

MODIFICATION OF TEHRAN CONTEMPORARY MUSEUMS AS A STRATEGY FOR HYBRIDIZATION OF METROPOLITAN CULTURAL URBAN FRAGMENT

M. Rajabi¹, A. Heidari Afshari²

1: ABC, Politecnico Di Milano
Piazza Leonardo Da Vinci, 32, 20133 Milan, Italy
e-mail: mehrnaz.rajabi@mail.polimi.it, web: <http://www.abc.polimi.it>

2: DASTU, Politecnico Di Milano
Piazza Leonardo Da Vinci, 32, 20133 Milan, Italy
e-mail: arian.heidari@polimi.it, web: <http://www.dastu.polimi.it>

Abstract

The main aim of this article is to investigate the role of in-between spaces in the process of modification of cultural centers in order to produce hybrid urban archipelagos in mega cities. As a case study Tehran was selected and from cultural centers it was desirable to choose Museums. Mainly because, both topics were very radically distorted after Islamic revolution of Iran in 1979, but not only for Tehran's extraordinary geopolitical situation but also for its unique political condition in Middle East.

Despite that Tehran's current museums mainly could be categorized inside a set of metropolitan urban fragments which have considerable potential to produce or generate social capitals, in their current conditions, they are mostly isolated not only physically from their context but also their relation with the social interactions in public spaces is corrupted. In this situation, which normally it is not possible to make a fundamental operation on the museums themselves, it is more effective to put an effort on the relationship between the museum in one side and the public context on the other side. The concept of in-between space is well suited for this conversation, not only for its historical background in both Iranian and Islamic cultures, but also because of its variety of scales- from urban voids to interior design, and conditions as a mediator and active generator of human sensible environment. Therefore, in this Article the critical focus is on the notion of in-between spaces and their capacity to reinforce the process of regeneration of museum urbanity in order to reach to active hybridization.

Keywords: Modification, Museums, In-between Spaces, Urban Fragments, Hybridization

INTRODUCTION:

Tehran Urbanization, Key Moments and Consequences:

while There is no doubt about the main impact of globalization on 60s and 70s in all over the world; first time shifting in the world's centre of gravity from west to east and the confidence of predicting the future of every human living environments, everyone have witnessed huge widespread local reactions, from united state feminism and civic right movements to the middle east oil crises and Iranian revolution. Meanwhile in Iran, the king; Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, had lunched a vast visioning of imported late modern architecture and urban projects labelled by White revolution-a set of social cultural reforms founded by increasing oil revenues. However, by the mid-70s based on oil crises, were not only literally failed but also was one of the practical foundation of civic resistance and therefore a revolution of 1979.

Tracing back in history it is possible to explore the original intentions of Tehran significant modernization proposals. In early stages of Pahlavi period, in order to replace the eclectic architecture and urbanism of Qajar period, two main architectural style were introduced for Tehran; a modern style based on neo-classicism of interwar Germany and more historical monumental interpretation of pre-Islamic architecture mostly for exterior of public buildings. During 1930 and 1941 the central governmental system of Iran was under radical change from very traditional system to modern one, to move from traditional local power system to central national one. Consequently, the radical new city centre not only was envisioned to be architecturally monumental but also functionally in accommodate modern sprit of the time- instead of most Qajar palaces, there had built Modern banks, Ministries and secular Judiciary.

As a result of these physical extensions specifically to the north of Tehran, based on the infrastructural necessity of the time and the monumental image of modern avenues, the central power convinced to plan a new north-south road system in 1940 in between rail way station on the south and new housing extensions of the north passing through monumental city centre. Later on, most of Tehran's post-war extensions took place along those roads which the contradiction between new monumental system and the grey fabrics of the city was mainly the original materials of postmodern debates. As a result Tehran new modern face had narrow alleys and traditional social cultural structure under its skin. The more capital became centralized, the more housing projects of city surrounding villages introduced by the need of new immigrants which was the origin of Tehran sprawl problem of later decades whether it was planned by government or illegally built.

Followed by white revolution of 1962 which was a fundamental reform of not only in the system of land ownership but also it was evolved in vast verity of social cultural and economic aspects which naturally resulted much more gentrification and generation gap. Thus by the 1965 the social and physical structure of Tehran was divided to three main substructures; the old core, the central and north which from south to north. Noted that all those extensions of Tehran in the 50s and 60s had happened thanks to increasing of oil revenues and U.S economic support, the government had enormous financial funds to realize a vision of 3 million habitat Tehran of foreseen 25 years; it was in the 1965 that the Gruen and Farmanfarmaian consortium had appointed to envision this strategy.

First Tehran comprehensive plan-TCP;

Based on studies of newly established institute of social studies, up to 16 million population was predicted for Tehran vision of first comprehensive plan. However, due to the limited water resources, finally it was decided to limit the city population to 5.5 million. This plan was envisioned as the linear growth of east-west in both sides. Adding the connection of east-west to the planned and constructed infrastructure of south to north, had to produce ten districts of each 5.5 million habitat by the vision of Tehran in 1991, each of them would have a commercial and an industrial centre as monument of modern consumption system imported from American life style and a cultural monumental centre as a core social capital. It is fundamental to note that, this vision had survived in all other post strategic plans even after Islamic revolution. All the master plans of 70s were based on this comprehensive plan and therefore focus of proposals were more into those districts, specifically one of the most monumental one named Abbasabad; a district of a new 500-hectare development with government, financial, and residential buildings in the north hills of Tehran where according to the specific topographic condition and its strategic location in the cross of main infrastructures, it was the most potential site for both governmental and housing monumental intervention as a manifestation of modern governance of Tehran.

Louis Kahn and Kenzo Tange Master Plan and LDI;

After the international congress of architects in Iran in 1970, with Kahn, Buckminster Fuller, George Candilis and Paul Rudolph involvements, in November 1973, Queen Farah Pahlavi appointed Tange and Kahn to design a master plan for Abbasabad, based on principals which had debated during the congress with the main highlights of tradition, spirituality and interaction between tradition and technology, evidencing a major shift in the approach of the Pahlavi regime toward Iran's history and architectural heritage as strategic tools of their monumental constructions.

Later adaptation of master plan with involvement of Llewelyn Davies International (LDI) and American planner Jaquelin Robertson, was even more monumental and culturally purposed with a fundamental role of urban centre called Shahestan Pahlavi; an ultimate representation of the system's mentality which had to overcome the contradiction between modernization and tradition of Iranian culture. As a result, at the centre of its complex there was a vast plaza to serve as "the civic heart of the nation" surrounded by the most monumental buildings of new era; Library, City Hall, museums (National, Handicraft, Textile and Modern Art), theatre Centre and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The birth of revolution and During the War;

Noted that in 1975 Tehran had reached a population of 4.5 million- districts cores like Shahestan Pahlavi with an strong emphasize on monumental cultural aspects of society were crucial in order to have a proper decentralization and localization process which had foreseen in TCP long before. It was for the same reason that in all urban centres it was placed a cultural centre with museum, civic centre theatre or cinema. However, in spite of this well conceptual strategy for those ten districts, and apart from the architectural language which was selected for representation of non-Islamic culture – it was envired by the system that the classical language of pre-Islamic architecture was more suited for kingdom representation, when both political and economic stability of regime happened to be shaken, most of those developments abandoned while their main cores fortunately or unfortunately had already been realized; the most of those cores where completely or partial built or existed in the time of revolution. By the revolution, following TCP was totally ignored, as the first priorities of the revolutionary

government was to solve the issue of housing for people with lower incomes. Thus, a huge allocation of land was made around Tehran, especially for refugees of the Iran-Iraq war.

Due to war priorities and limitations of financial resources of urban management there were no regulation for construction and therefore the transformation of fertile agricultural lands into urban land-use in the urban fringes resulted major irregular and low quality construction and rapid expansion of the slum areas outside the official boundaries of Tehran. New towns appeared and proposals of the municipality like a green belt in the south and south west of the city and a new motorway ring around the city, gave more space for new developments and easy movement across the city.

After the war;

First post-revolutionary Five-Year development plan started to optimize resources and to complete unfinished urban and sub-urban projects, with much attention to the religious infrastructure and transformation of existing cultural centres to religious functions. With the arrival of new post-war migrants the gap between older residents and newcomers naturally caused some social conflicts. Hence, the government made some changes in their spatial strategy planning. The first phase, was intended to deal with urban patterns of sub-urban areas as well as the distribution of population. While in the second phase, the spatial development, settlement scale and function, the geographic distribution and infrastructural networks were concerned mostly inside the official boundaries of Tehran; in 1986, Iran's Housing and urban designing Ministry made its first development plan which defined Tehran's boundaries, however it expanded in 1992 and then again in 2002.

Meanwhile from 1985, the government approved the new satellite town's development strategy outside Tehran boundaries. During the period of 1985-1995, five New Towns have been planned around Tehran which increased to eight by 1994, based on classical land use policy with a great emphasis on residential developments while the commercial areas and shopping centres were planned along the main roads and beside the town-centres. Copying the western urban models for the new towns without paying attention to historical background of Tehran and its urban tradition has made the new urban contexts more problematic than previous ones.

Tehran's new comprehensive Plan;

In 1991, the municipality of Tehran declared that the comprehensive plan of 1967 could no longer be used, while A-Tech- a group of Iranian town planners, framework for a transition period approved by 1993. The plan also focused on growth management and a linear spatial strategy, using the scales of urban region, sub-region, district, area and neighbourhood. It promoted conservation, decentralization, polycentric development, and increasing residential densities in the city. It proposed that the city be divided into 22 districts within five sub-regions. However, it was not adopted, and in 1996 municipality lunched a new Comprehensive Plan for Tehran of 2001. It was highlighted by not seeing the plan only as a land-use but also identifying some of the main problems of the city such as environmental pollution. Thus it versioned with major characteristics like a clean city, ease of movement in the city, the creation of parks and green spaces, the development of new cultural and sports facilities, reform of the municipal organization, and planning for the improvement of urban space.

Old structure still works;

Interestingly, apart from the main environmental aspect of this plan, most of its structure was based on the former TCP of 1967, emphasizing on the districts cores and their crucial roles in

not only urban regeneration but also defragmentation of metropolitan urban areas of Tehran, their roles in citizens participations and producing a sense of belongings, was physically referred to all those existing and or un developed master plans for cultural complexes of old TCP. It is remarkable to observe this extraordinary circumstance in which mostly these nodes were based on postmodern monumental Museums which had dramatic life and always their functionality was under question in relation to their dynamic context.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TEHRAN MUSEUMS' PROBLEMATIC:

The first Modern Museum of Iran;

The modernization of Iran brought architecture and archaeology into a symbiotic relationship for the first time. In 1927 the right of archaeological excavation which were granted to French in 1895, were repealed by the new king- Reza Shah Pahlavi. Thus, in the 1930s, for the first time, it was necessary to have proper place for the newly discovered archaeological finds of Persepolis and Susa. As Reza Shah Modernization concept was based on two principle of pre-Islamic and post-Islamic in contrast to tradition which he considered to be the result of Islamic period, he therefore employed architectural language to declare his demarcation between the "modern" and the "traditional" in his buildings and public monuments. Using the Two of Iran's first foreign architects, Andre` Godard e Maxime Siroux which were among prominent archaeologists of the time, the king appointed Godard to build Iran Bastan Museum, the first Iran Modern Museum. The construction finished in 1936 and its architectural monumentality was inspired by the palace of Taq Kisra at Ctesiphon, one of the few Sassanian ruins which is the largest extant brick arch in the world.

Reform of 1970s in Iran;

As the white revolution had happened in the 1960s, Iranian newly graduated Architects from Europe had more and more works to do and projects to build in the modern Tehran following TCP to lots of public and private projects which were financed by well economic revenues of the government and its relationship with the West especially United States. Here in the 1970 one could observe new reflections and approaches to museum in general and specifically to think of not only classical definition of Museum but rather to envision more contemporary image. As a result of the master plans for Tehran, most of those existing and foresaw nodes or district's cores were planned to have a cultural centre with monumental museum in a centre of its gravity and potentiality to bring new social life to the traditional structure of the city.

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Arts and Iran Museum of Carpet, were some of the projects which realized the 1970s, with more contemporary vision of both the museum functionality, its relation with the context and its role in the city. Locating the museum beside public functions especially parks, opening it to the garden in relation with the park and including lots of more exterior related functions inside the museum like bookshop and cafeteria, plus employing more contemporary language of architecture, more to the postmodern monumentality and using integrated materials-combination of modern technology and traditional materials, were some of fundamental changes of that period.

European Terza Eta`;

It is important to notice that those fundamental changes to Iranian approach in museum design mainly in Tehran, were more or less parallel to the birth of third generation of Museum in Europe; the so called "Terza Eta`".it happened in Europe after passing of two former main historical approaches to museum in general, the first one- it was considered as the birth of

museum design as a tradition of 19th century in Europe which was the background of modern mentality in the design approach to museum in which Italian culture had an strong impact on. The second period could be called inclusively Italian as they start the debate on “civic” museum.

This approach to the relationship between the museum and its internal collection with the society and the city was critically debated for a long period in Italy which led to the debates of Terza Eta`, the period in which after the second world war, European countries and specifically Italy were engaged in reconstruction of historical cities and urban composition was the main problematic of those days. The two main congresses which took place in Milan-Museopoli and Venice- Ricerca Porgetto Arsenale with Vittorio Gregotti in 1985, were mainly focused on these issues and terminologies like “Museo Diffuso”-diffused museum or “ Museo Della Citta`”- city museum, were introduced on those kind of congresses which mainly were attempts to re-establish the relationship among the fabrics of the city, monuments, reconstructed new buildings and cultural-social life of citizens of the city.

Correspondingly, the concept of Modification was introduced as well in this period and all those levels of modification from conservation and recovery to reconstruction and reanimation of the architecture, the existing and the new, the idea of “Tabloa Rasa”, typology and morphology and the new monumentality based on signage and Iconic readings of the context had been introduced during the 1980s by not only Italian but also important European countries’ and United States’ scholars. While with the beginning of 1990s a shift from the solid to the void and from the private and closed to public and open had appeared both in Europe with the problematic of public services and recovery of urban quality and in United States, by the more ecological approaches to the landscape and their problematic of sprawl and car oriented society.

Post Revolution Tehran Museums;

All those debates especially about urban qualities and monumentality of contemporary life which were continuously on the table of critics in the 1980s and 1990s, very rarely had reached Iran at the moment and even if they introduced to Iranians, the revolutionary government engaged with the Iraq war, under United States sanctions, with huge social and cultural radical changes especially in higher educational system, had no concern about them. In fact, one could argue that there were no dialogue between European debates on architecture in general and Museum design in specific with Iran in those years. Even when Iranians had faced the need to reform existing cultural centres and maybe to build new centres based on Islamic culture, they normally did it with no use of either aristocrats or technocrats and therefore, rarely those constructions had valuable architectural qualities, nor could they successfully establish any relationship with their context and the city. In fact as a result even the Islamic centres and thousands mosques which had been built after revolution had not engaged actively with the daily life of citizens.

As for the museum explicitly, the existing ones- related to historical collections remained still, they all were built even before 1960s and therefore they were in a traditional category of museum, mostly based on re-use of old governmental palaces with autonomous architecture free standing in a vast garden isolated from the city life. The modern ones were frozen in their pre-revolution states and they have not been the subjects of any critical modification. Even the newly built like Khavaran cultural complex, although it has some reflections upon its interaction with the public space and city life, based on its way of use and its functionality, it failed to be socially active and feasible.

PROBLEMATIC OPPORTUNITY OF PUBLIC SPACES:

Two European experiences of Museum as integrated public space;

At the moment of unsuccessful Iranian experiences in Museum design and its integration with the city, in Europe complex museum like Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris which even was built in the 1970s, were totally borrowed its success from its public functions and its front open space-piazza. Interesting enough it was not requested restrictedly on competition requires, but critical reflection of competitors had made it grow in this way. In fact with comparison to other proposals, the winners- Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, had used the in-between spaces of their project to produce active platform as public space which allowed the building to have maximum relation with the public social life. Another famous example would be I. M. Pei design for Louvre Museum extension which even though of very conservative atmosphere of Parisians to the monumental Louvre Palace, they were convinced by Pei design and the usage of underground had produced not only indisturbance to the classical taste of the existing building but also the transparent pyramid was the new centre of gravity to regenerate the social life of courtyard as a public space.

Western definition of public space;

In most of debates especially in Europe on the relationship between architecture in general and monuments in specific and the city from post-war period, the issue of public space was actively present. With the paradigm shift from modernism to the postmodern, in almost all of fundamental debates of architecture and urbanism, one could observe the ever changing role of public space. It is evident that most of social cultural interactions among all principal sectors of the city may happen in a platform of public space as classically these kind of spaces were recognized by the freedom of use and their shared notion in terms of time, age, race or gender of users. However, specifically, from mid 1980s and the beginning of 1990s, there were several fundamental changes in this realm, its way of use and identity.

from 1990 there are at least two considerable changes in the notion of public space; one was about the birth of big cooperation and their specialization of their services in public sector which led to alter the relationship between public space and open space in term of being open and accessible in any time of a day. The fundamental shift was about producing a public space which was not anymore open or public as it was owned and facilitated by private sector. The second change however, was more about human engagement with the physical public space; as far as internet and virtual platforms had been introduced to the public, the identical physicality of public spaces in the cities had been weakened and therefore their way of being used as shared spaces had shifted to more and more individualized experiences.

Meanwhile a public space in Iran;

All those changes had happened in Europe and U.S exactly when Iran had faced Islamic revolution and eight-year war with Iraq, not only separated Iran from continues dynamic debates of architecture and urbanism of Europe and U.S but also in terms of physical practices and critically reflections both in architecture and planning. Iran and especially Tehran was on hold while its population radically was growing, physically dramatic changes had happened based on rapid revolutionary land clamming and mass housing projects with low qualities. Moreover, islamification of all social and cultural activities in Iran had huge impact on the already weakened notion of public spaces. From altering in most of cultural centres related to Pahlavi to Islamic, superimposing huge amount of masques to the existing urban fabric of Tehran, the change in all public related activities of citizens and even the very principle relation

between genders in public activities to strong gentrification process, breaking of all social classes in the city and adding huge amount of immigration to the existing exploding population of Tehran, had formed contemporary mega city of Tehran with enormous social problems and conflicts, with absolute lack of infrastructural capacity both soft and hard in order to deal with.

CONCLUSION:

On hold Museums and rational use of available opportunities;

As most of pre-revolution museum, remains untouched but isolated in their classical relationship with the city, they are in critical locations in the city, mostly in the heart of main Tehran districts, with today huge population and social engagements, yet they are bounded behind their fences and walls. They are typically free standing detached buildings- with valuable qualities both in terms of architecture and historical, containing huge historical cultural and social values and collections, with vast green area completely un-used for a classical security concerns. Most of them never passed their transitional state to more contemporary state and get their healthy life back from the time of revolution. In this situation, which normally it is not possible to make a fundamental operation on those museums themselves because of not only political reasons and instability of municipality or ownership problems but also for lack of essential interests in either government or public sectors and a lack of theoretic and practical knowledge in this field, it is more effective to put the effort on the relationship between the museum in one side and the public context on the other side.

The concept of in-between space is well suited for this condition, not only for its historical background in both Iranian and Islamic cultures, but also because of its variety of scales and its flexibility- from urban voids to interior design, and as a mediator of human environmental sensibility. It is important to think of strategic soft interventions on the notion of public space to push it to more contemporary image and functionality- it is impossible to transform the contemporary condition of Tehran in a radical way nor it is rational to think of totally grassroots participation of citizens and local planning systems to address the problems with current political condition. In order to provide proper room for a natural urban regeneration of Tehran Metropolitan fragments, in-between spaces of those classical museums not only could recover the museums relationship with the public but also would produce new hybridity in those spaces which according to their important roles in structure of Tehran, their activation could produce new chain of social cultural interactions and therefore future capital, and hopefully healthy defragmentation of Tehran metropolitan urban discontinuities. It is more democratic then, to produce a platform based on in-between space modification for future hope and not only to modify the museums-objects of architectural monumentality, themselves or to produce new total master plan for mega city called Tehran.

REFERENCES:

- Airoldi, R., *museo e musei, architettura contemporanee*, Casabella, vol. 443, 1979.
- Albini, M., *Musei / Laurence Allégret*, Milano, Tecniche Nuove, 1992.
- Bairati, E., *Modi e forme del museo oggi*, Urbanistica, vol.81, pp. 13-18, 1985.
- Banani, A., *The modernization of Iran 1921-1941*, California, Stanford University of Press, 1961.
- Boeri, S., Ischia, U., *Città e museo*, Urbanistica, vol.81, pp. 10 – 11, 1985.
- Bonino, M., *Costruire nel costruito/Rafael Moneo*, Torino, Allemandi, 2007.
- Boriani, M., *Recupero e trasformazione del costruito*, Milano, Clup, 1981.
- Boriani, M., *Progettare per il costruito/dibattito teorico e progetti in Italia nella seconda metà del 20, Secolo*, milano, Città studi, 2008.
- Brandolini, S., Croset, P. A., *Strategie della modificazione 1*, Casabella, vol. 498, pp. 16-21, 1984.
- Canella, G., *alcune questioni dei musei*, Hinterland, vol.4, 1978.
- Canella, G., *Per un museo metropolitano*, Hinterland, vol.4, 1978.
- Der Grigorian, T., *Construction of history: Mohammad-Reza Shah revivalism, nationalism and monumental architecture of Tehran 1951-1979*, MIT, MA, 1998.
- Der Grigorian, T., *Cultivat(ing) Modernities: The society for national heritage, political propaganda and public architecture in twentieth-century Iran*, MIT, MA, 2005.
- Di Biase, C., *Riuso e riqualificazione edilizia negli anni'80*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1981.
- Dixon, J. M., *Cultural Hybrid: Tehran museum of contemporary art*, Progressive architecture, vol.59, pp. 68-71, 1978.
- Dixon, J. M., *News Report: Modern museum opens in Tehran*, Progressive architecture, vol.59, pp. 27-28, 1978.
- Emami, F., *Civic visions, National politics and International designs: Three proposals for a new urban center in Tehran (1966-1976)*, MIT, MA, 2011.
- Emiliani, A., *Museo alla sua terza età/Dal territorio al museo*, Bologna, Alfa, 1985.
- Gregotti, V., *Modificazione*, Casabella, vol.498-499, 1984.
- Kariman, H., *Tehran in the past and present*, Tehran, Melli University publication, 1976.
- Koolhaas, R., *Obrist H. U., Project Japan/Metabolism Talks*, Köln, Taschen, 2011.
- Davies, L., *Shahestan Pahlavi, A new city center for Tehran*, Tehran&London, 1976.
- Meier, R. L., *Tehran a New 'World City' Emerging*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1978.
- Peressut, L.B., *I luoghi del museo : tipo e forma fra tradizione e innovazione*, Roma, Editori riuniti, 1985.
- Peressut, L.B., *Musei: architetture 1990-2000*, Milano, F. Motta, 1999.
- Peressut, L.B., *Il museo moderno : architettura e museografia da Auguste Perret a Louis, I. Kahn*, Milano, Lybra Immagine, 2005.

Storchi, S., *Recupero, riqualificazione e riuso della città / presentazione di Bruno Gabrielli, Milano*, UNICOPLI, 2001.

Ungers, O. M., *Modificazione come tema*, Casabella, vol.498-499, 1984.

BIOGRAPHY:

Mehrnaz Rajabi, was born in Iran and graduated in Architecture in 2013 from Politecnico Di Milano, is involved in various professional practices from the time of graduation. She is currently a teaching assistant in ABC, Politecnico Di Milano. Her main research area is including Architecture, urban and landscape preservation, architecture and urban composition and modification of existing fabrics of the city.

Arian Heidari Afshari, was born in Iran and graduated in Architecture in 2012 from Politecnico Di Milano, is currently PhD candidate and teaching assistant in Architecture, Urban and Interior design at DASTU, Politecnico Di Milano. His main research interests include, modification and reuse of abandoned areas, infrastructures and wastelands of contemporary cities' edges and theory and critiques in architecture and urban design.