



ZMO-Colloquium Winter Term 2015/2016

*The Future of the City: Contested Urbanism
in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*

Thursday, January 28th, 2016, 5 pm

Streets and Walls: Mobility and Visibility in Tehran

By Prof. Dr. Shahram Khosravi (Stockholm University)

Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin

This paper deals with young Iranians acts of negotiating the city. It aims to show how power relations are configured through mobility or lack of mobility. Urban citizenship is differential due to access to mobility and public places. The spatial order in the past three decades has aimed to 'invisibilize' undesirable youth. The street, a space between the family and the state, and a public place which is supposed to be used merely for authorized activities, such as shopping or passing through, is turned into a site for performing new urban practices. By performing youthfulness in the streets, young people produce a form of urban visibility of themselves. The presence of those who are not supposed to be visible or audible is a political struggle over mobility and visibility. Performing youthfulness in the streets are all practices to resist the uneven accessibility to public spaces. This makes the youth's practices 'acts of citizenship'. The Persian word rahpeymai means both to walk and a political march. Through their practices (graffiti, hanging out in coffee shops), the ways in which they move around (walking, automobility), and by applying their imagination through these practices, young Iranians interrupt the official 'urban rhythm' and 'grammar' and thereby they re-create the urban space. By these urban practices youth resist belataklifi, a sense of being stuck in time. Their spatial mobility is a response to their temporal immobility. In my paper I argue that youth's new visibilities are subversive since the visibility of those who are supposed to be invisible draws attention to discrimination, gender segregation, a high unemployment rate among youngsters, and systematic bullying and mobbing by the police.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



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Shahram Khosravi is Associate Professor of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University and the author of books: *Young and Defiant in Tehran*, University of Pennsylvania Press (2008); *The Illegal Traveler: an auto-ethnography of borders*, Palgrave (2010); and *Precarious Lives: Waiting and Hope in Iran*, University of Pennsylvania Press (Forthcoming). He has been active writer in the Swedish press and has also written fictions.