

# Preface

In the years 2013 and 2014, I ran a taught course in SBU Master's in Architecture programme on architectural criticism. The course works included a paper in which students parted with 'the analysis of great masterpieces' focusing instead on the exploration of ordinary spaces of everyday life. This coincided with my invitation to a criticism session in Berlage Institute/TU Delft on a project focused on designing everyday life spaces in Tehran. On both occasions, I came across like-minded students who shared my belief in the merits of focusing on the spaces of everyday life and how their formation and use are politically charged, as well as a passion about the uncanny, alternative face of Tehran. Furthermore, they all had first-hand experience of being in hotbeds of Tehran alternative cultural spaces. This was how the idea of the present book was born.

Like many other cities worldwide, the production of spaces for alternative modes of communication, socialisation and consumption is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon in Tehran. We chose to focus, however, on what we felt we are better positioned to investigate, namely, alternative cultural spaces mainly created and/or used by the middle-class urbanite: alternative cafés, bookselling practices and galleries all have elements of communication, socialisation and consumption about them, but at their core is a desire for a cultural scene and a mode of cultural exchange often ignored if not suppressed by the mainstream business and the establishment. It is this will to reclaim those missing territories that results in the unpredictable, transient and innovative modes of the production of space: the spatial idea-making of a nature 'great masterpieces of architecture' are probably unable to achieve.

Tehran, Iran  
November 2016

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Urban Culture in Tehran

Urban Processes in Unofficial Cultural Spaces

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2018, XIX, 172 p. 137 illus., 125 illus. in color.,

Hardcover

ISBN: 978-3-319-65499-7