

SELF-HELP HOUSING IN VILLAGE RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS:
AN EVALUATION OF THE TURKISH EXPERIENCE

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SUMMARY

Relocation of villages is considered as one preventive measure against possible earthquake disaster or as a post-earthquake solution. But it is a quite complex and costly undertaking and should be applied after detailed analysis. The construction method itself is especially important for success of whole process.

The process or success of relocation in a country can also be evaluated independently from earthquakes. This paper examines relocation of specific villages in Turkey for reasons other than earthquakes. These villages are well documented and form a special case where local initiative and acceptance were a part of the process. In the text, resettlement process and its problems are explained and construction methods are also evaluated. There may be lessons to be drawn for the purposes of prevention of or reconstruction after earthquake disaster.

INTRODUCTION

Two organizations in Turkey handle decisions concerning the relocation and resettlement of villages. One is the General Directorate of Disaster Affairs (DA) (II); which provides housing for people left homeless after disasters such as earthquakes, floods and landslides. The other is the General Directorate of Land and Reconstruction Affairs (LRA) (III); it undertakes the resettlement of villages when deemed advisable for a variety of reasons.

Despite their different goals the practices of the two organizations resemble each other. In both cases;

- o Resettlement begins with the application of the villagers themselves,
- o Each is responsible for reconstruction in rural settlements,
- o Housing in the rural area is thus provided through governmental mechanisms.

These similarities mean that the organizations also face similar problems of relocation, finance and planning when it comes to decision-making and implementation.

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The basic difference in the practices of the two general directorates is the method they use for construction. The DA relies largely on a contracting system, but the LRA uses a combination of sub-contracting (emanet inşaat) and self-help housing.

There is a general impression that the practice of the LRA has proved to be successful. No rigorous study has in fact weighed advantages and disadvantages of the two systems. The original study therefore aimed at examining the practices of the two general directorates, identifying their operational advantages and disadvantages, and made detailed comparisons. In this shorter form more emphasis will be placed on LRA.

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

All the operations of the LRA are based on a law and its by-laws. It permits three types of operations. The first is the resettlement of villages whose agricultural land or settlement area, or both, have been expropriated for the construction of airports, dams or similar large scale public works. The second is the resettlement of villages deemed;
. unsuitable for development because of their inconvenient location,
. uneconomical in terms of the provision of physical infrastructure.
The third is the consolidation of small, scattered communities at one of their locations or at a new one in order to provide services more economically.

This study examines 38 villages that are documented in detail in the official archives of LRA. These are villages that have either been relocated or consolidated in the content of the second and third type of operations mentioned above.

While analysing these documents to delineate the resettlement process and examine its goals, I selected the following topics for particular attention.

- o Who made the resettlement decision and how?
- o What was the ownership structure of the new and old settlement areas?
- o Who undertook the construction and how was it done?
- o What is the cost of resettling a single village and the total cost for all the villages encompassed in this study?

RESETTLEMENT PROCESS OF A VILLAGE

The procedure followed in resettlement can be examined in six parts.

1. Villagers's application to LRA and the evaluation of the applications.
2. Preliminary research.
3. Final research and evaluation.
4. Planning studies
 - . study of the ownership pattern for the new settlement area,
 - . study of the land and buildings in the old site,
 - . preparation of topographical and cadastral maps ,
 - . arrangement of the physical plan,
 - . preparation of architectural designs.

5. Preparation period before commencing construction.
 - . sub-division of the land according to plan,
 - . official registration of lots for each household,
 - . the signature of loan agreements and mortgage contracts,
 - . the provision of monetary and material assistance.
6. Construction.

The construction process is handled by the local branch of LRA, and is the most important stage of resettlement in terms of defining the level of success.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The decision to relocate a settlement requires a prior detailed analysis because all settlements have historical and valid reasons for their original locations. Therefore applications must be very carefully evaluated considering the economic and social costs. In relation to this problem, one of the interesting findings of the study was that a new site located on a main road could weigh more heavily on villagers's minds than the overall economic and social costs involved. Political interests or the personal vanity of a village headman may be another effective reason for the resettlement decision.

The new settlement area is generally selected from land that belongs to the public "Treasury" and is transferred to private ownership of villagers. The former settlement is never expropriated. One last resource-wasting attitude in LRA practice is the duplication of infrastructure—such as water pipes and schools, at the new site. In spite of these drawbacks LRA resettlements are viable and successful, while disaster relocations are rejected by villagers in a majority of cases. On the other hand, whatever the original impulses for relocation, the success of the operation may be measured independently, mainly to ascertain whether more effective and fruitful ways can be adopted for disaster relocation.

COMPARISON OF THE TWO CONSTRUCTION METHODS

Local authorities inform villagers about the characteristics of the self-help housing method at the beginning of construction. Villagers usually prefer the sub-contracting method for a variety of reasons. For instance;

- . they will not be responsible for construction, but the sub-contractor will,
- . they will avoid the formalities involved in securing cash and building materials.

In spite of these marginal disadvantages for villagers, authorities must persistently try to persuade them for self-help housing because of its fundamental advantages. Moreover this study suggested to us that the sub-contracting method created serious disagreements between the sub-contractor and villagers. The problems can be summarized as follows.

Cost of construction generally exceeds the amount previously calculated and villagers reject extra payments. Therefore the sub-contractor does not finish the work. The second problem arises when the sub-contractor takes money from bank by getting villagers into more debt than they have contracted. In some cases the sub-contractor does not apply

building projects as agreed upon.

However self-help housing is an elastic method that can be applied in a variety of scales and building conditions. It allows people to organize around common problems, specify their own goals and actively participate in the project. As a basic principle of this method, villagers are instructed by technicians charged by LRA. It may be claimed that a major component of success in resettlement projects is the level of technical advice provided by these people. The research clearly showed that villages built with the self-help method recorded higher quality of construction and better current living conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper was to make certain inferences for the purposes of prevention of or reconstruction after earthquake disaster. The most appropriate method seemed to examine the degree of success in resettlement projects in general.

In Turkey most of the new villages constructed by DA after earthquake disasters are uninhabited or abandoned. The main reason is the insufficient attention to the basic necessities of villagers. On the other hand the contracting system used by DA contains the deficiencies of sub-contracting method more heavily and this contributes to failure in disaster response.

The villages resettled by LRA with a self-help method do not suffer from this kind of problem, are inhabited and actually functioning places. Therefore the most valuable lesson to be drawn is the use of self-help housing method more effectively in resettlement projects whether before or after earthquake disasters.

At the same time, it will be possible to rise the productivity of these kinds of resettlement practices if some operational measures are developed to remove deficiencies occurring in the resettlement process itself.

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