

Urban Regeneration in Turkey: An Effective Tool for Reorganizing Informal Settlements and Land Ownership

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Keywords: Informal Settlements, Land Management, Squatter Housing, Urban Regeneration

SUMMARY

56th and 23rd amendments of the Turkish Constitution talk about the matter of a healthy and regular urbanization of the government, and emphasize that people should live in a healthy, balanced and safe environment. In spite of that, squatter settlement resulting from an intense population pressure and illegal housing, prevent the healthy growth and development of the cities. The uncontrolled settlement in our rapidly growing cities has shown itself as orderless, unhealthy, risky in terms of life and property, unaesthetic, against zoning legislation and unlicensed constructions. Turkey, as a developing country, has dealt with illegal settlement and construction issues since 1950 and developed policies in order to meet the need for housing and to find the solutions for squatter settlement problems have been inefficient in solving the problems. In order to find an effective solution to these problems a new concept was introduced in 2000. This has been called urban regeneration which is the same meaning with slum or urban transformation. After the year 2012, it is primarily aimed to transform the areas and constructions under risk in terms of health and safety. The purpose of this paper is that analyzing technical, legal and land ownership dimensions of the urban regeneration which could change overall urban fabric and land ownership and applied in recent years in Turkey. So, the implementation stages of the regeneration projects, which have legal features and characteristics, are compiled with current data and the technical stages are presented. Thanks to urban regeneration projects; the substandard area housing is replaced, a new lifestyle is provided for the slum owners, unhealthy structures are destroyed in order to renovate or relocate to better areas, squatter settlements are legalized and cities are transformed into prestige areas to make better visual wealth. The urban regeneration projects show that if they are well planned and developed, cities can promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies.

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1. INTRODUCTION

More than 50 percent of the world's population live in cities, while more than 77 percent of the of Turkey's population live in the cities. Industrialization and migration to cities took 150-200 in Europe and America, while they too 50 years in Turkey, accompanied by a very rapid population growth, thus causing has been a social explosion. When our historical and cultural features added, unplanned urbanization issues appeared (Dogan 1998). The uncontrolled settlement in our rapidly growing cities has shown itself as orderless, unhealthy, risky in terms of life and property, unaesthetic, against zoning legislation and unlicensed constructions. There have always been a number of trends and approaches on solving urbanization problems in the world, in every period. In Turkey, regulations such as Anti-squatting Law No 775, Zoning Legislation No 3194 and TOKİ Law No 2985 have been made in order to solve urbanization problems. Also, amendments on Article 73 of Municipal Law No 73 and on Property Ownership Law No 643 have been made. However, none of these arrangements has been successful and issued laws and regulations have been insufficient. In the aftermath of the 1999 Marmara Earthquake and the 2011 Van Earthquake showed us that the majority of our constructions are vulnerable against natural disasters. Renovations against earthquake risk, a reality of our country, and the need for new constructions in demolition areas, have brought the urban transformation up (Ulger, 2013). A comprehensive, holistic and sustainable national urban transformation policy could not be formed in Turkey and applications in this regard have not been made (KS, 2009). To make this process work, we need new and comprehensive legal regulations. Transformation of Areas Under The Risk of Disaster Law No 6306 aims to transform areas under risk and pull down constructions under risk and form a safe and livable environment countrywide.

The purpose of this paper is that analyzing technical, legal and land ownership dimensions of the urban regeneration which could change overall urban fabric and land ownership and applied in recent years in Turkey. So, the implementation stages of the regeneration projects, which have legal features and characteristics, are compiled with current data and the technical stages are presented. Thanks to urban regeneration projects; the substandard area housing is replaced, a new lifestyle is provided for the slum owners, unhealthy structures are destroyed in order to renovate or relocate to better areas, squatter settlements are legalized and cities are transformed into prestige areas to make better visual wealth. The urban regeneration projects show that if they are well planned and developed, cities can promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable societies.

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2. URBAN REGENERATION IN TURKEY

Urban regeneration is the aggregate of comprehensive and integrated strategies and applications developed for economic, social, physical and environmental improvement of urban spaces. For this reason, urban transformation is about planing and managing the existing urban areas, rather than planing and developing new urban areas (Akkar, 2006). The Urban regeneration models and styles differ in practice. These can be listed as urban renewal, urban rezoning, urban replacing and urban rehabilitation (Sahin, 2006). The urban texture has been tried to be transformed with various laws until now. The common purpose of these laws is to carry out the renewal, discharge and improvement of urban areas in terms of health and safety. With the Transformation of Areas Under The Risk of Disaster Law No 6306 issued in 2012, it is primarily aimed to transform the areas under risk and the constructions under risk. The Urban Transformations in our country are carried out by companies licensed by construction owner or their legal representatives. In addition, Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation, TOKI, Special Provincial Administrations, Municipalities and Metropolitan Municipalities have authorisation regarding the transformation applications. The transformation applications are carried out in slum areas, areas with high density of unauthorised constructions, areas under high risk of collapse, depressed areas in city centres, economically depleted city parts, historical city parts (Mutlu, 2007) and areas under risk of disaster.

3. A SAMPLE REGENERATION PROJECT

Immigration, rapid urbanization and illegal construction have brought development and infrastructure problems in the countrywide. The case has turned into a threat for Trabzon city and unhealthy and lack of infrastructure squatter settlements have occurred in the Trabzon Zağnos Valley (Fig. 1.) (Bogenc, 2009). Because of the central location and historical feature, the area acquired prestige and the urban conservation and revitalization were important. The Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality recognized the importance and urgency of this issue and the region was declared a regeneration area in 2005.



Fig. 1. Location of the Valley of Trabzon Zağnos Urban Regeneration Project (source: adapted from google earth, 2015)

3.1 Technical Stages of the Project

The protocol was signed between Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality and TOKI. The authority and field of study were identified. The area was declared an urban regeneration area by the Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality and the area of 104290 m², divided into four phases. General characteristics of the region and the project are summarized in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1. General Characteristics of the Trabzon Zağnos Valley Urban Regeneration Project

Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *in the center of Trabzon * in the border of Erdoğdu, Bahçecik, Gülbaharhatun and Ortahisar districts *historical protected area
Attribute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *104290 m² land *unplanned, unhealthy, illegal and legal structuring *intensive land and housing *trade areas *vacant land

Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *creating active green areas *providing air circulation *the development and beautification of the physical statement and environment *increasing the standart of urban life by ensuring a healty dwelling unit * conservation, revitalization model
Legal situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * revision of the zoning plan (25.12.2002, Municipal Council Decision, numbered 165) * taking the scope of the ‘Special Planning Area’ *The Mass Housing Law (Law No: 2985)
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * urban conservation and revitalization *compensation methods are; expropriation or providing dwelling units built by TOKI
Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality *Housing Development Administration of Turkey (in Turkish TOKİ)
Practitioner authorization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *development plans in various scales *expropriation of privately owned property *development plan implementation *project approval *preparing urban design projects *preparing housing, social facilities, landscaping and infrastructure
Providing public needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * expropriation of privately owned property *free charge of transferring the property in the case of public property

3.2 Implementation Principles of the Project

Field works were started for the purpose of determining the current situation. Building floor quantities, building quality and space occupancy status of land were analyzed and land ownership structures were transfered into the digital system. Besides, questionnaire study was conducted with 275 persons by the Municipality. According to the survey 69,5% of them were house owner and 30,5% were tenant. Settlement rate was 93%, vacant building rate was 5% and vacant land rate was 2% in the region. 58% of the house owners wanted to expropriation price, 18% of them wanted to get dwelling unit which would be constructed by the TOKI correspond to their properties. 24% of them did not express an opinion.

As a result of the survey, the general public opinion showed that local people who had lived in the region for years were pleased to the space they lived and supported the Project of Zağnos Valley. Besides, they wanted to resettle in the dwelling units which were adjacent of the project area (Kara, 2013).

In the current situation, the destruction of 655 buildings have been realized and about 77.6 million \$ expropriation cost have been paid to the right owners up to 2014. So, unhealthy

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settlements in the city center have been turned into the habitable places. A large recreation area have been formed in the purpose of socio-cultural usages (Fig. 2).

Expropriation operations continue for the fourth phase of the project and right owners who get the expropriation cost, have started to vacate the buildings (TOKI, 2014).

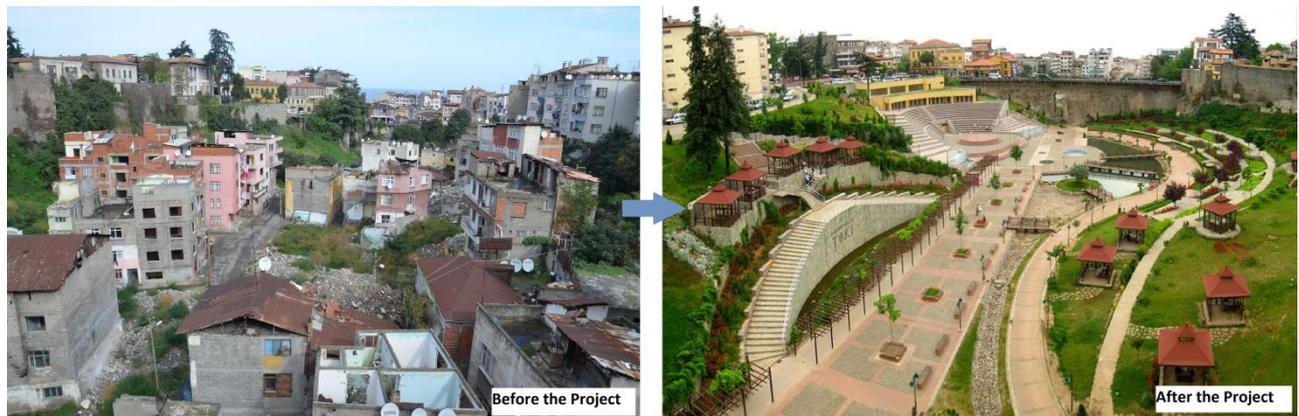


Fig. 2. The Trabzon Zağnos Valley Urban Regeneration Project (before and after)

4. CONCLUSION

The urban texture has been tried to be transformed with various laws until now because of the illegal and unhealthy constructions concluded the exhaustion of urban settlements in the countrywide. So, urban transformation projects have started to realize in order to provide new possibilities with a goal of renewal especially in squatter settlement areas which are within the extended urban environment. The example of this situation is Trabzon City. Zağnos Vallley that has the historical features is one of the important air channel of the city has turned into depressed area over time. So, the area acquired prestige and the urban conservation and revitalization are important. The Trabzon Metropolitan Municipality has recognized the importance and urgency of this issue and the region has declared a regeneration area in 2005. And the region has been divided into the four phases and implemented with the model of conservation and revitalization until today. At this point, it is seen that this area has gained prestige with the evolutions made to its surroundings. Active green areas have been created, air circulation, the development and beautification of the physical statement and environment have been provided and the standart of urban life by ensuring a healty dwelling unit has been increased. Although there are lots of benefits for the public, authorities and squatter house owners, it has been still different approaches in terms of transformation of the people. One of them is that “at the end of the regeneration projects, authorities not only give excellent buildings to the squatter or illegal house owner but also they have settled them to the matchboxes”. Even if this may seem like a stunning determination, in the background, concrete proposals should be made by the various parties such as NGOs, affected house owners, academicians, architects, engineers, city planners and authorities. It is clear that the project has produced demographic changes and physical upgrades besides improved living conditions. However, drawing a conclusion about how social and economic structures are changed is not possible right now and this issue will be the subject of another study.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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