing facilities and infrastructures were not sufficient and access to the bazaar was not as easy as past. Simultaneously, many bazaari people started to move to the newly built northern neighborhoods of Tehran. Therefore, the mutual relations between bazaar and its surrounding neighborhoods were highly disrupted. In addition, in 1980, in order to control the heavy traffic existed in central areas of Tehran, have extremely restricted the mobilization of automobiles in region 12. This has contributed to the decrease of the number of people who tended to meet their

requirements or conduct their commercial exchanges through grand bazaar (Keshavarzian 2005: 31).

These analysts neglect the fact that while global standardization of nation state establishment and management (or as Meyer calls it, 'isomorphism') has provoked to the rise of problems (like 'decoupling' from the local institutional structure) within a peripheral country like Iran, institutions remained from the old order not only had not been promoted by the governments, but also had been destroyed in some cases. It is important to bear in mind that modern governments of Iran have not replaced the old institutional structure by a functional alternative, although they endeavored to expansively structure organizations based on 'rational actorhood' idea.

Ahmad Ashraf's classical article (1975) about history of old Islamic system of urbanization in Iran, which started to decline by the second half of the nineteenth century, had an important share in creation of statements of this research. According to him, there was a particular form of division of labor within the framework of Iranian urban area, which was based on economic and social interrelated networks existed between rural populations and urban ones. In past, most of the population used to live in rural areas and they provided products which contributed to the urban commerce. They manufactured demands of urban dwellers through agriculture, animal husbandry and carpet weaving. As a result, a balance existed between villages and cities.

Throughout the old order, the urban economy was highly dependent on rural labor and production. Due to this fact, Ashraf argues that before decline of old order in Iran, there were no independent and self-sufficient urban economy or even, urban spots, but urban areas. In this system, urban bazaars were highly reliant on rural productions. This was led to a form of division of labor within the Iranian economic system which was dramatically different from its European equivalent progressed in free cities during the middle and modern ages (Ashraf 1975: 10, 41, 42, 44-45). In the twentieth century, the new division of labor and the new economic system did not brought a high status in the global system for Iran. The Iranian economic system was a one product economy, based on oil (Hessamian 1985: 31). Despite of its high incomes, it did not provide a sustainable economic growth. Other sectors of economy were highly dependent to the incomes of oil.

Ashraf notes that the heterogeneity between urban neighborhoods and rural areas with common ethnicity and religions were more visible than neighborhoods with each other in cities.

Neighborhood was mainly a semi-rural system with a large area and a considerable number of population. This issue was reinforced due to the fact that big land lords in Iran tended to reside in cities, unlike their European counterparts whom used to live near the peasants working on their lands (Ashraf 1975: 38). The far distance between feudal and city provided a suitable space with a great deal of freedom for different groups of people. In contrast, in Iran, for land lords' presence, cities could not become free and self-administered as much as their European counterparts.

Pahlavi's iron fist endeavored to open the gated sphere of neighborhoods to the new world through modern oriented development. To have a modern and developed country, plus to the outward changes like transforming the spatial dimension of the cities, economy, army, education and bureaucracy were to be modernized. Due to lack of a powerful bourgeoisie, the government attempted to inject and develop capitalist mechanisms into the Iranian society. Like western countries, a diverse set of ministries and organization were established, such as ministry of ways and streets (1929), ministry of commerce and public works, ministry of economy, the Iranian national bank (1927) and chamber of commerce (1930) (Hessamian 1985: 25-8).

The establishment of ministry of construction and housing in 1963 is envisaged as the formal beginning of urban planning and development in Iran (Kamrava 2012: 26, 49). Technocratic perspective is the essential character of not only the mentioned ministry, but also any other organizations involved in urban issues. The provision of Tehran's first comprehensive plan within the mid-60s by the cooperation of European and American urban planners, however, was an admirable effort to go beyond the engineering and technocratic aspect. Thitherto, urban development in Iran was based on passage development and widening. As mentioned, since mid-60s onwards, this trend was supposed to change (ibid: 28). However, multiple reasons explain why the comprehensive plan could not largely transform the destructive dimension of the urban management. Reasons which prove that despite of Eurocentric origin of the established plans and organizations, they suffered from a great deal of functional and fundamental weaknesses. In European and American cities, municipalities belong to public sector, which place between the central state and private sector. People oriented institutions able to intervene and question them. They have to be accountable to the representatives of local authorities. Besides that, political parties and institutions can evaluate municipalities' performances. Bottom up pressures and

demands are likely to be heard by the authorities. Therefore, urban system has a mutual relations with the urban dwellers and it will function and moderate towards social demands. Plus to budget provided by the state, people's tax play an important supportive role (ibid: 41-2).

In contrast, in Iran, urban organizations have shaped by the wills of the central state. They are accountable to government, not people. In return, people endeavor to not pay their tax. There exist no direct relation between people and authorities of urban system. Urban system functions as a tool in the hands of absolutist regime to control crowds of people. Urban plans were programmed towards the political interests of the state, not the public demands. Urban system received its legitimacy not through the citizens, but the state (ibid: 43).

In practice, the comprehensive plan, however, was mostly a technocratic plan in which the true identity of the Iranian cities were neglected (ibid: 50).

Concerning to the mentioned damages stemmed by the absolutist regime of Iran, even the engineering aspect of the comprehensive plan were likely to be fallen behind in favor of the personal ambitions of the Shah of Iran. In this case, Shahestan Pahlavi was to be the highest element of modernity and development in Iran in 70s. As mentioned before, it had been included in the comprehensive plan and its design and construction was supposed to go along with the comprehensive plan. However, given that the rise of oil income in the 70s brought a high level of prosperity to Iran, the Shah of Iran decided to employ a well-known British architect group to conduct his beloved project. He also commanded that Shahestan must be excluded from the comprehensive plan. In fact, Shahestan was considered as Shah's private property (Hourcade 2009: 21).

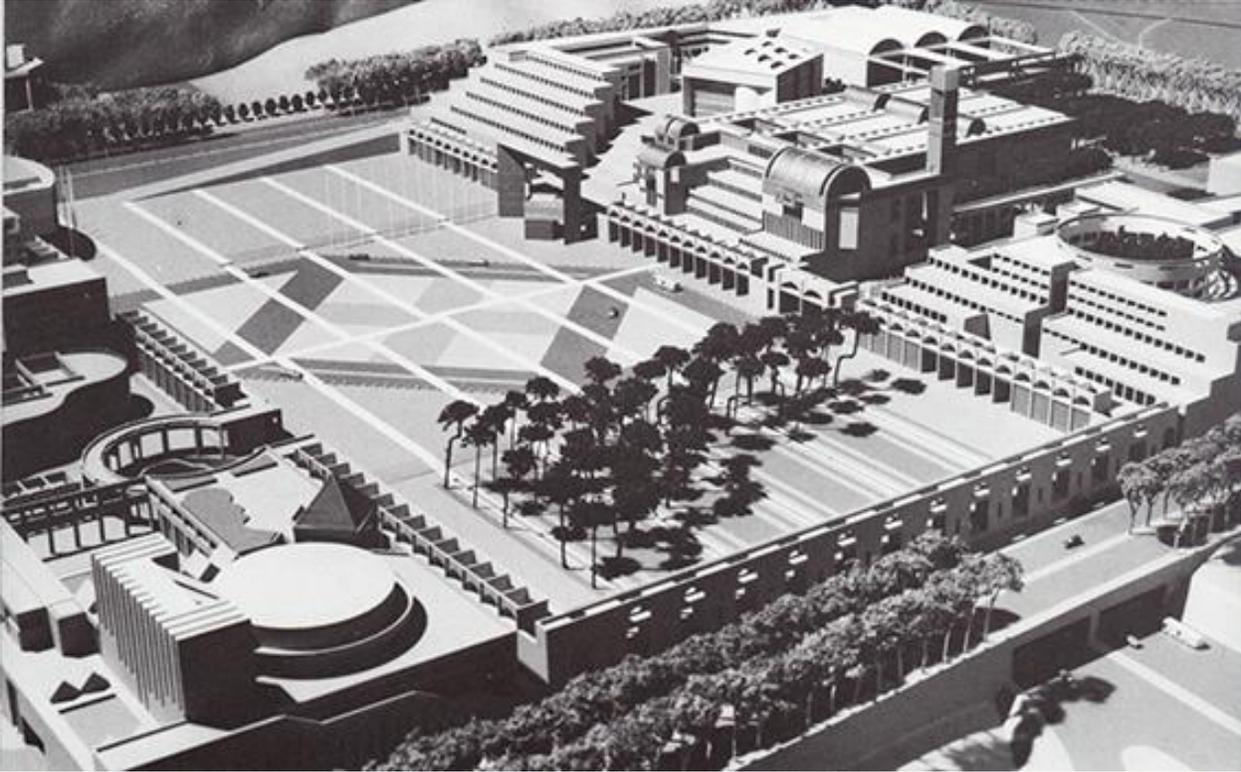


Image 5. Plans of the so-called ‘Shahestan Pahlavi’ (Graham Foundation Website)

4. Conclusion

By the beginning of policies based on top-down development principles during the reign of Pahlavi dynasty, neighborhoods in Iran, could not enjoy those kinds of freedom and self-sufficiency throughout their internal affairs, which others in the American cities had.

Governments considered themselves as the only source of power and order with the right to make decisions on neighborhoods, citizens and cities. They repressed any form of self-governance supported by communities.

Furthermore, the government did not transform the old institutions towards the new world society, but destroyed them and replaced them by the whole brand new ones. The pre-modern institutions and customs were viewed as elements of backwardness. With regard to the vast sum of group differentiations, instead of providing a peaceful condition for different socio-economic and ethno-religious layers to gradually solve and leave their disagreements and enmities and receive progression in their relations, the new regime decided to simply eliminate them with iron fist. Besides that, concerning to the fact that Iran in nineteenth century was a social mosaic, the powerful will supported by the Pahlavis, neglected that a rapid top down unification without considering deep socio-economic and cultural differences would be problematic. As mentioned, each nomadic, rural and urban units were approximately spontaneous. Integrating all these departed ingredients by using force might seemed accessible within their first conducting decades, it aroused resistance between new generations. 1979 revolution is an important sign of such resistance and nativism.

Briefly, during the reign of Pahlavi dynasty, while growing, the urban system had three significant features. First, total financial reliance to oil incomes; second, totally directed by the central state; and imitating European principles of urban management (Kamrava 2012: 14). In addition, commodification of land and housing and consequently, rise of construction industry has to be considered as an important factor, which changed rapidly and dramatically not only the appearance of the cities, but also the Iranian urban life style. Azam Khatam claims that rise of real estate market within the margins of Tehran was the first reason of old neighborhoods'

decline. She believes that the next level of decline was more damaging since it targeted the commercial centrality of this area (Khatam 2005: 128).

Another thing which should be noticed, is that during the process of modernization, the existing relations and model of division of labor were based on mercantilism, but not a productive one. In fact, production was neglected (Habibi 2013: 191). As mentioned, the productive relations between villages and cities were broken by the beginning of modern and capitalist policies in 20s. This, however, was worsened in 60s, after the implementation of land reform by which the agriculture was largely weakened. Simultaneously, since the old urban structure was not any more accountable to the changes, derived by capitalist and modernist perspective of the government, a new urban system was attempted to be replaced by comprehensive plan.

In spite of large revenues, oil industry could employ a limited number of population. No industry and economic activity was as beneficial as oil industry; because of that, the state allocated a great deal of money and energy to support it. In order to have a system of functional division of labor, there should be a diversity of professions and productions in a society. A single product economy like Iran relied on oil revenues, could not establish a diversified economy with sustainable growth. Because of that, a new system of division of labor which root in the old system has not shaped. The new system has been adopted and imported from the western civilization by technocrats whom were enamored of modernity. These experts and technocrats adopted procedures invented and successfully examined by others (in Western Europe and North America) (Kamrava 2012: 46). In Iran in which governments have attempted to modernize the whole dimensions of the country through applying principles of rational actorhood like their system of division of labor, bureaucracy and development, which had been enriched in western civilization, decoupling has had damaging consequences mostly due to the fact that the imported institutional structure has not been as functional as the original model and it could not contribute to creating a sustainable economic growth, political stability and social development. Quarter system –seen as a symbol of backwardness by modernist governments- is the one which sacrificed during the process of modernity and was attempted to be replaced by zoning pattern.

In order to accelerate the process of modernization and convincing the urban society to adopt new patterns of consumption and subsistence, the government demolished old urban structures (Habibi 2013: 192). The authorities assumed that replacing old spaces and structures with new

and modern designs and constructions would definitely change the whole socio-cultural values and patterns of the society. Yet, despite of all changes implemented in the structure of Iranian cities, people remained loyal to their former beliefs of urban life (ibid: 156). Many of them tended to pursue the Islamic-Iranian life style as their true identity. Their mental life and values were more similar to their previous generations than the values advocated and diffused by the state. The conflict between citizens and state was deepened by that contradiction.

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