

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

**Date: 29.10.2020**

**Title: Management in Fabric Areas.**

**Speakers: Mr. M. Salari rad and Mrs. P. Eshrati.**

**Roundtable Members: Mr. N. Bonyadi, Mr. Farjami and Mr. M.M. Mahmoudi.**

Mr. Salari Rad was the first speaker. Talking about his personal experience he mentioned that he has a direct record of eight years of activity regarding the fabric areas. Mr. Rad asserted that they have experienced various approaches and activities but none of them were science based activities in order to trace a clear path for the policies and activities. He believes that external factors like financial limitations, managerial instabilities, political confrontations, changes of approaches of foreign sources that in Iran they try to copy and get inspiration, have caused the disastrous situation that we assist to. Talking about intentional and premeditated acts regarding the mutilation or destruction of fabric areas he talked about acts during the era of Pahlavi the first. In this era with the excuse of creating new streets of communications, many fabric areas and precious monuments have been destroyed, and unfortunately many people that were involved in such crimes have been presented as heroes that gave a new life to this areas. This movement has intervened in cities like Mashhad, Esfahan, Shiraz and Yazd and we continue to assist to its disastrous consequences. Talking about the period after the Islamic Revolution, Mr. Rad asserted that the authorities having the impression that being the representatives of a popular movement and participation, they have the right to act as they desire, they continued the policy of destruction of fabric areas with more perspicacity. During the period after the Islamic Revolution the funds that could be directed for the salvation of fabric areas have been spent for the construction of new residential areas in the cities. After the mentioned the urban authorities intervening in fabric areas have continued their large scale activities of destruction in cities like Esfahan, Shiraz, the area surrounding the Shrine of Emam Reza in mashhad. After the initial destruction high rise buildings, large streets and other "solutions" have been imposed to the mentioned areas with the consequences that today we can see.

Continuing his speech Mr. Rad talked and presented the cases of Mashhad and its central area, where the main goal has been the creation of new spaces for new incomes from the pilgrims. This policy has created new problems for the central area of the city, pushing the authorities to continue the destruction course with the excuse of introducing new solutions. He explained that the principal "inspiration model" came from Saudi Arabia, where the local authorities have completely changed and distorted the spirit of such religious centers and areas in the name of more pilgrims and more incomes. Talking about the actual situation he explained that there are many projects that aren't economically justified and are semi abandoned, creating new problems to the existing.

The second case that Mr. Rad talked about was Shiraz and its historical area. In this case, in the

'90s, the municipality of Shiraz, without having a clear idea of the next operations, in one night has destroyed an aperture of 100 meters, destroying about 90 historical houses. After many years of uncertainty, the municipality has organized the construction of buildings that aren't absolutely compatible with the spirit of the fabric area.

The third case that Mr. Rad referred to was the case of Esfahan old square. The municipal authorities have realized a large intervention on 6 hectares of one of Esfahan most fabric areas. The result of such intervention is that the new area with new construction is in a semi abandoned situation, no economic or touristic activity. The result is the destruction of the historical area and the expulsion of its inhabitants.

The fourth case was the neighborhood of Nafar Abad near Shah Abdolazim Shrine in Shahre Rey-Tehran. Even though the final result of the project wasn't clear at the beginning, but the intention of the municipality was and still is to clear the area joining it to the area of the Holy Shrine, but they don't have what will be the next operations. Because the municipality is not able to buy all the properties, actually they are following the policy to buy limited properties, creating artificially the conditions to transform the neighborhood to a semi abandoned area, forcing the people to gradually live the area, because of the unbearable conditions.

What happened during the last years is that regarding the first a historical neighborhood like has been destroyed, most of the inhabitants left the area and the remaining are ready to leave. In the second case of Shiraz the inhabitants have been expelled from the area changing the social-historical texture of the area. In case of Esfahan the historical activities lost the possibility to survive and in the case of Nafar Abad the cruel act of the mayor generations of inhabitants have been forced to live their neighborhood.

Mr. Salari expressed his regret that nobody has paid for the mistakes that occurred, for the people that lost their homes and for opportunities that have been spent in wrong directions. Even though the results are disastrous but nobody is ready to accept part of the responsibilities, trying to save what can be saved today.

The second speaker was Mrs. Eshrati. Talking about the management of fabric areas she explained that there are two different components in this issue. The first is related to the management that is not necessarily related to urban issues and the second that issue is the fabric areas protection that somehow is in relation with Urban Historic Landscape approach. Talking about the process of completion of this concept Mrs. Eshrati explained that at the beginning city was intended as a complex of valuable buildings and monuments. Then the historical city was considered as buildings that had historical values. The concept has been gradually completed to historical area to arrive to the idea of protection of historical city (in Vienna, in 2005, during an int'l conference). The goal of this conference was to create a link between the historical and contemporary city. After the conference a document entitled "Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape" has been edited and then approved by UNESCO in 2011, that aimed to have a

comprehensive approach related to the issue of historic city.

Mrs. Eshrati asserted that the historic city is not an isolated entity and it's has been formed in its natural ground and its survival is related to the natural ground. The mission of the mentioned is that it has joined the two concepts of management with the landscape approach in urban protection issue.

Mrs. Eshrati believes that the mentioned document is a paradigm shift in historical city management field linking the concept of landscape with the concept historical protection. This approach has been considered by IFLA entitled Middle East Declaration on Landscape Approach during Middle East Landscape Architecture Conference (MELAC 2018) and Landscape in Transition held in Tehran 2018 by the International Federation of Landscape Architects- Middle East Region IFLA-Mer.

The landscape of historical city is a paradigm shift occurred in the sphere of historical city and its management, giving the opportunity to experts, programmers, policy makers and realizers to have a dynamic interaction between historical texture and the ecosystem, including them in their protective directives. Considering the issue by historic city landscape point of view we see that its has natural, cultural, historical and contemporary layers. This consideration needs a new approach of policy making to know all the component layers editing the necessary directives. What relates to the Iranian case the challenges relate the approach of programmers, policy and law makers to see, evaluate and manage the changes in the historic city. Talking about integrated Management she explained that the path to follow passes through Change Management, because changes occurred continuously in the historic city. This path must be realized in a gradual process in a minor process, that permits to evaluate positive and negative aspects of the actions. This kind of action permits to involve small resources, giving the possibility to attract various groups of policy makers, programmers...creating great results through small steps.

Mrs. Eshrati concluded her speech with a simple slogan" we can't realize great works, but we can complete small works with love".

During the roundtable debate Mr. Mahmoudi posed the first question asking which are the differences and similitudes between the management of urban fabric areas and other urban active areas.

The first speaker to answer to the question was Mr. Bonyadi. He said that during the last decades the fabric areas have been neglected, and we should pay more attention to this issue. Because these areas are part of cultural heritage and can create values in economic and precisely in touristic spheres. The activation of this industry can have a positive impact on the national economy that is clearly very important.

Mr. Farjami was the second speaker. He said that from approximately 1250 Iranian cities, 785 cities have been identified as historical (this means the %60). 563 cities have historical texture,

neighborhood or buildings and from the mentioned cities 200 of them have an identified historical area. Mr. Farjami explained that in these areas ordinary people conduct their everyday life and the principal difference is that in these areas the majority of the inhabitants belong to the vulnerable sector of the society. Mr. Farjami said that even though the fabric areas deserve more attention and respect but in facts they are ignored and neglected. Talking about the management of the fabric areas he said that in his opinion it should be one of them who feel and understand what problems and restrictions the inhabitants have suffered and preferably the manager should be one of the inhabitants of the area, having experienced the same problems and limitations.

The following that Mr. Mahmoudi posed was if the priority for the manager should be the specialization or the authority?

Answering to the question Mr. Bonyadi said that during a conference in Mashhad in 1998 related the management of fabric areas there is phrase that says " The management in fabric areas must be precise and programmed based on popular participation and their need and the authority of law and financial support", pointing also on the professional specialization. Unfortunately in our country there is a lack of preparation of experts on the issue.

Considering the existence of the fabric areas where ordinary people live, Mr. Mahmoudi stressed on the fact that it was important that the manager focuses at the same time on the protection and administration of the area.

Mr. Farjami expressed the idea that the manager in the historical area had to have both authority and specialization at the same time, and of course is the experience on the ground that completes the entire process. Talking about the Cultural Heritage Organization and its responsibilities he expressed the idea that they had to extend their cooperation with other office to work on the preparation of experts on the matter.

Continuing the debate Mr. Mahmoudi wanted to know if the fabric areas should be classified under the authority of the municipality or other ministries like the ministry of Roads and Urban Planning and the ministry of Science, should be involved in the process?

Mr. Bonyadi mentioning the different organizations that are involved in the management of the fabric areas, expressed the idea that it was a must to coordinate the operations of different offices and organizations creating an integrated system of management.

Talking about the question, Mr. Farjami had the idea that the municipality had to have the main managerial role in the fabric areas, because the municipalities and their managerial staff are able (through legislative tools), to compensate the losses of the owners in order to create the propense conditions for the protection and development of the fabric areas and their content. At the same time he believed that the cooperation between the municipalities that have the main role and other offices and organizations (like Cultural Heritage Organization) should be programmed and strengthened.

Mr. Mahmoudi expressed his satisfaction for their sincere approach (none of the speakers were involved in the activities of the municipalities or Cultural Heritage Organization) and wanted to know if the NGOs could have a more significant role in this process of management?

Mr. Bonyadi agreed that the presence and participation of NGOs could play an important role to ensure popular participation in a complicated process related the fabric areas, but at the same time other private associations and organizations should take part to such activities. He asserted that in many cases that the popular participation has been ensured the results have been satisfying for both the society and the historical area.

As the last question Mr. Mahmoudi wanted to know about the most important challenges existing in the management and protection of fabric areas.

Mr. Farjami answered to the question saying that in his opinion one of the challenges was the social and economic vulnerability of the inhabitants in the historic areas, that somehow should be reversed or at least balanced, in order to stop their exodus from the areas, because the social cohesion and sustainability are the most important components for the natural survival of the historic areas. regarding the legislative package he asserted that good decisions had been taken in order to define duties and responsibilities of each organization and office, in order to facilitate the realization of the decisions on the ground and especially the rights of the owners that usually are an inferior position in the fabric areas, encouraging them to be part of an active participation on the process of revitalization of the fabric areas.

At the end of the roundtable debate all the participants expressed the hope for the successful realization of the programs related to the management and protection of fabric areas.