

A Vision to Activate the Alternative Slums Housing Experience in Egypt.

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Abstract:

The problem of slums in Egypt is a grave issue with multiple dimensions and components. The Egyptian Government seeks to find fundamental solutions for the social, economic, and urban components of these areas through various policies and programs. The names of those programs and projects have changed until it became the “Social Housing Program” and “Alternative Slums Housing”. However, the question remains about the efficiency of the subsidized housing policy in alleviating the suffering of poor families in acquiring adequate, safe, and healthy housing. Therefore, this research attempts to formulate a methodological framework for paving the path towards activating the role of alternative slums housing in Egypt. The framework aims to devise a more comprehensive and efficient vision in providing appropriate alternative housing for the residents of this case by identifying its difficulties and most important problems. This is done by accounting for the different points of view of competent and responsible authorities, as well as the residents of those areas, together with the experts in that field. This was concluded in the previous research study to evaluate the experience of alternative slums housing in Egypt (Sebawy, 2022).

Hence, this study is a completion of the research procedures for an effective policy and vision for the experience of alternative housing for slums by evaluating the previous experience and currently being offered, and a study of a group of successful international experiences in the field of alternative housing for slums, deteriorating and unsafe areas. Hence, this study is a continuum of the research procedures for an effective policy and vision for alternative slums housing through the evaluation of the previous experience and the currently suggested. As well as the analysis of several successful international case studies in the field of alternative housing for slums, deteriorating and unsafe areas. With the aim of reaching recommendations for a more comprehensive and efficient vision in providing adequate alternative housing in Egypt.

The study is divided into three parts representing an evaluation of the alternative housing experience currently offered in Egypt and identifying its most significant pros and cons. The second part extracts a set of lessons, foundations and criteria for adequate alternative housing, as well as the goals of the international case studies, the steps and stages used in those cases, in addition to the procedures, mechanisms, tools and methods used. The aim is to overcome the negatives and problems of the current experience. In the third part the research provides a vision to activate the alternative housing experience, as well as recommendations towards a fair housing policy as one of the most important human rights in Egypt, based on the negative aspects of the current experience. This is done by formulating the initial general framework for a vision to activate the experience of alternative slums housing in Egypt. The initial framework is revised and developed by presenting it to specialists, experts and those responsible for implementing housing programs in the country by conducting interviews to get their opinions and suggestions in order to reach the finalized general framework for the vision to activate the experience of alternative slums housing in Egypt.

The government has recently been addressing the slums situation by providing alternative housing for the residents of these areas in all Egyptian regions, including Asmarat, San al-Agouz, Rawdat al-Sayyida, Ahalena, Ma’an project, and other different housing areas. The alternative housing experience in Egypt resulted in a set of problems, most notably renting or selling of the new units by the residents and moving back to the old slum area. In addition to the lack of decent job opportunities in the new area that fits the cost of living. As well as various urban, economic and social changes (Ministry of Housing, Utilities & Urban Communities, 2023; Sebawy, 2023; Solutions for Alternative Policies, 2020).

Urban changes included encroachments on the facades of residential buildings, violation of urban spaces and site landscape. Moreover, the spread of street vendors, and the conversion of some building floors into commercial stores. Furthermore, the basic services in the region are weak, and there is a shortage of cheap public transportation linking the region to the surrounding area.

Social changes included the oversight of those responsible of the social characteristics of the residents. For example, the units areas and the number of rooms are not commensurate with the family size. Moreover, the lack of consideration for the type of housing, as they do not prefer living in high buildings of 11 floors, such as Bashir al-Khair. Additionally, the omission of their participation in choosing the housing unit and choosing the proposed location for their transfer. Also, the incompatibility of their behaviour and culture with the new

society

Economic changes include the shortage of job opportunities in the new area and the high cost of living, which increases unemployment. Consequently, this led to the renting or selling of the units and the formation of new slum areas. This also contributed to the occurrence of social and urban changes and the appearance of undesirable behaviours such as theft, violent crimes, conversion of ground floors from residential to commercial uses, the spread of street vendors, the spread of garbage among others.

Methodology: Consequently, the need arose for a general framework to activate and correct the path of alternative housing in Egypt. This framework can be devised by reviewing the Egyptian experience with alternative housing, as well as previous studies. Then international experiences are discussed to reach a general framework for delivering efficient alternative housing. Then the pillars for building the framework are reviewed in order to reach a theoretical framework for activating alternative housing. Next the framework is taken through a checking stage by presenting it to experts and specialists in the field to reach a final framework for activating alternative housing in Egypt.

Results - Final formulation and vision towards an effective policy for alternative housing experience in Egypt

The final framework for the alternative housing policy is articulated for its more effective application in Egypt. This is achieved by developing the previous initial framework by presenting it to experts, specialists, and government agencies responsible for housing and slums in Egypt through standardized interviews. The interview was conducted with 13 individuals; 3 professors at the Faculty of Regional and Urban Planning - Cairo University, 2 professors at the Faculty of Engineering - Department of Architecture and Planning - Cairo University, 2 experts at the Ministry of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities, 2 experts at the New Urban Communities Authority, 2 from the Informal Settlements Development Department -Cairo Governorate, as well as 2 from the Urban Development Fund (formerly the Slum Development Fund).

Recommendations and proposals for amending and developing the initial framework fall under the following dimensions:

- Adding a stage to the framework, which is the transition stage, to act as an intermediate stage between the transfer and settlement stages, whether the transfer and settlement is within the same location or in a new location. This will hasten and facilitate benefiting and development of the original site. As well as rapid establishment of investment projects and utilization of the land value.
- Combining the “preparation for the project” stage with that focused on “Studying the current status of the region” into one preliminary stage.
- Employing sustainable development goals and standards during the planning, design and implementation stages.
- Emphasis on residents’ participation in housing production according to their needs and characteristics.
- Conducting questionnaires and interviews with residents to identify their current job types. And introduce them to the job opportunities available at the new location and the possibility of providing opportunities.
- Developing an employment plan for the residents in the new area with suitable wages.
- Accurately identifying development partners in the first stage of the framework, and coordinating between them, along with getting to know their views and their role in each stage.
- Preparing an accurate database of the existing residential buildings, including the number of units, the area of each unit, number of rooms, and number of floors.
- The “Studying the population characteristics of the region” stage should include identification of the current jobs / income - the educational and cultural level - connections and social relations - the type and size of families.
- The need for an entity that manages housing areas responsible for the management and follow-up process.
- Preparing a clear mechanism to ensure the complete financing of the project in its various stages.
- Adding a stage for raising the awareness and preparing the residents to qualify them to work in new job opportunities, through training and professional programs. And offer programs to raise the societal and cultural awareness level of residents. In addition to providing initiatives and activities to facilitate their cultural integration into society.
- Applying the principle of effective participation of the residents in all stages of the alternative housing project. Additionally, integrating them, giving them importance, and taking their opinions into consideration, all of which helps ensure the success of the project.

Based on these recommendations, the final framework towards an effective policy for the alternative housing experience in Egypt was prepared,

Keywords :

Alternative Housing - Activating the Alternative Housing Experience - The Egyptian Experience of Alternative Housing

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