D o s s i e r E d i t o r i a l

Quality of urban life

Guest editors:
Handan DÜLGER TÜRKOĞLU*, Robert W. MARANS**
**Istanbul Technical University Faculty of Architecture, Istanbul, TURKEY; ** University of Michigan Institute for Social Research Ann Arbor, USA*

During the past quarter century, a number of scholars operating at the interface of the social sciences and the environmental design professions have argued that quality of any entity has leisure,both a subjective dimension as well as an objective reality. Central to this assertion is the meaning of quality of the environment where the environment may be defined as having built, natural and socio-cultural dimensions. The residential environment consisting of places where we reside contains each of these dimensions and past research has suggested that they are important to the overall quality of life experience. The quality of residential environments is central to the work of architects, planners and landscape architects researchers worldwide who want to contribute to societal well being.

In their seminal research on quality of life, Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) measured the perceptions, evaluations, and satisfactions of Americans focusing on several domains of life including the residential environment. Satisfaction was considered a more plausible and realistic objective for policy makers inhcluding environmental designers than that of creating happiness, and the researchers were interested in generating data that could potentially influence public policy. Among the domains measured and compared were health, family, work, leisure, and community, neighbourhood and housing, Campbell and his colleagues suggested that domain satisfactions were a reflection of people's assessments and perceptions of domain attributes which in turn, were influenced by the objective attributes themselves

Building on the working of Campbell et al. Marans and his colleagues explored these issues from a conceptual and empirical perspective (Marans and Rodgers, 1975; Lee and Marans, 1980; Connerly and Marans, 1988). Their contention has been that quality of life in a particular geographic setting (city, neighbourhood, dwelling) was a subjective phenomenon, and that each occupant of a setting may differ in his/her views about it. Furthermore, those views would reflect their perceptions and assessments

of a number of specific attributes of the setting which could be influenced by certain characteristics of the occupant, including his or her needs and past experiences. The past experiences represent a set of standards again which present judgments are made. These standards or references include other settings experienced by the occupant, and settings to which the occupant aspires. Finally, it is suggested that the occupant's assessments and perceptions of setting attributes are associated with the attributes themselves

What are the measures or indicators that reflect the quality of life in cities or other settings and how might they be determined? Over the past quarter century, a number of reports on the quality of life in cities, neighbourhoods, retirement communities, and metropolitan areas have identified attributes or indicators which are believed to be representative of quality (Liu, 1975; Dickerson, 1981; Connerly and Marans, 1988; Savageau and Loftus, 1997). Indicator sets include climate, health care, crime, transportation, education, the arts, recreation, jobs, and costs of living. Within each set, specific indicators selected to represent quality are presented. The selection of the exact set of indicators, both objective and subjective, for a particular place is a complex process and needs to involve a variety of stakeholders besides planners and researchers who will gather them. Clearly, indicators that have been used in the past should be re-examined. Those that continue to represent an important aspect of city development should be replicated. Other previously used indicators may be abandoned while new ones representing current interests could be added. That is, they must represent the interests of potential users of the indicators such as governmental units, and institutional, business, and community organizations. Without input from these interest groups, quality of urban life indicators that are used are prone to attack on the grounds of accuracy and credibility.

An important assumption is that the quality of life in any geographic setting (i.e. city, neighborhood, house, etc.) can not be captured with a single measure. Rather, measures of the multiple attributes of the setting in question are needed. In combination, they reflect the overall quality of life of the setting. A second important assumption is that quality is a subjective phenomenon reflecting the lives of the setting's occupants. The objective conditions of those occupants themselves do not convey the true quality of the setting.

.

A major research program on the quality of urban life that utilizes this assumption was launched through the 2001 Detroit Area Study (DAS) (see Marans, 2003). The research program was extended to other world cities including Brisbane (Australia), Salzburg (Austria), Famagusta (Northern Cyprus), and Bogota (Columbia) where parallel studies were undertaken. Similar studies are being contemplated in Doha (Qatar), Bangkok(Thailand), and Xi'an (China)The instruments developed through the 2001 DAS and used in other urban settings provide a useful medium for doing comparative research on the quality of urban life.

The dossier theme (Quality of Urban Life) emphasizes the research conrtributions of the urban environment to the overall well being of residents living in urban areas ranging in scale from small cities and their hinterlands to metropolitan regions. By urban environment, we mean the socio-physical aspects of urban living ranging from individual dwellings and neighbourhoods to public services (i.e. transportation, rubbish collection, etc)

to neighbours and community organizations. It will also emphasize not only perceptions of and behaviors within urban environments but the actual conditions to which individuals are responding. That is, the research covers both subjective and behavioral aspects of urban living but also the objective conditions which drive them. The dossier theme covers research that incorporated theoretical and methodological approaches to the conceptualizing and measuring quality of life. Specifically contributions focus on the following subjects:

Theoretical approach on the study of urban quality of life
Research design for collection of data to measure and model of urban quality of life.
Presenting case studies of urban quality of life around the world,

Oktay, Rüstemli and Marans describe the Famagusta Area Study (FAS) including the methodology and selected findings. A sample of residents was selected from four neighborhoods that represented four different growth patterns, social-spatial character, and housing types. The paper mainly explores the impacts of certain social-spatial factors on satisfaction with neighbourhood safety, walkability, satisfaction with parks and recreational facilites, the maintenance of houses, streets and open spaces, the availability of trees, the vehicular circulation, car parking, the accessibility of common public spaces, neighbourhood traffic noise level, crowding, and the 'satisfaction with the neighbourhood as a place to live'.

Baran, Smith, Turkoglu, Marans and Bolen present findings related to walking behavior in the Istranbul area. Their work examines how neighborhood and micro-environment safety contexts are associated with utilitarian and recreational walking. Study results show that utilitarian and recreational walking are influenced by perceived neighborhood safety and signs of territorial functioning (maintenance) in the immediate context. In addition, busy places and an assessment of the area as a good place to walk encourage both types of walking. Several The differences between the factors influencing the two types of walking behavior relate to a number of individual attributes and neighborhood social networks, neighborhood density, number of cars in the household, and the overall satisfaction with living in the area. Overall, these findings indicate that the concept of "walking" should not be considered a uni-dimensional construct, but rather there seems to be types of walking behavior, with different "causes" associated with those types.

Berköz presents comperative results of a study which is done for gated and non gated communities in Istanbul..The purpose of the study was to assess the factors that improve housing and environmental satisfaction in gated (single-family) and non-gated housing developments in Istanbul. According to the results residents of both communites give the highest importance in "accessibility to urban facilities", "community safety", "neighborhood relationships", "status", and "accessibility to green areaswhile community safety' was found to be the most significant factor for gated communities .

Alkay presents analitical results of a study which is done by Istanbul Municipality.. In the study, the relationship between environmental quality and housing sale prices were examined in the Istanbul Metropolitan Area.

An environmental quality index which includes subjective and objective indicators was developed by utilizing principal component analysis in the paper. . According to the results, dissatisfaction results from high density, and negative externalities resulted from industrial areas have impacts on the environmental quality index levels. In the study the relationship between the index levels and average housing sale prices was also explored. Based on this analysis a positive and strong relationship between the environmental quality and average housing sale prices at the district level was explored.

Ayatac and Turk evaluate quality of life researches which is done for Istanbul following a literature review. Their study aims to question Quality of Place (QoP) on the socio-economic development level in two stages. In the first stage, the position and role of QoP in the existing literature is assessed, and the determinants affecting its measurability are summarized. In the second stage, the place-based research in Turkey, a developing country, and its largest metropolitan city, Istanbul, are examined in chronological order. In the research, a common synthesis of the indicators, limitations used and references made to QoP is devised. As a conclusion, the meaning of QoP for Istanbul is limited to housing environment. Moreover, it will effectively improve the usage of the resources in the planning process and will be a leading source for public policies.

Pinto emphasis social aspect of quality of urban life using empiric data on quality of life in the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA). She describes notions of quality of life of the inhabitants of the LMA and their forms of perception and assessment of quality of life. The data were analysed with a view to reflection on the complexity of the variables intervening between objective conditions and subjective perceptions of quality of life and contributing to a discussion on forms of intervention towards improving quality in urban settings.

Gulersoy, Özsoy, Tezer, Yiğiter and Günay aims was to discuss diverse factors in the provision of environmental quality, and to put forward a strategic approach for quality planning in decaying urban areas in Turkey in their study. In the paper a conceptual model is presented for future urban design practices in Turkey which concentrates on providing satisfaction for all levels of participants, emphasizing correlated systems, developing partnership mechanisms and balancing common interests through a sustainable structure.

Erkök presents an analytical approach to case studies using waterfronts for improwing the quality of life. According to her study the success of the quality of life embodied in public spaces is increasingly accepted factor for overall success. Her paper draws some recommendations for Istanbul, after examining some case cities in Europe, such as Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Hamburg and Antwerp, selected with the aim to search how they establish their urban policies involving water, how they create spaces of interaction with water and contribute to the urban life of citizens. Each case was assessed according to series of quality criteria such as urban space/recreation, housing, cultural environment, land use pattern and infrastructure/mobility. Interviews with policy makers and planners were used to assess the development projects try to re-install the water culture to the city and how this approach helps improving the quality of urban life.

References

Campbell, A., P.E. Converse, and W. L. Rodgers. 1976, **The Quality of American Life: Perceptions, Evaluations, and Satisfactions**. New York: Russell Sage Foundation

Connerly and R. W.Marans. 1988. Neighborhood Quality: A Description and Analysis of Indicators. In Hutteman, E. and W. van Vliet (Eds*.)* **The U. S. Handbook on Housing and the Built Environment**. Westwood, CO. Greenwood Press.

Dickerson, P. A. 1981. **Retirement Edens Outside the Sunbelt**. New York: E.P. Dutton

Lee,T. and R. W. Marans. 1980, Objective and Subjective Indicators: Scale Discordance on Interrelationships. 6:47-64, **Social Indicators Research**

Liu, B. 1975. **Quality of Life Indicators in U. S. Metropolitan Areas***, 1970*. Washington, D.C, U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Washington, Environmental Research Center.

Marans, R.W. 2003, Modelling Residential Quality Using Subjective and Objective Indicators: Opportunities Through Quality of Life Studies, Paper presented **IAPS Methodologies in Housing Research Conference**, Stocholm, Sweden.

Marans, R. W. and W. L. Rodgers. 1975, Toward an Understanding of Community Satisfaction. In Hawley, A. and V. Rock (Eds.) **Metropolitan America in Contemporary Perspective**. New York: Halsted Press.

Savageau, D. and G. Loftus. 1997, **Places Rated Almanac: 5th Edition**. New York: Macmillan