



The decline of the bazaar as a 'city within the city' started in the 1950s when industrialisation and globalisation took off. The government set up municipal cooperatives, a chamber of commerce, a consumer association and a board for the stabilisation of prices. It meant an end to the bazaar's independence. The most influential wholesalers left the bazaar and moved to the industry players that enjoyed government support. Many shopkeepers set up business on the straight streets leading to the new residential districts (see 'Bazaar 7'). The Koran schools, mosques and tea houses in the bazaar faced formidable competition from modern schools and meeting places that had internet. The bazaar became more and more of a shopping mall and tourist attraction. The task of rescuing the bazaar now seems to lie with the municipality rather than the impotent bazaar community.

The decline is evident in the spatial setup too. The caravanserais in particular have lost their function of providing accommodation and a place to trade for caravans with their camels. We saw various examples in Isfahan, ranging from undefined reuse to repurposing as a workshop or parking area or the complete demolition of the caravanserai. See the photos below.



*A former caravanserai in Isfahan that is now partly residential*



*This was once the site of a caravanserai near the square of Shah Abbas I in Isfahan*

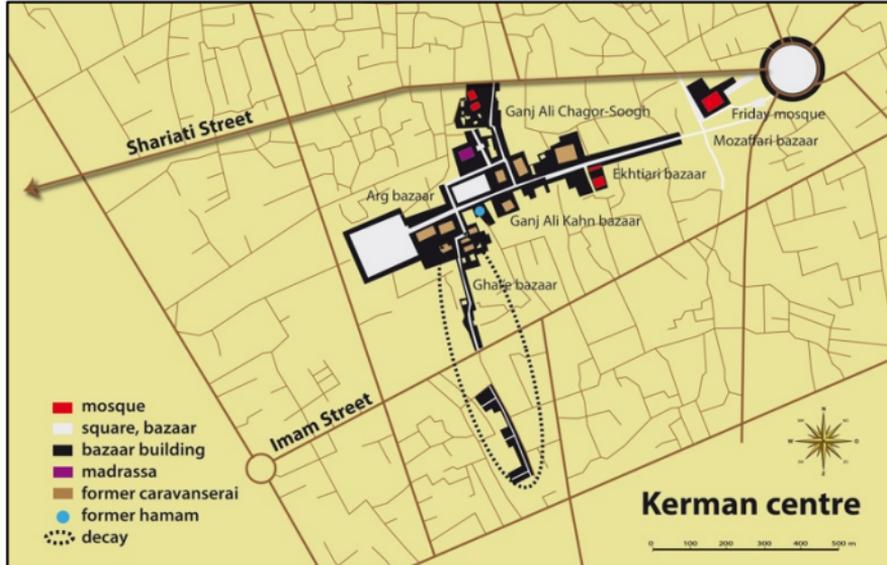
Another factor is at play too. The wealthy citizens who lived in the vicinity of the bazaar moved to the new residential districts. In their place came less affluent residents, in particular Afghan refugees. The bazaar was a golden opportunity for them as it let them trade and earn a small income. See the photo below from Kerman.

The extent to which residents in the new suburbs still visit the bazaar is not clear, but it would seem they prefer shopping in the somewhat more luxurious shops on the straight roads or in the modern shopping malls.



*Open market, part of the bazaar in Kerman*

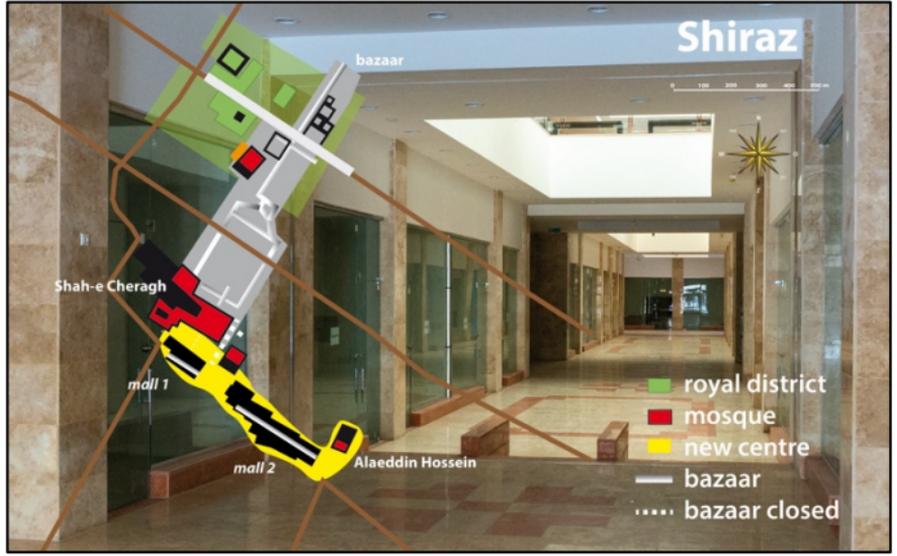
Whatever the case may be, in Kerman one whole section of the bazaar complex is in terminal decline — see the drawing below. In our opinion, this does not have much to do with the street cutting through the bazaar. It is rather the result of the trend described above. We are talking about the southern section, which is cut off by Imam Street, but the section immediately to the north of Imam Street is also largely unoccupied. This entire southern branch of the bazaar is struggling.



*The almost completely unoccupied southern bazaar*

To our great surprise, we also saw a bazaar that was brand-new but already showing signs of decline. That was in Shiraz, to be precise. At least if a modern shopping mall counts as a bazaar. Of course, that is not strictly the case. Shopkeepers in malls rarely own their premises, nor do you find crafts or wholesalers in a mall, let alone a mosque, Koran school, bathhouse or caravanserai. The only similarity between the bazaar and the shopping mall is that they are both covered shopping areas. The shopping mall in question was originally intended as a passage connecting two important mosques: the Friday mosque Shah-e Cheragh and the Alaeddin Hossein shrine (see drawing below). It is easy to reach by car but it does not connect up to the old bazaar as the Friday mosque stands between the two. The bazaar that could have provided that connecting route is closed (see photos underneath).

It also turns out that the mall, which was built in two stages, actually consists of two completely separate complexes with no connection between them. Partly for this reason, Mall number 2 is now empty (see the photo used as a background for the drawing).



*Shiraz: closed bazaar and mosque square that you have to cross*

**Next... Bazaar 9 – tourism**