REVITALIZATION OF THE BAZAAR NEIGHBORHOOD
IN TEHRAN

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Abstract

The word “bazaar” comes from an ancient word “wazaar” meaning market. The word “baza” has been used in other countries such as Turkey, Arabic countries and India as well.¹

Bazaars are historic market places that provide trade services as well as other functions. Their historic buildings are renowned for their architectural aesthetics, and in old cities such as Tehran (Iran) they are considered the centerpiece of activities with architectural, cultural, historical, religious, and commercial values. However, during the past 400 years, they have undergone social and environmental changes. The neighborhood of the Tehran Bazaar has in recent decades become degraded, which has consequently decreased the social value of the historic Bazaar. The ruined urban condition makes it impossible for contemporary visitors to have a pleasurable experience while visiting the Bazaar, although that was historically their experience. As Tehran began to grow, much of the trade and finance in the city has moved to the newly developed section of the city, diminishing the importance of the bazaars. Today, shoppers and residents living in the Bazaar neighborhood inhabit dilapidated buildings, while customers and tourists—when they go there at all—experience a neighborhood that lacks even the most basic urban amenities such as sidewalks, drainage, benches, trees and lighting.

This design study required a number of investigations. It was essential to know whether there is appropriate access to the neighborhood in general and to the Bazaar specifically, and whether or not these access routes provide pedestrians a safe and healthy experience.

Additionally, I looked at social context and sense of community, commercial viability, traffic, and urban hygiene. I interviewed many of the shop owners, customers, and residents in the neighborhood in order to learn their needs.

This thesis addresses the issues that threaten the values of the Bazaar. These issues can be seen in unaesthetic looks in both building scale and urban scale. It analyzes the existing conditions, cultural and historic context and develops a plan to resolve the threats. The proposed program introduces methods for developing a workable contemporary layer that responds to the needs of the neighborhood. This response proposes standards such as compatibility with the historic fabric. It also addresses how to create green spaces and resolve traffic issues with minimum intervention, while preserving the old and historic character. With this theory, the bazaar neighborhood hopefully will perform again as a meaningful residential, commercial, social, and religious hub in Tehran, creating a tight vibrant urban fabric.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Bazaar in Tehran (Iran) flourished as an important, central market neighborhood since the foundation of the city in the 17th century.\(^1\) This thesis explores the “Tehran old Bazaar,” a historic market place embodying cultural, historical, religious, architectural and commercial values, asking how and why social and environmental transitions negatively impacted the condition of the old Bazaar. The site is now in a dilapidated state and lacks basic amenities such as sidewalks, an appropriate drainage system, benches and trees. Vehicular traffic problems have created threats for vehicles and especially pedestrians. This thesis analyzes the existing conditions, cultural and historic context and develops a plan to resolve these threats, while preserving the existing social values of the residents and bazaar visitors.

Scope

The thesis focuses on preservation methods for Tehran Bazaar. By looking at other traditional market areas and urban regeneration projects both in and outside of Iran, I am going to propose methods for developing a contemporary urban layer that responds to the needs of the neighborhood. In addition to compatibility with the historic fabric, it will be sensitive to local valued spaces. Instead of intervening to change them fundamentally, it will use minimum interventions to accommodate the new social needs while respecting the character of the neighborhood. From this case study, a set of guidelines could be used in other similar situations where historical neighborhoods need selective improvement. In other words, the proposed strategy is transferrable to all other neighborhoods suffering similar conditions.

The outcome of this project will be the preservation of the old character of the Bazaar, while supporting the existing sets of social rules for public use and precedents for streets and greenery. Following the existing rules to accommodate the needs of the neighborhood will lead to small but important changes in the spatial design. It is in finding this balance between past and present requirements that the project will become a precedent. The project with my interventions offers more greenery, open and public space in respect to the old fabric, changes that improve the space yet are compatible with the historic nature of the neighborhood. The project aims to alleviate the pressure and physical degradation with minimal intervention and make the neighborhood a more hospitable and safe environment.

Important research questions are: what are the important features of historic bazaars? How are these bazaars in Islamic cities and towns different from other market places elsewhere in the world? It is critical to find out the major changes in the neighborhood that led to a degraded landscape and to understand the reasons why these changes occurred. Moreover, it is important to figure out the basic requirements for tourists, customers and dwellers and those that are no longer going to visit the site because it is no longer attractive to them. In the conclusion of this thesis I will answer how the historical and cultural aspects of the market can be preserved while introducing measures for enhanced safety; how to revitalize a neighborhood with a tight and lively fabric without destroying it; and finally how to make it more accessible.

This project examines the tension between historic fabric and contemporary needs for green spaces, circulation of vehicles, parking spaces and streetscapes. My thesis asks: to
prevent the historic fabric from crumbling and becoming obsolete, are there interventions that can be made to maintain the health of the historic fabric while accommodating contemporary needs? Can I reinvigorate the dilapidated fabric? If so, what are the appropriate measures for doing this? The strategy used in this proposal is based on analysis of existing physical conditions of the old Bazaar and its traditional use of space and the neighborhood around it, study of tourists and resident’s behavior. This thesis attempts to suggest ways to resolve the issues with the help of design interventions based on the findings from site visits, visual analysis, interviews and precedent studies.

**History**

According to Razieh Rezazadeh, “Old Tehran consisted of five neighborhoods including the Bazaar, which was confined within the fortifications” built in the time of the Safavid rulers of Iran (1501-1722). When the second fortification was built during the Naseri Period of the Qajar dynasty (1796-1925), new neighborhoods were built close to the old ones. One of these neighborhoods was Saboonpaz-khaneh neighborhood located on the south of the old Bazaar and was the residential area for low-class people. The area is now in a much deteriorated physical and functional condition. Rezazadeh’s article defines the meaning of dilapidation which applies to the current situation in the Bazaar neighborhood: “there are three major indices that define dilapidated fabric; these include small parcel size, narrow route width and poor

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structural quality. Dilapidated fabric occurs where over 50 percent of parcels are less than 200 m² in size, and/or 50 percent of routes are less than 8 meters wide and/or 50 percent of its structures.”

Presence of old fabrics and unsafe neighborhoods have caused old residents to move out from the neighborhood. This is the beginning of a new phase for the neighborhood; a neighborhood which is largely depopulated, with only the very poorest people residing there. Therefore, to encourage the residents to stay, the ruined fabric must be improved and made usable.

The Grand Bazaar is located in the center of the city of Tehran. The map of the evolution of the city of Tehran (Figure 1.1) demonstrates that the Bazaar and the surrounding neighborhood has been the heart of the city for over 400 years. The historic position of the Bazaar had led to many other historical architecture and landscapes located around the bazaar such as the Golestan Palace, a madrasa, mosques, wind towers (for cooling air) and many other old residential structures that are identified as cultural heritage (Figures 1.2). A particular kind of architecture is associated with bazaars: a vaulted linear form with shops located on both sides (Figure 1.3).

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Figure 1.1 Evolution of Tehran between 1891 and 1998

Figure 1.2 Old residential buildings
Image from: Bavand Architects
Figure 1.3 Special architecture of Bazaars, linear form
Precedent Studies

I focused on four sites that served as precedents for my thesis; the Isfahan Bazaar, the Kerman Bazaar, the Tehran Bazaar in Iran itself and the city of Lagos in Nigeria.

The Bazaar of Isfahan is a heritage site from Safavid era, notable for having the longest roofed market. It has about 3 miles of shopping streets with historic architectural design. The new Bazaar was added to the old one as organic growth. Built before the Age of Industrialization, the old Bazaar was designed based on the needs of people and to provide the most convenient way for people living in the residential neighborhood to access the bazaar. The Isfahan Bazaar is still successful today, which makes it a successful example for comparing with the situation in Tehran Bazaar which is currently inconvenient for the visitors and residents in terms of accessibility. Isfahan Bazaar sets as an example in terms of meeting the needs of the society while preserving the old fabric historical as well.

Lagos is a very different kind of precedent. According to Koolhaas, “Its population is expected to reach 24 million people by 2020, which would make it the third largest city in the world.” Architect and urbanist Rem Koolhaas (of Harvard University) started the Harvard-sponsored project to understand which cities in the world were changing the most and how is this change happening. When he was interviewed and asked about the specific element about Lagos that he found interesting to explore, he responded: “Lagos is a mystery that is

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intensifying...it is a very rich place but everybody is very poor....I don’t think you can be in Lagos without becoming aware of its potency...”

In order to understand how it worked, he wandered through the city and talked to people to recognize the problems, one of which was the overcrowding. Instead of planning to redevelop the city, he looked at the problem in a different way. In his point of view, “the city should be seen as an anarchic organism in which the enterprise of the inhabitants turns any apparent disadvantage into an advantage: Anguish over the city's shortcomings in traditional urban systems obscures the reasons for the continued, exuberant existence of Lagos and other megacities like it. These shortcomings have generated ingenious, critical alternative systems.”

This project is motivational because it encourages the use of the positive forces present in the site, rather than simply addressing the problems. Koolhaas’s approach inspires me to support the existing sets of social rules and rules for streets and greenery, and to accommodate the needs of the neighborhood, and this will lead to the establishment of new sets of rules which follow and respect the existing rules, and finally the project will set a precedent.

Studying Tehran Bazaar itself as a case study, I realized that the overall layout displays architectural incompatibility, beaten dirt instead of paved ground surfaces, and a serious lack of parking lots. Similarly, the open pedestrian spaces are either occupied by parked motorcycles or visually unappealing. Finally, without proper maintenance, the buildings have suffered physical


deterioration: staircases become garbage dumps, and broken windows are not replaced. Thus, lack of maintenance leads to an unhealthy environment in which the deterioration visibly shows the lack of care for the environment. In such circumstances, a designed neighborhood will provide a healthy and safe living environment for residents and nonresidents. The challenge is to keep and preserve the historic essence. The project aims to alleviate the pressure with minimal intervention. Thus, instead of seeing the current situation in Tehran as completely negative and doomed, I followed Koolhaas’s example and used the already existing positive forces to improve it; creating open space and social environments, following the same rules as those currently existing, would be a good response to the current situation of dereliction. Currently, due to the neighborhood situation, people prefer to purchase their goods elsewhere and avoid the unpleasant experience of Bazaar shopping. Therefore, the new planning and design efforts should bring the neighborhood more chances to be physically and socially integrated and improve its economic viability. Additionally, the site lacks certain supplies and necessities such as resting and sitting spaces, open spaces, parking spaces, defined pedestrian paths and greenery for the residents and nonresidents. These necessities should be provided so the neighborhood can function appropriately. The significance of this investigation is that the proposal can help prevent further deterioration.
Chapter 2: Methods-Data Collection

To analyze the site, I used the tool of site mapping, photographs and conducted interviews with residents and shopkeepers. In this chapter I will explain in detail the methods used.

Site Observations

In June 2012, I conducted a field study to analyze the site and its conditions. Site observation by walking around the site provided this opportunity to observe the site in a completely different manner and understand its significance. In other words, I had to approach it with an open mind, without judging it according to the ideals that were already formed in my mind. To understand the usage of the site, the important activities that took place at the site had to be identified. I mapped the activities that were distributed along the Bazaar and the active shops in the neighborhood. The basic procedure that the data was compiled is as follows:

1. Case study: The major precedent study is the Tehran Bazaar itself. The analysis tries to understand the existing rules and the way everything currently works in the neighborhood. This information is the base of this project as they will be followed for the final design. For thoroughly understanding the history of bazaars, their architecture and importance, I used Isfahan Bazaar as the other precedent study. Moreover, I also read about bazaars in Turkey and other magnificent bazaars in Iran to understand the important and similar features that bazaars share.\footnote{Kinay, Irem. \textit{The grand bazaar: Istanbul}. New York, NY: Assouline Pub., 2011.}
2. Site mapping: I studied the development of Tehran as a city before the construction of Bazaar and after to understand how the change in the city as a whole affected this neighborhood. Thus I looked at the past and present situation of the bazaar and neighborhood, information regarding the site such as land use, transportation and greenery situation and interpreted these data trying to understand the tendencies of the site. For this purpose, site mapping and site reading and activity map were prepared. Different kinds of maps were obtained from the Municipality and Bavand Architectural firm, others I made from site observations. Tehran municipality provided the location of the valued and historic neighborhoods and buildings.

3. Site observation: Observing the site provides good opportunity to understand the significance of Bazaar, to observe the tourist and residents behavior and to map the traffic. These observations provide the most basic information for the thesis. By observing the neighborhood, I was able to understand how the site works. Although the neighborhood is in poor physical condition presently, there are still some social rules present that keep alive the vibrancy of the neighborhood. By visiting the site, I was able to recognize those rules and incorporate them in my guidelines.

4. Interview: By visiting the site and interviewing local residents, people running businesses in the Bazaar, visitors and tourists, I understood what additions and facilities they require. The interviews are useful in preparing an inventory of facilities and focus

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of design inventions. It was also helpful recognizing what the neighborhood means to the locals, how they are using and respecting it.

5. Design: I then proposed a series of design interventions to make small changes to the neighborhood that provides a healthy, safe and sociable environment for the residents, customers and tourists and at the same time provides a better condition for the preservation of the historic Bazaar.

The site reading map locates different usage of the neighborhood (Figure 2.1). The map shows where different activities take place, such as commercial activities that are lined mostly along the main two roads. This map shows that there is very little greenery as well as parking space in the neighborhood. Figure 2.2 demonstrates the density of the dilapidated buildings. Comparing these maps, one can easily recognize that even though the amount dilapidation in the neighborhood is a lot, there are still people living in these areas. A photographic documentation revealed the overall site conditions.
Figure 2.1 Land use map
Image from: Bavand Architects

Figure 2.2 Dilapidation condition
Image from: Bavand Architects
Assembling photographs helped identify the sequence of change in construction in the neighborhood (Figure 2.3). It helped identify structures of heritage value and observing the problems with the new material fabric (Figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.3** sequence of change in construction in the neighborhood  
Photos are taken by author

**Figure 2.4** The new construction  
Photo is taken by author
The maps provided by Bavand Architects displayed the valued buildings and structures, valued spaces and valued fabrics and revealed the relationship between people’s activities and the physical environment (Figure 2.5). Finally, the traffic map provides the data on movement (Figure 2.6). However, although it indicates how traffic is supposed to move, in reality, it does not work as the map suggests.

**Figure 2.5** Valued buildings/Spaces/Fabrics. Image from: Bavand Architects

**Figure 2.6** Traffic pattern. Image from: Bavand Architects
According to my observations, there were several problems associated with the site. The first problem affecting the old neighborhood and the Bazaar itself is the lack of maintenance. This problem has led to erosion of the architectural fabric of Tehran’s Old Bazaar. Today, neighborhood residents inhabit dilapidated buildings that are unsightly and unsafe (Figure 2.7) and customers and visitors experience very narrow streets that lack even the most basic urban amenities such as sidewalks, drainage, benches, trees and lighting, and parking. Some of the buildings are abandoned and, because they are empty, they invite crime. Some of them are turned to storages which means they are no longer cared for and thus make the streetscapes unaesthetic.

Figure 2.7 Dilapidation in the neighborhood
Photos are taken by author
The second problem is the traffic congestion and lack of parking spaces (Figure 2.8). This crisis not only makes the streets unsafe both for the pedestrians and the vehicles themselves but also leads to an unaesthetic look to the old neighborhood. My investigations show that about 15 percent of alleys are 2 meters or less wide, allowing access only by foot traffic. These are not formally accessible by automobile; however, in many cases cars find their way into the fabric anyway and make it unsafe for pedestrians. Only about 20 percent of the routes are over 4 meters wide, which is to say, able to comfortably accommodate vehicular traffic, and there is only one major route that is over 12 meters wide. This narrow scale reflects the old street patterns, when people entered the Bazaar on foot. But today, cars and motorcycles are preferred, and there is no appropriate access for them into the neighborhood. The lack of parking space is another major problems observed in the neighborhood; motorcycles and cars parked in the narrow alleys lead to serious problems and even accidents. Residents told me about some cases when emergency vehicles could not get into the neighborhood because of the aforementioned problem. Unsafe pedestrian paths, lack of parking lots for tourists, visitors and costumers make it undesirable for people to visit the old bazaar.

Finally there is a lack of open space and greenery in the neighborhood. Presently, the most popular activity in the neighborhood is shopping, and commercial activities take up a very large area in the neighborhood. The Bazaar itself attracts tourists as well. Unfortunately, there is no open space or greenery or simply a sitting space defined in the neighborhood that provides resting places for pauses between the shopping activities or for people to sit together and chat.
Moreover, the neighborhood around Tehran Bazaar is old. The site is in derelict condition and revealing sanitation and waste management problems. Its fabric is old, but it is also historic and needs to be preserved; similarly, the neighborhood infrastructure needs to meet the current requirements for safety and sanitation.

Figure 2.8 Lack of parking
Photos are taken by author
Interviews

I conducted informal interviews in the field to understand the problems, the level of awareness people have regarding the neighborhood and the Bazaar condition, and what facilities they require. Seven interviews were conducted with three men running business, two local residents, one visitor, and one vendor. The interviews were useful in preparing an inventory of facilities and focus of design interventions. All the local residents complained about the traffic, narrow streets and lack of parking spaces. A woman residing in the neighborhood stated that when they needed an ambulance, it was blocked by all the motorcycles parked in the narrow alleys. That is clearly unsafe. They also complained that the commercial activities had a negative impact on the historical character of the place, and that the new construction is not at all compatible with the old.

The business men responded to the interviews quite differently. None of them were aware of the historic value of the neighborhood and or lived in the neighborhood. They all came from the northern part of the city only for the sake of business. They stated that as long as their business is running well, they have no concerns.

In contrast, the visitor that I talked to was quite concerned. He mentioned the lack of basic amenities such as benches and that there is no clean water provided in the neighborhood, no place to sit, and he described his visit as being quite tiring.

My interview with the eighty-year-old street vendor was quite helpful regarding the design interventions and decision makings. He stated that he earns about one dollar per day and his sole source of income came from selling biscuits and cigars on the sidewalk. While I was walking in the neighborhood, I noticed at least one such vendor on each block. This seems to be
the result of lack of facilities for them as well as poor living conditions. The lack of clean facilities results in unsanitary conditions which need special considerations while making decisions regarding the design interventions.
Chapter 3: Design Strategies

Historic landscapes such as Bazaar neighborhoods consist of continuous interactions between the physical settings and the human modifications to that setting. The concept of a historic urban landscape requires deep understanding of history in which past, present and future are connected. Therefore, the revitalization of such landscapes requires an understanding of the neighborhood, its people, their culture, value and traditions as they already exist, and sensitivity to the actual or possible outcome of every intervention. The key to integrating old and new is to find the balance between the two.

The design and guidelines for the Bazaar neighborhood that I have made are based on an analysis of existing physical conditions of the old Bazaar and the surrounding neighborhood and a study of the behavior of tourists, residents and other users. This thesis suggests solutions to resolve the issues through design interventions that are based on the information from site visits, visual analysis, interviews and precedent studies.

Urban Space and Social Rules

In a neighborhood such as the Bazaar neighborhood, despite the fact that there are current problems, it is working. However, it could function better. The rules that are described in this chapter are defined as the ways which things are currently working positively in the neighborhood. My design goal is to observe and honor these rules of human-environment interaction, while seeking opportunities to improve the condition of the built environment. The rules are as follows:
Social rules: To observe the dominant social rules and character, I worked primarily where most urban interactions take place. I began in the Bazaar and walked through the blocks of neighborhood where many groups and individuals of various statuses interact and come to buy, sell or simply pass time. To broaden my observations, I moved to other settings in the bazaar neighborhood, such as residential areas, religious areas and recreation areas and I passed by numbers of sidewalk vendors in each of these settings, and sellers sitting outside their shops on carts and having conversation with other shop keepers. These behaviors have become a part of the neighborhood character and delineate social norms for this specific neighborhood. The examples mentioned above are behavioral norms defining a meaning and developing a certain social life and social rule. At one point in my observations, I asked a visitor’s opinion regarding the sidewalk vendors. He replied that these behaviors are socially different from what we see in our everyday lives. He mentioned that visiting the Bazaar itself had been an amazing experience for him as he learned about the history, culture and architecture of Bazaar but the social life in the neighborhood is another social aspect of Bazaar. The sidewalk vendors, even though they do not have actual established shops, are attached to the character of Bazaar.
Figures 3.1 The social rules in the neighborhood sidewalk vendors
Photos are taken by author
Street rules: The images in Figure 3.1 display people selling dollars on the street or selling food on the side walk can be demonstrated as the street rules as well. Another aspect of the street is the traffic. There have been attempts to define functional rules to solve the traffic problem. Figure 2.6, which separates pedestrians from cars, represents the intended official understanding of space. In contrast, the photographs in Figure 3.2 display how the streets are actually used.

Rules for greenery: Throughout the neighborhood, greenery is typically found in the courtyards adjacent to the valued buildings. I followed the existing patterns of greenery which was mostly found in private courtyards and searched for their sets of rules in proposing guidelines in the design guidelines section. The aim of studying the rules is to provide a contemporary layer on top of the old neighborhood, while respecting the current dynamic and people’s behavior. Thus the old fabric is respected while mitigating the negative consequences.

Figure 3.2 how the streets are actually used
Photo is taken by author
Design Guidelines

My goal is to make minimal interventions to accommodate the needs of the community and improve the neighborhood while respecting its historic character. The features that I focused on during the site visit are as follows:

- Investigation of existing pedestrian paths and transitional zones for pedestrians passing from public spaces to private spaces.
- Location of the public realms which include play spaces, walkways, parking areas and building entries.
- Investigation of the privacy hierarchies. In other words, the visibility and access to personal properties should be explored and better understood, as the site has a great number of visitors from outside the neighborhood.
- The convenience of access to the Bazaar from the outside.
- Observation of the traffic patterns and parking within the Bazaar.
- Investigation of the extent and placement of existing greenery.
- Consideration of possible locations for future design and opportunities.

From the information gathered from the site visits, I learned that in order to respect the neighborhood and the residents, I need to address issues identified in the neighborhood:

- Safety (Figure 3.3): These images show the extent of the deterioration and leave us with three choices: letting them fall apart and becoming a wasteland, rebuilding and replacing them, or finding a way to preserve the fabric while accommodating new needs. In this third ground is where I have my new sets of policies. As mentioned in
the previous section, derelict buildings cover a vast area in the neighborhood which results in certain activities such as crime.

- Accessibility: Motorcycles park in narrow alleys anyway and block the traffic from using them as roadways. The provided map indicated the location of these narrow alleys with such problems (Figure 3.4).

- Health and lack of greenery and open spaces (Figure 3.5). The map indicates very little greenery in the neighborhood.

I will develop design strategies that could be used in other similar situations. In other words, the used strategy is transferrable since there are other neighborhoods with such condition.
Figure 3.3 Dilapidation locations in the neighborhood
Image from: Bavand Architects. Right photos are taken by author

Figure 3.4 Parked motorcycles blocking the alley. The dots in the above map display the location of parked motorcycles. This pattern continues in the whole neighborhood. Image from: maps.google.com modified by author
Having the concept of minimal intervention and following the current rules in the neighborhood, I studied examples of good blocks in the neighborhood; those functioning well and still keeping the character of the neighborhood (Figures 3.6). In other words, I looked to find the solutions within the neighborhood itself:

**Figure 3.5** Areas with Greenery  
Image from: maps.google.com modified by author

**Figure 3.6** Examples of functioning blocks in the neighborhood  
Maps from: Bavand Architects. Photos are taken by author
Looking at the examples of good blocks, and repeating their positive features throughout the neighborhood, would be a possible solution. What seems to be working in such examples is that there are not many motorcycles parked in narrow alleys because there are small parking lots defined for them. Moreover, use of materials that blend with the nature of the neighborhood have made these blocks positively different (Figure 3.8 and 3.9):

Figure 3.7 Derelict structures in narrow alleys
Photos are taken by author

Figure 3.8 Example of materials that blend with the nature. Image from: Bavand Architects

Figure 3.9 Example of materials that blend with the nature. Image from: Bavand Architects. Modified by author
Existing Pattern of Greenery in the Neighborhood

The link between environmental conditions, pollution and human health has been widely recognized by scientists and has been increasingly receiving attention among scholars, scientists, and designers.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, it is crucial to explore the consequences of urban land use and ways in which landscape modification affects the environment and human health.

Focusing on the scale of building parcels, research has shown that even small amounts of greenery can improve human health and decreases level of violence.\textsuperscript{14} Meanwhile, providing basic amenities to encourage people to linger in small green areas can provide a place to escape from the urban noise and traffic. As there is very little greenery present in the Bazaar neighborhood, this project seeks opportunities to add small amounts of greenery, but it will do so by observing the kinds of greenery that are already present.

Most existing greenery is in courtyards adjacent to the valued historic buildings. Following this rule, I am going to use the courtyard plan as the basic type in my future interventions. First I will add greenery to where it is missing, following the same pattern of existing greenery (Figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10 Existing greenery pattern. Map from: Bavand Architects
Photos are taken by author
My second strategy is to identify buildings that do not have greenery around them and search for opportunities for adding vegetation. I will look for conditions of dilapidation nearby and I will selectively remove those few ruined buildings to expand the available space for plants and trees. The other strategy is enlarging the footprint of greenery where it exists already.

In the figure shown below (Figure 3.11), the orange color shows the places where new opportunities could be made available. They are the buildings that are falling down or are on the verge of collapse, or they are open areas where there is no active commercial or residential use. In the above strategy, I am following the same pattern of the existing greenery and enlarging it throughout the neighborhood.
Figure 3.12 displays the location of future plantings when following the existing greenery pattern. These cultivated spaces could be a substitute for abandoned spaces or dilapidated ones. They could provide basic needs such as shade, water or simply greenery.

The result of this proposal for green spaces would be connections between the already travelled roads, using abandoned spaces or dilapidated ones (figure 3.13). The proposed spaces can provide greenery, shadow and furniture. The consequence of this approach is that people are possibly more willing to cross through the neighborhood because they will see places that
welcome them, with benches, shady trees, and an oasis of quiet. In other words instead of having a derelict next to a valued space, small interventions could be made to make it an inviting place. Figure 3.14 suggests the welcoming environment that I propose to adopt. I’ve taken an existing place, treated it like a courtyard, added greenery, precisely in a way it would exist in a courtyard. It is visible not only from within the “courtyard” but also from the alleys and streets leading up to it.

This approach does not insert green turf, which would contrast with the existing character of the bazaar, but the occasional tree. This proposal suggests keeping the sense of narrow streets and yet inserting into them small open spaces where people can take a moment to pause and rest before they proceed. This narrow street continues to function the way it
used to except it can now is alleviated by the new greenery and the newly opened and redefined plaza. Figures 3.15 and 3.16 display the same approach applied to an abandoned area. The area is a ruin, but it can be transformed by defining entrance and exit points, transforming it into an area with greenery following the idea of courtyard and urban furniture. Thus it will function as both a passageway and a small plaza. This suggestion can be repeated throughout the neighborhood.

Figure 3.15 Displaying the current status of the area
Image From: Bavand Architects
Figure 3.16 Displaying possible transformation

Image from Bavand Architects
Modified by author
The policy that I used to create these spaces (Figure 3.16 and 3.17) is to keep the sense of space—in this case an enclosed courtyard— but to seek to create extra space by opening it up and clearing it of debris. Thus, the new rule suggests adding the new layer where new opportunities could be defined; keeping the historic flavor and retaining the rule that people like to sit in a kind of informal way; sometimes just on a cart while providing sitting spaces.

Figure 3.17 Providing places where people could sit in an informal way, while keeping the flavor of the place

Image base from: Bavand Architects. Modified by author
Parking Situation and the Proposed Solution

In Tehran’s Bazaar neighborhood, excessive traffic volume and street widths are safety and health hazards, and pedestrians are particularly affected by vehicular hazards. In this thesis, motorcycles are very much a design issue; their presence in narrow alleys, parked in places where pedestrians want to pass through is not a safe scenario. On one hand, the entire narrow road network has evolved to accommodate pedestrians, but on the other hand, the presence of the Bazaar and the need of exchanging and delivering goods may be impossible without the presence of motorcycles. Therefore, I observe, as one of my rules that the motorcycles have to stay and must be accommodated.

In the Bazaar, one of the most evident problems is the lack of parking space. As one walks through the neighborhood, motorcycles and cars used to carry the goods are parked everywhere, including on sidewalks and in alleys that are barely wide enough to allow a car to pass (Figure 3.18). The lack of parking cause serious issues in the neighborhood such as blocking the way for emergency vehicles, constricting already narrow alleys and thus forming an unsafe path for pedestrians crossing by. A less serious issue, but one which I take into consideration, is their unaesthetic look. However, in the Bazaar, there are numerous places that are not used in any way; they are abandoned. These places could accommodate motorcycles that carry goods for the stores. In other words, instead of having them on streets, they can be pushed inward into parking areas that extend the available parking area into and under existing buildings.
Future of the Plan

The proposed plan addresses heritage preservation. This plan can be prioritized and phased according to fund availability. According to interviews with the municipality, there is no existing fund for preservation from the municipality because of the investment in other projects such as road construction throughout the city. However, engaging community members with the design and decisions could help with the funding and thus, the future of the plan. Moreover, the recommended guidelines in this thesis could also be implemented one by one, in
stages, which can spread the cost out over several years and could make it more possible to support.

The proposed method is a response to the needs of the neighborhood, which the main principal is paying attention to its compatibility to the historic fabric. The aforementioned sets of guidelines could be used in other similar situations. The strategy is transferrable as there are many neighborhoods with the same condition, where there is active social fabric that should be preserved and where the built fabric is struggling to accommodate people and their needs, where historic fabric and modern fabric don’t always go together.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

The Tehran Bazaar neighborhood has different meanings to different people. For people who live in the neighborhood, the Bazaar is a place that they live in and a place they take pride in. It is a place where their fathers started their business and passed it down to their children. For tourists, people from other cities or other parts of Tehran, the Bazaar is a place that embodies a special character and history.

I used to view the neighborhood as a citizen, but my appreciation has grown once I viewed it as an architect. This thesis has given me the opportunity to view the neighborhood from a whole new perspective; as a neighborhood that is a complex collage of the associations that people have with it, shaping the architecture and vibrancy of the neighborhood that I have always experienced. In other words, I see the neighborhood as a place evolving with people and place interactions.

Memories associated with a place such as Bazaar and its neighborhood, are reference points in such landscapes that nurture a sense of belonging and identity for mankind. I wasn’t aware of the importance of this sense of connection until I conducted my interviews with people living in the neighborhood. These references combined with prototypes help tie together the character, patterns and hierarchies within the context. History and memory provided the basis of design strategy as I wanted to be extremely sensitive to that history through my approach.

In this thesis, through the guidelines that I have outlined and explained above, I have tried to focus on the character of the neighborhood while addressing the particular problems
that have been recently emerging. Problems such as lack of safety, public health and social interactions were issues that were in contrast with social memories. These problems have reduced the Bazaar’s importance as an urban institution and have caused the old monuments to be in weak condition. The aim of this thesis was to address these problems and propose a few guidelines that address safety, a greener environment and thus, prevents the Bazaar from fading. These guidelines were thought of with specific attention to the historic fabric.

For this purpose, certain issues were considered; streets and circulations, greenery condition, rest areas and dilapidation condition. The approach used for the neighborhood to accomplish a safe and hospitable environment, was to figure out the existing sets of rules in the neighborhood and to work with them. Following the existing rules, that make the neighborhood work the way it is functioning now, led to the establishment of new accommodations to the old rules. Meanwhile, this project offers more greenery, open and public space in respect to the old fabric, compatibility of the results from the used method to the historic nature of the neighborhood.

My thesis aims to transform a degraded neighborhood --which used to be the most active point of social and commercial interaction in the city-- into a livable neighborhood. The ideas and principles used in my proposal can be used in other related situations.

This design process demonstrates that, while designing with existing rules, it is very important to use our discretion to see which ones are actually functioning well and which ones are detrimental and need to be corrected or cannot be used at all. My main role is to design for the community, to understand the needs and aspirations of the people. I believe that design approach should support environmental functions and should be incorporated within
traditional urban settings. The challenge here was to offer options that would appeal to a wide demographic, from tourists to residents to shop keepers and even street vendors.

Our main responsibility as designers is to make sure to provide for the present day needs of the society without losing the relevant meaning of the urban context. I believe it is crucial to understand within the design process, to look at the different culturally specific values on one side and specific archetypes on the other and understand what each of them mean to people.
References


Appendix

**Tourists Interview Questions**

1. What do you know about Tehran Bazaar/ what do you expect to find in Bazaar? What do you know about the neighborhood?

2. What do you know about the history of Tehran Bazaar and its neighborhood?

3. What did you like about visiting this neighborhood?

4. Were there any features that you did not like?

5. What would you have changed or added in the neighborhood?

6. How satisfied are you with the availability of urban amenities?

**Businessmen Interview Questions**

1. What do you know about the history of Tehran Bazaar and its neighborhood?

2. How long have you been running your business?

3. During the years that you have been running your business, have you noticed any change in the patterns of tourism?

4. How is your business goods delivered to this location?

5. If you have been here for long, what changes have you noticed over time?

**Local Residents Interview Questions**

1. How long have you been living in the neighborhood?

2. How would you describe safety in the neighborhood?

3. What do you most like about this neighborhood?

4. What would you have changed in the neighborhood?
5. Are there any problems that you frequently encounter?

6. What do you know about the history of Tehran Bazaar and its neighborhood?

7. Are there any places nearby where families gather for recreation purposes?

8. How satisfied are you with the availability of urban amenities.

**Vendors Interview Questions**

1. Is this the same place where you sell your products every day?

2. How many hours do you spend selling your products?

3. How many years have you been selling in this neighborhood?