Role of Gardens and Urban Public Spaces in Meeting the Cultural Needs of Adolescents and Young Adults

Fatemeh Roshan
Department of Architecture, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran.
Ayoub Gorvanchi
Department of Architecture, Tabriz Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tabriz, Iran.

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ABSTRACT

Leisure time is an extremely important part of life for children and adolescents especially in urban environments; providing them with many opportunities to rehearse different social roles and activities in order to adapt to urban life. Leisure time, therefore, has a dual role; it can be an opportunity for relief after daily stressful situations, personal development, as well as creative activities, but also can be a threat for developing and manifesting many forms of risky and dangerous social behaviors.

Besides, from an objective point of view, gardens and public spaces in a city are places in which social relationships and life are inherent. Therefore, these spaces can play an important and constructive role in meeting the cultural needs of adolescents and young adults. This paper tries to analyze the theoretical principles related to role of public spaces and urban gardens as social forums in urban environments, and represents the need for the existence of such places which can introduce and improve the culture among citizens; especially young adults.

Keywords: adolescents; architecture; culture; urban public space; young adults.

Introduction

According to the important role in education of next generation and also the special position which young adults have in the societies and the lack of suitable places for them, a place for offering and introducing culture to the youth, requires special considerations. Cultural spaces are known as a base for introducing cultural features and communicating with other cultures. These spaces, in order to play their role, must be compatible with the nature of intended activities. Therefore, the architectural features of before-mentioned spaces, mainly affects the activities. Meanwhile art and culture complexes in today’s complicated societies are very crucial according to their major role in conserving and displaying the cultural and social potentials of humans (Madanipour, 2001). Culture is a complicated set that includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, crafts, tactics, morals, laws, traditions and finally all the habits and rules that the person as a member of a society learns, and in turn the society has duties and commitments towards the culture (Rouholamini, 1994). The cultural milieu is crucial for artists. An environment for nurturing and developing attitudes and thoughts of the people of a society who are important to the whole society is an environment for talent flourishing. Life style of the people in a society is a picture of the culture of that society, so the cultural growth of a society is directly related to their level and way of living in that society (Izadiar, 2015).

Besides, one of the very important issues being crucial in work and daily activities is the leisure time and the way of spending that. Perhaps this issue is not so important and valuable for many people, but it can be considered as a job type and needs the amount of care and attention people have to their jobs. As the job they are doing can be a reason to the growth and development of the society, spending the leisure time and assigning specific time in a logical way to the leisure time also can promote and grow individuals in social and personal life (Alavizadeh, 2007). Leisure time is a certain domain of human experience which contains the advantage of franchise, creativity and a satisfaction for people, and has more joy and happiness by itself (Zakaei, 2009). By arising new social, economic and cultural conditions in modern times, leisure time is considered as one of the important issues in life and the quality of spending it has become so important (Falahat & Kalami, 2009). Leisure time activities today are so important that are mentioned as the sample of the societies’ culture; which means the way of spending leisure time is totally the reflection of cultural features of that society (Sheikh, 1996).

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that. As a house is needed for the formation of a new family, the formation of society needs a place to form mass communication and prepare opportunity for social engagements. Although, for this purpose there would be no need for a specific structure and framework in a particular place, but we need spaces in the city which would grant character and identification for that place and create fixation to the place in habitants and attract them (Ashrafi, 2008). Public spaces are among the city's most important elements in building the city, which are formed in different historical periods of history. This element which contains various cultural, social and economic activities has always been in connection with the history of the city and narrates the adventure of that city. This space is a place where people come together to meet, create mutual relations and represent social and spiritual understandings to be used (Mansouri, 2002). Besides, any cultural complex in urban context can create a forum for young adults to gather together and exchange their ideas as well as researching cultural and artistic information, and generally can be the best place for promoting the level of culture and knowledge of young adults. A place for spending leisure time for all ages can be somehow the representation of culture and knowledge of the previous generation, which changes and develops in today's world. Regarding the socio-cultural, economic and political roles that young adults play in modern communities, deploying natural elements in designing a cultural complex for young adults and provision of attractive and diverse spaces can lead to promotion of social interactions. This work approaches the identification of urban spaces and features and analysis of the needs, strengths and challenges of the design practices linked to provision of suitable opportunities for youth leisure time activities. This analysis has been carried out based on a review of social aspects of urban life in Iran.

Importance and Necessity of the Research

Leisure time is an extremely important segment of children and adolescents' lives. It provides them with many opportunities for trying different social roles and activities. Leisure time is a kind of a training ground for practicing many life skills like coping with and resolving conflicts, tolerant and democratic behavior, mutual respect and development of social and communication skills. Irby and Tolman (2002) has discussed leisure time as an opportunity for self-expression, relaxation, practicing self-control, self-development and learning in a less stressful environment than school. Some of the stated positive effects of children and adolescents' leisure time activities are: socio-emotional development and engagement (maintaining friendships and having fun and socializing), professional development and engagement (skills necessary for employment, understanding and achieving professional career), physical development and engagement (health), cognitive development and engagement (critical thinking, problem solving) and civilian development and engagement (Opic & Duravonic, 2014).

This leisure time has two sides; if it is directed in a positive way, it will nurture the person and society and if it is not directed in a right way it can turn into potentially harmful situations and contexts. So the attention to the role of gardens and public spaces has become crucial in responding the cultural needs of adolescent and young adults. Planning for these people is a sign of the society’s attention to the health of the society. With a suitable planning and right training, we can draw them off from many social obliquities, Since spending the leisure time in correct way requires a suitable and pleasant place which can be provided by the better design and spatial improvement of the gardens and public urban spaces.

Theoretical Framework of the Research

Public Spaces

Public space is an open and accessible place to improve appropriate patterns of behavior. Sociability in public spaces is based on people's need for a sense of social belonging and interaction, and this will be in a supportive social space along with supplying physiological comfort (Lang, 2004). Territory claim, a sense of ownership and receiving justice in space (Alexander et al., 1968). Social interactions and communications can be in physical manners like looking, talking and the relationship between people which needs to define events and activities suitable for their needs and the role of people in space and their membership in groups and social networks (Daneshpour & Charkhchian, 2008). Exterior places that create opportunities for people to get together and talk, can act as a place for meeting each other and make the urban life rich (Lowson, 2001). Social spaces can also be considered as lively atmospheres where people voluntarily and willingly participate in forever. For this purpose Jacobs considered the diversity of spaces and their activities at different times and the important issue to create the necessary vitality (Jacobs, 2008) spaces that foster a sense of comfort and prosper communication. Comfort is derived from enjoyable and gratifying interactions; those which confirm people as a member of the society. At these places people are talking to each other, or have a long well being times (White, 1980). It is where people spend their time and say please, thank you and so on to their neighbors and strangers, where social life exists there, where it encourages the social interactions. With respect to the components that were expressed by researchers and theorists it can be explained that a space has sociality feature which can have communities at all hours of the day and for long hours in other words that must be an inviting space. In explaining the components and characteristics of successful public spaces, there are studies and great views over the past decades, including Aldenberg (1999), Lerap (1972), Gel (1987),...
Urban Gardens

Gardens from ancient times are important in Iranian culture and civilization, and are one of the fundamental concepts of social, cultural and natural issues, that today are mentioned in different ways in literature, architecture and urbanism of Iranians (Banimasoud, 2005). Ecologists believe that by creating open spaces and parks, we can help provision of the conditions for a better and healthier life (Rouhani, 2015). A person who grew in past nature, feels the empty place of the natural spaces to meet the needs of soul and considers that a guarantee in physical and mental health. A relationship with nature creates a sense of calm and peace for the user of that space, and people who benefit from the presence of plants in their workplace are more efficient, more comfortable, healthier and more creative, and they do not have much stress in compare to who do not use plants (Mahdvinejad et al., 2016). In general, a garden is formed by combining the following factors; 1-ground 2-Water 3-plants 4- Architecture 5-secondary features. Among the elements of nature, water and plants are more important than others and will always affect the other natural elements. Constructing a verdurous space with flowing streams and beautiful trees are one of the most important objectives of the establishment of gardens to enjoy and use the nature (Mahdvinejad et al., 2016). Architecture science will become durable by combining natural elements such as light, water, plants and wind, and if not, the architecture is a consistent life and the compound structures. Trees and flowers are considered as integrated part of Iranian life from which the concept of complexes is derived. The use of nature in all arts including architecture has always been important for artists; the artist is a human and is the nature himself, part of the nature and among the natural environment (Khakzand & Ahmadi, 2008).

Four Dimensions of Cultural Needs of Young Adults

According to the increasing similarities in the progress of educational issues and the development of cross-cultural relationships, and the exchange of ideas among countries their experience in the field of education and cultural needs of adolescents are taken into consideration and discussed in four dimensions.

**Intellectual Aspects (Mental)**

- Need for learning: This need is reflected in a series of general information and knowledge.
- The need for exchanging knowledge: the need to exchange knowledge is the second level of intellectual dimension focused on skill acquisition and knowledge transfer.
- The need for knowledge creation: The third level of the intellectual aspects is the need to knowledge creation. This level focuses on the power of student in recognition and creativity in various aspects of knowledge.
- The need for friendship knowledge: the last level of intellectual dimension is the need of friendship knowledge. Adolescents and young adults not only are interested in acquiring information and sharing knowledge and knowledge creation, but also love learning and consider knowledge acquisition as a hypothesis.

**Social Dimension**

- The need for interpersonal relations: this need refers to the relationship between people within the system of cooperation.
- The need for social relations between people and the government: This need focuses on the observance of rights and civil obligations.
- The need for social relations: the need for national relations is the third level of social aspects which focuses on how adolescents and young adults communicate with the country.
- The need for international relations: the level of this need involves the world, and focuses on how young adults communicate with complex world and discover the governing relations.

**Personal Dimensions**

- The need for physical development: this need emphasizes on the health and physical development of adolescent. They consider a healthy body one of the important needs and are eager to satisfy this need by attending in different sport and leisure clubs.
- The need for mental and emotional stability: this need focuses on growth and emotional development in adolescents and young adults.
- The need for moral development and understanding the value of faith: this need as the third level of personality focuses on integrity and moral perfection and realizing the value of beliefs.
- The need for having passion for art and culture: Adolescents and young adults are prepared deeply in the shadow of the need for physical, emotional and moral beliefs, and they consciously and insightfully have passion for art and culture and satisfy this need
in a spiritual state.

**Technical Dimensions**

- The need for choosing a profession: This need as the first level of the technical aspects, focuses on the set of activities by which the necessary information and guidance on career choice is given to the young adults.
- The need for professional preparation: The young adult after acquiring information and necessary help about the intended job requires training courses for employment.
- The need for home and family: forming a home and a family is one of the basic needs for young adults, that logically after levels of education, school or university, choosing profession and professional preparation and employment is done.
- The need for economy: This need as the fourth level of the technical aspects focuses on sales, personal consumption and investment. The young adult needs to be familiar with the science of living and must be educated about home economy (Akbari, 2011).

**Urban Public Spaces as Places for Cultural Needs of Adolescents and Young Adults**

Of course, our mutual relations have an important role in our priority in habitat and the built environment should be able to meet the needs of these relations. On the other hand, we know that, spaces impose special social role to their inhabitants, and strengthen some standards and patterns of behavior and weaken some others and eventually give new dimensions to their residents’ behaviors. In theories of environmental design, there are comments about the impact of the design on society. With the patterns of social interaction and the functionality of the built environment, we find that as much as designing environments and its constituent materials influence communication channels of each member in behavior, the built environment affects social processes of human beings. Spending leisure time like social and personal activities needs a space which has the ability to meet the physical and psychological and cultural needs. Although different sports or recreational environments have been constructed in cities to help people in different ages to spend their leisure time, open and qualified urban spaces can be used as a behavioral setting to meet all kinds of needs in leisure time.

**Conclusion**

Life of a person is among people and what animate a space are people and their active and fervent presence in that space. To achieve an animated city or vitality in the city we must prepare places and opportunities to create lovely experiences. Public spaces in a city are areas or open and accessible spaces to improve behavioral patterns. A person is not able to fully realize the existence of himself, unless is in connection with something beyond him and at the same time explaining him; family, community and culture. So, a man in his social life needs a space in which he can find himself with others, and can test his social dimension and represents it. Such space gives credit to the city and also feeds on it and is at people’s service, seeking their social and behavioral patterns based on their needs. In the meantime, maybe something cannot be found more resuscitative than cultural life which enhances the social dimension of the human spirit in the city. Cultural and social spaces over the time with a variable rate, have guaranteed the link between the mobility and communication of the society with the city, as the heart of the city has guaranteed the life of the city. The reflection of the patterns of social and cultural behavior of the city is created in terms of cultural sites, where cultural events occur in it. Hence, the expansion of cultural and identified urban venues and the presence of people with different social and cultural characters are the most important factors in strengthening their social life in the public domain and have an effective role in restoring life. Such relationship is bilateral that a prosperous life in the public realm of the city is a good promoter for the restoration of cultural urban spaces and shed the culture in them in terms of cultural spaces. Attention to the spaces in the city is important in structural elements of urban design and we must try in promoting the quality of these places based on design criteria and mental and physical needs of people, especially young ones. Lack of attention to the principles of designing and planning in cities is one of the reasons of the problem of neglecting such spaces in the city.

**References**