

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

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

**Date: 13.12.2018**

**Title: Walkway, a word in cage.**

**Speakers and panel members: Mrs. Lida Eslami, Mrs. Saqar Mansouri and Mrs. Mahboube Kholouq.**

The first speaker of the 113th session was Mrs. L. Eslami. She said that referring to the subject of the walkway, there are always expressions of dissatisfaction. In her speech she would talk about the process of walkway evolution and which are the potentials to face modern challenges.

Talking about the potentials in order to face modern challenges, Mrs. Eslami referred to the problems that nowadays modern societies suffer from. Some of them are the increase of traffic, different type of pollution, overweight, weakness of social relations, depression... that with their increase affect human society. In her opinion walkways can help to answer to these problems and create the necessary conditions to improve the actual situation. Talking about the etymology, Mrs. Eslami explained the slight difference that exists between the sidewalk and walkway. The walkway is a passage where the pedestrian is in priority, using a safe, relax and memorable space. In this kind of routes vehicles circulation occur a relatively narrow way, with limited speed. The aim of creating such conditions is to ensure psychological and spiritual tranquility, far from fears like stumbling, get lost or to face difficulties to find the right spatial direction. These are treats that especially elderly people experience in their outdoor life, but properly designed walkways can considerably reduce these type of difficulties. In walkways qualities like the use of color, light and signs of social events, create the desirable conditions to prolong the time spending in the walkway. Usually the walkways conduct to an architectural outstanding work.

Presenting one of the best local cases, Mrs. Eslami talked about Abbasi Charbaq in Isfahan, where the pedestrians and tourists can enjoy the principal walkway, meanwhile the vehicles circulation occur in two narrow directions, with a speed near pedestrians walking speed. In the same space the pedestrians can enjoy subway accessibility and services to move in the direction that they desire. She explained the in the north side of the walkway there is the building of Jahan Nama and in the southern side the Siosepol bridge, marked in modules of 500 m. x 500 m., in order to stress the focal points of the walkway After mentioning the Catalan famous la Rambla walkway, Mrs. Eslami presented the pedestrian axe in the center of Washington D.C., with cultural functions in one side and government, administrative and similar functions in the other side, concentrating multipurpose and important urban facilities.

After this presentation, Mrs. Eslami wanted to talk about the reasons that created the conditions of the loss of some of the most important walkways around the world, especially at the beginning of the 20th century, the appearance of the motorized vehicles, the increase of urban population, the spread of diseases, the insufficient conditions of urban facilities.... All of them together contributed to worsen the conditions of life in the major cities. In order to overcome the accumulated problems and difficulties the responsible policy makers and experts tried to find and

propose solutions, like the improvement of housing and health conditions according to the standards. The system that pushed ahead the society toward industrialization process and upgrade of economic growth, created the conditions that living in the cities became impossible, because of the limitations that existed in the cities. The wealthy people preferred to shift to suburban areas, and at the same time the cities experienced deterioration and loss of their supremacy. The consequence of this situation was the increase of physical and spiritual distances, forcing the people to follow the rules of the industrial system and the mechanized life, with the consequent problems well known to everybody.

Continuing her speech Mrs. Eslami focused on the advantages that the improvement of a walkway system can ensure to the citizens. The improvement of the walkways conditions enhance the public transport, the accessibility to urban major centers, the development of parking areas, concentrating the vehicles accumulations in areas that are less visible and consequently create less problems to the people that already have lots of problems, related to modern urban lifestyle and encouraging them to alternative solutions. In order to reach the ideal condition it's necessary to improve the physical aspect of the cities, revival the historical centers and textures, protect the architectural and artistic heritage, upgrade the urban facilities, extend the green areas, increase of open spaces where the citizens can spend their leisure time. From all these conditions can benefit all components of the society, from children to elderly people, satisfying their necessities.

Mrs. Eslami continued her speech talking about how the conditions of the walkways should be upgraded in structural, qualitative and functional levels. In this context the dimensions of the walkway, the purpose foresaw for each space, the placement of the urban furniture, the accessibility of the spaces... must be put together in a functional context in order to ensure the best results. In this context details are important, like light and weather conditions that can cause the reduction or increase of time spending in the walkway area. To better understand the behavior and preference of the people the easiest way is to monitor their movements through installed cameras in the target area.

Concluding her speech Mrs. Eslami presented the TOD program (Transit-oriented development) that proposes a new approach in modern urban management, following the above mentioned principal points:

- 1-Walking movements. Development of urban districts based on the walking movements.
- 2-Use of bicycles, giving the priority to the creation of non motorized transport network
- 3-Creation of communication and penetrability, through the creation of a compact network roads and passages
- 4-Mass development of public transport and development plans near public transport network, with high capabilities and qualities
- 5-Integration of the activities and planed design based on the idea of integration
- 6-Increase of concentration, improvement and coordination of activities and the capabilities of public transport network

7-Compressive urban development

8-Change of vehicle based approach to urban management new approach based on public transport development

Mrs. Eslami concluded that the idea of smart cities doesn't belong to the future, rather is already a reality that must be introduced in the urban management system, in order to improve citizens' quality of life and minimize the problems.

The second speaker was Mrs. S. Mansouri. Talking about the title of the session, she said that she had a journey to the Turkish city of Gaziantep, where a project of revival of a walkway network in the historical center was in course.

The city of Gaziantep is located in the southeast of Turkey, near the Syrian city of Aleppo. The city has a compact texture, where the lower floors are designated to commercial activities. The historical center of the city is located around the ancient castle. The city has 1.5 million inhabitants and during the war created in Syria more than half a million of refugees have found shelter in the city. Gaziantep is considered one of Turkey's most important industrial poles and the majority of its population are Turkish talking people, even though there is an Arab and Kurd population living in the city.

The city is considered the sixth touristic city of Turkey, having many touristic attractions. The historic center has been renovated with the very limited budget of 2 \$. In the historical center a main walkway has been defined, where cities various attractions have been transformed in fee free museum, to encourage and make pleasant walking in the area. The designers of the route created the conditions that tourists can enjoy different monuments, buildings and urban landscapes, that if realized in a vehicle crossing wouldn't have the same effect and enthusiasm the visitors.

Focusing on the importance of the existence of walkways in strategic routs and areas, Mrs. Mansouri explained that in order to know and understand the culture and civilization of a city or the people that are living there, the best and easiest way is walk through the attractions and contact the people. In this way the visitor can create a visual impression of the visited city or place and at same time contribute to the improvement of social and individual quality of life.

The second case that Mrs. Mansouri talked about was the American city of Boston, where in the heart of the city there is a 4 km long walkway, created in the fifties of past century. The walkway has experience social large consensus and success, attracting annually about 4 million of tourist and visitors. In one hand the walkway contributes considerably to the municipal budget and the increase of civil awareness of the citizens, to protect and take care of the historical monuments and attractions of the city.

The following presented case was the walkway created in the central-historical area of Tabriz. The walkway connects Imam Khomeini St. axe to the Bazar. Mrs. Mansouri explained that before the restoration the old facades and building, with their particular architectural style, were considerably deteriorated and suffering the heavy traffic of motorized circulation.

In this densely populated area, the emergency to exclude vehicles circulation, assigning the liberated area to the circulation of pedestrians, was clear to the urban management and through the application of visual and green solutions, the area has become an attraction point for the people that for different reasons visit it.

Another interesting case is Marvi St. in Tehran Grand Bazar area that a few years ago has been closed to regular vehicles circulation, becoming a pedestrian area. In this case too, the urban management has worked on the revival of original and traditional elements that once characterized many areas of Tehran, but unfortunately most of them have been lost or destroyed. Because of the restoration and prohibition of vehicles circulation, the economic turnover has increased and the value of the commercial shops has experienced incredible highs. This is one of the most important reasons that the shopkeepers are seriously interested to maintain the actual ideal conditions.

The last example reported was the walkway in the Indian city of Ahmadabad, where the urban management tried to revitalize the existing walkway area through solutions that were in harmony with the spirit and physical conditions of the area.

Concluding her speech Mrs. Mansouri talked about the necessity that a city must be dynamic in its access routes and identity. These elements can be the visit card of the city, if the solutions are cleverly applied. She talked about different districts of Tehran that have not any walkway street or area and it is considered one of the problems that the urban management must face.

Mrs. Mansouri concluded her speech talking about the TOD program, where walkways as an urban solution have been considered. In her opinion the most important thing is that every district can define its capabilities and potentials, in order to improve the condition of life of the citizens.

The last speaker was Mrs. M. Kolouq. She began her speech saying that currently because of particular considerations, for the experts on the matter it is possible to talk about problems and expectancies, but in the reality most of the problems remain ignored.

Mrs. Kholouqi explained that in the process of decision making there is an imaginary triangle formed by the official and private sectors and the people. Unfortunately in this triangle only the official sector plays an active role, meanwhile the other two sectors are often excluded and ignored. In her opinion the problem is a lack of coordination between the different sectors that work or are interested on the same project. Mrs. Kholouqi said that as the representative of Iran in the United Nations and a member of Disable Women Soul Council, she follows what happens in Iran regarding the facilities that must be created for disable people, but despite the official propaganda, a lot of things and actions wait for a proper solutions. She expressed her regret about many works that are the result of repeated actions, meanwhile if they were considered at the beginning of the project and in phase of design process, the results would be much better and the economic losses limited.

Continuing her speech Mrs. Kholouqi said that after the industrial revolution, when many countries benefited from its achievements, in developed countries when a new phenomenon appeared, before its introduction in the society, the culture of its use was introduced in the target society. Regarding the case of Austrian capital Vienna, for example, she said that even though it's a small city, but all

the matters related to the convention for disables have been respected and disable persons don't face any problem for their movements. The consideration that she made regarding the U.S.A. was very interesting. The Americans asserted that because they have the most severe legislative norm, they don't intend to join the convention. After visiting New York, she realized that regarding the walkways and sidewalks, the approach of American urban policy makers is very material and commercial and they don't care a lot about the disable people and their needs. This is the reason that that journey was one of the most difficult that she has experienced.

Talking about the city of Istanbul Mrs. Kholouqi said that during her first and second visit to the city with an interval of 5-6 years, she realized that the facilities that did not exist for disables, during her first visit, were available during the second visit. It was clear that all together decided to cancel the barriers and equal conditions and opportunities also for disable people. She stressed on the fact that the facilities were created in both important and secondary structure that would be very important for tourist attraction.

Mrs. Kholouqi talked about the case of Tehran Municipality building, where meetings are held for the universal design of the walkways in Tehran, minimum facilities are not available in the building of the municipality, and what was finally provided, was the result of the interested group perspicacity. She told also about her journey to Korea, where the President of the country expressed her regret because of lack of some facilities for disable people. As conclusion regarding the case of Tehran, Mrs. Kholouqi asserted that the problem regards the negligence of the responsible authorities, if many problems still persist.

Concluding her speech Mrs. Kholouqi said the precondition for the progress of a country is that its citizens must demand firmly what they need and deserve, sharing the positive experiences and correcting the mistakes.

Mrs. Kholouqi expressed her gratitude to Herampey Research Group for organizing such interesting and useful meetings that aim to present problems and gather responsible persons that care about them.