

DESIGNING OF FOLK ART MUSEUM OF SARI CITY DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE CONTEXT- ORIENTED ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract

Urban environment has changed dramatically in recent years. Urban environment in the process of this development and hasty changes has faced with several issues. A uniform and identical form of cities is one of the most important of these issues. This causes the loss of the unique characteristics of cities. Field-oriented architecture emphasizes on land-orientation and connection of environment and space and it forms by understanding its context's message. In this type of architecture, each building is designed and implemented based on cultural, social, historical and physical-climatic conditions of the site and building. Sari city is a traditional center-oriented city. This city, like many other cities of the country, has developed regardless of the traditional city structure. The main objective of this study is to design a cultural complex in the city that reproduces the physical identity of the city by relying on underlying characteristics such as climate, culture, history, etc and helps to improve the readability of Sari. The current study is applied with regard to its purpose and descriptive in nature. Clarification of concepts, examining the theories related to the topic and the studies of similar studies of library research have been used to understand the different aspects of the issue. The characteristics of the plan's site, region and culture have been investigated through library research in the field and also collecting data using a field method. Results of the research show that paying attention to cultural, social, historical and physical-climatic conditions and specific conditions of that site and building in designing the building can help to improve and recover physical identity of the city. So it seems that taking advantage of a style in architecture which identifies, analyzes and evaluates the characteristics of the context and provides strategies appropriate for the context's conditions and provide access to the physical identity.

Keywords: Context-orientation, folk art museum, Sari

Introduction

A city is the product of various historical periods and the result of special relations among social, cultural, anthropological, geographical and economic aspects and today's architecture will become a part of cities' history in the future (Qadiri, 1385: 12). A city is a materialistic totality which is understood by minds or consciousness of humans residing in it. Creating a mental discipline is necessary in order to understand the abovementioned totality. What is important to understand this totality is the existence of a readable image, recognizable patterns of urban spaces and blocks and the ability of mental imaging of them, because the readability of a residential complex is very important in its desirability. An environment is desirable when it is felt as a uniform complex. In Lynch's idea, the basic condition for the uniformity and integration of this complex is that each section's manifestations flow in the other section and a feeling of integration of inner parts is created from each direction and in each level and all manifestations of the complex continue to persevere. So the integration of the building with the city has a key role in creating a whole. What is necessary in the continuation of passionate and joyful life of a city is the compliance of container (environment) with contents (man) in a historical interior. Recently, this compatibility has cancelled for various reasons including urban renewal plans in the modern movement and it has triggered a type of heterogeneity. Buildings and urban spaces such as markets and hangouts as cultural resorts in the past in the spatial organization of the city have completely been consistent with the activity, climatic and cultural patterns. By providing an

appropriate context for the formation of social events, they provide a context for recording communal memory of citizens. So these elements, as a bridge, have maintained citizens' connection with the context's characteristics and thus have enhanced the readability of the cities. Continuation of these buildings or communication bridges throughout history has caused them to penetrate and be recorded in the communal memory of the citizens and it has increased various generations' sense of belonging to the cities by association of ideas and concepts among them. So buildings which have been entirely consistent with the texture have caused the continuation and development of physical identity of the cities by providing readability and a sense of belonging. Today these buildings are replaced with non-public high buildings which often have same form and shape in most cities and have been formed regardless of the cities' context. These buildings' lack of consistency with functional taste of the residents, sameness and lack of diversity in urban areas and issues like that have resulted in the reduction of cities' readability and residents' sense of belonging. Thus, the main issue of this study is that lack of buildings designed and implemented with a context-orientation approach is one of the factors which hurt cities' readability and the residents' sense of place and this leads to the city's physical identity. Accordingly, the issue of the present study in the context of the macro approach, has been presented based on the promotion of physical identity of the cities and particularly it is related to the role of context-orientation in architecture and shaping this identity.

Statement of the problem

Urban environment has changed dramatically in recent years. These changes are more distinctive in the physical aspects of the urban environment. "Traditional centralist cities" quickly turn into "expanded multicenter cities" with less readability (Carmona, 2003: 20). Urban environment face several issues in the process of these hasty developments and changes. Uniformity and sameness of the cities is one of the most important of them. This causes the loss of unique characteristics of the cities. Paying attention to cultural, social, historical and physical-climatic conditions and specific conditions of the sites and buildings in designing of buildings can greatly help to restore and sustain the cities' physical identity. Hence taking advantage of a style in architecture which identifies, analyzes and evaluates the characteristics of the context and provides strategies appropriate for the context's conditions can provide access to the physical identity. This style of architecture is called "context-oriented architecture" which emphasizes on the connection between the environment and the space and it forms by understanding the message of its context, in fact it makes the message become objective which architecture's context has given it. As a result, the building will be a small part of its surroundings. In this kind of architecture each building is designed and implemented based on cultural, social, historical and physical-climatic contexts and special condition of that site or building. And the building will be a harmonious element in its context (Mahdaveinejad et al., 1390: 32). In designing of new buildings, there are many ways to create harmony and agreement with the context of their architecture. On the one hand, the design can copy architecture's element from the surrounding buildings and on the other hand, benefit from new forms to transform and improve the visual characteristics of the existing building. Context-oriented architecture does not emphasize on imitation and not hinder innovation and creativity. Its message is the necessity of paying attention to physical environment around the architecture's work. And it shows that this attention can be a positive and reinforcing factor for both architecture's work and for the context. Context-oriented architecture is an attempt to demonstrate the ability to create a favorable visual environment in a scale larger than architecture. In fact this approach in the designing and architecture, in addition to paying attention to architectural monument, pays attention to its decisive role in the larger space, which is the urban space. In the meantime it is important that buildings can maintain the independence of their style and innovation while having a peaceful coexistence with their neighboring buildings. Sari city is a traditional centripetal city. The development of this city, like many other cities of the country, has happened regardless of the traditional structure of the city. Creating communal and community centers and multifunctional spaces in the social areas can always provide a unique opportunity and reproduce the identity of the place by providing a thought-out plan (Safaei Monfared 1385: 283). Therefore, it is assumed that a building which is designed with special attention to context's characteristics and designing's context including cultural, historical, physical-climatic context, can partly help to sustain physical identity. Museum as a cultural profile which has an immediate communication with the public and does not exist in the city of Sari can be an appropriate option for designing a public building with context-oriented approach. The main objective of this study is to design a cultural complex which can reproduce the city's physical identity and help to improve city's readability by relying on context's characteristics such as climate, culture, history, etc. Based on the stated issues, cities' readability has reduced due to uniformity and the sameness of buildings and new urban spaces and lack of attention to the historical, cultural, social, physical, etc. contexts. It seems that by taking advantage of a kind of architecture which has a special attention to the context, it is possible to achieve a style of designing an Anthropology Museum as a cultural multi-functional complex which helps to increase Sari city's readability. Thus, the hypothesis of the present study, primary and secondary ones, can be formulated as follows: The main hypothesis, "paying attention to the context in designing public buildings can help to improve cities' readability and consequently to maintain and reproduce the cities' physical identity" Secondary hypothesis "Sari is the capital of Mazandaran province and annually receives a large number of domestic and foreign tourists and unfortunately, it has very few number of cultural monuments and there is no building as a museum among these few cultural monuments. It seems that designing of folk art museum with respect to a very

high cultural potential of the city and province, can help to introduce the rich culture of this province in addition to raising a few of these types of applications".

3. Research methodology

The present study is applied regarding its purpose and it is descriptive in nature. With respect to the type of research regarding its nature and aim, qualitative research strategies will be used to conduct this research. The most important strengths of a qualitative research is its capacity for achieving high quality in real-life situations and environments; the design and implementation of the study has sufficient flexibility to create the possibility of making adjustments in it. Therefore it is a good method for understanding the meaning and process of the activities and handicrafts (Groot and Wang, 1390: 199). Since aspects which this study is concerned with, cannot be qualitatively measured; a descriptive method has been used to define it and for rearranging them together an analytical approach has been used. Clarification of concepts, examining the theories related to the subject and the study of similar research from library studies have been used to understand the different aspects of the problem. Since context's characteristics are of designing priorities, to investigate the characteristics of the plan's site, region and culture, library studies in the area and field data collection have been used.

4. The theoretical framework

Context-orientation is a view which focuses on specific characteristics of a place and applying it in contemporary design. Hence, while it implicitly needs a distinction of the place, it clearly requires continuing of physical values of the place with the existing context; however it does not negate the creation of the new values (Ali Mohammadi, 1390). Contextualism is a model for creating a more favorable environment, therefore greater understanding and awareness and deeper understanding of the context and the environment is necessary and inevitable for architects and designers. C. Brolin one of the original thinkers of contextualism believes that context-oriented architecture is an attempt to show the ability to create a more favorable environment in a larger scale, in the meantime, a talented architect can play a decisive role in paying attention to the context by new creation in the existing urban space. This would increase the burden on him for the surrounding urban environment (C Brolin, 1383: 1). That is why it is often closely linked with the urban planning theories. As Brolin stated in the book entitled "architecture in the context", context-oriented architecture include limited scope and it deals with the styles of architecture and how to create harmony among buildings-of different periods and styles-in a visual manner. Meanwhile, in the attitude of Robert Stern, contextualism is expressed with a broader concept as the relationship between the building and its surrounding environment i.e. the surrounding environment encompasses all environmental factors including cultural, social and historical contexts. The other group views the context-oriented architecture as an image of the future. In fact contextualism and related issues think of it as a comprehensive understanding of the field in which the designer puts old a new together appropriately. In this perspective it is important to note that context-oriented architecture should not prevent innovation in creating architecture derived from the environment. And creating a context-oriented architecture is a combination of old and new and a successful achievement of the spirit of time and place which is opposed to all efforts of contemporary architecture in order to achieve a mechanism with the context (context-oriented architecture in designing urban spaces). According to the mentioned issues, in contextualism in addition to the physical aspects, the human aspects are considered too because the lack of attention to the human aspects of the building creates buildings which will have irreversible effects. Contextualism is Compatibility with physical, historical and socio-cultural of physical context which are present based on ideas and shapes of the past in forming the physical body of the Contemporary cities (Buckan). Contextualists believe that any building should be in harmony with the existing buildings, it should be an appropriate context for the future buildings. Contextualism does not mean the mere imitation of the past (Buckan). Context-oriented architecture emphasizes on land-orientation and the connection between the environment and space and it forms by understanding its context's message, in fact it realizes and designs the message which is given to it by the architecture's context. In this type of architecture, each building is designed and implemented based on cultural, social, historical and physical-climatic contexts and the specific conditions of the site and the building (Aslani, et al., 1390: 78). Some critics of contextualism believe that this approach in architecture designing has caused uniformity of the cities and urban spaces. They believe that if all buildings are designed with an emphasis and focus on the context's characteristics –which is common at least in the social and cultural section, then the urban area will be full of similar buildings. Brolin in response to those critics argued that designed within the context does not necessarily mean uniformity. First, assessing the quality of context is one of the major issues in contextualism which needs to be addressed and secondly a desired level of diversity should be achieved by relying on the contextualism in order to save the urban landscape from confusion and uniformity. Moreover, a building does not need to imitate the neighboring buildings 'form and shape to have harmony with the context and to strengthen the visual unity of the area, but it must have certain basic features (Brolin, 1980, 148-153). On the other hand contextualism seeks to enter the spirit of the place into the designing in order to maintain physical identity of urban spaces and its purpose is to create context-oriented architecture which reacts to the local conditions endogenously. This type of architecture is more related to the deep sensitivity and tangible reality of the place other than international influences and trends. Context-oriented architecture seeks its architectural features and importance through creating links between configuration of artificial elements of aesthetic

principles, organization, technology and materials in the one hand and specified place and time on the other hand. This is a cultural and technical effort. Each place has its own physical, social, political and economic conditions. In addition, cultural and architectural heritage and natural history is the performance of the architecture in creating connection among its inherent characteristics as a rich product with specific conditions of time and place and it expresses a vital link between technology and culture. The designing process must give a physical form to a synthesis of selected group compositions of performance links (Mirmoghtadaee, 1385: 25-27).

5- Investigating project`s context (area of the site)

Proper positioning of a building, especially in the context-oriented approach has a great influence on its design so choosing the right site for the project will help a lot in achieving its main goal. According to the approach of context-oriented architecture, the project`s site has been chosen in such a way that its surrounding application be consistent with the museum of folk art. The central context has been positioned in order to increase the identity of those sections and to have the greatest permeability. According to the above-mentioned issues, the project`s site was selected on Qaran street in Sari city. Sari city is located in the foothills of the Alborz mountain range and has two parts including mountainous and plain parts. Sari`s distance is about 27 km from the shores of the Caspian Sea. Sari is located at east longitude of 53 degrees 37 minutes and North latitude of 34 degrees 36 minutes. Its altitude is 5/118 meters from the sea level. The area of the city based on physical studies of 1375 is 44/2479 ha. The geographical location of sari is located to Caspian Sea and Behshahr city from north and northeast, to Alborz Mountains and Semnan province from south and southeast, to Neka and Behshahr cities from east and finally to Qaemshahr, Savadkooh and Jooybar cities from the west.

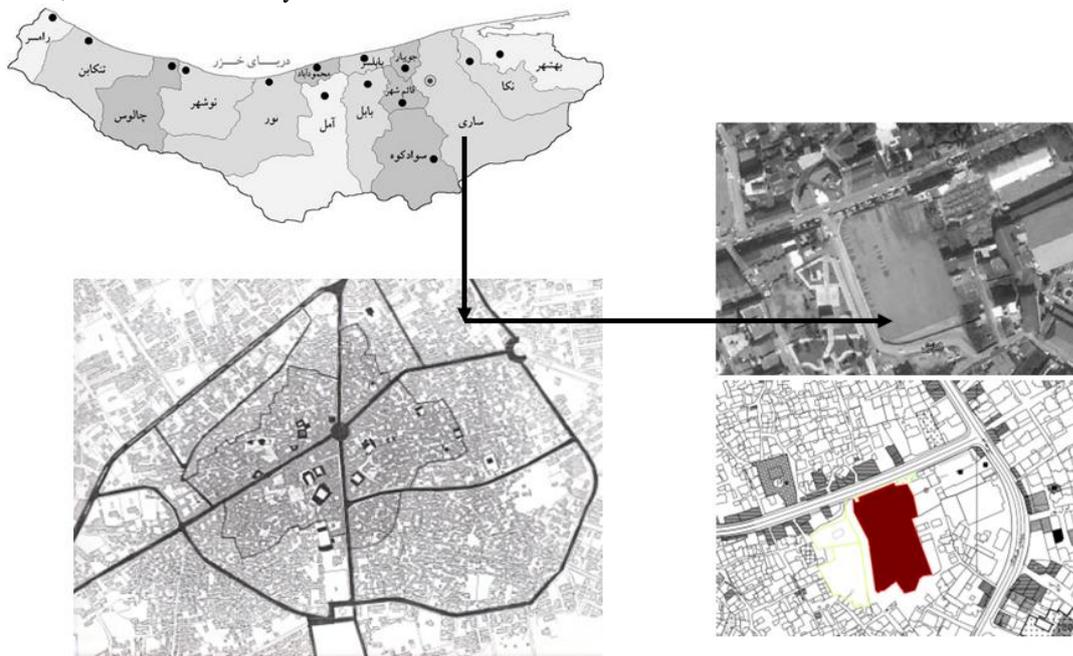


Image 1: location of the target site in the city of Sari

Investigating urban context of Sari city

Sari city has been rapidly transformed and modernized for the past sixty years. Because of this fact, a lack of balance can be seen between the old and modern contexts. In the meantime, the castle-like structure of the city has changed and its battlements and old surroundings are turned into new structures. With regard to this physical evolution, special features have been created in its context that the most important of them are summarize d as follows:

A: dichotomy of the surrounding-core

Development of the city of Sari has been radical in different years **and in connection with the central core**. Observing the characteristics of rural ownership **and its گزیندی network** along with lack of proper planning **have caused** irregularities and anomalies in the physical context of the city **and lack of distribution of service centers and public functions** of the city based on the principles of scientific urban development.

B: Land use

More than 30 percent of Sari`s land has been allocated to gardening and agricultural land use or has been arid lands at the time of data collection. On the other hand, urban services including Educational, green spaces, commercial,

sport, Health, cultural, religious, tourism and entertainment, urban utilities, public facilities, workshop and military applications have totally had a per capita about 13.2 square meters.

C: North-South conflict:

Despite some initial efforts of the revolutionary government, the gap between north and south as one of the main features of the spatial structure of the city has continued. Of course the other major factors influencing this distinction can be the construction of Tehran- North railroad. The railway passes through the city which leads to physical separation and lack of balance of activities in the city's northern and southern halves. Construction of this railway led to the City of Sari being divided into northern and southern parts and increases the gap between the people of this city.

D: shapes of the buildings:

The building's shapes reflect the transition from low-lying outward houses to outward apartments with average height or high ones.

E: the relative uniformity in the east-west axis

Sari has a special face throughout the east-west axis **which is** very varied and interesting. This is exactly the opposite of north-south axis. **In these paths, everything changes by approaching** the railway. Along the paths or north-south axes of the city, walls' color, dialects and behaviors have a significant change. But on the east-west axis less distinction can be seen. These axes have generally similar physical characteristics. **The changes which are seen in these paths have normal balance** and highlight the expansion of the city during different years.

6.Results

Finding appropriate visual solutions for scientific issues of architecture is one of the fundamental challenges of the architecture that all architects and designers are faced with throughout their professional career (Brolin, 1383: 21). In a good designing, very limited number of original ideas build the plan and secondary studies are formed around them. According to the content provided, we will discuss strategies to design a public building which can reproduce the city's physical identity by relying on context's characteristics including climate, culture, history, etc. and be effective in improving the city's readability. Therefore firstly, by reviewing the theories of context-oriented thinkers, Approaches and strategies of presented designs by them will be investigated and then some strategies for this context will be provided considering characteristics of this study's context.

A: A vague connection with the context:

Creating a vague and abstract connection with the context is one of the most difficult methods of contextualism because in some cases, passion for creativity and innovation in the plan continues to the extent that the building is not able to communicate with its surroundings (Tokhmeforoosh and Darskhan, 1393: 5). This communication can be done in several ways that are listed in the following table:

Table 1. Design methods in connection with an ambiguous approach with context

methods	Constructed models	
Close copying of the original design themes available	Accession to Frank Gehry museum	approach of vague connection with context
Using the same form, but with the new arrangement	Brandt House, Bermuda Market Queen, Boston National Permanente Building, Washington, DC	
Invented a new form with the visual impact of the old form Abstraction, primary forms		
(Tokhmeforoosh and Darskhan, 1393: 8)		

The extent of first forms` renovation has a significant effect on the ability to recognize them. if the forms are more abstract, their connection with the initial source will be more difficult and their recognition will be impossible. In the approach of **vague connection with the context**, bit must be noted that New and old buildings are able to interact and communicate with each other and strategies enhance the visual quality of the new and old buildings. This approach can have a good outcome when new language of the existing context`s features has a desirable connection.

B: a closer connection with the context

A more direct way to link the new architecture with the existing homogeneous visual context is using the main theme that should be more or less retrieved from the available style. While contemporary designers have very little

difficulty creating a vague and abstract connection of the building with the context, most of them do not accept a clearer eclecticism. It seems that doing so hurts its freedom of creativity. But the fear of restrictions of creativity shows that the nature of the design is not well understood.

Factors affecting the homogeneity of the context and design	Structural elements	Elements and tools Lines Skyline Land Proportions Openings Structures Combination Scuttle Angles Corners	Types of samples horizontal Vertical - - Symmetry, homogeneity height, scale, proportions Vertical - Horizontal Open and closed Soft and sharp
	Non-structural elements	Arrays Materials Color Tissue	Decorations, line array baseboard, window and porch railings Soft and hard

(Tokhmeforoosh and Darskhan, 1393: 8): source



Image 5: homogeneity with the field

It is worth noting that complying with the context does not guarantee compatibility. In some cases extreme negation of the past, is not only symbolically but is correct. This is a situation that can create gaps in the context. This is done in partial and general levels. Symbolic value and eliminating the heterogeneous past are important factors that create the need to make changes in the general level. Minor changes are needed because of aging, economic growth, technology obsolescence and migration and this can be only because of our environment being dismal. Whenever Minor changes occur, it should be noted that visual continuity can often be maintained. This means that despite visual compatibility, diversity can be achieved. And note their confrontation is effective when they are exceptions (Tokhmeforoosh and Darskhan, 1393: 8). Mahdizadeh and Masoomian in a study described design approaches in historical context. They presented various view in this regard which can be summarized as follows:

Design techniques along with a	Zero degree	Absolute neglect of the historic fabric of the city
	Incorporation	Modeled after the old buildings tissue
	Conflict and contrast	Absolute neglect of the historic fabric deliberately
	Mocking and unstable	Ridiculous and unstable buildings

historical context		
	Analogy or similarity	The new building has traces of the past and also symbols of the present
	not visible	The new building transparency or camouflaged by other elements
	Scuttle	Having a respectful distance from the old building
	Compound	A combination of techniques expressed

Source: (author)Adapted from Mahdizadeh and Masoomian, 1389

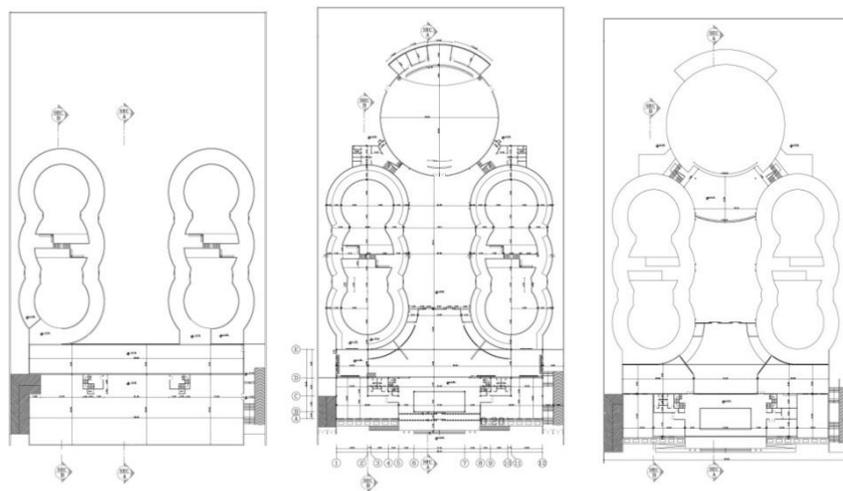


Image 6: A view of folk art museum designed with context-oriented approach (Source: author)

Table 5: Strategies of Special Design of the study`s site (source: the author)

Context-oriented design strategies with the physical approach (form)	More attention to the openings and its important role in building viewing
	More attention to detail such as lines, facade, windows and balcony railings and installation element that their purposeful design can have a positive effect on visual dimension and communication of the buildings with each other
	More attention to color, fabric, softness and hardness of materials
	Paying attention to the use of materials and proper combination of them which can have a a more prominent role compared to type, color and fabric of materials.
	The use of horizontal and vertical lines purposefully
	Targeted and appropriate use of curved and broken surfaces, sharp and soft angles
	Paying attention to the building`s facet as the skin bonding inside and outside of it
	Use of full and empty spaces
	Creating open and semi-open spaces, openings and green spaces that cause more interaction with their surroundings
	Paying attention to yard` s walls, fences, entrance and landscaping of the building
	Paying attention to decking and landscaping design
	Paying attention to visual communication and adjacency of buildings and the surrounding environment at different angles
Context - oriented design strategies with climatic approach	East-west extension of the building to minimize exposure to summer in the north and south walls and to maximize the radiation of winter to the eastern wall
	Use of edged roofs to prevent rain on facades
	Put the building in the center of the site and leaving its surrounding to be open
	Using wide and roofed balconies around the rooms to avoid tilting the rain and benefit from air drafts
	Make the most use of the half-open spaces like
Optimal air flow directed towards the body of the building by trees and plants	

	Use of materials with low thermal capacity in the north, south and east
	Use of materials with high thermal capacity on the Western Front
	Raising building from the ground to prevent moisture penetration
Context -oriented design strategies with humanistic approach	The use of Collaborative design model and applying the opinions of beneficiaries in the construction of the building which lead to positive feelings aroused in the man-made environment
	Penetration of green space in the building can also be greatly helpful to create a sense of place
	Provide the conditions for viewing the urban space
	Paying attention to the structure of indigenous and traditional buildings
	Spatial relationship with the spatial order of design
	The connection of interior spaces with green open spaces
	Bringing vision and perspective into the collection
	Exploiting the steep roofs as the most significant architectural element in Mazandaran
	Mixing and adding some applications which are consistent with the museum of folk art and at the same time are consistent with the socio-cultural context
	Providing sufficient space for social interaction between people, such as theater, green roof, pause spaces in the corridors and trails
Context -oriented design strategies with historical approach	Maintaining visual continuity in the historical context
	Maintaining visual and space continuity
	Designing based on concepts
	Making use of details and decorations existing in the old context
	Making use of traditional and native construction materials making use of the dominant color combination in the context and facets of Sari city



a. Basement floor plan b. Ground floor plan c. First floor plan

Image 7: plans of museum of folk art (source: the author)



Image 8: 3D design of the folk art museum (source: the author)

Conclusion:

Following the changes in conditions and factors affecting the development of cities and an increase in their sizes, by accessing the natural environment and countryside, **again paying attention to the internal areas of the city and what has existed from the past is a** crucial and unavoidable principle towards urban sustainability. What is primarily important in this regard is the context, context is as an event in which urban elements are recognized, produced and dealt with. **Contextualism is an approach in which in addition** purely physical aspects, humanistic, cultural, social and historical aspects are considered. Social and cultural relations and economic system **of a city can be greatly effective in defining the context.** Compatibility of the buildings with their surrounding buildings **is one of the features of the context-oriented architecture. One also can refer to the humanistic scale or** crushing the massive monuments into smaller parts to preserve the humanistic scale, Use of local materials of the site, **not using** modern materials such as glass and steel in large pieces, **using handicrafts and native methods to implement details in the building, building`s form** Being rooted in the existing traditions of the site and a result of the use of abstract forms.

In this world architects in line with other stakeholders, are seeking to find new ways to provide a good life for human beings. Obviously, life, work, leisure, rest, etc. are all activities which **are done inside** spaces designed by architects **and since** strengths and weaknesses of a building will have a direct impact on the ecosystems of the world, architects have a very sensitive task in this regard. Sustainable design **is** thoughtful cooperation of architecture with mechanical, electrical and structural engineering. Besides the usual factors of designing such as elegance, proportion, texture, shadow, light and the facilities that should be considered, designing group must pay attention to the long-term environmental, economic and humanitarian factors and consider their basics including understanding of the environment, relationship with nature, understanding the existing trends in nature, understanding environmental impacts, participatory process of designing and understanding of people (Anvari, 1391; Farooqi, 1390).

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