


Chapter 7

A Twin–Track Approach for Informal Settlements Restructuring in Response to the Impact of COVID–19: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

The impact of epidemics on urban restructuring is one of the most critical planning issues. This chapter presents a twin-track approach to intervention in the informal housing areas in Syria after investigating the ability to face the impact of Covid-19 epidemic. The informal housing “al-Radar” area in Tartous City was adopted as a case study. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for a multi-dimensional analysis of gathered data and site planning aspects. The goals are to achieve participatory decision-making to guide area restructuring aligned with national urban development laws. In addition, laying down the foundation of an area

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plan for future on-site redevelopment considers community cohesion and land-use improvements. Results illustrated the poor traditional planning criteria efficiency in achieving urban resilience/immunity required for a “new normal” and the need for good governance in land administration utilizing 15-minute city principles and a street-led citywide approach for the full integration into the city system as a tool to promote sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

Diseases shape cities (Das, Roy, Parvez, & Hasan, 2020). Epidemics such as the plague and the Spanish flu changed the cities’ planning and conducted the shifts in building codes that are still in use today. Many cities, such as Paris, New York, and Rio de Janeiro, have been redesigned to include higher hygiene standards and to upgrade sewage facilities (UN-Habitat, 2020). Urban planning and public health have been historically associated (Olszewska-Guizzo, Fogel, Benjumea, & Tahsin, 2022). The connection between these two terms in the calls of the early planning movement of the late nineteenth century helped reshape the urban form and influenced housing planning standards in rapidly developing European cities; to handle the concerns about public health and slum conditions (Scott, 2020). Consequently, city planning is critical for infectious disease management (AbouKorin, Han, & Mahran, 2021). Several urban planning innovations arose to respond to the health crises, such as the urban parks movement in the nineteenth century in the United States of America and the sewage system reform in Britain (Crompton, 2013; Bereitschaft & Scheller, 2020). While the pursuit of healthy and modern spaces was a major factor in the twentieth-century leap embodied in Howard’s ideas of the Garden City and Le Corbusier’s Social Housing, where cleanliness and moral health depend on the city planning, and the social unit becomes atrophied without them. The social unit “Neighborhood Unit” introduced by Clarence A. Perry illustrates the relationships between the residential components of the neighborhood and the various non-residential usages. The goal was to catch the daily services within a 5-minute walk as an integrated community based on self-sufficiency with open spaces and complete separation between vehicular and pedestrian traffic (Patricios, 2002; Mehaffy, Porta, & Romice, 2014). This theory provides a schematic guide to the space and facilities that can uphold routine life within spatial boundaries (Byun, Choi, & Choi, 2014). The neighborhood unit with the planning assets of the garden city formed the spatial patterns of the contemporary to generate the theory of new urbanism in an attempt to solve the problem of the garden city and modernity, which included new ways of thinking about the urban form (Jin, 2020). Hence, the decentralized city proposed establishing intimate settlements and distributing production, considering the negative

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