

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

Held in: Conference hall of Herampey Consulting Engineers

Date: 03.10.2019

Title: The course of academic teaching of architecture in Iran 1. Fine Arts.

Sessions series on architecture academic teaching: Fine Arts, Shahid Beheshti and Elm-o-San'at

Roundtable members: Mrs. N. Taqibeiglou, Mr. D. Diba, Mr. S. Arfaie, Mr. M. Kia Momeni and Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi.

Mr. Mahmoudi has begun the speech declaring that during the coming months three meetings will be held. The subject of these meetings will be Academic teaching of architecture in Iran. During the series of meetings the universities of Fine Arts, Shahid Beheshti, Elm-o-San'at and probably Azad University will be the main subject.

Talking about the dates of foundation of the universities in Iran, Mr. Mahmoudi said that the faculty of Fine Arts has begun its activities in 1939, few years later the University of Shahid Beheshti and Elm-o-Sanat were founded. Going back to the first years after the Islamic revolution, he mentioned that during those years only three universities were active, accepting about 20-25 students per year, meanwhile today about 1000 university are active in the field of architecture, absorbing about 100 or more students per year, creating the chaotic situation that today we assist to.

Continuing the speech Mr. Mahmoudi begun the speech talking about the faculty of Fine Arts and the goals that were pursued after its foundation and what were the position and aims of other similar universities around the world.

Before the main speech, Mr. Mahmoudi showed the pictures of the first graduated group of students of Fine Arts and a relatively new photograph, focusing on the differences that distinguished different generations of students.

The first speakers was Mr. Diba. He said because he had studied in three universities located in three European countries of Switzerland, Belgium and France, he had no clear idea about the principles and goals of Fine Arts and for him was interesting to know about, when he came back to Iran during the 70's of the past century.

Before focusing on the activities of the Iranian universities of architecture, Mr. Diba talked about his personal experiences regarding various European universities of architecture. In Switzerland, Belgium or France for example there are universities that give the priority to artistic aspects of architecture, others are more interested in the teaching of technical and structural capacities and others that consider seriously social and economic factors that can affect and influence the life of

the citizens. He continued his speech saying that there are centers that consider ecological factors that must be considered for the wellness of the societies where those principles are applied.

Continuing his speech Mr. Diba talked about the process and influence of architecture in the US, Europe and different Asian countries. In these areas every country traces a route to be followed by policy makers in architecture. All these countries' aim is to satisfy the necessities that they must satisfy for the wellness of the citizens.

Talking about the possibilities that are present or they would be Mrs. Taqibeiglou expressed the opinion that if in other countries since the childhood everybody has the chance to choose, in Iran the situation is different and the main problem and goal for the students is not satisfying their preferences but to get in a university that in the opinion of the society enjoy fame and professional security.

Continuing the idea that Mrs. Taqibeiglou expressed, Mr. Mahmoudi asserted that may be one of the problems in the Iranian educational society is because in the lower levels of educational system (like the schools) the students don't have the possibility to discover their preferences and capacities in the sphere of art and artistic directions.

The next speaker was Mr. Kia Momeni that made a historical presentation of the transformations that occurred in the process of education in architecture. Comparing what happened in the European sphere and what happened in our society, the Europeans paid the necessary attention to the transformations that occurred in their societies, adapting and introducing new manners and combinations in their educational system, that regards also the teaching of architecture in various universities and faculties. In this system the decisions are made by professionals that are involved both in the educational and also in the productive sphere of their profession and this is the reason that many problems are faced and find the optimal solution, because who is involved in the teaching process has also active involvement in the everyday life. In our society the situation is different. Mr. Momeni divided in two periods the process of development and modernization of the architecture in Iran. During the first period, even though the influence of the western society is evident, but the players in the society and specifically in the architectural world, find the right and balanced manners for the introduction of new solutions and trends, avoiding to ignore the Iranian historical heritage in arts and architecture. The second period, in his opinion is characterized by the accelerated entrance of young forces in the field of education and architectural production, when and at the same time experienced staff is somehow forced to live the sight, bringing away the cumulated experience and professional capacity, that could continue to serve and satisfy the needs of the new generations.

Talking about some of the personalities that influenced the Iranian modern architecture, Mrs. Taqibeiglou mentioned the Iran based French architect Ghodare and the Iranian architect Ferozqhi, who gave a new breath to the Iranian architecture, maybe because they were also

archeologists, so they had a clear vision and knowledge of the Iranian artistic and historical heritage.

Another speaker was Mr. Arfaei who has begun his speech talking about personal memories when he was still a student in the school and how he was interested in architecture and building profession, even though he didn't have any idea of a profession called architecture.

Talking about his personal experience Mr. Arfaie presented what happened in the period of transition immediately after the Islamic Revolution, when persons that were active during the former regime era, were considered as undesired for the new era, meanwhile, in his opinion, this was not a justified way of selection. The declared aim of this movement was to put order in the academic educational world, but the result seems to be different.

Continuing his speech Mr. Arfaie expressed the idea that despite all the lacks and probably negative aspects, the faculty of Fine Arts has still has its independent personality that differs from other Iranian universities. In this context what characterizes the spirit of faculty of Fine Arts is that the activists were involved in collective researches and approaches regarding the architecture and particularly what would happen in the Iranian society. In his opinion one of the principal problems in the faculty of Fine Art is the lack of a collective spirit between the students. Most of the students ignore the atmosphere and the persons that they live with during their academic life, meanwhile in the past the situation was completely different and there was a sense of unity and belonging between the students.

Returning to the discussion about the attitude that the faculty of Fine Arts could have, Mr. Mahmoudi talked about his experience regarding Japan. As an isolated country because of its geographical position, Japan developed its architecture totally different from the rest of the world. But in a particular period, architects like Kenzo Tange studied foreign architectural production, introducing and combining successfully foreign experiences with the Japanese architecture.

On this regard Mr. Diba talked about the years that he came back to Iran as a graduated in architecture. Persons like him that were graduated from various European universities had been included in the scientific board of the faculty of Fine Arts. Beginning his experience as teacher in the university, Mr. Diba said that he started to teach the experience of Bauhaus to Iranian students, but now he understands that it was a wrong choice, because it was something created for the European society, and totally strange to the Iranian society, that somehow created a deviation to the Iranian architectural route and still today we are assisting to and it's difficult to redefine the genuine route, based on the Iranian general heritage. Mr. Diba said that observing the experiences of other countries like for example India, the secret of success or failure depends on the vision and approach of the policy makers. If the vision comes from a local or national mentality, the result can be satisfying otherwise an imported mentality can't give the desired results. He continued his speech saying that even though changes were needed in the Iranian

society, but the main problem in the Iranian architecture is the lack of independence, the absence of a mentality and approach that is based on the national heritage. The students haven't the necessary freedom to propose and create their own concepts and they are forced to follow and repeat what they teachers impose in different manners.

Continuing the idea of independence Mrs. Taqibeiglou said that observing Iranian monuments and buildings created before the Qajar era, the spirit of independence and national strength is clearly visible , but after this period the architectural production reflects the opposite results and sensations.

Mrs. Taqibeiglou criticized the actual situation in the faculty of Fine Arts, where the lack of severity facilitates the "completion" of the studies, offering graduated architects, that can't in reality satisfy the needs of the Iranian society, able to insure an independent rout based on the national heritage.

The session was concluded by the intervention of Mr. Arfaie. Talking about the problems that affect the Iranian academic society, he asserted that one of the main problems is that the academic world that must see the continuation of its activities in the world of building and architectural production, is mostly excluded from this process and many activists that have financial sources and are linked to political and decision making sources, can act, ignoring the role and responsibilities that academic spheres. If we desire to have a more promising future on this regard, a revision of the academic educational system seems to be necessary and inevitable.