

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

**Date: 01.10.2020**

**Title: Solutions to Reestablish Active Habitation and Vitality in Fabric Areas.**

**Speakers: Mrs. Elham Androudi and Mrs. Zahra S. Mansouri.**

**Roundtable Members: Mr. S. Arfaie, Mr. M.S. Izadi and Mr. M.M. Mahmoudi.**

The first speaker was Mrs. E. Androudi began to speak about the solutions to reestablish active and vital habitation in fabric areas as one of the most important acts to protect and revitalize the fabric areas. Everybody knows that fabric areas have different values from historical, cultural, social and structural point of views, and as a precious heritage that must be protected and transferred to the future generations. The fabric areas reflect the lifestyle of our ancestors, how they managed their social life and how interacted with social spaces with their architectural and urbanistic characteristics that are proper of the Iranian civilization. The artistic styles that characterized the spaces of each area, gave them their proper identity and districted each area from others. The particular identity reflects also traditions, cultural originalities that are part of Iranian and Islamic heritage, accumulated and arrived to our days in centuries of collective life. Talking about active habitation in fabric areas that cause vitality and happiness for the inhabitants, Mrs. Androudi posed the question how these conditions are created and how the inhabitants can feel security and vitality when they live in such areas. Talking about memories that many still live with them, she said that in fabric areas the life was characterized by collective house-yards, where people and families lived in a human -natural dimension, where social-cultural values were reflected in the behavior of the inhabitants to help and protect who needed and deserved such behavior. In other words the continuation of traditional lifestyle as a precious heritage is the key solution to look forward having a dynamic and at the same time calm life.

Continuing her speech Mrs. Androudi talked about the sense of satisfaction that the inhabitants have and it's in relation with the sense of belonging to the area where they live. When the inhabitants are satisfied by the life that they have in their area, they are interested and motivated for positive changes and they are ready to participate to different type of activities that can occur in their area. In her opinion similar behavior is the best guarantee for the protection and maintenance of the fabric areas. Another important aspect is the actual lifestyle that has changed compared with the past times, because of technological achievements that we use in our everyday life. The key solution to create optimal conditions of life in fabric areas is to identify and understand the necessities and the way to satisfy them. On the other hand it's clear that the worsening conditions of social life create social negative conditions, and people live gradually the area, causing the gradual depopulation of the area transforming hesitant areas to be used for other purposes like warehouses or areas for prohibited activities. Mrs. Androudi repeated that the most important activity is the identification of the problems, needs and possible solutions in a large scale that will create conditions for long term goals and solutions.

Talking about the real needs of the inhabitants, Mrs. Androudi pointed on cultural, educational and medical facilities that must be provided for the wellnees of the inhabitants and how they can improve the quality of life in fabric areas. She presented also the results of their studies on ground realized in some of Tehran fabric areas like Oladjan or Emazadeh Yahya, where they have realized that the needs of the population are far to be considered satisfying and acceptable. The main reason in her opinion is that habitable areas are gradually being transformed in commercial uses or transformed in large scale warehouses.

Mrs. Androudi talked also about the accesses that in fabric areas are one of the most required needs for the inhabitants and how they have been transformed during the last years, affecting the lifestyle of the inhabitants both under negative and positive aspects. She explained how the particular form of the accesses influence the social life and activity of the population, and how important is to focus on the smart and long term solutions, considering also the experience of other countries regarding similar problems. She talked also about vehicular presence and circulation and how they can affect negatively the everyday life in the fabric areas if it's not controlled and regulated.

Talking about successful experiences Mrs.Androudi referred to the case of Rasoulia house in the historical center of Yazd, that has been transformed to the faculty of architecture, causing the flow of students to the historical center. Another case is the transformation of old houses in Kashan to guesthouses and the following attraction of local and foreign touristic flows, considering new demands and problems that must be faced.

Concluding her speech Mrs. Androudi stressed on the importance of social activities with the aid and participation of different organizations, creating the conditions for the revitalization of social and cultural life in the fabric areas.

The second speaker was Mrs. Z.S. Mansouri. She began her speech talking about the revitalization of fabric areas, how are the actual conditions and the quality of life. We know that cities at the beginning had a central nucleus where activities like commerce, government and religious centers were established. With the growth of the population and consequent growth of the cities the central areas didn't loose their nature, identity and types of activities. Because of existing infrastructures suitable for different activities the concentration has increased during the years. She observed that the concentration of activities in fabric areas has increased the traffic of the population that accessed the areas in daytime living them at the end of day. Such circulations have created many types of problems for the inhabitants, forcing them directly or indirectly to live the area looking or better conditions of life (like the neighborhoods 11, 12, 6 and 7 in Tehran). The inhabitants that continue to remain in the fabric areas, are those whom activities are somehow related to the existings in the fabric areas. She explained that where the approach of the urban management has been to give the proper traditional identity to specific activities, there the results have been satisfying for the population and also for the existence of the fabric areas.

Talking about the case of Kyoto, Mrs. Mansouri explained how the urban management considered the revitalization of historical area focusing on its identity, with compatible and traditional activities, that permit the inhabitants to continue their life in the historical area, based principally on a sense of belonging.

Another main problem that the urban management should focus on is the public transport organization, in order to facilitate the circulation in the fabric areas, minimizing the problems that can create such circulation for the local population.

Concluding her speech, Mrs. Mansouri repeated the idea that the revitalization of fabric areas is strictly connected to the establishing of the local identity, with compatible spaces and activities that can satisfy the necessities of the population sectors that are involved in the everyday life of the historical area.

During the roundtable debate Mr. Mahmoudi posed the following question. Considering that in fabric areas economic activities run as they should, is it really necessary to talk about the reestablishment of the population?

Mr. Arfaie was the first to intervene, posing another question. Regarding the fabric areas we should know which are their characteristics and contents. We should know the reasons that when the areas were depopulated, other people for professional reasons has preferred these areas. The principal reason is that as partially abandoned and degraded areas, they imposed minor costs for renting or exploitation. In his opinion the main problem is that the urban management has ignored the spirit and history of fabric areas that were subject to changes and improvement tentatives. In case the social, political or religious history of the area are identified, registered and offered to the population, it will help to a better approach for the protection, renovation and exploitation of the area, acceptable for the inhabitants and people that in different manners are involved with the life of the area.

Answering to the question Mr. Izadi considered that looking for solutions it's important to remember that each situation (area) has its particular characteristics and problems, so each one must be considered separately, avoiding to look for simple and repeatable solutions. Regarding the repopulation of the fabric areas he believed that even though the area has lost its indigenous inhabitants, anyway a neighborhood without local inhabitants it's difficult to imagine and they must be one of the principal components of the neighborhood.

Continuing to focus on the issue of the inhabitants, Mr. Mahmoudi asked if it would be possible to transform a neighborhood reestablishing the population and at the same time creating the conditions for the presence of touristic masses, without creating problems for each mentioned category.

Mr. Arfaie expressed the idea that the main goal must be the repopulation or confirmation of the presence of the inhabitants in the fabric areas. When this condition is assured the remaining

programs and goals can be realized in different manners and scales.

Pointing on the fact that the presence of the inhabitants can't be an artificial "intrusion", considering the history, traditions and culture of the area, Mr. Mahmoudi asked if it was possible to combine those characteristics to organize and attract touristic flows, in order to revitalize the natural course of life in the area.

Mr. Izadi answered that in his opinion, regarding the fabric areas, we should have at least three options. The first pointing just on the reestablishment of the inhabitants. The second to point on the reestablishment of the inhabitants and new activities. The third point on the reestablishment of the inhabitants with their traditional activities, adding at the same time new activities to attract for example the presence and participation of tourists. What is important is to plan and organize a balanced and separate approach regarding the reorganization of each area.

Regarding the proposal of the options Mr. Mahmoudi asked what would be the role of government organizations, and if there is a legislative ground for the realization of such programs and ideas.

Mr. Arfaie expressed the idea that generally programs that are organized and realized by common people ensure better results than waiting for government-official interventions. He reported the case of a group of sculptors that transferring their activity in a semi abandoned village, revitalized the life a village that had poor perspectives for the future.

Appreciating the resourcefulness of the mentioned group Mr. Mahmoudi asked if in a larger scale it would be possible to transfer the responsibilities to the common people or the government organizations should make the decisions and take the responsibilities?

Mr. Izadi said that during the last years the legislative sector has been completed with new approvals and the programs and goals are clear they can be realized based on the government organizations decisions. At the same time through a good programming it's possible to ensure their realization through new legislative approvals. Of course the private sector can play a decisive role combining a reciprocal cooperation between public and private sector.

Talking about successful projects Mr. Arfaie reported the case of a neighborhood in Yazd that paved the way for the organization of cultural and touristic activities, and today the base is ready for the realization of new projects. Even though Mr. Izadi mentioned the case of different cities like Gorgan, Shiraz, Bushehr but in his opinion the neighborhood of Julfa in Esfahan is one of the most successful projects that he can mention. In his opinion what is essential is to avoid to repeat the mistakes that happened in the past.

Concluding the session and the roundtable Mr. Mahmoudi expressed the idea that than to the experiences of the last 20 years in different parts of Iran, the point of view of the people has changed and many people that own historical buildings are not anymore ready to destroy them

for short term interests.

Mr. Mahmoudi thanked the participants for their active and precious presentations.