Editorial

Criticism of Urban Regeneration Programs (Plans)

Understanding and addressing the issues of urban spaces have been the major concern of governments and city management since the end of World War II. The records of those efforts show that in advanced countries, regardless of their special conditions, compared to the majority of developing countries, the authorities, utilize the most advanced methods available in the world to organize urban environments, always support continuous research and evaluation of ex-measures to embrace innovative methods exploring the different layers of the ideals which improve urban environments. The reason is the transparency and commitment of managers to those people who chose them via votes to improve and promote their urban environment.

If intervention in the environment, including the preparation of programs and plans for the so-called "recreation of urban environments," takes place in a space other than what has been described, the final product cannot be considered positive and constructive. Urban management in Iran takes place in a misty, opaque, and often dark atmosphere. Many of the actions and interventions of municipalities, especially the so-called plans to regenerate worn-out urban textures in the country, have never gotten close to their claimed goals. Experience shows that the words and writings about this matter are of no importance at all while what is not written is significant. For instance, it is never said what are the real goals of urban regeneration. It has never been clear what benefits these programs and plans will provide in advance. In meetings and speeches, it is not stated why and how humans and the environment are considered completely separate in urban regeneration plans. It is not clear which issues of deprived and underprivileged environments these plans are on the agenda to address.

It seems that focusing on the physical and apparent deficiencies of deprived urban neighborhoods and areas makes more sense in line with the cyclical accumulation of power and capital. This is why the conflict of interests of deprived individuals and households with the management and implementation of urban regeneration projects is evident. The reason is if the goal is to improve the living standards of the deprived urban population, the consequences of this human and development-oriented movement in all Iranian cities must be seen, measured, and evaluated. The city can be compared to the tip of a huge iceberg. The part of the city that is usually seen and judged represents only a small part of this iceberg. Since about 100 years ago, the trends and processes in Iran, have been in such a way that ordinary people only see and understand a small part of the city, and a significant part of the elites, experts, and urban managers prefer to ignore that invisible part of the city deliberately to protect their interests. Thus, it is clear that the reason for the failure of the plans to regenerate worn-out urban areas in Iran goes back to a part of the story that is basically invisible to the naked eye.

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