Investigation of the Factors Affecting the Identity Crisis in Contemporary Designs and Architectural Styles of Iran

Niki Amiri[1]

Abstract

Architecture and urbanism in Iran during the contemporary period have been influenced by inside and outside social and economic developments. These changes are so fundamental that have caused many challenges and styles in architectural space of Iran, both in conceptual and physical space. Indeed, objectified areas caused by intellectual movements such as: West-oriented, economic-oriented can be known as the root of identity crisis for Iranian cities from the architecture and urbanism perspective. The most important weaknesses and problems in today Iranian architecture include: lack of attention to cultural infrastructures, capability of integrating all cultural spheres, paying too much attention to the economic aspects in the constructions, lack of commitment in some of the builders, weakness of the management system and monitoring in the field of architecture and urbanism, lack of explanation of Iranian traditional architecture patterns, consumable culture of Iranian society, lack of attention to the potential of traditional tissues to integrate with today's architecture and more. While this article is presenting and checking the list of factors affecting this process - identity crisis - attempts to seek its causes and ultimately preparing the ground for achieving overcoming solutions of this crisis.

Keywords: Architecture, Urbanism, Identity, Plan, Style, Contemporary, Iran.

---

[1] M.A., Department of Architecture, Islamic Azad University of Babol, Iran.

1. Introduction

Despite all the complexities of the concept of identity and different perceptions of experts, it is not secret in Iranian contemporary architecture, this term is suffered from the crisis and has become as an abstract concept. Fading sense of identity is not architecture-specific, as this weakness in the various fields of cultural, social and national is evident (Ebrahimi, 2009).

Iranian's reputation in the world architecture has reverberated in a way that the world architectural history knows itself to owe to that. From Zanbil Ziggurat building that was built about 1250 years before Christ was passing more than three thousand years. As has come in the books, as a great and glorious civilization, Iran has been pioneers of science, culture and art. Great scientists such as Abu Ali Sina, Abu Rayhan Biruni and others have lived on this land and result of have offered their sufferings to the whole world. Anonymous architects of Iran such as Ruhi has blown in the body of Iranian architecture and as if Pasargad and Naqsh-e Jahan is alive with the breath of them. As if they have put their eternal soul in architecture (Ebrahimi, 2009). But now where are we? How much we have been faithful to own history and identity?

Do we continue their ways and we have put their efforts into fruition or so we've fallen from the peaks of glory that we cannot look down on top of their history? Perhaps in midway uncertainty and wandering we surcease of moving up to find a way. Architecture name of Iranian contemporary has decorated leaves of what books to itself? How much we apply own traditional notions to the world up to in global era be anonymous? It is otherwise we give loan to own history? Indeed, what's the problem? Why we're leading in that area, now we are standing and watching the end of the caravan up to others show us the way? Does modern living mean to our forgetting, become devoid of the existence of identity and the following others? No one denies the impact of architecture and urbanism on the behavior of the citizens of a society. Our urban landscape and architecture have been empty from the concept of God, so that their effects are evident on the psyche of the community. Buildings with heterogeneous forms, colors and materials, together have located so inharmonious that makes people into thinking: "Maybe it is intentional" (Hight et al., 2011).

2. Problem statement

Throughout history, architecture has always played an important role in the social life of citizenship and human effort and tendency is always in a way that to impose its control over the environment in every environment which he lives to have the sense of peace and balance in this way, but not only there isn't this control in the scale of large cities, but also a kind of

gap and separation has been created between spaces, visualization and human mentality and thus the sense of dependency to space and place has been disappeared.

Hasty process, development out of the rules and principles of architecture and urbanism have changed the condition in most cities of the country in the way that these cities, especially newly built and new formed parishes of them, have significant problems in terms of physically and urban sociology (Naghizadeh, 2000). If we consider architecture and way of urban arrangement spaces as the one of the fundamental aspects of the society, we find that the role of urban and architectural designing is considered as the part of the cultural identity of the society. If this identity is derived from the original culture of society, it should be appeared in the city form. Confusion and clutter in the view of the city show the lack of a strong and firm link between architecture and culture (Naghizadeh, 2000).

Today's architecture of Iran has been suffered from a kind of confusion, cultural self-loss and ravages. Architecture and urbanism of the country have been suffered from the vicious circle of dissemination of alien cultures in the urban landscape and perspective, increasing heterogeneity of the architecture and urbanism rather than satiety from unconscious followings of the other nation's architecture. Experience result of many centuries and effort of ancestors have been forgotten in the architecture and urbanism field.

Many of the characteristics and features of Iranian architecture have become less or disappeared in today constructions. "Architectural identity" and "urban identity" are two issues related to each other, because if the anonymous architecture process be spread away from the Iranian culture and civilization, a way should be opened for dominance of a kind of disunited, inharmonic and imported architecture (Ghorbaniyan, 2004).

Iranian architecture and urbanism have a difficult way to regain its special status, because it is facing with a developing society which experiences industrialization, globalization and networking processes. The transition from traditional to modern city and modern city to networking is updating in the entire world and has favorable and unfavorable effects on the communities. Iran cities have also experienced the transition from traditional to modern society very fast and without creating the necessary scientific-engineering, cultural and artistic infrastructures. In such circumstances, the emergence of a network society is happening within Iran cities (Ghorbaniyan, 2004).

3. Research theoretical foundations

3.1. The identity concept

When the identity discussion is created, complex and sometimes contradictory views are proposed on a wide scale. Ericsson believes this concept into two parts. First become one with self and the other collectivity with others on some essential components. He knows the identity process as a control system which creates a set of norms and anomalies in the person.

Stuart Hall believes: "Identity is a changing process that is certificate and cause of recognition. Some know the identity as a communicational concept that becomes meaningful by the similarities and differences with others." Many Iranian intellectuals know the today's identity of Iran society with three layers of religious, national culture and finally modern culture and civilization which involve with each other in essence of each Iranian that suitable connection of these three layers proportional with time and place spirit can be useful in completing today's identity of Iranian society (Habibi, 2006).

3.2. Identity in architecture

Identity can be known as an expression of the cultural identity in the environment because places take the meaning from human and human is a set of beliefs and ideas which the culture forms he and appearance and epiphany of human culture can be seen in place and an environment which is his identity. Today the social environment of the city is less understandable.

Today city is not inspiration to artists anymore. The modern city does not provide adequate facilities for living. Streets and squares are not a place for gathering people anymore, but they are merely a tool for communication. Today, city and country don't forgive what are superior values for human means same social belonging and cultural products.

Perhaps space is not neutral anymore and ruptures its relationship with happiness and sorrow and space is not alive for us because it has not become a system from meaningful places. Goethe expresses this problem in this way: "The farm, forest and garden were only the space for me, until you my love changed them to the place."

Now what connection they have with architecture and urbanism? Place means where we belong to it human become meaningful only by presence of me and humans will be meaningful only by having the place and there is a connection ring which named identity. So human forgive the identity to place and also the place for human and our environments become meaningful to social environment only if rich features be given to us in determining

the identity and it is the same physical identity (native architecture) which gives the self-meaning to the place and connects human with place. Therefore, place and human become an integral component of each other (Castells, 2001).

3.3. Identity in Iran architecture

Although the construction industry in the country, in recent years has substantial development in various qualitative and quantitative aspects and shows the exquisite and yet individual displays of the domestic construction industry (such as Milad tower), but perhaps the current situation of Iranian architecture can be considered as the sense of the popular proverb "The Raven wants to learn Partridge walking to be forgotten itself walking." Since in many cases, current designing and building construction of the country cannot be considered as the function of eastern and western patterns with features of a modern and advanced building and also not be found an effect of Iranian culture and art.

The reason of this problem should be evaluated in different factors such as regulatory weaknesses, educational and cultural weaknesses, negligence of some designers and contractors, misplaced condoning of some group of employers, not-indigenous of materials and incompatibility of that with Iran condition, the lack of principled and correct use of new features and materials, mismatch of new designs with Iranian culture Iran and from different angles, such as economic conditions, cultural changes and changing public interests and like that.

But certainly incorrect understanding of creativity and innovation in designing of buildings can be considered as one of the main causes of these ravages and confusion because it seems that in spite of new knowledge and available valuable experiences, for many designers and engineers in this field, from the innovation and creativity concept, only offering a different design is important without to be considered to other scientific, customary and value criteria and standards (Habibi, 2006).

Stuart Hall believes: "Identity is a changing process that is a certificate and cause of recognition. Some know the identity as a communicational concept that becomes meaningful by the similarities and differences with others." Many Iranian intellectuals know the today's identity of Iran society with three layers of religious, national culture and finally modern culture and civilization which involve to each other in essence of each Iranian that is a suitable connection of these three layers proportional with time and place spirit can be useful in completing today's identify of Iranian society (Habibi, 2006).

4. Iranian contemporary architecture and non-compliance with the social culture

Since evaluating to Iran contemporary architecture for a query on a division, requires critical thinking in the concepts field and effective components on forming these concepts, a feature for classification or equivalent finding in Iran architecture compliance with the contemporary architecture of the world should be provided by recognition the hidden aspects of architecture traces, also in the clear criticism approach. At the same time, it should be noted that during this critical approach is the communication process between the architectural trace as the referent and designer architecture as evidence can create a kind of artistic inference and analysis and on this base that cannot be ignored the critical role in the evaluation procedure, such that individual views and ideas become effective in division of architecture traces (Mahdavinezhad, 2004).

On the other hand, different grammar in architectural criticism and particularly contemporary architecture, which is full of internal variables and external affected and contradictions of their interaction, requires that the way and kind of attitude to architectural trace be determined before entering to the realm of criticism or analysis and critical evaluating which this matter in contemporary architecture of Iran be challenged because of the style variety or thought donations or Iranian readings from contemporary process, such as modernism or postmodernism and deconstruction (Mahdavinezhad, 2004).

Moreover, it can be found that the effect of these trends in architecture does not occur fully in compliance with a particular historical period, by looking at the Iran's architecture contemporary history and its interaction with modernization and super modernization currents, so that modernization and super modernization cannot be considered finished quote by thought of some their exegetes.

With this view, evaluating of Iran's contemporary architecture reminds this point that Iran's architecture as well as other social conditions or cultural needs, does not fully comply on these currents; such that Iranian Modernism (if such a word can be imagined) be formed only procedural current and without cultural modernity infrastructure and in addition it should be noted that desire to news (modernity) be shaped as a foundation with social and cultural backgrounds in the West and then modernism can be experienced which finally leads to modernization (Parvizi, 2009).

On the other hand, Western postmodernism is known as the residue of and critical thought, while in Iran it cannot be observed even a clear definition from existing processes and its events in cultural and social condition. Perhaps to this reason that Iranian architects do a kind of reading from social and cultural trends of modern and post-modern that create traces in

their intellectual frame intentionally or unintentionally, which cannot be dependent only to one style or one intellectual and social current or try to assimilation and adaption of them according to the Iranian architecture rules and standards or renewal the Iranian identity in architecture that the example of that can be observed in the architecture traces of "Ardalan" and "Diba" (Parvizi, 2009).

5. Lack of place sense and remoteness from own culture

Urban physic, particularly urban views represent this connection and give exactness to coexistence traditions values. Weaknesses in identifying the own cultural, educational problems, alien culture propaganda, lack of coherent and efficient laws and regulations, weaknesses of urban management solutions in architectural topics are the topics that have role in crisis of cultural and architectural identity and contemporary architecture Urbanism of Iran. In the process of converting modernity contractual certainty to the real relativity of the world, culture and identity are questions creating of topics in the geographic extent of the world that were partly ignored in the one-dimensional modern world. Loss of place sense, non-belonging to the place has a deep connection with anonymous of the residence place and ignoring human culture in shaping the living space (Falamaki, 2000).

Weakness of native culture education infrastructure education, interference of other professionals of science fields in architecture and urbanism, weakness of urban management solutions, housing expensiveness and the requirement to providing large-scale housing for needy groups have created a city with a turbulent eclecticism culture which reduces the glimmer of native culture more and more every day (Falamaki, 2000).

Three approaches are raised in evaluating the relationship of human-make environment and culture. In the first approach, the city is considered as a place geographical phenomenon, such as the Alexandria city which has lasted for centuries because of honoring to the culture, and has become the center of delivering value to future generations. The second approach evaluates the mutual effect of environment and human culture in terms of the physical environment characteristics, human activities and cultural characteristics of the society by relying on environmental psychology (Castells, 2001).

According to mentioned items, city views are the symbol of the culture as the part of the city physic and also it is the reflection of urbanization culture also the language of urbanization culture and also regarding to urbanization principles also expressing residence customs and respect to urbanization rules. So the urban view concept and its relation to culture should be evaluated and show this issue that building façade is not a separate thing from the building

and regardless of the final coating for resistance to atmospheric conditions, expresses the building performance (compliance the form of building with its performance), manner, behavior and thinking of residents as social hinge, the intersection of public and private spaces (Castells, 2001).

Urban view is achieved from overlooking views to public space. These views are homogeneous and heterogeneous from different directions. They can be homogeneous since they are performed on the body of city components by common language, but they are heterogeneous since each of these spaces expresses their destinations and needs by the help of this language. There isn't any common language between views in our city. They don't have a common culture for expressing and also they don't use the same materials and they don't follow a specific style, too (Lehman, 2006).

In fact, each of facades in the city shows the builder economic and social status and way of his thinking and attitude to different subjects. Urban view, in fact, is a combination of different components which is formed based on events that occur in streets and passages. The appearance of the building and what is placed in front of the people sight, in fact, is the most important part of the building in front of the pedestrians and other non-user persons from the building. Building facades create an urban view, but the building façade is considered as the least importance due to weakness of responsible rules of the designer and builder in this relation (T. Hall, 2005).

6. The reason of lack of specific architecture model in the current situation

The main reason is using styles, methods and models derived from other cultures without thinking. It is natural that over the time some methods and models in architecture to be introduced in some countries, but when most of them enter into our society identically without deliberation and thought and overshadow construction and architecture and even our life pattern, leads to loss that identity which we should strive a lot to maintain it (Pakzad, 2006).

In other words, the reason that our today's society becomes a kind of non-identity in terms of architecture is neglect to the past and in some cases forgetting stable values. Inattention to Iranian architect and implementation of models and styles that have been imported from other countries has been effective in creating this non-identity. In fact, widespread developments and creating different variety styles in other countries and transferring them to the public without deliberation have caused to change in style, methods and models of Iranian architecture. In this condition too much gap has been created between today's architecture of

Iran with the past and thus that the identity and authenticity of our past architecture have been lost in this influx of architecture styles and doctrine (Pakzad, 2006).

7. Major weaknesses and problems of today's architecture of Iran

In today's days, there are many buildings that are in front of you when you are walking in the city, many long and short buildings that have been built mostly in recent years and have shaped the landscape of our city, the shape that become stranger and more intangible every moment; so that the city that once was filled with memories from east to west of it; become full of cement and brick and stone.

As if we are stranger more with our city every day! Today's buildings facades are often with bad taste, similar to each other and are clumsy or they have been built with strange designs as if they don't have any relevance to our morale and belief and culture (Akhtarkavan, 2007). So the major problems of today's architecture and construction in Iran today can be known as follows:

- Inattention to cultural infrastructure and foundation of basics proportional with place and time spirit, ability of integrating to all cultural fields

Architecture as the basis of human life event is one of the most influential arts to represent public culture and its structural models in each period and this matter causes to evaluable totality reflection and judgment of culture, thought and national unconscious in the architecture. This judgment occurs from the environment users and also other historical and cultural periods. On the other hand, society will become the ground maker for national self-belief and more prosperity when to experience the familiar space.

We should remember that national architecture shapes based on its cultural thought in the way that people achieve national self-belief in a familiar space. On the other hand, this architecture is the former of a culture that people can have a role in its cultural growth and development so inattention to cultural infrastructure and foundation of basics proportional with place and time spirit, undermines ability of integrating to all cultural fields and provides a background of cultural and economic stagnation in society (Salingaros, 2012).

- Too much attention to economic aspects in construction

The significant efficiency of investment in the housing construction field sometimes has become so seductive and attractive that most of people are encouraged to participate in this market and examine their luck with it. In such periods housing construction field usually observes investors and builders who have entered to this field without any least experience in

this relation and just with expectancy to earn profit from this field and they use any way to earn more profit (Ghorbaniyan, 2004).

- Lack of commitment in some builders (contractors, architects, engineers and employers)

Another important issue is this that poor quality of our buildings is not due to lack of expertise, but it is because of lack of commitment. The builder is aware of his mistake in more than 90% of building defects, but because he doesn't want to spend enough time and money, he encounters with many problems. Building construction has flourished so that in our country that many people have comprehensive information about this industry and they become architects of their own building in many cases. So there is enough information about true implementation, but the builder does not his job deliberately.

- Weakness of management and monitoring system in the architecture and urbanism field

One of the most important current objections to the regulatory process of engineering organizations the topic of engineering organization structure which seems it should to be re-examined structurally, definitely. Engineering Organization is the part of professional formations that should to have a governance, policy making and monitoring work on the performance of its physical and legal members; while now engineering organization enters by own to administrative works or reference of supervisor is done by the organization. On the other hand, at this time, this organization is involved with financial issues field unlike the philosophy of its existence.

- Non-explaining the traditional models of Iran as the codified culture-letter in order to using in architectural and urbanism design.
- Improper using or even non-using the native cultures and the evolution of it with the time spirit.
- Lack of shaping coherent non-governmental organizations to people's participation in order to decisions about their living environment.
- Consumer culture of Iranian society.
- Inattention to the potential of traditional tissues to connecting with modern architecture.
- Historicist approaches without proper attention to the modern architectural elements.
- Necessity of attention to the relationship between architect, trace and the audience as the three basic pillars that in addition to the forming of a suitable architecture, also leads to identity solidarity of them.

- Mismatch of the building with the climatic condition, geographic and clime status.

For example, glass facade may not be a desirable facade in some cities, but inattention to expressed concepts like self-sufficiency and avoiding the frivolity leads to indiscriminate, non-scientific and non-utilization use from these materials and other materials in the buildings which is followed by many damages. Naturally, when we're designing a building for a cold and mountainous region; this building is not suitable for the hot and dry region; each building should be built in accordance with its climate, while today this matter is not respected in many cases (Ghorbaniyan, 2004).

However, globalization process is also not ineffective on mentioned factors, as Stuart Hall believes, the identity logic has been ended and in fact the great aspects of social identity has encountered to failure such as social class, nationality, race, gender, etc. He believes that the past single-center person has become a multi-center person that this plurality has become originate of the weakening of the identity layers of the person (Habibi, 2006).

8. Conclusions

The main points of the identity concept are the effective factors on the formation of that which have been expressed as the regnant space on the person or society, rotation or continuity of processes and concurrent identity processes even different contemporaneous oriented.

One of the main reasons for lack of specific architectural model in the current situation is using styles, methods and models derived from other cultures without thinking. It is natural that over the time some methods and models in architecture to be introduced in some countries, but when most of them enter into our society identically without deliberation and thought and overshadow construction and architecture and even our life pattern, leads to loss that identity which we should strive a lot to maintain it.

Also the most major weakness and problems of today's architecture of Iran include: Inattention to cultural infrastructure and foundation of basics proportional to place and time spirit, ability of integrating to all cultural fields, too much attention to economic aspects in construction, lack of commitment in some builders (contractors, architects, engineers and employers), weakness of management and monitoring system in the architecture and urbanism field, not explaining the traditional models of Iran as the codified culture-letter in order to use in architectural and urbanism design, improper using or even non-using the native cultures and the evolution of it with the time spirit, lack of shaping a coherent non-governmental organizations to people's participate in order to decisions about their living

environment, consumer culture of Iran society, inattention to the potential of traditional tissues to connecting with modern architecture, historicist approaches without proper attention to the modern architecture elements, necessity of attention to the relationship between architect, trace and the audience as the three basic pillars that in addition to the forming of a suitable architecture, also leads to identity solidarity of them, mismatch of the building with the climatic condition, geographic and clime status, also globalization process is also not ineffective on mentioned factors; therefore, some solutions are suggested in following:

8.1. Suggestions and solutions

Unfortunately, a much homogeneous and intact tissue cannot be mentioned at present in many Iran's cities. Although the small old towns which they were less in the arena of invading and looting of development plans without study and they were far from the encroachment of greedy jerry-builders have been damaged less and they have more coherent tissue. For instance, Nain, Ardakan, and Aran may be able to be mentioned in central area of Iran.

The current buildings in Iran's cities, apart from the visual reluctant and being non-uniform with the physical face of Iranian architecture have serious influences in shaping wrong and false culture which has infiltrated in all pillars and paragons of life and social behavior of their residents and gradually will be spread as the destructive mores and norms in large-scale and uncontrollably.

Despite the constant concern of Iranian architecture in order to making connection with bygone architecture and Iranian original culture and providing its continuity, these efforts have been unsuccessful mainly which the reason of that regardless from weakness of urban management is the incoherence of cultural layers of most architects. The only way to exist from occurred crisis is finding solutions for what has depleted today's architecture of Iran from great content and concepts and has caused to an identity crisis.

Accordingly, favor to this matter has importance which should be tried for reformation of culture and identity in urban spaces and views with a strategic approach and long-term perspective and to be made this matter possible in public cooperation and collaboration way between cultural and urbanism institutions. This strategic perspective should be tried to provide a way with recognition the weaknesses and strengths perception which changes today's threats in architectural and urbanism valuable structures into opportunities, which provides a worthy relic from urban view and space for posterities.

Perhaps it can be said that architecture is not related to place, time and culture of society any more in the modern world and mostly it is the feedback of philosophical and intellectual

thought of specific and apart people from society. Architect artists in the past always noted this point that architecture and building construction should be complied with the identity and originality and rich traditions of Iran which includes all these aspects. But today's buildings are often follow panache without regard to the human and spiritual and moral needs of him.

To create harmony between architecture with Iranian traditions and rituals in the first place should be exactly and depth recognized the bygone architecture, and its features and values. Moreover, utilization from today's human knowledge, new materials, new technology, the latest scientific findings and today's experiences of human in different parts of the world are essential. It is essential to reconsidering to features and values of that architecture and look of the Iranian architect to human, life and society to restore that quality which there was in bygone architecture and its traces have been known as the honors of our land.

In the past, look of architect to human, life and society was in a way that housing truly and properly was living and comfort space for members of a family, and school truly was a place of teaching, learning, discussion and education, while today buildings are built as the residential and school space but they don't have required performance features consistent with human needs. We should recognize the architectural values and ways of accomplishing these values should be evaluated in today's condition.

We should recognize factors that caused to lose that identity to solve architectural problems, once again return to our own selves. We should propose, advertise and promote Iran's architecture and its values in society and try to realize that with today's materials, methods and findings of human to be a witness of prospering of that architecture which be introducer of Iran's people, land, culture and civilization.

References

Akhtarkavan, M. (2007). Crisis in architecture and contemporary thought. *Journal of architecture and construction*. The spring 86.

Castells, M. (2001). *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture (of identity).* Chavoshian translation. Tehran: The new plan publishing.

Ebrahimi, S. (2009). Architecture and challenges facing the transition to the network society. *Journal of Architecture*. Spring and summer of 88, 94 and 95.

Falamaki, M. (2000). Urban restoration, Perspectives and Concerns. *Hftshhr quarterly*. The first issue.

Ghorbaniyan, V. (2004). Principles and concepts in the contemporary architecture of the West. *Cultural Research Bureau in Tehran*.

Habibi, M. (2006). Description of architecture and urban intellectual trends in contemporary Iran. *Cultural Research Bureau in Tehran*.

Hall, E. T. (2005). *After hiding*. Translation Tabibian, Tehran: Tehran University Press.

Hight, C. & Chris, P. (2011). Collective Intelligence in Design. *AD magazine*, volume76, no5.

Lehman, J. (2006). *Deconstruction of Durkheim (cash Psapsa structural)*. Translation named fashioned. Tehran: Reed Publishing.

Mahdavinezhad, M. J. (2004). Islamic Architecture wisdom, spiritual Zhrfsakhthay search in Islamic architecture. *Fine arts*, 19, 58-59.

Naghizadeh, M. (2000). The relationship of identity, tradition and modernity Iranian architecture with modernism. *Fine Arts*, 7, 63-64.

Pakzad, J. (2006). *Face of the city, that you understand what Kevin Lynch, The settlements*. Tehran.

Parvizi, E. (2009). National architecture from the perspective of cultural identity. *National Studies*.

Salingaros Nikos A. (2012). *Design methods, emergence, and collective intelligence*. Department of Applied Mathematics. San Antonio: University of Texas.