

Urban renewal essay sample

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



1. Introduction

Urban renewal refers to a process of land redevelopment mostly done in areas of former moderate to very high levels of urban land usage. This process had a serious effect on the urban landscape of various cities in the past and its effects are still evident to date. It has had a major role in the history and demographics of various large cities around the world, like China, Glasgow, Scotland, Massachusetts, California, London and many others. (www.urbanrenewal.com)

Urban renewal is often controversial and many times results to the reclamation of private property to put up civic projects headed by the state. This is often seen as a way to develop residential slums, commercial and industrial areas. It is also characterized by the demolition of vast areas of the city to be replaced by housing projects, expressways and freeways and many vacant areas. It was solely for renovations and reestablishment in the towns.

Sustainability in cities is challenged by the unprecedented urban growth, as (Surgrue (1998) p. 125), indicates, effort is then made to try and ensure that cities are made viable for latter generations and adequate enough for all communities, both economically and environmental based concepts. Policies and subsidies that encourage auto dependency, racial segregation and suburbanization have been put in place. After the war, in cities like Los Angeles the business and civic and civic elite supported the combination of suburban sprawl and downtown development, leaving out the poor who then did not benefit from either of the two.

Economic and racial disparities led to massive urban riots, as there was pervasive racial discrimination and misconducts of the police. Federal laws on antipoverty and urban renewal programs were put in place, to rebuild the country.

II. The Community Studies

Urban renewal goes way back in history. As the effect of the industrial revolution gripped, in combination with the war and social upheaval impacts on war, physical infrastructure was failing as a result of rapid growth. In the United States of America, it all began after the National Housing Act of 1934 which put in place, the Federal Housing Administration to make better the housing conditions and standards. There was also the formation of the department of Housing and Urban Development. The act was affected to provide housing for less privileged residents of urban areas and also focus on specified areas and neighborhoods for various racial groups. It was also stipulated that some parts of the cities were not qualified for any loans at all. The result of this was that ethnic minorities were only able to acquire mortgages in particular areas and this gave a rise to increased residential racial segregation in America.

1. 1st Community Study.

In 1937, the Housing Act was created and this led to the establishment of the United States Housing Agency and the very first program for public housing that is, the Low Rent Public Housing Program. The program instituted the large public housing projects that marked the urban renewal in the United

States as it recommended the demolishing of slum buildings as a condition to funding the local government's building of new public housing. The Serviceman Readjustment Act saw the transformation of various farmlands into cities occupied by quite a number of families within a few years. (www.urbanrenewal.com)

The reshaping of American cities was kick started by the Housing Act that marked the beginning of the 'urban renewal' era. That act provided federal funds to cities to take up the cost of possessing parts of the cities that were rated as slum areas. Part of the costs was to be covered by the federal government while the local government took up rest. The chosen sites were then handed over to private developers who brought up new housing, and this was referred to as urban development. The provision of the Federal Housing Act mortgages made the building projects more attractive to developers. Pittsburgh was among the very first cities to gain from this, rising from an economically depressed city to one with parks, office buildings and sports arena.

The federal government was given total control over the new highways, which mostly ran directly through urban neighborhoods, rendering other areas isolated, and others destroyed. The main aim of this was to facilitate the movement of traffic in and out of the central cores of these cities as fast as possible and most of this funds for this project came from the government, which led to the a great degradation of the tax bases of many of the cities, isolation of entire neighborhoods. The new infrastructure that ran across the cities meant that the commercial districts in place were bypassed by a majority of the commuters.

There was an increment in segregation as the displacement of communities occurred and

A large number of African Americans and Latinos were forced to take up public housing while their white counterparts went to live in the suburbs in even greater numbers. The government Center in Boston is considered one of the excesses of the urban renewal. Many lobby groups began opposing this renewal projects and the 1964 Civil Rights Acts removed the racial restrictions on housing.

Desegregation started in residential neighborhoods but the real estate agents continued to drive minority to particular areas that they felt suited them or could not be bought by the elite. This led to violent riots that also led the further destruction of some cities like Detroit. In due course, the state was forced to end its constructions under the urban renewal program, although thousands had already lost their homes to the building of highways and expressways.

The goals of this study is to get a clear picture of the beginning of the infrastructure development and the role it had on community development and network. It is by studying this past historical occurrence that we can appreciate its contribution to the enhancement of the community and know what improvements can be made over the same. Having a clear knowledge of how things have developed over time shows which direction they are headed to and how far it has come . It also shows one the methods that had been used before hence offers a good ground for comparison and c

conclusions over what would be the appropriate methods to apply currently.

The method that was used for the community study on urban renewal is books and Internet research. In order to have a systematic and critical scrutiny of the topic of study, it was necessary to consult a source with a historical leaning on urban renewal to obtain documented information on the topic, as interviews would not give a good historical research.

The study revealed that whereas the intentions of the urban renewal might have been genuine, and for the sake of development and renovations, the project was not a success as it created harm to the harmony that existed in the society, creating divisions along racial lines and making financial matters like mortgages unavailable to the minority groups. In general the authorities concerned should have carried out more investigations and predicted what it would have come to in the future.

1.2nd Community Study

After the great failure of the urban renewal period, the policies that had been put in place to facilitate it had to be revised. Like in 1968, the Housing and Urban Development Plan and the New Communities Act guaranteed private entrepreneurs private financing, to plan and develop new communities. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 also established the Community Development Block Grant program that capitalized on the redevelopment of existing neighborhoods and properties, instead of

demolishing housing that was considered substandard and in economically depressed areas.

The state started on monitored selective demolitions, a mix of renovations commercial developments. This was changed from being funded solely by the state, to the use of tax funds to realize these goals. Nonetheless, these efforts still result into formatted patterns where poorer residents that have been forced out of urban areas into suburbs or more depressed areas of the city. However the recent state of urban renewal was still considered as an improvement from the policies of the early 20th century.

There are other additional programs that seek to develop communities and facilitate highly favorable loan programs with additional education on financial literacy to empower poorer residents to afford and manage their restored neighborhoods,(Zimmer (2007) p. 56). Other methods of reestablishment include the empowerment and advocacy for the local people to possess greater control and ownership of the direction of their community and even market performance and overcoming failure

These groups support important aspects of the present concerns in urban renewal like community and development sustainability, participation in development of the community and oneself, and trust of community members and the state. Different cultural programs that involve the cities in the recent past also contribute to the improvement of infrastructure, for example, games and other similar events that take place in these cities. ; Tourism also plays a huge role in the improvement of the infrastructure, as they are developed to attract and maintain prospective customers. Building

of big business attraction elements also make the cities the focus of attraction, aiding the improvement of infrastructure an example is the new art museum in Bilbao that became the focus for a new business district. (Halpern, (2003) p. 120), there is also the funding of projects through lottery and the vibrant cultural and creative sectors.

Urban renewal has played an important role in very many cities throughout the world in the United Kingdom, United States and a great number more. It has especially brought cultural and economic development to numerous cities though this came at a great cost to poorer communities and the ethnic minority that live in these places. The urban renewal program has played a great role in the economic devastation in the major industrial cities in the United States from its beginning in the year 1940, (Correa (1989) p. 125). Urban renewal is however not dead as it continues evolving with its many success stories and failures that are reexamined, and revised models of development and redevelopment are implemented or improved.

III. Conclusions

The main aim of studying the phasing out of the urban renewal is to look at how the whole situation of reconstruction was handled. In this way we get to know their failures and try to find out the reasons behind them. In looking at the urban renewal, again we seek to find out their major and minor successes in the course of the projects and try to find solutions through learning from how the problems were solved then.

Studying the urban renewal also exposes us to the methodologies employed during the reconstruction period, we can then look at how effective they

were and whether they could still be applicable to the present day. When we study the urban renewal, we get to know and understand what extent the infrastructure project has moved and where the focus should be. When we look at the urban renewal, it makes it easier to chart a way forward for present issues with infrastructure as we understand the stakes involved. Since this project also involved money related issues, that experience would be valuable in budgeting for present infrastructure issues, and how allocate loan and mortgages for the different groups of society in a balanced indiscriminative way. Since the urban renewal was the origin of the major segregation, looking at it would help one to learn the roots of segregations and its impact on the present day society. It also serve as a reminder and help avoidance of such situations in the future.

The suitable method of study to explicitly exhaust this subject is, interviews in a field research situation, Internet sources and books on the reconsideration of the urban renewal. The interviews would give firsthand and most current information on the present situation. It would give the real picture of the situation from a practical view. Books that contain both the history and the present situation would give a good comparison of the two periods and historical insights into the reconstruction of the urban renewal and its impact.

The community in the twentieth century was one marred with uncertainties about the community situation that had been threatened by segregation. It depicts how volatile a community is and how such factors can have a great impact on the status of a country. It shows what role the state has to play in

the co-existence of different communities in a country. We get to understand the different lines of divisions in culture and geographical settings of different communities in today's world. In studying these two aspects of urban renewal, we get learn how to resolve problems concerning diversity today.

1. Words Cited

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