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Desire & Change

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Nasrin Tabatabai & Babak Afrassiabi

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## In Search of a Location for an International/ Independent Art Space in Tehran

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July 2004 we began the search in Tehran for a location in order to set up an independent international art space. It appears to us that inevitably some important characteristics of any potential location need to be carefully considered. As in any other city, various locations in Tehran carry out not only specific urban functions, they also possess a socio-political significance. Producing an independent art space would in one way or another force us to internalize issues relating to these paradigms from the very start. It would be futile to try to disavow the socio-political and urban significances of these locations however independent we like the space to be. Clearly the notion of a desirable art space remains relative.

This first step in the project “In search of a location for an international / independent art space in Tehran” is focusing on the various attributes and significations of locations that may or may not offer possibilities for the setting up of an art space. By launching the idea of an art space through various urban, political and social traits of each of its possible locations, a series of spatial positions are introduced that already provide a space or the means for generating art projects.

The first production out of this search is a “décor-object”, which is an extract from the first location. The original object, being a wooden built-in shelving unit with an extension frame forming a passage from the hallway to the living room, has a significant role within the interior *mise-en-scène* of this location.\* Separating this object from its original *mise-en-scène*, by way of reproducing it as an autonomous object, is an attempt in diverting, however partially, the desire for an art space towards production.

The “décor-object”, an approximate reproduction of the original shelving unit, has a height of 290

centimetres, is 78 centimetres wide, and with its extension frame carries a length of 350 centimetres. It includes four shelves each being 58 by 20 centimetre with a distance of 50 centimetres in between. The material used for this reproduction is 3-centimetre thick plywood. The object is later coated with chestnut brown finish.

The reproduced “décor-object” is a condensation of the idea of location and display at once, a trade mark for a possible independent art space. The project “In search of a location for an international / independent art Space in Tehran” will continue to develop further and will be an on going part of the activities of pages, one that can be followed through future issues.  
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\* Built in the early 70's together with the house, it is a reduced version of a once popular design that originally functioned both as spatial division and decoration. This pseudo-modernist architectural element, famous as the “decor” was first introduced in the early 50's and is still to be found in houses from that era.

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The Middle East is currently saturated with talk about “change.” Yet, the resiliency of authoritarianism and patriarchy in the region coupled with the evident failure of “democratization”-by-conquest have plunged this part of the world into a depressing impasse. The region’s Muslim majority is caught up between, on the one hand, authoritarian regimes or fundamentalist inspired opposition, both of which tend to impose severe social control in the name of nation and religion, and on the other, flagrant foreign intervention and occupation in the name of democratization. We witness then a clear abuse of faith, freedom, and the faithful. In the midst of this, however, one thing has become clearer. If a meaningful change is to occur in these societies, it should come from within, through the self-assertion of societal forces in a democratic direction. But the monumental question is how?

What options do ordinary citizens have when faced, in political, economic or cultural domains, with constraining forces and institutions? Some might choose complicity or “loyalty” by joining the mainstream currents. Others, while not approving of the existing arrangements, may well disengage, surrendering their rights to voice concerns and thereby exiting the political stage altogether in the hope that things will somehow change someday. Then again, others may choose to express their contention loudly and clearly even if it means remaining on the margins of society: to be vocal but marginal, or, even worse, irrelevant. It is, however, extremely challenging to be heavily present at the heart of society, to struggle for liberation, and yet maintain one’s integrity; to be effective but also principled. More precisely, I am referring to that delicate art of presence in harsh circumstance, the ability to create social space within which those individuals who refuse to exit, can advance the

cause of human rights, equality and justice, and do so under formidable political conditions. It is this difficult strategy, demanding sharp vision, veracity, and above all endurance and energy, that holds the most promise. Meaningful change in the Muslim Middle East may well benefit from such a protracted strategy.

The public life and activism of the Iranian lawyer and Noble Peace Prize Laureate, Shirin Ebadi, symbolizes that art of persistent presence. She gives testimony to, and exemplifies, the profound desire of millions of women in Iran and elsewhere in the Muslim world for a meaningful social presence. She became the first Muslim woman judge in Iran, holding the presidency of the city court of Tehran until the Islamic Revolution, when she was forced to resign on the grounds that women could not be judges in Islam. Yet she, along with a host of women activists (religious and non-religious) refused to remain silent; they waged a relentless campaign by writing, reasoning, reinterpreting the Islamic texts, engaging in public debate and lobbying to reverse that unjust ruling until women were once more able to serve as judges under the Islamic Republic. But such a struggle, this double strategy of non-silence and non-violence, could not have gone very far without the general societal support for change. The idea of Muslim female judges, only one instance of the struggles taking place for gender equality in Islam, had already gained a great deal of public legitimacy through grassroots campaign of many rights activists, both men and women. Its appeal was further rooted in the yearning of Iranian women, in general, to assert their public presence in society, not necessarily by undertaking extra-ordinary activities, but through practices of everyday life like working outside the home, pursuing higher education, engaging in sports activities, performing art and music, travelling, or executing banking transactions

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in place of their husbands. And these very ordinary practices, once normalized among the general public, were to undermine gender hierarchy in their society while imposing their logic on the political, legal and economic institutions of the state.

Understandably, reform of authoritarian states would require distinct arduous strategies. Nevertheless, societal change remains indispensable if a meaningful democratic reform of the state is to be sustained. Change in a society's sensibilities is the precondition for far-reaching democratic transformation. While social change occurs, partly as the unintended outcome of structural processes, such as migration, urbanization, demographic shifts, or the rise in literacy, it is also partly the result of global factors and flows, as well as the effect of exchange of ideas, information, and models. But the most crucial element for democratic reform is an active citizenship, a sustained presence of individuals, groups and movements in every available social space, whether institutional or informal, in which it asserts its rights and fulfils its responsibilities. For it is precisely in such spaces that alternative discourses, practices and politics are produced.

I envision a strategy whereby every social group generates change in society through active citizenship in all immediate domains: children at home and schools, students in colleges, teachers in the classrooms, workers in shop floors, athletes in stadiums, artists through their mediums, intellectuals in media, women at home and in public domains. This means that, not only are they to voice their claims, broadcast violations done unto them, and make themselves heard, but also take the responsibility of excelling in what they do. An authoritarian regime should not be a reason for not producing excellent novels, brilliant handicrafts, math champions, world class athletes, dedicated teachers, or a global film industry. Excellence is

power; it is identity. By art of presence, I imagine the way in which a society, through the practices of daily life, may regenerate itself by affirming the values that deject the authoritarian personality, get ahead of its elites, and become capable of enforcing its collective sensibilities on the state and its henchmen. And in this, the role of women in challenging gender hierarchy in and outside home is indispensable.

By art of presence, active citizenry, I do not necessarily mean pervasive social movements or collective mobilization for political transformation, although such imagined citizenry is likely to welcome large scale collective action. For not only does authoritarian rule impede contentious actions, but it is unrealistic to expect society to be in a constant state of vigour, vitality, and collective struggles. Society, with its ordinary people, also gets tired, demoralized, and even repressed. Activism, the extra-ordinary practices to produce social change, is the stuff of activists, who may energize collective sentiments when the opportunity allows. The point is not to reiterate the political significance of contentious movements, nor to stress on the necessity of undercutting the coercive power of the states. The point rather is to point to how lay citizens, with their ordinary practices of everyday life, through the art of presence or active citizenry, may recondition the established political elites and refashion state institutions into their habitus. There is of course a role for the international community to play. Instead of interfering, they can offer courage and solidarity by recognizing those who persist on the need for change through their active presence.

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## Stecca Degli Artigiani

*Gruppo A12*

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“Isola dell’Arte” (I.D.A) is an association of artists, critics and curators founded at the beginning of 2003 with the aim of saving an old industrial building in the Isola neighborhood in Milan. This was to be a collaboration with the people of Isola. This building, the “Stecca degli artigiani” (the craftsmen’s slab) with two adjacent public gardens was threatened by demolition and was to be replaced by public buildings and large scale private development.

Between the end of the 70’s and the beginning of the 80’s many important contemporary art events occurred in this area thanks to “Galleria Toselli”, located in the neighborhood and the former Brown Boveri factory occupied by a group of artists. Isola is a symbolic place for contemporary art history in Milan. Toselli’s gallery hosted Mimmo Paladino’s first exhibition and important artists like Mario Merz and Pierpaolo Calzolari who used to have his studio in the adjacent spaces.

The “Stecca degli artigiani”, the former Siemens factory building is the only physical evidence of the industrial past of this area and is an ideal place for a contemporary art centre. Today the building houses fifteen artisan laboratories, a painter’s studio, four social associations, the local offices of a political party, and a lot of empty rooms. The second floor, about 1500 sqm is not used at all and remains empty. “Isola dell’Arte” proposes to transform the second floor of the Stecca into a contemporary art centre, preserving and developing the richness of the social, economic and cultural life of the building today. The cohabitation of these functions with contemporary art activities is seen as an absolutely and positively original blend.

So far “Isola dell’Arte” has organized various events entitled “Le mille e una notte” (One thousand and

one nights), with an explicit reference to Shahrzaad. The works of art invented for “Isola dell’Arte” help to save the life of Stecca. They inform the inhabitants of Isola and of the whole city, of what is happening there while building a base for a contemporary art centre. The works are specifically conceived for Stecca. Some are permanent and some are re-exhibited. Many artists, critics and curators as well as interested people from Milan took part in “Le mille e una notte”. Italians and foreigners among them the directors of contemporary art museums or institutions in Italy (Prato, Bergamo, Trento) and abroad (Munster, Geneva, Gent, Tate Gallery, Palais de Tokyo), international artists, collectors, gallerists, students, intellectuals, fashion designers and public personalities attended these events.

Beyond “Isola dell’Arte”, the petition to save the Stecca with its gardens and to create a contemporary art centre has been signed by many other associations in the neighborhood.

The area in which the Stecca is situated is one of the most important urban zones in the city of Milan awaiting a solution since the end of the Second World War.

In 1948 this land, situated between two of the most important railroad stations of Milan (Centrale and Porta Garibaldi) and only 2 km from the city centre, and linked to the main road heading north to the industrial region of Brianza and to Switzerland, was designated to host the new administrative and business centre of the city.

After only a small part of the planned building had been completed (one completed project was Giò Ponti’s Pirelli Building) the rest of the area which was partly owned by the municipality and partly by the private sector remained empty for half a century being temporarily occupied by circuses, fun fairs and gipsy camps. Despite the succession

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of many proposals and projects and international competitions and perhaps due to a complex crossover of economical interests, social energies, physical tensions and memories of the past, no organic design solution has been forthcoming. At the moment one of the options is a proposal by a North American real estate company willing to build a large business complex called “The City of Fashion” with offices, museums, shops and other commercial spaces, plus a public park and a couple of skyscrapers for new regional administration offices. The company is strongly supported by the city council, happy to recover a big abandoned area and to cash the relative building taxes. On the other hand the inhabitants are making a strong opposition to these projects. An important reason for these oppositions is the continuation of the main road (viale Zara) directly through the Stecca building. This will split in two parts the neighborhood which is called “Isola” (island) because it has always been isolated from the rest of the town by railroads and cemeteries. The proposed redevelopment would mean that the only green spaces in the area (the gardens around Stecca) which are near the houses would be moved to the other side of a highway like road system. These physical transformations will destroy the delicate socio-economic equilibrium of the neighbourhood, one of the few in Milan where an “old fashioned” and “human” dimension of social life is still in existence. A12’s project for the contemporary art centre inside the Stecca does not long to join the debate about the final destiny of these areas directly even if it understands a judgment about what is happening. The building itself is without any doubt a mishap of secondary importance in the process of urban transformation. However, the strength of the social and cultural energies brought about by the actions of the citizens in the neighbourhood in their efforts to preserve the building and in the process infecting the

whole town, stands to demonstrate the distance that often separates the requirements of the people and the criteria of urban design.

The aim of A12’s project is more modestly to work with the few resources available to make the life of the contemporary art centre possible inside an old industrial building abandoned for years partially unsafe, filled with rubble and for the time being illegally occupied. Between many foreseeable obstacles and unexpected events the building itself accumulates evidence of experience and physical actions carried out on the very fabric of the building according to a principle of subtraction. While the current concept of the contemporary art space presupposes a “white cube” to contain artworks, this building is in a sense a dirty cube and the artists’ interventions contribute to architectonic decisions in order to build and renovate its contemporary and historic sense.

In Italy there is no public support for contemporary art so that the space has had to be cleaned and furnished room by room thanks to the voluntary work of IDA’s members with the help of students and friends supported by a few private “sponsors” (mainly contemporary art collectors). The activity of the art centre begun before the proper “centre” in its new proposed sense. It is an experiment in which temporal dimension is as important as the space itself. A process of gradual transformation in which immaterial elements, events occurring in the space and physical form all contribute to the setting up of a place.

//Gruppo A12 is a collective of architects, founded in Genoa in 1993 and currently working in Genoa and Milan. Its fields of action include architecture, urban transformation and contemporary art. Particular attention is given to the critical role of space within social and cultural contexts.

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## Location 1

(In Search of a Location for an International/Independent Art Space in Tehran)

*Nasrin Tabatabai & Babak Afrassiabi*

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### **First Street, Kargar Shomali, Northwest of Tehran**

#### **Significant attributes**

#### **Spatial configurations:**

174 m<sup>2</sup> apartment located on the second floor of a residential building facing both north and south. It contains a main space of 75 m<sup>2</sup> facing north, and 3 smaller spaces of 25, 20 and 18 m<sup>2</sup>, all facing the courtyard to the south with an old Cyprus tree. It contains a reasonably large kitchen and a bathroom.

#### **Geographical configurations:**

Located in the middle of a long street, with 2 grocery stores, a takeaway and a tailor in a nearby square. 5 minutes walking distance to public transport, and 5 minutes driving distance to the highway. 20 minutes driving distance to the International Mehrabad airport. 10 minutes driving distance to the Tehran University campus to the south and 5 minutes to the university's dormitory to the north. A mosque, a hospital, and the Tehran museum of contemporary art are all in close walking distance.

A taxi driver in that area complained about the traffic jam which happened everyday around 5 p.m. at the crossroads before the highway. He said he sometimes spends half an hour of wasted time without a passenger in his car. Even his car radio wouldn't make it any less unbearable he added ...

#### **Capacity:**

The space is suitable for small-scale presentations and the development of new projects. It can contain small events as artists' presentations, lectures and film screenings, having the capacity of hosting up to 50 visitors each time. It can also function as a

residency for one or two artists with the main space functioning as a studio/presentation space.

**Social configurations:**

A middle class residential district with 60% of its inhabitants from before the revolution and 40% post-revolutionary new comers.

The tailor working in a nearby shop remembered someone looking around for a space in this neighborhood in order to set up a private painting class. He said the times are ripe for this kind of occupation ...

#### **Political configurations:**

Due to its close distance to Tehran University and its dormitory the area has always had some degree of political significance. The Friday prayers are organized each week at the university and this adds to the political significance of this district.

#### **Prognosis:**

Due to the fact that the space is located in a residential area, its activities may arouse curiosity and/or uneasiness among the neighbors. This may however be unraveled through communication and the involvement of the neighborhood. The closeness of the space to Tehran University campus can attract more visitors and involve the art students in its projects. However the art space programs and activities may be subject to restrictions and closer observation during times of political crises.

## Proposition for Reclaiming a Space

*Bik Van der Po*

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Konrad Fischer, who began his career as a practicing artist, set up his first gallery in Düsseldorf in 1967 and became one of the most influential dealers in recent art world history. For his first gallery he appropriated a non-space: a passage under a building, which needed little more doing to it than to be provided with a front and back entrance. In this way he enclosed an open space and transformed it into an exhibition space.

The keen breeze, which had previously blown through the opening, became reflected in his approach: he was more interested in ideas than capital and was more personally engaged with artists than with their objects. He regarded friendship and the creation of a solid, mutual trust as crucial to a good and intense artistic climate.

“Proposition for reclaiming a space” is a reconstruction of Fischer’s first gallery, a homage giving the opportunity to revive, re-experience and re-view the actual space as well as the myth.

Transformed and developed into an unlimited edition, on a scale of 1:1, and supplied with information and instructions, this gallery can be installed in the DIY (do it yourself) tradition by the purchaser at a location of his or her choice. Suggestions for possible locations are assembled in a collection of urban passages.

By occupying unimportant, underrated and marginal in-between spaces, the unlimited edition makes a claim on urban areas. The unlimited edition of “Proposition for reclaiming a space” is an agent and a mediator to be used to enable art to take over redundant spaces; a space for discourse, thinking and reflecting, a “niche” so to say, a space we miss. By putting this discursive space in a framework, on a platform, we create the necessary space to re-vibrate, view and experience specific situations. It would be most successful if it were to become a DIY package on sale at IKEA.

//Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol are two artists from the Netherlands, living in Rotterdam. Since 1995 they work under the name Bik Van der Pol  
[www.bikvanderpol.net](http://www.bikvanderpol.net)

## **Pakistan Street**

(A Report from an Ongoing Project)

*Arash Mozafar*

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Some believe that we have not yet entered the transition phase, rather, we are a long way away from it.

Some believe that we have not only entered the transition phase but also have advanced in it a lot.

We believe that we are just entering the transition phase; we must only pass through its gate, that is, we must create the transition phase.

Due to the vast changes in the political and social system of Iran during the last 25 years, about 2 million people have emigrated from the country. The departure caused a lot of residential spaces in Tehran to become empty. Because of the beginning of the postwar reconstruction and the need for offices in Tehran, and due to the economic difficulties of the homeowners, residential spaces began to be rented as offices. Since there were no codified arrangements for such cases, the change of function was spread sporadically in the residential areas of a large portion of the city.

Consequently an array of problems occurred in those areas concerning the function of public and private spaces, the intermingling of those spaces, and structural and traffic problems. In fact, the new generation had decided to change the functions of the spaces in proportion and according to its own needs.

### **Project**

Our project begins with the question “Is it possible to pave the way, however narrow, towards democracy by applying changes in urban planning and citizen relations?”

To study this, we chose an area of Tehran called the “Pakistan Street” neighborhood.

Pakistan is in no way considered a special

neighborhood of Tehran but possesses researchable and designable characteristics, the very point that makes it a significant case. Later it will be pointed out how we can start from a little point and finally achieve a suitable model through studying the urban conditions of a residential/administrative area created by people without having a systematic and well thought out plan, i.e., proceeding toward democracy by suggesting an architectonic solution, an art project.

### **Pakistan street neighborhood**

The reasons why Pakistan street and the connected alleys were chosen as the subject of our project are as follows:

1. Pakistan street area is consisted of 8 parallel alleys forming a uniform administrative and residential texture.

— Tehran Mosalla (public prayer place), which is the most important symbol of state architecture is located on the east side of Pakistan neighborhood. It interrupts the consistency of the texture of Pakistan area and east Tehran.

— Modarres freeway (the most important north-south freeway in Tehran), cutting through the city to connect the rich residential north Tehran to the commercial downtown, is on the west side of Pakistan neighborhood. The freeway also interrupts the consistency of the texture of Pakistan area and west Tehran.

— Resalat freeway (the most important east-west freeway in Tehran) is on the north side of Pakistan neighborhood.

— Abbasabad Avenue, connecting two of Tehran’s old and important north-south avenues, Shariati and Vali-asr, is on the south side of Pakistan neighborhood.

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2. The embassy of Afghanistan is located in Pakistan Street. Due to the long-lasting wars in Afghanistan, about 2.5 million Afghans had immigrated to Iran and as cheap manpower have had a significant effect on industries and jobs in this country particularly in construction. Every day, a large number of Afghans gather at the entrance gate of the embassy. As a result this neighborhood has the highest rate of traffic of foreigners in Tehran. The effects of the Afghans' congregation and the way the daily visitors and the residents behave towards them are remarkable.

3. We have lived and worked in the Pakistan neighborhood for about 6 years.  
Labyrinth

**Alley#8, Pakistan street**

**Apartment building (A)**

Our office, a rented flat for nearly 6 years, is in the Pakistan street area. It is a space of about 200 square meters located on the third floor of a three-story building. It is a 35-year-old well built 3 bedroom flat. Our landlady lives in the ground floor flat. She is the wife of a deceased retired military man and is very kind. Two of the three children of our landlady immigrated to the US after the revolution and the war. Her only son in Iran has preferred to live in a northern area of Tehran. Her brother, who used to live on the third floor (our present place), has also immigrated to the US. On the first floor, until two years ago, there lived a family who belonged to a dissident group. They too, emigrated from Iran. Our group split into two and some of us moved to the first floor. We have a good relationship with our landlady.

**Apartment building (B)**

On the right side of our building lives an old retired

Armenian military man. His apartment building is good and well designed. On the ground floor lives an old man who has overstayed in spite of the landlord's wish. On the first floor is an architect office and on the second floor lives the landlord with his wife. He has an old 1960's Peugeot that is in a very good shape. He has a spare engine for his car and every now and then unfastens his car engine with total precision and installs the spare one all by himself. His children emigrated from Iran at the time of the Iran-Iraq war.

The architects who have rented the first floor in that building are graduates of the hard postwar years. The so-called Cultural Revolution occurred during their time at university. This caused the universities to be closed for 3 years while internal ideological and separatist conflicts had broken out in the whole country followed by war and dispatch of soldiers and students to the front. However, most of those problems are abolished now.

**Apartment building (C)**

All of the people who live on the second floor of this building used to work with some other group in the basement of the neighbor on the right which was a shared space divided between them. The landlord is a retired colonel who lives in the ground floor flat, painstakingly caring for his building. The basement is a printing and plotting office of architectural plans and graphic work and we are among their customers. The landlord's son who has two children lives on the first floor. The rest of the colonel's children immigrated to the US during and after the war. On the second floor is an office. We do not know what kind, and on the third floor is the office of one of our former colleagues. He went solo this year and has set up his independent workspace there.

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**Apartment building (D)**

Is on the left side of C and its function has been changed to administration/business.

**Apartment building (E)**

In front of our office, there is an apartment building in which a nervous old retired general, who has now become mentally disabled used to live. All his children live outside of Iran. He lost his wife in the United States during his last visit there and became very depressed. With the old man in an elderly care home now, the building is put on sale and a company has come forward to buy it.

**Apartment building (F)**

On the left of E and in front of B there is another three-story building owned by an Armenian who has a very spectacular 1977 brown Impala which has been abandoned for years under a sunshade in the yard. The owner had set up a lodging house on the top floor. On the left side of this building and in front of the colonel's, there is a residential building (G).

**Apartment building (H)**

On the left of (G) is a building owned by an international transport company in which activities such as training courses are carried out. During the breaks the trainees could be seen smoking on the balcony.

**Apartment building (I)**

On the right side of the old nervous general's apartment there is a building owned by a good-looking retired military man. He lives in the ground floor flat and has rented the remaining first, second and third floors to a private service for HP printers, a printing office, and an advertising office. Some time ago they had to cut a window out of the facade to push a huge plotter into the office with the aid of

a crane at night. But later they pulled it out in the same way and installed the window. What was all that about? We never found out.

**Apartment building (J)**

On the right side of (I) there is an office of structural research the upper floor of which is residential.

**Apartment building (K)**

On the right side of our flat there is a residential building the owner of which has a daily quarrel with the neighbors over his parking place pressing our doorbell angrily every now and then.

**Apartment building (L)**

On the left side of (K) there is a building with 2 of its office units emptied recently and left to real estate agencies to be rented as offices. The office of the owner's son is also in this building. Most of the adjacent buildings in this alley and the neighboring alleys have a similar condition.

**Common Problems**

There are many authorized and unauthorized offices set up in single units or whole apartment buildings in the residential texture of this area, creating a mixed-use situation. This has created numerous problems.

All of the following cases are problems faced by the residents and visitors in similar areas everyday:

— Since the rent and the government tolls for registered offices are unaffordable for young private enterprises many of them have preferred to use residential units and remain unregistered. Thus both the tenants and the landlords are constantly worried about encounters with officials from the municipality concerning tax and insurance.

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- The area suffers the problems caused by the improper provision of mechanical and electrical installations. Thus, the upper floors are faced with water shortage and there are repeated blackouts especially in summertime when the consumption rate of water and electricity is higher.
- Shortage of parking spaces in most hours of the day.
- Lack of space and organization required for a residential/administrative urban compound which threatens citizen relations.
- Lack of utilization of shared spaces in the buildings or private use of multifunctional shared and in-between spaces such as yards, roofs, staircases, basements and green spaces.

**Conclusion**

Pakistan street neighborhood is like an egg tray with some of its eggs replaced, for example, with teaspoons, biscuits, and TV remote controls. This heterogeneous arrangement must become proportionate. Here we doubt the function of the egg tray as a holder for eggs but inevitably, we have to endure the new additions. Therefore, we should allocate the more suitable parts of the tray to teaspoons, biscuits and remote controls and try to accept that it is a multifunctional utensil.

We believe that by studying the urban and social problems of the area we would be able to design a model that could be effective in the development of public spaces and institutionalization of social participation. This would provide one of the most basic principles towards achieving democracy by the development of public spaces that are managed collectively, that is, to develop public spaces along with institutionalized social participation.

We face different people such as residents, working people, peddlers and passers-by in the street.

These four groups create a crowded social space, meanwhile the available space does not have any suitable facilities for their association. In fact, Pakistan, as an area with flowing social mobility lacks any suitable behaviour setting.

Pakistan has about ten thousand residents and working people passing through. A behaviour setting is not necessarily a neutral gathering place; rather, it is like a plaza where people interact. This interaction is the starting point for democracy.

In a behaviour setting there can be, for example, restaurants, coffee shops, internet cafes, a small movie theatre, art galleries, meeting and resting places, small sport spaces such as exercise and billiard rooms.

There is financial circulation in a behavior setting, which can result in job creation. For instance a man, who has been passing Pakistan alley at 4:25 everyday selling fresh walnuts for the last six years would have a place to present his merchandise.

Public space is the requirement of social life which in turn is the basis of democracy. Social life can solve its problems by itself. Therefore, social trends of non-governmental structure with society's own management must be developed (of course the authorities' support would be necessary). In this case, there would be institutionalized social participation which is a principle of the realization of democracy. Such participation requires physical space for presence and virtual space for thinking. Thinking takes place in a relaxed environment, a condition in which the individual is physically and spiritually in a proper state to learn and to teach in dialogue and debate with others.

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In Tehran, public spaces are limited to parks and pavements where the shops are located. These spaces have not been carefully considered or designed. The social problems caused by such shortages are quite evident, therefore, we are going to suggest a model even if it is not realizable or if it is as small and limited as the Pakistan street neighborhood.

As Jimi Hendrix says:

[...]

Well, I stand up next to a mountain  
And I chop it down with the edge of my hand  
Well, I pick up all the pieces and make an island  
Might even raise a little sand

[...]

It is sundown. The sound of “azan” is heard from the huge minarets of Tehran’s Mosalla. Gradually the alleys are emptying in the slow oncoming darkness . In the morning people would be seen again, breathlessly climbing the slope of Pakistan street on their way to work while they do not know their neighbours, there is no place for their children to play, and the alleys are full of parked and passing cars. Their tiredness would be eased by smoking a cigarette on a balcony or in a kitchen. The noise of some people brawling over some parking place along with the amplified voices of watermelon peddlers through their loudspeakers would be heard. The agents of the municipality and tax bureau would be hunting for residential apartments illegally converted to offices while many worried eyes peer at them from behind curtains wondering when their turn would come, hoping that everything would be OK tomorrow.