Understanding socio-political impact of urbanization in Tehran

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

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Abstract

Urbanization is a growing concern around the world, but perhaps the threat of unruly urbanization is nowhere as great as it is in the Middle East. While there is a growing body of literature focusing on the environmental and ecological impact of increasing urbanization, there exist fewer investigations into the socio-political change arising from this rapid and sweeping change. This research seeks to add to this untapped field and provide meaningful insights into the socio-political impacts of rapid and ongoing urbanization in Iran. It is surmised that such research can be invaluable for recognizing the political trends and impacts that are likely to emerge in an increasingly urbanized landscape in Iran. The specific questions to be addressed in this research are as follows: What are among the many socio-political impacts associated with rapid urbanization in Tehran? This question will guide the research proposed here. This research helps provide support for the hypothesis that urbanization is an unexplained and intervening variable driving social change as well as Dubaization in Tehran. To be sure, urbanization has disrupted traditional gender roles in the city, raised levels of education, exacerbated inequality in society, and integrated technology into the day-to-day lives of citizens. Moreover, urbanization has facilitated the conditions necessary for the Dubaization of Tehran. Each of these conditions is a major driver of socio-political change in the city and has the potential to create significant change in Tehran overall.

Acknowledgements

<u>Dedication</u>

I dedicate this thesis to my number one supporter, my motivator and my real life angel; my mother. I love you.

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Introduction

Unruly urbanization is a growing phenomenon around the world. Many cities around the world are undergoing profound changes as a result of urbanization on a large-scale. While many researchers have focused on the environmental impacts associated with urbanization, research investigating the socio-political changes arising from these trends is important for understanding how urbanization is changing the social conditions in numerous cities around the world. Tehran is one city undergoing profound changes due to trends involving urbanization. What are the socio-political impacts associated with urbanization in Iran's largest city, Tehran? This question warrants investigation due to both the high degree of urbanization in Iran, as well as the presence of different social movements and widespread social change in the city of Tehran. To be sure, a number of significant social and political changes are ongoing in Iran; better understanding the role of urbanization in nurturing and sustaining these movements and changes can help inform policy as well as reveal potentially important further areas of research.

Urbanization in Iran has played an important role in shaping the country's development (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 2012, 98-99). It is important to note that by 1921, the rate of urbanization in Iran was 18 percent and by 1956, it reached 31 percent (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 2012, 105). In the years that followed, urbanization would rise even more sharply. Between 1956 and 2006, urbanization rose with great speed and reached the notable level of 68.5 percent (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 2012, 105). Researchers have attributed the rapid growth of urbanization in Iran over the second half of the twentieth century to a combination of factors including massive population growth, and trends involving

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rural migration to cities (Mohammadi 36). According to data on urbanization in Iran, urbanization will reach an unprecedented level of 75 percent by the year 2021 (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 2012, 105).

As previously mentioned, Tehran is the city most affected by urbanization in Iran. It is important to note that in the 1930s Tehran's population was 500,000; thanks to population growth and urbanization, Tehran's population had reached over 8.5 million by 2009 (Pilehvar and Kamali 49). When the metropolitan region surrounding the city is included in estimates, the city's population rises to roughly 12 million inhabitants (Madanipour 433). Widespread urbanization has had a significant impact on the city and its infrastructure, and the impacts are becoming more pronounced (Pilehvar and Kamali 49). It should also be noted, during the first years of the Iran's Islamic Revolution, between 1979 and 1982, the city of Tehran doubled its geographic size to roughly 550 square kilometres (Arjomand 123). During the same period of time, Ahwaz, another city in Iran, tripled in size to 75 square kilometres (Arjomand 123). Thus, Tehran and other cities in Iran have grown not only in terms of population, but grown in terms of their geographic size as well.

Furthermore, it's important to note that Tehran has experienced a range of negative environmental impacts stemming from its high level of urbanization. Urbanization has had a considerable impact on groundwater, and the country's Khash aquifer, an important water source in the south-eastern part of the country (Khazai and Riggi 211-212). Cities like Tehran are particularly vulnerable to having groundwater degraded by rapid urbanization that continues to shape the city's development. Already, significant and pervasive urbanization throughout Tehran

has engendered a number of environmental problems; the city's residents face dangerous health risks due to poor air quality which has been brought about by urbanization and the increase in vehicles and their fossil fuel emissions (Yokoyama and Takahashi 17). Data shows that over 90 percent of these harmful emissions are related to cars in and around the city (Yokoyama and Takahashi 17).

Tehran's development can be traced along three distinct phases, each of which had an important overall effect on how the urban area developed (Madanipour 433). Tehran's earliest stage of development occurred prior to World War II (Madanipour 433). The city implemented three major development initiatives during this period, all of which worked to shape the city's future development over time (Madanipour 433). In the 1550s, the city's first development initiative was implemented, with major walls being erected to surround the city (Madanipour 433). It was not until 1870 that the second development initiative was established (Madanipour 433). The expansion of the city during this period is argued to be the city's second important development project to be established during its first stage of development (Madanipour 433). Finally, in the 1930s, the third initiative was established with the new construction of a city infrastructure for Tehran (Madanipour 434). Each of these development initiatives were established out of the city's desire to ensure its growth and response to ongoing changes (Madanipour 434).

The second phase of Tehran's development started after the end of World War II. Starting in the 1960s, the city of Tehran started to use planning to help the city grow and respond to its changing needs (Madanipour 434). Significant urbanization in Tehran and other cities in Iran

necessitated the use of more complex and sophisticated tools for planning and city design (Madanipour 434). It was also in this development stage that Iran established a legal framework for the application of urban planning in cities like Tehran (Madanipour 435). Tehran's third stage of development took place in the years following the country's Islamic Revolution (Madanipour 435). In this stage, there were also three distinct development initiatives, including the actual revolution, from 1979 until 1988; the reconstruction phase during the years 1989 until 1996; and the reform period between the years 1997 and 2004 (Madanipour 435). The city authorities differed in their approach to planning in different ways during these periods (Madanipour 435). While reforms are ongoing, the city's residents are negatively impacted by congestion, deep social inequality, terrible air pollution, and high real estate prices (Madanipour 436).

Tehran has been shaped by rapid urbanization, and the city's residents and especially youth who are increasingly frustrated and dissatisfied with the current social and political conditions. It has been argued that cities are the sites that give rise to important social and political issues (Fanni 407). As such, examining the social and political impacts of urbanization in Iran is particularly important. Moreover, the Dubaization of Tehran is another issue that is an ongoing concern for residents; Dubaization refers to a process where cities are robbed of their local character and culture to better facilitate globalization (Al Rabady 289). In recent years, growing unrest, particularly among the country's urban youth, has contributed to the development of different movements aimed at promoting social change. Different authors have argued that social change in Iran may be engendered and shaped by generational change (Molavi), ideological differences (Ghamari-Tabrizi), and media (Sohrabi-Haghighat). However,

heretofore there has been no research considering the role that urbanization has played in promoting social change within the country.

This research examines the social and political impacts of urbanization in Tehran. Based on a review of the literature and a qualitative content analysis of findings from social media, it is hypothesized that urbanization is contributing to social unrest and social change in Tehran. Arguably, the popularity of the country's Green Movement and female empowerment has been influenced by urbanization. This research aims to fill a noted gap in the existing literature on the subject and contribute to an important area of understanding. The next section details the methodology employed in this research. The third section presents the literature review, the fourth and fifth sections present the findings and an analysis of the results obtained in the research. The final section concludes with a discussion of the findings, as well as a commentary on the ongoing potential for unrest and change in Tehran. In addition, the final section also notes a number of potential areas where future research may be conducted.

Methodology

The specific research questions posed in this research include: What are the socio-political impacts associated with urbanization in Iran's largest city, Tehran? The stated hypothesis for this research is as follows: urbanization is an unexplained and intervening variable to ongoing socio-political change and growing impact of the female empowerment in Iran. In light of the different types of information needed to address the research questions posed, the research methodology employed for this project included a mixed methods approach.

A literature review was conducted in combination with the case study method, while a qualitative content analysis was used to glean information from Twitter, Facebook, and other social networking websites and media properties. Examining Tehran using the case study method is particularly fitting due to the fact that the case study method allows for a specific focus on the sites in Iran where urbanization continues to have the most significant impacts. An important advantage of the case study method is that helps the researcher to collect an especially rich and detailed array of information about the subject (Tayie 101). By focusing on the city of Tehran, this research is able consider both the impacts to the city itself, as well as its residents.

After the development of research questions and corresponding hypotheses, a literature review was conducted, examining the available scholarly research discussing urbanization in Tehran. A variety of search operations were performed using different online public access catalogues, as well as university databases. The literature review was initiated with broad searches pertaining to urbanization in Tehran, and then narrowed down to a number of specific topics based on the findings obtained from preliminary research. The primary materials

consulted in the literature review were books and chapters of edited books, as well as academic journal articles. To return the broadest results possible, the initial search strings included phrases such as, "urbanization in Tehran"; "impacts of urbanization in Tehran"; "socio-political impacts of urbanization in Tehran", and others. These general search strings returned thousands of results, many of which were either irrelevant or too narrow in scope to be of particular value.

Search strings were then refined using dates as parameters and information in other fields to narrow results. Particular topics and themes were identified from these results, and then new searches were conducted to gain more in-depth information about a particular phenomenon, issue, or topic. The identification of broad themes and general topics in the overall literature pertaining to the topic was important for engaging in more targeted research and the identification of relevant search terms, keywords, and phrases. More targeted search phrases were then employed, based on the broad themes and topics identified. These search strings resulted in consultation with more sources dealing with the specific themes and topics identified in the broad literature review.

The literature review included an online component, with searching focused on relevant and authoritative websites with potentially useful information. While some websites were used to obtain general information, every effort was made to ensure the site being used was authoritative, and the material being cited was current. In some cases, material drawn from these websites could not be obtained elsewhere. However, wherever possible, useful information from websites were further researched and sourced using journal articles, books, and other printed sources. Every effort was made to ensure that all the sources used in the literature review were

authoritative and contained current and accurate information. In some cases, information obtained from one source was then supplanted by more updated information drawn from a more current and up-to-date source covering the same subject matter.

The second method employed to facilitate this research was a qualitative content analysis. The qualitative content analysis was used to help identify and analyze relevant content posted by citizens of Tehran on social media sites. Google was used to conduct a site-specific search to the Twitter domain. A variety of keywords and phrases were used to help identify relevant content. In addition, Twitter's advanced search engine was used. The most important tool utilized in the process of searching for content on Twitter was Topsy.com, a search engine specifically designed for Twitter. Using Topsy, searches were conducted specifically for users located in Tehran who tweeted specific relevant keywords and phrases. These findings were then refined to identify relevant and meaningful content posted by individuals in the English language. Topsy was particularly helpful in identifying a variety of Twitter users located in Tehran. By narrowing results to those users whose location was inside Tehran, the search engine allowed for the identification of whole profiles, which could then be searched in detail for potentially relevant posts or other content.

Content from Facebook was also researched using a variety of search strategies. Popular Facebook groups were identified using a combination of Google searches and examining Facebook's own search interface. Postings on group pages were reviewed by hand, with researchers reviewing materials to identify relevant keywords and phrases. In some cases, searches for specific keywords were conducted using the web browser's simple keyword search

tool. In cases were text was available on a webpage, this tool was used to identify posts and passages containing information relevant to specific issues and topics. Blogs and online editorials were searched primarily using Google and a number of different relevant keywords and search strings. When popular English-language blogs and sites were identified, contents and user-comments were examined for potentially relevant information. Findings from the qualitative content analysis were recorded by saving web pages where possible, and taking detailed notes and screenshots where it was not possible to save full pages. Materials were saved in their entirety whenever possible to ensure easy access could be obtained at any point to re-visit materials, double-check facts, or investigate a particular issue further.

After all research was completed, the findings obtained from the literature review and the qualitative content analysis were then synthesized and categorized based on the different major themes and topics identified. During this process, several categories and themes were eliminated because they did not have enough relevant, current, or authoritative sources. In some cases, where single sources contained information on multiple topics, information was recorded and included in other relevant categories. A final set of categories corresponding to different themes and topics was established, and the different sources related to these individual categories were then consulted again to identify any further information that had been missed.

In addition, during the final stage, the information was also synthesized to bridge gaps and make connections between different findings to facilitate the process of analysis. A visual research map was created to group relevant sources together, as well to make links between sources and topics in the literature. This tool was particularly helpful for keeping track of the

research already conducted, and how different materials and information related to each other in the larger context of the research itself. This research map was also helpful for preparing the process of analysis by providing a visual representation of the different topics and issues, as well as the relevant links between important research sources identified.

<u>**Literature Review on Urbanization in Tehran**</u>

The following sections outline key issues and topics in the literature related to urbanization in Tehran. Research on urbanization in Iran and Tehran, specifically, has come from a variety of different academic fields and disciplines. Among the topics reviewed include social change in Iran stemming from urbanization, Tehran's declining air quality, groundwater issues caused by urbanization, poverty and inequality caused by urbanization, migration and other factors driving urbanization, and the concentration of development in Tehran. In addition, topics such as the Green Movement, female empowerment, and other efforts aimed at reform are examined and discussed. The role that urbanization has played in the development of these movements is considered and explored. The information contained in each of these different sections helps to support claims that urbanization has impacted all facets of life in Tehran, including geological and pollution impacts, impacts to human health, and social change.

Social Change in Iran

As previously mentioned evidence shows that urbanization is having a significant impact in many parts of Iran. According to the research, the country's urban population was 34 percent in 1960, but by 1980, had reached 50 percent (Sayeed 60). By 2011, the country's urban population totalled 69.1 percent, with the urbanization rate expected to continue to climb (Central Intelligence Agency). Since the Islamic Revolution in 1979, urbanization has increased across the country, with the populations of cities rising, accompanied by an increase in the number of cities, as well as an ongoing decline in the country's rural population (Fanni 408). Tehran is the country's largest urban centre, having experienced continual growth over time since

1976 (Fanni 408). However, other cities are also showing signs of significant growth, with Mashhad, Esfahan, Tabriz, and Shiraz all reporting population increases over time (Fanni 408).

The dramatic increase in the number of cities in Iran is also important to note. While Iran had 199 cities in 1956, there were 1012 by 2006 (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 105).[1] Moreover, research shows that 400 cities alone emerged in just the last ten years (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 105). While there has been a rise in the number of cities, the greatest growth has been concentrated in key cities with most of the growth concentrated in Tehran (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 106). As a result, a concentration of development has been further compounded with focused development of infrastructure and services in areas most heavily populated (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 106). This has resulted in a situation for Iran where areas like Tehran have by far, the greatest amount of work opportunities, services, and other resources (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 106).

Tehran's Air Quality

Urbanization in Iran, and in Tehran, specifically, has contributed to significant social problems as well as associated environmental problems. Indeed, the rampant and unchecked urbanization that has characterized the country's recent development has contributed to a number of serious environmental issues and problems (International Business Publications 67). In Tehran, the city is facing a number of environmental issues and problems, and the government is now focusing more on addressing these serious problems (International Business Publications 67). Urbanization generally leads to environmental problems such as acid rain, air pollution,

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[1] This data is based on 1000+ individuals that make up particular cities.

deforestation, land pollution, and water pollution (Atash 399). In Tehran, urbanization has resulted in many of these problems, as the city struggles to manage the increased demand on resources as well as the impacts of such a large concentration of people.

A review of reports on air quality and its impacts on health reveals a number of troubling issues and concerns. In 2012, Tehran experienced a deadly crisis related to air pollution that led to the deaths of thousands of residents (Davidson). Between March 2011 and through 2012, roughly 4,460 premature deaths in Tehran have been linked to the city's air pollution and poor air quality (Davidson). In the face of devastating pollution, the city was forced to close government offices and issue advisories to residents to remain indoors when pollution was at its worst (Davidson). In recent years, worsening air pollution has been more readily recognizable at certain times of year; reports indicate that in Winter, the city experiences particularly terrible air pollution that poses an ongoing health risk to residents, particularly those with pre-existing respiratory and other health issues (Erdbrink). In addition, reports show a rise in respiratory illnesses and diseases that are linked to the city's air pollution (Erdbrink). According to the World Health Organization, Tehran has approximately four times the amount of particle pollutants per cubic meter when compared to Los Angeles (Erdbrink). All of this information suggests that air pollution is a major issue for the city, and a health concern for residents of all ages.

The major pollutants affecting air quality in Tehran include materials such as lead, benzene, and sulfur dioxide (Erdbrink). All of these materials pose major risks to human health. Cold air and a lack of wind in the city help to keep pollutants emitted by cars and factories

trapped within the city (Erdbrink). As a result, on the worst days, residents are forced to breathe toxic air that is rife with pollutants, including some that are linked to cancer. Indeed, reports from Iran's Ministry of Health show that some forms of cancer are increasing in frequency in Tehran, thanks to the city's terrible air pollution (Erdbrink). This helps to clearly demonstrate that poor air quality is an issue in Tehran, and when air quality is particularly low, it may pose a significant risk to the health of residents.

The population of Tehran is roughly 7.31 million (Atash 400). However, during the day, this number increases by roughly one million more individuals who travel to the city for their day-to-day work (Atash 400). While Tehran is beset by a number of environmental issues related to urbanization, pervasive air pollution and poor air quality have been cited as the city's most pressing environmental problems (Atash 400). Air pollution in Tehran is a significant issue because it poses health risks to many residents and has forced city schools and businesses to close due to safety concerns (Atash 400). There have also been a growing number of people who have been affected by health problems related to the increased atmospheric pollution (Atash 400). This helps to make clear that thus far, the issue has had far-reaching public health as well as economic implications. The major factors driving air pollution in Tehran include rapid population growth caused by urbanization, emissions from older and less efficient vehicles, and commercial and industrial activities (Atash 400).

Groundwater Issues

Urbanization has also negatively impacted water systems in Iran. Indeed, research shows that groundwater systems have been harshly impacted by urbanization in many of Iran's growing

cities (Khazai and Riggi 213). Urbanization has been identified as a significant threat against the integrity of the springs of the Zagros mountain range in Iran and Iraq (Raeisi and Stevanovic 514). The increased pollution and waste management problems caused by urbanization threaten the health of the aquifer and require effective management to ensure the groundwater resource is protected and can be sustained into the future (Raeisi and Stevanovic 514). In addition, research on the Khash aquifer has shown that urbanization has contributed to an overall decrease in the groundwater level, as well as a lessening in the quality of the groundwater (Khazai and Riggi 211). Due to the importance of the aquifer to Khash, one of Iran's fastest-growing cities, effective management of these issues is vital (Khazai and Riggi 213). Furthermore, in order to address the issues that are negatively impacting groundwater quality, individual aquifers and other sites must be subject to close examination and review (Khazai and Riggi 212).

Other research shows that the Zahedan aquifer has also been negatively impacted by urbanization (Khazai 2011, 155). Indeed, it is noted that urbanization, and unplanned urbanization in particular, has resulted in significant damage to the Zahedan aquifer (Khazai 2011, 155). The groundwater in the area has declined, and testing indicates an increased presence of nitrates in the water (Khazai, Urbanization effects on groundwater quantity and quality in the Zahedan aquifer, an arid region in southeast Iran 155). The increased presence of nitrates has been attributed to improperly managed wastewater which is being returned to the aquifer through absorption wells (Khazai, Urbanization effects on groundwater quantity and quality in the Zahedan aquifer, an arid region in southeast Iran 155). From this perspective, ongoing urbanization, and unplanned development and settlements in particular, represent a major risk to the aquifer's continued health. Risks to these aquifers represent significant environmental issues

with potentially long-term implications. Compromised groundwater can leave citizens in some areas without an adequate supply of drinking water. Moreover, this kind of pollution from urbanization can threaten agriculture and industrial activity as well.

It is argued that "the future prosperity of Iran will be heavily influenced by the availability and use of freshwater resources. Sustainable development will require considerable improvements in the economic and social productivity of water, even if the remaining renewable resources are exploited" (Marjanizadeh, Qureshi and Turral 2). This helps to make clear the notion that ongoing pollution to groundwater resources from urbanization represents a major issue that threatens the future viability of many cities in Iran. Without greater management of these key resources now, many cities in the country may face a significant social crisis down the road. However, with improved planning and management of resources, the country's vital groundwater resources can be better protected. A key element toward enhancing this protection is to ensure that all development is effectively planned and coordinated in order to ensure that future growth does not damage or degrade water resources, and that the existing growth can be managed effectively.

Poverty and Inequality

Urbanization has not just had an impact on contemporary Iran's environmental resources. Indeed, in terms of social changes, urbanization has led to a number of problems including rising poverty and inequality. The development of informal areas and settlements reflects the city's high rates of poverty. The development of these informal settlements has not stopped in recent years, and many of these areas are located in slums and ghettos (Mohammadi 78). It is noted that

unless the widespread urban poverty in Iran is addressed and more effectively managed, the development of informal settlements is only likely to increase (Mohammadi 78). An increase in these informal settlements has profound implications for the city's environment, as unplanned urbanization can cause significant damage to underground aquifers, as well as further contribute to existing problems with air pollution. It should also be noted that continued urbanization will increase the demand in the country for food (Amid 60). This increased demand is likely to correspond with an increase in prices for food (Amid 60). This process can ultimately increase the severity of the inequality that exists in Iran, widening the gap between the haves and have-nots (Amid 60).

Tehran, and indeed, Iran as a whole, also has an ongoing issue with unemployment. Critics have charged that Tehran's unemployment has reached crisis levels in recent years (Economic Desk of Tehran Times). Data from 2013 shows that the country's average unemployment rate was 10.4 percent (Economic Desk of Tehran Times). In order to combat this serious issue, the country has identified a clear need to create at least 8.5 million jobs within the following two years (Economic Desk of Tehran Times). Moreover, statistical evidence shows that women are hit harder by the unemployment problem than men. Research shows that the rate of unemployment for women was twice as high as that for men during 2013 (Saremi). Moreover, the unemployment problems are worse in rural, rather than urban areas (Atlas of Tehran Metropolis). Research shows that in Tehran, areas in the south and west parts of the city have the greatest rates of unemployment, while areas in the eastern and northern parts of the city have lower levels of unemployment (Atlas of Tehran Metropolis). The differences in unemployment

levels between different parts of the city have been attributed to patterns associated with job-seeking, and job-seekers looking for work in the city's centre and northern areas (Atlas of Tehran Metropolis).

Urbanization has also been cited as an important factor in Tehran's growing unemployment problem (Aminmansour). Unemployment at a mass scale, along with growing inequality and poverty are all cited as by-products of rapid urbanization in Tehran (Aminmansour). At the same time, urbanization has also had a number of positive impacts in the country, improving mortality and fertility, and facilitating economic growth and development (Aminmansour). In cities like Tehran, urbanization is accompanied alongside development (Aminmansour). In this form, economic growth spurs urbanization, potentially accommodating the growth in urban population through enhanced infrastructure and increased capacity (Aminmansour). In smaller cities and in rural areas, urbanization may occur without development (Aminmansour). In this process, limited economic growth occurring at the same time as urbanization fails to meet the increasing population's needs in various ways, such as limited infrastructure or resources to accommodate increasing numbers of people (Aminmansour).

Migration and Other Factors Driving Urbanization

Researchers have identified four primary factors driving urbanization in Iran: migration from rural areas to cities, normal population growth in cities, the transformation of rural areas to cities, and inclusion of other areas into existing cities due to sprawling development (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 106). While each of these factors plays an important role in the

country's ongoing urbanization, migration from rural to urban areas is the most important driver of urbanization in Iran in particular in Tehran (Hosseini-Chavoshi and Abbasi-Shavazi 106). For some time now, rural-urban migration has been a major factor in the country's urbanization. In 1956, Iran's urban population was approximately 5.953 million, but this number had reached roughly 9.754 million by 1966 (Sedghi 107). By the year 1976, the urban population in Iran was approximately 15.797 million (Sedghi 107).

Similarly, data shows that among migrants travelling within the country, most were engaged in urban to urban migration (Nomani and Behdad 78). These groups typically moved from smaller towns and cities to larger cities, like Tehran (Nomani and Behdad 78). This evidence supports the contention regarding the concentration of development and urbanization in Tehran. The concentration of development results in there being a significant disparity between the standard of living in Tehran and other areas in the country. It is noted that this difference in standard of living is one of the main factors sustaining migration from rural to urban areas (Kheirabadi 60). Because the standard of living in places like Tehran is so much higher than other areas, more and more citizens are compelled to migrate, both from rural areas as well as smaller cities to Tehran (Kheirabadi 60).

Concentration of Development

Rapid urbanization and concentration of development in Tehran also led to a concentration of commercial development in the city. The literature notes that by the mid-1970s, 60 percent of all investments related to industrial activities were made within Tehran, while 40 percent of all national investment was concentrated there as well (Keshavarzian 144).

Furthermore, it is noted that by 1979, 60 percent of all wholesale operations were located in Tehran, along with 40 percent of the country's retail sector (Keshavarzian 144). Regarding the city's commercial development, it is argued that because of fast urbanization, growth of existing infrastructure, and a central location, Tehran served as the ideal location for commercial development focused on both internal as well as export markets (Keshavarzian 144). The concentration of development in the capital city was thus caused by urbanization, while also spurring further urbanization.

Aside from Iran's oil production, the country's service sector has enjoyed the greatest growth and productivity in recent years (Bahramitash and Salehi Esfahani 83). It is noted that the service sector also offers a number of potential employment opportunities for women (Bahramitash and Salehi Esfahani 83). Urbanization in Tehran has had a clear impact on shaping the city and country's economic activity and labour patterns. While the service sector has grown, the country's agricultural sector is in significant decline (Bahramitash and Salehi Esfahani 83). The widespread migration from rural to urban areas and the overall declining rural population makes clear that the current trends vis-a-vis employment and economic activity are likely to continue, potentially becoming even more pronounced.

The Capital, Tehran

The metropolitan area of Tehran remains the most popular destination for those migrating from smaller cities or rural areas (Kheirabadi 60). Approximately one in every six Iranian citizens resides in the Tehran Province, which boasts a population of greater than 10 million inhabitants (Kheirabadi 60). The concentration of development has fostered a relatively dense

living area, with a population density of approximately 1400 people for every square mile (Kheirabadi 60). This stands in stark contrast to the rest of the country, where the average population density is just 94 people for every square mile (Kheirabadi 60). The dramatic contrast in population densities between Tehran and the average for the country reveals the degree to which urbanization and development are concentrated in the capital city. Furthermore, urbanization in the country is also influenced by population demographics. A majority of the country's population is under the age of 25 years old (Kheirabadi 60). It is noted that the large amount of youth in the country's population further contributes to urbanization because youth are more likely to migrate to and live in urban centres (Kheirabadi 60).

Tremendous population growth in Tehran between the years 1976 and 1986 resulted in two distinct categories of space being created in the city (Maroufi 179). The first space was the formalized suburban settlements, while the second space was informal and unplanned settlements (Maroufi 179). The suburban settlements continue to be created in order to accommodate the growing number of immigrants, as well as families who are struggling financially and may no longer be able to afford the high costs of living in the metropolitan area (Maroufi 179). Conversely, the informal settlements continue to be developed due to a confluence of different issues. These settlements tend to be clustered close to the city's primary routes for transportation (Maroufi 180). It is argued that these unplanned settlements continue to be developed because a lack of safe and affordable housing for the urban poor, as well as urban planning that has failed to consider the limited resources of the city's economically disadvantaged population (Maroufi 180).

The Green Movement

While urbanization in Iran has had a profound impact on the country's geographic landscape, Iran's urbanization has also fostered much social change in urban areas. Indeed, following widespread urbanization and the growth of cities like Tehran, movements to create social change have taken hold. To be sure, urbanization has helped facilitate some of the most significant social changes Iran has seen in recent years. Underground and overt political movements, including the Green Movement, represent important social movements facilitated, in part, by urbanization. In this section, social change arising from urbanization in Iran will be discussed. The country's Green Movement will be examined and reviewed as one example of a major social movement that developed in the wake of significant urbanization throughout the country. Iran's recent efforts for female empowerment will also be examined as an example of social change arising from increasing urbanization. It will be argued that urbanization has been a necessary component for both the Green Movement as well as ongoing efforts for female empowerment to take hold and potentially bring about significant social change all over Iran.

The Green Movement itself can be understood as a grassroots political movement in Iran that became public in response to the disputed presidential elections in June of 2009 (Milani 42). While it was these elections that brought the movement to the forefront of society, the movement had first been established in 2005, following President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's ascension to power in Iran (Milani 42). During the 2009 elections, President Ahmadinejad attempted to secure his control of the country, which prompted protestors to make public their grievances and

advocate for democratic reforms (Milani 42). During the elections of 2009, the only candidate running against President Ahmadinejad was Hossein Mousavi, who at one time had been Iran's Prime Minister (Milani 42). The Guardian Council, the ruling body tasked with determining whether a candidate could run in the election, granted their permission for Mousavi to run and oppose President Ahmadinejad (Milani 42). The Guardian Council would have been unable to outright block Mousavi's running in the election, as such a move would prompt criticisms that the Guardian Council was simply trying to engineer Ahmadinejad's re-election (Milani 42). The Council perceived no real threat from Mousavi to Ahmadinejad; it was believed that Mousavi lacked the overall appeal to be a viable political candidate with voters (Milani 42).

The belief of the Guardian Council that Mousavi was no threat to Ahmadinejad's presidency proved to be a serious error in judgment (Milani 42). Indeed, it is noted that Mousavi proved to be a highly popular candidate with many voters, especially among Iran's urban populations. According to the literature on the subject, when Mousavi began campaigning for the country's presidency, "Iran's nascent civil society, reformers, the women's movement and student organizations suddenly came to life. Vast networks of supporters appeared all over the country, connected through the internet and social network sites" (Milani 42). Urban populations were united under a single cause to establish social reform in the country and establish more moderate and liberal policies. In addition, supporters of the movement sought greater equality for different groups within Iranian society.

When the election results were announced and it was made known that President Ahmadinejad had been re-elected under dubious circumstances, the city of Tehran faced an

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explosion of protests (Milani 42). While the protests did not involve any incidents of violence, the ruling authorities were taken aback by the tremendous support that Mousavi and the Green Movement appeared to have from regular Iranian citizens (Milani 42). In response, the government unleashed a brutal campaign of repressive violence designed to ensure citizen compliance with the regime and its policies, and bring about an end to the series of protests that had affected Iran (Milani 42). Unlike protestors, the tactics employed by the government in their attempts to restore order involved significant acts of violence. Indeed, the literature notes that snipers killed a number of citizens during the initial protests after the election (Milani 42). In addition, agents of the government arrested hundreds of protestors and also assaulted a large number of them as well (Milani 42).

In addition to attempting to physically break the will of these protestors, the government sought to establish that their grievances were without merit. The government disallowed any and all protest activities involving the Green Movement, and the capacity of the Revolution to fight for meaningful change was significantly restricted (Milani 42). This ultimately prompted many inside the protest movement to refocus their activities away from the police and government authorities and toward organizing in the online world (Vakil). Indeed, the government crackdown has forced members of the Green Movement to adopt more clandestine tactics and limit their ability to spread information or draw new members to the cause (Vakil). The repressive tactics engaged by government forces have ultimately prompted many in the movement to switch tactics and adopt more conservative approaches (Vakil). The need to seek long-term reforms has been cited by many members now, as they look to new ways to achieve their goals of democratic reform under increasingly repressive and difficult conditions (Vakil).

The government also tried a number of prominent members within the Green Movement to further devastate their cause and limit their ability to promote social or political change. In late 2009, the government prosecuted more than 100 members of the Green Movement in a series of trials designed to send a clear message to those sympathetic to the cause (Milani 43). Those prosecuted were forced to recount statements of guilt on television in front of Iran's national television-viewing audience (Milani 43). The confessions these figures were forced to read were designed to implicate the United States government in the protest activity being engaged in by the Green Movement and its supporters (Milani 43). Indeed, by linking the Green Movement to the U.S. government, Iran's government was attempting to discredit the movement altogether, and demonstrate it to be a tool being utilized by a foreign government to negatively impact Iran and the country's overall stability (Milani 43).

The government also enforced tighter controls on the press and on communications channels (Milani 43). The internet was placed under the control of Iran's Revolutionary Guards in order to ensure that no individuals associated with the Movement could use the country's internet infrastructure to engage in any protest-related activity (Milani 43). The comprehensive efforts by the government to destroy the Green Movement and limit their ability to communicate or spread information resulted in members of the movement entering a period of regrouping and re-organizing (Milani 43). The literature notes that during this period, splinter groups emerged, one being led by Hossein Mousavi (Milani 43). Mousavi and his group urged supporters to recognize the struggle undertaken by supporters of the Green Movement as being part of Iran's longstanding and ongoing struggle for democratic reform (Milani 43-44). By positing this latest movement as simply another step in the country's ongoing struggle to achieve democracy,

Mousavi highlighted the illegal actions of Ahmadinejad's government as well as the legitimacy of the efforts engaged in by the Green Movement.

Quotes from some prominent Green Movement activists can help to make clear both the overarching goals of the movement, as well the methods activists sought to use to accomplish social change and reform in Iran. In an interview with one of the founding activists leading the Green Movement, Mehdi Karroubi, the cleric spoke frankly about the movement's goals, as well as his specific desires for Iran's future. In describing his motivations for seeking reform in Iran, the cleric spoke freely of his own experiences with Iran's authoritarian government. Karroubi recalled, "I was put in jail nine times which altogether makes six years of jail... I even had to illegally go to Iraq in 1966 to escape the regime's pressure when I didn't have a passport" (Financial Times). In the interview, the activist also explained his goals for the Green Movement, and what he and other activists were seeking with their efforts aimed at change. Karroubi explains, "we do not want to make another revolution and we do not seek to overthrow the regime. We are attached to the real Islamic republic, the one we promised to people which was approved by 98 percent of the people" (Financial Times).

Karroubi also explains the need for this movement in response to the failure of elections and perceived abuses by the current regime. He argues, "the government was unable to act logically, hold healthy elections and set up a group to study protests over the election. If the government were far-sighted, these problems would not have been created" (Financial Times). In this sense, the failure of the regime to work with its detractors and foster greater collaboration and involvement with critics is seen by contributing to protests and increasing the desires of

those interested in seeking reforms. Moreover, Karroubi argues that the different factions and groups within the country have the skills and ability to work together to foster solutions. He notes, "the forces from both sides who care about the Islamic system will join forces when they see, God forbid, the revolution, the system, and the Islamic republic are at stake. This will happen quite soon" (Financial Times).

Quotes from Karroubi help to illustrate his position as a moderate seeking collaborative reform. Quotes from other activists in the Green Movement can further shed light on the movement and its primary goals and objectives. The other primary activist leading the Green Movement is Mir-Hossein Moussavi. Moussavi has been particularly outspoken against former Iranian President Ahmadinejad, and others he perceives as deceiving or misleading the Iranian people. In response to Ahmadinejad's claims about the country's economy, Moussavi was quoted as saying, "we are up against a person who says black is white and four times four equals five" (Time Magazine). In addition, Moussavi's quotes reflect a more moderate stance than that held by prior leaders, particularly when dealing with the international community. Moussavi has been quoted as saying in regards to Iran's relationship with the United States, "trust can slowly be developed once again. We can contribute to this by moderating our tone... A policy of detente will be a central issue for me" (Time Magazine). These quotes help to make clear that while the activists leading the Green Movement have sought change and reform in Iran, they are not radical in their orientation or seeking to bring about complete change in all facets of life. Rather, these activists seek to change specific issues they have identified in the years since the revolution and improve life in the country for all citizens.

Women in the Green Movement

Women have played a role of particular importance in the Green Movement. According to the available research, the movement itself focused on achieving a number of advancements in areas related to women's rights. Before the 2009 elections were held, Mousavi specifically described his platform for women and the political goals of the movement vis-a-vis women's rights (Sadeghi 123). Mousavi and his supporters were seeking a number of improvements to women's rights in the country, arguing for enhanced social and political rights for women, as well as for them to take on a prominent role in the revolution itself (Sadeghi 123). Indeed, it was argued that unless women were an integral part of the revolutionary efforts, any attempts to achieve significant change in Iran would fail to produce the desired results (Sadeghi 123). The literature notes that the importance of women to the Green Movement helped separate the movement from prior attempts at political and social reform in Iran (Sadeghi 123). To be sure, with an increasingly diverse and cosmopolitan urban society, there was little doubt among supporters that efforts were required to ensure the social, political, and economic barriers that women faced were identified and eliminated.

To be sure, many women joined the ranks of the Green Movement because of the failure of the existing social and political order to create an equal society in Iran (Vakil). Following the government crackdown, efforts were undertaken to specifically undermine any political activism and organization involving women (Vakil). The literature notes that government authorities viewed women's participation in these political activities as particularly threatening and problematic (Vakil). Because greater calls for women's rights and equality with men could

potentially disturb many facets of existing Iranian society, these aspects of the protests were seen as serious potential issues to be quelled at once.

Some quotes from feminists and women activists involved in the Green Movement can help to make clear their primary goals and objectives in seeking reforms. Zahra Rahnavard, wife of Mir-Hossein Moussavi, is one prominent woman activist who has developed a strong voice in the reform movement. Rahnavard has been quoted as saying, "Moussavi and I address all the Iranian nation and in particular women, the youth and students" (Bozorgmehr). This quote helps to make clear the important role that women have to play in the movement toward reform, as well the orientation of the movement toward improving conditions for women in Iran. In addition, Rahnavard has been quoted as saying, "our messages to Iranians during election rallies are freedom of thoughts, opening up the environment, establishing a sound economy, increasing public participation... eliminating discrimination against women, creating job opportunities... and helping the youth to think freely" (Bozorgmehr). This particular quote helps to make clear the notion that women like Rahnavard in the reform movement have sought broad changes in society. These women have garnered support by advancing a vision of a more egalitarian and inclusive Iran, one where women have a much larger role to play in all facets of society.

Female Empowerment in Iran

While the Green Movement represents one important social development in Iran's recent history, the country has also been affected by a number of other social changes influenced by urbanization. Iran's female empowerment represents another important social development emerging from the country's urban centres. According to research on the subject, the female

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empowerment began as a small and relatively localized movement in Tehran, started by educated youth, designed to change attitudes about sexuality and morality in the country (Mahdavi 17). The literature notes that in other contexts around the world, efforts to increase have first taken hold in urban areas, and then spread to other groups located in other places throughout the country (Mahdavi 17). In Tehran, this movement has involved educated youth advancing calls for social change and the development of new attitudes in some areas of Iranian society (Mahdavi 17).

From this perspective, the female empowerment was specifically initiated by urban youth in Iran in response to the repressive social and cultural values and ideals that prevail in the country's dominant culture. With increased numbers of youth in urban areas receiving education, there is increased awareness of the repressive nature of the country's regime and a desire to enact a counter-cultural revolution (Mahdavi 19). Youth in Tehran are disrupting the traditional order by engaging in sexual activity, as well as the recreational use of drugs (Mahdavi 19). Through their participation in these activities, the youth population send a clear message to the ruling authorities that they decidedly reject the traditional values and order associated with the country's repressive political regime.

Urbanization and Reform

Iran's experiences with urbanization have ultimately shaped the nature of the Green Movement and affected support for this cause. Moreover, women's involvement in the Green Movement as well as the sexual revolution has been shaped by urbanization in the country. Indeed, according to the literature on the subject, the groups that have been most supportive of

the Green Movement have been students, the middle class, technocrats, and Iran's population of urban residents (Davis, Martini and Nader). Furthermore, the notion of female empowerment began among educated urban youth living in Tehran (Mahdavi 17). Despite crackdowns from ruling authorities, the relative success of both movements to gain popular support demonstrates that the country's increasing urban population is having a profound impact on the country's social fabric and organization. It is noted that the population of urban youth in Tehran have sought to

> "choose to reject the regime's morality injections by flouting the Islamic dress code, playing illegal music loudly, passing phone numbers between cars, creating impromptu dance parties in the middle of the street or parks, holding hands with boyfriends or girlfriends, and wearing large amounts of makeup" (Mahdavi 19).

Urban residents' support for the Green Movement and the notion of female empowerment can be attributed in part to rising education levels. The research shows that urbanization is positively associated with education levels in general (Parveen 169). Moreover, it must be noted that urbanization also results in higher levels of education among women (Parveen 169). One of the key ways that urbanization impacts the lives of women is requiring them to engage in paid work outside the home (Parveen 169). In order to ensure women can engage in paid work in urban requirements, education is a necessary component to ensure they have the knowledge and skills needed to fulfil different work roles (Parveen 169). Moreover, research shows that as urbanization and education increase, equality between men and women is likely to increase as well (Parveen 169).

From this perspective, urbanization itself can have a profound impact on the social order in society and change relations between women and men. With both women and men working

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and learning alongside each other in the urban environment, changes to traditional family structure and male and female relationships can occur. The literature notes that traditionally, mass urbanization has been accompanied by such dramatic changes, including declining rates of marriage as well as higher rates of divorce (Kelly 86). Other theories posit that increased urbanization is likely to create a fundamental breakdown in the pre-existing social order (Covey 13). Indeed, as the prior dominant order is disrupted by urbanization and the many changes it fosters, including changes in relationships between different groups in society, there is a broader disruption in society (Covey 13). These changes can lead to increased crime and delinquency, particularly among dispossessed youth living in urban environments (Covey 13).

In the case of Iran, significant changes resulting from widespread urbanization brought about calls from urban youth and other urban populations for social change and a more equitable, free society. Both as part of the Green Movement, as well as in the sexual revolution, youth, and women have played roles of critical importance, leading the charge to demand change in a number of key areas of Iranian society. The importance of urbanization in making possible these recent movements cannot be understated. Indeed, as part of both movements, urban populations were key supporters and initiators of protest activities. Furthermore, urbanization disrupted many of the traditional roles and processes that existed within Iran. With these traditional roles and understandings disrupted, and with greater education, urban populations sought to create reforms to reduce repression and promote contemporary values in different ways. Thus, without urbanization, these two key social movements would likely not have been possible.

Major changes to familial structure and makeup have also occurred in Iran. Prior to the 1970s, the average age of marriage for was 18.5 years (Quandl). By 2011, that number had risen to 23.5 years of age (Quandl). The rising age of first marriage in Iran reflects changes in the country spurred by urbanization. Increased opportunities for education and employment for both women and men have driven the age of first marriage up (Quandl). In addition, there have been dramatic changes in the fertility rates for families in Iran. In the 1950s, women had roughly 7 children (Atimes). Please see the table below for a breakdown of some of the changes to Iran's fertility rates and family structure over time.

Year	Fertility Rate	Age of Marriage
1950	7 children per family	No data available
1960	7 children per family	No data available
1970	6.5 children per family	18.5 years of age
1980	6.7 children per family	19.5 years of age
1990	4 children per family	21.7 years of age
2000	2 children per family	22.5 years of age
2010	1.5 children per family	23.5 years of age

These numbers show that Iranian women and families are having fewer children, as well as entering into their first marriage at an increasingly advanced age. If these trends continue, family structure is likely to undergo further changes over time. If declining rates of fertility continue, Iran may soon face a crisis. Regardless, the changes witnessed thus far demonstrate the

powerful impact of urbanization on family structure and relations between women and men in Iran.

A review of women's rates and types of employment is also helpful for understanding the changes experienced in Iran over time. Women's employment rates have increased dramatically in recent years. Women's employment has also been concentrated in certain sectors; while Iranian women's employment in the agricultural and industrial sectors has declined, their employment in the services industry has increased in recent years (Iran Daily). According to the data in the table below, women's employment declined in the period immediately following the revolution (Abbasi-Shavazi, McDonald and Hosseini-Chavoshi 35). However, in the 1990s and beyond, women's employment began to increase, and by 2010, had actually exceeded the levels of 1976 (The World Bank). Please see the table for information on changes to women's rate of employment in Iran over time.

Women's Employment Rate	Year
14 percent	1976
7 percent	1986
16 percent	2010
16 percent	2012
17 percent	2013

Sector	Women's Employment
Agriculture	Declining

Industrial	Declining
Services	Increasing

Conclusion

Poorly managed urbanization in Tehran poses a threat to the city's continued development. The city must take steps to better protect key environmental resources, as well as address the growing threats of poverty and inequality. The connection between unplanned developments, poverty, and damage to the environment necessitates that Tehran develop comprehensive planning and policy solutions designed to ensure the city can manage its continued population growth.

Urbanization is a significant issue across Iran, but in Tehran, specifically. Increasing urbanization and further growth of the city into outlying areas has significant social and environmental implications. Decades of rural to urban migration in to Tehran has created a range of different contemporary issues for the city to address. Issues like poverty, inequality, environmental damage, and others all represent significant concerns arising from urbanization. This paper will now turn to a discussion of some of these contemporary changes and their associated issues linked to urbanization in Tehran.

It is clear, without considerable disruption of traditional roles, greater education for women and men, and new spatial organization of society, the recent reform measures initiated in Tehran and other Iranian cities would likely have not come to pass. Urbanization is an important

precondition for such movements to develop because urbanization functions to disrupt many of

the traditional roles and relationships that affect individuals and groups in society.

Findings and Results

Introduction

A review of literature and content analysis can help yield meaningful insights into the socio-political impacts associated with urbanization in Iran. Moreover, analysis of these findings can help answer the question of how this process of urbanization is contributing to social change happening in Iran today. Some of the most important issues and topics uncovered in the literature review include urbanization's disruption of traditional gender roles for women and men, urbanization leading to greater levels of education among the population, growing inequality in society, an increase in protest activity and political activism, the socio-political impacts associated with environmental degradation of urban and rural areas, and the growing importance of technology in the day-to-day lives of individual citizens. These topics will be reviewed and analyzed to help answer the research questions posed at the start of this investigation. Additional research will help in making connections between the findings obtained in the literature review and relevant issues related to broader research topic and specific research questions.

Disruption of Traditional Gender Roles

One of the key findings obtained in the literature review related to the urbanization of Iran is that this process has functioned to disrupt traditional gender roles. The disruption of traditional gender roles is a major socio-political impact associated with urbanization in Tehran. Urbanization has contributed to the disruption of traditional gender roles in Tehran in a number of different ways. As the process of urbanization has continued over time, more and more men and women are living and working in cities, and obtaining higher education. The failure of the

Iranian government to establish egalitarian modes of governance has led to growing

dissatisfaction among women who are excluded from access to equal social rights and political

representation. These failures have led to women joining movements aimed at social change,

such as the country's Green Movement (Vakil). Understanding the link between urbanization and

the disruption of traditional gender roles for women in Tehran is crucial to appreciate the socio-

political impacts of urbanization overall.

The literature makes clear the notion that historically, urbanization and industrialization

made gender distinctions and roles even more important to society's functioning (DeBerg 14).

However, research shows that recent urbanization patterns and trends have had a disruptive

impact on gender roles and family structure due to changes it creates in the nature of productive

work and the roles for women and men (Barbarin and Richter 19). In Tehran, a key socio-

political impact associated with urbanization has been the increasing social and political

participation of women. Women's increasing participation in the economic, social, and political

spheres of life in Tehran has serious social and political implications. Indeed, research materials

presented in the literature review make clear the notion that women's increasing participation in

political and social life led to the development of the Green Movement in Iran (Vakil). Women's

increased political action and support of this movement has developed as a result of their

inequality and oppression in the larger culture.

Women's increased social and political participation has led to a more diverse political

discourse. In this sense, urbanization has facilitated social and political change by increasing

women's access and participation in political arenas. A more diverse political discourse has not

only given rise to new political movements, but dramatic social changes in society. It is clear that Iran's move towards female empowerment can be viewed as a direct result of the trends related to urbanization in Tehran and in other cities around the country. The sexual revolution in Tehran first began in the 1990s and would eventually play an important role in facilitating the conditions giving rise to the development of the Green Movement (Mahdavi, Iran's Sexual Revolution 408). Research shows that in developed countries, women's participation in the labour force, as well as their overall standing in society are linked to their political representation in national legislatures (Matland 109).

The work of Shirin Ebadi is particularly important to discuss here. Shirin Ebadi is a prominent woman lawyer in Iran who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her work in promoting human rights and the rights of women and children in Iran (Nobel Women's Initiative). Ebadi was also recognized for her important work to help political prisoners in Iran (Nobel Women's Initiative). Ebadi was one of the very first women to be appointed to the position of judge in Iran, and she served as President of Tehran's City Court from 1975 until 1979 (Nobel Women's Initiative). In addition, Ebadi was first woman in Iran to be appointed to the position of Chief Justice (Nobel Women's Initiative). Ebadi was instrumental in using her position of power to help women and advance equality in Iran. Because Ebadi is a lawyer, she has been able to use her position to help defend those accused of political crimes (Nobel Women's Initiative).

It should also be noted that Ebadi works as a university professor, influencing the younger generation of Iran and advocating for improved human rights (Nobel Women's

Initiative). She has also published a number of books and articles aimed at publicizing important issues for women and other vulnerable persons in Iran (Nobel Women's Initiative). Ebadi and women like her have been important forces for change in Iran. Her work and the work of others like her have been important for giving a voice to those in Iranian society unable to effectively advocate for themselves. Through her efforts to advance fundamental human rights for all, she has helped contribute to greater awareness regarding the need for change and reform in Iran, particularly among young people. This is particularly important to note because young people have played a critical role in both the Green Movement, as well as ongoing efforts intensify female empowerment. Without the efforts of young people, particularly those in urban areas, current efforts aimed at reform would be lacking support. The role of Ebadi and other famous women in inspiring these young people, as well as increasing their knowledge and understanding of key social issues, is particularly important to note.

Urbanization in and around Tehran and other cities in Iran has led to women's increased participation in paid employment, as well as their increased levels of education. Indeed, since the early 1990s, women's participation in paid employment has grown considerably, thanks in part to more and more women of lower socio-economic status seeking employment outside the domestic sphere (Bahramitash 161-162). At present, there are more women enrolled in secondary education than there are men (Bahramitash 162). Women's increased participation in paid employment and in higher education represents considerable socio-political changes arising from urbanization and the disruption of traditional gender roles. Indeed, it must be noted that the country's current political leadership actively seeks to keep women subordinate to men, and that their progress in the social and political arenas has been in spite of such attempts (Bahramitash

162). Urbanization has created an economic impetus for women to engage in paid employment outside the home. Thus, despite state-led efforts to keep women subordinate, urbanization has helped women make important inroads into greater participation in different areas of public life.

As urbanization has continued to drive women's participation in higher education and paid employment, their political activity in seeking greater representation has increased. To be sure, the relationship between urbanization and women's political representation is well-established in the literature (Sainsbury 66). However, there are other important factors that can determine the levels of women's political representation in different countries (Sainsbury 66). Aside from urbanization, education and participation in the labour market, women's political representation is also linked to cultural factors and a state commitment to equal rights, and factors such as the electoral system, the types of political parties, and the stability of the country's political party systems (Sainsbury 66). This helps make clear the reasons that in spite of changing gender roles and women's increased political activism, urbanization in Tehran has thus far not engendered change at the policy level.

Despite the fact that current changes and trends have not, as yet been reflected in government and social policy, it is clear that urbanization has caused the disruption of traditional gender roles and increased women's political activism. Indeed, women's increased political and social activism in the form of participation in the sexual revolution directly led to the Green Movement, and recent efforts at establishing widespread reform in Iran (Mahdavi, Iran's Sexual Revolution 408). Such disruption of traditional gender roles has profound implications for future political organization and activity, as well as the city's social and economic spheres. Going

forward, as women's political activism and participation continues to increase; Tehran may experience a tipping point where significant policy change is inevitable.

This information helps make clear the notion that one of the most significant impacts associated with urbanization has been a disruption in the traditional gender roles in Tehran. With increasing frequency, women engage in paid employment outside the domestic sphere, and attend higher education. In this sense, urbanization has not only led to a disruption in the traditional gender roles, it has led to important improvements for women, insofar as women in Tehran and other urban centres in Iran have increased autonomy as well as enjoyed much better access to important economic and social opportunities. While ongoing urbanization has not been limited to having positive impacts for women, it is clear that it has disrupted traditional gender roles in Tehran, and this disruption of traditional gender roles has significant implications for the city's future development, as well as its residents' social and political experiences.

Women's Rights Groups

While urbanization has played a key role in fostering women's active support for the Green movement, as well as their participation in the ongoing efforts for female empowerment, urbanization has also impacted women's rights in Iran in other ways. Rising levels of urbanization along with the development of these movements have contributed to the formation of different women's rights groups in Iran. Historically, such women's rights groups have played an important role in fighting for change and greater gender equality in Iran. One early group of particular importance working in this area prior to the Iranian Revolution was the Women's Organization for Iran (WOI). The WOI was first established in 1966 by an assembly made up of

5,000 Iranian women from diverse backgrounds and reflecting different perspectives (Women's Organization of Iran). The organization was dedicated to raising awareness of various cultural, social, political, and economic issues impacting women in Iran (Women's Organization of Iran). The group only operated in Iran for 12 years before the Iranian Revolution developed, putting a temporary halt to the group openly and actively seeking social and political change.

In more recent years, a number of women's groups have started to emerge in Iran, many with similar missions and orientations to focus on issues important to women. The city - Tehran specifically - has been an integral site for the development of these groups. According to the research, prior to the emergence of the Green movement, Iran lacked a broad and cohesive women's movement; however, the number of active women's rights groups operating in the country began to significantly rise following the death of Khomeini in 1989 (Mahdi 66). Different types of women's groups, both religious and secular, have begun operating more openly, seeking to raise awareness of key issues and topics affecting women. Professional women in Iran across various fields have been integral to the formation of these groups as well as for raising awareness of important women's issues (Mahdi 66). It is noted that, "this awareness, and its subsequent activism, are aimed at ameliorating women's social conditions, denouncing violence against women, resisting repressive policies of the state, and opposing discriminatory laws affecting women's lives" (Mahdi 66).

The literature notes that during the period in which the WOI operated, the women's movement in Iran was based on mass movements and demonstrations against the state (Mahdi 66). Indeed, demonstrations against the state, from women's groups as well as other protestors,

were organized and mass-scale protests were typical (Mahdi 66). In the 1990s, the major women's rights groups, such as *Sazeman Vahdat Komonisli Rahai*, sought legal changes, including divorce rights for women as their most important priority for improving gender equality in Iran (Graves 70). Other broad efforts still exist; recently, the One Million Signatures campaign was established by women's rights groups to gather one million signatures in support of equal rights for women in Iran (Vakil 18). In addition, a broad-based coalition made up of women activists and male supporters was established in 2009 to demand an end to laws in Iran which discriminated against women, and sought Iran's acceptance of the UN Convention to end women's discrimination (Vakil 19). However, in recent years, it has been more common for women's groups to focus on action at the local and community level, working to achieve gradual but important change (Mahdi 67).

Women in the Media

Urbanization in Tehran and the increasingly ubiquitous nature of technology, media, and social media has a number of implications for women. Research from Iran shows that media representations of women have undergone considerable change over time (Bahar 35). In the pre-revolution era, women's representation in mainstream media was limited; women were viewed as secondary players, objectified and reduced to the supporting roles of wives and mothers (Bahar 35). However, in the post-revolution era, representations of women have changed dramatically, with women occupying more prominent and diverse roles, and more authentic and meaningful representations of identity (Bahar 35). The implications of these changing representations for women are clear: improved representations of women in mainstream media properties reflect

women's changing status in society, influenced by ideological change, urbanization, technology, and more.

The internet and social media has been critical platforms for the women's rights movement in Iran. Women's rights groups and other activist groups aimed at social change have benefitted from the relatively unrestricted forum provided by social media and other online technologies (Rahimi 165). These technologies have allowed women's rights groups to engage with members in Tehran and across the country, formulate plans for action and mobilize support for specific activist efforts (Rahimi 165). By providing groups like women's rights groups the capacity to organize and talk about ideas freely, these technologies have made their activist work possible (Rahimi 165). At the same time, urbanization has played a critical role in the development of social media; the literature notes that technological developments have accompanied a long process of urbanization in Iran (Kashavarzian 178). In this sense, it is urbanization that fostered the conditions for these technologies to take hold. To be sure, the confluence of urbanization, technological growth, education, and activism has imbued women's rights groups with a particularly powerful set of tools for fostering social change across the country.

Success Stories about Female Empowerment

Female empowerment itself has been lauded by many observers as a major success - not just for women's rights groups in Tehran and elsewhere across the country, but for all Iranians (Mahdavi 46). Moreover, the Sexual Revolution and activist efforts forged from the revolution have resulted in a number of tangible changes to society for Iranian women and men (Mahdavi

46). Women in Tehran must no longer conform to rigid dress codes embedded in *Sharia* law (Mahdavi 46). Women in the city frequently wear makeup, their coats have become tighter and shorter, and headscarves are frequently worn in a relaxed fashion, revealing their hair (Mahdavi 46). It is noted that even as early as fifteen years ago, women could face harsh punishments for any of these behaviours (Mahdavi 46). Furthermore, it is also noted in the literature that these changes are the direct result of activist efforts in intensifying female empowerment in Iran (Mahdavi 46). Indeed, female empowerment has profoundly changed the lived experience for Iranian women, particularly those located in Tehran.

While much work still needs to be done in order to establish gender equality in Iran, Female empowerment has clearly generated some meaningful successes for women. Female empowerment ultimately fostered the development of the Green movement in Iran (Mahdavi 46). Author Pardis Mahdavi argues, "the Sexual Revolution is just one part of a larger social movement that is calling for social and, more recently, political change" (46). Thus, another success story from the Sexual Revolution is the greater activism the movement ultimately fostered in Iranian society. Female empowerment functioned as the impetus for greater efforts on the part of many groups in Tehran, all fighting out of the notion that equality for both sexes and all gender identities would eventually be in reach. Indeed, this belief fostered the development of an active gay activism movement taking place in Tehran (Mahdavi 46). While the movement is small, it is argued that gay activist movements in the West could benefit strongly from engaging with this small community to better understand their plight, as well as their activism efforts (Mahdavi 46).

Ongoing Challenges

While there have been clear success stories from the Sexual Revolution and efforts to intensify female empowerment, it is clear that women's groups still have more work to accomplish in Tehran. The recent incarceration of British-Iranian journalist, Ghoncheh Ghavami, provides evidence of women's continued vulnerability in Iran (Alexander). Ghavami was jailed with many other female protesters for protesting that they should be allowed to watch a men's volleyball match (Alexander). While initially released, the young woman was jailed again and held in solitary confinement until her trial (Alexander). At her trial, she was convicted on the charge of "propagating against the ruling system", and sentenced to one year in prison (Alexander). Without the potential to appeal her sentence, the only hope held by her lawyer now is that she may be released early if she maintains good behaviour (Alexander). Considering the totally innocuous nature of Ghavami's offence, her being sentenced to jail has been soundly criticized by observers in Tehran and around the world. Indeed, the Ghavami story has galvanized users on Twitter and elsewhere on social media, with the West's coverage being particularly intense due to the woman's connection to Britain.

Ultimately, the Ghavami story makes clear the continued challenges women face in Iran. Clearly, female empowerment in Iran has generated a number of successes, with men and women enjoying various changes that allow for freer expressions of identity and at least improved notions of gender equality. However, while these incremental improvements should be lauded, women continue to face great vulnerabilities in Tehran and across Iran. While Ghavami's case has received tremendous attention from global media outlets, the stories of countless women

jailed for similar purported transgressions do not receive such attention. The story ultimately highlights the considerable work that needs to be done before gender equality is meaningfully achieved in Iran. Moreover, the story also makes clear the notion that while the movement towards female empowerment has had many successes, and been an important impetus for fostering broader social change, the movement has not produced gender inequality, nor has it substantially reduced the legal and political risks women face when they violate state-imposed gender norms or present themselves in ways contra to normative gender identities.

Growing Levels of Education

An additional socio-political impact of urbanization revealed in the research is the increased number of women and men attaining secondary and post-secondary education in Iran's urban areas like Tehran. Indeed, it was noted that more and more young people in Tehran are receiving higher levels of education (Mahdavi, Iran's Green Movement in Context 19). Growing levels of education, particularly among youth in Tehran has significant socio-political consequences for Iran as a whole. An increasingly educated population in Iran has potentially major implications for the country's socio-political composition, particularly in light of continued urbanization, economic changes, and globalization. A better educated population of Iran is more likely to engage in further acts of political protest, potentially heightening the likelihood that political movements like the country's Green Movement will be able to engender meaningful social and political change.

The literature notes that a number of social and political factors can serve as potential indicators of the likelihood that urban residents will engage in political activism and acts of

public protest (Hornsby 121). Among these, it is noted that a more educated population is more likely to engage in political activism and acts of protest (Hornsby 121). To be sure, the growth of higher education both in rural and urban areas has had a tremendous impact on Iran's social and political development (Elling 55). The country has undertaken considerable efforts in ensuring the population has had access to university education, building a number of semi-private universities across the country and providing subsidized tuition for students from deemed financially deprived (Elling 55). Interestingly, these state-led efforts may lead to significant political and social change. The Green Movement is evidence of significant discontent among the urban population, particularly women and young people in Tehran. As more and more citizens attend university and other forms of higher education, political activism and protest activities are only likely to increase.

University education is on the rise across Iran. By 2010, there were 3,791,000 students enrolled in university and tertiary education in Iran (World Education News & Reviews). Students enter university in Iran by taking the Konkur university entrance exam, a competitive test that determines whether or not students will be able to successfully complete university studies (World Education News & Reviews). A variety of different university degrees are available to students studying in Iran, including an associate degree, a bachelor degree, master degree, and doctor of philosophy (World Education News & Reviews). In terms of different disciplines and fields, the most popular field of study among students in Iran was Humanities, with 48 percent of students choosing to pursue a degree in this field (Tarbiat Modares University). The next most popular choice is engineering, with 22 percent of students pursuing engineering degrees (Tarbiat Modares University). The least popular field of study among

university students in Iran is the field of Arts, with just 3 percent of all students pursuing a degree in this field (Tarbiat Modares University).

There has also been considerable growth in terms of the number of universities operating in Iran. Today, there are approximately 281 accredited universities operating in Iran, with many providing specialized education and training in specific fields (4ICU). Among the many different universities operating in Iran, the University of Tehran is ranked number one in the country, and ranked number 398 of all the universities in the world (Ranking Web of Universities). Despite the growth in number of university institutions in Iran, the University of Tehran and other well-established schools remain the most popular and most highly ranked schools in the country. Just behind the University of Tehran in terms of ranking is the Tehran University of Medical Sciences, as well as the Ferdowsi University of Masshad, and Tarbiat Modares University. Urbanization has helped bolster these institutions and created more opportunities for students to pursue higher education. The growth in number of universities, as well as the increase in university education as a whole, is clear evidence of the changes fostered by urbanization vis-a-vis education. As young people are increasingly living and working in urban areas, there is more opportunity for education, as well as a greater need. In order to distinguish themselves from others in the labour market, many young people in Iran are entering university as a means of ensuring a more stable and prosperous future for their families. Rising levels of university education among both women and men are a clear sign of an increasingly urban society. As education levels continue to rise in Iran, it will be interesting to see how a more educated and informed population responds to the challenges of living under a repressive regime that seeks to maintain a distinctly unequal society.

A review and analysis of selected blogs and tweets reveals a number of posts from a clearly politically active and engaged population in Tehran. Between the years 2009 and 2011, a blog maintained by author Homylafayette provided relevant social and political news about Iran in English (Homylafayette, Homylafayette Iran News in English). The blog provided a platform for uncensored news reporting from Tehran that was often critical. Of particular note are stories published by the author regarding political protest activities and the deaths of protesters engaged in anti-government protests (Homylafayette, 10 Esfand Scrapbook; February 20). Because blogs provide individuals living in Tehran with free and potentially anonymous platforms for exchanging news, information and ideas, they have become an important forum for the expression of political activism and engagement overall. As early as 2003, there were approximately 12,000 Farsi language blogs online and accessible to internet users in Iran (Delio). It is argued that one of the main reasons that blogs enjoy such popularity in Iran is because of the lack of a free press in the country (Delio). A highly educated and politically engaged population lacking a free press has turned to blogs and other online platforms as potential substitutes for uncensored communications pertaining to both social and political issues.

It is clear that a better educated urban population has important political ramifications. Current demographic information shows that the country's population is not only highly urbanized, but also highly educated (Associated Free Press). Between 2006 and 2012, there was an increase of 3.6 million citizens studying in universities and religious institutions (Associated Free Press). It is argued that because better educated citizens are more knowledgeable about the world, they are more likely than a less educated population to push their political leadership in

more constructive directions (Dodson). From this perspective, a better educated population in Tehran and in Iran as a whole is more likely to push local and national leadership in potentially positive directions, creating the potential for social, political, and economic improvement. The increased potential for greater economic and political integration with the rest of the world, including the Western world is enhanced by Iran having a better educated urban population with knowledge of local and global political, social, and economic issues.

The push for more constructive approaches in governance, coupled with increased political activism reveals how a better educated population in Tehran can have profound social and political implications. The Green Movement and the female empowerment movement are two examples of the grassroots political movements that can be fostered by emphasizing education among the urban population. To be sure, that both these movements aimed at socio-political change were established by highly educated and urban residents reveals the power of education to foster the knowledge and attitudes conducive to political resistance and efforts aimed at meaningful social change. In this sense, as urbanization has contributed to a better educated population, it has also created the social conditions necessary for this population to fight for social and political change.

A better educated population also has important economic and social impacts. A population that is better educated is more likely to help foster a prosperous and economically thriving state (Heichberger and Burr 118). High levels of educational attainment in Tehran and other urban areas should foster economic prosperity and a thriving national economy. In this sense, the benefits to education levels caused by urbanization can potentially have additional

consequences in the form of economic benefits to society. An increase in wealth and economic prosperity can potentially have important social and political implications as well. When individuals and cities are more wealthy and prosperous, society can enjoy a number of meaningful benefits, including enhanced social welfare protections, better infrastructure, higher employment, and other significant advantages. However, there is clear evidence to suggest that any growth in wealth and prosperity that has not been evenly distributed among different members of the population. Poverty and increasing inequality represent two pressing social issues greatly affecting life for many citizens living in Tehran and its outlying areas.

Growing Inequality

Despite the fact that urbanization has contributed to women's greater social and political visibility and increased enrolment in higher education for both women and men, urbanization has also contributed to various forms of inequality in Tehran in a number of different ways. While urbanization has spurred women's increased participation in paid employment, it must be noted that "the increase in women's share of paid employment has taken place at a time when the power of workers generally has eroded, owing to increased capital mobility, greater flexibility because of technological innovation, and labour market deregulation caused by the need to stay competitive" (Karimi 168-169). Thus, while urbanization has driven more women into the labour market; it has also fostered conditions where the work roles they are able to obtain are exploitative. This means that although urbanization has contributed to a disruption in traditional gender roles in Iran and an increase in women's paid employment, urbanization has also left these workers without access to meaningful and non-exploitative forms of work.

In addition to gender inequality, urbanization has also contributed to growing problems vis-a-vis poverty and income inequality. Indeed, online materials reveal that there is widespread poverty in Iran, with roughly half the population in cities like Tehran living below the poverty line (Homylafayette, Iran's Cities a Sea of Poverty). A lack of appropriate data collection and analysis on the part of the government has complicated the issue, making it difficult to understand the actual poverty line and thus plan and create effective policy (Homylafayette, Iran's Cities a Sea of Poverty). This information suggests that while urbanization may be responsible for exacerbating inequality and poverty in Tehran, these problems are also compounded by ineffective state policy which fails to collect or publish the data necessary to help planners establish effective policy responses.

The uncensored platform created by Twitter for internet and mobile users in Tehran reveals important insights about poverty in the city, as well as the nature of the inequality problem. An examination and review of tweets reveals a number of instances of users posting tweets related to poverty and social inequality in Iran. In response to a question on poverty and homelessness from another user, one Twitter user based in Tehran tweeted "cnt stp by red light in Tehran w/out having a child beg U 4 money Its bad" (Mazda, Status 2640651666). This was posted with the hashtag "#IranElection" (Mazda, Status 2640651666). The same user has posted a number of other tweets relevant to the economic and social inequality prevalent in Tehran. Another tweet posted by the user simply wrote "poverty in Iran under mullahs", and linked to video hosted on YouTube describing poverty in Iran under the mullahs and the severity of inequality (Mazda, Status 7341497538). The video depicts children and adults living in abject poverty and in makeshift settlements encroaching on urban areas and under bridges (Mazda,

Status 7341497538). These tweets make clear the fact that Tehran faces serious issues related to poverty and inequality, and that citizens are actively discussing these issues and critiquing state responses on social media.

Other tweets posted by the user point out the hypocrisy of leaders who enjoy tremendous personal wealth, while others in the population live in dire conditions of poverty (Mazda, Status: 7415182509; Mazda, Status: 8519943793). One tweet posted reads "poverty in Iran while Khamenei enjoys 100 horses worth $40 million #iranelection" (Mazda, Status: 7415182509). Another tweet posted roughly a month later reads "Poverty in Iran under Mullah regime: http://j.mp/6HPCai Yes & we R the 2nd oil-rich nation in the world! #NO2IR #Iranelection" (Mazda, Status: 8519943793). Not only does this user critique the situation regarding poverty and inequality in Iran, he also points out the wealth of leaders and points out the injustice of such inequality. Moreover, this user frequently links to other media in his posts, clearly seeking to promulgate a message highly critical of the state to others. By posting links to videos and other media in his tweets critical of the government, he provides materials that appear to support his claims. This is crucial because it reveals how Twitter is used by citizens in Tehran to exchange news information and materials that would never be found on traditional state-run media outlets.

Neoliberalism and globalization are also key factors to consider in Tehran's issues with poverty and inequality. The literature notes that globalization caused by a global neoliberal ideology has functioned to create a situation where countries engage in a "race to the bottom" (Karimi 166). Deregulation to attract corporate activity and economic development reduces living standards, creates more precarious employment, lowers living standards, and reduces

chances at meaningful social improvements (Karimi 166). A review of the carpet industry in Iran reveals how globalization has brought these issues directly to some Iranian citizens. Research shows that globalization intensifies and exacerbates gender and other social inequalities (Karimi 167). As globalization has increasingly impacted Iran's export industries, workers in these industries have experienced a number of negative impacts (Karimi 167). Moreover, because of the "race to the bottom" fostered by globalization, the negative impacts associated with globalization are not limited to workers in these industries, and indeed, extend to all citizens living in Iran.

Iran's status as an economic entity largely dependent on oil exports presents some significant problems for its continued integration in the highly globalized economy (Halliday xii). Indeed, it is noted that to better integrate with the globalized international economy, institutions like the IMF are encouraging major oil exporters like Iran to institute privatization efforts in order to increase economic efficiency (Karimi 168). Another purpose of proposed reform measures is to help countries like Iran diversify their exports and start producing more labour-intensive goods for trade (Karimi 168-169). Starting in the late 1980s, Iran made attempts to diversify exports and institute reforms; however, because labour costs are too high in Iran to compete with developing countries in the global economy, the country failed to increase its exporting of manufactured and labour-intensive products (Karimi 169). Moreover, workers in many industries have been negatively impacted by "race to the bottom" associated with globalization.

The handmade carpet industry in Iran has suffered significantly as a result of globalization. Over the past thirty years, the global carpet market has grown from $350 million to approximately $2 billion (Karimi 171). Despite tremendous growth in the international market for handmade carpets, Iran's market share has declined from roughly 60 percent to just 30 percent (Karimi 171). Iran's experiences involving the decline of its handmade carpet industry provide an example of the negative impacts arising from globalization both to individual workers and the economy as a whole. Wages have been driven lower, and deregulation has allowed a growth in potentially exploitative and dangerous work conditions. A Twitter account named "Tehran Times" (@tehran_times) posted a tweet on June 18, 2013, linking to an article from the Guardian detailing rising inequality, and the simultaneous poverty and prosperity that co-exists in contemporary Tehran (Tehran Times, Status: 346936776658677761). Tweets like these and others help to show that Tehran's population is cognizant of many of the issues related to globalization and inequality currently affecting the city and its future development.

To be sure, globalization is a significant issue discussed on social media in Tehran. One tweet from a user in Tehran reads "There R elements in the #US #UK & #EU that R pushing 4 globalization & war w #Iran in hopes 2 'reboot' the worlds failed economic system" (Mazda, Status: 132482063931670529). This signals an awareness of the myriad negative issues associated with economic globalization among the politically engaged online population in Tehran. That the negative impacts associated with globalization are featured in the online discourse emanating from Iran reveals not only that globalization is viewed by some as an important political issue, but also that Twitter is an important platform for the politically engaged population in Tehran to discuss pressing and cutting-edge social and political issues. The Tehran

Times Twitter account has also posted tweets to stories detailing poverty protests against Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as well as how family planning can positively impact levels of poverty (Tehran Times,Status: 192635264118689792; Tehran Times, Status: 58417141631811584). All of these tweets further demonstrate not only the importance of online platforms for political discourse, but also how poverty and inequality are viewed as among the most pressing issues facing Tehran today. Because of the clear link between urbanization and growing inequality, it represents perhaps its most significant socio-political impact.

Issues related to poverty and inequality stemming from urbanization are also exacerbated by environmental degradation and damage fostered by urbanization. Many of Iran's poorest residents live in make-shift settlements in the outlying areas around Tehran and other urban areas (Bayat). These communities of squatters reveal the complex intersection of social and environmental issues arising from urbanization. As viable space in Tehran has dwindled, the poorest city residents have been forced to establish squatting communities (Bayat). The destruction and degradation of these areas stemming from urbanization has been significant, and in the early 1990s, deteriorating conditions gave rise to social protest and upheavals (Bayat). Furthermore, air quality problems stemming from urbanization represent serious ongoing problems with devastating potential (Atash 399). These issues, coupled with threats from urbanization to important groundwater supplies, indicate that the environmental problems caused by urbanization have serious social implications and left unchecked, represent major threats to public health.

That the city's poorest residents may be most vulnerable to experiencing the negative impacts associated with environmental degradation associated with urbanization is an idea that is

important to explore. The problem of inequality in Tehran is thus exacerbated as the poorest and most vulnerable residents not only face income, gender, and political inequality, but also the greatest risks to their personal health and well-being stemming from environmental risks. Urbanization and poor planning practices have led to the unfettered growth of urban spaces, along with accompanying environmental problems. The poorest residents of cities like Tehran are forced to live in make-shift communities in outlying areas of the city, largely due to a lack of appropriate and affordable housing. As a result, these residents may be exposed to health risks from the various environmental hazards to which they are exposed. These individuals may also face increased social exclusion due to their being placed in make-shift settlements not properly integrated into city infrastructure.

Increased Integration of Technology into Daily Lives

An additional socio-political impact arising from urbanization in Tehran is the population's increasing use of technology. As urbanization has increased education and access to technological tools, various mobile technologies have come to play important roles. These trends have been exaggerated by recent technological developments to mobile computing and in social media technology. Social media tools and technologies are leveraged as resources to discuss and explore many of the most pressing social and political changes arising from urbanization. Twitter, Facebook, blogs, forums, and other online platforms all represent cutting edge social media technology utilized by the citizens of Tehran to engage in discussion of political and social issues. While blogs have served as places for women in Tehran to discuss social issues (Hermida), Twitter has provided users in Tehran with a forum to discuss such issues as well as

political issues relevant to women. One user based in Tehran (@Katrin_Salmani) has posted extensively in support of Maryam Rajavi, an Iranian politician and the President of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, specifically referencing her support for gender equality in all facets of life (Salmani, Status: 472325344838447105). The same user has also posted tweets referring to books authored by the politician and discussing women, equality, and Islam (Salmani, Status: 488195151584440322).

Technology has also allowed increasingly politically active and engaged women to have a voice online. It is noted that many women in Iran have turned to blogs as a platform for talking about subjects they are unable to openly discuss elsewhere (Hermida). Although few blogs focus directly on political matters, blogs have allowed women to discuss social issues of particular importance (Hermida). Blogs have allowed women to discuss subjects related to relationships, sex, and the challenges of conforming to traditional practices in these areas (Hermida). A thriving online discourse for important social issues ultimately allows women and men to navigate challenges in their day-to-day lives, as well as promote greater acceptance of non-traditional practices and progressive ideas. Despite the fact that most blogs focus on purely social issues, these forums can provide a place for debate and the open exchange of ideas, potentially giving rise to transformative political change. In this sense, women's increased visibility and participation in the online discourse in Iran is clear evidence of the disruption of gender roles caused by urbanization and its ensuing impacts on women's employment, education, and social and political visibility.

A review of tweets using the "#Iranelection" hashtag and containing certain keywords reveals a number of posts to Twitter pertaining to politics, the election in Iran, and other pressing

issues of national and local importance. A number of tweets posted links to stories and articles detailing corruption among different levels of government and leadership in the country. A number of other tweets simply noted issues of corruption in the country, discussing issues such as the accusations of corruption against the brother of the speaker of parliament by the country's president, corruption involving clerics, corruption involving officials from the United Nations, and others. Once again, the use of technology to point out hypocrisy and wrongdoing by the government is evident in the ways that Twitter is used to share content from global and local sources detailing government abuses, wrongdoing and other information materials critical of the state and its policies.

One Twitter account posting from inside Tehran posted a link to an academic article titled "Iran: Government neoliberalism, repression fuel mass discontent #iranelection, Tehran" (Links Socialism, Status: 2273624199). While tweets directly discussing globalization emanating from Iran were relatively rare in search results, the presence of a number of different tweets from different users reveals an awareness in the local population regarding the various implications of IMF-led economic development and globalization overall. This provides further evidence of the importance of online social media platforms, including Twitter, for regular citizens in Iran to criticize government direction and policy. The dangers associated with open and public protest against the government has necessitated that citizens who disagree with the government's actions take alternative steps to speak out against perceived injustices and wrongdoing.

The anonymity, immediacy, and interactivity provided by online platforms such as Twitter, allows these citizens to engage in lively social debates without the fears of drawing the government's ire and jeopardizing one's personal freedom and safety. On these networks, the

policy decisions and political manoeuvres performed by government can be openly critiqued and attacked for their consequences and perceived contribution to various problems affecting Iran. In this case, government orientation toward neoliberalism, globalization and economic development is attacked as the source of discontent among the population overall. A review and analysis of Twitter hashtags and posts reveals that Twitter in particular is an important resource for the urban population of Iran to discuss pressing issues and critique government fairness.

Besides Twitter, Facebook is another popular forum for discussions pertaining to social and political issues affecting Iran. Facebook groups such as Iran Elections News provide a forum for users to share relevant content and discuss matters pertaining to politics and social justice in Iran (Iran Election News). The Facebook group boasts more than 5000 likes, and page moderators share content from Iranian and global media outlets regarding social media, protest activity, sanctions, corruption, and other pressing issues affecting the country (Iran Election News). This helps to make clear that while Twitter may be used by citizens to openly critique the government and attack state policies and corruption, Facebook has emerged as a viable news source for issues affecting Iran.

As noted, the lack of a free press in Iran means that social media takes on an enhanced level of importance. Facebook has provided a resource where citizens can access uncensored and unrestricted news and information about the country, including information which may put the government in a negative light overall. Facebook also provides a resource for individuals to share the news and information they read with others in their social network, including friends and family. In this sense, Facebook provides citizens in Iran with not only an uncensored news

outlet, but also a forum to discuss this news and its potential consequences. Moreover, Facebook provides users with a platform to share relevant news and information with friends and family. As urbanization continues to drive the use of technology and social media, as well as a number of social and political problems, the public increasingly turns to these tools to help fill the void due to the country's lack of free press. Thus, urbanization is driving socio-political change in Tehran by changing the population, as well as changing how the population engages with the most pressing political and social issues affecting the country. The role of urbanization in fostering the further and continued global integration and Dubaization of Tehran will now be discussed.

The Dubaization of Tehran

The concept of Dubaization has been used in the literature to describe a process of change affecting many cities in the Middle East (Al Raouf, as cited in Al Rabady 289). In the process of Dubaization, these cities are transformed into hubs for global connectivity (Al Raouf, as cited in Al Rabady 289). However, in the process, these cities are robbed of their actual identities and their most meaningful local features (Al Raouf, as cited in Al Rabady 289). Dubaization represents a new and dramatically different form of urban development when compared to traditional patterns of urbanization (Elsheshtawy 100-101). Ultimately, the problem with Dubaization is that this form of urban development over-emphasises globalization and economic and urban development consistent with neoliberal principles which functions to seriously exacerbate economic, social, and political inequalities for citizens (Elsheshtawy 103-

105). This is particularly problematic as Dubai has become a model for the development of other cities in the Middle East (Elsheshtawy 108).

Other problems identified with the Dubai model of urban development include the fact that business deals and arrangements fail to enhance the skills base among the local population (Elsheshtawy 103). Moreover, the degree to which the model relies on the exploitation of cheap foreign labour is problematic and unsustainable (Elsheshtawy 103). Growing inequality in Tehran is evidence that supports the notion that Tehran is undergoing a process of Dubaization. Moreover, efforts aimed at economic reforms and better integration with the globalized international economy is further evidence of Tehran's Dubaization. Thus far, Iran has been excluded from Middle Eastern countries counted as "economic winners" in the new global economy (Elsheshtawy 108). While cities like Dubai, Beijing, Mumbai, Tokyo, Doha, and others have all enjoyed considerable economic success, thanks in part to their Dubaization, other cities like Tehran have thus far largely been excluded from reaping these economic benefits (Elsheshtawy 108).

Regardless, recent efforts toward economic reform, privatization, and the diversification of exports have all been made with the goal of bringing Iran into the category of economic winners in the Middle East. Exploring the link between urbanization and the Dubaization of Iran is critical in understanding the relationship between urbanization and Dubaization in Tehran, as well as further understanding how urbanization drives socio-political change in the city. With ongoing patterns of urbanization, the traditional gender roles for women and men have been disrupted. This has resulted in more and more women entering the workforce, particularly at a

time when workers have had less power and been more exploited by employers (Karimi 168-169). Following the advice of the IMF, Iran has sought to diversify its exports and move away from solely focusing on the production and export of oil. The result has been growing inequality and negative impacts for the poorest citizens and workers, a clear hallmark of Dubaization and neoliberal forms of development. Women and other vulnerable workers have been forced into work for low pay and little security.

At the same time, urbanization has also fostered a more informed and better educated population in Iran. A better educated population may be more likely to be politically active and engaged, pushing its leaders to operate in ways most likely to benefit the greatest number of people. However, the literature notes that as Dubaization exacerbates inequality and divisions between social classes, it also promotes a larger notion of injustice among the broader population and may even lead to increased acts of political and social resistance and the rejection of values and norms established by the state (Elsheshtawy 108). Thus, a more active and politically engaged population experiencing the impacts associated with Dubaization may be driven to engage in acts of resistance and protest against state policies deemed unfair and unjust. The Green Movement thus provides support for not only increased political activity fostered by urbanization, but increased political resistance fostered by Dubaization and widening inequality.

Because one of the key goals of the Green Movement was to address pervasive gender inequality in Iran, it can be understood as a response to the acceleration of inequalities occurring as part of the Dubaization of Tehran. Women's increased participation in the paid labour force has failed to provide them with equal rights and equal social standing in Iranian society. Thus,

the Green Movement represents a socio-political response in the form of resistance to state economic and social policies. As long as the Dubaization of Tehran continues and different forms of inequality continue to grow, it is likely that the city will only continue to see an increase in protest and resistance activities. To be sure, protests will continue as long as some groups in the city remain at a stark disadvantage compared to others.

From this perspective, urbanization has created the social and political conditions for the Dubaization of Tehran to take hold. Evidence of Tehran's Dubaization can be seen in the country's efforts toward economic reforms and integration with the global economy. However, evidence can also be seen in the growing social, political, and economic inequality that affects urban residents in Iran. As the Dubaization of Tehran continues to accelerate, issues of inequality become more and more pronounced and the citizens of Tehran may face greater instability and engage in more and more acts of protest and resistance. In this sense, the continued Dubaization of Tehran is likely to exacerbate its existing problems with inequality and environmental degradation around urban areas. As a result, continued Dubaization is also likely to increase the intensity of protest activities and participation in factions like the Green Movement. Because Dubaization actually intensifies and worsens some of the city's most pressing problems originally stemming from urbanization, it is only likely to exacerbate Tehran's most serious and pressing social and political problems.

Discussion and Analysis

The socio-political impacts of urbanization in Tehran include the acceleration of Dubaization in Tehran, the disruption of gender roles, growing levels of education, increased

protest activity and political activism, growing inequality, and increased use of mobile computing technology and social media. Moreover, urbanization contributes to the social change happening in Tehran today by creating the conditions to make it possible for the disruption of gender roles, and increased protest activity. As women participate more and more in the public and political spheres of life, demands for adequate political representation will only grow. Furthermore, as urbanization has driven levels of education among the population higher and higher, the likelihood of political and social activism continues to increase. In this sense, urbanization has fostered conditions in Tehran where social and political change is inevitable. Despite state-sponsored efforts to maintain traditional roles for men and women in society, urbanization has fostered the conditions under which women and men's roles have started to change dramatically. Similarly, state-led efforts to promote education among both the rural and urban populations have combined with urbanization to create a highly educated population and one that is more informed and politically engaged.

Broad-based, state-focused action among women's groups has evolved into more focused, community-level grassroots efforts designed to achieve incremental change. This evolution has been fostered by urbanization in many ways. Urbanization has promoted technological development, which in turn has facilitated freer expressions of identity and political organization through platforms such as social media. In the process, members of women's groups and everyday individuals can discuss issues affecting their lives and reject the dominant narrative imposed by the state. Rather than engage in mass-scale protests and efforts at change, women are now able to engage others on a more personal level, create small communities and activist networks and exchange thoughts about the particular issues impacting their lives. Social media

and other technologies that are largely free from state interference allow for grassroots movements to emerge, while also making it possible for those in different parts of the country to connect over important issues.

As the movements have transitioned, so too have their goals; while legal challenges and other fights against the state have had mixed success, the incremental changes wrought from the intensification of female empowerment are evidence that women have been successful in their efforts to achieve slow but important changes. Indeed, it cannot be denied that life in Tehran today is different for women than it was even a short time ago. Women are able to dress and act more freely, but there is still the looming threat of incarceration when a boundary is pushed too far. Such an ever-present threat makes it impossible to claim with any credibility that women have gender equality in Tehran. Urbanization has helped initiate the process for women's improved social status, but more changes are needed before the city truly has equality for both sexes. Regardless, it cannot be denied that women have benefitted strongly from urbanization. While female empowerment gave rise to the Green movement, it will be interesting to see what future movements arise in urban Tehran. As women and young people continue their clandestine efforts toward achieving gender equality across the country, the state will likely continue its repressive efforts to halt such change and ensure the status quo remains. While the future for Tehran is unclear, what is clear is the role that urbanization has played in the development of key movements aimed at women's social and political liberation, and gender equality in general.

Ongoing urbanization in Tehran has also contributed to a worsening of inequality within the city, raising important questions about the future Dubaization of Tehran. As Tehran follows the example of other cities in the Middle East, and seeks to become more integrated with the

global economy, the inequality exacerbated by urbanization may be made dramatically worse. Because Dubaization tends to only benefit the wealthiest and most powerful residents of cities, and creates negative impacts for a city's poorest and more vulnerable residents, there are serious questions regarding the nature of the city's future development. To be sure, urbanization in Tehran has already contributed to the city undergoing a process of Dubaization. This process has ultimately exacerbated inequality and created many challenges for the city's workers, all while functioning to direct benefits to only the wealthiest and most powerful in society.

Increased protest activity and political engagement is expressed safely through the use of social media. In driving education levels and the use of technology, urbanization has also facilitated increased protest activity. Moreover, this increased protest activity has also emerged as a direct response to the perceived injustice fostered by Tehran's Dubaization. Mobile computing technology and social media have provided relatively safe and anonymous tools and platforms for expressing opinions critical of the state, as well as exchanging information and ideas regarding political and social issues with friends and families. Due to the dangers associated with public protest in Tehran, online resources offer citizens an attractive alternative for not only critiquing the state and its policies, but also accessing uncensored and unfiltered news and information. Tools like Twitter, Facebook, and blogs are all used by citizens in Tehran to express their opinions regarding the pressing social and political issues affecting the city, as well as fight for political and social change. Urbanization and Dubaization have not only created the conditions that have given rise to this increased political engagement in the online realm, but also fostered the social and political conditions and issues that serve as popular issues for debate among the users of these online and uncensored social networks. In this sense, urbanization

causes social change today in Tehran by fostering the conditions that have given rise to Dubaization in the city.

Conclusion

Urbanization in Tehran has led to a number of socio-political impacts, including the disruption of gender roles, higher levels of education, growing social, income, and political inequality, increased protest activity and political activism and the increased use of technologies like social media. Furthermore, urbanization has contributed to social change happening in Iran today by a shift toward the Dubai model of development. The overemphasis on globalization and economic integration with the world economy under the Dubai model of urban development has led to dramatic increases in different kinds of inequality. Growing inequality among a highly educated population, along with other conditions eventually give rise to increased political protest and resistance activity, both online and offline. From this perspective, it is clear that urbanization is an intervening variable linked to Dubaization and socio-political change in the city of Tehran. These findings have significant implications for not only the city's general population, but also the state itself. An understanding of the socio-political impacts of urbanization, as well as how urbanization contributes to current social change affecting Iran can potentially help planners craft and implement improved policy responses for the city's ongoing development. Moreover, a more robust and complete understanding of the various negative impacts associated with the Dubai model of urban development can be helpful for recognizing the limitations of this model of development. Other cities in the Middle East should look to take away positive elements from the Dubai model, while remaining highly cognizant of the fact that

this model for development is a powerful driver of inequality and injustice in cities where it is applied.

<u>**Analysis**</u>

Based on the literature review and qualitative content analysis, a number of specific impacts and broad conclusions can be identified as arising from urbanization. The major impacts identified in the literature review and qualitative content analysis include the disruption of traditional gender roles, growing levels of education, growing inequality, the increased integration of technologies into day-to-day life, and the Dubaization of Tehran. Together, these broad areas represent the five greatest impacts stemming from the ongoing process of urbanization in Tehran.

It is clear that urbanization is acting as an intervening variable that is linked to social change. First, the disruption of traditional gender roles caused by urbanization has significant implications and represents a considerable form of social change. That traditional gender roles have been disrupted by urbanization is evidenced by women's increased participation in different areas of social and political life. Women's increased participation in these important spheres of life has also led to their increased visibility in Tehran, particularly in paid employment (Bahramitash 161-162). Women in Tehran have played an active role in the development of key social movements, including the country's Green Movement.

Women's increased social and political power stems from their changed role and economic independence, which is ultimately related to urbanization. As women and men have migrated to urban areas, women's access to paid employment has greatly increased. Similarly, women's access to education has also greatly increased. As a result of their growing economic and social independence, women have developed both better understanding of their oppression in

society, as well as other relevant issues. This increased understanding, as well as their independence, have allowed for greater opportunities to engage in activism and directly work for social change, evidenced by the Green Movement.

First established in response to the country's disputed Presidential elections of 2009, the Green Movement is a grassroots social and political movement aimed at achieving democratic reform in Iran (Milani 42). The only candidate to oppose President Ahmadinejad was Hossein Mousavi, a man who had formerly served as the country's Prime Minister (Milani 42). Mousavi became the leader of the Green Movement, and his opposition to Ahmadinejad served as the impetus to unite women's groups with other political activists in Iran (Milani 42). Women were united to support Mousavi and the Green Movement to potentially fulfill the promise of a democratic Iran.

Thus, women's participation in the Green Movement stems from urbanization as well as the disruption of traditional gender roles fostered by urbanization. As women have had greater access to better education and greater economic opportunities, their understanding of relevant issues is increased, and their political activism has increased. As urbanization has led to a greater number of women in the paid workforce, it has also led to their increased presence in other areas of life, including areas of social activism.

The second key theme drawn from the review and content analysis is that urbanization is resulting in higher levels of education. More and more young men and women are achieving higher levels of schooling in Tehran (Mahdavi, Iran's Green Movement in Context 19). Rising levels of education among the urban population has significant implications for the overall

population and the process of social change. Men and Women's increased access to education and increased levels of education are a direct result of the urbanization that has been ongoing in Iran. Moreover, their increased education has fostered social change, as well as direct efforts aimed at further social change.

It is noted that a more educated population is more likely to protest and seek to social change to resolve injustices and other problems (Hornsby 121). This appears to be the case in Tehran, with education helping the city's younger population to become more aware of the socio-political oppression that is pervasive throughout Iranian society (Mahdavi, Iran's Green Movement in Context 19). Higher education in the population has thus been brought about by urbanization; in turn, education has driven activism. The Green Movement and the female empowerment movement are just two examples of young people's increased orientation toward social change and activism.

The third key theme drawn from the literature review and qualitative content analysis is growing inequality in Tehran. Urbanization has furthered the divide between rich and poor in the city by making the overall working population more vulnerable and open to exploitation. Indeed, the working and economic conditions fostered by urbanization have made the working poor particularly vulnerable. Thus, even as women have made valuable gains and accessed paid work with greater parity as men, urbanization has driven inequality, poverty, and social division. As a result of the growing inequality and polarization fostered by urbanization, social change is being hastened.

Clearly, a sense of injustice associated with awareness of the inequality in Tehran was present in many of the social media posts reviewed here. Citizens living in Tehran offered pointed commentaries regarding the inequality and injustice they perceived. At the same time, it must also be noted that significant unemployment is a symptom of pervasive inequality and a motivating factor for those seeking social change. Without reliable access to meaningful paid work, citizens are likely to seek political and social alternatives out of their desire to see meaningful change in society.

The fourth theme identified in the research is that urbanization has also resulted in the increased integration of technology into day-to-day life. Urbanization has driven access to and adoption of technology by facilitating economic opportunities as well as education. The increased use of technology in daily life in Tehran has also been an important driver of social change. As mobile computing technologies have become more and more ingrained in the daily lives of city residents, blogs and other social networking sites have taken on importance as sites to facilitate free and unencumbered discussion. These sites have facilitated discussion and debate about important political and social issues that would have not otherwise been possible.

Technology has thus helped spur social change in Tehran by providing residents with relatively anonymous communication platforms where citizens have greater freedom to express themselves and access diverse content than traditional media platforms. Such platforms and technologies have not only allowed for the free expression of ideas, they have allowed political activists to organize protest activities and implement strategies directly aimed at effecting social change. Without urbanization, access to, and use of technology would be greatly restricted; in

this sense it has been critical for hastening social change in Tehran. Citizens have made use of technology in their day-to-day lives to not only access information with greater freedom, but directly work with others to foster a Tehran that more accurately reflects their values and meets their needs.

The fifth and final theme identified in the research is the Dubaization of Tehran. Urbanization is a critical pre-condition for the process of Dubaization to take hold. Because Dubaization involves the city losing its local character to meet the needs of the global economy, it requires an educated, urban population ensure a local economy capable of integration with the global economic order. Dubaization has also helped drive social change both through its direct impacts, as well as increased activism indirectly related to the increasing inequality caused by Dubaization. Thus, the erosion of local character and meaning are but one layer of change driven by Dubaization; injustices made worse by this process also function to drive change and activism in the local population.

Conclusion

The stated hypothesis for this paper was: urbanization is an unexplained and intervening variable that is linked to social change in Iran. The myriad broader impacts arising from urbanization all function to act as key drivers for social change, creating an impetus among the local population to act, as well as providing the tools and conditions necessary for change to come about. Urbanization continues to shape Tehran's development in all ways, but it is clear that urbanization has five broad impacts. These five impacts each function to drive social change in different ways, with some reinforcing others. For example, increasing education in the general population reinforces the disruption of traditional gender roles already fostered by urbanization.

Similarly, the integration of technology into our daily lives reinforces the Dubaization of Tehran by facilitating access to the global economy, as well as the transfer of capital. The integration of technology into day-to-day life also functions to further disrupt traditional gender roles by ensuring that both women and men have access to the same information and communication tools. Interestingly, the state's efforts to ensure the population has access to education may potentially hasten the demise of the current regime. With a more educated population, Tehran's citizens have increasingly demanded positive change on a number of different issues, as well as for the greatest injustices affecting citizens to be addressed.

Urbanization has driven change in Tehran for centuries. Throughout the twentieth century, the socio-political change fostered by urbanization in Tehran has been considerable. Today, urbanization is the primary driver of socio-political change in Tehran as it has nurtured and sustains the conditions which give rise to social change. Moreover, urbanization has helped

facilitate change through the process of Dubaization in the city. As this process continues, local character and meaning will be further eroded and supplanted with a generic city wherein residents are positioned to effectively service the global economy. Dubaization is linked to some of the other impacts linked to urbanization here, including the growing inequality and polarization of the city.

In this sense, it is clear that urbanization both drives injustices, as well as the conditions that facilitate activist responses to these injustices. With a more educated population where men and women are active in the different spheres of life, political activism is more likely. With greater access to technology, political activism is more easily accomplished. With growing inequality, political activists have a motivation and impetus to address the most pressing injustices affecting urban life. Dubaization also reinforces these conditions by exacerbating inequality, and increasing day-to-day access to, and use of technology.

There are a number of implications arising from the findings obtained in this research. First, the government of Iran is going to great lengths to facilitate the population's access to education. However, a more educated population has been increasingly dissatisfied with the government's approach to, and handling of a variety of issues. This vocal segment of the population is actively seeking change. Thus, the government, in its attempts to promote education, may be hastening its eventual removal.

Similarly, the provisions to support the Dubaization of Tehran, including a more educated population and increased access to technology, are also likely to facilitate knowledge and understanding of the fundamental problems associated with Dubaization. Thus, the pillars that

support Dubaization are also those likely to cause citizens to reject this process and seek to engage in a process of reclamation for their city. A rebuke of the ideals associated with neoliberal governance and globalization in general is most likely to come from an educated and engaged activist population seeking change.

There are a number of potential areas of research made clear through an analysis of the findings obtained in this research. Further research is needed to understand the role that technology plays in improving access to information as well as facilitating Dubaization. Access to technology appears to have positive and negative effects in terms of its role vis-a-vis inequality and polarization in the urban environment. Research which attempts to uncover the mediating factors that impact how technology drives change would potentially be very helpful for aiding understanding of how technology interacts with different factors to drive social change.

An additional area of research to be explored is related to whether or not Dubaization may blunt the capacity for citizens to engage in political activism. In the process of Dubaization, the city is transformed from a site of local meaning and character, to one that serves the needs of the global economy. How has Dubai and other cities following the Dubaization model responded to social activism? Restrictive governance and legislative changes designed to curtail demonstrations and protests in some cities may be evidence of the Dubaization and its impact to blunt the capacity of a given city's local population to engender meaningful socio-political change. Research in this area could provide insights into whether or not such a phenomenon existed, as well as how citizens in these global cities were responding to the unique challenges created by the Dubaization of their cities.

Tehran is a city that continues to undergo considerable change. As urbanization continues, it is likely that the considerable social change and unrest generated by urbanization will only increase and grow stronger. Furthermore, as Tehran continues to undergo the process of Dubaization, its citizenry will face complex demands stemming from the need to be more oriented toward global capitalism, as well as the need to respond to growing poverty, inequality, and polarization in society. The citizens of Tehran face a complex array of challenges both now, and going forward. Urbanization is the single most important factor affecting the development of the city, as well as its socio-political issues.

Because urbanization is ongoing in Tehran, the local population as well as the international community should expect continued unrest and social activism. For many of the city's residents, urbanization is the primary issue that shapes social life. As urbanization continues to negatively impact the environment and grow the divide between rich and poor, it is only likely to engender further social activism and action aimed at creating social change. Moreover, as the educated urban population continues to grow, eventually activists will reach a tipping point where the overwhelming majority of the population supports meaningful political and social change. Until that happens, urbanization must be recognized as an intervening variable driving social change and social unrest in Tehran.

In addition, as Dubaization continues to shape the development of Tehran and other cities in the Middle East, the local population may eventually be forced to confront the terrible possibility that conformity to the global economic order means the eradication of local character and meaning, as well as commitment to a system that deepens inequality and the polarization of

society. The urban population of Tehran faces this and other challenge as it looks to the future. This research has helped provide support for the hypothesis that urbanization is an unexplained and intervening variable driving social change as well as Dubaization in Tehran. To be sure, urbanization has disrupted traditional gender roles in the city, raised levels of education, exacerbated inequality in society, and integrated technology into the day-to-day lives of citizens. Moreover, urbanization has facilitated the conditions necessary for the Dubaization of Tehran. Each of these conditions is a major driver of socio-political change in the city and has the potential to create significant change in Tehran overall.

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