

WORK DEVELOPMENT OF HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES IN IRAQ BEFORE 1991

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ABSTRACT

This research is an attempt to translate the role of Housing Co-operative Societies (HCSs) as it considered to be the almost single institution permitted to convert the agricultural land to urban one in providing access to housing for various social groups, and in shaping a particular urban physical form before 1991 incidents.

The researcher encountered a number of obstacles: lack of formal data because, the (HCSs) were almost dormant as well as the wide expanse of the work being studied.

However, it was clear from the study, that these institutions were a product of a mode replaced the private accumulation of wealth by a form of state-induced accumulation. This change occurred without a radical shift taken place in the social relationship of production, and so the poor generally continued to be excluded from state benefits and services; and indeed that was contrary to the policymakers' assumption. Also, the work of these institutions resulted in the expansion of the suburbs and modern type housing with all their attendant consequences in diseconomies of scale, urban sprawl and social fragmentation, and so housing in this sequence meant a comprehensive term for social, economic, political and spatial change.

Yet, this pattern was continued for a while until the early 1990s when the work of (HCSs) had been diminished as most of urban lands were given as presidential gifts to specific social groups such as army officers and university tutors, without taking into consideration the side effects of this action such as urban segregation and horizontal expansion of cities as well as the shrinkage of forests, meanwhile the work of the (HCSs) were essential as an active solution for the housing crises in Iraq after amending the mistakes of its work.

التطور في عمل الجمعيات التعاونية للإسكان في العراق قبل عام ١٩٩١

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مدرس-قسم ادارة الاعمال

كلية الادارة والاقتصاد-جامعة الموصل

تتصدى هذه الدراسة لشرح دور الجمعيات التعاونية للإسكان في المساعدة على امتلاك السكن لفئات مختلفة وتكوين شكل محدد للبناء قبل أحداث ١٩٩١.

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وقد واجه عدة معوقات منها: نقص المعلومات الرسمية لأن الجمعيات التعاونية للإسكان شبه معطلة حالياً، فضلاً عن اتساع العمل الذي قامت به في أرجاء البلاد المختلفة. وبينت الدراسة أن تلك الجمعيات هي أسلوب لتعويض الثروة الفردية بثروة الدولة، هذا التحول في نقل الثروات حدث من دون تغيير جوهري في الإنتاج القومي، وما ينجم عنه من علاقات اجتماعية مختلفة، من هنا كان الفقراء مستبعدين عن المنافع والخدمات التي تقدمها الجمعيات التعاونية للإسكان على عكس ما كان يفترضه صناع القرار السياسي آنذاك والأهداف الأساسية التي تشكلت بموجبها.

وقد أسهم عمل الجمعيات التعاونية للإسكان في التوسع الأفقي للمدن وتشتتها، فضلاً عن ظهور القصور الفخمة الحديثة. لذلك كان موضوع الإسكان في سياق هذه الدراسة بمثابة مفهوم شامل لجوانب متعددة ومختلفة منها: اقتصادية، اجتماعية، سياسية.

ومع كل ذلك استمر عمل تلك الجمعيات إلى سنة ١٩٩١ تقريباً، إذ انحسر بعد ذلك، لأن معظم الأراضي السكنية كانت تعطى هدايا إلى فئات اجتماعية معينة كضباط الجيش وأساتذة الجامعات، وبدون اعتبار لما ينجم عن ذلك من آثار سلبية تسهم في التشتت العمراني والامتداد الأفقي للمدن وتآكل الغابات والمزارع أضف إلى ذلك ظهور القصور الضخمة لفئات محدودة من الشعب في حين يعاني غالبية السكان من أزمة حقيقية في السكن، كذلك أسهم توقف عمل الجمعيات التعاونية في تقاوم أزمة السكن في حين أن الضرورة تقتضي التوسع في عملها كتهيئة المساكن الجاهزة أو الشقق السكنية وشمول القطاعات غير الرسمية بخدماتها، ولكن بعد مراعاة تجنب الأخطاء السابقة.

INTRODUCTION

The Housing Co-operative Societies (HCSs) played a significant role in providing access to housing for various social groups and shaping a particular urban physical form for the period after the revolution of 1958 and until about the beginning of 1990s.

Contrary to the policymakers' assumption, the work of these institutions resulted in unequal access to their services for various social classes, as well as, they provided access to include forest, date palm trees, and olive gardens, and this in turn ruined the environment, meanwhile the unequal compensation made many of the landowners indignant. Also they were instrumental in the expansion of the luxury style of dwellings, and this led to the decline of the existing traditional areas at both social and physical levels.

Definition of Co-operative

A co-operative is defined as "autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically-controlled enterprise". A co-operative may also be defined as "a business owned and controlled equally by the people who use its services or who worked at it". (www . International Cooperative Alliance. com, 2008).

Problems Encountered

Tackling this study was not an easy task. The Housing Co-operative Societies had been dormant since the events of 1991 and the data that available in certain administrative departments were scanty, at best, and quite unreliable. Therefore, the researcher had to rely on empirical facts obtained by virtually headcounts of different sources.

Research Method

The starting point of this investigation is that housing is a basic human need without which it would be difficult to lead a full and productive life. Thus, if there is in any given society, a large number of people without "adequate" housing, this deficiency should be explained by the various processes taking place in that society. The term "adequate" is 'subjective' and related to the values and standards of living reached in that society. This implies that our approach is analytical, and that housing is treated as process and not as numbers. However, this approach differs from the sociological study of housing in that it attempts to correlate the study with its urban form.

The Establishment of the Housing Co-operative Societies

The (HCSs) movement was established according to Act No.22 of 1922, in order to organize the efforts of laborers, limited income earners and farmers, to improve their economic and social conditions. Before W.W.2 few societies were established but they disbanded as they failed to fulfill their goals.

In 1944, a new act No.27, was promulgated, instead of the former one. After the revolution of 1958, Law No.73 was enacted in 1959, this law established a directorate-general of co-operation, which was later transferred from the ministry of economic to the ministry of work and social affairs (Ahmad, 1970 :3)

However, the real expansion of these societies took place after 1964, when the nationalization decrees increased the size of the public sector, making it possible for the enlarged civil services to organize itself into department co-operatives. Furthermore the growing numbers of trades and professional unions made possible by the revolution, allowing these unions to form their own housing co-operatives unions. Thus, in 1965 there were 120 societies in Baghdad only, 90 of which held state-owned land. The Municipality of Baghdad estimated that by 1970, 40% of the city area would have been covered by the co-operatives' plots (Al-Ashab, 1974:350).

The expansion of the (HCSs) were impressive, but by 1970, many anomalies had risen from their practices. To deal with these problems, Law No.202 of 1970 was enacted and this law is still the main

text governing the co-operative movement in Iraq though few modifications as Law No. 63 of 1974, Law No. 67 of 1977 and Law No.37 of 1978 (ibid).

System of Operation

Prior to the 1970 co-operative law, any three persons above the age of 18, and of reputable character, were allowed to form a co-operative, and to apply for registration. The 1970 law made this number 10, and also made possible official and semi-official organizations to form co-operatives. The initial three, or 2, applicants were called the founders' committee, and their application had to contain the name, the purpose, the capital, and the internal rules of the co-operative. The government department could refuse the application, but once accepted, it become official, after paying I.D.5, and being advertised in the official gazette. In the most cases the norm was that the founders' committee were members of the same government department or trade union.

This co-operative would then accept members above 18 years old, not been convicted of any crime, and having paid the subscription, and not being members of another co-operative, there was no limitation to the number of members in the co-operative (Law No. 202 of 1970).

TABLE (1)

NUMBER OF BUILDING PERMITS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE ESTIMATED COST FOR RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS FOR THE YEARS 1985-1994

Cost (I.D. 000)

Total		Repair permits (2)		Building permits (1)		Year
Cost	Number	Cost	Number	Cost	Number	
1066602	86024	16446	13400	1050156	72624	1985
873003	64681	3914	4127	869089	60554	1986
1435545	107986	4219	4835	1431326	103151	1987
1091237	74797	3996	5298	1087241	69499	1988
1914366	119187	5389	5261	1908977	113926	1989
1732754	96876	5472	3980	1727282	92896	1990
578495	33452	3281	2281	575214	31171	1991
1776218	42838	11540	3184	1764678	39654	1992
5996863	30186	39682	2611	5957181	27575	1993
20001034	19357	57387	996	19943647	18361	1994

Note:

(1) Including new buildings, expansion and modifications.

(2) including fence works.

(3) Excluding autonomous governorates region.

Source: Ministry of Planning, Central Statistical Organization, annual statistical abstract, Baghdad, 1994, p.342

The administration committee would look for land suitable for housing. This land could be privately owned or government owned. It might be part of an estate allocated to the co-operatives by the planning departments of the government. A government-owned estate would be a much easier and trouble free proposition. If no such land was available, the committee would negotiate with one or more landowners to purchase their land. In this action, the co-operative had the support of the law, and there was a number of options open to the co-operative, which the landowner find hard to resist. The (HCSs) was the single formal institution that could convert the agricultural land into the urban one (Al-Obaydi, 2009:172).

For state-owned land, the co-operative would pay only the administrative costs. The government also provided technical services free of charge to the co-operative. The land distribution was usually carried out by the planning and engineering department of the Municipality concerned. The co-operative would then conduct a lottery to decide the distribution of the plots to the various members.

On obtaining a plot of land, the member paid the cost of the land, plus the cost of processing, i.e. survey, ownership transaction, etc. In theory, this member could not sell the land and building. He/she was also not allowed to let the structure for at least two years. However, in practice these rules were rarely followed (Law No.202 of 1970).

The government-owned or controlled agencies, such as the water and electricity boards, provided the dwellings with services, while the Municipality coordinated the sewage system and prepared tenders for paving. The cost of the installation of water and electricity between the plot boundary and the dwellings was paid by the individual member. This member also paid for paving his side of the length of road and adjoining his plot (ibid).

The building license was obtained by applying to the appropriate building department in the Municipality, and the house design was checked against a simple list of planning regulations. The Municipality was also responsible for providing community facilities such as schools, nurseries, and clinics, and the personnel to staff them, through the appropriate agency of the responsible Ministry. The land for community facilities was allocated

at the time of subdivision, according to 1935 road and services (Raouf,1986:348).

The Land Tenure System

It is important to note that after the independence in 1921, there were five categories of land, which goes back to the original Ottoman land code. These are:

1-*Mulk*¹ land: This is the type of land to be found in most of the original urban areas, and in absolute individual ownership. The owner possesses all rights of ownership and usufruct. It is the type of land most desired. If it is required for public purpose, the owner is entitled to full compensation.

2-*Waqf* land: This is land dedicated to some pious purposes. Waqf land is a form of endowment in some countries. Most of the waqf land is in the urban regions, and cannot be partitioned or alienated, but continues perpetuity to the descendents of the original owner. This type of land was normally given by its wealthy owner as a charitable endowment for the establishment of mosques, schools and their institutions, or for the care of poor families. This is done by allocating the income from the rent or use of land to charities in question, keeping the capital for "God" permanently, while the interest was given to the beneficiaries. After Iraq became independent, first a waqf department was established, and later changed to a ministry responsible for waqf properties, which stand still to this day.

Table (2)

NUMBER OF BUILDING PERMITS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE ESTIMATED COST FOR RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS* FOR THE YEAR 2003

New Buildings				
Governorate	Cost (000 I.D.)	Area of building (m ²)	Area of land (m ²)	Number
Nineveh	34144559	740421	625252	2372
Al-Ta'meem	11528800	170831	206566	823

¹ Mulk :free hold property

Diala	11280135	227790	297011	1027
Al-Anbar	14044150	268293	227073	694
Baghdad	53113390	648500	560172	1887
Babylon	25195907	458038	439034	1691
Kerbala	7706225	134326	152868	598
Wasit	7138909	128125	130939	500
Salah Al-DEEN	8097375	147830	183596	539
Al-Najaf	5800823	188805	141718	589
Al-Qadiiya	7955705	173164	185643	729
Al-Muthanna	8427450	143931	135206	445
Thi-Qar	6680548	130532	147396	603
Maysan	3169987	83324	82461	354
Basrah	3935700	76928	88343	314
Kurdistan region				
Duhouk	-	-	-	-
Arbil	-	-	-	-
Sulaimaniya	-	-	-	-
Total	208219663	3720838	3603278	13165

*Residential Buildings include dwellings & Residential Buildings

Source: Ministry of Planning, Central Statistical Organization, annual statistical abstract, Baghdad, 2004, p.275

3-*Tapu*²-registered land – or commonly known as agricultural land. This is land which had previously been owned Amiri³land, but later registered in tapu. The conditions of its tenure remained the same. The 'owner' was entitled to the usufruct but not absolute ownership. This type of land was only for agricultural use, and it could only be used for urban purposes after inclusion within a city boundary, and payment to the state of a quarter of its area, or the equivalent value. During the royal regime, this was a relatively easy process. But after the revolution, the (HCSs) were largely responsible for the inclusion and conversion of this type of land.

4-*Unregistered "Lasma"*³land: this land is sub-legal. In theory it is state-owned land, but in practice the occupier has a tribal control over it. It is not registered, in the sense that it is not (tapu) registered land, but it is included in the land registration records, set up by the (taswiyah) settlement land

² Tapu:land registration office.

³Lasma: A type of land tenure.

registration records, set up by the (taswiyah) settlement courts.⁴ it is also for agricultural purposes, and it could only be converted to urban use after inclusion within the city boundaries, and payment to the state of half its area.

5-*Amiriya land*, or simply miri land. This is state-owned land and includes the unalienated or unregistered, or unregistered previous Amiri land as well as the (matruka)⁵ and (mawat)⁶ land, the latter type of land includes most of urban marginal lands as well as large areas in the courtside (ibid:353).

The study of tenure system is of particular importance to understand the expansion of urban areas which took place after the revolution of 1958. This expansion was largely based on the distribution of state - owned agricultural land to the various (HCSs). These societies managed to convert the legal status of the land from the agricultural category to the urban one, enabling them to construct housing project on the land acquired. The method of conversion, and the historical background to the various legal types of landholding explained some reasons for the particular urban forms developed in this period, as well as the conflict and inequalities of access to urban land among the various social groups.

Evaluation of the Housing Co-operative Movement in Iraq

The co-operative movement was the product of the ideological environment of the 1958 July revolution. The specific form of the Iraqi housing co-operative was also the product of the historical background of the urban land problems.

Therefore, it was assumed by the government and their planners to satisfy the housing needs of all sections of Iraqi society without the allocation of vast sums of the development budget on 'unproductive fields such as housing'. This was clear from the introduction to the detailed plans of the period between the years of 1960-1990 which were stated that the housing needs of the country would be met by assisting the housing co-operative movement (Amin, 1992: 210).

⁴ These courts applied Lasma law No.51 of 1932, and settlement of rights Law No.50 of 1932 and No.29 of 1938 was amended by law No.36 of 1952. lasma right were analogous to Tapu rights and both types of rights were in practice indistinguishable from rights of private ownership. However, tapu rights were acquired on the strength of ten years of prescriptive use of the land, whereas, prior to an amendment incorporated in law No.36 of 1952, a "productive use" of the land within the fifteen years preceding the declaration of land settlement in the particular district was enough to form the basis of Lasma. This in effect meant that one year's productive use of virgin state land was sufficient to entitle the user to Lasma rights.

⁵Matruka: Unused land.

⁶Mawat: Dead (unusable).

However, the co-operative movement was not only assumed to meet the housing needs of 'all' people, but specifically to meet the housing needs of working classes, thus, it was assumed that this, movement was basically socialist, in accordance to the spirit of the revolution. This socialist assumption was derived from the introduction to the earlier 1944 co-operative law. In that law it was stated "The co-operative movement is (to be established) with the objective of organizing the efforts of the working classes and the fixed income earners so as to improve their economic and social conditions (Mahdi, 1977:27). Thus from the inception of the co-operative law, there was a target group, which was supposed to be the working people and fixed-income earners. Meanwhile, in 1958 the majority of the poorest of population lived in the rural areas, or worked in the informal services sector of the urban areas. They were mostly illiterate, unorganized, unionized, and too diverse to have any real political influence. In order to form a co-operative, there were specific legal procedures and requirement, as described before, and these could only be carried out by articulate, educated, and well organized individuals. Thus right from the start, the first element of the co-operative would exclude the poorest, for whom government, policy makers, UN experts, and others would argue that the co-operative were intended. Also the working people who benefited from these co-operatives were not representative of the 'poorest section', since they had permanent employment and income. Examples of these fortunate working people were members of the crafts or trade unions such as post office workers, hospital workers, soldiers and army staff. However, the quality of urban land and services they obtained was inferior to that obtained by other more powerful co-operatives. In order to illustrate some of these points and the resulting urban situation, below is a brief explanation of the different types of inequality of access to urban resources produced by the cooperative movement, and their influence on the housing situation:

The first course of inequality is related to the requirements of the organization. As mentioned above, the poorest Iraqis were unemployed, or in the agrarian and services sectors. For example, it was estimated that more than 36% unemployment in the work-force between the ages of 11 and 50 in the 1970 (Raouf, 1986: 371). Some of these employed work-force were in temporary or informal employment, lacking organized unions or representatives, and without a trade union the forming of a housing co-operative was almost impossible. Further more the rate of illiteracy among the poorest was understandably the highest varying between 50% and 70% at the time (Hassan, 1970: 49).

In contrast, the civil servant, professionals, and the wealthy had permanent employment and incomes, were organized and unionized, and had the education to allow them to take the initiative and form housing co-operatives. But perhaps even more important, they had the personal and

political connections with influential officials who would support their demands. In many cases these officials were themselves the organizers of their own department's co-operative. Needless to say this group of people was the fortunate minority, but in terms of access they obtained more than 80% of all land distributed by co-operatives. This is also reflected in the method of distributing land.

Inequality of access did not arise only from the level of unemployment or the ability to organize, but extended to inequality between the different co-operative, whose political and organizational strength varied according to their date of foundation and their location. In the post revolutionary period the various army co-operative were far more successful than any others, since the army was in power. At that time urban land, whether government or privately owned varied in location, access, vegetation, microclimate and size. Thus army co-operative, especially those of the officers, obtained the best possible land. They were followed by those of the higher professionals, civil servants and other government employee, while the craftsmen's and workers' co-operatives came at the bottom of the scale. The process of rationalization of the desirability of land meant that the upper middle-class grouped together to form luxury suburbs, while the poorer ones grouped together to form less desirable and sometimes depressed areas. Their land was often marginal and far from city centers and sources of employment.

This unequal access went further, covering the services which were supposed to follow the allocation of land items such as technical supervision, electricity, water, road and pavement surfaces and community facilities, were provided in a relatively short time for the more powerful suburbs the same services took much longer to appear for the less powerful group.

Often when there was a blockage in the process of obtaining land or services for the powerful co-operatives which the law was unable to resolve they used the highest power in the land exemption by presidential decrees. This explains why these co-operatives obtained parcels of land that were apparently unobtainable from the legal and logical points of view. Ministers and top officials also used the many loopholes in the law to help these co-operatives.

These were some sources of inequality of access to urban land and services mediated by the co-operative, aside from the inadequate compensation for the owners of (Tapu) or other kind of lands which the co-operative with the support of the law expropriated their lands. But what were the effects on urban and social form? Some of the effects will be discussed below:

As mentioned above, Iraq housing co-operatives were generally organized by government departments or trade unions because of the large membership, ranging from 1000 to 10000, the plots of land allocated to these co-operatives were also large. For example the military co-operative in Baghdad distributed more than 3000 plots and completed houses in one area. As a result, a new phenomenon emerged in Iraq cities especially after 1963 in the shape of professional suburbs, which tended to reflect the type of co-operative sited there. Often, because of large area distributed as a series of adjacent plots, the resulting suburb was called a city. Thus, one could find the Thobbat District, al-Thawrah District, al-Zuhur District, alongside the Al-Mohandesen District, and so on (Gulick, 1977:102). The grouping of these districts occurred in such away that the higher-income professions were grouped together and so on down the scale until at the bottom, the lower-income trades were grouped together. This grouping was also assisted by the size of the plot and the class of the area. The higher income areas were of the top class, with plots exceeding 600m² in area, while the lower-income areas were divided into class 1 and class 2 plots, that is no more than 200m² per plot. The rationale for this was that the higher-income groups were generally able to pay outright for the land and services and for building on it, while the lower income groups were supposed to require loans in all cases.⁷

The resulting pattern was that of urban social segregation similar to that produced by the market forces governing land and urban resources distribution before the 1958 revolution (ibid:105).

The way the co-operatives obtained their plots of land and the legal categories of land resulted in unparalleled urban sprawl. For example, the size of Baghdad increased eightfold during the decade after the revolutions of (1958-1968) while the population increase in the city had only doubled (Al-Ashab, 1974: 468-654). One reason for this expansion was the generous way in which land was subdivided and distributed, not only in plot sizes, but in the size of roads and access, resulting in many cases of a road-to-plot ratio of between 30% and 40%. A second reason was the leapfrog method by which co-operatives obtained land and the continual extensions of the city boundaries. An example of the first is the width of the residential access roads exceeds 100m, serves only a limited population. This waste may be criticized not only in terms of its diseconomies but also in terms of its environmental and climatic aspects. They are not only exceedingly hot for pedestrians in summer, but they are also far removed from the traditional form.

⁷ It is worth noting that the ratio of land cost to total cost in small permanent low-cost houses in Baghdad in 1972, was 1.67% (Al-Adhami, H., 1975,630). And the (HCSs) changed its approach of distributing the plots toward reducing the size of plots to less than 400m² at the best.

So, the resulting urban physical form which arose was one of large tracts of empty land in relatively central locations, well-serviced, and bounded by roads and transport leading to the suburbs where the co-operatives are located.

Therefore the resulting urban physical form was wasteful in resources, expensive to run, socially alienating and environmentally unsuitable. In their method of operation the co-operatives actually emphasized the individuality of their member rather than their collective aims as the notion of co-operation might suggest. The effect of individual plots were dominant on the ensuing urban physical form. They encouraged the rectangular grid form with its high ratio of road to plot and of services to plot, and assisted the growth of individualized luxury building material and technology. They caused immeasurable individualized house and discouraged the introduction of more productive capital in the form of machinery. They also kept the building industry fragmented by emphasizing the casual, temporary and seasonal work such individualized types of buildings require.

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