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## Evaluating Citizens' Participation in the Urban Heritage Conservation of Historic Area of Shiraz

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### Abstract

Today, citizen participation (CP) has become a global issue for mobilizing untapped human resources, and it has spread across the field of Urban Heritage Conservation (UHC). This study aims to examine an indicator-based approach for the subjective evaluation of CP practice in UHC initiatives in Shiraz. It employs a questionnaire survey of 384 residents who engaged in the UHC initiatives. Finding, particularly, demonstrated that participants desire to attend in a group discussion when the discussions are: respectful; possess mutual trust; respect to different points of view; equal opportunity to speak; offer common good; reciprocal dialogue; have a feedback communication.

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*Keywords:* Citizen participation; urban heritage conservation; evaluation; Shiraz

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### 1. Introduction

At the last decades of the present century has already shown that there is a dramatic increase in citizen participation (CP) in the environmental decision-making process. This rise has been come both from by 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 citizens in their decision-making process (Charnley & Engelbert, 2005). It is now considered that the main objectives of urban environmental management programmes require involving all people and agencies jointly. Despite the importance of CP in the decision-making process, it is clear that what is absent is effective monitoring instrument, particularly, to

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evaluate CP practices as a quantitative measure in assistance with mathematical method. In recent years, Most of historic cities in developing countries like Shiraz in Iran are faced with similar issues. On one hand, they are experiencing high development pressure and lack of concern for cultural heritage, and, on the other hand, there is less or no citizen participation in the different levels of the decision-making process in urban development and conservation (Kong & Yeoh, 1994; Steinberg, 1996). Therefore, this study aims to set out an indicator-based approach for the subjective evaluation of citizens' participation practice and people experiences in UHC initiatives in the Cultural-historic city of Shiraz. In fact, it carried out on two levels. One, the process they attended in it including group discussions on the issues of urban conservation in their area. Second, the outcomes created through the discursive interaction. The subjective evaluation means to prepare some information on: how citizens attend in the group discussions, what people thought they had learned and what they think about the results of their participations.

## **2. Issues and Challenges on Evaluating CP in UHC**

A review of the literature on evaluating citizen participation processes indicates that there is a significant literature purposed to identify criteria and assign measurable (Beierle, 1999; Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Bradbury, 1998; Charnley & Engelbert, 2005; Chess & Purcell, 1999; Edwards, Hindmarsh, Mercer, Bond, & Rowland, 2008; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, 2004) (See table 1). As a matter of fact, there have always been the main challenges to outline the appropriate criteria for conducting an evaluation process (Mannarini & Talò, 2013). At the first time, in 1981, four major problems have been described by Rosener (1981) for conducting an evaluation process. First, the concept of participation is complicated, and it contains many values. Second, criteria that have been held are not many for judging success and failure in the exercise; third, it has been acknowledged that there are no any consensus methods that were built to evaluate criteria; lastly, the reliable measurement tools are not numerous.

In recent years, the complexity of new evaluation frameworks has intensified due to two reasons: one, numerous criteria have been theoretically considered by researchers; second, the different tools have been experimentally used to a different method (Mannarini & Talò, 2013). However, what appears increasingly clear that they could not be used globally, they are today's most commonly applied based on context-dependent (Mannarini & Talò, 2013; Webler & Tuler, 2001).

This study was intended to evaluate the process and the outcomes of citizens' participation in the urban heritage conservation. It has been carried out based on the evaluation framework outlined by Rowe and Frewer (2000, 2004), Edwards et al. (2008) and exactly the resultant of Mannarini et al. (2012). However, the study justified the criteria based on context- dependent characteristics through Semi-structured interview with groups of experts and practitioners in the city. The interview resulted that using these criteria are well suited to evaluate the process and outcomes of CP in the UHC initiatives in the city.

Table 1 shows two categories of the criteria, the process and the outcomes, used in the study which synthesize the evaluation criteria drawn from Rowe and Frewer (2000, 2004), Edwards et al. (2008) and Mannarini et al. (2012). Following Edwards (2008) and by Mannarini (2012), the process factor of CP was categorized into two groups. One, dialogue, which defines as the procedures of people interact with the other citizens including authorities. Second, knowledge/ understanding, which define as whatever the participant may discuss, create, build upon, innovate, and obtain in the process of the collective discussion. This type of category was inducted many evaluation studies in the last decades (Beierle & Cayford, 2002; Rowe & Frewer, 2000, 2004; Webler, 1995).

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