

Can Typification Problem in Mass Housing Developments in Turkey be Solved by an Architectural Competition?

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Abstract

Along with rapid industrialization and urbanization since the second half of the 20th century in Turkey, Turkish cities had faced social, economical and spatial change. In this transformation, many of them invaded by squatter settlements and illegal housing areas. In order to solve this problem Mass Housing Development Administration of Turkey(TOKI) has begun to produce mass housing areas in different parts of Turkey which aimed to provide more livable environments to their inhabitants. . However, this good intention brought about typification problem. In order to find solutions to this problem, Mass Housing Development Administration of Turkey(TOKI) organize an architectural competition called 7 Region, 7 Climate. The aim of this study is to discuss and evaluate this architectural competition.

Keywords: Housing development, housing areas, typification.

1. Introduction

Since the 1950s in Turkey, - along with the growing industrialization and changing agricultural policies-, internal migration and rapid population growth has begun to change the urban and social structures of Turkish cities. Many of the Turkish cities which had the unique examples of traditional settlement areas in their centers have been invaded by squatter settlements and illegal housing areas. This rapid urbanization requires new solutions for preserving the characteristics of Turkish cities, on the one hand, on the other hand providing more livable environments for the new inhabitants of the cities. The rising expectations from the quality of life in Turkish cities has been the pushing factor of the seek for new national urban policies. As part of these policies, Mass Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKI) was established in 1984. One of the main targets of this institution is improving the quality of life in squatter settlements in Turkish cities.

Although TOKI has a good ambition about improving the quality of life in Turkish cities, the outcome of its projects does not fulfill this scope. TOKI's typified planning concepts, which are far beyond taking into consideration of cultural, climatic and topographic differences of urban environments, has brought about a process of homogenization in Turkish cities. In response to this problem, TOKI organized an architectural competition titled "7 Region, 7 Climate-From Tradition to Future" in order to prevent typification in mass housing areas which are developed by TOKI. The aim of this competition is defined as to promote inspiration from the traditional housing

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culture in the development of new mass housing areas in order to sustain the city identity. Although, the competition is organized with good intentions about the continuity of cultural identity of the cities; the concept of identity is reduced to selected architectural images unique to each region. However, it is known that the identity is unique to the specific area and it is nearly impossible to talk about the identity of regions. Even each city in a region has its own characteristics and identity and differs from the other cities in the same region.

The aim of this study is to criticize the typification process in TOKI 7 Region, 7 Climate-From 'Tradition to Future' Architectural Competition. In the scope of this study, the typification process is discussed with the 4 winners of this architectural competition.

2. Urbanization Process in Turkey since 1950s

Urbanization is the fundamental qualitative transformation process in the social structure created by industrialization and modernization. According to Keleş, the description of urbanization is “a population accumulation process which causes changes, unique to cities, in human behavior and relations; creates increasing division of labor, specialization and organization in social structure; leads to the growth of today's cities and increases of the number of cities in parallel to industrialization and economic development.” (Keleş, 2012).

One of the fundamental elements of the rapid change process experienced in the last century in Turkey is clearly urbanization. The presence of internal migration from villages to cities and from small cities to metropolis indicates the continuity of this urbanization process. Urbanization, which is not a population movement only, generates major changes in economic, social, political and cultural fields of the society. The magnitude of the proportion, its effects and multidimensionality of its possible results reveal the importance of the matter.

Upon a general evaluation of the urbanization process in Turkey, it could be indicated that the country has started an urbanization process from the year 1955 on and that there has been continuous increase since the beginning. Particularly since the year 1985, it is seen that the population has decreased in rural areas whereas urban population has gradually increased (http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/VeriBilgi.do?alt_id=1067).

Rapid urbanization and mass migration seen in Turkey after World War II has brought along an immediate housing need and the problems which have started between the years 1945-1950 have reached quite a large scale today. It was attempted to solve housing deficit and housing problems which were not settled legally due to the fact that housing demand, particularly for the low-income families, was fulfilled with illegal and shanty settlements. Mass Housing Development Administration (TOKI) which was established in 1984 with the aim of closing the housing deficit, solving urbanization problems and reducing unemployment has carried out numerous dwelling productions in every city of Turkey (Eşkinat, 2012).

The period between the years 1950-1980 is a period when housing problem and urbanization policies intensified. Urbanization policies and housing problems have been addressed within the socio-economic framework together with particularly demographic and economic transition period. One of the most important characteristics of this period

is the fact that housing problem and urbanization were considered as a government policy. Apart from the legal and special arrangements formed within this framework, it is indicated in the 49th article of 1961 Turkish Constitution that “The state shall take measures to provide the poor and low-income families with dwellings that meet sanitary requirements”(<http://www.anayasa.gen.tr/1961constitution-text.pdf>).

Although the developments in the housing sector have been followed closely, squatting has become one of the most important problems as a result of the applied urbanization policies. Industry settlement has not been moved away from city surroundings and thus rural-urban migration has accelerated. Therefore, squatting has increased substantially. For instance, in 1948 the number of slum houses was approximately 25-30 thousand; this amount increased to 230 thousand in 1960 and to 430 thousand in 1965 (Çakır, 2011:216). In addition to this, insufficiency of housing supply, incapability of the management, inadequacy of the infrastructural investments and deficiencies in the implementation of the development plans have caused many problems to occur in housing industry within this period. The most important one of these problems is the increase seen in the prices. Another problem is the fact that the lands outside municipality borders were zoned for housing unplanned and that this has brought along rent-seeking. Additionally, not only economic changes but also social problems such as the changes in lifestyle and socio-cultural changes, which have occurred together with rapid urbanization and migration, have taken place and they affected housing industry to a large extent (Tekeli, 1996: 14-15).

3. Mass Housing Development Administration of Turkey(TOKI) and Typification in Mass Housing Production

Housing problem has appeared in Turkey due to rapid urbanization and industrialization together with rural-urban migration which has started in the 1950s. Although many legal arrangements have been made in order to solve the housing problem, these attempts have not been successful and housing deficit still continues. As it is seen in many other developing countries, though a right to housing is one of the fundamental human rights in Turkey, the need for housing for the low-incomers is mostly met with shanty settlements. Upon the examination of the general structure of housing industry in Turkey, it is seen that housing supply and demand has followed quite a fluctuating course after the year 1980. Housing Demand increased considerably after Marmara Earthquake in 1999; however, this upward trend decreased again with the economic crisis that took place in 2001. The industry has been in an upward trend in parallel with the relative recovery in an economy which has started in 2004. Recently, construction of Mass Housing Development Administration (TOKI) Houses, 2B and Urban Transformation Laws and opening the way for Real Estate Sales to Foreigners (Law of Reciprocity) have caused a considerable recovery in the industry. Mass Housing Development Administration, which was established in 1984, is aiming to produce 500.000 houses within the scope of the “housing mobilization” it has declared in recent years. TOKI implementations, which give the chance to become a homeowner to people who did not have the chance to own a house because of economic insufficiencies, rapidly increase in 81 provinces of Turkey and play a determining role in urban

planning(Zariç, 2012).

Upon the investigation of the silhouettes created by mass houses constructed by TOKI in various parts of the cities, it is seen that there is an absence of quest in architectural attitude, uniformity and that they are mass city pieces many qualifications of which could be discussed. Social house-dwelling typology, the examples of which had been constructed abroad and which was abandoned worldwide due to the experienced problems, has been applied to housing blocks that rapidly rise in every city of Turkey and this has created an urban transformation which should be discussed from many different points. The fact that there is no design flexibility due to rapid production brings along uniformity and climatic and regional diversity is not taken into consideration in the implementations. The attempt to reduce cost and meet the needs of the users with the minimum solvency has caused TOKI to compromise on some of the criteria regarding quality (Gür and Dostoğlu, 2010; Duman and Vural-Arslan, 2014).

If viewed from the point of urban planning, the fact that the institution which produces dwellings in such large quantities applies the same type of implementations in every part of Turkey is an important problem. Interpretations incidental to modern design are absent in TOKI projects within the context of a planning that reflects regional and local civil architecture examples as well. An architectural understanding with an identity which puts natural, ecological and cultural values forward should be brought into prominence. It is possible to see the dwellings and social reinforcement samples which have the same character regardless of climate, environmental conditions and textural properties everywhere in Turkey (Vural Arslan, 2016).

Typification in Urban Scale

TOKI applied in different regions of Turkey, structures of a similar appearance have been built and settlements of a similar appearance have been created by neglecting features particular to local areas. Examples mostly situated far from city centres have not ensured a social or cultural environment for users and, with their undefined areas in the landscaping, have not provided a productive recreational area either. Despite being situated in two different parts of Turkey, the below examples, with their use of identical architectural language, have caused problems such as loss of natural climatisation and of urban identity. The choice of location away from the city has brought about alienation of these settlements from the urban life (Figure 1a- 1b) (Duman and Vural-Arslan: 2014).



Figure 1(a): TOKI Housing in Eastern Part of Turkey (Erzincan)
<http://www.yeniemlak.com/toki/erzincan/tokid-en-erzincan-ilicte-yeni-proje>



Figure 1(b): TOKI Housing in Northern Part of Turkey (Samsun)
<http://www.akilliyatirim.com.tr/toki/toki-1863-konutu-satisa-sunuyor-b3005.html>

Typification in Neighbourhood Scale

On the scale of neighbourhood environments in TOKI settlements, because of lack of consideration for social and recreational, social interaction between the inhabitants has begun to decline. Home owners in Turkey, while giving importance to the quality of the interior of their homes, remain indifferent to the areas of collective responsibility outside their homes. For this reason communal areas are turned into abandoned, polluted and unfinished areas. We can say that the same situation may be observed in TOKI settlement areas, from the viewpoint of both building quality and quality of the areas surrounding the buildings (Figure 2a-2b) (Duman and Vural-Arslan: 2014).



Figure 2(a): TOKI Housing in Western Part of Turkey (Kocaeli)
<http://www.emlaktasondakika.com/haber/toki/toki-kocaeli-gebze-sekerpinarinda-143-bin-tlye-3.1/45117>



Figure 2(b): TOKI Housing in Southern Part of Turkey (Adana)
<http://www.emlaktasondakika.com/haber/toki/toki-adana-saricam-sulucak-koyu-kuralari-bugun-cekiliyor/32587>

Typification in Housing Unit Scale

On the housing scale in TOKI, standard living areas are being created without any attention being paid to cultural differences. The structural limitations in the production process do not make it possible for vital transformation within the dwellings. In Turkey, healthy housing practices that should be at an optimum level are carried out at a

minimum level. This situation has given rise to the creation of isolated islands of life which cannot integrate with the city, of homogenous, anonymous building blocks in which the concept of neighbourhood is removed and which can be seen anywhere in the country, and has triggered the situation where the users' expectation of their dwellings is merely that of a place where they can shelter after closing their doors (Duman and Vural-Arslan: 2014).

4. TOKI's Solution For Typification Problem: 7 Climates 7 Regions Architectural Design Competition

7 Climates 7 Regions from Tradition into Future National Architectural Design Competition organized by TOKI is considered as an opportunity to repair the fading texture of our cities with contemporary planning approaches by interpreting regional and local architectural characteristics. In specifications of the competition(2014), the aim of the competition is explained as to promote "the formation of new structuring which is suited to modern conditions by taking inspiration from traditional architecture".The outcome of this competition is expected to develop an approach to provide residential area designs which do not harm the environment and traditional architecture by combining the climatic specifications of the region and the life conditions, culture and lifestyles of the people (7 Climates 7 Regions from Tradition into Future National Architectural Design Competition Specifications Book, 2014).



Figure 3: Regions map of Turkey
(<http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/map/turkey-map.htm>)

The results of the contest were announced in November 2014. The projects worthy of the prize and honorable mention in Central Anatolia, Southeastern Anatolia, Mediterranean and Aegean Regions were selected. However, for Marmara, Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia Regions none of the projects were found worthy of prize due to the fact that none offered appropriate solutions from the point of architectural and urban design and regional architectural character (Figure 3). This means that there was no project worthy of implementation (<http://www.arkitera.com/etiket/40022/7-iklim-7-bolge-gelenekten-gelecege-ulusal-mimari-proje-yarismasi>)

It is seen that even among the projects which received a place, there were many similarities although they addressed different user needs in different regions. These similarities were present both in layout plan and mass treatment and in plan and facades. It is observed that the projects have become standardized and the solutions have similar traits whereas the projects were required to address different users in different regions.

When the reports of the winner projects of the competition are considered (<http://www.arkitera.com/etiket/40022/7-iklim-7-bolge-gelenekten-gelecege-ulusal-mimari-proje-yarismasi>), it is seen that winner projects chose a city as their role model. Design decisions were made by taking the specifications of the chosen city into consideration. However, field conditions and even environmental and physical conditions in different districts of the city are different than each other. That is, whereas what is appropriate is for each project to be designed by considering the field conditions of the area on which the construction is planned to be implemented, here a uniform type of project is planned to be implemented in a region. Different cities have different specifications in themselves in different regions. For example, while it is appropriate to solve the problem with terracing considering Mediterranean Region culture and using inner court and iwan considering Central Anatolia Region culture for the cities the projects based on, this solution is not appropriate for the whole of the region. There are possible problems in accepting a single truth and trying to implement it in the cities in which factors such as field conditions, the wind, daylight, environment etc. are different, although they place in the same regions (Figure 4a-4b and Figure 5a-5b).



Figure 4 (a): Outdoor space render of the 1st Prize Winner of Mediterranean Region
(<http://www.arkitera.com/etiket/40022/7-iklim-7-bolge-gelenekten-gelecege-ulusal-mimari-proje-yarismasi>)



Figure 4 (b): Outdoor space render of the 1st Prize Winner of Mediterranean Region
(<http://www.arkitera.com/etiket/40022/7-iklim-7-bolge-gelenekten-gelecege-ulusal-mimari-proje-yarismasi>)



Figure 5 (a): Outdoor space render of the 1st Prize Winner of Southeastern Anatolia Region
(<http://www.arkitera.com/etiket/40022/7-iklim-7-bolge-gelenekten-gelecege-ulusal-mimari-proje-yarismasi>)



Figure 5 (b): Outdoor space render of the 1st Prize Winner of Aegean Region
(<http://www.arkitera.com/etiket/40022/7-iklim-7-bolge-gelenekten-gelecege-ulusal-mimari-proje-yarismasi>)

Concluding Remarks

7 Climates 7 Regions Contest organized by TOKI is quite a positive development in the sense that regional characteristics are taken into consideration while making design decisions in mass housing zones. However, reducing typification problem seen in countrywide housing implementations of TOKI into regional scale may bring along many problems. It is not possible to represent each region with certain architectural identities when the rich cultural geography of Turkey is considered. Identifying the regions with the architectural characteristics of a certain city will entail a brand new typification problem. When considered in this context, it is necessary to develop a new approach in which TOKI implementations were handled in a way that would provide solutions appropriate for each and every design field instead of the standard type of solutions.

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