

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

Held in: Conference hall of Herampey Consulting Engineers

Date: 23.07.2015

Title: From Tehran to Tehran

Speakers and panel members: Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi, Mr. F. Parsi and Mrs. L. Eslami

The 41st session of the Thursdays' Evenenings series organized by Herampey research group was dedicated to the argument called from Tehran to Tehran. During this session in presence of experts on the matter the progressive route and process regarding the architecture and town planning were discussed and analyzed.

As reported above the presents were interested to know better how and in which way Tehran was developed as the Iranian capital city. The speakers were Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi, Mr. F. Parsi and Mrs. L. Eslami.

An abstract of the speeches are here presented:

The first speaker was Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi began his speech explaining how the name of the city was gradually transformed throw the first letter Tehran. He explained that Tehran has undergone many transformations, one of the most important and tragic of them is the destruction of the big gardens, replaced by linear green spaces in the margin of the streets and highways. The traditionally gable roofs were replaced by modern apartments and due to climatic change the eternal snow was disappeared from the Damavand's peak. When the firs cars appeared in the Capital's street they moved timidly because the priority was for the sidewalks, meanwhile today we assist to the opposite phenomenon. Unfortunately the new urban elements took the place of the old and traditional elements. Mr. Mahmoudi asked himself and the presents if Tehran's identity was improved or worsened.

Continuing his speech Mr. Mahmoudi focused on different matters like the construction of the high rise buildings, like the Plasco building that in the northern side of that era rose near low buildings, ignoring their characteristics and spirit. Another representative element are the gates that have been ruined or forgotten if the structures still exist; sometime the structure exists but has lost its role,

meanwhile in the past time the gates of the cities were part of the governmental structure. Mr. Mahmoudi believes that even though these structures were not real castles but the façade that the people enjoyed was really nice and it showed the great respect that they had for the citizens.

Continuing to grow Tehran slowly is transformed, statues are placed in the squares and some questions must find the adequate responses, like the height and how the people should see these statues. Some cases are well done and others are less successful. In the following period the buildings are designed and built by experts that have a university degree, meanwhile in the past times the buildings were built through a process of learning and knowledge transfer between the master and the assistant. The invasion of the vehicles and the huge flow of people from other regions to Tehran, imposed new architectural and town planning forms and solutions, like the construction of tunnels, high rise buildings, that cause a break between the past time solutions and modern necessities. This may be the reason that in Tehran exist a gap of identity that seems to be isolated from the general context.

The second speaker was Mr. F. Parsi who presented Tehran as a 200 years old city that is a long period for city that acts as a Capital city. In This period there is a very important happening regarding the architecture and the cultural characteristics, between Iran and the West. In this process Tehran is a gate where the new ideas and theories are introduced. Mr. Parsi repeated the idea that during the Qajar era the Iranian architecture was subject to the western cultural invasion that cause the rupture with the traditions and the past. It is in this period that we say goodbye to the traditional architecture beginning a new kind of architecture that is an unsuccessful mixture. To better understand what really happened in this period is enough to compare the new examples with cities like Yazd and Naïen that have been relatively saved from the destructive process, where an harmonic urban complex is successfully maintained .

Continuing his speech Mr. Parsi posed a question, why and how these new solutions were adopted in the architectural process and identity? Which were the parameters for the introduction of foreign architectural elements? The choices that were made reflects the artistic and social preferences that the people have in Tehran. Ending his speech Mr. Parsi stressed the importance to maintain and keep

alive the historic heritage, but on the other hand to organize the way that guides Tehran to a natural developing process.

The third speaker was Mrs. L. Eslami who presented the historic area of Tehran better known of Safavid wall that occupies 400 hectares. This area has great historic potential, if we want make a comparison this area is proportional with Tehran, like Tehran as a Capital with the hall Country. The Safavid wall area is considered the point where Tehran can be historically identified. In this area we can find political and commercial centers like the ministries or the Big Bazar. In the area 170 histoical monuments have been registered, that can be great touristic attractions, that if properly organized can give solution to many social and economic problems. Mrs. Eslami explained that throw the studies that they realized, a sad situation appeared. The population during night and day was not proportional, causing social insecurity in night time and traffic limitations during day time. Another problem are the working children, drug consumers and unprotected women, even though the authorities tried to find solutions for the mentioned problems, but they still exist and probably one of the main reasons can be the buildings' use changes from habitations to commercial sites and depots, causing the deterioration of the life quality. The studies showed that in this area a chain of problems (economic, social and policy making) need to be faced if we want reintroduce a normal and acceptable life process. To achieve this goal the urban spaces must be re-qualified to satisfy the modern needs, the night time life must be reorganized, that will ensure the vitality in the area. Mrs. Eslami explained that for the mentioned problems there are two kind of limitations that are physical and social. For the first one visual obstacles, ruined buildings and limited nocturne limitation must be solved throw different solutions. For the social problems the working people must begin to live in the area transforming it to a natural context of ordinary life. Mrs. Eslami believes that even though there can rise problems during the process of revitalization, but throw a constant and well programmed organization the fixed goals can be achieved.