

Urban Politics and Regulation in Tehran*

(Research Paper)

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Introduction

The primary objective of this research program is to explain the dynamics and changes in the relations between the urban government, market, and society in today Iran's metropolises environment. We take Tehran as the case of study because of its political and economic centrality to the whole country and experienced profound changes in any respect. Besides, the state of governance in Tehran municipality has exemplified the basics of the political system in Iran. We began this research program because of a general concern on and about a tripartite crisis in relations between the governing system, the market and the society in Tehran.

The ۱۹۷۹ Iran Revolution and eight years' war between Iraq and Iran had a great impact on the nature of the urban condition especially in Tehran and other metropolises. The Islamic state confronted with lots of economic problems after the Revolution and an eight-year war has been urged to pursue economic adjustment policies. The very policies had changed the nature of urban governance which one can consider as the source of the problems that Iran's cities and specially metropolises are witnessing today. In this paper, we are going to examine the nature and dynamics of urban policies, its relation with the market and the role of citizens in order to understand the urban politics in today Iran. Recent studies show Iran's cities and especially the metropolises are facing with different challenges. The inadequate public spaces, discontent citizens, and non-participation, marginality, unavailing laws and regulations are indicating malfunctions in the urban governance apparatus. Through the study of urban politics in Tehran, we try to explain the path of this very situation.

۱. Governance and Regulations

The result of the state policies in land assigning and negating the urban planning practice beside the increasing demands for housing after the Revolution was the irregularity in urban development. In ۱۹۸۳ the state financial shortages led to the policies regarding the autonomous financial municipalities from one hand, and a few years later, in ۱۹۸۷ the Urban Density Determination Act made it possible that selling rights to higher density as a source of income for the municipalities on the other hand.

Almost two years after the ending of Iraq-Iran war Gholamhossein Karbaschi has been appointed as the mayor of Tehran (۱۹۸۹-۹۸) by the national government. He had a strong relation with the government so far that he was the first and last mayor of Tehran who had a sit in the cabinet. As a powerful mayor, Karbaschi didn't consider planning practices and