

ROLE OF URBAN REHABILITATION IN AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING FOR EGYPT AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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SUMMARY

During the last decade, most of the developing countries as in Egypt have witnessed a permanent conversion of the city and society as a result of the unguided growth of slums and deteriorated plots within the traditional urban plots, where the historical and cultural heritage of individual countries and of the world is concentrated, as the main result of the failure of governmental agencies and local bodies working in the field of housing supply to provide the low-income families with an affordable shelter. This means that governments have a two-fold problem; how to provide the population with new suitable shelter; and How to preserve historic and Existing Building Stock. Accordingly, we need to see both problems and policies in the context of the national and local urban development mechanism. Policy makers and Planners may operate in the private, public or nonprofit sector; all need an understanding of how the formal and (usually) informal housing process work and how policy influences the operation of the market, both intentionally and in unintended ways. Towards develop more innovative approaches of urban re-habitation for old residential areas that ensure the fulfillment of each actor's objectives and needs. The question, in which this paper tries to find an answer, is in what way can more attention be given to develop more innovative approaches (tools & techniques) in planning, managing the rehabilitation projects to advance the sustainability of these projects. To answer this question, a better understanding is needed for the different aspects of rehabilitation of existing building stock and to see both problems and policies in affordability of housing, that ensure the fulfillment of each actor's objectives and needs, in a way that recognizes the balancing development and conservation in sustainable manner.

KEYWORDS: AFFORDABILITY - REHABILITATION – HOUSING – EGYPT

1. URBAN REHABILITATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Rehabilitation aims at regenerating towns or ancient living sections, at the same time preserving, restoring and reviving their characteristics and urban, architectural, aesthetic and social qualities as well as historic values. However, Rehabilitation is fundamental to the protective operation. It is not enough to preserve, or, if need may be, to restore; it is also necessary to ensure a living function to a historic monument or to an assemblage that

will be useful to society. The solution of museum commitment, so often adopted, is an easy solution often of little effect. The rehabilitation of the habitat will give priority to the social aspects of the operation. The inhabitants who have been removed during operations must be re-accommodated in the same location if they so wish as a matter of priority. Temporary and progressively declining aid for the community should help the inhabitants with modest income bear the eventual increase in the rent or the charges rising from the works carried out on their property.

In so far as possible, a rehabilitation operation of an assemblage must not modify in any profound way the social context. All this should not be considered as a rule: a settlement is a living entity. Neither the form nor the context can be erected arbitrarily. Furthermore, the physical structure of the ancient town is generally the expression of an integrated society and, therefore, in as much as possible, it is desirable to take the occasion of a rehabilitation to promote the meeting as well as the living in the same neighborhood of all social levels. Stoilov Georgi, (1991).

1.1. Problem of Rehabilitation

The problem of rehabilitation and restoration of old buildings is very important. The rapid technological development destroys the cultural identity of nations. In industry, in construction and in communication, new technologies have done wonders; production has grown enormously. Towns and villages have been built with many complexes with much superstructure, but little culture. The only source of tradition is to be found in the national heritage, in music and literature, and it is very much preserved in monuments and architecture, which reflect the ages and their life-style. Architecture and town planning play a major role in forming the national consciousness. We need to maintain these masterpieces and to include them in the new way of life. They have additional significance, and are a source of a way of thinking, of models of composition.

The seriousness of the problem is underlined by the fact that the majority of governments throughout the world are trying to save the historical heritage of their countries and to preserve and rehabilitate architectural treasures such as historic districts, towns and monuments. It would be vandalism, an environmental disaster, if positive action was not taken in this regard. World experience shows us that in solving shelter problems there is a potential threat to the low-income population of the city centers. Their presence itself and their low income constitute an impediment for implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Hence we have to study very carefully an administrative and financial mechanism which can be properly used in the reconstruction of city centers, taking into account the interests of the inhabitants of those centers. Ramachandran' Arcot, (1991).

1.2. Balancing Development and Conservation

Upgrading and new development in urban areas are the positive outcomes of economic growth. They raise standards of living and set the stage for continued development. However, the accompanying rise in land values and pressure for high density urbanization can lead to the destruction of historic property and disruption of the traditional urban fabric. This loss of urban neighborhoods and historic sites was once thought to be the price of progress. However, planners now recognize that preserving the past is an essential part of creating livable, sustainable cities. Shehayeb, D. (2000). Conservation of a city's historic and cultural environment enhances the city and the quality of life for residents by:

- preserving evidence of past achievements and cultural traditions;
- protecting enjoyable areas of architectural and natural beauty; and
- creating energy for development by generating positive identity and civic pride.

In the process of implementation of projects on preservation and rehabilitation of the historical heritage in central areas of towns, governments should take care not to destabilize low-income population groups. All solutions regarding displacement of dwellers have to be based on equitable compensation. In most developing countries

community initiatives and responsibility can form the key to solving the problems of preserving and rehabilitating buildings of historical and architectural value.

2. CASE STUDY (DARB AL-AHMAR REHABILITATION PROJECT)

The neighborhood of Darb al-Ahmar is one of the poorest and most populous areas of Cairo, lacking adequate sanitation and rubbish-collection services, with refuse often piled up in the streets and in courtyards. Faced with low rents, absentee landlords invested little or nothing in their buildings, with predictable results: roofs and walls collapsed, the historic monuments came under greater and greater stress, and expectations for the quality of life declined along with physical decay. Yet community and family life remained strong. Small family businesses, including carpentry, tile making, and other small crafts, continued to provide a portion of the local population with a living. Cameron Rashti, (2001).

The project for socio-economic development of the neighborhood was conceived with the idea that the removal of the former rubble dump and its metamorphosis into a park would have a catalytic effect on the general improvement of the district. However, to ensure this result, the project's scope had to encompass the cultural monuments in the neighborhood and the people of this area. This approach took the form of an integrated urban area development plan containing a series of pilot interventions aimed not only at the restoration of landmark buildings, but at wide-based socioeconomic development.

The Aga Khan Trust for Culture brought together institutional partners, local non-governmental organizations, municipal institutions, neighborhood representatives, local businessmen and people living and working in the area. A detailed survey of the local population's socioeconomic needs was made and a series of meetings were then held to determine the community's own development priorities (rather than those perceived by outsiders). Through consultations with the residents, a list of priorities emerged, including

- Structural assessment study.
- Health risk assessment study.

2.1.2 Formulation of objectives:

The overall aims and long term objectives were operationalized into more tangible, immediate objectives that were continually refined as the understanding of the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the resident community became deeper. AKTC, (2001). These objectives at the initial stage of the project included:

- Provide models of architecturally sound, and culturally appropriate, restoration to the local community and to the authorities.
- Understand the factors that impede positive development and preservation of the area.
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- Test the proposed system for rehabilitating physically deteriorated, traditional housing.
- Earn the support and co-operation of government officials in high positions.
- Raise the community awareness as to the value of the traditional buildings they live in.
- Encourage residents of Darb AI-Ahmar to apply to the housing rehabilitation programs.
- Convince donors to contribute to the funding of the various programs.

2.1.3 Determining levels of intervention:

The project management foresaw two types of housing intervention, mainly the rehabilitation of existing buildings through a credit program, and facilitating the



Figure 2 Participatory discussion with local residents in front of a model of an area to be improved

Source: http://www.akdn.org/hcsp/Cairo34_53.pdf

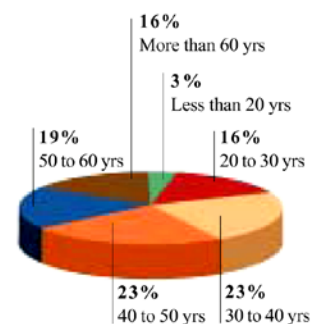


Figure 3 A social survey and demographic assessment showed that a high percentage of the long-term population in Darb al-Ahmar.

Source: http://www.akdn.org/hcsp/Cairo34_53.pdf

development of vacant lots. The legal and procedural challenges of such interventions were studied and tentative action plans drawn to be tested during the first phase of program implementation.

2.1.4 Development of building selection criteria:

The project team realized from the initial stages that criteria for building selection would differ at each stage of implementation. It was important in the initial stage to identify cases that meet the following criteria:

- High visible impact achieved through geographic concentration of interventions
- High historical and architectural merit of the building
- Residents' willingness to trust the project and invest in home improvement
- Owners' agreement and co-operation

2.1.5 Development of a credit program and financing mechanism:

This program was based primarily on the building occupancy structure, and affordability of the resident community, as well as their willingness to stay in the area which was high. The project is committed to the sustainability of the Housing Rehabilitation Program and, therefore, financing this endeavor was not solely dependent on grant money, but rather on a combination of grants and loans that building occupants repay in monthly installments.

2.1.6 Development of a procedural Manual:

This manual delineates the financing mechanisms that cover various possible scenarios for resident contribution in building rehabilitation costs. It also outlines the various activities and procedures of implementation covering the legal, social and administrative aspects of the process, starting with the initiation strategies and through the design and implementation stages, up till the last "post-delivery" stage.

2.1.7 Introducing the program to the community:

Before work started on the first few houses, many residents were confused as to what exactly were project's intentions for the area. The initial studies led the project team to decide on a two-fold strategy to introduce the program to the target community. The first step involved door-to-door visits to the home of key community members, where the project objectives were explained, and the challenges facing its implementation honestly discussed. This directness helped gain the community's trust. The second step was a public meeting held within the area aiming to make people aware of what we are doing and why, and more important, how they can participate or benefit from the program.

2.2 The Housing Rehabilitation Program In Darb AI-Ahmar

A total of (US\$ 3.25 million) has been spent on the socioeconomic rehabilitation projects of Darb al-Ahmar through 2003. Of that, half came as a grant from the Egyptian-Swiss Development Fund, 30 percent from the Trust and 20 percent was contributed by the Ford Foundation and the World Monuments Fund. The first phase of the program was successfully completed by the end of 2003. Based on the results of this phase and the outcome of the socioeconomic survey, a second phase of integrated urban development in Darb al-Ahmar, with a duration of four years, was started in Jan, 2004. AKTC, (2003).

During this second phase, rehabilitation and restoration of a substantial number of houses is foreseen, as is open space improvement. Based on the holistic approach adopted by the project, the program aimed at tackling the principal causes underlying housing decay in the district by:

- Encouraging and supporting the planning and implementation of community self-help activities aimed at the physical and environmental upgrading of living conditions.

- Preserving not only the urban fabric but also the social fabric of the area by sustaining the critical mass of the population and providing them with security of tenure.
- Improving security of tenure and propensity to invest in housing through the resolution of legal conflicts between the owners, tenants, institutional organization and community groups active in the area.
- Providing the residents access to an affordable housing rehabilitation financing mechanism, thus allowing for the gradual rehabilitation of existing residential structures, and the redevelopment of ruined buildings and vacant plots.
- Revising the institutional and planning mechanisms to bridge the existing gap between the official procedures (district plans, building regulations, Antiquities legislation, construction permits, etc.) and the tenure and ownership situation in the area (fragmented ownership, absentee owners, informal occupancy status, etc.).
- Revising the outdated plans and building regulations, that do not safeguard the character of the area, in addition to setting an example for similar urban development projects in other parts of Cairo.
- Reconciling the current Antiquities legislation's, which requires that any building or structure close to a monument be cleared, with the need to preserve the surrounding traditional fabric of the community.
- Promoting higher conservation and building standards between the area's craftsmen through apprenticeship and vocational training activities, technical advice, and monitoring of private construction activities and maintenance standards.
- Promoting more eco-friendly building techniques and materials by adopting appropriate building technologies for the new developments in the area.

- Building up experience and knowledge about the materials, technology, and construction methods to be applied in Darb al-Ahmar especially in buildings adjacent to the historic monuments.
- Assisting NGOs to play a more active role in their society by providing technical assistance, training and capacity building to their active members.



Figure 4 Comparison between actual heat loss and maximum allowed heat loss in 8 Norwegian log.

Source: http://www.akdn.org/hcsp/Cairo54_67.pdf



Figure 5 The pilot restoration project in the western slope of El-Azhar park near to Darb el-Ahmer under implementation.

http://www.akdn.org/hcsp/Cairo34_53.pdf

2.3 The Impact Of The Housing Rehabilitation Program

It is yet too early to assess the full impact of the Housing Rehabilitation Program on the community. Indicators such as income levels, residents' health, and decreased stress will not be indicative at this time. There are other proxy indicators such as the satisfaction of those households who have participated in the program so far as well as the increasing demand, in the form of an incoming flow of applications, from the residents of buildings all around the intervention area. El-Mikawi, M. & Shehayeb, D. (2003).

2.3.1 The economic impact:

Housing construction is labour intensive, and a significant number of local jobs can be generated, particularly if the capacity of developed area building trade workers is

increased to meet the challenge. Thereafter, the upgraded housing is expected to lead to further job opportunities and increased incomes through rentals and tourism development in the non utilized spaces of the buildings. Another venue just recently entering the implementation phase is the rehabilitation of rooftops so as to increase the opportunity for positive use patterns already existing in the area, some of which have an economic impact, such as poultry raising, and some the project would like to introduce, such as growing vegetables and herbs. Sedky, A &. Shehayeb, D. (2002).

2.3.2 The social impact:

There are social benefits to living and working in developed area (around 65% of the population works either in developed area or in the immediate vicinity). Compared to the available housing alternatives, whether in new cities, or informal settlements, developed area offers a number of social benefits perceived by the community such as the safety and security that increases the mobility of female members and consequently their opportunity for continuing education, and working under socially and culturally acceptable conditions.

2.3.3 The cultural and psychological impact:

Preliminary results from currently ongoing research studies reveal that residents (both men and women) as well as business owners, perceive a high value in the rehabilitation of the traditional housing stock. Some of the values mentioned were:

- attracting more visitors (both tourists and Egyptians) to the area which means an increase in the potential clients to various businesses.
- It will make residents proud of living in the area that they are already highly attached to.
- It will encourage both community members and the authorities to make a real effort to maintain and clean more efficiently, the area's streets and open spaces.
- The children will grow up seeing more beauty than their parents ever did.

3. LESSONS LEARNED FROM DARB AL-AHMAR PROJECT

From the previous discussion, we could summarize the main lessons learned and the future potential for the housing rehabilitation projects in Egypt and Developing Countries:

- The demand for this type of program for low income housing rehabilitation is quite high, and the community is willing to actively participate in the program.
- Develop a procedure and institutional framework applicable to other parts of Historic Cairo.
- The cost of repairing the existing houses is less than the cost of available housing choices whether in the urban satellite cities, or in informal settlements.
- Acceptance of the local authorities of the program, Improving the relationships with the authorities in order to simplify and resolve some of the legal issues and procedures pertaining to rehabilitation permit issuance.
- Raising awareness of users towards future use and maintenance
- The need to create or enhance an architectural review board for the preservation of the building heritage in the old city, and to review ownership and tenure of housing units in the old city

4. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS: -

The rehabilitation of the existing building stock of the inner city should give priority to the social aspects of the operation. Inhabitants who have been removed during reconstruction operations must be re-accommodated at the same location if they so wish. Temporary and progressively declining aid for the community should help the inhabitants with modest incomes bear eventual increases in the rent or the charges arising from the works carried out on their property. During execution of the works it is appropriate or expedient to plan alternative accommodation situated if possible in the neighborhood or in a social environment similar to the assemblage to be dealt with.

- 4.1. **Motivation** means that problems are to be discussed regarding identification of the people with the rehabilitation program. The program execution needs an identification of both the executive body (government, architects, municipality etc.) and the people who live in the inner city. If not present, the identification has to be created through educational activities.

- 4.2. **Adequate Financing System** The necessity of adequate financing system for rehabilitation programs. All rehabilitation projects need to be financed in some way. Problems have been confronted particularly with urban developments that are financially supported during their construction or early phases, often from sources external to the urban area in which the development is located, but which do not generate enough of their own finances or fall far beyond the means of the old city to operate and maintain over the medium and long terms. Rehabilitation should be designed appropriately with regard to the financial Systems and capacities of cities. The importance of appropriate cost recovery has been a particularly important lesson for long term financial sustainability. The need to involve the private sector and civil society in urban heritage financing is also important.

- 4.3. **Institutions** must be developed and economic and administrative instruments for control and promotion must be worked out. In the same time, civic authorities should pay attention to rehabilitation and re-use of old housing properties which are not under government protection and use. These properties should be listed, and their rehabilitation and re-use should be promoted.

- 4.4. **Sustainability** in rehabilitation old housing areas has tended to be associated with the conservation of non-renewable physical resources for the use of future generation. However, for urban development initiatives to be sustainable they cannot be confined to physical resources and the environment. If the urban

economic and social frameworks within which they take are not sustainable, little of lasting value will be achieved. For this reason, the guidelines use the now commonly accepted view of sustainability as concerning connected social, economic and environmental issues. To design sustainable development projects in historical areas, governments must be aware that Institutional Development is indispensable. Without such awareness it is difficult to achieve institutional progress. Governments should have not only a positive attitude towards Institutional Development, but also an open eye for a favorable legal-administrative frameworks Sometimes an active policy is needed to level formal barriers..

- 4.5. **Appropriates Local Partnerships:** The Importance of appropriates Local Institutions and partnerships. Participation and partnership are at the center of the strategic approach to effective urban development Whilst rehabilitation projects may take place with different actors and stakeholders participation with different levels of involvement, partnership implies a more equal distribution of responsibility (and benefit) amongst all partners. In order to develop and sustain partnerships on this basis, emphasis must be given to "empowering" and "enabling" all partners, especially those with the least access to power and resources such as low-income households and communities of urban heritage.

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دور إعادة التأهيل الحضري في القدرة على تحمل توفير السكن لمصر والبلدان النامية

الملخص العربي:

شهدت اغلب المناطق القديمة في المدن المصرية خلال العقود الثلاثة الماضية العديد من المظاهر العمرانية المضطربة تمثلت في النمو السريع الغير منتظم للتجمعات العشوائية بالمناطق القديمة داخل المدن وخارجها والتي سببت في التدمير السريع للبيئة الاجتماعية - الاقتصادية - العمرانية لهذه المناطق القديمة والتي يرجع تشييدها إلى ما قبل خمسون عاما علي الأقل. وقد تم تفسير هذه الظواهر كونها نتيجة مباشرة إلى فشل السياسات الحكومية وعجز الإدارات الحكومية علي المستوي المحلي في مواجهة تزايد الطلب علي المساكن والخدمات العمرانية الأساسية للمناطق الفقيرة. ومن هنا تظهر الحاجة الملحة إلى تطوير مداخل جديدة أكثر شمولية وتكامل تتناول كل المراحل من تخطيط وإدارة ومتابعة ثم صيانة هذه المشروعات التنموية بالمناطق العشوائية. هذه المداخل المتكاملة تتم من خلال التعاون والمشاركة الفعالة لكل الفعاليات بمراحل عملية الارتقاء والتطوير لتحقيق الأهداف الموضوعية واستغلال أقصى قدر من الإمكانيات الفنية والاقتصادية المتاحة علي المستوي المحلي بالمناطق العشوائية.

ولقد أصبحت مشكلة توفير المسكن الملائم بالمناطق الحضرية من اكبر التحديات التي تواجه الإدارات الحكومية بمصر والعالم العربي، فعلي مدار العقدين الماضيين، تم تطوير العديد من السياسات لمواجهة هذه المشاكل المتزايدة و المرتبطة بطبيعة التغيرات الاجتماعية والاقتصادية بالمجتمعات العربية. يتطلب التغلب عليها تطوير الإدارات الحكومية، وضرورة تفهم المخططين و المصممين الجوانب الكاملة لفعاليات السوق الرسمي و غير الرسمي، وكيفية تأثر السياسات المقترحة علي آليات العمل بالسوق، مما يتطلب ضرورة إيجاد صيغة متكاملة ومرنة للتعاون المشترك بين كل الجهات والفعاليات (حكومية أو غير حكومية) لمواجهة التحضر السريع والنمو السكاني المتزايد و ما يترتب عن ذلك من تزايد الطلب علي الإسكان الملائم في المناطق الحضرية. وتهدف الدراسة إلى مناقشة الأبعاد المختلفة لسياسات توفير وتيسير الإسكان بمصر، كما يتم التعرض إلى أسباب القصور في الإمداد بالمسكن الملائم وتأثير ذلك على جذب السكان والأنشطة الاقتصادية، وذلك من خلال تحليل مجموعة من التجارب المصرية في مجال توفير و تيسير الإسكان للفئات ذات الدخل المنخفض، و عرض و تحليل سياسات الإسكان المرتبطة بها، ثم تتبع تطور إستراتيجية تيسير الحصول علي المسكن الملائم للفئات ذات الدخل المنخفض، وتنتهي بمجموعة من التوصيات التي من شأنها تفعيل إستراتيجية متكاملة لتطوير سياسات توفير وتيسير الإسكان بالعالم العربي تتضمن تيسير الحصول علي المسكن الملائم لقطاعات مختلفة من ذوي الدخل المنخفض من خلال مدخل تنموي متكامل.