



## **Transformation of Public Space Leads to Transformation of Neighborhood Identity**

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This article is going to evaluate the effect of public space transformation because of rapid urbanization in Tehran since 1960s, on forming neighborhood identity

Public spaces can be divided into urban and neighborhood spaces. The urban public spaces underlie the urban community identities and the neighborhood public spaces underlie the neighborhood community identities. These neighborhood identities enhance the urban identities.

Before 1920, inside each “Mahalle” (urban neighborhood in Iran) we could find a variety of neighborhood public spaces from spaces which were common between some neighbors to spaces which belong to all residents of a Mahalle. Therefore, making social relations at different levels inside a neighborhood had been possible which consequently caused the neighborhood identity to improve.

After 1960s, slow urbanization in Iran transformed into rapid urbanization. This transformation occurred because of rapid changes in social life, political structure and economical formations which make great rural-urban immigration and this process has been intensified since 1976 revolution and the war between Iran and Iraq.

These rapid changes were the cause of great transformation in the form, function and identity of neighborhoods in the way that we couldn't call them as neighborhoods but just as residential districts. Transformation in spatial organization of residential areas and decreasing of public spaces was the most significant sign of this change. Tehran as the capital city of Iran is a good representative case of this phenomenon. According to this transformation, the quality and quantity of neighborhood public spaces decreases and this result in descending of neighborhood identities. But there were some exceptions too. Among these residential districts some few planned neighborhoods were constructed. These neighborhoods have various defined public spaces.

This article tries to explain the transformation process of public space in neighborhoods of Tehran and the role of contemporary public spaces in the identity of a planned neighborhood, thorough comparing two neighborhoods in this metropolitan: one with planned spatial organization and having public spaces and the other, one of the unplanned residential districts which grew after 1960s.

In the opening section, the article will discuss key concepts based on new literature about public space in social urban planning and social science, which build the theoretical framework of the article. The article then goes over the function of public spaces in neighborhoods of Iran before 1920, and then will analyses the role of public spaces in contemporary neighborhoods.

The article argues that, in spite of rapid urbanization and great changes in lifestyles, neighborhood public spaces play vital role in forming urban neighborhoods identity.

**KEY WORDS:** Public space, neighborhood, identity, urbanization, Tehran.