

“CREATIVE DESTRUCTION” AS A POLITICAL APPARATUS  
IN TABRIZ’S URBAN REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS:  
SHAHID BEHESHTI SQUARE SINCE THE 1990S

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SAMIRA ASADMOSAFFAR

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SHAHID BEHESHTI SQUARE URBAN TRANSFORMATION FROM THE  
1990S TO PRESENT**

submitted by **SAMIRA ASADMOSAFFAR** in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree **Master of Architecture in Architecture Department, Middle East  
Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Halil Kalıpçılar  
Dean, Graduate School of **Natural and Applied Sciences**

Prof. Dr. Cânâ Bilsel  
Head of Department, **Architecture Dept., METU**

Prof. Dr. Güven Arif Sargın \_\_\_\_\_  
Supervisor, **Architecture Dept., METU**

**Examining Committee Members:**

Prof. Dr. Inci Basa \_\_\_\_\_  
Architecture Dept., METU

Prof. Dr. Güven Arif Sargın \_\_\_\_\_  
Architecture Dept., METU

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bülent Batuman \_\_\_\_\_  
Urban Design and Landscape Architecture Dept., Bilkent

Date: 20.01.2023

**I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.**

Name Last name : Samira Asadmosaffar

Signature :

## **ABSTRACT**

### **“CREATIVE DESTRUCTION” AS A POLITICAL APPARATUS IN TABRIZ’S URBAN REVITALIZATION PROGRAMS: SHAHID BEHESHTI SQUARE SINCE THE 1990S**

Asadmosaffar, Samira  
Master of Architecture, Department of Architecture  
Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Güven Arif Sargin

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The primary aim of this research is to examine the urban revitalization scenario of the Shahid Beheshti Square in the historical center of Tabriz City after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. Regarding Iran's post-revolution and post-war (Iran-Iraq war) eras, in the 1990s, after a decade of state ownership, the government started liberalizing and privatizing its economic structure. Parallel to the state's political-economic regulations, the city core's historical and cultural potential generated a profit-making ground for multiple destructions and rebuilding phases. This study framed the cycle in the Beheshti Square scope under the umbrella concept of "creative destruction" as renewal plans (the 1990s and 2020s), which signifies the temporality of the urban revitalization project.

Hybrid Neoliberalism and Islamic Iranian representation are the conditions that formed the meanings behind "creative destruction" as a political apparatus in the Tabriz urban revitalization program. While the local administration erased the entire historical urban fabric, which led to the demolition of multiple courtyard houses and provided a tabula rasa for constructing modern commercial blocks and a tower, they

maintained the Karim Khan mosque as a representation of heritage Iranian Islamic architecture. Shahid Beheshti Square emerged as a modern reinterpretation of old squares of Tabriz and was filled with symbolic architectural elements such as the vast carpet-patterned pavement and the addition of minarets to Karim Khan mosque (as a stronger representation of Islamic ideology). That is, creative destruction exploits historical urban fabric to commercialize local cultural values, create a tourism center, and acquire a global Islamic city image. Yet, the finished project failed to make any social or financial progress, and after a short time, the revitalization project produce a problematic public space that required a second phase of urban renewal.

**KEYWORDS:** Creative Destruction, Historical Urban Fabric, Hybrid Neoliberalism, Urban Revitalization, Shahid Beheshti Square, Tabriz

## ÖZ

### **TEBRİZ KENTSEL CANLANDIRMA PROGRAMLARINDA SİYASİ BİR ARAÇ OLARAK “YARATICI YIKIM”: SHAHİD BEHESHTİ MEYDANI 1990’LARDAN GÜNÜMÜZE KENTSEL DÖNÜŞÜMÜ**

Asadmosaffar, Samira  
Mimarlık Yüksek Lisansı, Mimarlık Bölümü  
Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Güven Arif Sargın

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Bu araştırmanın öncelikli amacı, İran'da 1979 İslam Devrimi sonrası Tebriz Şehri'nin tarihi merkezinde yer alan Shahid Beheshti Meydanı'nın kentsel canlandırma senaryosunu incelemektir. İran'ın devrim sonrası ve savaş sonrası (İran-İrak savaşı) döneminde, 1990'larda, on yıllık devlet mülkiyetinden sonra, hükümet ekonomik yapısını liberalleştirmeye ve özelleştirmeye başlamış; devletin siyasi-ekonomik düzenlemelerine paralel olarak, şehir merkezinin tarihi ve kültürel potansiyeli, çok sayıda yıkım ve yeniden inşa eylemleri için kârlı bir zemin oluşturmuştur. Bu bağlamda çalışma, 1990'lar ve 2020'lerdeki yenileme planlarını inceleyerek Beheshti Meydanı'nın hikayesini "yaratıcı yıkım" şemsiye kavramı altında tanımlamaktadır.

Hibrit neoliberalizm ve İslami İran temsiliyeti, Tebriz kentsel canlandırma programında siyasi bir aygıt olarak "yaratıcı yıkım"ın ardındaki anlamları oluşturan koşullardır. Yerel yönetim, çok sayıda avlulu evin yıkılmasına yol açan ve modern ticari bloklar ve bir kule inşa etmek için bir tabula rasa sağlayan tüm tarihi kentsel dokuyu yerle bir ederken, İran İslam mimarisi mirasının bir temsili olarak Kerim Han

camisini kormuş; Shahid Beheshti Meydanı, Tebriz'in eski meydanlarının modern bir yeniden yorumu olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Geniş halı desenli kaldırımlar ve Kerim Han camisine (İslami ideolojinin daha güçlü bir temsili olarak) minarelerin eklenmesi gibi sembolik mimari unsurlar süreç içinde uygulamaya konulmuştur. Özetle yaratıcı yıkım, yerel kültürel değerleri ticarileştirmek, bir turizm merkezi yaratmak ve küresel bir İslam şehir imajı elde etmek için tarihi kentsel dokudan faydalanmıştır. Öte yandan, tamamlanan proje herhangi bir sosyal veya finansal ilerleme sağlayamamış ve kısa bir süre sonra, canlandırma projesi ikinci bir kentsel yenilemeyi gerektiren sorunlu bir kamusal alan üretmiştir.

**ANAHTAR KELİMELER:** Yaratıcı Yıkım, Tarihi Kent Dokusu, Hibrit Neoliberalizm, Kentsel Canlandırma, Shahid Beheshti Meydanı, Tebriz

*To my family:  
Fatemeh, Mahmoud, and Sara*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The transformation of the Mansour crossroads to Shahid Beheshti square in the historical core of Tabriz city after the Islamic Revolution (1979) in Iran is the main concern of this study. In this regard, examining "creative destruction" as an apparatus in urban revitalization programs concerned the beginning of Iran's adoption of neoliberal regulations.

Since the industrial Revolution, urban transformation has been widespread in many contexts due to political issues, capital mobility, population expansion, and migration concerns (Rad Yousefnia, 2019). In this process, political interventions, globalization, and mass culture recreate new relationships between people and urban spaces. Thus, capitalist states, commodification, and economic motivations have highly influenced people's perceptions. Harvey (2000) states that capital always seeks out land as a commodity and secure investments because of the uneven geographical developments and production of space. Within this perspective, the most potent forces that alter the urban fabric in capitalist states are commodification and economic motivations to maximize profits. Capitalism, as a historical global system, constantly seeks universalism by putting everything under its primary impulse for competitive accumulation. Yet, one of the most crucial groups in implementing capitalist government initiatives is the local administrations, who interpret and develop the strategies, policies, and design standards using local conditions. Modern Iranian

urbanism reconstructed the old cities in response to socio-spatial trends beginning in the 1920s. Under capitalism and modernization, traditional cities have been reshaped to provide for automotive access and new urban infrastructures. After the 1979 revolution, urban policies and governmental agencies' approaches (local municipalities, the Department for Roads and Urban Development, Iran Cultural Heritage, Handcraft, and Tourism Organization) toward the revitalization of historical fabrics are a general and significant problem in Iranian historical cities. As a result, the traditional Iranian cities of today are now made up of disparate parts that have either been abandoned for a long time or have been replaced by modern construction that does not match the area. (Tavakoli & Hedayati Marzbali, 2021)

In this study, the relationship between space and ideas such as means of production, capital accumulation, property rights, and ideological representation is investigated. As Harvey (2000) states well, lingering and reflecting on the concept of space can make it more clear to us that at least this concept, which today is circulating in election debates, is also utilized as a means of advertising and making promises.

## **1.2. Definition of the Problematic**

Iran was governing under a State Ownership economic structure during the first decade (1979-1990s). Meanwhile, following the revolution, Iraq initiated an eight-year-long war against Iran which along with U.S. sanctions left country's economy in very poor shape. Thus, by the 1990s government started reforming its economic system through liberalization/ privatization policies parallel to the global neoliberal changes. These regulations provided significant changes in urban planning procedures, administrative committees, and investment strategies.

In line with new policies and urban regeneration strategies, a historical and cultural urban axis was proposed for the historical core of cities in Iran. In Tabriz, as part of a

mega-scale revitalization program (the 1990s) consists of main historical buildings (Saheb-ol-Amr square, Grand Bazaar of Tabriz, Blue Mosque) Mansour crossroad was determined to be established as one side of the historical urban axis which was linked to Saheb-ol-Amr ancient square. In this case, there was a solid recommendation to set arts and cultural spatial programs through this axis. Regrettably, this did not occur, and most commercial, administrative, and financial uses were placed instead. Execution of the project started with the acquisition of mostly residential and small commercial properties from residents of the neighborhood. The ultimate goals of this project failed and even though this Mansour crossroad has played a crucial role as a prosperous node, after restructuring, it became a large ghost area at the heart of the city and lead to a total crisis. Therefore, although short time have passed since the beginning of the project, now, the Municipal Council has called on the municipality and the city council to reorganize Shahid Beheshti Square, solve the existing problems and make it one of the tourist attractions of Tabriz. In other words, the revitalization plan not only makes no social and financial progress in the region but also requires a second plan to renew the existing alterations of the urban fabric. Following 2020, the square has undergone another renewal project, aimed at improving its functionality and aesthetic appeal. The project involved the redesign and reconstruction of the square's infrastructure, including roads, sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping. New fountains, sculptures, and other public art installations are also planned to enhance the square's visual appeal.

Shahid Beheshti Square is a vital urban node on Imam Khomeini (former Pahlavi) main road along the east-west axis of Tabriz. The implementation of the Beheshti Square Project was started by the Municipality of Tabriz in the 1990s, under an agreement with the participation of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to participate in investing resources. It was expressed as a successful investment experience of gathering administrative and private-sector investors<sup>1</sup>. The removal of

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<sup>1</sup> The organization of private companies will express in following chapters

courtyard houses changed the historical character of the urban core and severed social relations within the neighborhood. The project included maintaining the Karim Khan mosque's heritage, constructing a metro station, 12 interconnected blocks (for commercial, service, recreational, and residential uses) around the square, the Ipek Tower, underground parking, and a shopping center<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, open recreational spaces such as the skating rink, green spaces, and a unique, vast carpet-patterned pavement using almost 500,000 pieces of natural stone in an area of 1226 square meters were designed in the central courtyard of the square.

### **1.3.Theoretical Framework and Methodology**

Although there are several publications, books, and conferences regarding so-called dilapidated (with historical or unhistorical background) fabrics and related policies in Iran, relatively few studies assess urban strategies critically. The majority of research on deteriorating tissues focuses on finding the optimal solutions to the problems of these neighborhoods. Others have concentrated on the historical and evolutionary path of urban renewal policies. Along with these, there have been studies evaluating the implementation of urban policies from various social, urban injustice, and sustainability perspectives. According to these studies, urban policies disregard the social characteristics (sense of belonging to the neighborhood, high social and cultural capital) and economic features (empowerment of residents, focus of urban management on national investors instead of local residents). These policies have rendered many cases of dilapidated fabrics, which are mostly renovated for residential and commercial uses, ineffective. Nonetheless, the objective of this study is to conceptualize the main factors, motivations, political reasons, and local/national governmental agents behind why and how these policies are decided and

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<sup>2</sup> With the exception of Ipek Tower, almost all of these areas are empty. Only a few of the shops surrounding the square remain open for a few months before closing.

implemented, which are aligned with the economic regulations as well as the administrative and organizational forces in Iran.

The study claims that the Beheshti Square revitalization planning procedure applied "creative destruction" to accomplish neoliberal and ideological purposes. I relate the ideas of particular scholars, extending the analysis of the planning procedure, implementation, and aftermath. It played a significant role in urban revitalization as historical buildings were replaced with new, more financially efficient ones. This provides capital circulation (through the construction path and entrepreneurial activities) in the poor economy of the country and also paves the way for new potentials of accumulation by dispossession (in Harvey's terms). Yet, the process leads to the disappearance of traditional local commercials and neighborhoods while also creating new opportunities for urban growth. The ambiguity of urban policies and language that government agents use in presenting historical and cultural arguments destroys historic urban fabrics. This is the most crucial difference that should be considered between urban revitalization and urban growth. That is, although creative destruction can be seen as a positive force in economic terms, as urban revitalization approaches, it has exploitative consequences.

To elaborate on this, Harvey opens a theoretical ground in a Marxist frame, which drew a model of capitalism that was focused on the circulation of capital through three circuits. The primary circuit involves the production of commodities to create surplus value, the second circuit involves investing in advanced commodities and services such as technology and finance. The third circuit as spatial fixes involves the use of other circuits' profit to invest in the production and consumption of space, such as urban development, which generates profits from commodification and branding of the space, and the creation of new markets and consumer cultures. Focusing on this, in Marx's terms, given the necessity of "motion" and the "fluidity" of capital, this study particularly emphasizes the inherent cycle in creative destruction led to the temporality of each urban renewal which is characterized by the need to constantly new phases of

destruction and rebuilding. By understanding the pace and sequence of change, the shorter "life cycle" of buildings resulted in negative spatial implications in tendencies of urban revitalization. In addition, Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession is of special interest for the analysis of the case study as it deals with the commodification and privatization of historical courtyard houses and the conversion of property rights. In other words, creative destruction is exploitative through the displacement of local residents.

Understanding Iran's contemporary economic structure was one of the most challenging parts of this research because of Iran's complicated history and political situation from a global viewpoint and the dominance of the state's stance at the national level. Neoliberal economic principles are combined in Iran's hybrid neoliberalism with the nation's distinctive political and cultural setting. Iran and neoliberalism have had a complicated and evolving relationship since the Islamic Revolution in 1979. On the one hand, in an attempt to boost the economy and attract in foreign investment, the government has enacted certain neoliberal economic policies, such as privatization and deregulation. On the other hand, the government has also maintained firm control over important economic sectors, including oil and gas, and has implemented policies to improve social welfare and diminish the income gap. The government has additionally placed policies into action that support domestic industry and reduce reliance on imports while yet retaining substantial governmental involvement in the economy.

Lefebvre's theory of the "becoming" quality of space requires a dialectic understanding of space that includes its use and exchange values as well as a "causal (determined-determining) relationship between the two." (Özkan, 2008) Lefebvre argues that space is produced through three interrelated processes: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space. These three processes are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. For example, representations of space can influence spatial practice by shaping inhabitant's perceptions and expectations of how

space should be used or experienced. Representations of space refer to the various symbols, images, and discourses that shape our understanding of space and the meanings that are attributed to it. Lefebvre's representation of space highlights the ways in which space is socially constructed and produced and the importance of recognizing the role of power and cultural values in shaping urban space. Lefebvre refers to the meanings attributed to space with the concept of representations of space that are associated with the agents who are the producers of the concepts related to space, and these agents serve in a way that is consistent with the dominant mode of production.

The Islamic society of Iran, which is identified by its predominance of Muslims and the prevalence of Islamic ideas, beliefs, and customs among its citizens, has a long history in this country. In contrast, Islamism is "an ideology to politically advocate Islam in shaping the social realm" (Batuman, 2020). The government of Iran has played a significant role in shaping the representation of the Islamic environment in the country. Following the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Iranian government sought to create a political system that was based on Islamic principles and values. One of the ways in which the government has represented Islamic space is through the physical design of urban areas. For example, the government has encouraged the construction of mosques and other religious buildings, as well as the use of Islamic symbols and motifs in public spaces.

Individuals' urban experiences are inevitably limited and fragmented. On the other hand, we all have a holistic understanding of the city, and these understandings emerge as a result of mental processes rather than bodily experiences. The representations produced with visual tools determine the meanings of the space, and the boundaries define the space with the elements they contain and leave out. The study attempts to illustrate that the ideological purposes behind "creative destruction" exploit historic and cultural heritage in the urban revitalization of Beheshti Square. While commercializing cultural values, it produces a government-desired representation of

an Islamic Iranian city. At this point, it could be claimed that the representation of space is subjected to the process of the aestheticization of ideology and serves to implement the hegemony of the state. Erasing the historical fabric as well as alterations to original Islamic heritage buildings are examples of such implementations that result in forgetting the past and creating alternative present pasts.

Since the main concept of the revitalization of Tabriz's historical-cultural axis was the revival of the ancient Silk Route, the study investigated traces of the establishment of the Silk Route and its axis using UNESCO's archival document on the Grand Bazaar of Tabriz, followed by the spatial organization of Tabriz's urban core formation and its expansion along this axis. The formation and transformation of the Beheshti Square project's historiography are investigated using nineteenth-century Tabriz maps and aerial photographs of the city captured in 1956 and 1967. Comparing the available aerial photographs after the 1979 revolution, between 2013 and 2020, the last condition of the district's previous urban fabric, before the project's implementation and its development, was assessed. Superimposition of old maps and aerial photographs from different periods and project design documents (plans, 3D models) draw the physical transformation in the approximate boundaries of the historical urban fabric. Comparing the modifications between the Pahlavi era and the post-revolutionary period of 1979 contributes to a better understanding of the ideological motivations behind the changes. Due to the lack of documented information about the social and physical environment of the district between post-revolution and the project's implementation (as the residents were displaced and all the buildings were demolished without documentation), Amir Sanajou, an archaeometrist, museum curator, and heritage interpreter in Tabriz, provided a significant understanding for the study.

The objective of this thesis was to approach "creative destruction" as an ideological and neoliberal instrument of urban governance. The study is structured at three stages of urban transformation: a) the beginning of engaging modernization (capitalism) in

the Pahlavi era; b) the beginning of politico-economic privatization after the revolution; and c) the failure of the project after its completion. In this regard, after reviewing the theoretical scope and the content of the studies, the study benefited from architectural drawings, municipality execution plans, photographs, and government officials' speeches in the media. They used different languages to present their arguments, as representations of urban political implications require new phases of renewal to legitimize intentions, while the voice of the original inhabitants of space was entirely absent in the planning battle.

The study examined the representation of the Beheshti Square project through photographs and articles on the official website of Sharestan Consultancy, governmental official news agencies (such as IRNA, ISNA, and Tasnim News), and tourism weblogs that seek to offer a beautiful image of Tabriz. This was addressed to comprehend and compare how the administration represents the project, how it is evaluated in the language of rhetoric, and how these representations influence the public's perception of space in this case. Comparing these depictions to photographs of the project's actual condition reveals major variations. Also, my field research was helpful besides my living experience in this region for five years during my bachelor's study at Tabriz Arts University, which is located at a close distance from Beheshti Square.

#### **1.4. Structure of the Thesis**

The study will attempt to cover the above-mentioned issues, structured in five chapters:

- 1) Chapter 1 introduced the general perspective and problems of the Shahid Beheshti Square, as it was the study's original inspiration. Theoretical

framework and methodology of research that was formulated on the investigation of this specific square's urban transformation.

- 2) Chronological historical framework: This chapter will review the spatial organization of the very first core of Tabriz during the early Islamic era and its development on the east-west axis as a result of the Silk Route's passage. It will also examine the significant impacts of the first signs of Iranian Modernity, which started by the Qajar dynasty and were fertilized by the Pahlavi era on the previous urban fabric. The last part will concentrate on the 1979 post-revolution ideological and spatial transformations and describe the revitalization project of the historical core of the city.
- 3) This chapter will start by reviewing the existing global literature on the main concept of creative destruction and the neoliberal logic of urban transformations. It will focus on hybrid neoliberal regulations in Iran, which form political spatiality under the theocratic authority of the state. The final section will identify three stages of creative destruction that occurred within the scope of the study, with different as well as similar meanings in different moments. These stages are related to the relationship between governmental agents, their motivations, and spatial approaches to the transformation of Beheshti Square.
- 4) This chapter will, first, review the potential of the "representation of space," in the words of Lefebvre. Following the first section, it focuses on the representation of Beheshti Square after the Islamic Revolution, including symbolic architectural elements, design documents, and photographs, that deal with the political aestheticization of urban fabric erasure. It will analyze the Iranian Islamic cultural codes' logic behind creative destruction that determines the meanings of the representations to legitimize the profit-making motivations and provide a modern Islamic image of the renewed square.

5) Considering the state's authority on the economy and built environment, the last chapter will conclude the study with the political outcomes of "creative destruction" spatial practice.

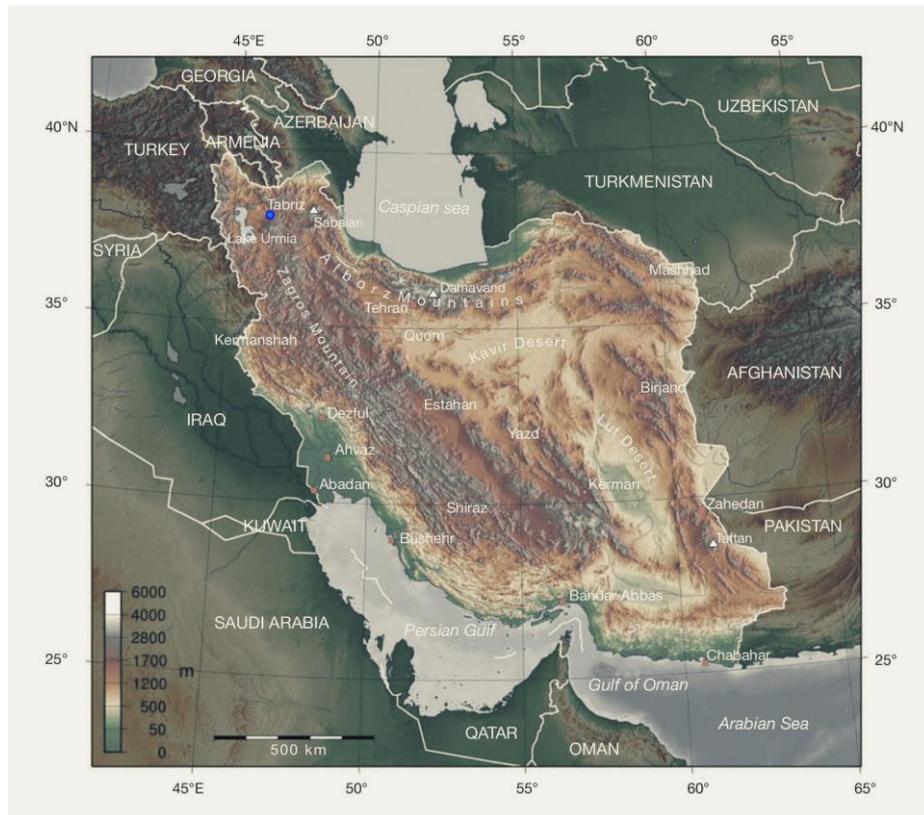


Figure 1.1: Location of Tabriz in Iran. Source: <https://gisgeography.com/iran-map/>

(visited: February 19, 2023) -Edited: author



## CHAPTER 2

### **KARIMKHAN DISTRICT CORE (Markaz Mahalle), MANSOUR CROSSROAD, SHAHID BEHESHTI SQUARE TRANSFORMATION**

#### **2.1. Brief History of Tabriz**

(Tav-Rizh) (Tofigh, 2020) is one of the oldest and most populated cities located northwest of Iran's East Azerbaijan province. Until recently, the oldest reliable document that displays the ancient life in this region was an inscription of Sargon II, the king of Assyria, dating to 714 BC. In 1997, the coincidental discovery of an ancient burial cemetery<sup>3</sup> during an excavation in the region of the Kabud Mosque<sup>4</sup> revealed the initial signs of the civilization of the Iron Age area of Tabriz going back to the 1st millennium BC. (Hezhabr Nobari, 1999 – 2000)

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<sup>3</sup> Blue Mosque Museum Site-Iron Age Cemetery: The site is located to the north, northwest, and northeast of the Blue Mosque. It covers an area of eight hectares. The historical background of archaeological studies through the excavation of the area by the construction companies in 1997; Nosratollah Motamedi and Nobari recorded the remains of the first Millennium B.C. began the excavation in 2000 and continued till 2003. A cemetery dating back to Iron Age II and containing remains from the Qajar, Safavid, Timurid, and Ikhanid eras has been discovered. Discovered Artifacts and Objects with Skeletons: Pale, Grey, and Red Potteries; Agate; Limestone; Turquoise Beads; Bronze Jewelers; and Bronze and Iron Weapons. The form of burial is formal in juvenile cases and common in prehistory. Undoubtedly, this kind of burial shows the beliefs of this tribe regarding the continuity of life after death.

<sup>4</sup> Also known as Göy Masjid, Blue mosque which is adjacent to Beheshti square



Figure 2.1: A skeleton discovered around *Blue Mosque* buried as the fetus lies in its mother's  
Source: (UNESCO, 2009)



Figure 2.2: Site of Graveyard of Blue Mosque Museum. Source: (UNESCO, 2009)

### **2.1.1. The Silk Route Traces on the City Core of Tabriz**

The establishment of the historical and commercial silk road was undoubtedly one of the most prominent economic and communication developments in the ancient globe,

stretching over 4000 miles from China's Xi'an through India, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, and the African continent to Greece, Rome, and Britain. These routes are formally established by the Han Dynasty of China in 130 BCE for over 1500 years to 1453 CE. Later, Silk Road split into numerous important routes to Southeast and Southern Asia and Northwest Asia (including Northern Iran, Anatolia, and Azerbaijan). As the Silk Road advanced, sea channels were also formed. Historical accounts mention numerous routes, including desert, stepped, sea, and routes from the northwest and southwest of China. The name "Silk Road" was first used by the German geographer "Ferdinand von Richthofen" in the middle of the 19th century.

Before the Silk Road, there was the Persian Royal Road, established by the Achaemenid Empire between around 550 to 330 BCE. The Persian Royal Road ran from Susa to the Mediterranean Sea and Turkey. Along the road were postal stations and horses so envoys could deliver messages quickly throughout the empire. After conquering Persia, Alexander the Great established the Alexandria Eschate in 330 in the Fergana Valley of a Neb, which is modern Tajikistan in Central Asia. The Macedonian troops who stayed in the city intermarried, becoming the Greco-Bactrian kingdom, which flourished in central Asia after Alexander's death. At one point, the empire extended to the edge of China. From this, it is thought that the West first came into contact with China around 200 BCE. The Silk Road continued to see widespread use until the Byzantine Empire fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 CE, who promptly closed off the Silk Road and cut all ways to the West.

However, according to UNESCO's archival document on the Grand Bazaar of Tabriz, some points should be added to the starting points of the Silk Road's establishment. (1) Significant interaction between the nomadic tribes of Central Asia, western China, and the Mediterranean regions indicates the existence of a delineated system of routes before the 1st century BCE; (2) an existing road system that was first built for military purposes was adopted by traders from Central Asia and the Mediterranean. For the reasons stated above, Alexander the Great embraced it in the fourth century B.C.; (3)

archaeological finds show that the silk found in Bactria reliably dates to around 1500 BCE. The similarities between the wreckage of a civilization dating back to 1500 B.C. surrounding the Blue Mosque and bacterial assemblages indicate the possibility of trade relations between North West and Central Asia prior to the formal establishment of the Silk Road.

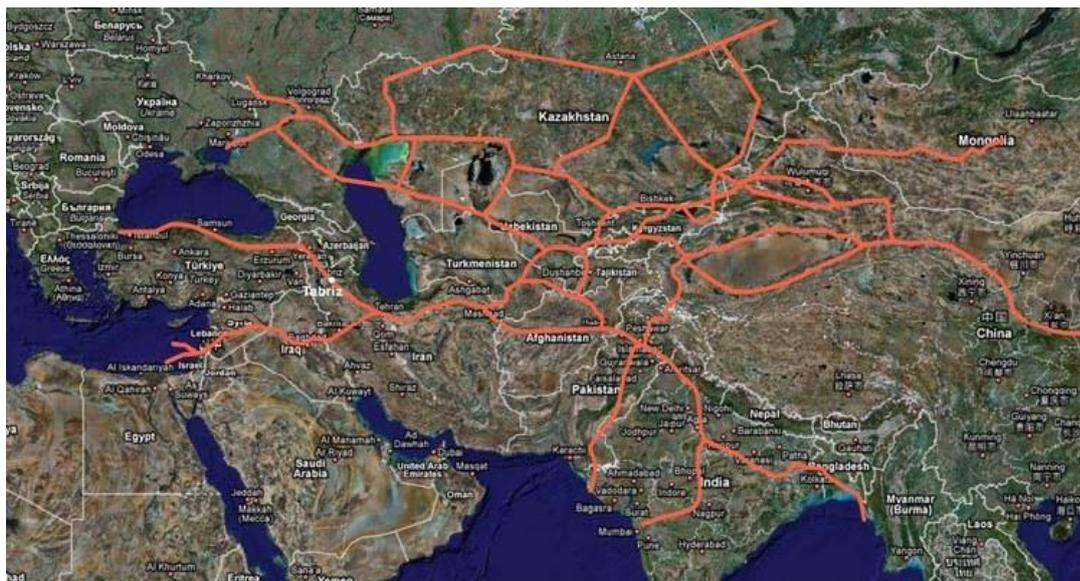


Figure 2.3: The Silk Routes from 13th century AD to 16th century AD.

Source: (UNESCO, 2009)

### 2.1.2. Tabriz In the Early Islamic Era Until Before Qajar Dynasty

Tabriz became the capital of several dynasties like the Ilkhanate, Qara Qoyunlu, Aq Qoyunlu, and the Safavids in sections of time. As the city was situated on the Silk Road, which connected the Far East and the West, it granted its geopolitical and economic significance (Yousefi Rad, 2019). The historical spatial structure of the city of Tabriz is still ambiguous due to its location within the geographical-political borders and the several earthquakes that have always plagued it. According to Yahya

Zoka's (1980) research, among the earthquakes happened in Tabriz, four occurred in 858, 1042, 1272, and 1780 AD, causing the greatest damage to the architecture and urban elements of this city. Al-Umari described the latest earthquake (1780 AD) as "mosques, houses, and caravanserais were destroyed, and no wall remained standing. The ground sank about four meters, and 60,000 people perished under the ruins, apart from their animals." (Melville, 1981) Thus, there have always been two threats throughout history of city : frequent earthquakes and invasions by adjacent powerful nations like Russia and the Ottoman Empire. These elements play a significant role in the spatial arrangement of Tabriz. (Mansouri & Mohammadzadeh, 2017)

Most of the historical cities of Iran have a primary core and an ancient historical context, which is of considerable value and also an identity for the city. The beginning of Tabriz's Iranian Islamic urban pattern, which characterized the city with the *Jaame* mosque and the Grand Bazaar at its center (in the south of Mehran river), surrounded by the Rawadi rampart (first fortification wall) and gardens outside it (Vahab Zadeh, 1955), dates back to the 10th to 12th centuries. As the city witnessed changes, the neighborhoods were influenced by the city's fixed center while also being situated following its main paths converge from gateways. (Mansouri & Mohammadzadeh, 2017) (Figure 2.3). In the Ilkhanid era (13th and 14th centuries), as Tabriz was the capital, the territory of the city developed and included many gardens, neighborhoods, complexes such as *Shanb Ghazan* and *Alishah Jami* mosque, tombs and cemeteries, and the paths that linked them. One of the most important commercial routes that reached from the south to Rey city and from the north to Istanbul and the Caucasus was most probably the route between Saravarud and Shervan gates, which placed the most important elements of the city around itself in later periods and became the main structure of the city (Mansouri & Mohammadzadeh, 2017). This is a crucial fact pertaining to the focus of the current investigation. The formation of these paths displays the current Beheshti Square's position on the Silk Road and its transformation during different periods, carried out in several types of spaces with a range of urban purposes.

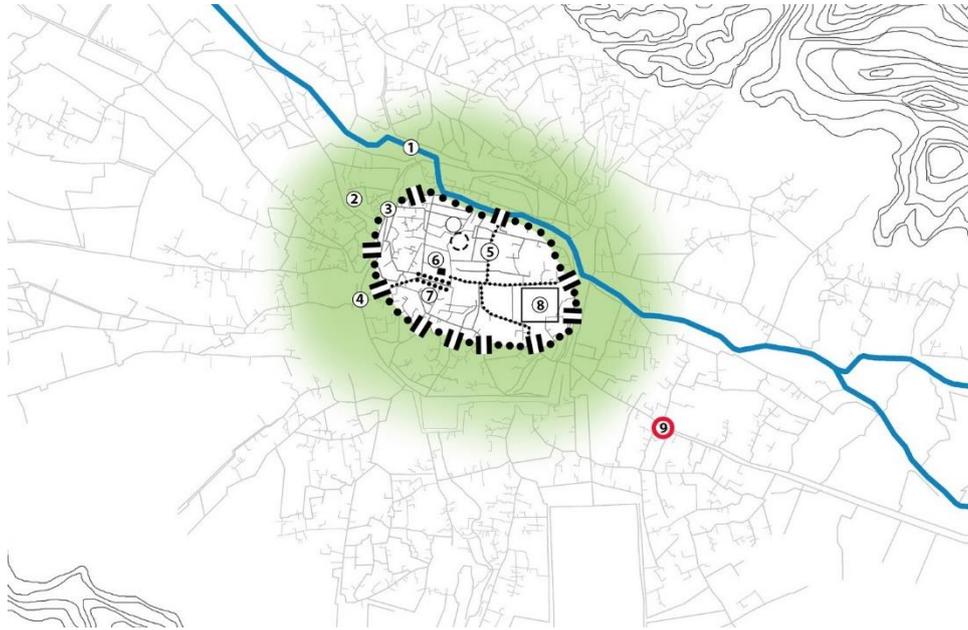


Figure 2.4: The very first core of Tabriz, from 10th to 12th century.

Source: (Mansouri & Mohammadzadeh, 2017). Edited: author

1. Meidan chiy (Mehran river)
2. Gardens around the city
3. Rawadi clan
4. Gate
5. The main city routes
6. Jami mosque
7. Bazaar
8. Government palace (Old government house)
9. Current area of Beheshti square

At some point during the era of the Qoyunlu Turks, the power of the Qaraqyunlu dynasty reached its peak, and this chance led to the improvement of the city (Karbalyi, 1963). Tabriz was expanded to the north, on the other side of the Mehranroud river. Governmental and religious buildings transferred around Sahibabad (*Saheb-ol-Amr*) square, the name of the garden on which it was built, including Meydan, with various public buildings surrounding it like a bath, mosque, school, mausoleum, and caravanserais by Qaraqoyunlus (UNESCO, 2009). Sahibabad was one of Iran's first geometric and pre-designed Meydans to hold military and governmental attribution (Hanachi & Nejad, 2006). Jahānshāh Gharāgoyunlu built the other significant historical building of the city in this period, the Mozaffarieh Complex, which contains buildings such as a tomb, mosque, inn, bath, cistern, library,

monastery, and several gardens, as a part of this complex. (UNESCO, 2009) Some say that his wife, Bayim Khātoun, and his daughter built them, and Jahan Shah, along with his wife and most of their children, were buried there. (Karbalaie, 1963). But unfortunately, most of these buildings have been destroyed over time, either due to factors such as earthquakes and wars or due to neglect and inappropriate management of political, economic, and sometimes religious motivations. Now only the mosque and its tomb remain. (Ansari & Nejad Ebrahimi, 2009). The east-west communication axis, which connected Rabe Rashidi and Shanb Ghazan neighborhoods, as well as the northwest-southeast axis, which connected important elements such as the Mozaffarieh complex and Hassan Padeshah complex to the city center, were the most significant communication paths shaping the structure of the city. Kabud (Blue) Mosque, one of the most beautiful heritages of Tabriz, adjoining Beheshti Square, was part of the Mozaffariyeh complex. It was constructed on the latter axis (the Silk Road), which made the commercial axis more important and is the only building that remains today.

However, Tabriz was not remarkably developed during the Safavid dynasty. Since most of Shah Ismail's reign was spent in conflict with constant exposure to Ottoman attacks, no significant buildings were constructed, and the spatial structure of the city allied with the Ilkhani era. When the capital transferred to Qazvin in 1555, Sahibabad Meydan lost its administrative function and governmental importance (Bani Masud, 2009). In addition to struggles with the Ottoman government, two consecutive earthquakes caused more destruction. As a result, the city's spatial territory has weakened, and it could not maintain its past economic, political, and cultural prosperity. Yet, by the end of this era, the bazaar remained the primary core component of the city and developed near the Mehran river due to the significance of the Sahib Abad complex. Old Khiaban and Old Bazaar were built throughout this period, which connected eastern neighborhoods, complexes, and the Blue Mosque to the city center (Mansouri & Mohammadzadeh, 2017)

Nasuh Efendi, known as Metrakçı, the famous painter of Sultan Suleiman Ottoman's army, depicted many of the landmarks of the Ottoman army's movement route and recorded them in his book *Fetihname-i Karabuğdan*, which he prepared for the Shah himself. Nasuh also mentions all the cities the army encountered along the way. He gave the details of the spatial structure of the city of Tabriz as a miniature map at the beginning of Shah Tahmasab's reign in 1538 AD, which is one of the first drawn maps of Tabriz.

The initial points obtained concerning the Tabriz miniature map show that the miniature is drawn in a north-south direction, and the gaze of Nasuh in his drawing is toward the east. The buildings are marked in such a way that they are easy to identify. Also, the city is surrounded by a rectangular rampart with rounded corners, and four gates are visible on this rampart, which seems to be the essential gates of the city from the perspective of Mataraqchi. The Mehranroud River runs through the middle of the town, and its left side belongs to governmental and religious centers established around a vast square in Sahebabad. On the right side, with higher building density, the most important buildings of Tabriz, such as the Bazaar, the Blue Mosque, the Alishah Jaame Mosque (Ark), and the Old Square (Kohna Meydan), are drawn. (Fakhari, Parsi, Bani Masoud, 2006)

Jean Chardin, who visited Tabriz between 1673-1677, drew a precise drawing of a panoramic view of the city (Figure 2.1). This painting also makes it simple to recognize iconic buildings, including the Ark Alishah, the Blue Mosque, the city walls, the main square, and the Jaame Mosque. He considered this town to be devoid of any walls and ramparts, as well as any necessary fortifications, but traces of the Ghazani rampart can still be seen in some parts (UNESCO, 2009). Regarding one of the other famous buildings of Hassan Padishah, the part of the bazaar that links the two sides, Jean Chardin (1956) states: "... The most beautiful and interesting bazaar of Tabriz is the bazaar where expensive goods and pieces of jewelry are sold. The name of this bazaar is Gheisarieh Bazaar, which means Shah's Bazaar. This bazaar is

octagonal and very big, and it was constructed upon the order of Ouzun Hassan, whose capital was Tabriz." The considerable expansion of the covered bazaar of Tabriz occurred in the following centuries to the extent that it became the most extensive traditional bazaar in Iran; hence, Tabriz was recognized as a wealthy city and the hub of the carpet, jewelry, gold, and silk industries (Bani Masud, 2009).

After the era of the Qaraqoyunlus and during the Safavid era, based on the drawings of Matrakçı and Chardin, the evidence illustrates that the Blue Mosque was settled at the eastern end of the city and in a low-density area. These investigations demonstrate that the Mozaffarieh complex was built outside the city and on the way to the Silk Road.

As mentioned, Tabriz witnessed several natural disasters like earthquakes and floods, including the last one that occurred in 1780, during the Zandiyeh dynasty. The earthquake left most of the city in ruins, along with many prominent structures such as the Alishah, Shanbe Ghazan, Alaiyeh, Dameshgiyeh, Magsudiyeh, Mozaffariyeh, and Nasriyeh complexes. Therefore, the establishment of the Qajar dynasty in 1785 affected the city's destroyed urban structure, which was the beginning of modernization in Iran. (Fakhari. Parsi. Bani Masoud, 2006)

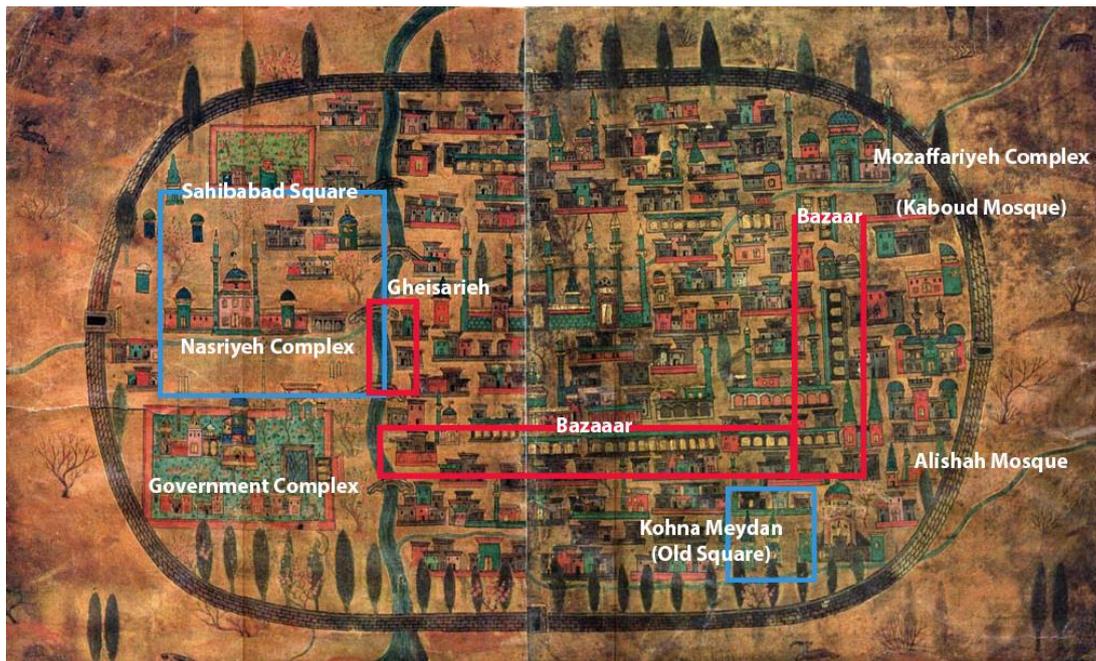


Figure 2.5: Connection of important parts of Tabriz (Important complexes and squares) and skeleton of the city structure by Tabriz Bazaar (Taken from miniature map of Tabriz – Matrakçı, 1537).

Source: (UNESCO, 2009). Edited: author

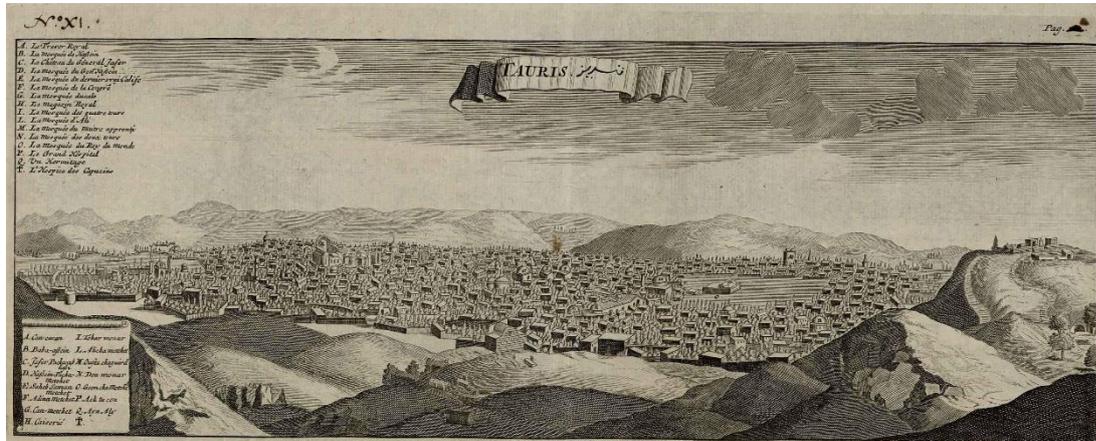


Figure 2.6: Chardin's drawing of Tabriz in the second half of the seventeenth century

Source: <http://www.negarestandoc.ir/documentdetail.aspx?id=105242>

(visited: February 19, 2023)

## 2.2. The Qajarian Era

Tabriz became Iran's second-most important city and the residence center during the reign of Fath-Ali Shah and Abbas Mirza as the Iranian crown prince after the Qajar dynasty at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century was established. Cultural and commercial contacts were concentrated during the Fath-Ali Shah era. Tabriz has also acquired military and political importance since the Iran-Russia wars in this period. Three factors: commercial prosperity, military strength, and political centrality, provided the city's vitality in this period (Safamanesh, 1956). Because of the threat of the Ottoman assault and the occupation of Tabriz, the military spaces in this city were provided special consideration (Omrani, 1965). Therefore, The Grand Bazar's importance as a thriving commercial hub, the city's military concentration because of its proximity to the Russian and Ottoman borders, and particularly the city's political significance as the settlement for the Qajar prince all had a substantial impact on Tabriz's urban fabric during the Qajar era.

The map of Trezel–Fabvier (1807–1808) in the era of Abbas Mirza, which was prepared by the Russians, is considered one of the most valuable old maps of Tabriz, demonstrating the physical and material renovations of the city after the 1780 earthquake. In this map, the first fortification wall surrounded by a deep moat to protect the central core of Tabriz, including the government building and the bazaar, can be identified easily and clearly (Figure 2.7). Najaf Qolikhan Biglarbeigi, the city's ruler, rebuilt this wall against internal riots and attacks from neighbors (Nader Mirza, 1953). By the start of Nasereddin Shah's reign, though, the fortification wall had been gradually dismantled, and the neighboring districts were linked to the city center through its development. Along the substantial routes of this era, eight gates were constructed on the wall, named as follows: Shotorban, Istanbul, Gajil, Mahadmahin, Nobar, Baghmisheh, Sorkhab, and Khiyaban (Soltanzadeh, 1997). Meanwhile, the route from Khiyaban to Shotorban gate, which was on the intercontinental path between Asia and Europe (the Silk Rout), and also Nobar to Istanbul gate, was more

important among the others (Safamanesh, 1956). As a result, centrality continued to be the primary component of the city's spatial organization. Smaller commercial hubs were established along the major gates, and the main bazaar in the city center was the culmination of these bazaars (Mansouri & Mohammadzadeh, 2017). Moreover, the blue mosque, according to this map, was in the southeast area, outside the city wall, and along the main road of the city's eastern entrance, the gate of the Khiaban, linked to the Tabriz Bazaar. Kohne Bazaar, a caravanserai, and other complexes were settled on the Silk Road and formed the center of people's presence and activity. Therefore, the Blue Mosque and surrounding spaces had a strong connection with the city's old artery (Hojjat & Nasiriniya, 2015).

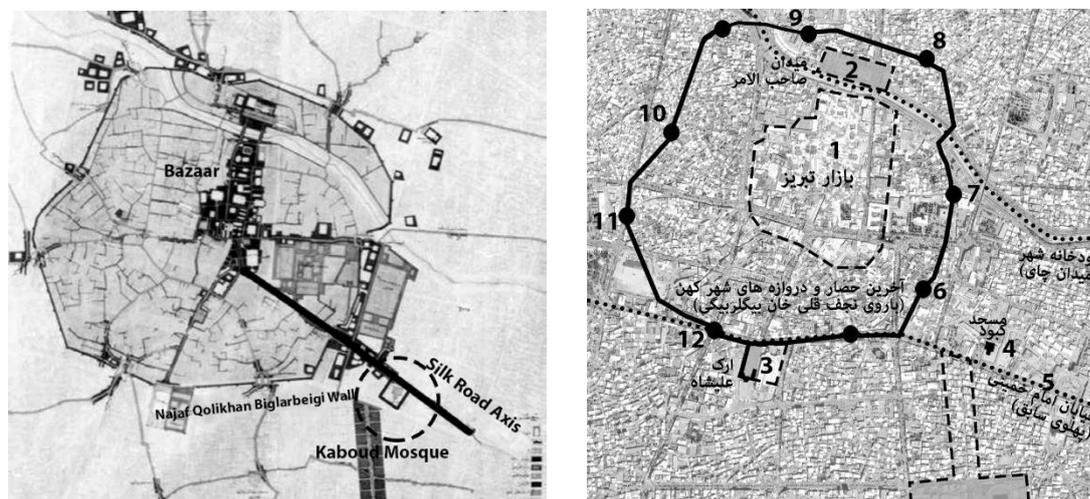


Figure 2.7: (Left) City spatial organization in 19th century.

1. Meidan chiy (Mehran river)
2. Gardens around neighborhoods
3. Najafgoli Khan Fortification wall
4. City. Source: (Hojjat & Nasiriniya, 2015). Edit: author.

Figure 2.8: (Right) Overlaying city walls of Tabriz during Qajar period drafted in 1807 – 8 by Trezel – Fabvier and the aerial photo of 1967. Also, gates, main paths and Bazaar area can be seen in this graphic. Source: (Hojjat & Nasiriniya, 2015). Edit: author.

During his stay in Tabriz, Abbas Mirza, as an enlightened, reformist, and progressive prince, took various measures in the direction of modernism. The Qajar inherited a

country whose economy was traditionally based on feudalism and agriculture, handicrafts and carpet weaving, trade and limited foreign trade, and livestock farming. Although these economic activities could temporarily supply the financial resources of the previous governments, they were no longer as efficient in the modern era due to the transformation of the global economy, the expansion of Western capitalism, and the emergence of its reflection in Iran. According to Zibakalam (2000), even though the relationship between Iran and the West had been established since the Safavid era (16<sup>th</sup>-century), the West of that time was not powerful, aggressive, and reliant on the 19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial revolution, nor was the level of communication and exchanges between Iran and the West such that it could leave various effects. This relationship more or less continued until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when its form and content suddenly underwent a radical transformation. From the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the fame of Europe's industrial progress and its effect on urbanization and urban issues reached Iran and created an awakening there. The desire to renew the country's structure and, as a result, the need to change its principles became necessary (Habibi, 1999).

*Dar Al-Saltaneh*, also known as *Gharacheh-Daghi*, is the first old map in this study, which compiles detailed information regarding the accurate historic tissue and buildings of the Beheshti Square location. This map was drafted by order of the Crown Prince, Muzaffaruddin Mirza, by the Iranian graduated students of “*Dar ul-Funun*” in 1880. It is one of the most comprehensive maps drawn in Tabriz and marks the beginning of modern mapping in Iran (Fakhari, Parsi, Bani Masoud, 2006).

The houses in the city had single floor and were constructed of raw mud prior to the Qajar era's renovations. The majority of the residential buildings in the city were also reconstructed; therefore, it can be considered that the historical houses of Tabriz today are left over from this era. The path that runs from the Khiyaban gate connects the Blue Mosque to the city's central areas while also acting as a commercial area and

Caravanserai.<sup>5</sup> (Soltanzadeh, 1997). This was the most crucial path that widened into a street during the Pahlavi era; now, it is one of the city's most vital axis, known as Imam street, where Beheshti plaza is (Figure 2.9).

The Karim Khan mosque, the only building that survived destruction through the revitalization process, which we will discuss in the following sections, was built during this period. It has a rectangular plan and its direction is east-west. It has 12 columns with stone capitals and its roof is covered with vaults and domes. The central dome is bigger and taller than the others. Therefore, it was submitted for registration in the list of national works. This mosque is known as Karim Khan Mosque, because Karim Khan was the name of the neighborhood trustee in the time before constitutionalism. During the constitutional period, after the death of the Friday Imam who was his father-in-law, Sheikh Mohammad Khiyabani assumed the position of him, which shows that this mosque dates back to before the constitution. The ownership of this endowment building is under the authority of the endowment and charity department of the province. The plan of this mosque is rectangular with dimensions of 17 x 31 meters, which is stretched in the east-west direction and includes twelve columns, of which eight to twelve columns have stone capitals and the roof is covered with a vault and a dome, the central dome is larger. And it is taller than the others. The facade of the mosque is a new brick that has been changed during the repairs. The main facades of the building have been changed and most parts of the facade are covered with cement. The changes in the facades of the building are one of the damages caused to this mosque (Figure 2.10).

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<sup>5</sup> “historical, an inn with a central courtyard for travelers in the desert regions of Asia or North Africa. Origin: Late 16th century: from Persian *kārwānsarāy*, from *kārwān* ‘caravan’ + *sarāy* ‘palace’.” (Oxford dictionary)



Figure 2.9: Map of Tabriz known as “Dar Al-Saltane” or “Gharacheh-Daghi” drafted in 1880  
 Yellow: Karim Khan district core, Red: Mosque, Blue: Ice- houses, Orange: Bath house, Green: Main paths, Purple: small shops in a row  
 Source: (Fakhari Tehrani, Parsi & Bani Masoud, 2006)

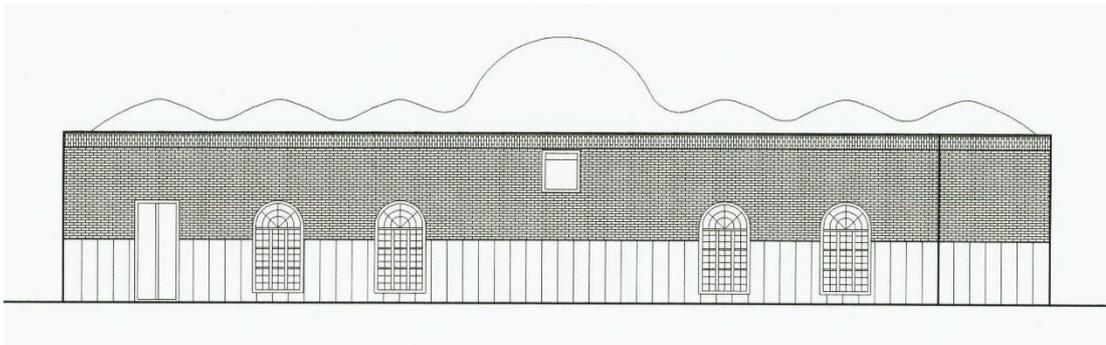


Figure 2.10. Elevation drawing of Karim Khan Mosque  
 Sources: Iran Cultural Heritage, Handcraft and Tourism Organization Documents

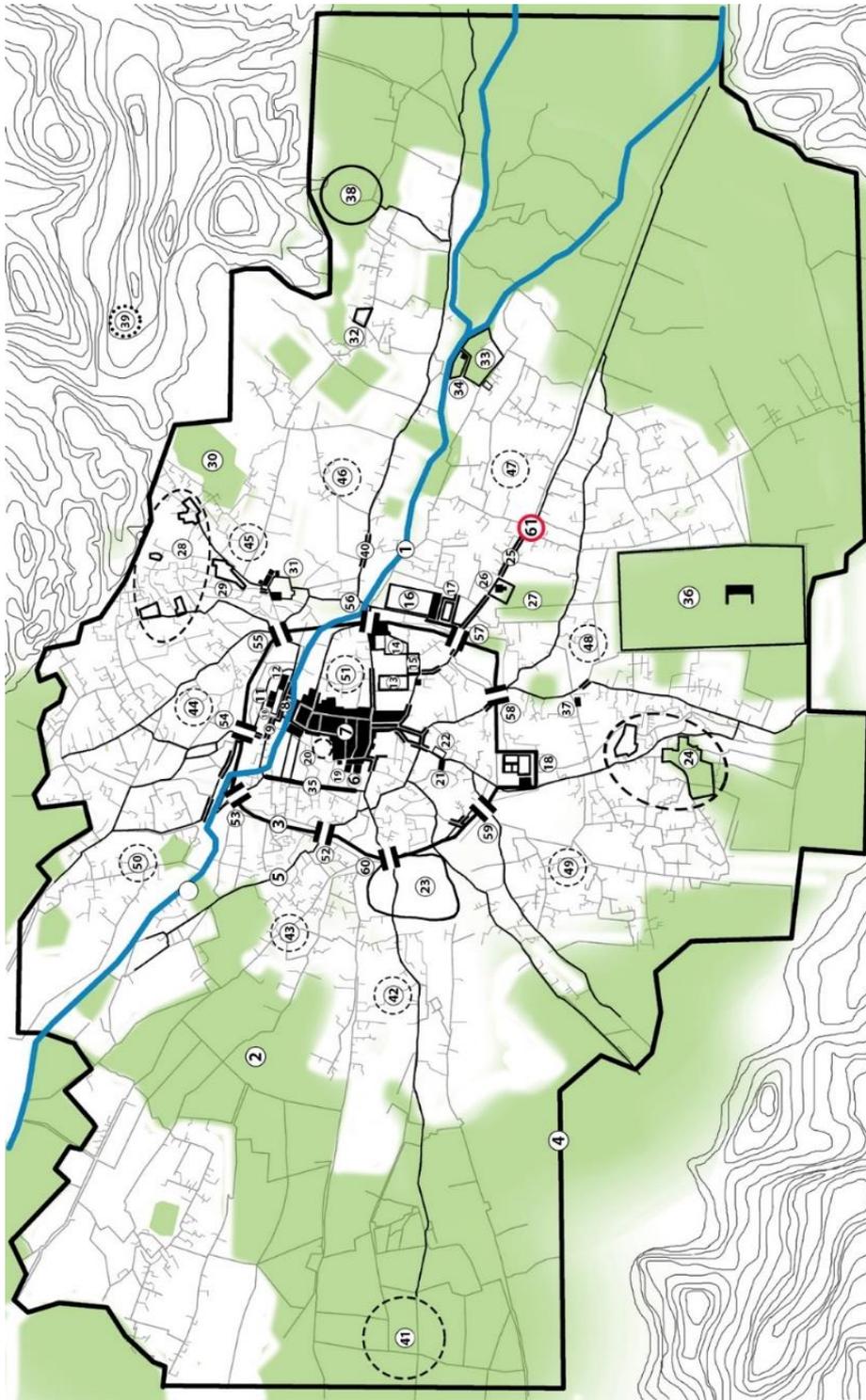


Figure 2.11. Tabriz spatial organization in Qajar monarchy.  
 Source: (Mansouri & Mohammadzadeh, 2017). Edited: author

1. Meidan chiy (Mehran river) 2. Gardens around neighborhoods 3. Najafgoli Khan Fortification wall 4. City territory in late Gajar era 5. City structure 6. Jami mosque 7. Bazaar 8. Mesgaran bazaar 9. Davachi bazaar 10. Sahibolamr square 11. Hasan Padishah mosque and school 12. Sahibolamr square and tomb 16. Mashg square 17. Geysariyeh square 18. Alishah castle 19. Talebiyeh mosque 20. Amir Vahsoudan tomb 21. Usta Shayird mosque 22. Garakulic square 23. Gajil cemetery 24. Charandab cemetery 25. Old khiyaban bazaar 26. Kabood mosque and its around cemetery 27. Around gardens 28. Sorkhab cemetery 29. Shah Magsud mosque 30. Bayim garden 31. Seyed hamzeh tomb and cemetery and Gaim Magma and Azaz Khan Mokri tombs 32. Golleh cemetery 33. Dameshgiyeh cemetery 34. Shah Hosein Vali tomb 35. Rasteh kучeh 36. Shomal garden 37. Magsudiyeh mosque 38. Rabe Rashidi Ruins 39. EinAli ZeinAli tomb 40. Rasteh bazaar 41. Around gardens 42. Gareagaj neighborhood 43. Veyjuyeh neighborhood 44. Shotorban neighborhood 45. Sorkhab neighborhood 46. Baghmisheh neighborhood 47. Khiyaban neighborhood 48. Nobar neighborhood 49. Mahadmahin neighborhood 50. Amirkhiz neighborhood 51. Chaharmenar neighborhood 52. Veyjuyeh gate 53. Istanbul gate 54. Shotorban gate 55. Sorkhab gate 56. Baghmisheh gate 57. Khiyaban gate 58. Nobar gate 59. Mahadmahin gate 60. Gajil gate. 61. location of Beheshti Square

### **2.3. Pahlavi Era**

While Iran's constitutional government's primary objectives could not be established due to social and economic conditions, after the 1921 coup d'etat, Reza Shah achieved administrative centralization, military modernization, and bureaucratic development by emphasizing secularism and nationalism. As we discussed, modernization started during the Qajar dynasty and progressed slowly. The emergence of the constitutional revolution and the function of democracy, caused the weakness of the Qajar king's authority. As a result, despite long-standing efforts to implement constitutional government progress in democracy, the state administration in contemporary Iranian politics shifted to autocratic periods. In this regard, what happened under the concept umbrella of modernity in the modern city in advanced countries is a reality based on rich intellectual resources in the domain of Western thought, which was formed based on the feeling of public need and found an internal form; but in underdeveloped countries, the modern city is formed based on the ruler's will and dreams. (Ghadimi, Mohammadi, 2020) Marshall Berman (1981) states that modernism, based on underdevelopment countries, must inevitably build its world based on modernity's fantasies and ideals and feed itself with interference and proximity to mirages and ghosts. In other words, urban renewal in these types of countries is carried out

hurriedly and under the guise of new institutions without the intellectual background of the people. Yet Ali Mirsepassi (2000) underlines, "it is with the imposition of Eurocentric universalism by the West that the emphasis on the local has become important in non-Western struggles for modernization." Thus, Iran, as a non-western country where kings reigned throughout its history, was also examining conflicting narratives of modernization according to intellectuals and authorities.

Reza Shah insisted on implementing city reconstruction programs, a new transportation network, a national market, and neighborhood integration (Madanipour, 2006). With his coming to power, the major export of oil, the increasing progress of Western technology, the new political arrangement resulting from the decline of the Ottoman Empire, and the rise of the Soviet Union, the emphasis of Western countries on centralized powers to exploit resources in Iran increased. It resulted in the stagnation, decline, and marginalization of Tabriz's and the region's economic and social conditions (Hariri Akbari, 1376). Historically, the early public spaces formed the core of urban society, which integrated a small urban population's political, economic, social, and cultural activities (Madanipour, 2010). However, instead of the conventional individual financial operations in the old towns' commercial spaces, national and international institutions achieved a more significant place in economic activities in modern cities (Ibid).

The formation of new urban spaces and architecture was considered to represent the Pahlavi era's ideological values. Reza Shah "launched a reconstruction and modernization program, moving Iran toward secularization and casting Islam as a force that hindered progress" (Khan, 2009). In this regard, although the majority of people were sympathetic and attached to tradition, intellectuals were attracted by Western civilization and modernization. As modern intelligentsia dominated political spheres in Reza Shah's cabinet more significantly, the measures in the new state were primarily intended to reject tradition, and anything that manifested as traditional or Qajarian needed to be substituted into modern structures and urban forms (Rad

Yousefnia, 2018). Therefore, for the first time in the history of the country's urbanization, the government decided to change the appearance and organization of the city. The implementation of this program led to the establishment of machinery, new structures, offices, ministries, and embassies, new city regulations, the construction of streets, as well as economic, social, and cultural improvements in Tehran and other Iranian cities (Ziari, 2006). A new context in the cities formed along with new political and economic developments, including social changes in settlements, everyday life, and rapid urbanization. The neighborhood system lost its identity due to the significant migration of villagers to cities and the increase in the urban population. The central policies and models for urban regeneration, the use of new forms of transportation, and the creation of new workplaces changed neighborhoods. New neighbourhoods were founded on economic and social classes rather than ethnic and racial factors (Yazdani, Pourahmad, 2007). These morphological transformations led to the removal of numerous historic buildings, structures, and landmarks as well as the deterioration of the traditional urban fabric. Even though the Ministry of Interior issued a circular to prevent these incidents (Article 6 of the law), which prohibited the destruction of ancient buildings and national historical monuments, Reza Shah destroyed old buildings as a great supporter of urban renewal. In order to clean up the Qajar past, he eliminated about two thousand pictures of urban landscapes on the pretext that they were humiliating. (Abrahamian, 1389)

### **2.3.1. Spatial Transformations By Street Widening Act**

The policies of the municipalities (*Baladiyah*) during Reza Shah's era were adapted from the Baron Haussmann, who was the mayor of Paris during Naser al-Din Shah's era. In the 19th century, his concepts and methods for generating new urban environments and renovating existing urban fabric of Paris expanded to to countries in the Middle East like Iran, Turkey, and Egypt (Bayat, 2010). Some important

features in Haussmannization urban development policies were as follows: the construction of a main street along the railway station of the city, the construction of streets and boulevards instead of the defense walls of the old city, the uniform appearance of the buildings, the destruction of the old working-class neighborhoods and the creation of more open spaces around the governmental buildings. According to urbanists, these Haussmannian changes were carried out with the aim of controlling and suppressing protesters and urban revolutionaries. This idea was welcomed by other authoritarian governments as well (Pakzad, 1394). The responsibility for the implementation of urban projects in Reza Shah's government was entrusted to military personnel or non-specialists who established as mayors. These people ran the municipality based on a centralized decision-making system from top to bottom. However, to carry out urban plans in October 1922, Tehran Municipality hired American urban planning consultants and engineers (Banani, 1961).

During the reign of Naseraddin Shah, actions regarding the routes of Tabriz began with paving and continued with leveling all of the city's pathways between 1888 and 1920. (Shakiba, Habibi, Tabibian, Ghadimi, 2020) Following the guiding principles of a uniform design for the entire country, Tabriz, along with other significant Iranian cities, underwent a morphological transformation from a traditional city to a modern one with the establishment of the Pahlavi regime. This modern city disregarded the pattern of historical fabric and respect for indigenous cultural values (Ehlers & Floor, 2007).

One of the influential institutions in the city administration was the local associations, which the representatives of the first parliament of the National Council established during the constitutional movement in 1907. According to Article 94 of the Baladiyah<sup>6</sup> Law, the municipality's administration was required to manage the city's affairs in

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<sup>6</sup> Balad (بلد) is an Arabic word that means city, and "Baladiyah" (بلديه) is the old name of municipality. This term first appeared in Turkey, where western-style urban institutions and services were imported as part of the regulations.

accordance with the association's instructions and to continuously seek to improve the city's situation (Tofigh, 2020). Tabriz Municipal Association entrusted the municipality with tasks such as regulating food prices, reconstructing alleys and streets, and maintaining health and medical measures in the city administration. Additionally, to provide the municipal budget, the city council also had the authority to levy taxes on real estate, shops, residential houses, customs, factories, cafes and restaurants, slaughterhouses, and garages. However, the municipality's budget was insufficient to cover its costs. In this regard, the municipality conducted tenders to repair urban infrastructure, including public roads, and asked the contractors to finish the contract at the lowest cost. Yet the lack of funds caused the city's renovations to take longer or the projects to be unfinished. In order to increase the executive power and expand the activities of the municipality, and with the proposal of the representatives of Azerbaijan, the government was allowed to hand over the land of the old and dilapidated barracks belonging to the Ministry of War in Tabriz to the municipality to build public benefit institutions such as laundries, gardens, and hospitals. Also, the barracks around the Alishah citadel were given to the municipality to construct a street and a national garden. (Shakiba, Habibi, Tabibian, Ghadimi, 2020)

The basis of morphological transformations started with "The Street Widening Act" in 1933, which required the construction of a geometric network of wide, straight streets for automobiles. Implementing new streets tore down residential zones, disregarding pre-existing buildings and their dwellers (Golabi, 2018). The first street built in Tabriz in 1926 by order of the commander of the Azerbaijan Army, Abdullah Khan Amir Tahmasabi, was Pahlavi Street (current Imam Khomeini Street). This street was developed as a communication route between Tehran-Tabriz and Tabriz-Maragheh roads, from the Mansour intersection to Qonqabashi square (Shakiba, Habibi, Tabibian, Ghadimi, 2020). Although the eastern part of Pahlavi Street was built on the Kohna Khiyavan route bed, which had been the primary access to the city since the Qajar era, the west side cut off the previous route and developed along the route between Qonqabashi (horse carriage) Square and the railway station. Thus, the

Kohna Khiyavan route, which was considered a part of the main east-west stretch of the city and the historical-cultural axis of the Silk Road transition, has lost its dynamism and growth since being separated from the main flow of the city. As a result, the Blue Mosque, which its entrance was established on Kohna Khiyavan and connected to the silk axis and Bazaar, was separated from interaction with people and the flow of city life. The Blue Mosque's identity and position have constantly transformed since it turned its back on the newly built street (Hodjat, Nasiriniya, 2014).

The rapid process of urbanization and Reza Shah's passion for modernizing cities caused substantial modifications to the traditional urban fabric, especially the Tabriz Bazaar. With the construction of two intersecting streets, new developments occurred in the southern part of Tabriz Bazaar, which tore down its coherent structure into several parcels. Beginning in 1926, Ferdowsi Street, constructed from Alishah Citadel to the Bazaar, demolished greater parts of the Bazaar's southern section. The extension of Ferdowsi Street would have divided the Bazaar into two disjointed sections if there had been no opposition and resistance from the Bazariyan (the name given to the Bazaar's merchants). However, the construction of Tupkhaneh Street (currently Jomhuri) and other new streets cut off the Bazaar area into smaller parcels with no physical interactions between them. Likewise, smaller bazaars formed along the Grand Bazaar and connected significant ancient buildings in previous periods, such as Kohne, Rahli, Shishegarkhaneh, and Haramkhaneh bazaars, were divided and lost their prosperity.

The organization of commercial uses on the sides of new streets was another modification to the set of urban developments following the establishment of Tabriz *Baladiyah* (municipality) laws (Ehlers & Floor, 2007) that supported new spatialities like recreational spaces such as cinemas, parks, and cafes and undermined the Bazaar's dominance in trade and services. Additionally, the construction of two-story structures surrounding the main squares housed public offices, including city administrative

organizations, banks, police stations, etc., which materialized a new understanding of streets and squares inside the urban fabric of the cities.

The most consequential construction measure of the municipality was the construction of Pahlavi Street, which influenced other urban elements as shops, mosques, banks, offices, and schools were placed on both sides of it. In addition to this impact, the construction of other streets in Tabriz was carried out directly to facilitate access between different points. The axes of the streets were formed using the previous passages. This was effective in the formation of Mansour, Khaghani, Ferdowsi, and Tarbiat streets.





Figure 2.14: Aerial photography of Tabriz in 1956. Red: Approximate boundary of Beheshti square  
- Sources: Iran National Cartographic Center, National Documentation Organization Tabriz branch



Figure 2.15: Aerial photography of Tabriz in 1967, Red: Approximate boundary of Beheshti square in the Second Pahlavi Era - Sources: Iran National Cartographic Center



Figure 2.16: Mansour Crossroad, near to Qurt Square  
Source: (Jadidoleslam & Abrishami, 2007).



نقشه برداری و احداث خیابان منصور (شهید بهشتی) ۱۳۰۷

Figure 2.17: Construction of Mansour Street, 1928

Source: (Jadidoleslam & Abrishami, 2007).



چهار راه منصور (بهشتی کنونی) در نزدیکی قورد میدانی (میدان گرگ بازی) ۱۳۴۰

Figure 2.18: Mansour Crossroad, near to *Qurt Meydan*

Source: (Jadidoleslam & Abrishami, 2007).

#### **2.4. Islamic Republic Era (Anti-Western, Anti-Capitalist Islamized Notion)**

The dominance of Marxism and the activities of the Tudeh Party had influenced most of Iran's intellectual society since the 1940s and 1950s. They had taken steps to fight against Western imperialism and had become anti-Western. Although anti-Westernism in the pre-revolution era was widespread among the people due to the role of left-wing intellectuals, the Tudeh Party, Marxists, and Muslim socialists among parties and educated people, with events such as the fall of Mohammad Mossadegh's government on August 28, as well as the support of America and Europe for the Pahlavi government, it became an official doctrine of the political system with the establishment of the Islamic revolution. In like manner, as the 1979 revolution built a new governmental model based on Islamic identity and the rejection of western ideals, one of the most well-known slogans of the Islamic Revolution was "Neither Eastern nor Western, just the Islamic Republic" (Hodjat, 1995). The foreign policy was based on "non-Western." However, "non-east" was included in this slogan to maintain balance and distinction between Marxists and Communists. The history of anti-Westernization in Iran may even reach the Constitutional Revolution. Still, anti-Western intellectuals have formed since the 1950s, and left-wing parties such as Iran's Tudeh Party were formed during this time. Although anti-capitalism was previously prevalent among intellectuals, it was not recognized as anti-Western. For instance, the Marxist-leaning Tudeh Party was anti-capitalist, not anti-Western, because Marxism was considered a Western phenomenon and its ideology originated in the West. The intellectuals of this period opposed the Western governments because the West was considered the representative of global capitalism.

Discourses based on justice and leftist ideals played a significant role in the Iranian revolution. In its slogans, the revolution praised and promised that "the oppressed," (*mostaz'fin*) "the masses," (*tudeh*) and "the impoverished" (*foghara*) would be its inheritors. These groups had a significant role in the social foundation of the post-revolutionary regime. The impoverished and oppressed were presented as the

revolution's beneficiaries and the real proprietors of the nation in the sermons and speeches of the first ten years of the revolution. The nascent revolutionary system had an anti-Western and anti-capitalist discourse, which rejected the socialist model as well. Abrahamian described Islamic Revolution in his book *A History of Modern Iran* as:

After years of demonstrations, the Islamic Revolution's victory was finally announced on February 11th, 1979. A new era in Iran's history started with the transfer of power from an authoritarian secular regime to an Islamic state under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. However, demonstrators of all social groups participated; most represented the lower and working classes and were discontented with the Pahlavi regime's policies. As indicated in the previous chapter, the working class's frustration and resentment increased due to the Pahlavi dynasty's second period's disregard for the working classes and widening the gap between the rich and the poor, particularly in terms of public utilities and housing. In addition, the Revolution's leaders pledged to close this gap and end the polarization that developed under the previous government. In this context, the protests against the Pahlavi dictatorship featured some of the harshest chants, calling for the emancipation of the lower classes and eradicating class distinction through applying Islamic law (Abrahamian, 2008).

Due to modernization in the era of absolute government, new social and class distinctions were created with Iran's admission into the capitalist structure. Divisions were progressively made between industrial, financial, commercial, and agricultural capital as a result of the encouragement of capitalism, trade, and industry. The Pahlavi government's confrontation with traditional social forces such as the clergy, nomads, and the merchants (*bazaarians*), as well as its support for the processes that led to the emergence of modern social forces, divided Iranian society and confronted traditional and modern classes and forces against one another. In this situation, the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 under the ultimate control of the clerical elite (Mozaffari, Westbrook, 2018) marked the beginning of a new era in Iran's history, despite the contributions of many social groups in the revolution, including religious leaders (*ulama*), merchants (*bazaarians*), intellectuals, the oppressed (*mostaz'fin*), and

the middle class (Khosrokhavar, 2002). Until the late 1970s, the major protests and strikes were organized by the Tudeh Party and the Central Council of Federated Trade Unions of Iranian Workers and Toilers (Rad Yousefnia, 2018). In other words, as a collective action, different social organizations, from leftists and Marxists to conservative and religious groups, participated in the revolution of 1979. Thus, it is necessary to keep the revolution's process distinct from the state and administration that the Ulama and Islamic organizations later established following the revolution (Rad Yousefnia, 2018). In general, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has demonstrated the historical demands of the clerical class as a political and organized one, and it has attempted to respond to those demands within the limits of modern governments' ability and capacity; prominent positions and privileges provide and preserve them in the power structure. Meanwhile, most revolutionaries, including nationalists, leftists, and Islamists, emphasized that political independence is insufficient and won't persist unless it is supplemented with economic independence. Economic independence was understood as severing dependence on the global capitalist system, reducing the influence of major foreign corporations on the country's economy, reconstructing the national economy and government budget without relying on oil export incomes, and ultimately achieving economic self-sufficiency. "Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic" was another significant slogan reflected the visions of many organizations in this sense (Tofigh, 2020). There is no doubt that the opposition of Iranian intellectuals and revolutionaries to the "West" changed the path of political and economic development, and the effects of this thinking are still the origin of various impacts on the country.

After the Islamic Revolution, hundreds of years of the monarchy were replaced with a religious republican type of government, and from a modernizing path came fervent revolutionary ideas. Along with the seizure of the US embassy in Tehran, these events prompted the US to sanction Iran and actively undermine the nation. In less than a year, Saddam Hussein deployed his army into Iran in an effort to take the oil reserves, with encouragement from Western governments and financial support from

sheikhdoms like Saudi Arabia foremost among them. (Mozaffari, Westbrook, 2018) The Iran-Iraq conflict, named in Iran as *Jang-e Tahmili* (imposed war) or *Defa-e Mogaddas* (holy defense), lasted eight years and aided the administration in reinforcing its Islamic identity (Golabi, 2018). Islamic intellectuals had a strong desire to revive Islamic principles and lifestyles in addition to opposing the legacy of modernity left by the previous regime. Islamic social justice laws, widespread economic participation, and a respectful attitude toward minorities' rights were all seen as the ultimate goals of Shia society. According to political revolutionaries and Shia thinkers, these laws could resolve all societal, political, social, and economic tensions (Keddie, 2003). In this regard, Islamized post-revolutionary Iran is distinct from referring to a Muslim nation due to the stringent application of Islamic laws in all facets of life and the dominance of religious-political leaders (Mehran, 2003). Consequently, society was once again incapable of applying its collective power to reshape the built environment policies or, at the very least, maintain certain state-protected regions, despite having ended hundreds of years of monarchy in Iran's history.

Therefore, the new state did not embrace the Pahlavi dynasty's public spaces and activities. In other words, the policies inserted into place during the Revolution's early years catalyzed an upending of the modernization process and altered society and urban planning. Similarly, the new state undertook significant adjustments to public places, the main tools used by the Pahlavi regime to build a modern society (Tofigh, 2020). In this respect, Iran's ideological system underwent a considerable shift due to the 1979 revolution, which transformed prevailing discourses and practices applied to the country's architecture and planning.

#### **2.4.1. Post-revolution Post-war Spatiality in Tabriz**

The removal of Shah statues and other remnants of the former government, in addition to the closing of places including the opera house, library, café, bar, and restaurant, marked the beginning of the Post-Revolutionary era's transformation of public space layouts. For instance, Bagh-e Melli and a part of the historical site of Alishah citadel were destroyed under the guise of construction of "Mosalla." Religious authorities claimed that this park (Bagh-e Melli) served as a social center for monarchists fascinated with western culture and lifestyle. (Tofigh, 2020) As a result, any indications of western culture incompatible with traditional religious ideals must be removed (Kheyri & Sadraiy, 2002).

The economic consequences after the revolution and the beginning of the Iran-Iraq war and the ensuing cost of maintaining the fronts until 1988 were considered a big obstacle to the construction projects of the government sector, but what was most noticeable was the war's continued destruction of cities and structures. It was impossible to develop architecture, and urban planning in such a chaotic environment. (FarmahiniFarahani, Etesam, & Eghbali, 2012) Iraj Etesam (2007) a well-known Iranian contemporary architect and author, divided post-revolution contemporary architecture of Iran to three categories as follows: "The first decade: the imposed war and the obstructive conditions in architecture development; The second decade: post-war construction and the qualitative and quantitative education of architecture. The third decade: the flourishing of the experiences of the previous decades and the flowering of the talented youth."

Since 1960, three significant elements including land reform, Third Construction Program, and the oil economy of Iran have caused fundamental changes in Tabriz. The Law of Land Reforms was adopted in Azerbaijan in 1963. In 1962, as part of the country's Third Construction Plan, Tabriz was designated as the region's development pole, and heavy industries and other sorts of industries were developed there in order to fulfill this objective. Several villages were linked to the city during these years as a consequence of the infusion of two powerful drives in the city of Tabriz. As a result

of this indiscriminate expansion, numerous fertile agricultural lands and gardens were destroyed, and numerous problems were created, including an increase in informal settlements, an increase in social harms, and an intensification of traffic along the old and historical central axes. The combination of spontaneous city growth and urban planning growth resulted in remarkable physical and spatial changes in Tabriz, such that green space around the city, whether in the east or west axis of Tabriz, was replaced by residential areas, resulting in significant environmental changes in the city and its suburbs.

The first comprehensive master plan of Tabriz city was approved by French consulting engineers in 1970 with a 25-year horizon. On the basis of this plan, the consulting engineers under Marjan developed the detailed city plan in 1976. Due to political conditions before and during the Islamic Revolution of Iran, municipal administrators did not follow the strategy with concern (1979). According to various analysts, the physical-spatial development of the city of Tabriz during the first comprehensive plan was primarily impacted by the political currents of the Islamic Revolution of Iran and the urban economy (land and housing market). One of the most important policies affecting the development and expansion of Tabriz city in the 70s and 80s was the "house construction" projects before the revolution and the "land preparation" projects after the revolution. Hence, it can be seen that from the 70s to 90s, Tabriz City was managed without a comprehensive and defined plan. In the mentioned periods, the city's growth has been influenced by the edicts and executive regulations of different government organizations.

Tabriz Municipality operated in accordance with the former master plan and the city's detailed plan till 1995 (Marjan plan). The first master plan contains a fundamental concept for the city's growth and various primary and subsidiary objectives. The goal of city development and zoning is to complete the developing points in the existing situation so that the plan does not lead to excessive city expansion. The plan's objectives are as follows: first, due to the essential significance of the existing city,

the next 25 years of growth must maintain the status quo; second, offer modern amenities for city inhabitants and facilitate their access.

The plan's sub-goals include preserving the texture and appearance of the existing city, introducing and preserving historical monuments and sites, and facilitating the plan's implementation. However, in this plan, to prevent interference with the duties of the organization responsible for implementing the master plan, it is suggested to establish an executive organization within the municipality. Probably, this factor will later prepare the ground for the municipality to define and implement its development measures without regard to the comprehensive plan (Moghadam Salimi, 2018).

#### **2.4.2. Revitalization of the historic core of Tabriz, Iran**

In the 1990s, urban policies, in collaboration with other governmental institutions, presented new strategic plans to revitalize major cultural–historical axes in Iran's historic cities. In this context, the municipality of Tabriz embarked on a massive renewal project from the Mansour crossroads to the Bazaar in order to restore the Silk Road axis. This report by Helia Shahmiri (2010) titled "Historical Restructuring Projects of the City of Tabriz - North-West Region Developer and Housing Company" explain the following aspects of this project:

The revitalization of the historical center of Tabriz has been started in 1990s and involving four areas: west of the Grand Bazaar, Saheb ol-Amr complex, surrounding area of the Blue Mosque and Mansour crossroad (Shahid Beheshti Square). These blocks are located around one of the old strategic axis of the city (part of the historical skeleton of the city) corresponding to a part of the Silk Path historical axis. Due to its geographical location on the commercial roads, Tabriz plays an important role economically and politically in northwest Iran. The bazaar complex, with an area of 15 hectares, has recently been registered on the world heritage list. In 2012, the

restoration project of Bazaar received the "Aga Khan" award as it had shown a new life in the old body.

Tabriz Bazaar lacks spaces that meet the modern needs of this big city, including the lack of equipped areas for loading and unloading and supporting activities. The northern and western parts of the Bazaar are also stagnant and chaotic. The Sahib Al-Amr complex, including a square, a mosque, and a school, which are connected to the Bazaar by two bridges-market, once had a mixture of cultural, religious, and commercial activities, which made it a unique urban center. It was created on both sides of the Mehran river. This complex was broken by passing through the Darayi street, and the bazaar bridges that connected the complex with the Bazaar were destroyed.

The Blue Mosque is another significant historic building on the Silk Path, forming the Bazaar's central axis. With the construction of the former Pahlavi Street (current Imam Khomeini), the connection of the Kohne (old) bazaar (mentioned in previous sections) was cut off from the main Bazaar of the city.

In the historical restructuring urban plan of Tabriz city, the intervention method is to present a spatial reorganization plan concerning the pattern of the historical context and the defining several development driving plans. The construction of new streets in the present era has destroyed the continuity of the bazaar, the Sahib al-Amr complex, and the Blue Mosque as three main points in the historical city of Tabriz. The concept of the urban plan for this project aims at revitalizing and recreating the historical axis of the city of Tabriz from the Shotoraban bazaar in the northwest to the ancient eastern gate of the city.

In the framework of this plan, the following interventions are included:

1. Renewal of Sahib al-Amr square
2. Connecting the two sides of the Mehran River by two Bridge-Bazaar, along the passages of Tabriz Bazaar.

3. Revitalization measures within the Bazaar complex.
4. Revitalization of the central passage of the Bazaar on the way to the Silk Path.
5. Revival and protection of the Blue Mosque and its surroundings.
6. Reconstruction of the neglected parts of the historical city center around these three projects.
7. The formation of Shahid Beheshti urban square with various uses as an active urban center at the beginning of the historical axis of Tabriz.

Since 1997, administrative operations in the projects of Sahib Al-Amr, Blue Mosque, and Shahid Beheshti Square have faced a record and closure. Subsequently, the above projects were gradually handed over to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (Urban Development and Improvement Company) based on the agreements reached.



Figure 2.19. Revitalization plan of cultural–historic axes of Tabriz. from top to bottom: Saheb ol-Amr complex, the Grand Bazaar, surrounding area of the Blue Mosque and Shahid Beheshti Square (Former Karimkhan Square). Source: (Shahmiri, 2010). Edited: author

### **2.4.3. Shahid Beheshti Square, Tabriz**

The historical axis that corresponds to the Silk Route starts in Shahid Beheshti Square. This square's branching pathways have created a market. The Ipek Tower located at the end of the plaza dominates the square. In addition, a metro station will enter the main plaza. The Karim Khan Mosque is the focal point of this compound. The house of Sheikh Mohammad Khiabani, which has been converted into a museum, is located in close proximity. This project, which was initiated by Tabriz Municipality in 2001, was launched through an agreement with the Ministry of Housing and Urban

Development. In the organization of restarting the administrative operations of this large urban project, first the sources of corporate bonds were used to acquire parts of the project's scope, followed by guiding the private sector's resources and forming partnerships with these companies, which was a successful experience. Regarding this, Shahmiri (2010) states in her study that "Protection and reconstruction measures in these projects have stimulated renovation in other areas of the central urban fabrics of Tabriz."

Shahid Beheshti Square is an essential urban node on Imam Khomeini's (former Pahlavi) main road in Tabriz. A city with a rich history over four millenniums, mostly of Azeri natives. Old core of city surrounded by Grand Bazaar, Blue Mosque and Azarbayjan Museum, Municipality Palace, and significant historic monuments remained while numerous masterpieces have been destroyed over time by invading armies, bad governance, and natural disasters.

On an area of seven hectares, the complex has been upgraded and structured in the city's inner center. The plaza, in conjunction with the mosque, metro station, and multi-story parking garages and commercial centers, constitutes one of the urban hubs. This project includes commercial and recreational centers consisting of 3 large commercial, service, recreational, and residential areas, as well as 12 interconnected blocks surrounding a central square, a tower for commercial and recreational use, underground parking, a shopping center, and recreational space including a skating rink, computer games, and green spaces. After reconstruction and restoration, the historical Karim Khan mosque stays unchanged in the northern section of the Shahid Beheshti Complex.

The under-construction area of the Shahid Beheshti Square project in Tabriz is 28,237 square meters, which offers the foundation for a 67% rise in the level of public roadways. This project's infrastructure is 106,600 square meters, which contains 35% of the buildings' useful infrastructure.

The project has three major commercial service components:

1. Ipek complexes (complexes with 12 blocks of 5 floors connected all around the square)
2. 18-story Ipek Tower
3. The largest hypermarket in the region and the city's largest shopping center on the lower floor of the square
4. Multi-level parking on the 2nd floor - under the square



Figure 2.20. Shahid Beheshti Square.  
Source: [bit.ly/3kWKYyC](https://bit.ly/3kWKYyC) (visited: February 19, 2023)

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **HYBRID NEOLIBERALISM, CREATIVE DESTRUCTION, REVITALIZATION PROGRAM OF BEHESHTI SQUARE**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

Over the last century, cities have transitioned from places to live to commodities for trade. Today, urban regeneration is one of the most crucial concepts driving urban growth and the policies of government and local institutions that alter the physical, economic, and political space of cities. Considering the measures taken so far in this direction, the ultimate goal of the urban regeneration project in recent years has not been to improve the quality of urban spaces and the quality of life of citizens (use-value), but rather to create an opportunity for officials to attract investor funding for urban projects (exchange-value). In the decayed tissues of the city, which are referred to as “inefficient,” there are veins of life that should be taken into consideration in the entire development of the city. Redevelopment projects, including acquisition and changing of use, provide the potential for financial misappropriation. Thus, those who are affected and influential in the process of development (architects, urban planners, residents, etc.) must thoroughly investigate and evaluate the mechanisms, forces, decision-making procedures, and implementation of urban regeneration in order to be able to comprehend it and formulate appropriate policies. Meanwhile, under the name "urban regeneration," by expropriating old residents of dilapidated buildings, the space's identity has changed. Not only have the spaces not become better places for citizens to live in most of cases, but the negative social and economic effects of renovation on a neighborhood and even city-wide scale have reached a critical level.

This chapter's main purpose is to examine the literature on creative destruction as a political apparatus for the planning procedure of the Pahlavi era's modernization motivations and later, post-revolutionary neo-liberalization motivations, which run concurrently with the nation's economic and political changes in three stages of transformation. In this manner, the creative destruction by devaluation phraseology confronts the historical fabric of the city center of Tabriz by destroying the entire buildings and thereafter rebuilding on a tabula rasa with explicitly renewed cultural and touristic dimensions as well as implicitly extensive capital accumulation and accumulation by dispossession.

### **3.2. Creative Destruction as Neoliberal Apparatus in Post-Revolution Dynamics of Iran**

First, Joseph Schumpeter applied the idea of "creative destruction" to his research in entrepreneurship and economics, which was inspired by his study of Marx (McCraw, 2009). Holgersen (2015) examines contemporary economic crises, using Marx's terminology, as destructive "momentary" solutions restore "disturbed balance." According to Marx (1981), the capitalist system engages the violent destruction of capital for the purpose of ensuring its own survival. "Destruction keeps the system alive" (Holgersen, 2015). Although the entrepreneurial feature of creative destruction relies on the "creative" (the use value of destruction) role, Marxists emphasize on "destructive" (the exchange value of destruction) characteristic; yet, the two phases must ultimately be understood dialectically. In this regard, one of the fundamental arguments relies on this research, which is based on the Marxist viewpoint, reads: "destruction of capital and devaluation as "creative" in the sense that they increase the rate of profit" (Ibid).

Capital, as money, commodities, and productive activity, leads to devaluation (Harvey, 1985b). Harvey establishes a theoretical foundation for the relationship between the built environment and the general processes of capitalism. He created a model of capitalism within a Marxist framework that concentrated on the movement of capital through three circuits: a primary circuit as the realm of production and the creation of surplus value, which produces the consumption tools; a secondary circuit primarily centered on the built environment of fixed-asset and consumption-fund formation; and a tertiary circuit as investments in science and technology as well as social investments such as education and health. When supply and demand become unequalized, over-accumulated capital is not used up in the production process, but rather it is reinvested into the built environment as the secondary circuit of capital that relates to consumption (Harvey, 1985a). The "dialectic between exchange value and use value inside creative destruction" (Holgerson, 2015) assumes a crucial role in the production of space from a Marxist urban perspective. Regarding the role real estate investment plays in the continuous creative destruction of capitalism, shifting capital primarily into the built environment has various spatial effects on urban development trends. Thus, dilapidated urban fabric could be an appropriate context for being exposed to devalued productivity as an "idle or underutilized physical plant" (Harvey, 1985b). Creative destruction serves as a strategic blending mediator between historically valued fabrics and problematic, dilapidated textures.

Harvey (1989) brings creative destruction to the examination of urban modernity and opens up the challenges that the modernist project's execution, like Haussmann's renovation project, encountered on a practical level, which demolished a city in order to regenerate it. He makes the argument that the emergence of capitalism would not have been achieved without "creative heroism" as a significant factor that "erases the past in the name of progress and liberation." (Fenster, 2019)

Moreover, in his book *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Harvey, 1990. Fenster, 2019), he emphasizes on constant structural pressures such as "language games," created by

the “postmodern condition” in neoliberal era to redevelop built environments constantly. Renewal programs of historical urban contexts as dominant forces for new uses are an example of a paradigm shift that employs concepts like creative destruction. In order to comprehend political processes, representations, and subjectivities, it is necessary to focus on the strategies and ideologies behind the spatialities created by these processes. In this way, renewal in a historical urban context becomes exploitative and creates blank spaces that detach the present from the past.

Moreover, concept of "accumulation by dispossession" and power-discourse formations are important issues here, as it relates to the commodification, privatization, and conversion of different types of property rights during the period in which capitalism became intertwined with local or regional governments economic and planning policies (Fenster, 2019). Understanding these relations clarifies how the spatial logic of neoliberalism requires that if profit drops in one location, capital moves or seeks a "spatial fix." (Harvey, 1989).

### **3.2.1. Neoliberalism as Global Mode of Production**

In brief, neoliberalism is a late-capitalist economic and political ideology that views market-based exchange as a moral framework applicable to all human actions. Since the 1970s, it has dominated the thoughts and actions of most international leaders and citizens. This ideology stresses the reform of government authorities, notably privatization, financial management, and market processes. According to the principles of neoliberalism, on the one hand, government intervention in the economy is minimized; on the other hand, the government's obligations for the welfare of its population are diminished (Harvey, 2007). Establishing and maintaining a structure to protect private property rights and promote a free market is the state's primary priority in this new economic system (Harvey, 2006). Meanwhile, state intervention should be

kept to a minimum to ensure that the market can eventually establish equilibrium and regulations (Yilmaz, 2009). David Harvey's (2005) description of this new economic-political system is as follows:

Neoliberalism is in the first place a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve the institutional framework appropriate to such practices.

The Keynesian Period, which marked the peak of the capitalist system in the 1950s and 1960s, presented an interventionist state that significantly prioritized social welfare and individual wages. The state's aim during this period was to stabilize economic growth, create full employment, and ensure the welfare of its citizens (Harvey, 2006). The Keynesian Order was demolished at the end of the 1970s due to declining high-rate profits made in earlier decades following the 1973 oil crisis and collapsing U.S. economic dominance due to the Bretton Woods Agreement (Harvey, 2006). By the end of the Thatcher and Reagan administrations, the USA and the U.K. had committed to the Neoliberal Order, a new strategy developed on Keynesian economic principles (Ibid). Countries are forced to implement neoliberal policies to establish a global market, either through manipulation by the IMF or World Bank or by being coerced into significant reforms by military operations (Ibid). Thus, neoliberalism's emergence as a new hegemonic order within the capitalist system denotes a crisis within it. As Harvey (1989) stated explicitly by citing Marx, capitalism is a "crisis-prone" organization. Its effectiveness primarily depends on its capacity to adapt to such crises by rearranging how the system's agents interact. The neoliberal discourse proposed an international capital movement between the nations and unified the market structure on a global scale. As a result, the term "globalization" emerged, which had a significant impact on all countries within the international system.

Moreover, "paper entrepreneurship" as a new type has supplanted the concrete representation of capital tied to gold and money in this period. (Harvey, 1989)

The outcome is that the neoliberal state functions on a global and national level. On a national level, the goal was to make public social sectors accessible to entrepreneur competition, seen in the neoliberal era as the primary motivation for the quality of services (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Despite the apparent justification, restructuring public services resulted in privatizing public assets and opening new markets to international capital flow. On the other hand, states' interventions on the international scale create a market with no trade barriers that requires nation-state boundaries to be opened up more physically and economically. However, the neoliberal order continues to thrive and has an active "state" that can control the system's integrity and ensure its responsibility. In other words, the regulatory force of the state is required to develop and enforce the regulation of optimizing capital flow (Brenner and Theodore, 2002).

Therefore, neoliberalism is not only a free market economy but rather a strategy to change the relationship between values and the balance of political forces and thus impose the principles of capitalism on workers and vulnerable groups as well (Rodríguez, Rodríguez, 2009). It is a process, not a state or situation with a fixed and definite end. Also, it is expressed through specific contextual strategies and does not have a specific and uniform form but takes on a new form based on the historical and geographical context (Brenner, Peck, Theodore, 2005).

### **3.2.2. The Neoliberalism Spatiality**

The issue of how space functions in neoliberalism's political-economic theory and the social project still need to be addressed. In his book "Production of Space," Henry Lefebvre (1991) asserts that the dominant mode of production does indeed manipulate space as an operational and instrumental tool to establish and maintain its hegemony

over "society as a whole, culture, and knowledge included, and generally via human mediation: policies, political leaders, parties, as well as intellectuals and experts." Clearly, the neoliberal order wants its fixation and expression in the medium of space in order to replicate the relations of production. The capitalist system's relation to space is crucial since the circuit of production in the capitalist system relies on accumulation which is the materialization of the surplus value. As Harvey (2006) noted, in addition to this aspect of capitalism that depends on space, cities serve as the medium for other forms of accumulation, such as accumulation through expanded reproduction or accumulation through dispossession, which both heavily rely on social networks. This emphasizes the significance of space or spatiality as a social representation for the neoliberal system.

The expansion and development of neoliberalism occur in connection with the global change processes in capitalism's production, distribution, and consumption, which are guided and controlled by non-single and integrated political forces. After a quarter of a century has passed since the formation of the doctrine of neoliberalism, there are two historical views on it: the first see neoliberalism as a historical transition period in the development of globalized capitalism, and the other is a view that is discussed in scientific and political circles in connection with Critical social theories deal with neoliberalism and analyze it as a separate historical period. The first point of view contains a kind of historical process; for example, Peck and Tickell (2002) distinguish between regressive neoliberalism, which includes the era of World War II and the domination of the Keynesian-Fordism era, and advanced neoliberalism, which creates institutions and the new laws are between the government and the society. According to the second point of view, neoliberalism and globalization have become important critical points in social theories (Lefebvre, 1991). To describe the characteristics of the present era, theorists examine the relationship between neoliberalism as a political project and technological and informational revolutions, new managerial goals, and new economic hegemonies. In all these discussions, the concept of space has been discussed as a central issue in general social science studies and urban studies in

particular. However, due to its many geographical possibilities, it is hard to conceptualize neoliberal approaches within a certain spatial pattern. Therefore, being a project-based operation with specific procedures for each circumstance in various scales and regions is another characteristic of neoliberalization.

To comprehend this issue, it is helpful to grasp the idea of "actually existing neoliberalism." While neoliberal ideology holds that, regardless of their time frame and spatial background, the economic forces existing in the market will be governed by fixed and specific laws, Brenner and Theodore (2002) define this concept as:

.. emphasize the contextual embeddedness of neoliberal restructuring projects as they have been produced within national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles.

They use the idea of the "path-dependent" feature of neoliberal restructuring projects to modify neoliberal ideas in various contexts. This concept can provide an analytical framework to examine the production process of projects in a general context with a specific national, regional, and local identity. With this definition, it can be said that the increasing variety of neoliberal forms is not accidental and far from expectation. A neoliberal process in a region, while taking the shape of the context, is also related to other neoliberal forms.

According to Brenner and Theodore (2005), firstly, the emergence, growth and formation of neoliberalism have been done in very different forms, spatial scales and historical and political periods, and in line with the experiences of the sometimes discrete and contradictory ideologies of the ruling class in the form of specific physical projects and/or political depending on the extent of their power and territory (path-dependent neoliberalism). Secondly, there is never a specific form of neoliberalism that can be prescribed for a certain place, and neoliberalism is explained and defined in the form of an additional form based on the existing background of institutional

structure, political systems, social conflicts and economic experiences (actually existing neoliberalism).

Neoliberalism is proposed as a framework that authoritatively structures the parameters of contemporary urban development. From this point of view, neoliberalism is mainly defined by extra-local forces (such as methods of capital accumulation or new forms of community administration) that seek to trap cities in the framework of market-oriented governance regimes (Mirgholami, Toghræi, Ghazipour, 2017). We see this form of neoliberalism's influence in the cities of the North American region. For example, in the Toronto city area, more than the efforts made to solve the basic problems of urban governance, neoliberalization projects have been able to achieve great influences in the field of their goals in the stages of determining the strategy for economic, environmental and transportation goals. In this city, an important part of the city management's effort has been devoted to the privatization of various sectors (Van Toorn, 2007). Brenner and Theodore, on the other hand, define the state's changes at the local level as the "dismantling of earlier systems of central government support for municipal activities, imposition of fiscal austerity measures upon municipal governments," which leads to the concentration of power in municipalities, similar to situation of our case in Tabriz.

Accordingly, the city as a multidimensional organism is particularly relevant, given its economic and political aspects, as well as its social repercussions. Today, neoliberalism is the primary hegemony governing the global political economy; the presence of the neoliberal doctrine on urban and smaller scales by the Neoliberal Restructuring Project. It cannot be seen as a one-way system and flow of capital and power hegemony, in which, reviving capitalist regressive relations in the form of a predetermined and absolute method. On the contrary, the neoliberal restructuring project should be considered as a concept that has a multi-dimensional and intertwined nature, because: redefines the scaled and moderated relationships between institutions and economic enterprises such as local governments, national states, and privatized

capitalism, and it has led to the replacement of the logic of competition instead of homogenous distribution and redistribution of local governments, knowing the risks and possible failures of accepting such a policy (Mirgholami, Toghraei, Ghazipour, 2017). Taken the context of the study, this rule also applies to the complex economy and political position of a country like Iran, and also the historical urban renewal process of neoliberalism in Iranian cities, and because of the contradictory character that neoliberalism derives through the interference and conflict of its various components, these spaces in the urbanization process are in the deformation zone. Moreover, in order to designate a new stage in capitalism, David Harvey (2005) describes neoliberalism as creative destruction, which results from replacing the old structures in all aspects with new ones.:

A theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade. . . The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (p. 22).

The subject of neoliberal urbanization is also covered in this sense. In other words, successive rounds of creation and destruction are necessary for neoliberal urbanization. Similarly to this, two stages of neoliberal urbanism are destruction and creation (Brenner, Theodore, Peck, 2009). In order to understand how the existing economic organization interacts with neoliberal projects, it is necessary to pay attention to two moments in the process of neo-liberalization that are separable from the analytical dimension but intertwined from the dialectical dimension: Partial destruction leads to the disintegration of the spatial organization of existing economic enterprises and the adoption of new consensual policies in line with neoliberal market reforms; Creation led to the construction and production of necessary infrastructure for market-oriented economic growth (Ibid). This process clearly demands on devalorization, which is accomplished by generating a discourse that elevates ideas

like revitalization, reinvestment, and rejuvenation (Brenner, Theodore, 2002; Yilmaz, 2009). (Table 1)

The destructive and creation dynamic nature of neoliberalism has never clearly been the removal of the old order and the replacement of the new order as the governing spatial organization, but rather this paradigm shift during the creation of chaos and contradictions in the existing economic environment and the creation of new economic forms that have suddenly emerged; it leads to the creation of an infinitely unstable and unpredictable economic layer. This process has affected many geographical areas on various scales since the seventies (Fairbanks et al, 2011).

Table 3.1: Moments of neoliberal destruction and creation. Source: (Peck, Brenner, Theodore, 2009).

The process of neoliberalization	The moment of destruction	The moment of creation
Changing the shape of the built environment and the shape of the city	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Intensification of surveillance of public space</li> <li>-Destruction of labor complexes in open direction speculative developments</li> <li>-Turning away from community-oriented planning institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Creating a privatized space for mass consumption</li> <li>-Construction of mega-projects to attract public capital and rearrange the local pattern of land use</li> <li>-Creating gated communities, enclosed urban spaces and other isolated spaces of social reproduction</li> <li>-Pushing and developing rehabilitated areas and intensifying socio-spatial conflict</li> <li>-Incorporating the policy of the best and most efficient use as the basis of planning decisions of the land use pattern</li> </ul>
Urban representation	Grounded speeches related to urban disorder, dangerous classes and economic stagnation	Entrepreneurial programs with the aim of revitalization, reinvestment and urban rejuvenation

Up until now, the discussion of neoliberal urbanization has been framed as the product of a pattern of capital accumulation, leading to an interpretation of neoliberal urbanization based on the neoliberal economy-political theory. As was already noted, neoliberalism, like other forms of capitalism, advocates a parallel system of governance for the social and economic realms. In fact, the spatial activities of neoliberalism inherit these social dimensions. These spatial actions result in redefining regulations on the urban scale. Neoliberal urbanization weakens society's cohesiveness by advocating a new public space that limits connections between citizens. It establishes monitoring throughout the city in line with neoliberalism's objectives. In the next section, we will examine the neoliberal appearance in Iran's economic politics.

### **3.2.3. Hybrid Neoliberalism: Political Economy of Iran after Islamic Revolution**

As we discussed in the previous chapter, due to strong anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist anti-westernization propensities after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, according to Iran's Constitution, the face of the country's economy changed considerably, and the government's involvement in the country's economic activities increased. Thus, the government was entrusted with managing many large economic units, and the number of industries owned by the government significantly increased. State ownership included not only all companies producing public goods and services such as water, electricity, gas, and telecommunications, but also railways, shipping, large and medium-sized industries, monetary and financial networks, monopolizing the import of many goods, and even provided retail distribution networks (Ahmadvand, 2013). The restructuring of capitalism in Iran was, nevertheless, inevitable considering the global crisis of capital accumulation that emerged in the middle of the 1970s and how it manifested itself in the aftermath of the 1979 revolution and the Iraq War (Valadbaygi, 2020). In such circumstances, as a result of the gradual decline in the purchasing power of oil revenues and the increase in the

country's population, along with the unfavorable economic and financial performance of state-owned companies and government financial constraints to manage and run activities, necessitated a change in the country's economic management (Ahmadvand, 2013). Nearly a decade after the Revolution, the Iranian government suggested a number of economic reforms (Valadbaygi, 2020).

The property of the previous ruling class was seized soon after the 1979 revolution through two different forms of state ownership, the so-called "government" and "public." In the first one, the government took ownership of all heavy industries, private banks, and insurance companies, establishing strata of government managers. This political wing promoted radical economic interventionist strategies for the majority of the state bureaucracy and the government-owned enterprises. Meanwhile, newly established revolutionary foundations received the confiscated assets of the royal family and its close associates, which were classified as public properties (*bonyads*). These publicly-owned companies were directly under the Imam's authority and were immune from government regulation and taxation to distribute money to the "downtrodden" (Behdad, 1996). In the same vein, despite the marginalization of the autonomous traditional marketplace (*bazaar*) in favor of the *bonyads*, the state denoted the relationship between these groups. As a result, the formation of this new class fraction within the state, which is referred to as the *bonyad-bazaar* nexus, was the second primary outcome of the Revolution.

Due to the erratic nature of the global oil market, the political shock of the 1979 revolution and the war with Iraq, as well as constant the U.S. applying pressure from the outside by imposing sanctions in reaction to the Revolution, affected a significant impact on Iran's economy. In light of facing such a fatal threat, the need for an extensive restructuring of the economy was recognized by the administration.

The governments of Rafsanjani and Khatami committed to providing institutional and legal foundations for expanding the private sector in response to the changes in the

global environment. To accomplish this, these administrations implemented a variety of neoliberal initiatives, including privatizing state-owned enterprises, through three development plans (1990–2005). Even though privatization includes some private investors, this portion of the capital should not be recognized as "private capital" as opposed to "state capital;" because this portion includes several apparently "private enterprises" that are divisions of different government agencies. Ultimately, with the domination of the military services and economic reforms with anti-import regulations favoring domestic manufacturing and consumption, after years of escalation conversion, the 'bonyad-bazaar nexus' has transformed into what is called the 'MilitaryBonyad' complex. The central character of Iran's economy is these institutions and organizations, although the "downtrodden masses" purportedly belong to these enterprises' official, legal ownership. The neo-liberalization process has neither been preset nor inevitable due to the particularity of domestic struggles. Therefore, although having universally shared characteristics, the outcome of neoliberal reconstruction of capitalism in Iran is distinctly "hybrid" (Valadbaygi, 2020). (neoliberalism monopolized by the government)

As a coda, the military-bonyad complex, which consists of multiple local parallel institutions and which, among other sectors, also has a favorable position in the construction sector through sub-companies, is therefore essential to comprehending Iran's neoliberal urban projects. Considering urban regeneration projects as well as the transformation of Shahid Beheshti Square in this sense, we see interventions of these shadow companies from planning procedures to implementing projects. We realize a power relationship exists between Iran's government and semi-private companies engaged in urban production. In this sense, this fact should be considered in order to reevaluate urban planning procedures, particularly in the case of Tabriz's historical core revitalization project (in a similar manner with various justifications most of the other preservation projects of other cities such as Shiraz, Yazd, and Mashhad), where property appropriation (even after buying them) is a dominant state ideology that may necessitate the obligation to inhabitants.

### **3.3. Three Stages of Renewal Plans**

On the one hand, the destiny of historical fabrics in metropolitan Tabriz represents the nature of the ups and downs of urban growth in the city, while on the other, it demonstrates the government's fundamental approach to urban development. Since the narrative of the developments will be more meaningful, there will be a general consensus among policymakers on how to deal with it. In other words, this question should be addressed more precisely and nuance: Why do authorities usually adopt a paternalistic attitude in react to the historical contexts? How they attempt to erase its memory from the city by renewal programs? Thus, in light of the area's background, as mentioned in the previous chapter, and the presence of old fabric that evolved through centuries in the Khiaban district of the city's core, this study criticizes the revitalization program's initiative to demolish the entire fabric and construct brand new contemporary structures in each period, considering creative destruction instrument through three stages of renewal plans which exploited space historically as well as socially.

#### **3.3.1. Plan Stage Zero: Destruction of Karimkhan District Core- 1920s**

Examining the spatial organization of Tabriz city through its long history revealed an organic morphological coherence until the Pahlavi regime in the second chapter. In the 1920s, new social and economic changes resulted in unprecedented occurrences, eventually leading to the rapid urbanization of this historic city, as well as most other Iranian cities.

In Iran at the end of the 1920s, historical contexts with their own functional logic based on unity around the axis of the traditional Bazaar were understood as an obstacle to modern urban development. For this reason, the construction of wide streets and boulevards that facilitate communication to revive them (remove them) was put on the

agenda. This approach was implemented in the city of Tabriz with the construction of Pahlavi streets with the aim of modernizing the historical context. The construction of streets was the cornerstone of new urban development and the beginning of imposing the logic of change on the historical fabric of Tabriz.

Modernization (read creative destruction), or the threshold of modernity, in the previous 100 years, with a more particular approach beginning in the 1920s, signified the formation of a top-down strategy on the foundation of Tabriz's historical settings. Constructing Pahlavi Street and Mansour Street removed the old *Haj Sheikh Ja'far* bath house, caravanserai (inn), several ice houses, cemeteries, and small stores. That was a modernization plan to organize, order, and beautify (read: remove and improve) Beheshti Square's urban fabric in that era. After then, the district became a dense residential area with courtyard houses. The Karim Khan mosque, which was a significant politic and religious space due to Sheikh Mohammed Khiabani's role in the mosque (mentioned in the second chapter), with its surrounding shapeless plaza, remained to exist despite the transformation of the neighborhood (Figure 3). The mission conveyed this legacy to the following generation with minor modifications. Although, the legitimacy of a new administration carrying out the same objective with different repercussions was read by the policy-makers of the 1920s from these activities.

In the decades after Islamic Revolution, there has not been a lot change in the direction, patterns, and manner of Haussmannian interventions and policies by governments in Iran; in this arena, we have only witnessed the shifting of language implications in justifying the intervention. A kind of hesitancy in language, but not for different reasons, i.e., a clear and explicit way in the goal, but vague in expression. Focusing on the historical background of the city of Tabriz, the intervention to clean up the city in the past five decades has emerged in various ways. The manifestation has changed from the street widening policies in the style of Reza Shah on the axis of urban development to the contemporary renewal of dilapidated fabrics in the

revitalization program of the historical-cultural axis from Beheshti Square to Sahib Al-Amr. It should be noted that the alternative domain arises from any discourse implication around a basic function, which is the maximization of economic profit.

Most likely, the conceptual definition of destruction should distinguish between functional and physical destruction. This division will help us gain an adequate grasp of the mechanism of the historical context's exit from urban life as a heterogeneous context. Functional destruction entails comprehending the myth of the wide Pahlavi street and perpendicular streets in order to modernize the city during Reza Shah's reign, which involved the separation of the axis of urban development around the wide boulevard from the historical center of the city and the main urban capital circulation. This coincides with the functional destruction of the logic of the historical city life around the bazaar axis, which has since been divided by broad boulevards, and its status decreased in the following years. Physical destruction, which is the undeniable result of previous policies, is the consequence of marginalization. The physical destruction of the historical context, which at this point has been categorized as the same as the dilapidated context, signifies the new activities of the assimilation discourse, which will develop its own layers of revitalization plans in the future.

### **3.3.2. Plan Stage I: Destruction of Mansour Crossroad Area- 1990s**

With the exception of the Karim Khan mosque, none of the old courtyard houses were registered as cultural heritages before implementing Beheshti Square. However, the historical heritage encompasses not only individual buildings but also the urban space and landscape that stand reference to a certain civilization, a certain point in evolution, or a historical event. A building is not separated from the environment and the period in which it was built, and from the historical stages that it was created or altered in. (Nazemi, 2017) Thus, although the Pahlavi's interventions had changed the

appearance of the environment being studied, there had remained a valuable historical fabric with its original structure.

Until 1996, the municipalities were receiving a certain amount of annual budget from the national treasury. During Khatami's administration (1997-2005) and with the beginning of neoliberal policies, it was decided that each municipality would earn its own funds. As a consequence, the municipality of Tabriz, in collaboration with the Department for Housing and Urban Development and Iran's Urban Redevelopment Company, initiated the development of commercial zones, with a twist of “revitalization”, similar to the Beheshti Square.

The project's development began over three decades ago, and property acquisition started in 1980 with Tabriz municipality's invitation letters to the inhabitants of the district. Despite the opposition from local residents and small businesses, the municipality began the buyback of their land. As a result of neoliberal characteristics, the extension of municipal power to become legal participants in the urban development, enhanced its financial gains, by redefining the cultural and historical framework of urban space.

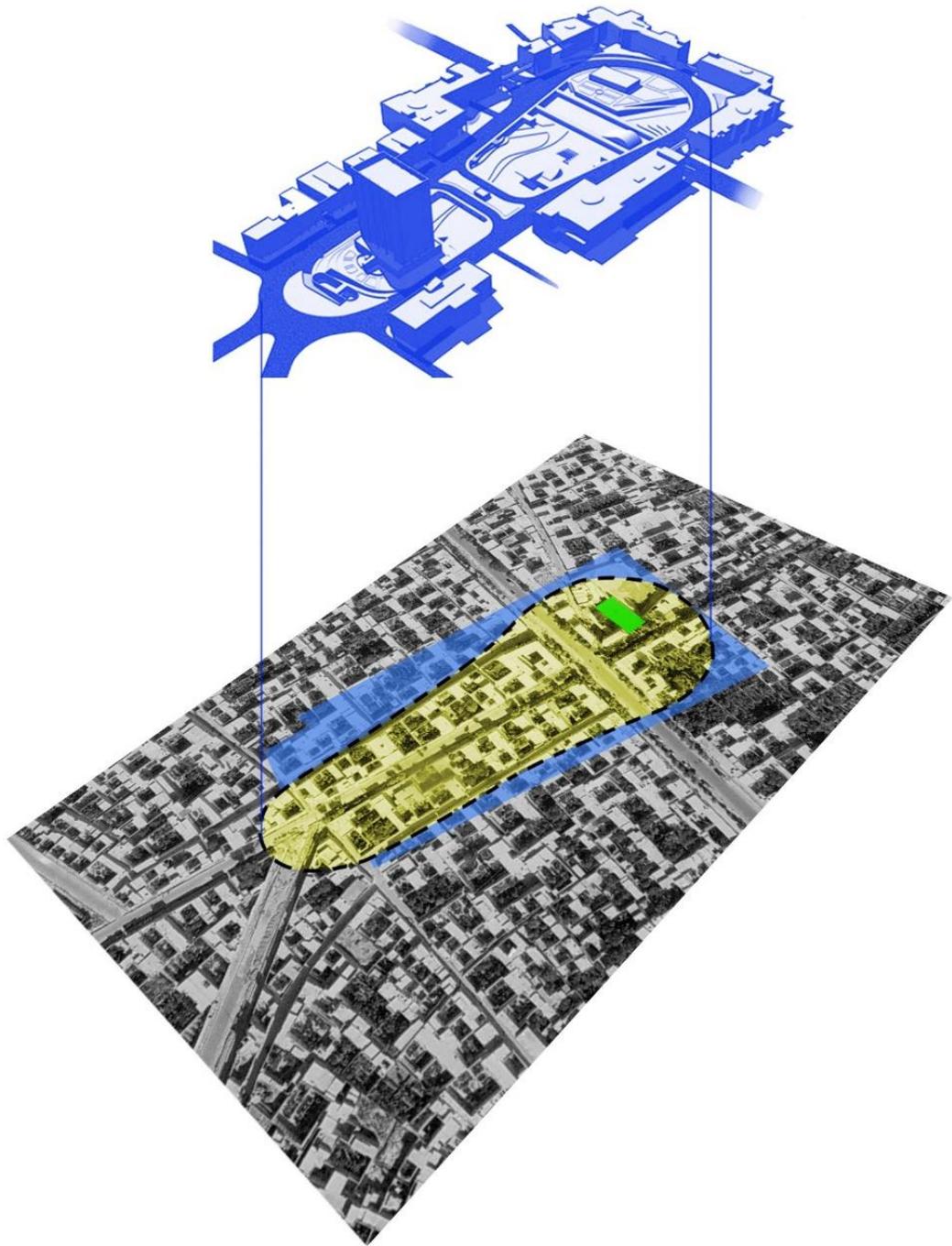


Figure 3.1: Superimposition of Tabriz aerial photo of Pahlavi era (1956) with 3D model of Beheshti Square. Green rectangle: Karim khan Mosque

Source: author

The municipality conceived and approved this project in 1991, and its implementation started in 1995. However, progress was slow until 2002 due to the financial problems for purchasing existing houses within the project's scope. The development of the square was transferred to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development in 2003 through an agreement, and the project was activated with the participation of the Urban Development and Improvement Company. In the organization of restarting the executive operations of this large urban project, initially partnership bonds and facilities were used to acquire portions of the project scope, and then it was continued by guiding the resources of the private sector and partnering with investment companies, which in its own way was a successful experience in attracting the necessary capital. Ultimately, the principal employer and conductor of the project were the North-West Region Construction and Housing Company, one of the significant para-governmental institutions operating a substantial number of urban projects in the region. Therefore, as stated before, the fundamental objective of the project was to revitalize the cultural and historical significance of texture along the designated axis. However, the decaying structures in these regions were bulldozed to decrease the number of inhabitants and promote business activities with various incentives. Keeping the fundamental objectives hidden, or as Lefebvre put it, utilizing space to produce surplus value (Lefebvre, 2009).

From this point of view, the destruction occurred in the crossroad of dominant discourse and political economy. In other words, the historical context was functionally at the opposite point of wealth production and accumulation, and its optimization is on the agenda with the aim of channeling economic capital to shape and unify the city. According to Engels, the expansion of metropolitan cities leads property, particularly in the city's core, to acquire an artificial and quantifiable value. The structures constructed on these grounds (whether historical or dilapidated) detract from their worth since they are incompatible with the new and altered circumstances. Therefore, existing structures were demolished and replaced with new ones. This practice often occurs in the setting of working-class dwellings, whose rental price

never surpasses a particular limit despite the high demand (as a result of the movement of individuals living in historical surroundings). In their replacements, malls, warehouses, and public buildings are constructed.

On the other hand, it is the dominant ideology that plays its role. From this perspective, the removal of a particular area that does not have the desired profitability in the eyes of the developer, gives way to ideologies and perceptions being formulated by justifications through certain terminology. In other words, what was done and what is the focus of every discourse is the elimination of historical places, although the discourse reasons range from urban development and modernization to the eradication of corrupt or troubled districts. But the result was the same: large commercial complexes instead of historic houses. Therefore, here a linguistic analysis should be added to Engels' statement, and this statement refers to the efforts of those who relegate historical context in language to the field of dilapidated context, and then destroy it with various propagandistic justifications.

According to the sequence of aerial pictures presented in Figure 3.2. (from 2003 to 2020), the progress of transformation and changes in the urban fabric, segmentation, and road network are apparent. Changes to Shahid Beheshti Street (formerly Mansour Street) and the building of the Ipek Tower forecourt began in 2006, and the street's texture and road network went through multiple iterations until 2012, when it finally attained a stable state. In the early years, the shape of the sections and blocks of the surrounding buildings somewhat varied; their number rose, and new construction also thrived. The construction of the Shahid Beheshti metro station, roads and access to the square, the square's flooring, which has earned the title of the world's largest tiled pavement, and the installation of furniture have occurred in the inner area of the square between the beginning and conclusion of the project. Since this square's establishment, the only noticeable alteration in aerial images is the completion of the metro station's entrance.

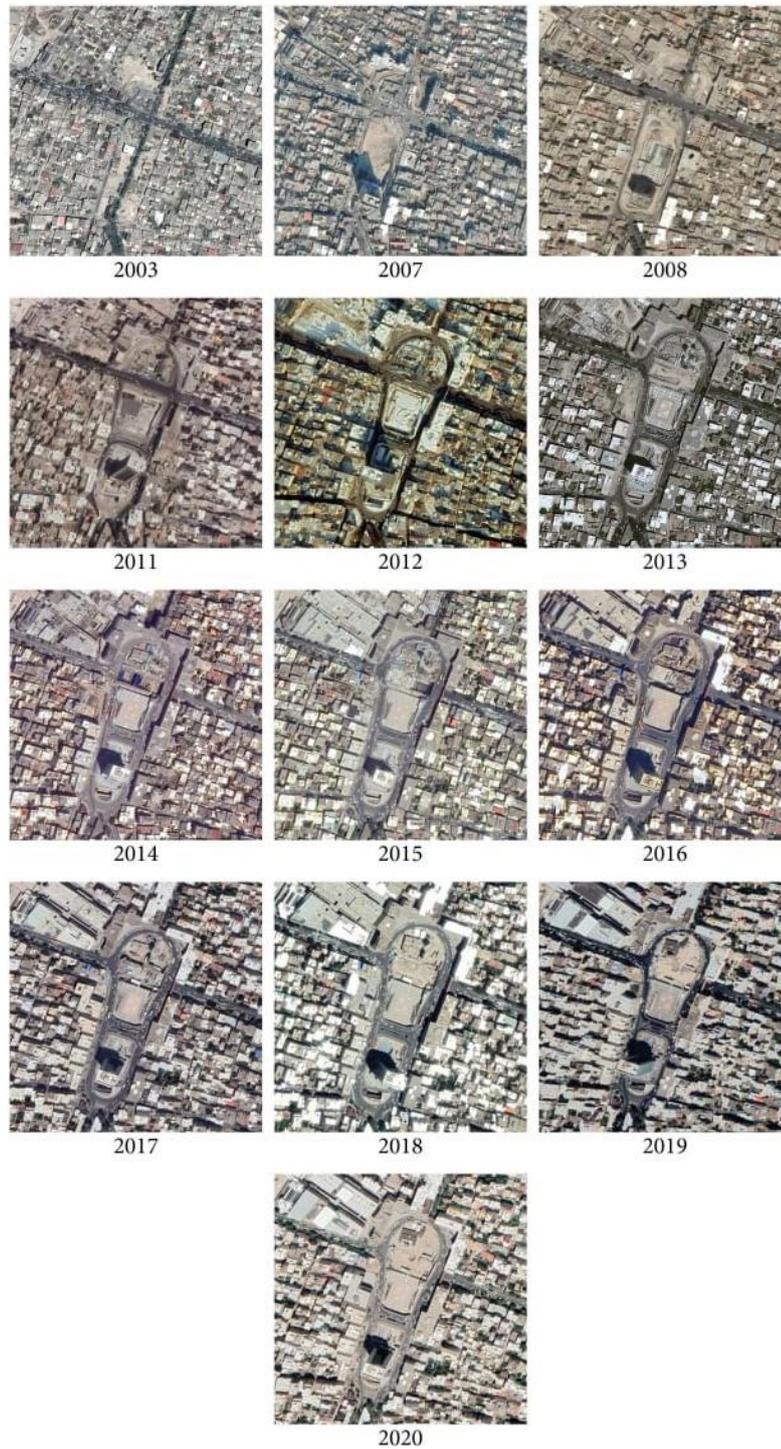


Figure 3.2: Tabriz aerial photos of Beheshti Square execution progress from 2003 to 2020.

Source: Google Maps. Edited:author

### **3.3.3. Plan Stage II: Beheshti Square Renewal - 2020s**

The Beheshti Square Complex was inaugurated in the presence of President Ahmadinejad in 2013, who described it as the country's largest improvement and renovation project on dilapidated urban fabric. However, the ultimate goals of this project failed, and even though this urban hub was a prosperous node, after restructuring it became a large ghost area at the heart of the city and led to a total crisis. Therefore, although ten years have passed since the completion of the project, now the Municipal Council has called on the Tabriz municipality and the City Islamic Council to analyze the problems of Shahid Beheshti Square, solve the existing problems, and make it one of the tourist attractions of Tabriz. In other words, the revitalization plan not only makes no social, cultural, or financial progress in the region but also requires a second plan to renew the existing alterations to the urban fabric. People still refer to Beheshti Square as Mansour intersection, nearly three decades after the transformation began. In the last decade, several studies have been conducted on renewal strategies to provide the optimal solution to the problems of the renovated urban space of the square and the surrounding inactive commercial complexes. These investigations indicate that almost none of the renovated historic sites, which mentioned in second chapter, are in efficient condition.

According to a 2022/7/11 ISNA (2022) citing the Tabriz Municipality, "the Shahid Beheshti Square project is one of the incomplete projects in the central area of the city that has not been completed after tens of years and should be completed in the best way possible, with the goal of renewing this important project and bringing it to its final use in the coming months." The report underlines the need of completing Shahid Beheshti Square in light of current events in this region and its organization. In this sense, the square has launched another revitalization project to transform the neglected public space into a more vibrant and functional one. The project includes several key components, including: transferring the head of the Tabriz Islamic Council's office to Shahid Beheshti Square to monitor the square's problems and address them

immediately; constructing 1300 square meters of green space; assisting in the construction and completion of the Shahid Beheshti Metro Station's entrances; landscaping around the historic Karim Khan Mosque; installing fountains in the square; creating new pedestrian walkways and bike lanes; and installing new lighting and landscaping features. The project signifies the square as a new public transportation hub, which includes a modern subway station beside the BRT stations in the near distance. Several solutions have been recommended to reduce traffic congestion (it was one of the primary purposes of the first revitalization plan) in the area, make it easier for people to access the square and surrounding commercial buildings, and encourage more people to use the square for socializing activities.

Consequently, in the first renewal program, the parties who intended to increase the exchange value of the space even changed the project, which had been designed according to desired intentions within the limited budget, and produced a space that serves the creative destruction concept. Buildings that were constructed without the necessary considerations given to the choice of materials in a climate such as Tabriz's, became defective before the square saw any vitality. It seems that this square, which will be exposed to an endless cycle of destruction and rebuilding, is crowned with financial accumulation for some property developers, but it will gradually be emptied in terms of spatial values and social relations.

The significance of the life cycle of architectural elements of Beheshti square in the ongoing creative destruction strategy of neoliberal urbanization, has varying spatial consequences. Utilizing low-cost materials in such large-scale projects paves the ground for a more rapidly degrading built environment, and provides possible future investment rounds. However, what is more significant here is not the cost-effectiveness of materials, but rather the suitability of materials for Tabriz's obviously severe climate. Considering the inadequate condition of the square's deteriorating physical space, another degree of creative destruction may be noticed since the

project's 2013 inauguration, which prepared the ground for more renewal interventions beyond 2022.



Figure 3.3: Beheshti Square turned into a ruin before being put into operation  
Sources: Yaz Echo. [bit.ly/3Yw69VM](https://bit.ly/3Yw69VM) (visited: February 19, 2023)



Figure 3.4: Unsecure environment of Beheshti Square  
Sources: Yaz Echo. [bit.ly/3Yw69VM](https://bit.ly/3Yw69VM) (visited: February 19, 2023)



Figure 3.5: Deterioration of Beheshti Square materials  
Sources: Yaz Echo. [bit.ly/3Yw69VM](https://bit.ly/3Yw69VM) (visited: February 19, 2023)



Figure 3.6: Current Situation of Beheshti Square, view from Ipek Tower.

Sources: Yaz Echo. [bit.ly/3Yw69VM](https://bit.ly/3Yw69VM) (visited: February 19, 2023)

### 3.3.4. Concluding Discussion:

The most significant actions of creative destruction take place at different moments in time and have different expressions and meanings – that is to say, creative destruction has its own temporalities. In the case of transformation of Karim Khan intersection to Beheshti Square, creative destruction took place in 1920s, 1990s, and 2020s and each temporality had a different architectural expression but a similar political–economic rationalization.

In 1920s (Plan Stage Zero), State as creative destructor in Pahlavi era, erased parts of old fabric in the process of modernization. This physical destruction removed parts of thatched houses and gardens of the fabric.

But Renewal stage I in 1990s, was very exploitative in the sense that the local owners of houses were removed from the city revitalization process. And then, the destruction became physical; the houses, local shops and Mansour Crossroad were demolished because of implementing neoliberal policy, and the destruction process continued to manifest in the different periods of “renewal” of the new mega-building that took its place.

Renewal stage II in 2020s, the Municipality and investor organization acted as creative destructor by reproducing temporary spaces – the project is present, while it is inactive, decayed, and produce a huge ghost area. Perhaps, in the future, the cycle will repeat, when even space will be more and more socially exploited.

Neither Renewal I nor II presented the positive aspects, because both phases entailed erasure of the past – symbolic or real. They only served the entrepreneur and the Municipality’s neoliberal perspectives. By that, “renewal” exploits the past – the local property owners; the present – the neighbors and current users unpresence; and the future – the image and future urban imagination of residents of the city.

The analysis of the language used by the various agentes emphasizes the power relations in the planning process. It shows how merely capital accumulation desires can result in the destruction of historical fabrics that are important for the neighborhood and the city’s appearance, serving mostly the aims of entrepreneurs.

It is obvious that city development involves destruction to make way for the creation of new areas; but in historical contexts, destruction and creation (renewal) constitute exploitation. Thus, creative destruction becomes “out of control”, because of its growing role, financial power.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **REPRESENTATION OF BEHESHTI SQUARE, ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY AS POLITICAL AESTHETICIZATION STRATEGY**

#### **4.1. Representation of Space, Neoliberalism, Islamic Ideology**

In recent decades, space is undoubtedly one of the multi-dimensional and multi-purpose concepts and keywords in the language (Harvey, 1976). For a long time, investigating space as a social and political concept was not common in the social sciences and urban planning literature. The city was only a container in which different forms of social, economic, political, ideological, and cultural life took place without objectifying the importance of space. The study of space, as it was commonly known in Iran's academic system and professional field, was in a sense subject of academic discourse that primarily reads space neutrally (Dadashpour, Yazdanian, 2019). This system produces dictionaries, concepts, words, minds, and perspectives according to its educational framework and reproduces them through space (Ibid). This domain is referred to by Lefebvre as the representation of space, where intellectuals such as architects, urban planners, and administration attempt to capture the spaces of representation through coding, design, order, and rationalization. In the sense that reading the space is identical to consuming the space, encountering the space via the educational knowledge system becomes the norm and ultimately neutralizes it (Ibid). Spatiality that is associated with concepts such as capital, consumerism, the logic of exchange, and others of a similar nature, resulting in a repetitive act of consumption along them (Lefebvre, 1991). In this knowledge system, particularly if we use Lefebvre's terminology, representations of space in Iranian cities' urbanization

prioritize neutrality and avoiding value judgements throughout the analytical process. This perspective views the spatiality of social relations as non-political and non-normative. This is one of the knowledge system's purportedly anti-ideological strategies, which is itself an ideology (Dadashpour, Yazdanian, 2019). In this sense, the system focuses on the economic, political, and social relations and forces that produce space in the "invisible layers of an ideological and homogenizing nature," (Ibid) which is the dominant characteristic of the current Iranian management discourse. Thus, investigating historical spaces in this manner ignores conflicts such as the protection of particular historic buildings and displacement of residents as a result of street-widening acts or the execution of revitalization programs on decaying urban fabrics after 1979 revolution in Iran.

This chapter focuses on the above-mentioned invisible layers of post-revolutionary dominating ideologies concerning the concept of "creative destruction." In this regard, Lefebvre's theoretical framework on the production of space will be applied, which has been one of the fundamental sources that irrevocably transformed the established ways theorists have formerly defined space (Soja 1989). Based on this work, the focus turned from space as a container/object to the spatiality of social life. "space is a process; It is not a dead or inert thing; it is not merely a physical container" (Özkan, 2008). By integrating his work on space with criticism of everyday life, Lefebvre elevates lived experience to the status of a critical idea in rethinking the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991). This move, in turn, leads Lefebvre to expand his spatial thinking and to develop spatial trialectics.

In his trialectics, Lefebvre articulates three interwoven spatial categories intended as theoretical tools to analyze the social production of urban space. The first category (percieved space) comprises the physical dimension of space, where space is treated as a container in which practices take place. This category corresponds to the use value of space or the utilitarian quality of space that meets the human need. Once the use value is defined as particular functions, Lefebvre's second category (concieved space)

is the discursive level at which spatial design and planning professions operate to give form to space (Özkan, 2008). This discursive level points to the space representations that obviously include social power and knowledge systems. At this level, space becomes mental, an image, either in the form of technical drawings on the computer screens of urban designers or through news and photographs in mass media. These two categories together amount to conceived political economy of space, in which space is considered as a consequence of the social relations underlying it. Lefebvre comprehend as his third category, what he calls social space, lived space, or representational space. Here lived experience becomes one of the constituents of the production of space. Thus the production of space pertains to a much more complex set of relationships in which the politics of spatial practices by inhabitants are also implicated—along with the politics of the other actors and factors involved (Özkan, 2008). Third category mentioned to contain comprehensive definition of Lefebvre's notion of space; nonetheless, examining representational space of Beheshti Square is beyond the scope of this particular study.

Representations of space, which characterize a conceived space produced by scientists, planners, urban planners, dividers, and technocrats. This space is also tied to dominant mode of production relations, particularly the order or design imposed by these relations. The order is imposed through the control of knowledge, symbols, and codes over the means of decoding spatial practices and, therefore, the production of spatial knowledge (Soja, 1996). Thus, representations are the dominant spaces in every society and are related to production relations and the order that these relations impose (Zieleniec, 2007; Lefebvre, 1991). Representations of space are the logic and forms of knowledge, as well as the ideological content of codes, theories, and the conceptual image of space in every society (Shields, 2000). These mental spaces impacted by profession, are manifestations of power and ideology as well as the supervision and control of space (Dalil, Javan, Salmanimoghadam, 2013).

Conceived space is the dominant space in any new society, because the government and the bourgeoisie form this space. Representations of space have a fundamental role and a special effect in the production of space. This influence can be found in all historical structures such as towers, factories, administrative areas, and public spaces; in other words, they have manifested objectively in the oppressive space (Merrifield, 2006). Due to their inherent nature, space representations appear at the level of discourse of urban planning, landscape design, and architecture and therefore include linguistic forms such as descriptions, definitions, and technical issues related to space. Plans, information, images, and symbols that are not necessarily derived from the context of the space are considered to be space representations (Rahbari & Sharepoor, 2014). Whoever controls how space is represented also controls how it is produced, organized, and consumed, as well as the degree of individual and collective involvement in space. Lefebvre considers urban planning, a field whose main subject is the problematic of space as a professional discipline, along with an inseparable ideology about space, an important movement in the direction of controlling the representations of space (Zieleniec, 2007) and, along with it, the practice possibilities and spatial practices, which have a negative effect on daily life.

Neoliberalism along with economy-politic changes reregulate social sphere to ensure and legitimize new order of dominant discourse. (Peck, Tickell, 2002) According to Harvey (2006), Neoliberalism's control over discursive forms has produced a whole new style of "perceiving, understanding, and acting," which changes the perception of the environment to "the common sense that we use to interpret, live in, and understand the world."

Replacing the Fordist property with consumption in the neoliberal production system, which covers culture as well as economic politics, led to the emerging term "individual," based on labor, whose consumers create continuous demand. Harvey (2006) describes, the particularity of the term "individual" is used in the discourse developed by the neoliberal social sphere:

The founding figures of neoliberal thought took political ideals of individual liberty and freedom as sacrosanct, as ‘the central values of civilization’, and in so doing they chose wisely and well, for these are indeed compelling and great attractors as concepts. These values were threatened, they argued, not only by fascism, dictatorships and communism, but by all forms of state intervention that substituted collective judgments for those of individuals set free to choose. They then concluded that without “the diffused power and initiative associated with (private property and the competitive market) it is difficult to imagine a society in which freedom may be effectively preserved.

This shift is notable because it creates a new opportunity for conditioning society for systemic purposes by reframing the individual as a consumer. The neoliberal system conditions consumerism by establishing social goals to define needs not based on truths or facts but rather speculative ones that are restructured and manipulated in accordance with the desires of the system. Thus, by controlling social life, "the society became a totality composed of individuals whose consumption patterns are indeed fictional behavioral patterns" (Yilmaz, 2009). Here, we can claim that, the "perception of the environment" in the words of Marx, provided by the system replaced the role of physical experience with visual experience in modern society since it has the capacity to internalize the ideology of the system (Ibid). According to Guy Debord (1995), aestheticized politics and existence, as "an object of contemplation," in society, leads to a material reality that is abstracted, valued only for its visual appeal, and experienced spectacularly; i.e., perceiving is equated with experiencing. He argues that under this new social framework, the accumulation of visuals—whether actual or constructed—builds cultural and social experiences: "All that was once directly lived has become mere representation." Visuality become the main form of experiencing the modern city, as urban images establish the individuals as the spectacles of the city, (Batuman, 2019) unable to actively engage in any social action but yet accountable for the outcomes of social processes due to their visual participation (Yilmaz, 2009). At this juncture, it is extremely crucial to emphasize that

the system generates a suitable setting for imposing ideologies inside society in addition to manipulating consumption.

Another essential aspect of neoliberal era seems to be the aestheticization of politics, or the creation of a politics marked by aesthetic reasons, defined by aesthetic concerns, and/or concealed by aesthetic appeals. In this sense, neoliberalism's new cultural logic seems to permeate all aspects of urban planning policies range from the "strategic beautifying" and reimagining of cities to the utilization of *urban design methods* focused on designed skylines and gentrification of unattractive historic inner city areas (Pow, 2009). The aestheticization of the urban environment serves only to achieve the economic interests of the urban elites, and it is nothing more than a "cosmetic of reality" (Welsch, 1997). Overall, social differences and the deeper roots of capital accumulation in the area of consumption are linked to the "stylish" intrusion of capital into urban life through processes of spectacularization and aestheticization. (Jacobs 1992). Additionally, the presence of beauty is not unconnected to other (unfair) economic, political, or social processes that go unnoticed and inevitably support the hegemony of certain groups. Terry Eagleton states that:

The aesthetic, then, is from the very beginning a contradictory, double-edged concept. On the one hand, it figures as a genuinely emancipatory force—as a commodity of subjects now linked by sensuous and fellow feeling rather than by heteronomous law, each safeguarded in its unique particularity while bound at the same time into social harmony. . . . On the other hand, the aesthetic signifies what Max Horkheimer has called a kind of "internalized repression," inserting social power more deeply into the very bodies of those it subjugates and so operating as a supremely effective mode of political hegemony (Eagleton, 1990)

Representations of space in urban design schemes inevitably result in the production of physical spaces, which are then transformed into commodities and depicted in real estate marketing. Hence, at this level, space becomes real estate and acquires an

exchange value (Özkan, 2008). The point to be noted here is that this process of space production is not merely an economic one (Batuman, 2018). But, besides this, the same process is "a strategy of dominance" (Batuman, 2018) that intensifies the impact of the creative destruction as an apparatus, which emerged as an executive power with its spatial dimension "in producing Islamic environments" (Ibid) and beautifying strategies vernacular cultural codes in Iranian cities' urban revitalization.

In this sense, examining neoliberal as well as other political ideologies like Islamic and cultural codes in the representation of Beheshti Square could be studied in two ways: a) conceived space production (space as a technical issue) in which space becomes the subject of representation by design documents (maps, plans, sections, etc.)(Batuman, 2019); and b) perceived space, which produced mainly visual objects in which physical space became a mere representation.

That being said, Fenster (2018) initiates a debate regarding the paths of creative destruction in post-colonial neoliberal contexts. He discusses neoliberal entrepreneurial interests and the uneven demolition of Muslim properties as a result of Israel's urban redevelopment plans. This argument prompted me to consider how creative destruction politicizes the revitalization of the historical urban fabric in contexts such as Iran following the 1979 revolution. In other words, considering the only remaining historical structure in Beheshti Square's transformation, the Karim Khan mosque (the path of "destruction"), and the construction of a spectacular combination of symbolic architectural features (the path of "creation"), demonstrates the ideological trajectories that neoliberal initiatives follow.

Therefore, the following section examines the representation of Beheshti Square to demonstrate how the revitalization project, as a creative destructor, cleared the history and culture of the historical urban fabric, except the ancient mosque, for its exchange value with the significant commercial architectural program as the neoliberal capital accumulation operation in Iran's general economic recession after the Islamic

Revolution; then it renewed blank space, focusing on the political visibility of space using cultural and Islamic codes, which we called "strategic beautification" as use value, to legitimize the project as a historically touristic revitalized public space and commercialized its cultural value.

#### **4.2. Representation of Beheshti Square**

The most significant representation of the Beheshti Square project was the administrators' advertising style, which presented the project as a prestigious one that would enhance the region's social, economic, and cultural vitality and become an iconic tourism center. Reviewing several media sources on Beheshti Square, the description of the project includes phrases like: "the largest urban square," "the first and largest stone carpet," "the largest improvement and renovation project," "one of the leading projects in the field of improving the quality of urban life," "one of the most successful investments," and "the unique features of this complex." The space, here, makes it more apparent how it serves as the foundation for propaganda, election discussions, and the promises of politicians, subjected to power relations and economical desires to attract investors as well as citizens to be active consumers of renewed space. Moreover, in an interview by Farsnews Agency, the head of East Azerbaijan Housing and Urban Development Organization stated: "Our company's duty as guardians of urban development is to promote Islamic design; and the architectural community should play a better role in this respect." In this manner, even before the project is finished, the first representations of agents legitimize the destruction of history and the displacement of local residents. They also promise a modernized, renewed public space that is true to the history and identity of the area. Therefore, over the long course of the square's implementation, residents perceive the space before experiencing it.

In order to interpret the representations of Beheshti Square, we must consider the production of space in relation to the social, political, and economic discourse of Iran in the 1990s, during which the revitalization program was initiated. The architecture discipline adopted new cultural and religious perspectives as a result of social and political transitions following the 1979 revolution. Generating a new Islamic identity was the government's primary purpose (Golabi, 2018). In the 1990s, also known as "the Decade of Construction," the state was engaged in the reconstruction of structures and economic infrastructure that the Iraq-led war had demolished. It also required functional areas for government and corporate structures (FarmahiniFarahani, Etesam, & Eghbali, 2012). Meanwhile, the government was under the weight of the expenses associated with the devastations that the war had inflicted, and all it could think about was reducing the high expenditures associated with running the major cities (Athari, 2010) such as Tabriz. The term "globalization" conquered the economic and political literature, and the word "global city" entered the texts of urban planning and spatial planning. Following the 1980, with the neoliberal economics domination the governments of developed and newly industrialized countries such as Iran, while reducing some of their welfare costs, preparing the metropolises, in order to welcome and grow new economic and social relations, also had to bear huge costs because they had to become global cities and thus bring or maintain economic superiority for their countries (Athari, 2010).

Parallel to these changes, Educational programs in architecture developed a curriculum intended to focus on culture, ancient heritage, Islamic identity, and the historic structures' interpretation that was compatible with Iran's circumstances. (Golabi, 2018). Since the Islamic revolution of 1979, the government has placed a high priority on the modernization of traditional Islamic culture and its architectural forms (Golabi, 2018) and encouraged architects and urbanists to seek methods to reinvigorate the use of formal and conceptual elements from traditional Islamic architecture (Soleimani, 2020). Besides that, Iranian architect Darab Diba (1992) puts an emphasis on climatic, cultural, and traditional characteristics of architectural

design, which is the major discourse in the educational system, stated as "return to ourselves, give importance to vernacular and national culture" (Golabi, 2018). Since "returning to cultural values" is recognized as one of the revolution's distinguishing qualities, Gafari asserts that architects must adhere to the traditions of Islamic society even if they try to include Western technologies in their work (Ibid).

Preliminary design of the square and surrounding buildings contributed by Tajir Consulting Engineers (Architects: Ali Akbar Saremi, Javad Bonkdar). Saremi is one of the most renowned contemporary Iranian architects with a modernist perspective, who earned his doctorate in architecture under the supervision of renowned architect Louis Kahn. Saremi states that through interviews, Tajir consultant architects explain the design process and the concept of design as follows:

“It has been reported that a proposal has been drafted to convert this whole area, except the square, into dense multi-story commercial and service buildings.. we walked around the neighborhood, conversed with locals, and took in the ambiance. The first stage was to utterly reject the plan's fundamental assumption, and to see the six hectares of land as a blank sheet, devoid of any structures.<sup>7</sup>”

Also they mention that:

“Six hectares of land resembled a massive white canvas spread on the ground, awaiting the first action. It was said that the Kohne Bazaar path that runs near the Blue Mosque is the same path as the Silk Route. ... Consequently, the first step was to position the Silk field on the road. The next stage was to identify the force-carrying paths that branch out of this area. We transformed these roads into a market, placing each business adjacently as a distinct location. We created a towering structure at the end of the field that has a particular presence in front of the square due to its size.<sup>8</sup>”

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<sup>7</sup> Silk Pattern on Beheshti Intersection Design in Tabriz: Tajir Consulting Engineers, Report from Architecture and Culture Journal (No:12 )- by Shaisheta Abbasvand, 22.07.2018. : [bit.ly/3SUSx5w](http://bit.ly/3SUSx5w) (visited: February 19, 2023)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

The representation of Beheshti Square considering first proposed design ideas and revitalization approaches seems contradictory. While the architects drew attention to issues such as the traces of the Silk Route's millennium history, the Kohne bazaar, chatting with the locals, and experiencing the flow of life in the neighborhood, the proposed idea ended up to see the historical, cultural, and social potentials of the urban fabric as a blank canvas. Thus, design intentions that treat the historical fabric with an existing flow of life in it as a "tabula rasa" serve the purpose of "creative destruction," which represents neoliberal forces that politicize revitalization planning. Also, the rhetoric employed here reflected that architects, as intellectual laborers, design based on romanticized notions that operate within neoliberal market relations.<sup>9</sup>

Tabriz's contemporary expansion resulted in a heterogeneous segmentation of urban fabric, and the city was divided into municipal regions, of which the eighth almost coincides with the central core of the city and its historical context (Tofigh, 2020). Small granularity of urban fabric along with instability and impermeability are the features of dilapidated urban fabric that are identified by urban public policy in Iran as necessary to be renewed. On initial examination of the aerial photographs, Beheshti Square's distorted large scale is a huge void at the heart of the fine-grained historical urban fabric of this municipal region that illustrates the blank space of an "erasure." The other mega-project on the northwest of Beheshti Square depicts the Atigh project, the revitalization program of the Blue Mosque discussed in the second chapter. This project also destroyed entire historical fabric including Kohne Bazaar as significant bed of of Silk Route. It appears that "destruction is prioritized over conservation" (Fenster, 2018) throughout the revitalization program lead to a morphological transformation of the historic city core's remained organic pattern.

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<sup>9</sup> class discussions of a course which I had taken in Spring 2020, named ARCH 526, Politics and Space, given by Prof. Dr. Guven Arif Sargin.

Comparing the proposed design and reformed one (Fig 4.1, 4.2, 4.3) reveals several formal differences. It is not uncommon for municipalities in Iran to alter designs in order to decrease costs of execution, address political issues, etc. Despite the scope of the project, there is no reference to Beheshti Square project in any of the list of architectural works of Saremi. He<sup>10</sup> stated that “the implementation organization changed the design in a way that was very inappropriate.” Yet, the principal argument provided here is based on the sociopolitical backdrop of post-revolution architectural discourse: the juxtaposition of the historic Karim Khan Mosque (on the north side) and the contemporary Ipek Tower (on the south side) on the same main axis, with a public open space that supports this connection. Meanwhile, the Ipek Tower represents an iconic structure of the square's commercial image used to portray Tabriz as a modern Islamic metropolitan city that competes with other global cities. This perspective originates in Iran's neo-liberal regulations in the 1990s.

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<sup>10</sup> During my undergraduate years, at a conference in Tabriz commemorating architects' day, Saremi truly apologized for the design of Beheshti Square, which had been newly opened.

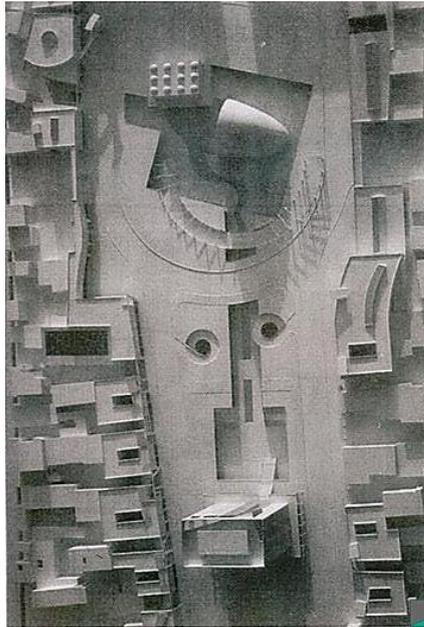


Figure 4.1: Shahid Beheshti Square, Design Document: Top View of 3D Architectural Model proposed by Tajir Consultant. Sources: [bit.ly/3SUSx5w](https://bit.ly/3SUSx5w) (visited: February 19, 2023)

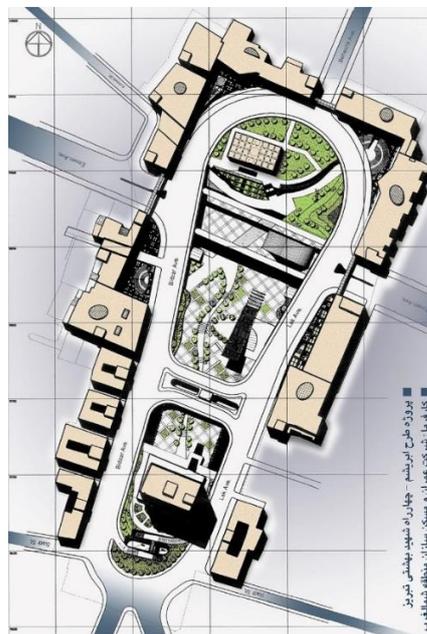


Figure 4.2: Shahid Beheshti Square, Design Document: Executed Architectural Plan Sources: Architecture and Culture Journal (No:12 )- [bit.ly/3SUSx5w](https://bit.ly/3SUSx5w) (visited: February 19, 2023)

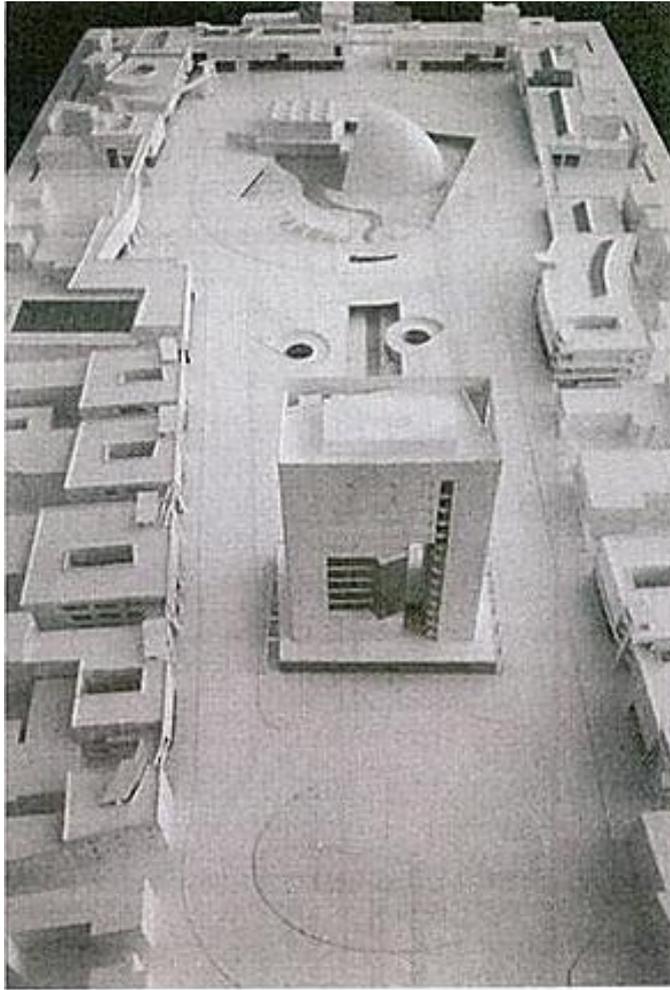


Figure 4.3: Shahid Beheshti Square, Design Document: 3D Architectural Model proposed by Tajir Consultant. Sources: Architecture and Culture Journal (No:12 ) - [bit.ly/3SUSx5w](https://bit.ly/3SUSx5w) (visited: February 19, 2023)

The square, whose size was enlarged and program was expanded by surrounding commercial blocks, was designed as underground level on a destroyed residential zone. The combination of the square, mosque, and marketplace evokes a modern interpretation of Islamic Iranian “Meydans” such as the Saheb-ol-amr Meydan, which mentioned as the end point of revitalization axis of historical core started from Beheshti Square, in the second chapter. During the revitalization operation of Sahibabad Meydan, only a preferred period of the city's historical layers was kept,

while demolishing other historical periods and leaving newly constructed stores after renewal unused, as they were in Beheshti Square (Soleimani, 2020). In a way, this was a modern interpretation of the traditional relationship of the Meydan with the Bazaar, “suitable for the consumer society”.

The square’s location and main axis reflected the complexities arising from the acquisition of the existing properties in the scope of the project. This expansion of the square's asymmetric north-south axis resulted from the municipality's negotiations on possessing the original inhabitants' existing properties. Although postponing the project's commencement until the 2000s claimed the municipality's budget deficit as the reason, the property owners were not convinced to sell their houses either. Yet, as new investors' injection of funding paved the way for the municipality's legal enforcement, the original residents had no choice but to give up their houses and sell the properties. Therefore, the general urban policy defined the revitalization project's boundaries based on how many historic buildings it was successful in acquiring.



Figure 4.4: Ipek Tower

Sources: Sharestan Architectural Consulting Website- [bit.ly/3kWKYyC](https://bit.ly/3kWKYyC) (visited: February 19, 2023)

### **4.3.1. The *Chahar Bagh*-patterned Pavement as Symbol of Tabriz's Local Culture**

The vast pavement design in the center of the square, was proposed by Sharestan Consulting Engineers (Architect: Behrouz Ahmadi) in 2009. It is a representation of authentic Iranian carpet design with a *Chāhar Bāgh*<sup>11</sup> (four-garden) motif, which subsequently was added as the most iconic cultural component of the square. The carpet's prototype, which is preserved in the National Carpet Museum of Iran, was woven in Azerbaijan<sup>12</sup> during the 17th century. In the production of the stone carpet (45 meters in length and 29.2 meters across), 490,560 separate pieces of stone of 12 different varieties and colors have been used.

Carpet weaving with its intricate art form and craftsmanship, is one of the most notable characteristics of Tabriz, and is perceived as a unique part of its identity. In addition to its cultural and artistic significance, this industry has played a major role in the economy of the city. Therefore, this carpet themed pavement symbolizes the art and cultural history of the city of Tabriz, where its name proudly entails “the city of hand knotted carpets”. Furthermore, a *Chāhar Bāgh*-patterned carpet is associated with Islamic Iranian architecture and art. Therefore, on the one hand, the pavement is a tool for the developer, to use as a token of history and culture to legitimize the destruction of the old historic urban fabric, and to convince the public that the primary purpose of the revitalized project is a cultural and historical re-enactment; on the other hand, to promise investors that the renewed space will positively contribute to the region and stimulate the local economy through tourism.

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<sup>11</sup> The phrase "*Chahar Bagh*" is composed of the Persian words "*Chahar*" means four and "*Bagh*" means garden. About this topic, there are several opinions. Scholars assert that Chahar Bagh is the Iranian culture's metaphor for the cosmos. The Persian garden always followed this pattern of a quadrant partition. During the advent of Islam, the same geometry was reinterpreted as the Quran's holy gardens. The courtyards of houses in Iran adapted the small scale of the specific geometry of Chahar Bagh divided into four sections of planted trees with a pool in the middle of the yard. (Tofigh, 2020)

<sup>12</sup> Tabriz is the capital city of East Azerbaijan Province.

Photographs have been the main representations of the pavement. In Sharestan's official website, their designers have presented the objective of this art piece within the square's landscape as enhancing the visual aesthetic and raising awareness of the cultural and economic significance of carpets in Tabriz's history. These bird's-eye perspective photographs were captured from the upper flats of Ipek Tower. The aesthetic appeal of the pavement is noticeable to those businesses or individuals who have own workplaces there or simply visiting; However, the concept of the pavement, i.e., producing visual space by generating visual objects of architecture that establish inhabitants' spatial experiences as a viewer, would be relevant if only the users could recognize it; yet the pavement's pattern cannot be fully recognized or appreciated at the eye level of users who commute around the square at ground level. Photographs represented the from a bird's-eye perspective or top views, which makes the carpet pattern identifiable from a sufficient distance. Thus, representations of the stone carpet were already being conceived by inhabitants as the creative environment of the square. In other words, representations of the trump the public's imagination for what and how the space should be perceived. Subsequently, the symbolic development emphasizing the cultural wealth of Tabriz, demonstrates a caring government that is protective of the culture and history of Tabriz, whereas in fact the city's absolute history has already been destroyed and has provided the investors and the city council with large profits.

Exploring the phrase "the pavement of Beheshti Square" on the internet yields several News Agency reports and weblogs introducing the tourist attractions of Tabriz City using these photographs before 2020. Furthermore, pavement representations spread with topics such as "the first and largest carpet-pattern pavement in the world" or "the unique design of the pavement in Beheshti Square," which prepare minds to perceive this work of art in accordance with the interests of the space producers. Yet, it seems that the second revitalization plan was put into place because of the state of the pavement, which has become one of the most important problems in the plaza. The pieces of the stone carpet detached, cracked, and deteriorated as time passed, waiting

to be replaced. The designers, whose objective was strategic aestheticization, failed to consider the most primary principles of climate, namely that Tabriz spends the majority of the year with cold, dry air and frosty floors. The use of inferior materials reduces the life of the stone carpet.



Figure 4.4: The carpet's prototype, preserved in the National Carpet Museum of Iran, was woven in Azerbaijan during the 17th century.

Sources: Sharestan Architectural Consulting Website- [bit.ly/3kWKYyC](https://bit.ly/3kWKYyC) (visited: February 19, 2023)

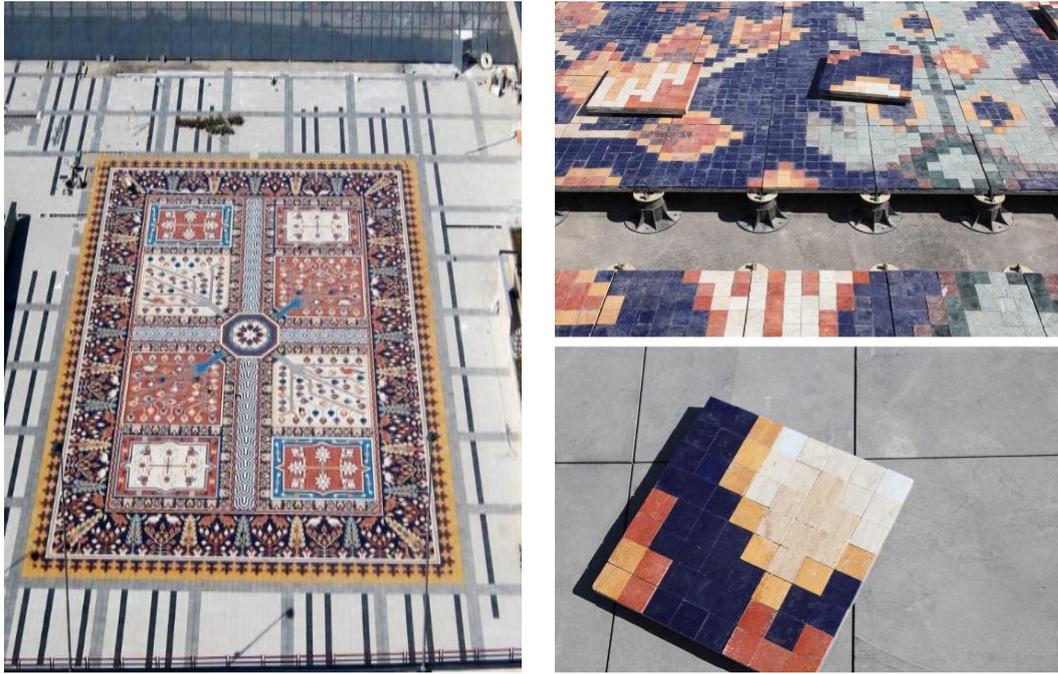


Figure 4.5: bird's-eye perspective Carpet-patterned pavement. Sources: Contemporary Architecture of Iran. (2016). Available at: [http://architectureofiran.ir/en/component/k2/item/280-stone-carpet.html?i=Stone Carpet in ShahidBeheshti sq. in Tabriz 5](http://architectureofiran.ir/en/component/k2/item/280-stone-carpet.html?i=Stone%20Carpet%20in%20ShahidBeheshti%20sq.%20in%20Tabriz%205) (visited: February 19, 2023)

Figure 4.6: Shahid Beheshti Square, Pavement tiles

Sources: Sharestan Architectural Consulting Website- [bit.ly/3kWKYyC](http://bit.ly/3kWKYyC) (visited: February 19, 2023)



Figure 4.7: Carpet-patterned pavement aesthetic view on rainy days  
Sources: [bit.ly/3L1BdcX](https://bit.ly/3L1BdcX) (visited: February 19, 2023)

### **4.3.2. Symbolic Minarets of Karim Khan Mosque- Symptoms of Islamic Neoliberalism**

As mentioned before, the Karim Khan Mosque is located in the heart of Beheshti Square. It dates back to the Qajar era and was registered as Iranian national heritage in 2013, along with the inauguration of the square. Yet the mosque is the only historical building that has survived the revitalization program's destruction. This exception highlights the question on the political logic behind creative destruction, which is why and how the mosque resisted destruction. In this way, "creative destruction" transcends being mere urban neoliberalism's spatial operation of capital accumulation. Authorities could define a renewed space's ideologies not only by what to construct in the path of creation but also by what to destroy and preserve in the path of destruction.

In Muslim societies, the mosque embodies religion in the public sphere. It gives an architectural form to religious discourse, with reference to the meanings accumulated in major building typologies over the centuries (Batuman, 2018). During the Qajar and Pahlavi eras, the Karim Khan mosque and its small surrounding public open space were acting as a socio-political space where collective practices were taken action besides its religious functionality. Considering the long history of the Islamic religion in Iran, mosques maintain their political and social significance besides everyday life religious practices, even under strict secular modern regulations during the Pahlavi era (Rad, 2018). After Islamic Revolution, mosques become even more significant architectural typologies due to the theocratic formation of state based on Islam Shi'ite. In the post-revolution context of Iran, "Islamist ideology symbolizes the mosque as a representation of political power" (Batuman, 2013). Iran, who claim to be the origin of its own distinctive Islamic representations, use mosque architecture as a method of establishing their national identity (Batuman, 2018). Therefore, "mosque is not only a place of worship but also a place of socialization, a tool for the reproduction of the sense of community and the spatial practical construction of religion-based identity" (symbol of Islamic nation) (Batuman, 2018).

The state's political consideration over religion in the post-revolution context of Iran intervenes neoliberal spatial practices. The municipalities' unclear urban policies along with neoliberal urban planning process pave the way to demolition of the entire historical urban fabric. Yet, the mosque resists destruction as it represents Islamic symbolism. After the completion of the Beheshti Square project, however, the Karim Khan mosque has emerged as a contradictory representation of the past among the new square's amalgam of modern commercial buildings. The mosque was significantly separated from its context. In other words, despite the physical preservation of the mosque, it has lost its previous social and worship functionality in the everyday life patterns of local residents. Creative destruction reproduces Islamic identity of the space as a mere symbol.

The Karim Khan mosque did not have minarets even at the time of its construction, which has been over two centuries since then. Due to the geographical conditions of Tabriz, which has always experienced terrible earthquakes throughout history, the majority of historic mosques in Tabriz are without minarets. Due to the minarets' separated structure from the mosque, as well as their height and fragility, they collapsed during earthquakes and caused several casualties. That is why the mosques in this city are often without minarets. However, considering the extremely large scale of the square, the Ipek Tower in front of the mosque, and the height of the surrounding buildings, the human scale of the Karim Khan mosque misrepresented its Islamic symbol. In this regard, "the mosque without minaret emerges as a religious space that has given up its claim to public visibility and acknowledgment" (Batuman, 2013). That is, the preserved Karim Khan mosque could not have fulfilled the administration's desire for a "powerful symbol for the political manifestations of Islam" (Batuman, 2013). Hence, the mosque, which fails to represent the desired symbolic significance in the Beheshti square, required a more powerful signifier of Islam.

In addition to its functional and structural features, the minaret is the most visually recognizable representative signifier of an Islamic city in general (Bloom, 1989). Due to the lack of a structural connection between the mosque and the minaret, it can be added to or subtracted from the mosque. Consequently, in 2018, the officials constructed two identical minarets<sup>13</sup>, the most identifiable symbols of Islamic city, in front of the the Karim Khan mosque to strengthen the power of Islamic representation. In the figure (4.7.), elevation view of the photograph depicts the minarets' height, which is higher than the surrounding commercial buildings, depicts the altered representation of the mosque. In this way, the Karim Khan mosque become symbolic

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<sup>13</sup> According to the IRNA news agency (17 July 2019), the initial intended minarets were even twice as tall as the ones that were ultimately built.

monument represented Islamic nation, which lost its social function. Taghizadeh<sup>14</sup>, a specialist in archeology and cultural heritage, emphasizes that “any decrease or addition of historical sites on the list of national monuments is a crime. The fact that the minarets' height obscures the exquisite and original Qajar Iranian-Islamic architecture of the entire Karim Khan Mosque significantly impairs the mosque's overall visibility. Without the proper authorization from the cultural heritage, such acts are impossible, and if they are carried out without a permit, it is a clear violation of the law. However, neither the General Administration of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts, and Tourism of East Azerbaijan nor any other organization has taken responsibility for this operation.”



Figure 4.8: Karim Khan mosque before conservation  
Source: [bit.ly/3SWw9Zk](https://bit.ly/3SWw9Zk) (visited: February 19, 2023)

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<sup>1414</sup> IRNA news agency (17 July 2019),



Figure 4.9: Karim Khan mosque during the conservation  
Sources: [bit.ly/3kWKYyC](https://bit.ly/3kWKYyC) (visited: February 19, 2023)



Figure 4.10: The new minarets adding to the historical Karimkhan mosque in 2018.  
Source: IRNA. (2019b). (visited: February 19, 2023)



Figure 4.11: current historical Karimkhan mosque with its two new minarets

Source: [bit.ly/3ZKWFHo](https://bit.ly/3ZKWFHo) (visited: February 19, 2023)

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION: CREATIVE DESTRUCTION, CREATIVE FORGETING

The urban revitalization project of the city core of Tabriz was a political spatiality outcome of Iran's post-revolution post-war economic recession in the 1990s. As part of this project, the revitalization of a residential district with the Mansour intersection as a prosperous urban node at the core of it emerged as the Shahid Beheshti Square and commercial complex surround it. Along with economic and political struggles in this period, the government adopts neoliberal regulations and adapts them to its own politic-economic structure (hybrid neoliberalism). As a result of regulations on urban economics, the municipalities of metropolitan cities, unlike the government, which was dependent on oil income, had no source of income except the city's economy, and the survival of their organization and services depended on the dynamics of its economy. The resolution of self-sufficiency of metropolitan municipalities in the 1990s led to different strategies of urban redevelopment to create circulation in the economy. Due to the lack of clear-cut urban policies, the terms urban revitalization and urban regeneration are used interchangeably and without precise definitions, so most of the historical urban fabrics fit the description of dilapidated textures, which necessitates renewal immediately. However, examining the concept of "creative destruction" formulated in the planning procedure of Beheshti Square reveals that this ambiguity is deliberate.

Since Tabriz municipality started the Historical Restructuring project to revitalize the historical Silk Path axis, cultural and historical urban fabric preservation was

introduced as the major purpose of spatial transformation. The concept of “creative destruction” provided the theoretical framework for the study as the revitalization of Beheshti Square treated the historical fabric as a tabula rasa and demolished all the courtyard houses to achieve economic profit. On the other hand, the Karim Khan mosque, as the only maintained heritage building in the central position of the emerged vast square, reflected the political complexities of the creative destruction planning process in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Examining the historical background of the district, categorized as three stages of urban renewal in the 1920s–1960s, 1990s, and 2020s, has altered the character of the historical fabric significantly. The analysis of renewal stages shows that the dominant political-economic discourse of each stage defines or changes the spatial qualities and political conditions that lead to the destruction and creation cycles. Creative destruction embraces temporality. This temporality accelerated the emergence of new deterioration. Ironically, the terminology employed to conduct the implementation of creative destruction prepares the path for further modification. Hence, we might claim that revitalization itself produces deterioration. To sum up:

1. Although the Beheshti square, which is one of the biggest urban investment failures in Tabriz, was opened, it could not be operated; In a short time it became idle again, and as long as it remains like this, the damage inflicted on the public will grow. After the call for the second plan was tried to be covered with the same financial motivations, it raises the question of what its future will be. However, considering the size of the area, the scale of the financial damage, and the political significance of the issue, this process needs to be evaluated from a broader perspective.

2. The process of “creative destruction” as dynamics of spatial temporalities reflects the relations between urban revitalization programs and neoliberalization in planning which clears out older buildings to make way for newer, more profitable ones at the expense of historical urban fabric and local residents of the city.

3. In the face of strong financial hegemonic discourse, agents reactively emphasized the cultural and Islamic representations that were identical and attempted to fill the void left by neoliberal intentions with the political aestheticization of space to acquire the approval of the society while also increasing the financial profit.

4. Considering the prominence of urban space as a means of capital accumulation, and the adoption of consumption functions in accordance with the spirit of the neoliberal era, the urban identity of the environment and social production of space is changed/exploited by the ideological transformation.

Considering the hegemonic role of the state, I will finish the discussion by mentioning two significant political outcomes of creative destruction:

### **5.1. Indirect State Properties**

Vahabi (2004) conceptualizes the term “destructive power” as covering all types of deliberate (violent and non-violent) social conflict behavior to ask how much an agent can destroy. He offers an interpretation of social development in a combination of three different types of power: creative (economic), destructive and moral. Then he defines destructive power as "threat power that may lead to the destruction of use or exchange values or even human beings and nature," with two different functions, namely appropriative and rule-producing, to integrate them into the political economy discourse. This means that the study of destructive power is within the scope of collective action and extends beyond being a mere irrational, abnormal, or critical reaction. (Vahabi 2004). He describes destructive power as:

In the *Kid* (1921), Charlie Chaplin's little tramp finds an ingenious way to earn his living as well as that of his little kid. The tramp and the kid go to a middle class district. First, the kid throws a stone and breaks the window of an apparently well to do apartment and then makes his

escape. Then the tramp appears as a glazier and is hired to repair the broken window. In this way, the deliberate destruction of a window by the kid creates an outlet for the tramp (Vahabi, 2004).

The scenario demonstrates intentionally broken windows emphasizes the necessity of destructive power in creative destruction process to circulate economy. In the social nature of destructive power, not only may individuals from disadvantaged socio-economic groups resort to using their destructive power to generate income, but sometimes, government also adopts expansionist strategies “to regulate new markets.” In this sense, values and individuals could aggrieve frequently (Vahabi, 2004). The windows (economy) might be reconstructed by a variety of companies, but who can fix the shattered people, values, and cities? The most crucial point of destructive power in this part of study is that it can affect distribution. Although it does not cause production, it can transfer the individual or public wealth to the dominant group, and this transfer is not carried out by mutual agreement but by force.

In light of this notion, which Vahabi uses to characterize the politics and economics of the Islamic Republic of Iran, it would be helpful to understand the relationship between destructive power and the redistribution of private residences to indirect state property. Notwithstanding the investment failure of Tabriz's core urban renewal project, the government secured expanded ownership and control over significant public places. What we see in inhabitants displacement, accumulation by dispossession, eliminating public memory and devalorisation of history and culture of built environment could asses as distructive power as well.

Government agencies, including Tabriz municipality, in collaboration with the Department for Housing and Urban Development and Iran's Urban Redevelopment Company, have reallocated significant funds to the Beheshti Square Project. Although government agencies bought multiple courtyard houses by mutual agreement on the exchange value of private properties, inhabitants were forced to sell their houses. In addition, these agencies mentioned that the private sector's cooperation in the project

provided a successful experience of investment. However, as mentioned in Chapter 3, these apparently private enterprises in Iran's economic structure are divisions of different government agencies. That is, individual private property rights are redistributed under the state's dominion.



Figure 5.1: Notices written on the facades of most of the large commercial units around the square: "This property belongs to Iran's Urban Regeneration Company of the Ministry of Roads and Urban Development." Photographed by Author

## 5.2. Creative Forgetting<sup>15</sup> as a Political Outcome

How inhabitants perceive, identify, and remember i.e. “socially understand” their city as a social phenomenon are all political. City as the space of everyday life, traditions, continuities, historical events, conflicts, and social changes are products of the imaginations of individuals as well as urban reality (Batuma, 2019). “The urban imagination should be understood as a constitutive component of the city as a social

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<sup>15</sup> borrowed from (Fenster, 2019)

structure, i.e., the city as an imaginary environment" (Batuman, 2019). Mental process rather than bodily experiences shape comprehensive understandings of the city. Urban imagination is a collection of ideas from diverse cultural mediums, similar to collective memory. The city represented indirectly or explicitly in these cultural connections. (Batuman, 2019) Indeed, one of the most related phenomena about historical cities is memory. Urban monuments generate (Lefebvre, 1993) and/or represent (Sargin, 2004) collective memories. However, collective memories are not only unstable but also have ever-changing qualities, which produce spatiotemporal remains (Sargin, 2004). Urban revitalization plays a vital role in conserving historical buildings in the urban imagination. Yet, neoliberal renewal prioritizes destruction over the protection of historical urban fabrics (Fenster, 2019; Harvey, 2007). Creative destruction involves not only physical rebuilding but also the destruction of cultural resources. Neoliberal renewal benefits from national or local cultural codes and past spatiality to "make space" for new enterprises and future progress. (Fenster, 2019). Due to their propensity to produce more rapid shifts and fluctuations, capitalism and neoliberalism have a conflicting connection with memory and nostalgia (Fenster, 2019; Saadi, 2011; following Benjamin, 1969). In this regard, contemporary memory discussions on Nietzsche's term "creative forgetting" (Fenster, 2019) as "use and abuse of history" (Huysen, 2003) raise this question: what is the political outcome of creative destruction considering the concepts of memory, cultural heritage, and history in the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran?

The Karim Khan mosque, the oldest maintained heritage building in Beheshti Square, outlined three historical layers of contemporary regimes and their different ideological standpoints in the last century of Iran: the Qajar dynasty, the Pahlavi monarchy, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Despite Iran's diverse ethnic and religious composition, "Islamic Shi'ism became the state's hegemonic mechanism following the 1979 revolution" (Vahabi, 2011). Iran's current theocratic regime and its hegemonic political stance are in sharp contrast to the secular modern concepts of the Pahlavi regime. As mentioned in the second chapter, the Constitutional Revolution, which

occurred in the transition between Qajar and Pahlavi regimes, marked the end of the monarch's absolute authority based on freedom, democracy, and progressive principles, although it could not succeed. Despite the revolution's democratic regulations and legislation, it clarified that "the official religion of Iran is Islam of Twelver Shi'ia and that the king must be a believer in this religion and propagator of it" (Vahabi, 2011). This amendment to the Constitution aimed to reduce clerical opposition by democratizing the political power structure. Yet, the Islamic Republic of Iran appreciates the intervention of religion in government, as well as the nationalist and anti-colonial nature of the constitutional revolution. That is, in accordance with its ideology, the state takes a position on the country's previous governments, consequently, on history.

In the Beheshti Square revitalization process, creative destruction applies creative forgetting by, on the one hand, being ideologically selective in demolishing and/or preserving historical structures and, on the other hand, by modifying the representation of space. Thus, the Karim Khan "mosque" of Qajarian resisted demolition since it represented the Islamic nation. In other words, the functional identity of the building is more significant than the fact that it is a historic heritage and adheres to the prevailing ideology of the theocratic state. On the other hand, although there is not enough accurate information about the history of courtyard houses in the district, comparing the map of the Qajarian era and (1956, 1967) aerial photographs of the Pahlavi era illustrates that most of the courtyard houses built after the first decade of urban modernization of Pahlavi era. Administrative planning language did not recognize these structures as historic, thus there was no need to register them as historic structures or attempt to preserve them. Yet, in the 1991, the fireplaces that were removed from the courtyard houses of Mansour Crossroad were moved to historical Ganjeizadeh house, which has now been changed to the Faculty of Architecture.

In the northeast corner of Beheshti Square, is the house of Sheikh Mohammad Khiabani, who played a crucial role during the Constitutional Revolution of Iran in the later years of the Qajar dynasty. Due to its cultural and political significance, the house of Sheikh Mohammad Khaibani has been registered on Iran's list of national monuments on August 19, 2004, with registration number 12783. This building began operating as a museum in September 2018, and the entry, where another building is located, has been given to the administrative department of the East Azarbaijan Provincial Museum Affairs Department. In addition, Sheikh's statue, as a reminder of his 15-year struggle as an independent and idealist constitutionalist, is installed in front of the entrance to the historical house on the northeast side of Shahid Beheshti Square. That is, spatial practices of "creative destruction," in which "preservation prioritizes monuments over urban texture" (Zhang, 2008). Moreover, the preference for conserving monuments aligned with the state's ideological position implements "creative forgetting" by not only demolishing a great number of historical courtyard houses but also the spatiality of commemorating by installing cultural codes and altering selected heritage buildings in public spaces, thus spreading desired ideologies to a wider audience.

In addition to physical alterations, representing social spatialities in a way that fits with the theocratic position of the state generates collective memory. Tasnim News Agency's (2020) topic: "The world's largest carpet-patterned pavement in Tabriz hosted the mourners of Aba Abdullah al-Hussein" represents the Beheshti Square as an open space that hosts *Ashura*<sup>16</sup> mourning ceremonies as the most renowned identity of the Shia Islamic nation. The Khiaban district, which once was the symbol of emerging new democratic public spaces as a result of society's political resistance, became the representation of the custom under clerical control but can also incorporate

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<sup>16</sup> This event takes place on the tenth day of Muharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, every year. To commemorate the death of Husayn ibn Ali (a grandson of Muhammad) who was killed in the Battle of Karbala in 680 CE, Shia Muslims hold massive public demonstrations of grief known as Ashura.

politically convenient messages. This is part of the state's efforts to reinforce an ideological message and retain clerical control to find its way into public awareness.



Figure 5.2: Shahid Beheshti Square, Sheikh Mohammad Khatami's Monument  
Source: IRNA. (2019a). (visited: February 19, 2023)

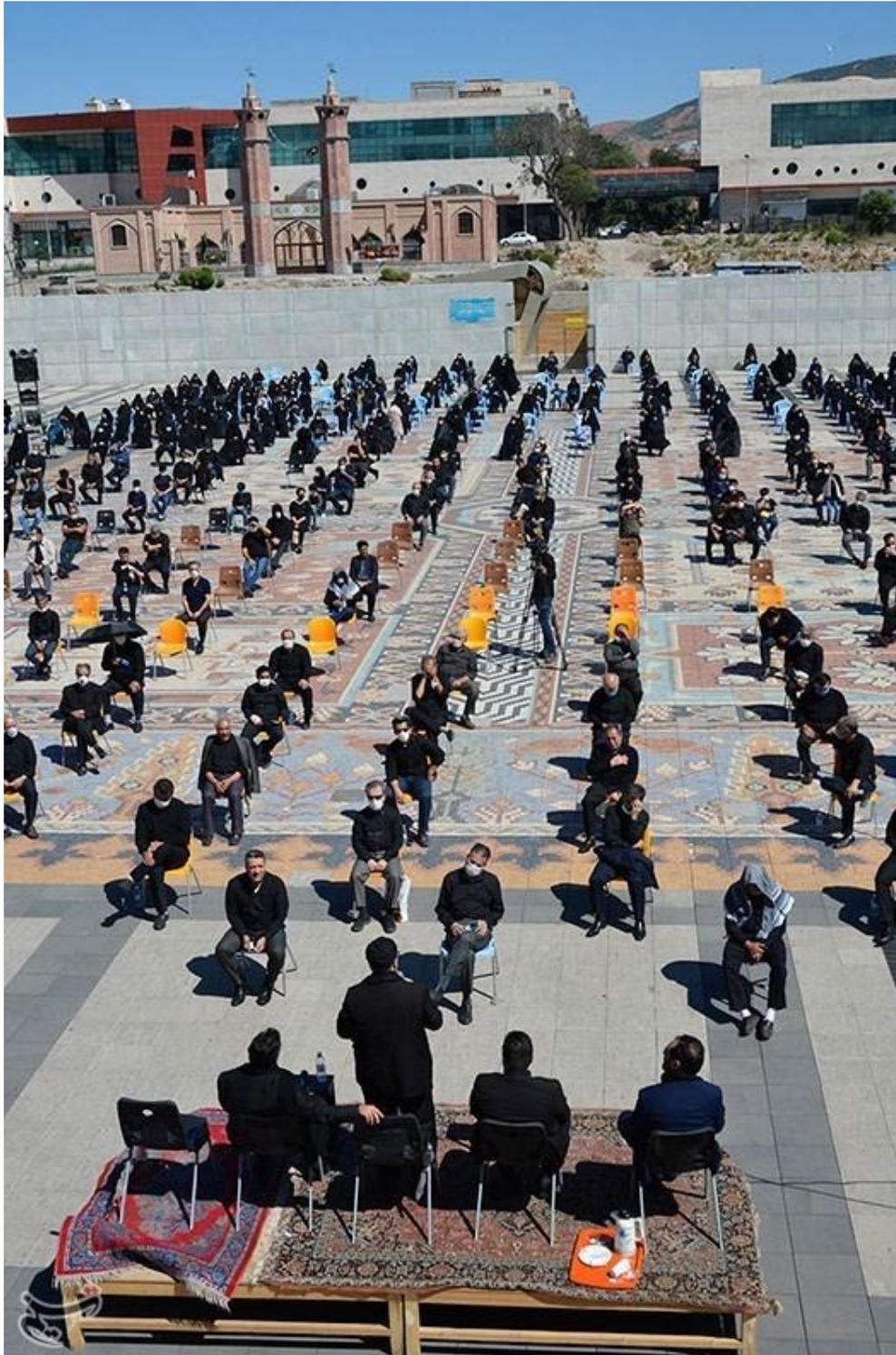


Figure 5.3: Shahid Beheshti Square, *Ashura* Mourning Ceremony  
Sources: Tasnim News Agency (2020). (visited: February 19, 2023)

### 5.3. Epilogue

The divisions and tensions of the destruction-creation phases that are discussed in this study are related to the framework of the contemporary history of Iranian urban modernity, which began in the Pahlavi era and followed the neoliberal regulations after the Islamic revolution. Although the literature on creative destruction in urban studies includes an economic-political context, I endeavored to underline that the rebuilding and destruction mentioned here involve an ideological conflict. In this case, creative destruction turns into an ideological apparatus as it selectively destroys historical structures and achieves the intended representation of renewal. The representation of contradictory ideologies materialized in the renewal procedure is the primary distinction between the "creative destruction" strategy before and after the 1979 revolution. Both political systems engage in a top-down approach to urban transformation. Reza Shah has deemed to build a new Iran by taking a nostalgic look at the pre-Islamic period of Iranian history to catch up with the modern and Western world. However, the Islamic Republic specifically highlights a modern form of Iranian-Islamic cities. Farhadpour (2021) argues that "the Iranian revolution of 1979 and its consequences should be analyzed using the concepts of integration (into the world capitalist system) and isolation (from the new world order)." This statement, in my opinion, encapsulates why the urban administration employed "creative destruction" in Beheshti Square's revitalization program as a political apparatus to keep the public space in the state's desired order while maximizing the exchange value of space. The striking point in this context is that the superiority of the administration's economic demand positions the 1979 revolution's dominant anti-capitalist Islamic ideology at the service of neoliberal pursuit. That is, for instance, how the Karim Khan mosque, which was an actual space of everyday religious practice, turned into a symbolic Islamic representation with a political character.

As one of the most prominent neoliberal paradigms, "creative destruction" has taken its place as the keystone in post-1990 Tabriz's urban revitalization programs. This

study has verified that the neoliberal process' demand for devaluation of Tabriz's naturally decayed historical urban fabric, which was accomplished by generating a discourse that elevated revitalization ideas, resulted in a human-made ruined space. In other words, the revitalization of valuable historical urban fabric produced problematic urban ruins. The revitalization of Beheshti Square, along with the Atigh Project, *Mesgaran* Bazaar, and other diverse projects, is not the first failure experienced by urban administrations' enforced transformation against the tendency of the local residents to displace them. However, the people of Tabriz welcomed none of these enforced public spaces. Considering the municipality's another degree of superficial strategic beautification approach, I believe that neither social nor commercial advancement will occur following the second phase of renewal.

The major motive behind this study is the fact that the erasure of the historical urban core, which is the most valuable cultural capital of society, is deepening. Figure (5.4) is the latest image of the Square, representing a human-made ruined space that becomes an urban political conflict as part of an almost three-decade unfinished project, which raises the question of what will happen next. The main reason behind this political conflict is that this urban crisis is a manifestation of Iran's continuous political-economic crisis. This study is the first step to providing a proper response to Shahid Beheshti's large-scale urban waste; it does so by creating a base on how the process of the main ideological conditions has matured and resulted in destructive spatial practices. The failure of approaches to urban renewal based solely on focusing on the technical aspects of the issue is not a surprise, considering the fact that the relationship formed with designers itself is political. Architects' and urban designers' understandings of ideologies and paradigms that pervade their professions must be thoroughly assessed. Because the solution to this problem could not only offer the opportunity to develop alternatives that will revive Beheshti Square but also develop a method on how to deal with many other areas that are built against the public interest.



Figure 5.4: Latest photograph of Beheshti Square representing an urban ruin,  
Taken by Amir Sanajou in January 2023



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## APPENDIX A

### OLD DOCUMENTS OF TABRIZ

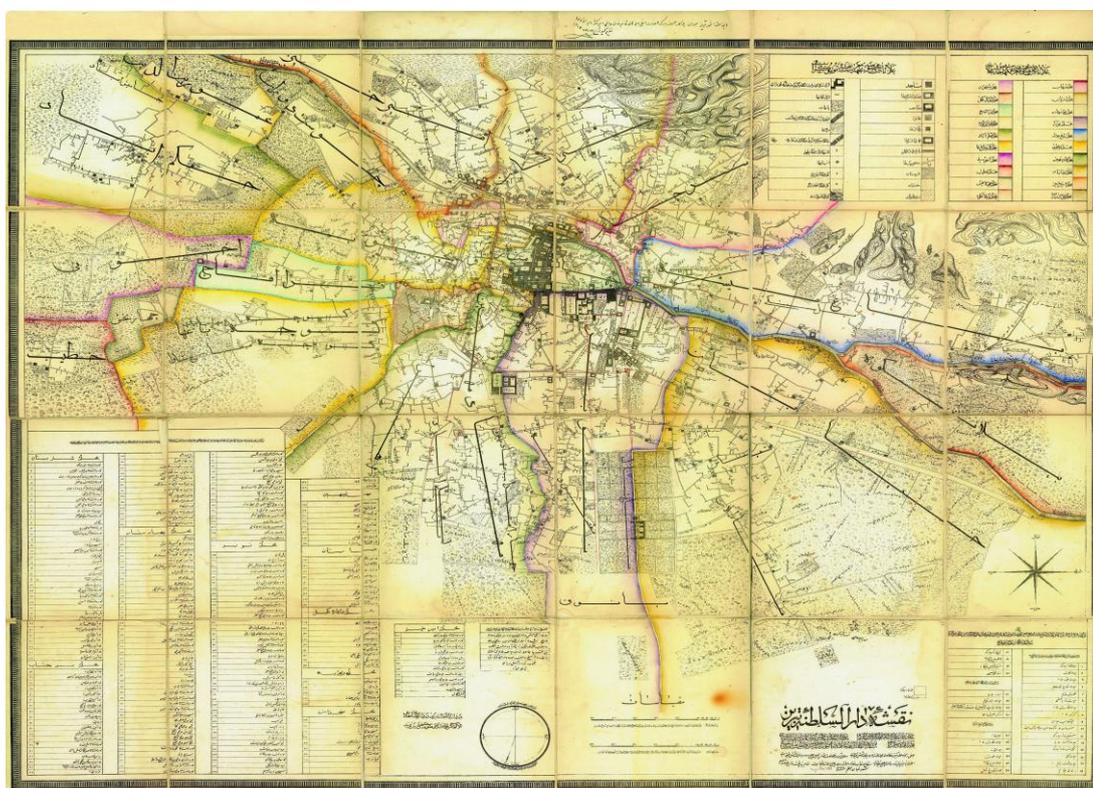


Figure A.1: Tabriz Dar al-Saltane Map, 1880 known as Qaracheh-Daghi Map

Source: (Fakhari Tehrani, Parsi & Bani Masoud, 2006)

<http://www.negarestandoc.ir/documentdetail.aspx?id=104986>



Figure A.2: Map of Tabriz drafted by Asad Allah Khan Maraghei in 1910

Source: (Fakhari Tehrani, Parsi & Bani Masoud, 2006)

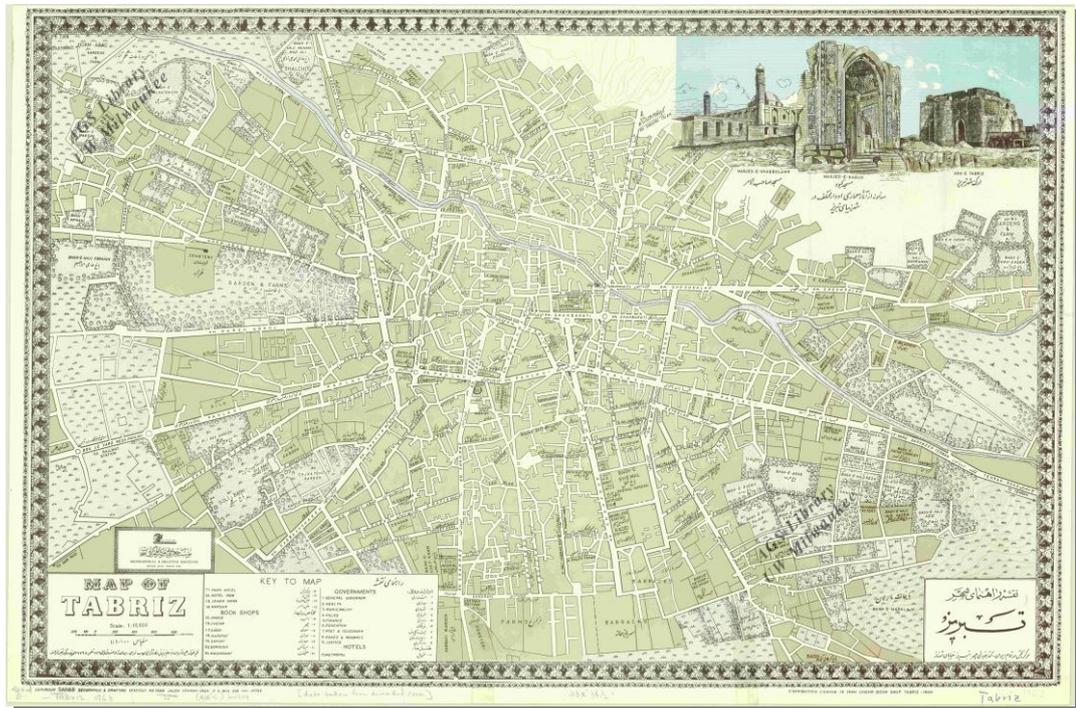


Figure A.3: Tabriz map in Pahlavi era after Street Widening Act

Source: <http://negarestan.info/documentdetail.aspx?id=104969>

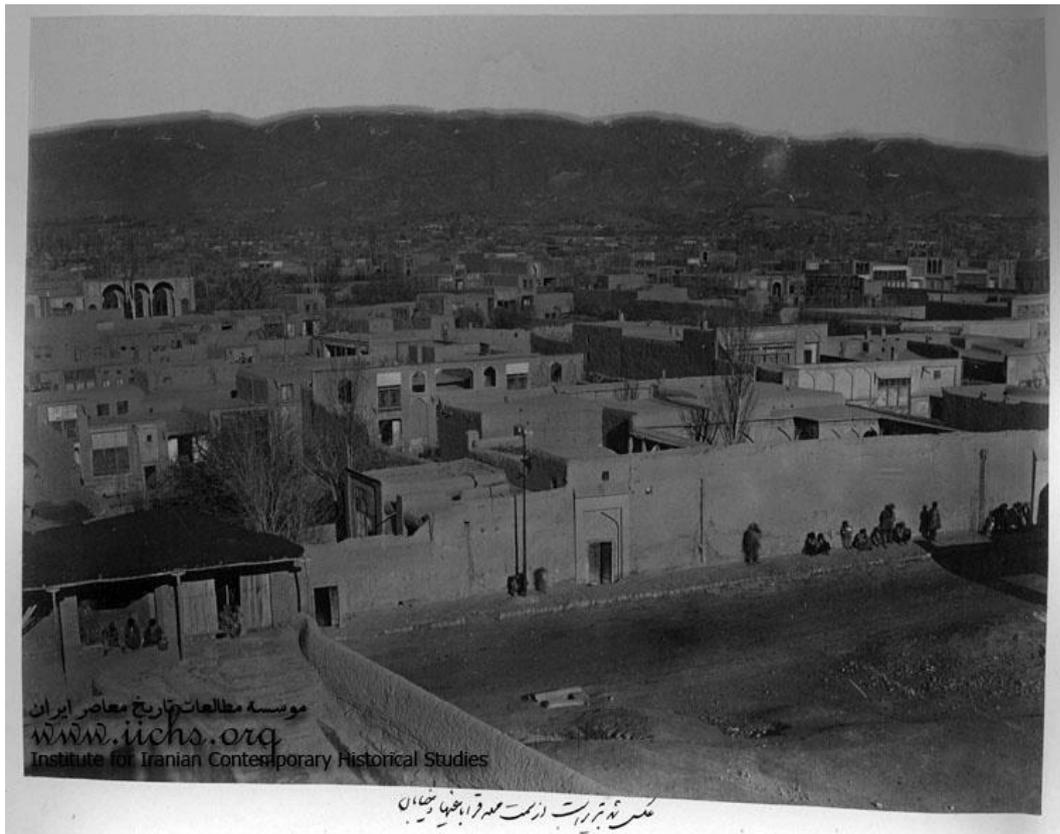


Figure A.4: Aerial view of Tabriz from the Qarabaghi and Khiaban neighborhood,  
the Qajar period

Source: <http://www.negarestandoc.ir/documentdetail.aspx?id=107653>

(Visited Feruary 23, 2023)



Figure A.5: Aerial photography of Tabriz in 1956.  
Sources: Iran National Cartographic Center



Figure A.6: Aerial photography of Tabriz in 1967.  
Sources: Iran National Cartographic Center



Figure A.7: The location of Karim Khan Mosque

Sources: Iran Cultural Heritage, Handcraft and Tourism Organization Documents

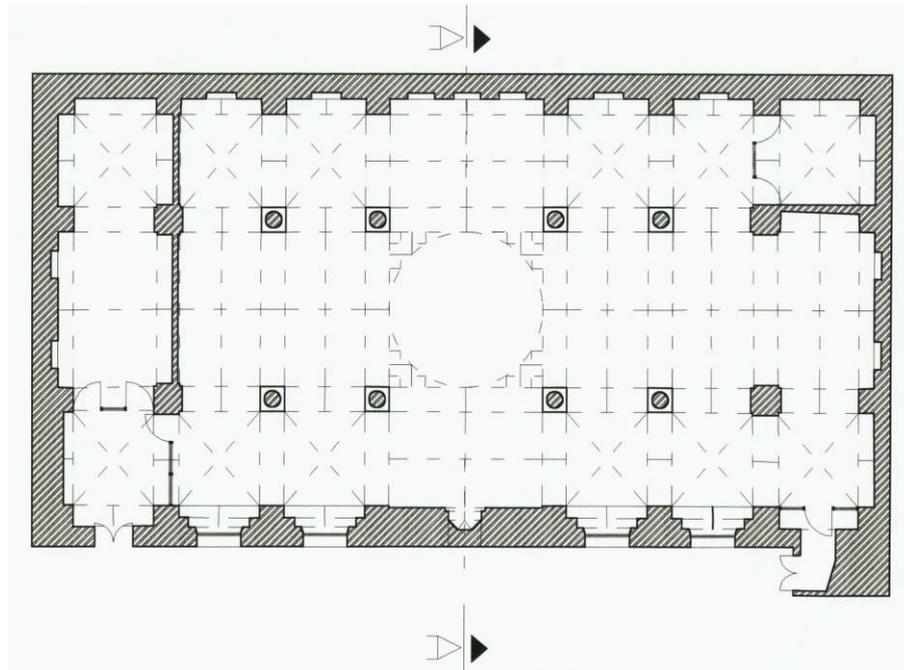


Figure A.8: Karim Khan Mosque's Plan

Sources: Iran Cultural Heritage, Handcraft and Tourism Organization Documents

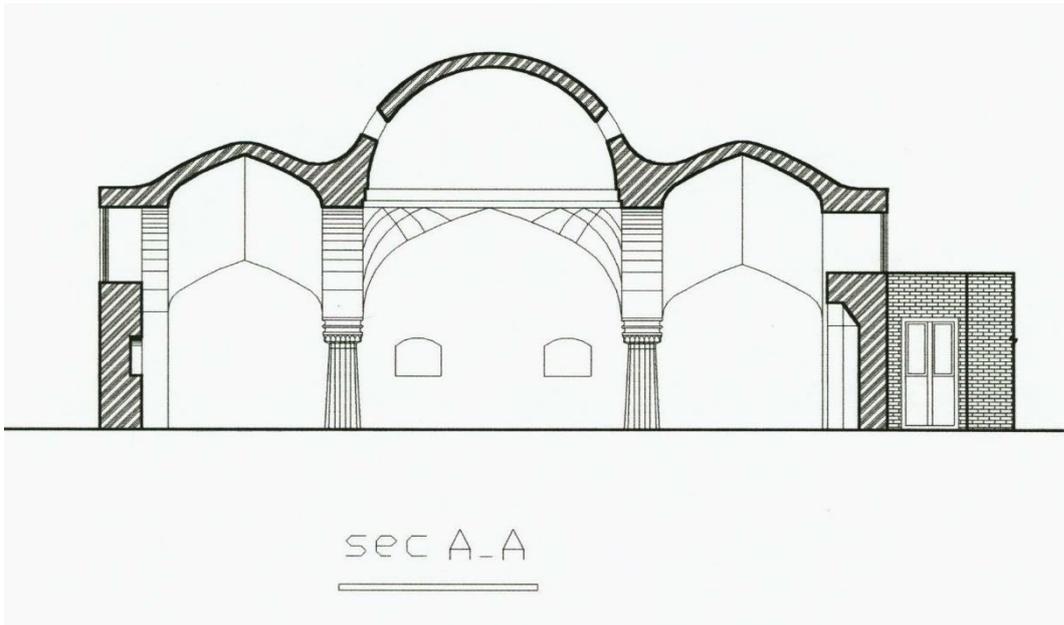


Figure A.9: Karim Khan Mosque's Section  
Sources: Iran Cultural Heritage, Handcraft and Tourism Organization Documents

