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Representation of the concept of housing in Iranian policy discourse; A phenomenological

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Abstract

Housing policy in Iran over the past four decades has been mainly formulated in the form of programs for the supply and construction of residential units. Without going into the evaluation of the performance of these policies, this article addresses an issue that has received little attention in the literature on housing by raising the question of how policy documents represent "housing" and what relationship this representation has with the concept of "dwelling". By conceptually analyzing Article ۳۱ of the Constitution, the Law on Organizing and Supporting the Production and Supply of Housing, the Law on the Leap of Housing Production, and programs such as the Mehr Housing Program, the National Action, and the National Housing Movement, it is shown that despite differences in implementation methods, all of these documents follow a relatively common conceptual formulation in which the house is mainly understood through concepts such as production, supply, land supply, and residential units. To criticize this formulation, the phenomenological framework of Martin Heidegger and Christian Norberg-Schulz is the basis for such a critique; Because these two thinkers, by distinguishing between «building» and «dwelling» and also between «space» and «place», show that the house is not simply a physical object that can be produced, but rather an arena for the realization of lived experience, belonging, identity, and human being in the world. The results of the conceptual analysis of the documents also show that the fundamental issue of housing policymaking in Iran, rather than being related to the way of implementing programs, is related to the way of defining the subject of policymaking; therefore, rethinking in this area requires a transition from understanding «housing» as a building unit to understanding it as a possibility of «dwelling».

Keywords: Housing policy, Dwelling, Phenomenology, Heidegger, Norberg-Schulz, Policy Discourse, Place

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Has "housing" been equated with "dwelling " in Iranian policy discourse? And if so, what consequences has this synonymy had for the understanding of home and the direction of housing policies?

Extended Abstract

Every public policy is based on a specific understanding of the policy issue, and policy documents, in addition to reflecting reality, also shape the way it is understood with their language and concepts. This article, with a phenomenological and critical approach, focuses on the language and conceptual formulation of policy documents, and examines the representation of the concept of home in Iranian policy discourse. The main issue is how these policies understand "home" and what consequences this understanding has for defining the housing issue.

A review of Article 31 of the Constitution, the Law on Organizing and Supporting the Production and Supply of Housing, Mehr Housing, the National Housing Action, and the National Housing Movement shows that despite the differences in the implementation tools, there is a kind of conceptual continuity in the way the housing issue is understood. The dominant language of these documents revolves around concepts such as production, supply, construction, land provision, transfer, facilities, and organized housing units. Thus, before being a place to live, the house becomes an object for production, appropriation and management, and the existential dimensions of dwelling, such as belonging, identity and lived experience, are marginalized.

The thoughts of Martin Heidegger and Christiane Norberg-Schultz reveal the distinction between "house" and "building unit", "dwelling" and "physical settlement", and "place" and "space". From Heidegger's perspective, building makes sense when it serves dwelling, and from Norberg-Schultz's perspective, humans always live in "place"; a place that allows for identification and a sense of belonging. Therefore, the body is a necessary condition for the realization of the house, but not a sufficient condition.

The conceptual reduction of housing is a consequence of the dominance of technical rationality in defining the problem. Therefore, rethinking housing policy, before changing

The main issue of housing policy in Iran is not simply the shortage of housing units or the effectiveness of executive policies, but rather the way the concept of "housing" is formulated in the policy discourse. Analysis of upstream documents shows that the concept of housing in this discourse is mainly represented through concepts such as production, supply, construction, provision of land and housing units, and as a result, the house is reduced to a producible and manageable body. In contrast, concepts such as residence, place, belonging, identity and lived experience find a marginal position. Therefore, rethinking housing policy, before reforming the executive tools, requires redefining the concept of home and expanding the policy horizon from "housing unit" to "dwelling".

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