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IRANIAN STUDIES '17 / INTERNATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE ON IRAN AND IRANIAN STUDIES

WHEN TRADITION BUILDS MODERN PUBLIC SPHERE

NILOOFAR AMINI

Introduction

The insecurity factor and change-making social forces (state, rural, business) made people to ignore their desire for transition from economic power to political power.

Iran was a short-term society. It was a society that declares any sound and solid buildings as a "pickaxe building"- sakhteman-e kolangi- as soon as it had become thirty or even twenty years old, then it can be called "the pickaxe society" (jame'eh kolangi). How and according to what mechanisms did these societies change, how such changes may be related to one another and where have they been going and are likely to go. Lack of long-term continuity, by definition, resulted in significant change from one short period to the next, such that history became a series of connected short runs. In this sense, therefore, change was more frequent-usually also more drastic- and social mobility across various classes considerably higher than in traditional European societies.

"Lack of continuity" as a basic feature of Iranian society, being precisely a consequence of the absence of long-term social classes and institutions. Even in recent times, when modernity and constitutionalism made it look possible to have established and long-term ruling social classes- once between 1910 and 1930, a second time between 1941 and 1963- they were easily lost by the re-emergence of the arbitrary state, respectively, between 1930 and 1941, and 1963 and 1978. The theoretical upshot is that Iran had been an arbitrary state; the state had not been representative of the higher social classes; on the contrary, they had been its clients by virtue of the privileges it had bestowed upon them, and had withdrawn at will; property ownership had been a privilege not a right; and so on. Then, one of the most important and at the same time the most observable factors leading to Iran's underdevelopment was despotism or authoritarianism in this society.

Conscious division of population in a geographical area, and despotic rulers and conscious choice of force-orientation rather than orientation to citizenship all were for establishing security. Even at the beginning of twenty century, while the idea of western democracy was introduced into Iran, by many different means and through many different fronts, even modern Intellectuals, including Mirza Malkam Khan, who played a major role by forming organizations advocating the idea and disseminating it among the population, distinguished the ideal system of government, between two models: an Absolute Kingship and a Moderate Kingship. According to him, the first model looks like the Russian and Ottoman systems and the second model resembles the British and the French systems. He decided that Iran was not ready for such a model and therefore: 'A system of moderate monarchy is not appropriated for Iran. What we need to acquire is an absolute system of monarchy.' Although in Malkom's idea of monarchy there was a division between the legislature and the juridical through the house of Reform in charge of enacting laws and the House of Ministers implementing them, there was no attempt to limit the power of the king over his subjects, In such a system the members in both houses were appointed by the Shah.

Therefore, Iranian historical thoughts based on this conscious choice of despotism, to ensure the security against the tyranny of foreign tribes, had given Iranian individuals a dual identity. It is noteworthy that the dichotomous universe of the Iranian reality was manifested in the form of participation and non-participation. Iranians were very participatory in their families, tribes, and religious activities, however they had a very low level of participation in military, civil, official and public activities, since the public and government spheres were secure spheres but at the same time full of animosity.

In this regard, the theory of "Strategy and Land Policy of Iran's Society" which searches after its theoretical bases out of Iran's history was formulated, tries to explain the history of Iran's society. Based on the knowledge of the Iranian cities' backgrounds, Parviz Piran, on his study, emphasized on the importance of making a distinction between civic scale and single structure scale and their relationships with citizenship and the public sphere. In this regard, Iranian cities indicated two different scale. First unique and glorious monuments which was related to the civil sphere which follows an extrovert pattern against single residential scale, which had an introvert morphology. Omitting such monuments from the Iranian urbanity causes the remarkably homogeneous urban context.

Then, free participation in public space which is one of the requirements of the community did not exist in Iranian urbanity. Therefore, his life was restricted to his home and not to the civil life. His identity was

manifested in family clan and tribe. He was regarded as a believer and a member of the community with no sense of self identity.

While public space didn't speak in the context of old Iran, as an agora or forum, for the first time during Pahlavi era western idea of public space/sphere imposed itself on the Tehran urbanity. However, Piran's idea of "distrusting the street" gradually forced to the privatization of such Western idea of public spaces, while it was used by some post-revolutionary architects, after 1979, as an antidote.

The concept of western public space/sphere was inaugurated during the sixties and the seventies in Iran not by politicians but apolitical architects such as Kamran Diba. Diba who trained at Harvard in both architecture and sociology, with the Queen Farah Pahlavi's patronage, was able to realize a few remarkable (cultural) projects.

Diba, in fact, was very aware of what was at stake at that time. 'Mohammad Reza Shah focused on economical development to give the modern outlook to Iran.' Diba cited; 'He never realized that cultural phenomena also were an effective political engine for transforming the society, and left those marginal issues to his wife, Empress Farah.'

Then, in some exemplary projects, cultural public parks, realized at the end of the sixties and early seventies, Diba tried to introduce genuinely space, into his designs, and advocate a modern pattern of social interaction, linking the private and public sphere, and integrating the public sphere and the individual daily life. Here, it is significant to mentioned that Diba's idea of public space, in Iran, precisely inspired by the idea of Italian piazzas. "Before I rediscovered my own native culture", Diba cited, "I became fascinated with Italian towns, especially their piazzas where a multiplicity of styles, attitudes and expression are grouped into an interconnected, unified urban and architectural complex. I saw in the Italian piazzas all the social fascination of my boyhood.

It is clear that the old and the new public parks in Tehran were political instruments and always were socially coded semi-public spaces, with thresholds. It is however, also true that even so, in a culture with the tradition of the 'secret garden', the walled and protected, introvert and private Persian garden situated in the outskirts of cities', the introduction of those few 'cultural' public gardens in the city by the Shah was a new development. Diba's cultural projects, converting public parks functioning merely as a surveillance instrument in hand of the authorities into more open public spaces/places where people were confronted with public art, and were discretely invited to meet and communicate, was revolutionary.

After Islamic Revolution in 1979, in different aspects of dailylife, new codes of appearances and behavior have changed Tehran to a "metropolitan andaruni," literary means "introverted metropolitan." With the beginning of the war between Iran and Iraq, and then from 1980 to 1988 (the time of war), most socio-cultural spaces lost their primary functions or were closed and many leisure and cultural activities slipped into the closed spaces of the home. After wartime, 1990s was return to public life. one of the first challenges of mayors of Tehran were to bring people back to the surface and to a public life. In Tehran, the management of the municipality implemented an active socio-cultural and physical policy to transform Tehran from a neglected and segregated city to a more equipped and more homogenized capital, with an important investment in the construction of urban infrastructure, new highways, and new public spaces all over in Tehran, from north to south. The famous municipal slogan "our City, our House" —expressed the will of the reconstruction of the identity of the city by involving the inhabitants of the capital as new citizens.

Post–revolutionary architects, such as Reza Daneshmir, in contrast to what Parviz Piran supposed about Iranian public space, believes that, " There is a possibility of applying the European notion of public space in the city of the contemporary Iranian situation. But first we have to x-ray our cities and the map the very significant structure that hides beneath them, then work on them and reactivate them in new ways for new kind of public spaces. what you learn from the books is that in the typical Iranian cities, the structure of urban spaces was a bazaar that accompanied with a public square (maidan), the mosque and a palace. The bazaar was the spine and city was formed around it. But we think, maybe it's not the whole story." "In fact, we (Reza Daneshmir and Catherine Spiridonoff) think the residential house's courtyard, as the void, is the most significant concept of the Iranian architecture for thousand years, because it's like the main anchor and every other spaces and programs are arranged around it. It's an organizer but at the same time brings light, life, green space and most importantly a kind of public space in the private situation. In traditional architecture it happened in plans, but we like to use it in sections."

The concept of void or emptiness back to 'the urbs or the polis where starts by being an empty space, the forum the agora and all the rest are just means of fixing the empty space, of limiting its outlines. The polis is not primarily a collection of habitable dwellings, but a meeting place for citizens, a space set apart for public functions'. Its function is to provide opportunities-in an impartial way-for spontaneous manifestations of social life. As Kuma uses this term 'emptiness' to describe a quality of the public space that impinges sharply on the idea of the public sphere: leaving scope for interpretation: 'the architecture does not overemphasize itself; the empty space exists...in empty space people become very sensitive to their surroundings.' The emptiness,

however, is the socio-architectural phenomena which lacks in the ancient Iranian urbanity, and most probably is one of the reasons why Parviz Piran, rejected the idea of public space by studying the urban morphology. Daneshmir in his interview defines that idea of emptiness as a play of voids, among solid masses. He believes that activating open spaces can unify the separate units of each building with the infinite space of the city. However, the idea of the void is a firmly entrenched idea in Iranian architecture. He tries to employ central courtyards within the houses, mosques, and other buildings in new ways in his projects. Based on his interview, Daneshmir mentioned that volumes in contemporary architecture are the only parts of the building that have been considered in the design process, whereas courtyards have been taken into account as isolated, undefined, and leftover spaces. That is why he attempts to combine the building units with urban spaces in his projects. Central open spaces have been employed for this purpose in most of his architectural works. Although central courtyards in traditional architecture settle horizontally among massive masonry clay structures for the sake of privacy, introversion and as a solution for harsh climatic conditions, in Daneshmir projects, this idea emerged as a vertical movement to connect both sides of the site together. These buildings are not settled arrogantly to boast themselves as greater than others but are situated humbly among their surroundings. Then, the idea of central emptiness, which gives an introverted characteristic to traditional buildings for the sake of privacy, has been combined with the extroverted idea of modernism in contemporary Iranian architecture. Therefore, central emptiness has been employed by modern architects through various reinterpretations in order to integrate building units with their surroundings while maintaining Iranian architecture's symbolic mission of looking inward.

Cinematic Mall

Tehran in the mid years of the 1990s and 2000s, for various reasons, was not in accordance with the population growth in the city. There was no public space except malls, on the other words there was not enough non-economical public space in the city. For this reason, the need to develop cultural public spaces was strongly sensed. After those years, for the first time in Iran, Cineplex for purchase of (cultural) products with include several screen halls and galleries were added to the city of Tehran. Having facilities such as galleries, exhibitions beside shops meet needs of the city for modern cinemas and at the same time provide an appropriate atmosphere for leisure time of citizens. As Tony Bennett argues that "the publicness of these institutions [libraries, art galleries, museums, concert halls and performing arts complexes] their reliance on public funding and administration, their openness to everyone places them, at least in theory, in the realm of unrestricted culture."

Before 2008 and construction of Mellat Park Cineplex, by Daneshmir and Spiridonoff , this title was unknown to many residents of Tehran as well as other Iranians. The reason why, the advent of Cineplex/complex concept in Tehran's urbanity was crucial, was that the ambivalences of public space came together in an ambivalent view of the urban citizen as located between virtue and pleasure,

Mellat Park Cineplex was (Fluid Motion Architects) FMA's largest constructed project so far and represented their focus on formal and spatial innovation, while being deeply connected to the surrounding urban context. The project won the Memar Award in 2008. It was designed and constructed on the far southwest side of Mellat Park and along Niyayesh Highway, and its spatial organization corresponds to the structure and program, accommodating four cinema halls on an elongated site while allowing for interaction with the exquisite surrounding environment. Connecting the sloped faces of the two main cinema halls created a covered plaza (eyvan) that serves as a social interaction zone. In his 'Review of Contemporary Iranian and World Architecture', Iraj Etessam stated that the Cineplex is the only valuable project in this area in 40 years and has completely changed the atmosphere and his feeling towards the park. Creating a dialogue with the city through the generation of urban open spaces (Eyvan), is the main achievement of this project for the city, and would be a place to talk, to exchange ideas, to celebrate an occasion and a variety of other cultural and social events. the main attribute of Eyvan, however, doesn't restrict to instituting public space but also ending in one of the central figure of modernity, recognized in Charles Baudelaire's nineteenth- century flaneur, walking the street, experiencing the modern life. the flaneur existed in a time and space experienced differently. This relationship indicates a belief that aesthetics is key to the experience of modernity. The essence of users' movement doesn't limited in the exterior of edifies but continue inside the project by designed free-ticket art museum in the basement of the Cineplex, as a way to converted flaneur into the public as well.

In each of these contexts, the term "public" is used in different ways, with a general intention of being symbolic of, and relevant to, democratic societies. In regard to Habermas, a certain decorum and protocol were required for the people to participate in public discourse; indeed, it was considered necessary in public spaces, such as café or town squares. Here, also, the representations of how the new public museums were imagined that this was also the case. The significance of cultural disciplines is not sufficiently apparent to Habermas.

Though he claims that interdisciplinarity is necessary for considering the public sphere and discourses on democracy. When museum practice is, also, dispersed rather than centralized, and has multiple voices rather than being singularly authoritative.

Remarkable achievement of this art gallery is the maintenance of the continuity of user's movement from exterior of edifice into the interior, and vice versa. While the other public places enable a new coupling of the illusion of free encounter in fluid urban space with the higher levels of control of the segmented interior. This "enclosure" of the "urban" that one finds in the typical cinematic mall generates a curious new category of space, as Hillier and Hansen argue that exterior and interior spaces have a fundamental difference, in that interior are far more deterministic of behavior and encounter, with greater capacities for control and social reproduction. By contrast the free flow of life in exterior urban space renders social encounter more probabilistic than deterministic. However, this art gallery, in Mellat Cineplex, acts as an antidote to this segregation. Then the Cineplex might not be economic space, but rather for youth to socialize and mix in grouping, when this distinction between the inside and the outside is abolished, and the former streets become so many aisles inside it.

The Mellat Park Cineplex stands in a green area as a neutral feature, which not only allows the natural environment to pass through its transparent façade but also lets the city cross it without any interference. This is not a building that forces the observer to enter but holds its dress up to enable people to pass through it as a gateway. Compressed in the middle, this simple cube is transformed into a feature in harmony with the surrounding natural environments while being an integrative entity between city, people and the park. Employing the idea of central emptiness in the building's vertical form helps the architect integrate the building with its context. Reza Daneshmir used the idea of emptiness to create a play between solid and voids and activate open spaces. This not only decreased the heaviness of the building but also generate a dialogue between the building and the city. Vertical open spaces in his projects connect and integrate the building with its surroundings. Instead of using a heavy settlement of building on the ground to prove their massive existence, the buildings were built upward to let the city pass through. Although central courtyards in traditional architecture provided privacy through their introverted characteristics, Reza Daneshmir tried to reinterpret the idea of emptiness in his projects by integrating the building with the city and activating open spaces which are now often forgotten in the Iranian's modern period.

However, after Mellat Park Cineplex, gradually, the rest of the cultural Cineplex converted, to the consumer activity systems, this aggressively themed, value-added component of Fantasy City manifests itself in particular in the pace and degree of mutual convergence and overlap of four consumer activity systems: shopping, dining, entertainment, education and culture. This has given rise to three new hybrids which in the lexicon of the retail industry are known as shopertainment, eatertainment and edutainment. This transformation of the Tehran's iconic cultural Cineplex into the fantasy world of Cinematic Mall, is a key component of the mix intended to turn cities that were once centers of productive labor into site devoted to the culture-ideology of consumerism. Then, these public space in the service of consumption transforms into controlled space. "The city is becoming the framework of private retail and public space is an integral part of this privatization."

As, both the mall and the movies are dream factories, then the cinematic mall becomes a heterotopian projection of a heterotopia, while, the heterotopia is, also, a place of "public otherness" on the inside of this privatized "public space." These cinematic malls are a heterotopian convergence of museums with their "indefinitely accumulating time" and festival sites, fairgrounds that are far more transitory. The malls are, indeed, "compressed, packaged environments that seem to both abolish time and culture, that appear somehow to be both temporary and permanent." The malls combine present and future, artifice and nature; they are hyperreal. " A kind of instinct" is a reconnaissance of the cinematic shopping mall as a landscape of the imagination and as a heterotopian locale. It also comments on the debate over public space between those who see a "loss of public space" that is, spaces of modern society becoming privatized in a postmodern world: malls, freeways- and those who see new forms of public space located in private places such as shopping malls. The mall is a heterotopia- an architectural fiction but a real place. The mall is, since its beginnings and by design, also a utopia, a "placeless place," a "fundamentally unreal space," literally nowhere, outside time and place while within them. The cinematic mall brings this utopian/dystopian character to the fore.

In this cinematic malls, the movie theatres do not feel like public places because they do not facilitate interaction between people. They aggregate individuals but they do so in a way that positions them as spectators rather than participants. In society of the spectacle, Guy Debord explains: " The spectacle divides the world into two parts, one of which is held up as a self-representation to the world, and is superior to the world. The spectacle is simply the common language that bridges this division. Spectators are linked only by a one-way relationship to the very center the maintains their isolation from one another. The spectacle thus unites what is separate, but it unites it only in its separateness." According to Debord, the togetherness

fostered through the spectacle is the opposite of the commonality constituted through dialogue because the latter allows for interaction, response, and change.

Then, one of the characteristics of this visual media is perhaps their extended postponement of the moment of response. While some spectators had come to watch films, others had come to be the publics of the cinematic mall. The two activities turned out to be much less complementary than expected. Those who became engrossed with films tended to forget they were a public. Others kept ready to jump, wary of any intense (distracting) involvement with the movies. In this regard, this volume primarily considers the public/audience rather than the public/private binary, although the latter is implicit in the former. As the result then the argument goes to the media which undermine the public sphere, transform politics into political marketing, bias the news agenda according to commercial imperatives and distract citizens from civic engagement.

However, the spectacle is not a neutral form in which capitalism incidentally happened; it is a form of capital itself, and one of the most effective. Haussmannization was an attempt to put an image "in place of a city which had lost its old means of representation." What had been lost was the idea of the city as a form of sociality. Once the city is imaged by capital solely as spectacle, it can then only be consumed passively, rather than actively created by the populace at large through participation. Therefore, when a privatizing ideology and consumerist culture have turned citizens into consumers, we need to go to where the consumers are and try to turn them back into citizens. If they go to the cinematic mall is search of public space and are seduced into privatized shopping behavior, we need to confront and transform the mall, as, what was happened not only in Mellat Park Cineplex but also six years later in Charsou Cineplex which is located in the Center of capital, Tehran.

By applying the multifunctional empty space inside the building, where many cultural events can be hold there, Charsou Cineplex introduce the new concept of modern retail space where, is not only known as shopertainment, eatertainment and edutainment but includes the cultural (non-economical) public space. It's true that before Charsou Cineplex, new shopping malls in Tehran undermine the public sphere and transform politics into political marketing to convert civic citizens into the consumers, but designing the indoor emptiness, in Charsou Cineplex, as a place for cultural events makes room for being also cultural citizens.

Charsou Bazaar (or Cineplex) opened in year 2014. This well designed media mall, by Mohammad Majidi, has an area of 5700 square meters and 7 floors. With its modern architecture, Charsou is located in the heart of downtown (Central) Tehran and among many historical landmarks and cultural areas. Charsou cine-complex is located on Charsou Bazaar's 7th floor and has 5 professional movie theatres. The idea of Charsou Bazaar is formed based on the latent capacity of this part of Tehran and its resurgence through the creation of a commercial center with an integrated approach of business, culture and recreation. Being located at the intersection of Jomhouri and Hafez Streets as a component index of the city and in the middle of the exchange of goods such as mobile phones and computers, and by emphasizing on the performance of different units inside the complex. Such as restaurants, movie theatre, sale of cultural products, coffee shops and children's playing area on the other hand, all indicate the importance of the location of this Cineplex in this specific part of Tehran. What significant for this study is that the complex also has an empty space acts as a "cultural lobby" of 3.000 sq meters where can be devoted to different cultural performances such as painting galleries, photography, short films and play reading. This Habermaisian public sphere/space testifies how number of Iranian architects look for the traditional idea of emptiness in Iranian architecture as the modern interpretation of Iranian privatized public space. Although, this cultural public space is privatized and hide from street's men, by rotating on the façade of the building, architect tries to illustrate that something different might be happened there.

Conclusion

In modern western philosophy the void and emptiness has often been seen as negative in more than one sense of the word. It has been viewed as a fearful nihilistic "other" space. However, the concept of nothing and zero is ancient in the east and has a place as much as any other physical element. The void rather than being nothing is something-where its otherness is rich with imagination and possibility. A space that can be intimate or sublime, it is the formless field that allows things to dwell or move, as well as the space in between or the hollow contained within. The void suggests both absence and presence and is a process involving negation-towards nothing, zero, entropy, erasure, tabula rasa. A drive towards nothing has always been explored in both art and architecture for its powerful symbolism and subjective experience. It is a desire for a return to essential qualities and a primary state. The void has a use value beyond the emblematic or minimal. It is a powerful and essential process of creation and sensation. So our focus is on making and the interplay between something and nothing, dynamic and static. Then architecture could be said to be an art of managing invisibility. Politics, it could also be said, is about manifesting the invisible of potential social order, often in the midst of ideological

conditions that prohibits it- and often this prohibition comes in the form of buildings and landscapes. What is literally invisible but nonetheless present and influential. We can imagine and experience a reality even if it can't be shown literally, and much of what we can experience ultimately depends on events and processes that have taken place outside the sense-immediacy of the literal present. Thus, it is important for architecture theory to pay its closest attention to cases where reperesentation breaks down, for it is precisely at such points that invisibility- void- becomes critical.

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Mirza Malkam Khan (1833-1908), also spelled as *Malkom Khan*, was a prominent Iranian modernist, preoccupied with the transformation of Iran into a modern state. The most remarkable aspect of his work was his promotion of 'law', to bring about an orderly society in which royal power was subjected or 'conditioned' (*mashrut*) to checks and regulations. He developed these ideas in a number of works, but most importantly in his newspaper *Qanun* (Law), which had a wide readership among Iran's modernists. As such, he can be considered one of the fathers of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mirza_Malkam_Khan .

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Parviz Piran, a sociologist and community development specialist presently is a faculty member of Social Research Department, Allameh Tabatabai University Tehran, Iran. He is also an official scientific board member of the Swiss Academy for Development & a member of Global Network of Government Innovations Network, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

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