

The role of Cultural Gathering Spaces in the Promotion of Citizen Quality of Life

Case study: Tehran City Theater

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Abstract

A city as a context of urban human life requires meeting some standards which at a glance are called the standards of life quality. In fact, the quality of life is a complex and multi-dimensional concept. Measuring the quality of life in Iran, according to particular social, economic and cultural conditions of this country and also the emphasis of country twenty years visions on this issue, has special importance. Cultural gathering spaces improve social and economic vitality in one side and in other side provide favorable conditions for citizen leisure. Theatres are one of cultural complexes which have important role in the promotion of citizens' quality of life. What is today known as Tehran City Theatre is a beautiful circular cylindrical building which is located at Daneshjoo park ,Vali-e-Asr crossroad ,Tehran city; and for some reasons daily attracts hundreds of people. The objective of this study is to explain the role of City Theatre in promoting citizens' quality of life. Research method is analytical descriptive. Data collection method has been based on researcher's objective assessments and filling questionnaire. Cochran's formula was used to determine sampling volume and questionnaires were distributed among citizens of district 11, Tehran city; then 480 questionnaires gathered and analyzed. The research findings show that City Theatre has an effective and positive role on mental dimension of citizens' quality of life. The capabilities of this collection can be increased for citizens' quality of life by creating facilities such as transportation control and avoiding interference of riding and pedestrian, creating sitting and pause spaces in this collection, and spaces associated with this collection using.

Keywords: Cultural spaces, gathering spaces, quality of life, Tehran City Theatre

Introduction

Currently, more than half of world's population live in urban area and by 2020 this figure will reach to 60%; so, urbanization phenomenon has become an inevitable work. Human habitat can provide the most desirability for human when it meets his/her expectations (Kakavand et al., 2013). Responding to human social and cultural needs and supplying the necessary opportunities to gain social experiences require the existence of spaces and physical settlements (Charkhian, Daneshpour, 2009). But what makes these spaces socially active; at first are physical factors that can underlie for individuals' entry and then stop within the space. Anticipation and creation of social events while

creating opportunities to participate in social activities can ground the promotion and dependency to the location (Lennard, 1984; Piran, 2001).

Cultural spaces ground individuals' presence in the city (Bakhtiar, Nasrabadi, 2011), provide social interactions and reactions, and create a shared collective memory, sense of dependency to space and quality control of the urban landscape (Charkhian, Daneshpour, 2007; Yazdani, Lavasani, 2010). Surveying the importance of cultural and gathering spaces in the city structure, it becomes clear that cultural and gathering spaces take place with interactive dialogue among citizens in the form of face to face meeting and holding presentation, social and cultural cer-

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emony (Mirmoghtadaie, 2009); and today they are remarkable as one of the fundamental characteristics in new urbanism idea. The shortage of such spaces is obvious in Tehran. City Theatre may be today counted as a few examples of successful cultural gathering spaces in Iran (Rafieyan, Razavi, 2010). Unfortunately, cultural gathering spaces in Iran have been less exploited for promotion and strengthening of urban life. Research findings can provide useful information for planning of development and the strategies that promote citizens quality of life. Hence, this paper studied City Theatre with the aim of investigating the role of cultural gathering spaces in the promotion of citizens' quality of life.

Theoretical basis and concepts

Quality of life

One of the most important streams of thoughts that influence on urban planning has been the concept of urban quality of life (Kokabi, et al., 2005). The quality of life in urban areas is considered as comfortable life and access to basic needs in an urban environment (Eiser, 2004). The quality of life may be a good sense that results from a combination of factors associated with the sense of location or location identity such as legibility, collective memory and the sense of historical dependency (Profect, Power, 1992; Khastoo, Saeedi Rezvani, 2010). Most scholars and experts believe that the quality of life has physical-environmental, social, psychological, environmental and economic dimensions (Fatahi, 2008). Measuring the quality of urban life (Jajarmi, Kalteh, 2006) has been conducted based on four key indicators of urban life each contains many variables in order to measure the grades exactly (Table 1).

Octoploid dimensions constituting the concept of quality of life were determined in an analysis which was conducted by Shalook (2006) according to the study of 9749 articles abstracts, 2455 articles and 897 deep studies of article using the most accurate crite-

ria and due to empirical basis and using authors' reference to one or more special dimensions of the quality of life.

Environmental culture-city

City cannot be merely defined as a place for living a group of people together, because this definition is also true for human gathering habitats in pre-civilization and even pre-historic periods (Piran, 2001). Cultural development is prerequisite for each development. Development is not possible without achieving its special culture (Moradi, 2010). According to the same point, the category of cultural spaces of the city obtained by adding civilization to buildings construction, living places and social interaction of people; so that material needs including cultural needs of the community are supplied (Pakzad, 2001; Fani, 2009). Because civilization is essentially founded on the idea, culture, individual and social rights and other categories like that, which are subjective affairs and independent of material concept of living place. Culture is a part of environment which is manipulated by human (Kaffashi, 2008). Culture includes all the factors that individual has unconsciously affected by them; human groups, or techniques and various methods, social institutions, beliefs and different forms of contact and etc. (Gharb, 2001). Culture is a tool for adaptation with environment. Culture is not static but mobile and dynamic. Changes occur in evolution way and their song is different in different societies. Financial and spiritual investment can be thought at the macro level for long-term cultural output and deeper and more positive influence on citizens mind in order to further flourishing of potential powers and creativity existing in different generations of the community (Imani Jajarmi, 2001; Ghasemzadeh, 2012; Mohammadi, Izadi, 2013).

Spaces and cultural activities

To achieve progress and development, nations require recognizing their history, and in the present era cultural complexes include a part of heritages and relics relat-

Table 1. Key indicators of urban life

Indicators	Variables	References
Social and aesthetic	Social or public security, Spaces for leisure, Pedestrian spaces, Green and open spaces, Spatial order, Perspective sequence, legibility, Visibility, Spatial perception	(Mukherjee, 1989), (May, 1996), (Ibrahim, Chung, 2003), (Ventegots, Jovvj, 2003) (Schalock, 2004), (Abbaszadegan, 2005), (Kokabi et al., 2005), (Golkar, 2007), (Rabbani Khorasgani, Kianpour, 2007), (Kokabi, 2007), (Nejat, 2008), (Noghani, et al., 2008), (Faraji Molaei, et al., 2010), (Ghorbani and Teimouri, 2010), (Rafieyan, Razavi, 2010), (Hajinejad, et al., 2011), (Ghasemzadeh, 2012), (Ghasemzadeh and Toofan, 2013), (Mousavi et al., 2013)
Economic	Supplying initial resources, Purchasing power, Residential land values, Job satisfaction	
Physical	Habitable space, Major housing facilities, Housing ownership, Number of rooms, Building arrangement	
Communication and Transportation	Communications tools, Public transportation, Traffic flow, Satisfaction of inner-city tours	

Table 2. *Dimensions constituting the concept of quality of life*

Octoploid dimensions constituting the concept of quality of life	Indicator and descriptive
Emotional Well-being	1.Satisfied (satisfaction, moods, enjoy) 2. Self - concepts (identity, self-worth, self-esteem) 3. Lack of stress (predictability, control)
Interpersonal Relations	1.Interactions (social networks, social contacts) 2. Relationships (family, friends, peers) 3.Supports (emotional, physical, financial, feedback)
Material Well-being	1.Financial base (revenue, profit) 2. Employment status (job status, work environment) 3.Housing (type of residence, ownership)
Personal Development	1. Education (achievements, academic base) 2. Individual competence (cognitive, social , practical) 3.Performance (success, achievement, efficiency)
Physical Well-being	1. Health (functional, symptoms, fitness, nutrition) 2.Daily physical activities (self-care skills, mobility) 3. Leisure (entertainment, hobby)
Self-determination	1. Independency / self-control (lack of dependency) 2.Personal goals and values (wishes and expectations) 3.Selections (opportunities, alternatives, preferences)
Social inclusion	1. Participation and integration in the community 2. Social roles (donor, volunteers) 3. Social supports (support networks, services)
Rights	1. Human rights (respect, dignity, equality) 2. Legal rights (citizenship, enjoyment, process)

Source: Schalock, 2006

ed to the past. A significant part of culture returns to the country monuments, those which perhaps include contemporary history in which type of life shows the tools of each period of history and each of them have a cultural manifestation (Tweed, Sutherland, 2007). Spaces, social, cultural and service centers in the city are created followed by social needs and activities and to supply them (Kaffashi, 2008; Rafieian, Razavi, 2010). In other words, a social or cultural center is a place for gathering and integrating the components of needs and activities in order to make them physical or run them in the frame work of physical spaces and continue social life of urban community (Daneshpour, Charkhian, 2007; Yazdani, Lavasani, 2010; Ghsemzadeh, Toofan, 2013). Accordingly, all social needs of city residents and the necessity of integration and making them physical to establish social life of urban community should be analyzed in detail (Karen, 2002; Kashanijoo, 2010; Fazeli, 2012) and appropriate contexts to be provided for creating social spaces. Appropriate recognition of activity spaces and locations in spatial and physical design relies on this trend. Social and cultural spaces of urban community are the place of supply and demand for activities, and spatial reflex of social supply and demand (Parsi, 2002; Ghasemzadeh, 2012).

City Theatre

This building is located at the intersection of Vali-e-Asr and Islamic revolution streets, in the southwest

corner of Daneshjoo park. This cylindrical building has a diameter of approximate 34 m and a height of 15 m, its exterior facing all covered with turquoise tiles and a stoic with extended pillars and trefoil star base covering it around, the curved beams have kept the protruded ceiling of the building (Naghsh consulting engineers, 2008). Where professional play works of Iran theatre staged in its halls by famous directors and actors (Figure 1) (Yazdani, Lavasani, 2010).

Hypotheses

1. City Theatre has played an important role on the promotion of the quality of citizens' life.
2. City Theatre has played an important role in citizens' satisfaction feeling of life.
3. City Theatre has played an important role in citizens' happiness and joy feeling of life.
4. City Theatre has played an important role in citizens' leisure.

Methodology

The present research is descriptive and explanatory, and survey method is used to conduct it. The research that is conducted in order to make positive alterations is developmental research, and also practical because it is useful and can be used for several urban organizations like municipality. Document-

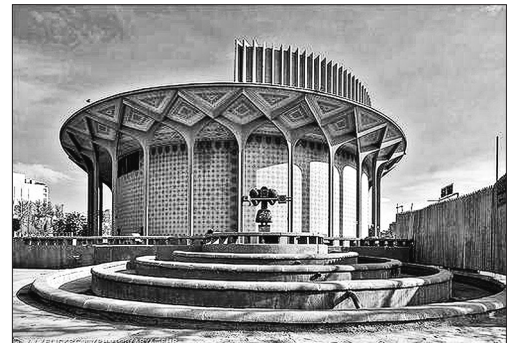
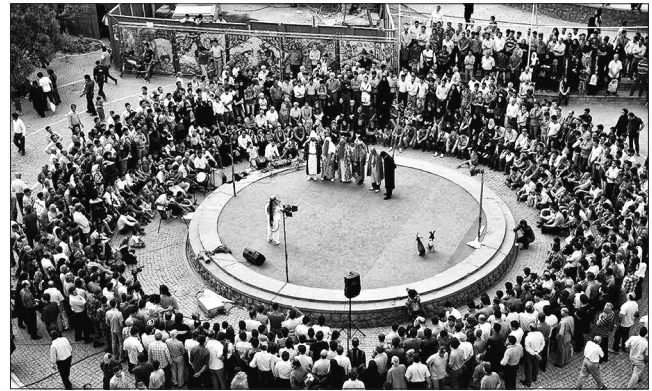


Figure 1. Tehran City Theatre

tation study by which the conceptual and theoretical investigation were done on this subject, such that the researcher could present conceptual and theoretical definitions of each variable (Hafeznia, 2006) and use previous methods and studies results in the research. Survey method is considered as the most common research method in human sciences and its prominent property is use of questionnaire tool in data collection. In this study, the researcher gave respondents several items in form of questionnaire, so all of them answered to similar questions. These items measure research variables and final analysis is done based on the results obtained from variables relationships. Statistical population of this research includes all citizens resident in the district 11. Kokaran equation (Fanni, 2009) was used to determine sampling volume. According to formula, 525 questionnaires were distributed among respondents that the information obtained from 480 questionnaires was analyzable.

Findings

City Theatre and leisure

To test research hypotheses, research variables including feeling of happiness, leisure and life satisfaction were investigated. Results of questionnaires distributed among citizens based on Table 3 and Figure 2 indicate that 35.4 percent of citizens go watching theatre to the City Theatre and 19.9 percent of them select entertainments like cafes and City Theatre restaurants for their leisure. It can be said that locating at Vali-e-Asr crossroad; City Theatre has played an important role in residents' leisure and promoting the quality of citizens' life. Visiting numbers of City Theatre also indicate that how much this collection has tied to citizens' life. Also, statistics show that during a week, 40.5 percent of citizens visit the City Theatre three times or more; this can emphasize on the importance of this art collection in citizens' leisure.

Table 3. *City Theatre and leisure*

Entertainments like cafes and restaurants	Numbers	Percent	Visiting numbers of City Theatre during a week	Numbers	Percent
Watching theatre	192	35.4	One time	100	32.3
Optimum use of their time	111	23.8	Two times	131	27.3
Gathering resorts and meeting friends	85	20.9	Three times	102	21.3
Entertainments like cafes, restaurants	92	19.9	More than three times	92	19.2
Total	480	100	Total	480	100

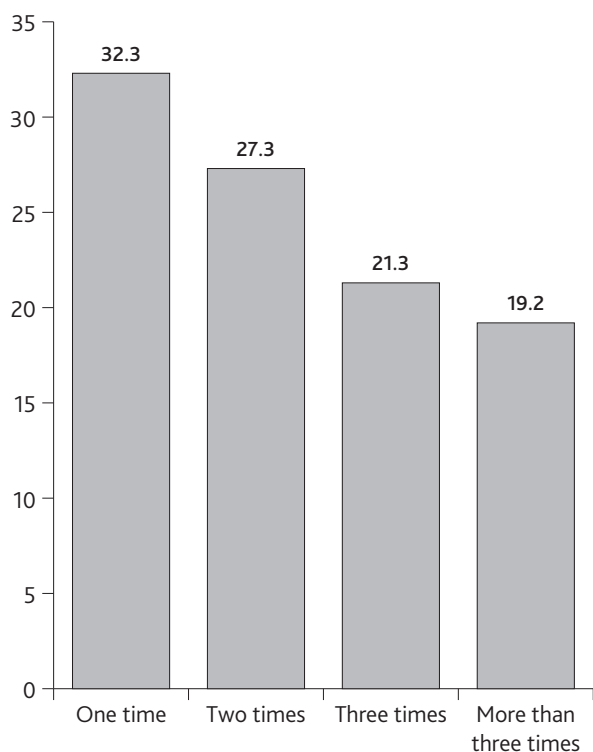


Figure 2. Entertainments like cafes, restaurants

City Theatre and feeling of life satisfaction

One of the mental dimensions of quality of life is the feeling of life satisfaction. In the present study, the feeling of life satisfaction was studied as a result of citizens' attendance in City Theatre Collection. The obtained results indicate that 37.3 percent of citizens which are equal to 179 persons of questioned statistical population visit the City Theatre in a large part of their life. This group includes more university students and cultural community; this shows the importance of the City Theatre in citizens' life. Also, in response to this question: in total, am I satisfied of my life; 17.7 percent have responded positively. Feelings of joy and happiness are subjective criteria of quality of life; in the present research it is decided to investigate its relationship with the City Theatre. The results of Table 4 indicate that 32.1 percent of citizens feel happy

Table 4. The feeling of satisfaction and happiness from life

The feeling of satisfaction from life	Numbers	Percent	The feeling of happiness and joy	Numbers	Percent
Visiting the City Theatre includes a large part of my life	179	37.3	I enjoy watching theatre	154	32.1
Availability of the City Theatre meet a part of my needs	156	32.5	I am very excited to be at City Theatre Complex	141	29.4
The City Theatre located near my residential place	60	12.5	Elapsed times in the City Theatre are the moments combined with happiness	97	20.2
Totally I am satisfied from my life	85	17.7	I like the City Theatre complex more than any other places	88	18.3
Total	480	100	Total	480	100

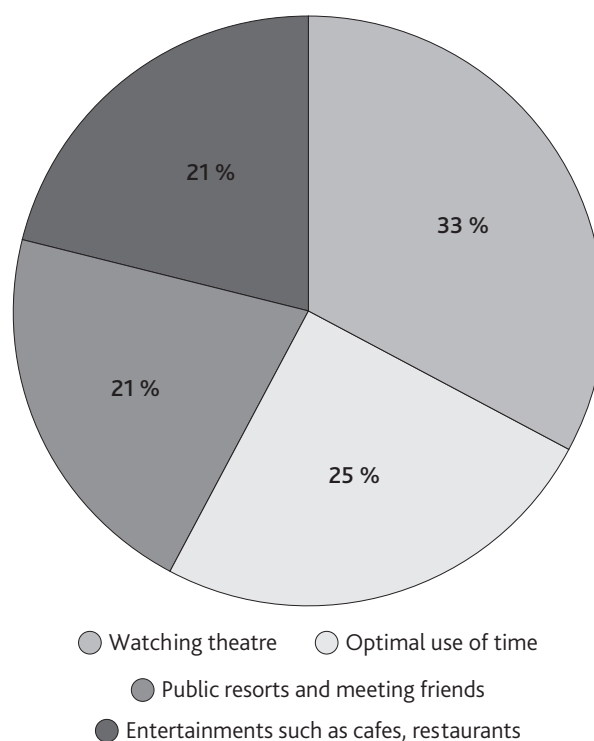


Figure 3. Visiting numbers of City Theatre during a week

ness and joy when they watch theatre; also 29.4 percent feel excitement when they are in the City Theatre collection and from its dynamism and vitality. In total, it can be said that the City Theatre plays an important role on citizens' joy and happiness.

Inferential findings of the research

Hypothesis Ho: It seems that the City Theatre has not played an important role in the promotion of subjective dimension of citizens' quality of life.

Hypothesis H1: It seems that the City Theatre has played an important role in the promotion of subjective dimension of citizens' quality of life. The following table shows that total model is significant. Generally in this table, if the significant level of f-statistic is small (less than 0.05), independent varia-

Table 5. Investigating the significance of the City Theatre in the promotion of subjective dimension of citizens' quality of life

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	6.225	5	1.112	406.137	0.008
Residual	0.731	244	0.003		
Total	6.846	249			

Adjusted R Square:/862

Table 6. Investigating the significance of the City Theatre in citizens' life satisfaction

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	1.221	5	0.247	879.264	0.004
Residual	0.058	244	0.001		
Total	1.401	249			

Adjusted R Square:/847

Table 7. Investigating the significance of the City Theatre in citizens' happiness and joy

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	3.241	5	0.333	912.239	0.025
Residual	0.070	244	0.045		
Total	2.221	249			

Adjusted R Square:/689

Table 8. Investigating the significance of the City Theatre in citizens' leisure

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	6.352	5	0.289	743.146	0.016
Residual	0.46	244	0.076		
Total	3.471	249			

Adjusted R Square:/753

bles can explain clearly the alterations of dependent variables. If this value is greater than 0.05, independent variables do not explain the alterations of dependent variables. "Adjusted R square" is also an amount of variance in the dependent variables that is explained by the independent variables.

According to Table 5, it is observed that the value of F is equal to 406.137 significance of 0.008 and since the significance level has been less than 0.05, then the model is significant.

According to Table 6, it is observed that the value of F is equal to 879.264 significance of 0.004 and since the significance level has been less than 0.05, then the model is significant.

According to Table 7, it is observed that the value of F is equal to 912.239 significance of 0.025 and since the significance level has been less than 0.05, then the model is significant.

According to Table 8, it is observed that the value of F is equal to 743.146 significance of 0.016 and since the significance level has been less than 0.05, then the model is significant.

Conclusion

Creating a dynamic cultural space by taking advantage of social capabilities and the promotion of participation opportunities in the gathering life requires an understanding of space and its multi-faceted look of designers and urban planners in this regard. The quality of life with the same level of access to valuable subjective and objective opportunities through both public and private area is accessible. Spaces such City Theatre with their collective cultural performance can be a powerful and useful context for urban economy, strengthening social-cultural communications, creating security and trust in urban area, social control, increasing mental sensitivities and supplying emotional balance, strengthening aesthetic sensitivities, socialization and acculturation that affect the promotion of the quality of citizens' life. If this building was brought to the depth and inside the park, park becomes a beginning to enter the theater; and so the park was more alive and effective and social interaction was increased and hierarchy to reach the theatre formulated. These results can help in policies evaluation, ranking places, organizing management strate-

gies and urban planning and facilitate understanding prioritization of social issues for planners and urban management in order to promote the quality of citizens' life. In total, from the factors effective on the success of gathering cultural spaces in the promotion of the quality of citizens' life, a proper geometric position, adjacency to coherent and consistent axis, diversity of social-cultural function for space users, attendance of memorable elements can be pointed.

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