

A Sustainable Approach to Urban Regeneration Process by SWOT Analysis

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Abstract: - Inner city deprived areas are valuable lands which have economical and social problems in addition to its physical conditions. Therefore, Turkey introduced interventions to these urban areas in order to improve the physical, social and economical conditions. However, interventions cause more problems rather than solving the existent ones such as; gentrifications, unemployment of inhabitant, loss of social and urban tissue. Problems consist of undetermined conditions of areas before or during implementation of the urban regeneration project. In this respect, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the projects have been limitedly analyzed in the urban projects. Therefore, this paper looks into an ongoing urban regeneration project in Izmir. A SWOT analysis is implemented on the urban project approach by using the case of Izmir-Ege Neighborhood. Observations, reviews, interviews are used to capture and analyze the data. Main findings show that there are deficiencies and weak points in regenerations but also opportunities for sustainable development.

Key-Words: - SWOT analysis, Turkey, Izmir, Ege neighborhood, Urban regeneration, Urban Renewal, Roma community

1 Introduction

Regeneration of the urban deprived areas became a way of solution in Turkey's urban context. Most populated cities such as Istanbul and Ankara have already faced intervention of urban with regeneration projects. Many of the projects were discussed by scholars in terms of urban quality, implementation process of urban regeneration, outcomes of the projects and projects' social, physical, economical effects on citizens [1-5]. It shows that, in the planning process of urban regeneration projects, authorities mainly focus on physical outcomes of the project rather than analyzing conditions in the urban. Community's social features are denied in proposal. So, due to the ignorance of social circumstances, Roma community faced urban regeneration projects which caused some changes in the social tissue. Istanbul, Sulukule urban regeneration is an example of this change that resulted in forced evictions and gentrification of the community [6, 7]. Parallel to this, Roma people in Izmir-Ege Neighborhood are about to face an urban regeneration project that was planned by Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. Project aims to improve social, physical and economical conditions with a sustainable regeneration approach.

The project is in progress, however, first proposal of it shows that the local authority ignores existing conditions of the community. Instead of having benefited from positive points of the society, the project consists of negative factors of the community for urban regeneration.

Therefore, this paper aims to analyze strengths and weaknesses of the neighborhood to diagnose main opportunities and threats of the project. Due to the importance in business and administration or in decision-taking process, scholars use SWOT analysis to specify urban conditions. To understand circumstances and possible outcomes of the project, analysis is applied for citizen participation in historic urban heritage, in urban planning and regeneration case [8-11]. At the implementation of the analysis, indicators are redefined in urban context.

2 SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis aims to reach a decision on a case according to its indicators. The theory emerged in 1950s in business administration context. In business administration context, aim was to analyse the factors that show a company's

competitive position in the market. Consequently, it provided opportunity to plan company's management strategies for the future and also gave a chance to stimulate alternative scenarios. Therefore, the technique became a popular tool for industrial organizations and scholars [12]. Circumstances of the case analyses indicators, and then it provides planning management strategies and alternative scenarios. However, the analysis framework is usefully applied of the business context. On the other hand, the method has been implemented in many different disciplines such as; urban regeneration projects, career planning, software design. Particularly, in urban context, technique is used for planning or development decisions [13, 14, 15].

SWOT analysis is actually an acronym that stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The technique consists of two parts, which are endogenous and exogenous factors. In business context, first part is determining the strengths and weaknesses of a company or a business. Strength and weakness factors are about the issues which are under the control of the firm such as; employees, products facilities [16]. In other words, endogenous factors are all variables which are the integral part of the system. Second part includes opportunities and threats, which can possibly be faced by the firm in market. In that part, external factors include political, social and economical environment of business [17]. In other words, the exogenous factors are variables, which are external to the system, and they can influence it. Therefore, SWOT analysis provides opportunity to develop strategies on their strengths, overthrow the weaknesses, consider opportunities and resist possible threats [16]. Due to these opportunities of SWOT analysis, it has a vital importance and it is considered as an initial point for developing strategic planning.

2.1 Defining SWOT in Urban Context

Definition of indicator in SWOT analysis is a general term and mainly corresponds to business administration. However, in urban context, it may vary even according to selected case. In this research, SWOT is applied to an urban regeneration project. Therefore, meanings of strength, weakness, opportunity and threat are defined according to the urban context case.

A strength is the resource of the urban area. It is a unique issue that varies in accordance to the area. The resource corresponds to social structure of the community and physical conditions and location of

the area. These resources of the urban space allow intervention to achieve its defined goals.

A weakness is a limitation of the project in urban environment, which restrain it to achieve results or goals of the project. In this case, weakness can be identified as economical, usage of land, community participation and issue of houses' title.

An opportunity stands for projects possible positive impact on social, physical and economical cases. It provides or allows more effective results with the completion of urban regeneration project.

A threat is an undesired result that can occur with the urban regeneration project. Results can directly affect community and physical environment. Threats are barriers for achieving goals that decrease effectiveness of the project.

Typically, an effective urban regeneration project consists of SWOT input and depends on a strategy which takes advantage from opportunities with using strengths and takes measure for threats with getting through weaknesses.

2.2 Data Collection & Socio-demographic Structure

Data collection of this study is based on fieldwork, which includes interviews, observations and questionnaires at Ege Neighborhood, Izmir. Surveys, interviews and observations are aimed to expose the strengths and weaknesses of the neighbourhood in the urban regeneration project and to find out opportunities and threats. Therefore, surveys and interviews are conducted with citizens of the neighbourhood and the manager of a non-governmental organization in the area. Citizens responded to 105 surveys however, 3 of them were eliminated due to contradictory statements. Questionnaires are composed of structured open-ended questions with face-to-face communication method due to high percentage of illiteracy. First part of questionnaire based on demographic questions about participant. Second part of it is strength, weakness of neighbourhood and opportunities, threats of the project which neighbourhood confront with.

Questionnaires applied on both sex equally, %52 of them are male and %48 of them are female. Also, it conducted equally with different age groups. Both 35-44 ages and 45-54 ages groups have 27,5% of participation in surveys. Additionally, 21% of participants is over 55 years old and 13,7% of participants is between 25-34 ages. It shows that every part of the community's participation is tried to be achieved by equal participation of surveys on different age groups and sexes. Moreover, it shows that most of the participants graduated from primary

school, approximately 53,9%. The highest graduation degree is high school, which forms 3,9% of the participants. On the other hand 6,9% of the participants are illiterate which is lower than over all the country and the city average. According to Turkish Statistical Institute Turkey's illiteracy rate is approximately 6% and Izmir's illiteracy rate is 5% [18]. This shows that neighbourhood also has an education problem and its education level is lower than average of Turkey.

3 Evaluation of the Neighborhood

3.1 Strengths of the Neighborhood

Neighbourhood culture: Ege neighbourhood is one of the oldest residential areas in the city and it is known as a place for Roma community. According to scholars and interviews, people who first migrated to the neighbourhood were the ones who came to Turkey as a result of population exchange between Greece and Turkey [14, 20]. Parallel to these, fieldwork shows that people identified themselves as Roma. Therefore, cultural practices have vital importance in the area. Also, results of questionnaires show that 74,5% of people are glad to have a neighbourhood culture or Roma culture. At this point, there is a need for expanding what neighbourhood culture is for them; solidarity in neighbourhood, knowing all members of community personally, high usage of public spaces as part of their lives and having common entertainment culture. Due to the small number of community relative to the city, there is a high interaction between community members. The interaction increases the importance of the neighbourhood culture, which is the main advantage of the urban regeneration project. Being a heterogeneous community, having solidarity and sharing same values result in sharing common interest, and demands from the project. For instance, there is a consensus on demanding a wedding ceremony hall after the project.

Affordable accommodation: Social exclusion against Roma communities not only affects their social exclusion but it also affects them economically. According to citizens, because of living in the neighbourhood, citizens can't find a job, which triggers economical difficulties for the community (Interview, 3). Therefore, they try to hide their identity to be accepted in the society or to get a job [14]. Even, this method is not enough for them to get a job. Surveys show that 62% of the community is unemployed. Financial difficulties are

normal due to the high rate of unemployment. On the other hand, many employed ones are having financial difficulties like others owing to the fact that inhabitants are working with lack of social security or they work in daily jobs. Inhabitants have irregular incomes and most of them have incomes lower than the minimum wage (410 Euro). Consequently, there is a high demand for low rent prices in community. In current circumstances, neighborhood housing stock sustains affordable accommodation and also affordable living expenses for market or grocery. Affordable accommodation and living expenses are the advantages of the neighborhood.

Location: Urban regeneration area is located at the city center of Izmir and near to the Fair area. Location provides an easy reach to city centre, public transportation and public services. These public services are healthcare facilities, education facilities and public green areas. Thus, for public services, location sustains sufficient environment for the neighborhood. Another advantage of the location is its closeness to job opportunities, many of them go to work on foot. Therefore, location has a vital importance for the inhabitants' lives. On the other hand, new city centre project, which has recently started, will be located near to Ege district. After the completion of the new city centre project, importance and value of the neighbourhood will increase. Shortly, the neighbourhood will have advantage owing to its location which provides them connection with the city centre without taking any transportation.



Fig. 1 Location of Ege Neighborhood

Space Quality: Space is a reflection of community's habits or experience of their daily life, which is clearly visible in the neighbourhood. Life practices of the community are based on usage of public spaces, which intersect with private spaces. In other words, there is not a clear difference between public and private place. It is observed that streets work as extensions of houses. Streets are places for preparing food, resting, talking with

neighbours, entertainment or having wedding celebration. As a result, high usage of street causes interaction between community members and sense of belonging for citizens. Connection between people and space stimulates a non-substitutable situation. Additionally, solidarity and knowing each other are results of space quality. Consequently, to achieve sustainable urban regeneration, space quality is a beneficiary point for the project.



Fig. 2 Ege Neighborhood

3.2 Weaknesses of the Neighborhood

Financial Problems: Urban regenerations are expensive projects that need sharing of financial load between local authorities, citizens and investors. In Ege neighbourhood case, project's focus group is current citizens of the neighbourhood. The project's aim was declared as providing adequate housing for them without moving them out [19]. Due to the financial load, citizens have to make payments for their new houses after the regeneration. Considering unemployment rate in the neighbourhood, it is unlikely to receive the payments or expecting any financial support from citizens. Therefore, need for financial aid from citizens can cause undesirable results for project and it can alter the social tissue.

Drug related problems: Due to the unemployment and financial problems, usage of drugs increases in the community. Interviewee mentioned that especially youth cannot find proper jobs and therefore they start using drugs (Interview 3). Concordantly, usage of drugs continues with trading it. Drug usage and trading cause safety problems for citizens. According to surveys, 52,9% of the community is discontent with neighbourhood's drug related issues. Citizens emphasize that, all problems in neighbourhood occur as a result of drug usage such as; crimes, fights and dead of young people. Drug problems are one of the issues which is awaiting a solution

Lack of Education: Like in other Roma communities, Ege neighbourhood has a problem of low education level. According to questionnaires, 7% of the citizens are illiterate which is lower than Turkey's and city's average. Moreover, 15% of the citizens did not graduate from any school. In terms of graduation; 54% of the society has graduated from primary school and nobody obtained a bachelor or higher degree. It shows that community mainly continues the education 'till the end of primary school. Interviewees connected this issue to young generation's reluctance to go to school, and their preference to work due to low financial profile. By working they have to aid their parents financially. Consequently, the relation between unemployment and uneducated people turn into vicious circle such as; finding qualified personnel is getting hard which triggers an increase in unemployment rate of the community.

Physical and Social borders: Ege neighbourhood is located near to city centre; however accessibility from the area to the city centre is beleaguered due to the borders. In the field, two borders increase exclusion of community from the city. First one is a physical border, which exists because of the location. Two edges of the neighbourhood are facing the railways, which restrain pedestrian traffic to area. Other edge is facing with vacant fields, which doesn't have a pedestrian road or motorway. In current conditions, the way to reach neighbourhood is from railway's overpass for pedestrians and railway's underpass for automobiles. Therefore, lack of visual connection between surrounding neighbourhoods stimulates physical borders. On the other hand, community's major part is Roma people who face discrimination because of the identity. Discrimination against the community emerges difficulty to find a job or participate in social life, which result in social borders. Consequently, discrimination against them precludes social integration with society and occurs as social borders to neighbourhood.

Lack of Citizen Participation: The project aims to achieve sustainable urban regeneration, which is based on economical, environmental and social sustainability that includes social integration of the community with city, improving life standards and keeping the community in same place after the project. Therefore, achieving social sustainability goal is based on the demands of citizens to keep them in neighbourhood. Having decisions in accordance with the demands of citizens can ensure staying in the neighbourhood after the project. Reaching this aim depends mostly on citizen

participation. Participation allows responds to citizens' demands. However, current project consists of limited participation in decision-making process, which can cause rejection of the project by community or sense of loss of belonging. For citizen participation, local authority informed citizens about the project and got feedback from citizens through surveys. Then, according to the surveys, project was designed. This methodology of participation constrains opportunity of citizens to be involved in decision-making.



Fig. 3 Edge of the Neighborhood and Railway

3.3 Opportunities of the Neighborhood

Social inclusion: Borders and discrimination occur due to barriers of the neighbourhoods. Barriers increase with the physical borders at the connection point of the area and the rest of the city. The urban regeneration project has potential to overcome physical borders with appropriate design implementations. On the other hand, supporting citizens to participate in all areas of social life can provide opportunity to social inclusion of Roma community with the city. The opportunity can maintain sustainable urban regeneration of the area.

Improvement in physical condition: Regeneration of the area brings opportunity for improvement in physical conditions of housing stock and infrastructure. In existing condition, structural system and infrastructural conditions are not in good shape. For instance, Izmir is first-degree seismic zone; however housing stock is not adequate for a possible earthquake. Citizens listed earthquake resistance building as one of the first priority of the project. Also, they complain about the sewage system, which smells and provides environment for mice in streets. Additionally, sewage system is not efficient for drainage in case of heavy rains. Consequently, the project has potential to overcome infrastructural problems and

to increase quality of housing stock by reconstructing the neighbourhood.



Fig. 4 Urban Regeneration Project Proposal, [20]

Potential for new job occupation: One of the main job occupations for inhabitants is working as a coachman at the city centre. The job is family tradition for citizens and is based on collaborative family members. Families are taking care of horses in the neighbourhood's vacant lands. In the process of urban regeneration project, authorities protected coachmen. Before the project, people were plying their trade as being their own bosses. Now, Metropolitan Municipality employs them as coachmen in the city centre. Consequently, the job occupation transferred into an official platform, which has beneficiary results for them with having social security and fixed monthly income. Nevertheless, this job was limited with few people. Although, intention of the Municipality shows that there is an opportunity to provide more job occupations for inhabitants. During the construction part of the project or after it, jobs could be sustainable for them in accordance with their life practices or habits.

3.4 Threats of the Neighborhood

Gentrification: Gentrification is population movement, which starts in a district and goes on rapidly until all inhabitants are displaced [21, 22, 23]. Smith argued the movement as "influx of new residents into declining area" [24]. It is the most undesirable outcome of an urban regeneration project, while the project aims sustainability. In Ege neighbourhood, landlords have the opportunity to get new houses after project if they make extra payments. However, due to the financial problems of people, these payments can cause them to sell

their properties and leave the neighbourhood to find cheaper accommodations. Therefore, gentrification is the most important threat, which can trigger to alter other conditions such as change in social tissue.

Unaffordable accommodation: Parallel to gentrification of landlords, also tenants will be affected by the project. In current circumstances, citizens prefer to live in the neighbourhood due to the affordable rents. After the project, development in physical conditions of the area and housing stock can trigger an increase in houses' rents. Consequently, district won't be affordable for tenants. Additionally, for tenants and landlords, living cost has potential to increase as a result of change in shops in the neighbourhood. Existing groceries, markets have affordable prices for citizens. With the completion of the project, an increase in shop's rents will affect the prices. Due to improvement in physical conditions and the need of payments for new houses, citizens will face with increase in living expenses. Parallel to this, in meetings for the project, citizens expressed that, "houses in the project will be based on natural gas consumption, however, even we are not able to pay water and electricity bill. So, how will we pay natural gas bills after the project?" [25]. Before the project starts, citizens have concerns about incensement in life expenses, which consequently may force them to sell the houses and move out for affordable places. This solution has probability to stimulate loss of social identity and characteristic of the area.

4 Conclusion

In the research, the strong and weak sides of Ege neighbourhoods' urban regeneration project are revealed. At the same time, opportunities and threats were defined in accordance with the fieldwork. As a result, affordable accommodation and the location of the area provide advantages for the neighbourhood. Also, Roma identity and unity of the community stimulate strength of space quality. Besides strengths, social and financial weakness of the area are financial problems, lack of education, drug related problems and physical and social borders. Additionally, lack of participation is the weakness of the urban regeneration project rather than community. Strengths and weaknesses are results of current conditions of the area. The project meets opportunities such as social inclusion, improvement in physical condition and potential for new job occupation. Gentrification and unaffordable

accommodation are possible threats that are found in research.

Drawing from the analysis, firstly urban regeneration project should solve its weakness with participation of citizen, then the project can construct on communities strength point to overcome the weakness. Consequently, opportunities of the project are reachable which also provides sustainable urban regeneration. However, while achieving these goals, gentrification threats should be evaluated carefully during the implementation of the project.

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