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Public participation of young people for architectural heritage conservation

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Abstract

Historic cities of developing countries', architectural heritage need conservation. Public participation (PP) of high school students' can be an effective tool. Aim of this paper is to share an experience in a historical neighbourhood, Yeldeğirmeni, İstanbul. Yeldeğirmeni was examined by final year students in “Analysis of Historical Buildings” course in Yeditepe University, Architecture Department. Results of the course were shared with high school students/teachers. These works which try to document and safeguard local cultural heritage, will be investigated in this paper. The paper presents findings of the course's presentations, workshops, exhibitions; discusses future scenarios of PP for architectural heritage conservation.

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1. Introduction

At the last decades of the twentieth century public participation (PP) started to be one of the main issues to construct a better and liveable environment. The interest in the subject has come both from the public who want a larger share and role in the decisions that affect their living and by agencies that recognize the importance of the absence of participants in their decision-making process (Charnley&Engelbert, 2005). Over the years the study of PP has attracted the attention of researchers from a wide range of academic disciplines as well as interest among policy makers,

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planners, and others in the environmental design fields. The concept is certainly interdisciplinary and increasingly recognized as warranting interdisciplinary study. Environment-Behaviour Research studies based on PP are so many varied from urban life studies (Gehl, 2013; PPS, 2015; Design Council, 2015) to quality of urban life studies (Marans, 2012; Marans&Smitson, 2011) and to evaluation methods of quality of urban life studies (Charnley&Engelbert, 2005; Mannarini&Talò, 2013; Rowe&Frewer, 2004) in general or in particular even try to evaluate criterias for PP in urban heritage conservation (Koorosha, Szaa,&Ahadb, 2015; Dian&Abdullah, 2013).

Researches about PP without giving always clear definitions of neither ‘public’ nor ‘public participation’ try to find a link between the participant and the public. This link between the participant and the public is tried to be tied with the help of many aspects such as: urban spaces, public places, public attachment, public involvement and citizen participation. The link between the public and public participation can be tied by defining what ‘public’ is. As, Dian&Abdullah (2013) stated that even The Cartagena Protocol made many general references to ‘the public’, but without providing a clear definition of the term. They state that, this usage provided States with a degree of freedom, as ‘the public’ could potentially be defined differently with respect to different requirements. In The Cartagena Protocol, it was generally accepted that who can also be divided into specific interest groups and stakeholders, according to the issue being addressed related to its context. Davidoff (1965) defines ‘public’ as the local people, either individuals or organizations that have an interest in or will likely be affected, either positively or negatively, by a decision to be made on any particular issues by the local authorities. While it is generally accepted that the expanding role of PP has become a major facet of many types of policy, decision making and planning activities, Davidoff further argued that it was impossible for the planner to have an overview of the entire needs of the community. The culture of community collaboration, consensus building, debate and discussion are ways to get better insight into the needs of the community. Dian&Abdullah (2013) trying to address Davidoff’s definition of ‘public’ and ‘public participation’ to the conservation of historical sites and state that, preservation planning includes PP where it provides a platform for open discussion of preservation issues. As heritage sites belong to the people, only people who live either in, within or near the sites know best on how effective implementation of preservation plans are best carried out. It should be meaningful if in the course of assisting local authorities, the PP is applied as early as at the designation stage rather than when it is offered to review the decisions already made.

In this research, a link between the participant and the public tried to be established, with a theoretical background stated above, with respect to young people. Young people and their participation was selected to be used as the public group in three ways; firstly as the high school students living in the neighbourhood as PP; secondly, high school students by being participants of workshops and exhibitions; thirdly, as university students preparing the data, surveys of historical buildings and documenting the historical environment.

2. Meaning of ‘public participation’ in conservation of architectural heritage sites

Public participation (PP) is the process by which an organization consults with interested or affected individuals, organizations, and government entities before making a decision. Public participation is two-way communication and collaborative problem solving with the goal of achieving better and more acceptable decisions. Public participation prevents or minimizes disputes by creating a process for resolving issues before they become polarized.

Public participation (PP) is defined by World Bank as process by which people especially disadvantaged people, can exercise influence over policy formulation, design alternatives, investment choices, management and monitoring of development interventions in the communities (The World Bank Report, 1992).

As Boyte and Kari (1996) suggest, PP provides a method for incorporating the public’s ideas, values and interests into decisions, resulting in more responsive and democratic governance. The Burra Charter also emphasises that heritage conservation will become unsustainable without local community participation (ICOMOS, 2013). Effective participation relates to informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering. The International Association for Public Participation, an international leader in public participation, has introduced the “IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation” for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes (IAP2, 2015). The purpose of these core values is to increase level of public impact. Among the fundamental “Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation” are public participation based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process and it includes the promise that the public’s contribution will influence the decision. PP provides participants with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions. PP seeks input from participants in designing how they participate. The process is an ongoing event that requires two ways flow of information, collaboration and

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