

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND SPATIAL PLANNING

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of spatial planning in social exclusion. In many countries planning, it is a tool to organise cities; however, it is widely used as a technical process and disregard social aspects. In this study, this notion is critically examined also the aim, role and scope of spatial planning is underlined through gentrification of Sulukule Project which is carried out in Turkey and resulted in social exclusion of Romans people who are main residents of the area. The key conclusion of the study is that the process of spatial planning can result in social exclusion of citizens; therefore, during planning process public participation must be considered and also it needs to be organised based on public interest.

Key Words: *Social exclusion, spatial planning, participation, public interest.*

Planning has been a tool to develop and improve city life. Planning tools are mainly used for controlling city future. There are different types of planning scales and spatial planning is one of the most common and effective planning concept. Mattingly (2001) defines spatial planning as a land use management process and indicates its subjects land buildings and physical space. He adds that these refer to urban form and spatial planning aims to provide a basis for land use regulation and building control, and generally it is carried out by urban planners. However traditional spatial planning basically concerns with zoning and land; therefore, community expectations and needs are ignored and people are left out from planning process. It can be said that spatial planning may cause social exclusion not only during the decision making process but also during determining the implementations and projects. Planning concept requires integration of all groups of society but in many countries spatial planning is carried out as only technical issue and eliminates social aspects. In this paper, the aim of spatial planning will be discussed. The question: "how a spatial plan can cause social exclusion and what is the main idea of including of all groups of society in the planning process?" will be addressed through providing relevant case from a specific country. The first section of essay will focus on concept of social exclusion and the importance of social integration, and the essay will examine role of spatial plans. Second section will be based on case study about spatial planning process in Turkey.

To begin with, it is useful to understand what social exclusion is. And then it is essential to link with integration of society. There are a number of definitions to clarify the concept yet due to the similarity between social exclusion and societal disadvantage, it can be misinterpreted. The difference between them is that societal disadvantage refers to market driven approaches such as poverty, low class and privation; however, the concept of social exclusion deals with life satisfaction, capability and accessibility to living opportunities and has strong connection with social norms (Wixey et al, 2005). As Gaffron et al (2001) pointed out it is not necessarily accurate that as a result of being poor, people face with social exclusion and alike, people who are socially excluded are not always poor or unemployed. Likewise, as Burchardt et al (1999, pp.229) defined "An individual is socially excluded if (a) he or she is geographically resident in a society but (b) for reasons beyond his or her control, he or she cannot participate in the normal activities of citizens in that society, and (c) he or she would like to so participate." At this point of view it can be inferred that if a person is not well-connected with its environment socially and physically, this causes social exclusion. Since spatial planning concerns physical shape of city, there is two types of linkage between social exclusion and spatial planning. First one is creating social exclusion among society through spatial planning decisions and second causing social exclusion during spatial planning decision process. Usually, both of these situations end up with social exclusion. The important question is to ask "why spatial planning induces exclusion and why it is vital to include all groups of society in planning" and follow-up question is "who decides what".

Spatial planning is mainly performed by urban planners and has a contribution with other disciplines such as architecture, sociology, and engineering. However, in most countries, as Mattingly (2001) highlighted this process is seen as a technical issue and determining policies for land use development, and ignores its other connections; therefore, during the decision making process society and their expectations and social needs are left out from planning. This is first step of excluding people.

While deciding projects what it should be done is to prioritise public anticipation. Yet in most cases projects are chosen according to political or economic reasons. It is essential that urban planners need to negotiate and contribute with government through political debate in development and planning process. Davidoff (1965, pp.332) suggested that *“urban politics, in an era of increasing government activity in planning and welfare, must balance the demands for ever-increasing central bureaucratic control against the demands for increased concern for the unique requirements of local, specialized interests”*. According to Klosterman (1985, pp.12) although pluralist planning requires *“it is required to represent the external effects of political decisions on groups and individuals who are not directly involved in the political bargaining process”*, traditional planning approaches does not bring society into planning process. Therefore, government is not aware of public interest and due to citizens are not capable of raising their voice, integration of public into planning is only controlled by state and urban planners. It is essential to add that urban planners conduct planning process does not necessarily mean that they act alone. They usually work with governmental planning institutions such as municipalities and ministries. At this point if nobody pays attention to public interest, there will be two consequences. The first, public cannot be included into planning process; therefore, they are excluded from social rights and second the implementation will be decided according to political and personal interests; therefore, public are excluded from city rights because mainly, those implementations are decided regarding economic and political benefits which are concerned by wealthy people and vice versa. For instance, in many countries mayors are responsible for city managing and prepare development projects. While deciding these projects, mayors', who have political power to use law over private persons and organisations to implement planning projects, main concern is public vote and gain some benefit; hence, they are imposing their personal regulations on citizens. The link with social exclusion is that spatial planning deals with land use and, as Hoekveld and Needham (2012) point out, those kinds of land use implementations have impacts on others in other locations, so how one person or agency makes decisions on a land can have important consequences for others. For this reason, spatial planning is usually discriminatory, in other words some people benefits from those consequences more than others and others, who can be defined as socially excluded face, with negative impacts more often (ibid).

Usually, those consequences affect urban poor due to not be taken into planning process. This view leads us to significance of integration of all groups of society in planning. In the academic literature, the concept of integration refers to public participation and social justice. Social justice is based on three concepts: equality, diversity and democracy (ibid, pp.5) and these categories can be performed in spatial planning process through public participation with private and public planning agencies. As mentioned earlier, spatial planning land use implementations affects city as a whole; hence, in this process all groups of society need to be taken into account in order to generate social justice in the city. Integration of citizens means that not only public participation in the process but also determining the implementations according to public interest. During the participation process society's expectation and needs can be revealed and during the decision making process projects can be determined according to that information. Although public needs are important it is not possible to make real all expectations; therefore, it can be said that spatial planning can also have a political role to be a negotiator between planning bodies' implementations and public interests.

To sum up the point, social exclusion is not necessarily related to financial aspects but also it has a geographic dimension created by spatial planning. Land use managements process is to develop city and determination of locations of city facilities has great impact on citizens' life. In this stage projects are not implemented regarding public needs, spatial planning process may result is social exclusion of society. While locating facilities society should be brought into process psychically and socially. As Cars et.all (1999, pp.8) suggested *“to a very large, and increasing, extent people facing social exclusion or being in processes that might end up in exclusion, are spatially concentrated in areas with poor reputation and relatively poor standards. Further, many of the countries witness a gradual reinforcement of the stigma of these exposed neighbourhoods”*. It can be said that spatial plans usually prioritise some areas over other by planning bodies due to political and personal interest. Hence, some groups of society, mainly poor, are left out from planning process.

In order to understand concept of exclusion, the second section of essay will explore an example of social exclusion which is created by spatial planning in Turkey. The gentrification project of Sulukule, where is located in Fatih district in Istanbul, has been discussed for over 5 years by planners and architects in Turkey. The project is designed under the concept of urban regeneration of Istanbul and the implementations started in 2010. Sulukule is a historical place where gypsies, *romans* who are an ethnic group with unique culture, have been living for more than five hundred years. Also it is considered as the oldest gypsy neighbourhood in Europe. They have created special living environment for themselves and have been living since 11th century. However, the physical conditions have been eroded and *romans* are not capable of renewal because the demography of area consists of low-income people and they commonly earn money from daily temporary jobs.

Therefore, aim of the project is to replace old structures with new ones and renew decayed buildings by governmental planning agencies. TOKI, which is a state institution and responsible for social housing, and Fatih municipality determined 10 avenues and 3 streets in 2008 and totally 640 houses will have been renewed by the end of 2013. The Spatial plan for Sulukule area has been drawn and carried out by the municipality. According to the plan the decayed houses will be renovated, new facilities such as mosques, sports centres and schools will be constructed. The evacuation was started in 2008 and this is where the problem was emerged. The community was placed in social houses which were constructed by TOKI and during this process they sold their tenant rights temporarily but once they went back to the area, the rental fees were nearly doubled and suddenly they became homeless because it was not affordable for them. Those who owned the houses had to sign an agreement to accept to pay restoration fees but the prices which they were willing to pay were increased, nearly tripled, due to “unexpected” construction and archaeological excavation. Therefore they had to sell their owner rights to the government as well. The project can be considered as a positive approach for city improvement because the promises of the head of planning bodies is to create a new living environment with full of tourism attractions and the community will not lose their tenure rights. However, there are two main problems to be paid attention. First of all Sulukule has unique history and environment and the spatial plan is not performed regarding this issue. The community were not allowed to participate with the process and they could not raise their voices; therefore, the municipality was not aware of the community expectations and needs as a result of this the new houses are not compatible with the culture of the area- with *Romani* culture. The area is converted from *Roman* style to more modern-usual- architecture. The houses are smaller than old ones and the street life was replaced with gated housing areas. Secondly although the community has been promised to reserve their tenure rights, 80% of the community is tenant and they became homeless because the owners sold their tenure rights to the government. Those who did not sell their houses are not happy with the new regenerated houses because as they expressed “*it did not feel like home since it does not familiar with my culture*”. For these reasons 50% of owners sold their houses and left the area. Those who sold their owner rights now regret because they lost their “home”. At the end of the Sulukule regeneration process, more than one thousand *Romani* became homeless because “gentrification” resulted in increasing housing prices and those who were tenants could not go back to their old houses. Those who own the houses, needed to make the agreement left the area because they were not able to pay the fees as well. The underlying problem of Sulukule demolishing is to see spatial planning process only technical regeneration procedure; hence, the community was not part of transformation of the area.

To evaluate, *Romani* people are socially excluded from their own living areas because of regeneration spatial plan. During the process, not only private planning practitioners and architects but also experts from other disciplines such as archaeologist, sociologist and historians resisted demolishing Sulukule but at the end of the process there is nothing left from the culture of Sulukule except for rubble. Daily life is completely changed. *Romani* people are excluded from their lives and homes-excluded socially and physically.

To conclude, as mentioned in the first section of the essay, spatial plans can be either “physical” solution to social problems and occasion to social exclusion. To include all groups of society, it is essential that spatial planning process requires ability to listen in order to understand what people want and care about (Albrechts, 2004). To achieve social integration in planning, spatial planning should not be seen only as a technical land use management process also has influence on social aspects. Spatial plan can be performed by government and public planning agencies but the role of government should “*Engage with the community on the preparation of planning policies and proposals and ensuring that local concerns are voiced in regional arenas*” (UNECE, 2008, pp.17). Otherwise social exclusion will be inevitable as seen in the example of Sulukule. What happened in the process of Sulukule regeneration is that government ignored to contribute to the community and their expectations, spatial plan was prepared according to technical knowledge and the goal was only considering economic and physical change of the area rather than social change. Therefore, people in the area faced with eviction and deprivation; at the end of the process a significant number of poor people became homeless. Social exclusion as a result of spatial plan can also affect other citizens who are located close to the area because spatial plans are prepared at present but have impact on the future of the city. Therefore, the questions of “who will plan”, “plan for whom”, “for what purpose” and “what shall be the consequences” needed to be addressed in the beginning of the planning process.

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