

## The Influence of Literature on the Improvement of Teenagers' Spatial Knowledge

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### Introduction

According to Haunt, "Iran has a head start over most of its neighboring countries in the establishment of schools, but progress were slow, and there were comparatively few books written for children in Persian" and so schools had to rely on translating books from other countries (2004, p784) . The first narratives for young people in Iran were published in Keyhane-bacheha, which was a weekly magazine that began publishing in 1956. In addition, there emerged other authors such as Nader Ebrahimi who published books for Iranian children and there were handful of youth novels that depicted young people and their relation to urban areas. But a lack of attention to the history and identity of Iran through the publication of youth literature has been criticized by many Iranian authors, especially in recent years. For instance,(According to ), Nasser Takmil Homayoun, who is an Iranian historian, in a panel session about Iranian identity, stated that "Identity is not just culture and history . In fact, physical space is also important. For instance, when I think of Ghazvin( my home town) I remember our old house in which we lived , and its valuable architecture. The rooms and niches. These items also shape my identity. Even now, Ghazvin means very much to me" (Takmil Homayoun, 2005,p.11). Because of the lack of published Iranian literature for children, the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (Kanun), initiated a project called "Today's Young People" in March 2009, The aim of the project was to write and publish books specifically for Iranian adolescents. Consequently, 20 books were published by the institute <sup>1</sup>.

One of the critiques of these new works for youth is of their lack of descriptions or mentions of Iranian spaces. In September 2015, panel sessions of the "Representation of Tehran in young people's literature" were held by the support of Shahr publications and the Revayat institute. One of the panelists, Mostafa Kharaman, a well known Iranian children's writer argued that "the problem with our contemporary literature is that the location is not obvious. It is not clear where the story happens. While we all know that we have various lifestyles in Iranian cities,these differences are not represented in young adults' stories. <sup>2</sup> Mohittabatabaei, a well known Tehranologist, observed that in these published stories, as well as in school books for young people, Iranian streets, squares and other spaces have not been portrayed. The spaces that are explained in these books seem to be "nowhere." While we all know that people in different cities in Iran have different lifestyles according to their culture. So, Tehranians have different way of living from people in other cities of Iran. Mohittabatabaei further argued that

<sup>1</sup>In this essay, the novels *Chapter five*, *Silence*, *Ziba! Call me*, and *The First Day of Summer* have been chosen from the "Today's Young People" project.

<sup>2</sup> Published on "Iran book Agency "on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015<sup>2</sup> :<http://www.ibna.ir/fa/doc/report/228171/>

some descriptions of the old and famous streets and mosques of Tehran should be incorporated in the school books so that young people can learn about the urban history of Tehran.

So physical space is often absent from these young adult novels but, as I argue, it should be one of the main elements in new fiction for youth in order to help young people know their history, and as a key element in identity construction.

### **Adolescents and the influence of the environment**

While younger children are usually accompanied by their parents in urban spaces, adolescents spend most of their time with their peers, and independent from their parents. They become more mobile and avoid authority. They socialize in larger peer groups of both single and mixed gender. Hanging out becomes an important social activity for these groups. This peer socialization is important for the formation of their personal and social identity and values (Passon, Levi, & Rio, 2008, p.75). A growing body of research in different disciplines from environmental psychology to urban planning have highlighted the influence of the outdoor space on both teenager's environment and on the formation of their identities ( Kahila, & Kytta, 2009, Horelli, & Walin, 2010; Ho' rschelman, & Blerk , 2012; Broberg, Kytta, & Fagerholm, 2013). Cahill asserts that "how teenagers define their environmental transactions is intimately bound with the way in which they construct their identities. In these interactions, environmental experiences are a means for reflecting upon, reproducing , and transforming the self" (Cahill, 2000, p.251). In fact, the physical environment influences young people's well being, educational achievement, and social development, among other things. Accordingly, a considerable number of specialists from different disciplines ranging from environmental psychology to architecture and planning have conducted research concerning young people and their environment.

Mathews, Taylor, Percy-Smith, & Limb (2000, p.281) have found roads, cul de sacs , alleyways, walkaways, shopping areas, car parks, vacant plots, and derelict sites are the spaces where urban children spend their time with their peers. Mathews, Percy-Smith, & Limb (1997) postulate: "The shops, streets and play areas of this locality provided the stomping grounds for teenagers. In effect, these were cultural gateways providing access to worlds of commonality and difference (p. 199). In "You, Your community, Your View" P. E. Owens (2008) found that "in addition to enjoying hanging out with their friends, youths likes places in their community where they can be with all ages.". In another study, she concluded that: "Parks, schools, commercial areas, places near homes and undeveloped open areas, all have been identified as places important to adolescents" (2003,p.7). In his study about youths and urban spaces, Lieberg noted that: "Young people seek both planned and structured activities in the neighbourhood, and spontaneous and unexpected meetings with other groups in the city centre" (2006,p.13). As these studies demonstrate, neighborhoods, streets, parks, cafes, and unstructured areas are among the favored spaces for young people in urban areas and are important to the research about adolescent identity formation.

Beginning in 1980s with Kevin Lynch's "Growing up in Cities" Project , numerous urban planning projects have been initiated by the participation of young people, using different methods ranging from traditional methods such as, painting , descriptive writing, place mapping, (Chawla, 2002; Travlou, Owens, Ward, Thompson, & Maxwell, 2008) to exploiting new technologies to raise children's collaboration (Saad-Sulonen & Horelli, 2010; Broberg Kytta,

&Fagerholm,2013). All of These studies propose that in order to have more child-friendly cities, involvement of teenagers in the planning process is necessary.

One of the ways urban planners find information on how youth feel about space is through youth novels. Novels can give planners adequate data about characteristics of a city in a specific period based on residents' viewpoint because stories are written according to people's (or the author's) point of view. Consequently, by reviewing novels for teenagers, planners can become aware of what urban spaces are used by teenagers, how they use these spaces and what the characteristics of these spaces are, which accordingly have led planners to create more children-friendly spaces. On the other hand, such fictional stories can also teach young people along with entertaining them. By including descriptions of urban issues in these stories children can get a better understanding of their cities and their communities. Accordingly, children can develop an interest in participating in the process of urban planning.

This essay aims to explore characteristics of local communities' insights into teenagers by reviewing young adult novels. Moreover, information about urban areas, which are represented in these novels, I will argue, demonstrate the importance of the educational role these novels have in introducing urban planning for teenagers. The novels that I review in this essay take place in three significant periods in Iranian history: the Islamic revolution period (1978-1979dates?)The story of "Chapter Five: Silence " and " the story of " the Haji Neighbourhood" have been chosen for this era, the war period (1981-1989d The story of " Samsam Alley " has been chosen for this era, and the present day, The stories of "Ziba! Call me" , " The First Day of Summer", and " The Tales of Majid" have been chosen for this era . In all of the stories, the narrator is a teenager. Each story has been analyzed in two parts: first, popular places of young people, and second, instructive information about architecture and planning in youth novels, although each story may not include all of this information.

### **"Chapter Five: Silence" by Hamidreza Bayrami and the Islamic revolution period**

The story of "Chapter five: Silence<sup>3</sup>" is about a teenager, named Morteza, who lives in the Aliabad neighborhood, a poor neighborhood in Tehran. He became aware of revolution and chaos in the city from the neighbors and his friends. Although teenagers spatial range is wider than little children, still neighborhoods are among their first choices for hanging out: "Because of their relative lack of free space (they do not have yet reached the age of driving-licenses) they are more dependent on the neighborhood and the local spaces than most other groups"(Liberg,1994, p.329). In this story, when a stranger comes to Morteza , and his friend, Amir, who are both 15 year-old-boys, and asks about their neighborhood, the boys both gave him a great amount of information about their neighborhood. Morteza says : "Amir, thought that he is responsible to inform the neighborhood to the strangers in great details, he said: 'the neighborhood has been newly built, still most of houses are vacant, some people do not want to come and the others are waiting for finishing of the remained constructions. Alleys and streets have not been asphalted yet. Is this a quote? there are 2 quotation marks here but no end quotation marks...(Bayrami, 2011, p.39)

In another part of the story, Amir adds “if you walk a bit, you will reach Aramgah street(main street near the neighborhood), then you can take a taxi and easily go to Shah-Abdol-Azim Holy Shrine or Nazi abad neighborhood. Shops have not been opened yet. However, there are lots of vendors and pickups. They can deliver whatever you want to your house.”(Bayrami, 2011, p.41). Indeed Amir, as a teenager, explores his community and city by walking. So he knows pedestrian routes in and around the community, and the responses which he provides for the stranger are based on this peripatetic approach.

Teenagers are also aware of the problems of their community, especially the more tangible ones which they are directly faced with, such as uncleanness in urban spaces. The information which Amir and Morteza present reflects the teenager’s great information about their neighborhood, which is the result of the considerable amount of time they spend in their localities. Iranian Adolescents usually have a sense of attachment to their neighborhoods, contrary to many Western teen narratives where the teenager cannot wait to escape their surroundings. This sense of attachment to space is an integral part of Iranian culture and has historically been a part of the strong friendships that develop between neighbors. These strong relationship bonds form an important part of Iranian culture, particularly among youth. These local relationships provide stability and foster a sense of cultural identity.

Further in the story, when Morteza found that he had unintentionally revealed the location of the opposition activist of their neighborhood to the police, he says: “Suddenly, every thing was changed: I felt like an alien in my own neighborhood. It seems that, I had no friends there. When my friends came to our house to ask me to join them in playing, I refused to see them” ( Bayrami, 2011, p.120). We can conclude that the narrator likes, even cares about, the people in his neighborhood and does not want to see them in trouble. He feels guilty when he realizes that he, unpurposely, has caused problems for his neighbor, who is an activist. His shame has then affected the way he interacts with his neighbors and the neighborhood space. He is unwilling to show his face for his embarrassment. His loyalty to the neighborhood has been challenged and it forces him to reexamine his position.

In another part of the story, a stranger tells Morteza that: “The only problems in suburbs is that they are not safe”. He replies, “Since we have come to this neighborhood, we have not seen any crimes. Just once, we woke up because someone was shouting ‘catch him,’ and then it emerged that a new family had recently arrived to the neighborhood from the countryside, and their hen had escaped, and they were looking for it”(Bayrami, 2011, p.132) In spite of the narrator’s knowledge of the economic and environmental problems in the neighborhood, the narrator belongs to it firmly. Hence, he defends his community when he hears the acerbic tone of the stranger.

When Fereshteh’s ( the narrator’s neighbor and beloved girl) father wants to talk to him, the narrator becomes nervous because his friends tell him that his girlfriend’s father wants to question him. because he had talked with her daughter. The narrator, says:

” They(his friends) really frightened me. If I was a stranger, I definitely would escape, but I could not. Since it I was in our neighborhood, and it would be a great shame. I had to go and face with Fereshteh’s father”( Bayrami, 2011, p.84).Which, is another evidences of the close relationship between children in the neighbourhood

The story represents the strong relationships of children with each other in the community. The relationships within the neighborhood are close enough that the youth feel comfortable calling each other by their substitute names; such familiarity in Iranian culture

would never be allowed between people who were not well-known to each other. The narrator describes that the “children all had their nicknames, I am Cart (since the narrator has a cart for selling ice cream, Amir is Amir with one coat, Nasser is Nasser with gold bow tie, and etc” (Bayrami, 2011,p.30). The freedom to address others by their informal names helps solidify feelings of belonging within the neighborhood space.

### **Streets and Squares**

Streets as the simplest form of public space in the city is more complex than it looks. These every day public spaces are subject to a variety of different uses and therefore have multiple local meanings. Streets are a means to getting about, but they are also meeting places or places to hang around in.. They are forums of visibility and display for many people, especially youth. Streets are also often sites of protest against local governments or issues people care about.(Tonkiss,2005, p.69). As Malone argues, “For many young people the street is the stage for performance, where they construct their social identity in relation to their peers and other members of the society”(Malone, 2002, p.163). In “Chapter Five:Silence” the streets become the location of political protests. Amir tells Morteza : “something odd has been written on the electricity posts,” and then the narrators replies, “After Sadri’s(their neighbor and opposition activist) death, we went to see what is happening. We read the notes on the electricity posts. They said “Guys! Shah is a betrayer, we are his enemy, join us!....’We heard that it is chaos in the city, and people are in the streets and shout mottos, but we could not go and join them, because it was far. Besides, we did not have time” (Bayrami, 2011,p.120). And then he adds “ mottos which were written in almost all of the walls of the city and the demonstrations which was said is being held in the streets, all represented that something great is going to occur, but I did not know what”( Bayrami, 2011,p.128).These quotes represent the description of chaos in an Iranian city in the revolution time, in sight of a teenager, who is not usually allowed to participate in the protests. In this story, when Morteza is arrested by the police, being accused of helping an opposition activist, he does not tell anything when he is being questioned. The interrogator shouts at him, and says: “Do not try to deceive me, you have grown up in the streets and alleys . You know everything ! maybe you have not understood . But, absolutely you have heard!” (Bayrami,2011, p.53). Young people also may not feel safe in some urban spaces. In this story Morteza says: “ we heard that the city center was in turmoil, people were in the streets and chanting slogans. We liked to join, but, it was far. Moreover, we were afraid of getting lost” (Bayrami,2011,p.104). So the streets here function as both a place for young people to improve their social identity and knowledge, but also a place for youth participation in the political sphere.

### **Parking , Shopping Centers, Coffee shops and Cinemas**

As it has been mentioned, parks, shopping malls, cinemas along with other recreational facilities are among teenagers favorite place when they want to have more excitement. In this story, when Morteza wants to have more fun with his friends, he says, “I decided to leave my work for some hours, I may go to Farah park (which is too far from the narrator’s home)” (Bayrami, 2011, p. 98). In fact, parks and coffee shops are one of the amendments of the city which recently have been more popular among young adults, and have become one of their

hang-outs. These open public spaces allow youth to integrate both recreational activities with work, and future work, further cementing the notion of identity with community. . As it has been said, social and economic situation of young people also influences their use of urban spaces. In this story “ the narrator’s tone became regretful when he is talking about the cinema and cafes. He says, “it was a few minutes to the cinema, but Amir was not with us to find some money for buying tickets. He is a master at finding inexpensive staff. It was Amir , who found Gernko cold store in the neighborhood where, its owner put some of its rotten fruits out. So, we can go and eat them without paying!”( Bayrami, 2011,p.14). Mitchel (2003) postulates, “The problems with the bourgeois city is that it is not so much a site of participation as one of expropriation by a dominant class (and a set of economic interests) that is not really interested in making the city a site for the cohabitation of differences” (p.18) For example, after talking with a stranger, the narrator says: “then he told me about Bolbol Café which had a nice ice cream, and sweet beverages. It was at that time when I found out what else existed in the city! And what a big world we have! I thought ice cream is what we sell to people in the neighborhood, but he told me, there are different tastes: Saffron, Pistachio and etc . I became determined to make a plan to go to Bolbol café with Amir one day, to see how it is! ” (Bayrami, 2011,p70). As the narrator’s excitement demonstrates, teenagers’ experiences in places, like cafes, which are not free of charge, are highly dependent on the economic situation of their families. They do not know the places in other parts of the city where they can not afford the prices.

### **Unplanned Areas**

Furthermore, teenage protagonists are in need of space that has not yet been defined by the rules of the adult community to develop and manifest their identity (Wistisen, 2014, p. 2). Owens (2001) claims that few place in urban neighborhoods do not have defined function. Liberg expressed that “one of the most important aspect of teenagers’ use of public space is the possibility to control and shape their own existence without adult control”(1994, p. 329). For instance, the area around the water pump is considered an unplanned area where teenagers choose to gather with their peers, since there is no adult or authority control in these places. These places are simply the place which teenagers can meet their friends, especially when they do not want to be seen by their parents or other adults. In “Chapter five , silence”, the narrator meets his favorite girl around the water pump<sup>4</sup> and says “Mom did not know why I am always ready to go to bring water” ( Bayrami, 2011,p.17) . Teenagers , also play with their peers in these areas. They feel free because they can change the character of the unplanned area to their own. In the other part of the story, Morteza states, “Climbing from the walls, hitting flies, and breaking windows of vacant homes were our hobbies in the neighborhood, with Amir. Amir also found that in dilapidated parts of our neighborhood we can find lots of old, used wires, which we could bend to make a sphere to use as bows while shooting with our simple bow and arrows”( Bayrami, 2011,p.29). In fact, Amir and Morteza spend a lot of time in these areas

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<sup>4</sup> Since the community in which the Morteza lives was not equipped with water pipes at that time , residents have to pick some containers and go to these water pumps. In fact they were not pumps with today’s definition, they were short, metal columns (Called Feshari in Persian which means pressing), which had some holes, and a metal button. People used to press these buttons strongly , then water came out form the holes, and people could collect it.

and enjoy, even when surrounded by the garbage – as old wires- ,playing freely without any adult control. For the Morteza, “It is better to go near the water pump or under the pines” (Bayrami, 2011, p. 68) with friends than to hang around adults at home. The narrator here emphasizes the importance of such unplanned areas in teenagers’ outdoor experience. And for the Morteza, the area around the water pump is the one place where he can meet his favorite girl ,Fereshteh, without adult interference.

### **Representation of architecture and planning issues in the story of *Chapter five, Silence***

As it has been mentioned before, young people can also learn from the novels while being amused by the story. In *Chapter Five* Morteza replies to a stranger who had asked him about the neighborhood: “The houses are all like each other. Without loft. All of them have been made by brick with blinded doors, small windows, and concrete base bounds up to the roofs” ( Bayrami,2011, p.11). These descriptions portray some of the characteristics of modern architectural style, which was popular in Iran in 1960s. These characteristics include: lack of ornamentation; emphasis on rectangular forms and horizontal and vertical lines; and, low, horizontal massing, flat roofs, emphasis on horizontal planes and broad roof overhang.

In the other part of the story , Morteza , describes the Aliabad neighborhood in the revolution period, he says : “Our neighborhood did not have the electricity and drinking water, and therefore ice. Accordingly, we had to take them from others. Little children had a basket , and went to Nazi Abad and Javanmard Ghasab neighborhoods, asking for ice . Gradually all of the people, who lived there, found that where these ice takers come from. “(Bayrami,2011,p23). And further he adds , in response to a stranger “When you pass our community, it is a desert till Shah-Abdol-Azim Holy Shrine, that is why less taxis are found in our neighborhood. Whenever we hear a voice of any vehicles, we become curious who it is for” (Bayrami, 2011, p.83). This is an explanation of poor neighborhoods before the revolution in Iran. Communities who was formed out of the city legal borders and do not have any facilities. Bayat(1997) asserts that since these neighborhoods did not have drinking water ,sewerage and electricity , and residents pleads was not responded, they found lawless but creative solutions on their own. They stole from electricity cables, and from main water pipe. Consequently , they expanded their private territory even to urban spaces such as alleys (p. 90)

### **The story of *Haji Neighborhood* by Behnaz Zarrabizadeh: Streets and Squares**

In this story, which takes place during the Revolution era, the narrator lives in Hamedan during the revolution time, and gets to know more of the situation by going to the streets with his friends. Amir, The narrator, who is a 13-year-old boy, and his classmates hear older students’ demonstrations while they are sitting in the classroom. They like to join the protesters but they are not allowed. The narrator says: “older students have held demonstrations. The school master has locked the door of the school, but we should join them!” (Zarrabi, 2014, p.13). During the Haj Molla Ali Hamedani’s funeral arrangement, who was a political activist, the narrator witnesses the chaos and confusion in the streets: “We ran a lot to reach a long narrow alley which led to Shoorin street. It was turmoil on the street. Smell of burnt car tires and fire were diffused in to the air. ...In a few walking down the street, it was Naderi pub which was closed.

Daddy changed his way. I knew he does not like me to see inside the pubs.... People attacked to the pub and broke the windows. Some people entered the pub from the broken windows and took out the beers and broke them in the pedestrian way. It was a huge demonstrations indeed, noise of gunfire, shouting of people and breaking of windows were not stopped for even a minute” (Zarrabi,2014, p.61). The narrator’s experience here in witnessing protests and even his own father’s participation, helped him to connect with his environment on a political level. Clearly these teenagers perceive several political demonstrations in the city, which affected their perception of the city, their neighborhood, and even their parents. The narrator’s observations also reveal how teenagers in Tehran are expected to be under the control of their parents and in line with their parents ideas too. The urban spaces here enhance the teen’s connection to broader cultural politics as it cements their connection to their parents in new ways.

### **The story of *Samsam Alley* : The neighborhood, Streets and squares**

This story is about a teenager named Aliakbar, whose close friend is martyred in the bombings of Tehran during eight years of war. In this story, when Aliakbar fights with his friend in the street, he says “Thank god , there was no one in the alley “(Najafi,2003, p.14). This signifies that the neighborhood has become intertwined with the young boy’s own identity so that he worries about his honor if he was seen while struggling or fighting with someone in the neighborhood.

Another factor which is important in the improvement of a sense of rootedness to people in the neighborhood, especially between young people, is the name of the neighborhoods and alleys in which they reside. In the story of *Samsam Alley*, Aliakbar is proud of the name of their alley, he says : “Samsam was a perfect name, I looked up its meaning in the dictionary. It means ‘sword,’ sharp sword which never bends. Our alley was like a thin and long sword which broke into Rey community, indeed. I always talked with excessive pride about the name of our neighborhood, to my peers from other neighborhoods, especially those which the names of their communities were really inappropriate like : Little’s alley, Toilet alley, Strippers’ alley, What to do alley,”(Najafi, 2003,p.14). But, as the names of other alleys were changed to honor the names of martyrs from that alley, Aliakbar does not like the name of their alley any more. He says, “Samsam was losing its grandeur. Each of the names of the alleys were being changed to the name of a martyr who lived in that alley, and children boast about the names. Alley of martyred Adeli brothers, alley of Martyred Sardar Ghaffari ,and etc. Samsam was really nothing among these names” (Najafi, 2003,p.14). In fact, during the war period, the name of the streets, alleys and squares of the community were changed to honor the names of the martyrs of the war who lived in that community. It was considered as a sign of memorial and respect for the martyr. Young people, at that time, were proud of the name of their alleys as they changed to the name of a martyr, since the belief of most of the teenagers in war time in Iran at that time was that going to war was a sign of courage .

Aliakbar adds that “Haj Abbasi’s son, who lived at the end of Strippers alley, has been martyred and therefore the name of the alley will be changed to the name of him. In few days, nobody says ‘Strippers’ alley’ anymore. A sign of the new name will be hanged: the name of Martyred Moheb ali Safari alley” (Najafi, 2003,p.16).

When the Aliakbar assume that one of their neighbors has been martyred, he says “with a great probability Amirkhan has been martyred. if it proves true, our alley will be honorable again. I was thinking to Martyred pilot, Amir Zamani, what a dignity! What a glamour! None of

the nearby alley's had a martyred pilot, we would be the first and probably the only one which will have! The young adults could not boast any more, and they also could not call us counter-revolutionary or The Shah-lovers. They held local football cups on the memorial of each of the martyred by the name of them, and do not allow us to participate. In fact, they were right, our alley did not have any injuries or missing people, let alone for martyrs. While "Ehsani brothers" alley had four martyrs only from one family" (Najafi, 2003, p.72)..

At the end of *Samsam Alley* when Habibollah, Aliakbar's friend, dies and becomes martyred, Aliakbar blames himself for his friend's death. Aliakbar had given his friend the key to the dilapidated house that collapsed due to the bombings, which caused Habibolloha's death. After his martyrdom, Aliakbar could not live in the neighborhood anymore because he felt so guilty. He said, "We have moved to a new neighborhood since two months ago, I failed all of my courses at school. I used to go to Samsam alley every day. Today I saw two people climbing from a ladder and hanging a sign, which was the new name of the alley. It was changed to martyr Habibollah Peyman (his martyred friend)" (Najafi, 2003, p.14). For Aliakbar, the guilt of his friend's death coupled with the daily reminder of the new Alley name became too much to bear. Leaving was the only way to live with his guilt and repair his damaged identity

Young people's presence in public spaces is both controlled and also confined by their parents. In her compelling study, Valentine found that parental fears, especially of 'stranger-danger,' considerably restricts teenagers' territorial range (as cited in Percy-Smith, Limb, & Matthews, 1998, p.195). In "Samsam alley," when Aliakbar's parents want to go out without their child, his parents do not let him even to go to the alley. His father tells Aliakbar, "Be careful about the alley, it is full of addicts and inappropriate people, Do not go out until we come back" (Najafi, 2003, p.131).

### **Unplanned Areas**

In this story, unplanned areas are around the curb near the community, the narrator and his friends chose this place to walk along with their peers. Aliakbar says, "We made paper boats from the most colorful and beautiful papers of books and magazines and threw them in to the concrete curb, which water of Haj alireza aqueduct flows in it. Our boats, turned to the old bridge of Bazaar, and then continued their journey in our imagination. (Najafi, 2003, p.41). In *Samsam Alley* the city in war time is described as suffering continuous bombardment by rockets, evacuation of people from their homes, increasing number of injuries and killed people. But life that goes on, from the Aliakbar's point of view. He says: "rocket attacks continued everyday and each one was heavier than before. Consequently, the city became less crowded. However, spring did not understand--it was rainy nights, and sun rises from behind the Hormoz inn every day. Although last night, the alarm on the mosque warned the neighborhood of air raids. After only a few minutes, one part of the city was bombarded and ruined. It was several areas around us which was bombarded: Baharestan, Arabs alley, behind the Jewish hospital, Pamenar. But, I, and my parents still have not left the neighborhood yet (Najafi, 2003 P94).

### **The Story of Ziba! Call me! by Farhad Hasanzadeh: The Present era**

I have chosen three stories from the present era to discuss in this final section. The teenagers in these novels have greater choices of urban spaces, such as coffee shops and shopping malls.

They also use new technologies to find different places. The novels *Ziba! Call me!*, *The First Day of Summer*, and *The Tales of Majid* are used to explore presence of teenagers in the urban spaces in the this era. In *Ziba! Call me!* a girl named Ziba spends a whole day with her father, who has escaped from the asylum and into the streets of Tehran

### **Streets and Squares**

In recent years, with the development of technology, young people's spatial information about the city in which they live has been dramatically improved. Today, most teenagers have a smartphone with different spatial applications. In the story of *Ziba! Call me!*, Ziba is a 15-year-old girl who has a cell phone which includes a Tehran city map application. When her father asks her how she knows where Mellat Park is—which is far from their home—she turns on her cell phone and says: “Daddy—we live in a modern era... with technology you will never be lost. Look! this is a Tehran map! It is not wizardry or juggler. Where is here? Valiasr street (she points to the map on her cell phone). Where is here? Mellat park. Where are we? Here, the point which is winking. Any person who looks at the map everyday will learn that Mellat park is in Valiasr street, after Mirdamad to the north, and Valiasr street will reach Tajrish square at the end. Finally, Tajrish will lead to Darband. Got it?” (Hassanzadeh, 2014, p.93). In this story, the young girl Ziba cannot walk freely through the streets because of her fear of bad people harming her. She says, “It was cold and I was trembling and some hooligans were chasing me. I was walking quickly to find somewhere to be warm and safe” (Hasanzadeh, 2014, p.109). So while she is technologically savvy and understands where things are in Tehran, she is intimidated by the potential harm that could happen to her by being out in the city alone. In another part of the story, Ziba is afraid of being alone in the street while she is walking. She expresses her fear: “Wind blows heavily and shook the newspapers. It was cold, and I felt a mix of strangeness, fear, and loneliness. It was rainy and I called you (the narrator's guardian)” (Hasanzadeh, 2014, p.191).

Additionally, teenagers like spaces in which they can be free. Lieberg (1998) asserts that young people need hiding places that “are private places away from the public eye and control” (Lieberg, 1994, p.327). For instance, Kamyar, the narrator, says: “I liked to go to a place where we could be free. No banks, no polices, and no people who stare at us like we are a beggar or a criminal” (Hassanzadeh, 2015, p.49).

### **Representation of architecture, space and place**

Other recreational sites and places such as parks, cafes and cinemas are also preferable places among young people. In this story, Kamyar meets his friends in the café which is a modern element in today's cities. He says, “When Nasser asked me where to go, I immediately told him, Soragh Café, (Golshiri, 2010, p13). Kamyar chose to go to the café with different friends, an example of cafes as a favorite place for Tehranian teens to hang out and escape adult authority.

In this story, the narrator, Kamyar, is not very affluent, so, he and his friends from the other neighborhoods plan to steal from one of his rich friends, who is also his neighbor. Kamyar and his friends then decide to steal from one of Kamyar's rich neighbors, Taghi. He recalls the robbery: “When Taghi's car turned to our alley, my feet began to tremble, I was scared. I have

never experienced these feelings before. “ (Golshiri,2010, p.67). In fact, he does not like to steal from his friend and neighbor, because of his dignity and reputation in their neighborhood, and also emotional ties he had with his friend and neighbor.

Kamyar likes to use his friend's motorcycle, to explore more distant urban spaces, while they are also fearful to go too far from their homes. He states: “Nasser told me that he wanted to go to Azadi square( which is too far from the narrator's home) ,and asked me to join him. I was terrified, and doubtful. Finally, I sat behind Nasser on his bike. “When do you have to be home?” he asked. I did not want to be like spoiled children, but my mom would be anxious if I would not come back till noon” (Golshiri,2010,p11). This shows that, in Iran, most young people are still dependent on their parents in exploring urban spaces which are not near to their neighborhoods.

### **The Tales of Majid by Houshang Moradi Kermani**

These tales are about a teenage boy named Majid who lives with his grandmother in Kerman. In *The tales of Majid* strong emotional and social bonds between young people who live in the same neighborhood is a core element of the story. For instance, on a weekend trip with classmates, Majid is responsible to keep agriculture staff. He refuses to give one of his friends the shovel in compensation for several overcharges of his father, who is a butchers in their neighborhood, but then he became upset, and says, “I was upset, it was not right to break my neighbor's heart” (Moradi karmni,2001, p.509). In fact, Majid did not like to irritate his neighbor even if he did not like him.

In this story, when Majid wants to go on a trip with the school, he is not permitted to enter the bus because of the great amount of staffs, which his grandmother had given him. In disappointment, he walks along a street and talks with himself, “I follow the bus. I was annoyed with my granny, I just wandering along the street and was thinking to Yazd to be with my uncle instead of my granny (Moradi Kermani, 1991,p.496). This quote suggests another function of the streets for young people. Some times they just roam around in the streets without any plan or aim. They just want to spend time alone or with friends. For teens struggling under adult authority, the streets of Tehran provide a needed refuge in some ways from parental surveillance and adherence to tradition. Majid reflects that “Kerman was not big at that time. One could go through all of the streets, even all of the alleys, in half of a day with a bicycle. I had visited Vakil Bazaar, goldsmith and coppersmith bazaar, the water storage, the inn, and mosques, along with all of the squares and streets, several times” (Moradi kermani,2001, p 87). In fact, Majid points out the most popular places in Kerman and also emphasize that Kerman was small thirty years ago and now it is considered as one of the biggest cities in Iran.

### **Conclusion**

Reviewing several Iranian novels for teenagers demonstrates that despite the progress which has been made in recent years in the inclusion of local spaces in Iranian stories for teens, these novels still provide a limited insight into the relation of teenagers and their environment in Iran. However, as it has been delineated, they do suggest useful information about teenagers'

popular places. By reading these novels planners can find how teenagers spend time and socialize in their neighborhoods, in the streets and squares, and how they hangout at cafés, cinemas, parks, etc. Urban planners can also find out about teenagers' views on the importance of these spaces. For instance, their feelings about their neighborhoods as their main hang out, or their dissatisfaction with the lack of safety in the streets and squares, or, more importantly, their exclusion from some recreational spaces such as cinemas because of parental or governmental control. Therefore, planners and policy makers can employ these comments in their plans to create more teenager friendly urban spaces.

Urban planners and designers should also consider undeveloped areas in their plans, which teenagers frequently described in the novels. Teenagers can design these lands on their own and consequently feel freer in these spaces. The experiences of urban teenagers that were depicted in these novels are mostly for boys, which may be the result of the fact that in Iran male teenagers feel freer to talk about their spatial experiences, while female teenagers are more conservative because of the social limitations they are subject to (Rezaei, 2015, p.24).

This study also offered a look at how fiction can contribute to the improvement of young people's knowledge about their city and also their countries. The novels which have been used in this study provide brief explanations for how the city in war or revolution was used by teenagers. It also looked at the characteristics of architecture and urban forms and their effect on teenagers in the different historical periods in Iran. Therefore, in Iranian youth fiction, teenagers learned about the cultural and social situations of their cities and also their country, which became a vital part of their burgeoning identity. However, there is still long way to go in understanding the deep psychological connections that place has for teenagers, particularly in a culture that is at times struggles with the freedoms of modernity. It should be taken in to consideration that if we want our children to be active participants in the process of urban planning and development, we should educate them in the issues related to architecture and urban planning in order to improve their knowledge about these fields and how these things affect their environment. With such knowledge, Iranian youth would be more confident in taking an active role in the planning process of the urban areas they inhabit. As I have shown,, novels can be a good source with which to achieve this goal.

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