

Barriers to child participation in the formation of urban space

Shohre Ezzatian

M.A in urban design, University of Tehran

Ezzatian.2011@gmail.com

Abstract | After legislating the rules on children's rights and focusing on their citizen's rights since 1980s, children's cooperative participation has been considered by urban designers and planners. Participation in design process of urban spaces let children to be shared in creating their life's spaces and making their environment proportional to their opinions and ideas.

Since children have their unique physical, mental and personality characteristics, their participation process will be defined proportionally to their settings in the society. The aim of this research is to investigate the experiences of administrative projects on children's participation in the process of urban spaces design in Iran and in the world, so in this way, the practical principles could be suggested for regulating the process of children's cooperative participation in Iran's society. The research method in this article is descriptive – analytic. The article has assessed the approach and process of children's participation in designing urban spaces in Iran and in the world, and used library resources and reviewed the results of practical experiences.

The results of the research show that focus on theoretical basics and principles of backup theory are not enough for planning the process of children's participation. It is necessary to identify the effective factors in success or failure of children's cooperative participation using administrative solutions of experiences in different societies and apply them to accomplish children participatory urbanism project in the process of urban spaces design in Iran.

Keywords | children, children's cooperative participation, participatory urbanism, children friendly urban spaces.

Introduction | Today's great attention to children's right, international communities try to provide logical situation for regarding the rights of young citizens. Therefore, the opportunity is marked for their presence in rules, laws and urban rights. In addition to focus on providing children's basic needs and their need to play, the importance of their participation in the place making process has been emphasized in international and internal approvals.

This provided opportunity has expected from government, special affected group in urban planning and decision making, implement children's opinions in the collaborative process of urban designing.

Questions:

- 1- What are the success and failure factors in collaborative projects in the world and Iran?
- 2- What is the practical framework in children participation process in urban design?
- 3- What approaches and structures have to be considered to succeed in the process of children participation?

Theories and background data for children participation in the urban design process

Children participation is a platform for children that can present their opinions on surrounding environment (Hart, 2002: 136). This kind of participation has found a legal situation in the late of 1980s with proving the convention on the rights of the child in the United Nations. This right was the most important international document about children, and it was the first international legal tool which guarantees extended kind of human rights for children.

In this treaty as "Declaration of Human Rights" for children, it is requested from approval countries to make a situation in which children can have an active and creative role in the social and political life in their countries, and governments support them and their appropriate activities in the effected themes in their life with giving their ideas (Driskell, 2009: 28).

Executive activities in all fields do in order to pay attention to this provision since the adoption of international rules. So that the experts in the field of urbanization, architecture and designers in the procedural aspects of designing urban space try to support children's rights by making opportunities to express children's opinions and delivering their voices to the authorities and create a child-centered space with their collaboration) Becker, 2011.

herefore studies and field studies were done for setting theoretical foundations and hypothesis of supporting children's rights in the city, their presence in the urban space and finally their participation in urban design process, so that children are recognized as citizens in this field that need support and protection in terms of their age.

At first nations accepted children's right of playing by organizations such as IPA. This right had useful effects on thought and practice for children's participation as powerless partic-

ipators. Experts such as Hart (1997), Bartlett (1999), Riokeen (1995), and Chawla (2001) have studies in this field (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002: 159).

In addition, some contemporary projects accomplished in children's rights as children's city council and child friendly city that UNICEF supports them. Child friendly city projects were carried out from 1995 for implementing children's rights in local-wide and became a social movement from 1996. The aims of these projects were setting impractical and lawful frameworks based on children's right, setting budget planning for children and presenting implementing process and supporting of children's rights (Child Rights Information Network 2008: 17-18). Since then, from the early twenty-first century, Institutionalizing of children's participation became the center of experts activities. In this period, children had been considered as adult fellows and they had taken part in the designing process in organizational framework that made by adults with accepting the same knowledge and power as adults. At this time some urban development projects have been done in developed countries for Institutionalizing children's participation which is generally limited to the environmental changes or idealization for what children want from environment (Francis & Lorenzo, 2002: 165).

Of the major achievements of this period are the effort for children participation, in spite of the realism of their life period, with future approach in order to use participation process as an interactive dialogue process and futuristic among children and adults. This provided background is defined in a range of different kinds of traditional participation that simply involved children and tried to help them to do as a child beside adults.

The main advantage of this approach is the full presence of children in society along with increased and controlled monitoring of adults. Sustainable cities movement was a good base for developing this field. These projects using interdisciplinary theories for environmental designing which involved people in designing their environment, plan a mutual educational process among citizens and designers and enter children to the environmental planning directly. (Hasirici et al, 2007: 5-6).

In recent years of 21 century, which has passed over a decade, with spreading the interdisciplinary environmental design and attempts to solve social problems with collaborative activities, the approach of creating inter-organizational spaces has been in central focus for the realization of social justice and the creation of a collaborative culture for place making and the expansion of social capital. In practice-oriented theory, the goal was the promotion of stakeholder dominance on their used space. Therefore, in relation to children and their participation spaces, the aim is to increase children childhood and to maintain their social spaces in a logical equilibrium of adult supervision. In this approach, children beside adults defend their rights and take part in provided opportunity of social participation.

Presenting the social capital theories in city from Pantam (2000) and Adlrookoon (2002), setting up a friendly partnership culture

(Subramania, 2010) for creating organizational programs and operating out two strategies “ YIG: Youth in governance” and “ Y/AP: Youth-adult partnerships “ at national and local levels are among successful actions that have been done in this regard (Subramania & Moncloa, 2010: 27).

Research methodology

Present research has written in descriptive- analytical way and data collection has done using library sources; based on literature reviews, documents and available articles in Scientific Information Database and interview with executive groups in Iran. Then for comparative study of the experiences of Iran and the world, first a brief introduction has presented from each of the experiences and the principles of these experiences has surveyed and evaluated by extracting goals, approaches and the process of the realization of children participation. At the end, some solutions has proposed for setting a framework of children participation in Iran.

Practical experience of children participation in urban spaces design in the world

The Charrettes project:

The Charrettes project was done in 2002 in Washington University. In this project Charrettes word used as a description of unique collaborative educational experience that tries to approach the project to its goals in the shortest possible time. Theory and theoretical basis of supporting this project was the realization of social justice in urban space for children which try to implement children`s intellectual and instrumental participation by planning educational workshops collection in designing process.

The goal of this project was place making for children with creating organizational space for their participation in urban management to discover the mutual and effective relationship of urban space on the formation of child`s personality (Sotton & Kemp, 2002: 174-176). So Charrettes` place making activity has started with strategies that surveyed and documented children`s perception and behavioral pattern in neighborhood environment and in relation to neighbors` behavior.

One of the unique characters of this project that make it successful is the mutual participation of university as a supportive science ground and children in school and local space. In this process children with the help of college students as facilitators became familiar with design skills and the masters also led the participation process in a high level. In other words, students as interface try to make a common language within children in school and university. 9-11 -year- old and 14-18 year -old children have taken part. Practical process of the project was holding the gathered meeting in area of designing project. Children can recognize possibilities and problems on site and present their opinions and ideas. At the end, children exhibited their concepts (Pic1).



Pic.1: children`s gathering and drawing the detail in the map. Source: <http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/styles/large/public/2015>.

Achievements of charrette

- 1- Children can become familiar with requests and claims of their surrounded area in participation process and be aware of the facilities that environment gives them.
- 2- This practice made an opportunity for them to independently control surrounding environment in decision making and participation.
- 3- Children`s presence in site makes opportunity for understanding, discovering and surveying the real environment and providing a ground that designer can clearly receive differences and conflicts in the perception of space and discovery of environment.
- 4- Children can enhance common sense, responsibility, and usefulness with taking a part in group.
- 5- Children in an education based process can be aware and become sensitive of their surrounded area and in this way provide more effective ideas. This educational process can merely reinforce children`s creativity and verbal skills and earn the ability to attend children in the community of adults.
- 6- Getting the university together with the real space of children`s lives, they could discover the Shortcoming that are in children`s perception from urban space and environment awareness and the university seeking to supply their needs.
- 7- Children participation process needs to make a common-language among children and designers for recognizing and designing urban space, which using it facilitators, students and researchers can be achieved as interfaces.
- 8- It needs a purposeful framework and organizational base for more exploitation and coherence in the operational process that can lead and organize children participatory activities.

According to operational experience of the Charrette, it determines that some environmental inequalities created for children`s exploitation from urban space can be decreased by informing children from their surroundings and taking advantage of children`s cooperation in recognizing and re-designing of the environment. In this process it is necessary to follow a series of informational and purposeful educational

actions for children in organizational situation and get their opinions and ideas for decreasing these limitations by approaching those to the real life.

Creating a Participation-Friendly Culture project

was finally implemented and evaluated with children's collaborative approach in planning, developing and its organizational program is based on two practical strategies "Youth in governance" and "Youth-adult partnerships". The process of this project had been consisted of different stage such as collaborative awareness, informing, education, ideas.

First, children knew the aims of projects and knowingly took a part in collaborative process. Then, they recognized successful samples of world experiences that gave them good information about children participation with adults and their results. Therefore they could find good under-



Pic.2: children's gathering and exchanging the communications. Source: Kamelnia & Haghiri, 2009.

standing of participation's approach, aims, and results (Subramania & Moncloa, 2010: 28-40, Pic2.)

This collaborative project has used two practical strategies "Youth in governance" and "Youth-adult partnerships." The strategy of Youth in governance is a kind of strategy for changing organizational Infrastructure that make an opportunity for youth in high schools to have annual meetings. In these meetings they can have discussion about their countries' problems with adults and use adult experiences solving them. Children from different cities and countries in this group get familiar together and become aware of other problems and concerns. Also an opportunity is provided that let children to gain skills for making connection and defending their rights and in the form of practice doing some leadership and leading roles and civil responsibilities) Youth in Governance.

This practical strategy can be implemented within international,

national and local wide. For example, "children in governance" program in Washington City is done as a Positive innovative development program for children and teenagers. In this program children involved in a set of actions and organizations to be effective in analyzing and solving their city problems.

This program held annually as a training class with collaboration of schools in Washington D C and its aim is to develop leadership power for children, create civil capacity, enhance children's self-confidence and pay attention to their social roles (Zarovy, 2012).

Moreover the "Youth-adult partnerships" strategy is a kind of strategy for involving teenagers and making opportunities for their problems in collaboration with adults. In this program educational process is prepared in which a teenager can learn, think, and plan with adults and have equal share in decision making process. Thus their merit is recognized for participating in decision making (Russell et al, 2009) and focusing on their collaborative process more than solving the problems. It is somehow a process-oriented project. According to what was investigated, participation-friendly culture project is done in a purposeful process with informing, educating and relying on reviewing the practical experiences, and try to give children a correct understand of collaborative participation with adults.

The results are:

- 1- Children have to be informed about the aims of research in the active and real participation
- 2- Children need to get skills to communicate and get responsibilities for defense of their rights.
- 3- Children have to participate in a process that can practice the leadership and management roles.
- 4- Schools are the best institutions which create communication between children and designers. They can provide possibilities and opportunities for children to get skills, and make place for formal meeting among managers and governmental institutes.
- 5- Children can practice to participate and also get familiar with different cultures and values making organizational infrastructure and coherent time programs.
- 6- In a collaborative process, children have to participate in group according to their merits and learn appropriately with their situation and thought level.
- 7- For success in a collaborative process, a series of target activities in planning and institutional level and in formal and informal situation is needed.

Practical experience of children participation in urban space design in Iran

During recent years in Iran, child friendly city plan is on the agenda in the law of the organization of duties and elections of the Islamic Council of the country with the support of the United Nations (UNICEF). This plan according to additional laws in fields of the development of cultural spaces, leisure and social and measures is to be implemented for the welfare of citizens. It should be noted that Tehran municipality was the secretariat for

leading the child friendly city projects in Middle East's city and north Africa in 2007 and Tehran municipality announcement has declared for cooperation of relevant authorities in performing child friendly city project in 2009 (Islamic council of Tehran city, 2009). Executive projects of the secretariat of Tehran city are consisted of child friendly neighborhood plan in south of Tehran and some social plans related to the women and children problems. According to the result of plans, they could not do effective measures in the whole of Iran. Therefore the social and cultural affairs deputy of Isfahan municipality hold a thinking session with professors and masters of art of Isfahan university and Islamic Azad university of Khorasgan, environmental and urban science groups, group of educational science, social sciences group and consultants and established child friendly city in Isfahan municipality with cooperation of related organizations for a comprehensive quality improvement in children's life (Introduc-



Pic.3: locating the green space in one of tables in Bam child friendly city. Source: http://www.ecpat.org/wp-content/uploads/05/2016/Children_at_table1024-x678.jpg

of children and increase children's knowledge and awareness with meaningful participation methods (Kamel nia & Haghbir, 2009: 80).

The child friendly city plan of Bam included several project which provided children's need functionally and infrastructurally. These projects included construction of a playground, creating hygienic equipment, supplying healthy drink water, equipping schools health facilities, building school, construction of a child-care center.

In planning and designing projects in participation process such as dream school, designer compared the children's priorities with designer group after getting their opinions. Using participation process in this level could adjust users and designers expectations (Pic3). Design indicators that were achieved from the results of this survey for presenting the pattern of green space design are as follow:

- Incorporating the green space with playgrounds; playgrounds have to be full of trees, flowers and lakes or pools.
- Green space and lake is placed as central places in playgrounds.
- Making spaces for adults' presence parallel to that children have

ing Isfahan as a Child Friendly City).

Child friendly city of Bam project

Child friendly city of Bam was established in 2003 after earthquake. UNICEF and other institutes defined this project to collaborate children participation. The most important goals of this plan include the following:

- 1- Enhancing children participation: it had to make opportunities for children to make decision on their environment. It should not happen after decision making but they should involve children while making a decision.
- 2- Increasing the social knowledge: the community has to be informed for enhancing respect to children's rights. And all social levels must have knowledge about this matter.
- 3- Building capacity and enhancing participation: These projects have to upgrade the possibilities, abilities and potential capacities



Pic.4: recognition of the neighborhood and drawing the details in the map by children. Source: Ezzatian, 2013.

their independent spaces for themselves.

- Designing places for children painting and memoir.
- Using light colors, the play of light and shadow in the space and making complex spaces.
- Using favorite materials such as wood, oft and natural elements (Ibid: 80).

Harandi neighborhood, municipality of district 12 of Tehran (as an unfinished project in Iran).

Plan of child friendly neighborhoods was carried out as a pattern from 2007 in Tehran municipality in five neighborhoods collaborating Nutrition and Health Research for Children. Harandi neighborhood was the first place and the plan was planned in 3 phases considering children presence and making their living environment suitable. In the first Phase, gathering information about children situation in the selected neighborhood in Tehran and planning for forming a stakeholder committee was considered that was done with library studies, field studies, forming workgroups, holding workshops. There was an empowerment plan for

mothers and families in the neighborhood to be able to notice children basic needs as a vulnerable group (the Biennial report of Institute of Food helpers 2007, 28-31). According to importance of childhood in this project, the target group was infants up to 9 years old. In the second phase, the plan included locating from current neighborhood status that hold collaborative needs assessment workshops through selecting and introducing representatives for residents. (pic4). In the third phase, making social mobilization and building capacity was expected to codify the document of intervention programs with the participation of residents. Forecasting the plan was finished in the end of the April 2009 (Sheikholeslam, 2008: 22-24).

Because of official reasons and lack of understanding of cooperation between partners, the first phase was done and other stages did not complete. Of course, along with performing the first phase of the project, the child friendly city's office was established in 2010 in Khajo-ye Kermani cultural home placed in Khajo-ye Kermani park and did their activities on education and empowering social cores in the form of classes and workshops. Although the plan of child friendly neighborhood was not complete, world children's research institute, during the research project of child friendly neighborhood, started their activities in Khajoe Kermani cultural home since 2009 and now it has activities in the form of holding classes, workshops and meetings related to its goals (Khozaei, 2011).

According to what was said in the review of this experience, at first this project checked out the social problems to become familiar with neighborhood in the plan. Then getting children's look from the environment, tried to determine their situation in

Harandi neighborhood. Although it was built some special places such as playground and cultural center in the neighborhood, as the result of plan and activities focused on increasing children's health and happiness after reorganization and new management of the neighborhood, but the plan has not entered directly to the physical spatial interventions of the neighborhood.

But Harandi district is a part of deprived areas in south of Tehran and has necessary needs to plan for scattered and non-planning renovation. The positive point of this project was enhancing mothers as a solution for supplying basic children's needs, which are vulnerable, and making social mobilization and capacity building for collaborative management in the district.

Causes of project failure:

- 1- Lack of official and legal support and disagreement on cooperation among organizations
- 2- Paying attention to the social problems should be parallel to the physical spatial issues. In this plan solutions presented for solving social problems are incomplete and inadequate and they have to be in line with residents' capacity economically and culturally.

Research finding

The collaborative participation experience in design process is done in different countries with aim of promoting real participation. some practical projects were done for advancing child participation to examine their theoretical suggestions operationally and to present proposed principals for developing child's participation in designing process of urban spaces.

According to the exploratory and research nature, these projects generally have been supported by governmental and supportive institutes such as UNICEF and each of them has considered dif-

Table 1: Comparative Comparison of children participation in design process of urban spaces. Source: Ezzatian, 2013: 68-69.

title	Child friendly city of Harandi	Child friendly city of Bam	Friendly participation culture	charrettes
Start off	2008-2011	2004	2005-2007	2000-2001
The place	Tehran	Bam	California	Washington
Executive	Tehran municipalities and Institute of Child Health and Nutrition Research Institute of the world	UNICEF and institutes	Some researchers of California Along with city staff	(CEEDS)
stakeholders	,Children and mothers local social institutes	children	Children, municipalities, experts, parents	Children, parents, experts
Implemented level	district	Urban spaces	Local governments in city and suburb	National and local
Children range	Children under 9 years old	Under 15 years old children	Up to 20 years old youth	years old 14-18 ,9-11

ferent approaches according to children situation and social level of society.

Approaches that are taken into consideration in the cities include: paying attention to the children's needs, creating cities suitable for children and child friendly urban spaces, enhancing children's supervisory situation for accessing favorable urban spaces, realization of the social justice and eliminating social inequalities in the cities, infrastructure within the organizations for supplying children's citizenship rights. From summing up the presented experiences, this part of article includes the comparison of the goals, approaches and the process of projects.

Charrette project tried to enter children to the design space centered on spatial justice and removing location based deprivations for children. This project has done with cooperation of university and professors and students as facilitators in collaborative process helped to make a common language in the process. Friendly participation culture project has emphasized to make organizational infrastructures for real children participation in urban decisions.

Child friendly city of Bam has tried to build capacity in targeted way for active children participation enhancing children's information.

In Child friendly district of Harandi as an unsuccessful project, the following were important failure elements in children participation projects:

- 1Lack of clarification problems in managing decision making and lack of stable situation in urban management.
- 2- Lack of short term and long term planning in district regeneration.
- 3- Retreating of children supporting group in managing organization.
- 4- Lack of attention to social problems in contract of physical-special problems.

Conclusion | The purpose of surveying the introduced projects is to realize success or failure factors in the process and executive approach in different social and economic fields in order to present principals for each stage of collaborative design process in the city.

This article has tried to suggest proposed principles for creating collaborative process in Iran in a comparative comparison with analyzing effective factors in successful projects.

Instructions gathered from a comparative study of experiences in Iran and the world:

- 1Pay attention to special justice and place-oriented limitation to children's use of urban space
- 2- Try to change social infrastructure and eliminate unhealthy competition in urban environment
- 3- Target to make healthy environment for children's life and recognized their needs.
- 4- Create organizational changes and annual meeting and adult's

participation for participation in children collaborative workshop.

- 5- Try to improve capacity and develop the targeted strategies.
- 6- Empower citizens and use public participation to solve social problems.
- 7- Use participation of university, children and designer for making common language among children and designer and entrance children to collaborative process.
- 8- Inform children to hold educational classes and make deep understand in taking decision with adult.
- 9- Improve the performance of the field study and children's activities to express their problems.
- 10- Use children's ideas and opinions for getting designing models in space.
- 11- Use principals of designing child-oriented places, attention to children needs and provide flexible spaces for them.
- 12- Apply the local models and cultural value for designing.
- 13- Exhibit and present the children's ideas like exhibition of children to extend and develop participation process.

Table 2: final principal of children participation projects in urban space designing, world and Iran. Source: author.

title	Performing process of participation projects	Goals and approach of participation projects
charrette	Mutual collaborating of university, children and designer, making common language among children and designer, involving children to design sphere and space	Attention to special justice and place-oriented limitation for children, try to change social infrastructure for eliminating unhealthy competitions.
Friendly participation culture	Annual meeting, educational classes	Making organizational change, informing, understanding, taking decision with adults, emphasizing on collaborative process.
Child friendly city of Bam	Children participation in decision making, children gathering, using data matrix	Enhancing children information, targeted development and building capacity
Child friendly district of Harandi	Gathering information by children in place checking, public collaboration.	Making opportunity for children presented in urban space, attention to tree aspects of planning, implementation, evaluation, building capacity and abilities.

Reference List

- Becker, C.R. (2011). *From policies to actions, at the international and local levels*. Congress Report of Child Participation. Italian Committee for UNICEF.
- Chawla, Louise. (2002). *Growing up in an urbanizing world. United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization*. Unesco publishing.
- Child Rights Information Network (CRIN). (2008). *Children's Right to the City, NEW: A Universal Periodic Review toolkit for child rights NGOs*. access in Number 22.
- Congress Report of "Child Participation. From policies to actions, at the international and local levels". (2011). Coordinator: C. Baker, Italian Committee for UNICEF.
- Deriskel, D. (2008). *Creating better city with children and youth (participation and research participation guid)*. Translate by Mehrnoosh Tavakoli and Navid Saeidi Rezvani. Tehran: Diba.
- Ezzatian, Sh. (2013). *Making suitable of urban space for children presented in city with attention on children participation in planning and designing process. Case study: Sede lenjan city*. Master thesis of urbanism department. Tehran: University of Tehran.
- Francis, M. & Ray, L. (2002). Seven realms of children's participation. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, (22):157-169.
- Hart, R. (2002). Containing children: some lessons on planning for play from New York City. *Environment and Urbanization*, (14):135-148.
- Hasirci, D., Kural, N., Ozaloglu, S., Tanriover, S. & Ertez Ural, S. (2007). A Participatory Process: Defining Urban Public Space for Children in a Squatter Settlement, (22): 1-22.
- International Child Friendly Cities Secretariat. (2003). *Review of Child-friendly City Projects*. Unicef Innocenti Research Centre.
- Islamic council of Tehran (third term). (2009). *adopted child friendly city text*. Available from: <http://laws.tehran.ir/Law/Tabs/226> (accessed 23 May 2017).
- Kamelnia, H & Haghiri, S. (2009). The model of designing green space in child friendly city, case study: child friendly city of Bam. *Journal of Bagh-e Nazar*, 12: 77-88.
- Khozaei, F. (2011). *Head of Public Relations of World Children's Research Institute*. author's interview. Tehran
- Russell, S, T., Polen, N. & Tepper, N, P. (2009). *What are Youth-Adult Partnerships?*.
- Sheikholeslam, R. (2009). *Report of child friendly district in Darvazeh Ghar of region number 12 of Tehran municipality*. First phase. Research Project supported by region number 12 of Tehran.
- Subramaniam, A & Moncloa, F. (2010) Young People's Perspectives on Creating a Participation-Friendly Culture. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 20 (2): 25-45.
- Sutton, Sh. E & Kemp, S.P. (2002). Children as Partners in Neighborhood Place making: Lessons from Intergenerational Design Charrettes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, (22):171-189.
- *The biennial activities report of institute of food helpers*. (2007-2008). eBook (non published).
- *Youth in Governance*. (n.d). available from: <https://extension.tennessee.edu/4h/ythgov/youth.htm> (accessed 25 March 2017).