



Social Inequality and Spatial Duality Shaped Tehran

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Cities are the products of interrelationship between different phenomenon such as culture, politics and economy. The spatial structure of the city sometimes evolved in response to this phenomenon's and sometimes has contributed to creating or sharpening these changes especially in the level of society. One of the cases in which we notice the both directions, is the urban transformation of Tehran from mid 19th century up to now. Being one the largest metropolis of the world, Tehran, as a current capital of Iran, suffers from the deep social polarization following the geographical north-south axes. The history of this social-spatial segregation turns back to the mid 18th century when Tehran became the capital of Iran. Since then it emerged as an important point in global market due to its strategic position between West and East. It was not until the 1906 constitutional revolution that Iran in general and Tehran in particular underwent many radical changes. Being influenced by western ideal of liberty the constitutional revolution challenged the society, economy and politics. The changes in the structure of economy from agrarian to manufacturing industry, led to formation of two different labor classes. The changes of the state structure from despotic state, sustained by tribal based military support, to centralized state, backed by constitution, led to radical transformation of social and political power and finally the process of individualization and atomisation of society as a result of ownership right legitimacy and structure of new pre-capitalist economy introduced a class-based society rather than existing community-based one. The physical appearance of the city gradually evolved in response to these changes and pressures. The first wave of urban development started at the end of 19th century toward north in order to accommodate the new capitalist function and new emerged class. Since then the north part of Tehran has become the site of better off with better services and living condition, while southern part remained for lower income groups with lower urban amenities and social services. The political and economical development after the First World War and at the same time the ambitious state policy to connect Tehran to the global network intensified the class segregation and social inequality within the city. When it came to the term of urban policies, we notice that since 50s the policy moved in a way to develop different small towns and neighborhoods in vicinity of Tehran (now included in the Tehran city) assigned to different income groups. This planned segregation of income groups continued by the government and private sector throughout the 60s and 70s.

Urban society in contemporary Tehran is deeply polarized and this polarization has been furthered in many different aspects of citizens' life. The case of Tehran reflects upon two important issues; first, the way that emerged social structure affected the physical space and spatial order and second, the way spatial order and policies associated with social segregation within society. In both cases the spatial structure has identified two kinds of social and political citizenship through inclusion of one group and exclusion of others. The study shows the limits of planning, consciously or unconsciously, in dealing with urban transformation associated with the social groups representing social and spatial order.

KEY WORDS: Tehran, social polarization, spatial polarization.