Sustainability of Housing Policies (in Turkey)

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Abstract: The number of slums and the inequity of the population's life standards have been increasing since 1950's. The proportion of people working in Developing Country agriculture has declined by 20 to 30 per cent. The economic situation is deeply caused this shift of this declination. But of course poverty is not *the only* factor for this change. The unforeseeable growth of population and the migration together with the inadequate house policies are the main seeds of the formation of the slums. Homelessness is the problem of both the Developing and Developed Countries today. Informal settlements with poor living conditions and inadequate basic services seek immediate act for housing provision for the slum dwellers. From industrial development to today's chaotic setting, increasing in environmental problems, decreasing in energy sources, showing efforts about surviving in spite of economical difficulties are considered to be in the extent of sustainable research. As the other professional areas, sustainability has been included in the architectural literature under the name of different research areas such as "sustainable planning for housing provision".

Worries about economical, environmental, social and cultural sustainability have appeared in the case of space; and started to form the design act in the direction of these factors. According to conjecture; planning and designing decisions will increase the interaction between international scale and the units. The substructure which is necessary for the decision mechanism must be examined in the housing provision and must be criticized in the historically. The necessity of examining the sustainability concept which has begun as an environmental worry, with all factors which composes the social being is emphasized again in the historical evolution. In nowadays' treatment, where the sustainability's concept can turn into unsustainable positions, impasse of not supporting the transplantation from global scale to the local correctly is come upon. For the solution, it is necessary to understand the relationship of the "whole-part" and the systematic of different scales correctly. The whole-part interrelation and the relationship between the planning and designing which spread from larger to smaller scale, have to serve to common truth. Otherwise, it can't go further from the evolution which includes mistakes. The sustainability has lots of directions in social housing literature. It requires a strategic plan for a common aim around which addresses to the different formats and which the professionals come together, especially the politicians, planners and the local and global authorities.

In Turkey, the policies affect only a very small group and mostly they are not effective in the long-term. Although all of these policies are to benefit the whole society, their impacts on different social and economic groups vary especially on housing policies. Housing provision and homelessness need more realistic solutions for nations, and require immediate action based on economical and social inputs. Although there is no exact solution or a recipe to the problem, rapid solutions must be sought as a sustainable housing policy without omitting its context.

Keywords: slum, homelessness, sustainability, housing provision

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Slums and Informal Housing

A slum, as defined by the United Nations agency (2002), is a run-down area of a city characterized by substandard housing and squalor and lacking in tenure security. In other words slums are poor-income, informal settlements with inadequate living conditions and basic services. The traditional meaning of slum is housing areas that were once respectable or even desirable, but which have since deteriorated, as the original dwellers have moved to new and better areas of cities (UN-HABITAT, 2007). The houses, which are abandoned by the original dwellers, are subdivided and rented to lower-income groups. The inner-city slums of many historical towns and cities can be good examples of these kinds of slums. The emerging meaning, includes the vast informal settlements found in the Third World Countries, has many examples and is still increasing.

A multitude of different settlements and communities are covered in the term 'slum', and it can mainly be divided into two types: slums of hope, and slums of despair. (Geddes: cited in Davis, 2006) Slums of hope are 'progressing' settlements, which are characterized by new, normally self-built structures, usually illegal (e.g. squatter houses and semi-legal subdivisions) that are in, or have recently been through, a process of development, consolidation and improvement. Slums of despair are 'declining' neighbourhoods (e.g. 'old' city centre slums), in which environmental conditions and domestic services are undergoing a process of degeneration (UN-HABITAT, 2003 & 2007).

The slum characteristics vary from place to place, and in different countries (and languages) it is named differently mostly showing the point of view in the mentioned country. In the case of Turkey, the term for "slums of hope" is called "gecekondu"; the exact meaning of the word is "built over night" emphasizing how fast they are (or can be) built and grow [1].

b. Third World Realities: The Ascending Numbers on Homelessness

Slums come about because of a number of forces; mostly based on economic situations (Fig. 1). The appearance of slums grounds on much earlier times, but the real break point of the formation is 1940's and 1950's; after the Second World War. The economical reasons are rural-to-urban migration, overpopulation in the urban areas, and increasing urban poverty. The situation became worse with the inadequate policies and plans (Table 1). Squatter and slum settlements have been formed mainly because of the inability of city governments to plan and provide affordable housing for the low-income segments of the urban population.
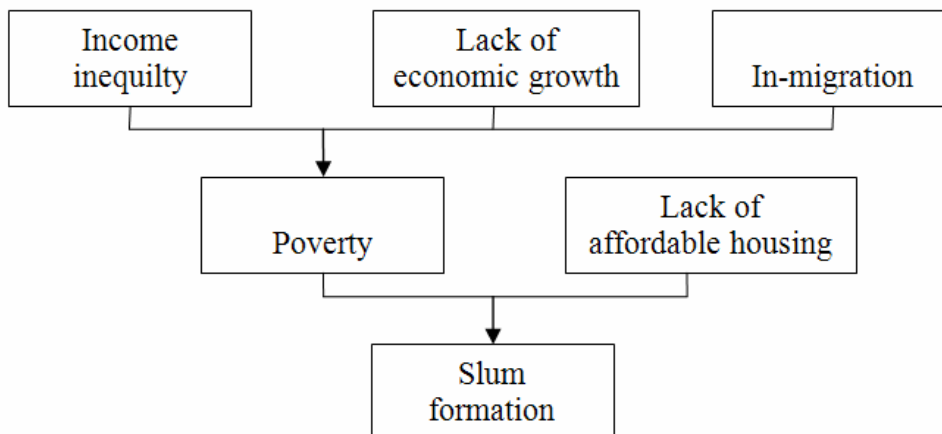

Fig. 1 - The reasons of slums (UN-HABITAT, 2003)

Hence, squatter and slum housing are the housing solution for this low-income urban population [2]. Yet, the rapid and accelerated migration and slum formation had turned the solution into the problem (Table 2). Homelessness became the problem of the world, since an estimated 100 million people worldwide are homeless, and more than one billion people are now living in informal housing with very poor conditions. The most thoughtful part is, according to a UN-HABITAT Report (2003) it can be foreseeable that in near future one in every three people in the world will be living in slums.

World historical and predicted populations (in millions)[6]								
Region	1750	1800	1850	1900	1950	1999	2050	2150
World	791	978	1 262	1 650	2 521	5 978	8 909	9 746
Africa	106	107	111	133	221	767	1 766	2 308
Asia	502	635	809	947	1 402	3 634	5 268	5 561
Europe	163	203	276	408	547	729	628	517
Latin America and the Caribbean *	16	24	38	74	167	511	809	912
Northern America *	2	7	26	82	172	307	392	398
Oceania	2	2	2	6	13	30	46	51

World historical and predicted populations by percentage distribution								
Region	1750	1800	1850	1900	1950	1999	2050	2150
World	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Africa	13.4	10.9	8.8	8.1	8.8	12.8	19.8	23.7
Asia	63.5	64.9	64.1	57.4	55.6	60.8	59.1	57.1
Europe	20.6	20.8	21.9	24.7	21.7	12.2	7.0	5.3
Latin America and the Caribbean *	2.0	2.5	3.0	4.5	6.6	8.5	9.1	9.4
Northern America *	0.3	0.7	2.1	5.0	6.8	5.1	4.4	4.1
Oceania	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5

Table 1 – World population [3]

Slum population (thousand)	1990	2001	2020(projection)
Developed regions			
Europe	32234	33124	34543
Other	18723	20934	25623
Total	**50957**	**54058**	**60166**
Developing regions			
Western Asia*	29524	41356	73896
Other	692084	882751	1403495
Total	**721608**	**924107**	**1477291**
Slum population (in percent)	1990	2001	2020(projection)
Developed regions			
Europe	4.47	3.58	2.34
Other	2.59	2.27	1.73
Total	**7.06**	**5.85**	**4.07**
Developing regions			
Western Asia*	4.09	4.48	5
Other	88.85	89.67	90.93
Total	**92.94**	**94.15**	**95.93**

*Western Asia is shown because in these statistics Turkey is listed in Western Asia.

Table 2- The slum population by numbers and percent distribution (UN-HABITAT, Table 3, 4)

According to the figures, the Developed and Developing Countries have both been affected by migration and slums but in Developing Countries the near future is still cloudy. The world's slums are growing, and growing, with the number of people living in such dire conditions now at the 1 billion mark - making up 32 per cent of the global urban population, the crisis is such that the world will see this figure double in the next 30 years unless a concerted effort is undertaken to alleviate the situation (UN-HABITAT, 2003).

The inequity between urban and rural population as well as between rich and poor countries is still growing and the gap is becoming apparent. The crowded-and big cities are getting more crowded, while the population in small cities and rural population continue to decrease.

The inequity between urban and rural population is evident in Turkey. The slum formation is very rapid. (Here the slum is a slum of hope or squatter house). The biggest three cities are getting more crowded –especially Istanbul; with a great difference to its nearest follower- while the small cities and rural population decrease. The urban population continues to increase as well as the slum population. And again like most of the Developing Countries the slums are growing much faster (Table 3, 4) [4].

Years	Number of Slums (thousand)	Number of Population (thousand)	Percentage of Slums in Urban Population
1955	50	250	4.7
1960	240	1200	16.4
1965	430	2250	22.9
1970	600	3000	23.6
1980	1150	5750	26.1
1990	1750	8750	33.9
1995	2000	10000	35

Table 3 – The number of slums and population in Tukey (Gökmen, Et Al.)

Years	Number of Population (thousand)		Istanbul/Turkey
	Turkey	Istanbul	
1950	20947	1167	5.57
1960	27755	1882	6.78
1970	35605	3019	8.48
1980	44737	4742	10.6
1990	56473	7309	12.94
2000	67845	10034	14.78
2007	70586	12574	17.81

Table 4 - The population of Turkey and Istanbul (Gökmen, Et Al.)

2. SUSTAINABLE HOUSING STRATEGIES & HOMELESSNESS

a. Sustainability for Housing Strategies

Housing is 'different' from other goods for several reasons; it is geographically fixed; it is a long-term asset; it is very expensive - requiring a complicated financial and legal machinery to assist consumption, through an array of mortgages, rents and public subsidies. Furthermore, housing is a positional good, connoting social status as well as the more tangible physical attributes. What is seen as 'desirable' in housing market cannot be reduced to a series of measurable components – the 'externalities' weigh heavy. The way for the most desirable solution in sustainable housing policies can be described as the best synthesis of the economic, social, cultural and spatial components.

The scale of sustainable housing strategies must be in three levels:

1. The city-level urban tissue;
2. The support (skeleton), made up of the main architectural structure and infrastructure;
3. The infill, made up of the interior and equipment.

When the scale changes similar influences flash in different forms, but there has logic of strategic planning issues for the scales from the smallest dwelling (home) to the largest one (liveable urban). The logic of the interaction between "the home" and "the world" can be underlined as the interaction of "local and global" (Fig. 2).

"Separation of skeletons and infill" is undoubtedly an effective elemental technology for realizing sustainable architecture (Minami, 2002). The sustainable strategy must have long-term benefits and works with unique short-term renewal of skeletons of city space.

Creating "compact" cities with blocks, open spaces and the connections between could be an effective solution to turn chaotic cities into sustainable ones. The "five C`s" could be counted for sustainable urban areas; connectivity, convivial, convenience, conspicuous and comfort. After the mass production had announced faster housing strategies, the accidents started to happen more often than ever before. From that view, it can be seen that the damage on the natural environment increase by the wrong applications of the created environment (Pitts, 2003).

NATIONAL SCALE PLANNING	**MACRO SCALE**
REGIONAL SCALE PLANNING	
METROPOLITAN SCALE PLANNING	
CITY PLANNING	**MICRO SCALE**
RURAL SCALE PLANNING	
SECTORAL PLANNING	
RESTORATION OF OLD CITIES	
DISTRICT PLANNING (SCHOOL S.)	
HOME (SMALLEST DWELLING)	

Fig. 2 - Sustainable Strategies in Different Scale (Aysu, 1977)

For sustainable housing provision as a part of a sustainable urban form, four main strategies could be underlined as below (Fig. 3):

  1. Planning multi centred urban form and housing spaces,
  2. Creating steps and secondary centres, strengthening the city centre,
  3. Drawing stronger boundaries for cities and stop unwanted diffusion to closers.
  4. Reducing energy use.
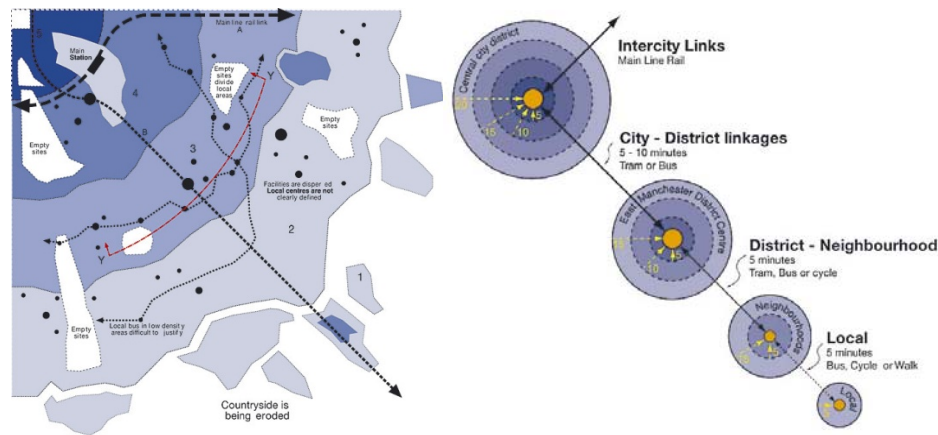
Fig. 3 - Sustainable Housing Provision Form [5]

b. Homelessness and Sustainable Solutions; "Liveable Cities"

For suburban homeless or for the immigrants, the first step to the city is the transformation spaces. After these flexible transformation spaces between industrial and residential ones, immigrants or homeless settle to outer boundaries of the city or just assimilated by the spaces close to city centre. These two main types of settlements that include the outer and inner spaces of the city are realized by two forces. The first one is "to rent a residential space just close to centre for short terms as a transformation space" (the inner city slums; slums of despair) and the second is "to have a slum just near the city borders" (the outer city slums; slums of hope) (Kıray, 1973).

Homelessness needs up-to-date solutions for newly created modern urban space and individual spaces. One way for contemporary organisations in urban form could be discussed in the case of "transformation". Transformation spaces regenerate from decades and get the exact form from new generations as a "liveable city form". The planning gets in to flexible forms and concludes in various ways of space alternatives such as; gentrification, renovation, reorganisation and restoration. City space interacts with many forces and gets in to new form for more realistic and humanistic social cases.

Homelessness is widely considered to be best understood as a continuum of housing situations --ranging from the street to inadequate insecure housing. UNCHS / Habitat argues that "homelessness can be seen as condition of detachment from society characterised by the lack of the affiliate bonds that link people into their social structures." People can be "homeless at home", staying with friends or family but without stable permanent accommodations (Moore, 2004).

There are some key elements to the environmental psychological approach used for homelessness strategies;

  1. The site of homelessness are carefully examined,
  2. Homelessness people move in an out of homelessness, it is not a static state, but reflects the processes of losing, making and sustaining.
  3. Homelessness is recognised as a social and cultural construction.
  4. Home and homelessness are inter-related processes.

Homeless is a part of the social dilemma of the humanistic structure that could be created easily by the weakness of the nations. The economic and spatial problems have a common focus to realise more liveable streets and also peaceful social structures. The two main arguments as a solution to homelessness are;

      1. to create newly spaces just in to the urban area as a homogeneous social structure,

      2. to isolate the homeless from the city to protect from drugs, alcohol and to take them under control better then the urban areas (the homeless houses)

These two solutions are a way to create liveable spaces for homeless and force them to be socially more attractive in community. Both the larger and smaller societies; sustainable economies, social condition and spaces are desired. These desirable needs are all linked to each other for sustainable chain of the life with the understanding which sees the homelessness as a way of thinking of the healthy society.

3. IMPACT OF HOUSING STRATEGIES ON HOMELESSNESS IN TURKEY

1950 is the turning point of migration to the cities in Turkey as well as the rest of the world. The primitive slum areas are formed. But it is 1960's the acceleration in building slums have climbed up very rapidly. In 1963 State Planning Organization was established; making five years development plans for many subjects, like housing and slums became one of most important the topics of the organization. In 1966 the first building code about slums was formed. Since then, new codes and implementations have being made (Bayraktar, E., 2006) [6]. But the numbers still show that the codes and the policies have not been very effective. For the last 40 years; the growth in slums are nearly 500% (from 1970 to today) as aforementioned above.

The policies are based on some main topics; the prevention (transformation), demolition and new housing. The renovations and urban transformations have remained at a small scale; and some transformation projects (like Sulukule Project) have become focus point of discussion, yet the authorities and the slum dwellers could not agree with each other. [7] Mass Housing Development Administration of Turkey made a lot of housing projects (new projects) -mostly medium and high-rise buildings- but most of those houses were not suitable for the slum dwellers like Sulukule both economically and socially.

4. CONCLUSION

Housing provision and homelessness need more realistic solutions for nations, the economical and social condition of which change. High performance housing provision needs a strategic plan which is to be examined by different professionals such as planners, architects, politics and local-global authorities. Furthermore, the strategic plan must include a well organized economic strategy, perfectly humanized social statue and deeply analyzed cultural literature for a high volatilized sustainable housing provision system. Such a system needs to be operated by all the strategies in planning such as; gentrification, renovation, restoration in historic area, urban marketing, and land making. Having a strong strategy that comes from planning must be supported by fluent and sustainable market-economy conjecture. Turkey is like most of the Developing Countries in a critical moment to act for the improvement of the slums and reducing the number of homelessness. Looking at the structure in Turkey gives a great frame of an example that includes both strong and weak sides of a sustainable housing strategy. There are some examples from Turkey to give information and create a debate on the issue to get the more realized point.

> **1. MHDA (Mass Housing Development Administration of Turkey) corporation and the paradox:** MHDA creates "Atasehir" for high quality housing and is it necessary for a healthy sustainable housing provision system? Is that the way for social homogeny to create gated communities? Where are the homeless and the poor situated in that strategy?
>
> **2. Municipality funds and the need for the strong economy:** Another way for healthy housing provision is to create more alternatives to support its economical side. If the pressure is targeted on just one corporation such as "MHDA" the creativity for planning and managing can be limited and lead to some mistakes. Is looking for new funds such as "municipality fund" can be a solution for low risk and low paybacks to structure newly housing provision system?
>
> **3. Establishing firm strategies for culturally degrading and the ill:** The weak strategies for the old city just in the middle of Istanbul Metropolis "Süleymaniye" seem as an unfounded way to restore the history and create housing spaces. Can it be called as a n inappropriate synthesis of "the old" and "the new" or "traditional wood master piece" and "cold steel structures"?
>
> **4. IMP (Istanbul Metropolitan Planning) Strategies:** The clear pressure can be experienced coming from both economy and political sides that can create weak planning issues. Can planning be free from all disciplines while getting some suggestions from other professions? Can the space and the freedom that is given to planners be separated from all politic and economic issues?
>
> **5. The need for culturally, economically, socially and technologically sustainable planning rules:** The plan can be analyzed by different professionals who work with the well organized feedbacks between "the global" and "the local"; or "the whole" and "the units". Can these interrelations and its cultural and social aspects be the focal point of the planning?

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