



The Transformation of the Bath from Collective Space to Private Sanctuary: An Analysis of Urban De-identification and its Impact on Tehran's Water Crisis

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Article Info	Extended Abstract
Article type: Research Article	Objective: The present study aims to go beyond dominant technical-managerial approaches and analyze the phenomenon of bathing as a cultural-spatial action that is deeply linked to the biopolitics of urban space. The main problem of this research is to explore this semantic and functional transformation: how the process of de-identification of urban spaces and the collapse of the neighborhood system has turned the bathhouse from a historical collective space into the last refuge for reproducing private solitude. Accordingly, the key research question is posed as follows: How has the transformation of urban space and the experience of spatial repulsion from the outside environment affected citizens' experience of bathing and the redefinition of bathhouse functions, and consequently fueled the water crisis in the Tehran metropolis? Answering this question requires an analysis of the dialectic between the inner space of the home and the outer world. In fact, by focusing on the contrast between home and city, this paper will show how the foregrounding of the inside/outside duality and the desire for symbolic purification from the pollutions of public space have inadvertently led to increased water consumption within the bathhouse.
Article history: Received: 08 May 2026 Received in revised form: 19 May 2026 Accepted: 19 May 2026 Published online: 18 September 2026	
Keywords: <i>Megacity, Repulsion, Bath, Pollution, Water Scarcity.</i>	
	Methodology: To conduct this research, constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) was used to encourage participants to reconstruct and interpret their lived experiences related to the research topic. Constructivist grounded theory emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge between researcher and participants, recognizes the researcher's role in shaping the research process, and encourages reflexivity and acceptance of the subjectivity of both sides of the research. Therefore, although grounded theory focuses mainly on qualitative data such as interviews, observations, and field notes, it can also be adapted for documentary analysis, including historical documents, and we have used this approach in our research. For this study, 15 in-depth interviews were conducted. According to Charmaz's (2014: 58) recommendation that participants should be selected based on "their relevance to emerging categories," purposive sampling was used with criteria such as employment status, age, gender, socio-economic class, and place of residence. To ensure diversity and



richness of data, snowball sampling was also employed. The interview process continued until theoretical saturation was achieved.

Findings: The findings show that bathing in contemporary Tehran cannot be understood merely under the category of personal hygiene or daily habit. In citizens' lived experience, the bathhouse has become a space for rebuilding personal boundaries, repairing a sense of security, and distancing oneself from the chaos of urban space. In this sense, the increasing tendency toward bathing should be analyzed in connection with the transformation of urban experience and the weakening of mediating spaces in everyday life—spaces such as the alley, courtyard, neighborhood, and neighborly relations that in the past made possible a sense of belonging, familiarity, and trust. Analysis of the findings in light of Mary Douglas's perspective shows that pollution in participants' experience is not merely a medical or biological concept but has a symbolic quality. As Douglas shows, bodily boundaries reflect social and cultural boundaries, and the feeling of pollution often expresses a sense of threat to social order. In the experience of Tehrani citizens, too, the city has become an alien, worn, and repulsive space whose continuous contact creates a kind of symbolic pollution. Therefore, bathing can be seen as an attempt to readjust the boundary between "self" and "other" and to remove the symbolic effects of the external from the body. Participants' emphasis on solitude, silence, nudity, and a sense of calm in the bathhouse also shows that the bathhouse, more than being merely a service space, has become a territory for reconstructing personal privacy.

Conclusion: The growing tendency toward bathing in contemporary Tehran cannot be explained merely by reference to health necessities or consumption patterns. In citizens' lived experience, the bathhouse has become a space for rebuilding personal boundaries, repairing a sense of security, and distancing oneself from the chaos and alienation of urban space. Under conditions where mediating spaces of urban life have weakened and everyday experience is accompanied by a sense of instability, congestion, and symbolic pollution, the body and its related routines become one of the last controllable territories for the individual. In this sense, bathing is not merely a health action but an attempt to readjust the individual's relationship with the surrounding world and reconstruct a kind of personal order against the repulsive urban experience. Finally, it is suggested that the relationship between water consumption patterns and the experience of social insecurity in critical periods, such as war, social unrest, or widespread urban disruptions, be examined on a macro scale.

Cite this article: Mohsenzadeh, R., Eskandari Nasab, M & Fatehi, L. (2026). The Transformation of the Bath from Collective Space to Private Sanctuary: An Analysis of Urban De-identification and its Impact on Tehran's Water Crisis. *Biopolitics and Development*, 2 (2), 107-128. DOI: [10.22034/jbpd.2026.145812.1042](https://doi.org/10.22034/jbpd.2026.145812.1042)



