

# The Role of Public Art and Culture in New Urban Environments: The Case of Katara Cultural Village in Qatar

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**Abstract** In recent years, public art has been featured as a trend in urban environments in GCC. During its period of development, the State of Qatar worked on large megaprojects designed to attract global investments and tourists. Also, the current process of globalization has greatly contributed to increasing competition between cities and promoting the development of public art within new urban developments. This research study discusses the role of public art in influencing urban environments in Qatar, namely within Katara Cultural Village. The study explores the extent to which such an approach can raise local communities' environmental awareness as an indirect input to the process of upgrading the desires of those living in these areas and of international tourists. In addition, it reviews the experiences of different types of catalysts for regeneration, such as art and culture, that can enhance the built environment's recognition, value, and economic growth. A qualitative evaluation is employed for this research study, which leverages subjective methods such as interviews and observations to collect substantive and relevant data while examining the interaction of connectivity, attraction, and development as they relate to economics and other multifaceted aspects of development. The findings reveal the main advantages and disadvantages of introducing public art to an urban space, namely in regard to acceptance, culture, and social behavior. In addition, the study helps identify new ways to use public art to enhance public interactions and participation in new urban environments.

**Keywords** Cultural Planning, Culture, Cultural Districts, Katara Cultural Village, Gentrification, Tourism

## 1. Introduction

Qatar continues to transform its art and culture to embrace the forces of urbanization that began to be witnessed in the country from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onward. Urbanization gave rise to an increase in oil production and lucrative oil export contacts that made Doha, the capital of Qatar and one of the oldest cities in the GCC, grow both economically and demographically. This growth puts Doha in a strategic position to attract artists from across the world to witness its rich cultural traditions, practices, and artifacts and to relate them to those from other countries. Development initiatives, however, are bound to encounter obstacles; in Qatar's case, there are obstacles to maintaining its cultural identity in an era characterized by rapid development caused by urbanization (Furlan & Faggion, 2015b; Furlan, Rajan, & AlNuaimi, 2016). [2-9].

Every development phase encounters obstacles, and in

Qatar's case, the difficulty lies in moving toward modernity while preserving the nation's cultural identity, which Qataris highly value [10, 11]. According to the *Qatar National Vision 2030* [12]:

*Qatar's very rapid economic and population growth have created intense strains between the old and new in almost every aspect of life. Modern work patterns and pressures of competitiveness sometimes clash with traditional relationships based on trust and personal ties. Moreover, the greater freedoms and wider choices that accompany economic and social progress pose a challenge to deep-rooted social values highly cherished by society. Yet it is possible to combine modern life with values and culture. Other societies have successfully molded modernization around local culture and traditions. Qatar's National Vision responds to this challenge and seeks to connect and balance the old and the new.*

During this time, Qatar worked on large megaprojects designed to attract global investments and tourists [4]. Undoubtedly, the current process of globalization is heightening competition between cities and affecting the very establishment of a relationship between public art and

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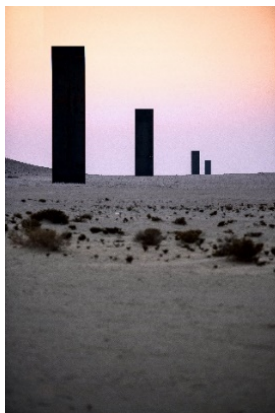
urban development whereby public art is valued or rejected as a tool for increasing the individuality, uniqueness, and attractiveness of cities and consequently providing work for the local economic base while safeguarding and preserving cultural identity for future generations (see figures 1, 2, and 3) [9, 13-15]. In addition, public art provides a platform for local and international artists to examine the ingenuity of contemporary art.



**Figure 1.** Lamp Bear by Urs Fischer, Hamad International Airport



**Figure 2.** Smoke by Tony Smith



**Figure 3.** East-West/West-East by Richard Serra, Zekreet Dessert

As part of the plan for reaching that goal, the Contemporary Art Society was established and chosen by AECOM and Ashghal, the Public Works Authority of Qatar, to develop a national public art strategy. This strategy works to guide the delivery of public art in current and future developments in the public realm [16-18]. The goal is to showcase Qatari art to an international audience from an intellectual, cultural, and artistic perspective.

This strategy recognizes the importance that Qataris place

on preserving their culture and identity and simultaneously provides a framework for a nationally significant public art program to be developed through creative responses to Qatar's physical, social, and historical context [19-24]. By providing opportunities, at intervals, for a dynamic variety of cultural experiences and encounters in public areas, this strategy views the public realm as a platform for culture in its widest sense. Over time, the general public realm will be seen as a host to a growing variety of public arts programming that is relevant to the Qatari experience and that reflects the simplicity of the country's culture, landscape, and heritage—both domestic and international [25].

Art trends and innovations constantly try to claim the status of public art, which is supposed to convey existential meaning through symbols that individuals can perceive and understand through an act of identification. The transformation of public art during Qatar's period of development reopened important questions about how such art influences the contemporary city and whether it has or should have a specific role in the city.

This research study paper explores (1) why public art is considered an important factor in urban development and (2) how public art should intersect with city spaces and new art trends—specifically in the case of Katara Cultural Village, in recognition of its dedication to culture and its location in a recreational zone that was built to merge Qatar's rich traditional heritage with modernism.

## 2. Literature Review

Public art, according to Public Art Southwest of the United Kingdom, is defined as follows:

*The term public art refers to artists and craftspeople working within the built, natural, urban or rural environment. It aims to integrate artists' and crafts people's skills, vision and creative abilities into the whole process of creating new spaces and regenerating old ones, in order to imbue the development with a unique quality and to enliven and animate the space by creating a visually stimulating environment [26].*

Public art may also be defined as site-specific art presented in a public area. Such art has experienced something of a rebirth in recent decades, aided by increases in the number of public- and private-sector commissions, expansions in arts policy, and artists' participation in many areas as part of broader urban design and regeneration initiatives [27, 28].

Such art pieces can come in many different forms, each of which represents social, cultural, or universal values. They may also draw on heritage, highlighting the most important aspects of a region or nation. However, it is worth noting that such a relationship between art and cities is not new. History regales us with tales of city authorities who supported art to give their city a competitive advantage—whether in reputation, prestige, or even just attractiveness—over similar cities [29].

Initially, public art referred to urban sculpture, but after the development of urban construction, the range of public art forms has expanded to include all things that can be made artistic in people’s public living spaces. Indeed, the existence of urban sculpture, in addition to murals, plays a significant role in developing a given community, and the city embraces traditional buildings and also seeks to construct buildings that capture the cultural and artistic aspects of that community [30-35].

There has been concern that the main purpose of public art is simply to renovate old concepts and produce works that affirm people’s belief in the already constituted culture and customs. However, the reason public art is becoming increasingly mainstream in the view of artists is because it is actually a way to protest cultural norms or critique urban development.

It seeks to pose questions to the viewers that elevate their ambitions for the society. The challenge for public art is to be more than a critique from within the development and design team that has come to be employed by many artists.

The goal of the artist is to assume a role more akin to that of community activist than that of architect or planner. This goal is depicted in the well-known example of the ‘Culture in Action’ exhibition curated for Sculpture Chicago by Mary Jane Jacob [36].

Here, the coalitions formed are not with other design professionals seated around a conference table but with members of the lay community who might have a completely different sense of priorities for economic and physical development. The result might be process- or event-oriented rather than oriented toward an object, structure, and surface. The goal might be to expose the underlying political and economic ambitions of a development project rather than to assume any effect on its aesthetic quality [37].

According to Thomas, certain universal needs are perceived in the urban environment. These universal needs—or, in Thomas’s words, “universal invariants”—can be used as references to qualitative aspects and physical planning by urban designers and planners as they seek to develop more productive urban environments [38]. This point raises a further question: What is the value of public art in an urban space?

**The Prospect of Public Art in the Context of Urban Environments**

Sustainable development, according to several scholars, plays an important role in deciding the social features of urban environments [39-44]. Urban settlements and buildings originate in social interactions [45]. Public art as a tool of development strategy has a significant role to play in advancing different aspects of urban planning and design.

Architecture and sculpture are important categories of urban public art. In particular, sculptures (and murals) play an important role: In many public spaces, sculpture is the focal point for construction and a bright spot for visual images, and architecture has multiple equally-important identities in public art [46]. According to Chunhua, “It is

important for the aesthetic field, in the process of an aesthetic experience, [that] people accept aesthetic information, ideological and spiritual values transferred by works of art.”

In light of this consumption-related concept, in which public art promotes city beautification that itself supports marketing strategies designed to attract mobile international capital and specialized personnel, it is important to stress that this relationship between art and cities is not new. According to Canter’s metaphor for place [47], all successful urban places comprise three elements: activity, whether in financial, cultural, or social form; the nature of the relationship between buildings and spaces; and meaning, which arises from a sense of place and historical and cultural context.

**Economic Advantage**

Doha might be viewed as the most progressive city in the Middle East for following the concept of economy as a calculated base for its 2030 vision [25], in which it goes beyond the typical image of a Gulf city possessed of seemingly endless assets of oil and gas [48, 49].

By expanding its economy to attract visitors and encourage tourism, the city of Doha promotes itself as a cultural center and a place to host international sporting events [50]. Farlance, a city featuring extensive public artwork, is a highly cultured city—a status that brings it economic advantages by helping it attract new industries because it serves as a place where specialist employees and executives would be happy to relocate (see figures 4-5) [49, 51].

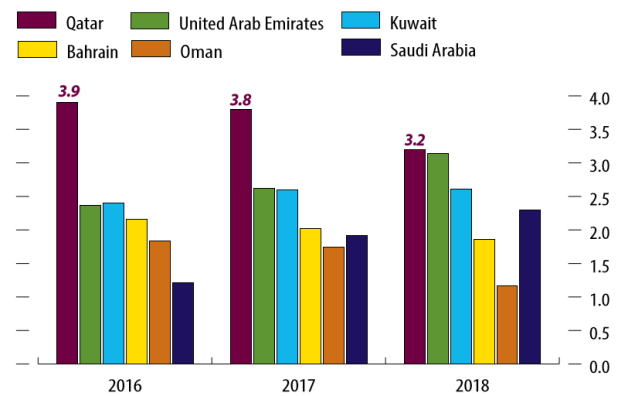


Figure 4. Real GDP growth forecasts, GCC (year-over-year change, %)

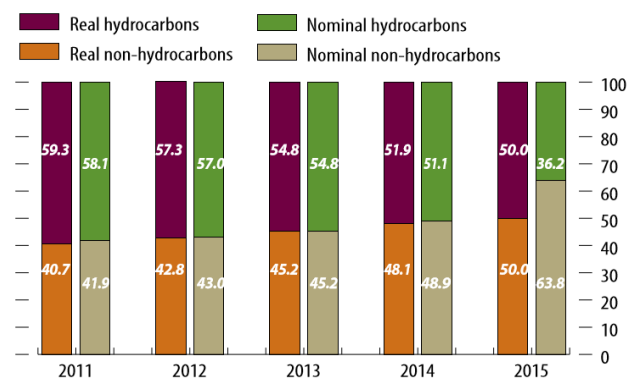


Figure 5. Hydrocarbons and non-hydrocarbons, share in real and nominal GDP (%)

Usually, many tourists visit a community to attend art events. These tourists spend money on local goods and services, and this, in turn, has an indirect multiplier effect on the local community's economy [52]. Public art can thus become a part of wider promotional mechanisms of town activity that have become necessary as a result of cities' global competition for investment [28, 53]. In one telling example, the New England Foundation for the Arts confessed to being "surprised if not shocked" that the region's cultural community and artistic community have a larger economic effect on New England than do sports [54].

Murals and public works of art are the eye of the city and are an epic stone through which the history and culture of the city are recorded. Moreover, their very existence can enhance and delineate a city's position and rank [55]. Public art is part of the procedure by which an urban area obtains a sense of meaning through its reputation and the characteristics of its heritage, which are preserved. It also contributes to creating a community and a sense of identity [56].

Sculptors or artists in the past had a central goal of representing slightly veiled or abstracted versions of Qatar's heritage or history. For example, the Bedouin coffee pot abstracted from Qatari fabrics. However, the focus of public art has recently shifted toward contemporary art to make it more intriguing or relatable to newer generations. Take, for example, the *East-West/West-East* sculptures in the Zekreet Desert that were created by Richard Serra, the *Gandhi's Three Monkeys* sculptures in Katara village that were created by Subodh Gupta, and many more [57].

Qatar has seen tremendous strides in economic development in recent decades and has been in the world's eye for its urban development, especially for its preparation of the city leading up to the FIFA World Cup in 2022. Development projects account for one tenth of Qatar's national GDP. These projects range from the work of architects such as Ricardo Legoretta, Aratalsozaki, and Rem Koolhaas on Education City, Qatar Foundation's educational district on the edge of the city, to Msheireb Properties' complete renovation of the old city center.

Public art's content must be derived from interaction with the viewer. Richard Serra, a sculptor who employs minimalist strategies, created one of the greatest contemporary public art pieces in Qatar. Serra's public art has always been driven by a desire to take sculpture off the pedestal and on to the street. The inspiration for Serra's design, the general pedestrian, also inspires the vision of Qatar Museum. Serra claims that while designing public art, he always envisions general passerby and considers what his sculpture would do for these people. He claims that one can't predict what the viewer would perceive in art but that the artist should design while keeping the viewer in mind anyway. The *East-west/West-east* sculptures are magnificent sculptures in Brouq Nature Reserve. The work is composed of four metal plates that are spread out over a kilometer. Each of the plates are over fourteen meters high. To guarantee flawless alignment, Serra studied the landscape of the land,

and his sculpture breaks the long wide stretch of desert sand with a bewitching view. His sculpture in the middle of the desert, despite being modern in design, will be a timeless tribute to the desert.

In a close collaboration with Hamad International Airport, Qatar Museum has placed public art objects created by various local, regional, and international artists throughout the airport. From playful pieces like the Lamp Bear by Swiss artist Urs Fischer to the iconic desert horse sculpture, the airport is littered with contemporary public art pieces. A series of sculptures of the Oryx produced by Dutch artist Tom Claassen is placed in a herd formation in the arrivals hall. Tom Otterness, an American sculptor, has created numerous sculptures that are placed throughout the airport; his series of sculptures is named *Playground*. His designs are generally inspired by happy and cheerful or cartoonish depictions, and his *Playground* series features tiny Arab figures.

The goal of public art is to make people engage with the art. How art relates to social and cultural aspects of a society is important. However, public art is also responsible for taking the viewer from the past into the present and, moreover, for providing the viewer a vision of the future. Qatar is seeing a revolution in public art, characterized by the constant addition of contemporary art pieces in Doha designed by various national and international artists placed alongside the traditional public art structures that are already a part of Qatar's landscape.

In developing countries such as Qatar, there has been a need to preserve what the country stands for as the country moves forward into the twenty-first century. This need is evident in the many instances of modern architecture that are inspired by historical cultural trends. Although these constant imitations of history produce some magnificent architecture, they might hamper the innovation that has characterized public art in recent years.

The *Qatar National Vision 2030* defines the value of culture for the purpose of its policies and plans. Its approach recognizes culture as a theoretical construct: "No one has seen or ever will see or observe culture—only its effects and products.... 'Culture' exists by definition: It is a conceptual summary shorthand (and proposed explanation) for particular conjugations of a great variety of human phenomena" [58, 59].

Culture, moreover, is based on public participation, and civic discussions are held through art, which raises viewpoints for inclusion in a public debate and which can support the vibrant cultural, social, and political atmosphere that is essential to meaningful civic discussion [56, 60]. According to Chansheng, urban sculptures are pieces of public artwork that should exhibit the spiritual features of the culture and should thus be considered symbols of a city or a nation [61]. Although Chansheng is referring to China here, many examples that reflect what he is describing can be identified in Qatar.

Conservation of urban heritage does not necessarily mean preserving a building; it could mean reviving it. It requires

being flexible in adapting the objectives of rehabilitation to the needs of modern living while respecting the local community's cultural values [62, 63].

A clear example of this balance is found in the Sheraton Hotel in Doha. This hotel is a landmark piece of architecture that provides an opportunity for intellectual, cultural, and artistic scrutiny, and it captures the development of its community since the oil revolution in 1978.



Figure 6. Developing a sense of community



Figure 7. Sheraton Hotel (left) and Teapot Sculpture (right), Corniche

West of the hotel, the Grand Mosque and the Clock Tower were built to complete a modern architectural ensemble that intended to represent Qatar's independence and indicate a clear break with Doha's historic building style (see figures 6 and 7) [23].

Public art is perceived as bringing benefits to the city, especially for urban development and regeneration. Researchers and scholars have attempted to develop a conceptual model of this research. Such a model provides a logical framework for the research, as illustrated in the following figure (8):

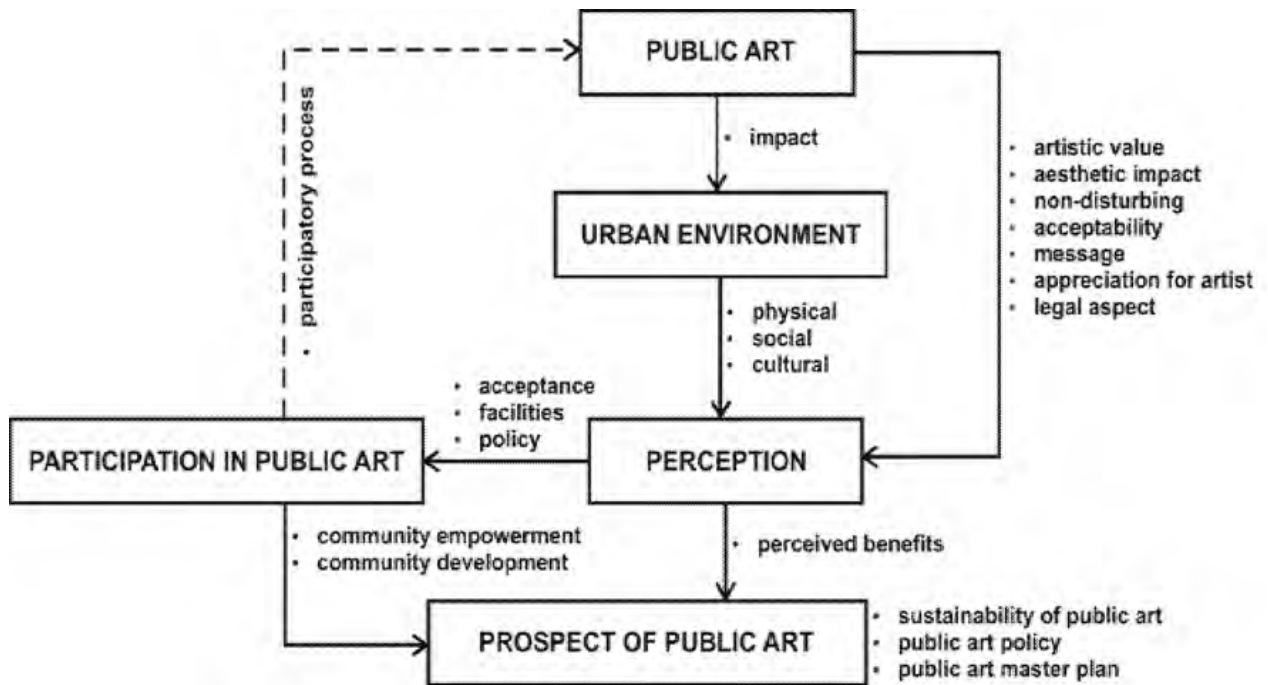


Figure 8. Conceptual model

### 3. Methodology

This research study focuses on why and how art and culture affect a specific instance of urban development. Qualitative evaluation is applied to this study by leveraging subjective strategies, including interviews and observations, to collect major and relevant data [64-66]. The overall process includes three key steps: interviews, observation, and plan application. The overall process is structured to take place over a four-month-long period.

A number of accessible approaches contribute to data gathering. In this research study, the authors will use two mainstream methods for conducting research: primary and secondary data collection. According to Creswell [67], when primary and secondary data are used, the secondary data is usually employed to clarify the primary data. According to Ghauri and Gronhaug [68], secondary data helps readers develop a better understanding of the research topic.

This analysis uses the purposive technique to pick out source persons, a group of people representing all stakeholders involved in the subject of the study, to interview; in this case, they are key members of the artist group, local authorities, key members of society, and specialists in related disciplines. The purposive random sampling technique is also used to solicit responses from citizens about their general perceptions of public art on surveys distributed to users of Katara Cultural Village; these are random individuals whose nationalities and behaviors correspond to the location and its intended uses.

Observation and mapping are additional tools used to understand the dynamics of people, their interactions with the urban environment, and the type of art used; this alternative approach to data collection views people as objects by recording their behavior periodically, and valuable information is obtained when their behavior is systematically recorded in this way [69]. Unplanned observations may result in inadequate findings that do not extend beyond surface appearances. Systematic observation of behavior, in contrast, takes into consideration four elements: people, activities, setting or space, and timing [70-73].

The research observations will be conducted within the administrative boundary of Katara Cultural Village. Open-boulevard murals (murals along urban streets) are observed in the areas surrounding different public works of art [27]. The study will focus on the following issues:

- Understanding public art and how it helps change the urban environment;
- How citizens perceive public art projects and their contribution to the environment;
- Citizen participation in public art;
- And the prospects for public art in Katara.

Technical and artistic aspects of the art will be discussed

to a very limited degree because these intrinsic aspects of art are not the focus of this research.

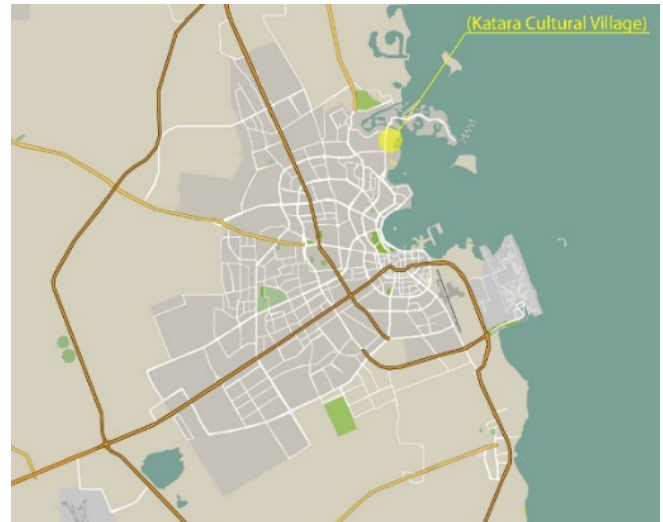


Figure 9. Katara Cultural Village location



Figure 10. Gandhi's Three Monkeys by Subodh, Katara Cultural Village



Figure 11. Murals as public artwork, Katara Cultural Village

The research design is illustrated in the following diagram.

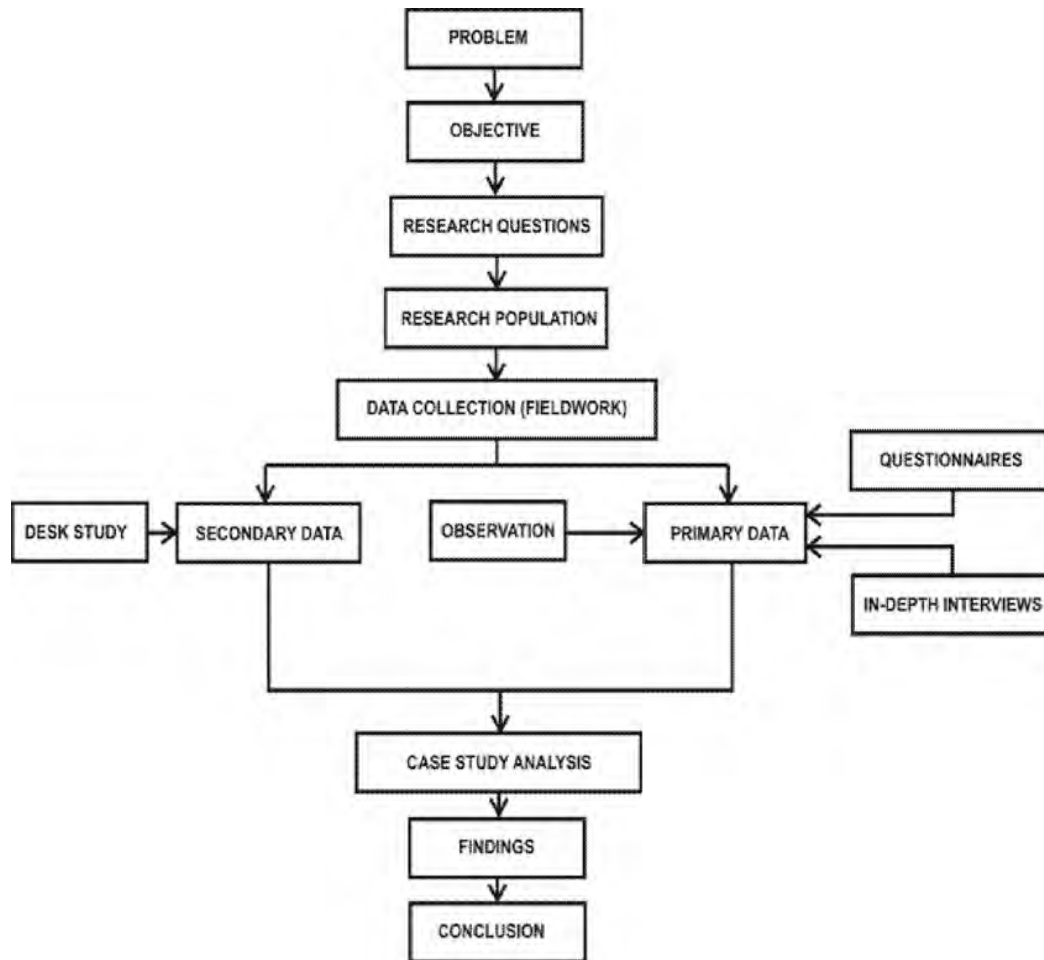


Figure 12. Research design [1]

One of the challenges faced in this research is finding the downsides of public art. We know from many surveys from other research that public styles of art do not appeal to most of the citizenry. Therefore, in nearly every community, a conflict arises over the taste in public art that is selected. However, other than this type of conflict, public art—like any type of catalyst—rarely brings any disadvantages to a location. It either helps an area develop or does not change it at all.

## 4. Findings

Katara Cultural Village is a tourism development project located in Doha, near Doha's West Bay. The village was opened in October 2010 featuring a theater, an amphitheater, libraries, art galleries, a heritage center, museums, and academic facilities—all of these marking the first stage of completion. Surrounding these buildings are retail outlets, coffee shops, museum facilities, and market areas—all designed to embody the historic theme of the site, which also underlies the concept of the village [18, 74].

Several Qatari organizations, including the Societies of Qatar Fine Art, the Visual Art Centre, photographic and theater collectives, and the Qatar Music Academy, have their

offices in Katara. Thus, this cultural village has developed into a major tourist terminus in Doha as visitors seek out art and artistic performances there. Indeed, average daily visitor counts exceed 20,000, a figure that grows to 180,000 during events and festivals. According to researchers, most visitors to Katara Cultural Village rate it their second most visited urban space after the Aspire Zone, even though Souq Waqif and the Corniche seaside area are conveniently located at the center of the city, where most of the people live [21, 70, 75].

This space involves various users, children among them. The users represent different socio-economic divisions and cultural backgrounds and include native residents. The space is designed to accommodate multiple users, including those interested in walking, sitting, relaxing, beach viewing, partaking in and viewing beach sports, eating, and, most importantly, learning about culture and arts through art exhibitions.

### Observation

Various types of public art can be found in Katara, and each significantly affects people's interactions. Katara features various contemporary art pieces alongside its traditional Arab architecture. The juxtaposition of contemporary art and imitation of cultural images makes the landscape unique and attractive to tourists. Katara Art Center

(KAC) is an independently run platform that was founded by Tariq Al Jaidah in 2012. KAC is dedicated to contemporary art and transdisciplinary creative endeavors, projects, and practices. It acts as a center for developing art and cultural communities that will solve the need for a serious proletarian and multidisciplinary framework in Doha for addressing socially relevant issues, and it will display both historical and contemporary art.

Public monuments arise from the desire to openly celebrate individuals or important events. They can be statues or landscapes, and their identification is largely undisputed. These works are part of the official historical record and heritage of public places. In Katara, such monuments include the aviary towers, or the Pigeon Towers. Although only recently built, the towers are significant in Qatari culture and will remain so because of their historical essence and because they help develop a sense of cultural

identity.

A piece of artwork depends as much on its landscape as on its material, because an art installation must be an integral part of its physical context. As described by Serra, a piece of artwork can distinguish between east and west and provide humans a way of measuring their relation to nature [76]. Like feature events in public places, works of art as feature objects may be integrated or simply inserted into public spaces. Moreover, they may be intimate artistic expressions or publicly accessible statements. Perhaps their meaning most frequently arises in the context of their references to viewers' backgrounds. Thus, the public space becomes an outdoor gallery or theater. Consider, for example, *Gandhi's Three Monkeys* or the *Force of Nature*, a celebrated focal point for tourists because it originates from a well-known international artist and relates to both the people and the area that constitute its environment.

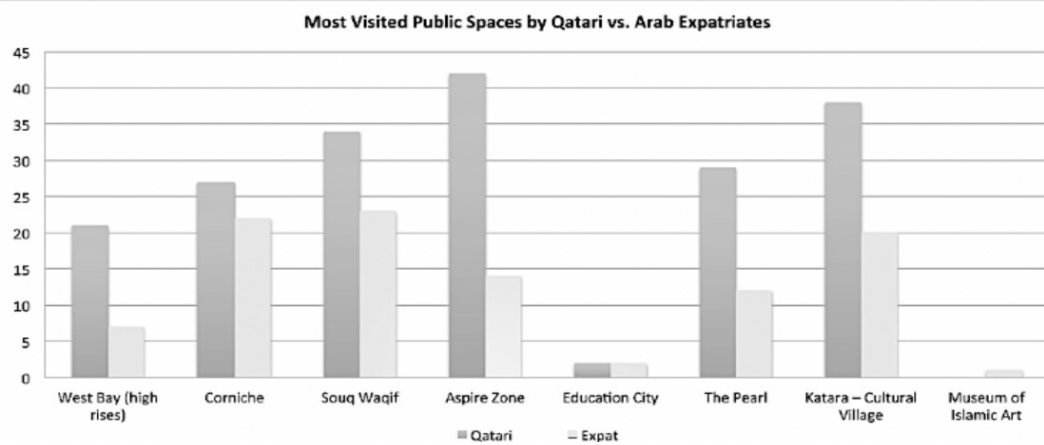


Figure 13. Public spaces most visited by Qatari vs. Arab expatriate respondents



Figure 14. Facilities in Katara





Figure 15. Pigeon Towers in Katara Cultural Village, Doha, Qatar



Figure 16. Mosque in Katara Cultural Village, Doha, Qatar

Contemporary art, with an emphasis on public art, arises from the desire to depict the everyday ailments or beautiful aspects of the society in an art form. One of the classic public art sculptures placed in KAC is *Gandhi's Three Monkeys* by Subodh Gupta. Placed in the middle of Katara, Doha's bustling cultural village, this installation captures people's attention as they go about their days. The most captivating concept of this art piece is its tackling of the bold theme of war and peace in a domestic setting.

*Gandhi's Three Monkeys* is a formation of three sculptures of heads, each wearing military gear. One of the heads is wearing a gas mask, another is wearing a head helmet for soldiers, and the third head is wearing a terrorist's hood. The most unique aspect of the sculpture is that each piece is made of traditional cooking instruments, such as pails, lunch boxes, and cooking bowls. The three heads together represent Gandhi's metaphor of the three wise monkeys that signify the proverb "See no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil."

In addition to promoting contemporary art, Katara is also playing a significant role in promoting the cultural heritage of Qatar through the imitation of traditional customs in its architecture. Katara's built environment is itself a work of art. The very structure of the place combines elements of both art and attraction for locals and tourists alike. This public place urges cultural interchange and heightens awareness. In doing so, it defines itself as art in its own right. Such an art form overcomes the most formidable of challenges to add abiding value to its environment [77].



Figure 17. Gandhi's Three Monkeys by Subodh



Figure 18. Qatar Wind Statue, Katara Cultural Village



Figure 19–20. The Katara Amphitheater, exterior

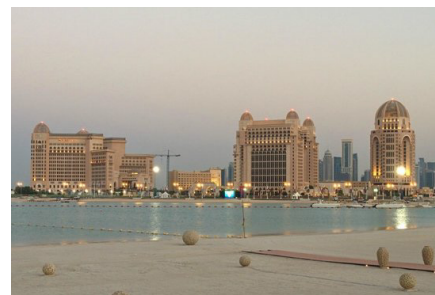


Figure 21. West Bay Lagoon, view from Katara beach

There are two main focal points that can be recognized from a distance and that create a clear definition of Katara's boundaries: the Esplanade (Figure 22A) and the Katara Amphitheatre (Figure 22B). Both are located in the center of the space.

Public art is created by citizen artists—whether local or international. Allowing the public to participate in creating these works of art develops a sense of belonging and creates a connection between the place and its people. Moreover, murals greatly help promote a city's culture. Furthermore, the benefits that accrue from public art can improve the city's economic viability. This point was emphasized by Agus Sularto (Interview, 30 September 2009), who, in hopes of attracting more tourists to the city, has promised to support the mural phenomenon if it reaches Yogyakarta.

Nonphysical (temporary) public art consists of events, activities, performance arts, musical arts, and all other creative and meaningful activities. These activities or events are the features that keep a place active, luring people to enjoy an introduction to the culture that hosts them.

### Interviews

To help the study draw relevant and insightful conclusions, Kahlifa Alobaidly, the head of fire station residency and the former head of the Musheirab Design Department, and Khalid Albeh, who oversees the installation and design of public art, were interviewed.

One of the main objectives of public art, according to Khalid Albeh, is to be interactive. Older public works of art, such as the *Shell Sculpture*, are not interactive; rather, they are based on functionality and used as landmarks—even place names. These monuments were not created by local artists; instead, they were designed and built by companies to meet a specific need or accomplish a defined purpose. Their functionality, however, is highly dubious.

This lack of functionality stands in stark contrast to the public art currently in progress, which focuses on activating an area. Consider, for example, the Richard Sierra Project located in Zecreet, once known as a deserted town. After the

work of art was added, the area came to life. Many artists and other interested parties began coming to Qatar just to visit this area, and they helped activate a neglected part of society.

Albeh agreed that public works of art offer a distinct advantage for urban development. Egypt, he said, has the pyramids, and Paris has the Eiffel Tower. These works do not have a function but are the more valuable for it.

The primary consideration when installing a work of art is whether its cultural elements, location, and reception are appropriate for the society and the public. Second, how does it delaminate knowledge? Third, does it activate a place?

Finally, we had the opportunity to interview Ibrahim Jaidah, Group Chief Executive Officer and Chief Architect of Arab Engineering Bureau, with whom we discussed his perception of culture and public art based on his experience in the field since 1991. Jaidah pointed out that public art is extremely important. He explained that in some nations, such as France, a certain percentage of the construction budget—1–2%—is dedicated to art. It is extremely important, he emphasized, even as important as urban planning and urban art. Its importance, he explained, is best understood when one explores older civilizations and sees that what remains of them is their public art. For example, in Italy and Europe, one can see beautiful examples of how important public art was to these places. Public art reflects culture, creativity, and the stage the nation is going through.

Jaidah went further to critique the urban development and the master planning of the city. He argued that the city is becoming too urbanized and ignoring the culture and behavior of the locals. It is evolving into a more typical international or global city. He suggested that there is a need to influence our surrounding environment to combat this development: “Even if the buildings do not reflect our culture, the public art can achieve a more locally adherent surrounding. So, if we use the elements and qualities of the old city in the modern context, the context can gain more identity.”

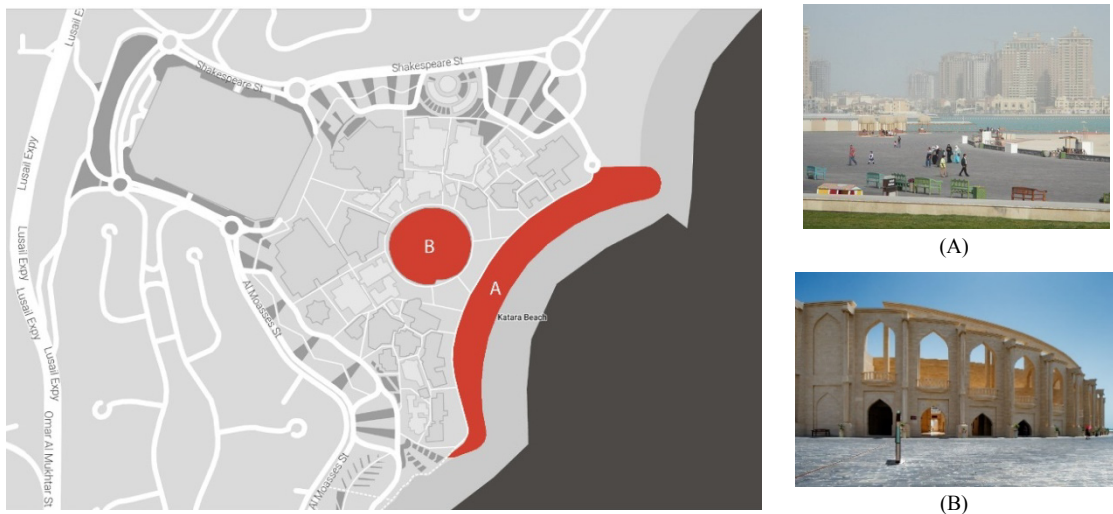


Figure 22. The Esplanade (A) and the Amphitheatre (B)

**Survey**

Findings from the surveys were divided into two parts: (1) effects on the urban environment and (2) citizens' perceptions of public art.

(1) Effects on the urban environment: Most respondents agree that public art can improve the visual quality of the urban environment. The aesthetic impact seems obvious, which only serves to confirm that the public is indeed aware of the economic value of public art. A total of 70% of the surveys were filled out by artists and designers, which explains the high rate of agreement on the educational aspects of public art and the way it inspires many groups of artists. Many personal interviews with international tourists confirmed that Katara Cultural Village is a must-see site for those seeking to better understand the area's cultural aspects; this makes the area more economically and socially active. Indeed, in terms of economic value, Katara is one

of the most active places in Doha because of its venues and events, which are mostly related to art and culture and which rival the Qatar Convention Center.

(2) Citizens' perceptions of public art: Of the different forms of artwork presented in Katara, the murals clearly received the warmest response. Through many interviews with passersby, it was learned that these works, having been created by the public—whether local or international artists—give the place a sense of identity and serve as a beacon, if only a temporary one, attracting many visitors to the area. Moreover, the aesthetic benefits are undeniable. Perceptions of public art are not directly related to citizens' decisions to participate in a public art project, but they are very closely related to citizens' acceptance of public art, which in turn figures significantly into their decision to participate.

	Strongly agree	agree	debatable	disagree	Strongly disagree	Total	Weighted Average
Public art reflects the environment that is located in?	30.30% 10	36.36% 12	24.24% 8	6.06% 2	3.03% 1	33	2.15
Public art are important to the Quality of life	45.45% 15	39.39% 13	9.09% 3	6.06% 2	0.00% 0	33	1.76
Arts are Part of a Well-Rounded Education	48.48% 16	30.30% 10	15.15% 5	0.00% 0	6.06% 2	33	1.85
we are more exposed to the arts through social media	45.45% 15	48.48% 16	6.06% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33	1.61
The Arts Unify our Communities	25.00% 8	21.88% 7	40.63% 13	9.38% 3	3.13% 1	32	2.44
Arts "help me understand other cultures better"	48.48% 16	33.33% 11	6.06% 2	12.12% 4	0.00% 0	33	1.82

Figure 23

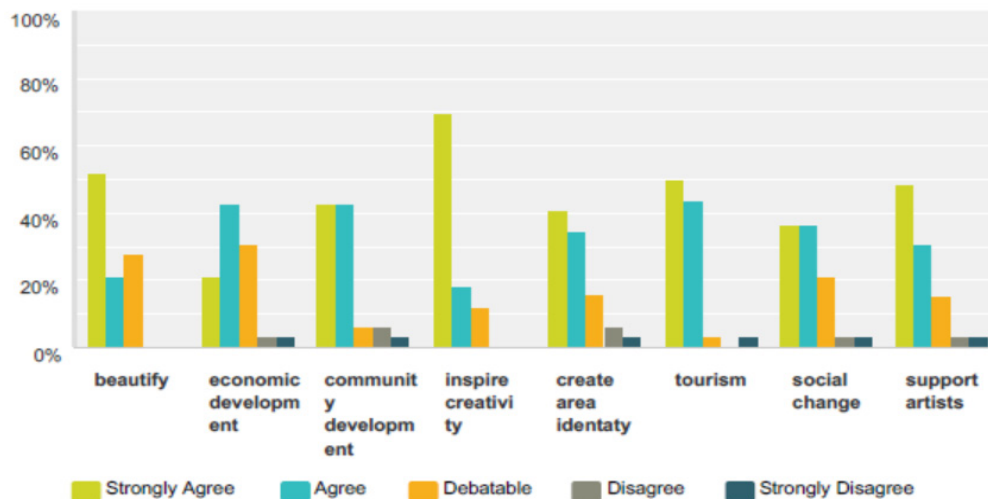


Figure 24. Survey: What is the role of culture and public art?

## 5. Conclusions and Discussion

Because public art is both unique and visually distinctive, it can take on a symbolic role in establishing a city's identifiability and legibility, especially when it is designed and created in ways that are consistent with its surrounding area and site. It can also improve a city's energy while intensifying the place attachment and sense of security that originate from an understanding of familiar elements, and it can intensify social interactions by establishing a connection with citizens and enconcing the place in citizens' awareness. The conclusions of this research are as follows.

### (A) The effect of public art on the urban environment in Qatar

Based on citizens' descriptions of their perceptions of public art and its impact on the urban environment in Doha City, specifically Katara, public art has positive physical, social, and cultural impacts on the urban environment and helps determine the livability and sustainability of the city.

However, there are also a number of disadvantages related to the application of public art. Most of these fall under ethical considerations; because of ethics and norms, not many works of public art were accepted by society, and in some cases, on the downlow perspective, disagreements arose more than once between societies because of public art. As a result, different social groups formed in society. However, this is a different topic that can be covered in further research.

### (B) Reflection on the literature

According to the reviewed literature, public art is much more than art works placed in a public area to enhance the environment, which is what it is understood to be by many users; instead, it is a tool that participates in urban development and addresses urban issues. For example, the mural located at the entrance of Katara became a current form of public art in Qatar because it is relatively accessible to the people and gives visitors the feeling that they are helping beautify the area, perhaps leading them to contribute to the city's economic development.

### (C) Participation in public art

Participation has been considered valuable in development theories because it is an important part of community development and is considered a key element of enablement. However, the decision to participate in environment-related activities such as public art usually depends on how the citizens perceive the art itself and how they perceive the effect of the art on their environment.

### (D) The prospects for public art in the context of the urban environment

Based on the literature review, public art is believed to bring advantages to the city, particularly for urban development and regeneration. Arts and cultural activity can increase attention on and foot traffic to a location, which attracts foreign and domestic visitors and increases the amount of time and money they spend in the location or the

country; as a result, they generally contribute to the area's development. Public art and related streetscape facilities, such as artist-designed lighting and built areas, are means to attract pedestrians.

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