



Identification of the Factors Effective in Designing the Child-Friendly Cultural Complexes (Based on Natural Environment Concept)

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Abstract

The urban planning achieves optimal urban objectives in the real sense when the needs and requirements of all the citizens are considered based on the age requirements. In this regard, children, as one of the social groups, must be more involved in urban planning. In recent years, in terms of the child-friendly cities, various researches has been done both globally and domestically. However, due to the lack of expansion and implementation of the expected indicators, there are a few cities that have gotten close to the optimal level, all over the world. One of the cases which have not been considered in the cities and has not been able to have child-friendly city indicators is the cultural complexes. In this regard, the current study aimed to identify the factors effective in designing child-friendly cultural complexes. The current study is descriptive-analytical. It has been done by library-based instruments and through indexing and reviewing the related writings (including the books and articles) have been used for the study. the effective factors in designing the child-friendly cultural complexes include the welfare, safety and security, association with nature, association with the history, culture and social identity, access to the facilities, and existence of institutions and the spaces relevant to the children, paying attention to the paralyzed children, etc. The children as the potential social capitals of the society required attention and care, and have a specific share of the cities and urban spaces. Perhaps, the only solutions to stop and prevent future crises in the cities age the creation of innovation in designing child-friendly cultural complexes or spaces.

Keywords: Child Friendly, Cultural Complex, Social Capital, Urban Issues.

Introduction:

Today, the discussions of culture paying attention to the cultural values are among the very essential issues of the society. Also, how to develop the ‘self’ culture and encounter the Western cultural invasion as well as the infusion of the cultural issues especially relevant to the young generation must be especially taking into consideration. Meanwhile, building and developing social

spaces complexes as the places in which social work is done is among the most important issues.

Paying attention to the location for construction, especially in the locations where people gather more, can better help us with the achievement of these objectives. Parallel to this, the open urban spaces and the public spaces can also, based on their function and the activities which are done in

them, be very effective in cultural development. One of the complexes which play a very important role in effectiveness on the children's culture is the child-friendly cultural complex.

By child, a person who has not reached the age of maturity is meant, and because the maturity usually happens between the age of 13 to 16 in boys, and 11 to 14 in girls, choosing the criterion of "12 years old is a good criterion the definition of childhood (Karbalaee Hosseini Ghiasvand & Soheili, 2013). The children's cultural center is a place that is allocated to the children's cultural and artistic activities and programs.

A child-friendly city is a city in which the children's demands are prioritized and the social, cultural, and architectural conditions of the city are in line with their requirements, and their rights are reflected in the policies, laws, plans, and budgets (Karim & Ebrahimi, 2013). Research on child-friendly cities, especially in Europe, has become the center of attention from 1918 onwards. Most of these studies were aimed at the location of citizenship rights to the children and dealing with their demands and requirements. Today, the "child-friendly city" has become the center of attention of the urban planners and practitioners, since the population of the children in the urban areas of the world (the cities of the developing countries) is increasing. The child-friendly city projects are mainly the opportunity to create a chance for the children to form or change their surroundings. The children and adolescents as the members of society with specific demands and requirements are the users of the artificial environment. The

child-friendly cities seek to create the child's participation to form their surrounding environment. The practical participation creates an attachment to the city in the child (Kiani & Ismailzadeh Kwaki, 2014). In this regard, the features of a child-friendly city can be expressed as follows: 1- welfare, safety, and security, 2- association with nature, 3- association with the history, culture, social identity, 4- extraction and novelty, 5- visibility, 6- access to the facilities, 7- the existence of the child-relevant institutions and spaces, and 8- consideration for the children with disabilities (Azmoudeh, 2012). In this regard, the current study aimed to identify the effective factors in designing child-friendly cultural complexes. To do so, we would investigate the theoretical frameworks and the opinions of the theoreticians in terms of the concepts related to the subject of this study. First, the child and their urban issues, the appropriate urban spaces for the children, and the effective factors in designing urban spaces for them would be investigated. Then, the concepts related to the cultural complexes and their design would be provided. After that, cases of the domestic cultural complexes and centers including the Niavaran, Khavaran, and Andisheh cultural centers which have been more successful than the other centers and have more facilities, would be evaluated and architectural parameters used in designing these complexes as well as a background of them would be provided, and finally, solutions for designing the child-friendly spaces and centers to advance the city towards a child-friendly city and



promoting its objectives would be introduced, in a way that participation of the children in the creation of the constructed environments would be more focused by the urban architects, designers, and planners.

Methodology:

The method of the current study is descriptive-analytical. The data collection instrument has been the library-based study and indexing. The writings related to the subject (including the books and articles) have been also used.

Child and Urban Issues:

The children are ground and educated in the family, school, and public spaces. The public spaces of the city must meet the needs of the children. The space to spend the leisure time such as the playgrounds such as the playground, a space for educational and cultural activities such as the libraries specific to the children and the cultural centers intended for them, and a space for their access to the natural environment such as the urban and suburban green areas.

Investigation of the children's needs and cities requires familiarity with child psychology and their physiology and physical conditions. Yet, the best guarantee of consideration of all these issues is the use of the children's opinions. In today's research activities, the use of the participatory process in the children related planning is pretty violent. The educational

and research workshops have been gradually increased in recent years, in the developed countries, and have been widely and effectively used.

Teaching Citizenship Concepts to the Children:

The psychologist believed that human life is actually a process of learning. This process continues from birth to death. Learning is the creation of a relatively persistent change in behavior. Today, in developed communities, citizenship rights and duties are among the first affairs that are taught and expand the children. Several methods have been proposed to do so. In many cases, the teachings are practical and functional. Formation of the working and artistic groups, performing and practicing group activities, the involvement of the children's opinions and the decisions related to them, and their participation in the social activities and paying attention to the children and adults and strolled in the activities are among these teachings (Razman, 2015).

Urban Spaces Suitable for the Children:

The public urban spaces for the children can be considered in different formations. The public spaces in the city, neighborhood, school, streets, parks, cinemas, libraries, sports spaces and the like are among such spaces. The urban public spaces, besides the home, are associated with the children and

are responsible for a great portion of their education.

In the modern urbanism, each neighbor hated him theoretically defined with the functional area related to the children. The center Irish neighborhood the primary school and in addition to the other services such as the neighborhood parks, sports arenas, and playgrounds are considered for the children. However, in practice, these points are ignored in the planned in most of the cases. Most of the urban neighborhood spaces are defined for the children but they are less welcomed and used by them. Perhaps, the most important feature of public space appropriate children is the provision of the physical and emotional security for the children and their families. Jane Jacobs believes that the most important child's interests in an urban space are summarized in the security of the streets, a variety of functions, and the vitality and succulence of the city. By obviating of these concerns for the child, the main concerns of the whole population would be obviated. Today, it has been revealed that the quality of the children-specific physical space in terms of the density, concealment, proper facilities and other issues related to these spaces depends on accurate and sufficient recognition of the children. Child psychology can be useful in this regard.

The child initiates his/her first social relationships with his/her mother, then father, and then the siblings. Gradually, as he gets older, he can establish a relationship with other children, too. In adolescence, he tries to become more independent from his parents and the home. However, he still feels

that complete independence is not possible. This period is the period of formation of groups, such as the artistic, sports, and leisure groups and the like. Sometimes, the adolescents also form small groups with specific objectives in the school or the neighborhood. The membership in the groups enables the individual to adapt himself with other people who are like him and learn new thoughts and ideas. Paying attention to these simple points is highly important for planners and designers. The urban spaces must be prepared for nurturing the children's and adolescents' thoughts and behaviors and meet their basic needs.

The Child and Social Needs:

Generally, the children's needs could be defined in three areas: within the family space, the educational space, and the public space. The urban public space for the children usually includes the public spaces of the neighborhood and the city, playing space, and the collective cultural and educational spaces (children's library, children's cultural centers, and the sports centers). The urban spaces must be usable and perceivable for the children as they are to other people.

By social development and growth, it is meant that the individual learns to live in a society or culture, cooperate with others, and take some responsibilities. The socialization requires the person to give some of his demands up and do the things he does not want to. Therefore, it is very important to give the child the power to cooperate with others, learn what he does not know, tolerate



the failures in life, ignore or postpone some of his demands for the good of the community, follow the customs and traditions, and take social responsibilities. On the other hand, when the family is not able to meet the basic need of its child, the city's authorities are obliged to support the child. The child supports social entities (state-based or charities) that are among the basic requirements of modern cities.

Child and Leisure:

The play is the best learning method in childhood. Schiller states: the child is really a child when he plays. Based on the child psychologists, the most effective play in the very low ages is the free play. A play without any interference and rules set by the parents who are completely self-stimulated and desirable, and usually has no goals. The urban space must meet this need. The children's playing space is only a part of the required urban space for them.

Based on Article 31 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, play and recreation are among the children's rights. Therefore, it is required to prepare the needed facilities and equipment for their recreational activities. In Clause 2 of the same article, it is stated: it is required that the city's authorities prepare various and appropriate spaces for children to play. These spaces better are close to the children's residence.

Children's Playing Space:

With the expansion of the urbanization process all over the world and the creation of the metropolises, the contact, and association of the children with nature and natural spaces have been reduced and their play and leisure opportunities have been restricted to the urban space. Also, the physical expansion of the cities which has led to the distance from nature, the parents' concerns about the sufficient security, the participation of the children in the extracurricular training classes, the computer games, and the TV have played a role in the decrease in today's urban children relationship with the natural space.

Psychologists believe that in childhood, learning occurs through free play. There is no precise and definite definition for the free play, however, the lack of planning, unpredictability, optionality, and being enjoyable is among the features of such play. In order to encounter the shortage of playing spaces in the cities, some countries have taken specific steps. For example, the revival of the concept and value of the neighborhood, informing people about the importance of children's play spaces, and the use of the neighborhood's residents for controlling and administering these spaces are emphasized.

On the other hand, the municipalities also consider some points in their executive programs. Locating the parks and the playing spaces for the children close to their residence by the optimal use of the natural elements such as the jungle, rivers, old trees, and securing the passages and facilities for the children are among these points. The simultaneous and due attention to all these

aspects leads to the creation of a healthy and sustainable neighborhood.

There is a significant experience in Germany in this regard. In some cities, public space has been considered whose purpose was to calm traffic and transform local street use into local access. This space is called “*Wonnerf*” or “the living street”. This way, urban space is created that is suitable for different types of economic and social activities, especially the children’s playing. In these spaces, the trees are usually planted in narrow streets and the vehicle speed limit is 16Km/h (10 miles/h).

Children Playground:

In the 1920’s, some spaces in the public parks were allocated to the children. In 1931, Sorensen, the Dane designer has suggested considering a space for children’s playing with the seemingly valueless tools and materials. This idea led to the formation of the “adventurous playgrounds” in the 1940’s which was implemented in 1948 in Camberwell, London. With the technological advancements in the 20th century, the construction of spaces for the audience in different age groups became feasible. In many large cities, some towns were created especially for children playing and leisure such as Cairo, New York, and Houston, and also, Paris.

In Iran, some kindergartens were established in Tehran and Isfahan in 1919, which were mainly managed by some European missionaries. The first Iranian kindergarten was established in 1924 in Tabriz, by Jabbar

Baghchehban. A little while later, Qamar Dolat Abadi also founded such an institution in Isfahan. The first kindergartens regulation in Iran was written in 1955, by the Ministry of Culture. The Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults was founded in 1962. This institute dealt with children aged from 6 to 18 years old.

However, generally, it should be noted that children’s playing in a natural space is quite different from playing in a man-made environment. The natural environment has an especial feeling for the child. The child is free in the natural environment. He is free to run, cry, and spill. Definitely, for designing and planning a children-specific playing space, the observance of the dominant culture of the society is necessary. The society’s culture is always effective in all aspects of the individuals’ life and consequently, in their living spaces. By the society’s culture, only the dominant and general culture of the people is not meant, but in many cases, the specific attention paid to the micro-cultures and the minorities guarantees the success of urban space.

It is only by consideration for these points that urban space can be expected to act ideally. Some social sciences scholars believe that consideration for the culture in designing and planning is, in fact, the same as attention paid to the local culture of the women and the children, because in most of the communities, it is the mothers who decide where their families and children go for leisure (Rahmani & Aliabadi, 2013).

The Children Playing Spaces in Iran:



In the traditional Iranian urbanism, no specific space for children's playing was considered. The children could play with their peers at home and the neighborhood and even find new experiences in contact with nature. However, with the entrance of the modernist thoughts and elimination of the traditional context of the cities, and especially, with the emergence of high-rise buildings and dense neighborhoods in the big cities of the country, the children and their specific needs were ignored by most of the urban planners and managers, as despite the influence of the modernist urbanism beliefs and thoughts on the urban planners and managers thoughts, the importance and position of the children-specific urban spaces such as the children's leisure and recreation spaces did not attract due attention.

The children's playgrounds in Iran are usually limited to a few simple items such as a seesaw or a slide, or the dusty playgrounds in the neighborhoods. On the other hand, the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults is actually the only active institute in terms of the cultural and educational activities specific to the children in the country. The kindergartens also have not been able to reach an appropriate position and role, as it can be said that the Iranian kindergartens (especially in the big cities) have only taken the responsibility of caring for the children when their parents are at work.

Even in cities whose urban design is at an acceptable level also the children's position has been ignored, as a feeling of insecurity in the children at the urban spaces and

consequently, in the parents, has always existed. This leads the parents to prefer their children to stay at home and spend their leisure time there so that they would lose the chance to play in nature and open space. It leads to the deprivation of the children from the new experiences and acquaintance with his peers and social relationships between them.

Perhaps, it can be said that before designing and constructing the leisure and recreation spaces for the children, the preparation of the urban neighborhoods for the children's social life must be taken into consideration. urban neighborhoods should not be a place for traffic and commuting. The neighborhood alleys must be only intended for local access. The vehicle's speed must be minimized and be at an optimal level for maintenance of security and peace.

In the second step, the access spaces design is of high importance. Spaces are tangible for the children. The child must be able to establish a relationship with his neighborhood and city. The green area design, beautiful streets, the use of appropriate colors in the neighborhoods and the city, and even the urban signs and symbols can be important.

In the third step, the designing and implementation of the urban spaces suitable for children are important. The neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and local libraries are among the simple and important examples of such spaces. In the city also, the establishment of the amusement parks, large parks, camps, and the like for children's playing and leisure, and establishment of the children-specific museums, exhibitions,

cinemas, and the like are important for nurturing of the children. In all these spaces, specific principles must be taken into consideration so that they can be successful in their functions. The most important principles are security, proximity, and closeness to nature, variety, welfare, silence, and supervision.

Generally, the children-specific problems and issues cannot be investigated in isolation and separately from the other social and urban problems. At the national level, the major policies and main orientations in the long-term, mid-term, and short-term programs must be taken with consideration for the needs and shortages of the children. The laws of the country must be made more and more in line with the global rules of child protection. Yet, the efforts must be put to correctly and accurately follow these rules. Consideration for the cultures and micro-cultures in different communities and coordinating with them can be a guarantee for precise enforcement of the children's relevant rules.

At the urban level, the expansion of social and cultural institutions can be considered as a mid-term solution. The use of other countries' experiences in this regard can be very useful. The correction of the urban neighborhoods for their accessibility to the children, the establishment of the children-specific cultural centers, parks, and local libraries, and the like can be among the authorities' plan to meet the needs and shortages of the children in the Iranian metropolises. In recent years, some activities in this regard can be seen, though sporadically. The Child and Adolescent

House in Isfahan or the Child and Adolescent Library in Leleh Park of Tehran are among such examples (which are supervised by the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults).

It seems that as long as the majority of the urban managers and planners are focused on the significance of the mental and emotional needs of the children, a better future for the children in the national and urban programs cannot be expected. The first step for solving the existing problems is making the planners pay attention to this significant task (Madani & Komayi, 2014).

The Concepts related to Cultural Complexes:

A cultural complex is a cultural-leisure place in modern life that is consistent with the occupational activities in an artificial and urban environment. The composure and relaxation of the soul and the body is very essential. Indeed, it is the lowest treatment of humans. In this regard, the order and flourishing of the thoughts and talents are especially important. Therefore, the cultural complex is established for nurturing the talents of the individuals, especially the youth, and a place for the psychological nourishment of citizens in an artistic environment, as well as the development and dissemination of artistic dimensions in people's lives and the introduction of various aspects of life.

Any culture is organized in an ordered manner so that it can provide people with



effective mutual relationships. The cultural element is the smallest unit of culture which can be an expression, an object, a movement, or a sign. The cultural complex is an intricate collection of elements attributed to that culture (Figure 1).

Some others define the cultural complex as “a cultural combination. A collection made of the cultural elements which have a specific function. The cultural complex can be defined as a collection of cultural elements that has an integrated function and stabilized as a unit in time and space. It has the capability of mutual cultural influence and is limited to one aspect of the general culture (Tables 1 to 3).

The Principles and Criteria for Designing a Cultural Center:

Different parts of cultural centers (some are essential and some depend on the designer’s opinion):

1- The main lobby and its subsets including:

Waiting and living space

Sale of food

Childcare

Elements of public services such as

telephone booths and the Internet

Vertical access elements such as ramps, stairs, and elevators

2- Booths selling cultural and artistic products

3- Administrative site includes:

Conference room

Presidential Room

Offices

Archive

Pantry

Toilets

The client's waiting place and the secretary room

4- Amphitheater and cinema

5- Library

6- Art Gallery

7- Classes and educational ateliers including Painting

Architecture

Photography

Sculpture

Language Laboratory and...

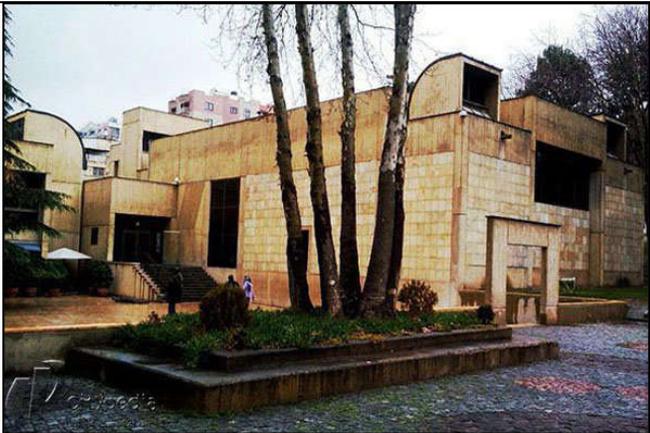
8- Audiovisual unit and computer site

9- Restaurant or coffee shop

Samples of Cultural Centers in Iran:

1- Niavaran Cultural Center (Table 1):

Table 1. the analysis of the Niavaran Cultural Center (source: the author)

Project name	Niavaran Cultural Center
Architect	Kamran Diba
Year of construction	1978
Location	Tehran
Function	Artistic, cultural, traditional group
Main objectives	Making the architecture consistent with the urbanism and the social aspect of of the city
Existing spaces	The amphitheater, the gallery and the office section, theatre saloon, concert hall, seminar hall, and library
Design solutions	A combination of the context (concrete and stone), form (simple geometrical), and the Iranian traditions, the platforms, and boxes on both sides of the steps
The key components of the design	The complete and singular geometries and perspectives beside each other
<p>The Niavaran Cultural Center building is ordered around a square-like courtyard which has a horseshoe-like geometry. The access to the main buildings is done through steps to enter the central courtyard which makes the audience pass through the traditional sub-form.</p>	
	

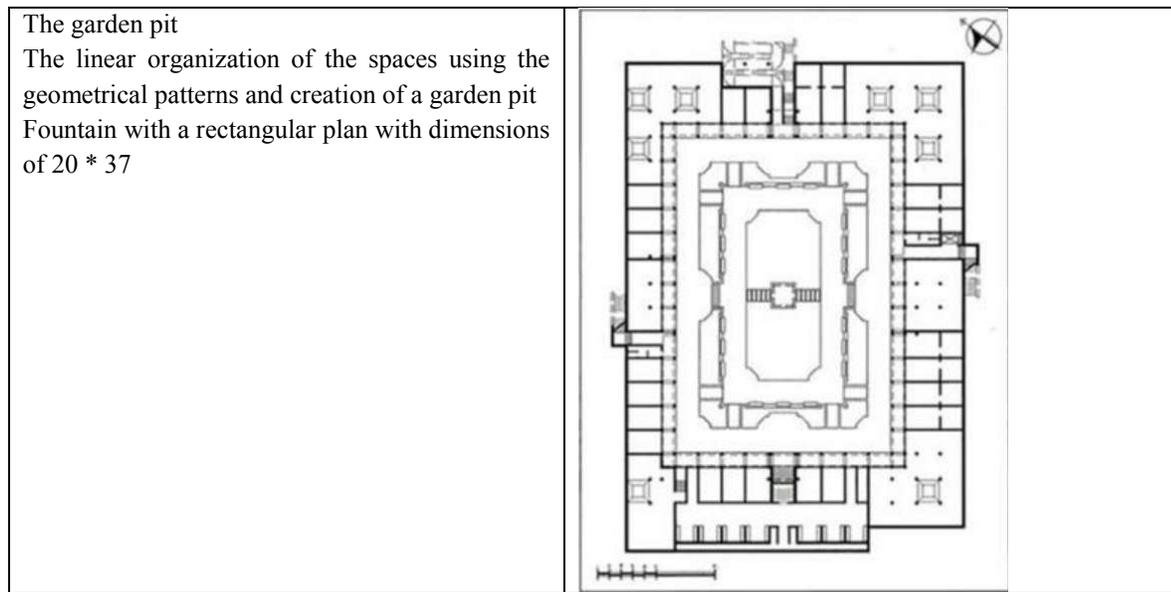
2- Khavaran Cultural Center (Table 2):



Figure 1. Khavaran Cultural Center

Table 2. analysis of the Khavaran Cultural Center (source: the author)

Project name	Khavaran Cultural Center
Architect	Khat-Niaresh Consulting Engineers
Year of construction	1994
Location	Tehran
Function	Artistic, educational, social, cultural group
Main objectives	Enrichment of the children and adolescents' leisure time in the southeastern Tehran
Existing spaces	Office building, the culture, and art market (in an open space in the courtyard), central building, technologies building, and playground
Design solutions	The manifestation of the cultural concept of the complex in the building shape and the open amphitheater of the cultural center
The key components of the design	Combination of traditional and modern architecture, various sports spaces, bigger spaces than other cultural centers



3-1-3- Andisheh Cultural Center(Table 3):

Table 3.Analysis of the Andisheh Cultural Center (source: the author)

Project name	Andisheh Cultural Center
Architect	Mohammad Meysam Meysami
Year of construction	1993
Location	Tehran
Fubction	Artistic-cultural
Main objectives	Provision of the cultural facilities and filling the free time
Existing spaces	A multi-purpose cinema with Dolby sound system and 420 seats, 1700 meters of a public library, Dar al-Quran, restaurant, gallery
Design solutions	access
The key components of the design	Modern architecture, the lay-out of cinema, gallery, theatre, and other saloons in a limited space



New architecture

The use of multi-story buildings

Large cultural space and easy access



Conclusion:

Definitely, a child-friendly city and cultural complex must meet a set of children that needs to be titled such. One of the minimum conditions which were mentioned was the provision of the infrastructures such as the playing items and green area for the children.

One of the focuses of these provisions is the children's right to participate in society's decisions. Perhaps, the necessity of such a measure seems a little vague in the first look, while such thought is false and the Covenant on the Civil Rights is opposed to it.

According to this covenant, the children must have access to unrestricted information sources so that they would be able to act consciously in their society's decisions because the children's participation in social affairs is introduced as one of the main factors for a child0friendly city and cultural complex.

Also, the children must be able to get involved in the cultural complexes' policy-making by the establishment of communities and associations.

For example, one of the concerns of the authorities in any city is the provision of clean air. Since one of the beneficiaries of it is the children, they can take part in provision and realization of this goal.

Also, another provision mentioned in the covenant is the justice in the provision of the facilities and services for the children in all urban zones.

The child-friendly cultural complex is also wanted by other people as it encourages its citizens, including the old and the youth, to participate in the services and urban design.

In a child-friendly cultural complex, the proper management and leadership require the allocation of the opportunity to the children to decide. Basically, the child-friendly city seeks to guarantee all the rights of these youth citizens as follows:

- The effectiveness of their rights in their city
- In addition to participation in the family, society, and social life, they should be also involved in designing the cultural complex
- Access to the basic services (such as the health, education and shelter, healthy drinking water, cinemas, theatre, and other related services)
- Protection against the violence and insult
- Walking in the complex securely
- Meeting friends and playing with them
- A suitable and private environment
- Recognition of the children as equal citizens and the possibility of access to all services regardless of race and religion (Osman El Hassan, 2013).

One of the important cases in urban areas is the creation of the spaces suitable for the children. In the urban spaces, the children

connect to different people including the peers and other people with a cultural and social variety. Such spaces are considered as the city’s language and the most important factor in the relationship between the city and all other groups. Therefore, the security of urban spaces for the movement of children is very important and significant. It is really important for the children to show them you are interested in what they say since what they have to speak about is quite relevant. Listen to them for a long time and with enthusiasm, and before designing a cultural complex, ask their opinion. Wherever possible, involve the children in the designing process as much as possible, and make sure the design reflects their ideas. The results of the participatory designing would end in a valuable reward. Therefore, in designing a cultural complex, many factors must be considered which are provided in (Table 4).

Table 4. the effective factors in designing a child-friendly cultural complex (source: the author)

Welfare, safety, security, and lack of discrimination
Association with nature
Association with the history, culture, and collective identity
Access to the facilities needed for the children
Existence of the child relevant institutes and spaces to meet their leisure needs
Children’s participation in designing the cultural complexes
Allowing the children to get involved in cultural complex management
The justice and equality in the provision of the facilities and services for the children

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