

The reflection on graduation project

The lack of a referral elderly care system in Iran

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Since the beginning of my study I had the aim to graduate with a design, which is based on my homeland architectural problems.

Iran's demographic changes are nowadays more obvious and there is not yet any solution for accommodating the elderly who do not have the ability to live by themselves or even with their children.

By that reason and due to the high amount of demands on this issue, I've started my research on elderly and their living requirements.

First of all I had some interviews with Iranian elderly and the organizations that are actually responsible for this demographic group.

Second of all, I attempted to do some literature review regarding this issue; and compared Iran's current struggles regarding elderly living conditions with developed countries which faced with this problems decades before. A good example therefore was Netherlands.

In order to provide a living environment for the elderly a collaboration of three sciences is needed; medical, social and architectural sciences.

One of the last trends regarding elderly care system in Netherlands is called Wozoco. Which contains living environment requirements with care facilities in one complex, which in Iran is still an unknown ideology towards elderly institutional settlement, but the most required one compared to the amount of (homeless) elderly.

The Iranian elderly are from different social classes some are very rich and some are very poor, and there is no impressive support from bigger organizations and government. Hence, I considered that we should provide an environment, which provides the same life and care quality for every elderly from each social classes. Otherwise the life gets harder day by day for those who do not have any (financial) support. In this way we could help the weaker group by support of their peers.

*Human beings are members of a whole,
In creation of one essence and soul.
If one member is afflicted with pain,
Other members uneasy will remain.
If you have no sympathy for human pain,
The name of human you cannot retain. saadi*

A basic approach that I've learned in this field was that architecting for elderly is really a high culture specific approach. Therefore, the next step I took, I began to search for the cultural aspects which could either affect my design, or my design could be developed based on them.

To develop my design based on Iranian living-cultural aspects I started to study the Old Persian houses.

My land, Iran (formerly known as Persia), is quite rich in its history, art and architecture. One of the main traits of old Persian houses are courtyard houses based on inner garden and all different activities in that space.

According to the background of the culture and history of Persia, for millenniums melting point between orient and occident, the traditional Iranian courtyard house evolved into a remarkable typology of urban architecture.

It is characterized both by its aesthetical clarity and its functionality, by its applicability to various uses and its perfect adaptation to the continental climate in Central Asia.

Today it is hardly known, that the architecture and urban design of Persia was an important model also to European building history.



Our ancestors believed that the garden is also one of the rooms out of many other rooms, which has no roof. Unfortunately in contemporary architecture when the cars get into the home environment the home

garden functions as parking space and all those activities and interactions between men and the nature (trees and water) within home environment are also destroyed.

Furthermore, one of the key features of the old Persian houses is that they were built out of materials, which originated from the nature and the earth. People believed that because men's creation was also from the soil, then men could make better relation with the soil and hot natured materials like brick, thatch, and wood. Furthermore, according to Persian vernacular architecture they also capture and store solar energy in a solid material such as a concrete floor or brick walls (thermal mass). While in today's architecture we are struggling with materials such as steel, cement, and etc., which are cold natured materials.

This stored energy can be radiated from thermal mass into living areas of the house during the night

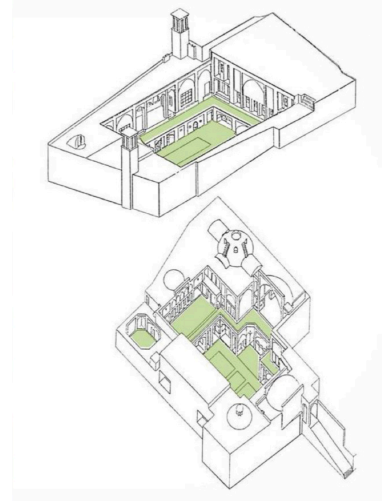
Another aspect of old Persian houses is the transition process from the house to the city; by applying this approach in my design, when people want to reach to their home they have to pass through different spaces in order to access it. Therefore, this approach provides them the opportunity to meet and communicate with others on their way and give them the opportunity to interact with different people within that environment.

Furthermore, another aspect of old Persian architecture is to make connection between the earth and the sky by creating close, open and semi open spaces in plan and also section design.

The most important approach to conceptualize this design was interactions between elderly and the nature, and people from other age groups.

The site that I've chosen for testing my idea also gives me the opportunity to focus more on the effects of design in an urban scale. In this neighborhood there is no public space related to nature provided for its residents, and their daily use. It in fact becomes more like a boring dwelling system in which a home is just a place to sleep in not to live; it becomes even worse for the elderly who needs to live there 365 days of a year.

The coming design is based on a city park, which contains accommodation+care blocks in it. In first touch you might not consider it as a living environment because these blocks are positioned in the park in a secret way. The exterior facades are not representing what is behind. The aim of the park and public space is to attract different age groups by the functions provided. Functions like children playgrounds or sport center, meeting points and, etc.



To design the site plan I was inspired by the famous Persian carpets, the art and different metaphors behind it. Therefore, I used the image of symmetrical Persian carpets as the basic grid of site plan. Moreover, the site plan has developed in a symmetrical way.

This design attempts to sharply change the elderly life style. By developing (adapting) the typology of the courtyard as a central point of design I've tried to achieve this goal.

Different functions of this design are distributed in smaller blocks to avoid high-rise complex for the elderly. Each two of the blocks are making an inner courtyard, which is the most important part or the key point of this design.

The inner courtyard is aimed to be the main space for elderly's daily activities. The disconnection of the rooms from the exterior façade, provides pressure on the elderly to use the opposite side space which is the courtyard; even if they want to stay in their units.