

Ali Kiafar  
University of Southern California

## Abstract

Tehran, the capital and largest city of Iran, has witnessed two parallel trends: a rapid and multi-faceted socio-spatial growth, and increasing separation among social classes. The former is manifested by population increase, physical expansion, concentration of institutions, and administrative centralization. The latter is indicated by rapid accumulation of wealth and capital by a tiny layer, poverty of most of the population, and spatial segregation of social classes. These phenomena reflect the transformation from a pre-capitalist city in the 18th through the early 20th century to a transitional capitalist city in the 1920-1950 period, and to a dependent capitalist city after the 1950s.

## Introduction

Since the early decades of this century, Tehran, the capital and largest city of Iran, has witnessed two parallel trends: a rapid and multi-faceted socio-spatial growth, and increasing separation among social classes. The former is manifested by population increase, physical expansion, concentration of institutions, and administrative centralization. The latter is indicated by rapid accumulation of wealth and capital by a tiny layer, poverty of most of the population, and spatial segregation of social classes.

The rapid growth and increasing contradictions in Tehran reflect the transformation from a pre-capitalist city in the 18th through the early 20th century to transitional capitalist city in the 1920-1950 period, and to a dependent capitalist city after the 1950s. This transformation was a direct result of the 100 year transition of Iranian society, in which capital accumulation was first based on rural subsistence production, later on internationally-oriented production for exchange and profit in cities. The cities were transformed from centers of control and rural extraction to production sites and market areas. Because Tehran was the political center of the country in the transition period, it gradually acquired its predominant position. The city, over time, became distinguished for its heavy

concentration of economic, social, and political activities. This transformation led to the capital's rapid population growth, physical expansion, and widening socio-economic and spatial contradictions.

## Tehran in Pre-Capitalist Iran

In this society, which lasted until the end of the first quarter of this century, agriculture was dominant, and landlords owned or controlled the land, the prime means of production, through a variety of means including inheritance, royal grants, and commissions (Lambton 1969). Peasants were normally tied to a plot of land. Cities served primarily as political, administrative, and commercial centers, i.e., their basic function was not production but control and distribution of the national surplus. The countryside produced the surplus, and the towns appropriated most of it by political power and through exchange mechanisms (Amirahmadi 1982). Since accumulated surplus did not go to productive uses and thereby required additional labor force for production and associated economic activities, cities did not grow much. Urban growth was also limited by restrictions on the movement of peasants and the low rate of population increase due to high death rates. Only cities on major transit routes and seats of political power grew substantially. The low level of urban-rural disparity remained largely constant despite heavy surplus extraction from the countryside.

Thus, over the entire 1867-1921 period, the Iranian urban population grew only 1.64 percent average per year as compared to 2.41 percent for rural population and 0.96 percent for nomads. The growth rate for larger cities was somewhat higher, 2.17 percent average per year over the 1867-1913 period. Among such cities were Tehran in the north-central region and Tabriz and Khoy in the northwest part of the country.

Tehran was a small village and a satellite of the important city of Ray until the 17th century. For centuries, the town had grown slowly. Between the mid-15th and mid-18th centuries, Iranian kings ordered construction of walls, towers and gates, government office and royal buildings, or

held their winter courts there. The central location of Tehran, which made access to different parts of the royal jurisdiction easy, was no doubt an important factor in the early growth of the city. After it was selected as the capital of the country by the founder of the Qajar Dynasty (1796-1925), it grew into a principal commercial center with a major *bazaar* (marketplace) and many small scale trading and gardening activities (Bahrambeygui 1977). Following these developments, the city's population estimated at 15,000 in the 1620s, surged to about 50,000 by the 1800s and reached the 120,000 to 150,000 level in the second half of the 19th century.

In the next fifty years, until around 1920, the population of the capital of Persia (as the country was called by the outside world until 1937) increased by at least another 50,000. In 1922, the city's first official census, conducted by the municipality, reported a population of 210,000 (Sarshemari-ye Nofus-e Shahr-e Tehran 1933).

Tehran's political domination during the Qajar period allowed it to extract surplus (in the form of taxes, rent in kind, and labor) from the hinterland and provinces (Bahrambeygui 1977). The money was spent on the Royal Court and the nobility, ceremonial events, European trips of the shahs (kings) and their entourages, building new walls and city gates, and luxury palaces. The city was by no means a center of production, but a center of administration and commerce (Bahrambeygui 1977). Before the 20th century, the class structure of Tehran, like other major Iranian towns of the period, consisted of several propertied classes at the top, including the nobility, courtiers, landlords, higher echelons of the clergy, and wealthy merchants, a large number of middle class individuals, mainly artisans and shopkeepers of the bazaar, and common people, mostly the lower level workers in the bazaar and on suburban land. Given that the largest property-less class, the peasantry, lived in the countryside, the non-propertied Tehranis did not make up a significantly high proportion of population in the city.

Although life was hard for many urbanites, absolute poverty was not a major problem, as evidenced by foreign travelers' and domestic writers' accounts (Amirahmadi 1982). Similarly, spatial segregation among social groups existed but was not conspicuous. For instance, different residential districts existed in Tehran, but the population was relatively mixed across the city. Spatial specialization of activities, however, did occur. Like most other Persian towns, the city had various districts with different functions. Specifically, Tehran had four districts which, as a result of population increase and the physical expansion of the city, grew to six after 1867 (Bahrambeygui 1977). They included the commercial district (*bazaar*), the royal district (*Ark*, or citadel), the politico-administrative district (*douwat*, or government), and three residential districts (*Sangelaj*, *Oudlajan*, and *Chaleh-Maiden*).

In sum, corresponding with the dominant system of production and accumulation process in the entire Iranian society, in the pre-capitalist period which lasted until after the mid-19th century, Old Tehran had a relatively small population size, grew steadily but slowly, and did not experience pronounced contradictions among the bulk of its population (people outside of the court and their associates). The class structure of the city remained basically intact, and for centuries there were no significant changes in income distribution patterns and formation of new urban social groups (Shahri 1978; Karimian 1976; Javaher-Kalam 1946; and Najmi 1985).

### Tehran in the Transitional Capitalist Period

Starting in the second half of the 19th century, as a consequence of a series of internal transformations, structural developments at the global level, and direct external influences, Iran passed through a process of change which significantly altered many facets of the society, including its economic system, political structure, social power base, and status of the state. While these transformations were highlighted by the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909, it was not until the 1920s that the process of transition from primarily pre-capitalist accumulation to capitalism got underway and its impact

noticed. These changes were concurrent with, and intensified by, a shift in the political regime.

The regime, which came to power through a coup d'état by Reza Khan, later Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979), ended the more than a century rule of absolutist Qajars. Responding to realities, the new regime took the historical task of driving the country toward full-scale capitalist development by establishing an infant state-capitalism wrapped in an authoritarian political system. The regime rebuilt the weakened state machinery, reorganized the ancient bureaucracies, and modernized the society based on Western models (Banani 1961). Monopolization of foreign trade, establishment of state banks and commercial agencies, creation of state-owned industries, assumption of an active and aggressive governing role by the state, and, in general, control of major means of urban economic activities were the manifestations of the new political-economic system in Iran (Ashraf 1971; Katouzian 1981; Bashiriye 1984; Akhavi 1986).

The determination of the first Pahlavi regime to follow a pattern of capitalist development, however, was not sufficient for capitalism to become the dominant mode of production in a short period of time. Pre-capitalist relations remained strong in every aspect of Iranian society during the next several decades. It was only in the late 1950s and especially the early 1960s that capitalist relations and institutions grew dominant (Amirahmadi 1980). Nonetheless, under the new regime, accumulation became urban-centered, dominated by service and industrial sectors.

The centralization of the restructured, authoritative state was accompanied by the concentration of new industrial, financial, and commercial establishments in Tehran and, far less, in a few other major cities including Tabriz and Isfahan. By 1950, over 38 percent of large industrial establishments were located in Tehran. Commercial transactions and economic activities were primarily carried out for profit. At the same time, and as a result of the state-led capitalist system of accumulation, two new

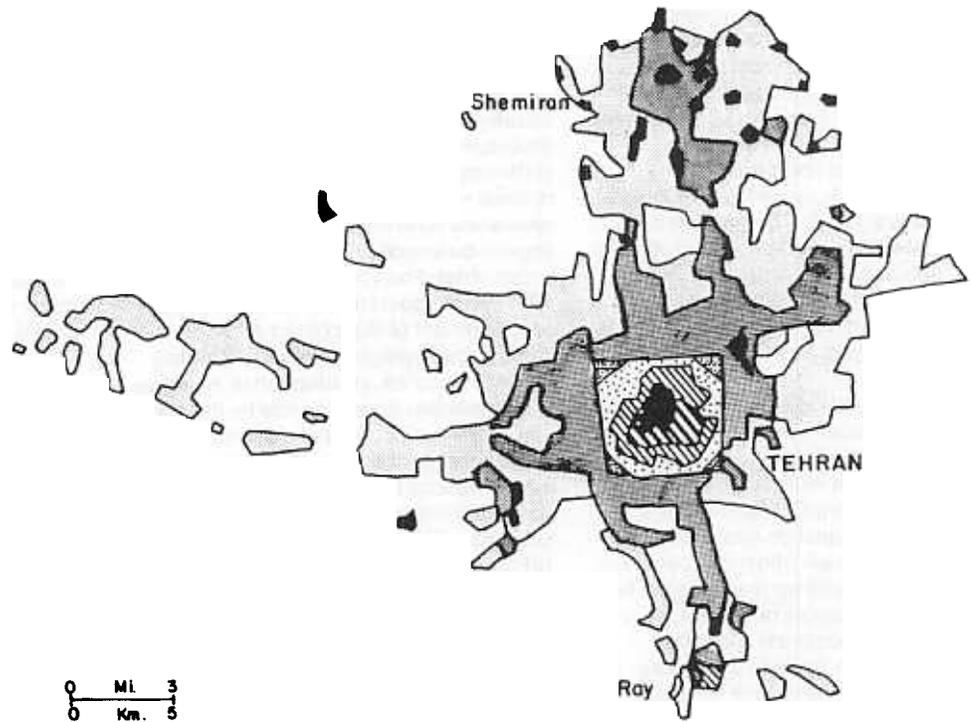
classes emerged in Iran, predominantly in a few big cities: a new middle class, which included a growing number of state-employed bureaucrats, technocrats, teachers and students, and an industrial working class. The members of the two new classes were basically the younger generation of the traditional middle classes, especially the *bazaaris* (the people associated with the bazaar), and lower level workers formerly involved in traditional trades and activities. Only few came from the peasantry. In addition, the Western-oriented bourgeoisie, which was already emerging in the latter part of the 19th century, grew in size and prosperity, due to the increasing integration of the local economy into the global capitalist system. An absolute majority of these people lived in the capital city of Tehran (Adibi 1979; Bharier 1971).

The above developments gave rise to the growth of Tehran, both in terms of population and area, and to a widening socio-economic gap among social groups. In 1920, Tehran was virtually of the same population as Tabriz, and not much larger than Isfahan, Shiraz, and Mashad, the other large Iranian cities. It had less than two percent of the total national population. During the 1920-1950 period, Tehran developed into the primate city of the country after experiencing a population explosion. By 1950 Tehran became a million-city, housing more than 30 percent of Iran's total urban population. A significant portion of the population increase was due to improvements in national health. An equally important part of Tehran's population growth was the result of an increasing migration to the city (Graham 1978; Bharier 1971).

Along with population growth came the physical expansion of the city (Figure 1). In 1920, Tehran had an area of 2450 hectares (approximately 5900 acres) with an average density of 85.7 people per hectare (35.5 per acre). The city boundaries, identified with walls, gates, and a surrounding dry moat built years earlier, were clearly separated from those of the nearby city of Ray (about 10 miles to the south), and the suburban village-turned-town of Tajrish in Shemiran (approximately 8 miles to the north). By the mid-20th century, Tehran had expanded to more than 8000 hectares with an average density of

Figure 1

Physical expansion of Tehran, 1868-1971



- Citadel area
- Old walled city until 1868
- Suburbs around 1868
- Villages
- Expansion in 1868
- Expansion in 1937
- Expansion until 1955
- Expansion until 1971



Source:  
Adapted from Michael E. Bonine, "Cities of the Middle East and North Africa" in S. D. Brunn and J.F. Williams. *Cities of the World* (NY: Harper and Row, 1983). Originally from Martin Seger, "Strukturelemente der Stadt Teheran und das Modell der Modernen Orientalischen Stadt," *Erdkunde*, 29, No. 1 (1975), 23.

187.5 persons per hectare (more than 77 per acre). The city expansion embodied a major transformation in its physical identity and spatial qualities.

In accordance with his authoritative policies of modernization, and in an effort to symbolize the beginning of a "new era," Reza Shah (1925-1941) had the city walls torn down in 1937. He also changed the urban fabric by constructing wide avenues cutting through old quarters (Lockhart 1939). During his reign, a new city was built to the north of the existing quarters, with modern structures, wide and occasionally landscaped streets, and frequent squares. The modern governmental buildings, required for the expanded bureaucracies, as well as houses of the upper classes were primarily put in these newer quarters. The modern city was essentially designed and developed based on European architecture styles and urban design concepts. It enjoyed basic amenities such as electricity and telephone systems. A few commercial strips were created along the newly built streets, forming shopping subcenters which challenged the vitality of the traditional centrally-located shopping district, the bazaar.

The physical appearance and qualities of modern Tehran were in sharp contrast to those of the old districts, most of which had evolved in conformance to the traditional Middle Eastern urban models. (Kiafar 1987). The privileges offered by modern districts attracted the better-off portion of the population of older neighborhoods: modern bourgeoisie and upper petty bourgeoisie, particularly the new social group of technocrats and educated professionals. As this shift of population toward the northern city continued — a trend accelerated in post-Reza Shah era — the traditional quarters came to be filled with new migrants and the lower classes who moved into the former residences of the affluent (Bahrambeygui 1977). As a result of the new inhabitants' financial hardship or lack of desire, and the government's neglect, if not adverse policies, the older neighborhoods were not properly maintained and improved, causing their gradual deterioration. The physical decline of the traditional urban sections and the growth of modern quarters increased the intra-urban contradictions. By the late 1950s and 1960s, the distinction between

the administrative-commercial sector and the residential sector, as well as between north and south Tehran became pronounced. The location of new shopping centers in the north and of industries in the south made the contrast even sharper. New factories were also established in the western and eastern parts of the capital. The spatial segregation of social classes accentuated the growing contradictions of the city.

Furthermore, Tehran did not expand physically as fast as its population increased, and the resulting rise in density was not proportionately distributed among its districts. Generally speaking, the newly built northern districts enjoyed low population density, in the 50 to 100 persons per acre range, while the corresponding figure for traditional neighborhoods in the central and south parts of Tehran was about 100 to 125 persons per acre.

The uneven distribution of population across the city boundaries was but one manifestation of the growing inequalities (social, economic, cultural) among social groups in the capital city. The upper classes, modern petty bourgeoisie, and new salaried middle classes benefited much more from the conditions provided by a changing system of accumulation and a political regime that promoted expansion of capitalist relations. Benefiting from accumulated capital and improved socio-economic conditions, the upper and middle classes moved to a lifestyle which was sharply different from that of the traditional middle and lower income groups, the emerging industrial working class, and the majority of new migrated population. The lower portions of the urban social hierarchy did not enjoy a tangible material improvement in their socio-economic status. The working class and other low income groups were by no means financially secure nor able to obtain guaranteed long-range employment. They became essentially dependent on the competitive job market and the fluctuating urban economy which was particularly unstable in the ten years following the occupation of the city by Allied forces in 1941. Therefore, while a minority prospered, the majority of Tehran's population fell behind. The result was the process of widening contradictions, a trend that intensified in the next few decades.

In short, the transitional capitalist period in Iran marked the beginning of an era which accelerated intra-city socio-economic contradictions in Tehran, changed its physical character and spatial distribution of population, and increased its population size. From a relatively small and undifferentiated city, Tehran grew into a metropolis with clear primacy over other Iranian urban centers. The city went from a compact, pre-industrial town containing a centrally located civic and commercial district to a socio-spatially segregated, significantly expanded urban area with an increasing number of commercial sub-centers, government offices, and industrial factories.

#### Tehran in the Dependent Capitalist Period

Capital accumulation in Iran entered into a new stage in the early 1950s. Following the 1953 coup d'etat against the nationalist and democratically elected government of Dr. Mossadeq, the monarchic regime launched a series of attempts directed at capitalist expansion of the economy and growth of industrial production based on oil revenue (increased from \$817 million in 1968 to \$19,000 million in 1973) and foreign technical assistance. The objective of the state and its foreign allies was to fully integrate the Iranian economy into the core capitalist economies. Such incorporation, which required the abolition of the remainder of pre-capitalist relations, was seen as the most viable approach to pushing the country out of the persisting "backwardness." Formation of a stable and strong state was a prerequisite. Thus, a significant portion of internal resources and foreign aid in the years immediately following the coup d'etat went into creating such repressive apparatuses as SAVAK (the Shah's notorious secret police), army, and police forces (Amirahmadi 1980; Halliday 1979).

The state in the late 1950s and early 1960s began large-scale intervention in the economy primarily through planning, expansion of state-owned industrial production, and financial subsidies for private local and foreign industrial and commercial ventures. The state also expanded its direct investments in production and trading activities and

subsequently entered into a "triple alliance" with local bourgeoisie and international capital in the form of numerous joint ventures. Consequent to these policies, a modern bourgeois class, who supported the regime and accepted its authoritarian role, was firmly established. Members of this class primarily invested in urban areas and in such high profit-making activities as assembly industries, banking and insurance, trade and hotels, construction, real estate, and urban land speculation (Kiafar 1986).

The 1963 six-point reform program called the "White Revolution" signified a new turning point. At its center was a land reform package which provided for the sale of non-mechanized agricultural lands to peasant cultivators. The Land Reform was largely regarded as a means to free the rural population for absorption in the urban industrial sector (Lambton 1969; Hooglund 1982).

The accelerated and continuing process of expansion after 1960 resulted in the establishment of capitalism as the prevailing mode of production, as illustrated by the changes in the share of different economic sectors in the gross national product (GDP). The industrial and service sectors grew rapidly at the expense of agriculture, their shares in total employment increasing from 16.5 and 20.8 percent, respectively, in 1956 to 23.3 and 22.7 percent in 1966, to 33.1 and 31.8 percent in 1976. Agricultural production increased by 83 percent over the entire 1959-1975 period, while the comparable figures for industries (excluding oil) and services were 613 and 485 percent respectively (Amuzegar 1977). The unprecedented increase in oil revenues after 1973 along with the orchestrated capitalist growth policies were instrumental in cementing the changes.

A fundamental consequence was the concentration of industrial and service activities in major urban areas. Tehran, leading other cities by a wide margin, assumed the role of the country's main center of production and distribution. For instance, by the late 1960s more than 46 percent of all large industrial establishments were located in Tehran (Kazemi 1982). In addition, more than half of all manufactured goods were produced in, or on the outskirts

of, the city. Tehran also functioned as the provider or distributor of all types of services to most other locations in the land.

Heavy concentration also existed in other activities. By the mid-1970s, e.g., 82.7 percent of all national companies were registered in the city, and the capital had 52.9 percent of the banking units in the largest cities and 54.5 percent of all telephone services in the entire country (Kazemi 1982). Additionally, one in every ten Tehranis had a car, compared to one in every ninety in other cities; 70 percent of those making trips abroad (excluding those going in religious pilgrimages) lived in Tehran; more than 40 percent of total movie tickets were sold in the capital; and the average land values were twice those of other cities (Graham 1978). According to one survey conducted in 1979, at the end of the monarchist capitalist regime, Tehran had 40 percent of total employment in retail sales, 60 percent of employment in wholesale activities, 47.2 percent of all investments in construction, and 41 percent of insurance companies. In the areas of health and education, the concentration was equally striking: 56.8 percent of all hospital beds and 57 percent of physicians were in the capital as well as 57 percent of all university graduates and 55 percent of elementary and high school graduates (Plan and Budget Organization 1983).

The heavy concentration of wealth, industrial production, and services in Tehran was the key to uneven distribution of population at the national level and to the rapid growth of the city's population. The city's share of total population of Iran increased from 7.9 percent in 1956 to 10.8 percent in 1966 and 13.8 percent in 1976. Specifically, Tehran grew from a population of 1,584,000 in 1956 to 2,980,000 in 1966 and 4,530,000 in 1976. The overall population growth was 186 percent in the two decades, among the highest in the Third World, including the largest Middle Eastern cities (El-Shakhs and Amirahmadi forthcoming). The city's population has continued to increase, at over 5.5 percent per year, in the years following the revolution of 1979 (Amirahmadi 1986). Estimates of Tehran population at present range from 8 to 10 million.

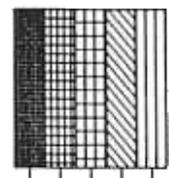
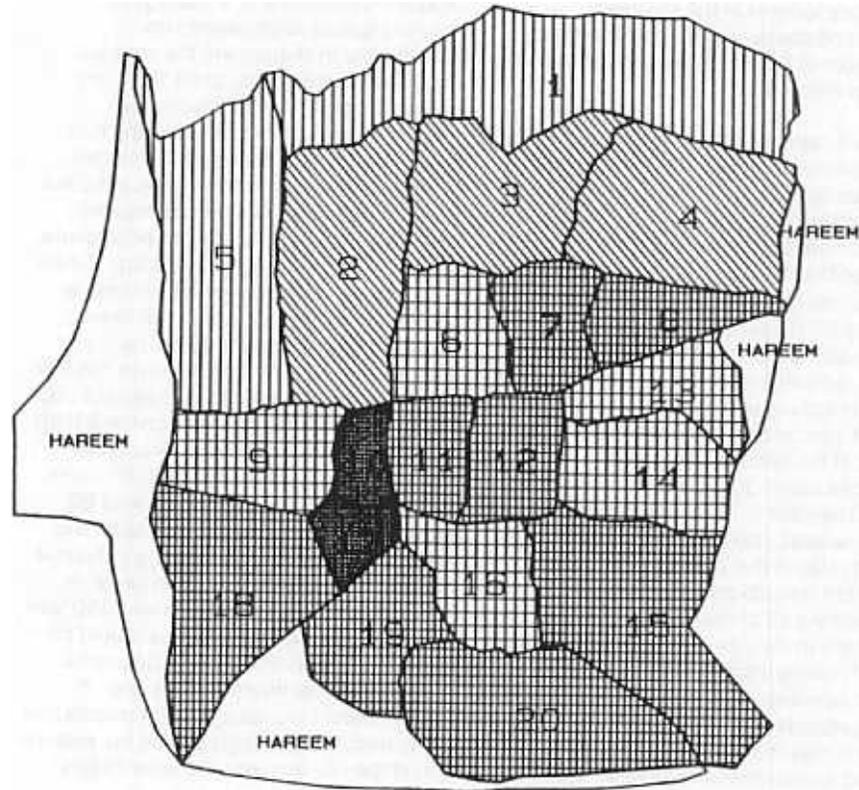
A major portion of the population increase in Tehran in the period after 1950 (and more specifically after the 1963 Land Reform) was due to migration, as indicated by the difference between the growth rate of the city's population and that of Iran. Specifically, Tehran had an average growth rate of roughly 6 percent per year in the post-1950 period as compared to about 2.6 percent for the nation. In the ten years after 1956, Tehran absorbed 38 percent of all internal migration (Bharier 1971). By the end of the 1960s, the city's migrant population had reached the 50 percent level. In the 1970s, more than 73 percent of migration between provinces and 44 percent of population movement between cities went to Tehran (Plan and Budget Organization 1983). Aside from such powerful "pull" factors as the availability of jobs, social services, urban communities, and higher income in Tehran, a variety of other forces, including decline in agriculture, direct expulsion of tenants due to modernization, sale of land, expansion of capitalist farming, lack of jobs and educational opportunities in outlying villages, intensification of usury following the land reform program, and changes in class structure of the rural areas "pushed" many of the working-age population out of rural areas (Hessamian et al. 1984; Alizadeh and Kazerouni 1984).

Natural increase and migration factors led not only to increases in Tehran's population but also to its predominance within the country's urban hierarchy and to its physical expansion. Thus, in 1976 the capital had a population size 6.7 times that of Isfahan, the second largest city since the 1960s. The physical expansion was equally considerable (Figure 1). In 1966, Tehran was divided into ten districts, including the old city of Ray and the new affluent suburb of Tajrish in the north Shemiran area. In less than ten years the city's rapid physical expansion forced the municipal government to redistrict Tehran again. Thus, in about 1976, the city was divided into 20 municipal districts covering a total of 50,000 hectares. In addition, the city limit was redefined to include another 500 hectares of non-municipal area called *hareem* largely occupied by squatters (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Tehran: 20 Districts & The Hareem

Population Density, on the Basis of the 1980 (Aban 1359) Census



PERSONS/HECTARE

- less than 30 persons
- 31-100 persons
- 101-200 persons
- 201-400 persons
- 401 nad over



Along with significant physical expansion of the city, population density has been growing rapidly. By 1979, close to 2.7 million residents (or roughly 60 percent of the population) lived in districts which had a density of 200 to 500 persons per hectare (80 to 200 per acre). Many of these districts are located in the southern, eastern, and southwestern parts of the city, where most of the low income families and rural migrants live.

With rapid capitalist development came the exacerbation of spatial and socio-economic disparities both at the national level and within Tehran (Amirahmadi and Atash 1987; Kazemi 1982; Looney 1982; Pesaran 1982; Jabbari 1981). Nationally, for example, the household expenditure share of the top 20 percent of population rose from 50 percent in 1969 to over 54 percent in 1973, whereas the share of the bottom 40 percent plunged from 17 percent to about 11 percent. In 1969, the top 10 percent of the national population consumed about 30.5 percent of the total, up to 40 percent in 1976. Within urban areas, the gaps also grew. The high annual inflation rates in the 1970s (in the 20 and 30 percent ranges) probably further worsened the lot of the poorer strata particularly in the city of Tehran, where the cost of housing increased by at least 50 percent between 1970 and 1978, and land prices jumped up by 500 percent in certain locations over the same period. Housing cost and availability were indeed major aspects of the city's problems. A 1966 survey found a shortage of 78,000 housing units for 275,000 low income families, whereas a surplus of 15,000 dwelling units existed for just 75,000 upper middle and high income families (Kazemi 1982). This comparison does not take into account the striking differences between the type, size, and quality of either group's shelters. The situation worsened in the 1970s, when, according to different accounts, between 42 and 50 percent of the population had housing problems.

The growth of inequality became well manifested in the increasing differences among Tehran's residential districts. In the post-1960 years, the city expanded considerably in all directions, particularly to the east, north, and northwest, where the upper classes and the growing professional salaried groups came to reside. The

expansion of the city from west to east created new neighborhoods for the middle class, particularly its traditional strata. The poor and new migrants, along with other strata of the working class, settled in the expanded south, southeast, and southwest districts. Aside from the uneven nature of capitalist development, a strategy of planning spatial segregation was instrumental in sharpening the contrast among various districts. Until 1951, any land on the periphery of the city was considered property of the one who had developed it. Legislation in 1951 placed such lands under a government-controlled Construction Bank, which subsequently developed four suburbs, called new towns, designed for various income groups. Since then, planned segregation by income for the Tehran metropolitan area has been a feature of development policy. The first town was Kuy-e Narmak, begun in 1956 on 400 hectares divided into 800 plots of 200-500 square meters, in northeastern Tehran for middle income residents. Naziabad began in the early 1960s on 300 hectares in south Tehran, divided into plots of 80 square meters, for two-room flats for the working class of the neighboring industrial centers. Kuy-e Nohom-e Aban began in 1965-1966 in south Tehran. Over 3450 low-cost three-bedroom houses were built for sale to slum dwellers who would pay for their units at low monthly rates over 15 years. Tehran Pars, designed for middle and upper middle income groups, in the eastern part of the city began in the early 1960s.

Planned segregation of income groups was followed by the government and the private sector throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Four major examples include Kuy-e Kan and Lavizan, both developed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development in north Tehran, Farahabad, and Abbasabad. Kuy-e Kan has some 1000 three-bedroom flats, built with subsidies for the 475,000 government employees with medium incomes. Lavizan is for 45,000 low to medium income government employees. Farahabad was developed in east Tehran by the Pahlavi Foundation, largely financed by the private sector for middle to upper income groups. Abbasabad was largely developed by the private sector as a high income residential-business district in north Tehran.

Among the most grandiose projects, to be located in Abbasabad, was the Shahestan-e Phalavi project. This "multi-use" center was to develop into the Pahlavi Dynasty's equivalent of the Persepolis of the Achaemenian kings. The Shahestan was planned to include a new national center for government offices, luxury hotels, retail shops, restaurants, parking, and parks, as well as a focus for the new transport network which was to deflect growth east and westward. It was also to serve as a residential area for a privileged 250,000 high income people (Llewelyn-Davies International 1976). The project was the best reflection of the Shah's obsession with large-scale showcase projects and with favoritism toward dominant domestic and international classes. Although this multi-billion dollar project contradicted the redistributive policies of the Fifth Plan (1973-1978) and was in competition with bazaar and the new town projects directed to better the lot of the lower and middle classes in the city, it gained approval of the Shah and received his highest possible attention.

A major consequence of these policies was sharpened contrast among various city districts (Table 1). In general, the northern districts enjoy a significantly higher per capita share of retail shops, medical facilities, physicians, dentists, educational and cultural services, and other basic urban needs. For example, in 1980, the 830,000 people in the four upper-town (northern) districts had one physician for every 1628 residents, and 25.8 percent of the city's nurseries and kindergartens, while the 1,700,000 people in the six lower-town (southern) districts had one physician for every 7492 residents, and 8.3 percent of its nurseries and kindergartens.

Density in the southern districts (151 persons per hectare) was over 3.5 times larger than density in the northern districts (43 persons per hectare). The five lowest densities belonged to districts housing the rich. The gap between average occupancy rates was also wide: 4.3 persons per unit in the north as compared to 8.6 persons per unit in the south. The correlation between density and poverty in Tehran is well documented (Connell 1973; Bahrambeygu 1977).

**Demographic and Social Indicators for  
20 Districts of Tehran,  
1980 (per 10,000 population)**

DIS-TRICT	POPUL-ATION	AREA IN KM <sup>2</sup>	DENSITY	DWELLING UNITS	NO. OF DOCTOR OFFICES	NO. OF DENT-ISTS	NO. OF HEALTH SERV.	NO. OF PHARM-ACIES	NO. OF MOSQUES	NO. OF NURS-ERIES & KINDER-GARTENS
North										
1	182,883	77.5	23.6	2,162	4.9	2.8	1.1	1.1	4.8	0.5
2	220,454	50.2	43.9	2,316	7.4	2.6	0.7	1.0	1.0	0.5
3	222,007	32.0	69.4	2,231	11.8	4.8	1.5	1.2	1.4	1.4
4(NE)	318,347	56.8	56.0	1,893	2.2	1.0	1.0	0.5	1.6	0.3
Central										
6	231,683	19.9	116.4	2,544	42.4	13.0	2.2	2.6	0.6	2.2
7	325,636	14.8	220.0	1,840	13.2	6.2	1.3	1.4	2.1	0.8
10	343,551	7.2	477.2	1,537	5.4	3.3	1.0	1.1	2.4	0.2
11	276,712	11.1	249.3	1,846	18.9	6.6	1.6	2.3	2.5	0.4
12	348,080	15.1	230.5	1,333	6.5	4.9	2.2	8.6	7.7	0.4
West										
5(NW)	92,741	51.9	17.9	1,740	1.1	0.5	1.2	0.4	3.6	0.2
9	209,263	18.8	111.3	1,485	2.9	1.1	1.0	0.7	2.0	0.2
East										
8	365,516	12.4	294.8	1,653	5.0	2.7	0.6	0.9	1.6	0.3
13	214,652	14.5	148.0	1,779	3.4	2.1	1.0	0.9	2.0	0.3
14	400,023	20.7	193.2	1,677	3.0	1.6	1.0	0.9	2.1	0.1
South										
15(SE)	375,349	41.4	90.7	1,466	1.4	1.2	0.9	0.5	2.1	0.0
16	361,605	18.2	198.7	1,306	2.0	1.7	0.7	0.4	3.4	0.2
17	353,428	7.0	504.9	1,165	1.3	1.2	0.6	0.4	4.0	0.0
18(SW)	211,606	8.9	237.8	1,431	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.3	2.0	0.0
19	142,188	3.6	395.0	1,488	0.3	0.8	0.9	0.4	2.4	0.1
20	258,425	33.4	77.4	1,480	1.4	0.9	0.5	0.4	3.5	0.2
TOTAL*	5,454,149	515.4	3,755.9	1,679	6.6	3.0	1.1	1.4	2.7	0.4

NO. OF ELEMENT. SCHOOLS	NO. OF JR. HIGH SCHOOLS	NO. OF HIGH SCHOOLS
-------------------------	-------------------------	---------------------

2.2	1.7	0.5
1.1	1.0	0.6
2.1	0.8	1.0
1.4	0.8	0.4
1.9	1.4	1.2
2.1	1.0	1.0
2.0	1.1	0.8
3.1	1.6	1.5
3.3	1.6	1.4
1.0	1.9	0.4
1.4	0.3	0.4
1.6	0.8	0.6
2.2	1.4	0.9
1.3	0.9	0.4
1.5	0.4	0.2
1.7	0.9	0.4
1.2	0.3	0.1
3.1	0.5	0.2
1.3	0.5	0.1
1.9	0.6	0.3
1.9	0.9	0.6

\*Only Statistics related to totals for the first four columns include those of Hareem (non-municipal area). The rest are exclusive of Hareem's data. Of 567.2 km<sup>2</sup> of Tehran's area, 51.8 km<sup>2</sup> belongs to its Hareem. For the location of the districts on the city map, see Figure 2.

Source: Plan and Budget Organization. 1983: 97-103; Tazeha-ye Amari. 1362(1983): 9

The distribution of educational facilities was no better. For example, the affluent northern districts had 6.3 times as many nursery/kindergartens per capita in their proximity, compared to the working class southern neighborhoods. In striking contrast, nearly three times as many mosques and other Islamic worship/mourning places (*takaya* and *Hoseinieh*) were located in lower-town districts, compared to the upper-town districts. As a result, the percent of literate population is skewed sharply between various districts.

The sharp north-south contrast is also reflected in the uneven distribution of household income. In 1973, for example, the "center-north" and "northern contiguous suburb" districts of Tehran with a combined 30 percent of total population had average monthly incomes of about 296 and 403 U.S. dollars, respectively, while the average in the southern and southwestern areas, with 52 percent of population, was 111 U.S. dollars. In the two northern districts 47 percent and 32 percent of households owned at least one vehicle. The comparable figure for the three southern districts was about 5 percent (SOFRETO 1973).

Finally, the north-south contrast was also evident in the size and quality of dwelling units (Janes 1979). Specifically, in 1979, the northern city contained larger single family residences including modern apartment buildings with brick and marble exteriors and steel or concrete structures, separate kitchen, living and bedrooms, as well as electricity and piped water. The average floor space in the north (2000 — 2500 square feet) was double the average dwelling unit size for the entire city. For the entire southern end of the city, on the other hand, the average was well under 400 square feet. This was the location of small, compact houses, shack hovels made of building scraps and cardboard, and tents put up to shelter hundreds of families, including two-thirds of the city's squatter settlers. Many large families of an average of six people occupied one-bedroom living quarters of less than 200 square feet. These areas were mostly without running water and electricity and suffered from inadequate, in many cases nonexistent, sewage systems.

## Concluding Remarks

Tehran's historical development fits with the theoretical expectations that cities experience qualitatively different stages of development in lines with patterns of accumulation at the national scale, so that cities' growth and contradictions mirror that of the larger society. Transition from pre-capitalist to dependent capitalism in Iran has been characterized by both a change from a rural-based to an urban-based centered production and by extreme inequalities. Tehran (like many other Third World Cities) has become a center of capital accumulation and the arena of major contradictions. Increasing concentration of various institutions and population have exacerbated the "urban problems," and physical expansion of the city has helped very little.

The Iranian experience suggests that such contradictions may produce revolutions in the Third World. The participants in the 1979 Revolution were largely the marginalized Tehranis, including the squatters and those from the southern districts. It was primarily Tehran, not Iran, that toppled the monarchy: the city became a historical scene for massive million-person demonstrations against the Shah. The poor and middle classes poured into the streets demanding democracy, independence and social justice, among other things.

The Shah's regime is gone, but dependency, capitalism, and inequalities remain largely intact. Most of the trends which besieged Tehran in the pre-1979 period also remain unchanged. The city continues to be the center of politics and political power in the country; the population has continued to increase over 5.5 percent per year, if not higher, in the post-revolutionary years; physical expansion, though now more irregular, continues; concentration of institutions in the city have reached new proportions; and inequalities of all types seem to have changed very little.

The alarming trends and their implications for the management of the city and for the provision of basic needs for its ever-growing population was outlined in a report by the Plan and Budget Organization in 1982. It concluded that the future of the

city, given the trends and its natural/physical limitations, as well as its budgetary constraints, is largely bleak. Much before the year 2000, at which time the city population is expected to reach 17 million, problems with water provision, sewage, housing, transportation, land use, and the city's fiscal situation, among others, will reach crisis proportions. If experience is any indication, these problems will be disproportionately shared by the poor in the south and the rich in the north. The report outlines a strategy for resolution of these problems; the main components of which are decentralized administration, planning and budgeting systems, creation of medium-sized satellite towns around the capital, and formulation of a master plan for the rational growth and expansion of the city. The Islamic Republic may not solve the problems of Tehran as long as it refuses to uproot the causes of the city's growth and contradictions.

---

## References

- Adibi, H. 1979. *Tabaqah-e Moutavaset-e Jadid Dar Iran*. Tehran: Jame'ah Entesharat.
- Akhavi, S. 1986. State Formation and Consolidation in Twentieth-Century Iran: The Reza Shah Period and the Islamic Republic. In *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics*, eds. A Banazizi and M. Weiner. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Alizadeh, M. and Kazerouni, K. 1984. *Mehajerat Va Shahrneshini Dar Iran*. Tehran: Ministry of Plan and Budget, Office of Population and Manpower.
- Amirahmadi, H. 1986. Regional Planning in Iran: A Survey of Problems and Policies. *Journal of Developing Areas*. 20.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1982. Transition from Feudalism to Capitalist Manufacturing and the Origins of Dependency Relations in Iran: 1796-1921. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1980. Planning and Capitalist Development in Iran: The Role of the State and Imperialism (1930s-1976). Working paper, Department of City and Regional Planning, Cornell University.
- Amirahmadi, H. and Atash, F. Forthcoming. Dynamics of Provincial Development and Disparity in Iran, 1956-1984. *Third World Planning Review*.
- Amuzegar, J. 1977. *Iran: An Economic Profile*. Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute.
- Ashraf, A. 1971. Iran: Imperialism, Class and Modernization from Above. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New School for Social Research.
- Bahrambeygui, H. 1977. *Tehran: An Urban Analysis*. Tehran: Sahab Books Institute.
- Banani, A. 1961. *The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

---

Bonine, M. E. 1983. Cities of the Middle East and North Africa. In *Cities of the World*, eds. S.D. Brunn and J.F. Williams. New York: Harper and Row.

El-Shakhs, S. and Amirahmadi, H. Forthcoming. The Integrative Role of the Urban System in the Spatial Transformation of the Middle East and North America. *Regional Development Dialogue*.

Graham, R. 1978. *Iran: The Illusion of Power*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Halliday, F. 1979. *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*. New York: Penguin Books.

Hessamian, F.; Etemad, G.; and Haeri, M.R. 1984. *Shahrneshini Dar Iran*. Tehran: Agah Publications.

Hooglund, E.J. 1982. *Land Reform and Revolution in Iran, 1960-1980*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Jabbari, A. 1981. Economic Factors in Iran's Revolution: Poverty, Inequality, and Inflation. In *Iran: Essays on a Revolution in the Making*, eds. A. Jabbari and R. Olson. Lexington, KY: Mazda Publishers.

Janes, G. 1979. In Tehran, Very Rich and Very Poor Await the Future. *New York Times*. March 4.

Javaher-Kalam, A. 1946. *Tarikh-e Tehran. Part 1. Tehran, 1325*.

Kariman, H. 1976. *Tehran Dar Gouzashteh Va Hal*. Tehran: National University Publications #78, 1355.

Katouzian, H. 1982. *The Political Economy of Modern Iran*. New York: New York University Press.

Kazemi, F. 1982. The Consequences of Rapid Urbanization: The Case of Tehran, Iran. In *Traditionalism in the Modernization Process*, eds. J.G. Lutz and S. El-Shakhs. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America.

Kiafar, A. Forthcoming. Traditional Middle Eastern Urban Structure. In *Urban Development in Muslim World*, eds. S. El-Shakhs, H. Amirahmadi and M. Bonine.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1986. The Bazaar and Revolutionary Change in Iran: A Spatial and Social Inquiry. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. University of Southern California.

Lambton, A.K.S. 1969. *The Persian Land Reform, 1962-1966*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Llewelyn-Davies International. 1976. *kShahrestan Pahlavi: A New City Center for Tehran, Book 1: The Master Plan*. London: Llewelyn-Davies International Planning Consultants.

Lockhart, L. 1939. *Famous Cities of Iran*. Brentford: Middlesex.

Looney, R.E. 1982. *Economic Origins of the Iranian Revolution*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Najimi, N. 1985. *Tehran-e A'ahd-e Naseri*. Tehran: Attar Publications, 1364.

Oliver, G.A. 1807. *Voyage dans l'Empire Othoman l'Egypt et la Perse, Volume 5*. Paris.

Pesaran, M.H. 1982. The System of Dependent Capitalism in Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Iran. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 14:501-502.

Plan and Budget Organization. 1983. *Natayej-e Amargiri-ye Tehran 59*. Tehran: Statistical Center.

*Sarshemari-ye- Nofus-e Shar-e Tehran Dar Sanavat-e 1262, 1270, 1301, and 1311*. 1933. Tehran.

Shahri, J. 1978. *Gousheh-ii Az Tarikh-e Ejtema'ai-ye Tehran-e Qadim*. Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1357.

SOFRETO. 1973. *Transportation Plan*. Tehran.

Tabrizi, A. 1981. *Tehran: Dow Yaddasht Dar Bareh-e Jam'iyat Va Taharouk-e Ejtema'i*. Tehran: Agah Publications.