Urban Management based on Citizen Participation to Enhance Quality of Life in Tehran

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1 ABSTRACT

In recent years the development of management approaches based on citizen participation has been growing. Concept of citizenship is the most important criterion for the legitimacy of the democratic systems. Social science theorists have considered citizen participation the main representative of citizenship. Thus, enabling citizens to participate in urban management result in increasing of their satisfaction. On the one hand this will cause citizens take place in a position to have the ability to change the conditions based on their increased satisfaction and on the other hand city managers use citizens opinions in their decisions and reflect it in their own actions. In modern urban management system based on participation, citizen not only judge the result of city managers and administers, but also involve in the processes of decision making and can be influential on the issues. This article tries to explain the neighborhoods council associations which citizens can participate in urban management resulting in improvement of their quality of life. In this regard Evin and Darakeh neighborhoods of Tehran were selected for case study and needed information were obtained from statistics and information of organizations affiliated to Tehran Municipality and also people's opinions.

2 INTRODUCTION

During the recent decades, issues related to urban management has tied to topics and theories in terms of participation of main stakeholders of the city, citizens. Urban management knowledge in order to achieve comprehensive and sustainable urban development needs citizen's participation. Therefore, participatory approaches of urban management has emphasized on participatory attitude to encourage some kind of "bottom-up" management approach and to enable community monitor development actions. One of the concepts associated with influence of urban management based on citizen participation is the quality of life. This paper is trying to introduce Neighborhoods council associations in Tehran as the intervening chain between people and urban management and review its influence on the promotion of the quality of life and the level of citizen satisfaction in Evin and Darakeh neighborhoods.

3 CONCEPTS AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Urban Management

There is no general principle for urban management concept and the main meaning of this term is very confusing. Stern believes that, urban management doesn't have a specific definition and content (Stern, 1993). According to the tastes, perception of people and also political-social demands of different eras had different meanings. We can still see these differences in meaning and concept in the recent era.

The World Bank defines urban management as a quasi-commercial activity for governments. In other words, urban management means, managing urban affairs and high performance in order to use the World Bank loans. Urban management is sometimes considered as a tool for implementing the urban policies, which means urban managing science.

Van Dijk defines urban management as an effort for coordinating and integrating the public and private actions for overcoming problems that urban residents encounter, and creating more competitive, fairer and more stable cities. *Van clink* and *Bramesta* also defined modern urban management as the process of implementing, coordinating and assessing the integrated strategies with city's authorities' help, by considering the private section objectives and citizen's benefit, in a political framework that in higher levels of government, is being edited for approaching the sustainable economic development potential (Van Dijk, 2006).

3.2 Participation

Citizen participation is one of the core values of democracy. Democratization means an increase in citizen participation in public affairs (Don-yun, 2003). In fact, Citizen participation plays a critical role in building healthy communities by creating more empowered constituencies who can leverage greater and more equal access to available resources (Pennie G, 2009).

In urban management, participation has two meanings, the first meaning of participation concept, can be considered cooperation between private sectors and municipality. In this kind of cooperation, the private sector which acts according to the market rules, in order to get economical profits and by receiving service cost that presents, cooperates with municipality and, hence, in performing duties, helps the municipality. Municipality monitors the activity of this section and giving part of duties to the private section does not mean that the municipality is not responsible toward the quality of the presenting services. The second concept of the participation emerges in the cooperation of community sector with municipality. This sector has other names such as social sector or private non-for-profit sector (mozayyeni, 1997).

3.3 Participation approach in Urban Management

In the recent two decades, many organizations and institutes that intervene urban management and planning at global levels, have emphasized on promoting the participation view for encouraging a kind of management and planning approach "Bottom-up" and enabling community in order to monitor development actions and had considered to make decision in solving urban problems based on local communities to fulfill the necessary conditions for citizen's welfare. From 1990, urban development approach, has experienced an important revolution in its paradigm; learning from previous experiences and "top-down" conventional view, would give a pattern that lies on the approach different from the past, and that is "down to up" approach; shift from a prescriptive view to the participative one based on government-oriented solutions for problem solving methods with emphasis on civic society is one of the features of new development pattern, which has fundamental emphasis on the role of people, local communities and civic society (Haji pour, 2006).

According to the capacity and power of citizens, the urban management should be on the basis of the principles that in fact create the fundament of this structure. These principles can be listed as follows:

- Principles of urban civility and citizens' education
- Principles of continuous poll from citizens
- Principles of codified rules for informing and guiding citizens
- Principles of gaining trust of public and private sector
- Principles of verifying and revising the actions which have been done (Mozayyeni, 2000).

3.4 Quality of Life

Quality of life is a broad concept which has different meanings for different people and groups. Some have interpreted it as habitability of an area, some others as measures for the level of attraction and some as welfare, social well-being, happiness, satisfaction, etc (Epley and Menon, 2007). However, there is still not a universal acceptable definition for this concept because many researchers believe that the quality of life is a multifaceted, comparative concept and is influenced by time, place, personal and social values. In table 1 some definitions of quality of life from different references are given.

Definition	Reference
New title for the old concept of psychological and material well-being of people in their living environment	Lio (1983)
Welfare levels of individuals and groups in the general social and economic conditions	Moller (1983)
Individual perception of life condition in the context of cultural and value system of society and in relation to goals, expectations,	WHOQOL Group (1993)

standards, interests and personal concerns	
Person's overall life satisfaction	Foo (2000)
The condition of the environment people live in (such as pollution and housing conditions) and also some traits and characteristic of people (like health and education)	Pacione (2003)
Level of human needs fulfillment in relation to perceptions of individuals and groups of subjective well-being	Costanza et al (2007)
Well-being or absence of well-being of people and their living environment	Das (2008)

Table 1: Definitions of quality of life from different references

According to studies conducted, it can be said that there is still no universal acceptable conceptual framework for quality of life assessment and also no uniform methodology to determine realms and quality of life indices in hand. So selecting realms and related indices and quality of life methodology is based on study goals, researcher's personal judgment, characteristic of the studied area and available data. Major differences in quality of life models have been considered due to differences in scale, indices and life realms (Rezvani and others, 2009).

3.5 Participation and Sustainable Development

The 1980s is mentioned as the economic development decade with new attitudes, proposing approaches for sustainable development, environment protection and participation. The last decade of the 20th century is also called the decade of human development and necessity of applying and institutionalizing public participation in the process of sustainable development (Congress of NGO and future challenges, 2001). Accordingly, in order to achieve sustainable development based on public participation, the followings are considered:

- Public participation is the fundamental condition for implementing sustainable development.
- Circumstances in which participation will have the required efficiency are numerous.
- Sustainable development must be completely consistent with people's real needs and demands.
- Information, communications, education and cultural promotion are considered as principles of participation and development.
- In addition to government political will, other legal tools and social institutions which complements traditional parliamentary and administrative processes and also some required features for public participation must exist. (Arjmand Nia, 2001)

Transition from the traditional approach, caused changes in the views towards urban management issues and these changes led to considering links, solidarity and cooperation that have important roles in improving the quality of life. Thus, sustainable development is associated with human development and a new viewpoint to development is discussed. In this regard three concepts of security, justice and participation are significant.

3.6 Relations between concepts

In general, relations between concepts of sustainable development, urban management, citizen participation and how they influence the quality of life can be shown in the diagram below.
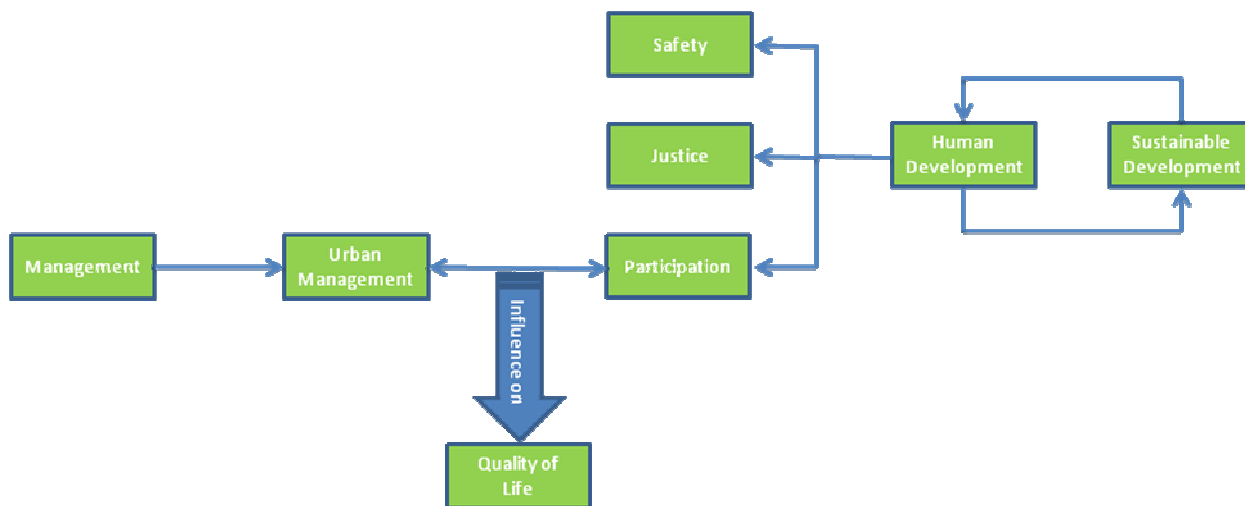
Fig. 1: Relations between concepts

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

There are two approaches in the studies of urban quality of life, subjective and objective. (Lee, 2008) Approaches are used often separate from each other and are rarely combined to assess the quality of life. In this research, according to the nature of the subject of the study that is related to citizen participation, quality of life is studied with the subjective approach. Quality of life in subjective aspects reflects people perception and evaluation of their own life and is measured by subjective indices. (Rezvani and others, 2009) Indices measured are in 2 realms: Social and Material.

This experimental study is mainly based on primary data. Questionnaire and sample survey were used to gather the primary data. In order to design the mentioned questionnaire and also to determine indices in dual realms, experts' and professors' views were used. Next, with introducing Neighborhoods council association as public participation solution in city governance, its effects on quality of life of life of Tehran citizens would be reviewed based on determined indices.

Geographic scope of this research is Evin and Darakeh neighborhoods in the northwest of Tehran. Evin and Darakeh neighborhoods with the population of 5100 and 4200 respectively (based on 2006 census) with joined and ongoing texture are located in region 1 of Tehran and on Alborz foothills in the northwest of the city. These neighborhoods that are considered one of the ancient villages of Shemiran and inhabitancy history in Evin goes to 3000 years back, today have joined the metropolis texture as a result of Tehran's expansion and growth. From administrative and political view, Evin and Darakeh neighborhoods are considered within their old area matching the former textures.

Evin's good agricultural lands and good natural position led to various governmental organizations including agencies related to agriculture, university, hospital, etc. to be built in parts of the neighborhood in the course of years. These organizations that are responsible for various social and economic tasks, affected the lives of the neighborhood residents such as creating jobs in low administrative levels for some of the neighborhood residents. (Khalilkhah, 1998)

Darakeh neighborhood according to its special geographical position, welcomes many tourists especially on weekends. Due to lack of proper public transportation, tourists' traffic roar is a problem for neighborhood residents. Connection and coherence between Evin and Darakeh residents has such strength since long time ago that despite the separation of these neighborhoods, everyone calls it "EvinDarakeh" (identity statement of Darakeh neighborhood, 2007). Statistical society's characteristics are shown in the picture below.

Fig. 2: Evin and Darakeh neighborhoods in Tehran

5 CURRENT STATE DESCRIPTION

5.1 Structure of Urban Management in Tehran

Urban management structure in Iran is similar to such structures of other cities of the world in many aspects. This similarity not only does entail countries that are similar to us in terms of governance and social and cultural context but also includes the cities of western countries. Two institutions in all these countries create the main pillars of urban management structure. First, City Council and the second is municipality which is the head of the executive pyramid of the city. City Council's members would be elected by people and City Council would select the mayor which is responsible for Council's affairs (Mozayyeni,2000). The point that should be noted here is that urban management structure in Iran is a young phenomenon and since it is inexperienced, the burden of urban management has been on the government for a long time. The formation of Islamic City Councils in 2000 with the government's monitor and intervention was a significant step for populating urban management.

5.2 Neighborhoods council associations as citizen participation solution in city governance

Now one of the obvious examples of participation in the management of Tehran is Neighborhoods council associations in neighborhoods. To strengthen Neighborhoods council associations means to strengthen public participation, to strengthen sense of social belongings to gain secure environment devoid of social anomalies, benefiting from all ideas and expertise, benefiting from reliable persons' experiences in managing city affairs, monitoring development and effective communication between residents of neighborhood and urban managers such as municipality, City Council of Tehran and other executive agencies, etc. In most regions of Tehran it is tried to provide appropriate context for practical participation of citizens in various fields with benefit from principle of being neighborhood-oriented and citizen-oriented.

In article 1 of statute of Neighborhoods council associations approved by City Council of Tehran, mentioned formation of Neighborhoods council associations in order to achieve and execute the law of Councils and to strengthen the participation of Tehran citizens in organizing urban affairs and gaining their real cooperation in promoting quality of life of citizens.

6 FINDING RESULTS

Results obtained based on the research conducted on the determined parameters and using a questionnaire filled by 200 people of the Evin and Darakeh neighborhood, which includes nearly 2 percent of the total population, shows the influence of Neighborhoods council associations performance on urban quality of life. Interviewee's characteristics are shown in table 2. Interviewees were randomly selected and interviews took

place during 10 days at different times and locations. Statistical society's characteristics are shown in the table below.

Statistics			Charectristics
Over 45	31-45	15-30	Age
18%	37%	45%	
Male		Female	Sex
46%		54%	
Master and Higher	Bachelor	Diploma	Under Diploma	Education
5%	37%	46%	12%	

Table 2: characteristics of statistical society

In the mentioned questionnaire, numeric range is 1 to 9 that is related to each one of indices that shows Neighborhoods council associations performance after its establishment in Evin neighborhood. On this basis, 5 is the middle of the range and means no effect and consequently 5 to 9 means positive effect and 1 to 5 means negative effect. Another point is that the weight of each of the indices is considered fixed. The average related to each of the indices and in macro level related to each of the realms, represents the influence of Neighborhoods council associations performance on the urban quality of life. In table 3 the results obtained from each index are shown.

Overall influence average	Level of influence average	Level of satisfaction average	Index	Realm
+0.43	+1.4	6.4	Parks and green spaces	Material
	+0.9	5.9	Traffic	
	+0.5	5.5	Garbage gathering and disposal	
	-0.2	4.8	Housing	
	-0.1	4.9	Job opportunities	
	+0.1	5.1	Wealth and income distribution	
+1.47	+1.7	6.7	Residents' participation in neighborhoods' affair	Social
	+1.1	6.1	Personal security	
	+2.2	7.2	Social security	
	+0.3	5.3	Hope to the future	
	+0.7	5.7	Satisfaction	
	+2.4	7.4	Belonging to the environment	
	+1.9	6.9	Having trust in authorities	

Table 3: Results obtained from each index

In this research it was found that Neighborhoods council association establishment in Evin and Darakeh neighborhoods as one of the examples of participation in urban management of Tehran, caused quality of life promotion in two physical-material and social realms. It is obvious from the results that influence in social realms is higher than physical-material one and this difference can be interpreted as, since Neighborhoods council associations have specific and limited authority domains, influences on physical-material realm which is more focused on executive measures is less than influences on social realm. Also based on the obtained results, the most influence is for sense of belonging to the environment index with +60 percent in physical-material realm and the least influence is for housing condition indexwith -5 percent in social realm.

In a general inference of the gained results, we can conclude that when the management is based on citizen participation and citizens contribute in making the decision and the actions done by management institutions, citizens' satisfaction from authorities increases and also more appropriate planning and measures of authorities would be performed.

7 CONCLUSION

City councils establishment in Iran is an important step moving from a centralized system to a decentralized planning system and urban management based on citizen's participation. Concurrent with city council establishment, neighborhoods council associations also was established in order to citizens be in contact with their representatives directly. Neighborhoods council association is the most public institution that implements social participation in the lowest levels.

Reliance on public institutions and getting citizens comments causes the most basic and important problems from the perspective of people in the urban environment be told. Neighborhoods council association links between citizens and urban managers who enhance citizen's satisfaction at each scale from micro to macro (neighborhood, district, region, city) by performing of urban projects step by step. In fact, Tehran's City Council has formed neighborhoods council associations to encourage broad participation of citizens in urban affairs, particularly in urban utilities. This institution facilitates local influence directly on the municipality activities affects. Neighborhoods council associations as interactional and complementary ring of City Council should be considered for full realization and movement toward decentralization of macro systems of planning and management.

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