MODERNIZING THE PUBLIC SPACE:  GENDER IDENTITIES,

MULTIPLE MODERNITIES, AND SPACE POLITICS

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ABSTRACT

After the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, surprisingly, the presence of Iranian women in public spaces dramatically increased. Despite this recent change in women's presence in public spaces, Iranian women, like in many other Muslim-majority societies in the Middle East, are still invisible in Western scholarship, not because of their hijabs but because of the political difficulties of doing field research in Iran. This dissertation serves as a timely contribution to the limited post-revolutionary ethnographic studies on Iranian women. The goal, here, is not to challenge the mainly Western critics of modern and often privatized public spaces, but instead, is to enrich the existing theories through including experiences of a more diverse group. Focusing on the women's experience, preferences, and use of public spaces in Tehran through participant observation and interviews, photography, architectural sketching as well as GIS spatial analysis, I have painted a picture of the complicated relationship between the architecture styles, the gendering of spatial boundaries, and the contingent nature of public spaces that goes beyond the simple dichotomy of female-male, private-public, and modern-traditional.

Following the feminist approaches and based on my unique status as an Iranian woman and researcher, I critically examined the now classical position regarding the role of public spheres and modern spaces in building democratic societies. Part of the critique is that ideals of equality can exist alongside practices of exclusion and repression. These boundaries of exclusion are often gendered. The central theme of this study is to demonstrate that abstract analytical tools and methods merely replicate binary distinctions and mask the fact that public/private and modern/traditional do not map in simple ways with respect to gender.

Meidan-e-Tajrish, Sabz-e-Meidan, and Marvi Meidancheh in Tehran accommodate a visualization of gendered space. The process by which Iranian women attach symbolic meanings to those public spaces offers ethnographic insight into the mutual construction of gender identities and public spaces. The contrasting urban locations, different design styles, and distinct social activities of the selected case studies provide a useful comparison between what appear to be distinctly modern or traditional. In what urban planners call modern spaces, Iranian women feel a greater sense of self, more freedom, and a sense of equality with men. While traditional spaces are male dominated, those places help users relate to their cultural identity, evoking a feeling of nostalgia. These places connect them to their past, just as modern spaces connect them to their future. This moving back and forth along with the social construction of public spaces that occurs in between highlight the two-sided relationship between structures and agencies in social processes and the process that each society creates its own space.

Findings suggest we use caution in presuming gender as an essential category. Binary categorization of modern/tradition and public/private in urban studies should be carefully validated as such categorizations often vary across space and time boundaries.

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies, have examined a dissertation titled "Modernizing the Public Space: Gender Identities, Multiple Modernities, and Space Politics in Tehran", presented by Nazgol Bagheri, candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

**To Iranian daughters and their mothers,**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this study is to advance the understanding of Iranian women's use of and social life in Tehran's today public spaces by not simply importing Western theories, but instead by hearing their voices and stories. No one theoretical model serves as the cornerstone of this study for two reasons, first such a comprehensive model about social behavior and physical environment does not exist; second, I have chosen to apply grounded theory through fieldwork methods. It is suggested that fieldwork facilitates a better understanding of human group social behaviors. In fieldwork, also known as ethnography, qualitative research and/or naturalistic research (Lofland and Lofland, 1994), the researcher goes beyond the taken-for-granted concepts and presumptions, and analyze data available to him/her in the field. In fact, unlike many theory-driven methods, the research questions and interests are driven from the course of research. In this case, my research questions and specific case studies were finalized through my work in Tehran after visiting a wide range of public spaces.

First and foremost, this dissertation is interdisciplinary in nature. Following Harvey's (2005b) effort in linking geographical and sociological imaginations, I bring together theories and methods from both disciplines with a focus on gender studies.  C. Wright Mills (1959; also cited in Harvey, 2005b) defines the sociological imagination as something that:

> enables its possessor to understand the larger historical scene in
>
> terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a
>
> variety of individuals....The first fruit of this imagination...is the
>
> idea that the individual can understand his own experience and

gauge his own fate only by locating himself within his period, that

he can know his own life chances in life by becoming aware of

those of all individuals in his circumstances....The sociological

imagination enables us to grasp history and biography and the

relations between the two in society....Back of its use there is

always the urge to know the social and historical meaning of the

individual in society, and in the period in which he has his quality

and his being.

On the other hand, Harvey believes that the sociological imagination is not limited to

sociology discipline and adds geography to the list of disciplines in which sociological

imagination would advance our understanding of ourselves and the world around us.

Geography with its emphasis on space and place is as important as history with its emphasis

on time. Therefore, Harvey introduces (1973) "spatial consciousness" or the "geographical

imagination" something that:

 enables the individual to recognize the role of space and place in

his own biography, to relate to the spaces he sees around him, and

to recognize how transactions between individuals and between

organizations are affected by the space that separates them. It

allows him to recognize the relationship which exists between him

and his neighborhood, his territory, or, to use the language of the

street gangs…to judge whether the march of communism in

Vietnam, Thailand and Laos is or is not relevant to him wherever

he is now. It allows him also to fashion and use space creatively

and to appreciate the meaning of the spatial forms created by

others.

Therefore, this dissertation focuses on the relation between social processes and spatial forms as what Harvey called (1973)" a prerequisite to well-grounded critical research on urbanization and modernization." There have been many studies exploring this relation in Western context but little research, however, has examined the everyday practices, experiences and meaning involved in Middle Eastern context where modernity does not hold to its Western model and competes with religious law and still-in-practice unwritten societal norms. There are also few studies in Western context that are concentrating on women as both subjects of change and objects of study. Therefore, this dissertation examines the processes in which women use and attach meanings to the built-environment through the everyday spatial practices in Tehran's selected public spaces.

Since its inception, public space has been an object of architectural focus, a backdrop of political struggle, and an instrument in stabilizing the boundaries of gender. In Iranian cities it has further become a mechanism for negotiating the religious significance of tradition and modernity. While gender identities and behaviors in public spaces play significant roles in understanding how public spaces work and how more democratic public spheres can emerge in cities, such research themes are suppressed in Iran and there are only a few studies in which gender issues are a central focus.

On one hand, urban and social scholars in Iran cannot easily and freely research and write about sensitive topics such as gender issues and, on the other hand, scholars outside the country have limited access to the data. Despite, the rigid restrictions on publication in Iran, the former group have made considerable efforts to "talk about" gender issues in Iran and

3

introduce that subject to geography and urban planning in academia (see Etemad, Khatam, and Yalda, 2008; Jahanshahi, 2008; Fanni, 2009 and 2011). The latter group includes both oversees Iranian Feminist scholars (For exceptional and more general works, see Haleh Afshar, 1991; Afsaneh Najmabadi, 2005 and Janet Afary, 2009) whose works are mostly based on secondary data analysis and/or their own life experience while living in Iran and a few Western scholars (such as Nikki Keddie and Lois Beck) whose works largely focus on the years before the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79. I agree with Afsaneh Najmabadi (2007: 109-10), who has stressed the significance of anthropological and ethnographical studies in the Middle East and its absence in Iranian studies as field research is usually not feasible in post-revolutionary Iran. Such difficulties in data accessibility in the Middle East, however, should not result in, at least not in Academia, an unrealistic oppressive picture of women in Muslim countries. Of course, among the second group, there are critical and feminist scholars such as Lila Abu-Lughod (2002), who has bravely pushed the boundaries and offered a more nuanced approach in appreciating the complexity and diversity of women living in Muslim societies. Meanwhile it is important to remember that Muslim women's identities do vary in regards to their geographic locations, social and ethnic characteristics, educations and ages. I, then, do not aim to question the validity of the findings of others, but instead, I will contribute to a more realistic picture of Iranian women who use public spaces everyday and by their actions have changed the boundaries and definitions of such urban spaces in Tehran.

**Dissertation Goals**

Reflecting interdisciplinary influences, this dissertation explores how modernization and sociopolitical forces in Iran interact to create unique forms of non-Western agency for women making use of seemingly universal spaces. Highlighting gendered and specialized dimensions of social activities, the main advantage of this research is that it is largely based on firsthand data gathered during the winter of 2011 and the spring and winter of 2012 in Tehran through participant observation and intensive interviews. I have chosen a mixed-methods approach including ethnography and historical documentations along with GIS' visualization and spatial analysis techniques to explore women's presence and preferences focusing on the relationship between women's spatial behavior and the design and meaning of public spaces. The two selected public spaces in Tehran accommodate an ethnographic visualization of the process in which space becomes, in Setha Low's words, "socially constructed and socially produced" (Low, 1996). Meidan-e-Tajrish (Tajrish Square), Sabz-e-Meidan, and Marvi Meidancheh public spaces were selected due to their distinct and often-contrasting urban locations, spatial settings, and design and architectural styles. The selected spaces also are associated with different social activities and suggest certain social behaviors.

**Dissertation Structure**

This dissertation consists of 7 chapters including the introductory chapter. Chapter 2 is a review of three fundamental concepts of this study and organized into three sections: envisioning democratic public space, Multiple Modernities and Modern urban planning, and the mutual construction of gender identities and public space. The goal is to offer brief backgrounds of both Western and non-Western (particularly Iranian) definitions and

5

explorations of theoretical foundations that shape this dissertation. First, I explore the definitions of public spaces and clarify what I mean by public space in this study. Second, I review the critical Modernity theories and define my departure point as Multiple Modernities, the concept that this study is based upon, that is, modernity and its definition(s) and consequences are perceived, practiced, and presented in essentially different realities in different geographic spaces and in different historic periods. This perspective of modernity refers to the cultural dependency of modernization process, its interpretations and its outputs. Giving a brief history of modernization in Iran, I examine the changing nature of public spaces in Tehran. The final section of chapter 2 concentrates on the mutual construction of gender identities and spaces. Reviewing a wider range of studies on gender and geography, I explore how space is "socially produced" (Lefebvre, 1991) and consequently, is gendered. This section also explains the ways in which geography is indebted to the recent feminist efforts in re-defining "space" as a more dynamic entity.

Based on the literature review, I end this chapter by defining my research goals and objectives. The literature review confirms that systematic study of the relation of gender and public space in the context of the Middle East is long overdue. This dissertation's research, with a focus on women's subjects engaging in a fluid relationship between daily social practice and political milieu, aims to advance the understanding of Iranian women's social life in public spaces. Focusing on the lived experiences in which urban space is produced by gender relations and is reproduced in those everyday practices, this dissertation seeks to answer the following questions: How women's in Tehran use and attach meanings to public space? Do they play any role in defining and changing such places regarding their controlled presence? And finally, how are the women's experiences in Tehran different from those in

West? Many modern and privatized public spaces such as shopping malls and coffee houses have been denounced by urban design scholars in the North America because of class and race segregation, modern (and often boring) design styles, controlled behavior, and their emphasis on consumption and leisure (see Sorkin, 1992; Carr et al., 1992; Soja, 2003). Is that what happening in recently built modern public spaces in Tehran too? Do women prefer traditional spaces and rarely go to more modern places as these urban scholars in North America predicted? (See Day, 1999 where she introduced Gender to the critique of privatized public space) Or are women challenging this critic through their actions in such places and attach different meanings to public spaces?

Chapter 3 describes the mixed-methods approach used to gather and analyze the data. Both feminist geography and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have been among the fastest-growing theoretical and practical research themes in geography during the last few decades (McLafferty, 2002). Since the late 1990s, many scholars have made significant efforts to connect the two in their creative efforts including Qualitative GIS, Grounded Visualization, and Geo-Ethnography. Such hybrid epistemologies can enhance geography from a merely inductive and objective science to a subjective one in which the researcher has a richer understanding of everyday social life through observation and participation. In this chapter, I review the previous efforts of linking what often become separate perspectives based on distinct quantitative and qualitative epistemologies and explain my research methods in details.

The research settings including the sociopolitical urban history of Tehran, geographical divisions of the city, and the current social and environmental characteristics of the selected public spaces are at the center of the next chapter. It is important to stress that

with its unique historical, socio-political, and cultural geography, Iran "relates just as much to its pre-Islamic past and its borrowings from the West as to Islam" (Adelkhah, 2000:178). Tehran, capital of Iran, is home for more than 12 million people coming diverse ethnicities and social classes. Known for its omnipresent tension between "deep-seated tradition and wild modernity" (Bayat, 2010: 99), Tehran offers an excellent laboratory to study women's social behaviors in public spaces. I have chosen two public spaces in two of Tehran's zones (1 and 12) for their interesting social and spatial characteristics and dramatic changes over time. Both zones have witnessed the largest and fastest change in their built environments as compared with the other zones in Tehran.

In Chapter 5, I present and analyze the data gathered through my fieldwork in Tehran. This chapter is organized into three sections: Situating the data, what maps tell and do not tell, women's narratives: moving beyond boundaries in everyday life. I explore in these sections some of the ways women in Tehran move beyond the binary divisions of modern-traditional, conservative-liberal, form-meaning, and physical-metaphysical through their preferences and spatial behaviors in the selected public spaces. Their actions clearly reflect Lefebvre's definition of space as "a whole" in which "space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it also producing and produced by social relations" (Lefebvre, 1991: 286). This chapter provides a rich textual and visual presentation that I have created from my field work in Tehran.

The dissertation ends with conclusionary points and suggestions for future research on the subject. I emphasize the complicated relationship between the architecture styles, the gendering of spatial boundaries, and the contingent nature of public spaces that goes beyond the simple dichotomy of female/male, private/public, and modern/traditional. Through this

model, this dissertation suggests how public space may be experienced by women from other Middle Eastern contexts, in ways that may differ from experiences articulated in studies of Western world.  Combining quantitative and qualitative data in GIS maps helped me understand why women do not prefer one public space to another.  It is argued that the selected public spaces become meaningful only in the context of subjective human actions. In addition, the benefits and limitations of GIS application in feminist geography research will be discusses.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is a review of three fundamental concepts of this study: Public Space, Modernity and Modern Urban Planning, and Gender Studies (Feminist Geography). The goal here is not to confirm nor reject a certain theoretical model because no one comprehensive model explaining the interplay of gender relations and different characteristics of public space exists. Instead, I will offer brief backgrounds of both Western and non-Western (Iranian) definitions and explorations of theoretical foundations that shape this dissertation. Through this review, one may understand how these concepts are interconnected and gain a clearer picture of the study's research goals.

The meaning(s) of the term public space and its ambiguities will be explored through urban planning, urban sociology, and cultural anthropology scholars. Three dimensions of public spaces– physical, activity, and meaning– will be discussed. I will explore places of public gatherings in Iran through examples from traditional cities to the modern era and also will offer a model that will be will used in this dissertation. Next, I will review the critical Modernity theories and will define my departure point as Multiple Modernities, the concept that this study is based upon. While modernism attempted to break from past traditions, the tension between traditional and modern has varied across space and time boundaries. Thus the concept of multiple modernities is based on the idea that modernity and its definitions and consequences are perceived, practiced, and presented in essentially different realities in different geographic spaces and in different historic periods (Eisenstadt, 2002 and 2003). I will examine the rapid modernization forces of early twentieth-century Iran. Two competing forces against Modernity, Islamic regulation (*Sharia*) employed by the state and societal

norm (*Urf*) employed by society, will be explained with regard to the historical roots of the omnipresent tension between modernity and tradition. This contextual treatment suggests replacing Modernity with the concept of Multiple Modernities.

Finally, I will review gender–based approaches in the study of space, particularly public spaces, as a recent interest of feminist geographers. Gender, fundamentally plural in character, is written into a wide range of theories from Feminism, Marxism, and Constructivism to Post-Modernism and Post-Colonialism in diverse subfields of geography: cultural, social, human, geopolitical, and post-colonial geographies. My study of women and public spaces goes beyond the current Western-gender geography theories by adding new layers of local urban history and sociocultural realities from Iran.

## Envisioning Democratic Public Spaces

Creating and maintaining a better public space for people has become a primary mission of the relatively young discipline of Urban Planning and Design. Although public space has attracted the attention of scholars and policy makers from a wide variety of disciplines, it has no single definition in the literature. In this section, through emphasizing the changing nature of public spaces and the tension between modern and traditional spaces, I will review the current definitions of public space and its dimensions. Then, I will review the history of public space in Tehran, Iran and, finally, I will offer the definition used for the purpose of this dissertation.

## Defining Public Space

Without public space, the history of urban structure and cities is unimaginable. Public space, a pivotal theme in the Urban Design and Planning discipline, is used by people all over the world and is also criticized by different groups sharing certain perspectives. (Carmona et al., 2003; Madanipour, 2010) Public space is traditionally thought of as a communal social space, which is open and accessible to all people, without direct monetary cost and regardless of social identity.

Urban Dictionary ("Public space," 2011) defines public space as "a place, in wide definition, for everybody to enjoy their coexistence and represent their collectivity and common interest without drowning or disaggregating their diversity." Nick Blomley (2009:600), in the *Dictionary of Human Geography*, defines it as: "Space to which all citizens have a right of access. Public space must be juxtaposed with private space…Central

to those rules is the right of owners to exclude others from the use and enjoyment of a space. Public space, conversely, is presumptively open to all."

Public space, although intimately associated with public sphere, the term coined by Jürgen Habermas (1991), does not mean the same thing.  For him, public sphere is the sphere of private people who join together to form a "public." Public sphere is interrelated with public (collective) opinion.  Tracing the history of public sphere from the Middle Ages until the eighteenth century, Habermas (1991) defines it as the realm of rational communication, where free rational discourse can happen between citizens. Although both public sphere and public space play an essential role in civil society, they are not necessarily interchangeable. Our focus, here, is public space, the term that is widely used in Urban Design and Planning and similar disciplines but does not have a single definition.

The word public, originally from Latin, refers to people as a whole. Therefore, as Madanipour (2010:1) emphasizes, "public space should be accessible place, developed through inclusive processes." By inclusive processes, he means all stakeholders, including residents, should play a role in designing and maintaining such places in the cities. But does "public" mean the same in different contexts?  Madanipour (2003:37) defines the fundamental distinction between inner self and the outside world as the criterion for any form of public and private distinction. The inner self is constructed through social interaction and exchange with others. As the meaning of "self" varies across spatial boundaries, the distinction between public and private should be defined according to its specific temporal and spatial context (Benhabib, 1992; Madanipour, 2003).

Public spaces are located outside the boundaries of individual or small group ownership and control. They can offer a multiplicity of functional and symbolic roles in a

society's urban life, depending on the society's economy and culture. Public spaces, as an intersection of space and society, reflect the way people socialize in a city in the context of unequal distributions of power and resources.

For Kevin Lynch (in Banerjee, T. and Southworth, 1990; also cited in Loukaitou-Sideris, 1993: 139) public open spaces are "all those regions in the environment which are open to the freely chosen and spontaneous action of people." Amos Rapoport emphasizes people's freedom of action in public spaces "through their lack of restriction and obstruction-whether physical or through rules of ownership or occupancy" (Loukaitou-Sideris, 1993: 140).  Banarjee (2001) believes that public space cannot be either defined or studied without regard to the evolution of values and symbolism associated with it. Mitchell (1996: 2) suggests that public spaces are "those spaces in cities that are publicly owned and have always been used by citizens to gather and communicate political ideas." Mitchell (1995:115) also argues that there are two visions of this definition according to its relation to the public's will and the designer's preliminary goal.  The first vision is that public space is unconstrained space that can be changed through its users' wills, interests, and needs. The second vision refers to many designers and planners' concept of "planned, orderly, and safe" public space. This latter vision simply eliminates any users' appropriation of the space and discourages many city residents such as homeless, drug users, and criminals from using the space. These competing visions correspond with Lefebvre's (1991:39) distinction between "representational space" (appropriated, lived space, space-in-use) and "representations of space" (planned, controlled, ordered space) (Mitchell: 1995:115). Representational space is space "lived" directly "through its associated images and symbols and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'…" (Lefebvre, 1991:39)

14

Carr et al. (1992: xi) see public space "as the common ground where people carry out the functional and ritual activities that bind a community, whether in the normal routines of daily life or in periodic festivals." Francis (2003), under urban open space typology, categorizes public space into public parks, squares and plazas, memorials, markets, streets, playgrounds, community open spaces, greenways and linear parkways, urban wilderness, atrium/indoor/marketplaces, neighborhood spaces, and waterfronts. Based on the current definitions, public space consists of a wide variety of urban places from streets, squares, public gardens and parks, marketplaces and bazaars, urban stairs, and entrances of buildings, bridges and river fronts in traditional cities to quasi-public places such as airports, university quads, rail and bus stations, and the like in contemporary cities (Sorkin, 1992; Madanipour, 2010). Public space is where people gather and engage their personalities "beyond the contexts of purpose, duty, or role" (Oldenburg, 1999: 24).

Similar to Habermas, Fraser (1990) recognizes public spaces as indispensable infrastructures in democratic societies. Public space can also play a positive role in citizens' quality of life when it offers diverse activities in a safe, accessible and inclusive environment (Carr et al., 1992; Banerjee, 2001; Gehl and Rogers, 2010). Public space can constitute, constrain, and mediate human activities and social life through its design (Dear and Wolch, 1989; Bell et al., 1990). Responding to human needs is considered an essential element of public spaces, and almost all definitions emphasize the necessity for more democratic environments that maximize the degree of choice available to a wide range of users (Habermas, 1991; Madanipour, 1997; Kaplan, Kaplan, and Ryan., 1998; Harvey, 2005; Hester, 2006). Public space, of course, encompasses various degrees of public-ness, public participation, access and interests that bring out inherent ambiguities associated with the

concept of public space.  Both functionally and culturally, a neighborhood center or park is a very different place from a regional shopping mall or a city park. Clearly then, there is still an ongoing debate about what constitutes public on paper and in reality. While the dimensions of a public space are highly differentiated from one instance to another, my goal, here, is to explain general dimensions of public space in order to construct the model I will use in this study.

## Ambiguities/Dimensions of Public Space

In this section, I will focus on the ambiguities associated with the term public space in the Urban Design and Planning discipline, the main task of which is to create and maintain "good" public spaces for people than otherwise might be produced. (Carmona et al., 2003:3). I will take into account the various prior attempts discussed above and will identify the elements that create ambiguity.  In this case, ambiguities will offer a wider scope for innovation and will suggest different dimensions of public space. These dimensions are organized according to different place models suggested by Canter (1977), Punter (1991) and Montgomery (1998) and are presented in Figure 2-1.
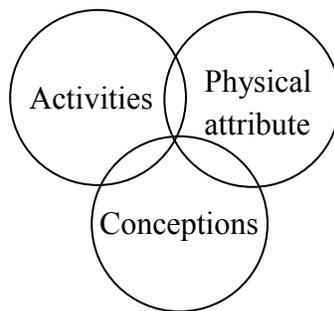


(a) – Model of Place, Canter, 1977

=        Activity     Physicial setting        =

Land uses                                        Townscape

Pedestrian flow    Sense of Place    Built form

Behavior patterns                         Permeability

Noise and Smell       Meaning        Landscape

Vehicle Flow                                   Furniture

= Legibility

Cultural associations
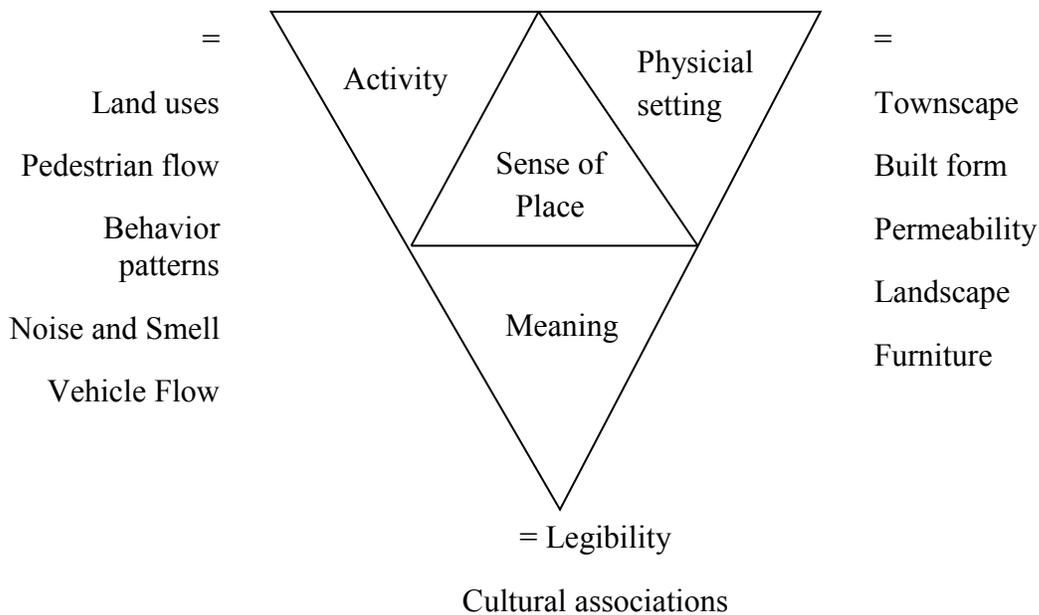
Perceived functions, attractions, Qualitative Assessment

(b) – Model of Sense of Place, Punter 1991



=                                                 =

Diversity,                                 Scale, intensity,

Vitality, Street life,    Activity    Form    Permeability,

People watching, Café culture              Space to building ratio,

Local traditions      Image      Stock,

Pastimes, Opening hours              Vertical grain,

Flow, Attractions                        Public realm

Transaction base, Fine grain economy

= Symbolism and memory

Imageability and legibility, Sensory experience and associations

Physiological access

(c) – Model of Place, Montgomery, 1998

Figure 2-1: Models of Public Space (source: Montgomery, 1998)

17

**Physical Characteristics of Public Space:** What scale does a public space serve? A neighborhood? A city or a nation? What kinds of users does a public space have? Is there a right or wrong size for a public space? The first dimension is related to the form and physical attributes of the public space and is also known as the formal, visual, aesthetic, and spatial dimension. According to many scholars, public space includes a wide variety of urban places in different sizes and scales (see opinions offered by Sorkin, 1992; Lynch, 1972 and 1981; Mitchell, 1995; Madanipour, 2010). On a macro-scale, public, central, city parks, central squares or plazas, city markets, main streets, city waterfronts and any urban spaces that function at city-level can be included. In a more micro-scale, public space can consist of neighborhood parks, neighborhood centers, playgrounds, community gardens, and so forth. Basically, no matter what the scale is, we consider any urban space in the city that is not private or between close nearby buildings, as public space. While there are major differences between macro- and micro-level public spaces in their size, shape, visual and spatial characteristics and other architectural details, both play an important role in the quality of life of the city and neighborhood residents.

Urban public spaces also come in a wide range of different shapes. Squares (plazas, medians, circuses, piazzas, places, courts, etc.) and streets (roads, paths, avenues, lanes, alleys, boulevards, malls, etc.) are two main types (Carmona et al., 2003). Many scholars have studied the formal, spatial, aesthetic or visual aspects of the two categories (see Sitte, 1889; Zucker, 1959; Krier, 1987; Loukaitou-Sideris, 1993; Moughtin, 2003; Woolley, 2003). In studying formal aspects of squares, the ideas of Camillo Sitte, Paul Zucker, and Rob Krier are invaluable. Sitte (1889), one of the founders of modern city planning (Moughtin, 1992:3), visually analyzed the squares of a range of European towns and developed

18
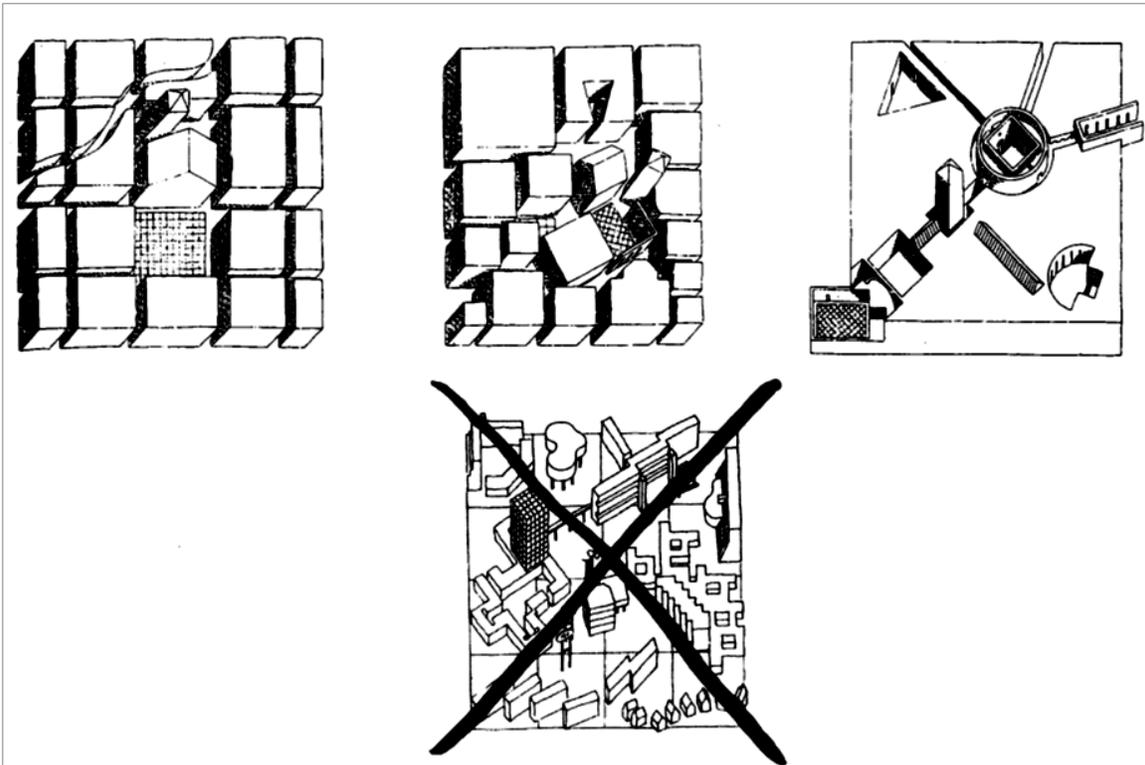
Figure 2-2: Modern vs. Traditional Squares (Source: Krier, 1990, also cited in Carmona et al,

2003:71)

a series of visual principles for designing squares. Zucker, in *Town and Square* (1959),

argues that there is a unique relationship between the open area of the square, the

surrounding buildings, and the sky above. For Zucker, this relation was so essential in

defining a square as a "whole" or "hole", where whole was defined as an "artistically

relevant" urban squares and hole was an unshaped haphazard space between buildings.

Unlike Sitte and Zucker, Rob Krier (1979), in his book *Urban Space*, used elementary

geometry as his analyzing criterion instead of the aesthetic effect of public spaces.  Rob

Krier's brother, Leon Krier (1990), distinguished two types of urban squares (Figure2-2)

traditional defined squares and modern undefined spaces. In figure 2-2, the first row illustrates three examples of traditional squares integrated to the urban fabric of the city. The picture in the second row shows what Krier (1990) calls modernist urban spaces and criticizes it as a random distribution of buildings standing in space.

Streets are linear, three-dimensional, public spaces that are usually confined by surrounding buildings on both sides. While the term street has been used interchangeably with path, avenue, alley, boulevard, way and route, the distinction between street and road is important in the urban planning and design discipline. The main purpose of roads is to serve as thoroughfares for vehicle traffic, often fast-moving or heavy traffic with its engineering codes (Moughtin, 1992:129). Unlike roads, streets provide a more dynamic social space for more diverse users, including people. In his book *Great Streets*, Allan Jacob (1993) categorizes different types of streets with regard to their formal and social characteristics through studying the great streets along which people have lived in European and U.S. cities. On a spatial and visual level, attributes such as patterns and aesthetic order, urban architecture, kinesthetic experience (the experience of moving through space) openness and defined space, lightings, naturalness, floorscape, townscape, maintenance and cleanness, historical significance and content, street furniture, and soft landscaping such as trees and shrubs, are also related to formal dimensions of public space (Carmona et al., 2003; also see Venturi, 1966; Bacon, 1976; Smith, 1980; Bentley et al., 1985; Von Meiss, 1990; Cullen,1995; Nasar, 1998). Although all mentioned attributes play an important role in the quality of public spaces, going into the details of each aspect would be irrelevant to the subject of this study.

**Activities in Public Space:** Just imagine an ordinary day on the calendar and you will be able to count many activities that occur in the public spaces in your city: walking to the bus station, going to work, walking to get fresh air, sitting on a bench or sunbathing by a dormitory, greeting an old friend on the street, chatting outdoors with your neighbors, playing chess in a park and so forth. To Gehl (1971), activities happening in public spaces can be grouped into three categories: necessary activities, optional activities and social activities (see Figure 2-3). Necessary activities are those that seem compulsory and happen regardless of the physical framework and the quality of the public space. On many days one will go to work, school, or wait for a taxi regardless of the quality of the public spaces that one must frequently use. Optional activities are those activities that are influenced by the exterior conditions and the quality of public space. You would take a walk in your neighborhood, sunbathe in the park, or stand around and enjoy watching people when the space and time is right. In other words, time and place invite you to do so. These activities are not compulsory and depend upon one's wish or interest. The better a place, the more optional activity occurs and the longer necessary activity lasts. The last category is social activities that are the fruit of other activities in public spaces, what Gehl (2011:12) calls the "resultant activities." Social activities are passive contacts emerging from other activities in public space. Such activities require people to hear and see other people. The better the quality of public space, the more social activities may take place in it. Children playing, greetings and conversations, and communal activities of different kinds are examples of social activities (Gehl, 2011). To Gehl, public spaces in cities can become attractive and meaningful, only if activities of all types occur in combination and accommodate each other. As social activities are usually the fruit of other activities, their extent, intensity, and

(a) – Necessary activities: waiting for a taxi


(b) – Optional activities: enjoying people watching


(c) – Social activities: socializing with other people

Figure 2-3: Three types of activities in public spaces (categorized by Gehl, 1971)

frequency are essential to a public space's success or failure.  "Great public spaces are where celebrations are held, social and economic exchanges take place, friends run into each other, and cultures mix. They are the front porches of our public institutions … When the spaces work well; they serve as a stage for our public lives" ("Great public spaces," 2011).  In this respect, although Gehl does not believe in environmental determinism – the direct influence of the physical environment on people's actions, he suggests that the quality of public spaces can affect the quality, content, intensity, and frequency of social contacts; therefore architects and urban planners can improve or degrade people's social life in cities by designing, encouraging, or discouraging public spaces.  Gans (1968: 5) also draws a distinction between "potential" environments and "resultant" or "effective" environments. While a potential environment offers a range of opportunities and options to its users, a resultant/effective environment is appropriated by its users based on what they actually do within it.

**Meaning(s) in Public Space:** Environment affects us and is also affected by us. There is a complex reciprocal relationship between the environment and people.  We gather, organize, and make sense of data about the environment. There are two interrelated stages in this process: gathering of data and interpreting it, which can be called "sensation" and "perception," respectfully (Carmona et al., 2003). It is important to emphasis that these are not discrete and separate processes.

Sensation is related to the human sensory system that responds to environmental stimuli. Vision, hearing, smell, and touch are the most valuable senses in our encounters with environments. These four senses usually work together and result in an interconnected whole, a comprehensive perception and appreciation of sensory stimuli. For instance, Bacon (1992: 20) argues that "a changing visual picture was only the beginning of the sensory experience;

23

the changes from light to shade, from hot to cold, from noise to silence, the flow of smells associated with open spaces, and the tactile quality of the surface under foot, are all important in the cumulative effect."

Perception refers to a more complex process of understating and interpreting the environmental stimuli. Although people may be different in their sensations, they are definitely different in their "environmental images that resulted from a two-way process in which the environment suggested distinctions and relations, from which observers selected, organized, and endowed with meaning what they saw." (Lynch, 1960: 6) Environmental images are not simply a "selective abstraction of an objective reality but are intentional interpretations of what is or what is not believed to be" (Relph, 1976: 106). This intentionality points to an individual's life experiences, interests, status and cultural settings that highly influence how meaning develops through one's environmental perception. Age, gender, ethnicity, lifestyle, length of residence in the environment, social, cultural and physical backgrounds are among the personal variants that affect one's perception.

Since the 1960s, the interdisciplinary field of environmental perception has studied how people perceive their urban environments. Environmental images also have been used to explain symbolism and meanings associated with the built environment. To better appreciate the field of urban imagery, the work and ideas of Kevin Lynch (1960) are of particular value. In *The Image of the City* (1960), Lynch evaluates environmental legibility (how people orientate themselves and navigate in cities) in Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles based on cognitive (mental) mapping techniques and interviewing. His research resulted in the five key physical elements of paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks that he suggests people use to navigate through the city and to create mental images of their environment. Lynch's

work was criticized in three areas. First, his study explicitly ignored observer variations in background and experience. For instance, later on, Appleyard's research in Ciudad Guyana (1976) unfolded how people's city images were different as a result of their social class and habitual use of space. Secondly, Lynch's work was criticized for his extensive emphasis on legibility and imageability as a positive value of the environment. Scholars (see De Jonge, 1962; Kaplan and Kaplan, 1982) showed that people also like illegible environments and often enjoy environmental surprise and mystery. Thirdly, Lynch was criticized for not paying enough attention to "what the urban environment meant to people and how they felt about it" and for mainly focusing on mental (cognitive) maps (Carmona et al., 2003: 92). Environments can be memorable or forgettable, liked or disliked; Lynch's method tends to record only the memorable places and ignores meanings and symbolism.

All urban places carry meanings, symbols, and consequently are associated with values. (Eco, 1968; Ardalan and Bakhtiar, 1973; Knox and Pinch, 2000; Alexander, 2002; Carmona et al., 2003) Semiology or semiotics is the study of signs and the meanings attached to them. "Semiotics", Eco (1968: 56-7) states, "studies all cultural phenomena as if they were systems of signs. Eco (1968:183) highlights that "a phenomenological consideration of our relationship with architectural objects tells us that we commonly do experience architecture as communication, even while recognizing its functionality."

Ferdinand de Saussure (in lectures between 1907 and 1911 at the University of Geneva) referred to the process of creating meanings as signification and coined the terms "signifies" (what are referred to), "signifier" (things that refer to them), and "signs" (the associations between the two) (also cited in Carmona et al., 2003). The key question in semiotics is the extent to which meaning resides in the object or in the mind of the beholder.

There is a difference between the "intended" message created and meant by architects, planners, etc. and the message "received" by place users and customers (Knox and Pinch, 2000:273). The gap between the intended message by architects and planners and the received message by users of a place refers us to Barthes' (1968) notion concerning the "death of the author." To Barthes, the reader builds a new text in the process of reading a text. It seems all manmade environments symbolize the power system's efforts in creating or changing the social environments (Knox, 1987; Dovey, 1999). Architecture legitimizes a particular ideology or power system by providing a physical focus to which sentiments can be attached. The built environment is "a means by which the prevailing system of power is maintained" (Carmona et al., 2003:94-5). Modernist architecture –the International Style-- claiming to carry no associations beyond its own "magnificent declaration of modernity" (Ward, 1997: 21), offers an interesting case. Modernist architects appeared to fail in averting symbolism altogether as people still attach different meanings and values to their works. For instance, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour (1972) distinguished three types of functional/meaning expressions in modernist buildings: "Las Vegas way" (putting a big sign on a little building); "decorated shed" (covering the façade with signs); and 'the duck' (an iconic sign, built to symbolize its function).

Although the term Sense of Place has not been clearly defined, it is a key concept in an understating of the phenomenological dimension of (meanings in) public space. Phenomenology, according to Edmund Husserl, is a way to explain and understand "phenomena as experiences wherein human consciousness takes in information and makes it into the world" (Cited in Pepper, 1984: 120). Dovey (1999: 44) argued, however, that phenomenology is a limited approach in the understating of place as it ignores the effects of

social structure and ideology on everyday experience.  Sense of place, originating in the Latin concept of *genius loci*, is often thought of as the spirit attached to a space (Jackson, 1994). Relph (1976:9) makes a useful distinction between place and space.  A space becomes a place whenever one feels or knows space. To Harvey (1989:4) "place has to be one of the most multi-layered and multi-purpose words in our language." Place carries meanings derived out of lived-experiences.  For instance, a neighborhood park can be a place for the neighborhood residents but also a space for outsiders. (Sense of) Place is associated with concepts such as communal identity, belonging, character, and Norberg-Schulz's (1971: 25) notion of "to be inside."  Sense of place, while not easily analyzed in physical or formal dimensions, is something that would remain even after profound changes in space. As Yi-Fu Tuan (2001: 54) states place is a humanized space and "a calm center of established values." Spaces may become places for a variety of reasons for different users.

For example, a Middle Eastern bazaar is a place for residents and for visitors. Figure 2-4 illustrates different dimensions of bazaar, including its environmental, aesthetic, and functional aspects. It is not only a market place but also a place for public gatherings where one can get updated local news about the city. On the other hand, for a visitor, a bazaar engages all senses and becomes a memorable place. One can smell the spices, fresh fruit and snacks, hear people chatting and the sound of making metal handcrafts, watch people, lights, busy store fronts, and finally touch the unsmooth floor beneath one's feet or feel the sun's warmth through the bazaar's roof openings.

(a) – Shadow and light     (b) – Smells and colors



(c) – Bazaar sounds and people's chatting

Figure 2-4: Different dimensions of human experience in bazaars

**Changing Nature of Public Space**

As our cities grow in the modern era, the nature of public spaces has been dramatically changed as well. Public spaces may have grown in size, number, and variety but they have become more impersonal and lost their most essential characteristic, that is, public-ness. While public spaces are to be open to all citizens regardless of their social identity and status, in reality they are regulated in a manner that is often contradictory to the democratic ideals of open and free space. Much recent attention has been paid to the contentious and exclusionary practices involved in the gendering, racialization, and commodification of public spaces (see Low, 2000; Mitchell, 2003; Madanipour, 2004, 2010; Kwan, 2008; Low and Smith, 2006). But, why has public space become a subject of interest? Why does the public-ness of public spaces make such a difference in our cities? How do public spaces affect our quality of life and change what Gehl (2011) called "life between buildings?"

Besides the early efforts of Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas to theorize the concept of Public Sphere and its changes in the twentieth century, Don Mitchell, Ali Madanipour and Setha Low are among the scholars who have recently made significant contributions to answering such questions. Focusing on a wide variety of issues from homeless to minorities, Mitchell has studied the nature and regulation of public space in the United States. Similar to Habermas, Mitchell sees public space as critical ground for the Public Sphere, where progressive politics can be created and enforced. In America, where the definitions of democratic society and citizenship are based on private property, only propertied citizens, and not homeless, can voluntarily participate in public space, according to Mitchell (1996, 2003). Central to Mitchell's work is that everyone has a right to public

space and one should participate and shape the future of the nation through communicative actions that occur in public space.

Madanipour (1996, 2003, 2010), with a special interest in the relationship between society and space in European and Middle Eastern cities, also brings attention to the change of public spaces from belonging to the whole social fabric of the city to becoming more impersonal and exclusive. Emphasizing the key role that public spaces play in the life of cities everywhere and at all times, Madanipour highlights the structural changes in our provision of public goods, including public space, during the past 30 years (Madanipour, 2010). To him, these changes are rooted in the economic paradigm shifts of the1980s. The new directions for state and society were introduced through "radical industrialization, reduction in the size of state, privatization, individualization, globalization and liberalization of the economy" (Madanipour, 2010: 3). By downsizing the state, the private sector assumed more control of urban development. The private sector would not invest in public goods such as public space that did not offer immediate political or economic profit. Indeed, the only public spaces that the private sector invested in after the 1980s were restricted, privatized, and highly commodified. Public space was traditionally the urban core of city, where political, economic, social, and cultural activities occurred. Modern cities, by their fast spatial growth and suburbanization, have transformed the nature of public space.

The distinction between space and place becomes useful in understanding this transformation. Public spaces in modern societies –Gesellschaft— are comparable to impersonal and abstract spaces; where in pre-modern communities (Gemeinschaft)—public spaces referred to meaningful places of social public gatherings (Tönnies, 1988). Needless to say, such places also, often, excluded women, foreigners, and slaves. Madanipour, although

confirming the changes Arendt (1958) and Habermas (1991) observed in the nature of public spaces, suggests that by "inclusive processes," we shall again create and maintain "accessible places."

Setha Low has studied public space from an anthropological viewpoint focusing on cultural meanings people attach to public spaces. In *The Politics of Public Space*, Low and Smith (2006:3) define public spaces as "the range of social locations offered by the street, the park, the media, the Internet, the shopping mall, the United Nations, national governments, and local neighborhoods." According to their definition, public space is no longer confined by physical boundaries and can include virtual social spaces such as online social networks, blogs and chat rooms. They see that public spaces are losing their democratic quality over time, if they ever had one. Low and Smith (2006), criticizing new urban development such as "new urbanism" for being an anti-suburban sub-urbanism, invite us to be aware of the negative impacts that exclusive public spaces can have on the whole society. Highlighting the continued symbolic and practical importance of public space, they believe public spaces in modern cities have become places of consumption, advertisement, and commercial activities as well as political and government control (2006).

## A Public Space Model

For this study, I will use the two-dimensional public space model presented in Figure 2-5. While I recognize two aspects—physical/space and activity/place—in public space, these two are completely interconnected and cannot be separately studied or even imagined. Physical/space dimension refers to formal, visual, morphological, functional, and temporal

Identity

| Ecological/ Finite/ Space | Public Space | Cultural/ Infinite/ Place |
|---|---|---|

Soft and hard landscape, scale, shape and size, safety, accessibility, architecture, lightening, seasonality, enclosure, material, functions, etc.

Image

Diversity of activities and users, street life, sense of place, historical value, associated meanings, symbolic meaning, character and identity, etc.
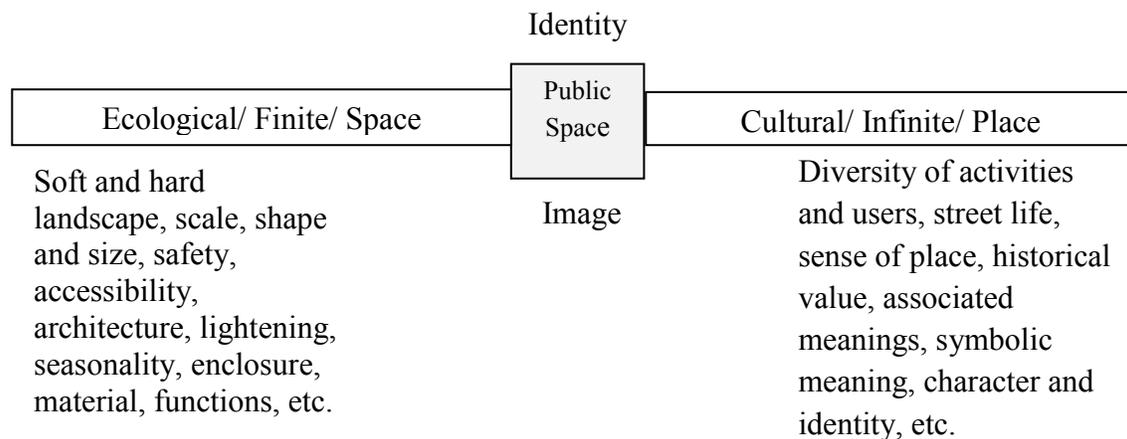
Figure 2-5: A Model of Public Space

aspects of public space. Activity/place dimension, instead, consists of all complex aspects that make a space into place such as phenomenological (meaning), perceptual, and social aspects. Again it is important to remember that the two dimensions are interconnected and do not exist in a clear distinction. For instance, an architectural style of a public space can be seen as its visual aspect and if it happens to be historical, it also can improve the meaning associated with the space and make it memorable for its users.

**Places of Public Gathering in Iran**

In Iran, scholars from diverse disciplines have studied public space and its dimensions. Architects and urban planners (Ardalan, 1980; Soltanzadeh, 1991; Habibi, 1996; Tavasoli, 2000; Pakzad, 2003; Charkhchian and Daneshpour, 2009, Tafahomi, 2007; Alizadeh, 2007; Frid-Tehrani, 2011), urban geographers (Shakohi, 1994; Shakohi and

Kazemi, 2005; Fanni, 2009 and 2011), and urban sociologists (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2006 and 2008) have studied public spaces from a wide range of perspectives.

Ardalan (1980:5) defines places of public gathering in traditional Islamic cities as "all locales in human settlements which are outside the private and personal territorial domains of the citizens." Historically, such places have included neighborhood centers and alleys, public gardens and cemeteries, covered passages such as Bazaars and Suqs, mosques and other holy spaces such as Imamzadeh (Holy Shrines) open spaces, squares, city gates, public buildings' entrances, bridges and water fronts, stairways connecting streets at different levels, streets, and roundabouts. (Ardalan, 1980; Soltanzadeh, 1991; Pakzad, 2003; Charkhchian and Daneshpour, 2009). Pakzad (2003) emphasizes that unless a space facilitates social presence and interactions between citizens, it cannot be counted as an urban public space. To Pasban-Hazrat et al. (2003), the social dimension of public spaces depends on users' ages and interests; for example, a public park can be used by people in their 60s as a place to relax, get fresh air and be close to nature while youth in their 20s can see it as a place to "see and be seen" and to socialize. It does not matter how many people use a public space, as long as it is for socializing and provides a sense of place even for a few individuals.

For many Western scholars, public spaces in Islamic cities have played a positive role in everyday life and have presented a well-defined sense of place (see Kostof, 1992; Alexander, 2002; Keddie, 2007). Eco design, hierarchy and functional flexibility are significant characteristics of traditional public spaces in Iranian cities. Traditional places are defined as pre-industrial urban spaces rooted in sociocultural circumstances and consisting of organic (piecemeal ad hoc actions) growth patterns, an emphasis on pedestrian traffic, and construction with locally available materials. Public spaces eventually began to grow

organically as a response to population growth, land ownership, and other vernacular characteristics.

Throughout history, the form and function of public spaces have been influenced by political, economic, religious, socio-cultural and ecological changes. Cities in general and public spaces in particular, reflect the dominant political regimes and their relationships with people. Tafahomi (2007: 85) distinguishes two periods for public spaces in the Iranian urban history: Iranian-Hellenic and Islamic-Iranian periods. Public spaces in the Iranian-Hellenic era (550 BC-674 AD) were limited to streets (characterized by movement), square (characterized by less by movement than by rest and leisure activities) and bazaar (covered street and market place). They were all ruled and controlled by the government and most squares offered only military and political functions. From Castle City to Merchandise City, the bazaar became an important place not only for exchanging goods, but also for social interactions among citizens.

The Islamic conquest of Persia in the seventh century not only transformed Iranian religious and socio-cultural values but also affected the urban structure. The mosque, as a new element, was introduced to Iranian cities. Mosques, Bazaars and districts were the main elements of Islamic-Iranian cities (Habibi, 1996). To use a term coined by Carmona et al. (2003:67), these city elements were connected to each other through a "capital web,"a network of public spaces including streets and squares. The Jaame Mosque (main mosque) was usually located near a bazaar and supported other functions in the city. Bazaar districts usually offered "mix uses — commercial, holy and religious, manufacturing, hygienic, recreational and culinary" and were characterized by high levels of "social connectivity" (Keshavarzian, 2009: 98).

Indeed, it was in the Safavid Dynasty that more recreational functions were added to urban public spaces, besides their religious, governmental and commercial roles. Naghsh-e - Jahan Meidan (translated to Image of the World Square) in Isfahan, is a cultured public space constructed between 1598 and 1629 by Safavid Shahs. The square is surrounded by the Alighapoo Royal Place (western side), Jame'Abbasi Mosque (southern side), Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque (eastern side) and the main bazaar entrance space (northern side). Naghsh-e-Jahan, as the best example of Islamic-Iranian public space, is considered by the Project for Public Spaces ("The world's best squares", 2011) to be one of the world's best Squares and remained the largest public square in the world until the mid-twentieth century (Vance, 1977 in Madanipour, 2003).

The Golden Era of the Safavid Dynasty and its revitalization forces were seceded by Modernism planning in 1900. By the end of Qajar Dynasty (1785–1925) and the beginning of Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979), Iranian cities were not only exposed to major political shifts, but also were subject to social and spatial transformations. The Oriental inward architecture was forcefully replaced by outward Western architecture and this shift dramatically changed the nature of public spaces.

Modernism emerged from industrialization and technological development facilitating a universalized and standard pattern of development (Harvey, 1989; Krier, 1987; Johnson, 1991). In Iran, modern developments during the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-79) not only exhibited a nationalistic and progressive nature, but also embodied traditional pre-Islamic architectural details. Indeed, architecture of this time went beyond the International Style and connected modern and traditional Iranian designs (Diba and Dehbashi, 2006).

There is a tension between state Islamic regulations (*Sharia*) and societal norms (*Urf*), two elements defining tradition (*Sonnat*), and modernity through different eras of Iranian urban, political and social history from the 1920s to the present. Since the beginning of the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1925, most Iranian cities have gone through a modernization process by integrating Western methods and patterns and ignoring the origins of Iranian vernacular architecture (Diba and Dehbashi, 2006). Reza Shah, relying on the booming oil industry of the1920s and 1930s, aimed to build a new modern nation through radical social and spatial changes.

Tehran was the first city in which traditional public spaces were subjected to Comprehensive Master Plans (MCP), their modernist design interventions and the resulting construction of car-friendly cities (Sennett, 1977; Madanipour, 2007). General Karim Agha Boozarjomehri, Head of Tehran Municipality (1922-1932), started cutting through old, traditional, and historically invaluable neighborhoods to open straight, wide streets. Modern planning practices have continued to influence and transform all components of traditional cities.

Modernist forces have lessened the role of the bazaar through the state-funded investments in street stores and shopping malls. Neighborhood roads and alleys, once used for standing, watching and socializing, lost those functions and became streets or even thoroughfares for high-speed movements. Tehran's neighborhoods, once organized based on ethnicity and profession, were cut through by streets and lost their identity. Squares, where people used to hang out and socially interact, suddenly became roundabouts, the spaces of passing through. Tehran became more and more socially and spatially segregated and

36

separated. Indeed, Modernist practices deconstructed the network of public spaces and introduced new functions in urban places.

While modern planning stabilized civic and commercial functions in public space, people attempted to maintain its recreational and social functions and to rearrange space to accommodate their everyday social needs. Gans (1968:5) recognizes an important distinction between "potential places," which are designed by professionals, and the "resultant" or "effective places," which are changed and re-created by what people actually do within the setting. It is crucial to understand how people have made considerable efforts to change both the social and spatial aspects of public spaces in order to create such "effective places."

Pakzad (2003) blames Modernist practices for their sudden fast changes and contends that the positivist rationalist approach of modern urban planning highly focuses on function and ignores the other two aspects of public spaces, form and meaning. Converting people, trips, streets, and so forth to some abstract numbers and putting them into an imported American or German formula does not help us to make better public spaces. Although urban scholars have carried out numerous studies about public spaces and their dimensions in Iran, there are few studies that focus on gender relations and women's presence and participation.

According to many Iranian scholars, change for the better only happens when we start understanding the historical roots of a problem and design according to Iranian society's values, needs and interests. To this end, I will review the modern urban planning theories and practices in general and in Iran in particular. Such a review will help us to better understand the opportunities and limitations for Iranian women in public spaces that have resulted from Modernist planning and recent sociopolitical changes.

## Multiple Modernities and Modern Urban Planning

In this section, I will briefly explore the way modernity is understood through various critical theories of modernity. I will also examine the notion of "Multiple Modernities," which has been articulated in the last decade or so, but has not come into common usage yet. The last part of this section reviews modern urban planning and its interpretations and practices, with an emphasis on the case study of Tehran.

Smith (2006: 1) sees the idea of "modernity" as "a master theoretical frame to organize focus, problems, explanations and interpretation" in social sciences during the last 150 years. She highlights the binary division of pre-modern and modern, in pivotal works of Marx, Tönnies, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, and Parsons, all of whom studied societal changes through centralization, urbanization, economic and technological growth, rationalization, secularization and other modernization concepts. Modernity is traditionally thought as of universal, predictable, and inevitable transformational stages changing the world that largely relies on the idea of rationalization. Modernity is often associated with generalized technological rationalization, economic growth, freedom, individuality, instrumental reason, industrialization, urbanization and also abandonment of religion, objective universals, and non-naturalistic metaphysics (Eisenstadt, 2002 and 2003; Taylor, 1992 and 2004; Smith, 2006). Taylor (1992) distinguished two types of theories of modernity: cultural and acultural. Recognizing the plurality nature or human cultures, he believes languages and consequently cultures are not always mutually translatable. Emphasizing the notion of plurality, Taylor defines a cultural theory of modernity as "one that characterizes the transformations which have issued in the modern West mainly in terms of the rise of a new culture"(1992: 205). In contrast, the acultural theory of modernity offers

one single definition of modernity and its process regardless of any cultural differences. For instance, in the acultural theory of modernity, modernity is defined as the growth of reason in different domains such as scientific progress and development of secularity. In its acultural model, modernity is a series of transitional stages that every culture would go through, sooner or later, and would result in the same end as in Western societies. The Universal Pattern Variables (by Talcott Parsons, 1960) and Five Stages of Economic Growth (by Walt Rostow, 1960) are both examples of acultural theories of modernity. Studying the relationship between culture, economic progress, and political development, both theories assumed that all societies will, inevitably and inexorably, go through pre-determined, standardized, uniform stages of development to become modern. Until the 1970s, acultural theories of modernity were the dominant theoretical model for understanding modernity among social sciences scholars (see works of Comte, Marx, Tönnies, Durkheim, and to some extent Weber). Although the "homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of this Western program of modernity" have not been realized in the post-World War II period, writings of few scholars (see works of Steve Bruce and Francis Fukuyama) are still based on acultural theories of modernity (Eisenstadt, 2002; Smith, 2006). Apparently, this over-simplified model ignores the diversity in "input" of modernization processes and, more significantly, is based on a supposedly cultural-neutral process of change. Avoiding superficial, simplistic, generalizing modernization theories, the term "Multiple Modernities" is suggested by scholars such as Eisenstadt, Taylor and Wagner.

The concept of Multiple Modernities is, then, based on the idea that modernity and its definition(s) and consequences are perceived, practiced, and presented in essentially different realities in different geographic spaces and in different historic periods. This notion, unlike

acultural theory, refers to the cultural dependency of modernization process, its interpretations and its output. I appreciate the notion of "plurality" and "multiple truths" in the cultural theory of modernization, and indeed, through this dissertation, will question the theoretical binary divisions such as traditional-modern, public-private, mechanical-organic, and so forth. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the historical, social, and political context of the early twentieth century Middle East and of course, Iran, to better understand the modernization forces and processes.

## Multiple Modernities and Islam

Nilüfer Göle (2002:91) stresses the significance of the project of Multiple Modernisties as a "challenge to the monocivilizational narratives of "Western modernity." Modernization has been already re-appropriated, rejected, and simply reshaped in a diverse range of non-Western contexts. The process of decentralizing the West and considering the "other" forms of modernization can, in fact, illustrate its limitations and create new ideas about it. Göle (2002: 92) suggests that the concept of multiple modernities improves "our capacity to see and read diverse trajectories and distinct patterns neglected by our social and scientific language."

In non-Western contexts where tradition had deeper roots in people's everyday life, the tension between identity and modernity is more tangible. "The secular bias of modernization theory" Eickelman (2002:113) states "has had a significant role in deflecting attention away from the role of religious practices and values in contemporary societies, particularly in the Muslim majority world." The Muslim world used to face a difficult choice from the early 1960s to 1990s: "either Mecca or modernization" (Lerner, 1964:405). Many

scholars believe(Eickelman, 2002; Kamali, 2006; Abrahamian, 2008) that "either Islam or modernity perspectives" have resulted in an emergence of military dictatorships' secularizing reformers such as Turkey's Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (1881-1938) and the Pahlavi Shahs of Iran, Reza Shah (1878-1944) and his son, Mohammad Reza Shah (1919-1979). Eickelman (2002: 123) emphasizes that those militant governing regimes were often associated with "authoritarianism and intolerance rather than with enlightened values."

The recent experiences of modernization in diverse contexts challenge the assumptions of theories of modernity and their rigidness. It has become more and more apparent that modernity and Islam (in fact, any religion) can co-exist. In *Modernity and the rise of the public sphere* (1992:208), Taylor highlights the illusionary and false "unlimited confidence" in fragile human rationality that modernity promised by rejecting our dependency on history and God. In the context of the Muslim-majority Middle East, many religious intellectuals have been clarifying a relation between religion and modernity by re-interpreting Quran. Scholars such as Aldolkarim Soroush in Iran, Muhammad Shahrur and Sadiw Jalal Al-Azm in Syria, and Fethullah Gulen in Turkey have generated new views on the role of science, modernity, religious and ideological tolerance, and democracy in Quaranic thought. Inviting people to a non-radical approach to Islam, they all offer a new interpretation of religious authority and tradition. Their interpretation of the Quran supports liberal political positions such as pluralism and is more relative to the ever-changing social realities. Like some Indonesian and Malaysian Muslim political figures, Abdolkarim Soroush (2000), highlights the importance of dialogue in Islamic thoughts. His thought has gone beyond Iranian boundaries and has been well-accepted in other Muslim counties of the region. His promise is simple: Islam does not reject modernity and they can co-exist. Not

unlike fundamentalist Christianity, the conventional approach to Islam can conflict with modern thought. Nevertheless, a considerable growth in mass higher education and mass communication has made it possible for more and more Muslims to choose between classical or modern interpenetrations of Islam. As Eickelman (2002:130-31) suggests "just as there are multiple paths too modernity, there is a growing practical awareness throughout Muslim majority world of multiple claimants to the task of articulating how Islamic virtues should relate to public and political life."

Iran was among the Muslim Middle Eastern countries that went through intensive modernization prior its Islamic Revolution of 1978-79. However, the Pahlavi regime's challenge came from the growing middle classes who had benefitted the most from the state's rapid modernization. Iranian people did not fight against modernization nor secularism, but against the military dictatorship in a revolution in which religious sentiment and leadership played the central role. Fariba Adelkhah (2000), an Iranian anthropologist, believes that a real revolution is on its way by a new generation of Iranians who were born after 1979 (*Bachehaye Enghelab*). In this new revolution, religion and politics will be intertwined in ways that are not anticipated by Iran's established religious leaders.

## Modern Urban Planning Practices

Traditional city design, where practiced, brought about cities conceived, perceived, and executed as "a whole" (Alexander, 2002; Carmona et al., 2004; Pakzad, 2003). Traditional places are defined as pre-industrial urban spaces rooted in sociocultural circumstances and consisting of organic (piecemeal ad hoc actions) growth patterns, an emphasis on pedestrian traffic, and construction with locally available materials. Public

spaces eventually began to grow organically as a response to population growth, land ownership, and other local characteristics.

In the modern period, though, cities went through programs of comprehensive redevelopments. While the traditional cadastral pattern created an urban public space network providing social space and movement space in cities, modern planning practices cut through such network and reduced public place to merely movement space. Another major urban change in the modern era was from building as defining elements of mass and space - shaping streets and squares- to building as "free standing pavilions in amorphous space"(Carmona et al., 2003:67). Modernist functionalists believed that the external form of a building should follow the internal function of a building.  Resembling a building to a soap bubble, the modernist architect Le Corbusier (1927: 167) explained how  new concepts of form and space were established: "this bubble is perfect and harmonious if the breath has been evenly distributed and regulated from the inside. The exterior is the result of interior." Emphasizing the importance of movement in modern cities, Le Corbusier criticized traditional streets as "no more than a trench, a deep cleft, and a narrow passage" and suggested new ideas of separation of modes and speeds of travel in streets of modern cities. Totally ignoring the context, modernist planners suggested an International Style, a universal plan that would work in any city regardless of its geography and socio-cultural history.

Many scholars contend that the major problem with twentieth century urbanization was unreasonable emphasis on "objects" and the neglect of "urban fabric." The negative impacts of modernist "freestanding sculptural building" went beyond aesthetic preferences and deprived the social characteristics of space (Bentley, 1999:125). Bentley argues that modernist architecture destructed the socially constructed distinction between front/active

and back/passive that plays an important role in defining privacy and defines the relationship of private and public. Unlike public space network in traditional cities, modernist public spaces became socially passive as there is no defined relationship between them (Trancik, 1986; Von Meiss, 1990 Bentley, 1999; Carmona et al., 2003).

Although modernist architects aimed to fix social ills through changes in the built environment, the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project in St. Louis was demolished in 1972, symbolizing the death of modern architecture and its failure to solve social problems. James C. Scott (1998:88), in *Seeing like a State*, studies what he calls "authoritarian high modernism," and defines it as "a sweeping, rational engineering of all aspects of social life in order to improve the human condition." Examining Le Corbusier's plans in Brasilia, Scott identifies one of the major components of high-modernist interventions in public space, that is, "to start from zero" and to completely trust in the rationality of comprehensive planning. Unlike Le Corbusier, Jane Jacobs (1961), who studied cities from street level, contended that multiple functions within a neighborhood as opposed to modernist idea of single function areas (zoning) provide a livelier and safer neighborhood. Indeed, Modernist so-called "planned" cities significantly decrease social interactions, information flows, surprise elements (unpredictability) and are more subject to economic decay, abandon and socio-cultural stagnation (Jacobs, 1961; Scott, 1998). Lefebvre (1991:303) illustrates Modernist cities as follows: "fracturing of space…a disordering of elements wrenched from each other in such a way that the urban fabric itself-the street, the city- is also torn apart."

Responding to Modernist approaches; urban design, in the last three decades or so, has shifted back to value traditional ideas and patterns of connected neighborhoods and the public space network. (See Krier, 1979; Rossi, 1982; Gosling and Maitland, 1984; Duany

and Plater-Zyberk, 1991; Bentley, 1999; Calthrope, 1993). Pre-Modernist cities are based on Kurt Koffka's (1935) Gestalt principle that "the whole is other than the sum of the parts." One can liken traditional cities to the body or any natural organism where all parts are interconnected and dependently function.

## Rapid Modernization in Early Twentieth-Century Iran

To better understand and evaluate the modern architecture and urban planning of Iran, it is crucial to explain the sociopolitical status of Iran in the early twentieth century. Since the Qajar dynasty (1785–1925), Iran has confronted Western ideological concepts: rationalism, scientism, secularism, and modern economic and political systems (Diba, 1991). Upon the demise of the Qajar, Modernist intervention in Iran was forcefully applied through the Pahlavi Dynasty's rapid modernization agenda in support of the urban bureaucracy, central administration, modern military and secularization of cultural values system from 1921 to 1934 (Madanipour, 1998; Grigor, 2009).

Both Reza Shah (1921-1941) and his son and successor king, Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979), forcefully modernized the society that had been rooted in pre-Islamic past, Islam, and metaphysical ideology. Such radical changes were employed in all aspects of everyday life of the society, from ideological to physical transformations. To better understand the scale of these changes, The Iranian Court Minister, Adolhossein Teymurtash (28 August 1927), becomes useful. He stated that "everything has to be started over again… [We] longed for Persia to progress along modern lines, but without discipline there is no hope" (Also cited in Grigor, 2004: 1). Reza Shah forcefully unveiled women through the Women's Awakening Law, linked to the Marriage Law of 1931, and the Second Congress of

Eastern Women in Tehran in 1932.  This ideological change was not coming from the majority of Iranians, who, at the time, were traditional and did not support the mandatory unveiling law. Benefiting from oil and other resource wealth, the Pahlavis also sought to build a new modern Iran. Architecture and urban planning became state-controlled stages for social, political, and economic expressions of nationalist movements, providing the tools of modernization across the nation (Modarres, 2006; Grigor, 2009). The notion of cultural heritage, introduced by the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1922, was one of the most important forces to modernize Iran. Cultural heritage, for the Pahlavi Dynasty, meant more than modern public monuments and buildings or a path to legitimize their Royal political regime.  Instead, it was a defining element in modern Iran's place among other modern nations in the region (Grigor, 2009).

Modern developments during the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-79) not only exhibited a nationalistic and progressive nature, but also embodied traditional cultural heritage of pre-Islamic architectural details. Cubic architecture- Modernist big box- with its light metal structure, glass and travertine façade, and flat roofs became prevailing in the larger cities. While oil industry was largely being exploited and property was becoming the major economic investment, property speculators benefitted from such easy-to-build architecture (Diba, 1991). The Besaz-o-befroosh (build and sell), a group of builders who rarely cared about the quality of what they built, became the engine behind architecture and construction in Tehran and other large cities in Iran.  As a result, cities witnessed a large physical growth in a short amount of time. While there were some valuable architectural buildings created by individual architects during this time, most of the buildings were a confusing mixture of Western modern and pre-Islamic Iranian elements. The Islamic Revolution of 1979

highlighted the Islamic architecture elements while attempted to deprive the Pahvali regime's

modernization. Many streets and buildings' names were changed during the first years after

the revolution and new building regulations were established by the Plan and Budgetary

Organization (Sazman Barnam-o-Boodgeh). Such regulations ignored qualitative and cultural

aspects and instead were largely concerned with superficial and quantitative aspects of

architectural production. No wonder, except for some invaluable architecture carried out by

private and individual architect teams, the Modern city silhouette appeared to be confusing,

disordered and without any identity.

## Mutual Construction of Gender Identities and Public Spaces

The relationships between gender, geography, and space can be seen from different aspects and scales; from geographers' studies of differences in global context and anthropologists' investigations of identity and localities in national and tribal settings to architects' and urban planners' efforts in creating more inclusive places in cities and buildings. This section builds on the scholarship examining these relationships from an interdisciplinary perspective, including that of geographers, architects, urban planners, and anthropologists. First, definitions of space and gender suggested by scholars who connected the two will be reviewed. Next, the significant contributions of feminist geographers and their approaches in addressing complex questions related to people and places will be highlighted.

## Gendering the Spaces of Modernity: Gender and Space

Critical geographers have argued that the notion of space does not mean a fixed location or a set of coordinates on a map anymore (Massey, 1994; Werlen 1992; McDowell, 1999). Instead, "places are contested, fluid, and uncertain" (McDowell, 1999:4) and are influenced by and influence the socio-spatial practices happening in them. I also suggest that space is not a geographic product; rather, it is a "process" that can be perceived differently over time and geographical and cultural boundaries by social groups through their actions.

Although he does not particularly focus on gender relations, Benno Werlen suggests (1992) that studying space without considering the social agents and actions that shape and reshape it is not defensible. Through their actions people attach meanings to space. There is a complex interrelation between the concepts of space, place and people. Relph makes a useful

distinction between place and space. For him, a space becomes a place whenever one feels or knows a space (Relph 1976, 8). Place carries meaning derived out of lived-experiences while it has crucial ties to systems of power, including ideological, cultural, socio-political, and economic forces as well as gender relations. As Yi-Fu Tuan (2001, 54) states, place is a humanized space and "a calm center of established values." Therefore space may become a place for a variety of reasons for different users.

On one hand, social scientists have highlighted the significance of social, phenomenological, and symbolic aspects of space and even suggest that "physical space has no reality without the energy that is deployed within it" (Lefebvre 1991, 13).  On the other hand, architects and urban designers have explored how a space can constitute, constrain, and mediate human activities and social interactions through its physical and aesthetical attributes (see Krier 1979; Knox and Pinch 2000; Carmona et al. 2003).  In fact, the architecture of a space legitimizes a particular ideology or power system by providing a physical focus to which sentiments can be attached.

As Elizabeth Grosz (2001, 5) contends, architecture is not merely "a system that reflects and judges." She suggested that there is a mobility idea in architecture and the built environment is, in fact, "a way of living."  Cope (2012) emphasizes that it is important to remember that geography is indebted to the recent feminist and critical efforts in re-defining "space" as a more dynamic entity. This is space as the sphere of dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore always undetermined) by the construction of new relations.  It is "always being made and always therefore, in a sense, unfinished" (Massey, 2005:107).

The construction of public space influences and is influenced by the social organizations and processes in and surrounding it (Soja 2003; Harvey 2005a and 2005b). "Public space," Torre (2000, 145) believes, "is produced through public discourse, and its representation is not the exclusive territory of architecture, but is the product of the inextricable relationship between social action and physical space." Even before a space is created and built, its form, function, and even its meaning are affected by social processes, but once it is used by people, all of its aspects can be changed by its users' actions. Of course, it is easier to imagine changes in the function and meaning of a space, but there are examples where people have modified the form of a space in relation to their needs. It appears that once used, space advances to a living entity, rather than a physical one and then affects behaviors while simultaneously being affected by social relations. I agree with Durning and Wrigley (2000, 1) that "…architectural space is not the container of identities, but a constitutive element in them." Identities, including those of gender, are (re)defined in the space and therefore can change and be changed by social powers and processes occurring in the space (Grosz, 1992; Rose, 1993; Lips, 2003; Longhurst, 2004).

McDowell (1999:6) reminds us that the idea of space and place encompasses "… the grounded intersections of a whole variety of flows and interactions that operate over a range of spatial scales." She also suggests that as the conceptualization of space in geography has recently become more fluid, the definition of gender, traditionally known as an essential category or an independent social construct, requires a reexamination. McDowell (1999:6-7) further highlights that:

> the focus of feminist scholars, geographers among them, has also
>
> changed, from a dominant emphasis on the material inequalities

between men and women in different parts of the whole to a new

convergence of interest on language, symbolism, representations

and meaning in the definition of gender…in defining gender, and

in the preceding discussion of the changing definition and

understanding of place, it is clear that social practices, including

the wide range of social interactions at a variety of sites and

places- at work, for example, at home, in the pub or the gym- and

ways of thinking about and representing place/gender are

interconnected and mutually constituted. We all act in relation to

our intentions and beliefs, which are always culturally shaped and

historically and spatially positions.

Feminist Anthropologist, Henrietta Moore (1995) also highlights the importance of

space and time in the concepts of gender and gender relations. Moore (1995:13, also cited in

McDowell, 1999: 7) suggests two different, "but not mutually exclusive," approaches should

be considered in understating these concepts; from a symbolic construction or a social

relationship perspective. However, as I have discussed earlier for the definition of space, the

physical and social dimensions of space cannot be separately imagined nor studied. Like

space, both dimensions of gender should be considered. Space, as representations of social

relations and power systems, has a strong association with identity and particularly, gendered

identities. Lefebvre (1991: 411) asks: "Is space indeed a medium? A milieu? An

intermediary?" and answers "it's doubtless all of these, but its role is less and less neutral,

and more and more active, both an instrument and as goal, as means and as end. Confining it

to so narrow a category as that of medium is consequently woefully inadequate." The

interplay between gender, identity, and space has been of increasing interest to many scholars from diverse fields.

Susan Hanson, in the 1992 presidential address to the Association of American Geographers (also cited in Staeheli, L. and Martin, P. 2005), suggests that scholars who study the construction of cities and the creation of places need to recognize that space is 'socially produced' and consequently, is gendered (Lefebvre 1991). Many scholars from a wide range of disciplines have studied the differences between the ways men and women experience the city in regards to their diverse assets, limitations, networks, needs, and interests. Among them, Kwan (2002, 646) emphasizes that "the material and discursive construction of gendered identities is crucial for understanding difference in the lived experiences of individuals."

The works on gender and space have usually focused on one of the three scales: homes, public spaces, and the city as a whole. Focusing on domestic space of homes, many scholars ( see Greenbuam, 1981; Ardener 1993; Khatib-Chahidi,1993; Durning and Wrigley, 2000), particularly in architecture and urban anthropology, have studied the implications of design on gendered spaces of the house and explored the everyday experiences of women and men within it. For instance, in Kitchen culture/ kitchen dialectic, Greenbaum (1981) suggests that the typical kitchen design in every decade of the twentieth century reflects how women cooking food become invisible in the larger house space.

Other groups of scholars (see Gardner, 1989; Valentine,1993; Day, 1999 and 2011; Alizadeh, 2007) have focused on public spaces and the ways women have been excluded from participating in such places of the cities, either through design decisions or policy implications. A great deal of these works has focused on women's feelings, including safety,

comfort level, and fear. Day (2011) examines feminist approaches to urban design and the differences between women and men in urban places. Day (2011: 150) suggests urban planners and designers must consider these differences in order to prevent reinforcing the status quo. Recognizing the differences among women themselves, she suggests "race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion, physical ability, [and] age" influence women's experiences in cities. Day (2011) points out the feminist critiques of the separation of land uses executed by Modern urban planning practice. This separation of land use is rooted in the Victorian division of private and domestic spheres associated with women and public spaces for men (Franck and Paxson, 1989, Rose, 1993, Day, 2011). Much of this separation is also "specific to a particular time--the nineteenth century-a particular class-the middle class-and a particular racial group-whites" (Kwolek-Follan, 1998:4). In reality, however, restriction to the domestic space of home was a luxury for women of color and low income in those times and still is not valid for many professional women who, like (or have to, according to the neo-liberal economies and division of labor) their male counterparts, spend the majority of their day outside home and in public spaces. Rejecting the rigid distinction between private and public, suburban and urban in urban design, Day (2011:152) believes such boundaries are "meaningless and constraining." Recent works (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 2001; Miraftab, 2007; Alizadeh, 2007) focusing on women's use of public spaces in non-Western context enhance our understanding of the ties between geographical location and gender identities beyond the question of the traditional separation of private and public sphere. For example, Alizadeh (2007) examines how Kurdish women's experiences in public spaces are different from those of women in other Islamic and Iranian contexts. He concludes, because of certain roles of Kurdish women outside of kinship ties, that the tension between private

53

and public spheres is not as strong as in the other Islamic cities with more restrictions on the presence of females in public spaces. Although there has been a special interest in studying public spaces among architects and anthropologists over the last three decades, public space is also a common subject of investigation for many feminist geographers who study the relationship between gendered identities and constructed space (Fraser 1990, 57).

Urban geographers and planners (see Monk and Hanson, 1982; McDowell, 1983, 1997, and 1999; Rakodi 1991; Massey, 1994 and 2005; Blunt and Rose, 1995; Hanson, 2003; Lips, 2003; Benhabib, 1992 and 2004; Fraser, 2004; Moss and Falconer Al-Hindi, 2007; Kwan 2008; Jarvis, Clock, and Kantor, 2009); have worked on the larger scale of cities and studied how physical organization of urban areas can influence women's mobility, employment opportunities, and gendered segregation.

The studies in social and urban geography vary in their scales and subjects of analysis, from a neighborhood to a city and from medical to socio-political geographic themes. For instance, McLafferty (2002) examines the relations between the number and locations of women diagnosed by breast cancer and environmental factors in Long Island. Pavlovskaya (2002) benefits from GIS as a geographical tool in her studies of urban transformation in Russia by re-connecting the domestic space of house to the public spaces of the work place. Informed by feminist theories about space and mixed-methods approach her research reveals some invisible social changes regarding women's role in the economy. In studies of the experiences of Muslim women in Columbus, Ohio, Kwan (2008) examines how the September 11, 2001 tragedy and the resulting anti-Muslim violence have affected the everyday life and spatial mobility of Muslim or Muslim-looking women in cities. Telling a story of Muslim women in the United States, she recognizes the diversity in their responses

and suggests more investigation for a fuller account of what happened in their lives after that September 11.

In *A new psychology of women: gender, culture, and ethnicity*, Lips (2003, 6) emphasizes, "each society makes up its own set of rules to define what it means to be a woman or a man, and people construct gender through their interactions by behaving in appropriate ways." Socially accepted or unaccepted behavior and appearance for men and women are the reflections of cultural characteristics and the value system of societies and vary among different societies. The social construction of gender identity is largely derived from the patriarchal system of values defining gender roles and expectations that vary from one culture to another. Perhaps, there is no universal notion of femininity as the accepted values and societal norms change over time and space.

For Kwolek-Follan, gender is a fragmented and experiential category. "Any dominant gender system will engage different people in different ways and will create multiple layers of experience … like race but unlike class, gender is simultaneously a private, intimate, personal category and a public, communal, social expression of self. Like class and race, gender can link the individual to society in personal, forceful ways" (Kwolek-Follan 1994:5). Therefore, it is important to not consider gender as "a homogenous social group" when one generalizes characteristics in social sciences. In other words, although women and men experience the city in different ways, an individual's age, education, race, social role, economic class and position in the hierarchy of power can play a significant role in one's experiences throughout the city.

I have reviewed the definitions of space and gender in the works of scholars, mostly feminist and critical, and conclude that space includes the social activities that happen in it

and the meanings that are attached to it should be studied as a "process." In addition, like space, a more fluid definition of gender should be considered in feminist geography scholarship. In the following section, I will review the efforts that have shaped gender studies in geography and their contributions to the discipline.

## Feminist Approaches in Geography

My goal is to outline some of the key connections between geographical perspectives and feminist approaches and to illustrate them with some of the works I have read. I will, then, explain how this dissertation benefits from the main characteristics of feminist approaches in geographical research.

Although gender has been a focus of research in many social sciences and humanities, the effort to incorporate gender debates in the geography discipline is recent, but is also one of "the fastest growing theoretical and empirical fields in geography" (Moss and Falconer Al-Hindi, 2007:1). Since its emergence in the mid-1970s, feminist geographical research has had "a commitment to portray women's experiences, a concern with the quality of women's lives, and a political vision of gender equity" (Monk, 1994:276). In the early 1980s the Women and Geography Study Group was established within the Royal Geographical Society and Institute of British Geographers to encourage studies on women and to improve the position of women in the geography discipline. McDowell (1997:384) reminds us that " the early years of feminist geography were marked by optimism and euphoria, "geographers, almost all female, were re-defining the discipline to include research themes such as women's spatial behavior and social mobility, childcare provisions, domestic power relations, women's works and transportation, and women's access to resources.

By conducting research about women and their everyday life (see Monk and Hanson, 1982; Massey 1994 and 2005; McDowell, 1997; Pratt, 1992; Rose, 1993; Valentine, 1993; McDowell, 1997;Domosh and Seager, 2001; Longhurst, 2004; Staeheli, 2004; Kwan, 2008), feminist geographers' works have gone beyond women subjects and explore critical matters including identity, subjectivity, praxis, difference, and power relations (Moss and Falconer Al-Hindi, 2007:1).

Linda McDowell (1997:382) defines Feminist Geography as "investigation of the structure of social and spatial divisions based on gender." To her (Ibid), "doing feminist geography means looking at the actions and meanings of gendered people, at their histories, personalities and biographies, at the meaning of places to them, at the different ways in which spaces are gendered and how this affects people's understating of themselves as women or men." The works of feminist geographers vary in the scale and subject matter of analysis (McDowell, 1997). Kwan (2002:646) has identified three common characteristics of feminist approaches. First, they all strive to offer a fuller understanding of gender differences in the everyday life of individuals. Second, they acknowledge that knowledge is neither objective nor transparent; instead the social characteristics of the researcher affects the course of research and the ways in which the knowledge is "situated" and partially constructed and transmitted (Haraway, 1988 and1991). Third, like in anthropology, they do not recognize any particular methods as a "right" one and instead, they choose a "better" method based on the research questions and data (Kwan 2002 and 2008; Cope and Elwood, 2009). I acknowledge two more commonalities. First, feminist geographers, by focusing on the diverse voices, multiple truths, and variety of perspectives, appreciate the complexity of people' social and spatial behaviors and do not aim to predict the future as physical sciences do. Second, which

is directly related to the earlier notion of feminist's appreciation of complexities and ambiguities; they effectively reject dualisms such as mind/body, sex/gender, and private/public.

Despite their differences in scale and subject matter of analysis, feminist geographic efforts have continued to enhance "critical inquiry in geography, in examining multiple dimensions of research processes, and in questioning what constitutes research itself"(Moss and Falconer Al-Hindi, 2007:3; also see Kobayashi and Peake; 1994; Lawson, 1995; Monk, 2001; Kwan, 2008; Grosz, 2010). Challenging the basic assumptions of geographic theories and conventional data collection methods, feminist geographers have contributed to both theoretical and methodological aspects. They have long challenged the knowledge production process and further explored the subjective position of the researcher in that process. Elizabeth Grosz (Grosz, 1986: 199), among other feminist scholars, reminds us that "the congenital assumption that the researcher is a disembodied, rational, sexually indifferent subject…is a status normally attributed only to angels."

That knowledge is partial and situated is one of the most important theoretical contributions of feminist geographers. Megan Cope (2012) believes the recent advancements in hybrid methodologies in human geography are indebted to feminist perspectives, practices, and critiques. For the geography disciplines, particularly human geography research, feminist scholars have highlighted the importance of everyday life and engaging with people through valuing people's experiences and emotions. Although anthropologists and sociologists have long worked with ethnographic methods, feminist geographers have started to combine qualitative and quantitative methods in order to define and shape feminist methods. "The absence of women, and the associated privileging of information gathered from male

respondents," McDowell (1997: 388) argues "led to a welcome expansion of work by feminist geographers to correct absences and biases."

As methodological approaches and theoretical perspective are directly connected, the traditional definition of space, the key concept in geography, as a fixed phenomenon has been replaced by a more fluid conception (as I have discussed earlier). Also, as Fraser (1992) points out the conception and characterization of an idealized public space/sphere where women, equal to men, gather freely to exchange ideas (such conceptualizations are found in the works of Habermas (1991) and Goffman (1963), for critiques of these works see Fraser, 1990 and Gardner, 1989), does not necessarily represent women's experience in real life. To this end, there has been increasing research on women's use of public spaces in the past two decades, however, much of these works focus on women's experiences in Western contexts, and are done primarily in the English-speaking academy.

**Research Objectives**

Through the detailed review of literature, I have offered a public space model that I will use for the purpose of this dissertation. I define space as contested, fluid, and uncertain geographic phenomena that are constantly changing and have both social and physical aspects. Reviewing and rejecting the traditional models of modernity, I recognize the plurality nature of human cultures. This dissertation, then, is built upon a model of multiple modernities in which modernity, its definition(s), and consequences are perceived, practiced, and presented in essentially different realities in different geographic spaces and in different historic periods.

Finally, in regard to the lack of study on women in public spaces in non-Western societies, this dissertation investigates how Iranian women use the selected public spaces in Tehran through applying feminist methodology and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) visualization and analysis tools that will be explained in the next chapter. There are three important reasons that explain why I chose Iranian women as the focus of this study and why the location of case studies, Tehran, Iran, is meaningful. After the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran, surprisingly, the presence of Iranian women in public spaces dramatically increased (Fariba Adelkhah, 2000, Masserat Amir Ebrahimi, 2006). There are three important factors that contributed to this change and invited more women into public spaces. First was the change in societal norms and the compulsory hijab that allowed many traditional women to feel comfortable and use public spaces. Second was the Iran-Iraq War period (1980-1988) when women had to come to the public life to compensate for the losses in the male workforce. Third was the postwar urban development that added many new public spaces (e.g. parks, shopping malls, and cultural complexes) and an increased opportunity for consumption. The latest factor is still happening and is relevant to this study. The increased women's presence and participation in public spaces has changed the women's roles and the definition of "a good Muslim woman" in Iranian society. Therefore, it is critical to understand the role of modern public spaces such as shopping malls in this change.

Despite this recent change in women's presence in public spaces, Iranian women, like many other Muslim-majority societies in the Middle East, are still invisible in Western scholarship, not because of their hijabs but because of the political difficulties of doing field research in Iran. As Afsaneh Najmabadi (2007) points out there is an urgent need for more ethnographic work in Middle Eastern contexts such as Iran. Seyla Benhabib (1992) and Lila

Abu Loghud (2002) also remind us of the unrealistically oppressive picture of Muslim women and emphasize that even political difficulties in doing research should not result in, at least not in Academia, any unrealistic ideas of other cultures. To this end, a study of Iranian women's socio-spatial behaviors in Tehran's public spaces can help the understanding of the cultural and political transitions happening in the Muslim societies of the Middle East. The focus is present-day social and spatial behaviors of women in what have often been called, by urban planners and designers, modern and traditional public spaces in Tehran.

This dissertation emphasizes the value of female users' lived experiences in different public spaces in Tehran in order to illustrate how their experiences and the ethno-cultural values and symbolic meanings they attach to those spaces are similar to or different from those of Western societies. By focusing on the lived experiences in which urban space is produced by gender relations and is reproduced in those everyday practices, this study aims to illustrate and explain how women in Tehran use and attach meanings to different public space, whether they play any role in defining and changing such places regarding their controlled presence, and finally, how the women's experiences in so-called modern and traditional public spaces in Tehran can be interpreted in comparison to those in West.

In the West, many urban planners and human geographers (see Shields, 1990; Sorkin, 1992; Crawford, 1992; Banerjee, T. and Loukaitou-Sideris, A., 1992; Soja, 2003; Zukin, 2003 and 2011) have warned us of the loss of authentic public spaces and the danger of overtly controlled designs and behaviors in modern and often privatized public places. The critics emphasize the lack of sense of place based on the boxy and boring designs of modern public spaces such as shopping malls, the potential of segregation through target audiences and controlled behavior, the systematically designed notion of consumption and leisure, and

finally depoliticizing the space through confining the user's democratic rights (Judd, 1995;

Zukin, 2003; Soja, 2003). Although there have been a few efforts (Day, 1999; Salcedo, 2003)

to include more diverse experience into these criticisms, the literature still lacks the inclusion

of examples from non-Western contexts where these modern spaces, like other modernity's

features and forces, are developed, perceived, and used in significantly different ways. This

dissertation's goal is not to reject the predominant critics of modern public spaces in the

West, but instead, I seek to enrich the existing theory by including lived experiences of a

more diverse group of users.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS: GEO-ETHNOGRAPHY OF PUBLIC SAPCES

This research project is constructed on recent innovative efforts in methodologies of human geography, urban planning and design disciplines, and gender studies that value more qualitative research methods in understanding human societies. During the last 30 years, cultural sociology and urban geography have been enriched by emphasis on space and spatial analysis, while, simultaneously, architects and urban planners have paid more attention to social relations and local-cultural aspects of design. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodological approaches I have chosen to apply in this research project. Three methods are explained below:

1- Field study (also known as ethnography, naturalistic research, and the qualitative method)

2- Spatial visualization and analysis in Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

3- Geo-ethnography of meidans in Tehran (a combination of ethnography and GIS spatial visualization and analysis tools, see figure 4-1)


**Field Study**

The research methods can be categorized into a qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approach. Qualitative methods are often associated with soft, flexible, subjective, case study, speculative, grounded ideas. Whereas quantitative methods may be linked to concepts such as hard, fixed, objective, value-free, survey, hypothesis testing,  and abstract (Lofland and Lofland, 1994; Silverman, 2006). This dissertation is based on a mixed-method approach in both gathering and analyzing data.

There are three main methods of data collection: experiments, surveys, and field study. While field study methods have been widely used in anthropological studies (see William Whyte's Street Corner Society, Ervin Goffman's Asylums, and Herbert Gans' Urban Villagers), it is still not in common use for geographers and planners. But the good news is interdisciplinary studies have recently highlighted the importance of combining field study with research methods. For Lofland and Lofland (1994), there are three issues that make field study different from other research methods. First is the relation between the researcher and the data. In almost all field studies, also known as ethnography, naturalistic research, and qualitative method, the researcher is an observer and participant in the lives of research objects, including individuals, groups, or societies. The researcher primarily collects qualitative rather than quantitative data; he gathers data about natural behaviors and social life as it is experienced by the participant rather than using determined categories. Hence, this type of data gathering provides the researcher a richer understanding of everyday social life. Second is the relationship between the researcher and the time spent in the study area. In field study, the researcher lets the research questions and interests derive from the course of research. There is no theory or hypothesis to test, instead there may be a theory emerging from grounded data (often called grounded theory) based on concrete social behaviors that the researcher observes and records during the course of the research. The researcher is a means for data gathering and his role becomes sensitive as it is subjective. Hence, the research questions in field study are often exploratory, with a commitment to inductive reasoning: to discover what people think, how they act and why.

Lofland and Lofland (1994: 1) distinguish three phases in any research: gathering data (firsthand and empirical data input); focusing data (social science input: relating data to

terms of social science concepts, questions and issues) and finally, analyzing and writing up the results or conclusions. The last difference between field study and other research methods is based on the way the researcher treats these phases. In field study, these phases are interconnected, overlapped and often happen simultaneously. Indeed, it becomes an open-ended, reflexive, and emergent process rather than predictable, determined steps where the researcher considers social life as involving an interlocking series of events.

The main objective in field study is to go beyond the taken-for-granted perception, categorization, and generalization of social life of the group under study. As a result, the best source for research questions is the field. Field studies, often, are derived from personal experiences and/or a connection to the study group (Lofland and Lofland, 1994: 9-10). This can actually become advantageous for the researchers as the previous connections may facilitate the process of what Lofland and Lofland (1994) call "getting in and along" with the world they study. The researcher often concentrates on previously unstudied processes and unanticipated phenomena. Focusing on human subjectivity, meanings that participants attach to events and that people give to their lives become the central parts of the research.

Research starts with observing social interactions and/or interviewing social actors and is followed by developing an explanation for what has been seen and found in the field (Schutt, 2008:47). Rather than testing a hypothesis, questions such as "what is going on here? How do people interpret these experiences? Why do people do what they do?" are asked to make sense of the observed social actions and phenomena. That is why the research question is often derived from the situation itself.

Field study consists of four distinctive research techniques as follows: participant observation, intensive and in-depth interviewing and focus groups, analyzing text and

documents, and audio and video recording (Lofland and Lofland, 1994). In this dissertation, I have chosen the first two methods in gathering qualitative data.

"Participant observation refers to the process in which an investigator establishes and sustains a many-sided and situational appropriate relationship with a human association in its natural setting for the purpose of developing a social scientific understanding of that association." (Lofland and Lofland, 1994: 18) As a participant observer, I gathered data through participating and observing in selected public spaces where I developed a sustained relationship with people while they went about their everyday activities. Through participant observation, I was able to capture social life as participants experienced it rather than in categories predetermined by the researcher.

In addition to observation, I conducted intensive interviews with users of public spaces and professionals such as architects, urban planners, and urban educators. By intensive interviews I mean an interview that "encompasses both ordinary conversation and listening as it occurs naturally during the course of social interaction and semi-structured interviewing involving the use of an interview guide consisting of a list of open-ended questions that direct conversation without forcing the interviewee to select pre-established responses."(Lofland and Lofland, 1994:17-18)

This approach relies on written or spoken words or observations that do not often have direct numerical interpretation and typically involve an orientation to social context and the meanings attached by participants to events and to their lives that emphasize that "qualitative data about social settings can be used to understand patterns in quantitative data better" (Lofland and Lofland, 1994; Schutt, 2008). Campbell and Russo (1999:141). I studied the social processes in the selected case studies as they happened and in relatively

undisturbed settings. During the observation phase, I observed actively, took systematic notes, and was prepared to spend significant time developing each case study.

Schutt (2008: 286) defines "case study as a way of thinking about what qualitative data analysis can, or perhaps should, focus on. Case study is a setting or group that the analyst treats as an integrated social unit that must be studied holistically and in its particularity." Silverman (2006: 40) suggests that "case studies illustrate why a dependence on purely quantitative methods may neglect the social and cultural construction of the 'variables' which quantitative research seeks to correlate." The case studies of this dissertation are Meidan-e-Tajrish, Sabz-e-Meidan, and Marvi Meidancheh in Tehran, which accommodate an ethnographic visualization of gendering space. The process by which Iranian women attach symbolic meanings to those public spaces offers insight into the mutual construction of gender identities and space politics.

Through field study, one can "collect the richest data by achieving intimate familiarity with the setting, through engaging in some number of behaviors relevant to the setting and in face-to-face interaction with its participants" (Lofland and Lofland, 1994: 16). But, it is important to remember that field study has its own challenges. Although field study provides a rich description of social life happening in its natural settings, it is "time-consuming, arduous and often emotionally draining" (Schutt, 2008: 9). I was aware of the fact that properly conducted research consists of prolonged, sustained engagement and persistent, systematic observation and such engagement make it unlikely for me to ignore significant patterns and notions (Lofland and Lofland, 1994: 55). In addition, Schutt (2008:11) recognizes three specific challenges that social scientists face in field studies:

1) The objects of our research are people like us, so biases rooted in our personal experiences and relationships are more likely to influence our conclusions.

2) Those whom we study can evaluate us, even as we study them. As a result, subjects 'decisions to 'tell us what they think we want to hear' or, alternatively, to refuse to cooperate in our investigations can produce misleading evidence.

3) In physics or chemistry, research subjects (objects and substances) may be treated to extreme conditions and then discarded when they are no longer useful. However, social (and medical) scientists must concern themselves with the way their human subjects are treated in the course of research (much could also be said about research on animals, but this isn't the place for that).

In addition, there are some data that cannot be gathered only through participant observation and intensive interviewing such as historical backgrounds and the larger sociopolitical (state) and economic (market) contexts. Despite these challenges, qualitative research makes it possible for researchers" to study phenomena which are simply unavailable elsewhere" and that is a significant benefit particularly for this dissertation (Silverman, 2006:43).

Before explaining spatial analysis and its role in this research, I would like to clarify the relation between qualitative methods and ethnography as I will use this concept to create the mixed-methods approach applied in this dissertation. Silverman (2006: 468) highlights that social scientists write ethnographies based on their field observations and defines

ethnography as "highly descriptive writing about particular groups of people." Brewer (2000:6, also cited in Silverman :67) explains ethnography as the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'field' by methods of data collection that capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, making the researcher participate directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner." In fact, Delamont (2004: 218) suggests that ethnography and fieldwork can be used interchangeably, and they both can "mean spending long periods watching people, coupled with talking to them about what they are doing, thinking and saying, and designed to see how they understand their world."

## GIS Spatial Visualization and Analysis

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) researchers and critics have defined the rapidly progressing field of GIS in different ways according to their applications and interests (Pickles, 1995). For many reasons, GIS is much easier to be imagined than to be defined. Cope and Elwood (2009: 2) define GI systems as "digital technologies for sorting, managing, analyzing, and representing geographic information. GIS is also understood as a collection of practices for producing and negotiating geographic knowledge through the representation and analysis of spatial data. " For Star and Estes (1990:2-3) GIS is "an information system that is designed to work with data referenced by spatial or geographic coordinates. In other words, a GIS is both a database system with specific capabilities for spatially-referenced data, as well [as] a set of operations for working with data . . . In a sense, a GIS may be thought of as a higher-order map." William Huxhold (1991:27*) in *Introduction to Urban Geographic Information Systems* suggests that "the purpose of a traditional GIS is first and foremost spatial analysis. Therefore, capabilities may have limited data capture and cartographic

69

output. Capabilities of analyses typically support decision making for specific projects and/or limited geographic areas." Central to the concept of GIS is its capability of overlaying spatial and non-spatial data into what geographers call "a sort of cartographic sandwich."  In summary, GIS is a computer-based information application that uses geographically-referenced data as well as non-spatial data to support spatial visualization and analysis.  GIS technology is widely used in different disciplines, such as geography, geology, environmental sciences, social studies, and criminology.

GIS has often been associated with positivist epistemology, instrumental rationality, and quantitative and data-led methods and has been criticized for its limitations in representation of space, movement, and subjectivity particularly by critical human geographers. Many geographers (see Sheppard, 2001; McLafferty, 2002; Pavlovskaya, 2002; Kwan, 2002; Bell and Reed, 2004; Matthews, Burton, and Detwiler, 2006; Elwood, 2006; Cope and Elwood, 2009; Knigge and Cope 2009) have tried to challenge the dualism of qualitative and quantitative geography and have successfully opened doors to human geographers to explore the benefits of GIS in their studies. As Sheppard (2001: 532) explains "the distinction drawn between quantitative and qualitative geography has developed since the late 1970s, after humanistic and radical human geographers began to develop critiques of the philosophical and methodological foundations of the geography of the quantitative revolution." He believes this dualism is reductionist and paradoxical according to the fact that critical, feminist, and post-structural geographers have actively advanced pluralistic thinking.

Continuing this perspective, an increasing number of researchers integrate GIS-based spatial visualization and analysis into qualitative methods, such as ethnography. Photographs,

sketches, mental maps, audio and video records, and narratives gathered in the qualitative methods can be linked to spatially-referenced data in GIS software and offer new ways of understanding. (Al Kodmany, 2002; Kwan and Kingge, 2006; Kwan, 2008; Cope and Elwood, 2009) Such endeavors in connecting qualitative and quantitative data in GIS application emerged in response to the mid-1990s critiques of GIS that presented it as a merely quantitative method rooted in positivist epistemology (Cope and Elwood, 2009:1). Reacting to those critiques, mixed-methods approaches, such as Qualitative GIS (MacLafferty, 2002; Pavlovskaya, 2002; Kwan, 2002; Bell and Reed, 2004; Cope and Elwood, 2009), Grounded-Visualization (Knigge and Cope, 2006), Feminist-Visualization (Kwan, 2002) and Geo-ethnography (Matthews et al., 2006) have emerged and transformed the "inherent" quantitative perspective on GIS as a research tool. These approaches , particularly suggested and used by feminist and critical geographers, integrate multiple forms of data (both GIS-based spatial data and non-spatial data such as photographs, sketches, narratives, field notes, and interviews) in order to create a bigger picture and greater insight into what and why is happening in the study area.

Both feminist geography and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) have been among the fastest-growing theoretical and practical research themes in geography during the last few decades (McLafferty 2002). Since the late 1990s, many scholars (see Cope and Elwood 2009 for a comprehensive history of Qualitative GIS) have made significant efforts to connect the two. This combination has largely enriched feminist geography research methods by introducing GIS geo-visualization and spatial analysis techniques and has reduced the role of positivism in GIS. Although feminist geographers have typically preferred qualitative methods such as ethnographies that capture "situated knowledge" and

account for "lived experience" (Haraway 1988 and 1991), quantitative methods such as GIS can open new avenues of knowledge to feminist geographers by aiding in the analysis of the spatial and social contexts of women's lives.

One major outcome of incorporating qualitative data with GIS, in the words of Cope and Elwood (2009, 4), is promoting the "use [of] GIS in research that emerges from multiple or hybrid epistemologies, and theorizing previously unrecognized forms of social knowledge that may be present in GIS applications." Jackson (2008:328) reminds us that "geographic space cannot be reified as a direct and objectively distinct cause of behavior. Cause and agency have to be located in subjects who respond to the world as both material and symbolic creatures." Therefore, Qualitative GIS that includes ethnographic data can serve as a bridge linking what often become separate perspectives based on distinct quantitative and qualitative epistemologies. Qualitative GIS can enhance geography from a merely inductive and objective science to a more subjective one in which the researcher has a richer understanding of everyday social life through observation and participation. In this approach, research becomes truly an open-ended emergent process rather than predictable determined steps (Lofland and Lofland, 1994). Finding patterns on maps can result in more questions that would not be necessarily answered without prolonged contacts with the groups studied. Such rich ethnographic data can then be mapped again and result in nuanced findings. By reviewing the field study and GIS spatial analysis, I am now able to explain the methods I have used in this dissertation in more detail.

### Geo-Ethnography of Meidans in Tehran

Continuing with the mixed-methods approach (see figure 3-1), I will explore GIS's potential to register patterns of movement over time that can then be qualitatively assessed through

Figure 3-1: Mixed-Methods Approach: Combining Different Layers of Data

interviews with subjects.  Participant observation, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 83 users of public spaces as well as historical documentations are my main data sources in this dissertation. Figure 3-1 illustrates the four different layers of data I used: Social behavioral mapping prepared during the participant observation phase, hand sketches and photographic presentation, women's narratives collected in in-depth interviews, and GIS visualization and spatial analysis.

**Participant Observation:** I started with observing different public spaces in Tehran. After a week or so, I decided to choose Meidan-e-Tajrish, Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh as excellent settings for understanding gender relations. First, they are vibrant centers of the city both on weekdays and weekends (Thursday and Friday in Iran) and take a special place in Tehranies' nostalgic memory. Second, although they have different urban histories, all are integral social units. Compared to other Meidans I visited, Meidan-e-Tajrish and Sabz-e-Meidan as well as Marvi Meidancheh host the widest variety of activities. Gehl (2011, 1–15) distinguishes three types of outdoor activities in public spaces.  Necessary activities consist of those that are compulsory and necessary in our everyday life such as waiting for a bus and passing through a space. Optional activities include those that occur only if the space and time permit, such as walking for fresh air or sitting and people watching in a park. Social activities depend on the presence of others and include activities such as children at play, greetings, and conversations.  To Gehl, a good quality environment enables a broader spectrum of human activities. In both squares I witnessed all types of activities in a rich variety and frequency, particularly by women.  Finally, the contrasting design style and urban locations suggest excellent comparisons. Tajrish Square is located in Tehran's zone 1, the home of newer Saad-Abad Palace of the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925– 1979) while Sabz-e-

Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh are located in Tehran's zone 12, part of Old Tehran's city boundaries, and home of the Qajar Dynasty's (1785–1925) Golestan Palace.

During the first phase of my observation, I recorded the activities, particularly by women, that occurred in each section of the public spaces on both weekdays and weekends throughout the day and also recorded the physical characteristics of the built-environment, based on Montgomery's model of public space explained earlier. I started by being an unknown investigator in public places (covert researcher), but it resulted in introducing myself as a researcher and often ended in a long conversation. Loftland and Lofland (1994:39) also mentioned that it is expected that fieldwork begins with short-term covert participant observation and gradually leads to the investigator revealing research interests and goals. As a member or insider of the study group, I had all the benefits of what Adler and Adler (1987) called "complete membership," including knowing the cast of characters or at least part of the cast. People were very open and usually took their time to communicate and answer my questions. I also sketched and photographed people and places to record what was happening in a certain space at a certain time. For different sections of each public space I created spatial behavioral maps (SBM) representing the counts of people and activities by gender, age, and location. SBM is a type of systematic observation research that tracks behavior over space and time (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). SBM was conducted in 15 1-hour segments at each location, evenly representing the days of the week (weekday and weekends) and the time of day (morning, afternoon and evening). At 15 minute intervals, my research assistant and I recorded the counts of people, their activities and locations, and characteristics that are readily observable, such as approximate age, sex, whether the individual is alone or in a group. I also included my hand sketches to help capture the sense of places. Pictures

capture the physical settings and other visual details such as women's hijab and make-up style.

Drawing on practical examples from everyday life, I illustrated the many ways that space is socially and culturally constructed and, consequently, gendered. These preliminary GIS maps suggested some interesting spatial patterns and new questions but did not offer any reasons or answers. So I went back to the meidans and interviewed a variety of female users and urban professionals.

**In-depth Interviews**: Through half-hour to hour-long interviews, I examined women's use and perception of public spaces, particularly in terms of the experience of visual pleasure and social comfort. Women explained why they were there (in each public space), how often they came and how long they stayed, and finally how they felt about the public spaces in question. The interviews were recorded, translated, transcribed, content-analyzed and, finally, were mapped.

For the open-ended interviews with professionals, I was lucky to have excellent connections from my pervious colleagues and professors. I really felt this old saying, "It's not what you know but who you know that counts." Snowball or chain referral sampling was used to select potential informants. According to Beirnacki and Waldorf (1981), snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling in which each informant introduces more informants with similar characteristics, in this case being involved and familiar with the selected case studies.

Although I planned to go into interview settings with an interview guide, my goal was not to fill out a standardized questionnaire but instead to work with the people to whom I talked, trying to find the particular experiences and issues that were most meaningful to

them, according to the subject, and using questions that would emerge during the interview period. A general interview guide (see Appendix A) was used for consistency in types of information that were collected from each informant. I believe that the informal nature of this kind of interview allowed me create rapport with the informants so that I was able to ask follow-up or probing questions more easily. When I started "hanging out" in research sites, I felt I was overloaded by what I was seeing and hearing. They were all interesting and theoretically or empirically eye-opening, but I had to control my focus and re-direct my questions.

**Spatial Visualization and Analysis:** It was through this feedback process, mapping and going back to the meidans that the interview questions derived from the field. The GIS maps are accompanied by ethnographic patterns that come from interviews and participant observation to provide a graphic register of spatial meaning from the ground up. This methodology was very practical in overlapping a wide range of data that could be subsequently analyzed. GIS application makes it possible to create alternative representations of women's socio-spatial behaviors that reveal these otherwise invisible social relations. The dataset includes both the collected (the behavioral maps, sketches, pictures, and narratives) and the demographic and socio-cultural records of the Iranian Census. GIS application is fundamental for this research because mapping women's socio-spatial behavior would be technically impossible without GIS visualization interface. In addition, the overlay capabilities of GIS mapping facilitate a productive integration of standard available datasets (such as land use and census) and specific dataset created for this dissertation. As feminist and post-structural scholars have long argued that "production of all knowledge and information, including standard data sets, is inherently biased and influences research

questions and outcomes," (Pavlovskaya, 2002: 283) including independent field data, for this research, becomes a necessity. In this way, I explored the broader question of how to visually represent the kinds of movement and patterns of agency that tend to remain invisible to non-local observers as well as local planners. Although GIS-based representation has the benefits of connecting different data, creating multiple meanings, experiences, and knowledge, it has its own technical limitations that will be discussed in the analysis chapter.

It is important to mention that conducting research in Iran has extra political and social barriers. For instance, I had to be extra cautious whenever the subject of religion and politics came up not to offend anybody nor to endanger myself with the government.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH SETTINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief background of modern Tehran by examining its social and physical characteristics over the last 200 years and the selected case studies. This review is organized by adapting a model found in the literature of urban design. Carmona et al. (2003) suggest a six-dimensional model for studying urban design in general, and public spaces in particular, including morphological, perceptual, social, visual, functional, and temporal. As these aspects of the selected public spaces are not easily separated from each other, my goal is not to separately describe and evaluate them, but instead to include these dimensions in order to give a fuller picture of what these places look like.

**A Geographical History of Tehran**

It is important to stress that with its unique historical, socio-political, and cultural geography, Iran "relates just as much to its pre-Islamic past and its borrowings from the West as to Islam" (Adelkhah 2000, 178). Tehran is home for more than 15 million people of diverse ethnicities and social classes. Known for its omnipresent tension between "deep-seated tradition and wild modernity" (Bayat 2010, 99), Tehran offers an excellent laboratory to study women's social behaviors in public spaces.

Tehran is both the largest and capital city of one of the oldest civilizations of the world, Iran (Known as Persia until 1935). Although the recent turbulent political events (2009 presidential post-election protests on Tehran's streets and uncertainties around Iran's nuclear program) have brought Tehran to the Western media's attention, Tehran still remains

a little-known city in the Middle East. "In the West's imagination, Tehran has principally been seen as a city of lofty minarets, piercing calls to prayer, bearded clerics and women veiled head-to-toe; a city of mud-bricks and narrow alleyways populated by extended families" (Bayat, 2010: 99). Before this recent attention, although Iran has had international significance for its role in the geopolitics of the Middle East, threatening the power balance in the Middle East, and its importance in OPEC and oil production, Tehran has mostly been imagined or pictured through unrealistic generalizations of the media such as what was presented in *Not without My Daughter* (An American movie released in 1991). Since 2009, a fuller picture of Tehran, its young protesters, satellite dishes, modern architectures, and usage of modern technology such as Twitter and blogs, has been presented and circulated in the international media. Bayat (2010:99) highlights that the post-elections movements also "disclosed the more complex reality of Tehran—a city with a tumultuous history that is traversed by glaring contradictions and marked by a persistent social and spatial defiance."

There are very few academic works on Tehran and its social and physical urban structure in English literature. Madanipour's (1998) *Tehran: The Making of a Metropolis*, part of the world cities series, remains the main major contribution. Thus, I have tried, as much as possible, to include literature on Tehran in Farsi and introduce Tehran in textual and visual representation in regard to its contemporary social and physical conditions.

The story of Tehran cannot be complete without special attention to debates on its modernization and the ubiquitous tensions between modern and traditional. There were two revolutions in the last century that dramatically influenced the conditions of modernity in Iran (Madanipour, 1998: xi). The constitutional revolution of 1905-07 at the beginning of the twentieth century opened the doors to modern and particularly Western schools of thought

and life styles. On the other hand, the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79 challenged everything that was associated with the West and its modernity in the respect of the Iranian and Islamic identity. By tracing the social and physical transformation of Tehran during these important events in Iranian history I will explain how Tehran, a village outside the ancient city of Ray, became a major metropolitan area of more than 15 million people in the Middle East and one of the largest cities in the world during the last two centuries.

Tehran's history can be divided into four periods: 1) A small village during the Safavid and Zandieh dynasties (before 1785); 2) Tehran as the capital city of the Qajar dynasty (1785-1925); 3) Modern Tehran in the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979); and 4) Post-revolutionary Tehran (1979-present). In the following pages, I will explain the historical growth of Tehran by briefly reviewing the urban structure of the city in each of these periods.

**1- A Small Village during the Safavid and Zandieh Dynasties (Before 1785):**

Tehran used to be a small village outside the ancient city of Ray, located on the Khurasan highway between the northern fringe of the central Iranian Plateau and the southern slope of the Alborz Mountains (Figure 4-1). The Khurasan highway was the main artery of communication between the east and west of Iran and a part of Silk Road. Tehran's specific topography and location resulted in some visual and morphological benefits such as the visibility of Mt. Damavand, the highest peak in Iran, from most parts of the city. Tehran, the city of old plane trees, was also famous for its pomegranates. It was not until the sixteenth century that Tehran gained the state's attention for its strategic location and mild climate. In 1553, the Safavid dynasty's (1502–1736) king, Shah Tahmasb, started developing the village by building a bazaar and a town hall. At this time, Tehran was walled and covered 400

(a) – Tehran with Alborz Mountains in the background (source: aks.roshd.ir)



(b) – Tehran from the Mountains (Bam-e-Tehran)

Figure 4-1: Tehran with the Alborz Mountains in the background

1     The Arg
2     Bazaar
3     Jamee Mosque
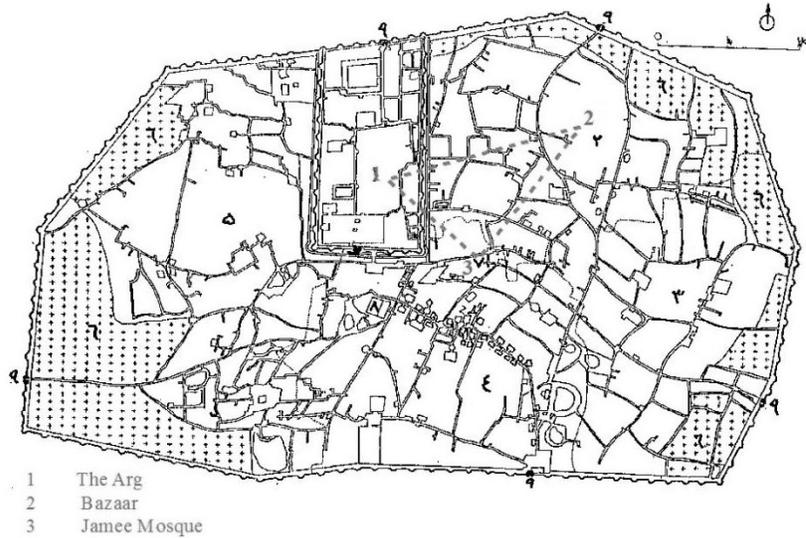
Figure 4-2: Tehran's map in 1553, Safavid Dynasty (source: Hamidi Habibi, and Salimi,

1997, Tehran's Urban Structure II (in Farsi): 25)

hectares (Figure 4-2). The city's wall had 114 towers and 4 gates. These gates, Doolab,

Ghazvin, Shemran, and Isfahan (also known as Shah Abdol-Aziz) gates, were located on the

main roads to the neighboring towns.

The Arg (royal palace located in the city citadel), a linear bazaar, and the Jame

mosque were the city's major elements that shaped the citadel and defined the urban

structure. There was no significant natural element in the city nucleus, but the Alborz

Mountains provided a spectacular silhouette to the city. The citadel was surrounded by four

mahalleh (neighborhoods), Bazaar, Sangelaj, Odlajan, and Chal-e-Meidan that contained

densely clustered courtyard houses and narrow organic alleys. Each neighborhood had its

own center and these centers were connected through minor alleys and major roads to each other. All major roads ended in the Bazaar.

The winding road networks followed a hierarchal order and defined public, semi-public, and private spaces. The bazaar neighborhood was the nucleus of old Tehran (Tehran-e-Ghadim) and it has remained the center of economic exchange and cultural activities. The Arg was connected to *Sharestan* (residential neighborhoods) in the southern parts of Tehran-e-Ghadim by an open public space, Sabz-e-Meidan. Sabz-e-Meidan, the city's first public square located in front of the Tehran's bazaar's entrance, was the main public square that people used every day for their social, cultural, and economic activities. Tehran's urban fabric at this time was dominated by the introverted architecture of the courtyard houses with very limited exposure to the outside. Sabz-e-meidan was the only open space that provided visual perspectives to the bazaar, the Arg and the Jame mosque; the main symbolic and defining elements of the city (see Figure 4-2).

Figure 4-3: Golestan Palace Complex: (left) Takht-e-Marmar, (above right) Shams-ol-

Emareh, (below right) Talar-e-Ayneh

The city's natural and pleasant gradual slope from north, east, and west to the south

facilitated the city's growth. Although Tehran was not the capital city at this time, more

buildings were built by other Safavid kings and Tehran gradually became "a garrison town, a

trading center and a regional capital and eventually a temporary court."(Madanipour, 1998:5)

**2- Tehran as the Capital City in Qajar Dynasty (1785-1925):** the Safavid dynasty

collapsed in 1763 and Karim Khan Zand, the founder of the Zandie dynasty (1763-1794),

considered making Tehran the capital city. But Tehran did not become the capital until 21

March, 1785 in the next dynasty, the Qajar (1785–1925). For some unknown reasons, Agha

Mohammad Khan Qajar, the founder of Qajar dynasty, decided to settle in Golestan Palace

(Figure 5-3) in Tehran, his seat of government (Madanipour, 1998 and Bayat, 2010).

Madanipour (1998) suggested that because Tehran was geographically located in the middle

of country, it provided a strategic location for the Qajars to rule the country throughout the

first quarter of the twentieth century.

Early Qajar Iran witnessed a rapid economic development; however, the importance

of foreign trade in Iran's economy was dramatically deprived in the nineteenth century as the

silk trades, the country's major export, decreased considerably.  By this time, roughly 60

percent of Iran's 10 million inhabitants lived in rural settings, and the majority of them were

involved in agriculture and livestock. (Madanipour, 1998:7) While the agricultural products,

the main section of the country's economic system, were produced in rural areas, the towns

shaped the administrative, commercial, political centers of the nation.  Like other towns in

the Middle East and unlike those of medieval European, Iranian towns were "part of [a]

rural-urban continuum, in which the mutual relationships favored urban areas."(Madanipour,

1998: 7) Therefore the towns were the centers of control and exchange mechanism, political

power and distribution of regional surpluses of agricultural products. This system is called

feudal; however, it was different from its Western version. It was a feudal system in a sense

that the power was based on the possession of land and peasantry while the ruling was

militarized and controlled distribution.  At this time, there was neither class consciousness

nor state-wide socio-political classes because of the communal connections among people

regardless of economic class. Tribal norms, religious bonds, and other regional communities

unified the rich and poor. Tehran was not an exception in this regard. Tehran's

neighborhoods were "organized urban space not along class lines, but according to ethno-religious divisions, clustering citizens of the same ethnic or religious affiliation, whether rich or poor, within particular quarters." (Bayat, 2010:101)

Since Tehran has become the capital city, "the interests of multiple forces—elites and bureaucrats; the poor; foreign influences and international capital—combined to create and shape a remarkable, contested urban blend"(Bayat, 2010:101), Tehran was among other larger cities such as Tabriz, Mashahd, Qazvin, Isfahan, and Shiraz, that became the capital in the last four centuries. During the rule of the Qajars, Tehran attracted people and resources, grew dramatically in its size and geographical significance, and witnessed significant changes. The city population was 15,000, including 3000 soldiers in 1796, and grew to 70,000 by 1817 (Madanipour, 1998:5).

Throughout the first half of the Qajar dynasty, from 1785 to 1848 (the year Naser al-Din Shah became the king), Tehran experienced a medium-paced growth comparing to the second half of the dynasty. Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, the founder of the Qajar dynasty, established Tehran's political importance throughout the nation, ordered the restoration of the old wall and the creation of architecturally attractive buildings around the city. At his time, the building of the royal palace also was started. After Agha Mohammad Khan, Fathali Shah, who reigned from 1797 to 1834, built a ditch around the city. Qajar Place, Shah Mosque, near the Arg and the bazaar, Marvi School, the military establishment in Bagh-e-Shah (King Garden) and the Negarestan and the Lalehzar gardens outside the city boundaries were built during the reign of Fathali shah. During the Mohammad Shah period (1834 -1848), Tehran had six gates and like many other Islamic cities in the region, its arg, bazaar, and Jame

Figure 4-4: Tehran's map in 1891, Qajar Dynasty (source: Bahrambeigi, 1977, Tehran: An
Urban Analysis: 24, Sahab Geographic and Drafting Institute)

mosque were its main defining elements. Most of the city's spatial growth was oriented to the

south and the west while the citadel kept its central significance. Tehran's bazaar also

expanded and many *Rasteh Bazaars* (short linear paths that are usually devoted to a specific

product or service such as spice, coppersmithing, or carpentry were added between the Shah

Mosque and the Jame Mosque, strengthening the importance of these two main religious

centers.

Naser al-Din Shah (reign1948-96) extended the city wall to incorporate the growing

population, including the migrant poor and the rich elite Iranian and foreigners, and to

prevent and control protests against bread shortages. The new octagonal wall with its twelve

gates increased the city area from roughly four to twenty square kilometers.  Figure 5-4

illustrates Tehran's map that was prepared by Abdol-Ghafar Khan; the citadel is located in

the middle of the map. The Lalehzar and Negarstan gardens that were formerly outside the

city boundaries were now located inside the new city boundary. Hasan Abad, Atabak, and

Farmanfarma, Amin al-Doleh Park, Baharestan , Amirieh, Masoudieh were among the many

gardens and buildings that were designed and built in the Naser al-Din Shah's time. Another

major change in his time was alley-widening to establish Lalehzar and Alae al-Dolleh

*khaiaban* (streets) parallel to each other, along which several foreign embassies were later

added. Tekkye Dolat replaced the old Tehran Arg, and government monuments such as the

Shams-ol-Emareh (1862) and the Golestan Palace (1870) were built. As there was an

increase in communications between Iran and Europe, European classic architecture design

became apparent in such new governmental buildings (see Figure 4-3).

The first phase of modern architectural development, occurring in the Qajar period,

was a result of reformers and intellectuals who encouraged the rational rule of law and the

development of public education and social welfare.  It was Amir Kabir (1807-1852), the

innovative and capable prime minister of Naser al-Din Shah, who ordered the foundation of

Dar-ol-Funoon (the first polytechnic institution, equivalent to modern university, in 1851),

and the publication of *Vaqaye'-e- Ettefaqiyeh* newspaper in order to train civil servants and

to educate Iranians about the world's political and scientific developments. At this time,

Tehran exhibited an elective fusion (*Memari-e-elteghati*) that was a combination of motifs

and details of nineteenth-century neoclassical European architecture and elements and design of traditional Islamic and Iranian architecture. Meanwhile, northern Tehran also grew and gradually became a home for Iranian elite and Europeans in the last years of the Qajar.

The motivations behind these physical changes in late Qajar Tehran was to create an image of a "modern city" borrowed from a French urban planner who "rebuilt" Paris in the mid-nineteenth century, Baron Haussmann. His ideas became popular at the time in the Middle East and were endorsed not only by Naser al-Din shah in Iran, but also by Khedive Ismail in Cairo and the Ottoman leaders in Istanbul who were more concerned with the "modern" appearance of the city that its functional and social aspects (Bayat, 2010).

However, the city's traditional social and spatial fabric remained almost unchanged by the end of Qajar dynasty. It was by the advent of Reza Shah Pahvali, the first king of Pahlavi dynasty, in the mid-1920s and 1930s that Tehran experienced not only a major transformation politically, but also socially and spatially.

**3- "Modern Tehran" in the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925-1979):** The last years of the Qajar dynasty coincided with civil war and foreign occupation that highlighted the required transition from feudal dispersion into capital development in Iran. This transition became possible when a Cossack Brigade's officer, Reza Shah, came to power in the midst of political unrest and social insecurity (Madanipour, 1998:13, Bayat, 2010). In order to centralize the government and build a secular, unified, and "modern Iran", in 1925, Reza Shah founded the Pahlavi Dynasty, an autocratic state, which was propped up by "the creation of a new army, a reorganized government bureaucracy, and a court patronage."(Abrahamian, 1982: 136-7; also cited in Madanipour, 1998:13) Tehran became the spatial and social embodiment of a new "modern nation." The Iranian Court Minister,

Adolhossein Teymurtash's statement (28 August 1927) highlights the scope of this transformation: "Everything has to be started over again… [We] longed for Persia to progress along modern lines, without discipline there is no hope" (Also cited in Grigor, 2004: 1). During the two decade's rule by Reza Shah (1925-1941), Iran rapidly industrialized and urbanized. The king built road and rail networks around the country, and reconstruction projects were undertaken in Tehran. Therefore, many urban scholars (Diba, 1991, Madanipour, 1998, Amir-Ebrahimi, 2006, Bayat, 2010) suggest the traditional design of larger cities in Iran significantly changed under Reza Shah's kingdom.

Tehran's *Baladieh* (the municipality) was established in 1919 and its first task was to demolish Tehran's wall. By 1930s, Tehran's wall was completely demolished and the city's urban fabric witnessed a dramatic change. New functions such as administrative, office, and industrial moved to the city center and accommodated a new image of the city, a modern Tehran. The emergence of modern buildings and boulevards designed by European or European-trained architects resulted in free-standing "pavilion" buildings in landscape settings. The inward Oriental city converted to an outward Western-type city and consequently changed the nature of public spaces. The centuries-old tradition of the alley (*Koocheh*) that was once an extension of living space and a place of social gathering for the neighborhood residents became a public street (*Khiaban*) where the transportation function was dominant.

The eclectic fusion that was started in the late Qajar also continued in the first two decades of the Pahvali dynasty. This style was used to design and build new governmental buildings such as the entry gateways of Meidan Mashgh (1931, today's Bagh-e-Melli, Figure

4-5) and Meidan-e- Hassan Abad (1935, Figure 4-6).  Among these new additions to Tehran, one can also find purely European or "copy-paste" buildings in which there is no sign of localization and Persian identity. Tehran Railway Station (1937) and Tehran University's campus (1934, Figure 4-7) are examples of this copy-paste architectural trend in the early years of Pahlavi dynasty.

The mallaheh (neighborhood) system was broken through "street widening" projects that made room for motor vehicle transportation in the city's narrow and winding alley networks. New streets were built on the ditches around the old city and a zoning pattern was adopted from modernist urban planning in which neighborhoods were defined and separated largely along class lines, instead of social and cultural similarities. The old mahalleh system lost its integrity, and neighborhood character gradually changed to a mixed, confusing identity. "Nevertheless, many aspects of the older urban structure and social organization persisted, now juxtaposed with the emerging realities of the city of petro-dollars." (Bayat, 2010:102)

Figure 4-5: The entry gateways of Meidan Mashgh (1931, today's Bagh-e-Melli)



Figure 4-6: Meidan-e- Hassan Abad (1935)

Figure 4-7: Tehran University's campus (1934) (source: Tehran University website)

Reza Shah forcefully unveiled women through the Women's Awakening Law linked to the Marriage Law of 1931 and the Second Congress of Eastern Women in Tehran in 1932. As Amir-Ebrahimi (2006: 455) highlighted "for most women this order was unacceptable and equal to going naked in public." This ideological change was not supported by the majority of Iranians, who at the time, tended to be traditional and largely did not support the mandatory unveiling law. Reza Shah's modernization project also changed the nature of public and private places. Public and private spaces were distinctly separated; public spaces, including streets, squares, and the bazaar, were mostly male domains and considered masculine spaces, while the domestic space of home and the neighborhood were considered female dominant, the spaces where women were socially and physically accepted and welcomed. Amir-Ebrahimi (2006:455) suggests that "the arrival of women in urban public spaces was the touchstone of westernization in Iran, as it was in several other countries."

In the 1920s, the oil industry was the state's main resource for its modernization projects for all aspects of everyday life of the society, from ideological to physical transformations. Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh nationalized Iranian oil in 1951 which resulted in his removal by a coup d'état on August 19, 1953 supported by the United States and United Kingdom secret intelligence agencies. Mohammad Reza Shah (reign 1941-1979), the second king of Pahlavi Dynasty, rose to power in 1941, but until 1953 few development projects were executed because of the political conditions in the country. After 1953, and especially from1969 to 1979, Mohammad Reza Shah accelerated his father's modernization reform with the substantial support of oil income. In the 1960s, Mohammad Reza Shah and his court moved to the Palace of Niavaran, located in the northern parts of Tehran, that gradually become more modern, Westernized, and a home for an affluent population.

Architecture and urban planning became state-controlled stages for social, political, and economic expressions of nationalist movements, providing the tools of modernization across the nation. The notion of cultural heritage, introduced by the Pahlavi Dynasty in 1922, was one of the most important forces to modernize Iran. Cultural heritage, for the Pahlavi Dynasty, meant more than modern public monuments and buildings or a path to legitimize their royal political regime. Instead, it was a defining element in modern Iran's place among other modern nations in the region (Grigor, 2009).

Modern developments during the second era of the Pahlavi dynasty (1941-79) exhibited two trends of architecture: an International Style (1941-79) and a dialogue between tradition and modernism (1965-1979). In accord with the International Style and Modernist School of Architecture, numerous governmental structures, commercial buildings, and

residence towers were built without regard to the local cultural and climatic characteristics in

Tehran, Yazd, and Tabriz.  Cubic architecture- Modernist big box- with its light metal

structures, glass and travertine façades, and flat roofs began to prevail in the larger cities.

Monuments like the Senate (Islamic parliament, 1959, Figure 4-8) and the Ministry of Oil

buildings (1969) were built under the influence of International Style, and are known today

as distinct examples of modern Iranian architecture. However, in the latter trend, which was a

response to modern architecture, professionals and educators such as Nader Ardalan and

Kamran Diba emphasized Iranian history, tradition, and identity as indispensable parts of

architecture.  The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (Figure 4-9) is an example of

customizing modern architecture in regard to local characteristics and identity.   Although

some individual efforts were made to integrate Iranian cultural identity, a genuine Iranian

modern architecture never emerged due to the sociopolitical conditions that will be discussed

in the following paragraphs.

Bayat (2010:103) states "Tehran became a site of ever-increasing consumption, as

new spending patterns and Western lifestyles were adopted; restaurants, cafes, and exclusive

uptown neighborhoods appeared. The Shah's regime sought to reshape Tehran into a

decentered LA-type suburban entity." The first Comprehensive Plan of Tehran (CPT) was a

collaborative work of architect Abdol-Aziz Farmanfarmaian and his foreign partner, architect

Victor Gruen, then working in Los Angeles, that envisioned the city's growth plan for the

next 25 years. This plan was drawn between 1963 to1967 and envisioned the city as ten large

and independent districts that were connected to each other through freeways and a rapid

Figure 4-8: Senate building (Islamic parliament, 1959)
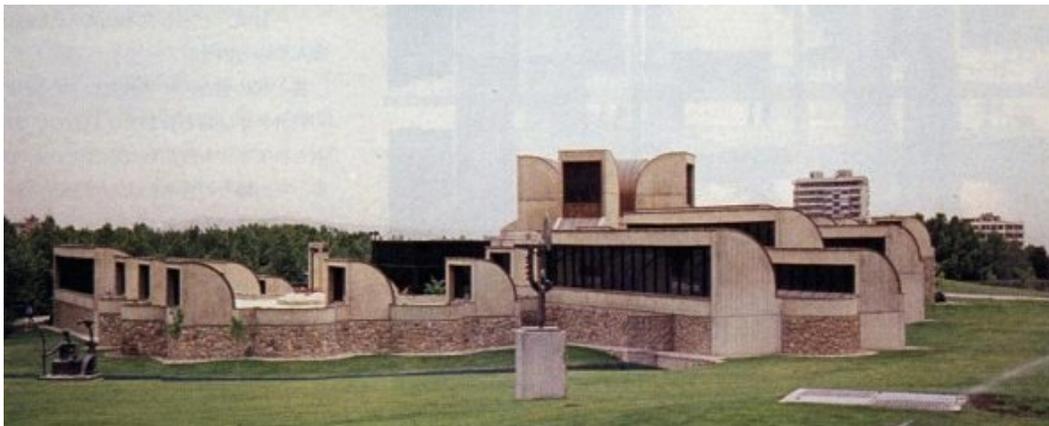


Figure 4-9: Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (source: www.tmoca.com)

transportation system (Bayat 2010:103). The CTP was organized in three stages of concept development, study and evaluation. The new plan offered several alternative options for the city's spatial and social future. The plan also highlighted Tehran's major challenges, including air pollution, unorganized high-rises in the city center, deficient services, and unemployment (Gruen and Farmanfarmaian Associates, 1968 Comprehensive Plan for Tehran, Stage I, Concept Development, Volume I: 4-11.) Although the CTP envisioned the uncontrolled migration to the city that followed the 1960s and 1970s Land Reform Program in which millions of peasants lost their lands, it failed to account for a mass rural-urban migration and to accommodate the extra three million countryside people who migrated, mainly to Tehran. The newcomers relocated outside the marginal parts, mostly in Paeen Shahr (the Southern half of Tehran), and created numerous slums, dormitory (*Khabgahi*) and satellite (*Aghmari*) communities around the city.  Tehran with its population of some 4.5 million in 1975 became a divided city where the Besaz-o-befroosh (build-and-sell), a group of builders who rarely cared about the quality of what they built, became the engine behind its architecture and construction (Diba, 1991).

In short, by the end of the Pahlavi dynasty, Tehran, like many other larger cities in Iran, had become an antagonistic combination of the build-and-sell developments and rootless copy-pastes of modern architecture. Tehran lost its traditional Qajar character and had entered a new era of spatial and social history.

**4- Post-revolutionary Tehran (1979-present):** Tehran, by the eve of the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79, exhibited a divided city in which there was a significant distinction between the rich North and poor South Tehran. The Revolution brought a "City Islamization Project" promoting the Islamic forms and behaviors and dramatically changed the spatial and

social urban fabric. This project affected all aspects of the city's life, including education, media, and architecture and gradually constituted a rupture between pre- and post-1979 Tehran. Imam Khomeini and his regime claimed to build "a spotless society," (Khatam, 2009:44) where the Pahlavi's unfair distribution of wealth to the North would be replaced by an Islamic society. The very first task was to halt the Pahvali's regime's modernization and signs of the Shahs. Several buildings were demolished and many streets' and buildings' names were changed during the first years after the revolution. Men and women become separated in public spaces such as buses and universities. The subsequent war with Iraq (1980–1988) caused many social and economic disturbances that influenced the urban fabric of the city and the nature of public spaces. Tehran was a sad, gray city of abandoned public spaces that had become "the spaces of commemoration of war, revolution, and above all the main stage of the authority of the religion" (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2006:457). As scholars have already highlighted (Amir-Ehrabimi, 2006 and 2008; Adelkhah, 2009), this extreme Islamization of public spaces during the first decade of the revolution coupled with the hard conditions of economy surprisingly and paradoxically opened the doors for more traditional women to participate in public spaces and work places.

The revolution also brought a sense of disorder and contradiction to Tehran, which dramatically and haphazardly expanded into the current giant metropolis as numerous slums mushroomed. Bayat (2010:105) describes post-revolutionary Tehran as "an extraordinary space of chaos and contradictions: freedom coexisted with suffocating control, an egalitarian ethos with deep discrimination; promise with despair." The city lacked the central authority of Pahlavi's authority and people from all social statuses and economic classes, including the poor and newcomers, claimed their right to the city. Many who could afford to, or had to

99

leave, fled the country and left their belongings behind. The revolution had registered its contradictions in the urban fabric of the city. Tehran became a confusing combination of old and new buildings that either were designed in regard to Islamic architecture or were influenced by the Western post-modern architecture and deconstructivism.

Meanwhile, new building regulations were established by the Plan and Budgetary Organization (Sazman Barnam-o-Boodjeh). The regulations ignored qualitative and cultural aspects and instead were largely concerned with superficial and quantitative aspects of urban development. No wonder, except for some valuable architecture done by private and individual architect teams, that the silhouette of the so-called "spotless city" appeared to be confusing, disordered, and without any identity.

The Iran-Iraq war ended in 1988 and post-war reconstruction took place under Ghulamhossein Karbaschi, Tehran's mayor (1989-98) assigned by Iran's president, Hashemi Rafsanjani's (1989-1997). Karbaschi, well aware of Tehran's uncontrolled growth and insufficient infrastructure, aimed to put behind the dark years of the 1980s by bringing new life to the city. He received a polluted, spatially divided, and over-populated city and strived to bring a new identity through the first two of Tehran's five-year development plans (1989-1999). He built new parks, shopping malls (such as Mild-e-Noor, figure 4-10), department stores (such as Arjhantin Shahrvand, see 4-11), cultural and sport centers in and around the city and made Tehran "a colorful city" where people were more welcome in its better-maintained public spaces. Commercial billboards replaced the Islamic slogans of the 1980s. Ehsani (1999:23) emphasizes "Karbaschi's strategy was to launch a bold program of urban renewal while simultaneously integrating Tehran's fragmented and disillusioned population."

Figure 4-10: Milad-e-Noor shopping mall (source: www. shoppingcenters.ir)



Figure 4-11: Shahrvand department store in Arjhantin square (source: www. sepitman.com)

New modern-looking coffee shops and super-bookstores (Shahr-e-Ketab) provided the younger generation and seniors "morally safe public spaces" to spend time and socialize. At the same time, the importance of neighborhood centers (Markaz mahallat) and other traditional gathering places had declined. The north-south Tehran's spatial distance became less tangible as the city's highway system tripled in length and public transportation doubled during the Karbaschi's administration (Ehsani, 1999; Bayat, 2010). This made it easier for people from a diverse range of neighborhoods to claim to be "Tehranies" and unify in national sports as well as in political or religious events; however, the rich elites affirmed their class distinction through consuming specialty products, following fashion, owning cars, and presenting *bakelas* (high class) behaviors that they adopted during their travels abroad. Athough there were efforts to prevent illegal construction without permits in Tehran during Karbaschi's administration, the poor continued to settle in slums outside the city's boundaries. Tehran remained the primary city in Iran's urban hierarchy and a "city of opportunities," attracting many people for its political, cultural, educational, recreational centrality; however the class differences and clashes continued to increase.

Under Mohammad Khatami's administration, Iran's president (1997-2005) and an advocator of *Goftogo-ye-Tamaddon-ha* (Dialogue between Civilizations), Tehran witnessed a more liberal media, vibrant public spaces, and a less-controlled political landscape (Bayat, 2010:114). Such an environment permitted women, youth, and students to participate in the public sphere more than any other time after the revolution; however, Islamic fundamentalist groups such as *basijis* and *pasdarans* were eager to bring back a more Islamized vision of Tehran. A return back to the 1980s "Islamized city" begun by Mahmood Ahmadinejad's selection as Tehran's mayor in May 2003 was completed later by his presidency in 2005.

Rejecting Western ideas and life styles, Ahmadinejad changed Tehran's public spaces dramatically. Since then, Moral Police have been present in every major meidan to control women's hijab, men's clothing and hair style, and behaviors. The city also exhibits a more conservative architecture, symbolizing Revolutionary values in its haphazard borrowings from Islamic architecture.

Tehran's population is now three times that of 1979, while its spatial pattern and architecture remains a confusing combination of modern and traditional. Although Bayat (2010: 99) sees Tehran as a "not interesting city" and reminds us that "it is not like its regional counterparts Istanbul or Cairo, with their long imperial or colonial histories, pivotal geo-political locations, memorable architecture, and natural charm," I suggest that Tehran is a very interesting city, maybe not for its architecture or ancient history, but instead for its residents with different ethnicities and languages still navigating between modern and traditional values and life styles. Through all this, Tehran still remains a divided city with its north-south social and spatial distinction. Before examining the selected public spaces, in the following section, I will explain this division in more detail and will also explain why I have chosen these places.

### Bala Shahr and Paeen Shahr

While changing, today's Tehran is still socio-spatially divided into Bala Shahr and Paeen Shahr (Figure 4-12). Bala Shahr (High City), located in the southern slopes of the Alborz Mountain and in the far north of the city, is the home of the most affluent neighborhoods, including the first generation of gated neighborhoods in the Middle East (Bayat 2010, 105). Paeen Shahr (Low City) neighborhoods are located south of Enghelab

Street, consist of the lowest lands of the city, and are home to the poor, new rural migrants, and the lower strata of working people (Madanipour, 1998: 103). Beside the physical and environmental advantages such as better water supplies and defensive and visual dominance over Paeen Shahr, Bala Shahr has also been associated with socio-cultural preferences. Paeen Shahr is associated with, traditional beliefs, religious conservatism, and a pre-modern and historic built environment. Unlike for southern Tehran, people have an image of Bala Shahr that associates it with higher classes, progressive, liberal ideology, religious openness, and Westernized modern architecture and public spaces.

As I explained earlier, two forces have intensified this geographical and ideological division in Tehran. First, the Pahlavi's rapid modernization process where modernization, in
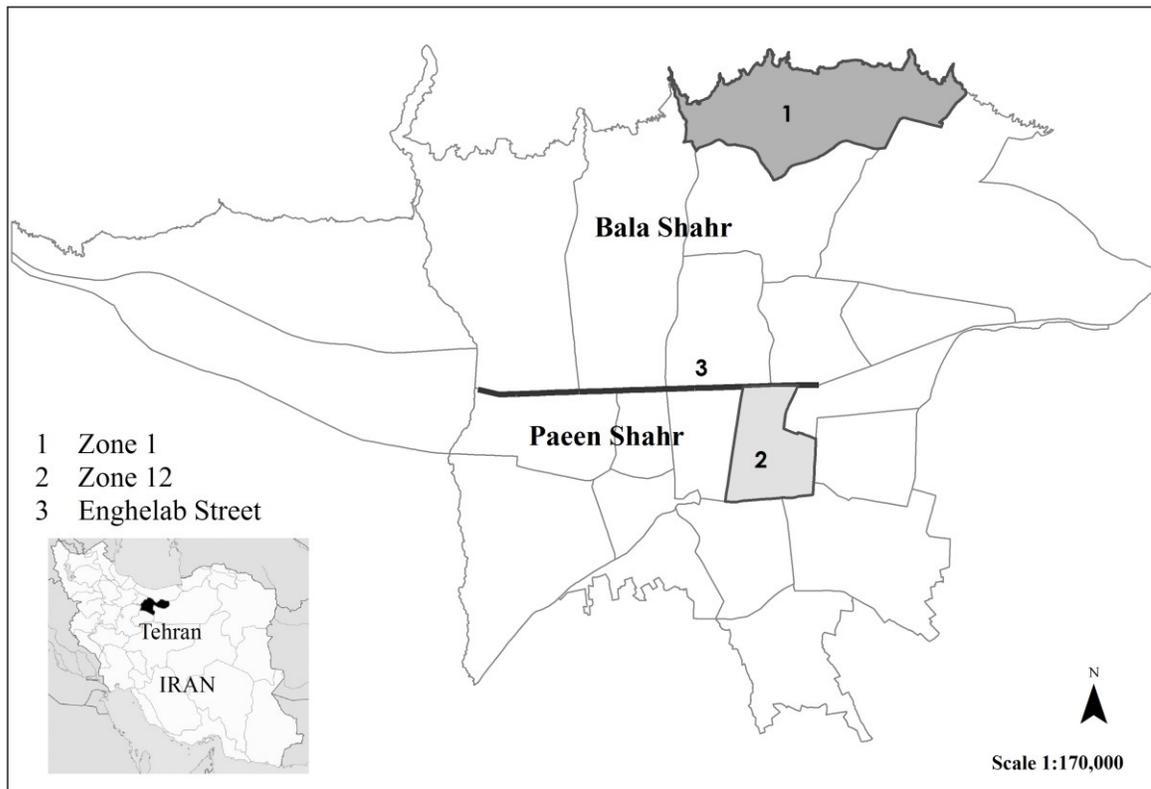


Figure 4-12: Bala Shahr amd Paeen Shahr in Tehran

Table 4-1- Zone 1 and 12 population change (Source: Tehran Census, 2010)

| Zone | Population 1986 | Population 1996 | Population 2006 | Population Growth (1986-2006) | Zone's Population Percentage of the total city's population |
|------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| Zone 1 | 216,367 | 295,409 | 379,962 | + 75% | 5% |
| Zone 12 | 230,657 | 189,625 | 248,048 | + 7% | 3% |

fact, became "a process of racialization, in which the local is rejected and West declared superior" (Moallem, 2005). The North became the home of Pahlavi's Saad-Abad Palace and symbolized progress, modernity, and, most importantly, the civilized West. The second force was the *Besaz-o-befroosh* (build-and-sell); a group of builders emerged just after the Iran-Iraq war in the late 1980s and 1990s who rarely cared about the quality of what they built. They became the engine in Tehran to provide homes to newcomers from other cities in Iran relocating to Southern Tehran. The South symbolized lower income, traditional, and religious ideology. Although the distinction is vaguely defined and geographically fuzzy, the pairing of high city- low city survives symbolically in residents' everyday lives and influences their preferences in housing, shopping, and transportation. I have chosen two public spaces in two of Tehran's zones (1 and 12) for their social and spatial characteristics and dramatic changes over time. Zone 1, located in Bala Shahr, and zone 12, located in Paeen Shahr, have witnessed the largest and fastest changes in their built environments and populations compared with other zones (Fanni, 2009, see table 4-1).

Figure 4-13 illustrates the geographical locations of zone 1 and zone 12 in relation to Enghelab Street and a background of mosque density in Tehran. The map also shows that most of the Tehran's mosques (religious and to some extent political presentations) are

concentrated in the central and southern parts of the city.  In both zones, one can find lively

and active public spaces with character that are among Tehran's major places for social

gatherings and activities.  The squares' significant changes in physical settings and social

activities represent the efforts that different structures of power have made to embed

themselves in the public realm, where everyday life occurs, in order to justify their

hegemony.  In both places, architecture and planning appear as state-controlled stages for

ideological and religious expressions of the prevailing system of power.
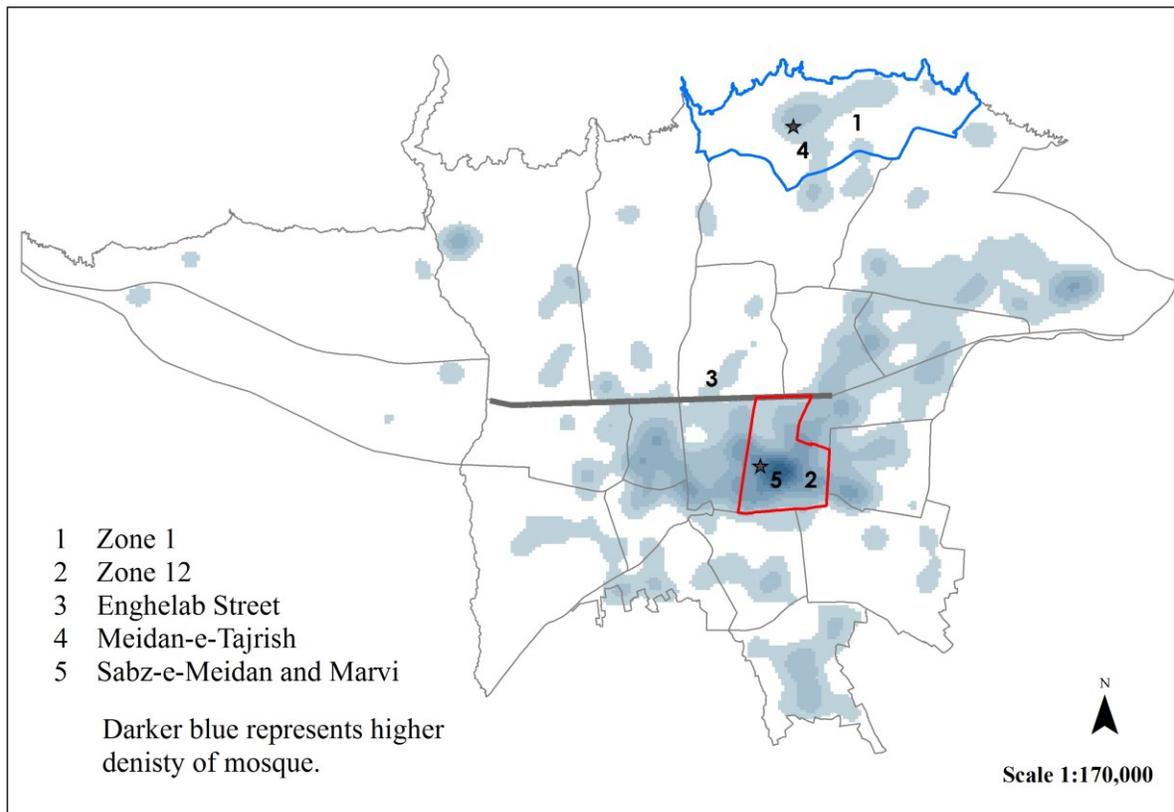


Figure 4-13: The locations of Zone 1 and 2 and the selected case studies

**Meidan-e-Tajrish**

Tajrish square (Figure 4-14), located in the north end and highest topography of the city, benefits from a beautiful view of the Alborz Mountains, clean air, and mild climate. Large old sycamore and oriental plane trees around the Darband river-hill and Vali-e-Asr street that have added ecological value to the square are now endangered by uncontrolled high-rise developments and water pollution. Vali-e-Asr street, the longest street in Tehran, runs south to north throughout the whole city and connects Rah Ahan (Train Station) square and Tajrish square. Tajrish square is adjacent to some of the most affluent neighborhoods of
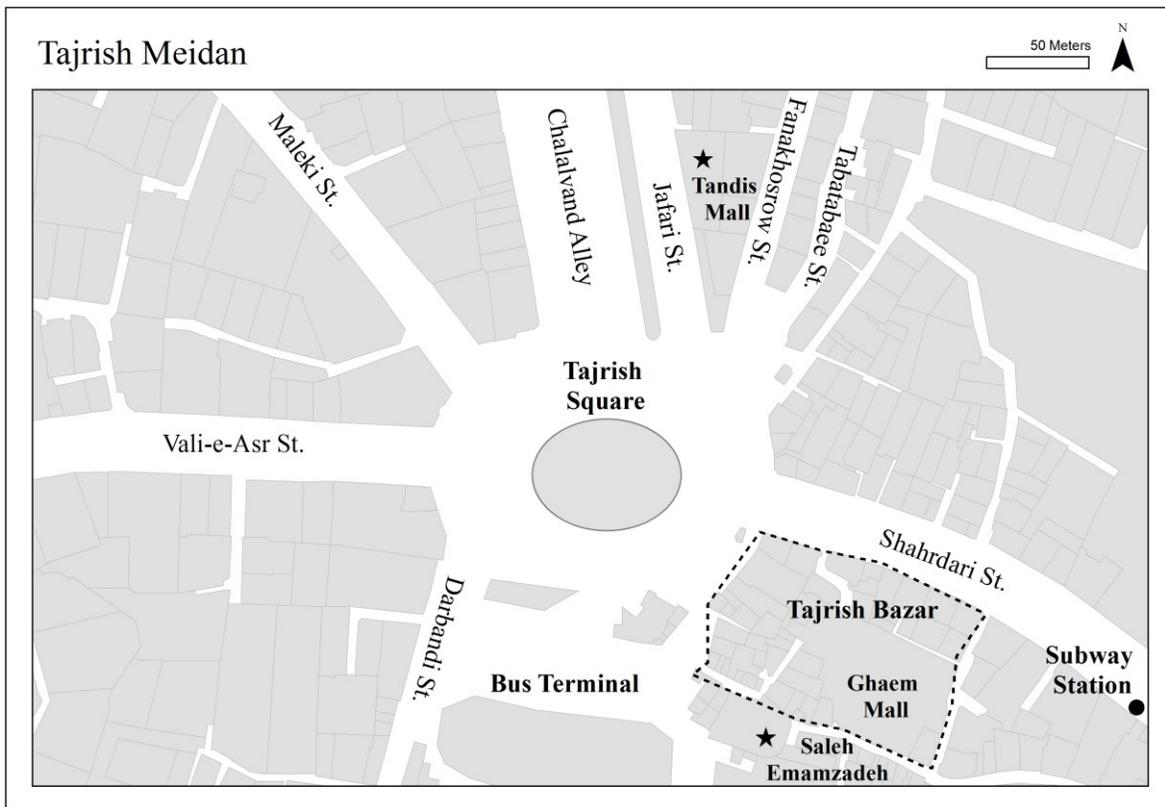


Figure 4-14: The location of Tajrish square and its surrounding streets

Tehran such as Saad Abad, Elahieh, and Zaferanieh. Figure 4-15 is the land use map of

Tajrish with selected photographs in the square. Being surrounded by important

governmental, commercial, and religious establishments including zone 1 municipality,

Tajrish old bazaar, Emamzadeh Saleh (Shrine and Jaame Mosque), city-wide bus terminals

and Tandis and Ghaem shopping malls makes Tajrish one of the most vibrant and busiest

squares in Tehran. Tajrish also serves as a starting point for those who go to the Alborz

Mountians for recreation. There are many stores in the two high-rise, modern shopping malls

where young Iranians enjoy shopping for European and even American name brands.

Modern coffee shops and buffet restaurants make it possible for the opposite sexes to gather

and chat for hours with less fear of police interruption.

Although its history goes back to the Qajar Dynasty, Tajrish square, today, provides

more modern activities and functions and exhibits a contemporary Iranian culture and

architecture.  In both Tehran's Comprehensive Plan (Tarh-e-Jamee) and Detalied Plan (Tarh-

e-Tafzili), Tajrish is expected to be a home for low density residences, commercial buildings,

and offices that reflect the ecological and historical value of the zone.  But, the Besaz-o-

befroosh (build-and-sell) have taken advantage of uncontrolled city growth and damaged the

urban silhouette and air quality, which has resulted in an undefined skyline and illegal high-

rise constructions. Such high-rises have changed the old character of countryside Tajrish that

was once a neighborhood center in Qajar and early Pahlavi eras. The only remnants of old

Tajrish are the old Tajrish bazaar and few old houses behind the bazaar.  Tajrish bazaar was

built next to the major religious place of the neighborhood, Emamzadeh Saleh, and together

they defined the main center. Nevertheless, Tajrish square remains a major square in Tehran

and creates a sense of place where Tehranies gather to enjoy the New Year night and many other national and religious holidays throughout the year.

Figure 4-15: Land use map of Tajrish and selected photographs

110
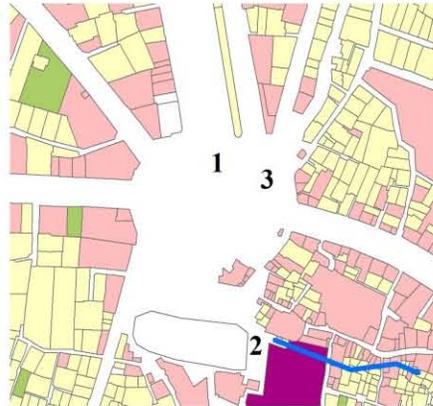
**Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh**

The second case study consists of two connected public spaces located in Tehran's zone 12 and within a 5-10 minutes' walk from each other (See Figure 4-16). Sabz-e-Meidan and the Marvi Meidancheh provide entrance spaces, respectfully, to Tehran's bazaar and Marvi Gozar (alley), a relatively long narrow pedestrian street that has become one of the *boors* (concentrations of specific products) for imported clothing, cosmetics and health products in Tehran. Figure 4-14 illustrates the land use plan of these public spaces. Because of their unique urban locations in the heart of old Tehran, adjacency to major economic, religious and governmental establishments, and city-wide easy access by the subway, they are excellent sites for the study of social behavior. In fact, rain or shine, these places were packed with people every time I visited. The activity level of the squares remained high until around 7 pm, when people started leaving for the evening.

Sabz-e-Meidan, the original Takhteh Pol, is one of the oldest squares in Tehran. Its long history goes back to the Safavid period (1502–1736) and spans the Qajar, and Pahlavi dynasties as well as the Islamic Republic period (1979–present).  In the Qajar era, Sabz-e-Meidan connected Tehran's bazaar, Arg square, the main governmental square, and old Tehran neighborhoods.  Besides its economic functions, this square served as a public place for Tehranies to gather and perform religious practices during Muharram month. Muharram is the first month of the Islamic calendar and the most sacred month after Ramadan. The Muharram Mourning occurs on the tenth day of this month in which Shai Muslim annually commemorates the sufferings of Hussein Ibn Ali on the Day of Ashura.  A place that used to be a city market for fresh produce, a few *attaries* (herbal medicine stores), and spices, is now the financial heart of the capital where the price of gold and foreign exchange rates are set

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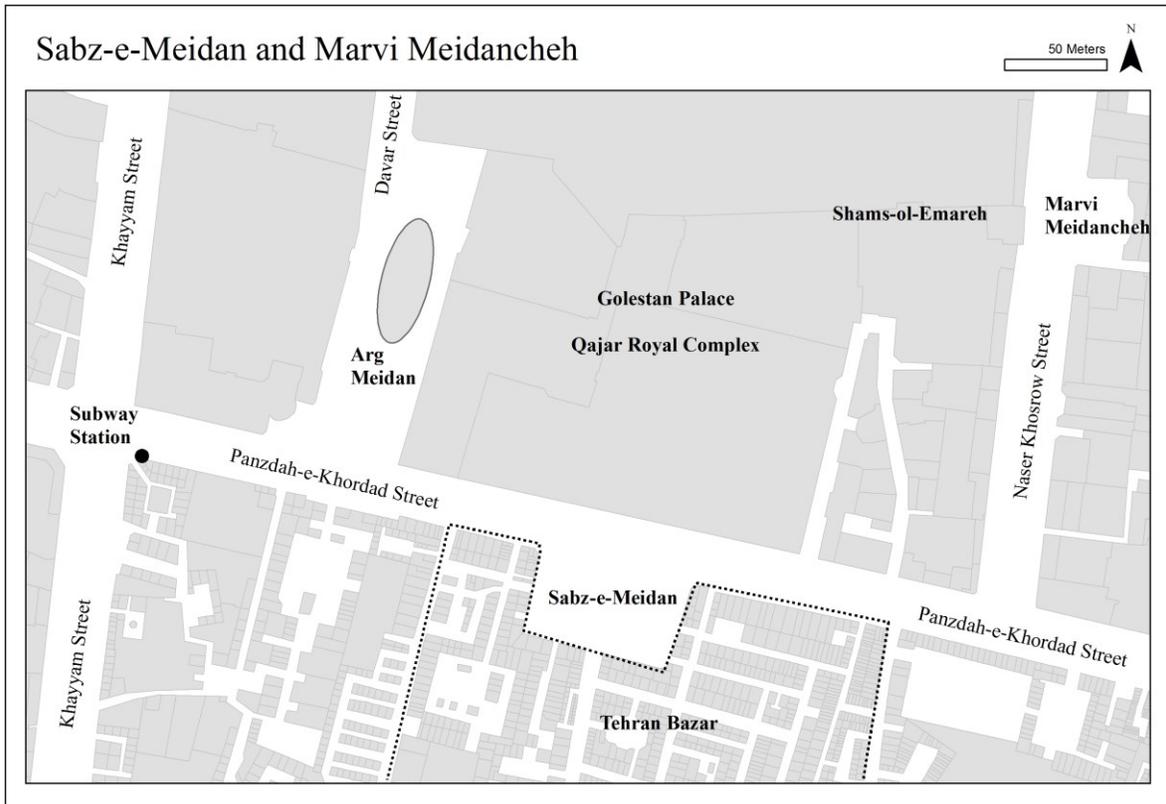
Figure 4-16: The location of Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh and their surrounding

streets

daily. Figure 4-16 shows the location of men's concentration in the middle of Sabz-e-

Meidan. Due to its historical value and present significance Tehran Municipality initiated

restoration of the square in 2006 according to the architecture style of the Qajar and Safavid

eras. Since then, the square has been upgraded with urban furniture such as trash baskets and

benches, better lighting, and maintenance. Panzdah-e-Khordad Street, the street located north

of the square, has also been pedestrianized and people can now commute, using decorated

horse carriages, between the subway station and the square.

Figure 4-17: The central space of Sabz-e-Meidan

Figure 4-18 shows the land use plan of Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi as well as selected photographs in these public spaces. Marvi Meidancheh is one block east and two blocks north of Sabz-e-Meidan. Marvi Alley, also called Arab Alley, is surrounded by invaluable and historical sites such as Shams-o-Emareh (part of the Qajar's Golestan Royal Palace), Marvi Mosque-school (the second school established in Tehran after Dar-o-Alfonon and equivalent to a modern university) and Hakim Mosque and Abanbar (water reserve). The restoration project of Marvi Gozar was initiated by Tehran's Beautification Organization and Tehran municipality in 2004. The project consists of three main tasks of designing an entrance space on Naser Khosrow Street's end, restoring the old façade, adding a traditional bazaar roof over Marvi Gozar's central part, and creating a meidan at the eastern end of the

113

alley on Pamenar Street.  One of the challenges has been bringing back the old sense of place to the alley where modern functions have replaced traditional ones. Nine out of ten women with whom I talked in Marvi Meidancheh had already been in Sabz-e-Meidan or were going there next. That is why I considered both public spaces for the second case study.

Located in two contrasting urban locations in Tehran, these public spaces are socially produced and maintained by the economic, cultural, political processes and are gendered through women's experience and social interaction. They not only exhibit differences in their physical production, but they also offer often contrasting symbolic meanings. Because of their unique social, political, and planning history, these case studies symbolize the spatial expression of Tehran society and its citizens' social values. Tehranies struggle for this representation because it is so critical to the survival of civic society. They are also centers of cultural and class expression as reflected in the architectural design and furnishings. And finally they are settings for everyday urban life where daily interactions, economic exchanges and informal conversations occur, creating a socially meaningful place in Tehran. The squares' significant changes in physical settings and social activities represent the efforts that different structures of power have made to embed themselves in the public realm, where everyday life occurs, in order to justify their hegemony. These characteristics make Tajrish square and Sabz-e-Meidan as well as Marvi Meidancheh excellent contexts to investigate how women create, change, and make meaningful use of the public sphere.

Figure 4-18: Land use map of Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi and selected photographs

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter, I will explain the multiple methods I applied to analyze the diverse

types of data I gathered in the field. I will first situate the case studies in Tehran through GIS

representation. The GIS maps show the general demographic, socio-economic, and built-

environment characteristics (population density, economic classifications, land cost, etc.) in

Tehran by focusing on the contrasting urban locations of the case studies (Zone 1 and 12). In

the next step, using different GIS spatial-statistical tools, I will transform the social

behavioral maps (SBM) to GIS maps. These maps resulted in more questions (than answers)

that consequently made the need for talking with women necessary.  Next, the ethnographic

data gathered in semi-structured hour-long interviews with 83 female users were used to

offer an in-depth understanding of the spatial patterns on GIS maps and also the mutual

construction of gendered identities and public spaces in Tehran.

It is necessary to emphasize the qualitative nature of this research, that is, both data

gathering and analysis phases are based on critical social and feminist theories that "value

difference and non-hierarchical ways of conducting research" (Todd, 2009: 33, Valentine,

2002, McDowell, 1997; Longhurst, 2003; Bondi and Rose, 2003). Kwan (2002:646) suggests

that there are not any distinctly feminist research methods. Instead, feminist geographers

often recognize the need for different kinds of data and research methods according to the

specific research questions and goals (Moss, 2002; Kwan, 2002). To this end, this research

benefits from feminist notions of "situated knowledge" in specific social contexts (Haraway,

1988; Monk, 1994; Hanson, 2003), "multiple truths" (Sheppard, 2001; Moss, 2002; Kwan,

2002), and challenging the "taken-for-granted" (Rose, 1993; Domosh and Seager, 2001; England, 2006) to highlight women's everyday experiences and to make them more visible.

## Situating the Data

This section represents the geographical similarities and differences of Tehran's zones 1 and 12, where the selected case studies are located. Through GIS spatial analysis, one can see why and how people attach contrasting symbolic meanings to Zone 1 in Bala Shahr (High City) and zone 12 in Paeen Shahr (Low City) that were discussed in chapter 4.

Tehran is divided to twenty two municipality zones. I used demographic, socio-economic, and environmental data from 1385 Salanameh Amari-e-Tehran (Tehran's Census 2006) available on Tehran's Municipality website (http://www.tehran.ir). Instead of using the population of each zone (Figure 5-1), I have used the population density, which is a more meaningful indicator for this study. Figure 5-2 illustrates the population density (population total for each zone was divided by the area of each zone) among Tehran zones. Comparing population and population density maps (Figure 5-1 and 5-2) shows that although there are more people living in zone 1 than in zone 12, the population density of zone 12 is higher than that of zone 1. Zone 12 is also surrounded by other highly populated zones (7, 11, 13, 14, and 16). This spatial population concentration can be explained through Tehran's land values and the spatial distribution of socio-economic classes. Figure 5-3 shows that the most expensive lands (residential) are located on the north side of the Enghelab Street. Basically, southern residential lots cost much less compared to those of northern parts of the city. Figure 5-4 also shows that zones 1, 3, and 7 are the home of the upper classes and zone 12 is the home of the lower-middle class surrounded by other lower-middle and lower class zones.
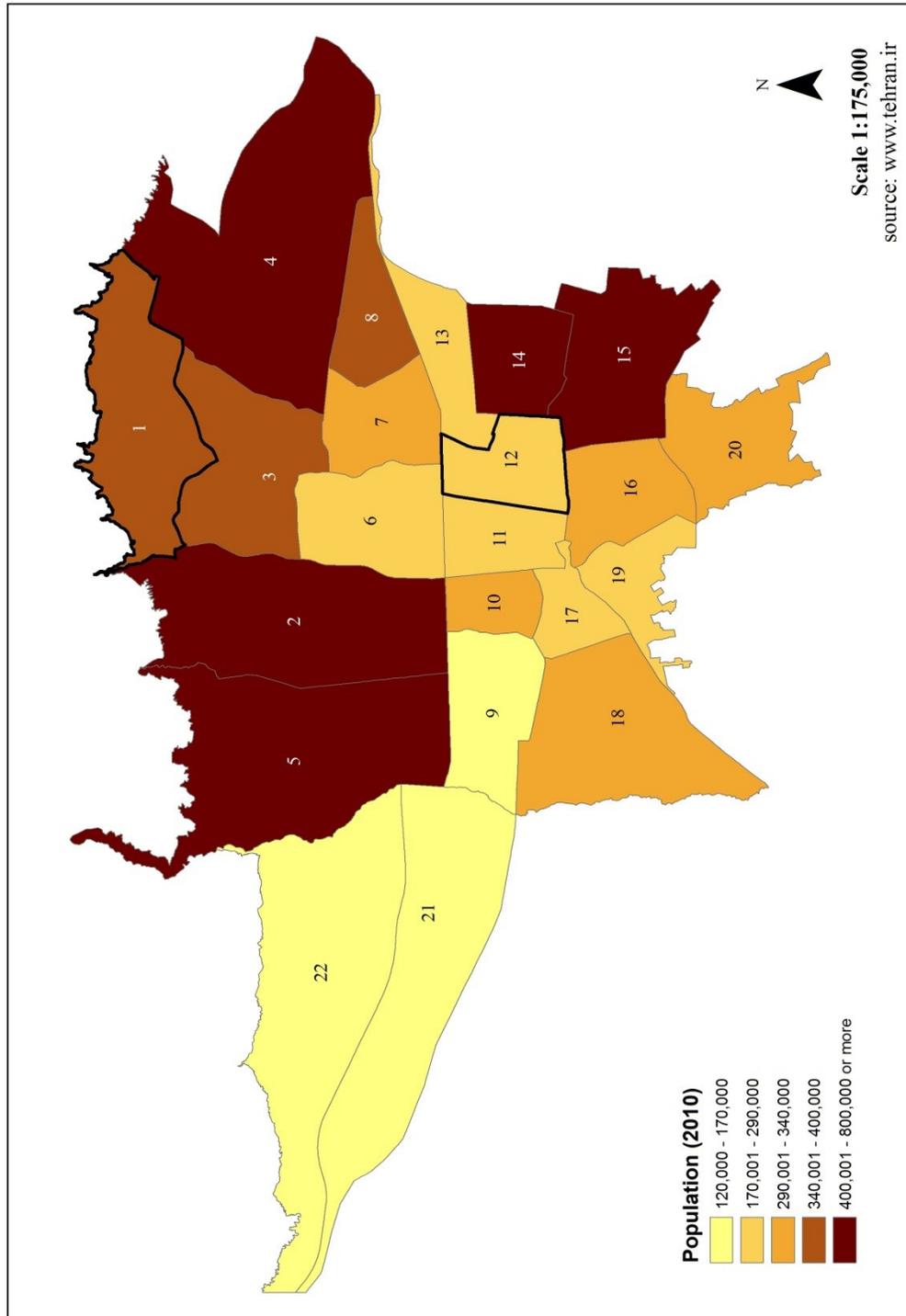
Figure 5-1: Tehran Population Distribution
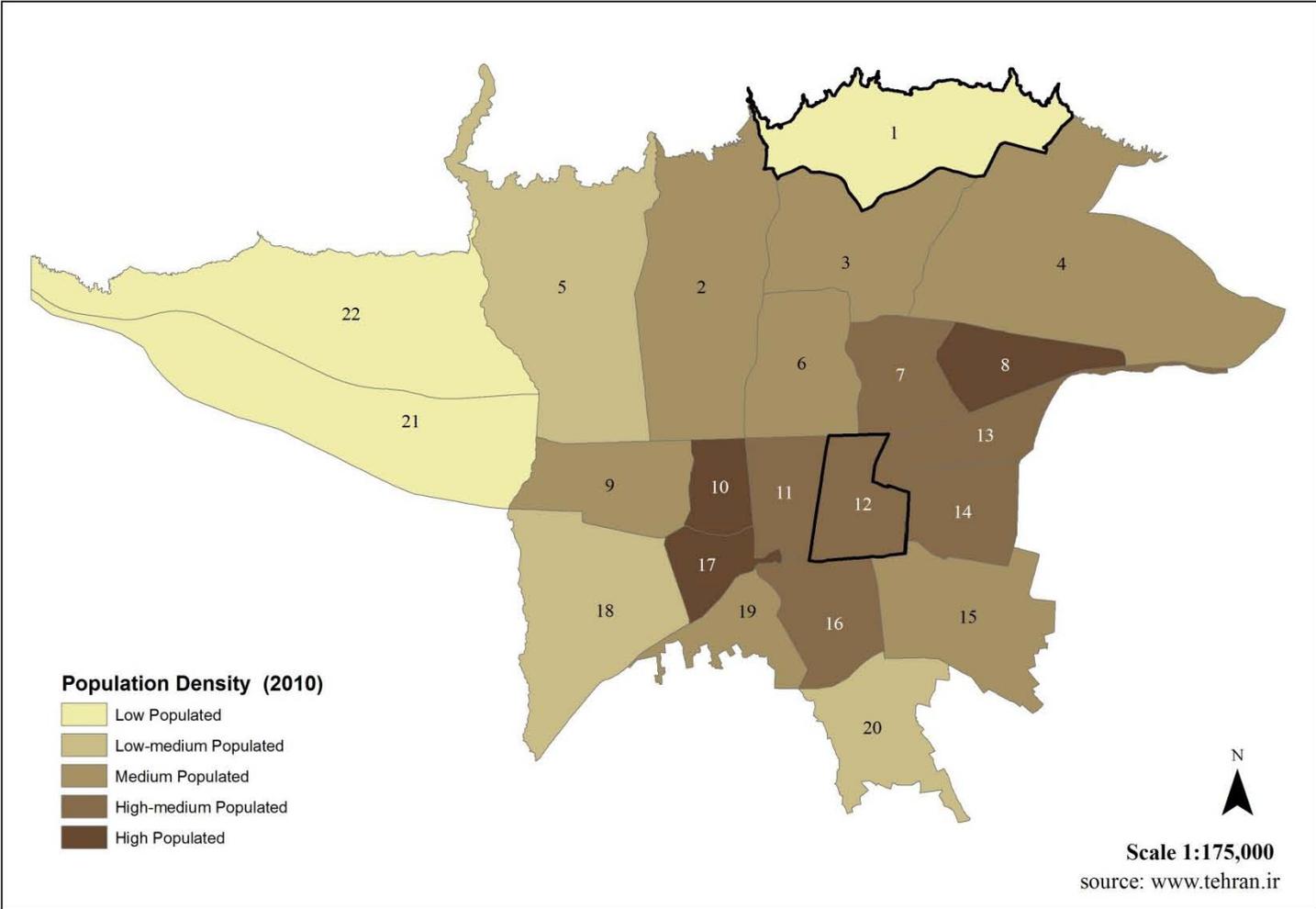
Figure 5-2: Tehran Population Density

119

**Population Density (2010)**

- Low Populated
- Low-medium Populated
- Medium Populated
- High-medium Populated
- High Populated

N

**Scale 1:175,000**
source: www.tehran.ir
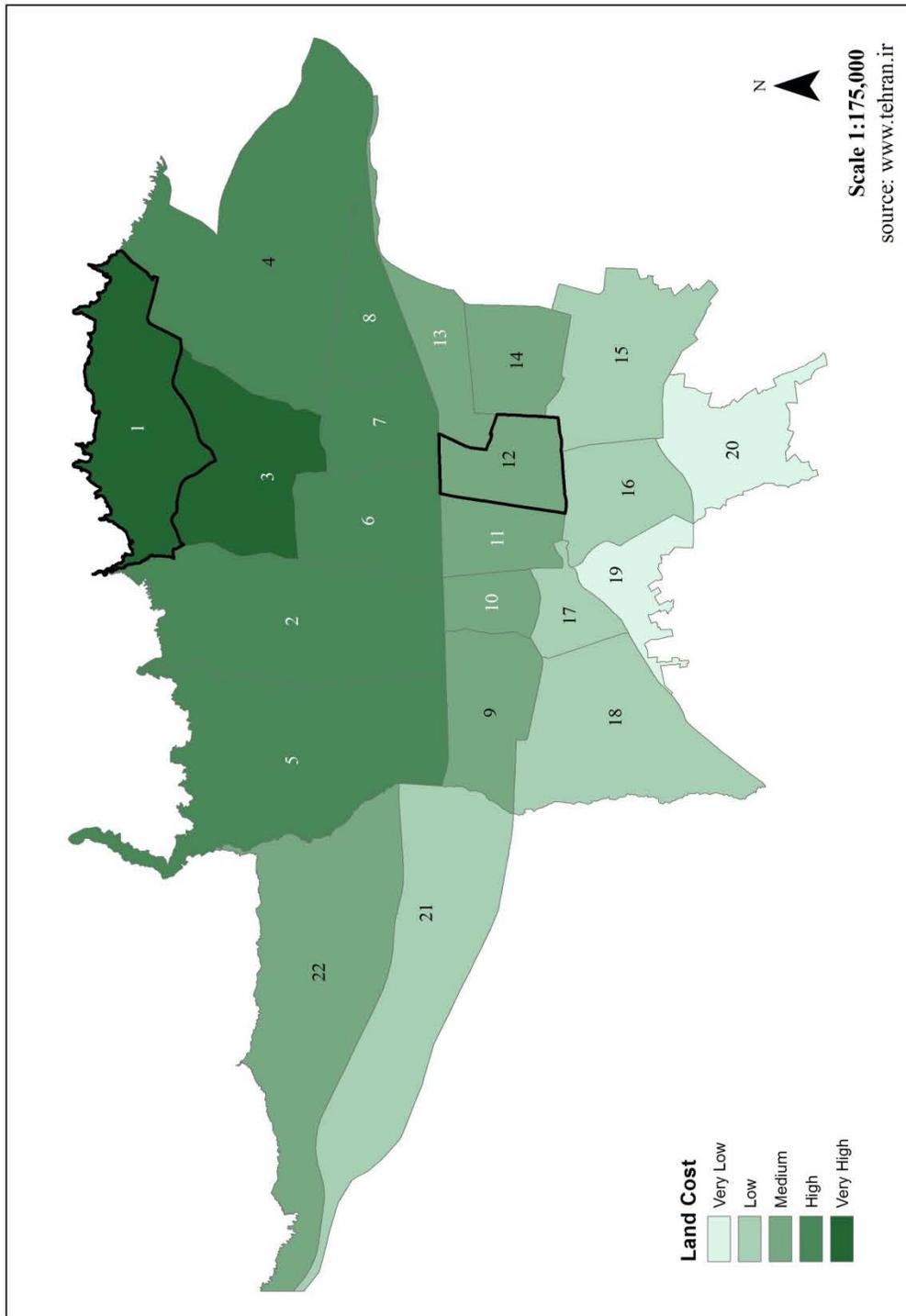
Figure 5-3: Residential Land Costs in Tehran
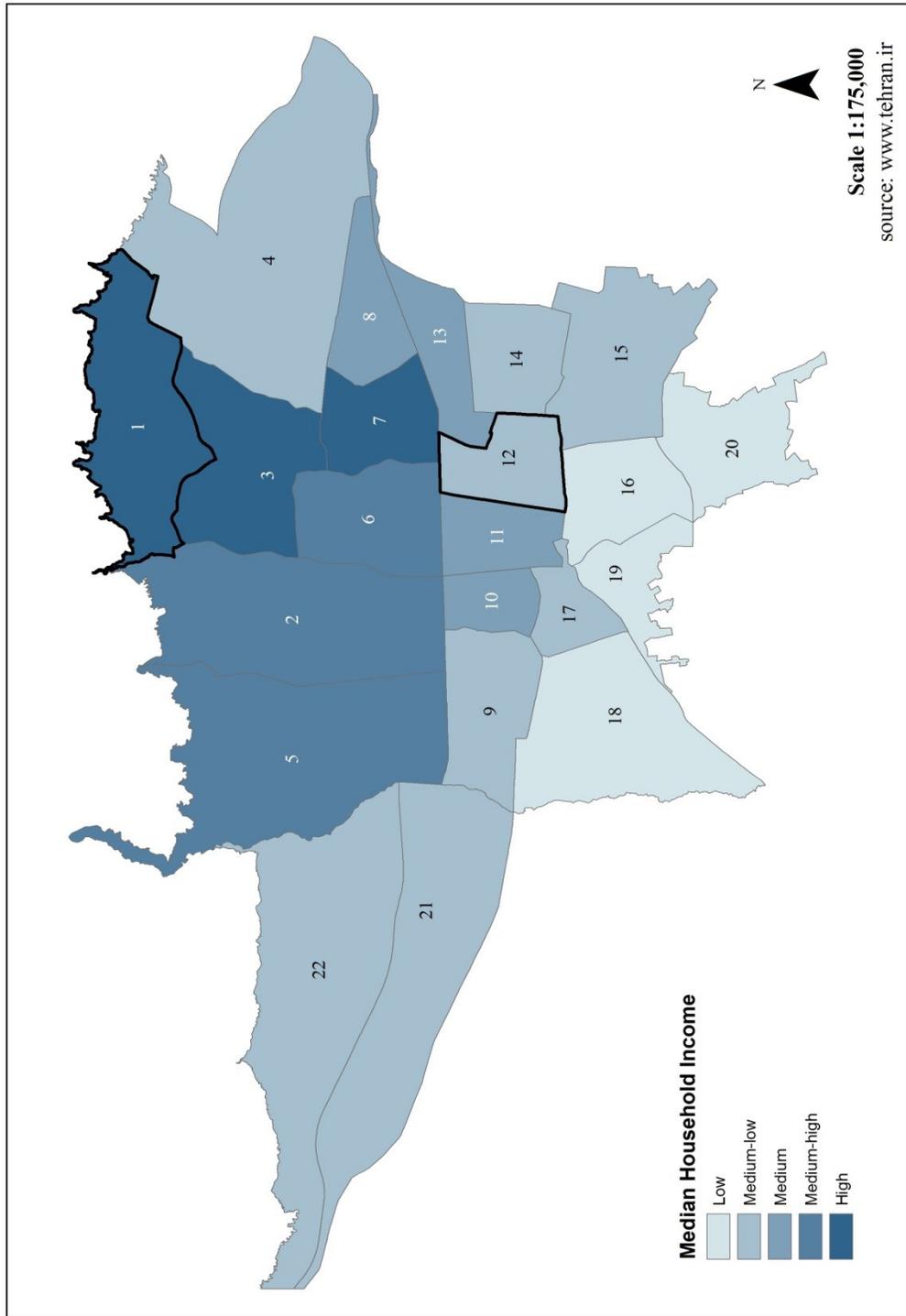
Figure 5-4: Median Household Income, Tehran
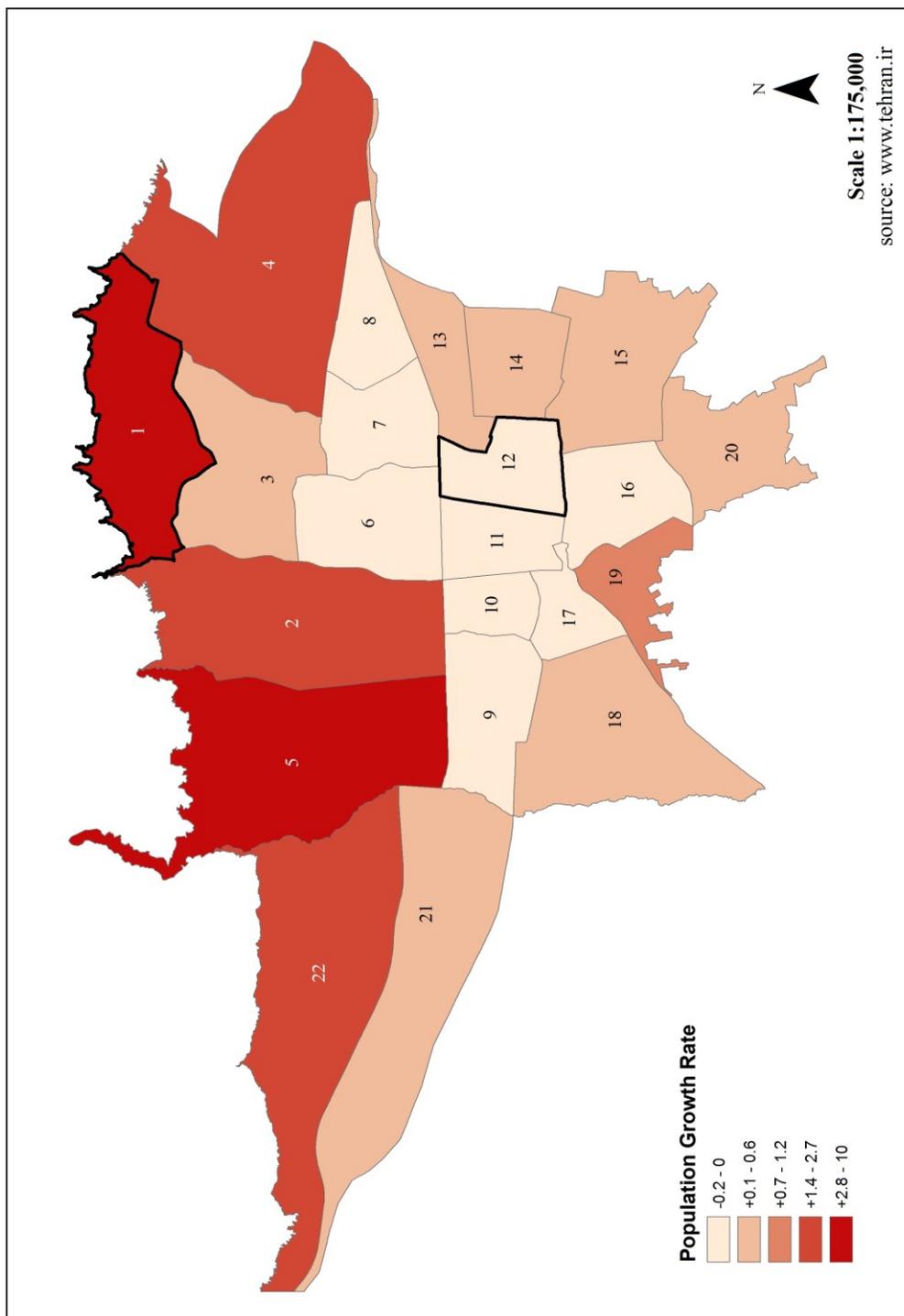
Figure 5-5: Population Growth Rate, Tehran

In addition to their contrasting geographical and sociological location in Tehran, zones 1 and 12 have witnessed the largest and fastest change in their social and physical landscapes compared with other zones in Tehran (see figure 5-5). Moemeni et al. (2009, also cited in Fanni, 2009: 38) call these two zones "the most changed and changing zones" in Tehran in the past five decades. This change is not only in population change, but also in the construction and the emergence of modern shopping malls.

One of the most significant reasons that I chose Tajrish square and Sabz-e-Meidan, among many other reasons that were discussed in chapter 4, is the unique images people associate with them. Sabz-e-Meidan is located in front of the Grand Bazaar (Tehran's bazaar) in Tehran's most historical zone (zone 12) while Tajrish square is located in zone 1 with its modern-looking shopping malls offering American and European brands and upscale gated residential neighborhoods. Although the selected case studies are quite different in the population they serve, their activities are similar. People come from all over the country to the Sabz-e-Meidan to shop and spend time in the bazaar, while the majority of people in Tajrish square are Tehranies or people from smaller cities around Tehran such as Lavasan, Meigoon, Qom, and Shahr-e-Rey. In general, people go to both places for shopping, window-shopping, eating, carrying out some religious activities such as visiting the Jame- mosque in Tehran bazaar of Emamzadeh Saleh in Tajrish, and spending leisure time. The case studies bring together different functions including recreational, commercial, sight-visiting, and religious activities and that is why, despite their geographical and social differences, they are active public spaces functioning at the scale of the Tehran metropolitan area. The case studies have provided me with the opportunity to examine women's feelings, emotions, and preferences with regard to what urban planners and professionals often call traditional and

123

modern public spaces. In the following sections, I shall discuss how these spaces are socially and culturally constructed through GIS representations and, more importantly, drawn upon women's narratives and conclude that "space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it is also producing and produced by social relations" (Lefebvre, 1991:286; also cited in Low, 2000:130).

### What Maps Tell and Do Not Tell

GIS visualization and spatial analysis, in fact maps in general, often have been associated with quantitative research and positivist epistemologies (Bell and Reed, 2004; Cope and Elwood, 2009). In contrast to quantitative geography, qualitative and reflexive geography is "represented as non-empiricist or post-empiricist, sensitive to complexity, contextual, and capable of empowering nonmainstream academic approaches and social groups." (Sheppard, 2001: 535) Although many critical/radical and feminist geographers (see Sheppard, 2001; Moss, 2002; Kwan, 2002; Cope and Elwood, 2009) have already begun to challenge the dualism separating quantitative and qualitative geography, innovative mixed-methods approaches such as Qualitative GIS (also known as geo-ethnography, feminist visualization, grounded-theory) are still their early stages. Therefore, I consider this section as a contribution to the ongoing debates about the advantages and disadvantages of applying Qualitative GIS methods in social and cultural geographic research.

To prepare my preliminary GIS maps, I gathered four different kinds of data, population counts by gender, age, and activity on a weekday and weekend (Thursday and Friday in Iran), behavioral maps, photographs and architectural sketches to capture and describe everyday life in the selected public spaces.  I will first discuss the processes and

tools I used in translating the social behavioral maps (SBMs) to GIS map. Then, I will explain how and why GIS maps were not sufficient on their own to explain the socio-spatial patterns observed and recorded in the field.

**Population Count:** During the participant observation phase, I started to count the population by gender but because the selected spaces, particularly Sabz-e-Meidan, were so populated, I decided to change my approach to population counts. Instead of the population counts in 15- or 20- minute intervals common in urban anthropology and environmental design studies, I decided to use photographic representation of selected spaces. In addition, I also included what women felt about the population, the population density, and whether they thought a space is male-dominate.

Many people were just passing through to their destinations and that was another reason that made the common count population quite hard and in some ways useless. Numbers varied depending on the time, day (week day, weekend, or national holidays) and weather. For example based on women's narratives and my own experience in the spaces, the numbers often double near the Persian New Year when everybody goes out to shop for Norouz holidays.

On the one hand, my observation notes show that total numbers of people using Sabz-e-Meidan is almost triple that of Tajrish and five times more than that of Marvi Meidancheh. This significant difference can be explained based on the scale each public space functions. Sabz-e-Meidan operates on a more national scale serving users, Tehranies as well as merhcants, from all over the Tehran who go there to shop from Tehran bazaar. For them, Sabz-e-Meidan is a passing through space rarely used it for a long time. Unlike these passersby, Tehranies families or couples use the space for sitting, eating lunch or snacking,

125

or drinking tea. Marvi Meidancheh served mostly women who use the space for lunch gatherings and chatting about what they have bought or still want to buy. There were some senior men who were playing chest in the northern section of the square. Unlike Sabz-e-Meidan where women were in the marginal spaces near store fronts, in Marvi men were in the marginal spaces and women dominated the center.

On the other hand, the numbers of women and men using the spaces were close. Sabz-e-Meidan, was, of course, a more male-dominant space because of its location near the bazaar but still there were many women using the space. *Hammals* (workers who carry loads from or to bazaar) were a specific feature of Sabz-e-Meidan and around the bazaar area. They were young and middle- aged men, usually from other cities, who carry loads to and from the bazaar. When approaching the crowd, they often yell to make their presence known so people can give them more space to pass. Depending on the time of a day, the numbers could diverge. Unlike Tajrish that showed a consistent equal distribution of men and women throughout the day, in Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi meidancheh, men outnumbered women during the early morning hour of 8:00-9:00 am and the late evening hours of 8:00-10:00 pm. That can be explained as Tajrish square is surrounded by many more residential neighborhoods while both Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi meidancheh are located in Tehran's Central Business District. Also, Tehran bazaar, which attracts the majority of women to Sabz-e-Meidan and its surrounding public spaces, closes at 5:00 pm.

The population patterns observed in Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh are not unlike those of Tajrish square except that there are many more families and women in groups on Thursday evening and Friday. Whereas many young, single female college students in the Tajrish area were passing through, window-shopping or just having a good time alone,

women in Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh tended to be in groups or with male partners.

Tajrish square is spatially organized differently from the separate concentration patterns of men and women in Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh. Although in Tajrish, women often gather in the sitting areas in the northwestern side of the square, the spatial patterns and population concentration are quite different from the distinct separated patterns observed in Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh. Women in Sabz-e-Meidan were walking along the store fronts and in the marginal spaces of the square while men were gathered in different circles in the center of the space.

On Fridays (the official weekend in Iran), the majority of stores in Tehran bazaar were closed and Sabz-e-Meidan was used by more women than men. The separate circles of men who were discussing the gold and dollar exchange rate on weekdays in the center (Figure 5-6) gave their place to families and groups of women who were shopping in the stores around the Sabz-e-Meidan. The same space that was used by men on weekdays were occupied by groups of women and family who gathered to eat their lunches and chat about their shopping lists. On Thursdays, Tehran bazaar is open and the population counts and the spatial patterns observed in Sabz-e-Meidan were closer to those of regular weekdays than those of Fridays.

Figure 5-6: Men occupying the center of Sabz-e-Meidan

On the other hand, Tajrish square gets really busy on Friday and Thursday mornings. Early Friday and Thursday mornings, many meet up with friends in front of some landmark stores such as the Post Office on the south side of the square or restaurants on the northwest side in Tajrish to go the mountains. On weekends the most apparent change in population composition is the appearance of couples and groups of younger women (18-35) who enjoy shopping in the Ghaem and Tandis malls or strolling in the old Tajrish bazaar. Thursday nights are also a busy time in Tajrish square. Besides those who come to shop and window-shop, they are many women who come to pray in the Saleh Emamzadeh located in the southeast side of the square.

Overall, then, Tajrish retains the largest number of people, both on Thursday and Friday while Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi become most populated during week days. Again, the activities in the public spaces were similar, but the people who carry them were quite different. I shall explain this difference in more details based on women's narratives in the following sections.

Figure 5-7: Women's appearance, hijab and make-up styles

**Photographic Representation and Architectural Sketching:** In addition, I took photographs and drew architectural sketches representing the sense of place and illustrating more visual details such as women's style of hijab and make-up during the participant observation (Figure 5-7). Such visual representations have been used as research tools across a diverse range of disciplines including architecture and urban planning, anthropology, sociology, and human and urban geography. Since the 1960s, the usages of visual representations have increased in different sub-disciplines such as visual anthropology and sociology and resulted in integrating photography, mental maps, films, and diagrams in social research. However, they are still an under-utilized methodology in most social sciences research (Moore et al., 2008).
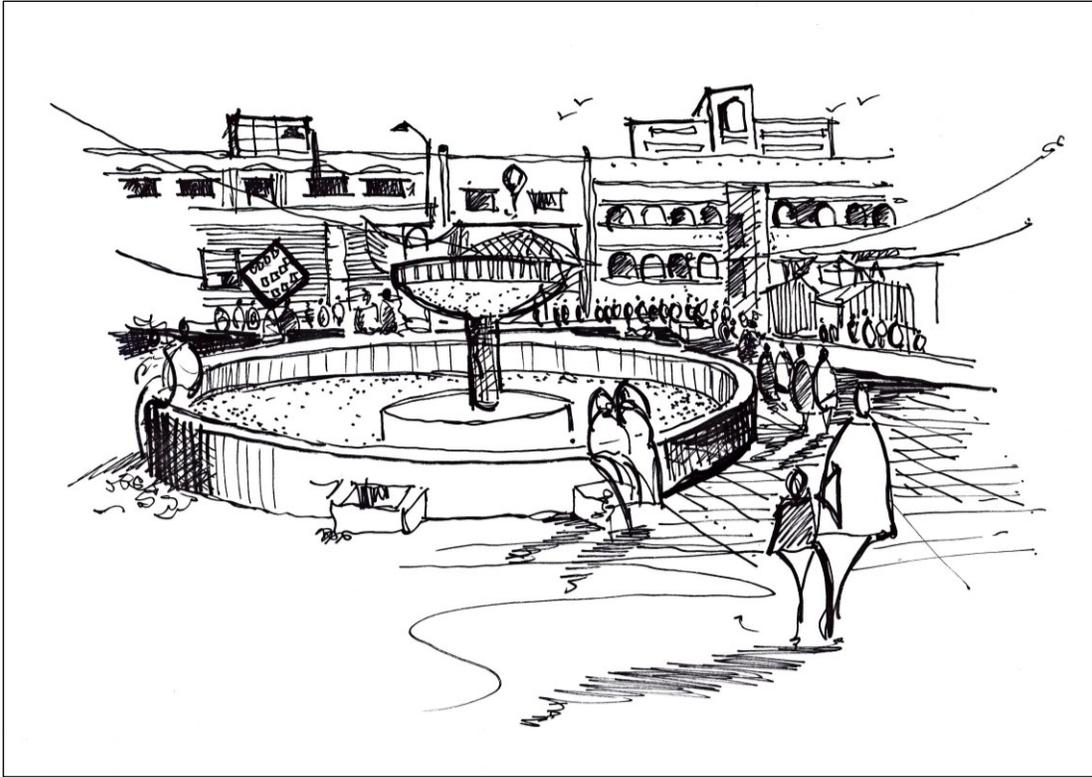
Figure 5-8: Sabz-e-Meidan sketch
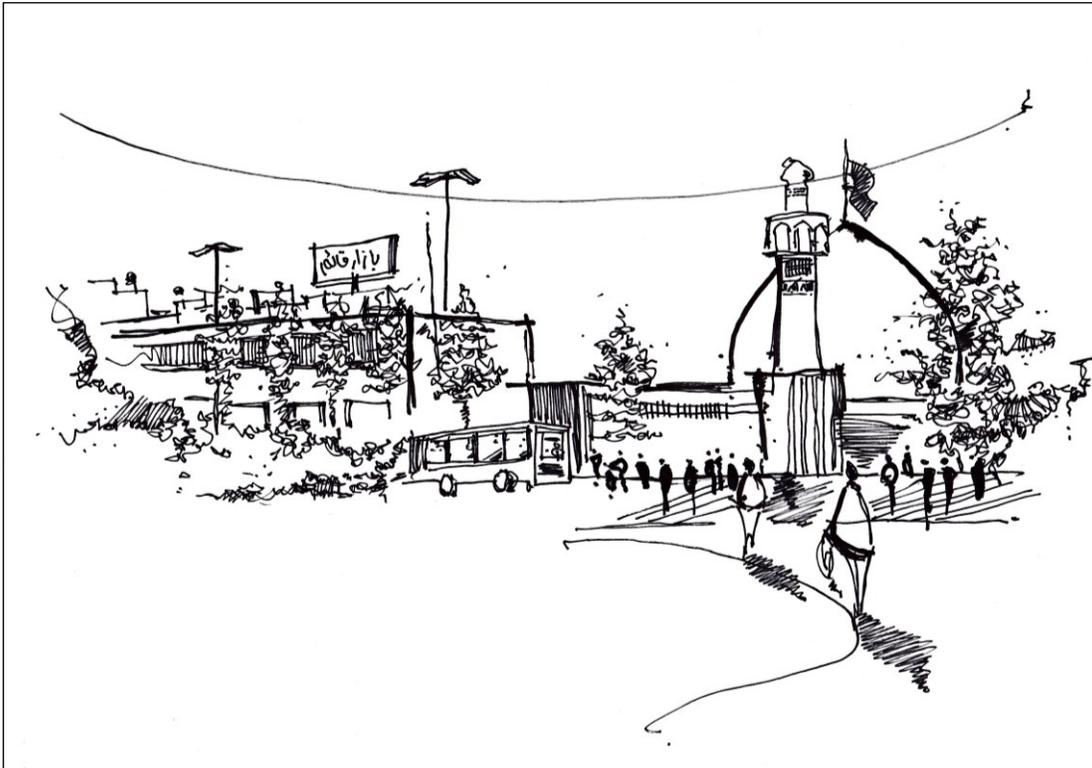


Figure 5-9:  Tajrish square sketch

Kevin Lynch (1960:1), in *The Image of the City*, emphasizes the complexity of data gathering in everyday life of cities and states that "at every instant, there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored" (also cited in Moore et al., 2008). To this end, I used photographs taken by me and my research assistant in order to partially represent the everyday life happening in the public spaces. More specifically, I included photographs for representing different characteristics of built-environment and spatial forms of the squares (such as maintenance, cleanliness, visual pollution, and architectural style), the extent each public space was populated in different times of the day and during weekdays and weekends, and finally women's appearance details (such as hijab styles and make-up). In addition hand-drawn sketches (Figures 5-8 and 5-9) are also included to show the particular sense of place in different public spaces. Although it is apparent that the whole story of women's experiences cannot be captured simply in visual representations (neither photographs, social behavioral maps, nor GIS maps), such research tools were helpful in the interviews and offering a fuller picture of the studied public spaces to the readers.

**Social Behavioral Maps:** Social behavior mapping (SBM) is a type of systematic observation research that tracks behavior over space and time. SBM was conducted in 15 1-hour segments at each location, evenly representing the days of the week (weekdays and weekend) and the time of day (morning, afternoon and evening). At 15-minute intervals, my research assistant and I recorded the people's activities and locations as well as characteristics that are readily observable, such as approximate age, sex, and whether the individual is alone or in a group.

The results are shown in the figures 5-10 to 5-21. Social behavior maps confirm the difference in population density, but they also show the difference among weekday and weekend activities and spatial distribution by gender in the selected public spaces. Based on the spatial distribution of men and women in these figures, one may conclude that women are more segregated in Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh than in Tajirsh. In Sabz-e-Meidan women walk close to stores and occupy the marginal space of the median. Men, on the other hand, are in the center trading and talking about gold prices and the stock market. The maps also suggest some places that women are not welcome such as the central parts of Sabz-e-Meidan, secondary alleys and the dead ends of Marvi that are occupied by workmen.

The social behavior mapping was translated to GIS maps using Kernel Density Tool, which is a spatial analysis tool in GIS to "calculate a magnitude per unit area from point or polygon features using a kernel function to fit a smoothly tapered surface to each point or polygon." ("ESRI Kernel density", 2013) Figures 5-22 and 5-23 are the result of this translation. The GIS maps confirmed my field notes that the numbers of men and women using the each public space are close and there are more gender-segregated spatial patterns in Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh than in Tajrish square.

Although GIS maps allow us to visualize the spatiality of social processes, in this case the social production of public spaces, these GIS maps, it should be noted, do not really explain the observed spatial patterns. They also do not explain why women were using Tajrish as a more modern public space. The GIS maps basically resulted in more questions than answers. I found them most useful, however, in guiding my interviews with women.
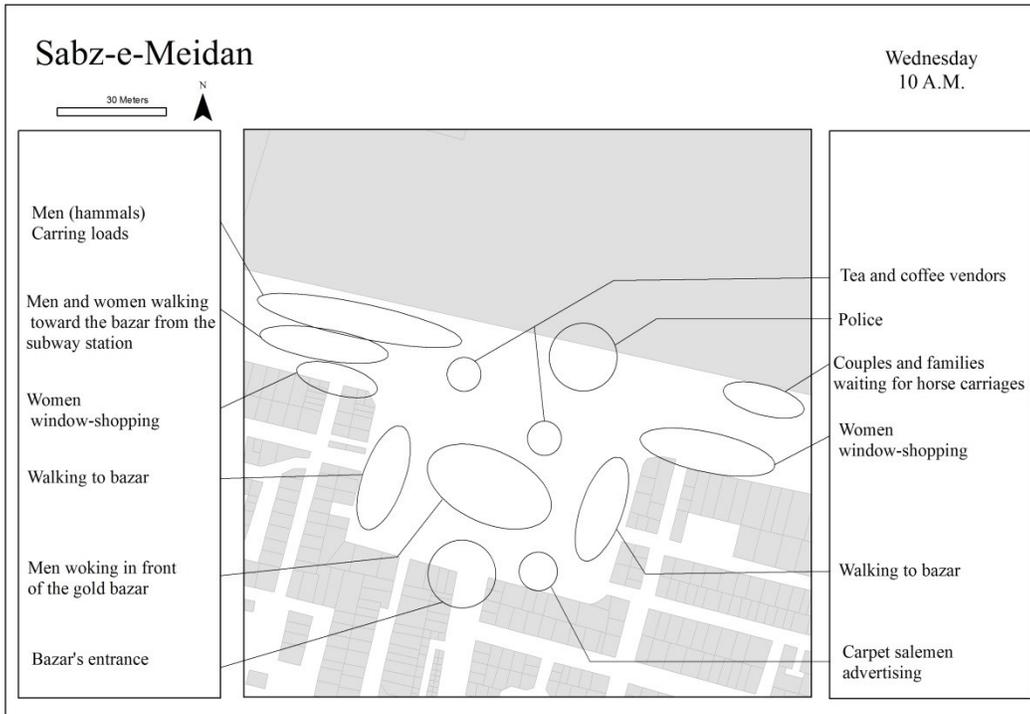
Figure 5-10: Behavioral map of Sabz-e-Meidan, 10 A.M.
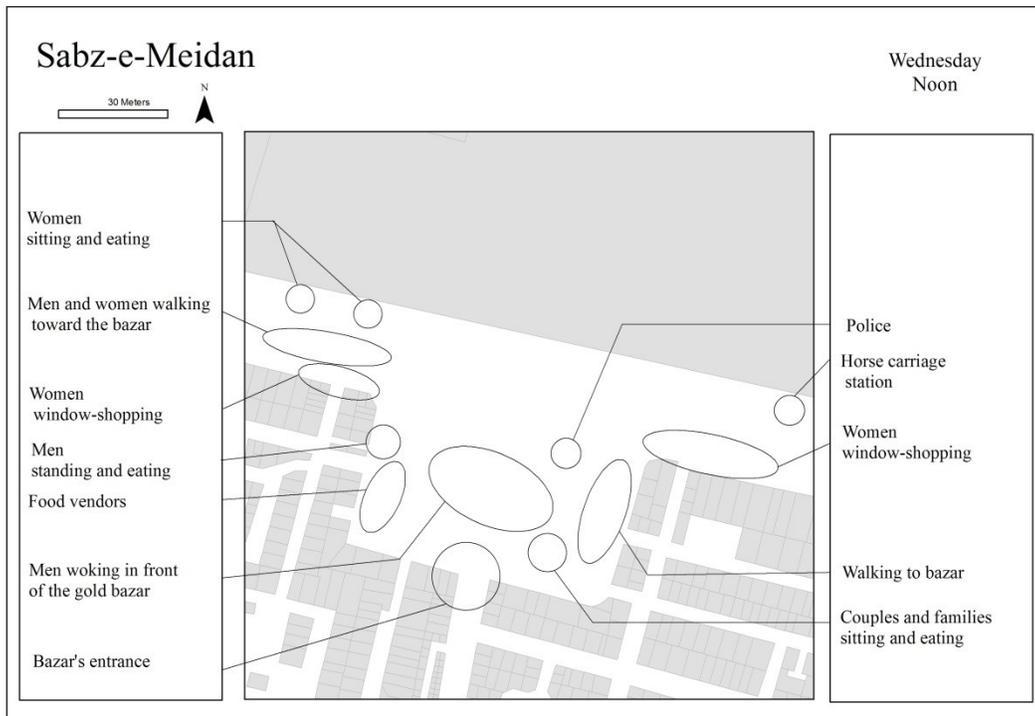

Figure 5-11: Behavioral map of Sabz-e-Meidan, Noon
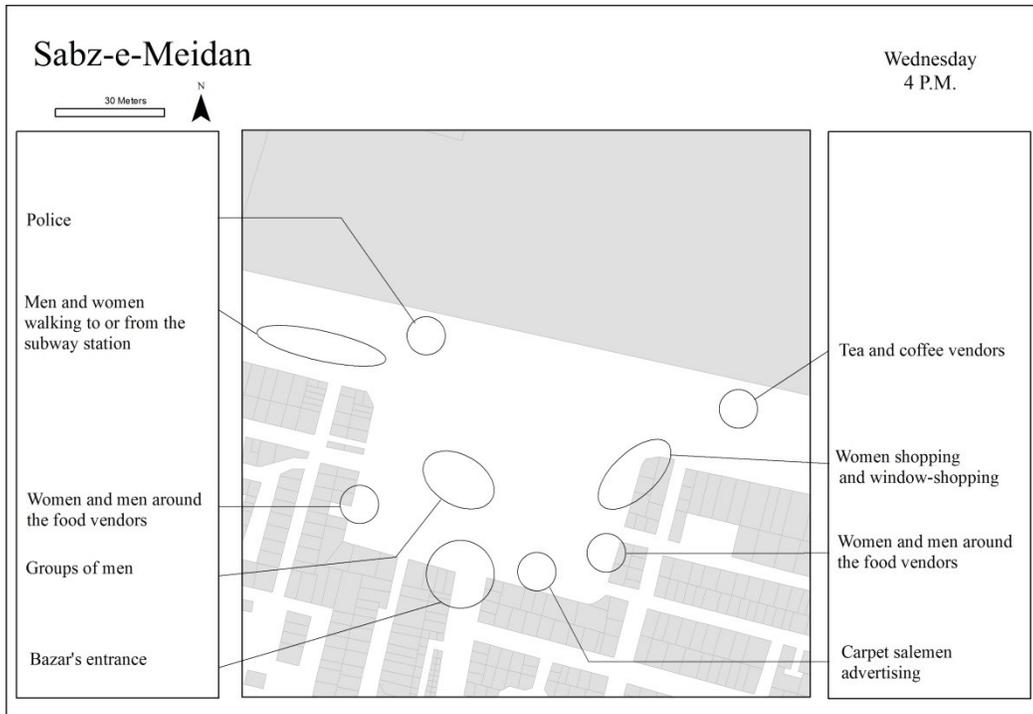
Figure 5-12: Behavioral map of Sabz-e-Meidan, 4 P.M.
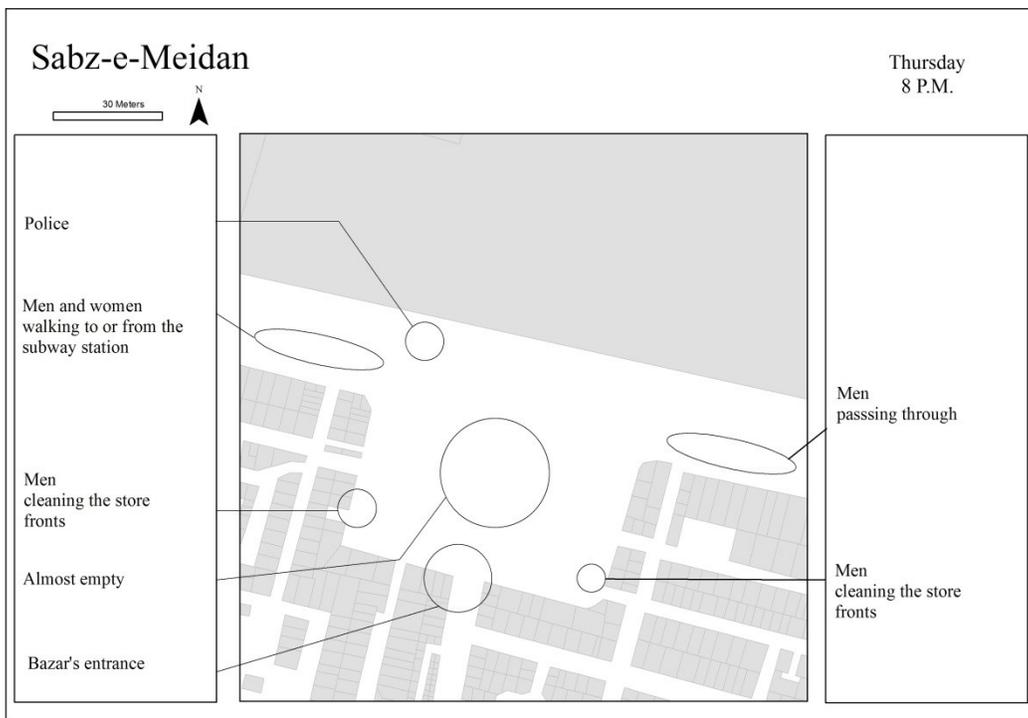


Figure 5-13: Behavioral map of Sabz-e-Meidan, 8 P.M.
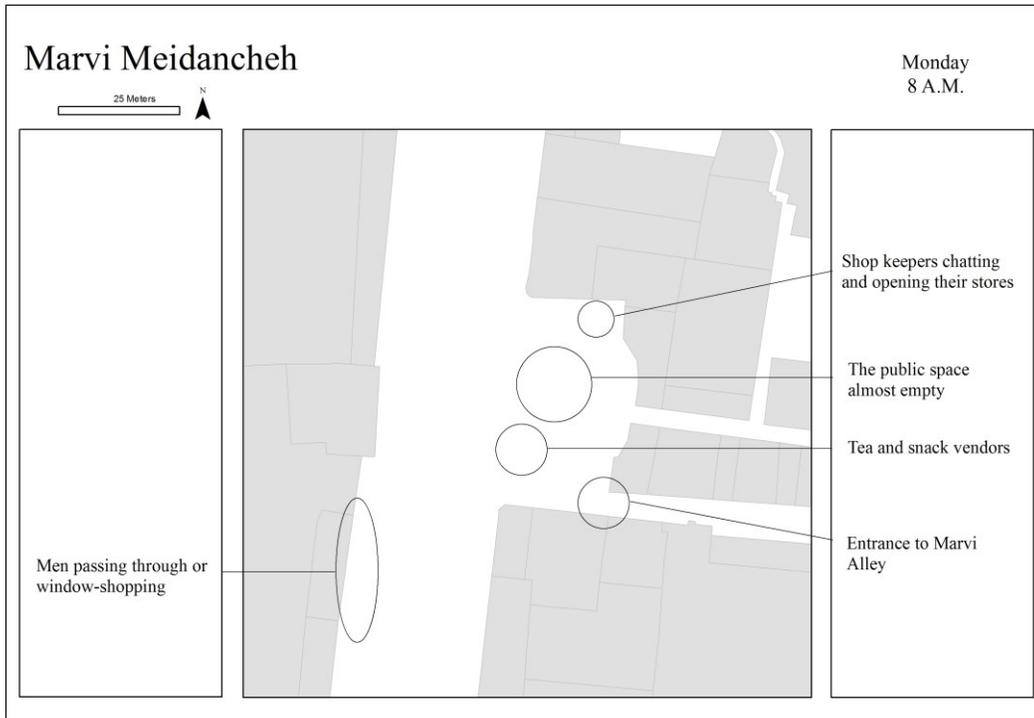
Figure 5-14: Behavioral map of Marvi Meidancheh, 8 A.M.
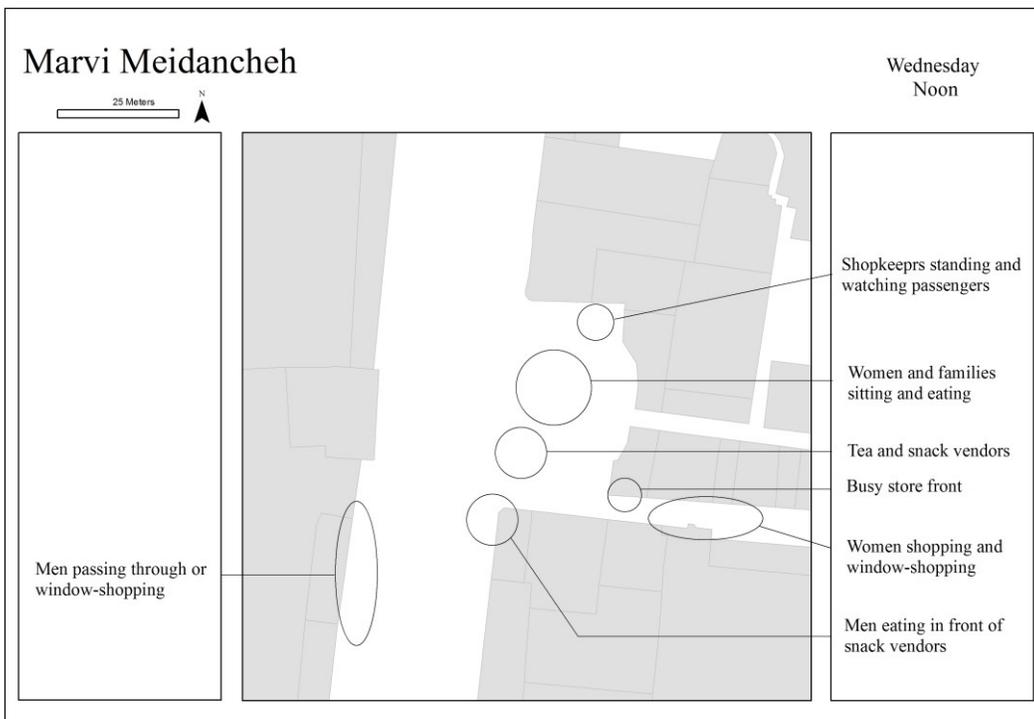


Figure 5-15: Behavioral map of Marvi Meidancheh, Noon
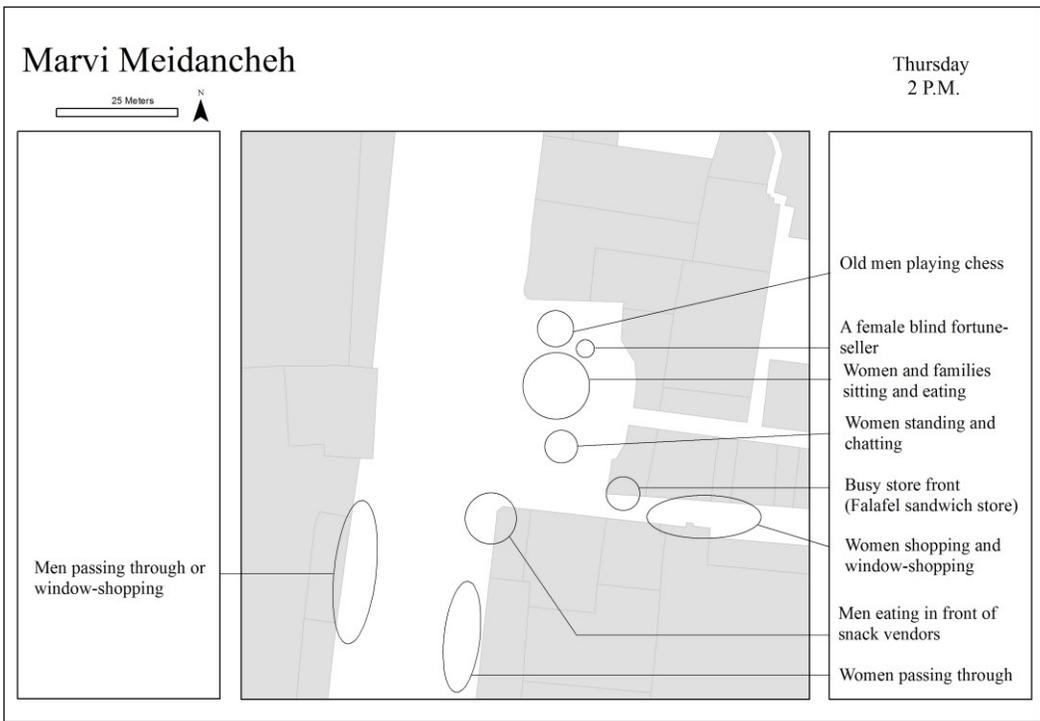
Figure 5-16: Behavioral map of Marvi Meidancheh, 2 P.M.
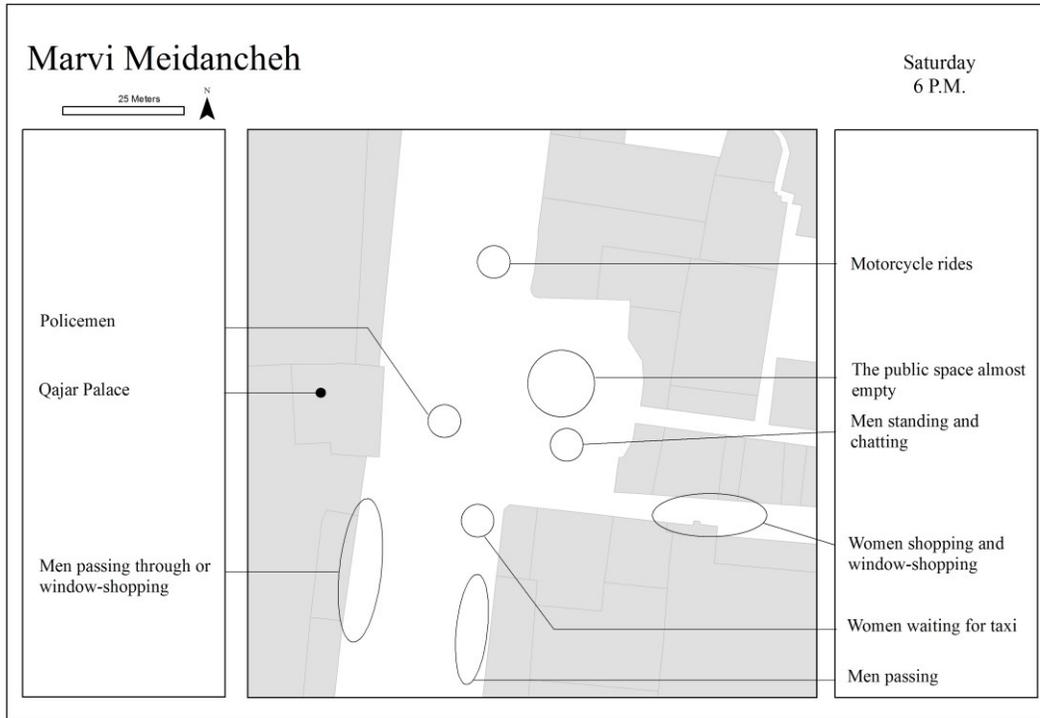


Figure 5-17:  Behavioral map of Marvi Meidancheh, 6 P.M.
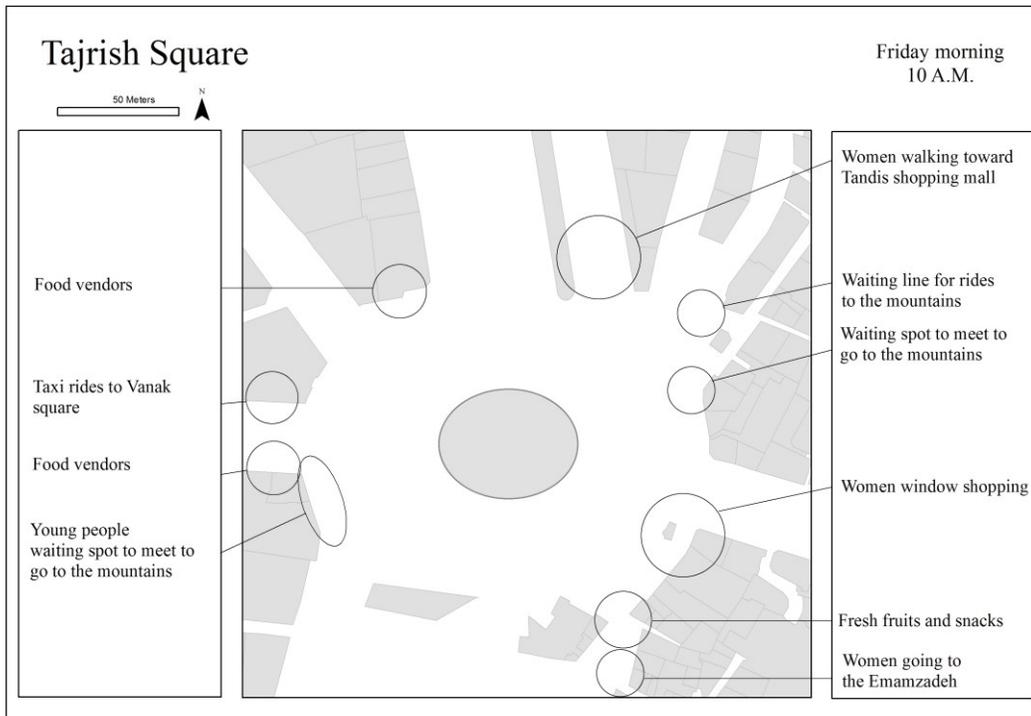
Figure 5-18: Behavioral map of Tajrish square, 10 A.M.
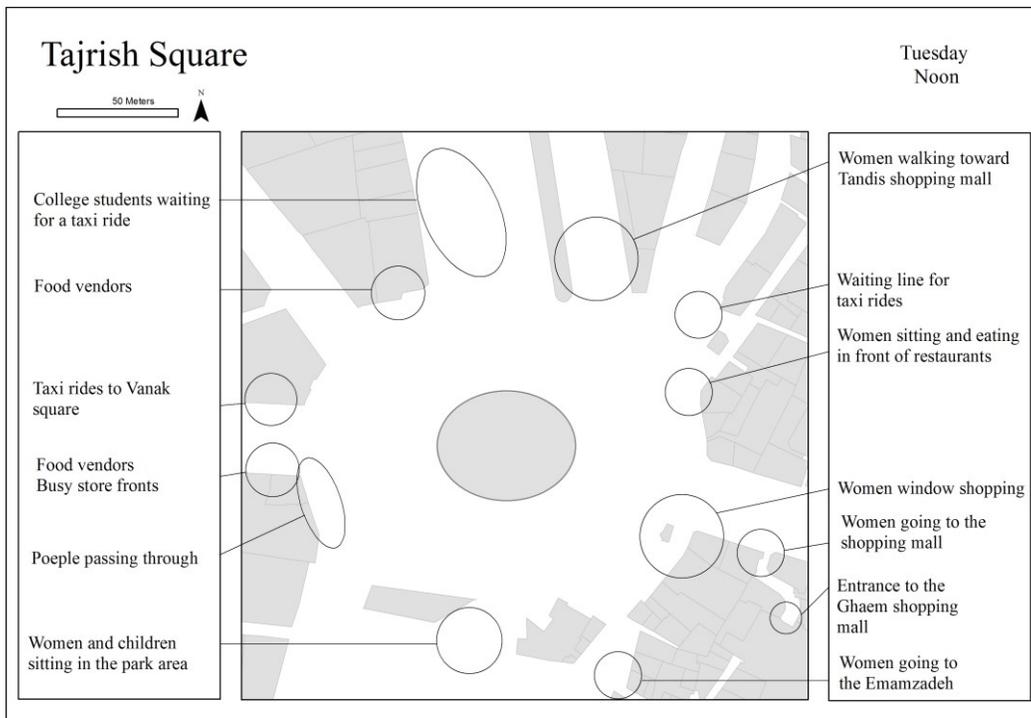


Figure 5-19: Behavioral map of Tajrish square, Noon

137

## Tajrish Square

Thursday
4 P.M.

50 Meters

N

Taxi rides to Velenjak, Bam-e-Tehran, and the University neighborhoods

Food vendors

Taxi rides to Vanak square

Food vendors

Passing through area

Women and children relaxing in the park area

Bus terminal

Women walking toward Tandis shopping mall

Waiting for taxi rides

Women sitting and eating

Street beggar

Women window shopping

Going to the Ghaem shopping mall

Food vendors

Figure 5-20: Behavioral map of Tajrish square, 4 P.M.

## Tajrish Square

Thursday
8 P.M.

50 Meters

N

Taxi rides to Velenjak, Bam-e-Tehran, and the University neighborhoods

Food vendors

Taxi rides to Vanak square

Food vendors

The park area almost empty

Women walking toward Tandis shopping mall

Waiting for taxi rides

Families sitting and eating

Women window shopping

Women going to the Ghaem shopping mall

Food vendors

Men going to the Emamzadeh to pray

Figure 5-21: Behavioral map of Tajrish square, 8 P.M.

138

Density of male users

Density of female users

N
Scale 1:3,000

Darker colors represent higher density.
1   Marvi
2   Sabz-e-meidan
3   Qajar palace
4   Tehran bazar

Figure 5-22: Density of women and men in Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh



Density of male users

Density of female users

N
Scale 1:2,500

Darker colors represent higher density.
1   Tandis shopping mall
2   Ghaem shopping mall
3   Tajrish bazar
4   Saleh Emamzadeh

Figure 5-23: Density of women and men in Tajrish square

139

**Women's Narratives: Moving Beyond Boundaries in Everyday Life**

One the main advantages of ethnographic research is its ability to represent the social macro- and microprocessors through everyday lived experiences of social actors under investigation (Appadurai, 1992; Low and Lawrence-zuniga, 2003, also cited in Low, 2000: 127). In this section, I will explain how such ethnographies helped me to better understand what Setha Low called (1996, 2000) "the social production of space," that is, the phenomenological and symbolic experience of space, in this case by Iranian women in Tajrish square, Sabz-e-Meidan, and Marvi Meidancheh.

In feminist debates, there is an emphasis on the researcher-researched relationship and power relations in the process of knowledge production. While "the traditional objectivist social science methods…position researchers as detached omnipresent experts in control of the research process," (England, 2006: 288), feminist ontology challenges this dichotomy between researchers and research (subjects and objects). Following the feminist approaches and based on my unique status as an Iranian woman and researcher, I situated myself as an insider, both the researcher and the researched. (Laurie et al., 1999, Todd, 2009) This way, I was able to reduce the distance between myself and the female users in the selected public spaces by establishing a relationship based on our commonalities and working collaboratively (McDowell, 1992; Kobayashi, 1994; Bondi, 2003; Haynes, 2006; Todd, 2009). Such relationship made it possible for me to draw upon my own experiences and also to give voice to women with similar challenges and opportunities in public spaces. The central theme of this section is to demonstrate that abstract analytical tools and methods merely replicate binary distinctions and mask the fact that public/private and modern/traditional do not map in simple ways with respect to gender.

Although boundaries are socially and culturally defined, political powers influence them for their benefit and social control. In fact, "boundaries are inherently arbitrary based on cultural rules of difference and differentiation" (Low, 2000: 155). The way we create boundaries largely impacts "the production of social space and the politics of our everyday lives" (Low, 2000: 155). But how do individuals experience and navigate those boundaries in their everyday lives? Is there a difference between the way professionals, such as architects, urban planners, and social scientists, define and categorize boundaries and the way ordinary people perceive them and act accordingly?

I will explore, in this section, those questions and also the ways women in Tehran move beyond the binary divisions of modern-traditional, conservative-liberal, formal-symbolic, and physical-metaphysical through their preferences and spatial behaviors in the selected public spaces. Their actions clearly reflect Lefebvre's definition of space as "a whole" in which "space is permeated with social relations; it is not only supported by social relations but it also producing and produced by social relations" (Lefebvre, 1991: 286).

In this study, the women's narratives become particularly important as they enrich our understanding of Iranian women who do not have access to publicity and whose thoughts, emotions, and actions have been obscured by the dominant discourse around the seemingly inaccessible world of Muslim women. As a female Iranian, I had all the benefits of what Adler and Adler (1987) called a "complete membership," including knowing the cast of characters or at least part of the cast. Women were very open and usually took their time to answer my questions. Although my goal was to talk with women and ask about their experiences in public spaces, men who accompanied women or men, who were very interested in what I was doing, also started to talk with me.

The overlay of such diverse data in the GIS interface provided a rich visualization that I analyzed for socio-spatial patterns that would better explain the ways in which women experience, prefer, and attach symbolic meanings to the public spaces.

Although the selected public spaces are different in their history, design and meaning, the activities happening in them were relatively similar. But again, the people carrying out those activities were different; at least in their appearance and representation. Although most women who go to Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi want to shop and find cheaper products, there are some who come to enjoy the bazaar's sense of place and to commemorate 'good old days' by walking around traditional architecture and urban places where shopkeepers are often either the original owner or the son of the original owner. On the other hand, in Tajrish (with an exception of a few retail stores in the Tajrish bazaar), the majority of shops offer European-brand clothing and home goods and shopkeepers consist of young men who know more about modern economic practices and rarely enjoy bargaining with customers. Tajrish represents a more modern place for young women to hang out, show off, or present themselves in hopes of finding a boyfriend.

> My boyfriend and I often come here [Tajrish square] because it is chic,
> high class, and clean. It is all about class. What do you think if I tell
> you I bought my shoes from Tajrish or from Marvi? Even if I bought
> my shoes from Marvi or the baazar, I tell my friends I shop in Tajrish
> shopping malls…this is how my friends judge me. (Woman, aged 18–
> 25)
>
> My friends and I come here [Sabz-e-Meidan] as we are art students,
> but, honestly, I think we do not take care of our historical architecture.

I know they started a project to restore the Sabz-e-Meidan but it is not just decorating it, putting trash baskets everywhere, or even adding horse carriages. Young people only care about class and fashion. I think we need something more than this. Maybe we should bring newer functions here like coffee shops or bookstores. I don't know. I just know the way people think about what these places are and should be like has to change too. (Woman, aged 26–35)

Unlike in Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi, there are some modern-design coffee shops in Tajrish where women spend their leisure time and can temporarily escape from some societal norms with activities such as smoking. Young men and women, who carefully styled their hair and wore brand-name clothing, were found exclusively in Tajrish square. On the other hand, in Sabz-e-meidan and Marvi people just *looked* more conservative in appearance and behavior. In interviews for this study, many women expressed their concerns about their social representation of self in those public spaces.  I should highlight that women often referred to functional and physical characteristics of spaces while explaining what an appropriate behavior is in each place. The following statements are illustrative:

When I come to Sabz-e-meidan and even Marvi to shop, I always make sure I have on less make-up. There are many workmen here that I do not want to hear say 'wow! Babe' while looking at me. (Woman, aged 26–35)

…every time I want to come here [Sabz-e-Meidan], my mother makes sure I do not have my tight dress and red lipstick on. She thinks we

143

should respect the traditional and conservative atmosphere here, but I

like to be myself anywhere I go…. (Woman, aged 18–25)

I come here [Marvi] because I live really close. But, I honestly would

rather go to Bala Shahr's shopping centers and new malls. There, I do

not need to constantly think who is watching me or which neighbor

would catch me with my boyfriend. Look around! So many mosques!

People are just noisier here, I guess! [Laughing]…you know I do not

want to live under other's magnifier. I want to go out and be free,

where nobody knows nor cares who I am. (Woman, aged 18–25)

I like it here [Tandis shopping mall, Tajrish], first because it is cleaner

and fancier. The architecture looks modern and different. I just feel

more comfortable here. Or maybe because I do not feel that all

traditional and religious norms are practiced or even important here. I

can be myself instead of 'being a good girl' defined by other people.

(Woman, aged 26-35)

The notion of "becoming a stranger" in public spaces is not new for women.

Elizabeth Wilson in *The Sphinx in the City* (1992) discusses how anonymity in public spaces

of the city can provide a sense of freedom, rather than fear, to a single woman using public

spaces.  Her works suggest a complex relationship between gender and public, regulated by

class, ethnicity, sexuality, and family status. These women's experiences also show how

modernity competes while co-existing with Islamic Sharia (written laws such as the

compulsory hijab in public) and societal *urf* (unwritten but often strictly practiced norms for

women in public such as condemning smoking or laughing loudly) in Muslim societies

(Amir- Ebrahimi 2006).The geo-ethnographies of public spaces (see Figures 5-24 and 5-25) illustrate women's narratives gathered during interviews with spatial data on men and women as well as photographs and sketches illustrating the character of the case studies. The spatial visualization and ethnographic work show that women in Tehran make up a considerable number of public space users. Although since the revolution Iranian women have experienced much more governmental control on their appearance (e.g. the compulsory hijab) and behavior in public, they have been actively participating in public spaces by re-appropriating the existing places. In fact, the number of traditional women using public spaces has dramatically increased after the revolution. Young Iranian women have specifically made use of enclosed, privatized spaces (such as shopping malls, coffee shops, and super bookstores) that are mostly modern in their design and the activities offered.

In Tajrish, a young woman in her late twenties, who was heading to a coffee shop with her male partner, mentioned that "We often come to here to go to coffee shops and to hang out in shopping malls. None of us live close but we prefer to take a bus or taxi to come here. It is so busy here and nobody even notices if you are with your boyfriend." Another woman in her mid-thirties sitting with three other women around a table in coffee shop expressed that "I like it here because I can smoke,…You know in some neighborhoods in Tehran societal norms are strictly practiced. I need to be really careful about my surroundings." I asked her for an example and she answered "we like to go to old historical places but forget about having fun there...." She was interrupted by her friend who happened to be a sociology student. She offered a contradictory perspective: "I do not agree that we are more ourselves here in Tajrish or in more modern places. I feel I need to look fashionable enough to even come to this shopping mall. Look around, all these teenagers spend hours

"...it is kind of nostalgic; I just wish it was better maintained"

"...I like the Islamic-Iranian architecture of bazaar and Marvi"

"People are more conservative and religious but I still like it here."

"...I make sure I have less make-up on."

"...the shopkeepers are old Tehranies and friendlier..."

"...honestly, I do not really care about the architecture I go wherever I feel comfortable"

**Sabz-e-meidan & Marvi**

1    Marvi
2    Sabz-e-meidan
3    Tehran bazar

Figure 5-24:  The Geo-ethnography of Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi Meidancheh
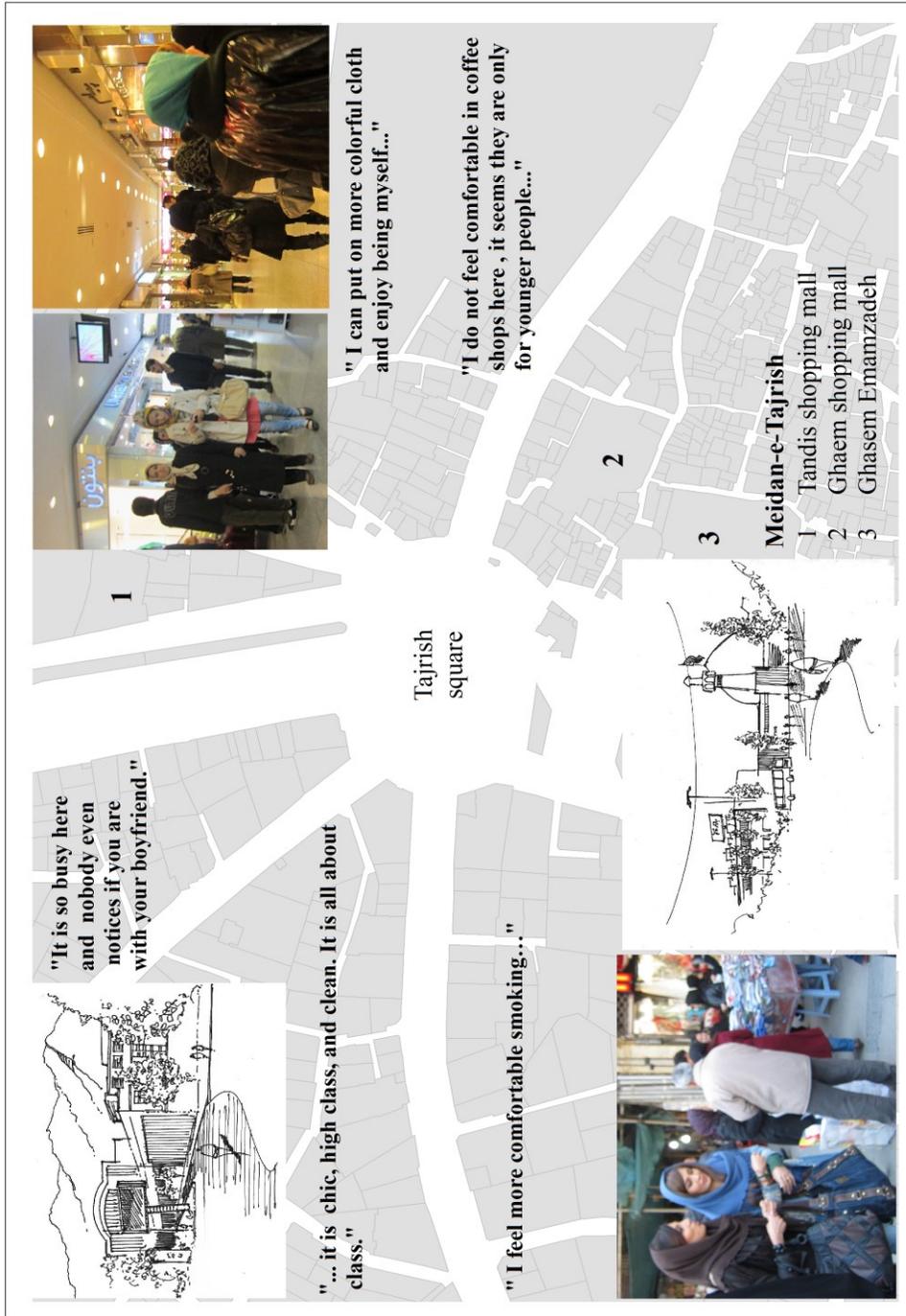
Figure 5-25:  The Geo-ethnography of Tajrish square

matching the color of their shoes with their make-up. Is that being yourself?" In addition, middle-aged women expressed that they do not feel welcome in coffee shops:

I do not feel comfortable or even welcome in the new shopping malls or coffee shops. They are packed with young people. I think they want to fight against tradition; they just want to show they are different from us, their mothers. I personally prefer to spend my time in places I grew up. I enjoy walking in Marvi alley as I remember every Norouz [Persian New Year], my mother and I would come here to shop. (Woman, aged 46–55)

My girlfriends and I gather at least once a month to catch up with each other. We usually go to the places we used to go when we were younger but recently we come to the more modern areas [describing a coffee shop located in a big modern bookstore that recently opened in Tajrish]. Unlike other coffee shops, I like it here because it feels more inviting to our age group and also we can sit down and have a tea together. Plus it is clean and you do not see any workmen hanging out in them! (Woman, aged 46–55)

I like our own old fashion tea-houses that are actually disappearing. I make an hour trip by the subway to go down to the neighborhood where I was born [Monirieh, close to Sabz-e-Meidan]. I walk around with my children and revisit my memories with them. It is sad that they do not maintain these places better, but we still go there. The coffee shops around our current house [Elahieh near to Tajrish] are

anything but genuine.  They are not real modern designs or ideas!  It

feels that the owner just copied a Starbucks store he visited in his trip

to Dubai! (Woman, aged 46–55)

These women's experiences confirm that gender boundaries never fully translate into

lived experience.  Gender, like culture, is itself an abstraction– it is the map, not the thing it

represents. Agency plays an important role in the social production of space. Interviewees,

according to age, social status, economic class, home neighborhood, and individual life

experiences express themselves and their preferences differently.

Although women were aware of the built environment and architecture and even

briefly mentioned the modern design or cleanness of places in their responses, they seemed

to care more about the structure of social relations and norms in each place. For them, the

distinction between modern and traditional designs was not as important as architects and

planners think or like it to be. Generally, women do not prefer one public space over the

other; they enjoy having the options to move from one to the other.  Grosz (2001: 48)

emphasizes that the concept of modern, new, and futurity influence the ways people

experience and understand their place in cities.  In what urban planners called modern spaces,

they feel a greater sense of self, more freedom, and a sense of equality with men.  Traditional

spaces are male dominated but those places help them relate to their cultural identity,

evoking a feeling of nostalgia. These places connect them to their past, just as modern spaces

connect them to their future. This moving back and forth along with the social construction

of public spaces that occur in between highlight the two-sided relationship between structures

and agencies in social processes and the process that each society creates its own space

(Lefebvre, 1991). It appears that women, in Tehran, make unanticipated use of public spaces

and therefore attach meaning in unpredictable ways to such spaces, in part, because they remain uniquely invisible to those who are tasked with designing the public built environment. Being invisible to planners allows women to maneuver and manipulate boundaries to fit constantly changing needs, but renders and keeps them politically marginal. In addition, the spatial representation of women's presence and preferences confirms that built environment interpretations are not only tied to social and economic institutional forces, but they also are influenced by symbolic meanings derived from local culture and history (Low, 1996 and 2005). More importantly, these women's narratives and their spatial behaviors shed light on the unrealistic categorization of binary divisions of public-private, modern-tradition, and form-meaning. In fact, they do not exist in tidy distinctions in our every-day lives.

> …of course, our historical architecture, or whatever you want to call it, our cultural heritage is important to me, but I need a break from it. I like having the choices. Depending on the mood I am in and what I need, I go to different places in Tehran, and I think I enjoy them all. (Woman, aged 18–25)

I encountered and talked with an architecture student who had a very different perspective about Tehran's public spaces:

> It does not matter if you are talking about Tajrish, Vanak, Sabz-e-Meidan, or Azadi square, there is no original tradition or modern style anymore in Tehran. The character, if any, is a mixture of everything, a little bit Islamic, a little bit Iranian, and a little bit copying Modern

architecture. People use these spaces because they simply have to.

(Woman, aged 26–35)

As Kristen Day (1999) suggests, the actual women's experience in and perceptions of privatized and modern public spaces are way more diverse than those that were considered in compelling critiques of privatized public spaces in North America in the 1990s. Of course, in the case of Tehran, women are in a "passing through stage" and still dealing with the existing tensions between modernity and tradition; but such variation among women's experiences remains valid.

The interviews show mixed feelings about Tajrish square located in Bala Shahr representing  high city, a modern, newer, and somewhat less religious place in which women enjoyed a sense of freedom and equality, and Sabz-e-Meidan and Marvi, located in Paeen Shahr representing traditional, more religious, and older neighborhoods where women appreciated their unique sense of place. It appears the symbolic meanings, ubiquitous in women's social behavior and preferences, become as significant as their geographic locations and architectural design. I agree with Doan (2010: 648) that "gender matters, but due to its discursive complexity, how gender is performed matters even more." Other demographics (such as age), social characteristics (such as education, profession, and family culture), and home locations highly influenced women's answers in expressing their perceptions and experiences of the selected public spaces.  I contend that although feminist geographers have bravely questioned our presumptions about space, geography's most basic concept, and have successfully changed the classical dualism (such as public/private , modern/traditional, and mind/body), gender as a relatively widely-used social construct still requires a more detailed reconsideration.

151

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Functioning public spaces are the "public" arenas whereby individuals come together to exercise the ideals of equality and modernity through discourse and other actions. As Setha Low (2000:201) suggests "culturally significant public spaces are forums for working out political, economic, and social conflicts that cannot be resolved by more direct verbal means, and, as such, provide rich material for ethnographic analysis and cultural interoperation." Feminists have critiqued the now classical position regarding the role of public spheres and modern spaces in building democratic societies. Part of their critique is that ideals of equality can exist alongside practices of exclusion and repression. These boundaries of exclusion are often gendered. This dissertation engaged these critical positions to suggest an even more nuanced use of analytical categories such as public/private and modern/traditional drawing upon geo-ethnographic research methods.

Iranian women have been traditionally limited to the private sphere; but their presence in public spaces has dramatically, and surprisingly, increased after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. There are three important factors that contributed to this change and invited more women into public spaces. First was the change in societal norms and the compulsory hijab that allowed many traditional women to feel comfortable in using public spaces. Second was the Iran-Iraq War period (1980-1988) when women had to enter public life to compensate for the losses in the male workforce. Third was the postwar urban development that added many new public spaces (e.g. parks, shopping malls, and cultural complexes) and an increased opportunity for consumption. The latest factor is still evolving and is relevant to this study. The increased women's presence and participation in public

152

spaces has changed the women's roles and the definition of "a good Muslim woman" in Iranian society. Therefore, it is critical to understand the role of public spaces in this change.

In response to the urgent need of ethnographic feminist work in Middle Eastern contexts like Iran, this study aims to enhance our understanding of the relationships of the socio-cultural construction of public spaces and gendered identities in present-day Tehran. Based on the narratives and experiences of women in two public spaces with contrasting urban locations, spatial settings, and design in Tehran, I have shown how the combination of ethnographic and geographical methods can be employed in feminist geography research to study actual women's experiences. The results can be summarized into two theoretical contributions and one methodological implication.

First, abstract analytical tools and methods merely replicate binary distinctions and mask the fact that public/private and modern/traditional do not map in simple ways with respect to gender. The picture I draw here of the complicated relationship between the architecture styles, the gendering of spatial boundaries, and the contingent nature of public spaces goes beyond the simple dichotomy of female-male, private-public, and modern-traditional.  Drawing upon Werlen's (1992, 100-139) notion that space is one of the many forces that constitute, constrain, and mediate social action, I emphasized that the selected public spaces become meaningful only in the context of subjective human actions, including those of female users.

Women's experiences show that there is not a clear distinction between traditional and modern for them in everyday life. Iranian women have developed strategies to move back and forth between modern and traditional public spaces. For example, as many interviewees pointed out, they can easily change their gendered identity by adding red

lipstick to go to Bala Shahr or by putting on a darker scarf and using less make-up to go to Paeen Shahr. They like more traditional public spaces to connect to their cultural and national identities through Islamic-Iranian architecture and functions while at the same time, they use more modern public spaces for the sense of freedom and equity with men. This research is a timely response to the fact that modernizing processes in contexts like Iran have not completely translated into shared expectations of the meaning and function of both public space and public action. It highlighted the lived tensions between public and private boundaries everywhere, the social and political nature of gender boundaries, and the incomplete promises of Modernity in places like Iran.

Returning to the predominate critics of modern and often privatized public spaces in Western societies; it is significant to include experiences of a more diverse group into the conceptualization and evaluation of such places. The critics emphasize the uninteresting "standardized" copy-and-paste architectural design, the overtly controlled behavior through complete surveillance, and potential homogenization and social segregation. Although these criticisms are valid in many cases, particularly in their North American contexts, they do not include the variety of experiences by diverse populations in different countries and cultures.

The meanings and values Iranian women attach to the studied public spaces change the dynamics of commercialized privatized public spaces and convert consumption *in* space to consumption *of* space. The goal is not to contrast the emerging modern public spaces such as shopping malls in Tehran to North American ones, rather I would like to emphasize how the specific written religious laws enforced by the government (e.g. compulsory hijab and the presence of fashion police on Tehran's streets) and unwritten societal norms (e.g. conservative approach to women's role and presence in public in specific neighborhoods in

154

Tehran) can change the consumption culture and overall ambiance of so-called modern public space in an Islamic country. The findings also challenge the homogenizing dimensions of Anglo-American theory on authenticity of postmodern public spaces and highlight the opportunities in learning from international studies.

Women's narratives also refer to space as the sphere of dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined (and therefore always undetermined) by the construction of new relations. It is "always being made and always therefore, in a sense, unfinished" (Massey, 2005:107). For instance, although the pairing of Bala Sharh and Paeen Sharh still survives symbolically in residents' everyday lives and influences their preferences in housing, shopping, and transportation, the role Tehran's subway and other forms of public transportation play in the accessibility to different parts of the city is significant. The spatial and social distinction of Bala Shahr and Paeen Shahr is slowly blurring as more people get to experience other parts of the city, beyond their own neighborhoods. The changes in the symbolic meanings of Bala Shahr and Paeen Shahr considering the role of Tehran's subway can be an interesting subject for further exploration in the future.

Second, findings suggest that gender boundaries never fully translate into lived experience. Gender, by itself, does not offer an essential category nor an independent social construct and it may be studied in regards to culture, class, race and sexuality. I agree with McDowell (1999, 23) that "what it means to be a woman or a man is, therefore, contextual dependent, relational and variable." On the other hand, studies often speak of women, but not necessarily for or from them. Women have become objects, and not subjects. In this study, through open-ended interviews, I have tried to capture Iranian women's experiences and

155

feelings as subjects in the selected public spaces.  Although, this dissertation was mainly based on hearing women's stories and mapping those narratives, the diversity observed among women's experiences and preferences refer to their differences in age, education, socio-economic class, familial culture and religious practices. In addition, it is necessary to mention that the societal forces (such as keeping up with peers in terms of being modern or fashionable) play an important role in understanding women's experiences and preferences.

Finally, it is important to highlight the benefits of integrating GIS visualization and spatial analysis to ethnographic methods. GIS maps illustrated ethnographic patterns that derived from interviews and participant observation to provide a graphic register of spatial meaning from the ground up. The application of the mixed-methods approach contributed to broader questions of how to visually represent the kinds of movement and patterns of agency that tend to remain invisible to Western observers as well as to local planners. By finding spatial patterns on GIS maps, I was able to modify my interviews and ask new questions. It should be stressed that spatial patterns on GIS maps were just the beginning and not what have often been considered as the solution or the end of a project.  Maps can reduce social processes to spatial patterns and treat human activities as a function of space. Maps can leave out the people's stories who actually socially construct public spaces through their actions and constantly (re)define boundaries in such places.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

Although I did not go to the interviews with a list of specific questions, I used the

following general guideline for consistency in types of information that were collected from

each interviewee. One of the reasons that I had to create this guideline was the fact that while

I was hanging out in research sites, I felt I was overloaded by what I was seeing and hearing.

Therefore, I tried to cover the below-mentioned categories during my interviews. Although I

did not ask directly about these factors, I paid extra attention to women's narratives (details

and examples they used) in the interview's transcribing and analysis phase.


GENERAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

| | |
|---|---|
| Space/ecological/finite | spatial arrangements, architectural details, environmental design, accessibility, lighting, enclosure, functions, material, seasonality, availability of bathroom, green space |
| Place/cultural/infinite | symbolic meanings, socio-political background, ethno-historical values, diversity of activities, street life, sense of personal freedom, self-expression, character and identity, psychological comfort |
| Visit characteristics | what was the reason for a visit? How often does the interviewee visit each public space? How long did the interviewee stay in each public space? How far did the interviewee travel to go to the public space? What kind of transportation did the interviewee use to go to the space? Was the interviewee by herself, with a female or male partner? What were the interviewee's feelings, emotions, and preferences? How did the interviewee explain each public space? |

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160

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VITA

Nazgol Bagheri was born and grew up in Tehran, Iran. She started to enjoy the complexity of urban landscapes in high school when she observed the city while riding the bus in Tehran. She received a Bachelor of Architecture in September 2004, a Bachelor of Computer Science in September 2006, and a Master of Urban Design in November 2007 from the National University of Iran (Shahid Beheshti). She worked as an architect for urban projects at a multidisciplinary international design firm between 2004 and 2007. In 2005, she established the *Khayyam* private design school, offering hand-sketching preparation classes in Tehran for the national universities entrance exam. Over the period of three years, she tutored 87 applicants to enter urban design schools in Iran.

She came to the United States on the last day of 2007 and started her interdisciplinary doctoral program. She is interested in navigating disciplinary terrain in Geography, Urban Planning, and Social Anthropology to develop a working theoretical model to account for changes in the use and design of public space and the unique relationship between the aesthetics of modern planning, the gendering of spatial boundaries, and the contingent nature of public space in Middle Eastern contexts.

She has taught design studio at the University of Missouri-Kansas City's Architecture, Urban Design and Planning department. She has also been an instructor of a diverse range of geography courses including GIS and Geographical Elements of Urban Planning in the Department of Geosciences. In her research, she is committed to challenge and to enrich the Anglo-American hegemonic theories through studying the people whose stories are often unheard, including women, children, and other minorities.