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Spaces of Temporary 'Freedoms': On the Culture of Leisure and Rebellious Pleasures in Tehran

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Spaces of Temporary 'Freedoms':
On the Culture of Leisure and Rebellious Pleasures in Tehran

by

Shahrzad Shirvani

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:
Professor Nezar AlSayyad, Co-Chair
Professor Greg Castillo, Co-Chair
Professor Nelson H. Graburn
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Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Nezar AlSayyad, Co-Chair

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This dissertation explores the spatial manifestation of fear and fun in the urban public and private spaces of Tehran in the postwar era. From a comparative and historical perspective, the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution shifted the secular authority of the Pahlavi Monarchy (1925-1979) to the conservative government of the Islamic Republic. While the former regime engaged in practices to form a modern secular nation-state, the latter sought to institutionalize religion. This shift deeply affected the social life of the Iranian people, particularly young men and women. Modern conceptions of leisure, recreation, entertainment and freedom in public urban spaces were also challenged.

This study investigates the ways in which the rise of leisure spaces in Tehran has resulted in the production of zones of exception and encounter. A conditional and temporal understanding of public joy and freedom is produced and reproduced within everyday 'norms and forms' in the context of the Islamic Republic. In addition, the notion of agency has led to the production of a new identity and lifestyle that stands in stark contrast with the current ruling authority.

The research examines three case studies, including the spaces of women-exclusive parks constructed by the Tehran Municipality, public streets employed for the exhibition of luxury cars and specific social performances by the young and rich, and suburban garden-villas as spaces for clandestine parties. The study explores emerging lifestyles of a young generation of Tehrani residents born after the Revolution, who advanced to maturity under conservative regulations and codes of public behavior. It looks at how these conditions have affected their lives and social relations in a variety of dimensions, and how these young men and women have formulated a particular everyday urban lifestyle of resistance. Youth have created ways of manipulating

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controlled urban environments to redefine 'public freedom'. Through the manufacture of fun in the city, they compensate for a lack of public and private leisure space.

The research is conducted by ethnographic fieldwork, and includes on-site observations, semi-structured interviews, and informal conversations. The dissertation provides an analysis of the ongoing interactions among young Iranians at the selected sites, and how their everyday practices in the built environment have served as methods of resistance to political and social restrictions, particularly those that limit their use and enjoyment of public space. Challenges to everyday dynamics of 'resistance' and 'agency' are shaping a new 'culture of imposture', a tradition that deviates from the moral values of post-revolutionary Islamic society.

The research also revealed a number of compelling observations about the everyday use of public and private urban spaces in the Middle Eastern context, and allude to spatial strategies of defiance against rules of public behavior under totalitarian governments. As the general trajectory of research in the areas of gender, class, and sexuality rapidly develops in the United States, this research brings a Middle Eastern perspective to a widening, international discourse.

To my mother Yasaman, and

my father Manochehr.

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Acknowledgments

Preface

<div dir="rtl">
شادی همچو آب لطیف صاف به هر جا می‌رسد در حال شکوفه عجبی می‌روید. ...

غم همچو سیلاب سیاه به هر جا که رسد، شکوفه را پژمرده کند ... . .
</div>

Joy is like pure clear water; wherever it flows, wondrous blossoms grow…Sorrow is like a black flood; wherever it flows it wilts the blossoms.[1]

On a hot summer day in 2011, only a few weeks prior my journey to the US to start my graduate studies, I saw a provocative public notice that was posted on Facebook inviting people to a fun public gathering at Âb-o Âtash Park. The modern park, popular among locals since its inauguration in 2009 by Tehran Municipality, is located in Abbâs-Âbâd Hills district of northern Tehran.[2] I did not personally attend the event, but started to walk in the park just to observe. Surprisingly, over 500 people attended the water pistol fight festival (âb bâzi) including young women and men in their 20s and 30s, and families with children who were happy to be there for a day of public fun. People met and gathered, and splashed water to the sounds of loud music and laughter. The festival-like event turned the park into an exhibition of color and pleasure.

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[1] Franklin D. Lewis, *Rumi - Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings, and Poetry of Jalâl Al-Din Rumi* (Oneworld Publications, 2014), 203.

[2] 'Water pistol fight' is a public activity where people of various ages use water-dispensing devices such as buckets, balloons, and water guns to soak opponents for fun. In this game the objective is to stay dry while trying to make opponents wet.

However, colorful plastic guns, clothes soaked in water, loose wet headscarves (*hijab*) of women yelling out with laughter, and music being played in public space, are all against the Islamic Republic's strict rules. Within an hour from the start of the event, park authorities sent a report to the Morality Police (*Gasht-e Ershad*: Persian for Guidance Patrols, supported by *Basij* militia) in an attempt to remedy the 'un-Islamic and abnormal' gathering. Around noon, the Morality Police shut off the main water pipe in the park, which stopped the event, and dispersed people from the area. The day ended with a clash between the public and police, resulting in the arrest of seventeen young women and men who organized and participated in the event.

The Morality Police called the players and party-goers "offenders and transgressors," and judged their actions "improper and un-Islamic public behavior." Female participants were humiliated by the Morality Police, as "*bad-hijab*" (one who wears inappropriate Islamic cover). The next day newspapers expressed frustration and outrage of the Iranian authorities. In a Mehr News interview, deputy chief of police Ahmadreza Radan claimed that participants were trying to show an ugly face of Islamic society, calling them, "*gand-keshan*" (meaning to make impure by shedding filth), and expressed his disgust for them as socially worthless.[3] Shargh Newspaper ran a headline in the center of the Society section: "Deputy Police Chief Ahmad Reza Radan Forbids Water Play!"[4] After the event, police installed a kiosk next to the ground fountain area to control the activities of adults [figure 0.1]. Only children are allowed to play in the fountains and get wet. Anyone who breaks the law will be investigated by the Morality Police.

Figure 0.1: The Morality Police Kiosk on the far right, installed close to the fountain area. (Source: by author)

This is just one example of how public pleasure and festivity have been disrupted by the Morality Police in post-revolutionary Iran, depriving a generation of Iranian citizens from simple expressions of urban joy in public spaces of the capital city. I left the country shortly after this

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[3] '' دستگیری عده‌ای هنجارشکن در پارک آب و آتش/ برخورد قاطع پلیس با آب‌بازی) Offenders Arrested in Ab-o Atash Park / Decisive Act of Police with Waterplay)." 2011. Online News Channel. Mehr News Agency. September 4, 2011. https://www.mehrnews.com/news/1398039.

[4] *Sharq Newspaper*. 2011. '' سردار رادان: آب بازي ممنوع) Deputy Police Chief Ahmad Reza Radan Forbids Water Plays)," September 5, 2011, 1335 edition, sec. The Society. http://www.magiran.com/npview.asp?ID=2350642.

event, but it has been engraved in my memory, part of the narrative of emerging spaces of pleasure, self-expression and hope in the city where I was born.

Nearly seven years after the Water Pistol Festival, I traveled to Tehran to complete my dissertation fieldwork. Walking in the streets and attending public and private events, I realized that the current generation of youth, particularly women, have found new ways of enjoying the city under conditions of severe control. As someone born in the post-revolutionary era, and more significantly, as a woman, I lived a considerable part of my life deprived of public fun — a result of restrictions, control and moral codes of public behavior enforced by the conservative government since the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution. Observing such a huge transformation was therefore surprising. I realized how the new generation of youth is learning to experience a collective understanding of 'freedom' in urban settings through insurgent practices of everyday life and leisure.

This dissertation aspires to present an alternative reading of leisure, pleasure, fun and freedom in the streets of a city like Tehran with all its limiting forces. It is not about the history of leisure spaces in the city, but rather, it presents a history of temporary spaces of pleasure and freedom that emerge and disappear conditionally. This study deals principally with people living in a specific built environment. Yet, it is also a work that benefits tremendously from sociology of space and people, anthropological studies, psychological engagements with the urban spaces, memory studies, and studies of culture and religion. A chief goal of the study is to offer an interdisciplinary way of reading everyday urban experiences and encounters in the city to contribute to each of the above mentioned fields. The hope of this dissertation is to show that even in extreme conditions of control, joy can still be practiced by people, although in different forms.

Indeed, the Water Pistol Fight Festival was a turning point. The police actions that plunged an urban festival into chaos also produced the observations that led to writing this dissertation on rebellious fun and pleasures in urban space. Water splashing that was a joyful performance became weaponized in the battleground of public morality. Wet bodies of women covered in *hijab* turned into symbols of inappropriate, immoral and illegal behavior. Colorful water pistols became cultural weapons of war against "Western" public behavior. Within the blink of an eye, the carnivalesque mood of a park filled with laughter and joy was transformed to a space of rebellious resistance against the Morality Police forces.

As an architect and a scholar of space, what I found striking was how the turn of events transformed the nature of space itself — turning joy into fear, seizing pleasure and holding it hostage. This event provides new definitions of the concepts of 'hope' and 'freedom' under the Islamic Republic's rules of surveillance. In politicizing play as outlawed public behavior, Iran's Morality Police established the rules of combat for an insurgency in which relatively privileged urban youths establish transient spaces of illicit fun as statements of personal and collective freedom. This dissertation explores these dissenting performances and their ambiguous results as manifestations of both hope and despair in contemporary Tehran.

Prologue

Spatial Appearances of a New 'Leisure Culture'

"Pain, whether endured or inflicted, yields strange pleasures."[5]

In the history of the post-revolutionary Iran, *shadi* (meaning joy) remains a contested term. The Islamic Republic government endeavored to transform the manifestation of *shadi* in the everyday lifestyle of Iranian society by associating the concept to the religion and an imagined identity of the Shi'ite Muslim community of believers. In other words, the government would attempt to institutionalize the notion of *shadi* in their effort to construct a new society devoted to Shi'ite Islam. As a result of these government strategies, the quality and expressions of joy that were intrinsic to everyday life in Iran were affected. A variety of concepts for joy find expression in Persian, as follows: *shademani* (joyousness), *tafrih* (leisure), *khoshi* and *khosh-gozarani* (enjoyment and fun), *jashn, soroor, tarab,* and *bazm* (all meaning celebration and festivity), *lezzat* and *eiysh* (pleasure), *hazz* and *keif* (ecstasy), *vajd* (rejoice), *meil* (desire), faraqat and *vaqt gozarani* (pass time), and many others. While the pre-revolutionary regime strategically endeavored to promote *tafrih* and *khosh-gozarani* by a close association of these ideas with the project of modernization, the post-revolutionary regime devalued these social concepts, re-codifying based on Islamic codes of public moral behavior. Many examples can be seen in the deliberate demolition and ban of a considerable number of urban leisure places, particularly those related to the nightlife activities and performances, including cabarets, social clubs, dance clubs, restaurants, bars, cinemas, theaters, opera halls, public pools, ice rinks, gymnasiums, and others.

The political manipulations and interventions of urban leisure practices affected the social production of pleasure in the Iranian cities, perhaps most significantly in the capital city of the Islamic Republic. After the Revolution, the suppression of public joy manifested itself across various disciplines, including urbanism, media, education, sports, art, cinema, public performances, social relations, and many others. Through the implication of the politics of gender segregation, control over public moral behaviors and people's bodies, prohibition of the consumption of alcoholic beverages, lamenting Western style music and dance, prevention of public gatherings and mixed-gender parties, along with various other strategic enforcements, the expression of joy turned into a site of dissent and social polarization.

In the early years after the Revolution, conservative Islamists launched a battle against the demonstration of public joy, and the people's desire for fun, laugher, and playfulness. These were considered entertainment, or "counter-virtue" (*zedd-e arzesh*).[6] The excessive control of fun and

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[5] Henri Lefebvre et al., *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 50, https://muse.jhu.edu/book/34309.

[6] Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, 1st Edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009), 132.

management of joy in the city led to social disruptions in society, a search for 'lost freedom', and a change in way of life for Iranian youth. The presence of freedom and joy faded from city life until the 2009 Green Movement, during which the rebellious act of this generation spontaneously produced a new understanding of public joy. In the book, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy,* Barbara Ehrenreich explores the history of the desire for collective joy in European culture.[7] Drawing on history and anthropology, she uncovers a historiography of street celebrations and public festivities. The author optimistically argues that the impulse of collective celebrations has deep roots in human nature, which repressive actions will never successfully extinguish. This study supports Ehrenreich's central thesis, as witnessed in the strategies of the conservative government of Iran in the suppression of public joy, and demonstrating how in the context of a Middle Eastern country, this approach has once again failed.

I argue that the temporary emergence of urban spaces of illicit joy has become a weapon for a new generation of youth to continue their spontaneous politics of everyday defiance against the rules of the conservative governance. An enormous amount of power expands and contracts with the temporary emergence and disappearance of spaces of joy in the city. Transience thus becomes a condition for the production of 'freedom' in the urban realm. Though it is complicated to locate and map these spaces or their users, such temporary spaces can be found in a variety of locations in many forms. This dissertation focuses on specific case studies that emphasize the dynamic dialectics of private and public spaces. The selected case studies therefore provide a stage for interdisciplinary approaches towards understanding space and its relation to the opposing forces of people and state power. I argue that the temporal aspect of these spaces delineates the meaning of 'freedom' as a conditioned and temporary mode of public feeling, through expressions of joy.

This dissertation explores public joy as an urban inquiry as well as a response to the restricted right of *shadi* and urban freedom for the Iranian citizens. It studies everyday playfulness, but at the same time rebellious spaces of joy in Tehran, the capital city of the Islamic Republic. Regardless of the existing mode of suppression and control in the country, the appearance of spaces of joy in the capital city invokes an urban language for social expressions of the new generation youth who have been deprived of manifesting *shadi* since the Revolution. The study investigates the emergence of temporary leisure spaces as spaces of encounter as well as threshold spaces, where the reality of pleasure and joy, and the creative power of imagining hope and freedom coincide. Such encounters subsequently make possible an envisioning of qualities of new social ways of living despite imposed limitations.

While Iran has been perceived in a radically different way through the media, the reality of the everyday urban life as well as the spatial signs of a 'cultural turn' in the capital city, particularly in a span of the past decade stand in stark contrast to these depictions. In this study, 'space' as an active agent of social and cultural transformation within the conditions of governmental surveillance and control over public rights and behaviors is explored. As the Islamic government continues its endeavors to construct a hegemonic identity for the young generation of Iranian citizens, youth find creative ways to resist suppression in their respective bounded territories. For the current generation of young Iranians, modes of resistance depend on changing notions of

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[7] Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Streets: A History of Collective Joy*, 1st Edition (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).

identity and self, as well as the spaces in which these are expressed and manifested. This study investigates the contentious spaces of social interaction in the city where resistance is manifested through the expressions of joy and fun, seeking to explore the spatial representation of an emerging 'leisure culture' in a city under surveillance, and where public joy has turned into both a way of life and a mode of everyday defiance.

While the main focus of this dissertation is on Iran, nonetheless, it locates its argument within a larger historical, political, and theoretical context of the Middle East and Islamic countries. A socio-cultural and political critique of space unfolds by addressing the impact of modernity, gendered urban zones, ideological conflicts between government and the people, the processes of nation-building and identity formation, as well as the disintermediation of technology and communication methods. An examination of pre-revolutionary urban modernization in relation to the development of a new wave of modern leisure in Iran reveals the underlying structure of political structure of public and private spaces.

In fact, in addition to the Water Pistol Festival event, a variety of similar cases occur every day in public and private spaces of the capital city, which are the expressions of multiple dimensions of a staged social culture. In the deep layers of the city and society, there are innumerable cases where people lose themselves in communal festivities every day for the experience of pleasure and freedom. Looking at spaces where those events take place, whether public or private, helps discern the practical dimension of specific cultural meanings and experiences that define and redefine the transformative aspects of culture, society and identity. , A critical analysis of social and performative urban processes underscores this shift, and the reorientation of meaning of space and its representation.

Inquiry into Space

Chief among the scholars who mainly engaged in a discussion of space as a social construct was classic Marxist spatial theorist, Henri Lefebvre.[8] Lefebvrian space is not merely a material and geographical product, rather it is a social construction encompassing interrelationships with the forces of production.[9] Lefebvre asked how societies generate their social space, delving into the problematic nature of space in everyday life of urban spheres of the city and its extensions.[10] The theoretical concept, central to Lefebvre's perception of 'space' extends beyond the level of spatial representation to a dialectical mode of everyday encounters with the urban life. The study of cultures is best understood through the framework of 'spatial turn', in which[11] the notion of space is as a relational category rather than a territorial concept, linked to social practices and social relations. Space is thus introduced as a subject rather than an object of analysis.

With the rise of telecommunications and various forms of social media that compress space through speed and simultaneity, the role of space continues to be transformed. Postmodern urban geography laid the foundation for a new understanding of space without territorial boundaries and

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[8] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991).
[9] Ibid, 73-77.
[10] Ibid, 88-89.
[11] Doris Bachmann-Medick, *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2016), 211.

beyond geographical frameworks, developing a corresponding concept of space from the perspective of geography and urban studies. This new foundation for understanding of space beyond the geographical boundary and territoriality (David Harvey 1989; Edward Soja 2010, 2011; Doreen Massey 1999), in turn, extended spatial thinking space beyond a physical concept to a relational category. The spatial turn questioned ideas about space and spatial boundaries in earlier thinking of space, culture, national identity and traditions to include challenges, interdependencies and interrelationships between global and local phenomena.[12] According to Doris Bachmann-Medick, the notion of simultaneity is associated with new concepts of borderless space that replaces the previously dominant temporal-historical model.[13]

Space as an interdisciplinary and a more developed concept was developed in the works such critical postcolonial thinkers as Michel Foucault's, whose spaces of "heterotopia" as "placeless places," as well as "other spaces" defined the notion of space at a cultural and discursive level with relational layers of meaning.[14] Edward Said's Orientalist theory of "imaginative geography" advanced a new perception of space.[15] Influenced heavily by Foucault, Said's theory of imagined geographies developed a relational understanding of power, space, society and culture, through the lens of post-colonialism. Arjan Appadurai's theory of global "scapes" further developed the meaning of space as a product of globalization and cultural flows. The five dimensional scapes that he proposed - ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes - shift the meaning of space across cultures and borders. According to Appadurai, the fluidity of these flows and "disjunctures have become central to the politics of global culture."[16] Homi Bhabha's cultural theory of "third space" in postcolonial discourse proposes a hybrid space of negotiation and difference. Bhabha's concept of hybridity is a representation of cultural differences within indeterminate spaces in-between, where liminality initiates "new signs of identity" and eventually defines "the idea of society itself".[17]

In contemporary critical studies the experience of spatial turn can be seen in the work of Edward Soja. Soja refers to "Thirdspaces" or "real-and-imagined places,"[18] He defines Thirdspace as "an-Other way of understanding and acting to change the spatiality of human life, a distinct mode of critical spatial awareness that is appropriate to the new scope and significance being brought about in the rebalanced trialectics of spatiality-historicality-sociality." Soja builds upon Lefebvre's spatial triad: the *perceived space* as physical places of a society and users; the *conceived space* or Representations of space, as a mental and conceptualized place of planners; and the *lived space* or Representational spaces, as a social place that is lived through of experiences.[19]

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Michel Foucault and Jay Miskowiec, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22–27, https://doi.org/10.2307/464648.

[15] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994).

[16] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 1 edition (Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 37.

[17] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge Classics (London ; New York: Routledge, 2004), 2, http://site.ebrary.com/lib/berkeley/Doc?id=10617572.

[18] Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, 1st Edition (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

[19] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 36–40.

All these attributes of 'other space' point toward intermediary spaces that are oriented by relational forces of power, economics, society and culture, as well as a variety of characterized actions and negotiations. The intermediary space is therefore no longer a representation of a society's desire to produce it, but an agent of change that attempts to form and transform the society, social attitudes, and collective subjects and identities. This dissertation concerns the transformation of collective subjectivities in the context of the Islamic Republic Iran, considering the discursive base of spaces of leisure as intermediary element of social and cultural change. Space is considered as an analytical category, as well as a new form of perception, beyond a prominent object, a central principle in the construction of culture, social behavior and power relations. The spatial perspective allows the analysis of everyday life in the unknown layers of a city like Tehran where public joy and freedom most meet interference by government.

'Freedom' as a Space In-Between

It is important to note that 'freedom' as an ambiguous term has played a key role in the social and political discourses of the Western world. However, regardless of its strong positive connotations, the concept has remained challenging in contemporary modern debate. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines 'freedom' as "the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants, and as, "freedom from the state of not being subject to or affected by (something undesirable)."[20] The *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* presents the development of the concept of freedom as early as antiquity, as an opposite response to slavery in the barbaric world.[21] The *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* also refers to the term in both positive and negative terms: "a condition of liberation from social and cultural forces that are perceived as impeding full self-realization," and as "the absence of constraint" when the law is silenced.[22] However, my intention is not to discuss freedom as a central concept in Western thought, but to explore a specific spatial perception of the term in the context of the post-revolutionary Iran, where youth create their own ways of redefining freedom through everyday urban performance.

Western scholars have analyzed how contemporary societies are governed through norms of freedom (Rose 1999; Dean 2010). Freedom as a problem-space restructures government, and therefore, the idea of freedom can be considered an antithesis of government.[23] Contemporary forms of governance have introduced new conceptions of freedom. The notion of freedom and free conduct of individuals, according to Mitchell Dean, becomes "the principle by which government is to be rationalized and reformed."[24] Rose's idea of *freedom* defines the term not as an abstract ideal, but as material, technical, practical and governmental. Freedom has inspired the invention of a variety of governing technologies. According to Rose, freedom, as an object of

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[20] Angus Stevenson, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford University Press, 2010), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199571123.001.0001/acref-9780199571123.
[21] Alexander Kazhdan, "Freedom," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (Oxford University Press, 2005), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195046526.001.0001/acref-9780195046526-e-1966.
[22] Simon Blackburn, "Freedom, Positive/Negative," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford University Press, 2008), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199541430.001.0001/acref-9780199541430-e-1309.
[23] Nikolas S. Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 62.
[24] Mitchell M. Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*, 2nd edition (London ; Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009), 155.

investigation "defines the problem-space within which contemporary rationalities of government compete."[25]

However, in the context of the Middle East, freedom is a space in-between reality and fantasy, which reconfigures relationships between the governing and governed. The embodiment of the term 'freedom' can be observed in selected case studies in this dissertation, for instance, in women-exclusive parks. The reality of freedom collides with ideas of regulation that exist outside the bounds of control. Thus, a certain kind of freedom is produced that is simultaneously a reality and a phantasm within the boundaries of exclusion. This double-edge mode of freedom enables users to build a protected domain where 'others' are not allowed to interfere their everyday performances.

Spaces of Non-movement

This dissertation attempts to look at the notions of agency and change in the context of the post-revolutionary Iran through the lens of urban space. It involves an investigation of the ways in which pleasure and joy have been deployed, policed, or even liberalized in public through contemporary spatial practices. New spaces of joy appear as agents of social and cultural change in the city, which shape the emerging identity of the young generation. This newly formed identity deeply contrasts ever-changing 'Iranian-Islamic' standards that the Islamic Republic government has continued to propagate since the Revolution.

To articulate the relations of agency, identity formation, and space, I use the interpretive framework of 'non-movements' coined by Asef Bayat in his book, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East.* In his book, Bayat employed a sociological approach to study notions of agency and change in the contemporary Muslim Middle East. He used the term "social non-movements" to refer to "the collective actions of non-collective actors" that embody shared practices of ordinary people, and whose activities trigger social change.[26] Bayat argued that grassroots efforts of a society challenge authoritarian rule. Therefore, he envisions a strategy "whereby every social group generates change in society through active citizenship in their immediate domains," as "public actors" through the practices of daily life that question the authoritarian identity of what he calls the "art of presence".[27] According to Bayat, "the art of presence" is "the courage and creativity to assert collective will in spite of all odds, to circumvent constraints, utilizing what is available and discovering new spaces within which to make oneself heard, seen, felt, and realized."[28] The notion of non-movements resonates with self-directed agency in times of constraint.[29]

The meaning of 'public joy' and 'spaces of nonmovement' represent the emergence of a new leisure culture in Tehran. Consequently, spaces of non-movement imply a framework for analyzing the spaces of joy that continue to be produced by youth, and those who are deprived of self-expression in public. These spaces manifest the young generation's struggles for enhancing life conditions, claiming youthfulness and expressing a mode of resistance. Public joy, as a mode

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[25] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 94.
[26] Bayat, *Life as Politics*, 15.
[27] Ibid, 314.
[28] Ibid, 28.
[29] Ibid.

of non-movement requires the emergence of temporary spaces where it can appear and disappear conditionally. This form of non-movement can occur anywhere in the city, i.e. parks, streets, corners, houses, stadiums, restaurants and cafes, etc. Gender-exclusive parks, the street, and suburban gardens are among the most striking spaces in which temporal manifestation of public joy is dominant.

Spaces of non-movement are strongly connected to the space of social media and communication networks. In *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution,* Howard Rheingold explores the development of digital communication networks and devices, and their role in social, political, and economic transformation.[30] Rheingold demonstrates the importance of communication technology, and the ways in which people use, adopt and resist it. The author argues that these technologies are producing new "placeless spaces" and attendant social infrastructures that impact societies, cultures and power relations.[31] The act of "texting" on mobile phones has created a user-culture. As a result, new forms of urban culture, as well as new ways of life have emerged.[32] In Iran, a manifestation of such social infrastructures can be observed in the use of text-messages by youth as a form of collective resistance against social and political embargos. Text-messaging, a fun activity has provided a new social infrastructure and virtual sphere where a new generation can form relationships with friends, and plan leisure activities and experiences with less fear. Text-messaging creates a network to gather the youth for a specific event, serving as a mobilizing form of social action. This form of mobility and suddenness in public gatherings continues to thwart the governance of urban spaces, particularly in the context of the Islamic Republic. The new social infrastructure thus allows the current young generation to bypass extant, suppressive social regulations that would otherwise obstruct their freedom in everyday life.

Besides the notion of social media, urban and social performances of the city evoke the concept of 'carnivalesque', a term coined by Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963), and later in *Rabelais and His World* (1968), Bakhtin develops his theory of carnival, defining a rebellious and dialogical mode of social interaction between people who stand against the authoritarian power. The term, Carnivalesque is used to describe a form of social behavior that represents a mode of resistance and critique of dominant conditions and orders of society. Bakhtin viewed carnival as a profane celebration, tolerated by the religious institutions, in which the body was celebrated through bizarre and absurd presentation. He wrote, that Carnival "celebrates the destruction of the old and the birth of the new world."[33] It is a subversive world "upside down," in which the repressive everyday standards and norms are unmasked by different social stratums. Bakhtin positions the carnival as a politically aware act, which serves to subvert and disrupt the established social, political, cultural and religious norms and rules of a given society.

In the dark days of the Second World War, Bakhtin's concept of carnivalesque was read as a celebration of change. In the contemporary Iranian context, a cultural subversion can be observed through specific representations of pleasure in the capital city, such as *dor-dor* performances and

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[30] Howard Rheingold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2002).
[31] Ibid, 24-25.
[32] Ibid, 16.
[33] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 410.

extreme form of parties. Even though these performances might not be considered full-fledged carnivals, the associated acts, for instance, public eating and drinking are not regarded in the same way as in other parts of the world. Themes of carnivalesque can be found "woven thought the fabric of the Iranian world."[34] The urban practices and subversive strategies of youth in Tehran recall the notion of rebellious fun associated with the carnival, situated as a defiant reaction against an oppressive structure of everyday life that has been normalized under the Islamic Republic.

Throughout the dissertation, I prefer to use the term 'public joy' instead of 'collective joy'. Public joy implies a new understanding of space, and the temporal integration of public and private for expression in everyday urban life. Collective joy, entails to some extent flashbacks, feelings of nostalgia and lost memories. There is a sense of non-movement in the public which does not exist in the collectiveness of joy. Public joy reveal an ambiguity that lies within the dialectical binary of public and private space in Tehran under the Islamic Republic.

Research Questions, Hypotheses and Methodology

The rise of leisure spaces in Tehran in the context of the Islamic Republic has resulted in the production of zones of exception and encounter where a conditional and a temporal understanding of public joy and freedom is produced and reproduced within everyday 'norms and forms'. Paul Rabinow argues that spatial forms are supposed to embody social norms of living such that the concept of 'modern urbanism' links the two.[35] By bringing norms and forms together into a common frame, social orders can be produced.[36] While Rabinow's definition of Western types of norms and forms cannot be applied in the context of religiously ordered cities such as Tehran, re-contextualizing them in accordance with the Islamic Republic's urban 'norms and forms' allows the city to become the main platform. In the city, experiences of a certain kind of freedom can be observed and identified, providing a transition from Western understanding of 'freedom' to a kind of freedom formulated under a controlled regime of power. The spatial manifestation of public joy in the city serves as an everyday art of defiance by a new generation in Iran, publicizing new identities and lifestyles to stand against the standard ideals of the Islamic regime.

Whether public or private, the spaces of exception allow for an expression of joy that is also a form of defiance, a kind of spontaneous non-movement against many forms of state restraints on public behavior and space. The walking users bring these spaces to life. In Michel De Certeau's essay, "Walking in the City," he writes that "urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded," or "a totalizing eye."[37] In the case of the Islamic Republic's urban zones of gender-exclusion, women users give new meaning to these spaces, often differing from the original intent — for instance, fenced spaces, when reimagined, could present new forms and meaning of the idea of freedom.

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[34] Walter Armbrust, ed., *Mass Mediations: New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and Beyond*, First edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 65.

[35] Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 67–77.

[36] Ibid, 11.

[37] Michel De Certeau, Michel, "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall, Reprint edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 92.

This dissertation is an attempts to answer the following questions: How does resistance as a form of non-movement becomes spatial? How does the understanding of public joy redefine the concept of freedom in the context of the Islamic Republic's capital city? What are the representations of public joy in the urban realm? How does 'identity dispossession' as a sociopolitical and cultural phenomenon affect public spaces in the city? How does the process of spatial transformation define and redefine the dynamic dialectics of public/private in the production of leisure spaces in Tehran? Understanding space and its relation to joy and leisure performances is only possible through an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, this research bridges analytical and methodological approaches of architecture history and theory, urban design and history, anthropology, sociology, leisure studies, gender studies, and cultural studies.

I explore the posed questions with no straightforward answers, but instead attempt to show that the process of having the proper questions can itself be a way of uncovering new histories, spaces and cultures. This dissertation does not aim to narrate a history of Tehran's post-revolutionary modern leisure spaces. Instead, it explores everyday encounters of the new generation Iranian youth within the city seeking freedom and joy. This mode of exploring urban experiences has the power to simultaneously divulge public spaces that are occupied and transformed, and to reveal the most clandestine spaces that exist in deep layers of the city and society. It emphasizes the encounters, themes, events, sites and cultural significance of such space, rather than historical narratives — bringing fragmented and multilayered histories into a coherent flow of synchronic time to explore their impacts and transmutations. In its engagement with different encounters and events, the study takes both history and theory into consideration.

The notion of 'contemporary' marks a process of continuity instead of a break, and signifies multilayered temporalities that interconnect modern history of pre- and post-Revolutionary eras. Reinhart Koselleck's idea of historical temporalities elaborates the significance of the 'contemporary'. According to Koselleck, there are temporal structures contained in everyday life, in politics, and social relations with a timeless quality that interweaves layers of history. In this temporal framework, past, present and future could be understood in terms of each other. Koselleck argues that modernity as "a form of temporal experience" could remake the process of rewriting history in the present time.[38]

By emphasizing the term 'post' in exploring the post-revolutionary spaces of leisure, the focus remains on the present rather than the historical processes of a particular past. Abidin Kusno's implication of term 'post' in his study of contemporary Indonesia is useful here. In *The Appearance of Memory: Mnemonic Practices of Architecture and Urban Form in Indonesia*, Kusno uses the term 'post' to signify "the new historical conditions that remain an unknowing host for the return of the past."[39] Past and present integrate and synchronize as they become a point of reference for writing history of the present spatial encounters.

Field research included three main components. The first was to engage with case studies, on-site observations and interviews with the users of the selected spaces and events. Interviews

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[38] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 105.

[39] Abidin Kusno, *The Appearances of Memory: Mnemonic Practices of Architecture and Urban Form in Indonesia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2010), 5.

were done either on-site or virtually through social media and phone calls. I collected diverse types of information on the ways in which everyday encounters with leisure spaces in the city, as well as the performative experiences in specific spaces took shape. During my research, I gained fragmented knowledge of sociocultural, governmental and spatial aspects of selected spaces. In the second step, I engaged with historical sources including pre-revolutionary magazines, newspapers, video and audio clips, films, and those remaining spaces from the Pahlavi era. Combined, these allowed me to investigate the similarities and differences of modern leisure activities and spaces that have occurred in pre- and post-revolutionary eras. A third step brought fragmented pieces of information together through narratives by the active agents of change in these spaces, in the present time. To understand the new leisure culture in Tehran, this study moved back and forth between historical and modern sources. Secondary historical sources provided a point of reference for understanding the past in present time.

The Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation is organized in three chapters. Each chapter offers an individual narrative that engages with a particular case study to represent and conceptualize 'public joy' as a mode of everyday non-movement and defiance in the urban and suburban contexts of the Islamic Republic's capital city. Each chapter aims to define the concept of public joy using an individual case study, and through a particular lens. While the first chapter is concerned with government strategies of creating spaces of public joy in the capital city, the next two chapters explore the social construction of joy through grassroots performative processes. In the later, control has been gained in public and private spaces in different parts of the city and its suburbs. The goal is to understand everyday spatial practices of joy, and the emergence of forms of non-movements in the capital city.

Chapter 1 analyzes the role of emerging gendered urban public zones in the capital city of the Islamic Republic as a governmental strategy to anchor the Islamic order and codes of behavior in the everyday encounters of citizens with the city. The chapter investigates understandings of public space from a state perspective through the case study of "Mother's Paradise" (Behesht-e Mādarān) in Tehran. The study reveals how the new zones of gender exclusive to leisure in Tehran create a particular understanding of 'freedom' as 'spaces of exception'. The inauguration of women-only parks by the Tehran Municipality provided fenced urban territories where women are allowed to choose what to wear and how to behave without the interference of the Morality Police. Regardless of the strict rules of mandatory *hijab* and moral coding that have been imposed on women in public spaces since the 1979 Revolution, these gendered-exclusive parks proved to be exceptional spaces, in which women could be free.. By employing the idea of 'make-believe space' - somewhere between the 'real' and the 'unreal' – this chapter articulates an alternative understanding of 'freedom' in the context of the Islamic Republic. Despite the government's understanding of 'public joy' as exclusive and gendered, the parks for women only provided possibilities for social change, as a result of being a 'space in-between'.

Chapter 2 engages with a socio-spatial layout of nightlife in Tehran. It explores how in the past decade, in the streets of Tehran have become public stages for the manifestation of a new type of urban phenomenon, commonly known as *dor-dor*. This form of performative leisure activity has been the response of a new generation of Iranian youth who are now in their 20s. This young generation, born after the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution advanced to maturity under

conservative regulations and codes of public behavior. These restrictions affected their lives and social relations in various ways. This chapter investigates the ways in which young women and men manipulate the controlled urban environment of the streets to create a particular form of leisure and defiance. In other words, the young generation has learned ways to compensate for the lack of public freedom in the everyday urban life of the capital city. Particular streets turn into temporary stages of public performance, particularly for the *nouveau riche.* This social stratum is engaged in an exhibition of a 'culture of imposture', which stands in opposition to the moral values and behavioral teachings of the conservative government.

Chapter 3 explores the spatial manifestation of privatized spaces of public fun in the suburban gardens of the capital city. The chapter focuses on garden-parties as a form of everyday defiance and 'illicit fun' set against the state-enforced laws of public gatherings and the Islamic order of pleasures. The study considers three types of extreme parties that have been well-received by the urban youth in the past decade, where ideas of public and private are interwoven in a battle for identity and self-expression. The performative turn of public fun is the result of how the new generation youth perceives the city and its rules of control. The chapter provides an understanding of 'public joy' as a social strategy to produce hope in clandestine privatized spaces of desire and self-expression outside the boundaries of governmental control.

In conclusion, this dissertation investigates the rebellious role of fun and pleasure in pursuit of temporary forms of freedom in the capital city of the Islamic Republic. Analyzing different types of case studies in relation to the urban everyday life reveals the dynamics of spatializing pleasures as modes of social non-movements under the conditions of surveillance and sociopolitical control. By escaping the norms and standards of moral public behavior of the Islamic Republic government and the traditional values that have been engraved in the everyday life of Iranian society, the young generation creates a network of temporary freedoms, regardless of the associated risk.

Chapter One

Public Spaces of Gendered-Exclusive Fun:

Territorializing 'Freedom' in Women's Parks

A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely within a boundary Greek peras. A boundary is not that at which something strops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing...

Martin Heidegger. Building, Dwelling, Thinking. 1975.

"Hey, Madam! Stop!" shouts the outraged security woman of the park while blowing her whistle to get attention. "Didn't I tell you to stop this music and dance?" She continues in an angry voice. Her objection is toward a few middle-aged women whom are gathered on a hot day, in an effort to raise public awareness and decrease the stigma of breast cancer. One of the ladies in pink clothes responds to the yelling, "our ceremony includes music, and now with all planning and organizations, what shall we do?" And, silence prevails again.[40]

Under the trees, women were gathered in Behesht-e Mâdarân Park on the morning of October 1, 2015 to discuss prevention of breast cancer in a ceremonial event and walk of hope. The events were sponsored by the Pink Ribbon Campaign of Iran. It was disturbing that every few minutes the park's security women, in their long grey-color manteaus blew whistles to focus attention while preventing women from dancing and playing music loud. Even though the sound of whistles resulted in a corresponding silence every few minutes, the participants continued having a fun time — dancing here and there, under the trees. However, they wondered, "aren't we supposed to have 'freedom' in a women-only space?" The women in grey uniforms were not the guardians of the park, but security guards whose job was to control moral behavior and dress codes in the public space. As part of their job, they were required to go around the park areas and warn women who seemed to behave improperly. Their 'dos and don'ts', particularly with regards to clothing and covering issues, created an uncomfortable atmosphere for park users. This security guards were able to express their disproval and rebuke (often in a bitter and rude language) the actions that they considered immoral and improper for park users. During the Red Ribbon ceremony, the security guards would repeatedly tell the women, "Madam, you cannot enter the park with those clothes!". The tone of the guards lacked compassion. A few participants

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[40] Ja'farzadeh, Zahra. 2014. "Dos and don'ts Every Where! اینجا «ممنوع»، آنجا «نباید»!" *Zanan Emrooz*, August 26. http://zananemrooz.com/fa/article.aspx?id=193&mag=5.

replied, "Aren't we in a women-only place?" Though the security women responded, "of course, it is! But even here there are constraints and limitations that you're required to adhere to...according to the park regulations, wearing tops with thin straps is not allowed. Wearing shorter than knee-length shorts is also prohibited. You need to have hijab and be covered when entering the children's playground and a few other areas." The same guard cautioned that "playing and listening to loud volume music is banned and disobedience will result in penalties."[41]

The above-mentioned paragraphs are translated from Farsi to English, from an article that first appeared in *Zanan-e Emrooz*, an Iranian feminist magazine.[42] The interaction between the guards and women illustrate some of the difficulties that face users of gender-exclusive spaces of leisure in Tehran. In recent years, the municipality of Tehran has been increasingly engaged in constructing public spaces, including parks and green areas. Tehran's Parks and Green Spaces Organization, which works under the auspices of the municipality, lists the main objectives of new projects on its website:

> Management, development, maintenance, and supervision of public open spaces, recreation centers, tourist resorts, parks, and urban greenbelts in cooperation and collaboration with the governmental, public and civil organizations, and participation of the Tehrani citizens according to the rules and regulations of the ratified master plan and ratified detailed plans.[43]

None of these objectives addresses the overarching issue of gender segregation. However, in 2007, the inauguration of Mother's Paradise, the first women-exclusive park, (Behesht-e Mâdarân) in Abbas Abad Hills of Tehran caused controversy [Figure 1.1]. This was the first time since the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution that women were allowed to be present in public without a veil. The new gendered zone is highly policed and controlled from both inside and outside the fences. It is protected within its walls, which separates the inner public space from outer, creating, at once, an area of isolation and *freedom*. Heidegger's assertion is validated here, the space shows that it is in this bounded territory that new problems start to arise. The walled landscape, on one hand, initiates and forms a new kind of 'freedom' under the repression of the Islamic Republic. On the other hand, it serves to reinforce new types of citizenship, based on the conservative government's desirable coding for what they consider "Iranian-Islamic Culture." Over the past two decades, the government has and promulgated an invented historical narrative, critical to shaping a national identity in contemporary, post-revolutionary Iran.

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Zanan-e Emrooz is an independent publication, owned by Shahla Sherkat, a feminist journalist and activist. She has been one of the pioneers of Women's Rights Movement in Iran. Zanan-e Emrooz started its work in June 2014 after eight years of suspension. It was previously known as Zanan Magazine that had been published since February1992 until the 2006 suspension. On April, 27, 2015, after publishing 11 issues, another suspension took place due to the publishing of an article on "white marriage" referenced to unmarried cohabitation in Iran that according to the authorities passed the red lines. The magazine touched on many taboos in Iranian women society. For more information see: Anonymous. 2015. "Iran Women's Magazine Forced to Close." Award-winning media site dedicated to in-depth coverage and analysis of the Middle East. *Al-Monitor*. May 18. http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/05/iran-womens-magazine-zanan-emrooz-suspended.html.

[43] Taken from the official Tehran Municipality website, retrieved from http://parks.tehran.ir/default.aspx?tabid=204.

Figure 1.1: Location of Mother's Paradise in Tehran. The red arrows point towards the entrance gates. (Source: Google Maps)

The Iran–Iraq war (1980 to 1988) and the death of the supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, plunged the Islamic Republic into a crisis of national identity and self-representation. Gradual detachment of citizens from the Islamic state and the nation, particularly the young generation who were born after the Revolution, caused the conservative government to rethink the importance of 'identity.'[44] A few years after the war, Iran's second supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, with the help of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, invented a legacy of "Iranian-Islamic" culture and lifestyle in an effort to reconstruct the fragmented social order. The assumption was that by changing urban space, a new generation could be influenced. However, the embedded duality of 'Iranian' and 'Islamic' left the combined term 'Iranian-Islamic' indeterminate. The 'duality' inherent in the Iranian-Islamic legacy referenced two distinct political and ideological positions: a nationalistic mindset, that was a remnant of the dynastic Pahlavi era (1925 to 1979) and the conservative Shi'ite movement of the Islamic Republic.[45] The combined

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[44] In the early days after the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini declared that the Islamic state and the nation should stay together to prevent dictatorship. The Supreme Leader's complete speech is accessible on the digital archive of International Affairs Department of The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, retrieved from http://www.imam-khomeini.ir/fa/n22974/. The Institute was first established by Ayatollah Khomeini's son Ahmad and continued its progress under the supervision of Khomeini's grandson and close relatives. See also Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkeley: University of California, 1993), 19–38, http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft6c6006wp.

[45] Reza Shah's nationalist views underpinned a political movement aimed at the transformation of national identity in Iran. He emphasized the notion of "pre-Islamic Persian civilization and culture." I will elaborate in the Historical Background section, below. A synthesis of his ideas manifested in terms of Iranian culture and the Islamic conservative government's attempts to revitalize Islamic culture eventually led to coinage of the term "Iranian-

effect of the two would affect architecture and urban design practice, producing a new culture of representation that served a larger mission for the state, supporting the creation of a new national identity for a young nation in the midst of ideological transformation.

The Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance website offer a broad definition of Iranian-Islamic identity and culture.[46] The 5th and 12th principles under *Content Strategies* emphasize "the attributes of Iranian-Islamic identity" and "Iranian-Islamic culture" without mentioning what those attributes are or how this term should be defined. However, the composite expression, Iranian-Islamic has been used extensively in IRIB, the state-sponsored media outlet.[47] The politics of gender segregation, derived from these ideas are at work in the women-exclusive park design.

The main focus of this research is on the emergence of women-exclusive parks in the capital city, using the example of Mothers' Paradise as a case study. A central goal is to show how public urban spaces, in this case, places for leisure and recreation for women—become not only a way to live, but a mode of social resistance. This research, then, will examine the notion of 'agency' within this context. The research is an outcome of two months of field study, observations, and interviews with the park participants, and include women users, security guards, gardeners, vendors and staff involved with the park on a daily basis. In addition, the study is dependent on secondary sources like books, journal articles, manuscripts, magazine articles, newspapers, online reports and interviews, government websites, and personal blogs. In recent years, personal blogs have become popular online public spaces for the new generation youth who wish to share opinions and ideas freely in a public forum.

Contextual and Theoretical Framework

The processes of state formation in Iran and the development of gender-segregation policies echo Foucauldian concepts of *governmentality* and *exception*. Iran, as a Middle Eastern country, presents a sociopolitical context that is significantly different from what Foucault describes. The Foucauldian framework for experiencing governmentality is concerned with systematic and pragmatic regulations of everyday urban practices by liberal governments in relation to their self-regulated social subjects. As Foucault states, governmentality covers a range of practices that "constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other." Similarly, Nicholas Rose and Mitchell Dean both explore how contemporary Western societies are governed when freedom is the norm.[48] According to these scholars, freedom is central to contemporary regimes because it structures

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Islamic culture," which contributed to the distinctive nature of Iranian nationalism and Iranian Islamism in a Shi'ite tradition.

[46] For more information on the principals see the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance website, retrieved from http://www.farhang.gov.ir/fa/intro/duty.

[47] IRIB stands for Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (Farsi term: *Sedā va Sima-ye Jomhūrī-ye Eslāmī-ye Īrān*). It is a large media organization founded in 1979 with the establishment of the Islamic Republic regime. Under the Pahlavi regime, the organization was called National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT). According to the Islamic Republic's constitution, radio and television should be "aligned with the course of perfection of the Islamic Revolution and serve the promotion of the Islamic culture and to this end benefit from the healthy collision of different ideas and seriously avoid spreading and propagating destructive and anti-Islamic tenets."

[48] Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 1st Edition (New York: The New Press, 1998), 300.

contemporary government itself. To this extent, Rose argues the idea of freedom could be considered "the antithesis of government." Rose writes:

> "To be governed through our freedom: the very idea seems paradoxical. Freedom appears, almost by definition, to be the antithesis of government: freedom is understood in terms of the act of liberation from bondage or slavery, the condition of existence in liberty, the right of the individual to act in any desired way without restraint, the power to do as one likes."[49]

In the West, rules of exception can be positively viewed as decisions to consider selected populations and spaces as targets of calculative choices and value orientation.[50] Contemporary framing of the concept and practice of governance introduces a new conception of freedom. The notion of freedom and the free conduct of individuals, according to Dean, becomes "the principle by which government is to be rationalized and reformed".[51] Rose's idea of freedom defines the term not as an abstract ideal, but as material, technical, practical, governmental. Freedom has inspired the invention of a variety of technologies of governing. According to Rose, freedom as an object of investigation "defines the problem space within which contemporary rationalities of government compete."[52]

In applying the idea of governmentality to the context of Tehran, and Iran as a Middle Eastern country, it cannot be stressed enough that one of the significant features of cities under the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic regime is that they are severely controlled. Since the 1979 revolution, public spaces have been watched by the Morality Police for "proper" moral behaviors. This surveillance has affected women and young people in their everyday urban social relations and activities.[53] Most recently, new norms are being created both by the government and the people, such as legalizing the unveiling of women in specific controlled urban zones, e.g. women-only parks, constructing shopping malls where youths can gather and mingle, and designing theme parks in central Tehran for controlling the leisure activities, gatherings, and movement of young people. In these cases, urban public spaces turn into spaces of negotiation for the experience of a certain type of controlled and regulated freedom. As a platform for experiences of a certain kind of freedom to be observed and identified, reading these spaces will help readers with a Western understanding of freedom to understand a controlled regime of power. According to architectural historian Nezar AlSayyad, an ongoing clash of interests, irrespective of religious or cultural conflict, between Western countries and Muslim countries leads to different notions of democracy and human rights.[54] It follows that certain values, such as reason, tolerance, and freedom will differ according to ideological viewpoint.

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[49] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 62.

[50] Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*, 1st Edition (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press Books, 2006), 5.

[51] Dean, *Governmentality*, 182.

[52] Rose, *Powers of Freedom*, 94.

[53] The Morality Police, as an organ the president does not directly control, targets women in public and even private spaces in order to control their bodies, movements, and behavior in general based on strict Islamic codes of public behavior.

[54] Nezar AlSayyad and Manuel Castells, eds., *Muslim Europe or Euro-Islam: Politics, Culture, and Citizenship in the Age of Globalization*, Transnational Perspectives (Lanham, Md. : Berkeley: Lexington Books ; Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of California at Berkeley, 2002), 106–7.

To better explore the concept of freedom in a sociopolitical context, this research primarily draws inspiration from the idea of "make-believe" as a transition point as well as a threshold space. In Yael Navaro-Yashin's book, *Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity*, the "make-believe space" is a social construct that refers not only to space and territory, but also to modes of governance and administration, and material practice.[55] The make-believe that is discussed as an analytical category that encompasses both "tangible materiality" and the "phantasmatic," without either being favored. Therefore, the material in the making and the phantasmatic in the believing simultaneously contribute to both imagination and reality. This process of simultaneous making and believing invokes practices and ideologies in a specific make-believe space. The make-believe therefore confers a spatial quality to temporality in a present history. Navaro-Yashin argues, "all spaces, when aligned with state practices, have make-believe qualities".[56]

If the idea of 'make-believe space' informs a new understanding of freedom as a 'threshold space,' such space could only exist somewhere between religious realities and modern global fantasies in the context of the Islamic Republic. This space, situated between reality and fantasy reconfigures relationships between those the governing and governed. It can be argued that the new power relations that emerge in this threshold space produce a specific mode of governmentality in the context of the Islamic Republic. However, this mode of governance is different from what exists in a Western context. Anthropologist Aihwa Ong considers the limitations of a style of reasoning and problematization that is concerned with transforming situations of uncertainty,[57] As a result, the make believe within the context of conservative ideological transformation can give way to new, seemingly contradictory forms of public space and urban design, for instance, the woman-only park with its enclosed publicness.

Exclusion: A Mechanism of Limiting 'Freedom'

An investigation of the dynamic transformation of women before and after the 1979 revolution shows how attitudes toward women's bodies have been framed and coded across various domains, such as the family, state, and political and religious organizations. According to Minoo Moallem, professor of gender and women's studies at University of California at Berkeley, masculinist narratives of an Islamic *ummat*, or fraternal community, a modern construction based on an imagined Islamic community, "relies heavily on the bodies of women and their mediation between the 'we-ness' of the Islamic *ummat* and the 'other'." In this process, women turn into ideological subjects, as their bodies become part of the conception of identity in the paradoxical context of a modern Islamic city.[58] In this sense, the paradoxical desire for the freedom to be "unfree" emerges at a societal level (Moallem, 2005, p. 16). Subsequently, the notion of the self becomes increasingly dependent upon "the rearticulation of the personal and the political".[59]

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[55] Yael Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2012).
[56] Ibid, 6.
[57] Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*, 178.
[58] Minoo Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran* (University of California Press, 2005), 25–26.
[59] Ibid, 13.

Under restricted Islamic coding for 'proper lifestyle', a man's masculinity depended—and still depends, to a degree — on his economic power and moral authority over his household women. The role of women, however, was to develop skills in cooking, childbirth, childcare, and cleaning and organizing domestic domains, while retaining their husband's interest in sexual relations. According to Ong, male protection of female sexuality outlined the boundaries between spaces of males and females, where a woman could be considered her man's property and control of this property defined the collective identity of men in a traditional Islamic society.[60] The patriarchal control of women's bodies and sexuality is a major subject of religious and cultural discourses on how privileging heteronormativity in modernized societies creates gendered and sexual citizenship "as sites of exclusion and inclusion."[61]

The only way 'exception' can be discussed is to weigh the term against what can be considered normal in the same context. Ong describes the exception as "an extraordinary departure in policy that can be deployed to include as well as to exclude."[62] This simultaneous colligation of inclusion and exclusion illuminates mutations in the nature of sovereignty and citizenship. In spaces of exclusion, the geography of citizenship is reconfigured and citizenship becomes disarticulated. Exception therefore allows for a measure of sovereign flexible enough to be recognized by the population. The political exception is a decision made outside of a general rule and subsequently, the exception itself becomes a new rule.[63] In the case of the park, the space of exception regulates a public understanding of how an Iranian-Islamic woman is allowed to be uncovered in a limited form of public space. This gives the women who use the park a new understanding of freedom, and of how they should appear in different types of public spaces in the city, which eventually becomes a mental law, that is, a mindset, absorbed into the zeitgeist.

A Historical Background on the Importance of the 'Veil' in Iran

Gender is strongly related to the ways in which power is produced and mediated within modern culture. In the altering sociopolitical and religious context of Iran, veiling (*hijab*) has been one of the most crucial factors in staging difference, and in underlining gender, power, and authority.[64] Before and after the 1979 revolution, disciplinary practices of veiling and unveiling in public and the "positioning of the body in the order of the visible has been instrumental in practices of freedom," and women's understandings of the term.[65] The dichotomous notions of the veiled Muslim woman and the unveiled Western woman juxtapose freedom and 'unfreedom'. Moallem argues that "through dichotomous notions of veiled/unveiled, Islamic/secular, Western/non-Western, and free/unfree, different and sometimes oppositional models of femininity are asserted and performed through the consumption of goods and ideas."[66] According to her, the secular space is an amalgamation of religion, culture and power. Therefore, any understanding of the term

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[60] Aihwa Ong, "State versus Islam: Malay Families, Women's Bodies, and the Body Politic in Malaysia," *American Ethnologist* 17, no. 2 (May 1, 1990): 261.

[61] Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister*, 24.

[62] Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*, 5.

[63] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, 1st Edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[64] Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister*, 28.

[65] Ibid, 70.

[66] Ibid, 16.

'nation' needs to be informed by the issue of religion, particularly in the context of the Middle East.[67]

In 1933 and 1934, Reza Shah instituted mandatory unveiling (*kashf-e-hijab*) in public, along with the encouragement of men to dress in a Western way. One of the king's strategies to rebuild a civilized and secular nation state—part of his projects of modernization and Westernization—involved the cleansing of religion. 'Westernization' in the Pahlavi era, according to Moallem meant "the re-disciplining of the body through the process of nation-state building."[68] Shah's imposition of 'Western lifestyle' forced veiled women to take off their scarfs in public, despite their religious beliefs.

In this civilizing mission, modernity and tradition were opposing poles. In Reza Shah's conception of tradition, religion was the opposite of modernity and modernization.[69] Moallem argues that the revolution, along with the convergence of seemingly contradictory ideas such as religion and secularism in the identities of Iranians and Muslims, enabled the emergence of a specific Islamic subject. This revolutionary subject and individual self thus transformed by changing appearances of the veil to negotiate day-to-day political, legal, religious and economic obstacles. This marked a point of transformation and change in the construction of the "civic body" as "an abstract body that is made public and politicized in a way that displays the connections between individual and collective identities, or that is marked as a place of inclusion or exclusion."[70]

Modernization for Reza Shah was a process of racialization wherein the local was inferior and the West was superior. Women, in particular, "were born among the uncompromising world of binaries in the middle of a cultural war."[71] Although modern notions of femininity were evolving nationally, traditional families continued practicing patriarchal ways of controlling women's bodies and minds. Women were therefore the subjects, as well as the objects of this war. In opposition to the ideologies of the Pahlavi regime, the new state created various moral codes for the citizens regarding how to behave in public. They started to emphasize Islamic rules of morality, particularly for women.

With the 1979 revolution, social norms started to change, but the path was not smooth. Mandatory female covering and the act of forced veiling by the Islamic state created social disorder and turmoil despite the state's initial promises of 'freedom of choice'. However, the Islamic government never succeeded in forming a national understanding of what was considered a 'proper cover.' Women who were gradually secularized during the Pahlavi era were now forced to be veiled and to adopt the traditional and religious ideologies of the conservative Islamic state. The dress codes were never constant, transforming over the years, even though *hijab* was a fixed rule for the appearance of every woman in public.

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[67] Ibid, 11–14.
[68] Ibid, 12.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid, 28.
[71] Ibid, 2.

According to 2011 demographic reports from the Statistical Center of Iran, almost half (49%) of the total population (75,149,699) were women.[72] Article 3 of the Constitution of the Iranian Islamic of Iran lists state goals, and among them Code 9, the "abolition of all forms of undesirable discrimination and the provision of equitable opportunities for all, in both the material and the intellectual spheres." It also states, as tenets (in Code 14) "securing the multifarious rights of all citizens, both women and men, and providing legal protection for all, as well as the equality of all before the law."[73] Women in Iran, however, in their quest for political and gender equity, suffered throughout history, as none of these codes was fully applied in actual life.

It is striking that, in recent years, fashion has become a signifier for social modernization, particularly in the case of young women in Tehran. It represents a silent resistance that operates through women's bodies in response to the coercive acts of patriarchy enforced by the state and society, both of which have suppressed women for many years. Young women designers who were born after the revolution are creating their own individual and private fashion brands in the country as a form of active opposition to imposed dress codes. Strategically, their secular trend is now redefining 'mandatory Islamic coverings,' thereby creating a paradox. This form of silent resistance was evident during my observations in the park area. What this study intends to show is that the construction of women-exclusive parks, despite being a governmental strategy and a method practiced by the municipality of assembling the Iranian-Islamic women citizen, provides a public exhibition of the conflict between freedom and control. This mechanism invokes a sense of resistance in the form of everyday activities generating a new understanding of freedom in young women users of the park.

A twofold understanding of freedom consists, on one hand of a nation-building apparatus in the hands of the conservative government and, on the other, of a 'nonmovement' representing a mode of silent resistance for the young women. The term "nonmovement," coined by Asef Bayat, refers to "the collective actions of non-collective actors" that embody shared practices of ordinary people, and whose activities trigger social change.[74] In this research, the nonmovement implies women's deprival of self-expression in public, and their struggle to improve conditions of social life.

A Case Study in Tehran: Mother's Paradise

On 15 hectares of land in Northern Tehran (District 3), where the view from outside is blocked by a number of tall trees, as well as a 13-foot (4-meter) iron wall, exists an exclusive paradise for women [Figure 1.2]. In my view, it represents a green cage of freedom. Around a thousand women visit the park every weekday.[75] The identity of the park transforms one day a week on Friday — when the gates are open to all family members. This means that women using

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[72] The information was reported by the Statistical Center of Iran. Retrieved from the official website www.amar.org.ir.

[73] For more information see Iran Human Rights Documentation Center: http://www.iranhrdc.org/english/english/human-rights-documents/iranian-codes/3017-the-constitution-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran.html?p=5.

[74] Bayat, *Life as Politics*, 15.

[75] Taken from the official site of Tehran Municipality, retrieved from region3.tehran.ir.

the park cannot be unveiled on Fridays.[76] On that particular day, women are only allowed to use the park as they use any other public space in the city: by accepting the state codes and regulations regarding how to appear in public. It is on Fridays, then, that the notions of freedom and constraint collide to show how conditional the rules of freedom are.

Figure 1.2: Borders that territorialize the gender-segregated area of Mother's Paradise Park from surrounding environment. (source: by author)

The first gender-exclusive park in the capital city is a public space where women can freely take off their scarves and Islamic coverings, and let their bodies feel the natural sunlight without men's interference [Figure 1.3]. The municipality defines women's parks as green public areas that are secure and restricted, in order to provide opportunities for social interactions and recreational activities for women.[77] Tehran Municipality declares the park's purpose to be "a response to women's 'real' needs in accordance with religious values and local and national cultures."[78] This shows that because of the existing restrictions in other public urban spaces, the park aims to provide a "secure and healthy environment for women users to spend social hours."[79] The municipality believes that the existence of such spaces is a practical solution that achieves two goals: it respects Islamic women's religious ideologies and beliefs; and, it is compatible with the Islamic Republic's laws and religious codes. In recent years, Tehran Municipality as a civic institution has attempted to reunite new-generation youths with the Islamic government through construction of a considerable number of public and recreational spaces such as parks, museums,

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[76] Mousavi Khesal, Shabnam, "نیم نگاهی به طرح احداث پارک های زنانه در تهران" Vista News Hub, accessed May 16, 2015, http://vista.ir/article/123913/.

[77] Translated from Tehran Municipality's official website. *Parks.tehran.ir*.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Taken from Agence France Presse. "Headscarves off in Tehran's First Female-Only Park." 2016. Accessed October 29. https://www.wired.com/2008/06/afp-headscarves/.

libraries, shopping centers, sports centers, and other areas. These stand as proof of what the municipality is determined about, for instance, to sway the youth.

Figure 1.3: The park allows women to take off their Islamic coverings. (source: by author)

During the first decade after the 1979 revolution, leisure and sports were considered "unnecessary and un-Islamic," particularly for women.[80] The Islamic government's broader goal, the production of pious mothers who followed Islamic coding of the state, forcefully dominated women's bodies and behavior in public. According to Nazanin Shahrokni, an individual scholar whose work is focused on gendered spaces in Iran, after the revolution, between the years 1979 and 2009, the state-imposed religious laws and Islamic coding that were related to gender issues, particularly in the case of women subjects. According to Shahrokni, it was in the 1990s, under the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, when the idea of women-exclusive parks first came into being.[81] According to the women's magazine *Zan-e Rooz*, in 1993, the Presidential Center of Women's Affairs, led by Shahla Habibi (Iran's presidential advisor) pushed the Tehran Municipality to designate Taleghani Park as a women-only park. This was the first time since the revolution that the idea of women's health in public started to come to the attention of the Islamic government. Though the project never fully developed, as a result, serious discussions about women's issues under the Islamic Republic were launched both at home and abroad. Shahrokni notes that moving from prohibition to production represented a shift from purely ideological expressions of state power to a more practical understanding of women's everyday problems.

The issue of women's leisure and exercise in public spaces and public health became crucial to the Islamic government, resulting in the construction of new types of spaces, and well as new understandings of freedom and the control of women's bodily movements in public space. Shahrokni argues that the gradual (re)opening of spaces for women could be considered in terms of the story of gradual (re)orientation of state power,[82] and that the problem-space of 'unhealthy bodies' of compulsorily veiled women in public justified the need for the opening of women-only

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[80] Nazanin Shahrokni, "The Mothers' Paradise: Women-Only Parks and the Dynamics of State Power in the Islamic Republic of Iran," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 10, no. 3 (2014): 93.
[81] Ibid, 92.
[82] Ibid, 97.

parks.[83] The competing power dynamic reflects how various state institutions under the Islamic Republic regime continually need to adapt their ideologies, what the state refers to as 'Islamic modes of thinking' in order to more favorably situate themselves within a broader global and transnational context. According to Shahrokni, women-only park projects were a state solution to globally recognized health problems of women.[84]

In 2005, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad became the president of Iran. Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf was appointed Tehran's mayor. Both are conservative politicians. With the help of Ghalibaf, their tenures signaled the start of a new phase of transformation and ideological change in the capital city. In 2007, the opening of Mother's Paradise reaffirmed a women's need for exercise and leisure, which was a public health victory. Women's outdoor exercise in public spaces once considered un-Islamic and unnecessary was now promoted and supported by the municipality. It became a state obligation to serve women "as both mothers of the nation (with needs), and citizens (with rights)" in public spaces.

Farangis Najibullah, a journalist at Radio Free Asia, in an interview with Sedigheh Ghannadi, head of the National Council of Women, said that "even from an aircraft flying over the park, women will not be seen because of the special arrangement of plant and trees."[85] According to Ghannadi, the chosen trees, planted in four rows, formed a green wall that protected women from being seen from outside. Najibullah noted that some women saw the park as "an opportunity to act freely," but others complained that it discriminated against women.[86] Nayyereh Tavakkoli, an Iranian sociologist, argues that these kinds of gender-exclusive spaces can p provide women with some opportunities. However, they do not allow women to experience the same level of freedom as offered in other city [Figure 1.4].[87]

Figure 1.4: Fences that control the inside view from the outside. (source: by author)

The park is monitored for 'proper behavior' both inside and outside the fences. A team of fifteen male security guards controls three main entrance gates. Their goal is to stop outsiders from ogling women in the park. They are the only men who are involved with park use. According to

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[83] Ibid, 92.
[84] Ibid, 93.
[85] Farangis Najibullah, "Iran: Tehran Opens Controversial Women-Only Park," *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*, May 17, 2008, sec. Iran, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1117504.html.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Mousavi Khesal, Shabnam, "نیم نگاهی به طرح احداث پارک های زنانه در تهران".

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the online magazine *Vista News Hub,* a team of 35 women is in charge of control and management inside the park area [Figure 1.5].[88]

Figure 1.5: The park's women staff are in charge of management, security, gardening, and other responsibilities. (source: Islamic Republic News Agency website retrieved from irna.ir)

Fars News Agency reports that the park offers various kinds of facilities, including exercise areas, such as roofed and unroofed spaces for fitness, swimming pools, saunas, a walking path, an artificial lake, small shopping kiosks, an amphitheater, areas for religious gatherings and group meetings, a restaurant, and coffee shop. There is also a place for kids to play while mothers are exercising [Figure 1.6].[89] According to Vista Hub News, the park has yoga classes for women as well as biking facilities.[90] In Iran, women are not allowed to bike in public areas, so women were pleased to hear about biking inside the park [Figure 1.7]. However, by the order to the municipality—and for reasons unknown—the biking section stopped offering any services to the park's users.

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[88] Ibid.

[89] "Fars News Agency : زنان دست در هکتاري 19 شهر," accessed March 18, 2015, http://www.farsnews.com/printable.php?nn=8702240307.

[90] Mousavi Khesal, Shabnam, "نيم نگاهی به طرح احداث پارک های زنانه در تهران."

Figure 1.6: Upper image: sports facilities and walking paths inside the park; Lower right image: Houra Cultural Center; Lower middle image: A kiosk and coffee shop in the park; Lower left image: Playroom for kids (source: author's archive)

Figure 1.7: Biking area inside Mother's Paradise. (source: Jamejamonline.ir, courtesy by Tara Mokhtar)

Women can enter the park once they have been checked at the entrance, by the security guards for cellphones and cameras. The municipality initially did not care if women took photos or videos inside, but policies changed as a result of enforcement of the moral control and photos and videos, with an ensuing ban in protected area of the park [Figure 1.8]. According to online statistics and officially released interviews, even under the repressive rules of the Islamic Republic affecting women in public spaces, most women of the lower-middle class feel satisfied using the park.

Figure 1.8: All cellphones and cameras are banned inside the protected park area (source: by author)

In my personal interviews conducted on the site with almost fifteen young women between the ages of 22 and 35, eleven claimed that the park is a nice outdoor space for women who live in Tehran. They described it a place to breathe fresh air and feel sunlight. Ironically, the air pollution in Tehran is one of the main reasons for heart diseases and breathing problems for city inhabitants. Nine women interviewees mentioned that the park provides a fresh atmosphere for them to breathe better while doing exercise. Parisa, 24 years old, finds the park, "a valuable award for the polluted capital city." Six other interviewees appreciated the park, and found it a safe place where drug users and sellers stay away from it.

The notion of safety was also expressed by the National, a private English-language daily newspaper published in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The newspaper article reported on interviews with women users of the same park, noting their satisfaction with control factors. The interviews revealed that the majority of women users found the women-only park a safer place than other parks in the city. For them, safety was a byproduct of having women security guards

and women staff working in the fenced park area.[91] Contradictory notions of freedom and control were considered positive factors in evaluating the success of the design of this women-only space.

Conclusion: Dispossession of Identity

Women's status has been transformed by social and political forces many times, and changing relationships, private and public, between men and women have consequently controlled the family and body politic. As Ong argues, "in modernizing societies, 'women' and 'the family' enter into the social construction of national politics." Therefore, social constructions of gender and family are always, in effect, "class specific."[92] In an article in *The Washington Post* in 2012, Iranian authorities were reported to believe that that un-Islamic dress is a symptom of Western cultural interference, consequently, should therefore be considered a matter of national security."[93] In Iran, agency, in terms of autonomy or adherence, differs according to class. Working-class women still pretty much accept Islamic rules and religious duties, while upper-middle-class women most often display their disapproval in silent resistance. This form of opposition is more evident in recent years, as young women apply fashion to the mandatory style of public *hijab* in order to appear 'differently' in public. These attitudes represent an opposition by women to conservative regulations, which eventually affect the everyday social spaces and relations.

Proper dressing Following Islamic cultural coding, proper dressing prescribes ways of covering bodies—particularly those of women. According to these codes, women are not allowed to display their bodies and beauty in public because doing so may put their chastity at risk. Since even prior to the revolution during the Pahlavi era, these types of coding that define proper ways of dressing and appearance in public have been controversial among women of various classes, particularly in the modernizing capital city. Codes of proper dressing introduce a 'mechanism of normalization' by which the Islamic state can appropriate or moderate religious regulations in this global era. The word 'proper' also carries with it the aim of stabilizing gender norms in a broader political context, in which desire and law become inextricably intertwined. According to Judith Butler, "in this performative intertwinement, gender and sexual categories, identities, and fantasies are reconstituted and reinvented in unforeseen ways as the law 'strives' to produce, affirm, consolidate, thwart, commodify, or render them proper[94]

The results of this case study of the park reveal that the make-believe constantly creates and recreates itself through fences and walls, inside and outside this women-exclusive territory. From these borders of control emerge new understandings of freedom for citizen subjects (object); what it means to be free is continually constructed, both inside and outside this inner-city partition zone. The individual creates a protected domain in an exclusive landscape built by the municipality. It is significant that within the Islamic Republic's capital city, that the gendered park is a space where the 'Iranian-Islamic woman'—as a post-revolutionary state tradition—legitimizes the meaning of freedom for women. It defines the limits of such freedom in a bounded territory,

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[91] Sinaiee, Maryam, "All-Female Park Opens in Tehran | The National," The National, September 2, 2008, http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/all-female-park-opens-in-tehran.

[92] Ong, "State versus Islam," 272.

[93] Jason Rezaian, "Struggle over What to Wear in Iran," *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/struggle-over-what-to-wear-in-iran/2012/07/21/gJQAbkspzW_story.html.

[94] Judith Butler, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2013), 46.

in what is called public space. The park becomes a 'threshold space,' where reality and imagination coincide, engendering qualities of a new social form of living. This territory eventually becomes a place where an ideology and dreams can transform into a tangible, solid, material space in which "the make-believe is real."[95]

This research intends to raise questions that are not necessarily part of the established discourse regarding Islamic feminism and its sociopolitical context, Islamic traditions and its effects on gender, and the greater Middle East. The park, its users, and related policies will likely change over time; as the situation is dynamic and ever changing such changes will necessitate further investigation and field research.

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[95] Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space*.

Chapter Two

Public Spaces of Private Fun:

Streets of 'Dor-Dor'

> The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below', below the threshold at which visibility begins. They walk – an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thick and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it.
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> Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life.* 1984

The Tragedy of Parivash:

On 4:30 am of 20 April 2015, in the empty morning street of Shari'ati in Tehran, the capital city of the Islamic Republic, a canary yellow Porsche accelerated to 120 miles an hour and crashed into a sidewalk tree. The luxury car was completely destroyed in the accident as a result of losing control and slamming first into the curb and then into the tree. The twenty-five year old woman at the wheel, Parivash Akbarzadeh, died instantly at the scene. A few hours later, Mohammad Hossein Rabbani-Shirazi, the 21-year-old young man who was sitting next to her, also died due to severe injuries. According to the news reports, the Porsche car with a cost of at least $178,000 belonged to Mohammad, whom turned out to be the grandson of a well-known Ayatollah, Abd-al-Rahim Rabbani-Shirazi, who was among rebellious clerics during the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution. After surviving several terror attacks, Ayatollah Rabbani-Shirazi died in a road car accident on March 8, 1982.

The story of Parivash and the yellow Porsche was widespread in social media, followed by a large number of young people who were interested in stories of wealth and scandal in Iran. After the accident, the news channels and weblogs stressed the fact that the first-time Porsche driver came from a low-income family of Western Tehran, while the young man belonged to a rich religious family.[96] The true relationship between Mohammad and Parivash was never revealed, resulting in further scandal and creating controversy among youth that continued for a while. Of note, while the name of the Ayatollah's grandson gradually disappeared from the media coverage, Parivash became the main target of scorn from one side, and sympathy from the other. Her personal pictures were disseminated online. Commentary was incendiary. In the unleashed storm of contrasting judgments and nasty remarks about the deceased girl, very few condemned the young

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[96] Amir Hatefinia, "A Night with Dor-dor Fans in the Capital City پایتخت «دُور دُور» اهل با شبی," *Shahrvand Newspaper*, April 29, 2015, 552 edition, sec. Reports.

boy who had bought the Porsche just two days earlier. Only a few mocked Mohammad for being the Porche-owning grandson of a former aid to the founder of the Islamic Republic. A few days after the accident, Mohammad's father told Haft-e Sobh Newspaper that his son "did not even own a bicycle," as a strategy to prevent further related disputes and judgments about his political position.[97]

Regardless of the veracity and extent of the scandal associated with the tragedy of Parivash, the people's anger was evident in posts on Facebook and Instagram. The rage, unleashed by the crash invoked national issues of rising inequality and corruption. Parivash, scorned by Iran's middle- and lower-class society, was called terms like *tazeh be dorân reside,* an opportunist or an upstart, citing her lower class origins. Ten days after the tragedy, the New York Times published an article entitled, "Fatal Porsche Crash Unleashes Middle-Class Anger at Elites."[98] The article began with an image of the destroyed Porsche that was captioned, "the fatal crash of a Porsche has drawn scorn, not sympathy" [figure 2.1].[99] The focus of the article was the issue of a rising inequality in Iran during the presidency of Mahmood Ahmadinejad. The article noted that a particularly well-connected group of middlemen with "three-day revolutionary beards" had gained fabulous wealth after being granted trade rights through a highly corrupt state system.[100] Five days after the New York Times article was published, the Business Insider, a German-owned American news website, posted another article on the tragedy of Parivash stressing inequality. Pamela Engel's report stated, "This Fatal Porsche Crash Is Causing an Uproar in Iran." In the piece, Engel spoke against the kind of corruption that generated extreme wealth for untouchable Iranian 'one percenters'.[101]

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[97] Azadeh Bagheri, "Interviewing the Father of the Deceased Boy in the Yellow Porsche Accident گفتگوی هفت صبح با پدر یکی از قربانیان پورشه زرد," *Haft-e Sobh Newspaper*, April 30, 2015, sec. Social, http://7sobh.com/id/28313.
[98] Thomas Erdbrink, "In Iran, Fatal Porsche Crash Unleashes Middle-Class Anger at Elites," *The New York Times*, April 30, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/01/world/middleeast/in-iran-fatal-porsche-crash-unleashes-middle-class-anger-at-rich-elites.html.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Pamela Engel, "This Fatal Porsche Crash Is Causing an Uproar in Iran," Business Insider, accessed May 21, 2017, http://www.businessinsider.com/this-fatal-porsche-crash-is-causing-an-uproar-in-iran-2015-5.

Figure 2.1: The photo of the destroyed yellow Porsche was broadcasted by various local and outside news channel, including the New York Times (Source: New York Times)

The story of the yellow Porsche serves as a springboard for exploration, and how particular mode of everyday practice in Iran of wealth and imposture manifests itself in the capital city. Rather than the extraordinary event of a high speed car crash, everyday imposture by a new generation of Iranian youth is a daily occurrence, gaining news coverage one day to be forgotten the next. The themes that emerge from this recurring story define a space in which dynamics of wealth, class, privilege, imposture, gender and identity are transacted in an urban context. These transactions are perhaps unique to Islamic Republic. The importance of Parivash's story lies in the hidden layers and themes, including everyday dynamics of 'resistance' and 'agency' among a new Iranian generation, particularly young girls, who look for fun and freedom under severe conditions of governmental control over public moral behaviors. An interdisciplinary approach to that combines anthropology and sociology with urban and cultural studies helps elucidate one of the most significant socio-spatial phenomenon in the post-revolutionary history of Tehran, that is, *dor-dor*.

Parivash's story is an object lesson revealed to a cohort of young women filled with passion, desirous of wealth, pleasure, fun, and 'freedom'. The conditions surrounding her life and the tragedy of her death raise many questions. Why was the tragedy so important, and so scandalous to such a large group of young Iranians? Why did it generate a social media storm? Who was Parivash really, and what did she have in common with other young women that made her representative of a whole generation of young women in post-revolutionary Iran? What distinguishes her particular class among other youth? How does the expanding wealth gap in the country affect this new generation and their social relationships in the city? And finally, what is the role of public space in representing this new culture of leisure and fun in the city in response to existing suppressions and deprivations? This research explores the spatial manifestation in Tehran, of an expanding voracity for wealth and luxurious belongings, not limited only to the ultra-rich.

In an article on the 'tragedy of Parivash,' journalist Amir Hatefinia writes about the deceased girl.[102] He notes that Parivash had two Instagram accounts: one private, the other public. On her public account, she had uploaded three videos of herself driving, and singing inside a car. While Hatefnia did not indicate whether the car belonged to her or not, it was evident that Parivash was a fan of '*dor-dor*', a nighttime leisure activity. *Dor-dor,* invented as a kind of wandering street cruising, has become extremely popular in the everyday life of young Iranian men and women who are looking for places to meet new friends and spend time. Hatefinia noted that Parivash was well known by the majority of the *dor-dor* players interviewed in his report. Interviewees believed that she was from a low-income family living in Jannat-Âbâd, a neighborhood in the west of Tehran. Like many other Tehrani girls of the same-age, she desired a life of affluence in the northern districts of the capital city.[103] *Dor-dor* provided opportunities to befriend rich young men and hang out with them. In the context of the Islamic Republic, where rules of Islamic morality are enforced by a conservative government, *dor-dor* and its everyday practices in Tehran have ethnographic implications. .

Dor-dor: A Public Urban Phenomenon

Dor-dor, an urban phenomenon has been expanding rapidly in Tehran and other large cities in Iran in recent years. It is considered to be a well-known public pastime activity among young women and men who are in their 20s. Some 'upper-class' streets of Tehran, renown for *dor-dor* play, have become places where one can notice specific types of actions, behaviors, and relationships among youth of the opposite sex in the Islamic Republic context. The youth's desire for nightlife activities, particularly their passion for *dor-dor*, conveys a new perception of 'freedom' as a sociopolitical and urban concept. The practices of *dor-dor* have turned the streets of Tehran and many other cities into a platform for the performance of rich youth whose goal is to express their wealth and display their luxury automobiles in public urban spaces [figure 2.2].

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[102] Shahrvand Newspaper is officially owned by Iranian Red Crescent Society (IRCS), which is a semi-state institution, established in March 2013 by the Principlists - a party of conservative government in Iran. The principles of Shahrvand changed within a year after its establishment. For more information about the article, see Hatefinia, "A Night with Dor-dor Fans in the Capital City شبی با اهل «دُور دُور» پایتخت".
[103] Ibid.

Figure 2.2: Dor-dor activities in luxurious automobiles in the streets of Tehran. (Source: Mashregh News Agency, retrieved from www.mashreghnews.ir)

Dor-dor occurs almost everywhere in northern and northwestern parts of Tehran though locations are mobile and subject to change depending upon local police control. Almost any upper-class city boulevard in Tehran with a possibility of U-turn maneuvers can be considered a good location for the play of *dor-dor*. Young women and men drive luxury cars turning cars 180 degrees in the opposite direction of the street at existing U-turn spots (in Farsi: *dor-bargardân*), uncountable times every night. It is interesting that *dor-dor* players come from throughout the city and as they gather in these particular boulevards, the show off play goes on for hours, particularly on Thursday and Friday nights. Regardless of having limited places for specific types of leisure activities in the city, including cinemas, theaters, cultural centers, restaurants, cafes, entertainment places, shopping centers, sports centers, and others, young women and men are interested in *dor-dor* as a game of simultaneous fun, as well as a mode of silent resistance, explored throughout this chapter. Some of the well-known locations for *dor-dor* in Tehran are Andarzgou Boulevard in Kâmrânieh district, Kâj and Farâz Boulevards in Sa'adatâbâd district, Elâhieh Street, Jordan Boulevard, and Iran Zamin Boulevard in Shahrak-e Gharb district..

Luxury automobiles assume the role of game pieces. While engaged in *Movâzi-râni,* or 'parallel driving', young women and men between 20 to 30 years old, drive side-by-side, checking out potential mates and sharing contact information [figure 2.3]. Through this practice of desire, a street suddenly turns into an exhibition of luxury cars, such as Maserati, Bugatti, Ferrari, BMW, Porsche, Mercedes and other European brands and hence, also becomes a display of wealth and power. In such landscapes of lust and passion, it is difficult for lower-cost cars such as Iranian manufactured Peugeots and Prides to garner much attention. In *dor-dor* games, luxury car drivers

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become rivals on the hunts, rolling windows down and turning up the volume of their music. They usually don't look at low-price car drivers unless they find them sexy and attractive.

Figure 2.3: Movâzi-râni (parallel driving), stopping for a brief conversation between young women and men, and sharing contact information. (Source: author's personal collection)

The Prominence of Styles and Expressions

In *dor-dor* play, luxury car owners drive up and down in selected streets to cruise and pick up girls. Young women and men involved in this particular form of leisure look different from ordinary people in the society. They stand out, dressing and speaking in contempt of the existing urban and social rules. For this distinct social group, particularly young girls, 'beauty' plays the role of a silent weapon to resist the conservative government's restrictions and social limitations. Since the 1979 revolution, Islamic regulations have obligated women to cover their hair and body (*hejab*), and dress modestly in public. Even men are required to dress conservatively in public spaces, for instance, they are prevented from wearing shorts. Contrastingly, recent published pictures of the young elite, posted on Instagram and Facebook depict Particular codes of beauty that have been generated by young women, which differ from the rest of the society. Parivash could be considered among this type of women. Her strong character, colored by extraordinary pretensions expose a feeling of imposture worthy of analysis. Longing for a lavish lifestyle, Parivash could be classified as a member of the Iranian *beau monde*. Her pictures on Instagram and Facebook demonstrated specific codes of beauty that have become commonplace among the young generation [figure 2.4]. In similar fashion, her friend's Instagram pages reveal almost identical qualities and traits. Among various Instagram accounts, there is a public group, "The Rich Kids of Tehran." The account follows the lifestyle of this privileged segment of Iranian youth.

Figure 2.4: From Parivash Akbarzadeh's public Instagram public account (Source: Instagram)

Rich Kids of Tehran (Instagram Account @therichkidsoftehran) #RKOT:

"Rich Kids of Tehran" captures a specific lifestyle in stark contrast to the Islamic Republic leaders' ideology and their moral codes of behavior. The glitzy posts portray Iranian elites and their ostentatious lives. Beautiful young women in revealing bikinis, sipping champagne and smoking shisha pipes (hookah) stand by the pools of their multi-million dollar mansions. Young boys wear expensive Rolex watches, posing next to their luxury cars. These are the types of subject matter of the Instagram account [figure 2.5].
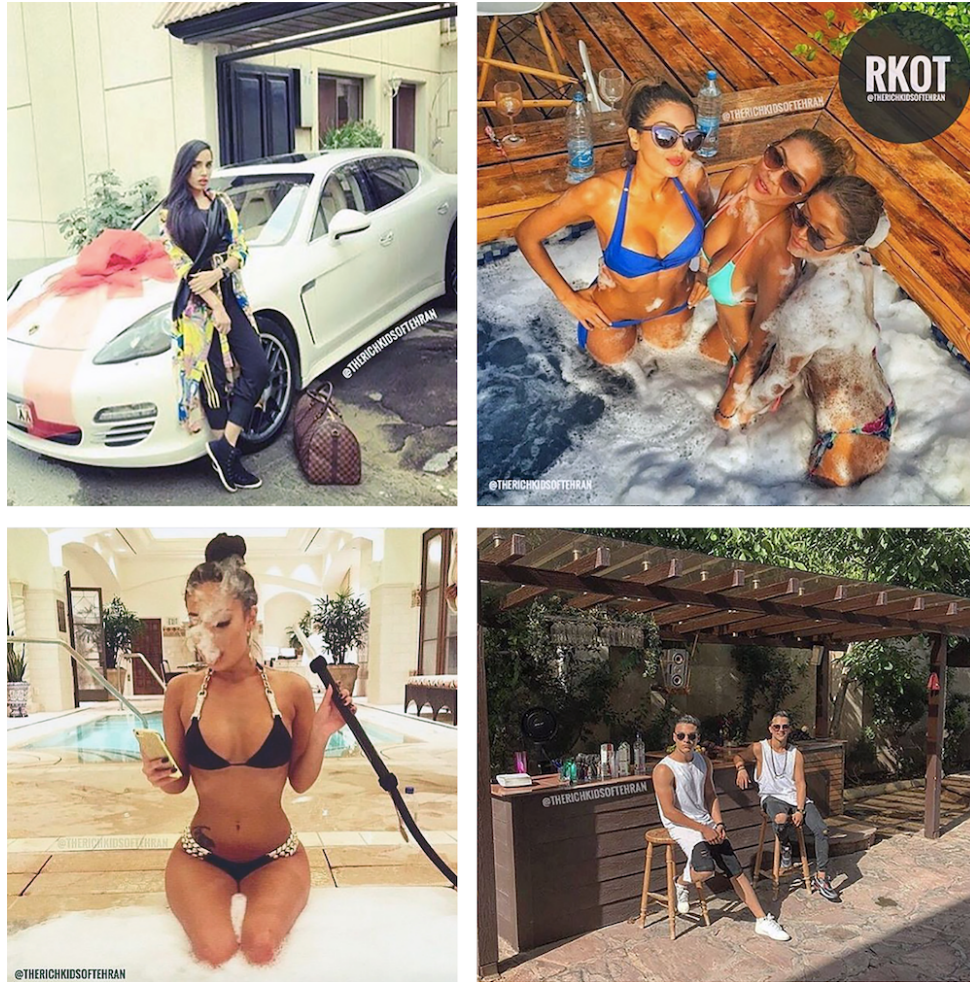
Figure 2.5: Selected images from the Instagram public account of RichKidsOfTehran. (Source: Instagram)

The idea of curating an Instagram page for Rich Kids of Tehran (#RKOT) was inspired by elitist Western counterparts: Rich Kids of Instagram #RKOI, curated in 2012, and two E! Shows "#Rich Kids of Beverly Hills" and "#Rich Kids of New York." This Instagram account documents the luxurious lives of Iran's young elite, portraying the ambitions of the nouveau riche of the capital city as role models for "other youth."[104] Following the creation of RKOI, another Instagram account of a similar type has become popular. The account, bache.poldaraye.tehran1 advertises luxurious lifestyles.[105]

The administrators of the #RKOI Instagram page claim that their goal is to show a contradictory side of Iran to the Western world, and to help correct misplaced opinions of Iranians.[106] It might be surprising to know that RKOT promoted its activities on Instagram when

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[104] Holly Dagres, "Rich Kids of Tehran," Al-Monitor, October 2, 2014, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/ru/originals/2014/10/iran-tehran-rich-corruption-instagram.html.
[105] See https://www.instagram.com/bache.poldaraye.tehran1/
[106] Ibid.

the country was in dire economic straits as a result of severe economic sanctions from Western countries. They don't follow any political ideology, and their attempt is to show that Tehran is nothing like what the exists in the press. The headline reads: "Stuff They Don't Want You To See About Iran!"[107] In other words, the account's goal is to depict a beautiful and contradictory Tehran for display in worldwide media. RKOT has over 121,000 followers, and more than 2,000 posts. The other account has 515,000 followers, and more than 3800 posts. In addition to these Instagram pages, their Facebook versions have about 25,500 followers. Twitter versions have a more limited number of members, approximately 1,200 members. The smaller numbers for the Facebook and Twitter are largely the result of both having remained filtered in Iran.

In the present context of filtering and censorship in Iran, Instagram and Telegram have remained the most popular among other social media applications. While Instagram can still be publicly used, Telegram was filtered in May 2018. Their popularity among the Iranian youth began in 2012, after a considerable number of the communication channels, including Orkut, Yahoo! 360, Facebook, and others were censored and filtered by the Ministry of Telecommunications. The National Center for Cyberspace *(Markaz-e Melli-e Fazây-e Majâzi)* estimates that 7.5 million Iranian people, including over 40% population between the age of 16–35 use Instagram extensively within Iran. According to statistics, over 100,000 Iranian accounts have been curated on Telegram, with users creating over 1,200,000 posts per day. The Iranian Supreme Council of Cyberspace*,* Abol-hassan Firouzâbâdi declared that the high rate of social media as an entertainment platform has caused national concern. According to him, there are 24 million active Iranian users on Telegram, and between 12-14 million Iranian account holders on Instagram.[108] Statistics also indicate that there are more than 400 million active users per month, and more than 75 million active users per day on Instagram in Iran. These numbers include 51% male users and 49% female users. Furthermore, 90% of the users are 35 years or younger.[109] This information demonstrates how popular virtual networking sites in Iran have turned into public arenas for youth to experience what they are prevented from experiencing in the real public spaces of the city. It is striking that the virtual public space of Iranian society is completely different identity to the real urban spaces of Tehran.

The ostentatious wealth on display showcases young Iranian women and men in their 20s. The images reveal the everyday lives of young elite's as they plunge into excess from luxury cars such as Porsches and Maseratis, to million-dollar villas and mansions, pools, jewelry and watches, boozy parties, smoking, girls in bikinis, and fashion. Each of these images has attracted the attention of thousands of followers. The account, featuring selfies of young elite at parties and

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[107] The quote comes from the original Instagram page @therichkidsoftehran. See https://www.instagram.com/therichkidsoftehran/.

[108] Entekhab.ir, ایران در اپ واتس و تلگرام اینستاگرام، کاربران آمار" .۱۶:۴۱ - ۱۳۹۵/۰۹/۱۷ |. انتخاب تحلیلی خبری پایگاه" Text,Image. *fa*. http://www.entekhab.ir/fa/news/309262.

[109] Followgram.ir is one of the official pioneer marketing websites in Iran that offers packages for the increase of followers on Instagram. See "Instagram Statistics - Followgram." 2017. Accessed February 21. http://followgram.ir/instagram-statistics.

depicted in luxurious scenes carry hashtags: #young, #Iran, #Luxury, #Lavish, #Persian, or names of rich neighborhoods in Tehran, such as #Elahiyeh and #Farmanieh. The images and captions challenge the reputation of the country, as a conservative stronghold ruled by Islamic government and its leaders.

Followers of both Instagram accounts enjoy parading wealth and showing off their bodies in a virtual public sphere. Wearing designer-labeled clothes and posing in elegant gowns, young rich women flaunt their lavish lifestyles to help change people's perceptions of Iran, or so they claim.[110] These elites gallivant around the city in pursuit of pleasure despite Islamic rules and regulations. Women wearing short skirts, crop tops, and even bikinis drink alcohol and smoke hookah for the cameras. In a backlash, a Facebook account, "Poor Kids of Tehran" (PKOT) and an Instagram account of the same name appeared, that juxtapose pictures of poor and rich in the city.[111] Both accounts utterly contradict the vision promoted by the Islamic Republic government of Iran for the ideal youth [figure 2.6]. On these contrasting social media accounts, various kinds of positive and negative behaviors can be found, including gossip, criticisms, insults, complaints, negative judgments and rude attitudes.

Figure 2.6: Left image: a photo selected from the public Instagram account of RKOT. Right image: the image shows the gap between the rich and the poor levels of the Iranian society. (Source: Instagram)

Panthers and Gladiators of Dor-dor:

In Shahrvand Newspaper Article,, after a section on the "tragedy of Parivash," a section follows. In "Palang girls in streets," Hatefinia interviews Dariush, using the Farsi term *palang* (panther in English) to describe young women who play *dor-dor*. According to Hatefinia, *palang*

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[110] Sophie Roberts, "The Rich Kids of Tehran Share Snaps of Their Lifestyles - with Booze and Bikinis," *The Sun* (blog), November 23, 2016, https://www.thesun.co.uk/living/2248400/the-rich-kids-of-tehran-share-snaps-of-their-swanky-lifestyles-including-boozy-pool-parties-and-bikini-babes/.
[111] Jordan Valinsky, "Meet the 'Rich Kids of Instagram' - In Iran," World.mic, October 8, 2014, https://mic.com/articles/100788/meet-the-rich-kids-of-instagram-in-iran.

girls can be easily distinguished by an overwhelmingly use of make-up. When I was doing fieldwork, I interviewed around fifteen girls in their 20s and asked them about their experience of being a *palang*. They revealed that they all like to be called *palang* by the young rich boys in *dor-dor*. According to these interviewees, the term *palang* was considered a cool label for all girl fans of the *dor-dor*. They mentioned that being called *palang* helps them hunt rich boys more easily [figure 2.7].

Figure 2.7: Images of Iranian palangs posted publicly on the Instagram public accounts of Palange_irooni. (Source: Instagram)

After reading the weblogs and speaking with young women and men, I realized that the term *palang* is borrowed from the lyrics of a rap song of the same name. Behzad Davarpanah, famous as Behzad Leito, is an Iranian rapper born in 1992. He currently lives in Dubai, UAE. 'Palang' (2014) was one of his controversial songs (feat Alireza JJ and Sijal) that became famous among youth, particularly the fans of *dor-dor*. In the lyrics, he describes a particular type of girl, born in the 1990s, whom he calls *palang*. These girls, who are their 20s are described as having highlighted hair and remarkable colored eyes, achieved through the use of tinted contact lenses. They love sex, and desire money and men. In her search for a rich man, a *palang* tries her best to display her attributes, expressed through make-up and clothes, and eventually, hunts a 'high quality' young man to spend a fun night with him. By using the term 'good taste' (saligheye khoob), Leito points rich men with luxury cars including Mercedes. The lyrics also mention that these girls come from high-class districts and neighborhoods in Tehran, such as Niavaran, and they

usually won't leave until their sexual desires are satisfied. Leito's lyric compares *palangi* women with prostitutes that travel and work between Tehran and Dubai. According to this lyric, these young girls are a good choice only for a night or two. In their love of money and sex, and through the public display of their desire, these girls embody a specific social and class category among youth, which strongly contradicts the Iranian-Islamic model of a woman propagated by the conservative government. The male counterpart of a *palang* is called a *gladiator* [figure 2.8]. Girls of *dor-dor* label young rich boys who drive luxury cars, and have 'cool' looks and appearances as such. As *gladiators* and *palangs* hunt each other to fulfill various desires, their friendships usually don't last long.

Figure 2.8: Palang-gladiator couple image posted on the Instagram public account of Persian_Luxury_Couples. (Source: Instagram)

Transforming Codes of Beauty in Iran:

On March 1, 2013, The Guardian published an article on the highly visible issue of the Iranian obsession with physical beauty.[112] Cosmetic surgeries have become popular among young girls in the hope of attaining "doll faces," or in an effort to look like Western actresses. According to the article, "Iran has the highest rate of nose surgery in the world."[113] Iranians, mostly women, choose surgery as a way to change their looks. With the help of rhinoplasty, they reduce the size of their nose, and the tip made to point upwards to look more 'beautiful'. Some have more than one nose job. Changing the display of their looks allows women to silently react to the restrictive rules of compulsory Islamic covering. Based on the interviews conducted by *The Economist*, Iranians want to have smaller noses even than European ones. The article claims that for Iranian

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[112] Tehran Bureau correspondent, "The Beauty Obsession Feeding Iran's Voracious Cosmetic Surgery Industry," *The Guardian*, March 1, 2013, sec. World news, https://www.theguardian.com/world/iran-blog/2013/mar/01/beauty-obsession-iran-cosmetic-surgery.
[113] Ibid.

women, the face is the only part of the physical body that they can show as a result of *hejab* regulation, and hence, its beauty is important. A conducted study in co-operation with John Hopkins University in the US and The Rhinology Research Society of Iran shows the rate of nose-jobs per capita in Iran is seven times more than in America.[114] According to my interviews, *dor-dor* women either come from wealthy families, or they gain the required money to invest on their so-called 'beauty' from the men whom they meet and befriend in their nightly urban performances. Melody, a 24-year-old woman among the interviewees indicated that she finds friendships of her nightly *dor-dor* encounters do not last long. The interesting point was that Melody neither came from a wealthy family or owned a car herself. Therefore, every night, she joined her friends who owned a car to ride with them in *dor-dor* play. The young woman had two nose surgeries, primarily for the sake of being "different."

The National Newspaper has sought to examine the increasing number of cosmetic surgeries, not just noes jobs, but all types of surgeries. The number of cosmetic surgeries performed yearly are around 40,000, not including those performed by non-specialist surgeons. Besides nose surgeries, women desire to improve their looks through liposuctions, Botox injections in cheeks and foreheads to conceal wrinkles, collagen injections in lips to make them look bigger and sexier, eyebrow tattoos of various kinds, and many others.[115] Further research shows that the number of women who do surgeries on their stomachs and breasts, and buttock lifts and implants is also increasing. According to *The Economist*, a standard nose surgery costs at least $2,500 in Iran, almost twice that of the US.[116] Over the last years these prices have increased tremendously, particularly after the new economic sanctions and fluctuations in the currency exchange rates.. However, young women still consider changing a necessity and will find a ways to pay. The culture of beauty, specifically among *dor-dor* women, can be argues is a form escape from the social norms of behavior and common rules of public appearance.

Palang girls often consider plastic surgery and beauty enhancement procedures as 'classy'. They define codes of beauty with regard to physical manipulations of body that are the result of surgeries and injections. These girls are changing the norms of beauty in the country, and are a form of everyday silent resistance. The amalgamation of new looks, fashion, and luxury belongings formulate a mode of imposture to transform identity, a paradoxical response to a myriad of bodily restrictions and suppressions. Bold and expressive in their new looks, these young women have become agents of dissent and resistance in the context of Iran's conservative society and government. *Dor-dor,* as a playful and fun nighttime activity provides a rebellious space of

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[114] Ibid.
[115] AFP. 2016. "Iran Leaps into World's Top 10 Countries Performing Plastic Surgery." *The National*, January 4, sec. Arts & Life. http://www.thenational.ae/arts-life/beauty/iran-leaps-into-worlds-top-10-countries-performing-plastic-surgery.
[116] "Plastic Surgery in Iran: Under the Knife." 2015. Magazine. *The Economist*. October 22. http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21676799-why-one-particular-operation-so-popular-under-knife.

leisure and entertainment, and the expression of the young generation's opposition with existing social and cultural norms in the city.

Dor-dor: An Aimless *Tafrih*

Rich Tehrani youth spend most of their leisure time in streets looking for fun. In this regard, the Farsi phrase, *khiâbân-gardi* that has been employed by the young people. It literally means 'wandering in streets', and connotes a condition of 'aimlessness'. During fieldwork, in interviews with at least twelve Tehrani girls between the ages of 21-26 who were fans of *dor-dor* plays, all interviewees mentioned that what they desire in a luxury life is simply *tafrih*, which can be defined as living in a pleasurable state, with entertainment. It was surprising to see that for the young girls living under the restricted conditions of the Islamic Republic, having collective nightlife of fun and desire seemed to be vital, regardless of being rich or not. In an interview with Tina, a 22 year-old girl from not a rich, but a religious family, she defined *tafrih* as "a way to be free". She continued, and said that "where ever I can feel free, that space is a place for fun and *tafrih*". Tina equates luxury with freedom, and fun, and considers that both are only accessible to the wealthy.

Among *dor-dor* players, fundamental social concepts like 'beauty,' 'freedom,' and 'friendship' take on new meaning that violates Iranian tradition. Tina defined 'freedom' as not telling someone what to do or what to wear. She said, "having fun in *dor-dor* plays every single night is part of my lifestyle..."to "get rid of the loneliness that is resulted from having a different mindset than the rest of my family members." According to Tina, having too much make-up on her face makes her religious family think of her as a "bad woman." *Dor-dor* provides a space for Tina where all other people look and think like her, even if not being trustworthy enough for a longtime relationship. She plays *dor-dor* every night from 8 pm to 4 am. Her life is based on nighttime gatherings. She usually rests during the mornings, and spends the rest of her time on putting on makeup and 'classy' outfits to make ready for her night out. She enjoys this lifestyle, and continues despite the opposition of her family, and interestingly, even though she does not have a car or even a driver's license. She goes to *dor-dor* plays with her friends who do own a car. Tina likes to be called *palang*, and believes the term best represent her and other "high-class and hot girls." In her public profile on social media,, she advertised some of her interventions, including nose surgery, Botox injections in the face, and collagen lip injections. If she had has more procedures other than these, she did not mention them. . . For Tina, *dor-dor "tafrih-e bi hadaf"* is a form of aimless entertainment, in which she befriends rich boys. The boys, like Tina stand apart in look and appearance, having adopted the regulation style of the players. The friendships formed on the street most likely won't last more than a week or two., contributing the cyclical nature of play; the player always feels lonely, and returning to the play, and the designated arenas for *dor-dor* offers players feelings of freedom, pleasure and connection

'Street Harassment' as a Form of Public Leisure

Local stores located in these streets close early at night because of traffic and parking problems, as a result of *dor-dor*. The area stores close around 8 to 9 nightly, while stores on other streets close around 11 pm. From 8 pm until almost 12 am, these areas are always packed with traffic. Area residents complain of the high volume of music. Many residents and traders in the *dor-dor* neighborhoods worry that this activity could present a risk of death, particularly in emergency situations during high traffic periods when ambulances could not reach hospitals on time. According to various online news channels including IRNA and Melliyat, residents of the neighborhoods where *dor-dor* takes place, including Iran Zamin in Shahrak-e Gharb and Bâm-e Tehran in Velenjak have expressed objections to nighttime yelling by young women and men. The residents claim that besides traffic impacts, it is also psychologically disturbing hear foul language being shouted, and alcohol and drug-induced laughter throughout the night.[117] Residents also mentioned that the constant roaring of luxury car engines, exacerbated by the steep hills of Velenjak Avenue. The frustration mounts, and there are frequent verbal and physical clashes between residents and *dor-dor* players.

Reports show that *dor-dor* players, particularly young girls, are sometimes at risk and threatened by other players during the nighttime activity. IRNA News reported a violent act close to Niayesh Bridge in the highway.[118] According to this report, the driver's window of a white Peugeot 206 with two 23 year-old girl passengers was broken by two boy passengers of a Lexus car that was in a parallel driving with them. The report indicates that the boys felt that these girls did not pay enough attention to them. They were drunk, sitting in a wealthier car than the girls', while trying to ask for the girls' phone numbers. The boys then decided to break the girl's windows with a steering wheel lock. This resulted in a traffic jam, and more disturbingly, injury to one of the girls. The police was also reported in investigating the violent attack[119] that the injured girl mentioned that she and her friends come to this street during weekdays and weekends for *dor-dor* as they thought there were no alternatives to have fun in public spaces. The case illustrates the constant risk associated with fun and leisure in *dor-dor* play, and violating the social and cultural norms of public behavior in the context of the Islamic Republic.

Psychological analysis has investigated *dor-dor* games as a way of expressing youthfulness, in order to fulfill the needs for self-expression under conditions of restrictive society. The play seen as the result of a newly expanding social syndrome, which the report calls, "*now-kisegi*" and "*tâzeh be dorân residegi.*" Translated into English, the terms mean 'nouveau riche' and 'upstart'. One report continues by Farid Barati, an Iranian psychologist views *now-kisegi* as a form of narcissism. This social syndrome is nearly epidemic among Tehrani youth, and

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[117] بازی مار و پله دور کنندگان شب‌های پایتخت" (Snakes and Ladders Game of Dor-dor Players)," Online Newspaper (Iran, September 6, 2015), http://meliyat.com/fa/print/128369.

[118] Masoumeh Niknam, "What Is the Price for Dor-Dor ? - چند می گیری دور دور کنی؟," Online News Channel, Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), May 6, 2015, http://www.irna.ir/fa/News/81597258/.

[119] Ibid.

specifically among *dor-dor* players, where boasting and self-glorification through exaltation of wealth and luxurious belongings serves as a way of self-expression. The *dor-dor* games facilitate a mode of expression among the youth, specifically the rich, who have great financial support from their parents with no intention or impetus to work and gain success. The lack of enthusiasm and motivation results in the growth of aimless desire among the youth, which, in turn, transforms the streets into a stage for self-expression and self-satisfaction. With no respect for other people's rights, rich youth use their wealth to express their desires in the streets.[120]

The conservative government considers '*dor-dor*' a form of street harassment (in Farsi: *Mozâhemat-e Khiâbâni*). Through state-sponsored media, the government has warned people to avoid *dor-dor* using this descriptor. The term, *Mozâhemat-e Khiâbâni* is synonymous with intruders and those who bother women in streets. In contrast, for the youth, *dor-dor* is only a form of public entertainment and leisure, resulting from years of public restrictions. On 6 September 2015, IRNA (Islamic Republic News Agency) posted a report about *dor-dor* in the capital city, which spawned intensified police control during the following nights. However, the players changed locations to other streets and continued their fun activities. The report mentioned that this form of nighttime leisure has caused inconvenience for the residents. In these neighborhoods, the residents given testimonies to the police in an effort to stop such midnight nuisances, and improve safety. According to this report, a majority of nighttime *dor-dor* players either drive drunk or use drugs, and therefore, they are not in condition to drive. In the silence of the midnight time, these players shout, use improper terms, laugh out loud, and do all sorts of norm-breaking activities. These bother residents. The vivid outrage for the widening gap between rich and poor has evoked commentary from officials including Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In a comment on the controversy, he stated that the young rich people who deliberately display their wealth in streets cause psychological insecurity in the country that needs to be controlled by the police [figure 2.9].[121] This was not surprising. Other similar reports were also published, such as a. July 27, 2013 account by the state-sponsored institution of the Young Journalists Club, which lists *dor-dor* i as one of the top ten nightly crimes.[122]

[120] بازی مار و پله دور دورکنندگان شب‌های پایتخت‪"‬ (Snakes and Ladders Game of Dor-dor Players)."
[121] پلیس راهور تهران از تشدید برخورد با 'جولان خودروهای لوکس' خبر داد‪"‬ 'Police Reported the Intensified Control Over Dor-Dor Activities with Luxury Cars,'" Online News Channel, Nasim Online News Agency, accessed September 21, 2018, http://www.nasimonline.ir/print/996956.
[122] Webgardi Group. 2013. "Top 10 List of Night Crimes in the Capital City." Text, Image, 4485161. Tehran: Young Journalists Club. http://www.yjc.ir/fa/news/4485161.

Figure 2.9: Police intervention on 25 December 2016, for the prevention of dor-dor performances in Tehran. (Source: Tasnim News Agency, Courtesy by Hossein Zohrvand, retrieved from https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/media/1395/10/05/1277099/.

On 24 November 2015, one of the episodes of Biraheh, a documentary series produced by Reza Sedaghat-Sho'ar on IRIB1 channel investigated *dor-dor* as a social problem.[123] In this documentary, a reporter followed several luxury cars for a period of four hours, from 9 pm to 1 am on a street in Tehran. The video captured scenes of parallel driving in the streets of Tehran. After four hours of stealthily following these cars, the reporter asked each of the occupants of the cars to answer a series of questions about why they like to drive in the street for hours, and knowingly disturb the privacy of others who live nearby. These young men had interesting yet unreasonable responses to this question. The first driver responded that he does this for fun, that he needs to be out of the house for a while and spend his spare time this way, making the claim that there are no other fun activities or places available during these hours. He also mentioned that what he does should not be considered a 'disturbance'. The reporter asked him how would he define this term, and said the young man said that it means bringing people out of their cars with force (in Farsi slang: *kherkesh kardan*). The reporter asked if others would do the same thing to your family members and dear ones, for instance, your mother or sister, how would you feel. He seemed disappointed at that point, and referred to dor-dor players as "selfish." He thought that the players, in fact, don't think much about the meaning of 'disturbance' and their impact on other people's lives. When the reporter asked a young man why he disturbs women in their cars by talking to them behind the wheel, he replied that he doesn't consider this behavior as a form of disturbance. According to his response, young girls behind the wheels who drive in this street are

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[123] Biraheh. 2017. Accessed March 24. http://www.aparat.com/v/ZadFH/

seeking a relationship with men. He indicated that the majority of these ladies do not live in this neighborhood and come from other parts of the city. He noted that the government limits leisure activities for youth, and this is the only way that girls and boys could meet and form relationships under restricted rules.

Interestingly, in Biraheh, the young boys who are interviewed, and engaged in the act of street harassment are very honest in describing what they do.[124] 'Freedom', according to this government-sponsored documentary, needs to be defined based on social rules and regulations. However, these rules are not defined for the audience. According to the law, *dor-dor* players who are found involved in street harassment can be sentenced up to six months in prison. Furthermore, according to Iran's traffic regulations, driving at a very slow speed and blocking traffic are both considered evident violations. The Department of Traffic and Transportation of Tehran Municipality clearly outlines driver regulations in the written test handbook to get a driver license.[125] In the instances of *dor-dor*, the police of Tehran can seize the cars that drive side-by-side at slow speeds and, police are allowed to question what they consider 'improper behaviors and relationships' in the streets, considered a public space. However, none of the police attempts have yet been successful in terms of stopping *dor-dor*, or in transforming this spontaneous leisure activity in the streets of Tehran or other Iranian cities. *Dor-dor* has thus become a cultural signifier of the clash between the young generation and the conservative government [figure 2.10].

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Traffic regulations in Iran, as written in the driver handbook, are accessible at the Traffic Police website. For more information see http://traffic.tehran.ir.

Figure 2.10: Images demonstrate how the young women and men in dor-dor plays connect and make relationships as a way of escaping the existing social norms and traditional values of Iranian society. (Source: author's personal collection)

An Urban Culture of Imposture

According to the Islamic teachings, one of the central principles of Islam for an Islamic society is preventing boasting and a display of wealth. Since the 1979 Revolution, simplicity has been acclaimed as a social and cultural value for the Iranian Islamic nation. In the early years of the Revolution, the Islamic government admired the simple lifestyle of Prophet Mohammad and his followers. However, in recent years, what is evident in the Iranian society, the youth culture stands in deep contrast with the above-mentioned values and beliefs. The increasing number of 'rich-kids' in Tehran has become the symbol of an expanding inequality in the country, largely as the result of the increasing number amount of economic and political corruption.

A new culture of imposture is being formed in Iran, particularly in the capital city among the current generation of youth — expanding as the peoples' desires for wealth and power increases. The wave of conspicuous consumption and increasing voracity in purchasing brands and luxury goods is changing the values of the Islamic society. The *nouveau riche* is considered a

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social class of 'untouchables' who benefit and are sanctioned or protected by their influential networks, and very often, their relationships with government officials. The intentional use of the term, *nouveau riche is* to highlight a particular group of Iranian citizens who have had an important role in the formation of the existing wealth gap in the country. The nouveau riche gained wealth through an exploitation of a corrupt economic and governmental system where nepotism and fraud have been legitimized for 'untouchables'.

Imposture implies that the *dor-dor* players, underneath the glamor, are anxious because they might be impostors who are not as wealthy, beautiful, fun or fabulous as they pretend [figure 2.11]; if a life is built on pretense, there's a deeper layer of insecurity under a conspicuous display of luxury. Shahram Khosravi in *Precarious Lives: Waiting and Hope in Iran*, discusses the institutionalization of social precarity in Middle Eastern countries, including Iran since the late 1990s. Investigating the complex social conditions of life in Iran and the insecurity of wealth that resulted from those conditions, Khosravi considers the idea of, "*zerang bazi* (playing smart)," and *Irooni bazi* (playing Iranian)," as social strategies of building success at the expense of other people.[126] According to Khosravi, the culture of competition, *cheshm-o ham cheshmi* among the young generation is a byproduct of insecurity and distrust among Iranian citizenz,.[127] In which success is related to competition, an easy gain of wealth, and where the chance to reach success in this manner is slim. There is little hope among young Iranians, and this precariousness becomes a condition of life, and the resulting behavior, a political issue. The culture of imposture among the young generation has become a strategy — producing fake identities through public acquisition in a simultaneous mode of pursuit of fame, fun and self-expression. The new urban practices of youth's impostors can be situated as a direct response to the state of living under restricted freedom and diminished hope.

Figure 2.11: The rich kids posts on the Instagram account of bache.poldaraye.tehra1, another account that represents the lifestyles of the wealthy social class in Iran. (Source: Instagram)

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[126] Shahram Khosravi, *Precarious Lives: Waiting and Hope in Iran* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 12.
[127] Ibid.

In the 19th century, the economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen introduced the concept of "conspicuous consumption." He emphasized the behavioral characteristics of a specific social class that emerged as a consequence of capital accumulation in the mid-nineteenth century in Europe, called the *nouveau riche* (new rich). Veblen used the concept to describe an upper class whose aim was to manifest their social class and prestige through wealth and consumption of luxury goods and products. The display of social status and narcissistic behavior induced by consumerism, and the desire for immediate gratification of hedonic expectations, were not only practiced by rich people, but also mirrored by poor social classes. For the poor, the display of wealth was a way to reduce the sociological impression of poverty. Accordingly, the researches and studies built more insights into the economic differences between racial groups and common assumptions about luxury life styles. For instance, Kerwin Kofi Charles, Erik Hurst and Nikolai Roussanov used national representative data on consumption to study the Black-White 'wealth gap' in American societies. According to their study, there are visible consumption patterns both within and across races. Regardless of having less wealth and income than whites, minorities may spend more on conspicuous items such as cars, jewelry and clothing.[128]

A similar mode of conspicuous consumption applies to the context of contemporary Iranian society, which is visible, particularly in the everyday life of Tehrani youth. It should be mentioned that the trends of luxurious living and lavish lifestyles have long existed in the country, as a result of a rich history of monarchies. Under the Pahlavis (1925-1979), and with the force of modernization plans, the royal family and their lifestyle became a model for the majority of rich and noble families in the country. However, with the 1979 Revolution and the attendant shift in goals and ideologies, concepts such as 'social equality' and 'simple life style' followed. The life style of Prophet Muhammad and Shi'ite Imams became the main model for sociopolitical transformation. These ideas remained intact for about a decade, due to the eight year war with Iraq (1980-1988). After the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, it all started to change.

The worst scenario — exemplified in sociopolitical changes — started to unfold during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013). His economic policies intensified international sanctions on Iran, which resulted in an increase in the social gap between the rich and the poor. The middle class gradually diminished, with the rich becoming richer, and the poor becoming poorer every day. During his presidency, a huge number of assets were lost every day in the country. Massive embezzlements created an array of controversies and disputes among the various social strata. These have continued to today. A changing social gap was not the intention of the initial goals of the Revolution. The gap, mostly affected youth and particularly women who were born after the Revolution, and did not have the experience of pre-Revolution life. Under international sanctions, a relatively new class of ultra-rich rose in Iran. And, the new tycoons, who are a mixture of well connected to the regime and the clergy are in high positions of power. The

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[128] Charles, Kerwin Kofi, Erik Hurst, and Nikolai Roussanov. 2007. "Conspicuous Consumption and Race." Working Paper 13392. National Bureau of Economic Research. doi:10.3386/w13392.

sanctions not only weakened this particular social group, but ironically, also helped them in the process to become richer and more powerful.

It is interesting that during Ahmadinejad's presidency, regardless of coming to power on an anti-corruption platform, worsening economic corruption has resulted due to sanctions and difficulties for international trade; money acquired through corrupt practices. The ultra-rich invested in big cities, and in Tehran, mostly in the form of shopping malls and residential towers. While the rich increased their wealth, the poor experienced worst living conditions, resulting in a huge social gap, and the fading away of the middle class. In 2011, the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran reported the inflation rate of 21.5%.[129] Contrastingly, a same-year, an article published by the Economist Magazine indicated that Porsche Company, "sold more cars in Tehran in 2011 than in any other city in the Middle East."[130]

An analysis of rich and poor — as a paradox of Iran's political economy — highlights the challenges of contemporary Iran. Supercars, including Ferraris, Maseratis, Porches, Audis, Mercedes, BMWs, Lamborghinis and Aston Martins, are worth hundreds of thousand dollars are purchased in Iran Rial currency, even with a 40-percent import tax over the actual value of all imported cars. The rich kids of Tehran are required to pay the 40 percent import tax before paying the actual price of their supercars.[131] According to the semi-official Mashregh News report, about 100,000 luxury cars had been imported to Iran since 2009.[132] People who can afford to buy these cars pay 140 percent of the actual value. The U.S. selling price of a $75,000 Porsche could cost, at minimum $178,000 in Iran. The information in these news reports about currency values and prices apply to the first half of 2018, before the new international sanction rules were implemented. In the second half of 2018, prices has been further affected, increasing tremendously as a result of an unbalanced currency exchange rate in the country.

It appears that under the Islamic Republic that one of the strongest Middle Eastern markets for sport cars has emerged, despite severe trade and economic sanctions. According to the London Times, in 2012, two companies, both connected to the Revolutionary Guard requested 1,400 Porsche vehicles of a limited edition model of classic 911 sports cars. However, Porsche declined their request, as only 1,911 vehicles of that type were available.[133] This statistics reveal that the

[129] The information is according to the official statistics reported by the Central Bank of Iran. See www.cbi.ir.

[130] *The Economist*. 2012. "When Will It Ever End?," August 18. http://www.economist.com/node/21560596.

[131] Hanna, Laurie. 2015. "'Our Lives Aren't like Homeland or Argo!' Instagram's Rich Kids of Tehran Claim to Show off Their £250,000 Cars, £10m Homes and Opulent Lifestyles... but Are They Fake?" *Mail Online*, January 19. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2916388/Our-lives-aren-t-like-Homeland-Argo-Instagram-s-Rich-Kids-Tehran-250-000-cars-10m-homes-opulent-lifestyles-attack-view-think-ride-camels.html.

[132] "صدهزار خودرو با تخلف وارد کشور شد" Online News Channel, Mashregh News, July 5, 2018, https://www.mashreghnews.ir/news/871757/.

[133] Tomlinson, Hugh. 2014. "Anger at Poor Little Rich Kids of Tehran." *The Times (London)*, October 6, sec. News. http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/world/middleeast/article4227560.ece.

elite in Iran continue to purchase huge numbers of luxury cars even under strict economic conditions.

Dor-dor Urbanism

During fieldwork, I drove in the infamous streets of Tehran at nights, observing the practices of *dor-dor.* I spent a considerable time studying Andarzgou Boulevard in the north of the city. It was difficult to capture quality images due to the dynamics of movement, but observations in tandem with interviews with *dor-dor* fans, traders, store keepers and pedestrians in the street helped paint a picture of *dor-dor* as an urban phenomenon. Through interviews and observations, the importance of *dor-dor* as a sociopolitical and cultural force in transforming the Andarzgou urban area is evident. What follows is an explication of *dor-dor* as a spatial manifestation of the culture of imposture in the city, as illustrated by this well-known street.

Andarzgou is part of the Farmanieh neighborhood that is located in Shemiran, a northern district of the capital city [figure 2.12]. The neighborhood of Farmanieh has a rich history as the land used to belong to the royal prince of Qajar Dynasty, Abdol Hossein Mirza Farmanfarma. In fact, the name of the neighborhood is also taken from the name of his wealthy royal family and ancestors. An image of the pre-revolution time captured by Annemarie Schwarzenbach demonstrates Farmanieh in the modernization era. Young Iranians sitting by the swimming pool of a modern villa in Farmanieh street depict some aspects of the pre-revolution luxury lifestyles in Tehran [figure 2.13]. The image also shows that today's glamorous lifestyles and extravagant expressions of wealth did not exist in the same way before the Revolution.
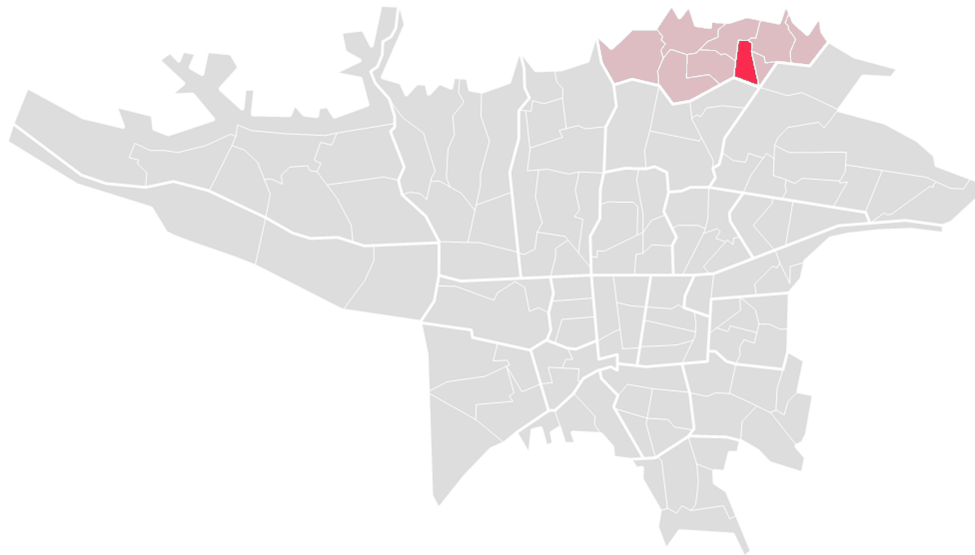
Figure 2.12: The location of Farmanieh neighborhood (red) in the Municipal District #1 (pink) of northern Tehran (Shemiran). (Source: Wikipedia, retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farmanieh#/media/File:Farmaniyeh_in_Tehran.PNG)

Figure 2.13: A luxury villa in Farmanieh Street in 1935. (Source: Helvetic Archives, courtesy of Annemarie Schwarzenbach retrieved from https://www.helveticarchives.ch/detail.aspx?ID=113278)

Andarzgou boulevard surrounds the neighborhood. At its center is the religious space of *Imamzadeh* Ali Akbar, nearby is the well-known Qeytarieh park ofnorthern Tehran [figure 2.14].[134] The park has remained one of the most significant spaces for young women and men select to use as a popular meeting place and their rendezvous in cars. There are U-turn spaces constructed in different parts of the boulevard where the rich kids cruise in expensive cars, going up and down the limited area of the boulevard.

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[134] *Imamzadeh* is a Farsi term for religious shrines of immediate descendants of the Shi'ite Imams. These shrines are centers of Shi'ite devotion.
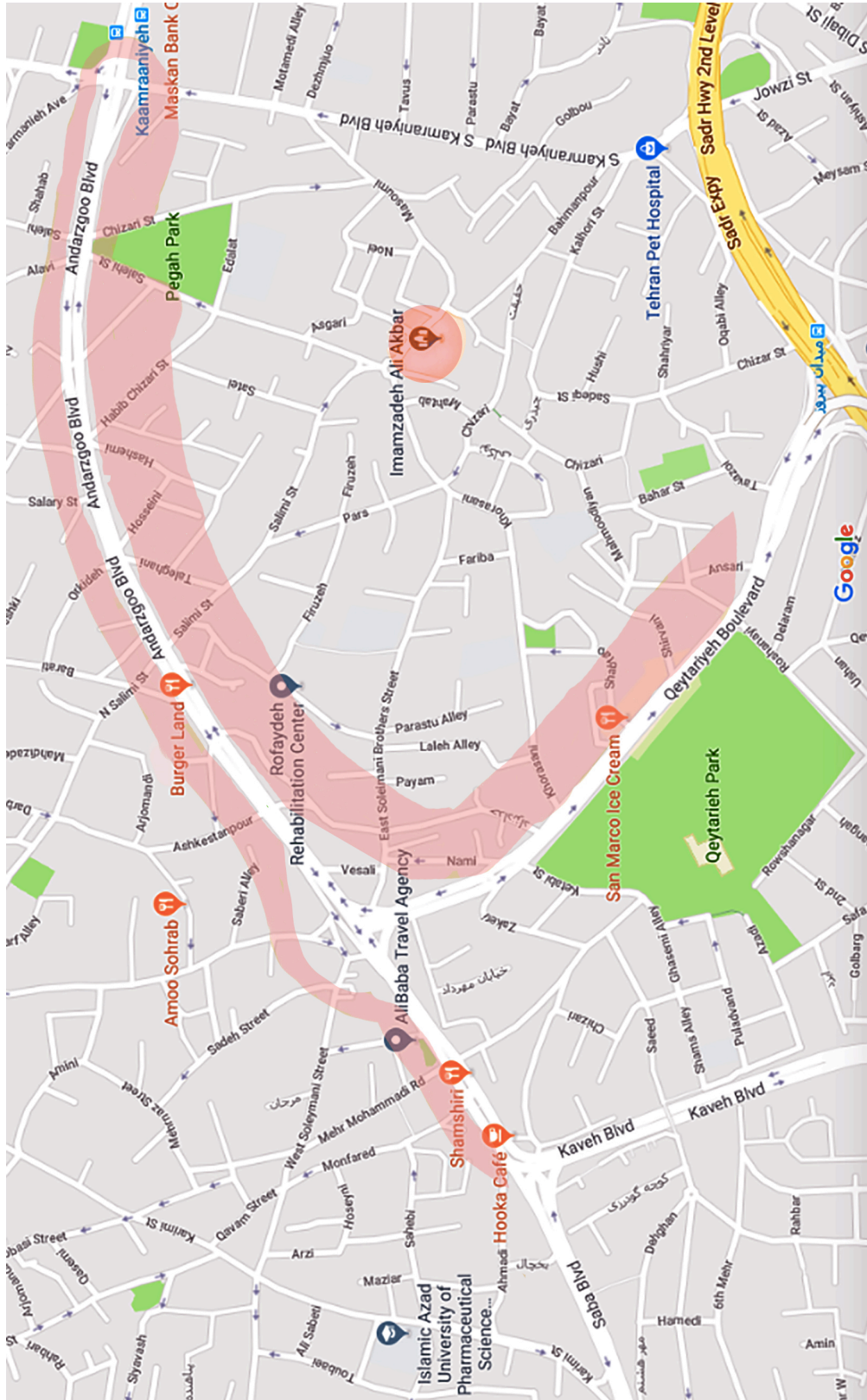
Figure 2.14: Andarzgou Boulevard location on the map of Tehran. The parts highlighted in red show the accumulation of businesses, mostly the eateries on the two sides of the boulevard. (Source: Google Maps)

On a Thursday night around 9:30 pm on Andarzgou Street, traffic was congested. Young women and men drove up and down the street in their luxurious automobiles, cruising, but slowing down their speed every time they saw an attractive Iranian of the opposite sex. They exchanged numbers and chatted through open windows. In a crowded area with many people — in front of a very small café called Amir's Chocolate — there is no available inside space to sit. Fashionable young women and men in the latest styles are gathered, engaged in conversation and having a good time. I interview two men, Kamyar and Saman between the ages of 34 and 36, who provide interesting information regarding nightly *dor-dor*s. Kamyar introduced himself as a *dor-dor* specialist who had spent many years doing this every night. According to Kamyar, *dor-dor* plays have significantly transformed the area of Andarzgou in response to a variety of construction underway, and the emergence of new businesses on both sides of the boulevard. And based on what the merchants and local residents mentioned in separate interviews, the traffic that results by *dor-dor* play almost paralyzes the area. The only kind of business that has mushroomed in growth despite the impact of traffic has been the eateries. Tracking each of the old and new eateries on the map, to understand the evolution of Andarzgou street, it is easy to see a correlation to cruising to the growth of restaurants and cafes [figure 2.15]. These are the only places where youth of opposite sexes can gather to befriend each other. However, the new restrictions enforced by the police has limited the working hour of these local restaurants until midnight, even during weekends and on holidays.

Saman, the second interviewee, named three important spots among so many others that have become iconic spaces for *dor-dor* players to gather and meet: Amir's Chocolate café, Night Pizza, and Burger Land [figures 2.16 - 2.19]. According to Saman, the role of the three spots in the city is similar to the role of night clubs and bars in Western countries, except that in the Iranian versions, people are not allowed to dance and drink alcohol. He continued, noting that almost all of the eateries in Andarzgou boulevard are successful as they host a great number of young women and men every night.

Figure 2.15: Andarzgou Boulevard has turned into one of the most popular spots with a variety of restaurants, cafes, and boutiques. (Source: Google Map)
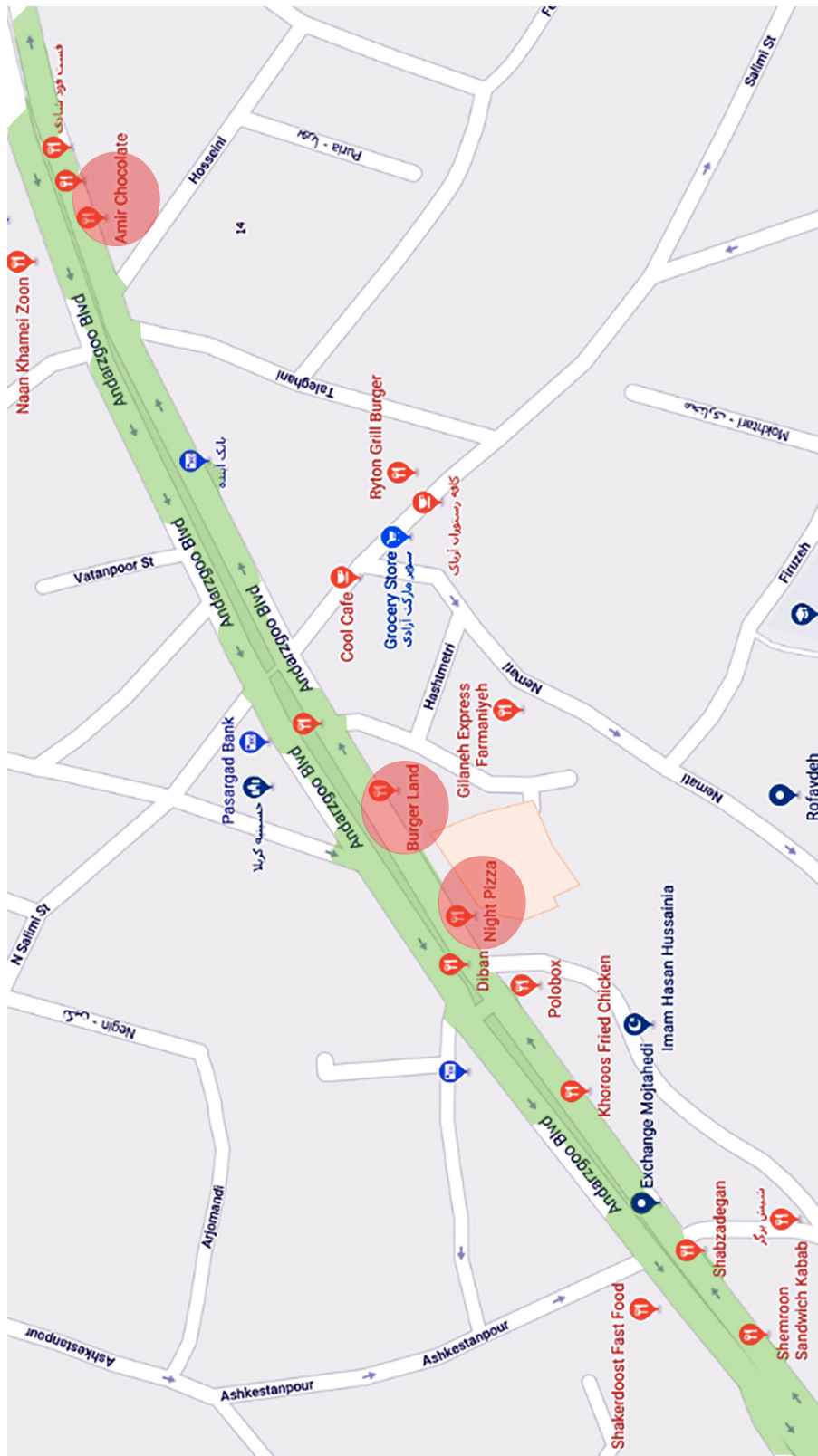
Figure 2.16: The red circles show the location of the three most popular gathering spots in Andarzgou Boulevard. (Source: Google Maps)

Figure 2.17: Amir's Chocolate Café is a very small and cozy space, and has been one of the oldest businesses that appeared in Andarzgou Boulevard as a result of the nightly dor-dor plays.

Figure 2.18: Inside and outside photos of the Night Pizza place in Andarzgou Boulevard. (Source: by author)

Figure 2.19: Burger Land of Andarzgou Boulevard. (Source: Fidilio.com, retrieved from https://fidilio.com/restaurants/burgerlandandarzgoo/برگرلند-اندرزگو/)

During my interview with Kamyar, he mentioned an important fact about the nightly *dor-dor* plays. According to Kamyar, there are two types of *dor-dor* women as defined by the young men. The first type includes the young women who are interested in making friendships and relationships in their cruising experiences. They look for a night of fun and entertainment. The second are women prostitutes who look for customers in public spaces. Kamyar continued that the second group have their own rules in the *dor-dor* plays. By rolling down their car window and expressing the terms of their "business," the male players can decide whether they want to follow. If the price mentioned by a women prostitute during parallel driving is not agreed upon by a man or the man refuses her offer outright, she rolls up the car window and continues driving in search of other possible customers. Of course, after finding the right person, the rest of the business occurs in a private space.

Despite being noisy and disruptive in the neighborhoods, *dor-dor* has continued to be a desirable nighttime activity for the young generation in these locations. It is clear that *dor-dor* is remaking the city's local economy through the enhancement of local businesses, particularly eateries, shopping centers and boutiques. The apartments in these locations have high value, despite the traffic and noise. In recent years, the construction of shopping centers and malls has also affected *dor-dor* urbanism. In Andarzgou boulevard, Sana Shopping Center began construction in 2011 and completed after six years [figure 2.20]. The luxury mall houses a variety of open air and enclosed restaurants and cafes that are often packed with young people. Despite existing traffic in Andarzgou boulevard, the shopping mall is one of the successful businesses of the area, providing luxurious products and services to the wealthy customers and *dor-dor* players.

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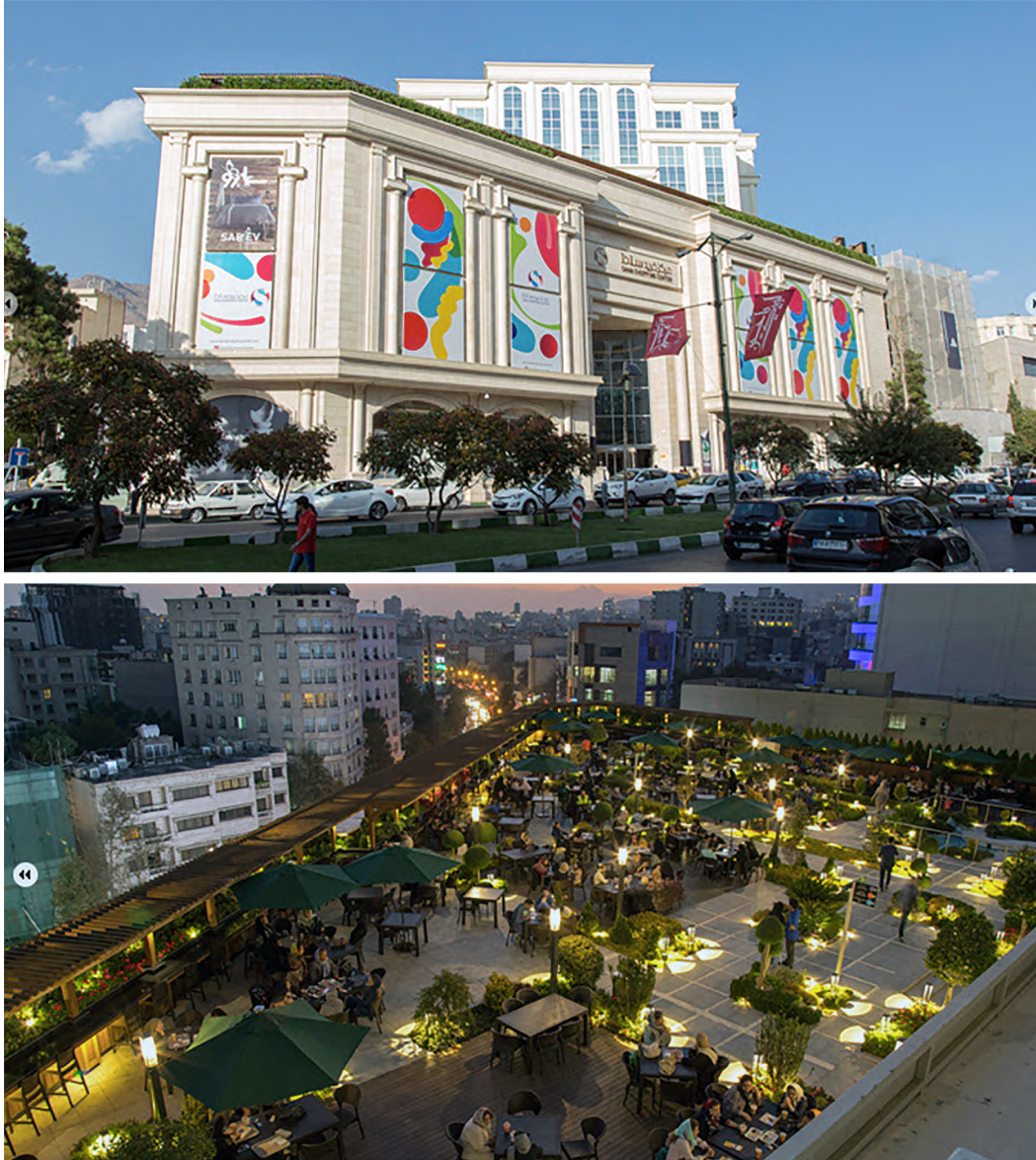
Figure 2.20: Sana Shopping Center in Andarzgou Boulevard. The luxury mall includes open air restaurants and coffeeshops that offer service to wealthy customers who look for a fancy place to rest and meet with each other after their dor-dor plays. (Source: Fidilio.com)

Conclusion: *Dor-Dor* for Fun and Resistance

This chapter focused on *dor-dor* on particular streets and in certain parts of the city to in order to investigate recent sites of leisure and entertainment in Tehran.. It is not easy to control the youth in Tehran. This may be in part due to the. Statistics that indicate an estimated 60 percent of the population of Tehran is younger than 25, that is, born in the years after the 1979 Revolution. *Dor-dor* started around a decade ago in the capital city, gradually expanding to mostly 'upper-class' streets.[135] During the past few years, this kind of leisure activity has reached its greatest

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[135] Hatefinia, "A Night with Dor-dor Fans in the Capital City پایتخت «دُور دُور» اهل با شبی."

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number of fans, subsequently becoming a threat for the conservative government, as a new generation youth creates their own spaces and captures their own brand of freedom in the Islamic Republic's capital city.

The municipal-owned Shahrvand Newspaper posed a question concerning the transformation of Tehran: "why do young women and men practice *dor-dor* in particular streets of the capital city?" The newspaper criticized the lack of proper leisure spaces in the city, and public spaces where young people might meet and gather. The article cites the occupation of specific streets in *dor-dor* performances as a response to the needs of youth for a past time.[136] *Dor-dor*m is an urban practice for everyday leisure, entertainment, behavior and self-expression. Minimally policed and controlled, it keeps the youth, particularly women outside the realm of political decisions. And this everyday public activity allows women to experience a particular kind of social and urban freedom; a form of escape from the behavioral norms of the society.

In *Life as Politics,* Asef Bayat considered the streets, "an arena of politics," or public space where the actors and the authorities encounter oppositions, embodying an operational feature that he called, "passive networks."[137] According to Bayat, a "passive network" is an "instantaneous communication among atomized individuals that is established by a tacit recognition of their common identity."[138] In *dor-dor* play, the street provides a "passive network" where people with similar identities come together, without necessarily knowing each other. In fact, they all gather in a place to show authorities that they, the players want to be different. Therefore, through the act of occupying streets for the display of luxury cars and bold fashioned looks, the youth mobilize to act collectively without the presence of any deliberately constructed networks. They may not even be aware of the network they have produced, but their leisure experience consists of a collective mode of resistance that should not be ignored. The simultaneous engagement in fun and resistance is thus a quiet daily encroachment in pursuit of freedom. This temporary mode of freedom, although limited, provides a space to escape, in resistance to the norms of a conservative society. Aimless, but meaningful, *dor-dor* turns the street into a temporary public space where freedom can be negotiated and pretended to be experienced, to some extent. The display of wealth in the streets of the capital city also represents an everyday mode of disapproval against the Islamic Republic's propagations on how to become a proper "Iranian-Islamic" citizen.

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[136] Mirzaie, Minoo. 2015. "A Transformation in the Concept of the City و اینک ... دگرگونی در مفهوم شهر" Online Newspaper. *Shahrvand Newspaper*. July 30. http://shahrvand-newspaper.ir/News%3ANoMobile/Main/38661/
[137] Bayat, *Life as Politics*, 53.
[138] Ibid.

Chapter Three

Private Spaces of Public Fun:

Clandestine Parties in Suburban Gardens of Tehran

This is Tehran for me: its absences were more real than its presences …

Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*, 2003.
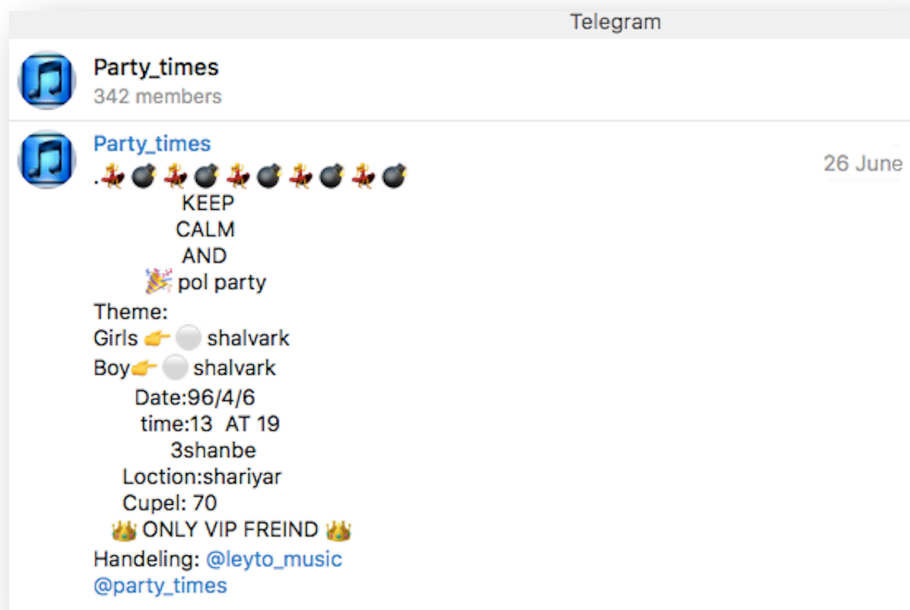
Figure 3.1: A public invitation message plans a pool-party in Shahriyar (a southern suburban district of Tehran). The message was posted on Telegram in summer 2017. (Source: Telegram)

On 26 June 2017, an invitation to a pool party was announced by Telegram to a group of anonymous administrators who organized the public channel, Party-Times [figure 3.1]. The invitation announced tickets with the cost of 70,000 Iranian Rials (equal to about $15) to young Tehranis who planned to attend the party in Shahriyar, a suburban district of Tehran. As indicated on the invitation message, the guests were requested to wear shorts. This party was held on 27 June 2017, a day after the invitation was publicly sent out. A considerable number of similar

invitations pop up almost every day on the social media channels, among which Instagram and Telegram are the most used in the country.

Invitation announcements of this kind might seem bizarre in the country ruled by the conservative regime of the Islamic Republic. However, the abundance of these messages illustrates that they are well received and responded to by the youth population. According to the statistical reports, more than 50 percent of Iran's total population are youth under the age of 30.[139] Such invitation messages are signs that reveal the formation and expansion of new types of leisure activities and spaces under the Islamic Republic's repressive social mores [figure 3.2]. During the last decade, youth lived their lives under the watchful eyes of the conservative government. Though activities such as partying have been deemed improper and immoral, they remain a common practice among the young generation. The parties require veiled spaces in order to remain secure and uninterrupted under strict surveillance and control. This chapter explores the spatial implication of a new mode of partying in Tehran and its suburbs. It investigates the ways in which party spaces respond to the production of a cultural identity among the new generation of youth that is contrary to the expectations of the Islamic Republic.
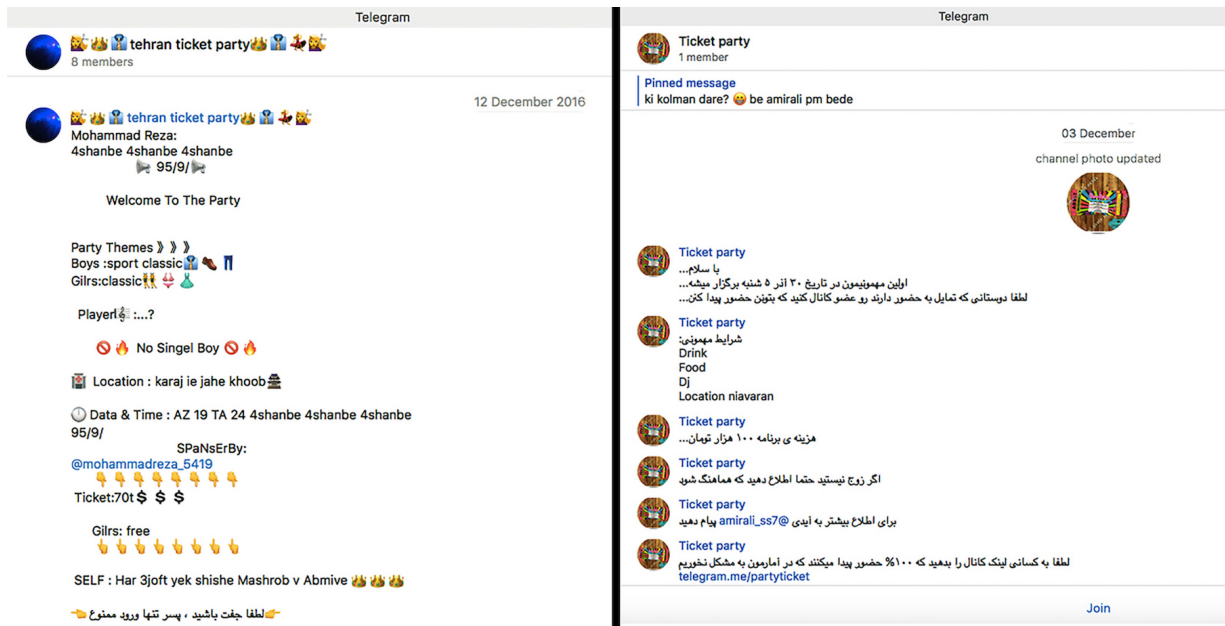
Figure 3.2: Two other invitations to pool parties posted on public Telegram channels in December 2016. These parties were planned to be held in a garden in Karaj (a city in Alborz Province which used to be part of Tehran) and a garden villa in northern Tehran. (Source: Telegram)

The following images indicate some of the fundamental transformations in the life of Iranian people since the 1979 Revolution [figure 3.3]. This chapter looks at this transformation from a socio-spatial lens. The images reveal that modern spaces of joy and entertainment constructed by the Pahlavi regime were disrupted by the Islamic Republic through implementation of severe controls. However, new signs of collective desire and fun continue to emerge under the rules of control, and beg a number of questions. How has the socio-spatial transformation of leisure

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[139] Information retrieved from https://www.amar.org.ir/news/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2566.

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activities occurred over time? Why did it happen? And, what are the spatial implications of such huge changes in the Islamic Republic context?
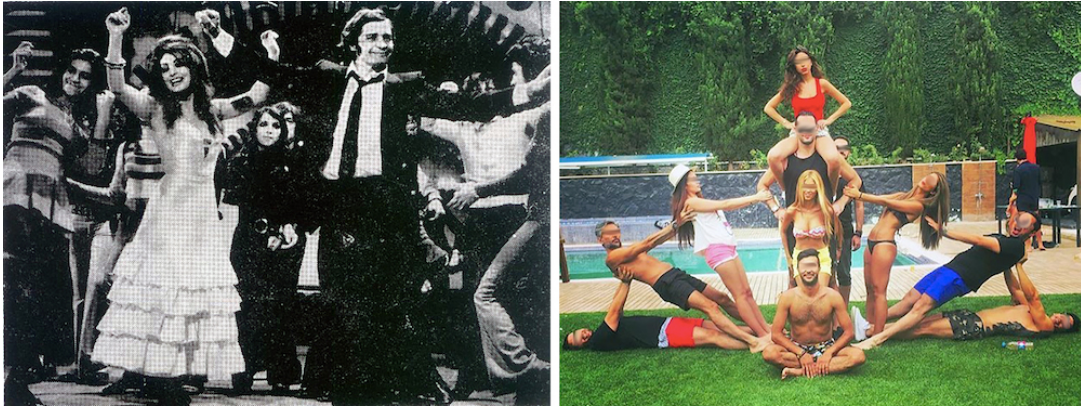
Figure 3.3: Left image: Chandelier Restaurant and Dancing in Tehran before the 1979 Revolution. (source: A selected scene from the movie Mard-e Ejare'ie); Right image: Estakhr-party (Pool party) in a suburban garden-villa. (Source: the public Instagram account of The Rich Kids of Tehran) – The contrast between the two images that capture on a time span of about 45 years, manifests the fact that the pre-revolution types of leisure activities were more conservative than the ones being practiced under the Islamic Republic. In fact, the nature of experiencing modern fun under the Pahlavi involved some respect for collective religious and traditional beliefs and values, while the notion of respect has almost been faded from similar practices by the Iranian youth in the past decade. The right image would have been more understandable if captured in the context of Beverly Hills or Miami beaches, but it can be considered spectacular in the context of the Islamic Republic.

Despite the high level of governmental suppression and control over those public gatherings organized for fun and entertainment purposes, post-revolutionary generation in Iran, like young people throughout the world, yearn for communal activities. They look for opportunities to organize public meet-ups and events in the urban landscapes of Tehran, as well as other big and small cities of the country, regardless of all kinds of existing moral regulations. Unfortunately, the Morality Police know how to disrupt different types of youth entertainment and organized gatherings in the city, and therefore, the production of urban joy is, at times, forcefully repressed. However, when these sorts of urban public gatherings are closed by the authorities, they take other forms, occurring in private enclosed spaces instead.

From a historical perspective, the 1979 Iranian Islamic Revolution shifted the secular authoritative Pahlavi Monarchy (1925-1979) to the Islamic Republic. The former regime strategically engaged in the modernization project by rejecting traditional practices that were rooted in the culture of Islam. They sought the construction of a secular nation-state. In contrast, the Islamic government endeavored to the institutionalize religion, and reject the Pahlavi 'modern' style. This shift tremendously affected the social life of the people, particularly urban youth and women, and the pursuit of public leisure, recreation and entertainment. Gradually, youth have gained a new understanding of their individual rights. A sense of freedom is now available to a generation coming of age, who enjoy the privileges of wealth and status. Their experience is deeply intertwined with modes of resistance and their everyday lives, fashioned in reaction to existing governmental controls. Rising social demands for pleasure and joy form an underground, in which unrestricted leisure activities are accessible to the young and rich. Everyday practices of

defiance, as expressions of this 'leisure culture' take place in veiled spaces outside the boundaries of control.

The social strata of an underground of resistance continues to manifest itself in various types of communal activities, including parties and night gatherings, sometimes in extreme and the most un-Islamic forms. One of its most common iterations is the organization of mixed-gender parties in the suburban gardens of Tehran, where 'others' cannot intervene and disturb their fun. These gatherings differ to some extent from regular or ordinary parties that take place on occasion in private homes, with the presence of friends and families. These gatherings reveal cultural shift in Iran, in which an emerging practice of partying has been adopted by young Iranians. It showcases an alternative understanding of public/private binary and social identity, which is grounded in obscureness and uncertainty. The parties, a new mode of public interest and exposure, which occur in private spaces, are a rebuke of the values and restrictions, as well as the behavior for citizens prescribed by the Islamic Republic.

In post-revolutionary Iran, the representation of joy as a form of public control over private spaces of fun has transformed and blurred the meaning of public and private. It is a battle for identity and self-expression with results in a spatial paradox, in which private and public space become the stage for resistance. The 'illicit' fun taking place at covert parties, in remote areas of Tehran and the suburban gardens are acts of defiance again the state-enforced laws of public morality and standards for Islamic pleasure. Private gardens inside and outside the capital city have been turned into spaces of illegal public joy by so-called 'children of the Revolution' (*farzandan-e enqelab)*.[140]

The Changing Nature of Leisure in Iran

During modernization and onward, Tehran was a center of modern entertainment, offering various types of fun activities and joyful experiences to its citizens. In 1925, the reign of Reza Shah and his policies of secularization changed the traditional lifestyle of Iranians and gradually transforming the urban lifestyle of the capital city. Modern entertainment was came along with a rapid process of modernization. This new wave of modernization has social and special impacts in Tehran, as well as s other big cities in the country.

Reza Shah's resistance against the long existing tradition of religiosity in the country required that adoption of Western lifestyles be encouraged and enforced. The king strategically planned modern forms of entertainment to appeal to Iranian society. During the process of adaptation and appropriation of the West to Iran, various forms of modern entertainment and leisure activities — restaurants, cafes, bars, nightclubs, dance clubs, casinos, cabarets, public and private mixed-gendered pools and beaches, — emerged. The introduction of modern leisure to Iran required fundamental changes in the social, cultural and spatial layers of the traditional society. Among the most noteworthy examples were the changing policies for public dress code, support of mixed-gender social relations, and legalization of alcohol.

After the Islamic Revolution, new policies were issued by the conservative government in opposition to the failed dynastic regime. Even though the application of new policies was partly

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[140] Later in this chapter, the term 'children of the Revolution' will be discussed more extensively.

successful in changing social orders, they were never able to remove the essence of pleasure from youth culture. In fact, the expansion of the new mode of parties in the past decade has been a defiant response to the prohibitive laws and the lack of leisure spaces, which the Islamic regime destroyed and removed from urban platforms of the Iranian cities. Haleh Esfandiari said the devastating changes after the Revolution were like an "earthquake" or "hurricane".[141] The new dress code was enforced by the conservative government, particularly in the case of women, and women who had already been transformed by the old regime's strategies of secularization, liberalization, and Westernization, were obliged to adapt to a new set of rules. In a profoundly backward step, they now had to be covered in whenever appearing in public. Under Pahlavi, wearing the *chador* and full veiling cloths became an official standard, and women were coerced into adopting other forms of dress. The government called for "Iranian-Islamic women" to reconfigure their own identity and style of dress in support of a new national identity.

In addition to changes in the dress code, family protection laws also changed. People were encouraged to marry early, and have more children. At this time, the Islamic constitution was altered. The social status of women and their civil rights in the society declined. A woman could easily be dismissed from her job for not being dressed appropriately. The deteriorating articles and laws were an attempt to decrease the role of women in the society, and revive patriarchy, in opposition to the Pahlavi regime's secularizing policies.

Esfandiari writes that regardless of being forced to adapt to the social changes, Iranian women did not feel compelled to compromise their principles.[142] Throughout the struggles to adjust, women continued to work, many refusing to stay home. Many pursued higher education, which opened up opportunities for social growth. Iranian women endured the overarching hardship through their achievements.[143] Nevertheless, the Revolution brought about drastic changes in the lives of women, and severely transformed gender relations in the country. Increased discrimination, the exclusion of women from the public sphere, control over women's bodies and sexualities, restriction in lifestyle choices, and most importantly, the control of relationships between the opposite sexes in the society became crucial in changing the existing social orders of the Pahlavi regime. The issue of the control of women and efforts to define their identity by the state remain at the very core of revolutionary politics today.

Prohibitive regulations, imposed on the life of Iranians were political attempts to Islamize the form of urban freedom that citizens enjoyed under Pahlavi. Identity and social change in Iran affects all aspects of life in the county, however there are five moments that are particularly significant: banning alcohol; enforcing dress codes for women in publics; the Islamic state's emphasis on sustaining family values by limiting social relationships between opposite sexes; banning mixed-gender public leisure practices including swimming and sunbathing; and declaring a ban on Western and pop music and dancing in public. Communal activities in private spaces are

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[141] Esfandiari, Haleh. 1997. *Reconstructed Lives: Women and Iran's Islamic Revolution.* Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 105.

[142] Ibid.

[143] For more information on women's achievements and endeavors in the post-revolutionary Iran, see Sedghi, Hamideh. 2007. *Women and Politics in Iran: Veiling, Unveiling, and Reveiling.* Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press; Shahidian, Hammed. 2002. *Women in Iran: Gender Politics in the Islamic Republic.* Greenwood Publishing Group; Paidar, Parvin. 1997. *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran.* Cambridge University Press.

the youth's response to the above-stated prohibitive conditions. The nature of leisure practice in the Iranian culture and society sunder the Islamic regime are further affected by limitations of space, and the nature of publicness. These existing limitations on urban joy have given rise to new spaces of leisure in the underground layers of the society. These spaces, where the youth could publicly experience illicit fun and pleasure, as they desire integrate public and private in forming a new cultural identity.

1. Banning alcohol

Islam has long history been the main religion in Iran. But since the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736),Shi'ism has been the official religion of the empire. Islamic laws and moral behaviors have been adopted into Iranian life in a variety of forms. In Islamic jurisprudence, the term, *harām* (unlawful) refers to any act and behavior forbidden by Allah and hence, by Islamic rule. Laws derived from commandments from the holy book of Qur'an, as well as the Hadith and Sunnah are cataloged, reporting what the Prophet Muhammad has said or done during his lifetime. Among the unlawful dietary laws is drinking alcohol. According to the Islamic law and its constitution, consumption of alcohol is banned for the Muslim population. Therefore, after the 1979 Revolution, the consumption of alcohol was legally banned in Iran, and classified as a crime against God. The sale and production of alcohol was also considered illegal, and thus prohibited. Only the non-Muslim population were allowed to produce wine for religious purposes. They did not have permission to sell it. Since then, anyone who attempts to break the law by drinking alcohol in public or private can be fined, lashed or could be served a prison sentence.

Prior to the Revolution, Iranian factories produced wine, vodka and beer for general consumption. Grapes of southern Shiraz were among the most favored in local wine production. *Mey*, meaning wine and *sāghi*, meaning the wine pourer have been central elements and motifs in Persian art, poetry, literature and painting for over a thousand years. The New York Times ran an article about how drinking and wine have been integral to Persian culture.[144] Iranians have drank alcoholic beverages regardless of being religious, or considered official Muslims. The reason for the contradictory act of drinking besides praying, fasting, and many other Islamic rituals among Iranians could be traced to the modernization process.

According to the urban historian ja'far Shahribaf, liquor shops opened in Tehran after the coup of 1299 (1920 in the Gregorian calendar), with the arrival of Reza Shah. Previously, under Qajar dynasty, the selling of liquor and alcoholic beverages were considered illegal if publicly displayed, regardless of its economic benefit to the capital city.[145] Shahribaf, writes of *Aragh-foroushi, meykadeh, meykhāneh, piyāleh-foroushi,* or the places that served alcoholic beverages and small portion foods [figure 3.4]. In Iran's culture of drinking, the food choices included both local and Western-style dishes such as

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[144] Fathi, Nazila. 2006. "Iran Finds 7,000-Year-Old Liquor Habit Is Tough to Break." *The New York Times*, April 3, 2006, sec. Africa. https://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/03/world/africa/iran-finds-7000yearold-liquor-habit-is-tough-to-break.html.

[145] Ja'far Shahrī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimā'ī-i Tihrān Dar Qarn-i Sīzdahum: Zindagī, Kasb va Kār*, Chāp-i 1 (Tihrān: Ismā'īlīyān: Mu'assasah-'i Khadamāt-i Farhangī-i Rasā, 1367), 378.

cutlets, gigot (roasted lamb), ragout (French-style stew with vegetables), sausages and sandwiches.[146] Under order of the Pahlavi state, these types of small modern businesses in the city were to be supported, as a strategy to transform Iranian religious culture. Sharibaf also discusses how the dress codes of male customers gradually changed to incorporate Western-style suits, to match the stylish unveiled (*bi-hejāb)* female customers. The customers were served by waiters and waitresses wearing bow ties and white outfits.[147] Of note, during the time, the majority of popular and highly rated liquor stores in Tehran belonged to the Christian Armenian minorities. Their special methods of cooking high-quality meat (known as *kālbās va sousis)* turned their stores into popular pubs in the city. Many Iranians who grew up in this period are nostalgic for for the tastes and smells of the food of their youth.

Figure 3.4: A bar in Lālehzār Street of Tehran , 1955. (Source: Tehran-e Musavvar Journal, Issue 628)

After the establishment of the Islamic Republic, the consumption of alcohol was legally banned and classified as a crime against God in the country. According to the Islamic law and constitution, the sale, production, and consumption of alcohol is strictly prohibited in the country, specifically for the Muslim population. Anyone who breaks the law by drinking alcohol in public or private can be fined, lashed, or serve prison time. All liquor stores, bars and nightclubs were either destroyed in riots or their use was transformed. Despite being among the most popular spaces for night-time urban entertainment and activities, these spaces suddenly disappeared from the life of the city. In the early years of the Revolution at the start of the war, religious activities and events increased; Alcoholic beverages would not have been consumed.

However, since the 1990s -- despite the ban on drinking, alcohol has become readily available to people. Wealthy youth indulge, but veiled, and in private. Last year, the New York Times reports that in the last decade, serious alcohol problems have affected the

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[146] Shahrī, 381.

[147] Shahrī, *Tārīkh-i Ijtimāʿī-i Tihrān Dar Qarn-i Sīzdahum*, 382.

Islamic Republic.[148] In an effort to combat the growing alcohol problem, under the order of the Health Ministry, more than one hundred private and government sponsored alcohol treatment clinics are slated to open throughout country. These facilities are for the care of alcoholics and addicts.[149] The 2014 statistics from the World Health Organization report that regardless of unrecorded alcohol consumption in many regions of Iran, among those who drink, the rate of individual consumption is higher than the United States and many European countries. The report estimates around 25 liters of alcohol consumption per person annually.[150] In fact, the statistics show that a rising number of people, particularly the youth use alcohol, and that alcohol is readily available for everyday consumption in this Islamic country. The BBC outlined in a 20 June 2012 article, that a major concern regarding alcohol consumption in Iran is the "unwillingness among relevant authorities to admit to such problems."[151] According to the ISNA news article published in May 2016, no official statistics on the prevalence and consumption of alcohol currently exists in Iran. The only available statistics show the number of causalities in relation to the use of alcohol in the country.[152]

2. *Enforced dress codes for women in public areas*

Since the Revolution, gender relations have been drastically changed and reshaped. Increased discrimination, exclusion of women in the public sphere, control over women's bodies and sexuality, as well as the lifestyles imposed upon women, have combined to increase suffering among women. The increase in unhappiness has occurred when the Western world was opening up to practices of liberalization and equality. The government mandate of an ideal "Iranian-Islamic woman," with no clear boundaries and standards further produced suffering in the life of Iranian women.

In contrast, prior the Revolution, Reza Shah's reformist politics of modernization brought back isolated women back to city life. In the nineteenth century, Qajar, women's lives were most often secluded within the boundary of house. One of the main requirements of the modernization process was the secularization of the country and the disestablishment of religion. Reza Shah believed that the key to modernizing a nation was changing the way in which people dressed. This process affected women as they began to wear European style dresses, at first in the private spaces of their houses. In 1928, Reza Shah banned wearing tribal and local dresses with the imposition of a uniform of Western-style dresses. In terms of women, Reza Shah believed that their secularization and social engagement would occur when they stop using veils. The politics of activating modernization in the

[148] Erdbrink, Thomas. 2017. "Decades After Alcohol Ban, Iran Admits It Has a Problem." *The New York Times*, September 11, 2017, sec. Middle East. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/11/world/middleeast/iran-alcohol-rehabilitation.html.

[149] Taylor, Adam. 2015. "Iran Is Opening 150 Alcoholism Treatment Centers, Even Though Alcohol Is Banned." *Washington Post*, June 9, 2015, sec. World Views. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/06/09/iran-is-opening-150-alcoholism-treatment-centers-even-though-alcohol-is-banned/.

[150] Ibid.

[151] Ahmadi, Parham Pourparsa and Arash. 2012. "Iran's 'hidden' Alcoholism Problem." *BBC News*, June 20, 2012, sec. Middle East. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-18504268.

[152] تست مثبت الکل وترامادول قاتل ستایش. "2016." Online News Channel. Iranian Students' News Agency. May 25, 2016. https://www.isna.ir/news/95030502935/.

society required women's education and their integration into the work force as early as the 1930s. In early Pahlavi time, women from the wealthy families gradually stopped wearing the black *chador* in public, and used lighter color coverings. In 1936, the dress code officially changed with the king's attempt to unveil women. At the same time, the new dress code for men consisted of a European-style coat, trousers, and a peaked cap known as *kolāh Pahlavi* (Pahlavi hat).[153] Another strategy to secularize Iranian women was to provide access to education and civil rights for them along with expanding employment opportunities.

Reza Shah's order of unveiling women was implemented by force. The Police were ordered to tear away the veils and scarves of every woman who appeared in public with the *chador*. The forceful act initially made a considerable number of women stay at home and resist appearing in public. Gradually, wearing Western clothes was adopted by the rapidly modernizing society. Accordingly, women's organizations were encouraged by the government, and in most cases, were planned and managed by female members of the royal family.[154] The strategical integration of women into the modernizing society transformed women and hence family structures. The modest changes made in marriage laws, the rising age of marriage for women, the acquisition of social and civil rights for women, the right to vote, the involvement of women in civil activities and politics, and many more factors changed the common understanding of a pious and traditional Iranian woman in the society. However, with the collapse of the Pahlavi regime, the Islamic Republic attempted to change the order of the society from what it was under modernization.

3. *Islamic state's emphasis on sustaining family values by limiting social relationships between opposite sexes*

The Islamic Penal Code of Iran clearly defines gender relations. Chapter eighteenth from Book Five of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran describes Crimes Against Public Prudency and Morality, Article 637 states:

> "When a man and a woman who are not married to each other, commit indecent acts other than *zina*[155], such as kissing or sleeping next to one another, they shall be sentenced to up to ninety-nine lashes; and if the act is committed by force, only the one who has used force shall be punished as *ta'zir*[156]".[157]

The post-revolutionary policies eradicated free relationships between men and women n opposition to Westernization promoted by the Pahlavis. Parvin Paidar's study on gender relations and women in twentieth-century Iran indicates that post-revolutionary

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[153] Haleh Esfandiari, *Reconstructed Lives: Women and Iran's Islamic Revolution* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997), 23–24.

[154] Esfandiari, 25.

[155] Zena is an Islamic legal term that points to illegal sexual intercourse that can include adultery, extramarital sex and relations and others. For more information, see Paidar, Parvin. 1997. *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran*. Cambridge University Press.

[156] In Islamic Jurisprudent, *ta'zir* is a legal term defined as to be subject to the discretion of the judge.

[157] Comprehensive translation of Article 637 from Chapter Eighteenth of Book Five of the Islamic Penal Code of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Retrieved from http://iranhrdc.org/english/human-rights-documents/iranian-codes/1000000351-islamic-penal-code-of-the-islamic-republic-of-iran-book-five.html#18.

policies of the Iranian society constructed a dominant conception of gender.[158] She argued that the discourse of Islamization in relation to women, "was formed within a particular framework of opposition to the Pahlavi system and what was defined as alien Western conceptions of gender relations."[159] She further states that, "the multiplicity of definitions and sources of Islamic policy created a situation in which different aspects of gender policy did not necessarily correspond with each other," and remained contradictory in purpose and effect.[160] The Islamic Republic's strategy to protect the Islamic family made sex outside marriage a moral offense, and a form of corruption punishable by law. According to Paidar, the concept of 'corruption' included "adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, drug trafficking, alcohol consumption, and common crimes such as murder and theft."[161] The changing meaning of corruption gradually affected the social relations of men and women in public spaces.

The post-revolution era introduced a concept of ane ideal Islamic family, which was intended to be in contrast to the 'Western' notion of the family. The idealization of the family resulted in the Islamization of women.[162] In the Islamic constitution, policies were developed on marriage, family relations, divorce and custody that mostly affected women's rights in the society. As the Islamic Republic continues to legitimize its interventions into the private life of Iranian residents, a huge discourse on the "family crisis" challenges the government's Islamizing efforts. The transformation of the family institution by "encouraging polygyny and temporary marriage, rapid and drastic shifts in family planning programs, and gender discrimination against women in the labor market and other public areas – have changed the Iranian family pattern forever."[163] The Islamic Republic is now facing intense destabilizing factors affecting the family, which, in turn, affects the society, described as a "sexual revolution" in *Passionate Uprisings* by Pardis Mahdavi.[164] The government policies on Islamizing the Iranian family stand in deep contrast with Pahlavi's bid to improve the family as a sign of progress, and a modern and national institution.

4. *Banning mixed-gender public leisure practices including swimming and sunbathing*

Since the Revolution, women's sports have remained a vexing problem for the conservative government. Specific sports such as swimming were even more problematic due to the need for special clothing that reveals women's bodies. Gender-segregated enclosed swimming pools were constructed for women; wearing swimming suits was allowed. Similarly, Iranian women have not been allowed to experience the seaside with a sense of ease. They have been required -- by law -- to appear covered in all public spaces, including beaches. When going to the beach, women need to stay veiled, and can only watch their men and children swim [figure 3.5]. They can only swim in enclosed parts of

[158] Paidar, Parvin. 1997. *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran*. Cambridge University Press.
[159] Ibid, 353.
[160] Ibid.
[161] Ibid, 345.
[162] Ibid, 265.
[163] Khosravi, Shahram. 2017. *Precarious Lives: Waiting and Hope in Iran*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 54.
[164] Mahdavi, Pardis. 2009. *Passionate Uprisings: Iran's Sexual Revolution*. Stanford University Press.

the sea where, in segregated public zones, where barriers create privacy, sheilding them from the eyes of male strangers.

Figure 3.5: A sign installed near a Caspian Sea beach in northern Iran that reads: "Men swimming zone – women's entrance is severely restricted". (source: author's collection)

In pre-revolutionary times, the politics of thee Pahlavi government allowed tourism to develop. Modern leisure was integrated with strategies of social change and secularization, resulting in the expansion of beach culture, particularly among the wealthy and upper-middle-class families. Reza Shah and his son, Mohammad Reza Shah ordered the construction of modern hotels, particularly in the astonishing green landscapes of Mazandaran and northern Iran to attract people to modern forms of leisure activities. The kings of Pahlavi and their families themselves spent considerable times in luxury hotels and palaces that were designed and built near the beaches of the Caspian Sea in northern Iran. A great example is Ramsar Hotel, designed in 1928 by German architects and Italian landscape architects, and inaugurated in 1933 [figure 3.6].

Figure 3.6: Ramsar Hotel, inaugurated in 1934 under Reza Shah Pahlavi. The hotel offered a variety of leisure activities including, restaurant, café, cinema, bar, casino, mixed-gender swimming pool, and etc. (Source: Wikipedia archive. Retrieved from
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_old_Hotel,_Ramsar-Before_Iranian_1979_revolution.jpg)

The white modern building was located between a green forest and the Caspian Sea in the city of Ramsar, one of the most beautiful cities in Iran. The four-hour distance between Tehran and Ramsar made it one of the most popular tourist destinations for Tehranis. The hotel complex included a club, dancing, bar, theater and many other entertaining features that contributed to the modernizing aspect of this astonishing tourist destination. In addition, a casino was built at the end of the boulevard that connected the hotel to the beach area [figure 3.7]. After the Revolution, the casino changed functions, and currently, it is a restaurant called Touska-Sarā [figure 3.8].

Figure 3.7: Ramsar casino and bar area. (Source: Kamran Digital Archives, retrieved from http://www.datkam.com)

Figure 3.8: Ramsar Casino changed function to Touska-Sarā Restaurant during the Islamic Republic. (Source: Tehran-e Parirouz Archives)

The archival photos illustrate how women and men used the beach area comfortably, and with no concern for restrictions [figure 3.9]. During the second phase of Pahlavi, the hotel became a national symbol. In 1958, under the order of Mohammad Reza Shah, the image of Ramsar hotel was printed on the back side of 20-Rials paper money to emphasize its national importance as an icon of the country's modernity [figure 3.10].[165]

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[165] Cuhaj, George S. 2015. *Standard Catalog of World Paper Money, Modern Issues, 1961-Present*. F+W Media, Inc., 518.

Figure 3.9: Caspian Sea beaches in northern Iran in 1950s. (Source: Farsi Deutsche Welle, retrieved from http://www.dw.com/fa-ir/سهم-زنان-ایران-از-دریا-دیروز-و-امروز/g-16765612).

Figure 3.10: Image of Ramsar Hotel as a national icon was printed on the back of the 20 Rials Iranian currency in 1958. (Source: Wikipedia, retrieved from https://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/هتل_قدیم_رامسر#/media/File:Mohammad_reza_20_R_1958.jpg)

5. *Declared ban on Western and pop music and dancing in public*

Ida Meftahi studied the politics of dance in 20th century Iran. Her research investigated the body in the socio-historical milieu of dance performance in contemporary Iranian culture. According to her historiographical account, modern café-chantants with both European and Iranian music performances emerged in the famous Lālehzār Street of Tehran in the early 1930s.[166] She argued that while the introduction of modern dance culture in the first Pahlavi era was mostly limited to the theatrical scene, the second Pahlavi era developed an independent public dance culture.[167] Her study also indicates that founding governmental theatrical institutions were established during the 1930s and 1940s, to serve as platforms for teaching dance, with a goal of improving the public appearance of dancers in theatrical performances.[168] After the 1950s, with the development of Tehran's nightlife industry, female cabaret dancer (*raqqas*) became a key attraction for male audiences at cabarets, restaurants and musical cafes. The cabaret dancers of Lālehzār Street gradually commercialized and publicized the notion of "unrestrained sexuality" in modern nightlife culture.[169] In fact, from the 1950s onward, dance performances began to receive urban staging interest [figure 3.11]. Meftahi further indicates that the venues of nightlife performances and dance "were regulated by the ministry of the state as well as the municipal police *(shahrabani)* and local police stations *(kalantari)*."[170] According to the laws for public space, obtaining a license was required for the owners of nightlife business.

Figure 3.11: A dancer in Ofogh-Talāyee Cabaret located in Lālehzār Street of Tehran. (Source: Iranian UK digital archives, retrieved from http://iranianuk.com/20170321121313014)/)

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[166] Meftahi, Ida. 2017. *Gender and Dance in Modern Iran: Biopolitics on Stage*. Routledge, 9.
[167] Ibid, 19.
[168] Ibid, 22.
[169] Ibid, 30-31.
[170] Ibid, 77.

Besides cabarets, a considerable number of restaurants offered a dance area. Chandelier Restaurant and Club was one of the most popular restaurants, and among the most classic one in the city. After the Revolution, the dancing feature was abandoned, and the place changed the name to Sham'dān (Farsi translation of chandelier, meaning a decorative light with several parts that hangs from the ceiling). It is still among the top luxury restaurants in the capital city [figure 3.12]. With the Revolution, performing art forms and public dancing in general, were immediately halted by the Islamic Regime, and "were deemed to be improper, or that signified 'prostitution' *(fahshā),* 'eroticism' *(shahvat),* and 'degeneration' (*ibtizāl*) – most of which involved women bodies."[171] In addition to public dancing, Western and pop style music, as well as women's solo voices were banned. Bronwen Robertson's study on 'unofficial' and 'underground' *(zir-zamini)* rock music in Tehran demonstrates the illegal, but creative boundaries of Western-style music production. Most of which was created in private.[172]

Figure 3.12: The building changed function and currently serves as Sham'dān Restaurant. (source: retrieved from https://www.likealocalguide.com/tehran/shamdan-restaurant-rstwrn-shmdn)

The rapidly emerging restrictions of the post-revolutionary era that were imposed on public life and gender relations resulted in confusion, and uncertainty in Iranian society. Government suppression of music, dance and the arts transformed the cultural landscape of Iran. However, the conservative government could totally contain these activities, as they expanded illegally, going underground. The tension between public and private spaces created a situation, in which banned activities began to take place in private spaces, but in a public form intertwining the boundaries of public and private. Parmis Mozafari uses the term, "public-in-private spaces" to emphasize the intertwinement of the public/private binary.[173]

TV Plus, an online television channel that has the official permission of the Islamic Republic to broadcast public performances posted a video on July 2, 2016. The video was

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[171] Ibid, 150.

[172] Robertson, Bronwen. 2013. "'I Am an Original Iranian Man': Identity and Expression in Tehran's Unofficial Rock Music." In *Cultural Revolution in Iran: Contemporary Popular Culture in the Islamic Republic*, edited by Annabelle Sreberny and Massoumeh Torfeh. I.B.Tauris, 133-147.

[173] Mozafari, Parmis. 2013. "Dance and the Borders of Public and Private Life in Post-Revolution Iran." In *Cultural Revolution in Iran: Contemporary Popular Culture in the Islamic Republic*, edited by Annabelle Sreberny and Massoumeh Torfeh. I.B.Tauris, 99-100.

about underground DJs in Iran.[174] Recorded phone calls captured in the video reveal that the Morality Police is not willing to speak about the parties. The authorities consider the parties as red lines that have been crossed in Islamic society. An interview conducted during a phone call between an unknown host and a dealer offers interesting information regarding DJs and the high cost of their services. The recorded voices reveal that women DJs have recently been among the most popular DJs at night parties. According to a phone call interview from 2016, women DJs are paid between 1.5 to 7 million Tomans per night. The hourly price for a group of dancers started at 500,000 Tomans. Women singers are usually paid 1 million Tomans for two hours, and even more if lighting systems are added to a night party. The more famous women DJs have a different price range upwards of 4 million Tomans per hour.[175] During night parties, DJs turn the space into a public dance area similar to the nightclubs that existed prior to the Revolution. A variety of banned pop and Western-style music is played over the course of the night.

The post-revolution strategies that planned to change the social orders gradually blurred the colors of joy in the city life, and replaced them with black and grey tonalities in the eyes of city residents. The greyish atmosphere could be perceived in various levels of urban life. Dark colors gradually affected the society in its everyday engagement with the urban life. For example, in the case of women who used to be free to choose what to wear and how to appear in public, black and grey became substitute colors for their enforced Islamic coverings. Even the school costumes for little girls in the elementary and higher levels changed into enforced black, dark blue, brown or grey colored coverings. In the case of school-boys however, it was a little easier to pick colors, but school authorities still believe the darker, the better.

Fieldwork in Tehran

I researched partying as an urban phenomenon by conducting fieldwork in Tehran for one year. It was confusing to trace parties in the city as they could be found almost anywhere they could be hidden from public view. The parties were difficult to locate at first, but, over time, I learned how to find dates and locations through social media. I was able to join two parties in Karaj and Lavasan in the company of one of my friends. Participatory observation helped me investigate what goes on in these gatherings, and what the enclosed spaces of parties look like. It was risky for us to continue the research this way. The Morality Police could arrest us as they were likely to regard us as regular guests. Therefore, instead of attending the parties, I decided to proceed with the research using other methods. Virtual ethnography was employed, along with long-distance interviews with party organizers and young people who attend these gatherings. Extensive analysis of secondary sources included online materials such as weblog, news channels, movies, video and sound clips, and most specifically social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram. All of these were tremendous help..

During fieldwork, my focus was on the space of the party itself, and the ways in which it was appropriated for a particular event. I observed people's behaviors, public expressions, and appearances in the parties, in addition to their social relationships and communal activities. One

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[174] "دی جی ها و رقصنده های خانم در پارتی های شبانه (Women DJs and Dancers in Night Parties)." 2016. Online Television Channel. TV Pluss. July 2, 2016. http://plus.ir/official/2403/.
[175] Ibid.

of the initial things that I noticed was the intentional use of the terms, such as 'others' (*digarān*) and 'disturbers' (*mozāhem-hā*) by the young people who attended parties. They used these when speaking about their freedoms, rights and public appearances. The notion of 'otherness' in their common language indicated the fears and challenges they encountered during their leisure time. Moreover, the terms illustrated a widening ideological gap between the new generation of youth and the conservative government, resulting in the production of illicit spaces in the so-called Islamic atmosphere of the city.

Since the 1990s, house parties have continued to be a common form of social gathering, particularly for families, friends, neighbors and colleagues. Formal and informal, these private gatherings allow people to enjoy a shared fun time without thinking of the boundaries of control outside the house walls, such as dress codes, drinking alcohol, or other similar prohibitions. Common forms of more traditional house gatherings consist of small wedding ceremonies, birthday parties, Iranian national and traditional celebrations, such as *Nowruz* (Persian New Year), *Yaldā night* (a winter solstice celebration), casual get togethers or *did o bāzdid*, religious gender-segregated gatherings or *sofrehā-ye mazhabi* (gatherings for the fulfilment of a *nazr*[176]), Qur'an-*khāni* (women getting together to read the holy book of Qur'an)*,* among others.

From 1997-2005, the reformist president Mohammad Khatami opened up a new discourse on issues of social justice, individual freedom, civil rights and democracy that resulted in more opportunities and freedom for youth and women. "A new Iran was in the making" with the gradual disappearance of old taboos, and ordinary people becoming agents of social change.[177] But the increase in hope for the future among Iranian youth began to diminish with the presidential elections of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, followed by his widely disputed second round =election in 2009. Failing economic status and worsening conditions of life led to cultural and social changes among Iranian youth, as they sought the reclamation of freedom and hope.

Everyday urban struggles of the Iranian youth population in breaking taboos were given the name 'lifestyle movement', a term that rapidly spread across the country. The palpable change disregarded public morality regulations, particularly by young women. It stands as an illustration of newfound self-confidence in facing enforced suppression. This form of change is visible through wearing bright colors, rather than black and gray, and using fashion as a weapon to challenge rights to the city in everyday urban experiences. Organizing public meetups and gatherings in the parks and streets of Tehran, and many other big cities demonstrates a new mode of everyday resistance against governmental control. Gradual everyday practices of "turning the sacred into an instrument of joy" are evidence of social change. Behzad Yaghmaian discusses the formation of *Hossein-parties* in Tehran during the month of *Muharram*.[178] The month is important in the Shi'ite culture as a time of mourning for Imam Hussein, the third Shi'a Imam, and grandson of Prophet Muhammad, who was martyred in Karbala (680 AD).

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[176] In the Islamic tradition, particularly in the Shi'ite culture, *nazr* can be defined as the willing to do something conditionally for God. A simple example of *nazr* is feeding the poor in terms of gaining health, but there are unlimited ways of doing *nazr* and is not possible to discuss all of them in this chapter.
[177] See Behzad Yaghmaian, *Social Change in Iran: An Eyewitness Account of Dissent, Defiance, and New Movements for Rights* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 77.
[178] Ibid, 61–64.

Traditionally, during *Muharram* religious parades, donation of free food, mourning ceremonies in mosques and houses, and other religious activities take place. But the children of the Revolution, particularly wealthy youth, have turned this traditional and religious event into an instrument of public joy. By wearing fashionable clothes and makeup to attract the opposite sex, and staying out late to participate in parades and religious ceremonies, they engage in self-expression rather than for mourning -- a new culture of joy is born. It is contrary to the traditions of the Islamic Republic when young women and men drive their cars at night with loud techno and rap music. Even though the lyrics are selected for mourning purposes, the background music is a bold rebuke of Islamic dictates, evoking dance and public self-expression. Interestingly, another sign of self-expression is the installation of religious texts stickers, particularly name of Imam Hussein. The stickers are placed on luxury automobiles by the fashionable young and rich [Figure 3.13]. The amalgamation of religious events and leisure activities confounds the traditions of the early revolutionary time, when all that could be herd during *Muharram,* especially in the state media, was the recitation of the Quran, *Noheh* (a vocal tradition of public mourning), and sounds of mourning. *Hossein-party* has turned into an annual event, for a festival for young women and men. They want a public space to get to know each other, exchange phone numbers. And they want memorable and joyful nights. In this negotiated public space of pleasure is mixed a traditional taste of mourning for the Shi'a Imam who is known to be a symbol of resistance.

Figure 3.13: An Iranian girl is sitting on a luxury car that is labeled with painted scripts of Muharram, which read "Ya-Hussein" and "Labbaik Hussein" (meaning in the service of Imam Hussain). This image was posted on the Instagram public page of The Rich Kids of Tehran. It well represents the clash between religious rituals and new lifestyles of the Iranian young generation. (Source: Instagram)

More evidently, the new lifestyle seems to admire the rich and wealthy social classes, and the way in which fashion and appearance figures in public space. This, in fact, stands in deep opposition with the primary goal of the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader, and the admiration of *mustaz'afin* (the oppressed). In the capital city's everyday life, young Tehranis expressively imitate the flamboyant *nouveaux riche* lifestyle for public self-expression, and is manifested, most notably, in the covert night parties of Tehran.

Typologies of New Spaces of Pleasure, Desire and Defiance

Among the parties that occur almost every day in the outskirts of the city, there are remarkable one. These stand out, which I am calling, extreme parties. These parties differ greatly from regular ones, in the degree of diversion from the norms and rubric of the Islamic Republic. 'Regular types' refer to more conventional forms, for instance, house parties, birthday parties or wedding ceremonies. Other interesting types of parties are getting more common everyday. Examples include divorce parties, Bal Masqué and Halloween-like parties held in private spaces of apartments and villas in the city. These three types are the extreme parties. These gathering are known as key-party, pool-party and color-party have become common types of leisure practices among Tehrani youth. Many other extreme types of parties are also held by the young population in the secret layers of underground social networks, for instance, sex-parties, lesbian-parties and gay-parties. However, finding sufficient information and evidence to include them in this study was impossible due to the existing risk of getting in trouble with the Morality Police and authorities. The following section explores the three selected types of extreme parties in the context of the Islamic Republic.

Pool Party (*Estakhr-Party*)

The first type of extreme parties has become popular over the past few years. The *estakhr-party* (pool party) is a boozy event, that provides a space for young women to wear bikinis. They freely sprawl by private pools in the presence of young men for the experience of a pleasurable night. Images of pool parties in suburban gardens and villas of the capital city have been spreading widely through social media, documenting the changing lifestyle of the new generation youth in Iran [figure 3.14]. The unscrupulous images exhibit a specific type of openly shared private life, one in which there is no fear of being viewed publicly on social network sites (SNS). Besides challenging youth culture and social relations in the Islamic Republic, social network sites offer new definitions of public and private as "publicly private and privately public."[179] The intertwinement of the binary concepts are juxtaposed to the Islamic Republic's moral values, particularly in relation to women, rules of public appearance and social chastity. It can be argued that the prevalence of pool parties under a religious regime contributes to the existing gap between the conservative government and the new generation of youth. It invokes everyday defiance of the children of the Revolution who are predisposed to urban fun and public entertainment.

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[179] Lange, Patricia G. 2007. "Publicly Private and Privately Public: Social Networking on YouTube." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13 (1): 361–80. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00400.x.

Figure 3.14: Estakhr-party (Pool party) in the outskirts of Tehran. All images were posted publicly on Instagram. (Source: Public Instagram account of The Rich Kids of Tehran)

On July 23, 2016, the Young Journalists Club (YJC) published a report on the "fast-growing *estakhr-party* phenomenon." The report details the changing social life of Tehran suburbs, as a result of extreme parties organized by undaunted youth.[180] The report discusses the "immoral act of publishing semi-naked photos in social media" by youth who live in an Islamic country.[181] One of the main concerns is cultural transformation among the young generation, and particularly among women. The report notes that in past years, young women who had been sensitive and self-conscious about sharing their unveiled (*bi-hijab)* photos with strangers, has shifted. Social media, such as Instagram seems to have transformed the ethical beliefs underlying these sensitivities. The report continues citing that young women now post their uncovered and "semi-naked" photos in the virtual space (Instagram) with no hesitation, and little concern for ethical and religious pressures. The report emphasizes that moral issues are fading in interest among Iranian youth. The report calls swimming in mix-gender pools, an "immoral form of entertainment" that "follows

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[180] ‏«‏رواج «استخر پارتی» در باغهای اطراف تهران‏» (The Prevalence of Pool-Parties in Tehran Suburban Gardens)." 2016. Online News Channel. Young Journalists Club - Webgardi Group. July 23, 2016. http://www.yjc.ir/fa/news/5704040.

[181] Ibid.

Western cultures," warning of potential social consequences of pool parties.[182] Surprisingly, for young women, the dress code has become a significant factor for attending this type of party. Showing skin has become a weapon of resistance in young women's everyday life of aimless fun and defiance. Breaking the rules of chastity, for them, is a form of silent opposition to be implemented against the hard line of the Islamic government.

Spatial Context:

From my experience of attending a pool party, I can describe the space that I observed. The hosts initially requested all guests to participate as couples (of opposite sexes). Therefore, I had no other choice but to attend the party in the company of an old friend of mine whose name I will not reveal. Using a hand-drawn map, and passing through many narrow streets and alleys in Kordan, we eventually reached the location of the pool party [figure 3.15].[183] The dark road that passed so many private gardens, bordered with tall masonry walls and gates, had a way of saying that we have nothing to look for in them. At the same time, the road's curves pointed to the corner, a private garden similar to all others that we observed along our way, where the brick walls had a large brown built-in gate. The traditional entrance of the garden looked similar to all the other gates that we had passed by. There were only two lights over the gate to show signs of human existence. There was no sign of a party, nor of a gathering at the entrance.
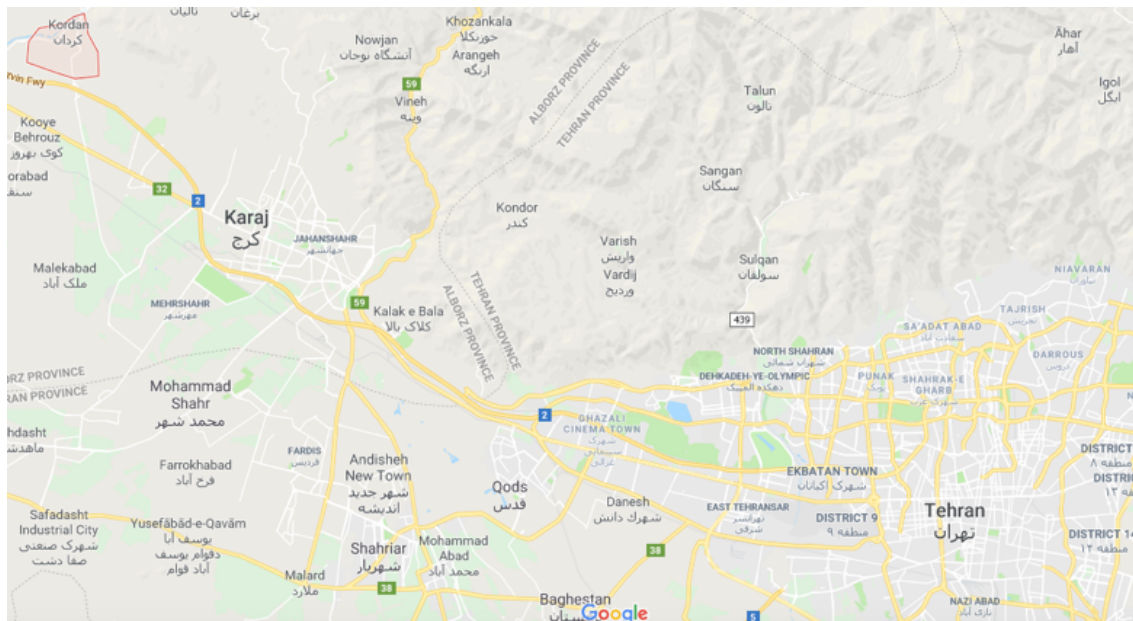
Figure 3.15: The close distance between Kordan and Tehran makes it one of the most popular leisure destinations for young Tehranis. Vast agricultural lands and gardens in Kordan provide the youth hidden spaces for all kinds of unlawful leisure activities and gatherings. (Source: Google Map)

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[182] Ibid.

[183] For security reasons the chapter will only provide the area map of Kordan and not the exact location of the party. Kordan is a small agricultural village near the city of Karaj in a close proximity to Tehran (almost 22 miles west of Tehran). However in 2014, with the Parliamentary approval, Karaj was separated from the Tehran Province and considered the seat of the Alborz Province. Kordan has been a well-known leisure place for Tehrani people because of its great weather and beautiful landscape.

Following the rules of the party, two consecutive honks from our car's horn brought two young men to the gate, and we entered an open area that functioned as a parking lot for the guests. It was interesting to see hundreds of cars camouflaged behind the garden walls. The parking area was covered with stones and gravel, and we had to walk along a dark path towards another gate that was closed. As we reached the second gate, the two young men opened it and let us in. A garden within a garden seemed to be a thoughtful method for providing security (of course, not from the thieves, but from the Morality Police disturbances). Everything started to change after entering the second gate. We walked into a green garden with lots of trees. These were well planted for acoustic reasons, and to camouflage the signs of a party within to outsiders. After walking for few minutes, we arrived at the real location where all the other guests gathered.

To the right of the garden area was a big swimming pool, on the left were seats around it. Young girls in bikinis were inside the pool. A few others were dancing beside the pool, and flirting with boys on the sunbathing seats. The female guests were in their 20s and followed fashion trends. They all wore too much makeup, looking as if they had a mask on, regardless of getting wet in the pool. To the right of the garden was a desk for collecting the price of the ticket from the guests, and for those who reserved their spots days before. While sounds of loud music was spreading in the air near the pool area, it was hard to notice the activity from outside.

An inner garden, where the guests gathered was smaller compared to the outer. In front was a building raised from the ground about twelve steps. The door to the building was kept closed because of the high volume of live music coming from the enclosed party space. As I entered the building, I noticed a similar method of creating a double-skin area was used to prevent loud noises from spreading outside the building. The entrance corridor that led to another door created a void area, which functioned as a risk reducer for the party, to help avoid encountering the Morality Police. Ironically, it did not feel comfortable to attend a party in a risky space where I would need to protect myself from the eyes of the Morality Police. It somehow felt like being a criminal, who escapes and hides from the law. After speaking with the guests, I realized that none of them were bothered much to think of this issue while partying. Most believed that a party was a place "to be free and to let go."[184] To further confound my discomfort, my friend and I were feeling awkward in jeans and shirts, while others guests wore bikinis, swimsuits, and beach outfits. The guests in their beach wear looked at us with scorn.

Inside the enclosed space was another world, beyond the limits of the Islamic Republic. Right in front of me was a bar space designed for the guests to drink alcoholic beverages of all kinds. It was not different from bars in the United States or any other European country except for being concealed in the duality of a private/public party space. Young girls wearing sexy fashioned clothes served alcohol for the guests upon orders . The payment for the drinks was included in the price of a ticket. At the right corner of the hall, a well-known DJ was playing live techno music for the guests to dance. Color lights played on the scene, turning the enclosed area into a nightclub, similar to ones that exist in almost all Western cities. To the left side of the bar area, a colorful table offered sandwiches, chips, salads and various types of snack food. Around ten young women and men were sitting next to the table in the corner of the room. They smoked hookah. The smoke filled the air in the corner, and hardly allowed me to observe them clearly.

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[184] From my interview with Sara, a fan of the pool parties.

The two-story building had exposed stairs leading to the upper rooms. Four rooms on the second floor facilitated more intimate relationships between the opposite sexes. I noticed that the doors of these rooms were sometimes closed. They opened only when a couple exited the room to join the dance area. However, it was not possible to observe the rooms, and people's behavior in them. Overall, my experience revealed important information on how space is appropriated for the purpose of being rented nightly to those who want to hold pool parties. It was astonishing to me how young people circumvent the rules of the Islamic Republic, in order to create their spaces of pleasure and joy.

Conclusion:

Pool parties have recently become a popular form of illicit fun in secluded areas around the capital city. Becoming more popular each day, these parties emanate a sense of dis-identification with the government-imposed "Iranian-Islamic" culture and identity. "Iranian-Islamic" entity as a form of unidentified identity has never been clearly described by the government. The young organizers and participants of these parties express themselves as citizens who contradict the state models and patterns of citizenship. This contradiction is apparent in every elicit action from wearing bikinis in public, sunbathing in the mixed-gender space of a poolside, drinking alcoholic beverages, dancing with loud illegal music, and other actions.

In conclusion, pool parties have become a cultural weapon in the hands of young participants, in order to show defiance towards imposed regulations. They use pool parties as a strategy to avoid following the model of the state for "good citizens.". The space of the pool party becomes a cultural battleground for the representation of youth identity against what the Islamic Republic dictates. In other words, the leisure space silently transforms a form of everyday fun into a representation of everyday resistance and opposition.

Color Party (*Rang-Party*)

Rang Party, defined as Color Party can be considered a second type of an unconventional form of extreme party, held in Tehran and its suburban districts. A variety of images posted on Instagram and telegram demonstrate that this type of gathering is a common form of leisure, mostly among the wealthy youth [figure 3.16]. The Shoma News article published on September 3, 2016, described this form of partying a manifestation of a cultural shift.[185] The article explained that in a color party all guests are usually required to wear clothes of a decided theme color, preferably white, red or dark blue.

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[185] "A New Style of Parties in Tehran." 2016. Online News Channel. Shoma-News. September 3, 2016. http://shomanews.com/fa/news/806310/.

Figure 3.16: Rang-Party in Tehran suburbs. (Above source: retrieved from Instagram public account page of deej_crazy; Bottom source: Farda News, retrieved from https://www.fardanews.com/fa/news/563697/).

The guests are offered buckets of washable paint colors to splash on each other's faces and bodies as the night goes wild with extremely loud music played by DJs. Drunk guests dance and show their joy and pleasure by sprinkling colors in an enclosed area. This form of party is adapted from the traditional Indian Holi Festival. The Festival, also known as the Festival of Colors is held annually in different regions of India [figure 3.17]. The Hindu ceremony gathers people of all ages to celebrate the arrival of the spring with a traditional belief that light will overcome darkness. In contrast to the traditional Indian festival, the Color Parties held by Tehrani youth do not follow any of the traditional customs and rules. They solely celebrate temporary modes of fun and desire. The goal of these parties is to invisibly break the silence of the capital city, and its repressions to reveal unfulfilled desire and pleasure.

Figure 3.17: Holi Festival celebrated in India. (Source: Flickr, retrieved from
https://www.flickr.com/photos/pabak/13663451105/)

Shoma News published a report of a phone interview with the owner of a garden in Shahriar district in southern Tehran.[186] According to the interview, the garden is rented nightly to those who want to hold such parties without disturbance from the Morality Police. The rent depends on the number of guests. The price for ten people was about one million Tomans, and went as high as three million Tomans in 2015, when the number of invitees to a party reached around eighty guests. Prices can even go higher as the number of guests rises. In the past two years, the increasing inflation rate has made these fees rise considerably. During fieldwork, I conducted an interview with a party dealer in Tehran called Mostafa. He stated that while the night fee is agreed upon by an oral promise, it includes a promise by the dealer for the security of the garden, and to keep it safe from the Morality Police.[187] The promise was backed by the by the owner of the garden who knows the officers well, and therefore could assure that no problems would occur during party time. The dealer also indicated that the garden spaces include professional lighting, and a pleasant environment for dancing and fun activities. It is hard to believe that the threat of the Morality Police can be put to rest through a dealer's promises over a phone call.

Spatial Context:

During fieldwork, I had the opportunity to join a color party as an observer. With the help of a friend, I was introduced to Soheil, a 22-year-old boy who lived in Ekbatan Residential District in Western Tehran. He kindly allowed me to enter the party as an anonymous guest for the research purpose. My interview and meeting with Soheil happened in his apartment in Ekbatan, while the party was to be held in a private garden in Varamin, an agricultural district in southern Tehran. By interviewing Soheil, I realized that his main reason for organizing the party in a distant remote garden was fear of police interference, and the risk associated with it. The garden was rented for a

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[186] Ibid.

[187] Information is collected from an interview made with Mostafa, a party dealer in Tehran.

night at the price of 4 million Tomans. The guests were invited through telegram application. The initial invitation was sent out to a group of known guests, who were asked to invite their friends by sharing the same message. The list of the guests was produced. Those who planned to attend the party were asked to pay the amount of 110,000 Tomans upon entrance. Approximately, 70 young women and men joined the party on Wednesday night of September 7, 2016, including me.

The garden was hidden inside the maze of alleys and narrow streets filled with trees, set in agricultural lands. It was veiled enough not to capture any suspicious eyes from the outside. Three young boys stood by the main gate to watch for possible police interventions. I started a brief chat with one of the guards, and talked to him about possible suspicious acts of the Morality Police. He assured me about the security of the garden, and he further indicated that in case of any possible intervention, they were going to bribe the police. He s "Morality Police officers who work in this area are used to being bribed for their interventions in parties and it is a common act for them."

The party was held in the villa that was centrally located in the garden landscape. There was not much going on in the open space of the garden, and almost all the guests were spending the night in the enclosed space of the villa. The villa was surrounded by trees and long bushes. It was hardly noticeable from the outside. Stepping into the building, live music was being played loudly by the invited DJs and a musical band. Surprisingly, one of the DJs was a young 25-year-old woman wearing lots of make-up, and a torn sexy top and jeans. Earlier in this chapter, I talked about women DJs and their rising numbers in the service of parties.

As I looked around, I noticed that on the left side of the large living room, there was a counter specifically designed and used as a bar space. Young women and men were standing by it and laughing loudly while drinking beers, vodka, wine and other kinds of alcoholic beverages. There was no bartender to make the drinks so the guests prepared their own desirable glasses as a fun activity. There was also a snack table close to the bar area with chips, small cold sandwiches, fruits, etc. Even the color plays happened all inside to avoid police disturbances. The colors were washable so they wouldn't affect the interior space. The organizers were responsible for returning the garden and villa in its original state. They would have to stay the whole night and day after it to clean the place, otherwise, they had to pay fines. Overall, the party space reminded me again of western clubs with a similar arrangement of the tables and sofas, but in a simpler way. The interior wall colors were painted milky white so that the building could be easily used for various types of occasions. For instance, on the color party night, the walls turned into a club-like space with the use of colorful lights. DJs were the ones responsible for designing the light works of the party space. The DJs brought all the required equipment with them to turn the multi-purpose living room into a dance club.

Conclusion:

The transformation of the simple interior space of the villa that was constructed inside the garden to service clandestine parties produced a space defined by the social and communal activity: the party. The changing aspect of the everyday use and design shows that the point of view of the garden, the villa, and its architecture is never fixed. It defines itself through the purpose of the people gather there, hiding their fun times from the eyes of intruders. The space of the garden party is neither inside or outside. It is neither private nor public, in the strict meaning of these terms. It is a space that is defined by the illicit act of temporary fun and joy. The private space of the garden

has not much to do with public space in the traditional understanding of a square, an open space public gathering, a forum, etc. But its sense of publicness can be derived through the gathering of young women and men who hardly know each other, who have a common purpose in looking for a low-risk place to drink, find relationships, and simply spend an entertaining night. Beatriz Colomina's writes, "the private is, in this sense, now more public than the public".[188]

Key Party (*Swich-Party*)

The third extreme form of clandestine parties with limited fans is known as *swich-party* or *kelid-party* that invites guests to suburban gardens of the capital city. *Kelid*, defined as key in English, and *swich* means a car key. The key thus plays a significant role in this type of party. There is a special rule in this game to make the night more attractive for the group of participants who sometimes don't even know each other. Upon entrance, the party organizers (informal hosts) request the participant guest couples to drop their car keys *(swich)* into a big bowl. The party progresses with music, dance, drinking varieties of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, snacks, and sometimes dinner. It should be emphasized that alcoholic beverages are a substantial factor in these parties, and available to all guests. Illegal music is another important factor, and most often DJs make the night more attractive and fun by playing live underground music for couples to dance. Eventually, when the party is over, the female guests are requested to go and sit in their cars – the one every woman rode to the party when she arrived. After all women leave the room, according to the rules of party, every man must blindly take a car key from the bowl to ride in the selected car to the home of the lady in it. This way the couples switch their women randomly for the sake of a night of fun and sexual gratification.

Every so often, the news media report the arrest of an underground group by the Morality Police. The reports are to prevent the spread of social immorality and sexual misconduct among the youth of the Islamic Republic. Jam-e Jam News called this type of party, "the ultimate end of the Iranian-Islamic moralities."[189] This form of covert party is frequently organized online through social media. The invitations are posted to the public on Facebook, Instagram and Telegram. However, the exact date and location of the party are announced only as a final step to avoid police intervention. These parties are usually held in suburban gardens of the capital city and close cities including Karaj, Kordan, Lavasan, Fasham, Eslamshahr, Varamin, and many other districts. Control over *swich parties* has turned into a challenge for the conservative government, as this form of nightlife puts Islamic morality and codes of chastity - the way advertised by the government - at risk.

Jam-e Jam Online report blamed government officials for the lack of a strategic plan to control and prevent "Western cultural attacks."[190] The report outlines how these night parties denigrate the concept of 'family' and the moral values of "Iranian-Islamic culture and lifestyle."[191] According to the report, these parties are organized not only by Tehrani rich kids, but by young

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[188] Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994), 8.
[189] از طلاق پارتی تا کلید ، سوئیچ و رنگ پارتی" (On Divorce-Party, Swich-Party, and Color-Party)." 2016. Online News Channel. Jamejam Online - Society Section. September 10, 2016. http://jamejamonline.ir/online/2539075712942464364/.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.

people of the middle and lower social classes in many cities and towns all over the country. I argue that these parties are the result of an expanding culture of aimless joy among some groups of new generation youth and taboo breakers. For these individuals, their lives and values are in opposition to the revolutionary ideologies of the Islamic Republic.

Spatial Context:

This type of extreme party is hard to get discover except to known guests due to the high risk of occurring in the Islamic Republic. For the organizers of this type of party, it is important to make sure all guests are trustworthy. Even though the guests sometimes don't know each other and gather only for the purpose of fun and passion, they are often selected from a circle of known fans. It was not possible for me to attend this type of party as it required all guests to follow the rules, to adopt the conditions of participation, which included the exchange of partners for the night. But with the help of friends, I was able to find a young couple who were fans of key parties. They agreed to meet with me. During the interview, they revealed interesting information that I share in this research.

Shadi and Reza were among the first couples that I interviewed. They were both 27 years old and lived in northern Tehran districts of Elahiyeh and Farmaniyeh. They were neither married, nor lived together, but considered themselves as modern partners to whom sexual relations was not a taboo. Reza had his own business with the help of his wealthy father, but Shadi did not work and lived in her wealthy parent's luxury apartment, and was financially supported by them. Going to parties was their everyday passion, and they both considered key party "a taboo-breaking play" (*bazi-ye taboo shekan)* in the existing sociopolitical atmosphere of Tehran. For Shadi, it was interesting to have the experience of spending a night with an unknown man, and to find out more about his lifestyle. It was a desirable activity for her to go to people's luxury houses and apartments and experience a night of fun. She had done cosmetic surgeries in parts of her face and breasts to make them look sexier. Her lips and cheeks were injected to be more expressive. Indeed, her face was an expression of crying out resistance against the enforced rules of the conservative government on women. Reza described Shadi as a "sexy and fashioned partner." He had similar ideas about open relationships between men and women as a strategy to break the ordinary rules of a dictated lifestyle in an Islamic country. For Reza and Shadi, participating in key parties was considered a pleasant "hobby" as well as "a revolutionary lifestyle that needs to be propagated."

Reza described the spatial features of one of the key parties he recently participated with Shadi in Lavasan, a modern and luxury district in the north east of Tehran [figure 3.18]. In order to analyze the spatial differences of a key party held in Iran versus the U.S., I decided to compare the spaces as I explored through the interviews with the spaces of a key party in the feature film "The Ice Storm," directed by Ang Lee in 1997. This movie captures the idea of key parties in the U.S. during the 1970s during a wave of the sexual revolution that was happening in America. The first difference is t in *The Ice Storm,* at the end of the party, it is women who grab a key from the bowl to find out who is going to be their night mate. But in the Iranian style, as described by Reza and Shadi, as well as by the online news reports, it is men who choose a car key at the end of the party. In the second case, the car and the woman who was in the car at the time of entering the party will be picked up by a man who takes a random car key. This is indeed more of a patriarchic system of thought that exists in the Middle Eastern countries, including Iran, where it is normal for a woman to be considered a man's property, like his automobile.
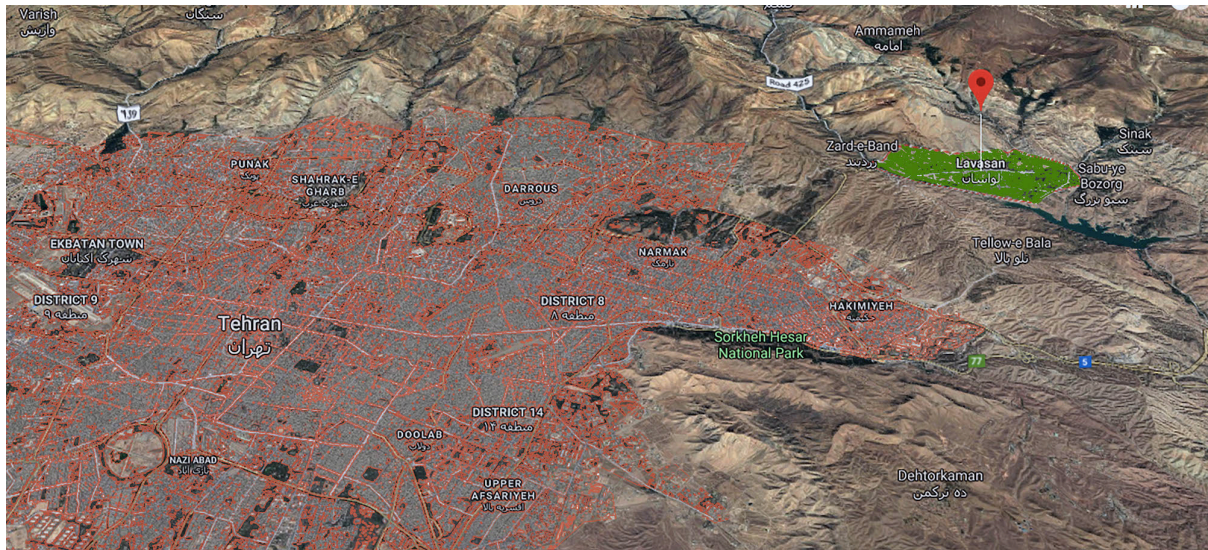
Figure 3.18: Geographical map of Lavasan district and its proximity to Tehran. (Source: Google Map)

In *The Ice Storm*, when the party is almost over, all guests gather in the living room [figure 3.19]. A scene from the movie shows that eleven men sat together on one side of a table that is full of alcoholic beverages and the bowl with keys in it, while eleven women gathered on the other side of the same table. The table became a separating border between the couples, many of whom were married and had children. As they were all drinking, smoking, and laughing, the first woman blindly selected a key from the bowl, and looked for its owner. When they were both saying good night to leave the party, the owner of the car gently stroked his wife's face to wish her good luck.

Figure 3.19: Selected scenes of a key-party in the US in the 1970s from the featured film The Ice Storm.

The world's sexual revolution of the 1970s created new practices, for instance, swinging sex groups in the United States. Key parties became a common phenomenon among swinging couples in the U.S. The swingers who attended this type of swap parties wanted to explore open sexuality, often in resistance to the traditional beliefs about marriage and family values. This type of party became popular in places such as Silicon Valley in California, as reported by CNN Money.[192] However, such parties have not been accepted and tolerated by the religious and conservative atmosphere i the Islamic Republic where the concepts of marriage and family have remained highly valued and appreciated. The key party is severely disruptive to these values and norms. The rising number of young women and men who are interested in these sort of gatherings are a significant threat to the ideology of the government in Iran. While the fans of this type of party were mostly adults and married couples in the '60s and '70s in the U.S., in Iran the fans

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[192] Segall, Laurie. 2015. "Inside a High-Tech San Francisco Swinger's Party." CNNMoney. January 25, 2015. http://money.cnn.com/2015/01/25/technology/swingers-silicon-valley/index.html.

consist of youngsters mostly in their '20s. This raises even more concerns about sociopolitical challenges of to the new generation, the so-called, "Children of the Revolution."

Conclusion:

The private space of the party becomes a space that provides a field of collective resistance through taboo-breaking practices. Space puts forward a situation for a collective group of people who get involved in forming and transforming their everyday identities by standing in conflict with the outside culture and governmental inflictions on citizens. The key party itself turns to an active zone of performance where a counter identity is constantly shaped to defy the state enforced culture and identity. The unconscious fun movement of the party thus signifies a cultural battleground that challenges the 'social norms' through the exposition of extreme self-expression. In this private space, conditioned illegality becomes a common norm and practice for a group of citizens who do not necessarily know each other.

Other Types of Parties

In addition to the three extreme types of parties that occur mostly in suburban gardens, there are other new types of gatherings which take place in camouflaged urban areas of the capital city. While doing fieldwork and observations in Tehran, I realized that one of the most recent types of parties is pet birthday parties. The gatherings are usually held in apartments or private green spaces. I personally attended one which was held in the private green lot of a high-rise residential complex located in the modern district of Shahrak-e Gharb in Western Tehran. The hosts were owners of an apartment in Hormozan Residential Complex. The guests included around 30-40 young women and men who were all dog owners. The space for the party was concealed and surrounded by green bushes and trees [figure 3.20].

Figure 3.20: A pet party in Shahrak-e Gharb district of Tehran. (Source: by Author)

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It was not difficult to see it from the top through the windows of the surrounding buildings. Even though it was not easy to configure the location from the green space itself, the loud music was revealing. The hosts professionally enclosed the space with the use of chairs and tables. This strategy was used for two reasons: first, to block the space from the entrance of the outsiders, and second, to prevent the pets from leaving the party area. Inside the enclosed space, a table was placed that held a birthday cake and various kinds of snacks, in addition to recyclable plates, cups and drinks. The area was decorated with colorful balloons and birthday banners. There were birthday hats for each dog, and all the dogs were wearing a pet dress. The party started around 5 pm, and continued for about 5 hours until 10 pm. After dark, the hosts quickly served alcoholic beverages, and the guests drank, but in a concealed manner. Throughout the evening, no one interrupted the gathering or caused any sort of problems to prevent it. The guests ate, drank and danced along with their dogs, and turned the silent open space into a place of public fun and entertainment throughout the night.

In the Islamic faith, dogs are considered impure (*najes*), and should not be petted by Muslims. Even shepherds who live in rural areas and own dogs tend to keep them outside their living places in gardens or yards. The young, and most often wealthy Tehranis who appear in public in the company of a dog, and those who keep dogs as pets in their houses and apartments are commonly labeled as *sag-baz* (English translation: 'dog fanciers').[193] *Sag-bazi* is a Westernized behavior, also considered an anti-Islamic practice that has become a form of everyday defiance, and very commonly seen in public spaces of the city. However, the Morality Police is allowed by law to punish dog owners if they appear in public spaces. They may arrest them and take the dogs away from their owners. Dogs that are taken by the police often won't be returned to their owners. In some cases, high fines are charged. With all these suppressive acts, young women and men have found dog ownership to be a way to both objects to the existing Islamic laws, and to use as a strategy for social connection.

Risks Associated with Organizing and Attending Parties

All the cases discussed show the young society's rising desires for enhancement of pleasure and public appearance. Governmental restrictions on urban space have only resulted in the appropriation of the spaces of leisure, but have not been able to erase them completely. Accordingly, public spaces are produced by the people, and are hidden inside privately-owned suburban gardens in order to fulfill the expansive desires of the kids of the revolution, especially 'the rich kids' (*bacheh pooldarha)*. However, organizing such intertwined public/private spaces and events can never be risk-free. Often, the Morality Police attacks the parties to destroy the youth's nights. Social media, and especially the online news websites that are independent from the state, cover the majority of the disturbances and clashes. Here, a few cases are indicated to show the amount of risk the youth take in order to create a joyful but illegal night.

In May 2014, a group of young women and men were arrested, sentenced to jail. The offenders were punished for 91 lashes because of partying and posting a Youtube video of them dancing together. The government considered the video clip a "vulgar act to hurt public chastity." Etelate Rooz News Agency reported on March 16, 2017, that a group of 120 young women and

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[193] Shahram Khosravi, "The Third Generation: The Islamic Order of Things and Cultural Defiance Among the Young of Tehran" (Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University, 2003), 124.

men were arrested at a night party in Pardis District of Eastern Tehran.[194] Heydar Fattahi, the public prosecutor of Pardis, said the arrests were carried out through a direct judicial order, in cooperation with the public prosecutor's office to prevent the illegal gathering of a group of young women and men who had no legal relationships with each other. During the operation, about 20 liters of alcoholic drinks were discovered and seized. He continued that the party invitations were arranged in social media. Calling this form of illegal gathering a "cultural attack from the West and through social media," Fattahi asked Iranian parents to have more supervision over their children.[195]

Another arrest case was reported by Tasnim News Agency on 22 December 2017. The report indicated that 230 young women and men were arrested by the Morality Police, and charged with attending a mixed party for Yaldā Celebration in northern Tehran.[196] The news article reported that the general invitations for both parties were advertised on Instagram. Tehran Morality Police Chief Zolfaghar Barfar told the semi-official news agency that two overnight raids were carried out for the two parties: one that was held in a garden in Lavasan District with 140 guests, and another one that was held in Farmanieh District with 90 guests. He said that the reason for the arrests was mixed gender group dancing, drinking of alcohol, and using psychedelic drugs. Police ordered both locations closed along with the arrest of the singers and music players.[197] Seven days later on 28 December 2017, Mehr News Agency published another article about the arrest of 35 young women and men in a mixed-gender party that was held in a private garden located in Varamin in southern Tehran.[198] A similar charge of drinking alcohol and dancing was raised in this case.

Shohada-ye Iran News Agency published an article on how suburban gardens of Kordan are rented nightly to the young people for holding parties and fun gatherings, "without being disturbed by the police."[199] The parties are widely advertised in social media channels, particularly on Telegram and Instagram. In a search of the hashtag of #Kordan, a variety of photos that had been taken by the youth at the mentioned parties was easily accessed. These images serve as evidence of cultural transformation occurring under repressions and controls. Shohada-ye Iran noted that in addition to wealthy youth, the lower middle class also rent these suburban places. They use an individual shared money system and a strategy of collecting the rent fee from a large group of guests. Since online transactions are not trusted, the money in most cases is collected in the form of an entrance fee that every guest must pay at the time of entering the party.[200] The next section theoretically discusses the new generation of youth in Iran, and their art of everyday resistance in the city.

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[194] بازداشت ۱۲۰نفر در پارتی شبانه در پردیس" (The Arrest of 120 People in A Party in Pardis)." 2017. Online News Channel. Etelate Rooz News Agency. March 16, 2017. http://www.etelaterooz.ir/news/38067/.
[195] Ibid.
[196] دستگیری 230 دختر و پسر در پارتی مختلط شب یلدا" (The Arrest of 230 Girls and Boys in A Mixed-Gender Party in Yalda Night)." 2017. Online News Channel. Tasnim News Agency. December 22, 2017. /Farsi/news/1396/10/01/1607973/.
[197] Ibid.
[198] "The Arrest of 35 People in a Mixed-Gender Party in Varamin." 2017. Online News Channel. Mehr News Agency. December 28, 2017. https://www.mehrnews.com/news/4185533/
[199] فحشا در باغ های کردان بیداد می کند" (Growing Perversion in Kordan Gardens)." ۰۳/۰۵/۱۳۹۵ - ۱۰:۰۳. Online News Channel. Shohada-ye Iran News. ۰۳/۰۵/۱۳۹۵ - ۱۰:۰۳. http://shohadayeiran.com/fa/news/123837.
[200] Ibid.

The Former 'Kids of the Revolution' in the Global Age

An exhaustive study has been done by the sociologist Shahram Khosravi to look at the 'new generation' in Iran. By questioning identity, Khosravi examines the young Tehranis struggles for gaining subjectivity in their everyday encounters with the city life. In questioning the social order of the city, he emphasizes the gap between two generations created by "those who made the Revolution, and those who reject it."[201] According to the author, individual acts of defiance and cultural escape are substantial factors of people's social life in post-revolutionary Iran.[202] He indicates that the growing "culture of mistrust and hostility" that has developed between the government and the people since the Revolution makes *moqavemat* (defined as resistance) part of everyday activities of the youth. By using the term *moqavemat*, the author makes a distinction between "resistance as a deliberate and organized response to state oppression" and the "practice of defiance as a spontaneous, uncoordinated every day challenging of the social order."[203]

The idea of 'defiance' discussed by Khosravi seems to be in alignment with the idea of 'nonmovement' as studied by another sociologist Asef Bayat. By questioning the notions of 'agency' and 'change' in the Middle East today, Bayat uses the term "social nonmovements" referring to "the collective actions of noncollective actors".[204] The non-movements in his study represent the everyday mobilization of the subaltern, including the urban poor, women and youth. Bayat indicates "the quiet encroachment of the ordinary" in their everyday encounters with the city is rarely guided by an ideology or organization.[205] The urban youth's acts of defiance in the ordinary practices of everyday life is a way to claim and defend youthfulness under conditions of control. Moral sensibilities of the Islamic Republic stifle the ethics of fun and joy, which according to Bayat, is "the core of the expression of youthfulness."[206] According to Bayat, 'fun' as "a metaphor for the expression of individuality, spontaneity, and lightness," can become a site of prolonged political contestation between the youth and the conservative government, especially in the context of the Islamic Republic.[207] Therefore, the youth non-movements refer to the notion of agency in times of constraint. This chapter considers night parties organized by Tehrani youth a form of non-movement, as well as a creative strategy of opposition with the Islamic Republic's rules of controlling youthfulness.

According to Khosravi, "urban mobility" in Iran is "an act through which young Iranians reclaim their right to the city and thereby to produce their own city."[208] Khosravi names a few of a young Iranian's new urban practices including driving, practicing parkour, performing street art, occupying street corners and coffee shops to show how these practices socially and politically demonstrate self-assertion and active presence in the streets.[209] He further argues that these loci for the production of youth culture are "integrated into the process of production and reproduction of

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[201] Ibid, 3.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid, 5-6.
[204] Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, First edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009), 15.
[205] Ibid.
[206] Ibid, 19.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Khosravi, *Precarious Lives*, 16.
[209] Ibid.

the city."[210] Khosravi believes these urban practices are struggles for enhancing life chances, as well as a means to claim youthfulness and gender equality, rather than aimful political acts.[211] He indicates that these urban practices are preeminently political acts of citizenship "because they make visible what is supposed to be invisible and because they make audible those who are supposed to be silent."[212] These urban acts are performed, "in claim of the right to the city as well as of the right to hope."[213] The author states:

> "If forced 'immobility' is imposed on the young, they have become a generation of mobility. If they are made invisible by legal and political processes, they are the most visible generation ever."[214]

Khosravi uses the term "confused generation" *(nasl-e motahayer)* to describe the Third Generation.[215] The confusion according to him is the result of the split between two oppositional social roles: "indoor" and "outdoor."[216] Living a post-revolutionary life under the conditions of paradoxical orders has turned them into a confused and puzzled population who struggle with unanswered questions. This cultural confusion affects the understanding of public and private in everyday interactions with city life. Profoundly, he describes the difference between the "veiled private" and "unveiled public" through an anthropological lens, and distinguishes between having a 'life indoors' in a pre-revolutionary atmosphere, and 'life outdoors' under the order of the Islamic Republic."[217] He argues that the Third Generation has learned to live an 'in-between lifestyle', somewhere between real and un-real by being forced to present dishonesty and duplicity *(dou-rouyee)* for the sake of living. Furthermore, he argues that the notion of law-breaking and doing illegal acts has caused the production of a "culture of criminality" that has turned the Third Generation to the "most rebellious" population in the modern history of Iran.[218] In seeking more individual autonomy *(azadiha-ye fardi),* young people find ways to escape the boundaries of traditional moral values of the patriarchical society. And, within this escape, *tafrih* (entertainment) becomes a significant order to fight the existing norms. Khosravi argues that while the Islamic Republic regime strategically enforces control over public places, the young generation finds everyday tactics to transform the place into space.[219]

Conclusion:

Indeed, nightlife of Tehran has gone beyond mere entertainment and pleasure. It entangles with challenging factors including politics, moralities, breaking enforced laws, and patriarchic traditions that still exists at the heart of the Iranian society. It can be argued that under the authoritarian rule of the Islamic Republic, efforts of the young population to challenge restricted urban and public freedoms are likely to be the expression of everyday non-movements. Therefore, entertainment and joy have been employed by the youth as weapons to stand against existing

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[210] Ibid, 17.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Ibid.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Ibid, 19.
[215] Khosravi, "The Third Generation," 168.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid, 168-169.
[218] Ibid, 171.
[219] Ibid, 213.

restrictions, and to claim rights to the city. Among various types of urban entertainment, partying has become an embellished way of life that allows groups of Iran's young population to express themselves and their suppressed desires in a pleasurable and joyful environment. Extreme types of parties and social gatherings have substantially changed the general definition of public and private space in the capital city of the Islamic Republic. These parties have become a strategy to question the institutionalized values and code of public behavior conducted by Revolution ideologies.

Within the conditions where basic and general public freedoms are limited, covert night parties in the form of private gatherings turn into a substitute way to regain prohibited expressions of desire and social relations. Due to the existing social parameters set by the Islamic Republic regime, for many young people, "doing what the regime doesn't want them to do brings satisfaction."[220] Suburban mixed-gender parties thus turn into veiled spaces where diverse types of social relationships and prohibited activities and behaviors are offered only inside a limited boundary. These are spaces of negotiation of the lost publicness. Through partying, lost leisure spaces, which used to exist in the city are evolved in veiled forms, including bars, nightclubs, dancing areas, and even public mixed-gender sports facilities, such as public swimming pools, and sometimes, even the lost experience of public beaches. Therefore, this creative process of negotiation transforms private gardens into spaces where pleasure and joy are publicly practiced and bodily expressed.

While the Islamic Republic is challenging its own creation "the children of the Islamic Republic," a new generation of the younger population is in the process of formation, as the result of "the globally dominant youth culture."[221] Inevitably, a cultural revolution is pervading that contradicts the identity of the Islamic Republic and its enforced morality code and religious values. The youngsters now seek a breathing space and demand their own freedom in every corner of the city. Their understanding of publicness has vastly expanded and therefore, they are about to make the government paralyzed in legitimizing control. As political Islam that was created under the Islamic Republic is being defeated by the new generation youth, "a new Iran is in the making," clandestinely.[222] To conclude, the capital city of the Islamic Republic is undergoing substantial transformations that can be discovered and observed in the underground layers of the city life where the foundations of hope are still growing in demand of 'freedom'.

The new spaces of public joy substitute risk with hope, and turn deviance, as defined by the state, into an everyday pattern and lifestyle for the young generation deprived of self-expression and public rights. In the majority of suburban gardens that offer night party services, three spatial elements are implemented to turn the space into a public leisure area, including the bar area for serving alcoholic beverages [figure 3.21]; music and mixed-dancing area where DJs can perform and guests can dance publicly [figure 3.22]; and pools where guests of opposite sexes can swim together freely and without disturbance [figure 3.23].

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[220] Mahdavi, Pardis. 2009. *Passionate Uprisings: Iran's Sexual Revolution*. Stanford University Press, 188.
[221] Yaghmaian, Behzad. 2002. *Social Change in Iran: An Eyewitness Account of Dissent, Defiance, and New Movements for Rights*. SUNY Press, 226.
[222] Ibid, 227.

Figure 3.21: Bar spaces temporary designed in the suburban garden-villas to provide alcoholic drinks for the guest. (Source: Author's personal collection)

Figure 3.22: Party as a nightclub for music and dance. (Source: Iranian Djs' public accounts on telegram and Instagram)

Figure 3.23: Party as a public space for Mixed-gender swimming. (Source: Telegram public account of @Partytime420, retrieved from http://t.me/partytime420)

Epilogue

In pursuit of Freedom

In this dissertation, I have aimed to demonstrate the spatial manifestations of new practices of leisure in the contemporary urban and suburban spaces of the post-revolutionary Tehran. The study has investigated the ways in which pleasure and joy has been either deployed and policed, or liberalized in public, through everyday practices and performances in the city by the urban youth. The purpose of the dissertation has been to discuss a two-fold understanding of the post-revolutionary dynamics of 'public pleasure': a nation-building apparatus in the hands of the conservative government; and a resisting mode of 'urban nonmovements' adopted by the new generation youth in their everyday encounters with the city. Through the strategy of non-movements, the young generation in Iran has been claiming agency over temporal spaces of 'freedom', their own bodies, and public behaviors.

Each of the chapters had its own focus, but the study as a whole had four main objectives. The first and most significant, has been the demonstration of a cultural turn as a result of everyday non-movements by collective acts of ordinary people, specifically the urban youth, and further, the contribution of urban and public/private spaces discourse to this process. The research has thus emphasized selected spaces of non-movements, including gendered parks, streets, and private suburban gardens where pleasure is consumed as a strategy of escape. The second has been the need of rewriting a post-revolutionary history of urban spaces of leisure and entertainment in the Iranian context with a reference to its modernizing past. In this regard, past only becomes a platform from which questioning of the present and the future begins. The third goal has been to navigate the everyday hustles and bustles of the capital city underneath which is laid veiled spaces of pleasure and illicit fun. The younger generation's acts of publicizing their deviant performances, including the demonstration of wealth in the streets and the extreme forms of parties invoke a new understanding of 'freedom' as a liminal space for the transformation of society, culture and lifestyles. Finally, my aim has been to produce a narrative of hope in the urban stage of Tehran, a city where pleasures can be obtained only when undertaking risks. Thus, risk and hope are complementary and interdependent features of the emerging culture of leisure in the capital city of the Islamic Republic.

Escape Spaces of Pleasures

Every chapter of this dissertation has attempted to emphasize leisure as an activity that requires a space to occur in the city. For this reason, individual case studies have been selected for the chapters to demonstrate the spatial experiences of different forms of satisfaction and pleasures in the spaces of leisure. The overall objective is to show that everyday pleasures within the context of the Islamic Republic are the outcome of leisure practices and are hence spatial. Accordingly, the first chapter has looked at the case study of women's parks in Tehran to argue that the joyousness of being in gendered urban spaces comes from freedom that is not available elsewhere. The leisure activities that are allowed inside the park territory provide women a degree of pleasure

as a result of the freedom they experience for being unveiled in a public space. Furthermore, the park area saves women users from the oppressive masculine society, as well as the male gaze outside the territory of the park. This way, the park area becomes a safe territory that allows women users to temporarily escape the existing norms of a masculine society.

The case study of the streets of *dor-dor* has explored the process of social satisfaction from the eyes of the deprived youth in the capital city. The chapter has argued that the youth's intent to show their wealth and express their bodies in the public space of the streets is a form of public exhibitionism. What the young people have gained from this type of spatial leisure experience and the exhibitionism component that is involved with it, is a feeling of self-actualization that has to do with their desire to manifest and prove their superiority and wealth in the public eyes. The expression of bodies and the display of fashioned young women and men in Tehran's Rodeo drives are extreme types of opposition with the existing Islamic orders of appearing in public spaces of the Islamic Republic's cities. However, these public performances have turned into everyday hobbies for the new generation whose ideologies are far different with the Islamic government. This particular form of leisure activity that occurs every day and night in particular streets has transformed those spaces into showcases of people's wealth and power. *Dor-dor* thus leads to the production of temporary pleasures, in this case exhibitionism, which provides a form of escape from the Morality Police, and the propagated norms of public social behaviors.

The third case study has revealed the pleasure derived from specific types of extreme mixed-gender parties in private spaces of suburban garden-villas. The chapter has attempted to reveal the ways in which the values and norms of public appearances change with the changing of the spaces in which they occur. It is striking how by transforming the interior spaces of the private villas and gardens, the fans of the parties produce their own types of Western-style leisure spaces, such as bars, dancing clubs, and public swimming pools. The aim of the chapter has been to discover the young society's rising desires for the enhancement of pleasures and the making of the public in private spaces through the strategy of publicizing the events in the social media. A concluding point of this chapter has indicated that the government restrictions have only resulted in the appropriation of the spaces of leisure, but have not been successful in erasing them completely. Extreme forms of pleasures have continued to increase despite the risks associated with them. The parties turn into clandestine spaces of leisure that offer a variety of prohibited activities such as drinking alcohol, dancing with the opposite sex, and many more. Inside these spaces of leisure, risk is substituted by hope, and resistance turns into an everyday pattern and lifestyle for the Iranian youth. In fact, these spaces produce pleasure as a form of non-movement to stand in opposition with the Islamic government's rules of behavior. These clandestine spaces of pleasure provide the guests a space where they can temporarily escape the cultural norms of the society and the state all together.

All of these case studies have carried a shared component of desire for resistance that has been demonstrated in various types of leisure spaces in pursuit of the forbidden experiences of pleasure in the sociopolitical context that limits freedom. I argue that the emerging temporal leisure spaces under the Islamic Republic regime have become zones of encounter that have resulted 'spaces of exception' for the experience of different types of 'freedoms'. However, these spaces of exception offer an alternative understanding of the term in the Iranian context. The 'space of exception' is a concept of Carl Schmitt in legal theory, and later elaborated by the Italian philosopher Georgio Agamben. In political terms, the concept refers to a state of emergency that

allows the sovereign power to transcend the rule of law and juridical order.[223] Aihwa Ong has conceptualized the term, 'exception' more broadly, as "an extraordinary departure in policy that can be deployed to include as well as to exclude."[224] Ong's definition of exception transcends the meaning beyond the state's sovereignty and adds a positive layer that includes selected populations and spaces to the formulation of power structures in non-Western contexts. In this dissertation, I adopt Ong's definition of spaces of exception to provide an alternative understanding of the term in the context of the Islamic Republic's capital city from a spatial lens. I argue that while the general understanding of the space of exception introduces the term as oppressive spaces that exist outside of the law, the case studies of temporal spaces of leisure in Tehran stand as the exact opposite. In contrast to its Western connotation, these emerging temporary spaces of leisure provide spaces of exception in which the citizens (in this case the new generation youth) escape the monotony of the Islamic state and its authoritarian rules for public behavior. This form of exception is created by the citizens who are ruled, and not by the government who oppressively rule in the country. To articulate it more properly, I argue that the spaces of exception in the case of the emerging temporary spaces of leisure and pleasure in Tehran represent the power of the citizens and their strategies of escaping the rules of the state through their everyday performances and non-movements.

Hope in the City

The study has attempted to show that during the past decade, temporary spaces of pleasure have continued to articulate a new social and urban language that substitutes fear with hope. I argue that hope has continued to be a transcendent agency that dwells in the temporality of events and encounters of the city. Therefore, within the context of the Islamic Republic, the problem of hope is a question of agency, particularly among the new generation youth. In *The Method of Hope: Anthropology, Philosophy, and Fijian Knowledge,* Hirokazu Miyazaki beautifully uses hope as an ethnographic inquiry, as well as a methodological approach of knowledge formation.[225] The author investigated practices of hope entailed in a range of Fijian everyday settings and performances including Christian church rituals, gift giving, and business practices. Miyazaki's ethnographic effort in analyzing the production of hope in Fijian culture created a space for a new understanding of the relationship between agency and hope. He introduced the 'method of hope' as a "performative inheritance of hope."[226] Methodologically, this dissertation has encouraged a reading of the city by looking at the appearances of hope through temporal performative actions by the youth at the urban level. The spatial performances have remained essential analytical tools for understanding the social, political and cultural development of contemporary Iran.

The analysis of the practices of hope contribute to a better understanding of the dialectics of public/private in the urban realm. In contrast to the general meanings of the two terms 'public' and 'private' as two distinct spheres manifested in the city spaces and social lives of the citizens, this study has shown that the nature of the two concepts are deeply interwoven, and that they cannot be separated from one another, particularly in the context of the Islamic Republic. The integration of these two realms in the life of Iranian youth has transformed the society, culture and

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[223] See Agamben, *Homo Sacer.*
[224] Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception*, 5.
[225] Hirokazu Miyazaki, *The Method of Hope: Anthropology, Philosophy, and Fijian Knowledge*, 1st Edition (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2006).
[226] Ibid, 128.

spaces of the cities. The new generation of youth has learned how to seek pleasure through risk taking performances. Moreover, they publicize those risks and pleasures as a strategy of defiance in social media, particularly through the use of Telegram and Instagram applications. Space has become an indispensable part of the leisure experience process through which temporal forms of freedom are produced and consumed.

To conclude, in the context of the Islamic Republic cities, pleasure plays a significant role in pursuit of temporary types of freedom. This dissertation has attempted to explore the spatial manifestations of pleasure in three different scales. The first chapter has dealt with the gender roles within the society from the perspective of gender-exclusive public spaces. The second chapter has considered the performative activities of the youth in the streets that are considered public spaces in the urban scale. And, the third chapter has observed illicit parties that are held in the private spaces of the rented suburban garden-villas. The three scales have allowed this dissertation to state that in the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran, different forms of pleasure are practiced within different spaces of leisure to achieve different forms of freedom. The varying types of freedoms that are gained are, at the same time, the youth's strategies of escaping the Islamic state's rules of public moral behaviors that have limited urban freedoms since the 1979 Revolution. I argue that the dynamics of spatializing pleasure as a form of social non-movement has become a mode of everyday urban defiance under the Islamic Republic. It is in the joy of pleasure and defiance that freedom turns to temporary hopes despite all fears and risks involved. This shows that even in the extreme conditions of control and surveillance, freedom and hope can still be practiced by the citizens who have long been deprived of joy in their private and public lives.

Dealing with the challenges of the present, the society's desires and concerns for regaining its lost joys and pleasures, and the contradictions that exist between the government and the society within a larger spatial and temporal context of urban everyday life, drove me to go beyond practices and performances. Throughout the research, the main focus of my investigations was to discover 'hope' in the most suppressed conditions and clandestine layers of the city where I was born. I found hope growing beneath the most public and private layers of the city. As I started this dissertation with a quote on *shadi* (joy)*,* I will end it with another quote on *omid* (hope), as the two concepts complete each other in the journey of life, particularly in the cities where freedom is suppressed. Hope will always find its way out of the ruins.

(هر کجا ویران بود آن جا امید گنج هست ...)

Never lose hope, my dear heart,
Miracles dwell in the invisible.
~Rumi

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