



## Type of Article (Research Article)

### A Sociological Analysis Of The Commodification Of Land And Speculation In The Housing Market; The Role Of Municipalities And Housing Cooperatives In Addressing The Crisis (Case Study: Tabriz Metropolis)

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#### Abstract

Studies indicate that speculation and investment practices in the real estate market play a significant role in driving up housing prices. This trend exacerbates the housing crisis, limits access to housing for ordinary social groups, and displaces them from desirable neighborhoods. The aim of this study is to provide a sociological analysis of the phenomenon of land commodification and speculation in Tabriz's housing market, with a focus on the role of municipalities and housing cooperatives in mitigating this crisis. A mixed-methods approach (qualitative–quantitative) was adopted. In the qualitative phase, grounded theory was employed to analyze the data, while in the quantitative phase, a survey was the main data collection tool. The study analyzed the factors, contexts, consequences, and strategies of land and housing speculation, as well as the relationship between the actions of municipalities and housing cooperatives and this phenomenon. The statistical population comprised urban experts in the fields of sociology and economics, selected through purposive sampling. Data collection tools included a semi-structured interview based on open and axial coding in the qualitative phase, and a researcher-designed questionnaire validated using Cronbach's alpha in the quantitative phase. The data were analyzed using AMOS software. The findings showed that the path coefficient for municipal performance → commodification and speculation was estimated at 0.464 with a negative relationship, and the coefficient of determination was 0.215. Similarly, the path coefficient for cooperatives' performance → commodification and speculation was estimated at 0.391 with a negative relationship, and the coefficient of determination was 0.152.

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## Extended Abstract

### Introduction

The housing crisis in developing countries, including Iran, has in recent decades become one of the most serious social, economic, and spatial challenges. This crisis is rooted not only in population growth and urbanization but also in deeper processes such as the commodification of land and speculation in the housing market. In this context, land and housing — as basic human needs — have been transformed into investment commodities and instruments for profit accumulation, leading to intensified class and spatial inequalities in cities, rising crime rates, the expansion of informal settlements, and the deterioration of urban quality of life. Theoretical studies by Marx, Bourdieu, and Harvey, emphasizing the capitalist logic governing land and housing, demonstrate that the housing market — especially in large cities — is driven more by financial interests and rent-seeking behaviors than by human needs. In Tabriz as well, the privatization of public spaces, land speculation, and the proliferation of vacant homes have reshaped the city's social and spatial fabric, deepening social divides. Under such circumstances, although housing cooperatives and municipalities, as local institutions, have at times managed to partially control the crisis, their role has been weakened due to the dominance of speculative approaches and poor policy coordination. Therefore, revising housing policies, reforming urban management, and strengthening grassroots and local institutions through a multidimensional approach are undeniable necessities. The present study, by sociologically examining the processes of commodification and speculation in the housing market and analyzing the role of municipalities and cooperatives in the city of Tabriz, seeks to provide a response to part of these challenges.

### Methodology

This study is quantitative in nature and was conducted using a survey method. Data were collected through a researcher-designed questionnaire. The statistical population consisted of households residing in the ten municipal districts of Tabriz (497,898 households), and the sample size was determined to be 327 based on power analysis and the structural equation modeling approach in G-Power software. Sampling was carried out using a multi-stage cluster method by dividing the districts into larger and smaller clusters and randomly selecting households, in order to obtain a representative sample of the target population. The research questionnaire was designed based on the economic, social, and speculative components of the housing market, its validity was assessed through group tests, and its reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The collected data were analyzed using statistical software, and hypothesis testing was performed with Amos version 24.

### Results And Discussion

The findings of the study showed that the collected data exhibited an acceptable level of normal distribution, and the designed structural equation model demonstrated a good fit with the data. Model fit indices, such as [insert indices: e.g., RMSEA, CFI, NFI, etc.], all fell within desirable ranges, indicating the validity of the study's conceptual framework. The results of the model's causal paths revealed a significant and inverse relationship between the performance of municipalities and the commodification and speculation in the housing market, such that better municipal performance in land management, policymaking, and market control was associated with reduced levels of speculation and commodification. Likewise, the performance of housing cooperatives also had a significant but weaker inverse effect on speculation and commodification compared to that of municipalities. Descriptive index analysis further indicated that municipalities performed relatively better in terms of tax policies, urban infrastructure, and market oversight, whereas cooperatives faced challenges in financing and construction. Overall, the results demonstrated that the housing market in Tabriz is influenced by a complex interplay of economic, social, and institutional factors, which can be analyzed in four main categories: changes in supply and demand, macroeconomic policies, inefficient market structures, and socio-cultural factors. An investment-oriented view of housing, multiple ownerships, liquidity growth, and the ineffectiveness of supportive and tax policies were identified as key drivers of speculation in the housing market. The findings also highlighted the need to improve urban management policies, reform tax procedures, increase transparency in transactions, control bank facilities, and facilitate sustainable construction processes to curb speculative trends and create a foundation for sustainable improvement of the housing market. Therefore, the proposed model of this study can serve as a basis for developing optimal policies and making strategic decisions in the housing sector in the metropolis of Tabriz and similar cities.