

**ГРАДОСТРОИТЕЛЬСТВО, ПЛАНИРОВКА СЕЛЬСКИХ НАСЕЛЕННЫХ ПУНКТОВ / URBAN PLANNING,
PLANNING OF RURAL LOCALITIES**

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**CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF LOCAL PLANNING TOWARDS RENOVATION IN HOMS ON THE EXAMPLE
OF THE KHALIDIYA NEIGHBORHOOD**

Research article

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Abstract

Local planning aims to enhance decentralization and participation, as each of these aspects reflects different aspects of life, including social, economic, political, and others. This has made it one of the current global concerns, especially after disasters, as it is the primary tool in relief and then renovation and development. The research aims to demonstrate the role of local planning as a link between the participating parties, regardless of their levels, as it has a significant impact on achieving a balance between popular needs and the central government's vision. However, the research problem lies in the lack of a clear Syrian planning policy in renovation, utilizing local planning applications to meet the citizens' needs and determine their capabilities by adopting decentralization and participation as mechanisms for recovery and renovation. The research consists of a study defining the local planning methodology, its applications, and tools after disasters, presenting an analytical study of global experiences that adopted it as a mechanism for renovation with varying degrees, and finally reaching the challenges facing the recovery of the Khaldiya neighborhood and Homs City in general and making recommendations aimed at activating the role of local authorities and providing appropriate mechanisms to enhance their role in addressing urban problems facing the Syrian cities affected in the recovery and renovation phases.

Keywords: renovation, local planning, decentralization, popular participation, local administration law.

**ПРИНЦИПЫ И ПРАКТИКИ МУНИЦИПАЛЬНОГО ПЛАНИРОВАНИЯ НА ПУТИ РЕНОВАЦИИ ГОРОДА
ХОМС НА ПРИМЕРЕ РАЙОНА АЛЬ-ХАЛИДИЯ**

Научная статья

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Аннотация

Муниципальное планирование направлено на оптимизацию децентрализации и содействия населению, поскольку каждый из этих аспектов отражает различные сферы жизни, включая социальную, экономическую, политическую и другие, что делает муниципальное планирование одной из актуальных задач глобального уровня, особенно после стихийных бедствий, поскольку является основным инструментом оказания чрезвычайной помощи, а затем реновации и развития разрушенных территорий. Цель исследования – продемонстрировать роль муниципального планирования как связующего звена между участвующими сторонами, независимо от их уровня, поскольку оно оказывает значительное влияние на достижение баланса между потребностями населения и видением правительства. Однако проблема исследования заключается в отсутствии четкой политики сирийского землеустройства при реновации, включения в нее предложений по муниципальному планированию для удовлетворения потребностей граждан и определения инструментов, путем принятия мер по децентрализации населения и участия в качестве механизма восстановления и реновации. Исследование состоит из определения методологии, применения и инструментов муниципального планирования, происходящих после катастроф, также в нем представлено аналитическое исследование мирового опыта, в разной степени использующего муниципальное планирование в качестве механизма обновления. В исследовании будут выявлены проблемы, стоящие на пути восстановления пострадавших территорий района Халидия и города Хомс, выработаны рекомендации, направленные на активизацию роли местных органов власти и обеспечение соответствующих механизмов для повышения их роли в решении урбанистических проблем, с которыми сталкиваются разрушенные сирийские города на этапах восстановления и реновации.

Ключевые слова: реновация, муниципальное планирование, децентрализация населения, участие населения, закон о местном самоуправлении.

Introduction

Local planning is an approach that considers the specific needs and characteristics of a particular area, including social, cultural, environmental, and economic factors. It involves collaboration between architects, urban planners, local authorities, and the community to identify and prioritize the needs of the area. Local planning also considers the historical and cultural heritage of the area and aims to preserve and enhance it [1], [2].

The Khalidiya neighborhood is located in the south of Homs and was one of the most vibrant and densely populated areas before the conflict. The neighborhood was a center for commercial and social activities and had many historical and cultural landmarks, including mosques, churches, and traditional markets. However, during the conflict, the neighborhood suffered significant damage, including the destruction of many buildings and infrastructure. The renovation of the Khalidiya neighborhood requires the implementation of local planning to ensure the preservation of its cultural heritage and the creation of a sustainable and livable environment [3], [4].

The implementation of local planning towards renovation in the Khalidiya neighborhood requires a collaborative approach involving architects, urban planners, local authorities, and the community. The first step is to assess the damage and identify the needs of the area. This includes identifying the buildings that need to be restored or reconstructed, assessing the infrastructure and public spaces, and understanding the social and economic needs of the community. The second step is to develop a comprehensive plan that considers the historical and cultural heritage of the area and aims to preserve and enhance it. The plan should also consider the needs of the community, including housing, public spaces, and social and economic opportunities. The final step is to implement the plan, which involves the reconstruction of damaged buildings and infrastructure, the creation of new public spaces, and the provision of social and economic opportunities [5], [6], [7].

The implementation of local planning towards renovation in the Khalidiya neighborhood faces many challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of funding and resources. The reconstruction of damaged buildings and infrastructure requires significant financial resources, and the local authorities may not have the necessary funding to implement the plan fully. Another challenge is the lack of technical expertise and knowledge. Architects and urban planners may not have sufficient knowledge of the historical and cultural heritage of the area, making it challenging to preserve and enhance it. Finally, the lack of community participation and engagement is another challenge. The community's participation and engagement are essential to ensure that the plan meets their needs and reflects their aspirations [8], [9], [10].

Methods

The research adopted a descriptive-analytical methodology to define the concept of local planning, its mechanisms, and its role in revitalizing areas. This was applied to the case of the old city of Homs during the renovation period. The research utilized established research tools derived from references and studies to assess the extent to which local communities were involved in global experiences discussed in the research, as well as in the case study.

Discussion

Local planning refers to the set of decisions and measures taken by decentralized local units to achieve specific development goals within a defined electoral and regulatory framework established by the central authority [11]. As such, it provides a clear view of the planning policy and what needs to be taken into consideration in terms of local development specificities, emerging from the comprehensive understanding of local housing problems and aspirations.

1- Local planning applications represent a fundamental stage of radical transformation for local communities, turning them into cells for local development, a process which can be enhanced through a decentralized legislative framework.

1-1 Decentralization:

1-1-1 Forms of decentralization:

In 1999, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) developed a classification for forms of decentralization based on their degree of implementation, from the weakest to the strongest [12]:

Deconcentration: This is the weakest level of decentralization, as it relies on local entities that are subject to limited transfer of authority without any independent local inputs from the central government. Cambodia is one of the countries that has adopted this mechanism. These local entities have legal personality and recognized geographical boundaries.

Divestment/Privatization: This involves transferring responsibilities and functions from the government to voluntary or non-governmental organizations or private sector institutions. Governments transform into parallel functional organizations according to the tasks assigned to them, while overseeing their members, such as the experience of the Iraqi economy.

Devolution: This is the most common concept of decentralization. The central government creates local units outside its direct control, with legal personality and recognized geographical boundaries, to secure the necessary resources and provide local services. This model is evident in England.

Delegation: This is an elected local unit that enjoys semi-autonomous rule, relying on the transfer of decision-making industry and administrative authority from central tasks to organizations that are not subject to legal accountability, as in Germany, Russia, and others.

1-1-2 Activating Decentralization: Under appropriate conditions and even after disasters, various forms of decentralization can contribute important roles in expanding public participation in local planning by working as follows:

- Achieving spatial coordination between local and national levels, providing better opportunities for local residents to participate in renovation priorities based on their needs and in accordance with national frameworks.

- Allowing for greater political representation of diverse political, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups. This alleviates the constraints that centralized planning often causes in the decision-making process.

- In addition to the need to avoid the negative aspects of decentralization, which include transferring central responsibilities to local levels without sufficient financial resources and equitable distribution. This increases the difficulty of securing the necessary funding for renovation. In case of weak administrative or technical capacities at the local level, this leads to less efficient and effective service delivery in some areas of the country.

- Competition between interest groups to obtain power and control over field operations. As a result, it is necessary to adopt legislative and legal references that determine how to apply them.

1-2 Public participation:

It's refers to the method through which citizens exercise influence and control over decisions that affect them, enabling them to directly or indirectly intervene in specific social interests within public activities.

There are two types of public participation: direct and indirect. Direct participation is when citizens engage in various forms of self-organization to participate in decision-making regarding issues that affect them. Indirect participation is when citizens express their preferences through their elected representatives [13], [14].

Successful decentralized forms of public participation require higher opportunities for cost recovery, adoption of policies that support the poor and minorities, and ensuring the provision of fair services through several mechanisms used to meet citizens' needs. This includes listening sessions for the weakest and strongest in public meetings, holding town hall meetings for citizens to express their priorities and proposals for improving the preparation of local plans, as in the case of Sernikoy, Turkey in 1999. Elections are the process of voting for the candidate representing the citizens, who provides a promise that meets their expectations, as in the case of Badreshwar village, India in 2001. Participatory planning involves citizen participation through elected local committees to identify necessary local plans and budgets and contribute financially to meet public needs. This is exemplified in Kobe, Japan in 1995 [15].

2- Local Planning Tools:

Local planning relies on several tools for implementation, including interviews, committees, meetings, and conferences. However, the focus in most countries during the relief and renovation phases is on the role of committees and their working mechanism. These committees are known as an organizing tool for the community and formulating local plans with the participation of many local entities involved in policy development and standards according to national frameworks prepared by the government. This ensures maximum compliance with renovation requirements, which is embodied in the working mechanism of the Renovation Committee [16], which includes the following:

1. Organizing public awareness and supporting priority needs and proposed procedures, in addition to working with the media to encourage participatory planning and place information in the hands of all groups.
2. Developing strategies through damage assessment and needs evaluation during community meetings, which provide a clear picture of priorities in accordance with local resource capabilities.
3. Supporting the role of the community and preparing its own vision to overcome reliance on external resources and develop renovation plans.
4. Renovation through highlighting what is considered the most important objectives in the vision statement.

The local renovation committee is composed of representatives of the disaster management authority appointed by the government, local governments, financial institutions, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, volunteer organizations, citizens, private sector companies, local research institutes, academic training, and local media. The following are several international cities that have addressed the application of local planning as an experience in post-disaster renovation. The researcher arranged the seven items in the reference [11] gradually according to the activation of centralized or local planning and numbered them accordingly to be the main research tool.

3. The possibility of implementing local planning for the renovation of Homs city:

International experiences have shown the necessity of having a suitable environment for the implementation of local planning following disasters. This environment is available in Syria through Legislative Decree 107, which contains the Law of Local Administration for the year 2011. This law can be utilized during the renovation period of the old city of Homs. Despite the existence of constraints such as the necessity of speed in achieving results, the community itself held consultations, and as a result, the Head of the Planning Council presented a plan for recovery and renovation to the Mayor. Based on this plan, the government approved the city's revitalization plan on June 30th, after about five months of formulating the plan. As a result, Homs is considered a pioneering example in the field of local planning, primarily in the application of popular participation and decentralization, despite challenges and time constraints [17].

3-1 Current situation of decentralization in Homs city:

The aim of the Local Administration Law for the year 2011 is to activate the role of local planning by identifying the 12 concerned localities and distributing tasks and responsibilities among them, coordinating between municipalities on one hand, and linking between the ministry and municipalities on the other hand, in addition to preparing organizational planning studies for the destroyed neighborhoods and digital property plans, and the results of social surveys on a topographical basis according to the Geographic Information System (GIS) – for the central city including neighborhoods of Bab Hood, Jourat al-Shayah, Al-Qusur, and Al-Qarabis, and all necessary services and economic activities related to the completion of renovation projects as soon as possible.

As for the old neighborhoods of Homs, they are working on rehabilitating the infrastructure of the city center, removing accumulated debris from main and secondary roads, conducting social surveys, registering the number of returning families, evaluating the humanitarian situation in cooperation with international organizations, and preparing the property plan for the area. The neighborhood committees in old Homs were assigned the tasks of assessing individual and collective damages, in order to provide services to citizens and gradually restore their way of life, in addition to receiving compensation requests after submitting the necessary ownership documents and police clearance for the return of residents.

The image shown (see figure 1) illustrates the location of the khalidiya neighborhood in relation to the rest of the city. Citizens relied on volunteer work to clean up the old neighborhoods, rehabilitate them, and revive the gardens by planting crops. They also cleaned churches, mosques, and their surrounding squares, including the Church of Um al-Zunar, where children participated in creating the place by implementing colorful murals with local materials. Additionally, some homes in Homs were maintained by those with good financial status. Compared to forms of decentralization within theoretical studies, we find that the model of De-concentration is the adopted form in Syria in general.

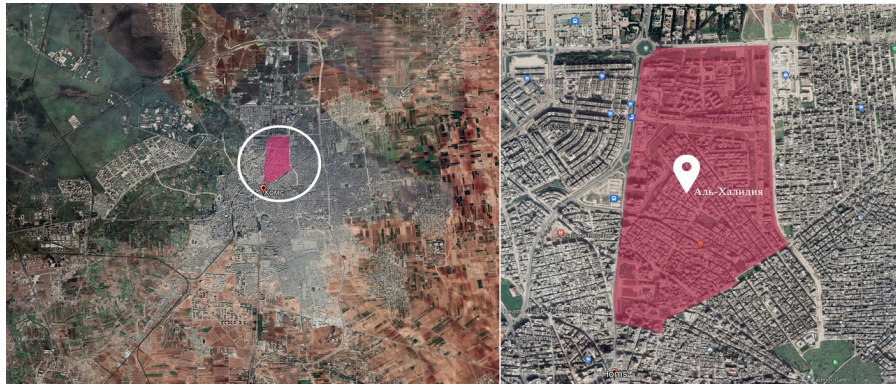


Figure 1 - The khalidiya neighborhood location
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3-2 The reality of popular participation in Al-Khalidiya neighborhood:

Despite the hierarchical decentralization specified in the Local Administration Law of 2011, implementation mechanisms remain limited and rely on a centralized model, through:

- Central funding from the Ministry.
- Preparation of upcoming studies for renovation according to the mechanism adopted in the pre-war period.

As a result, the role of citizens is absent, and their participation in personal voluntary work, expressing their needs and priorities through media and personal interviews, is limited. These interviews have focused on the priorities of voluntary work, the families of martyrs and affected citizens, and the exchange of national experiences in rebuilding their city using available means and methods [18].

Achieving balanced renovation in all neighborhoods, rather than concentrating service facilities in one neighborhood and depriving old neighborhoods, poses several challenges, including:

- Greater costs in terms of time and financial resources during the economic crisis and time constraints, leading to delayed recovery and renovation, as illustrated in the following image (see figure 2), which requires complete removal in addition to property redistribution.



Figure 2 - Completely destroyed buildings that require removal
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- Citizen disagreement on priorities and needs causes difficulty in reaching consensus on what needs to be done, creating new disturbances among participating parties. The image shows differences in damage between property owners (see figure 3).



Figure 3 - The differences in damage between property owners
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- Weakness of technical and administrative personnel due to the migration of national competencies and experienced individuals, and a decline in the role of technology as a primary factor in implementing local planning mechanisms due to the significant damage to infrastructure during the previous period.

- Differences in the desires of citizens who have left the city to return to their homes further complicates the preparation of renovation plans for the affected neighborhoods in the city and the distribution of properties within them.

Conclusion

The Local Administration Law provides an opportunity to activate local-level planning by identifying the active parties, their roles, and responsibilities. However, it remains theoretical in Syria and has only been minimally implemented without covering all the required aspects. Despite the role played by the municipality and neighborhood committees, participatory mechanisms between the local and central levels have not taken the main and effective role. After comparing with some global experiences, it is necessary to grant citizens, especially the affected ones, in cooperation with neighborhood committees and municipalities, the powers of self-government, while limiting the role of the central side to determine the general national frameworks. To achieve the above, it is essential to prepare the capacities of the local community and qualify them with training courses to increase citizens' awareness.

There is an increasing need to reduce bureaucracy to support cooperation between central and local agencies, by providing technological facilitations and supporting participatory mechanisms that enhance the authority of localities during the relief and renovation phase.

Returning to previous studies conducted on the City of Homs to benefit from them in saving time and cost, including their advantages and modifying their negatives according to the needs of renovation in the next phase.

Конфликт интересов

Не указан.

Рецензия

Все статьи проходят рецензирование. Но рецензент или автор статьи предпочли не публиковать рецензию к этой статье в открытом доступе. Рецензия может быть предоставлена компетентным органам по запросу.

Conflict of Interest

None declared.

Review

All articles are peer-reviewed. But the reviewer or the author of the article chose not to publish a review of this article in the public domain. The review can be provided to the competent authorities upon request.

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