

Homelessness, Housing Crisis and Solutions Made by Citizens

Journal of Entrepreneurship and
Innovation in Emerging Economies

10(2) 304–311, 2024

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DOI: 10.1177/23939575241262629

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Introduction and Design

After two massive earthquakes hit Turkey and Syria on the 6th of February, thousands of people died and were injured (Said-Moorhouse, 2023). After the earthquakes, people needed temporary tents and homes (Atay-Alam & Sariyüce, 2023). However, due to a lack of governmental support and controversial actions of aid organisations such as Türk Kızılayı, people could not find tent support quickly, and this situation led the citizens of Turkey to gather under organisations such as AHBAP (Atay-Alam & Sariyüce, 2023).

After the homelessness issue in earthquake areas, I started to make the skeleton of this article. It was followed by researching homelessness as a term, its history, and its causes. These points were followed by solutions, innovations, citizen engagements, and entrepreneurial approaches made by citizens. Even though the massive earthquakes were my starting point, I mainly focused on the potential solutions citizens of societies worldwide made.

Definition of Homelessness

According to Somerville (2013), homelessness is more than an absence of shelter or living space, a roof over the heads of individuals. Multiple aspects of hardship are involved in homelessness, including physiological (a shortage of physical warmth or ease), emotional (the absence of bliss or love), territorial (the absence of privateness), ontological (an absence of ground to the world), and lastly, spiritual (the absence of goal and hope).

Homelessness means not having a stable, safe place to live, and individuals who are homeless cannot get a stable, good place to live or keep one up because of money problems and other societal challenges (Tipple & Speak, 2005). UNCESCR defines proper housing/shelter as having enough privacy, room,

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safety, lighting, air circulation, basic infrastructure, and position in relation to work and fundamental amenities, all for an affordable price (UNCESCR, 1991).

'Homeless household' refers to a group of people who do not have a place to live that would be considered a shelter; these people carry their few belongings with them and slumber in public areas, doorways, or just about anywhere else (UN, 1998, p. 50). This interpretation shows that people who look 'dirty' walking around cities and taking their belongings to random locations to sleep is straightforward and popular; nonetheless, 'accommodation-oriented' meanings of homelessness have been criticised since they limit the problem of homelessness to not possessing a house, which is called 'houselessness' (Tipple & Speak, 2005). However, they do not credit how complicated homelessness is, nor are they enough to explain how homelessness varies in each country (Cooper, 1995).

History of Homelessness

According to Somerville (2013), before the 1960s, there was a lot of 'sin talk', which meant that homeless people were mainly blamed for their position, for instance, the image of being drunk, using drugs, or being generally careless and irresponsible. From the 1960s to the 1980s, 'system talk' became more common, where the fate of homeless people was blamed on 'structural factors' like a shortage of occupations that have salaries to pay daily needs and a shortage of suitable, accessible, and economical housing. Lastly, 'sick talk' has grown more common since the 1980s and is still around today. For instance, homeless people are often seen as people with mental health issues, disorders, physical disabilities, and other 'vulnerabilities'.

According to Cunningham (2009), when homelessness became a bigger problem in the 1980s and 1990s, most people were helped by emergency shelters and temporary homes. During these times, most lawmakers and supporters believed that homelessness was an interim issue caused by the financial crisis, the deinstitutionalisation of individuals with psychological illnesses, and the crack epidemic. Even though there are more immediate and intermediate housing options than ever before, homelessness is still an issue, making many towns unhappy and without hope. Even though emergency services are essential for helping homeless individuals with their immediate needs, they do not give people what they seek, mainly a stable place to live. As a result, shelter-based solutions are frequently referred to as 'managing the issue', instead of eliminating it. Also, the main aim of intermediate living is to help people get jobs so they can support themselves financially and live on their own for a while, but its outcome rates are varied.

A Local Example: Homelessness in Germany

According to FEANTSA (2017), Germany's strategy for homelessness is firmly focused on avoidance. BAG W figures show a sharp increase in family domestic homelessness between 2014 and 2016. According to estimates, the number of homeless single-person families rose from 239,000 to 294,000, a 22% rise. In addition to programmes being created in numerous towns across Germany to reorganise and enhance preventative services, an updated handbook on enhancing administrative prevention efforts was released in 1999. Rent arrears are the centre of integrated prevention services offered by many towns. In recent years, social 'support in housing' has expanded to include formerly homeless persons and people who have experienced housing crises.

Reasons for Homelessness

In this article, the housing crisis is the focused reason for the homelessness issue. However, it is essential to differentiate reasons clearly. The main reasons behind adult homelessness have differentiated under five typical pathways; housing crisis, the disintegration of the family, substance misuse, mental well-being, and transition from adolescence to adulthood; specifically, various reasons, such as loss of employment, broken relationships, or a failed business, can cause a housing crisis (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013).

Individuals facing homelessness due to the housing crisis typically become homeless due to sudden and severe financial hardship; families with low income frequently face economic difficulties and must choose which expenses to pay (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013).

Housing Crisis

Housing costs have risen dramatically over the last 20 years, with house price growth exceeding actual salary increases; the outcome is that an increasing number of households are having difficulty finding affordable accommodation in desirable areas, a situation known as 'the housing affordability crisis' (Lutz, 2020). Noticeable effects include an increase in the number of families facing high housing expenses; many families' fulfilment with how they live has fallen, and the percentage of homeless people is rising in some of the richest countries globally (Eurostat, 2020a).

The housing problem has the greatest impact on people at the lower levels of the wage spectrum (Fields & Hodkinson, 2018). As an example, 49.5% of families in Germany with earnings less than 60% of the median salary face excessive housing expenses; compared with only 7.5% of families earning more than 60% of the median earnings, their housing expenses are greater than 40% of their available income (Eurostat, 2020b). As a result, many academics and lawmakers have emphasised how the present problem in housing affordability leads to severe inequalities in the housing market (Lutz, 2020).

Some Approaches to Solving Homelessness & Innovations

According to Roberts (2022), governments have not only tried to deal with the complicated problem of homelessness in the past. Private players have helped in many ways, from building charity homes for older people and paying for them through church charity to building large-scale social housing and providing shelters for women fleeing violence at home. There has been a strong resurgence of private engagement for the public good in various areas of social action in the past several decades. The roots of these emerging phenomena are complicated. Still, a common thread is a recognition of the limitations of both market and government for solving ongoing social issues (like poverty) or dealing with additional ones (like climate change).

In the topic of homelessness, in particular, there may be an absence of research, an inability to handle the underlying causes of issues, and an impulse to 'do the same things which were tried in the past already' (Teixeira, 2020).

Solutions, Especially Shelters & Their Importance

As a solution example for homelessness, shelters have influence and importance for homeless people. This section will discuss shelters and their influences as a solution methodology for homelessness.

According to the research of Shier et al. (2011), shelters and their importance were highlighted by homeless people. Respondents of the research characterised the role of shelter services as a crucial step on their journey out of homelessness. Despite having a variety of motivations to use shelter services, many respondents reported using them as their primary source of support. Respondents said that shelter services either helped to keep them in their current situation and stopped them from making changes or helped with homelessness. However, respondents needed to see how the services affected their own lives or were helpful and affected the respondents directly. Many people are afraid to access services, and it can be challenging to transition from having a general understanding of the services to recognising how they can impact an individual's life directly. The fact that some respondents characterised the service delivery system as part of their social groups is a final aspect of service delivery. The importance of the type of housing, how that impacted people's lives and the use of therapy services to help deal with personal problems or issues were all part of this view on shelter services.

An Entrepreneurial & Innovative Approach: Roof Coliving

According to Roof Coliving (2023a), Roof is a coliving facility in Turkey that seeks to create a link between various social groups. A collection of young social entrepreneurs who want to reside in the neighbourhood and enhance ecosystem cooperation have come together. Roof organises gatherings and programmes that let various people interact, get to know one another's experiences, exchange, and collaborate. Living areas are being redesigned to incorporate interpersonal and communal relationships. By enhancing people's capacity for sharing and co-creation, they hope to establish a new mindset of communal life. Even though Roof Coliving gives importance to the active participation of citizens, a social enterprise is managed by a small team and defines itself as a social enterprise.

According to Roof Coliving (2023b), the team wants to change the household atmosphere from one that is private to one that is more inclusive. Through its work on the municipal scale, Roof Coliving creates shared living spaces for regional needs with the help of citizens, and by rejecting top-down design methodologies, it attempts to create pluralist and inclusive conversation spaces in cities. By bringing engaged people together in these places to foster conversation, the team uses collaborative design practices as a tool to build resilient communities, and resilient communities, in turn, build resilient societies. Through workshops with civic space actors, they are attempting to create common knowledge about the housing issue facing young people and to promote debate about potential solutions.

Brief Theoretical Approaches About Citizen Entrepreneurship

Citizens as Entrepreneurs (CE) refers to the participation of citizens in commercial, community, and public businesses as consumers, creators, and guardians of communal governance (Mitra, 2019). In situations where citizens feel that their requirements are not being met by their local authorities, they often resort to 'do-it-yourself urbanism' Mitra et al. (2020). By applying a collective repository of economic, social, and human resources, CE presents new methods to use technology to meet people's goals and demands (Mitra, 2019).

Motivations Behind Citizen Entrepreneurship

According to Mitra et al. (2020), besides referencing Elinor Ostrom's notion of the 'commons', in which people are directed by a concept of collective self-efficacy to achieve collective governance over

manufacturing, utilisation, allocation, and appropriate knowledge of services and products that impact how they live, we further the idea that innovative thinking and entrepreneurship are socially beneficial. Importantly, CE does not indicate being fervent about everyone acquiring the ability to establish businesses. Instead, it is about raising consciousness, having beneficial interactions with business activities within the community, talking to entrepreneurs regarding options for improving skill sets and the labour market, valuing human and financial assets, impacting the environment, and fixing local issues.

The Impact of Citizen Entrepreneurship Projects on the Future of Social and Economic Development

Mitra et al. (2020) mention that it could develop new social or civic identities for business development if we combine the possibility of merging individual company creations using crowd-based frameworks to contribute to meta-level problems resolving breaks in our financial and social activities. These emerging identities exemplify collaborative effectiveness that draws the resources required to carry out those ‘functionings’ using a ‘commons-based’ flexible framework. The final result is the development of a collection of abilities that incorporates the person’s capabilities with those socially produced by rank and connection or social anchoring and exterior skills, or functional abilities reliant on interpersonal or social connections.

Citizen Involvement for Homelessness: Eden Village USA

Even though homelessness can be seen as a problem that is hard to solve, it is not impossible. Especially with collaborations of people, it is inevitable to have innovative solutions. Active collaboration of citizens for innovation for social good in homelessness issues has created Eden Village in the USA.

Story & Motivation of Eden Village

According to Eden Village (2023a), the roots of Eden Village are connected with ‘The Gathering Tree’. Ten citizens founded Gathering Tree in the autumn of 2010 to assist homeless people. The crew noticed that Springfield’s downtown had many homeless people. They learned there were numerous locations where the homeless could hang out during the day and facilities where they could stay the night. The drop-in facility was established during the late afternoon and early evening hours because there was nowhere else for the destitute to go. The Gathering Tree, run by Dr David and Linda Brown, has developed programmes to assist Springfield’s homeless population. They came to realise that while these outreach programmes were important, they did not offer a long-term fix due to the connections made at the Gathering Tree’s drop-in facility. The first goal was to give homeless people a secure location to spend a few hours away from the streets. The second goal was to create connections and learn about homelessness directly.

Objectives and Their Implementations

Eden Village (2023a) mentions that with the assistance of numerous people and groups, The Gathering Tree secured a 2-year contract for a building and increased the number of hours to five nights per week.

Meals and necessities like clothing, toiletries, and emergency tools were also given out. In addition to serving as a cafe and library, The Gathering Tree has reinstated its nighttime drop-in facility. They could nap, play cards, use computers, shower, and get the supplies they needed to live on the streets.

Site Purchase for the Implementation of Goals

According to Eden Village (2023a), a site purchase is one of the milestones for the community. The land was acquired, and the Eden Village Community's official statement was made to the public. At this time, Springfield's severely homeless population had decreased by 14%. Although this figure was high, there were many more homeless people. To help other communities who want to establish an Eden Village in their area, Eden Village has increased the scope of its development services to include licensing and advice.

Research Design, Limitations and Usefulness

As a brief research design structure of Eden Villages, the area used by the organisation is one of the most important deals. The citizens knew about homelessness, its consequences, and potential solutions.

According to Tracey (2020), the small-home society would not exist without Brown's 13 years of experience in the real estate industry. After researching, she found out about an ad for a foreclosed mobile home park in Springfield's eastern neighbourhood. There was no need to change the zoning of the land for small-home trailers. Also, the roads and amenities were already present.

Since Eden Village was created by the citizens of Springfield, their awareness of homeless people became a strong muscle while building Eden Village and Gathering Tree. However, their religious connections with the local church are both a helpful asset and a limitation.

Because some people can criticise religious approaches, and religious organisations create question marks in their heads. Religion-connected organisations and their movements have been questioned countless times worldwide. That is why this connection would be a limitation for expanding process of Eden Village. On the other side of the coin, this feature of Eden Village created space for religious people to donate, support and expand the community.

Impact on Development in Terms of Economical and Social Aspects and Involvement of Citizens

According to Eden Village (2023a), the concept has gained national attention and is being considered for implementation in other cities. Many neighbourhoods in the United States and abroad are interested in learning more about the Eden Village concept and possibly establishing their own Eden Village. In an effort to help other communities establish their own Eden Villages, Eden Village has extended its development services to include consultation and licensure.

Eden Village (2023b) mentions its economic structure and development. Eden Village residents can enjoy all the advantages of living independently in a small house while being part of a sizeable, encouraging community. Smaller homes are more affordable than larger ones, providing neighbours who are homeless with a secure place to reside. Residents, companies, and groups that want to make a direct donation support the expense of the homes. A tiny house can be purchased for less money upfront. Also, in terms of policymaking, since Barbee Memorial Church supports Eden Village, citizens, church leaders,

city officials, and lawmakers are attending their sessions; this situation makes Eden Village more visible in policymaking about homelessness issues.

Even though Eden Village is decreasing homelessness in the USA, the participation of lawmakers, city officials, and various church leaders in their events would create question marks regarding transparency.

Conclusion

In conclusion, homelessness is a complex issue that goes beyond just not having a place to live. It involves physical, emotional, and other hardships, and is often related to problems such as low-income and housing crises.

There is a need for innovative and effective solutions to address homelessness, and this means looking beyond government action alone. Involvement from the private sector can offer new ideas and resources.

So, solving homelessness is not just about providing housing. It involves understanding the problem entirely, coming up with new solutions, and working together at all levels—government, private sectors, and communities. By doing this, we can hope to help everyone find not just a place to stay, but a real home and a better future.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

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