City Entrance as Suitable Potentials to Gain Identity: A Case Study in West Entrance of Bojnoord

Somaye NORAEI, Zahra Sadat SHEKARFOROUSH1, Bahareh Ashraf HESARI2,*

1Department of Architecture, Shahroud Branch, Islamic Azad Univeristy, Shahroud, Iran
2Department of Architecture, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad Univeristy, Mashhad, Iran

Received: 22.03.2015; Accepted: 29.05.2015

Abstract. With the expansion of geographical territories of city and consequently, change in the functional aspect of city borders from wall and compass to urban edges- suburb- the concept of city entrance has changed as an entrance to boundaries different from nature. In other words, changing position from nature to city and vice versa has occurred without any mediator or soft space and two unfamiliar environments join to each other with the most terrible way possible. Lack of preparation in entering the city may confuse the new comer audiences and changes the hierarchy of access to that territory and, in the same time, eliminates the sense of presence in that space for permanent audiences (citizens). So, identifying the position of city entrance and organizing and designing it as a mutual space- urban and suburban-seems necessary.

This article briefly reviews the west entrance of Bojnoord as a sample of transit cities and discusses ideas to design and organize this space considering its specific characteristics. We may observe that designing and preparation of spaces and signals that promise the arrival to city, not only reinforce the city foundations from different aspects of framework, spatial and visual, but also establish a proper link with the road outside city as a soft join or convertor transforming outside to inside and help to its spatial clarity and identity.

Keywords: Entrances, transit city, identity, outside and inside space, urban and suburban audiences

INTRODUCTION

With cultural and geographical expansion and territory change of cities and the occurrence of multilateral framework, functional and social transformations in them as bio-complex, concepts like enclosure, limits, and entrances and..., have changed their meaning and value or been completely destroyed. Entrances and exit ways that in ancient cities were exemplified as urban gates have lost their locality and now find meaning just when the audience feels himself completely in the city environment. Now there is nearly no defined location or exact image for the entrance joint of city. In fact, we may argue that penetrating the city territory is possible from several points, points that often lack framework or symbolic characteristics of entering the new territory. The signs showing entrance to urban environaments are nowadays mostly a few signs showing geographical and political boundary, welcome signs, entrance boulevards and squares that are repeated more or less for all cities with similar characteristics. This is while the entrance concept finds functional meaning when there is a clear definition of in and outside.

Generally we may say that entrance concept doesn’t act as transferring the city characteristics and location feeling but acts as just a sign for changing motor scale and it seems that this scale change may not be defined for a special and specific location. Sometimes this may result in

* Corresponding author. Somaye NORAEI

Special Issue: Technological Advances of Engineering Sciences

http://dergi.cumhuriyet.edu.tr/ojs/index.php/fenbilimleri ©2015 Faculty of Science, Cumhuriyet University
disorder in motor and functional system inside the city. Lack of location of spatial sign which may prepare the audience for entering a new territory and arouse the sense of belonging to the city is a critical subject that must be addressed. So, in this research we have tried to study the issues around the entrance of Bojnoord and the quality of territory effect, functional, framework and symbolic characteristics and features, and discuss ideas to organize and design it.

**Entry concept**

In order to recognize entry procedure and city entrance concept, we should discuss entry briefly. It should be mentioned that entry concept has special qualities and complexities, so historically city entry has always had extraordinary importance (Nuremberg Schultz). We should generally state that entry is not just a physical location to enter and exit, but it carries deeper artistic, visual and philosophical concepts. The main role of entry is mediating between two territory which links in and outside. Auto Fredrisch Bolenov argues that this duality between inside and outside is the base of space understanding and may be followed in all aspects of human life (Grouter, Y.) Human being needs outside and inside space and requires moving between these two. Norberg Schultz believes that the relation between inside and outside is one of the basic principles of architecture (Grouter, Y.)

**Identity, structure, framework-spatial organization of Bojnoord**

Bojnoord is a city located in the north of Khorasan with the approximate width of 17245 square kilometers. This city is limited from north to Turkmenistan, eastern south to Esfarayen, and northern west to southern west to Semnan. It is the capital of Northern Khorasan and located in a special geographic position and in the high traffic road of Tehran- Golestan- Mashhad. The approximate distance of Bojnoord with the first big city of Golestan province (Azadshahr) is nearly 240 km. This has increased the communicational importance of Bojnoord for the travelers of round trip road as a place to stop and stay. (Seyedizade, A& Abbasian) Most of the travelers of northern cities or pilgrims of Imam Reza spend at least several hours in Bojnoord. Besides this city is considered as the territorial border between Golestan (north) and Khorasan (east) and so the sudden change of plant coverage and natural perspectives before and after passing this city converts it to a territorial and geographical turning point during the way. Although because of the change in political position of Bojnoord and because it has converted to the province capital, the administrational stops and traffics are mostly performed in the city but Bojnoord has hold its past feature as a transit city in the way of Tehran and Mashhad. Considering the general feature of Bojnoord, a main requirement of it to attract tourists and establish its touristic position is to prepare residential and touristic facilities especially for travelers who are going to stay there for a short time. Since Bojnoord is near Khorasan northern border and the possibility of travel to central Asia countries, some travelers of this city and traders and merchants. This group may stay longer and require more facilities. So considering the special geographical, economic and political position of Bojnoord in all architectural and city planning projects seems necessary.

It should be mentioned that the most important point in the procedure of developing and transforming the city is upgrading its urban identity. Any city should be a first grade place to live and work. What make a city such a place are not compression of its buildings and not the wandering network of access but the belonging and locality sense. A place many people with much commonality continue living in a collective territory. In addition the city should be a long lasting and memorable place for its non-native audiences. So in order to upgrade urban framework and structural status like Bojnoord we should keep in mind that the memory of city is made by main elements like squares, memorials, streets and traditional context and the designer or planner is obliged to keep and reinforce these elements and at the same time add
other functional and memorial elements to the city, so the city will maintain its growth procedure properly and expand in the correct direction.

Entry sections of Bojnoord

Access to Bojnoord, considering its geographical and natural characteristics, is possible from three ways: eastern furthermost which enables communication with Mashhad and other eastern cities of northern Khorasan, and Razavi Khorasan; western furthermost in the initial stage of going to the northern cities and acts as the communicative path relating eastern provinces (northern and Razavi Khorasan) and northern provinces (Golestan, Mazandaran, and Gilan) and the southern furthermost which is the origin of travel to Esfarayen, Jajarm and Sabzevar. Among these three sections, western and eastern entries (entrances from Tehran road and Mashhad) have formal and suburban features because of the traffic of pilgrims and travelers. The establishment of Baba Aman touristic and recreational complex in the eastern entrance and Besh Ghardash in the southern entrance, it seems necessary to provide especial facilities for the audiences entering from Tehran road (the eastern entrance). So the local situation of the western entrance of Bojnoord is chosen as the first priority for organizing local situation of city entrance and creating identity hierarchy for the connection of suburban access axis to the public urban spaces, and also functional equipping of the city limits as the entertainment space. City entrance design should be so that the information required by the audience is provided as symbols, signs and metaphors step by step and once entering the city and presence in its spaces, the required preparation will be created and the usual stress in entering from suburban highway to urban streets will be minimized.

Western entrance features

1) One of the most important features of Bojnoord is its natural location and extraordinary landscape. When the audience approaches from west to Bojnoord, he will observe an unusual and beautiful perspective of the general landscape which changes alternatively when coming down the mountain and becomes clearer. This natural feature and the form of entering the city from the elevation and coming down the mountainside, and also watching the vast and unique scene in front, encourages the audience to stay in the city for a short time and have a temporary rest. And also because of the effect of urban perspective in the mind of audience the first confrontation with the city gradually occurs and the audience finds himself in city environment and understands the urbanity aspects of it. In this way he will have the proper opportunity and sufficient distance to gradually communicate with the public space of city and remain in its social environment, (www.khorasannews.com)

Design bases and general ideas

When designing city entry we confront two audiences: first, the citizens of the city who directly communicate with the city spaces and second the travelers that we confront with temporarily and require special spaces and facilities. In order to design city entry, the target population includes a vast group of citizens and all travelers who enter or exit the city by ground roads. In this way, it seems that most part of studies and programming in every project relating to the city entry should be performed by travelers, but we shouldn’t forget that users of city spaces even in the entrances are the citizens.

In addition, because in most cities suitable spaces haven’t been designed for the audiences, the entrance squares have been converted to residence centers. This may cause traffic interference of riders and pedestrians. 

1215
In transit cities like Bojnoord in which travelers pass to travel other cities, most of the spaces provided for these audiences are used just in special seasons. So, in order to design these spaces, they should pay attention to their flexibility and possibility of using them during the whole year for citizens.

The main concern for designing project spaces is that the place of entering the city should be designed and equipped in a way that if designed in any other place except the place for entering the city, it would show its incompatibility with the environment around it. In fact, city entrance is the suitable factor to give identity to a city, a procedure which may be designed and performed with its special characteristic just in the entrance of city. A process of changing the system of driving outside city to the traffic movement inside the city; moving from boundlessness of the nature to urban intertwined system; from the scale of driving speed to the scale of urban movement; form lack of details and hierarchy to the increase of density of details and urban symbols; form coarse grained compactness of suburb to residential fine grained compactness inside the city; from sparse plant cover to the systematic thick green layer and from the natural symbols in the way to the urban manufactured symbols.

In fact, the entrance procedure is a joint between inside and outside; a joint which has accommodated all these reciprocal and convertible factors in it and the main feature dominating this procedure is the importance of this hierarchy and proper design of these convertible details. Hence the entrance of Bojnoord has been designed in 5 consecutive sequences and a zero sequence which has been acquired by default from the facilities of existing situation. (Fig. 1)

Figure 1. The sequencing and spatial system of entrance limits in the suggested plan (source: author).

The zero sequence in this project is applied to the first point of visibility of city perspectives in the tortuous pass which may not be altered because of its much distance from the city but the location of an interurban mosque and travelers’ service complex are considered as the first signs of approaching Bojnoord. In this point located in about 5 km from the city, the far perspective of the city comes continuously in front of the eyes of driving audiences and about 2 km from the city this scene covers the sight horizon completely. This is the point that the first sequence of project begins (the veranda). The plan for designing and the characteristics of first sequence is as follows:

- Defining and equipping traffic of the road as a sign for approaching the city
- Nearly dense plant coverage in the right edge of the road
- Emphasizing the plant coverage importance in Bojnoord as the territorial border of Khorasan and Golestan as a symbol for beginning artificial manipulation in nature
- Platforms and terraces which expand as they reach the summit to approach the main platform of sightseeing.
City Entrance as Suitable Potentials to Gain Identity: A Case Study in West Entrance of Bojnoord

- Emphasizing the importance of far perspective especially in the night and also the fifth view of the project.
- The function of terminal outside the city as the main function of first sequence. Creating a suburb function which answers simultaneously to the requirements of city and passengers.
- Locations related to terminal which includes nearly all equipped parts of the city (combination of terminal with the green belt).
- City roof restaurant in the summit which emphasizes the requirements of passengers and travelers besides city perspective and the fifth view of project. (Reminding us of the ancient state castles which were built as the first center of city building on top of the hill).
- Touristic-recreational street with a network-like geometrical system, reminding us of ancient Bojnoord urban structure as a military city.

At the end of first sequence of project, in a place provided by city, to join entrance axis traffic to the northern and southern side road, a semi-clover intersection with different altitudes has been designed which traffic studies show that acts the best in response to the characteristics of this region. The symbolic form of the gate is also associated with the design of this intersection. The intersection with different altitudes and the related links form the second sequence of the project which besides its traffic function creates visual and symbolic changes in the process.

After this intersection the third sequence of project begins. In this section the road level gradually comes down and it becomes necessary to create an opportunity for providing calmness, reducing speed and prepare the audience for settling in the final section of the entrance procedure. This opportunity is created through lack of so much details and increasing the importance of vision axis and the final point of vision. The main role of this sequence is the importance of main road traffic combination with the slow moving and links of intersections with different elevations and the division of industrial suburb.

With about 500 meters the initial square of the city begins according to the comparative plan of the fourth sequence of project which is completely related to the former sequence. This stage was the most important part of project because of the increase in urban density, increase in details and functions and the necessity to completely prepare the audience to enter the urban context. The fourth sequence of project accommodates more detailed hierarchy which satisfies the need to increase details hierarchically. The designed plan for the fourth sequence is as follows:
Figure 2. A general scheme from the ideas of suggested plan (source: author).

- Suggested complex as the general offices required for the city which is located according to the opinion and necessity of city (with the formal idea of city wall). Using administrative coarse grains may ensure the survival of project.
- Two linear parks with similar recreation-touristic functions were organized in both sides of project. This was made with the idea of emphasizing symmetry when approaching the city and with the increase in plant coverage density. (fig.2)
- Centers of information and purchase for travelers are considered for the travelers in linear parks.
- When approaching the city, pedestrian overpasses while emphasizing transversal communication, defines the rhythm and hierarchy and increases details.
- Garden ditches or transversal communication in the under alignment was formed to complete the abovementioned idea.
- The idea of planning market overpass- converting an overpass to a functional complex (touristic shopping mall)- on one hand completes the administrative, recreation, touristic, and residential- located on the back layer- and on the other hand connects two urban spaces on two sides of the path.
- Designing urban spaces on two sides as pedestrian gatherings’ squares contributes to the survival and dynamism of administrative spaces besides linear parks.
- Slow moving vehicles with traffic functions are created to service the functionality of two sides, because there is no possibility to divide directly from fast moving to the around mass. Besides slow moving vehicles, parking and side services special for travelers and administrative personnel and their clients are provided.

The final sequence of procedure is considered an important sequence and has mutual function and concept. A square with the dominant role of traffic knot which acts as a divider and moderator of driving traffic is like a filter for entering the city. This square with elliptical form expresses the different concept and function for entrance and exit. Besides, the location of a sign in the best view from entrance axis in elliptical focus increases its visual function and
symbolic importance. In fact the square is the turning point of entrance procedure to be converted to an urban substructure. Its formal composition along the extension of entrance route emphasizes the sequence change of two sides. This square acts like the final point for entry procedure and the beginning point for being located in urban environment.

CONCLUSION

We now find out that what is required for a city in its entry point is the procedure which accommodates the feeling of change and movement besides creating identifying elements which are familiar with the city. Now we are not supposed to wait for an edge as the physical border for the city to differentiate outside from inside because these two are connected together. What is now necessary is a joint to facilitate and define the proper system to move between two different fields. It is a scenario to familiarize city for an unfamiliar audience and gain identity and personality for the citizen; a field for welcoming and escorting and…

In fact, designing city entrance is to plan a two featured project: a feature to the nature and a feature to the city. A chain of spaces that join to each other, convert to each other and finally reach from infinitude to the density of city and civilization. In fact what is considered the main idea of project is the concept of transition; transition from nature to artifact, from organic system to geometrical system, from infinitude to density and suburb to city; transition including hierarchy to focus more on the characteristics of each stage.

REFERENCES