

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

Held in: Conference hall of Herampey Consulting Engineers

Date: 23.06.2016

Title: Gender and Space

Speakers and panel members: Mrs. A. Shahcheraghi and Mr. H. Soltanzadeh

Before the principle speakers Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi talked about his memories regarding the universities' students during the past three decades. He reported that 30 years ago in the faculty of architecture of the University of Tehran most of the students were males and the females were in a small minority, because the profession of the architect was considered a masculine profession. During the last years the situation has been inverted. Mr. Mahmoudi told about a case when he entered in a classroom where all the students were females, for him it was a little bit difficult and unusual to see just female in a field like architecture considered traditionally a profession reserved to the men. He reported the observations of a foreigner resident in Tehran about women, who says that in Iran the women try to show that they are equal components of the society, meanwhile in other countries a similar problem doesn't exist. Talking about architecture he said that most of the spaces have been designed by men and taking a look to the architects that operated during the last 100 years, until 15 years ago, all of them were men. Concluding his considerations he said that actually the situation is different and in many positions the women are in majority. He posed a question asking if in this situation the traditional spaces for men will continue to exist.

Mrs. A. Shahcheraghi had a scientific approach to the problem, she said that not only in the Iranian culture but in all other culture until the end of the 20th century the differences between men and women were considered through cultural and educational, meanwhile in 1980 a series of studies shown that these differences had nothing to do with culture or education. Mrs. Shahcheraghi explained the structural differences between men and women analytical functions that first of all are different regarding the environmental conception and their data processing, giving consequently a different type of understanding the received data.

Mrs. Shahcheraghi talked about the five classic senses, asserting that in many cases women are more concentrated to capture the sensations, meanwhile men have better capacities to understand the problems. Talking about architecture she expressed the idea that the education and instruction in the field must be different for men and women, because it regards the creation of spaces that must be experienced.

The second speaker Mr. Soltanzadeh analyzed the matter of gender and space from a historical point of view. He said that the domain of men in the beginning had a physiological root. Women cared about children and men cared about wars, work... the number of male children influenced directly the social and physical power of each family (something that today is unimaginable). The male children acted as social security structures, because they took care of their elderly parents. In this context the men driven families had to face foreign attacks. Mr. Soltanzadeh said that today the social and moral responsibilities of men are extremely reduced, meanwhile the same responsibilities are in women's life. Mr. Soltanzadeh believes that today men live in better social conditions.

Talking about the architectural old spaces when all of us admire them, we never ask ourselves if their inhabitants had the same satisfaction, this regards especially the garden that we consider very romantic, but the existing documentation shows us that the spaces were not pleasant for both men and women.

Mentioning the documentation regarding the Islamic and pre Islamic eras that tell us about the life in the gardens, Mr. Soltanzadeh says that women had to suffer psychological pressure, a phenomenon that is not related to the Islamic era, but is a geographical and historical phenomenon.

Talking about the women's position in the Iranian ancient society Mr. Soltanzadeh asserts how women were respected in the past (a phenomenon that we don't even see in our days). Talking about the feminine figure of the queen presented with the figure of the king, Mr. Soltanzadeh believes that anyway the Iranians had to consider the real situation of the country, where many nation and conquerors crossed Iran to reach east or west, affecting in this way the lifestyle and creating problems for women, causing the gradual elimination of their formal presence in the official world dominated by masculine figures.

Talking about the content of Shahname, Mr. Soltanzadeh said that it contains many information about the women's life and the limitations that they suffered. The situation has not changed even though on the Qajar era, when the spaces reserved to the women are strictly protected and controlled. Women have to observe severe rules regarding their behavior. He believes that if we study what really happened in the life of the women, we can discover a life that is not always fantastic and romantic.

Concluding his speech Mr. Soltanzadeh stressed on the fact that being Iran a very big country (geographically) each region had different and specific characteristics, even though all of them belonged to the Islamic sphere. This reality shows the importance of the geographical characteristics in the history.