Social Capital, Empowering Marginalized Women, and Urban Labor Market
(A case study of the community of women in unofficial settlement neighborhoods in Tabriz)

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Extended Abstract
1-Introduction
Social capital consists of a collection of norms and laws and unofficial networks which provide companionship, trust and collective effort for obtaining public merchandise and entails those aspects of social structure which facilitate collective effort (Suzuki, 2010) and provide people with resources to attain their objectives. Among the many recent changes can be the soaring participation rate of women, specifically their ever-increasing participation and presence as official workforce (Nozari, 2001). Considering the structural transformation of labor market and decentralization of macro structures in favor of flexibility and workshop based production, social capital can have an invaluable place for empowering women of unofficial settlements. Considering the constant and long-lasting presence of women in districts and neighborhoods, the geographical environment of a neighborhood paves the ground for reproduction and strengthening of interactions and thus reproduction of social capital whose accumulation in workshop-based production and creation of location-based cooperatives lead to formation of an environment of hope, in place of the former environment of despair. The nature of flexible labor market accompanies subcontracts, insurance, pension and social security loopholes, all which were among the benefits of Fordism labor markets. Thus, empowering women of unofficial settlements through social capital and creating location-based cooperatives culminates in stability and increased resilience to risks stemming from periodical depressions brought about by employers’ investment. The issue on which the present research aims to shed some light concerns the way in which investment can lead to the empowerment of women in unofficial settlement neighborhoods in Tabriz, in the presence of flexible labor market conditions.

2. Theoretical Framework
The theoretical framework of the research draws on the topics of 1) Flexible accumulation, post-Fordism and flexible nature of urban labor market, 2) Geographical environment, social capital, women empowerment in a flexible labor market, and 3) Entrepreneurship and location-based cooperatives. The outset of post-Fordism, or the end of organized capitalism, necessitates getting away from mass production and mass consumption, turning toward information and service economy and shrinking and fragmenting the working class (Lash, 2009). For David Harvey, post-modernism is the passage from Fordism to flexible accumulation, meaning that mass production of standardized goods and workforces associated with that are replaced with flexibility (Wood, 2004).

With regards to the second topic, considering the political economy of post-Fordism and weakening of labor unions and decentralization of macro institutions and structures, women’s social capital in unofficial settlement neighborhoods can be an effective tool for taking part in flexible labor market and increasing the bargaining ability vis-à-vis the employers. Similarly, social capital is an effective element in empowering of and capacity-building in women in unofficial settlement neighborhoods (Piri, Zali, & Taghilou, 2010). According to the third topic, i.e. entrepreneurship and location-based cooperatives, with an emphasis on the paramount variable of geographical environment of unofficial settlement neighborhoods in flexible labor market, the creation of location-based cooperatives hinges upon the continued presence of women of such neighborhoods in public environment (Saidi Kia, 2009).

3. Method
The present study is governed by a methodology based on deductive reasoning and experimental testing. In other words, taking into account the extant literature regarding the independent variable (social capital) and dependent variable (empowerment), we have analyzed their relationship through field survey. Considering the
span of the research field and the possibility of interference from unwanted variables, which afflicts the majority of studies done in the field of social sciences, a great deal of effort has been expended so that selected criteria correspond exactly with the intended variables.

4. Discussion and Conclusion
Social capital is an essential element in empowering women of unofficial settlement neighborhoods in urban flexible labor market. Considering the criticisms leveled by such Neomarxists as David Harvey against the colonizing effect of this kind of labor market from the perspective of employer-employee relationships, it merits a mention that one of the many obstacles impeding women in unofficial settlement neighborhoods from participating in Fordism and inflexible labor markets is numerous contracts which are based on skills sought after by the employer and the market. However, creation of models of diverse economy instead of scale economy has provided a suitable marketing opportunity for a wide range of women’s skills in unofficial settlement neighborhoods; skills to which no attention was paid and were not demanded during Fordism, neither by industrial employers nor the labor market. For the purpose of interaction among geographical environment, social capital, urban flexible labor market and empowering women, we purpose location-based cooperatives. It has been stated in the conceptual model of the research that the effect of social capital, for the purpose of empowering women in unofficial settlements, is felt when the conditions for flexible labor market and geographical environment are met. In addition, social capital plugs some of the employers’ insurance loopholes in subcontracts. The analysis depicted in table 4 shows that group contracts with employers, in the majority of the cases, are accompanied by insurance; something which is not stipulated in self-employment and subcontracts. Similarly, the table illustrates when the opportunity for working outside the house is provided for women, workshop-based contracts have been more favorable which can be attributed to the advantages of collective effort preceded by social capital and insurance and in line with the cultural notion of patriarchy, prevalent in unofficial settlement neighborhoods. Furthermore, the conceptual notion of location-based cooperatives does not form in isolation, but is attached to the social praxis of collective effort of women in unofficial settlement neighborhoods.

5. Recommendations
- Government’s support of household production, possibility of financial support for and formation of location-based cooperatives
- Knowledge-sharing for the purpose of production in location-based cooperatives is regarded as one of the applications of social capital.

Key Words: Empowerment, Entrepreneurship, Flexible accumulation, Social capital, Urban labor market, Tabriz.

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