

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

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

**Date: 27.12.2018**

**Title: Experts' Roundtable. The architecture of yesterday, today and tomorrow. Profession and Action.**

**Roundtable Members: Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi, Mr. A. Mohseni, Mr. H. Khaki and Mr. F. Khorrami**

Abstract of speeches:

The meeting began with Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi speech. He explained that the first meeting on the architecture of yesterday, today and tomorrow, talking about education and research, was held a month ago, and the second one was its continuation, inviting the presents to talk about profession and action, dividing in two periods, until the '90s and from '90s to our days.

Talking about profession and action, Mr. Mahmoudi said that actually there is a movement called relationship between university and industry. Many universities act effectively on this regard, even before it was officialized and institutionalized, but after the undeclared relationship weakened. Mr. Mahmoudi asked Mr. Mohseni to talk about the existence of relationship during his university studies and when he became a member of the teaching staff. Talking about architecture Mr. Mahmoudi said that once the mutual relationship existed, but he wanted to hear Mr. Mohseni on this regard.

Answering to the question Mr. Mohseni said that in effect once there was a balance between the quantity and quality of the students that were graduated from the universities and for a neo graduated was easier to find a job on a satisfying level. Today the situation is different and the students receive less professional education with a lower quality. On the road to create a positive relationship between industry and profession, the responsible sphere is trying to find the route through an action of probe and error. In this long process, who pays is the national building patrimony that loses in quality and durability, because of a general mismanagement.

Talking about his professional experience, Mr. Mohseni explained how the boom of construction in the building market created an uncontrolled chaos, where the priority was to build structures that were physically reliable and safe, but the artistic side of the works was almost completely ignored. This situation was primarily caused by the managing and low making system of the municipal authorities that pursued material interests and duties, ignoring the spiritual and artistic aspects of the construction process. In this process, different graduated and qualified experts are required to take responsibility for different fields involved in, like civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering ... when architecture and the decisive figure of architects is weakened or almost ignored. The law making system gave the priority to the functions that a building unit had to satisfy, pushing back the importance of the composing elements in a building. It seems that official permissions issued by municipal authorities, are enough to run the building process and there is no necessity to permit the serious entry of professional experts on their related

fields. In this context the architects are literally pushed out of the game, and the main players are the unqualified builders that transform the cities on buildings graveyards, built but destined to be demolished in short time and become other composing elements. Mr. Mohseni expressed regret regarding official and government building, where outstanding buildings are rare case. The outcome of this sad situation, is that many graduated architects are forced other professions to gain incomes, so the building fields remains on the hands of persons that are not interested to transform buildings in national-artistic and functional values. After this pessimistic observations, he said that fortunately during the last 10-12 years different serious architectural competitions have been held and many young enthusiast professionals inspire hope for the present and future of architecture and a solid relationship between university and industry.

Continuing the exchange of idea Mr. Mahmoudi posed a question. Is it permissible to follow a process of probe and error in order to find the right answer. He wanted to know if 2-3 decades ago university professors followed their own believes and teachings in their professional lives too?

The third speaker was Mr. Khaki who before beginning to talk about the argument of the speech, said that he likes very much the idea and the way it's organized of the sessions organized by Herampey Research Group. Talking about the periods defined by the other speakers, he didn't agree with the possibility of specifying the decadence period during the last 3-4 decades. He said that in his opinion the decadence process in architecture began long time ago, during Safavide era (he knows that many people with disagree with him, regarding his assertions). In his opinion the main problem of architecture in Iran is that who has the duty, doesn't care to focus on the problems, ignoring the possible architectural solutions and simulating to make architecture that can be transformed in national and artistic values.

Mr. khaki expressed the idea that there is a big gap between the architecture of the other parts of the world that has been transformed in base of new situations and demands, meanwhile what is happening in our society is that who is making architecture is destroying our material-territorial heritage.

Talking about the academic and professional rout that he and his coetaneous have passed through. About three decades ago when he was admitted to the university the situation of job market was quite different, the country was overcoming the eight year war era, beginning a new reconstruction era, so the faculty of architecture multiplied rapidly, offering numerous graduated experts, for a market that had a high demand. The specialized magazines experienced positive transformations, because the global situation of the market was prosperous. In this situation the architects were caught of some kind of design rut, designing separate outstanding buildings, forgetting the environment and the land where they were realized. In this process we forgot and destroyed the tradition and especially the material heritage of our ancestors, like numerous ancient gardens or the underground water channels that for centuries had ensured the continuation and prosperity of the Iranian society.

Continuing his speech Mr. Khaki posed a question. Despite the enormous quantity of the buildings built during the last 2-3 decades, how many buildings can be classified as the result of a good design, the work of a qualified contractor, the testimony of a successful cooperation between

university and industry? In his opinion one of the biggest problems of modern (popular-low quality) architecture in Iran is that the primary and sane relationship between architecture and the environment (in this case the cities) has been completely ignored or misinterpreted.

Mr. Khorrami began to talk about the period when his professional career began. He described that period as a destructive one, because of technological and electronic new achievements. In this period the people had large access to specialized magazines, or via internet it was possible to use or copy the necessary information. At the same time the society became person based and people were not interested in the collective fate. Regarding the students that were graduated, many of them continued their studies in higher levels, arriving to the top of the pyramid, but without professional knowledge, preparation and even deprived by the possibility to exercise and grow in a professional ambience. In this situation the only way to find an occupation was to occupy university tribunes, causing catastrophic results for the students and for the weak relationship that once existed between university and industry.

Talking about the values that are trendy, Mr. Khorram talked about some of the buildings and their characteristics. Talking about Mellat cinema- theatre, a building that is considered interesting and lovely by the students of architecture, he said that this building has been made to have a particular -attracting form, but it's not functional and doesn't attract people (in theory it has been designed to host people). Referring to the reconstructed House of Artists, Mr. Khorrami said that even though the reconstruction works were not ideal and perfect, but the building has become a continuous point of attraction, because the building has its identity, inserted in an environment with the proper characteristics. Another problem, in his opinion, are the competitions that are organized in Iran. The work that has to be judged, usually is not visited on the ground and photographs presented by the author are the base of the evaluation, meanwhile it's very easy to hide evident problems and lacks, using nice pictures. Concluding this part of his speech he asked himself how it was possible that unqualified institutes were authorized to instruct large number of architecture students.

Replying to the assertions of Mr. Khorrami, the manager of the roundtable Mr. Mahmoudi said that if the traditional and confirmed universities are not prepared and ready to realize their tasks, it's obvious that other opportunists will try to steal their place.

Continuing the speech Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi asked what is the reason that so many people is interested to study architecture, when most of the are unable to get the necessary education to become acceptable professionals.

Mr. Mohseni shifted the discussion on social phenomenon. In his opinion part of what is happening in the sphere of architecture in Iran, has social reasons and roots. Many people that has money and social status(because of the financial resources that they possess) are not absolutely prepared to occupy the social position in which they find themselves and when it comes to the choice of the artist or architect that must design the building that they want to commission, usually the choice is not the most appropriate.

Comparing the past and actual generation of architects, Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi made an observations. He said that in past times, architects were artists that were interested and active in

different artistic fields and architecture was one of their occupations and preferences, meanwhile today architects that are graduated follow economic interests. This is the reason that many architects leave the ground, following other professional experts.

Mr. Khaki believes that architecture as a profession is condemned, like professions that once existed. Today technological achievements permit to obtain results that can eliminate and ignore the role of architects. Talking about the Iranian situation, Mr. Khaki said that Iranian universities are plenty of professors that have no inherence with the art of architecture. The problem is not only because most of them didn't design any building or structure. The problem is that people that profess architecture in the universities don't have the characteristics that once the architects had.

What is happening in our society is that there is a large number of graduated architects that are not able to find a job and occupation in the field that they have studied. At the same time there are so many universities and institutes that continue to accept students that want to study architecture. Another problem is that architects are not paid as they would for the projects that they have worked for and this is the pretext to justify the low quality of the works.

Talking about possible solutions and how it would be possible to save this profession, Mr. Mohseni said that only artists can save the architecture, only when there is an artistic-poetic approach the architectural product becomes art work and loveable.

Mr. Mahmoudi asked his colleagues about professional ethics and how is the situation in our country. Mr. Mohseni answered to the question saying that it's a fact of familiar education and if somebody has been educated in the right way, it's clear that he will follow the same rules in his professional life and career. He concluded his speech saying that he is not worried about the increase of the architects in the Iranian society, because once we had the same problem regarding medicine doctors. Even though today the number of medicine doctors in our society is very high, but the number of real experts and specialists is very limited.

All the participants to the roundtable agreed that the problems that the architecture of Iran has, it's not affected by a sole type of problem. The problems have social, artistic, economic... characters, so in order to overcome this situation it's necessary to make changes, to increase the sense of responsibility, the sense of artistic perception, the knowledge of our heritage to maintain it and use it as a base for our future buildings structures. If we want to save the architecture that we have inherited from our ancestors, it's necessary to study and know our history in all its aspects. There must be a continuation between the past, present and future and the nations are successful in this marathon, that are able to transfer these values from generation to other generations.

As the last question Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi asked to his colleagues what architects were looking for. In his opinion for many the main goal is not the architecture but to leave a trace and name on the buildings that they have designed. In his opinion in our society the architects are considered successful that meanwhile are not well accepted by the professional society of architects, but are welcomed by ordinary people that usually have not passed through social and cultural phase and steps that make possible changes.

Mr. khaki replied saying that the crisis doesn't regard only the field of architecture and other fields are involved in this crisis too. The problem is that in order to create an architectural work money is the principal font and if the owner of the money is not culturally and socially at a certain level, there is no doubt that from his money will not benefit the real and sane architecture.

Mr. Khorrami concluded his speech saying that if an architect wants to reach the fame and glory in our society, must think and care about to the people that stay in the lower layers of the society, to people that are homeless. This kind of mentality must not remain just as a slogan, it must not be limited just to the architecture, involving the social cultural entire sphere. The speaker added that he wasn't very optimistic, because a lot of things remain to be realized.

Mr. Mahmoudi thanked the presents for their participation, expressing the hope that everybody realizes his assertions, because our profession is still armed with ethical and professional spirit.