

Thesen zur Dissertation

URBANISM AND DICTATORSHIP
A STUDY ON URBAN PLANNING IN CONTEMPORARY HISTORY OF IRAN
SECOND PAHLAVI: 1941-1979

zur Erlangung des akademischen Grades

Doktor Philosophie (Dr. Phil.)

an der

Bauhaus-Universität Weimar

vorgelegt von

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geb. am 13.09.1986 in Teheran, Iran

Mentor der Arbeit

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Weimar, Dezember 2020

1.1 INTRODUCTION:

This thesis investigates urban policies and plans leading to the advancement of urbanization and urban space transformation in Iran during the second Pahlavi (1941-1979). The evolution of urbanism under dictatorship forms the core of the current research. By reflecting the influence of economic and socio-political determinants of the time on urban forms and the urbanization process, this work intends to trace the effect of dictatorship on the evolved urbanism.

The research on the second Pahlavi's urbanism has been limitedly addressed and has only recently expanded. Most of the conducted studies date back to less than a decade ago and could not incorporate all the episodes of the second Pahlavi urbanism. These works have often investigated urbanism and architecture by focusing merely on the physical features and urban products in different years regardless of the importance of urbanism as a tool in the service of the state. In other words, the majority of the available literature does not intend to address the socio-economic and political roots of urban transformations and by questioning 'what has been built?' investigates the individual urban projects and plans designed by individual designers without interlinking these projects to the state public planning.

Moreover, some chapters of this modern urbanism have rarely been investigated. For instance, scant research has looked into the works of foreign designers and consultants involved in the projects such as Peter Georg Ahrens or Constantinos A. Doxiadis. Similarly, the urbanism of the first decade of the second Pahlavi, including the government of Mossadegh, has mainly been overlooked.

Therefore, by analyzing the state's urban and spatial planning programs, this research aims to bridge the literature gap and unravel the effect of dictatorship on urbanism while seeking to find a pattern behind the regime's policies by answering the following questions:

What are the most representative characteristics of the urbanism of the second Pahlavi?

Which type of necessities did urbanism have to satisfy to achieve the aimed modernization? and which kind of models and scientific disciplines were adopted?

Was the urbanism under Pahlavi endogenous? Or can a certain degree of autonomy of the urbanism discipline be recognized between 1941 and 1979?

The main body of this work is concentrated on studying the history of urbanism in Iran, of which collecting data and descriptions played a crucial role. To prevent the limitations associated with singular methods, this research's methodology is based on methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2017). With the triangulation scheme, the data is gathered by combining different qualitative and quantitative methods. In this research, the following are employed: library, archival and media research, online resources, non-participatory observation, and photography. For the empirical part, the city of Tehran is selected as the case study; moreover, individual non-structured interviews with the locals were conducted to gain more insights regarding the housing projects.

KEYWORDS:

Pahlavi, Tehran, Dictatorship, Urbanism, Planning, Segregation, Modernization

1.2 STATE OF THE ART AND THE SHORTCOMINGS

The field of urban history in Iran still needs progression. For a long time, the urbanism and the urbanization process were not the concern of many social and political historians; therefore, the central part of the theory and the methodology of urban history has not evolved in a multidisciplinary space. On the one hand, the works of general historians such as Abrahamian (1982 and 2008), Matin-Asgari (2012), Milani (2008), and Katouzian (1999) do not concentrate on architecture and urban planning; on the other hand, the study of urban history under the dominance of architects and urban planners was chiefly limited to the study of buildings, plans, and urbanism's physical features. Thus, most of the research has disregarded the effect of the power structure and dictatorship on altering urban forms.

Besides, there is a lack of research evaluating 20th-century Iranian urbanism, and those who have focused on modern urban history, have mainly investigated the first Pahlavi's urbanism. In contrast, the research on the second Pahlavi's urbanism has been limitedly addressed and has only recently expanded.

Due to the lack of prior research on urbanism under the dictatorship in modern Iran, to review the state of the art, the author situated this study within the body of the most relevant literature. Accordingly, the literature review is divided into three different categories:

First, to gain overall knowledge about state of the art from a global perspective, the author reviewed other researchers' works on the history of urban planning under dictatorship in the 20th century such as Bodenschatz, Welch Guerra, and Sassi (2015), Bodenschatz, 2018, and Rockhold 2017. Although these works were not related to Iran, this review inspired the author to restructure the research design and select the suitable research methodologies.

Second, the works of social and political historians on the modern history of Iran were studied, including but not limited to 'A History of Modern Iran' (2008) and 'Iran Between Two Revolutions' (1982) both by Ervand Abrahamian, 'Musaddiq and the struggle for power in Iran' by Katouzian (1999) 'The Pahlavi Era Iranian modernity in global context' Matin-Asgari (2012b) 'Planning and Power in Iran: Ebtehaj and Economic Development under the Shah'(1989) by Bostock and Jones and Roshd-e Ravabet-e Sarmayeh dari dar Iran [The Development of Capitalist Relations in Iran] by Sodagar (1990). This review provided great insight into the socio-political background in which urbanism was developed and highlighted the needed linkage in the existing literature between urbanism and socio-economic sub-layers of Iran's modern history.

Third, an evaluation of scholarly research on Iran's modern urbanization was conducted. The scholars such as Madanipour (1998), Soltanzadeh (2011), Habibi et al. (2015), Arefian and Moeini (2016), Pakzad (2017), Khosravi 2017, Mashayekhi (2018), and Kamrava (2020) have explored the modern urbanism in Iran under the first and the second Pahlavi. Even though the formation of urbanism under dictatorship was not the primary concern of these studies, this review provided the necessary background information and shed light on the forgotten pieces in the puzzle of Iranian's modern urban history.

The current state of the art shows the growing weight and importance of the second Pahlavi's urbanism among the scholars. However, despite the new studies conducted in the past decade, a closer look at this expanded literature reveals several gaps, shortcomings, and areas which are still insufficiently explored.

The first decade of the second Pahlavi and before the 1953 coup has been previously assessed only to a minimal extent. To my knowledge, the only publication which has addressed the urban development under Mossadegh with more depth dates back to 1997, 'Gāhshomār-e Tahavolāt-e Sharsāzie Jadide Iran' [Timeline of New Urbanism developments in Iran] by Soheila Beski. No research has looked into the works of foreign consultants of Tehran's municipality, such as Peter Georg Ahrens, who established the Cartographic Department at Tehran's municipality. There is only two primary research on the Greek architect and town planner C. A. Doxiadis, who was actively involved in different urban projects since the 50s in Iran. As mentioned before, there is no literature examining urbanism and architecture as a state apparatus under the second Pahlavi. The majority of existing works have exclusively focused on the individual realized and unrealized projects, and the role of individual planners, engineers, architects who shaped the cities. Only a few studies integrated the socio-political circumstances and the different layers leading to the formed urbanism. As a result, by addressing modern urbanization in Iran with insightful approaches, the mentioned scholars have provided a great source of information, but, due to the different research limitations, the existing works have either briefly explored or entirely overlooked some of the key events, historical chapters, and figures of this timeline and therefore, do not comprehensively study state public planning.

In this regard, this study differs from the mentioned research in the following ways:

Firstly, here the direction of the gaze has changed; instead of studying urbanism's evolution regardless of the state's influence, asking 'what has been built?', this study investigates the government-imposed urbanism and traces the beneficiary of the projects and questions 'built for whom?'

Secondly, this thesis integrates the analysis of Iranian modern history and the political and economic developments within the urban context to uncover the pattern behind the regime's planning. Given these

points, this study takes place on the edge of existing knowledge. Here, urban plans and products are not limited to their morphology but have been interpreted as a system of signs displaying the regime values and utopia and reflecting the socio-political context. Accordingly, urbanism's political and socio-economic aspects are explored to present a critical understanding of the second Pahlavi and provide a foundation for a better understanding of the shaped present.

1.3 PAHLAVI, URBANISM AND THE SHADOW OF DICTATORSHIP, A SUMMARY

The second Pahlavi's urbanism was not an integral whole, hardly separable. Throughout the almost four decades of Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, the most representative elements and characteristics of urbanism morphed from one to another.

In the almost first decade of the second Pahlavi (1941-1953), Iran had its closest experience to a democratic political structure, though these years were fraught with economic difficulties. Under the open space generated by the aftermath of 1941 (the war, the invasion of British and Soviet forces, and the overthrow of Reza Shah), a new political arrangement formed, the opposition parties grew, and new democratic elements appeared in the political system. Shaped by the constitutional monarchy and a functioning parliamentary democracy, this setting influenced the planning system and the growing urbanism. The establishment of the Plan Organization was a huge step for the country's development programs, and the amendment of the Municipal Act was the first attempt to moderate the top-down planning structure and integrate citizen participation in regional planning. New urban policies and concepts were introduced to tackle urban inequality, such as: 'Barren Lands Registration' or Kouy-e Jadid [new self-sufficient housing projects]. Moreover, a decade of political activism culminated in Mossadegh's government and his cabinet's success in the nationalization of the oil industry. However, the short-term prime ministers and the political changes in the early forties slowed the blooming process, and the economic blockade and the imposed sanctions after the oil industry's nationalization almost paralyzed the executive means. Finally, the British-American-orchestrated coup in 1953 was the turning point that put an end to the accomplished progress.

Upon the Shah's return, the regime applied new modernization reforms promoted and sponsored by the USA following the cold war policies. Urbanism and urban development were an integral part of this process.

Under the cold war atmosphere, the USA significantly invested in the export of modernization and top-down reforms in developing countries by providing technical assistance and economic aids. The Iranian regime and the U.S. government both favored such investments. On the one hand, a centralized pro-western government in Iran could not threaten the USA's economic and political interests in the region but would reduce Soviet influence; on the other hand, the USA support could help the regime stabilize.

However, the country's economic growth was not the only priority for the regime. Shah- felt threatened from the inside- was dedicated to investing in the army. The USA granted this wish considering a monarchy the best way to maintain a pro-western country in the region and the army its significant source of support. Such investments turned to the point of conflict between Shah and the other planning figures, such as Ebtehaj, who advised and prioritized a rational allocation of the budgets to the economic sector and intended to promote the country's economic growth with rational planning. However, the demonstration of such opposition often led to resignation or imprisonment. Disproportionate allocation of the budget was also one of the many reasons for the land reform's failure. In the 60s, the rural regions, which had been excluded from the government modernization projects, received new attention. The State-planned modernization project known as the 'White Revolution' with land reform as its central part, attempted to diminish the feudalism and satisfy the agriculture workers, but their failure only expanded the unemployment rate in rural areas. Although Shah claimed to divide the land between the peasants and the reforms slightly weakened the landowners, the number of those who benefited from the land reform was remarkably low. Only half of the rural population received the land, and for many, the amount of land they received was not adequate to sustain a living.

The gap between urban and rural regions widened during the fourth and fifth development plans, as the rural areas received relatively less attention while the urban construction budget increased by 50%. The spatial imbalance of development within the country and the high unemployment rate in the rural area motivated massive rural-urban migration, especially toward Tehran. With the growth and expansion of

capitalist relations in Iran, the state and private-owned industries increased. The jobless former agriculture laborers and peasants turned to new urban industrial workers, mainly residing in southern Tehran.

The city grew excessively and became a metropolis in a few years so that by 1980, it had more than five million inhabitants. In the 60s, with the help of famous western designers and their Iranian collaborators, Tehran was restructured and remodeled. Yet, the social benefit of the new urban projects was never intended to be circulated among the poverty-stricken groups. The working class limitedly and indirectly benefited from modernization, and the urban development projects were mainly aimed at urban middle and upper-middle-class, including the imperial guards, civil servants, and government employees.

In the last decade, the regime exhibitionism tendencies grew deliberately. Although the U.S. aid was cut at the end of the 60s, the 1970s oil crises caused another leap in the oil price and paved the way for another industrialization wave and new series of investments in costly prestige projects such as Shahestan, Paridsan, and the celebration of the Persian empire. In these years, urban products were the means to emphasize the progress made under the Pahlavi dynasty, and Tehran was to become a monumental capital filled with costly projects.

Shah envisioned a developed society leaping ahead of the western countries. A society to which he repeatedly referred as the great civilization [Tamaddon-e Bozorg]. He considered the fast-socio-economic transformation as the gateway of the promised civilization and desired a new representative image to broadcast the regime's ideology under the limited political freedoms. The practicality and visibility of the built environment in everyday life turned the architecture and urban planning into the machinery needed to construct a new cultural society.

As a result, urban space became the regime's canvas to draw the idealized reality through deliberate and purposive construction. The plans were consonant with Shah's desire and ideals. The development projects incorporated the middle and upper-class demands to create the envisioned image and build a source of reliable supporters for the regime. Meanwhile, the appointed designers put a blind eye on urban inequality and the plight of the urban poor. No one stood by their proposals and suggestions in all the commissions and projects that contradicted the Shah's opinion, mainly to secure their contracts.

To summarize, by imposing socio-economic transformations, the regime intended to not only win international acceptance but also strengthen its grip on power by creating faithful supporters out of the projects' beneficiaries. However, the modern transformation through planning and new urban projects did not solve the regime's illegitimacy.

Despite the intense propaganda, the urban plans and policies formulated by the regime barely mentioned the urban poor while the shanty towns, hosting the new working class, mushroomed in the suburb of the city. By disregarding the financial ability of the impoverished strata, the first National Housing Development Plan targeted the middle class. The low-cost housing projects halted in the 70s, and Tehran Comprehensive Plan, Tehran Action Plan, and new urban design projects such as Shahestan were adjusted to the middle and upper-class needs. The modernization and urban development projects only deepened the existing social gaps, and the regime's reluctance to address the expectations worsened the situation. Moreover, by imposing physical distance, these projects deliberately separated the less-affluent groups in society and isolated the lower incomes, who did not belong to the modern picture of the capital, in predominantly poor areas close to the industrial zone in the south Tehran.

On the other hand, Shah never intended to democratize the political structure. The revival of the rigid autocracy was followed by an increase in the country's secret police activities (SAVAK) in the 60s. The lack of political freedom upon installing a single-legal political party system in the 70s left the middle-class political demands unfulfilled. As a result, the level of dissatisfaction increased within society among the middle and working classes. The regime estranged the educated middle-class population, while Khomeini mobilized the urban poor who were suffering from the economic situation the most.

After the 1979 revolution, the inherited Pahlavi's planning and urbanism legacy grew into a complex and rigid social and spatial segregation of Tehran. However, the range of influence and the effect of this legacy on Iran's current planning system still need to be thoroughly investigated. Thus, it provides space for future research that can answer the following questions: *What types of materials and disciplinary legacies from that time have remained? How does the current society and government deal with those legacies?*

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