

## URBAN MEMORY, RENOVATION AND ECONOMIC SPACE: LOCAL RESIDENTS AND IMMIGRANTS IN IRAN

*S. Shalchi, F. Mohabbati*

*Allameh Tabataba'i University, Tehran, Iran*

Urban memory, as an arena for remembering the past, exists in urban networks and interactions of cities and lays the foundation for actions and for organizing relations with cultural groups. Urban memory is an arena based on which the residents organize social and economic relations with other ethnic-cultural groups. Hence, contrary to the dominant memory and macro ideologies, memory similes exist in neighborhoods offers a unique interpretation of urban life. This research was conducted in Kan neighborhood as the one with an urban-rural fabric. The results demonstrate how the village is restricted to a small neighborhood during renovation plans. It also shows how immigrants have been gradually enabled to produce and reproduce their economic and social spaces in Kan.

**Keywords:** *urban memory, city image, neighborhood of Kan, renovation, economic space, immigrants.*

### Introduction

Cities act as important arenas of individuals' social actions and life within which the way of reproducing social relations and thinking methods are formed. Memory also shows how the immigrants can steadily produce their own economic and social spaces in the neighborhoods they are living in [1, p. 232]. Urban memory shows the effects whereof on the process of the formation of the confrontation of different urban groups while they are both interacting with each other and opposing one another [2, p. 19].

In a milder form, urban memory might show one's sense of belonging to a city. The more memory people have from their cities and neighborhoods, the more sense of belonging they might have to their city and homeland, hence, the more social capital grows there in that place [3, pp. 17—19]. However, the importance of memory is not limited to such a level. The scope of the effect of memory might alternatively expand to the dimensions of the understanding of different urban cultures, the confrontation of ethnicities in a city, and the understanding of the complexities of macro-spatial systems. Urban memory is a kind of accumulation of collective memory of urban population which can make mental commonalities in an association with the past among a group. Collective memory, due to its psychological projection, makes people have a common past and future Halbwachs, 1992 cited in [4, p. 259] and forms a common interest for them. Collective memory is a reflection of shared images, mentalities, losses, joys, and regrets of a social-cultural

group. Memory, as a result, acts as a spatial issue which is temporal and moves on time-space axis. While moving on the time axis, memory fosters relationship with land environments of people's life; therefore, it can codify, signify, and give meaning to the current historic contents [4, pp. 259 & 260]. As a result, through decoding such meanings, signs, and codes of the collective memory, it is possible to redefine and reveal the historical content of the life of people of a given land.

Accordingly, urban neighborhoods change into arenas wherein collective memories and city memories can be read. Therefore, any entity in a city can change into a place for discovering and reflecting the memory and find a memory-reading nature. Popular memory approach (Mitstal, 2003) is a landscape in a city which stands against the policy of top-down manipulated memory and, contrary to the belief that memories are built in a top-down manner in a social form, it refers to the building of memories, bottom-up. The method for remembering and forgetting in a popular memory starts from a local and specific issue and, during the formation process, moves toward a complete story [5, p. 117]. The landscape of a popular memory shows that the local groups in a city have their own version of the past according to which they recall the dominant hegemonic discipline. Such a memory type reveals how the memory of local groups can have its own independent interpretation of the past and, accordingly, can influence the hegemonic and dominant urban memory, hence turning into an anti-memory or an informal memory.

### Statement of the Problem

Numerous renovations in the physical space of the city, the gentrification of the neighborhoods, and the intensification of the social gap has isolated many urban neighborhoods in the city of Tehran. In the course of the renovations of the city and many constructions, many neighborhoods haven't been destroyed and the physical and memory-related effects of the neighborhoods have been either demolished in favor of unifying the forms of townships and apartments or confined within their own limits. The neighborhood of Kan is located in the 5<sup>th</sup> zone of the city of Tehran and prior to the development of the city into the current size, used to be a vast village with a longer history than that of today Tehran. However, the process of the renovation of Tehran has, gradually, swallowed all the gardens and the rural fabric of the neighborhoods of Kan and Sulaghan<sup>1</sup> and today those vast lands and the rural fabrics have been replaced by townships and apartments.

Nowadays, the neighborhood of Kan, the vastness of which has been downsized, has been changed into a small and limited neighborhood in Tehran. As the neighborhood is recognized as a valuable rural fabric, constructions and building apartments are prohibited there. Therefore, for the time being, the neighborhood of Kan, similar to a small-size urbanized village, with a relative urban-rural fabric, is located at the heart of the city of Tehran and enjoys a distinct physical space from the surrounding neighborhoods. As a result of the renovating process of the city of Tehran, the neighborhood of Kan has become gradually smaller and most of the original residents and the farmers have moved to the neighboring townships; however, there are still some locals in the neighborhood. In addition to renovating processes, one of the most important challenges the neighborhood is confronting is receiving emigrants from Afghanistan and Kurdish people from the west of Iran. In effect, numerous ethnic groups and locals are inhabiting a certain area called the village of Kan.

It seems that the neighborhood of Kan is like a headquarter that embodies important social truths of urban and urbanized issues. Centuries of history of the neighborhood heralds the presence of collective memory arenas which reveal the physical properties and collective history of the residents dwelling in the neighborhood. The question is what important processes does the nature of remembering the past reveal? And how do the Afghan and Kurdish groups produce their own economic and social spaces in Kan overtime?

<sup>1</sup> Sulaghan is a rural district in Kan, Tehran Province, Iran.

### Theoretical Underpinnings

#### *Renovation and Economic Space*

Robert Park, as one of the founders of the Chicago School, uses the expression "Small Worlds Mosaic" to refer to the numerous spatial truths in cities and also urban societies, and believes that "the isolation process brings about ethical gaps which in turn change the city into a mosaic of the small worlds which are touched but not united" [6, pp. 38—40]. Park's conception of the city as the mosaic of small worlds that do not merge makes it possible to investigate what social and identity forms exist in the increasing anonymity of a modern metropolis.

Putting forward such concepts as "deterritorialization" and "disembedding" in globalization and the consequences of renovation, Giddens and Castles believe that globalized electronic communications have dramatically increased the speed of transferring economic data and media images to the extent that in the virtual communications domain, time has overcome the space. The result of such a domination is the disembedding of the local and social relations which entangles neighborhoods and spaces in globally remote relations in such areas as information, ideas, propositions, and even goods and capital [7, pp. 26—28]. Bloomfield believes that conducting research on urban imaginations fights against such "spatial displacement" Bloomfield, cited in [2, p. 70].

In his explication of the typology of produced space, Henri Lefebvre — the Marxist sociologist and intellectual — considers a three dimensional relation between *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived* spaces [8, p.131]. The most important factor in the theory of Lefebvre is the focus he puts on the spatial dimension of a social phenomenon. Here, space and its formation are the result of the mentioned three-dimensional relation. In such a three-dimensional plan, space, having a complex nature, appears in the social relations wherein physical, mental, and social factors bond together. The perceived space is the physical dimension of the space; the conceived space is the understanding of space which takes form by the urban developer and power hierarchy. The perceived space is, in fact, a reflection of the hegemonic power of space which is formed in people's minds. The lived space is a part of the social life which has been experienced and lived by people. It is the part of the space that is in relation with people's lives [9, pp. 112 & 113].

Lefebvre considers space as the product of "spatial practices", "representation of space", and "spaces of representations" dialectics. For a better understand-

ing of the spatial trigonality went above, Lefebvre explains another three-dimensional plan in relation with the formation of space. The trigonality can be posed to answer the following question, “How is a (social) space produced?” The production of space can be divided upon the three dimensions which act in a dialectic relation. Lefebvre considers the trigonality as the constructs or the moments of space production [10, p. 39]. It can be argued that the three dimensions of “perceived”, “conceived”, and “lived” co-referred with “spatial practices”, “representation of space”, and “spaces of representations” and compose two collections of parallel concepts which explain the concept of space in a two-dimensional approach [11, p. 34 & 35].

Tehran is a city for which many expenses have been made for such processes as renovation and modernization. The images created by the urban planners for the city are modern but, at times, inappropriate to the needs of people. Urban engineers try to portray a unique image of the city, but how do the residents of the neighborhoods and the real residents of the spaces experience and define such spaces?

***On the Image of the City and Urban Memory***

Maurice Halbwachs is perhaps the first theoretician who has expanded the theoretical formation of memory in its social dimension under the influence of Durkheim. At first glance, memory might seem to be a psychological issue but Halbwachs expands the concept of memory contrary to its psychological dimension. While rejecting the psychological traits of memory, Halbwachs believes that remembering, in a solid and stable manner, cannot occur to individuals out of group ties [12, p. 38]. Georg Simmel (1903) is the most important intellectual from whom paying attention to the study of mental life, image, and memory in city and city streets are obtained and, then, in the thoughts of the other intellectuals like Walter Benjamin, the maturity of studies in cities and streets are observed.

Emphasizing the issue of spatial anecdotes, De Certeau studies the interaction between a known factor and the city. The idea of spatial anecdotes is located between the physical reality of a city and the vague movements of the mind in a city [1, p. 198] and moves between the two poles. In his famous article, “Walking in the City”, De Certeau discusses mental and meaning images of the known factor in the physical manifestation of the city. De Certeau believes that a pedestrian brings about a double standard in the “reading” disci-

pline the designers and urban planners have imposed on the city. The pedestrian, in a personal manner, owns the dominant discipline. De Certeau likens the process of owning the city to a dream, as the dream might take the place of the real world and make it vague and double De Certeau, cited in [13, p. 187]. The idea of “spatial anecdotes” lends a specific importance to the analysis of daily life because the formation of such anecdotes is made within the gaps of larger power structures. In fact, it is possible to interpret such anecdotes as a human-related nicety which occurs in the space of one’s daily life and has the potential to disorder the predetermined structural lines.

**Research Method**

With regard to the nature of the current research, which focuses on the anecdotes and personal narratives, the method of narrative research brings about a deep understanding of the people’s anecdotes and narrations about the neighborhood wherein conflicts and complexities reveal themselves as the anecdote goes on. Such conflicts might contain deep meanings of the patterns of urban life. Narrative research emphasizes the lifeline, life periods, and the turning points of one’s lived life. [14, pp. 74 & 75]. To this end, the selected participants were of above 40 years of age and to have been living in the neighborhood for at least 30 years. All participants have reflected the patterns of the narratives, conflicts, and challenges as per the theme of the research. Some names are pseudonyms:

*Table 1*

**The names of Interviewers**

	<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
1	Abdollah Darvish	75 years old, poet
2	Mohsen Mohammadkhani	68 years old, member of the neighborhood council
3	Mansour Shams	48 years old, active member of the neighborhood
4	Fatemeh Khavari	45 years old, school principal for the deprived Afghan children
5	Ali Asgar	75 years old, resident of the neighborhood
6	Mohammad Malek	65 years old, carpenter
7	Ebrahim Jahanshah	50 years old, shopkeeper
8	Fatemeh Seddiq	45 years old, shopkeeper
9	Tahmineh Souri	40 years old, shopkeeper
10	Simin Ashraf	45 years old, active member of the neighborhood

Source: authors own study.

## Results

### ***Exposition: The Old Neighborhood of Kan Meaning: Imaginary Representations of the Space***

When people define the neighborhood of Kan, they refer to spectacular spaces which have already been ruined. Such spaces in Kan as garden alleys, cypress zones, gardens, and old houses act as reminding symbols in a way that the past of the neighborhood is visualized in its present existence for people. A revision of mental images to define a ruined geography represents deeper layers of a loss which is not just dependent on the lost physical changes but refers to the change of collective interactions, too. What people of Kan think is being missed or endangered is not just a latitude or a longitude but it is the “mental images” and “mental representations” of a physical dimension of space which is prone to threat and annihilation.

Regrets for the destruction of places are not just dependent on their physical side, but it is in their mental relation with space and in the memories of people that causes regrets. The methods through which the residents of Kan keep and interpret the elements of their collective history forms a type of emotional core with regard to the past. It is like a literary genre beyond a neighborhood whose residents feel regretful about their lost past. Variables like renovation, confinement of the fabric, the reduction of the population of the locals, and compulsory migrations result in the locals not being willing to form a new type of modern urban memory as they fail to easily delineate the border of their old neighborhood. However, even such a lost past is changed into a legacy which can be transferred to the next generations. An effort to save the memory of the locals from their neighborhood is like referring to the past to keep a name alive; a revival which can change the almost-lost past of the neighborhoods, in similar samples, into a distinct feature lending itself to research which is retrievable in the process of recalling.

### ***Meaning: Eidetic Memory and Formulating the Concept of Community***

In all memories people recount of the past of Kan, relating to themselves and their collective identity, there exists a type of common core wherein the local residents of Kan try to show themselves as an independent group, despite the fact that the concept of community might be quite imaginary for them. They try to formulate and develop such a concept in a variety of ways. A group, which distinguished itself from both the “today Tehran” and the “immigrants”, strug-

gles with its own history to draw the borders of such a distinction. By sticking to such concepts as “we are original and they have no originality”, “they are nasty but we are admirable”, and “we know what respect means but they do not”, they try to make their cultural-life history better than others.

A concept of being a nation that can push the borders of imagination despite the dispersion of residents can bond groups under the umbrella of imaginary borders. In Kan’s people’s terms, the concept of being a nation or an independent group can show itself through expressions such as “having originality and nobleness”, “owning vast property and lands”, “being cultured”, “having ethnic purity”, “enjoying neighborly relations”, and “having rich agriculture”. Such issues are distinguished identity sources in the collective memory of the locals of Kan by which the residents can create a kind of image of being a nation. The intensity of their objection and reaction to the immigrants stands witness to such a belief. Despite that fact that the emigrants have left the neighborhood of Kan and have dispersed across the spaces of Tehran and do not have direct interactions, nor live in a common physical space, upon a “banishment” condition, they jointly bear the identity burden of a group and consider each other connected with regard to the social understanding independent of the joint living place.

The collective memory of the residents of Kan is formed by the narrations giving way to the concept of being a nation/group. Referring to their experiences, memories, monuments, events, happenings, and some important dates (e. g., the construction of Kan Highway, the destruction of gardens, immigrants, etc.), the people in question have a sense of sharing in their history. Likewise, a history is made based on the image the residents have of the past. The images of the environment (garden alleys, farms, gardens, and mulberry gardens), the image of religion, traditions, and neighbors’ relations exist in the people’s image of themselves and their neighborhoods. Such images have made Kan locals to have a kind of communal awareness of their collective history.

### ***Mid-Narration: Kan, Prone to Changes The First Complex: Strange Acquaintance; Forming a Sense of Being Forgotten***

In narrations, it seems that the first complex the residents of Kan refer to while talking about their neighborhood is the experience of a sense of becoming forgotten and fading away. What has remained from the past to which people have had a sense of ownership has to some extent been lost and the migration phenomenon

and the control of the life and economy of the neighborhood by the immigrants has made the previously known atmosphere quite strange for the people of Kan. In a part of the interview transcripts, it is discussed that the destruction of the old fabric has with itself a sense of change and becoming forgotten:

*The fabric was quite rural... but now everything has changed. Nothing is like before... We have been quite ignored.*

An important part of urban and neighborhood-related awareness of the local people of Kan is formed by absences and becoming forgotten in which gaps and challenges reveal themselves in ideas, imaginations, and memories in line with the collective memory of people:

*In my mind, I am still imagining the past. Those beautiful monuments and narrow alleys, with those thatched walls. We used to have baths which were quite beautiful one of which was the very Esmaloon<sup>1</sup> bath which was half-ruined and we saved it.*

A hypothetical dialectic is formed between the past and the present and such a dialectic acts as a force that forms part of the identity and image of people upon the neighborhood. In fact, those elements which have been removed from the history of the neighborhood are revived and appear in urban awareness frameworks:

*In the past, if one had a problem, all the people of Kan came to help. They had such a rich culture that did not let anyone know one from their neighborhood is in need or in trouble. They were in need themselves but helped others. They were hungry but helped their neighbors. Everyone in Kan was likewise, unexceptionally! People were all friends.*

The people of Kan believe that their past is ruined and are experiencing a sense of becoming forgotten, rejected, and lost. The damage that is inflicted upon the urban memory by the process of forgetting observes and relates a type of individual sense of sorrow and regret to macro issues. The way they explain the history of garden alleys, neighbor relations, and the vastness of the properties connects their emotions to political, economic, and identity issues. The sense of Kan becoming forgotten is reflected in the increasing importance Tehran has found as the capital:

*“Urbanization moved toward us, we did not go that way”; “Tehran has developed but we remained a ruined small corner”; “The relationship between Tehran and us is like that of the king and the beggar.”*

The sense of losing belonging to a place, serenity, and uniformity, and showing human emotions are in close relation with the process of global and met-

ropolitan development. What is seen of old bricks, thatched alleys, bread-baking furnaces, and wooden lampposts in the space of narrations represents people's awareness and experience which tries to relate their history to metropolitan and cosmopolitan processes under the subjective force of rejection, marginalization, and suppression. The macro issues of metropolitanism that embrace Kan, in addition to top-down renovations of the city of Tehran, attend to the macro issues of immigrants' migration and homeland-making in the host culture the manifestation of which is seen in such recent urban issues as multi-neighborhoodism, multiculturalism, and de-territorialization.

### ***Second Complex: Multi-Ethnicity; The Economic Mosaic of the Small Worlds***

With regard to the central point of the narrations, what refers to the conflicts within the neighborhood in the form of a complex is the entrance of a significant number of Kurdish and Afghan immigrants, who have changed into the dominant residents of the neighborhood and taken control of its economy. For the time being, the neighborhood of Kan contains a collection of groups and identities, next to each other in one place, and each of such groups and identities is located at a specific hierarchy taking responsibility for a part of the economic and social activities and the sustainability of the neighborhood as per their position. Upon the hierarchy, in the past, the local residents of Kan, due to owning numerous gardens and properties, were the major power of the neighborhood. Over the years, however, when they started to sell their gardens to Afghan workers, they did not know that they were giving the major functionality of the neighborhood to them. Today, on the identity hierarchy of Kan, the immigrants are more active and have been able to gradually take control of economic affairs of the neighborhood and change it into a dwelling place:

*At first, Afghans did not have any control, and nobody took them seriously. They were ordinary workers and weren't dominated, but by working for the people of Kan, now they are landlords and look down on the people of Kan. Even people of Kan now borrow money from them and sometimes pay interest. But Kurdish people had an even more important effect. But now the economy of Kan is dependent on Afghans; they have taken over all the farming activities.*

The above narration shows that the immigrants, taking control of the economic process of the gardens, have marginalized the people of Kan. Afghans and Kurds have gradually been able to control

<sup>1</sup> One of the old and small neighborhoods of Kan.

the major structure of the neighborhood in the form of small group (such as daily behaviors and native culture spatial-taste commonalities) and big groups (such as controlling the economy of the neighborhood).

As an urban space, Kan can be understood first as a shelter for the immigrants and today as a living place for them. Immigrants' residence and settlement in Kan is a good example of the minorities' settlement in cities, through which they can demonstrate an effective organization of multiplicity in cities.

*The one from Kan says that there is no point in going to my garden at 4 a. m. and pick the mulberries together with my wife and children, I rent the garden to an Afghan, sit back, and get the rent. If he wanted to work in the garden himself, he would need to give mulberries to his sister, to his brother, and some neighbors on both sides, so he has given it to the Afghans. Now, it is meaningless for a Kan dweller to buy/rent a piece of land and plant beans there, he will be laughed at. He would be told, 'it is pointless, afghans are there, give them the trouble!*

Small groups of immigrants, in addition to holding to the differences, can reproduce their own societies and, gradually in the unknown and strange space, create the familiar living style.

The neighborhood of Kan is a remnant for Tehran remaining from the pre-modern era, but the city of Tehran has a city-village within which has dissolved in itself a variety of modern societies of the city. The village, having been rejected by Tehran, acts a metaphor that carries important processes of metropolitanism inside and bears a part of the organization of social space of the city of Tehran. Alienating or completely rationalized methods of development and renovation of Tehran does not conform with the internal logic and practical reality of the city-villages and neighborhoods. In fact, the renovation of the city of Tehran has taken the logic of an urban life from Kan.

It seems that the ethnic multiplicity of Kan and accommodating the immigrants have contributed to reproducing the vital element of life in Kan. If it were not so, most of the houses in Kan would not be rented. Besides, no permission is issued for construction and registering deeds in Kan. Despite the fact that the residents of Kan are generally dissatisfied with the immigrants in Kan, their migration to the neighborhood has prevented Kan from the annihilation of human life. In fact, what has made Kan still alive is the conglomeration of the ethnic groups and their diverse cultures.

### ***Conflicts: Economic and Social Competitions of the Ethnic Groups; Immigrant-Local Tension***

The conflict between the locals and immigrants in different urban regions has been a continuous phenomenon in the history of most cities in the world. The neighborhood of Kan, as a small space of the city of Tehran, shows numerous representations of the tensions created on a daily basis between the immigrants and the locals. When considered basically and structurally, many of the tensions are discursive issues. The basis of many imaginations and social actions can be understood through discourses. It seems that one of the major conflicts, which prevails a major part of the space of Kan, is conflicts or even interactions between the locals and the immigrants. In this section, as a part of the "mid" narration, under the title "conflicts", we investigate the existing tensions in the neighborhood.

### ***The Discursive Construction of Social Affair in Tensions***

The people of Kan give a type of discursive structure to the concept of "social affair" in daily routines of the neighborhood through their actions. Alteration ideas (such as installing street names tags, language revival, and poetry reading sessions about small alleys) originate in imagined and experienced spaces of representation of life in the past and what seems close to the utopian life in the past and change it into a type of spatial representation (giving a special local order to the anatomy of the neighborhood) for the immigrants. In the course of such events in the routines of life, it is observed that different groups create a specific discourse with regard to their own space and produce their own specific spaces upon such social affairs. In fact, the tension between the locals and the immigrants can be shown in the form of such social affairs which, in turn, refer to the discursive structure of a social affair.

The explanation of the process of the othering tensions in Kan, from different aspects, is aimed toward the others (the others from Tehran and the immigrants others). Such spaces continuously take from and are reproduced opposing numerous others. For example, efforts made to name alleys and revive the heritage can both refer to the process of producing space and maintaining the distinction of Kan against unified renovations of the city of Tehran and producing a space opposing the immigrants aiming to draw borders between the locals in the physical space of the neighborhood and the immigrants.

Under the theory of space production by Lefebvre via a spatial trigonality, namely 1) spatial practice (physical, tangible, and materialistic space), 2) representations

of space (conceptualized space, scientists, engineers, and technocrats space), and 3) spaces of representation (socially lived and experienced spaces), it was argued that Lefebvre analyzes the process of “social” production with regard to the interactions between the very trigonality. In this light, it seems that the process of space production, which is made by either local or the immigrant groups of people in Kan, contains the trigonality of spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representation. It is important to note that such a trigonality puts emphasis on the “social” production of space which can have a discursive structure by creating mutual opportunities for the action and structure.

Producing space is made not only by the locals but also by the immigrants. Immigrants are among the groups who experience a type of spatial-social disintegration from the place they have left behind. However, in the host domain, through interacting with organizations and local people, the immigrants move in the space and, due to their disintegration from the home country, settle in the host culture.

#### ***Local-Immigrant Diagonality: The Formation of Daily Nationalism***

One of the most important narrations in Kan, which refers to distancing and rejection, is the one related to the construction of a separate township for the Afghans, which the locals of Kan consider a suggestion for the betterment of their neighborhood. One of the manifestations of allocating space to oneself and separating the space of others is observed in such a proposal:

*“I am not on speaking terms with the immigrants at all. I myself prefer not to receive 90 percent of them! 100 Percent, they must leave Kan!”*

*“Afghans need to be organized and controlled, otherwise, Kabul and Herat will move to Kan! If we have the comprehensive plan, the Afghans need to leave. 80 percent will leave. If constructions get started, Afghans will not occupy the space. The plan is to the advantage of the people of Kan. If the Tehranis did not impose themselves on us, things would have been right, but now it’s a different story.”*

The issue of building townships, narrated by the locals, for the immigrants has implied meanings for a spatial organization with identity and social differences representing a type of modern otherness-rejection accompanied by such disparaging statements as “they are filthy”, “they are low-class”, “they have no respect”. Such metaphors represent that the idea of “ethnicity” in the social structure of collective life acts as an effective social issue which gives form to the urban imagination of the locals toward the immigrants.

Through the narrations, it is observed that there is a popular hostility between the locals and immigrants. At first, the people of Kan took advantage of the Afghans, but now the immigrants have dominated the locals, resulting in a mutual tolerance with veiled hostility, resistance, and lack of leniency.

*When there was the 15<sup>th</sup> of Sha’ban<sup>1</sup> ceremony, some of the locals attended and got the sweets and fruits in a dignified manner. Now, for any public ceremony, we are afraid of the Afghans. The children with dirty feet and faces are running around everywhere. You can neither disrespect them nor receive them. A disgusting situation that makes us feel bad, too. In the neighborhood I see no locals, just the Afghans and Kurds.*

It seems that the local residents of Kan, under the effects of the hegemonic discourse prevailing in Iran, consider the ethnic groups like Afghans and Kurds a type of threat. The immigrants in Iran are living on the blades of the dominance of domestic colonization and are sacrificed to the Iranians’ hidden nationalistic mindset. The interviews show that, in some parts, the locals consider the moving of immigrants to Kan a predetermined plan that follows specific policies:

*What you see today in Kan was planned 10 years ago. My friend’s son-in-law now standing there watering the plants, is one of the staff of the Ministry of Intelligence. He might not be willing to confess but we all know. One day, we were sitting at a corner and I said, ‘Hossein, I know that the Kurds have moved to Kan based on a plan. They want to deprive the locals of their own solidarity, culture, worldview, nobleness, and family. How is it that all the people from Kurdistan, Sanandaj, and Kermanshah moved to Kan?’*

In Kurdistan, a process is observed through which non-Kurds have moved to Kurd-dominant regions to work in administrative organizations and service sectors. Such a strategy acts as a demographic pressure control that prevents the unification and solidarity of the Kurdish population in Kurdistan. Despite the fact that immigrants’ movement to a region might follow some population control policies and affects the historical-religious organization of the neighborhood, the immigrants in Kan reflect their unique ethnicity effects in a variety of ways and stand against the locals. Especially, the Kurds ethnic groups do not simply disregard their native cultural identity and try to preserve their identity symbols in the neighborhood. Such a narration shows the process of name changing among Sunni Afghans who opt for Shia names:

<sup>1</sup> Sha’ban is one of Iranian religious ceremony.

*Some of the Afghans change their names and opt for Ali and Fatemeh and Zahra or they are Sunnis but do likewise and select a Shia name for themselves. In the school I asked a mother why your daughter's name was Fatemeh despite the fact that you are a Sunni. She answered that after we moved to Iran, instead of her real name, we call her Fatemeh. Right now I have two students, they are Fatemeh and Setayesh 'Omari'! The last name is 'Omari' but the first name 'Fatemeh'! Or the other was called Othman but after moving to Iran, he changed his name. Iranian do not accept even the Sunnis.*

The representations the interviews offer of the disagreement among the ethnic groups demonstrate that the locals draw an image of discordant civilizations in Kan today, which can have its origins in colonization. Such discordances refer to the fact the life of the ethnic groups, when living with each other, is full of tensions, which prevent us from forming a monolithic image of a cosmopolitan life. It warns against the idea that all ethnic groups belong to the same humanity and what is highlighted is a type of lack of tolerance and support for such concepts as nobleness. Ideas that are developed based on ethnicity or nationalism can be quite blurred and invisible after they form, but they still exist in their subconscious minds.

#### ***Immigrants: Economic Life and Work on the Borders of Rejection and Deprivation***

Some illegal Afghan immigrants in the neighborhood of Kan are living a rather poor life in small and old but crowded houses. Their living in such houses, which the locals deems to be inadequate, gives a new meaning to the physical place and reconstructs the prone-to-destruction space. Despite such financial deprivation and social rejection, it is possible to trace their collective identity which, in the form of numerous groups, do different activities in the neighborhood, in particular, and across Tehran, in general, and establish their own social order. Those Kan residents who used to own gardens, at first employed the Afghans to work in their gardens and earned economic profit.

Now, however, the Afghans have expanded their communities and developed their identity process in the space, making the locals see the immigrants as their rivals. The locals try to reject the sovereignty of the immigrants in the neighborhood by emphasizing their nobleness and nativeness. The Afghan and Kurd immigrants, at first, face a type of domestic colonization that brings about unequal economic and social condition in a way that they should admit doing low-class tasks and living in inappropriate houses. On a small scale, the

situation in Kan is a reflection of unequal development all around Tehran and across Iran, putting the minor ethnic groups in a more discriminatory and exploitative situation. The immigrants who have been forced to leave their motherland and stay in Kan live under unfavorable circumstances. Some of the Afghans and Kurds have gradually managed to improve their life in the neighborhood and obtain economic profit, but there are still others who are living a hard life.

#### ***The Coda: The Vista of Kan Confinement in the Homeland***

Strangement in one's homeland is the gloomiest form of confinement—the kind that turns people into familiar strangers at home and gradually fade the sense of belonging. The local residents of the neighborhood, on two large-scale processes, have been alienated from their previous lifestyle: On the one hand, the renovations of the city of Tehran, which have confined Kan neighborhood within a rural physical fabric, and, on the other hand, the multiple processes of the immigration of ethnic groups to the neighborhood. The municipality has introduced the neighborhood as a valuable rural fabric and that is why Kan residents are not allowed to reconstruct their old houses and many houses do not have registered deeds. Such issues have caused many Kan residents to leave the place and the others still staying there have been confined in the houses with no deeds. The renovation of the neighborhood has marginalized the people of Kan and made the neighborhood a confined place.

Now, in Kan, many locals are following the official issues to register the deeds of the houses and the members of the neighborhood council try to pass and execute the comprehensive plan for the neighborhood. The narrations show that the comprehensive plan enables the landlords to reconstruct their houses with three or four floors. The plan works to the benefit of the residents in a way that they can reconstruct the old houses and rent them. However, such an issue will completely change the fabric of the neighborhood and the beginning of apartment building in the neighborhood would result in the gradual death of the place and likens the neighborhood to the surrounding townships.

#### ***Constructing Homeland among Estranged Ethnic Groups***

Immigrants on a continuum of rejection and deprivation gradually form their multiple identity spaces and arenas in the neighborhood — a space wherein one cannot easily reject the identity of others by emphasizing that of oneself. The process of construct-

ing space in the neighborhood and getting stabilized there by the immigrants cannot be sought just in a collection of systematic behaviors and thoughts but the immigrants can change the dominant urban order by daily behaviors and invisible movements. In fact, immigrants can create their own spatial stories under the clear and dominant order of the city. Today, an important part of life in the neighborhood of Kan belongs to the immigrants' specific spatial meanings which produces a part of the space of the neighborhood of Kan and the city of Tehran.

Language, in general, and the order of language, in particular, can skillfully deviate the space from the dominant space. Even the special methods of expressions and pronunciations, as a daily strategy, can create spatial distinctions for the immigrants. Michel De Certeau believes that even the ordinary process of walking in the city can, as a spatial strategy, reverse the dominant order. The games the immigrant kids play in the neighborhood are among the most active forms that signify a sense of ownership by the "other" in the neighborhood and cast doubts on the stable drawings of the space. The manner the kids run, laugh, and play and their physiques and happiness create their specific inventive spaces in the neighborhood. Changes and the small belongings of the immigrants can gradually bring about a new interpretation of spatial designs in the neighborhood. Such new interpretations can even distort the power hierarchy of the neighborhood and gradually change the equilibrium to the benefit of the other group.

**Conclusion**

This article shows how immigrants can produce their economic and social spaces in the neighborhoods. In this part, efforts are made to answer the following question with regard to theoretical approaches and general interpretations: "How have the economic and social spaces become organized in the neighborhood of Kan?"

The spatial development of numerous cultures next to one another, and collecting small worlds for people and immigrant groups in the neighborhood of Kan depends on the process of organizing many major and minor trade centers in the central sections of the city of Tehran which can provide job opportunities of low status for the immigrants. In this light, the neighborhood of Kan acts as a dormitory for the immigrants. In fact, it is the spatial economy of Tehran which has changed the neighborhood of Kan into a confined neighborhood and has concentrated spatial distribution of the immigrants in Kan. Despite the fact that the neighborhood has specific potentials for the immigrants (like abundant gardens and inexpensive, crowded houses), the model of urban order of Tehran and the vast distribution of economic activities of Tehran and the increasing focus of economy there intensify the solidarity of the neighborhood. In fact, stabilization of the immigrants in Kan is the dialectic result of the spatial conflict between Tehran and Kan.

It is also argued that the plan for homogenizing numerous cultural and ethnic processes in the city can result in the collapse of the ruling ideology of the metropolis. The urban centers in Tehran and in metropolises, as Lefebvre believes, due to architectural triviality of third modern grade, move towards collapse,

Table 2

**Implications by Observing Story Elements in the Chronology of Kan**

Recounting the narrations of the neighborhood of Kan based on chronological order				
The Old Kan (Outset): Image		Prone-to-Change Kan (Mid)		Vista of Kan (Coda)
Image / Narration	Meaning	Complex	Challenge	The Eventual Scene
Image of an imaginary geography	1. Imaginary spatial representation 2. Photographic memory and planning the concept of community	1. Strange Acquaintance: The sense of becoming forgotten 2. Multiple ethnicity: The Economic Mosaic of small worlds	Ethnic groups' Economic and Social competitions A. The discorsal structure of social affair in tensions B. Local-Immigrant duality: The formation of daily nationalism C. Economic Life and work on the borders of deprivation and rejection	1. Estrangement in the homeland 2. Constructing homeland among estranged ethnic groups'

Source: authors own study.

resulting in the change of city centers into a vacant lobby with no relation to the link between the residents and the city and becomes alienated from the residents. In fact, the urban centers are a formal reality wherein conflicts, society, and synchrony occur but void of any content. Hence, gradually, a type of intra-city transfer and suburbanization takes form in the metropolis, which direct life processes toward rural regions. As a result, the crisis the metropolis confronts has failed to realize the actual process of life as an “urban issue” in abstract spaces like gaps and networks. Tehran has also formed an abstract type of location which does not correspond to the real logic of the residents’ life both ethnicity — and culture-wise and Lefebvre considers it city crisis.

To make it short, the local residents of Kan have images and memories of the past entities but they do not correspond to the reality of their current social life. In fact, people have images of their neighborhood and their past but during their routine life, they cannot find a corresponding reality to those images. Therefore, there is a gap between the image and reality and such a gap can become so deep that it might result in a meaning crisis in life. As a result, urban entities and those of the neighborhoods need to enter the imaginary shapes of the urban memory and the imaginary shapes of the urban memory should have real and tangible realities in a way that space finds its way into the arenas of memory.

### References

1. Tonkiss F. (2005) *Polity Press*.
2. Bianchini F. (2006) *Urban Mindscape of Europe*. M.: Editions Rodopi BV.
3. Crinson M. (2005) *Urban Memory and Amnesia in the Modern City*, M.: Routledge.
4. Fakouhi N. (2005) *Urban Anthropology*, Tehran: Ney.
5. Missztalztal B. (2003) *Open University Press*.
6. Park R. (1967) *University of Chicago press*.
7. Cassel P. (1993) *Stanford University Press*.
8. Gottdiener M. (1993) *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 129—134.
9. Zieleniece A. (2007), *Space and Social Theory*, M.: SAGE Publications.
10. Goovewardena K., Kipfer S. (2008) *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, Routledge, Christian Schmid, *Towards a Three Dimensional Dialectic: Lefebvre’s Theory of the Production of Space*.
11. Bridge G., Waston S. (2002) *The Blackwell City Reader*, M.: Blackwell, Henri Lefebvre, *The Right to the City*, pp. 367—374.
12. Halbwachs M. (1992) *Chicago: Un. Chicago Press*.
13. During S. (2007) *The Cultural Studies Reader*, M.: Routledge.
14. Du Certeau M. (2007) *Walking in the City*.
15. Creswell J. V. (2007) *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, M.: SAGE Publ.

### Information about authors

**Somaye Shalchi** — Assistant Professor of Sociology at Allameh Tabataba’i University, Tehran, Iran. Somayeh.shalchi@gmail.com

**Faezeh Mohabbati** — Master Student of Sociology at Allameh Tabataba’i University, Tehran, Iran. f.mohabbati@gmail.com