

Professional scientific sessions for art, architecture and urban planning Thursday evenings

Held in: Conference hall of Herampey Consulting Engineers

Date: 21.02.2019

Title: Professional Roundtable, The architecture of past, today and tomorrow. Cooperation and Exploitation.

Roundtable participants: Mrs. S. Arasteh, Mr. M. Sa'adati, Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi, Mr. F. Parsi and Mr. M. Qaseminejad.

Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi introduced the content of the roundtable saying that they would talk about cooperation and participation, during the first part about what has happened in the past to our days and during the second part they would talk about future activities, based on the accumulated experiences. Mr. Mahmoudi presented the experiences on their professional field of the participants. Mrs. Arasteh had worked in the port of Kong in Iran, Mr. Qaseminejad In Qeshm island, Mr. Parsi in khorasan region and Mr. Sa'adati in Tehran district 12.

Mr. Mahmoudi said that they don't want talk about a specific matter, but want share the experiences that each of the participants had, regarding geographical, economic, architectural and social characteristics.

The first speaker to talk about her experience was Mrs. Arasteh, who had worked in the Kong port. She said that this experience was very interesting and educational from many points of view. In her opinion cooperation can't be defined in a single explanation, but it differs from different situations and contexts. Regarding the case of Kong, because of the high cultural maturity of its inhabitants and the relationship that they have with people and societies that live on the other side of the Persian Gulf, their task was easier, even though the results came after works lasted three years, plus works that had been realized during the last twenty two years. The difficulties that they had to face was because they had to consider social, economic and structural aspects of the case. Fortunately the economic results are already visible, there has been founded an office for the promotion of investments, that had positive impact on the occupational aspects of local people. Talking about the economic condition of the people living in Kong, Mrs. Arasteh explained that most of the people enjoy economic wellness, because of the ships that they own and trade contacts that they have developed with countries on the other side of the Persian Gulf. So sailing has insured social and economic emancipation. In most of the case the goods that they need are provided not from the Iranian market, but from neighboring countries.

The difficulty that her working team had to overcome, was to ensure the trust of the local and particularly the poor component of the society. At the same time, local people that have their business in the neighboring countries, have expressed their interest to invest and see the restoration of their old but architecturally precious houses.

Talking about the geographical position, Mr. Mahmoudi concluded that the local people had closest commercial contacts with foreign but near countries than the market of the motherland. Affirming this assertion, Mrs. Arasteh talked about the providing of marine lanterns. The options were to buy them from neighboring markets or from Tehran. The design group opted for an original solutions. They ordered the wooden lanterns to local artisans, even though the local people prefer imported goods.

Mrs. Arasteh added that she had the chance to work in Tehran district 12 as consultant, an experience that helped her to better understand the conditions, particularities and necessities of local people in the Kong port.

Beginning to speak about the case of Tehran district 12, Mr. Mahmoudi observed that in the case of Kong port, the responsible authorities had to negotiate just with the greybeards of the local society, meanwhile in district 12 it was much difficult to assure the trust of the people, because of diversities and social status considered as dangerous for the rest of the population.

Mr. Sa'adati explained that in district 12 there were social contrasts between different parts of the society, where somebody made big deals without efforts, and there were others incapable to earn money for their daily needs. This was the reason that the project managers had to make continuously changes in their policies and approaches, because the base of management and cooperation is based on a reciprocal dialogue and trust. He confessed that dealing with organizations, local community or persons, wasn't an easy deal and there are still lacks and problems that need solutions and more appropriate solutions. The principal problem is that the authors of the project didn't succeed to ensure the popular participation, meanwhile the cooperation with experts' community was partly ensured. Mr. Sa'adati explained that in order to have a successful intervention for the solution of urban problems, there must be ensured the participation and cooperation of different components and players of the local community, like NGO-s, municipalities, city councils and other government organizations. In his opinion the lack of cooperation with the government is still the principal source of problems. In the case of the district 12, the population is composed by different tribes, that are somehow isolated from each other and this division creates problems for a normal growth and progress of the community.

Responding to the question of Mr. Mahmoudi, he explained that during the daytime the active population in the district arrive to about two millions, meanwhile at the end of the day the resident people are just 250 thousand. The goal of the project managers is indeed create the conditions to keep the people in the district, ensuring the sense of belonging and responsibility.

The following speaker was Mr. Parsi who talked about his experience. He explained that in his opinion regarding the architectural heritage of desert areas in Iran, we have better knowledge on western parts of the desert, meanwhile the eastern parts are not well known. Some of the areas had losses because of earthquakes occurred in different years, but at the same time the integrity of architectural components have been maintained. He talked about an abandoned village,

because of earthquake, that thank to the responsible approach of the local population, had been conserved, They had also tried to register the village in the list of national architectural heritage, but the responsible offices considered that there was nothing precious and valuable. Realizing that the case of the village was interesting, Mr. Parsi organized a study journey for his university students, in order to study and register the characteristics of the village, in order to help to organize the preservation and restoration of local constructions that reflected the heritage of local and national architectural heritage.

Mr. Parsi explained that hearing about their intention, the local people welcomed them, creating the necessary conditions for the stay of research group and this can be considered a successful case of cooperation between different parties, that are interested on the same project and goal. The result of such cooperation was that preserving the existing heritage, they could promote and organize tourist flows, paving the way for social and economic wellness. The cooperation and reciprocal trust created the conditions to begin the restoration of buildings. The people of the village were surprised for the approach of Mr. Parsi's team that worked and helped the people, without pretending financial compensation. Mr. Parsi believes that such cooperation must promote popular participation and if there is a government intervention, the route must be very focused and precise.

The roundtable was continued with the speech of Mr. Qaseminejad, who explained how his group cooperated with a foreign group in Qeshm island, insuring the cooperation of local people. He explained that working with the Japanese group wasn't difficult, because they were familiar with the Iranian conditions. The Japanese believed that such programs must be organized from top to bottom of government structures. The goal was to realize the comprehensive plan of development based on the popular cooperation and in their interest. The main process in this process was that the local people wasn't able to comprehend the pursued goals of the plan, that in many phases was changed, due to different necessities. The project managing group had to contact constantly the local authorities in order to explain and clear the problems. The case of Qeshm can be the reflection of the various situations in Iran, in a minor scale, where are present different conditions and realities.

Hearing the stories of the speakers, Mr. Mahmoudi expressed his satisfaction regarding the successful realization of such programs and projects and was at the same time surprised because such successes were not reflected in a larger scale in the country. Interpreting the assertions of the speakers Mr. Mahmoudi asserted that probably in smaller spheres and cities, the popular direct participation and cooperation is higher and more effective than in bigger cities or districts. The reason is that in areas that the economic and social conditions of inhabitants are "lower" their sense of responsibility and participation is relatively higher. This picture of situation is reflected also for example in the city council, where the members are professionals and more responsible regarding the activity that they are realizing.

Mr. Qaseminejad talking about the experience of district 12, said that in this case they tried to act out of academic frames, trying to understand what the citizens want and how they can satisfy their desires that will bring to improve the quality of life in the areas that they live. The aim of the acting group was to create the conditions that the people consider the area where they live as their own belonging, trying to improve the quality of life through little but focused and effective acts.

Mr. Mahmoudi continued the discussion saying that what is important is to put away academic language when contacting people of the street, trying to understand better what they say and what they need. Joining the discussion Mrs. Arasteh asserted that everywhere the people are the same, and it's the duty of urban managers to respect the people and understand their necessities and their differences. The most important think in this case of cooperation is to gain the trust of the people, convincing them that they are all pursuing the same goal that is improve the quality of urban life in general.

Mr. Parsi talked about the necessity of having a common language regarding a common goal. Like in the case of national approach to bring together a nation, in the case of architectural goals and activity, if the people has a common interest and goal, it will be easier to reach the prefixed goals.

Mr. Mahmoudi talked about the cases that for example Mrs. Arasteh didn't succeed in her programs and which were the consequences. She explained the she used the negative experiences to avoid to repeat them in other projects, and it was very useful for the project of Kong. She expressed the hope that programming process in Iran will experience radical changes in order to achieve better results, satisfying the real needs of the people.

As the last question and answer Mr. Parsi talked about comprehensive plans of the country, that have been planned in a large scale and are very difficult to be entirely realized. In his opinion the consultant must be informed which part of the mentioned plans have been realized and which part are not completed. The consultants must be able to define and show which role has each quarter or district in the mosaic that compose the city.

Mr. Parsi talked about the case of Qeshm island, where they have been able to organize the flow of tourists in order to distribute the flow, giving equal opportunities to all villages that are interested to attract visitors. This goal will be possible to be realized, when the communities don't copy each other, or try to keep all the benefits for their community, but when they understand that the wellness of each community will cause the wellness of other communities. As they think in the UN or UNESCO, the most important factor are the people and their active participation to activities that aim to maintain and protect the environment and habitat where they live. Of course activities that are planned and organized today, may be can give results 40 or 50 years later, but it's clear that it's worth to spend this time to achieve greater results.