A Critique of Modern Shohada Square Based on the Principels of Islamic Iranian Urbanism

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ABSTRACT: Squares as urban spaces are the arena for people formed by physical proportions and variety of functions such as religious, commercial, cultural, etc. Shohada square as a focal point in Mashhad , is one of the main arteries of access to Holly shrine of Imam Reza and makes access to utilities and major axes . According to the former urban pattern and its position in the traditional context of surrounding neighborhoods, access to the Holy shrine plays the memorial and historical role, that presents a very important position of the square. This paper clearly states that Esfahan school characteristics such as unity, diversity and balance, are an appropriate pattern for design and evaluation of urban spaces that can be used for reconstruction of old squares on historical context. The results showed that this pattern does not comply fully with Shohada square and modern architecture is visible in it. Also, serious damage has struck to the identity of the Shohada square by physical transformation with absolutely modern pattern after neglect of strong position of relation between Razavi shrine and Shohada square and religious traditional context and history. Egregious physical duality of new and old context shows lack of attention due to religious and national culture and context oriented environment.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important elements of city design is the square or plaza. It is possibly the most important way of designing a good setting for public and commercial buildings in cities (Montgomery, 1998, 97). It gives the citizens the sense of presence in space while not being indefinite. They have some spatial determination (Pakzad, 2012)The design of the Iranian cities ,especially the old and central section must be based on identification of design principles of old textures ,their physical characteristics and Iranian urban space features on traditions. Urban spaces, beside their tangible social, cultural and economical usages, would be useless without the active presence of people (Yazdanfar, 2013, 51).

Today, the incompatibility of urban spaces with national and Islamic values along with ignorance of historical texture and valuable buildings have resulted in culture and identity destruction. The effects of modernity on urbanization and

ignoring the local, national principles and grounding in urbanization are the problems to be paid attention to.

Regarding the previous urbanization pattern of this square and its position in traditional textures around, connection with the shrine, its historical and memorial role is of great importance. The study of changes imposed on the texture during the reconstruction helps to reintroduce the native urbanization principles maintaining the originality of urban spaces.

The studies about urban squares are paid attention to from different views. Ebrahimi studies the formation, performance and development of Iranian squares in terms of interruption in fabric and function. (Ebrahimi, 2009)

Reviewed the modern urbanization role in traffic violation in Tabriz old texture showing that pedestrians` violations depend on physical texture interruption ,urban activity density from central position and spatial limitation (Mohammadzadeh et al., 2005). Lotfi studied urban quality and sustainability based on modern urbanization (Lotfi, 2004). Studying Isfahan school in

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urbanization, Habibi points out to the principles of hierarchy, plurality, unity and opposition (Habibi, 1999, 48). Naghizadeh (2006) reviews the trend of square concept in Iranian culture. Sayeedi Rezvani and Nourian compared the concept of justice in urban plans such as Shohada square in Mashhad and mentions the unilateral rules of land ownership and lack of precise mechanism for owners` participation (Sayeedi Rezvani & Nourian, 2009). Abbaszadegan (2004) studied the features of modern spaces, modernization movement of urban spaces and Shahriyari (2001) concludes that architects can use modernity patterns but the ground of plan must be cultural and social norms of the society. The physical study of Shohada square has not been studied thematically.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This paper aims to answer the following question based on descriptive-analytic method taking data from library and field observation: How is Shohada square evaluated based on Isfahan school principles of urbanization? Is there any attention to historical background and square position in reconstruction of the square? How is its architecture assessed regarding the cultural and religious dimension?

Research Theoretical Foundation

Isfahan school seeks to provide balance and harmony in urbanization in spatial and physical dimension. All elements are used to create an artistic work based on rhythm, repetition, interruption, continuity, sameness, return to rhythm, and opposition along with ups and downs represented in most skillful spatial composition and physical expression. In Isfahan school, the human space is considered and elbow room view is avoided. Space discovery is the principle represented in micro to macro dimension while fluidity and continuity are two other concepts which made Isfahan school as the unique school of urbanization before the contemporary era (Mahdavi, 2010, 81). Other principles of urban planning are hierarchy, plurality, concentration, lack of concentration,aggregation,opposition,connection,balance,proportion,continuity,territory,simplicity,complexity, composition, establishment, time and brevity.

In development of modern cities, buildings are not considered to be part of total texture and forming the streets, squares and lively and open spaces.

The two-dimensional plan was focused on and no relationship between space and buildings with human and human behavior was observed.

This movement paid attention to singular high rises and open spaces In this period, the relationship of form, performance and meaning is ignored. As a result of ignorance of ground and surrounding, citizens find out the placeless city.

According to Strauss, you reach the place which does not exist. Modern morphless spaces lacked any definite visual framework and coherence conceptually (Abbaszadegan, 2004). The studies by Shahryari show that architects can use modernity as a suitable base for development of Islamic cities but the cultural, social,

political and economic conditions must be taken into account. For example, Alkheyrieh complex in Ryaz and John Hanckok in Boston are two urban elemnts with many similarities in two different parts of the world. In Islamic cities, modernity helped to grow and develop the cities while keeping their Islamic identity. The example for this is the reconstruction of old center of Ryaz in Alkandi square in which great mosque and baazar are established in the main fabric of square and outer foliage of the mosque, respectively, to induce the Islamic identity of centrality in the city (Shahriyari, 2001, 56).

Squares in Iranian cities

Squares are among the most influential urban spaces in citizens` mentality to the extent that people know their own city with the square and distinguish different parts by square (Pakzad, 2015). Square has been the place of communal activities, economic exchange and sport activity, soldiers` marching, public information and even punishing platform. There are one main square and different small squares .From physical changes and design concept, the history of Iranian squares has been divided into four periods:

Ancient squares from the beginning to Islam;

Post –Islamic squares, from Abbasid government to the late Qajar;

Iranian ancient square like its counterparts in ancient communities has been related to business site and sometimes some religious or official buildings were adjacent to it.

The functions of urban square can be summarized as the following:

A great part of spatial attraction of squares is coming from its variety so that it can accommodate a lot of citizens in different hours and make the social life flow. Therefore, vitality is the important feature of square which must be effective in satisfying various activities for all the groups and communities to survive. Urban square must match itself with the content of events which can be interpreted as flexibility (Pakzad, 2015, 50).

The position of Mashhad city and Shohada square

Mashhad, Iran has a long history of 1200 years old, the history of this city created with Martyrdom of Imam Reza (AS) and his funeral in the village Sanabad and takes Mashhad name, place of martyrdom. The village has long been on the fringes of the village of Toos unknown. But the attractions of the shrine of Imam Reza (AS) turned it into a city that was superior to all the cities of Khorasan (Executive management plan of Shohada square, 2011,9).

Shohada Square It is located in the geographic center of Mashhad and the great shrine of Imam Reza (AS), is the most important urban center that often connects poles of urban services and basic arteries. At the beginning of it's formation, in the early AD century present, Shohada square was a symbol of a non-traditional urban spaces that six new urban arteries intersected. Symbols of modernity, such as municipal

buildings, fire and electric office building on the square, took Mashhad as a hub for new developments.

Aside from that , activities focus on the center of city , Increasing of Urbanization population and Especially the wide use of the car is yielded . According to (Fig.1 and Fig.2) Shohada square roles as main Focus are variated, Shohada square Was built Approximate distance 1 km from Haram Motahar complex , the early century a long the Shirazi- Tohid , street top Axis And from the point of view of the increasing importance of the function and movement.

According to the proposed principles in Isfahan urbanism school and basic Modernism that is quite evident in the Square, The Position of Shohada Square is evaluated until existing short coming to relation with Islamic-Iranian urbanism with attention to Mashhad religious historical context is determined.

Hierarchy principle: Based on this principle, nor architecture can be conceived being free from its upper or lower order and layer. Each urban space can exist in relation to the hierarchy of which it specifies a point. Therefore, each urban space has inside and outside. It organizes its sub-orders and is influenced by outside orders. Hierarchy is one of the basic principles governing the elements and phenomena existing in the universe as a whole naturally and are designed by humans. Hierarchy makes the order in the universe as the characteristics for elements to be related (Tabibian et al., 2011, 65). Regarding the hierarchy, according to (Fig. 3) Shohada square does not have any certain internal definition and definite outside. It represents itself as an independent identity without relation to upper or lower layers.

Fig. 1: Situation of Shohada Square before the implementation of the project

Fig. 2: Situation of Shohada Square in new plan

Fig. 3: Buildings of Shohada Square Chambered

Fig. 5: Square Exterior Chambered, Toos: Building

Unity Principle: Urban space turns to unity in correlated elements. The whole has a unified identity and presents a specific character free from the composition of elements. The elements lose their singular identity and become unified. The objective reference of this concept can be seen in main foundation of the city like Isfahan bazaar and its constituents (Mahdavi, 2010, 80). According to Fig. 5 Shohada square has a separated identity from the spaces surrounding and represents a nonharmonic whole.

Plurality Principle: Urban space turns to plurality and variety in its extension .In this pluralism, each part becomes a whole in its own dimension. The present Shohada square does not have plurality feature regarding the character and meaning of the existing elements (Habibi, 1999, 52).

Concentration Principle: Concentrating the urban space endows a prestige to it and distinguishes it from other spaces. Shohada square has obtained a type of concentration in paving as there is no outstanding element and dominant building in square showing spatial concentration. (Ibid, 52).

Decentralism: Urban space dispersion causes a unified expression to be represented in different places. The balanced distribution of urban spaces is the main reason of unified concept of city and its different spaces (Ibid, 52). Shogada square is unique in that it does not have traffic loading.

Accumulation Principle: The accumulation of different elements in a special place endows the place particular meaning beyond the place with a spatial identity defined in the space within (Ibid, 52). Shohada square is the result of accumulation of concrete buildings of great density which express the square space as modern.

Opposition Principle: Heterogeneity of urban space elements and their harmony related to other spaces help them to be free from sameness (Ibid, 52). Shohada square is in sharp contrast with its surrounding which made a new identity for it.

Connection Principle: Each urban space tends to connect to other spaces and this brings about discourse (Ibid, 52). Shohada square is a focal point with six riding and pedestrian axes which provide the connection between official centers, education, tourist ,health services and holy shrine. This represents the condition of connection in the square.

Balance Principle: City is defined in space harmony and the constituents. Harmony changes the space to human-friendly system resulting in spatial balance (Ibid, 52) .The performance of Shohada square in urban scale and accommodation of numerous people in religious ,political and social ceremonies along with high rises around it conveys balance.

Proportion Principle: Universe beauty is summarized in the dimension and size proportion, dark and light proportion and human and space proportion (Ibid, 52). The dimension of Shohada square does not match the details in the square such as fountain.

Continuity Principle: The movement and stagnation are two concepts which can be expressed in paving the history in a directed line covering the points .This also makes sense to interruption (Ibid, 52). The new spaces in Shohada square have made a new identity which interrupts its historical identity.

Territory Principle: The life can be defined in self and other which are distinguished through the territory. The accessibility in each area is based on the determination of territory (Ibid, 53). The accessibility in Shohada square is only possible for pedestrians and bus lanes around the square determine the border of the square.

Simplicity Principle: The purity of urban spaces makes them tangible for users resulting a belonging sense. The modern architectural design of Shohada square has some complexity in contrast to the spirit of the space

Complexity Principle: The space must be able to motivate the curiosity of users to seek for intricacies of space .The shape is formed and memories are reinstated. The complexity can bring

Fig. 6: Shohada Square Arena, (Source: Executive management plan of Shohada square, 2011)

confusion which acts negatively (Ibid, 53).This is what can be seen in Shohada square.

Composition Principle: What makes the universe a set of all opposite attribute is composition in which adjacency of opposite powers may cause some synergic force. This can help to understand the real meaning of one under the presence of its rival. The nature has created the true composition of elements (Ibid, 53) while the design of Shohada square has brought up the false composition of elements which slows down the inward motion of people into the space

Settlement Principle: The realization of the whole is dependent on the parts each of which can have an independent identity while maintaining its relationship to others. This connotation of whole-part brings life to the smallest part on the world (Ibid, 53). The mutual relationship of spaces around the square adds to the performance of building volumes playing its own role.

Time Principle: The meaning of space can be defined in time and can be interpreted differently (Ibid, 53).The appearance and form of Shohada square has changed remarkably and this has helped to changed its nature.

Brevity Principle: The simplest form may convey the most complex meaning which is defined in Isfahan school as the fundamental principle of brevity (Ibid, 53).

RESULTS AND DISSCUSION

According to the main principles and general expectations of urban public spaces such as space determination, vitality and adaptability, it was conceived that Shohada square lacked space determination because of vast and deserted appearance, the extent of the area, high-density construction volume and non-human scale. Vitality of space can not be determined due to lack of completion of the project and the placement of all commercial and cultural activities in designated areas. In conjunction with flexibility , this square can accommodate many people in the days and events ranging from festivals, processions and social political protests the content of which the square match with , but because of features such as pure geometry of the form, rigid

and monolithic materials , dictating specific functional activity, etc , it doesn`t have flexibility. Table 1 shows the features of Shohada square regarding Iranian Islamic urbanism principals of Esfahan school and modern patterns:

CONCLUSION

Design of Shohada square has not followed the Iranian Islamic urbanism principals and modern pattern characteristics such as lack of attention to human scale, spatial ambiguity, dissociation, fragmentation, meaninglessness, etc which are seen in it. Given the history and importance of the square in Mashhad as it is clear, redesign should be done in the current context that is not significantly observed in practice with modern pattern.

It was conceived from this research that urbanism and architecture of Shohada square have been relying on modern urban patterns and Iranian urban patterns have been less respected and creating a few principles is adequate.

At the end, pondering the following questions could be the next research:

What is necessity and consequence in reconstruction of the square in the modern way?

If I were to rebuild Shohada's Square, could a new design based on the principles and criteria of Iran and   preserving Islamic identity and sense of place, not be a more appropriate solution? Instead of following the past, disregarding the date and place and inappropriate use of modern patterns of western countries?

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Table 1: Examination of Shohada Square on the pattern of Esfahan school of Iranian – Islamic model and modern pattern

Features of Shohada square	Presence / absence	Urbanism principals	
Lack of attention to Higher or lower on the hierarchy of urban structure	-	hierarchy	
multiplicity of characters and elements due to characters and meaning of elements	*	Multiplicity	
Lack of unity texture with modern pattern in the traditional context around	-	Unity	
Centralization can only see on flooring texture of square and there is no central element in the field	-	Centralization	
According to the Distinctiveness of the square in operation and meaning in relation to other squares in the city, Shohada square has no principle of decentralization.	-	Decentralization	
Complete marked difference with surrounding environment seen in this square	*	Contrast	
Due to its central Shohadas' Square specific position, it connects the different parts of the city , so connectivity principle is clearly visible	*	connectivity	
Function of square in scale of city and it's outputs, shows balance	*	Balance	Esfahan Urbanism School
There is no proportionality in components and performance of the square	-	Proportionality	
New design of this square disrupted Historical continuity	-	Continuation	
According to the boundary between mounted and pedestrian, the territory in this field is evident.	*	Realm	
The ambiguity and complexity of modern volumes due to the heavy body and neglect of the spiritual soul space	_	Simplicity	
The new design consist of complexity of confusion and ambiguity	-	Complexity	
This space lack of combination fit with components that can perform suitable function about corresponding relations	-	Combination	
Volumes deployed with specific functions in the square and each are part of space	*	Esfahan Urbanism School	
Shohada square have changed in the changeover period and transformed the content of the atmosphere	*	Time	
Shohada square has a large rectangular space but lacks coherence	*	Amorphous space	
This space has very large scale	*	Very large scale space	
Construction Volumes have formed a great wall in this square that lacked continuity and there is a huge gap between them	*	Discontinuity of foliage	Modernism School
Design of the square regardless of the traditional context and historical - religious atmosphere of the city	*	Ignoring the context and surroundings	
This project includes 6 huge single building with different functions such as commercial, administrative and cultural uses	*	Huge single tall buildings	
Buildings adjacent to the square are often have commercial –administrative land uses	-	One functional spaces	

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