

Urban Renewal Activities in Turkey: The Trabzon Experience

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SUMMARY

Cities can be deformed due to reasons such as migration, natural disasters, irregular structuring, industrialization after a period of time and an unhealthy, irregular urban tissue appears. These areas that are not compatible with the whole city, must be revised again and integrated to urban tissue. One of the actions for that purpose is urban renewal practice. In Turkey, urban renewal process increased in importance with the Marmara earthquake that happened in 1999. Due to about one hundred ten thousand buildings destroyed as a result of this earthquake and sixty percent of the buildings in the current cities have destruction risk in an earthquake, the law about transformation of the areas at disaster risk has entered into force in 2012 and urban renewal activities gained momentum all over the country.

Most of the urban renewal practices in the developing countries such as Turkey, physical dimension of the urban renewal is regarded. However, economic and social dimensions of the urban renewal are ignored. In this study, it is aimed that the investigation of Trabzon Province Zagnos Valley urban renewal practice together with its economic and social dimensions. Zagnos Valley is located in the center of the city. Also this valley is an important air corridor of the city. Especially after 1950, industrialization and urban migration movement has gained momentum in Turkey. As a result of this the development of the city along the coast, caused this area where is close to the coast and in the center of the city filled with the unqualified and low standard of living buildings due to economic reasons with the purpose of settling by the people who live far from the center of the city and the area have been exposed to irregular urbanization. Irregular structuring of the Zagnos Valley eliminated through the urban renewal. Likewise, this urban renewal practice is first urban renewal experience in the city. In this study, owners of the properties who join the urban renewal how affected from this process and how they assessed their revenues that gain from urban renewal will be analyzed. Before and after the urban renewal will be analyzed as compared and new suggestions will be made.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since 1950s, in the developing countries such as Turkey, some areas of the cities filled with squatter houses that are unhealthy, not earthquake proof, not have enough physical conditions through the industrialization, urbanization, population growth and rural to urban migration. For example, in Istanbul, half of the 1.2 million houses are illegal and more, both legal and illegal houses do not meet the technical conditions (Gürsel, 2003).

To solve this problem, one of the best approaches is urban renewal practice both in Turkey and in the rest of the world. Urban regeneration is an outcome of the interplay between these many sources of influence and, more importantly, it is also a response to the opportunities and challenges which are presented by urban degeneration in a particular place at a specific moment in time (Roberts, 2000).

In Turkey urban renewal projects became popular since the Marmara earthquake in 1999. 17127 people died, 43953 people got hurt, 77342 houses and shops were destroyed or were heavily damaged due to the Marmara Earthquake and Yalova Earthquake (T.C. Başbakanlık Kriz Yönetim Merkezi). The earthquakes caused destruction of thousands of buildings and proved that buildings were too weak for earthquakes and do not meet the enough physical conditions. After that government launched urban renewal projects all over the country to destruct these buildings and building new ones which have enough physical conditions for earthquakes and other disasters through the urban renewal activities.

With urban renewal, particular sections of the city change its nature and its structure being evolved (Tekeli, 2003). In the developing countries such as Turkey, urban renewal is seen as a zoning application such as land adjustment. But it is more than that. It is more comprehensive and complicated. Urban renewal projects must not be considered as just destruction of old houses and building new houses but urban renewal projects should be considered together with its social, economic and environmental effects on the practice area and whole city. In the urban renewal areas, after the renewal process an increase in value of properties is experienced. These areas become the center of interest.

2. PHYSICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF URBAN RENEWAL

2.1 Physical Dimension

Physical dimension of the urban renewal is about physical conditions of buildings, housing, communication systems, infrastructure, open spaces, parks, and environment. In a modern

city houses must be resistant to earthquakes, meet enough physical conditions, all buildings must benefit from infrastructure and city must have a good urban design. The purpose of the physical renewal is executing these circumstances and meeting these conditions.

Physical renewal is usually a necessary if not sufficient condition for successful regeneration. In some circumstances it may be the main engine of regeneration. In almost all cases it is an important visible sign of commitment to change and improvement. The key to successful physical regeneration is to understand the constraints and the potential of the existing physical stock and the role improvement can play in enabling, and where appropriate promoting, renewal at regional, urban or neighborhood level. Successful realization of the potential requires an implementation strategy which recognizes and takes advantage of the changes under way in economic and social activity, funding regimes, ownership, institutional arrangements, policy and emerging visions of urban life, and the roles of cities (Jeffery and Pounder 2000).

2.2 Social Dimension

When viewing the social dimension of urban renewal, the effects of the urban renewal on the people who lives these areas is analyzed. Social dimension of urban renewal is about educational status and health status of property owners who effect from urban renewal, how they react to urban renewal and how they effect from urban renewal. The participation of property owners who effect from urban renewal to project should be ensured.

In Turkey and most of the other developing countries, urban renewal means just physical renewal, the participation of property owner to the project is ignored and after the urban renewal social dimension is not analyzed enough. So this caused that the urban renewals like this become short-lived, not sustainable and incomplete.

2.3 Economic Dimension

When studying the economic dimension of urban renewal, we analyze how the people who lives urban renewal area is effected from urban renewal in the point of profit or loss. In economic dimension of urban renewal, such topics with the urban renewal project the changes in income of property owners in the area, the profit they gain or the loss they gain after renewal and the coast of urban renewal project to the government are discussed.

In the urban renewal process determining the expropriation costs are crucial. The government should not get loss through too high prices but the property owners should not get loss too low prices. Determination of the prices that protect interests of both government and property owners is extremely important. Otherwise, high prices will cause government to get loss economically and will risked the continuation of this type of projects, low prices will cause property owners to get loss economically, damage participation to the project will caused government to lost prestige and trust.

3. TRABZON PROVINCE ZAGNOS VALLEY URBAN RENEWAL PROJECT

3.1 About Zagnos Valley



Figure 1. A view from Zagnos Valley in the 1970s.

Zagnos Valley is in the ancient center of the city and lies near the historical Castle Of Trabzon where is in the first order protected area (Figure 1). It is an important air corridor of the city. As a result of rapid urbanization and rural to urban migration, city developed along the coast line, so people who lives in the rural area migrated to this area because this area is very close to the coast line and it is in the center of the city. Zagnos Valley is filled with square houses in a short time. To solve this problem urban renewal practice was implemented. In this study we analyzed physical, social and economic dimensions of this urban renewal practice.

3.2 The Situation Before The Urban Renewal Project

Before the urban renewal, the area was filled with squatter houses that are unhealthy, do not have physically enough conditions. There were big transportation problems because there were no enough roads. The area had not a good urban design, had not enough green. There were security problems; people could not walk this area at nights safely (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Before The Renewal (URL1)

3.3 The Situation After The Urban Renewal Project

After the project, the area was completely cleared from squatter houses. The expropriation of properties were made by Housing Development Administration of Turkey (HDAT) and property owners left the area. The area has gained a good urban design and enough green. Security problems completely solved. And city has gained its air corridor again (Figure 3). Houses moved to above the area and this area that lies along the valley was imparted to green area.



Figure 3. After The Renewal an Ordinary Day At Zagnos (URL 2)

3.4 The Analyze of The Situation Before and After The Renewal With Its Physical, Social and Economic Dimensions

3.4.1. Physical Renewal

Before the renewal, %80 of the houses in this area have 2 or 3 floors. Reasons of this type of low-rise construction are the people that migrate rural to this area want to keep their way of life which they are accustomed to, financial difficulties and the ownership is too fragmented for high-rise construction (Bülbul, 2008).

After the renewal, all the buildings in the area destroyed and the area has a nice view with a good urban design (Figure 4). Area designed as a recreation area and area gained a view that is consisting of park and green space which people have good time, can relax. Outdated urban tissue completely healed and the area has been gained to public. More over while doing this, green spaces and open spaces are created, the area has been gained a more spacious environment.

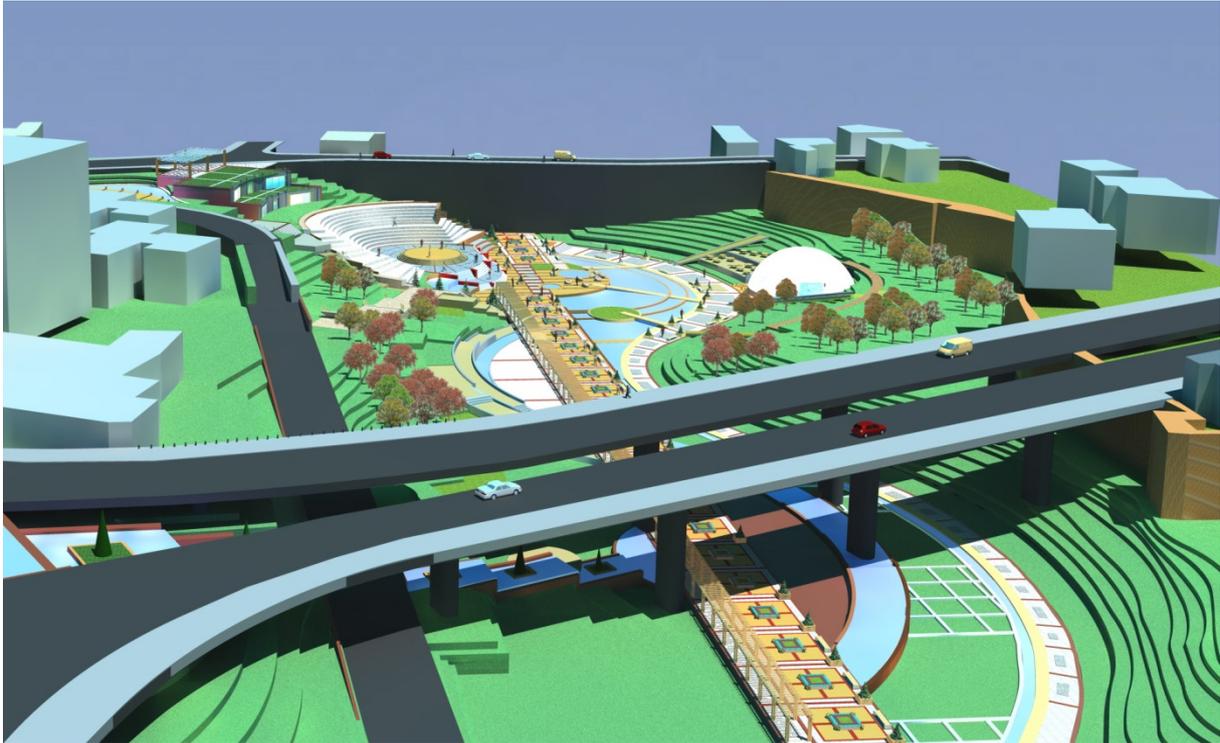


Figure 4. Urban Design of Zagnos Valley

3.4.2. Social Renewal

As a result of surveys that are made by people who are effected from urban renewal, we have seen that people who lived in the area before the urban renewal was happy about their lives. They expressed that they are pleased neighborly relationships and they did not to leave from the area. When we considered the urban renewal about participation of property owners, most of the these people expressed that they were just aware about urban renewal when project began to practicing and when measurement studies being made before the destructions (Bülbül, 2008).

Although discourse of the municipality and HDAT is that the project will be carried out in a participatory way, during our surveys we seen that they have learned the project when the project started and during the field studies. Municipality and HDAT have not worked well in this regard and the people were not able to participate in the project. This is one of the biggest problems of urban renewal projects that are practiced in the developing countries such as Turkey.

When the expropriation began, half of the property owners wanted money for compensation and the other half of the property owners wanted house for compensation from HDAT. %60 of the property owners who wanted house for compensation wanted from houses that are built by HDAT in the Bahcecik neighborhood where is close to Zagnos Valley. The

reason of the choosing the Bahcecik neighborhood is that it is the closest option to Zagnos Valley and therefore they are unwilling to far away from their usual environment.

When we look at social renewal of the area, before the renewal this area was a place that nobody wants to visit except local residents but after the renewal this area has become a center of interest, has become a place where people can rest and can have a good time. In summer various activities and festivals are organized in this area and social environment for all of the public are provided (Figure 5).



Figure 5. A Festival in Zagnos Valley (URL 3).

3.4.3. Economic Renewal

In order to analyze the economic dimension of the urban renewal, we did a survey with the property owners who effects from urban renewal and we had interviews with real estate agents. As a result of these studies we had findings as following.

%66.66 of the property owners who effects from urban renewal project think the money given to them for compensation for their properties is not enough for either apartment.

Due to project was made in the form of stages, the valuation for a particular region after the environment of the region has changed at stage 2 was different from the valuation for the same region at stage 1. This situation has caused unfair sharings between property owners. Expropriation costs have paid to the property owners with 3-4 months long periods. TOKI has determined the value of properties, value increases at during construction has led to the injustice. For the first expropriated properties real estate valuations was lower but during the project environment changed and the value of nearby properties increased. This caused that

later expropriated properties valued for higher prices than first expropriated ones and so injustice payments has been made in the area between property owners.

After the urban renewal, real estates around the urban renewal area greatly increased in value. After the urban renewal, real estate prices that is around 80,000TL-90,000TL before the urban renewal up to 200,000 TL-300,000TL. So values of properties around the urban renewal area have increased about %300.

After the renewal the people who does not want to leave from their neighbors, wanted to purchase houses from places where are close to Zagnos Valley. But due to increase in the values of the properties near the Zagnos Valley after the urban renewal, they paid much more than take for compensation and so they've lost money.

When we analyze the property valuations during the urban renewal, owners of the shops have loss much more than owners of the houses. Because appraised values of the houses were almost equal to the current values but appraised values of the shops were very low from the current values of them. Therefore shop owners have loss much more.

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, Zagnos Valley urban renewal project has analyzed with its physical, social and economic dimensions.

Physically, all of the squatter houses that located in the area destructed, urban design that consisting of green spaces and parks has been created (Figure 6).



Figure 6.a. Before the Renewal (URL4)

Figure 6.b. After the Renewal(URL5)

Socially, the area's security problems have been resolved, area, where people come together and socialize, have fun, and various festivals are organized has been turned into a center of interest. But about participation of the property owners to the project, we have seen that municipality and HDAT officials could not provide the participation of the property owners to the Project. Most of the property owners have been informed about project only during the

field studies. Property owners stated that they never talked with the officials about Project before the field studies.

Economically homeowners, with the money they took for compensation of their homes, they did not lose much. But shop owners with the money they took for the compensation of their shops lost much. Because appraised values of the houses were almost equal to the current values but appraised values of the shops were very low from the current values of them. Also, property owners who take money for the compensation of their properties wanted to buy a house from a place where is close to the Zagnos Valley. But after the urban renewal, prices of the houses that are close to Zagnos Valley were tripled. So they could not buy houses from where they want to buy houses from where they want, they lost money.

In Turkey and other developing countries, urban renewal is used as a tool for liquidation for gain profit, urban renewal seen just physically destruction of old houses and building new ones instead and only physical dimension of the urban renewal is seen as important. However, urban renewal projects like Zagnos Valley are much more than physical renewal for gain profit and become a model project although it has some shortcomings socially and economically.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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