

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

**Held in: Conference hall of Herampey Consulting Engineers**

**Date: 18.07.2019**

**Title: Professional roundtable - Art, Architecture and Urban Planning - Architecture in Tehran.**

**Roundtable members: Mr. B. Shafei, Mr. F. Boroumandi, Mr. M. A. Karamat, Mr. V. Qobadian and Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi.**

Mr. Mahmoudi explained to the presents that during the last session they talked about Tehran arriving to the conclusion that the city had ugly buildings and the artists tried to transform them making them nicer, but may be the result was worst. May be the reason was that the artists hadn't enough experience, because it was a long time that in Tehran they had not an important role to participate to the beautification of Tehran. The result of such participation was confusion and wrong messages. Regarding the technological achievements Tehran hasn't been able to introduce new technologies for the improvement of urban life conditions.

Talking about the architectural creations as buildings in Tehran, Mr. Mahmoudi asserted that during the Qajar era had their own beauty and character, during the Phalavi era even though there is a decrease of nice buildings, but the results are generally satisfying. In general 70% of Tehran is dedicated to habitable areas.

Mr. Mahmoudi asked Mr. Shafei to talk about his studies of last 30 years and explain why the history of Tehran has not been documented as it should be.

Mr. Shafei began his speech saying that such talks may be make changes and may be are we last generation to have a different view to our past and contemporary history, because the young generation is the generation of social medias and their understanding manners are different. In his opinion we need to reinterpret our architecture, especially regarding the contemporary architecture, in order to have our own approach and not what others want to impose us.

Talking about the architecture of the last 150-200 years Mr. Shafei explained that he doesn't agree to divide this period in different era, because he believes that each period is the continuation of the precedent and they reflect the same sources that Iranian architecture is inspired of.

Mr. Mahmoudi continued the speech saying that about 15 years ago a group of French architects came to Iran participating to a gathering organized in Tehran University and having speeches for the participants. When they visited Tehran, they were able to guess to which era each building belonged to. They were also curious to know what the Iranian students that graduated abroad took to the Iranian architecture.

Mr. Boroumand agreed that there is a continuation of architectural style in Tehran, because the architects of Qajar era are still active, creating new buildings that reflect the qajar style, introducing new concepts and ideas that sometimes have foreign sources. Talking about the character of Tehran he asserted that at that period the city is surrounded by gardens and green areas, the houses are one story and there is not a big difference between the houses of rich and poor people. The architecture of Tehran is similar to the cities of Shiraz or Isfahan, also because Shiraz was the capital of Iran and it influenced the architecture of Tehran. This is the period the Iranian architecture still is not influenced by the European architecture that will happen later. Mr. Boroumand explained that the route of transformation has two sources of influence, the first is local and the second comes from cities like Shiraz and Isfahan.

Talking about the visits of Nassereddin Shah to the Europe he explained that this is the period when people think that copying from European sources can ensure good results for architectural production and somehow what has European origin is considered acceptable and precious.

Thanking Mr. Boroumand for such interesting explanation Mr. Mahmoudi described Iranians as good copiers saying that they have copied from Europe in general but taking separate parts of an entire entity. He asked Mr. Karamat that is a Maskan Bank employee, how they influenced the construction course for houses that the bank financed.

Mr. Karamat presented the history of Maskan Bank that is the continuation of Rahni Bank founded in 1939 during Reza Shah era. He said that many of the problems are because of historical defeats in the Iranian society and the behavior of the governors that tried to impose their way of thinking and acting to the common people and at the same time people tried to be similar to the ruler cast.

Mr. Karamat explained that in this period the governors of the Rahni bank try to know and introduce the European housing system, sending experts to Europe. This is the period that the rulers try to understand how it will be possible to copy what the Europeans are doing in popular housing and how it can be fitted with the Iranian reality. He asserted that the Bank succeeded to create and transfer the construction culture to the common people.

In order to realize its policies Rahni Bank organized the construction of new factories and industries to ensure the production of modern building materials, even though in Iran there were groups that were against its activities and groups that welcomed the introduction of new technologies and housing systems. Mr. Karamati added that the process of transformation was not simple to introduce because the concepts were new and for most of the people it took time to get familiar with new idea and new living habits.

Mr. Qobadian was the next speaker that about the architecture of Tehran. He said that in Tehran the architecture is a confused gathering of buildings that if taken separately can represent artistic and architectural values, but because of the lack of collective order when they are put together the result is a visual confusion.

Mr. Qobadian talked about the gradual transformation of constructions in Tehran and how step by step the new style and manners of construction pushed out the traditional construction concepts. This transformation is parallel to the foundation of factories that produce building materials and because these materials are of western origin, it's obvious that the transformation revolutionize the manners of building construction in Iran.

In his opinion the variety of the materials and the engineering possibilities permitted the architects and constructors to build buildings that can completely defer from the surrounding buildings, cancelling the existing continuity in the urban facades that in many countries have been jealously maintained, meanwhile in Tehran the existing precious examples are demolished to free the space for new construction.

Talking on this regard Mr. Mahmoudi expressed the idea that may be for different reasons there is no political will to maintain and protect what is coming from a past that some groups don't consider as genuine eras. The problem that exists in the architecture of Tehran is that ignoring the other neighboring architectural constructions prevails to the common sense. The consequence is that it seems that each building is fighting or ignoring the nearby building and this creates a chaotic situation.

Mr. Mahmoudi believes that the solution for the salvation of the architectural heritage in Tehran is not the demolition but cleaning up the elements that covered the original images of the buildings that in their simplicity are original and attractive. The fragmentation of the architectural creation is the key way that can bring to their demolition, meanwhile if the buildings form a collective unity, nobody will be able to cancel their existence simply and easily.

After talking about the existing problems that affect the contemporary architecture, the participants agreed that the lack of a well organized university instruction and education is the answer to most of the problems that today our society suffers. The problem is to find the way to how teach the students the route that they must follow to maintain the existing buildings, adding new one without suffocate the old ones.

Mr. Shafei talking about the existing values talked about the area of the Iranian parliament where near the existing buildings that have respected the historical course, we see the erection of a pyramid that is completely strange and aggressive to the surrounding buildings. It seems that the authors tried to ignore the exiting proud but at the same time humble buildings, forcing them from its height. In order to better present his concepts Mr. Shafei talked about the group of ministerial buildings in the historical center of Tehran, constructed in the '20s. These buildings are the successful expression of how architecture can unify the aims of a society if well realized, or divide it as it happened in many cases during the last century in the Iranian architecture.

Concluding the session posed the last question for reflection. He was interested to know how Iran was different from neighboring countries and how it succeeded to create a contact with the

western world, trying to get the positive aspects, but the final result cannot be considered adequate, because the lack of a solid based educational system can't give better results.