

Conflict in the Unofficial Production of Space in Sanandaj City

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The expansion of poverty caused by the global capitalist mechanism, which in Iran has majorly appeared in the form of governmental capitalism, has led to the formation of an official/unofficial duality across various economic dimensions as well as urban areas. Physical representations of urban poverty under different terms such as marginalization, slum dwelling, unofficial residency, and spontaneous settlement have always been compiled through the outlook of planning and analysis management, according to the interpretation of various plans to confront this issue; nevertheless, the dimensions of the problem have been expanded, partly due to the inefficiency of the discourse used by groups that are involved in organizing this phenomenon.

2. Methodology

In this paper, the production system and reproduction of space as a supplement to official spaces were examined with a focus on critical analysis as well as Henry Lefebvre's (1973) production of space theory, which involves three spatial dimensions including perceived space, conceived space, and lived space. To this end, first, the problem of unofficial urban

living was examined within the framework of Lefebvre's (1973) production of space theory as well as the three spatial dimension as a unique view of spaces. By using such an outlook, it is likely to gain access to the underlying layers of reality which may occur through a type of possible contemplation that does not exclusively remain bound by phenomena and manifestations of the problem, yet it could break through underside layers of phenomena by reflection and could identify, explain and, conceptualize the mechanisms, forces and, structural orientations behind the problem. A real conceptualization cannot only remain limited to results, consequences, manifestations, and minor issues but more importantly, it should be able to explain the link between such minor issues with more general ones, portraying the interactions among them. Consequently, first, the theoretical foundations of the study were investigated through this outlook, within the framework of Lefebvre's (1973) intellectual instrument. Following the investigation of the study's theoretical foundations, the status of unofficial production of space in Sanandaj city was assessed by extracting a way to assess three dimensions of unofficial production of space and observing the three international, national, and local levels; the conceived space was examined first. Primarily, the plans and programs of

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Sanandaj city and the province affecting the spatial structure and policy-making of the city were examined. Next, the views of technocrat groups were analyzed using documents and interviews conducted with the groups and published in newspapers. To analyze the conceived space involving the present space and actions taken in these settlements, the executive actions in urban spontaneous settlements by government agencies and NGOs were investigated. Ultimately, the lived space was analyzed and assessed as the most important type of space in urban spontaneous settlements through conducting interviews with the residents of the three spatial layers of Sanandaj city along with observing and comparing the other two spaces with the livelihood of these settlements' inhabitants. The statistics on three spatial layers were obtained from population and housing census.

3. Result

Today, more than 50% of Sanandaj city population live in urban spontaneous settlements. Despite the numerous plans and programs offered for the city in different periods, they have failed to effectively contribute to the status of the poor. Moreover, some of these plans had brought about considerably incorrect ideas for the city as they were compiled as a completely abstract, upper, top-down plan for the city and rural areas around it. In fact, the plans and programs' structures, as well as the bureaucratic structure of offices, led to more low-income groups to become marginalized. The status quo observed today are the problematic dimensions of these plans. In addition to the plans, the residents were accused of being "the marginalized" through some of the views put forth by scientific, technocratic groups along with influencing the government's conditions. As representations existing for spaces, all of these factors had led to the growth and spatial reproduction of spontaneous settlements in Sanandaj city; in this regard, not only it has not contributed to the first established layer of the city, but it has also

helped with its reproduction in the second layer, naturally followed by the reproduction of the third layer over time. Similar to projects by the World Bank and various organizations such as the civil and urban development company along with actions taken by the municipality and urban management, spatial practices within the spontaneous settlements of Sanandaj city have had no impact on preventing the rise of this process; the residents themselves have often forced the urban management to adhere to their requests by producing their intended spaces, given the conditions imposed on them. As a form of representation space, residents have resisted against the focus of the urban management on the exchange value in cities by prioritizing the value, producing space in their own unofficial framework. As a matter of fact, imposing spatial practices and space representation on the lived space of the residents followed by the expansion of the city within the second and third spatial layers confirms this very subject. The separation between the components of the triad involving theory, action, and people's demands was correctly confirmed through interviews conducted across the three spatial layers of Sanandaj city

4. Conclusion

By paying attention to Lefebvre's opinions and how planning should be self-criticizing to the extent that it is free of any ideologies, the necessity of catering for demands and self-organization of daily life by the low-income strata is made clear more than ever so as to gradually resolve the official/unofficial duality. Furthermore, the intensifying process of inequality and the class gap could be slowed down and ultimately mitigated by forming a critical discourse which would not be attainable except through the public demand as well as deciphering the spaces and focusing on the application value rather than exchange value along with the lived experience of residents. The results obtained in the study denote a distinguished perception of unofficial living

conditions by the three groups including the government, technocrats, and people. Differences between the views and actions of governmental and scientific technocrats and the lived experience of residents demonstrate a deep gap between these groups and show the necessity to consider

alternative solutions through a critical outlook that is independent of space compared to previous decades.

Keywords: Unofficial living, Urban spontaneous settlements, Production of space, Sanandaj city

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