

The Emergence of Slums in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, and the Saudi Government Response

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Introduction

This research paper will focus on the causes that led to the emergence of slums in the Holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia. It will begin by introducing some information about the Holy city of Makkah. Then, it will show some explanations of reasons that caused the emergence of the slums. It also will include a description of the slums' physical, social and economic condition. Later, the paper will briefly demonstrate how the Saudi Arabian government responded to the issue of slums.

The Holy city of Makkah is considered to be a religious capital of Saudi Arabia and it is located in the western province of the country, where the city of Medina, also another Holy city is located as well. Makkah has a population of 1.5 Million. Since Makkah is the place where more than one billion Muslims around the world go to perform Hajj and Omrah, a once in a life obligatory pillar of Islam, the city hosts more than fifteen million religious visitors annually. Therefore, Makkah is an extremely diverse city despite the fact that non-Muslims are forbidden from entering the city. Another important characteristic of the city is its location within a rugged mountainous area.

Slums in Makkah

Many scholars have used “slum” as an idiom to describe a contiguous settlement, others have used different idioms to describe slums based on different causes that led their emergence or based on their characteristics and conditions (Al-Shareef, 2003). The United Nation defined the slum as the following:

“A slum is a contiguous settlement where the inhabitants are characterized as having inadequate housing and basic services. A slum is often not recognized and addressed by the public authorities as an integral or equal part of the city” (UN-HABITAT, 2002).

Slums have been considered as one of the most important urban issues in Saudi Arabia, and they are a result of multiple political, economic, and social causes. Makkah’s slum settlements consist of three categories according to their historical developments and they all share similarities in terms of their built environment conditions. However, there is a differentiation regarding the causes that led to the emergence of these slum settlements. In order to discuss these settlements in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, we should first examine three different historic stages that Saudi Arabia has witnessed, which have caused the emergence of the slums; these stages are pre-oil, pre-planning and planning stage. Each stage represents related reasons for the emergence of slums in Makkah (Al-Shareef, 2003). This sequence of stages has been mentioned and used by other scholars as well.

Based on the above sequence of stages, Makkah’s slums were categorized under three types. Type 1 slums represents slums that emerged during the pre-oil stage, type 2 represents slums that emerged during the pre-planning stage and type 3 that represents slums that emerged during the planning stage (Al-Shareef, 2003). (Exhibit 1).

The pre-oil stage:

The pre-oil era, between 1926 and 1956, represents the very beginning years of Saudi Arabia as a country. During this era Makkah was transformed from an Ottoman

ruled city and was losing its historical and traditional Ottoman appearance without adapting any modern planning systems (Al-Shareef, 2003). Also, the Saudi government had established programs that aimed to urbanize nomadic tribes. This governmental agenda motivated many un-urbanized tribe members to migrate to urban places, such as Makkah, seeking employment opportunities in the newly established country (Ankary & El-Bushra, 1989). This attempt to urbanize nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes has caused a non-stop practice of rural-urban migration, and played an important role in expanding major cities such as Makkah (Al Hammad, 1995).

During World War II, the rural areas and peripheries of Makkah had faced shortages in food supplies. Therefore, Makkah received a massive numbers of immigrants seeking sustenance and goods. Consequently, the new settlers, nomadic tribes, started to gather around Makkah's ruling castle, *Saqaff Castle*, which led to the formation of Makkah's first squatter settlements (Al-Shareef, 2003).

During the pre-oil era, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia did not attract foreigner labor. Most of Saudi Arabia's modest cities were dependent on agricultural business and its inhabitants were relied on farming and livestock grazing. On the other hand, living conditions were different in the western region of Saudi Arabia, having more attractive living opportunities, considering the existing of the two holy cities Makkah and Medina, which are points of attraction for Muslims in both Arab countries and around the world. Makkah in particular hosts the annual pilgrimage season, which makes it a trading hub and the most desirable place for foreigner labors seeking better living conditions (Kansawi, 2008).

The pre-planning stage:

The pre-planning era between 1956 and 1970 is the oil production era, which represented a vast transformation in Saudi Arabia's urban development. In Makkah, due to the massive oil revenues, the government was able to expand the Holy mosque in 1956, which also contributes in its urban growth. Moreover, brand new districts had risen in the city. Yet, this era witnessed the establishment of many squatter settlements in Makkah (Al-Shareef, 2001).

During this era, development in a variety of sectors has began, supported by the oil revenues. Makkah as religious capital benefited from such economic growth. Consequently, the increased number of local and foreigner immigrants had made a huge growth in population in Makkah, because all the growth segments had made the city of Makkah more attractive for foreigner labor and the need of skilled labor to contribute in constructing the city infrastructure (Kansawi, 2008).

Makkah's slums grow during the pre-planning era and this growth was supported by the absence of housing plans, land subdivision regulations and the increasing number of immigrants, for both religious and business purposes (Al-Shareef, 2003).

The planning stage:

Between 1970 and 1990, Saudi Arabia had benefited its maximum from oil revenues and the government started implementing five Five-Year Development Plans. The first Five-Years Development Plan focused on infrastructure development, such as improvement of sewerage and potable water systems, constructing public facilities and establishing paved and lighted roads. Makkah was one of the larger cities to benefit from

this plan, which caused a massive urban growth not only in Makkah but also for Saudi Arabia on a global level (Al Hammad, 1995). Saudi Arabia was one of the most urbanized countries in 1990 with a percentage of 77.3% urban comparing to 10 – 16% urban in 1950 (Frisbie, 1995). (Exhibit 2)

Slums in Makkah had emerged during this era even with the government development plans because of the following reasons. First, the local and foreigner migration reaches its maximum. Second, there was an imbalance in the regional development. Also, in Makkah, real estate market did not afford suitable and affordable housing for the new settlers and renting prices exceeded this group financial capabilities. Another reason, due to an absence of the state control the new settlers, with their desire for acquisition, were able to use a lands that lacks certainty regarding their ownership. Finally, the government's planning authorities failed to create urban areas for those immigrants with limited income (Al-Shareef, 2003).

Mecca's slums characteristics

Social and economic characteristics:

Most of Makkah slums' inhabitants are low-income non-Saudis, with the average of 74% non-Saudis citizens. In type 2, however, the percentage of non-Saudis increases to 84%. Moreover, in each slum different nationality communities clustered together. For instance, in type 3 most of the inhabitants are originally from Sub-Saharan Africa. In type 2, however, most of the inhabitants are from Southeast Asia, 38% from Porma, 32% from Pakistan and 9% from Bangladesh. Also, many of them are illegal immigrants who

loitered their legal migration periods, and most of them came to Makkah either for religious or economic purposes. Therefore, slums are a suitable choice to accommodate such a group. On the other hand, most the Saudi citizens are concentrating in type 1 slums. The very convincing reason behind that is because type 1 slums had developed during the Pre-oil era, which all of its early settlers were immigrants from the Saudi nomadic-rural tribes (Al-Shareef, 2003).

The average monthly income for a single household in type 2 and 3 slums is less than 2,000 Saudi Riyal (533 USD) this number represent 63% of the inhabitants, compared to the average Saudi household income which is 8,500 SR (2,250 USD). Moreover, 58% of type 3 slums live with less than a 1,000 SR (266 USD). These amounts indicate that most of Makkah's slums inhabitants are those with limited income and foreigner labor. On the other hand, 45% of type 1 slums' residents have an average monthly income that exceeded 4,000 SR (1,066 USD). Also, 74% of the slums' inhabitants, in all types, own cars (Al-Shareef, 2003).

In Makkah's slums, uncertainty regarding land ownership is a critical issue, where two parties claim their ownership of the lands. First, there are the actual owners who still reclaim their rights of ownerships. Second, there are residents and owners who acquired these lands randomly without any rights (Al-Shareef, 2003).

Beside the social and economic situation safety in slums is a critical issue to discuss. Based on Makkah slums' demographic condition, especially in type 2 and 3, many inhabitants are those illegal immigrants with low-income who contribute in serious social issues such as, increasing the crime rate and drugs trading. These issues made the

local authorities classifying Makkah's slums as "dangerous neighborhoods" (Kansawi, 2008).

Physical characteristics:

According to (Al-Shareef, 2003), all three types of slums in Makkah share the following physical characteristics:

- Compiled physical masses and accumulation of buildings that have been built on unplanned bases, which creates a complex disorderly urban pattern.
- Lack of an organized pattern in terms of building themes, which were constructed without any aesthetic elements, and most of the buildings are covered with sheet metal or plywood. (Exhibit 3)
- Congested and narrowed streets that lacking unity, capacity and quality and which not accommodates cars movements. The average street width is 3 – 5 meter. (Exhibit 4)
- Shortage in social services facilities, such as, educational, health and sports institutions.
- Availability of infrastructural services, such as, electricity, sewers and water systems, and paved roads.
- Valuable strategic locations within the city of Makkah.
- Disproportionate lands subdivision, with 80% residential, 14% un-built & 6% commercial & residential uses.

Buildings condition

According to (Al-Shareef, 2003), in type 2 & 3 slums 67% of the buildings are in a poor condition with cracks on their walls and with an unfinished appearance and only 15% of the building structures are in a good condition. On the other hand, in type 1 slums 38% of the buildings are in a good condition and only 35% are in a poor condition. The reason behind that is because most of type 1 residents are Saudis who are able to take advantage of governmental subsidies programs, such as “ Saudi Real State Development Fund”, which provides the citizens with interest-free loans.

Similar to other slums around the world, 85% of Makkah’s slums consist of one to two story buildings. And 65% of these buildings been built with a reinforced concrete, 32% wood & blocks and 3% plywood and sheet metals (Shareef, 2003).

Makkah’s slums occupy almost one third of the city’s built environment (Al-Shareef, 2001). Different categories of slums have been extended over a variety of locations. Some slums have emerged within mountain enclaves; spatially type 1 slums, away from the state oversight. (Exhibit 5). Other slums have emerged on strategic locations with proximity of major roads, such as type 2 slums. Yet, type 3 slums have developed on the western side of the city of Makkah, which is one of the main entrances for the city and the only way to the nearest airport. In all, most slums have emerged within Makkah’s built environment boundaries (Al-Shareef, 2003).

The Saudi government response to Makkah's slums issue

In Aug 2005, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz became the king of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as a successor for his brother King Fahad bin Abduaziz who had ruled the kingdom for twenty-three years. As a common tradition of his predecessors, King Abdullah initiated a new expansion for the Holy mosque of Makkah, yet, this expansion was the greatest ever with an estimated cost of 80 Billion SR (21,330 Billion USD). This project is supervised by Makkah's Development Authority, which is a subordinate of Makkah's Municipality. This expansion was not only about raising the Holy Mosque capacity, but also, to improve the Holy city of Makkah at large. Thus, improving Makkah's built environment was one of the main goals of this project, which includes upgrading all the slums in Makkah.

Prince Khalid Alfaisal, Makkah province's governor who was in office in May 2007 to Dec 2013, was supervising both Makkah's municipality and the development authority. In 2008, Khalid Alafaisal, had launched a program that tends to improve and to develop slum settlements, in the province of Makkah with a privet sectors partnership. The king acknowledged the program and ordered to appoint a special executive committee for the program.

Slums development regulation:

In May 2008, Makkah's municipality had introduced a regulation for developing slums in the province of Makkah. The regulation states an establishment of a governmental company, as a development and urban regeneration company. The function of the company is to coordinate with the private sectors development and urban

regeneration companies. Thus, in 2009 Makkah's government established *Albalad Alameen* Development and Urban Regeneration Company (ABAM).

The regulation also states seven rules that should be taken in consideration during any development and urban regeneration process:

- 1- Improving the slums' social and economical situation and identify their inhabitants' identity.
- 2- Stimulating any investments opportunities and urban enhancement to increase the economical factor in order to join these areas with beneficial real estate markets.
- 3- Adapting new Building codes to insure investment potentials for the areas.
- 4- Facilitating the legislative procedure to obtain property deeds for landholders after developing the slums.
- 5- Finding an effective ways to prevent the emergence or the expansions of the slums.
- 6- Adapting the sustainable development principle in developing the slums.
- 7- Supporting the involvement of private sectors in the development process.

The regulation also stated that each slum in Makkah should be categorized under one of the following types:

- Slums that have investment potentiality and encourage private sectors to participate in developing them.

- Slums that do not have investment potentiality and do not encourage private sectors to participate in developing them.
- Slums that have self-improvement and development potentials.
- Slums that needs a fractional urgent improvement.

It is also stated methodologies to deal with each slum based on its type and provides procedures to manage land ownership based on standards that insures owner rights, whether the owner is the government, citizen or non-citizen, also the regulation stated standers to preserve any historical areas (Makkah's slums regulation, 2008).

Based on the first rule in the regulation, a survey to evaluate the social and economic condition should be prepared before any development process. The reason behind such a survey is to insure household's rights either as owners or renters. Their rights include real estate indemnification and suitable displacement.

The regulation also considered the illegal immigrants inhabitants issue, by letting the local security committee evaluating their situation, and if their situation were legally fixed they will be treated as any legal non-citizen residents (Makkah's slums regulation, 2008).

Makkah's first slum upgrading project:

According to Alriyadh journal (April 5, 2012 - Vol. 15991), 121 researchers from both ABAM and *Ektefaa*, a non-governmental organization, had completed a survey that

evaluated the social and the economic situation for 21,535 units in two of Makkah's slums, *Al-sharashif* and *Goz Alnakasa*, both slums considered as a type 2 slums.

Based on the above survey *Al-sharashif* slum was considered as a slum that has investment potentiality and encourage private sectors to participate in developing it. Therefore, Makkah's government and ABAM determined to start an upgrade project for the slum, and announced in Nov 2013 that *Al-sharashif* slum is an under-development area. Consequently, ABAM started arbitrating landownership matters, after receiving landholders and residents, meanwhile preparing the first Master Plan for the area.

(Exhibit 6)

In Dec 2013, Makkah's government had announced the establishment of JORHUM company, a private development and urban regeneration company, as a subsidiary for ABAM. JORHUM were assigned to develop the area of *Al-sharashif* slum in the Holy City.

Conclusion

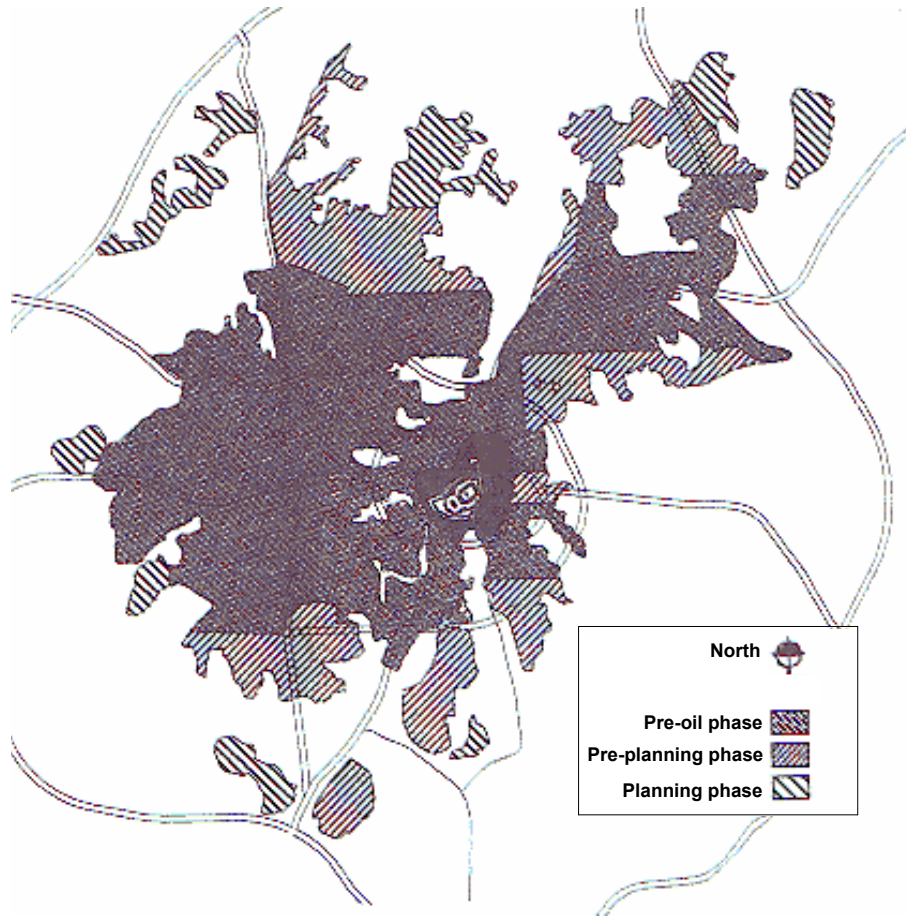
During the twentieth century slums had developed in Makkah, Saudi Arabia, caused by similar causes in another developing countries. For instance, the rural- urban migration which was motivated by global events such as World War I & II, which caused a massive crack in the world's economic situation and forced many rural people to migrate to a proximate urban areas seeking better living conditions. Another opposite reason is the economic growth for certain developing countries such as Saudi Arabia and its surrounding countries, which were benefiting from oil revenues. Saudi Arabia's

government was lacking experience regarding developing plans and concentrated most of its wealth in certain cities such as Makkah, which had created many jobs opportunities and caused an unbalanced regional development. Moreover, Makkah's religious status and as a place for the Muslims' annually Hajj occasion have made it a desirable place for both local and foreign immigrant.

Makkah's slum settlements share a lot of similarities with other slums around the world regarding their inhabitant's social and economic conditions, where most of the inhabitants are low-income immigrant, yet, most of the slums in Makkah have a proper basic infrastructure, such as sewers, electricity and paved roads.

The Saudi government and King Abdullah's willing to improve the Holy city of Makkah initiated mega projects, which include upgrading Makkah's slums. The projects also tend to improve Makkah as city that embody equality and welfare. Meanwhile, the Saudi government, represented by Makkah's governor and the city municipality, has been progressing in the first slum-upgrading project in *Al-sharashif* slum. This project began after a series of stages that include: initiating a regulation for slum upgrading projects, surveying the slum's social and economic condition, and resolving a complex landownership issues.

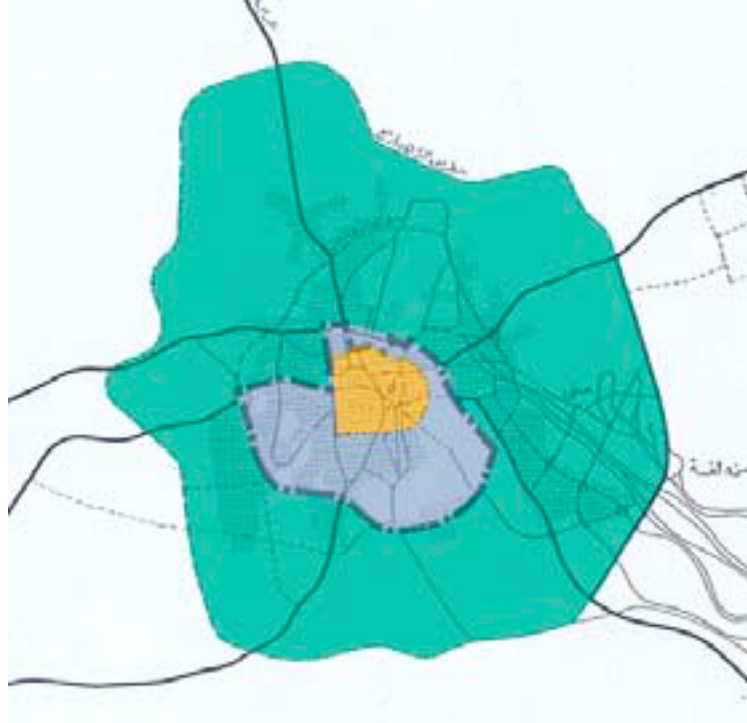
The Saudi government stimulated the private sectors partnership during the construction stages for each slum upgrading projects. Therefore, two development and urban regeneration companies were established ABAM, which represents the Saudi government, and JORHUM, which represents the private sector, for upgrading *Al-sharashif* slum.



(Exhibit 1) Source: (Al-Shareef, 2003)

Year	Population	Changing rate%
1940	60,000	-
1948	100,000	66.7
1968	200,000	100
1971	300,000	50.5
1974	369,000	22.7
1982	559,655	51.5
1984	700,000	25.2
1991	965,500	37.7
2004	1,500,000	54.9

(Exhibit 2) Table shows Makkah's urban growth Source: (Al-Shareef, 2003)



Stages of growth of Makkah's built environment Source: (Al-Shareef, 2003)

Year	Built environment area (hectare)	Changing rate%
1922	140	-
1955	711	408
1975	1,112	56
1982	5,526	397
1999	8,690	57

Stages of growth of Makkah's built environment Source: (Al-Shareef, 2003)



(Exhibit 3) Pictures show Makkah's slums building conditions Source: (Al-Shareef, 2003)



(Exhibit 4) Pictures show Makkah's slums building conditions

Source: (Al-Shareef, 2003)



(Exhibit 5) Pictures show slums in mountain enclaves

Source: (Al-Shareef, 2003)



(Exhibit 6) Proposed master plane for *Al-sharashif* area

Source: ABAM

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