

Social and Cultural Sustainability

(A Key Dimension in Niavaran Cultural Center's Construction)

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Received 28.05.2012; Accepted 23.07.2012

ABSTRACT: Of building cultural centers in all communities and with any kind of attitude has always been one of the designers' issues. When we use the term in ordinary daily conversation, we often think of culture as an equivalent to the "higher things of the mind"- art, literature, music and painting. According to sociologists, the concept of culture includes such activities, but also far more. Culture can be conceptually distinguished from Society, but there are very close connections between these notions. Culture concerns to the "life Style" of the members of a given Society- their habits and customs, together with the stuffs they produce. Society refers to the system of interrelationship which connects the individuals who share a common culture. No culture could exist without a society and no society could exist without culture, as well. Nature, as a sort of context for society has always been the catalyst for cultural issues. Architecture is considered as a link between man and environment around, which is a step forward to close up the society, culture and nature. By considering human attitudes to nature and the principles of sustainability, Green Architecture, helps to expand the favorite Cultural themes for designers in such cultural centers. This paper aims to assess and analyze the connection between society, culture and nature. Also, investigating this form of addressed sustainable cultural centers regarding the improvement of society in the case study of Cultural Center and Garden of Niavaran. It is prepared on the basis of library-based phase of the research, case study method and observation for its field study phase. At the end, to sum up, the findings of this study comprise the distinguishing characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of our case study and some efficient proposals have been used to achieve sustainable development.

Keywords: Culture, Society, Nature, Green Architecture, Sustainability, Cultural centers.

INTRODUCTION

Reason and Science are the link between man and things, but it's the images of the manifestations of emotional life which are the instruments of solidarity and sympathy between people. Undoubtedly, this imaginary museum has not only presented the Treasury effigy statues and cultural poetics and themes, but also shows the fears and hopes of mankind, so that, everyone can regain their optimum pictures in its perspective. This is reflected in a place like a "Cultural Center" and also manifestation of the belief that the human soul is united, and this spirit is manifest both in the mind of primitive man and meditation of a modern civilized man the same. Here we came to what Louis Strauss Believed: "Man has always been a symbol of his thought.", Mental thoughts and fantasies that reflect the culture and mentality of the people who are representative of a nation. Thus, as in most cultures today the attention has focused on scientific topics and economic issues, cultural manifestations collection is the best means of restoring psychological balance. Balancing art and culture is the only way out to the detection of human civilization as it is today.

What we should not forget is when we build something; it is actually "Nature" that we have formed with our hands so the nature and essence will always remain. As professor Jung,

with fifteen years of experiences in the research of Alchemy believes: "A stone in the science of Alchemy is like his own in reality! Alchemy of the rock just liberates the Holy Spirit. Like Christ, the Holy Spirit is in all of us." As alchemists believed Spirit or essence of the matter is an eternal creation that has captured the hearts of materials and the goal of Alchemy was to release it. In Alchemy, Material should be tormented to release the dark matter (black body). Alchemy is the path that offers the combination of opposites. First, it should totally change into black body or evil (in humans) and then became the golden spirit. As in any building that reflects the value of understanding the true nature of the soul and spirit of the components depends on the designer and contacts. "Architecture" is one of the alchemy in which the human spirit and the soul eternal are eternally binding. "Architecture" may be an attempt to combine the conflicts of nature in the context of culture and society as well. Even though it never means the real evolution but can be interpreted as "beauty". "Beauty" is the reciprocal relationship between art and the beauty that does not simply refer to the audience. Borges says: "It's not the apples that taste apples in the mouth of someone who has not seen it. It's the taste of contact, between the two" "Architecture" is considered as a body in which gathers the society, culture and nature as a whole. They come together and gave meaning to a unique structure. Considering all these issues, employing green

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architecture and sustainable approach seems to be the most appropriate way to form the unity of man, nature and culture.

Problem Statement

Today, the issue that clearly and prominently attracts the attention of managers and researchers is to take a review of the importance of culture and cultural development as a priority. Many developing countries take benefit from endowments of natural resources and industrial development as their core competencies. They consider society and culture as the original contexts of their policies. Technology fits with the culture of a society to ensure the welfare of the people (UNESCO, 2000: 20). Construction of cultural centers is important for cultural and social goals of sustainable development in the communities mentioned above. Usually in such cultural centers, as well as educational, cultural and social attempts, conditions are provided for learning a variety of different arts and crafts such as painting, pottery, needlework and music. The best solution is combining culture with environment in a sustainable dynamic system. The fundamental requirement to achieve environmental sustainability is a dynamic balance between the different systems. In sustainable environment, with symbiotic balance between human society and the natural environment, both social and economic benefit has been established.

In this paper, we examine the dimensions of sustainability and ethics which are effective in promoting social culture and other cultural developments and also most helpful to form a sustainable cultural center.

Research Questions

This research is aimed at trying out and testing the impact of implementing authentic methods in constructing sustainable cultural centers. The study attempts to answer the research questions:

Do sustainability and community development inform emerging views of sustainable architecture development?

Which are the prevailing themes in the emerging cultural sustainability in cultural centers?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of semi sustainable complexes that include culture as a significant component?

What are the distinguishing characteristics of cultural complexes with sustainable approach?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

According to the nature of the defined research topic in order to achieve the goals mentioned, the method is of applied type and a specific case study was used to supplement the study. Based on given tables, the necessary indices were related to the books of guidance course social studies to analyze the contents of the books. By the use of these cases, the whole books were analyzed in three dimensions of the "text", "picture" and "questions".

An integral and expedient study of the references and choosing a proper case study.

This step is the first step of data analysis. It gives a complete explanation achieved in reviewing the text and questions and hypothesis.

The adequate analysis of each part separately begins. Hence, it must be noted in the conclusion.

In this step, clustering and analyzing is fulfilled, offering a set of strengths and weaknesses which leads to final results

and conclusions.

Thinking and perspective of the writer or narrator is the culture and spirit of a text presented in words. After putting the words together, based on the method, the text and pictures of the references are being reviewed. Then, a compatible case study would be reviewed based on the issue. At the end, the comparison and scrutinizing the cases and final topics will be used to obtain an acceptable conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of all important factors affecting the society, culture is one essential that gently and step by step emerges out of the realm of social sustainability. It is recognized as owning a separate, distinct, and integral part in sustainable development. Amongst all the community development contexts, culture is generally defined as "the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO, 1995, 22).

Community cultural development, considered as part of an emerging sustainability framework, encompasses "a huge range of activities that give communities the opportunity to tell their stories, build their creative skills, and be active participants in the development of their culture" (O'Hara, 2002, 4). Therefore, studying the sustainability of our social culture leads us to create improved cultural centers and urban spaces.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a vision and a process, not an end product. (Newman and Kenworthy .1999, 5) It is fundamentally about adapting to a new method of living with nature and creating a more equitable and compatible society through the fair distribution of social goods and resources in the world (Darlow, 1996).

Traditionally, sustainability has largely been defined at the global and national level. Only recently has it begun to be applied to cities and communities (Mitlan and Satterthwaite, 1994).

More precisely, sustainability involves five dimensions:

Development of efficient technologies and markets for meeting human needs- generally the purview of engineering, physical science, biotechnology, economics, and business;

Understanding the state and nature of ecosystems- generally the purview of ecology and environmental science;

Understanding how exploitation affects ecosystems- generally the purview of applied ecology and environmental science;

Understanding how exploitation affects human cultures- generally the purview of sociology, political science, policy, law, anthropology, and the arts and humanities;

Understanding the meaning of normative concepts such as human needs, socially-just, depriving, ecosystem health- generally the purview of ethics and philosophy (Vucetich and Nelson 2010).

Social sustainability

A socially sustainable community must have the ability to maintain and build on its own resources and have the resiliency to prevent and/or address problems in the future. Socially sustainable communities have the capacity to deal with change

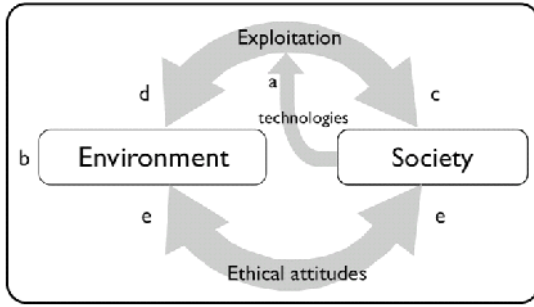


Fig. 1: Sustainability is essentially the relationship between the environment and society.

(Source: Nature Education Adapted from Vucetich and Nelson-2010)

and to adapt to new situations, attributes that are now becoming increasingly essential in a globalized world. This capacity requires individuals to have the freedom to choose how to improve their quality of life in the context of their own communities and social networks.

That relationship involves a physical aspect (exploitation) and an ethical attitude. That relationship is affected by:

- a. Development our technologies
- b. Understanding of the environment
- c. Understanding how exploitation affects society
- d. Understanding how exploitation affects the environment
- e. Understanding of our ethical attitudes about ourselves and nature

History provides plenty of evidence that dimensions (a) through (d) are inadequate for achieving sustainability. Ethical attitudes are a critical aspect of any relationship involving humans (e), and the neglected dimension of sustainability. This model emphasizes how technology is conceptually secondary to exploitation- determining only our ability to, and efficiency at, exploitation. Ethics determine how we use technologies.

According to the British Columbia Round Table on the Environment and Economy, socially sustainable communities are able to:

- Achieve and maintain personal health: physical, mental and physiological;
- Feed themselves adequately;
- Provide adequate and appropriate shelter for themselves;
- Have opportunities for gainful and meaningful employment;
- Improve their knowledge and understanding of the world around them;
- Find opportunities to express creativity and enjoy recreation in ways that satisfy spiritual and psychological needs;
- Express a sense of identity through heritage, art and culture;
- Enjoy a sense of belonging;
- Be assured of mutual social support from their community;
- Enjoy freedom from discrimination and, for those who are physically challenged, move about a barrier-free community;
- Enjoy freedom from fear, and security of person;
- Participate actively in civic affairs.

Sustainability and Ethics

The rise of sustainability science has led some to conclude that the ethical dimensions of sustainability have become obsolete (Davison, 2001). This elimination of ethics from

sustainability discourse- particularly in the mode of sustainability science- can also be glimpsed in recent practices and sustainability research. They had an interdisciplinary funding program devoted to environmental sustainability. (Fig.2) That makes no reference to the ethical dimension of sustainability, but concluded “All proposed research should be driven by engineering principles, and be presented explicitly in an environmental sustainability context.” (Vucetich and Nelson ,2010).

The percentage of faculty associated with each dimension [(a) through (e)] of sustainability hired by several universities in recent initiatives to hire clusters of faculty related to sustainability.

Analyzing Social and Cultural Sustainability in the Design of a Case Study

Cultural Center and Garden of Niavaran

The Center is designed around a plaza, which is connected to a sizeable Persian garden with extensive waterways. This was programmed as a prototype neighbourhood cultural center. The poetic brick-clad buildings produce a unified architecture that is elegant, and the sequencing of the urban spaces is highly refined. The building owes much of its success to the traditional construction patterns and building types used by Diba in place of the Western-style planning favored by the authorities. There is a global sustainable vision in designing this complex, which allows Diba to call it a chain of meanings. As the Architect believes “I was mostly involved with the entire collection, not only with individual artworks. I believed they were significant as a set, and rather made a chain of meanings.”

Distinguishing characteristics

There are some Distinguishing characteristics about this cultural center and garden that described here in the following:

Due to the north winds, the plan of the cultural center is stretching along East - West.

Using a combination of light and color as well as the volume and movement of water.

Water use in both fluid and static.

Setting up in this way, it almost seems that the complex has a “U” form.

There is a two-story building and all components are of the

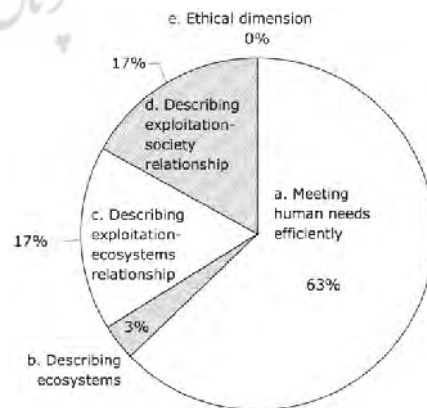


Fig. 2: Recent university cluster hires in sustainability. (Source: Nature Education Adapted from Vucetich and Nelson-2010)

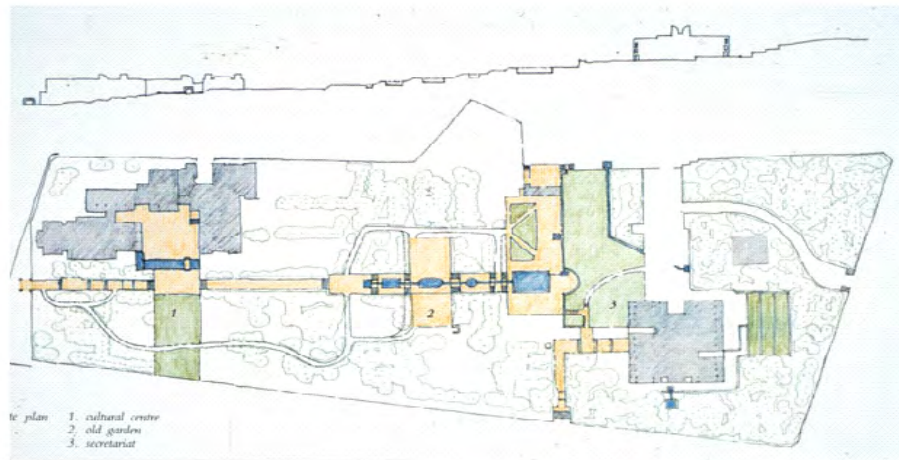


Fig.3: Color drawing, Master Plan of Nivaran Cultural complex (Source: www.archnet.org)

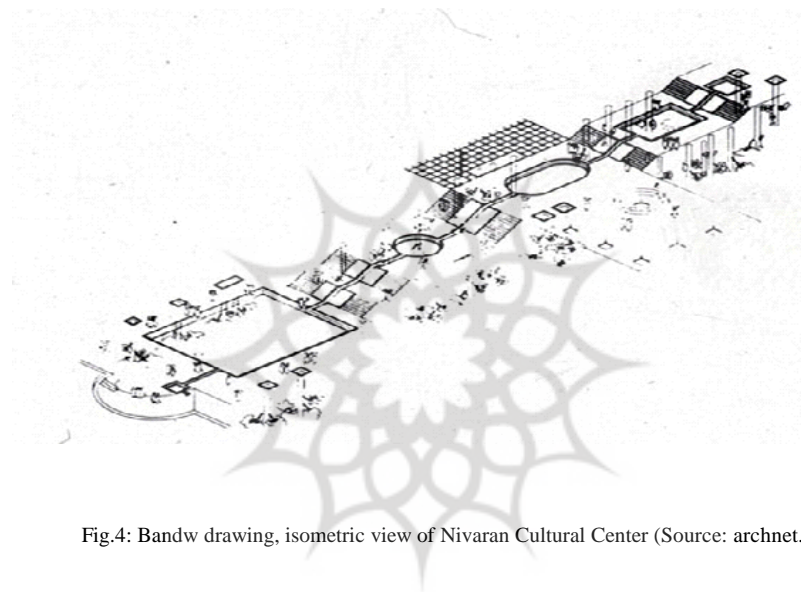


Fig.4: Bandw drawing, isometric view of Nivaran Cultural Center (Source: archnet.org)

same height.

The building is of reinforced concrete structures. Combination of the aesthetic design of the building fabric (concrete and stone), form (simple geometry) and the Sunnah (the traditions of Iran) allows the architect to create a new structure of modern and traditional architecture.

Components

The cultural center consists of library, gallery, auditorium for performing arts, cafeteria-restaurant:

Main Gate

Courtyard plaza

Auditorium for performing arts

Restaurant

Library

Statues

The assessment of cultural sustainable factors in mentioned case study, as a new strategy, leads to achieve social sustainable development. From this point of view, Cultural Center and

Garden of Niavaran is distinguished by its type of presentation which differs from such conventional venues as museums and galleries and by the nature of its interaction with the surrounding environment. The overall assessment of the addressed cultural Center offers a set of strengths and weaknesses presented in Table 2.

As a result, a number of sustainable themes were considered that can be offered as perfect proposals in order to achieve maximum social and cultural sustainability.

Stylistic transformation from the golden age to modern times Exploration of the effects of adopting a westernized lifestyle in domestic and public space.

The role of gender in shaping space.

Inward focused architecture versus externally focused

Documentation of cultural conditions which are experienced and observed in our analysis.

The transformation of architecture with sustainable approach throughout cultural centers.

The adoption and adaptation of sustainable modern architecture.

Table 1: A detailed investigation of the various parts of the mentioned case study (Cultural Center and Garden of Niavaran)





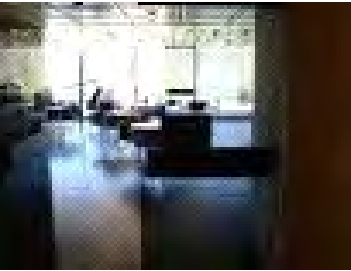


Type of Space	Comment	Images
Main gate	<p>The entrance to the complex is symmetrical in form. However, it acts as the entry to access to the main gate of the cultural center. The entrance above is taken from the traditional architecture of the vestibule space. Access to the main building takes place via the stairs. There are two platforms with hedges on either side to navigate the viewer up the stairs leading to the main building.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Gate of Nivaran Cultural Center (Source: www.worldarchitecture.org)</p>
Courtyard plaza	<p>Courtyard located in the heart of the cultural center and in addition to being the communication center, it is somewhat the main element of the complex. The two facades facing the courtyard consist of areas that are exposed directly to the outdoor courtyard and views of their entire body as well</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">View across courtyard plaza of Nivaran Cultural Center (Source: www.kamrandiba.com)</p>
Auditorium for performing arts	<p>The exhibition space holds several galleries for temporary display of art. These exhibitions will act as an informative part of the complex, demonstrating subjects concerning political, social and philosophical issues and ideas from around the world. The exhibition area can expand to the outdoor spaces or be visible from outside for more interaction with the public.</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">View from courtyard to Exhibition Space of Nivaran Cultural Center (Source: www.nacfiran.com)</p>
Galleries	<p>“That’s an interesting subject. Here we have a double-edged situation. To be in touch with artists could be both instructive and destructive. You should not just trust the artist’s assertions, in my opinion. Galleries sometimes explain the works even better than the artists themselves. I think one could buy better things through galleries than directly from artists. It is because artists are interested in their weaker works as well, and try to sell them.” (Diba, Kamran, 2010)</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">View across Exhibition Space of Nivaran Cultural Center (Source: www.memarinews.com)</p>

Table 1(Continued): A detailed investigation of the various parts of the mentioned case study
(Cultural Center and Garden of Niavaran)

Type of Space	Comment	Images
Cafeteria-Restaurant	<p>The restaurant space is projected into two stories. It is possible to access the building from three parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 - The central courtyard, 2 - Gallery, 3 - Library <p>The restaurant has a window with a view of the yard with green and beautiful landscape. Also, through an opening embedded in the ceiling, the second floor receives light.</p>	 <p>View across the restaurant (Source: www.worldarchitecture.org)</p>
Library	<p>“The most important factor in the selection of artworks is the ability to commune with it since one should spend time with the piece and live with it.” (Diba, Kamran, 2010) The library contains professional and academic books for Art students and professors. The interior layout is set in a way that readers can get what they want and feel relaxed.</p>	 <p>View across the library of Fine Arts (Source: archnet.org)</p>
Statues	<p>Diba has made extensive usage of Sculpture works in his design for urban spaces, landscaping and reconstruction. Model figurines were all ordinary people who happened to spent time there. These statues were much appreciated by the public at the time. There were Photographers taking pictures of people with their hands on the neck or back of the statues.</p>	 <p>Statues of ordinary people-View across courtyard plaza (Source: archnet.org)</p>

CONCLUSION

The process of shaping the environment has always been influenced by different attitudes towards human, nature and the relationship between these two that led to the creation of urban landscapes.

The Studies show impact of human intervention in the Shaping of two opposing trends: “Unison of Man and Nature” and “Rule of man over nature”. Expectations and responsibilities include improving the quality of human environmental assessment, esthetic and ecological needs as the goal and have an implicit duty in the construction of green structures and spaces.

By investigating the issues discussed in this paper, constructing cultural centers in harmony with the natural and social environment, the following conclusions can be acquired and developed in order to best take advantage of them.

- Designing with the vision and objectives of sustainable architecture.
- Improving the quality of education and socio-cultural.
- Maintaining environmental quality through the preservation of ecological systems.
- Maintaining cultural integrity and solidarity among the community.
- Creating facilities so that visitors can gain valuable experience.

Table 2: Evaluation and Classification of Strengths and Weaknesses of the mentioned case study
(Cultural Center and Garden of Niavaran)

Strengths	Weaknesses
Although Niavaran complex designed as separate parts and then put together, but the architect had found a creative relationship between the two buildings to create proper circulation.	Due to dense trees of Pasdaran Street, the main front garden of the complex with its large trees does not seem to exist.
On arrival at the complex from the southern side, to achieve cultural complex, we entered into an open space. The outstanding features of open space are arranging a set of separate units around it and playing a decisive role in guiding, is the cultural center.	The Courtyard plaza is very important and acts as the main factor of the complex. In fact, many places do not look at the yard but a glimpse; such as the library. It seems as an individual element and is almost isolated. Parts around the yard, are discontinuous and fragmented; consequently, they do not form a quite steady fence around it.
Creating Linear spaces, transmission and pause spaces by appropriate flooring and making use of green spaces and changes in the width direction.	It seems that at first, the elements in the complex designed individually and are then stacked together; thus all of the components seem to be single attached. In this way, the holistic approach to the complex is somewhat infringed.
The courtyard building located in the middle of the floor, has its minaret flooring and a distinguished entrance which was created to emphasize that it represents an important element of the plan.	
The design and construction of the cantilever bridge in addition to the visual beauty emphasizes that we are entering a new space.	
Use of statues: Model figurines were all ordinary people who happened to spent time there. These statues were much appreciated by the public at the time.	

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