

# Tehran City and Social Capital Dualism: A Neighborhood Case Study

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## **Abstract:**

Iran has transformed after the second world war due to volume, speed and diversity of contextual and physical changes, structure and historical function of city. The evolutions of the past half century caused the city of Tehran to have two different urban spaces which are called in the present paper as traditional and modern communities . The residential section of old neighborhoods of the city of Tehran( like traditional fabric of Kashanak neighborhood ) is usually very dense, without considerable open space while having a very homogenous and coherent face. Settlement of all these components along the bypasses and winding roads created a system with historical identity in which a part of the lost past of Tehran can be found. The present research is conducted to study social capital in Kashanak neighborhood of the city of Tehran . social capital is intangible, and cannot be seen or touched. Hence it can only be measured by reference to those features of society with which its development is associated, i.e. the process which results in its accumulation. There is general agreement that this process includes features of society such as association (both formal-via group membership and work colleagues, and informal-via networks of friends , neighbours and family), engagement in community-based activities , community cohesiveness and thick and thin trust. These features of society may be considered the building blocks of social capital and used as proxies for its measurement. Bonding social capital refers to the social capital generated and shared by members of a relatively homogenous group. Bridging social capital refers to the social capital generated and shared through interconnections between heterogeneous groups. The concepts of bonding and bridging social capital contain elements of norms of behaviour and societal structures in that they indicate both a tendency for people to act in a certain manner (the norm of tending toward bonding or bridging links) and the capacity to do so (the fact of having friends or contacts either locally-bonding link,or externally-bridging links). The level and nature of social capital in each town was assessed through a self- completion questionnaire. A Hundred persons of each community were selected randomly for collection of data. The questionnaire included 22 variables designed to measure aspects of social capital formation covering informal association, formal association, social cohesiveness and engagement , trust, Bridging Social Capital and Bonding Social Capital. Comparative scores for both communities on

each of the six factors were generated by calculating a score for individual cases based their responses to the variables included in each factor and then aggregating these scores for cases in each community . Multivariate variance analysis method has been used to compare the two communities. A self-completion questionnaire was designed in which we included questions that had been used to measure social capital in traditional and modern communities. We also grouped questions in factors similar . Responses to the questionnaire were assessed via measurement on a five-point Likert scale . The research hypothesis states that social capital in traditional community indicates a higher level of modern community . Questions were included to reflect perceptions on informal association , formal association, cohesiveness and engagement, social trust, Bonding Social Capital, and Bridging Social Capital. Responses to questions were rated on ordinal scales and recoded where necessary so that a higher score represented a higher level of social capital . A calculation of general social capital (GSC) to reflect the total level of social capital in each community was made simply by aggregating the scores of individual cases on each factor. The difference between the communities statistically significant in relation to informal association with friends and neighbours and differences between the two community in regard to formal association, social cohesiveness and engagement are noteworthy. Although it is approved in the present research that the level of general social capital (GSC) is higher in traditional community, the score obtained in bridging social capital factor is higher in modern community. bridging social capital represents the propensity of individuals to travel and have social relations with people who do not live in the local community and is an indication of the degree to which local residents network with others beyond their community. the importance of bridging social capital to facilitate development, commenting that 'the commitment of non-local actors through financial and organisational assistance is needed to stimulate cooperation between local subjects'. Therefore, the higher level of extra-neighborhood (widespread ) relations in modern community, due to better situation of bridging social capital, paved the way for its development.

**Keywords:** *Tehran, Kashanak neighborhood , social capital, bridging social capital, bonding social capital.*

### **Introduction:**

Social, cultural and economic changes in north countries in contemporary centuries affected by industrialization and modernism caused the rapid growth of the cities and made fundamental changes in their spatial organization and structure( Shieh, 2006, p. 86 ). Since 1950s, south countries, such as Iran, have been affected by modernization theory and resorted to macro planning for national development. This caused industrial, demographic and political discrimination and allocation of resources to the profit of big cities and especially main megapolis, Tehran (Sarraf, 2000, p. 14 ).

The city of Tehran, having a short history as compared with other historical cities of Iran ( such as Esfahan, Shiraz and Hamedan ), rapidly developed, its interior fabric and structure fundamentally changed and acted as the dominant city of the country and a communication bridge with outside world(Saidi, 2010, p. 251 ). At the beginning, it was hoped that

economical effects would spread and a spatial balance would be created however numerous various social changes were made in the city of Tehran due to the flood of immigrations with the hope of finding a better job and life(Nazarian, 2010, p. 123 ). Of these social changes we may refer to separatism of traditional and modern social classes which is known as south of city and north of city .

Before 1920s, Iranian cities space was the physical manifestation of Islamic Iranian culture(Nazarian, 2008, p. 55 ). Despite of this fact that new structural changes European cities occurred during several centuries, the Iranian governments have the intention of making such changes quickly within several decades. The physical changes in the city of Tehran were initiated by a non-principled cutting of old fabric for the purpose of making motorable ways(Mojtahedzadeh, 2008, p. 160). Modernization eliminated the traditional form of the city of Tehran. All walls and gates of the city were demolished. The city found a new face in the streets(Ziari, 2008, p. 101 ). The checker network of new streets of the city replaced irregular dense fabrics of the old city. As Land Reform was implemented, the economic sections of the city ( such as industries and services ) gained power in the economic system of Iran and rural economic ( including agriculture and animal husbandry) were put on the margin(Dalir, 2006, p. 147 ). The expansion of migrations to the city of Tehran and vacation of the fringes of the country changed Tehran to a big city.

Nowadays Tehran is a mixture of spatial contradictions and the aging trend of old neighborhoods of the city(Ziari, 2006, p. 17 ) and reconstruction and tower build of its newly established neighborhoods and is a prominent appearance of this claim. The residential section of old neighborhoods of the city of Tehran( like traditional fabric of Kashanak neighborhood ) is usually very dense, without considerable open space while having a very homogenous and coherent face. Settlement of all these components along the bypasses and winding roads created a system with historical identity in which a part of the lost past of Tehran can be found. The complex access network of houses in these neighborhoods is among the properties of Islamic Iranian type neighborhoods( Shakoei, 2007, p. 337 ). Old neighborhoods are not capable to be adapted for new conditions of living, such as narrow alleys without a geometric order and with steep slope that causes transportation problems for the neighborhood. The large number of old buildings and deterioration of buildings and lack of a suitable financial support changed these neighborhoods to a mixture of deterioration and pollution.

Modern neighborhoods ( such as modern fabric of Kashanak neighborhood ) are a set of towers and checker streets that neither represents the past Islamic Iranian city nor the actual model of a modern city. Such neighborhoods were usually created in non-organic order and cultural heritage and native history were ignored in their design(Ziari, 2007, p. 129 ). In general, Kashanak neighborhood as a part of the system of the city of Tehran has two different spatial models called herein as traditional community and modern community .

### **Understanding and defining social capital**

Much discussion of social capital is clouded by the absence of a clear definition of the concept. A plethora of definitions exist already, many overlap and many refer to the same or similar fundamental processes and outcomes, but approach them in different ways. Such arrange of

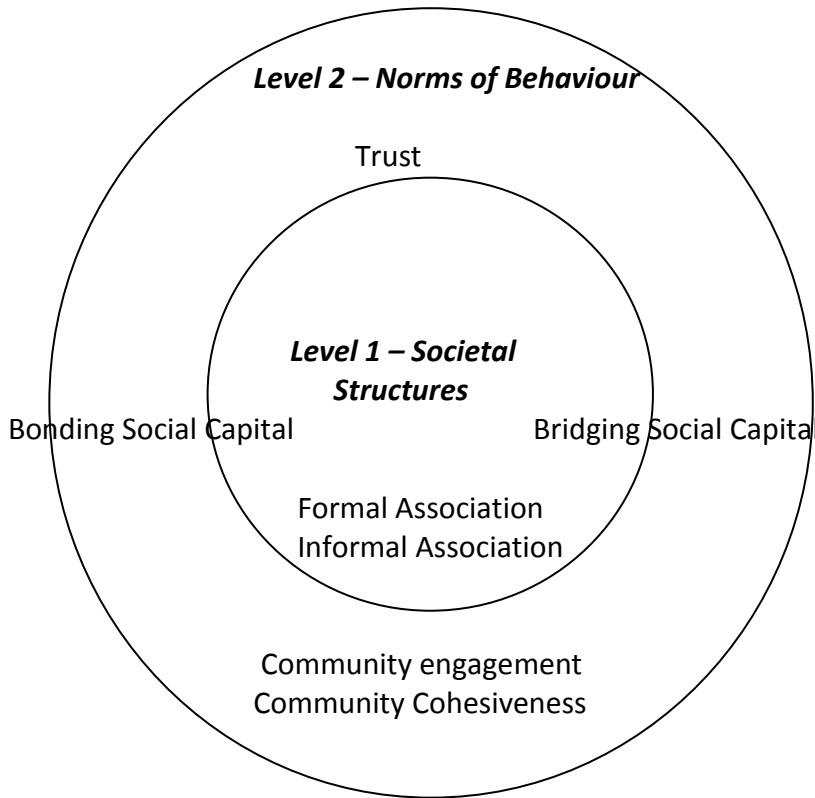
definitions allows the concept to be applied in a multitude of guises and to analyse and explain various phenomena, a situation described by Mohan and Mohan (2002, p. 22) as 'operational opportunism' and by Stone (2001, p. 9) as 'empirical mayhem'. More harshly, Woolcock (1998, p. 46) suggests 'a single term is being adopted in discriminately, adapted uncritically, and applied imprecisely' and as such can be used by politicians and policy-makers from across the political spectrum to justify often contradictory measures. Given such diversity, it is hard to see how agreement will ever be reached on a single definition or even an application of the concept. This dictates that researchers must be clear about their specific understanding and application of the concept.

Drawing on theory developed by Bourdieu (1986, p. 121) and Coleman (1988, p. 47), social capital is conceived as a resource that may be used to achieve a variety of ends. This source is generated by individuals or groups of individuals through deliberate processes of accumulation involving interaction with other people. This stance is shared by Winter (2000, p. 145) who suggests social capital is a 'resource to action'. For Bourdieu that 'action' is the development of economic capital, for Coleman it is the development of human capital. Within this conceptual framework, a useful definition of social capital is 'the stock of accumulated resources that one can access based on the relationships that can aid or be leveraged in accomplishing an end or furthering a pursuit' (Tymon and Stumpf, 2002, p. 130). This clearly identifies social capital as both a resource and the outcome of a deliberate process of accumulation within a social sphere. It is this conceptualisation of social capital that was used in this research.

Much has been written critiquing the concept of social capital, attempting to rigorously identify proxies for its measurement (Chamlee-Wright, 2008, p. 7; Durkin, 2000, p. 15; Durlauf, 2002, p. 4; Glaeser et al., 2000, p. 132; Paldam, 2000, p. 141; Robison et al., 2002, p. 12; Schmid, 2003, p. 132; Wallis et al., 2004, p. 11). Regardless of how social capital is defined, it is apparent that the resource that is social capital is intangible, and cannot be seen or touched. Hence it can only be measured by reference to those features of society with which its development is associated, i.e. the process which results in its accumulation. There is general agreement that this process includes features of society such as association (both formal-via group membership and work colleagues, and informal-via networks of friends, neighbours and family), engagement in community-based activities, community cohesiveness and thick and thin trust. These features of society may be considered the building blocks of social capital and used as proxies for its measurement. The conceptual framework put forward by Krishna and Shrader (1999, p. 9), and subsequently adapted and utilized by Onyx and Bullen (2000, p. 42), Stone (2001, p. 21) and Western et al. (2002, p. 22). categorises these building blocks as either norms of behaviour or societal structures, whereby the norms govern the nature of personal interaction within the predominant structure of any given society. A diagrammatic representation of this conceptual framework is illustrated in Fig. 1 where Level 1 relates to societal structures and Level 2 relates to norms of behaviour.

A key differentiation in the literature is made between bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000, p. 12; Narayan, 1999, p. 23). Bonding social capital refers to the social capital generated and shared by members of a relatively homogenous group. Bridging social capital refers to the social capital generated and shared through interconnections between

heterogeneous groups. The concepts of bonding and bridging social capital contain elements of norms of behaviour and societal structures in that they indicate both a tendency for people to act in a certain manner (the norm of tending toward bonding or bridging links) and the capacity to do so (the fact of having friends or contacts either locally-bonding link, or externally-bridging links).



**Figure1** Conceptual framework of social capital in society.

**Methodology**

Rational underpinning of the research is based on this fact that the level of social capital in traditional and modern communities is different. Considering the properties of traditional and modern neighborhoods, which have already been stated, Kashanak neighborhood was selected for the case study. There are two traditional and modern communities in kashanak neighborhood. Although both studying communities are in the same neighborhood, it is impossible to determine the exact border between traditional and modern texture in the neighborhood. The purpose of present research is to identify the differences of social capital in both traditional and modern communities in the studying neighborhood. The research hypothesis indicates that the level of social capital in traditional community is higher than the modern community. Kashanak neighborhood is located in dist. 1 of the city of Tehran. The

region is on the foot of Alborz mountain range to the north of Tehran. The population of the neighborhood was 16189 persons in 2006.

Cognisant of the numerous criticisms of previous attempts to empirically measure social capital highlighted earlier in this paper, this research develops a comprehensive measure of social capital that incorporates each of the previously identified ‘building blocks’ . The level and nature of social capital in each town was assessed through a self- completion questionnaire. A Hundred persons of each community were selected randomly for collection of data. The questionnaire included 22 variables designed to measure aspects of social capital formation covering informal association, formal association, social cohesiveness and engagement , trust, Bridging Social Capital and Bonding Social Capital. The six factors used in this research are described in detail in Table 1, which also includes the full wording of each of the 22 variables. Comparative scores for both communities on each of the six factors were generated by calculating a score for individual cases based their responses to the variables included in each factor and then aggregating these scores for cases in each community . Multivariate variance analysis method has been used to compare the two communities. Responses to the questionnaire were assessed via measurement on a five-point Likert scale .

**Table 1** Description of factors

| Factor loadings | Description   | Variables included and factor  |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 1               | Informal association neighbours’<br>(friends , neighbours and relatives)<br>my first name’  | ‘I get on well with my<br><br>‘Most of my neighbours know<br><br>‘I generally socialise with my relatives<br><br>‘I’m happy to help out my friend if |
|                 | at least once a week’   |  |
|                 | they need a hand’   |  |
| 2               | formal association<br>decision (e.g. to do with family or relationship<br>religious groups ) problems or money worries), I would be likely to ask someone at<br>work’ | ‘If I needed advice on a life<br>(work colleagues, voluntary and<br><br>‘I’m active in voluntary groups of<br><br>foundation)’                       |
|                 | neighborhood (e. g. mobilization, charity   |  |

g. the ceremonies of mosque and jeremiad )

3 Social cohesiveness and engagement  
to go out for a while I would ask a

friends for help when I need it'

community projects or working bees in my spare

people are willing to become Involved

not focussed only on their own lives'

events (e.g. celebrations and marriges)'

4 Bridging social capital  
community to visit my friends'

community'

not live in my local community'

community to visit my relatives'

5 Trust  
interests'

trusted'

neighbourhood can be trusted'

6 Bonding social capital  
live in my local community'

community'

live in my local community'

'I get on well with my religious groups'(e.

'If I was caring for a child and needed

neighbour for help'

'I can count on members of my

'I often help out with local

time'

'In kashanak neighbourhood most

with the local community and are

'I often attend local community

'I sometimes go outside my local

'I often travel outside my local

'I have a quite a lot of friends who do

'I sometimes go outside my local

'I trust my friends to act in my best

'I think most people in Iran can be

'I think most people in kashanak

'I have a quite a lot of relatives who

'I barely travel outside my local

'I have a quite a lot of friends who

**Hypothesis testing**

Generally, the framework of this research corresponds well with the previously identified conceptual framework and includes elements of several of the ‘building blocks’ of social capital. Questions were included to reflect perceptions on informal association , formal association, cohesiveness and engagement, social trust, Bonding Social Capital, and Bridging Social Capital. The factors and the questions belonging to each one of them are listed in Table 1. Responses to questions were rated on ordinal scales and recoded where necessary so that a higher score represented a higher level of social capital . A calculation of general social capital (GSC) to reflect the total level of social capital in each community was made simply by aggregating the scores of individual cases on each factor. The results of scores for GSC and on each of the six factors are provided in Table 2 where higher scores indicate higher levels of social capital.

**Table 2** Comparative of social capital in kashanak neighborhood

| Factor                            | Traditional community - | Modern community- |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| DF                                | F                       | p value           |
|                                   | mean score              | mean score        |
|                                   |                         | (1,2)             |
| General social capital( GSC )     | 77.45                   | 59.19             |
| (1,198)                           | 35.196                  | .000              |
| Factor 1-Informal association     | 16.88                   | 13.25             |
| (1,198)                           | 48.907                  | .000              |
| Factor 2- formal association      | 11.98                   | 8.47              |
| (1,198)                           | 51.229                  | .000              |
| Factor 3- Social cohesiveness     | 16.59                   | 9.27              |
| (1,198)                           | 104.837                 | .000              |
| and engagement                    |                         |                   |
| Factor 4- Bridging social capital | 11.19                   | 13.01             |
| (1,198)                           | 8.08                    | .005              |
| Factor 5-Trust                    | 10.63                   | 9.25              |
| (1,198)                           | 12.721                  | .000              |
| Factor 6- Bonding social capital  | 10.18                   | 5.94              |
| (1,198)                           | 102.38                  | .000              |



The difference between the communities statistically significant in relation to informal association with friends and neighbours and differences between the two communities in regard to formal association, social cohesiveness and engagement are noteworthy. As predicted, traditional community records a higher level of social capital than modern community. As shown in table 2, the level of social capital in traditional community is higher than the modern community. The traditional community obtained higher scores with respect to informal association, formal association, social cohesiveness and engagement, trust and bonding social capital factors, however, modern communities recorded a higher score with respect to bridging social capital.

### **Discussion:**

While the social capital concept is of major theoretical and empirical interest to many economists and social scientists, the concept is not yet fully explored. Coleman (1990, p. 16) and Putnam (1993, p. 56) contend that communities with higher stocks of social capital are better able to deal with economic and social problems than those with fewer stocks of social capital. The design of our questionnaire was a comprehensive attempt to assemble a wide array of questions relating to important factors included in social capital definitions. A self-completion questionnaire was designed in which we included questions that had been used to measure social capital in traditional and modern communities. We also grouped questions in factors similar.

Researchers have argued that social capital is enhanced when people belong to voluntary groups and organizations. In particular, Putnam (1993, p. 56) maintains that participation in political and social activities and collective organizations is the primary means of civic engagement, and credits the economic success of northern Italy, relative to that of southern Italy, to its latter's rich organizational participation. He claims that individuals' participation in social and political organizations "instill(s) in their members habits of economic cooperation, solidarity, and public spiritedness" (Putnam, 1993, p. 33).

As it was anticipated, the level of general social capital (GSC) in traditional community is higher than the modern community, however the score obtained in bridging social capital factor in modern community is higher. Factor 4 (bridging social capital) represents the propensity of individuals to travel and have social relations with people who do not live in the local community and is an indication of the degree to which local residents network with others beyond their community. Trigilia (2001, p. 8) notes the importance of bridging social capital to facilitate development, commenting that 'the commitment of non-local actors through financial and organisational assistance is needed to stimulate cooperation between local subjects'. Therefore, the higher level of extra-neighborhood

(widespread) relations in modern community, due to better situation of bridging social capital, paved the way for its development.

### **Conclusion:**

This research prove that traditional community displays a higher level of general social capital than modern community but modern community displaying a significantly higher level of bridging social capital than traditional community. Our hypothesis for kashanak neighborhood was confirmed in the present paper; however more researchers should be conducted in other neighborhoods of the city of Tehran so that we can generalize the hypothesis for the city of Tehran. The difference between the communities statistically significant in relation to informal association with friends and neighbours and differences between the two community in regard to formal association, trust, social cohesiveness and engagement are noteworthy. In general, the differences between traditional and modern communities in the present research are called social capital dualism.

Woodhouse (2006, p. 25) argues while bonding social capital is crucial to foster early stage economic development, it is the combination of this with the generation and utilisation of bridging social capital that is likely to have the most significant and sustainable impact on the level of economic development within a community.

In the studying traditional community, the relations are mostly in compact form (inter-neighborhood), but the relations in modern community are widespread (extra-neighborhood). The extra neighborhood relations can pave the way for importing thoughts, information and resources from outside of the neighborhood (such as financial, human and physical) into the neighborhood. The question of causality in regard to the difference of social capital in traditional and modern communities a vexed one. While these results show social capital dualism between traditional and modern communities but they do not illustrate the direction of causality nor do they rule out the influence of a third (or fourth or nth) factor in shaping both, social capital in traditional and modern communities.

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