

Common Space Production as a Solution to the Affordable Housing Problem: Its Relationship with the Squating Process in Turkey

Authors : Gözde Arzu Sarıcan

Abstract : Contemporary urbanization processes and spatial transformations are intensely debated across various fields of social sciences. One prominent concept in these discussions is "common spaces." Common spaces offer a critical theoretical framework, particularly for addressing the social and economic inequalities brought about by urbanization. This study examines the processes of commoning and their impacts through the lens of squatter neighborhoods in Turkey, emphasizing the importance of affordable housing. It focuses on the role and significance of these neighborhoods in the formation of common spaces, analyzing the collective actions and resistance strategies of residents. This process, which began with the construction of shelters to meet the shelter needs of low-income households migrating from rural to urban areas, has turned into low-quality squatter settlements over time. For low-income households lacking the economic power to rent or buy homes in the city, these areas provided an affordable housing solution. Squatter neighborhoods reflect the efforts of local communities to protect and develop their communal living spaces through collective actions and resistance strategies. This collective creation process involves the appropriation of occupied land as a common resource through the rules established by the commons. Organized occupations subdivide these lands, shaped through collective creation processes. For the squatter communities striving for economic and social adaptation, these areas serve as buffer zones for urban integration. In squatter neighborhoods, bonds of friendship, kinship, and compatriotism are strong, playing a significant role in the creation and dissemination of collective knowledge. Squatter areas can be described as common spaces that emerge out of necessity for low-income and marginalized groups. The design and construction of housing in squatter neighborhoods are shaped by the collective participation and skills of the residents. Streets are formed through collective decision-making and labor. Over time, the demands for housing are communicated to local authorities, enhancing the potential for commoning. Common spaces are shaped by collective needs and demands, appropriated, and transformed into potential new spaces. Common spaces are continually redefined and recreated. In this context, affordable housing becomes an essential aspect of these common spaces, providing a foundation for social and economic stability. This study evaluates the processes of commoning and their effects through the lens of squatter neighborhoods in Turkey. Communities living in squatter neighborhoods have managed to create and protect communal living spaces, especially in situations where official authorities have been inadequate. Common spaces are built on values such as solidarity, cooperation, and collective resistance. In urban planning and policy development processes, it is crucial to consider the concept of common spaces. Policies that support the collective efforts and resistance strategies of communities can contribute to more just and sustainable living conditions in urban areas. In this context, the concept of common spaces is considered an important tool in the fight against urban inequalities and in the expression and defense mechanisms of communities. By emphasizing the importance of affordable housing within these spaces, this study highlights the critical role of common spaces in addressing urban social and economic challenges.

Keywords : affordable housing, common space, squating process, turkey

Conference Title : ICAH 2025 : International Conference on Affordable Housing

Conference Location : Barcelona, Spain

Conference Dates : March 04-05, 2025