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Socio-cultural approach to create an educative city case: Tehran-Iran

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Abstract

Human beings have always been under the influence of their surroundings. There are some social characteristics specific to human beings that have made them reside in urban and rural areas and thus form the cities and urban communities as they stand today. The results of the study have revealed that, in order to approach a socio-cultural city, firstly, both explicit and implicit effects of cities on their residents’ lives need to be characterized. There are some points based on socio-cultural concepts that have to be taken into account.

Keywords: socio-cultural city, educating city, citizenship skills, urban squares, Tehran

Introduction

If we intend to investigate the position of human being in history, we should trace it back to the literature of the late 50s and the early 60. The duration that by increasing the systematic theory, this word has got attentions more than before. Calling a city a living creature means that there are several factors involved in its growth and progress (just like a living creature) that if any of them are not considered in planning, the city doesn’t stop for us and continues to grow. Therefore, by adopting a systemic approach we should to take all these factors into account and by carrying out the necessary measures lead this living creature to our goals. In this approach this living creature is construable and all of its features and attributes are known and could be recognized for planner, this is what led to the formation of Comprehensive Plan.

2. The Review of the Literature

2.1. The Effect of Culture on the City

Edward T. Hall in his book titled “The hidden dimension” (Hall, 197, 1990) stated that the booming population in the world cities has caused destructive behavioral cycles that are more lethal than hydrogen bombs. Human being is faced with a chain reaction and is practically unaware of the structure of its constitutive cultural atoms. Currently, we are facing horrible repercussions in civic processes. Attention to the studies of animal behaviors and analogical
methods of study and research might beware us of the hazards caused by the massive immigration of the rural population to the city hearts, which is at hand. There are also other more complicated issues regarding the encounter with unknown communication systems, incongruent spaces, and the pathology of an active and inflating behavioral cycle, added to the present circumstances. What has often been ignored is the fact that the lower class of the black society is totally different from the middle class of the white society regarding the cultural aspects. The distinction between this minority group and the dominant culture is fundamental and dealing with important values like the consumption and construction of space, time, and material that are all learnt early in life.

It should be noted that the city constructions and the social activities in city, has to be in line with the educational and social accommodations so that it would not disturb the internal and mental serenity of the citizens. This is while the social and educational approach requires us to expand the city structure and framework principally by considering its educational and social functions. It means that from the beginning we think about how we can satisfy the need of the citizens to social relationships, amplitude and eminence, spiritual, mental and virtual composure in a parallel fashion with the ministrative requirements provision.

2.2. The effect of society on the city

In his famous book called “Urban Sociology”, Dickenes (1990) defines a city as it is ultimately the result of a collection of relations among social actors and hence, there is this belief that the formation of city spaces and relationships follows these relations.

Also in the book of “Urban Anthropology” (Fokouhi, 2004), the city is enumerated as a kind of social organization in space which should be accounted as a perpetual generator of education. If we consider education as a collection of acquisitional behavioral and mental phenomena of each society which grants individuality and identity to that society, so the society also tries to reproduce itself via a procedure or transmission from a generation to the next.

2.3. The Social-educational Approach

The Social-Cultural approach in the city, which is directly related to human condition and its living environment, is discussed. This approach notices the cultural issues, which means that the issues referred to are dynamic and specific to the culture matter in the city. Culture is very varied in cities and in each city it’s distinct from others. The other equally important issue that has to be explored in the city is related to the social aspects which are socially agreed upon. The Social-Cultural approach can expand the framework and structure of the city basically by considering its cultural and social functions. Currently, if we face a number of troubles like delinquency, anxiety, violence, aggression, threats to the urban environment, as well as different acoustic or visual contamination, it is because of the ignorance of cultural-social aspects in the urban environment.

2.4. Cultural Reification

As GeorgSimmel assumes the origin of culture is in this situation: the subjects produced in life process and are generated for reserving life energies, and they gain their self-organization structures position which have their own innate value. Although the ultimate origin of these subjects is in their life energies, they change into some objectified, identified realms that obtain a relative independence from life. Reification is constructed through two closely-nit processes. However, regarding the analytical aspect, it would be helpful to recognize objectivism and instrumentation as the constitutive elements of reification.

The instrumentation of the cultural values creates an aesthetic orientation, where it seems there is a unique value position for all of the values. If distinguishing values is not possible at all, it is imagined that no innate value can be identified. In that case, none of the cultural products seems to be more valuable or less valuable than others. Therefore, the instrumentation of values causes the downgrade of values, and the skepticism and relativism of values which results in philosophical nihilism and makes the final stage of crisis (Simmel, 1980).
3. The Theoretical Framework

Regarding the objectivism theory of George Simmel (1980) and the concept of hidden dimension proposed by Edward T. Hall, we can conclude that the city affects the way the citizens live and the life style of the citizens is effective on the meaning understood from the city.

This theory together with the framework of the experiences existing in educating cities displays a kind of unity and harmony. Thus researchers recon that they can investigate the mutual effect of the city on the citizens’ behaviors, and the citizens’ behavior impression on the sense of the city by selecting a resultant from the ideas of George Simmel and Edward Hall.

According to the educating cities convention enforced in 2004, three basic principles and twenty clauses were agreed upon and cities can be registered as educating cities if they have a certain plan for obtaining these twenty purposes (Educating Cities, 2004).

Table 1. The principles and clauses of educating cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educating Cities</th>
<th>Giving Services to Inhabitants</th>
<th>City Commitment</th>
<th>Realities of Educating Cities</th>
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Figure 1. Knowing the theoretical framework of the study
4. Statement of the Problem and Methodology

4.1. Statement of the Problem

Here, the importance and the effect of the city environments on the people have not been as evident as today. The contemporary psychologists have demonstrated that the sensational, psychological, and moral reactions of an individual would make inextricable links with the childhood, mental and emotional upbringing, and the living environment (Nouhi, 2009). The relationship between human being and the city is an interactional one and it seems that there exists a relationship between human and the environment in which they live. The present study is aimed to admit this relationship or discover the quantity and essence of it.

4.2. Research Questions & Research Method

The main research questions of the present research are as follows:
1. What are the educational features of the urban environment? And what effects on the receiver are induced by each of these characteristics?
2. How can a city be an infrastructure for the education of the citizens in various cultural and social fields?

In this study the qualitative method of research is used. For the data collection, indirect interview with people is employed. In the data analysis, the researchers made used of Michael Foko’s theory (the analysis of city discourse and language). It means that in addition to the blatant message the latent message attended to.

4.3. The Procedure

With regard to the related literature, the main analyzable issues in field observations are selected which are: (1) the traffic transmission, (2) visual contamination, (3) construction quality, (4) function and activities, (5) city furniture, (6) environmental advertisement, (7) acoustic contamination, (8) environmental. Then based on the issues mentioned in the charter of an educating city, for each of the issues the corresponding principles of the charter of the educating city are extracted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Transmission Traffic</th>
<th>Visual Contamination</th>
<th>Constructing Quality</th>
<th>Function and Activities</th>
<th>City Furniture</th>
<th>Environment Advertisements</th>
<th>Acoustic Contamination</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues in the Educating City</td>
<td>4-5-6-9-11-12-19</td>
<td>5-7-8-9-11-18</td>
<td>5-7-8-9-11-12-19</td>
<td>1-3-4-6-9-11-16</td>
<td>5-7-9-10-11-12-15-18-19-20</td>
<td>1-2-3-4-6-11-13-17-19-20</td>
<td>1-5-9-11-12-18-20</td>
<td>9-11-12-13-14-18-19</td>
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5. Discussion and Analysis of the Results

As for the case studies, 10 of the urban areas in Tehran were randomly chosen, 5 being from the upper class parts and 5 form the lower ones. The urban spaces of the upper class are Niavaran, Vanak, Kaaj, San’at, Madar Squares, and the urban spaces of the vulnerable regions are Molavi, Qazvin, Razi, Shoush, and the Nazi Abad Squares.

For completing the data for each of the locations twenty of the principles related to the charter of the educating cities are listed. Afterwards, with the emphasis on the method of the discussion group and the opinion of the expert professors, the rank of each of clauses (according to the numbers 1 to 10) is determined. This comparison demonstrates that the ultimate average of the principles in group A is 37.6 and in group B 30.1 percentages and their difference equals 7.5. Even though the upper economic classes have performed better than the lower economic class,
the ultimate number, is a small one and this is worrying and indicates that Tehran in general does not enjoy a completely appropriate condition in the provision of the goals of the educating cities.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>The resultant of the 20 principles</th>
<th>percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The upper class (group A)</td>
<td>7/52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The lower class (group B)</td>
<td>6/02</td>
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### 6. Conclusion

At the end, it can be concluded that cities have latent and blatant messages and it seems that the messages which are disseminated in the urban spaces are effective on the reaction type people have in these spaces or their feeling in such atmospheres. This is the reason why people have different reactions in different spaces. Urban atmospheres that are creative and the arenas which have places for cultural and social activities have the most influence on the development of the citizen skills of its citizens. These are the points required for moving toward an educating city based on the cultural and social concepts and can in a way be approving the objectivism theory of George Simmel.

Studies demonstrate that those citizens can take proper advantage of city capabilities who have received the necessary education. Also city has to be prepared to be capable of generating the required capacities for offering to citizens. In other words, on the one hand the urban infrastructures have to be improved and on the other hand the citizens are required to receive the education for optimum benefit of them. This reciprocal interaction and mutual process can be influential in creating a lively, thriving, and beneficial city.

Figure 2. Socio-Cultural Approach to Create an Educative City

### References


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