

Reconsideration of Sustainable Architecture and Identity in Contemporary Architecture (Case Study: Tagh Bostan Kermanshah, Iran)

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ABSTRACT: Contemporary Iranian architecture is still caught in a dilemma between a cursory review of a nostalgic look at the past and beguiling ostentations of the western patterns and models. Iranian architecture has faced a myriad of challenges to achieve its national fundamental essence. Past Iranian architecture which has long achieved a sustainable and special position by resorting to creativity and unique features, nowadays has distanced from reality and has found an artificial and inferior status due to the encounter with various phenomena such as exploitation policies and affluence of oil wealth without necessary management backgrounds and also obsession with the superficial manifestations of the western industrialized civilization. The present paper attempts to investigate the typology of identity and the issue of identity in contemporary Iranian sustainable architecture, then to analyze this issue in Tagh Bostan in Kermanshah city, and finally to consider the identity crisis in Iran and the world.

Keywords: Identity, Architecture, Sustainable Development, Crisis, Tagh Bostan

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INTRODUCTION

The architecture is not a passive phenomenon dominated only by geometry of structures. Rather it is the creation of a qualitative space and a proper place for replying to spontaneous and future demands of residents which develops based on a process in "place-time" and leads to a space. Conceptual and qualitative features of cities in different places of world reflect their "identity". History is and has been a confirmation of man's attempts to discriminate oneself from others. The members of each community have a special understanding of their distinct identity. They may demonstrate this perception in their religion or language and reflect it in art in a symbolic type (Bites, 1996). Achieving an authentic identity, freeing from crisis-generating identities and identity crisis are among the main humanity concerns throughout the history and human cultures and they are the result of man's desire for liberty and idealism. It could be underlined that human is human because he/she is an identity-creator being and always attempts to achieve a transcendental and idealist identity. Nowadays, the achievement of personal identity through nature and people which is the main attribute of pre-industrialism era is rarely possible, and people, objects and happenings are specified through an artificial world. In fact, nowadays, the view of cities under the title of symbolic pattern is quite queer and vague (Yar Ahmadi, 1999).

Significance of problem

The motivation to create a cultural identity in architecture is a man's adorable attempt to make its house, city and county distinct and distinguished, and in turn, to appreciate its beliefs and ideals. Therefore, whenever people as the builders of a city have found opportunity to

think and to reflect their personal tendencies on their buildings, have been able to fulfil this major objective (Falamaki, 2004). However, at the present era, globalization as one adverse consequence of loss of identity necessitates creation of cultural identity elements in a city more than past. Today, everybody complains of loss of identity, monotony and dullness in the cities (Pakzad, 2006).

Study Objectives

- Paying attention to the identity of the historical context of Tagh Bostan
- Transfer of the past glorious Iranian history into contemporary culture of Kermanshah province and sustainable development of the historical context of Tagh Bostan and the physical body of the context and Kermanshah contemporary life)

Research questions and hypotheses

- What is identity?
- What are the factors which shape identity and what are they characteristics?
- How can we restore lost identity to Iranian architecture and urban planning?
- Should we believe in change or constancy regarding the issue of identity?

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study methodology is of a descriptive-analytical type and data is gathered in a field- and library-based manner. In the present study, to analyze identity and its applied and conceptual aspects, using library-based analysis and study, the issues of identity crisis and the

factors influencing it are considered, and field studies are used to analyze a case study.

Study Area

Kermanshah is the ninth greatest city and one of metropolises in Iran and also the capital of Kermanshah province. This province has population over 784,602 and an area of 93,389,956 m sq. It is regarded as a historical and cultural city and its emergence dates back to the fourth century BC. The area under study is Tagh Bostan at the north of Kermanshah and it is one of the oldest and identity-orientated contexts in the city, which due to the neglect of officials and residents mainly caused by inability to do an appropriate designing and incongruent systematization of different parts, a great deal of chaos and disorder could be observed in this part of city.

Improper land partitioning of Tagh Bostan, low quality of a context's service buildings which include loss of resistance to natural disasters, density and compaction of a context, the gradual emptiness of some parts of a context, financial problems of residents, raised age of old residents, the concentration of "trade-tourism" application in this area are among the reasons for selecting this region.

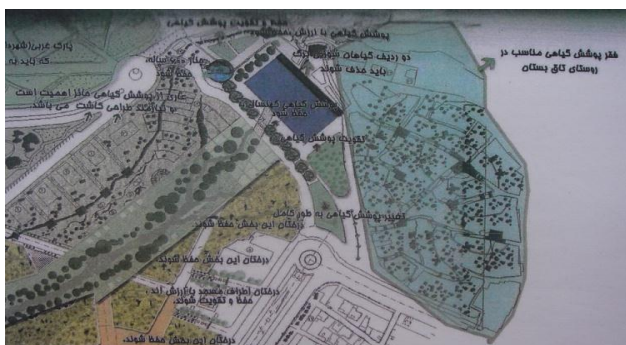


Figure 1. Tagh Bostan Kermanshah Area, (Kermanshah Meayr)

Concepts, view and theoretical foundations

Content: In this paper, first, the concept of identity, identity and its sustainable development, and architecture are defined and then the situation of contemporary Iranian architecture and urban planning are analyzed.

Nature of identity: What is identity? First of all, identity is a process not something which could be "found". It has a resemblance to the trace which civilization leaves behind by its progression throughout the world. This trace is the same as culture or identity of a single civilization. Secondly, the identity cannot be artificial due to its processing nature. Man forms his identity in facing with variations and changes in life and passing of time. For example, Europeans were forerunners of industrialism era, without any concern with their identity. Due to doing some efforts in this area, they amassed a huge amount of wealth, though they remained still as French, English and Germanic. Thirdly, identity is not something self-conscious. Man understands its identity through its self and environment. Any attempt to shorten or obliterate this process, to manipulate or deny identity could be disadvantageous to us. This is a type of deception and manipulation or a negative signal. A signal is different from a symbol because entails a type of impassive reaction.

As a person who shakes a flag and others become so excited and show their respect. If an architect who lives in a foreign country, then come back to its original land and construct a glass building same as the one in the countries which he visited, the only work he has done is the transfer of signs. However, if the same architect learn the architectural principles and apply them to a very different series of material, climactic situations, customs and traditions, it is probable that he construct a building which is not completely made of glass but it is so proportionate to the status and thus the identity of that particular place.

The climactic situations in this process are very determining. For example, the reply to this question that "whether or not a church must be enclosed space" or "whether or not a mosque must have a vestibule" depends on the place of construction of such buildings. For example, in some regions such as India, Malaysia and Indonesia, due to humid and hot weather, it is necessary to each house has a very good ventilation system.

Environmental situations determine form in two different levels: first as a direct determining factor which courtyard (in dry and hot weather) and universal ventilation (in hot and humid weather) is a manifest manifestation of it; climactic situations in a deeper level form cultural patterns and customs. And as weather in a deeper level is an important factor regarding custom and traditions. Therefore, form determines structure.

Therefore, search for identity can make us more sensitive to both environment and ourselves and a community in which we live. This emanates from byproduct of our focus on our real problems rather than a conscious attempt to find identity as an objective by itself, without paying attention to the subject which we have faced with it.

Identity and architecture: Identity sometimes is defined as separation and distinction from other schools of thought and sometimes as deep-rooted and internal coordination and the relationship between surface and depth. The first definition has a historical and sociological perspective and the second one has a philosophical and spiritual perspective. Nowadays, identity refers to as the first perspective, while many modernist intellectuals and architect regard the issue of identity as baseless and useless at least for a country like Iran. They believe that by the development of communications, inter-connection of the world and formation of a universal village, preserving identity has become impossible and useless, and it is crucial for Iran to identify itself further and raise its level to a universal level. However, this idea is rejected and fundamental changes have been made even in the West, and both in terms of architecture and thinking, the issue of identity is of a critical significance (Akhtar Kavan, 2006).

In the process of architecture formation, a variety of factors influence final structure such as climate, performance, material and techniques, manpower, building economy, etc. Along with the influence of environmental-climactic, material and physical factors, the form and space of a building in terms of cultural, artistic and imaginary aspects must be taken into account in a community as well (Diba, 1996).

The situation of contemporary Iranian architecture and urban planning: A cursory look at contemporary Iranian history and other civilizations in the world indicates that all architectural masterpieces have been formed based on a formulated and clarified thinking. So it could be said that each civilization and race depict a particular architecture in a specific architecture. The issue of the relationship between culture and architecture as one aspect of relationship between man and artificial environment by an attempt to enhance its quality is a challenge faced by different thinkers and architects with various environmental and intellectual contexts.

Systematization of space in Iranian architecture was done based on the presence and understanding of an invisible three-dimensional network entangled in micro- and macro-spaces, and it could cover a broad spectrum of man activities ranging from thinking and watching flower and plants to the celebration of overcrowded ceremonies (between two public and private poles). The interaction of these two means a spatial organization and the life style would show itself in a combined form of spatial layers.

Since the end of Qajar era and the beginning of Pahlavi regime, fundamental political, social and cultural changes happened in Iran. Some of the main features of this era include construction of broad streets at the heart of historical contexts, the establishment of public great buildings and the emergence of an invaluable popular architecture. Although in the same era, some buildings with ancient traditional views, this was done based on a specified plan for making a contrast between pre- and post-Islamic era, rather than establishment of a robust fulcrum by which it was possible to perceive the character of contemporary Iranian people (Me'marian, 2004).

One main cause of chaos in contemporary Iranian architecture in finding its own identity is vagueness and confusion behind this type of architecture. If man knows properly its contemporary dominant thinking, architecture is easier able to find its own identity (Mirmiran, 2004).

Nowadays, different interpretations are presented on contemporary Iranian architecture. This architecture is suspended between past and future and attempts to find its own special direction. In such situation, Iranian architecture sometimes is lured by its past honourable and nostalgic past and sometimes by the western ostentatious and decorated architecture. However, the recognition of a real direction is totally challenging in this regard, because Iranian past and traditions are still replete with eternal principles and thinking and contemporary manifestations of Western architecture cannot be a proper response to the situation arisen by Iranian social-cultural context (Ansari, 2002).

Crisis of identity: The main root of theoretical and practical crises of contemporary man is its inability to achieve self-recognition and identity, so that contemporary world has converted into a relative universe with various and contradictory interpretations and there is no single criterion and principle regarding it. So the first solution to solve the problems of contemporary man is its illumination toward its identity, universe, etc. and strengthening them based on robust structures.

When the issue of identity crisis is considered, there is always this risk that man regards a past image as the criterion to evaluate and analyze the recognition of

identity rather than paying attention to a complete mental image of the phenomenon, without the fact that perhaps what had a special identity in the past, today is not able to fulfil individual's demands. Man must not forget that identity cover further the present time rather than past and even it is able to extend to future (Behzadifar, 2008).

The identity crisis in contemporary architecture and urban planning: Understanding roots of crisis and the factors influencing it to present a good solution is necessary. The factors forming a crisis in the architecture of a land are different. The import of architecture from other lands is done in different ways. The act of an individual or group attempt to import foreign culture instead of the utilization of local cultures is the first step toward individualism. Therefore, some buildings are constructed solely based on personal preferences of the class dominating a society and each building becomes a representative of individualism at that community.

A city is now a combination of three main parts including a disintegrated old context which is gradually decaying and destroying, dirty, unsanitary and inhuman residence with a completely autonomous context, devoid of environmental strategies and derived from dealing and trading on the earth, and finally modern neighborhoods with a type of ostentatious and extravagant architecture and without any spatial-physical thinking. The city in all three parts is devoid of norms and rules relevant to urban planning and up to date architecture.

Dealing with the issue of city is a process which is initiated by "philosophy of city" (a framework of artistic-cultural values), developed by "place-time" (a framework of values and valueless items) and ended by a "scientific-practical" (dominant and suitable values) to the space. Whenever one aspect of city's four conceptual aspects (objectivity, subjectivity, place and time) are neglected and depreciated, "live-space" converts into a "live in space" (only due to the presence of its residents) and this is the beginning of collapse of the civil life foundations and gradual disintegration of civil bases. A city which cannot either be interpreted as a philosophical issue loses its existential philosophy (Habibi, 2004).

The development of urban planning in Iran has led to the construction of incomplete and undersigned spaces. The design of new parts of cities mainly is limited to the provision of land use map including a monotonous cross network without land hierarchy and partitioning in a repetitive and continuous form. The neglect of the third dimension and the volumes of buildings, the height of walls, sky line and lack of adjacent observable building designs at the edge of streets as the architectural complexes without paying attention to their overall identity lead to chaos and disintegration and also sometimes monotony in the image and architecture of civil places and they have constructed with a highly improper spatial quality. Stoppage of the historical process of a city-due to the placement of exogenous development- has caused that our contemporary city lose its identity-based and conceptual aspects in most of these instances.

Sustainable identity in architecture: Identity has two aspects including physical and mental or exoteric or esoteric and these two aspects could be separated only

mentally. Physical aspect is mostly animalistic-humanistic and covers quantitative and qualitative aspects. However, human identity is something beyond form and surface and initially is potential and gradually loses the main part of its identity, and the final form of identity emanate from man behavior and is a combination of these two.

In art and architecture, identity acts as a basic and determining element. This identity results from content and form and when an artistic work has a unified content and form and search for the same meaning and objective, the main goal is achieved. So balance and sustainability of identity is related to the situation in which those factors are present. This is because in this situation, these factors are interrelated to each other. These factors are as follows: 1-Universal systematized thinking (speculative philosophy); 2- Universal systematized conduct (practical philosophy); 3- Systematization and coordination between thinking and conduct (idea and conduct)

Un- sustainable (critical) identity in architecture: Critical and un-sustainable identity is related to the situation in which the above factors are ignored. In this situation: 1- The definitions are not clear (the lack of universal speculative philosophy); 2- The values are missing and vague (the lack of practical and universal philosophy); 3- There is no need to the relationship between them and their evaluation

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ancient history of Kermanshah

Kermanshah is one of the metropolises in Iran and is the capital of Kermanshah province. The Kermanshah appellation dates back to Sassanian era. The old name of Kermanshah is “Gereh Misin”. Some references claim that Kermanshah was the pseudonym of Baharm Kermanshah (fourth Bahram) because he was the ruler of Kerman before achieving the title of King (Shah). After he was appointed as a king, this city was named Kermanshah in the honor of him. In old Kurdish references, Kermanshah was named “Mai”. At the first years after Islamic Republic of revolution, Kermanshah changed its name into Bakhtaran and then it was called Kermanshah again due to native people dissatisfactions. The application of word “Kermanshah” dates back to administrative correspondences. In many parts of Kermanshah province, Kermanshah is called “Kermashan”.

Organization of Kermanshah Tagh Bostan

Based on field surveys on Tagh Bostan, multi-user application for systemization of this area was determined. A questionnaire was also distributed among users and people. They were asked to express their view on the construction of cultural, trade, residential, recreational and service spaces and buildings. Based on the results from the presented questionnaire, almost 45% of respondents demanded constructing service centers, 87.5% demanded recreational centers, 70% demanded cultural centers and 15% demanded construction of trade centers around administrative and residential centers around Tagh Bostan. It must be noted that none of the respondents want the construction of administrative and residential centers around Tagh Bostan. Almost 27.5% demanded construction of cultural and recreational centers at once,

42.5% asked for service and recreational centers. 27.5% asked for cultural, recreational and service centers, and 7.5% asked for trade, service, recreational and cultural centers. Due to the incongruent and inappropriate view of the surrounding restaurants and to coordinate and systematize space in all parts, it is necessary to do repair and rectification. It must be noted that considering the climate of Kermanshah, these restaurant spaces are open to their customers outdoors or indoors, and systemization of these spaces must be the first priority.

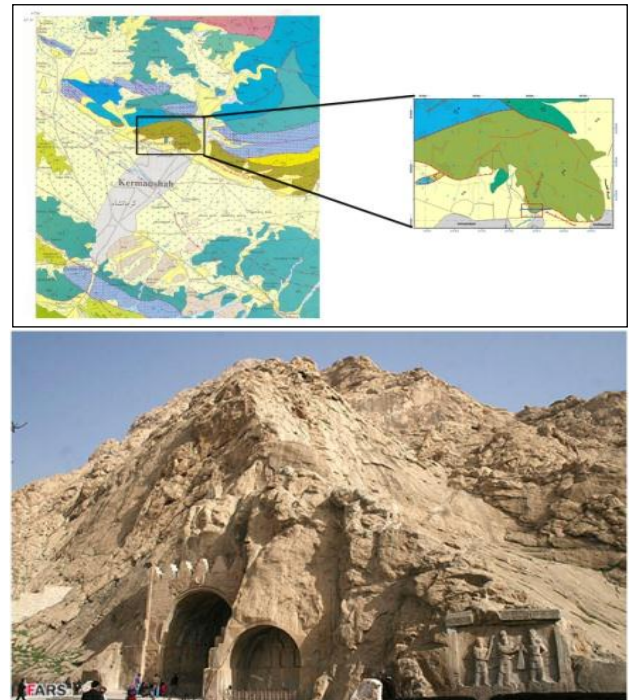


Figure 2. Tagh Bostan Kermanshah Area and View from the top of the small and large, (Fars news agency)

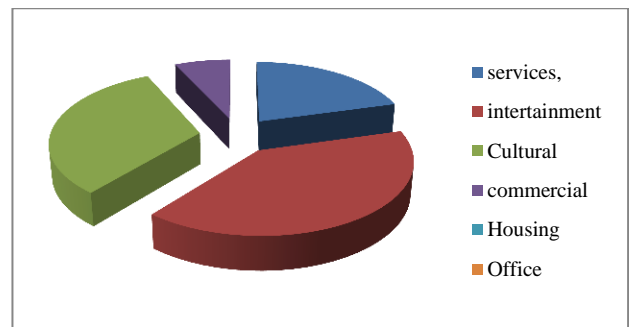


Diagram 1. The requirement for services, entertainment, Cultural and commercial (The authors)

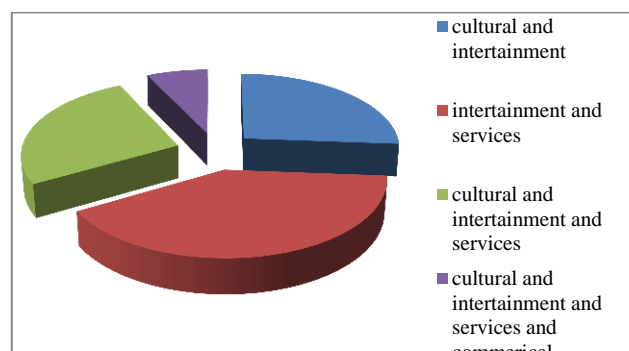


Diagram 2. The requirement for services, entertainment, Cultural and commercial in the same time (The authors)



Figure 3. Order restaurants scattered, (The authors)



Figure 4. The interior restaurants view, (The authors)



Figure 5. Tagh Bostan view, (The authors)

Suggestions

Tagh Bostan systematization plan: In the introduction, two overall approaches to revitalize Tagh Bostan are taken into account including:

- a) The physical rectification and treatment of decays to elicit vitality and vivacity in Tagh Bostan
- b) A comprehensive surveillance and analysis of the causes of Tagh Bostan's inability to achieve physical, cultural, social, political, management and economic unification regarding Tagh Bostan conceptual and spatial link and its physical space.

The beauty of the Tagh has gradually declined and its function has tended toward recreational applications. However, in the second view, the Tagh is a live phenomenon throughout the city and officials do not regard its revitalization separate from the revitalization of the city. Therefore, the key to the problems of the Tagh is its adoption to the needs of citizens. The dominant view on the systemization plan of Kermanshah is its civil reconstruction and Tagh Bostan is regarded as an area of repair and preservation in the old context which is under supervision of Iran Cultural Heritage Organization.

To sum up it could be said that

- Tagh Bostan is located at the northern part of the city and although the street leading to it is one of the main ways of Kermanshah city with a sufficient width, more congestion happen there usually at the final hours of a day.
- Constructing some restaurants and stalls with modern views are another reason of this traffic and they have distorted the ancient view of Tagh Bostan. Notably, despite such problems, many people who either are mostly native or come from close provinces spend their time there and use its recreational facilities and good weather. Further attention of the officials to the ancient places such as Kermanshah Bazar and Bistoon has led to the isolation of Tagh Bostan. Also, improper materials and sometimes incongruent to the place has moderately damaged there.





CONCLUSIONS

Civil design is the art of giving form to a city in a proper and suitable manner and one sign of this beauty could be seen in the image of a city. Unfortunately, due to the dissemination of a thinking incongruent with local cultural values and immediate and un-planned entrance of contemporary western urban planning and architectural trends and also inability of the works related to the history of urban planning and architecture to express content and values of local culture and identity, a chasm has been happened in civilization and cultural principles and traditions and this has influenced the form of cities, so that it could be said that the beauty of a city is an art which using artificial civil elements in link with environment's natural elements systematizes a civil space. Therefore, it could be said that civil design is a complex task which enables physical systematization of civil elements, in a way that results in functional, environmental and aesthetic enhancement of civil places.

In the present study, with emphasis on civil design strategies, different objectives based on identity are presented which some of them include discernibility, vivacity, environmental penetration, deepness and giving identity to space, visual continuity and integration, paying attention to the quality of collective spaces to enhance social interactions. Such examples in the form of different levels and scales were observed surrounding Tagh Bostan area and analyzed, and penetrability and discernibility could be seen at the level of beauty and identity formation in the symbolic and historical symbols of the city.

Therefore, form and image are among the factors which play significant roles in defining the suitability of civil spaces. And by emphasizing on such components, Iranian architecture and urban planning provide residents with a space full of comfort and exhilaration.

Table 1. Iranian-Islamic Pattern in the View of Tagh Bostan (source, analysis and edition: the author)

Row	Title	Descriptions	Figures of Case Study
1	Identity and Vivacity	Discernibility of Tagh Bostan and easily recognition and the establishment of a link between its elements and components with other events and places could be regarded as the identity of the Tagh There is a direct relationship between meaning and form of a space and its quality and space totally depends on culture. Tagh Bostan Premise is totally distinct from other places and streets.	
2	Discernibility of Street	Discernibility in civil spaces can have an understandable structure. To be missed in spaces is a negative experience for men specially foreigners. To avoid this, signs can act as significant elements to navigate and guide users	
3	Dynamic and Adaptation	Along with the continuance of men's life and vivacity of nature, civil spaces pass on their historical trend organically. The spaces are the intersection of interactions, social, economic, physical and environmental sciences. Changes in each of the above factors can gradually physical change and variation of a neighborhood. While such variation show themselves like a threat, the most important thing is the acceptance of changes and adaptability of policies and responsive plans.	
4	Variety	In Tagh Bostan, although each space compared to the surrounding spaces, has unique features and an almost intricate and varied view, there could be seen a totally continuous context between such spaces.	

5 Access

Accessibility ways to Tagh Bostan is not only for traffic but also it could be regarded as a space with varied performances. The accesses could be considered as a space for enjoying movement process. Regarding planning, design and the construction of paths' communication networks, the following criteria could be taken into account: each access, security, social space, environment, balance, economy, etc.



6 Familiarity

Due to the deep background of Iranian-Islamic patterns at Iranian cities, citizens always view these features as familiar and loving ones and this is the same Iranian-Islamic identity. This familiarity can lead to comfort and reduced anxiety. This issue is more important in the metropolises with huge amount of pollution and population, and citizen when seeing native material feel more comfort and solace. The obvious example of these familiar views is the application of traditional styles (and sometimes their combination with new styles) instead of some styles which are totally incongruent with natural and cultural atmosphere of cities.



7 Security

One key principle regarding urban planning and Iranian-Islamic architecture is paying attention to security and privacy of resident and citizens. Therefore, in case of imposing Iranian-Islamic principles and by paying attention to some indices such as dominance, privacies and the hierarchy of entrance to different areas of a space and considering natural surveillance on civil spaces, the security of space is increased for citizens.



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