Empowerment Experiences in Iran’s Spontaneous

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Abstract: A manifestation of urban poverty is ignored the housing needs of low income sectors, which is formed in the transition of rapid urbanization. Then the question is how the assets of the urban poor can be brought in urban development orbit in the light of social justice? How to acknowledge the urban poor as civil citizens, with an appropriate share of the urban and social developments’ benefits? International efforts in this field have started for many years and policies, including public housing, site and services schemes, slum upgrading and empowerment objectives and the new millennium were discussed. There have been some practical experiences in Iran based on aforementioned principles. The objective of this research is to find the strategies of converting the aggregated treats of urban poverty to opportunity of developing an impoverished community while studying the urban poverty pathology of experiences. In this respect the methodology will be comprised of comparative studies, as well as analyzing and pathology investigations of Iran and world experiences. The methods and strategies will be examined in different scales and situations and the feasibility of each one will be studied to identify the applicable strategies in Iran context. The strategies are eventually categorized in two main features of physical and social groups.

Key words: Spontaneous Housing • Empowerment • Physical planning • Social planning

INTRODUCTION

Urban poverty and its impact on the spatial protests of the city is one of the challenges which is taking place in the inner and suburban areas along with the development of mega-cities and this leads to confusion and disruption in urban functions and affects locality from different aspects. Timeworn city textures, social crimes and unorganized landscape of urban and suburban areas are some other outcomes. A conclusive and comprehensive analysis is required to solve this big challenge. International organizations have analyzed the problem for several years and have also presented a variety of solutions, but, like many other urban plans and issues in Iran, it took a time difference of 20 to 30 years for these solutions to be applied. This is when the growth and formation of these settlements is more prompt in Iran compared to developed countries. In addition, most of the projects aiming at organizing improvement of such settlements in the country have failed. Therefore, solving urban poverty and its spatial protests requires comprehensive perspectives and methods, consistent with the country’s condition and this will be done by using a pathology of different experiences and presentation of reforming strategies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

According to the main subject of the research and the expected results of this study, a major part of the project has been done through analysis and data collection. In fact the methodology of the study is based upon a descriptive and analytical method. A comparative method has been used in the conclusion to present an applied comparison of the policies and a comparison of the principles in each approach.

Literature Survey

Definition: Spontaneous housing is a dense focus of population which grows rapidly and possesses some of the following characteristic:

It relies on the spontaneous and self-motivated movement of people and develops according to the people’s will, motivation, abilities and facilities.
It receives no control or management from the government or any public institute and has a rapid growth in, at least, the first decade of its formation.

Its formation or transformation is not based on any official or premeditated planning, but on its social and cultural structure and the origin of its residents.

Due to its rapid and unorganized growth, it has a minimum level of infrastructural and masonry services. In addition, weak infrastructure and living service are the settlements’ main characteristics.

Land ownership, land division and its usage has been done out of common official and legal frameworks and has been established without formal license.

No principle or law is followed to provide services and infrastructures [1].

Studies of spontaneous housing and the strategies taken to improve it have resulted in the following classification of different periods and the dominant theoretical principle of each period:

- **Theories and perspectives up to 1960s:** including destruction of slums and construction of new residential units-call out for “returning to villages”-development of small cities.
- **Theories and perspectives of 1970s:** including self-help housing -land supply and services: preparation -improvement of poor neighborhoods of the city.
- **Theories and perspectives of 1980-90s:** including the approach of empowerment, development and necessity of social participation- Institutionalization-creating capacity.
- **New millennium development goals:** cities without poor neighborhoods- alleviation and elimination of urban poverty- alleviation and elimination of spatial poverty [2].

Based on the above mentioned categories which have also been mentioned in other resources, theoretical foundations and related experience of each period will be described:

**1960s - Social Housing Program:** In this view, theorists lessen the importance of the studied phenomenon (urban poverty) up to an unimportant issue and besides assigning it as a natural matter, tried to display it as predestination or inaccurate urban planning and management. Regardless of origins and basis of the problem and effective factors in formation of such settlements, they consider it a natural issue which in final analysis can be eliminated or collected in the development course of the city [3].

Elimination and collection of slums and replacing them with low-cost residential units which had been built by the government was the solution proposed in this review.

Following the intensification of urban poverty and housing, many countries approached the policy of social housing, among which the following experiences can be cited:

- Housing a hundred thousand units in Sri Lanka.
- Building more than 40 thousand residential houses for poor people by government of Hong Kong.
- Eliminating Jamshid district in Tehran and constructing a park instead.
- Eliminating and collecting of constructing of Khake sefid neighborhood in Tehran.

After examinations and evaluations of this view and related experiences, it had been observed that most of the carried out projects weren’t successful at all. Hence; the international community pursed to a better and more improved solution, in order to lessen the defects of social housing approach. Accordingly; the approach of site and services schemes was propounded.

**1970s- Site and Services Schemes:** Planned and separated lands were transferred to low-income ranges of people in this approach. Three main axis of this approach includes: affordability, cost recovery and repeatability. In affordability, standard and suitable methods of construction applied and housing prices lowered up to a sustainable level in order not to pay governmental subsidies. In this project, cost recovery would be secured to make repeatability possible [4].

Dandora project in Nairobi capital of Kenya had also executed with the same approach which had comprised extensive measures of Nairobi’s city council and government of Kenya, providing a low- income housing plan during which in seven years, more than six thousand pieces of lands were rendered. World Bank, international bank for reconstruction and development (IBRD) and the international development board had advocated this project.

Some pieces of land with area of 100-160 sqm with private water and sewage disposal system, access path, lighting facilities and garbage collection services were
planned in this project. Health facility centers and related office buildings were prepared and tree options of these centers formed with kitchen, store and rooms with the area of 160 sqm in the distance of this project [5].

Compared to previous one, this model has plenty of advantages, but 3 main defects of this approach can be present as follow: the need for abundant supply of public and private lands, the need for having access to technical consultation and inability of poor communities for reimbursement of loans and debates [6]. Ultimately, the world bank concluded the experience in this way: In order to solve the problem of low-income community housing more elaborated and interconnected relation between market, government and also households self-help is required [7]. In order to complete social and anthropological aspects of this model and based up on the above mentioned limitations, slum upgrading plans were concerned in different areas.

1970s- Slum Upgrading: This program is designed to prepare upgrading environmental plans for the parts of city with artifact shapes and aimed at transforming areas which despite locating outside the legal system, contains settlements which makes easy access to employment opportunities and are popular among their residents.

In this approach rather than destruction and elimination of the slum, the trend is to provide infrastructures like water and sewage, reorganize some plans as far as possible, improve social service for people, legalize the ownerships and provide financial assistant for constructions, in order to upgrade the condition of business units and houses, many upgrading and improving plans had been conducted through world banks investments and urban loaning in recent decades.

The KIP project (Kampong Improvement Project) is based on this approach. This project is one of the most successful improvement projects in the world. it has initially designed by local authorities of Indonesia but after 5 years attract support and participation of world bank. The project started in late 1960s with the aim of housing improvement and helping low-income people in two cities Jakarta and Surabuya. The KIP project has had three phases, the first two concentrated on physical improvement and the third phase added a social-economic dimension to the equation (12% of the funding devoted to economic development).

In late 1970s, the KIP model carried out in all urban areas of Indonesia and many of Kampongs upgraded [8]. The KIP project was the first project which received The Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1980 and the following years. The success of the project was the reason of choosing goals and executive strategies which has achieved by studying the causes of the place creation, ability and infirmity of its residents. The positive points of the project were high utilization of local and domestic sources in executive and investment parts -government’s political commitments for upgrading poor condition of neighbors-creation of organized and systematic KIP units. The negative point was disregard to maintenance and repairing of facilities [9]. Accordingly 1970s was an important transition period in which traditional methods of public housing changes to new methods and policies for low-income housing.

1980s-Empowerment Program: This strategy emphasize mobilizing all resources and all potential factors to improve life conditions in poor communities and gives chance to people for improving their house conditions according to their needs and priorities. In this method construction engineering and financial resource injection weren’t helpful, but social engineering took to action by support of public sections, nongovernmental organizations and active participation of residents. Following elements can be considered as the main goals of this approach:

- Establishing full communication between housing sectors and macroeconomic planning.
- Comprehensive link of house planning and urban planning.
- Directing policies for realization of empowerment using NGO nongovernment organizations and community based organizations like self-help organizations which correlates with operation of government and performance of market.
- Attention to issues like poverty, environment and health in housing plans and government’s subsidy payment when necessary, in a way which carefully locate under the domain of management and doesn’t create diversion in market performance.
- Providing infrastructure network s and granting priority rights in suburbs [10].

Empowerment project of spontaneous housings in Bandar Abas, Iran, with participation of World Bank was an example pragmatic of the project. Studies have confirmed that economical characteristics and increasing growth of spontaneous housings attract unemployed
Map 1: Samples of poverty indicators in studied areas

Fig. 1: Physical condition of studied areas in Bandar Abas
people and jobseekers from all around the surrounding neighbors. Moreover, the issue of smuggling and informal importing of goods, presence of tourists and official governments cause future economic prosperity of suburb areas in which makes improvement in earnings and cause temporary housing and employment of refugees.

In physical surveys of Bandar Abas, many differences could be seen between informal areas and indicators of the city. According to low quality of constructions; spontaneous housing texture of the city which was a cause of residents’ poor condition had high level of susceptibility.

Based on field data, local documents (detailed and comprehensive plans of the city), theoretical studies and consultations with local authorities, the area of low-income spontaneous housings in Bandar Abas divided to 10 different areas, in order to present more field investigations and detailed classifications.

Integrated techniques were used for ranking areas which has been studied. Determined areas ranked upon indicators. The sum of ranking indicates the degree of poverty in the place. Indicated maps and figures are samples of rankings based on urban poverty indicators (Map 1, Figure 1).

The styles of intervention were determined based on this division. Intervention strategy in spontaneous housing texture of Bandar Abas was not only considered the point of improving the physical conditions, but also indicates institutional coordination for empowering the local communities. Intervention strategy was people-oriented rather than project-oriented. People-oriented intervention strategy in these textures had been defined with regard to empowerment, institution-building, capacity-building and public participation.

The following elements have been expressed based on upgrading strategy of spontaneous housing in Bandar Abas for the framework of proposed plan. According to applied goals and strategies framework for intervention in the area and for schematization, the following elements had been considered;

Empowerment and physical upgrading of neighbors, rehabilitation, promoting low income urban groups through improving employment status, strengthening civil institutions, promoting welfare, education and health services, Infrastructural development, stabilizing the program through institutionalization of development planning system, public participation and increasing production capacities. Coordinating integrated urban plans, preventing inappropriate development of areas and modifying existing schemes of urban managements are all among cases which can be mentioned in the framework of proposed plans.

The proposed plans, generally contains 2 main approach; Active prenotion and Integral urban development. For active prenotin 2 main subprogram were presented in the field of “urban developing management” and “land management” (Figure 2) [11].

The project of empowerment spontaneous housing in Shirabad-Zahedan was one of the other projects which had been done in Iran with empowerment approach. Compared to previous project this one emphasized on social and participatory aspects. According to studies, it has observed that villager influx and formation of Zahedan on one hand and Afghans immigration on the other hand, in away that 9% of Sistan and balochestan's immigrations is related to Zahedan and caused the city to host an increasing population. Therefore, high growth of population and inadequate economic facilities cause formation of spontaneous housings texture in the city.

The background of habitation in spontaneous housings of Zahedan had started 40 years before Babian neighborhood. The old informal areas of Zahedan like Babaian, had formed from separating of agricultural lands before 1971. Residents of new informal settlements are either overflow population of old settlements (like Babaian and Shirabad) or the new immigrants of city. These textures contains different cultural roots. Combination of two above mentioned groups formed a multi cultural texture which at the same time reserved independence of each culture. This diversity along with physical and structural characteristics formed another interval structure; this interval structure, made a kind of social grouping among residents. Shirabad physical texture is a twofold example of spontaneous housing. Old parts have adobe houses with doomed roofs which are similar to rural houses in south of Khorasan province, but new developed parts have new architecture and evokes third kind of architectural mold in spontaneous housing (houses which are completely under standard levels and made up of second-hand materials by the owners without any document, just with an illegal credit) [12].

From the experts point of view, the project of empowerment spontaneous housings in Shirabad-Zahedan, which had been done with participation of people and government and world bank; was one of the most successful examples of dealing with such textures.
Parviz Piran did a research and depicted spontaneous housing appearance of Shirabad in a study for “united nation- sanitation office”. In the last part of this study, empowerment factors used in Shirabad’s plan of action has been discussed as area’s council plan. Accordingly shirabad’s spontaneous housing characteristics can be expressed as follow:

- Existence of strong ethnic and social relations like male domination.
- Existence of refugees from neighborhood countries and afghans immigrants in this part of the city.
- Permanent control and monitor in neighborhood area.
- Family ruptures and abandonment because of poverty.
- Polygamy.
- Strong religious beliefs(Sunni).
- Problem of garbage collection and sewage.
- Self-housing and high amount of unorganized invasion at the beginning and dividing agricultural lands.
- Lack of sewage and acute water shortage and the following health hazards.
- Stronger presence of women in the family because men goes to other provinces seeking jobs.
- Dividing and subdividing residential units and renting them to families because of bad economical condition.

Following acts have been done in Shirabad’s empowerment plan:

Nomination of elected municipality- formation and start of area’s council plan- demolition of about 60sq meter voluntarily and without intervention of any institutes-pathway’s sanitation- providing preliminaries for induction of sewage and garbage collection-establishment of two nongovernmental organization (Zeitoon and Makran)- rehabilitation and development of handicraft and cover 250 family [13].

The above mentioned activities which were the result of being committed to principals like participatory urbanism and intervention of local and non-governmental organizations were the result of innovation of its manager (Chart 1).

Poor people’s empowerment by strengthening public organizations and developing funds for poverty alleviation of Thailand was one of the global experiences of empowerment plan.

In this project, Thailand’s government tried to deal with urban poverty by organizing people in groups of social council and save funds through following organizations, use their participation for offering difficulty solutions, project’s execution and financial supports.

**Urban Community Development Office -UCDO:** This office investigates to new plans for community development of poor neighborhoods of Thailand and tries
to take advantage of participation and financial support of residents. The office has a major role in organizing 600 money saving groups and their financial support.

**Urban Community Environment Activities -UCEA:** The main activities of this organization includes; reconstruction and rehabilitation of public facilities, dry garbage recycling system, upgrading poor neighbors and their surroundings, creating knowledge and skill for environmental activities through education plans and also; seminars and workshops.

**Social Councils of Poor Neighborhood in Thailand:** These councils make effective corporation between poor urban communities and urban constituents and as a development mechanism fill the gaps between poor urban communities and official system of the city.

**Council of Under-Bridge Neighborhoods:** The council organized for 67 neighborhoods in Bangkok and supported by public corporation organization and human settlement federation. The council, initially surveyed life condition of under bridge areas and then starts some researches for improving life condition in these settlements. The operation of this council can be expressed as follow:

- Studying issues related to land and housing.
- Developing credit activities and savings in order to create financial fund.
- Help to develop saving group’s of member communities.
- Developing fund.
- Developing social investments.
- Providing research trip to India.
- Designing economical and inexpensive settlements.
- Hold exhibitions for designing economical and inexpensive settlements.

Accordingly these councils have some restrictions like: lack of guaranteed property, false equation for residential lands. Rigid financial systems in housing, undesirable provisions in construction and designing, incapability of institutional frameworks for participating in development stages [14].

Based on the presented theoretical foundations in the field of empowerment and also based on some experiences of the world’s and Iran’s plans we can conclude about the theory. Empowerment is away which attempts to reduce the obstacles of previous methods and accomplishes operative and successful efforts to improve the self-help urban settlements. In Istanbul declaration of1996, empowerment method emphasis on participation and participatory methods and promoted to an"adequate shelter for all".

**CONCLUSION**

As different theories and experiences about interventions in poor urban settlements in the world and in Iran and according to their success level in the fields of physical, social and economical problems have been evaluated before, it seems that; among all other intervention methods, empowerment strategy is the most accountable way for investigating situation of Iran. Although there are also some elements in the theoretical and executive system, which are not useful for Iran’s situation. On this basis, the approach proposed as the basic method of intervention. BY the use of successful experiences and considered manner and their adaptive comparison we attempt to reread the approach in Iran’s condition.
Adaptive Comparison of Empowerment Experiences in Iran and the World: For adaptive comparison of empowerment experiences in Iran and the world, we initially searched Common and defined Constituent components of 3 discussed empowerment plans; and then the amount of emphasis and consideration of these experiences, conducting methods and executive strategies have been evaluated. Main point of this evaluation process is presented in the following tables. Comparative components include physical interventions, various magnification of participating (local-governmental-economic) and training.

According to tables of adaptive comparison and the analytical results, following elements can be discussed about the pathology of these experiences in the condition of Iran:

Problems Related to Theoretical Considerations and Policies:
- Lack of theoretical foundations about interventions related to these settlements.
- Lack of the subjects definition in urban planning and believe it as an inevitable urban challenge.
- These settlements use city and their surrounding services but being ignored in plantings(mismatch of reality with urban planning programs).
- Inappropriate and undefined approach for the legal confine of cities which cause growth of self-help urban settlements in suburbs.

Problems Related to Style and Type of Intervention:
- Excessive acceptability of physical interventions compared to social and cultural ones.
- Lack of comprehensive considerations to the topic of upgrading the textures(unilateral consideration to social, economical and physical problems).
- Project-oriented approaches to interventions related to these settlements compared to process-oriented approaches.

Problems Related to Type and Level of Participation:
- Participation is the missing segment of this process.
- Lack of considerations to abilities and capabilities of local communities and organizations,

Problems Related to Role of Education in Upgrading Settlements:
- Inconspicuous role of education in Iran’s experiences.
- Lack of consideration to education, which is a necessary factor for stability of reforms and permanent element of control.

Problems related to economic issues:
- Lack of independent financial resources to supply costs of settlement’s upgrading.
- Lack of consistent financial sources for upgrading settlements.
- Inability to finance these projects in the form of local financial firms.

Problems Related to Interferer Organizations and Urban Management:
- Lack of independent organizations, legal and defined executive staffs for self-help housing
- Lack of coordination between intervening organizations and partial action of these organizations
• Existence of ongoing changes in urban management and conversion of ideas and perspectives dealing with settlements.

Problems Related to Approved Plans and Documents:

• Lack legal documents related to these settlements.
• Unfair spatial planning in the country which make basis of creation and development of these settlements.
• Lack of consideration to the problems of these settlements as top plans and lack of definition of these plans in urban planning system (comprehensive and strategic plan of city).

Reforming Strategies: According to the above mentioned pathology in different fields, the following reforming strategies could be expressed for the process of empowering self-help settlements in Iran:

• Legal elimination of problems in management system of urban developing in Iran and necessity of decentralization.
• Considering the presence of institutions and people communications of the area in urban management cycle and making legal documentation.
• Defining partial institutions in order to make appropriate relation between legal interventional institutes.
• Considering physical and non physical problems of spontaneous housings.
• Necessity for legal defining of local financial firms.
• Necessity for legal defining of independent document of organizing and spontaneous housing
• Necessity for legal defining of these settlements roles and organizing them in comprehensive and strategic plans for the city.

REFERENCES