

Problem Definitions and Transformation of Urban Slum Areas and Urban Renewal Policies: A Case Study in Ankara Province, Turkey

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SUMMARY

ABSTRACT

Various concepts are used to identify problematic areas within residential settings in urbanization and real estate studies. The terms “slum area” and “squatter settlement” are frequently used interchangeably in the literature. According to Hari Srinivas (2015), the term “slum area” is used when referring to the conditions of settlements while “squatter” is used when referring to legal situation of the settlement and in line with positive, neutral, and negative approaches, terms such as “informal settlement”, “low-income settlement”, “semi-permanent settlement”, “shanty settlement”, “spontaneous settlement”, “unauthorized settlement”, “unplanned settlement”, and “uncontrolled settlement” are also used to refer to such settlements. Essentially, each of the phrases mentioned addresses a dimension of the same concept and describes the quality or the level of development of the settlement area. The slum settlements in the urban areas of many developing countries are often emerge in areas that are not allocated for settlement by the zoning plan or in areas that are not actually used by the owner (vacant). Those who occupy the lands owned by the public or others build housing that is generally not compatible with engineering and architectural services for the purpose of accommodation without having obtained any permission from the related public authority. Since users of slum areas are aware of the potential risk of forced evacuation, they produce such housing in a short period of time and naturally, construction in accordance with construction standards is not possible and the construction quality remains very low. In addition, slum areas generally lack infrastructure and utility services such as transportation, health, education, drinking water and sewerage and the physical intensity can be considered extremely high. When we look at the social and economic situation of people living in these areas, low income, low education, insufficient employment opportunities and unemployment are common problems.

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In the high density depression areas around the cities (slum areas), housing construction standards and the quality of life much lower than that enjoyed by the rest of the inhabitants of the city. Beyond not being at a satisfactory level in terms of social and economic conditions, due to the uncertainties related to real estate ownership in the areas in question and the problems related to health or hygiene and environmental conditions, urban transformation and development projects are put into practice in many countries. Within in the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), these areas are defined as living environments with low accommodation quality for poverty-stricken, low-income households. Especially under Goal 11 of the mentioned study, typical slum (depressed) settlements in developing countries are described as unplanned places with high risk of diseases and death, where people from low income groups reside, and as places with high physical intensity where minimal services are so insufficient that they almost do not exist. The emergence of such areas should be seen both as a fundamental cause of population growth (birth and immigration-linked growth) and failure of urbanization policies. The UN-Habitat has identified several factors to characterize slum areas. According to UN-Habitat data, one in six of the world's total population live in slum areas and one person settles in those areas every second. In addition, it should also be kept in mind that most of the population in question live in the big cities of the developing countries.

In the post-1950 period in Turkey, serious slum development has occurred in cities with a population of over 500 thousand, particularly in Istanbul and Ankara, due to migration from rural areas to big cities and building code amnesties granted in the 1980s have made the illegal occupants of slum areas on lands that belong to other parties entitled. Transformation activities started particularly in the 2000s, considering the increasing level of income and the possible effects of the earthquake risk. Firstly, the North Ankara Entrance Urban Transformation Project was put into practice with Law No. 5104 and this regulation constituted the basis for the project to be carried out by the Prime Ministry Housing Development Administration (TOKI) and Ankara Metropolitan Municipality in cooperation. Subsequently, with the amendment made in Article 73 of the Municipal Law No. 5393 and under Law No. 6306 on Transformation of Areas at Risk of Disasters, urban regeneration project application areas were determined one after another, slum areas and risky construction sites were selected, expedited expropriation for immovable acquisition in risky and reserve building areas was applied, and transformation projects were aimed to be developed and implemented as quickly as possible by the Prime Ministry Mass Housing Administration (TOKI), Municipality, and the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. The aim is transformation of depression areas and slum settlements in urban centers and to ensure that those living in these areas are moved to “modern” houses with infrastructure and social and cultural fittings and commercial facilities Transformation projects implemented so far have been mainly treated as physical transformations and the social, environmental and economic sustainability of conversion works seems to have been neglected. In many cities, TOKI and municipalities are the first to implement large-scale transformation projects, and the mentioned structural problems in almost every project are obvious.

In the Mumuk, Cankaya, Altıncılar and Keçiören and Sincan Districts of Ankara, many transformation projects have been developed and implemented with municipality and TOKI cooperation in the last 10 years. One of these was the urban transformation project which was developed in order to reduce the economic and social problems experienced in the Sincan District, Saraycık Neighborhood due to the widespread slum settlements. Detailed analyses focusing on demographic, economic, social and environmental aspects of all the community sections that can be primarily (directly) and indirectly impacted by the transformation project and their habitats and thus, both the need for the implementation of the planned project was laid out and current situation analysis was performed to determine the possible impacts of the transformation to conclude the