

Professional scientific sessions for art, architecture and urban planning Thursday evenings

Held in: Conference hall of Herampey Consulting Engineers

Date: 25.10.2018

Title: Petra, landscape design in historical sites.

Speakers and panel members: Mr. Davoud Khatibitabar and Mrs. Parastou Eshrati.

The first speaker of the session was Mr. D.Khatibitabar. He explained that Petra was rediscovered by a Swiss tourist-researcher before the world war, through the study of religious fonts, because the inhabitants of the city were considered damned by God, so they conducted a very isolated life and after the discovery the main reason of its consideration was the attraction of tourists. The city is far from the Jordanian capital Amman 262 kilometers, and it was the capital of Nabatinians, in the 4th century B.C. regarding the history of the city many believe that it was conquered by malignant spirits. Mr. Khatibitabar explained that the Nabatinians were considered Arabs of the north side of the peninsula, close to the Arab governments of Hejaz. The city was considered one of the seven magnificence of the ancient world, and it was named Petra, because of the red and pink stones that were used for the construction of the city, meanwhile its ancient name in Arabic was "Sale" that means rock.

Continuing his speech Mr. Khatibitabar gave some interesting information about the city. The city occupies an area of 264 sq./km, the country of the Nabatinians was extended in the area between the actual Jordan and Palestine. Petra was the connecting ring between the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Arabian peninsula, Egypt and Syria, controlling the commercial routs that connected the different areas.

The domain of the Nabatinians was terminated by the Romans in 105 B.C., when the city was surrounded and then conquered by the Romans. After a long period of Roman domain, the city was liberated by the Arabs in 636 A.D. The inhabitants of the Petra were forced to leave the city, after a strong earthquake that caused large damages to the city.

Today the city is one of the main touristic attractions of Jordan. Most of the city's constructions have been obtained graving the rocks and the brick made constructions are of the Roman era. The tourists that travel to Jordan have the possibility to visit the historical sites and at the same time, enjoy the luxury hotels that are available in the Arab country. The private sector has created all the necessary to satisfy whatever the tourist need and this is the reason that many prefer to spend their holidays in Jordan, enjoying the history and the modern commodities of the country.

Talking about the architectural monuments of the city, Mr. Khatibitabar explained that because of their design and engineering, many believe that it's impossible that the city can be manmade. Many believe that maybe the city has been built by aliens or people that belonged to other advanced civilizations, without living testimonies of their presence and the heritage that they left.

Talking about the rout that connects the ancient city of Petra to other parts of the country, Mr. Khatibitabar talked about the valley that once was part of a green and prosperous area. The journey that the tourists most experience crossing the valley, is a fantastic experience, because it

continuously offers surprises to the visitors. After enjoying natural beauties of the valley the tourists are literally fascinated by the beauty and the magnificence of the buildings and palaces that crown the city, because it's difficult to believe that man was able to build such structures in so ancient times, about 2500 years ago. Of course the monuments created by the architects of that times are still source of admiration and inspiration for the generations that came after.

Mr. Khatibitabar gave other interesting information talking about the city of Petra. He said that the city was the scene of the movie "The last crusade war" performed by the famous actor Harrison Ford, as Indiana Jones, the hero of the movie.

Concluding his speech Mr. Khatibitabar talked about how the Nabatians succeeded to provide the necessary water for the inhabitants and the numerous gardens of the city. The Romans continued the works began by the ancient governors, building dams to control and keep the water. After so many centuries, it's still possible to see the testimonies of the ancient heritage. Thank to clever solutions, the inhabitants were able to plant whatever they needed, enjoying the richness of the soil and the abundance of the water supplies and sources. The main attraction of the city apart the entire context of the city, is the Greek style temple, high 42 meters and considered one of the jewels as an artistic and architectural monument. The city had also an open air amphitheater, capable to receive 4000 spectators. This evidence shows that art was part of their daily life and culture. Petra, despite its geographical position, had all the components, necessary to be considered as an important of attraction, in the past and also today.

The second speaker was Mrs. P. Eshrati. She said that because of political considerations Jordan is not a main touristic path for the Iranian tourists. The idea of this presentation goes back to pictures that presented cultural landscapes, where a cultural landscape was described as fossilized, in order to show a place where the daily life has stopped its course, but in the past times, man had a positive interaction with the environmental microsystem. In 2007 Petra has been defined as one of the world's seven wonders. Mrs. Eshrati explained that the city was built in an area surrounded by sand rocks and thank to the morphological form of the rocks and the talent of the inhabitants, they had create a water collection system, that permitted to collect and store the Monsoon rainwater, making possible the creation and irrigation of their city's famous gardens. Petra was well known with its water channels, gardens and water sources. Fortunately, in our days in some parts of the city that are not part of city's touristic route, the experts are working to recreate the ancient local water collection systems.

Talking about tourism in our days, Mrs. Eshrati said that today it is considered as one of the most important considerations for the countries. The problem that the authorities most face, is find the solution to how to attract touristic flows, without harming the local populations daily life and social structures. This approach is the main duty of tourism management, especially in cases when the historical sites are registered as world heritage. In her opinion it's very important to know what the tourists learn and memorize visiting a particular historic site.

Mrs. Eshrati talked about the 2007 ICOMOS charter, where heritage as a concept is presented and interpreted. The interpretation includes a vast sphere of potential activities that aim to increase the public awareness and comprehension of the cultural heritage. The activities may include printed

and electronic publications, public speeches, educational programs, social and research activities and the continuous evaluation of the interpretation process. Another related case regards the programming of the file's content, through the arrangement of the information, the physical accessibility of the infrastructures in a cultural heritage site. The presentation can be realized through technical equipment like informative panels, museum like exhibitions, official walking tours, speeches and programmed tours, programs and websites.

Continuing her speech Mrs. Eshrati talked about the interpretative infrastructures that are physical installations, facilities and related areas, in relationship with the cultural heritage site that can be used especially for the interpretation and presentation of particular concepts, through the use of available new technologies. The interpreters in the cultural heritage sites, are employees or volunteers the permanently or periodically are offering services of public relation nature, regarding the value and importance of the related site. The cultural heritage site is an area, place, natural landscape, or a place for habitation, an architectural complex, an archeological site or an existing structure, that legally is recognized as a protected cultural site.

Talking about the attraction of tourist in big complexes like Petra, it's very important to maintain the originality and protect the site, respecting the axes of sustainability... the tourist must be able to learn and enjoy the site, avoiding tiredness. The charter of ICOMOS for the presentation recommends the use of written and oral traditional sources. It's important to exclude wrong information and to identify precisely the importance of the site in its political, cultural, artistic, economic and social aspects in different eras, to be presented to the tourists. In this process the complex must be considered in the context it has been formed, and the protection must not be limited just to the sole building and its dimensions. Mrs. Eshrati mentioned also the Iranian case in general, where considering the cultural heritage, in the best situation statistics and numbers are presented, ignoring the burden that the visitor must carry after the visit. To have a successful programming for the protection of a monument, experts in different fields like architecture, urban planning, economy, philosophy, industrial design and other artists must be involved, in order to ensure a valuable interpretation of the heritage.

Regarding the path to reach the site, Mrs. Eshrati said that it's necessary to consider innovative solutions, focusing also on local characteristics. Reporting the case of the site of Petra, we must pay attention to the stands for information, rest and emergency services. It's necessary to identify the type of tourists and addressees, what kind of technology or smartphones they are using, or they use printed catalogues or refer to the panels installed in the site. The addressees must be able to get exciting information and through visual strong sources, take home indelible memories. This is the case that in her opinion in Petra has not been considered and respected.

She said that in landscape design in historical sites, elements like furniture, the way of the accesses to different parts, the paving, the design of the railings, the handicrafts shops and the ambulant sellers, restaurants and cafés, the uniforms of the staff, the fonts used on the panels, the hygienic services... must be carefully studied and applied, in order to ensure the compatibility of the identity and physical structure of the site.

In order to increase the attractiveness of a site it's possible and important the presence and use of some kind of animals, with the consequent and necessary consideration, or the organization of movie shootings, for the same mentioned reason.

Concluding her speech Mrs. Eshrati said that in the case of Petra, because of some lacks and disorganization, the visitor imagine the site a place to visit but not for living.

In her opinion tourism helps the growth of the local economy, but the main point is the organization for the local people and how and which spheres it will affect their everyday life.