

S02. Urban Disasters and Resilience Policies of Cities

Localized urban resilience policies: who is in and who is out?

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Abstract

This paper examines the conflicts and contradictions embedded in area-based practices aimed at enhancing urban resilience and the problem of defining boundaries and the implications of such practices across multiple scales in the context of Tehran metropolitan area in Iran. In planning urban resilience the issue of scale and boundaries are major challenges as they deal with the questions of who is in or out and what are the implications for resilience at multiple scales. In order to examine localized policies and practices aimed at enhancing urban resilience, we consider the case of urban upgrading and revitalization policies and practices in 'deteriorated urban areas' in Tehran metropolitan area. These practices are primarily framed as interventions that are aimed at enhancing urban resilience. We examine the content of these programs and their implications in targeted localities and at larger scales of city and metropolitan area. We argue that Tehran upgrading and revitalization programs for deteriorated urban areas have resulted in spatial redistribution of social vulnerability, mostly from inside formal urban boundaries to the areas outside these boundaries.

Extended Abstract

This paper examines the conflicts and contradictions embedded in area-based practices aimed at enhancing urban resilience and the problem of defining boundaries and the implications of such practices across multiple scales in the context of Tehran metropolitan area in Iran. Beilin & Wilkinson (2015, p.1208) explain that in planning and governing for urban resilience "arguably scale offers the biggest challenge to our framing of the urban because who, what and where the boundary of the urban is located has implications across all levels of management, government and communities. Scale offers a way of interrogating networks and reframing problem questions: if we change the scale of what or who is 'in' or 'out', how does this affect our responses?" Increasingly resilience policies are being directed towards smaller spatial scales (Coafee & Lee, 2016). This focus of resilience policies on smaller spatial scales runs the risk of overlooking that localities are "complex interconnected socio-spatial systems with extensive and unpredictable feedback processes which operate at multiple scales and timeframes" (Davoudi, et al., 2012, p.304).

In order to examine localized policies and practices aimed at enhancing urban resilience, we consider the case of urban upgrading and revitalization policies and practices in 'deteriorated urban areas' in Tehran metropolitan area. The study relies on field data collection, archival review, interview with officials and mapping the target areas of these policies and practices and their progress. These practices are primarily framed as interventions aimed at enhancing urban resilience. The paper begins with a brief overview of the policies and practices of urban regeneration in the country. The earthquake of 2003 in Iran, with more than 30,000 people killed, marked a rhetorical

shift in urban policies concerned with ‘upgrading and revitalization’ of what is officially called ‘deteriorated and underutilized urban fabrics’ towards enhancing urban resilience. The disaster gave an impetus to the introduction of a series of acts and programs concerned with these urban areas at national and city levels. It is estimated that these areas include 55,000 hectare inner urban areas and villages engulfed by the urban development as well as 77,000 hectare informal settlements, which overall accommodate 6 million households.

Tehran, the capital city with 8.5 million people (day-time population of 12 million), according to JICA (2000) is prone to major earthquakes and hence has been the center of attention of urban upgrading and revitalization programs. Within the formal boundaries of the city, five percent of the urban area with 15 per cent of urban population is identified as deteriorated urban areas. Authorities are determined to redevelop most of the housing stock within this areas, with the aim of increasing the earthquake resistance in the city. Pursuing this purpose, new institutional bodies and arrangements as well as additional financial and developmental incentives, including exemption from taxation and higher development rights, have been introduced to accelerate the transformation of Tehran inner areas.

In the next section of paper, we examine the official conceptualization of resilience as the current urban transformation agenda and the ways in which the concept is deployed in identifying target areas and in developing urban regeneration programs. We discuss that at each step, from the identification of deteriorated areas to the content of the program and its implementation, resilience, risk and vulnerability have been conceived from a built environment perspective with narrowly defined territories, without considering the socio-spatial dynamics that shape and reshape resilience across different scales.

The criteria defined for the identification of the deteriorated areas consisted of areas with a high proportion of parcels smaller than 200 square meters, unsustainable structures and access roads narrower than 6 meters. The three mentioned criteria are exclusively concerned with the built environment, i.e. safer buildings, overlooking the socio-economic dimensions of resilience, vulnerability and risk. Moreover, while considering fine grain morphology as a criterion for resilience does not rely on a clear scientific basis, it does result in reducing the diversity of urban housing options and exacerbating the problem of housing unaffordability in Tehran. Furthermore, informal settlements outside formal urban boundaries have been excluded from programs developed for Tehran. Therefore, these settlements, which have been among the most rapidly growing settlements in the country, and their residents who mainly work in Tehran and even a third of them previously lived in the city (Zebardast, 2006) are not included in the spatial scope for enhancing urban resilience. This raises questions like what should be the boundaries of urban resilience; whose resilience should we consider; Does it include people who live outside formal urban boundaries but work in, and contribute to, its economy.

As regards the program, upgrading and revitalization of the deteriorated areas can be generally summarized as a property-led regeneration process. Measures adopted in this program involve the demolition of residential buildings and replacing them with higher density buildings. By allowing higher density buildings, reducing municipality costs and subsidizing housing finance for homeowners, the program seeks to engage homeowners and private developers to enhance the resilience of these urban areas. The program, however, has failed to deal with intricate land and

property rights in targeted urban areas. As a result, they exclusively focused on land/homeowners with formal ownership registration documents. Other prevalent forms of land/housing rights like *gholnameh* (documented but not registered promissory note) have been overlooked. More importantly, the emphasis in this program is placed on landowners, and hence tenants, find themselves in a weak position and as the first target for compulsory moves. While more than half of low-income tenant households in the country are living in old urban areas (MRUD, 2014), urban upgrading and revitalization programs fail to present any alternative to them, and work as a driving force for their displacement. The property-led urban transformation has resulted in the loss of affordable rental housing with good access in inner urban areas (Pakseresht & Rezaie, 2014). In the absence of any plan for providing affordable housing for the former residents of these neighborhoods, renters have been the first groups forced to leave these areas for the urban periphery (Pakseresht & Rezaie, 2014).

The implications of these programs, in terms of resilience, include increasing the resistance of the built environment against future earthquakes and reducing social vulnerability of the target areas, through their demographic transformation. With no consideration for the supply or replacement of the lost affordable housing units, the program has resulted in lower-income groups move to other 'deteriorated areas' further apart or even to the informal settlements outside the formal boundaries of the city. In Tehran and due to the current housing stagnation in the country, the progress of the program has been slow; only 55,637 parcels have gone through the regeneration process. The paper presents the spatial distribution of the progress of this process in Tehran.

Applying a resilience framework in the examination of these programs and their implications across different scales, from Tehran metropolitan area to the formal boundaries of the city to the selected areas can assist us in understanding the importance of the issue of system boundaries and the processes and relationships across multiple scales that shape and reshape resilience. Tehran upgrading and revitalization programs for deteriorated urban areas has resulted in spatial redistribution of social vulnerability, mostly from inside formal urban boundaries to the areas outside these boundaries.

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