

Ognjen Čaldarović, PhD, professor of
sociology, Zagreb University
ognjen.caldarovic@ffzg.hr

*Urban Renewal and Transitional
Society*

content

1. Introduction
2. The Most important processes in urban renewal
3. Major terms and concepts in urban renewal
4. Urban renewal and transitional society
5. New situations and processes
6. The position of city government
7. Conclusion: The Public interest

1. Introduction

- What is urban renewal? Rehabilitation of the degraded parts of cities
- Why? Urban, architectural, social *decay*
- Ageing...
- Changes in the ideas concerning new construction, developments, images ...
- Changes concerning the evaluation of tradition, historical monuments, the past – in general

2. The Most important processes in urban renewal:

- Enlargement of pedestrian zones, mostly in the centres of cities
- Renewal of historic tradition –housing, industrial units, open spaces, green areas, parks, specific millieus
- New construction – interpolations or renovatios of the whole part of a city
- The creation of new construction zones

- Construction of new housing and business buildings
- “Beautification”, refurbishing usually of central parts of cities – new lights, new pavements, new urban “furniture”
- Rehabilitation of old and organization of new green and recreation areas
- Restrictions of the extension of private traffic, especially into central zones
- Better organization, expansion, and multiplication of types and means of public transportation

3. Major terms and concepts in urban renewal

a. Urban renewal

- A process of a comprehensive *restauration* and *reconstruction* of the degraded physical and social structures of a part of a city or even a whole city
- To stop the process of urban degradation, *slumization* and the weakening of the *carrying capacity* of the existing urban social structure
- An example: the case of NYC – in inner sense, in 1940. 7.700.000 inhabitants, also in 1990, but dramatically changed social structures

b. Reconstruction

- A process of change of primarily *physical structure* of a city
- Process, actions: new construction
- Less a process of rehabilitation of the existing structures and social composition of population
- Usually, limited to local issues, indirectly affecting wider areas of the city

c. Revitalization

- Wider and more complex process of urban renewal
- A complex evaluation of the reasons for degradation and the needs for revitalization – of what, why, “how much”, and “how”?
- “Bringing back the life” into the degraded urban situations ...
- Actions, methods, concepts: reconstruction, bringing in “new, more carrying population”, new constructions, rehabilitation of the existing structures and contents, new situations, ...

d. Regeneration

- Similar to revitalization
- Development and implementation of many measures to revitalize, regenerate and reconstruct of the degraded parts of cities, as a whole and/or as parts, milieus
- Actions: reconstruction of the existing structures, situations, construction of new structures and spaces, rehabilitation of “old” parts ...
- Sensitive towards the existing structures that are taken as starting points in the planning of regeneration – what, how, what is “valuable”, where, ...

e. Restoration

- Primarily a process of the renewal of traditional, but degraded elements of physical structures (situations) that used to exist before ...
- Restoration of old layouts of streets, squares, milieus, details... “going backward”
- Reconstruction of industrial architecture
- A combination of the faximil methods, principles of “retraditionalization”, old and new structures ...
- So, reconstruction of old elements but also new construction and replicas of old milieus.
Turistification? Commercialization of the remains of the past?

f. «Gentrification»

- A process of change of social structure of inhabitants, mostly in the degraded parts of the city
- *Type of change* – from poor to rich social structures ...from less to higher *carrying capacity* of the inhabitants ...
- Who will start to live in the regenerated urban conditions ... and ...will introduce “new lifestyles”, bringing in also higher levels of aspirations in consumption...and...
- In that sense expanded the changed structures (“gerntified”) to the wider parts of cities

Major consequences of gentrification

- Change of the “structure of contents”- from simple to more exclusive; the rise of the property values, commercial business
- A change in the regulation and ways of “the use of a city” – from public space, to the semi or completely private use (restrictions)
- A proces of “beautification” is taking place through new housing structures, interpolations, new (fancy) restaurants, shops and other elements of structures of contents

- A process of division of urban population to the “connected” and “not-connected” (M. Castells)
- Creation of a “dual city” (Castells, Harvey)
- «*Gentrification*» - usually a result of private initiatives, but also as an effort of the forces of city administration and private, corporate investors
- *Loft living* – Sh. Zukin – an example of gentrification in the 1980s in the Lower Manhattan

4. Urban renewal and transitional society

- a. Urban reconstruction – in a way of new business and housing construction
- Application of “dotted, locational, or project” planning principles (“unique objects”, structures)
 - The emergence of iconic figures and structures ...
 - The existing parts of cities are getting nothing through reconstruction, no real rehabilitation of the condition of life

- b. Urban revitalization –almost non existing, plans for extremely degraded areas do not exist, the citizens are not consulted about priorities and ways of revitalization.
- c. «Gentrification»- partly in the central part of Zagreb; tendency, most probably to continue; first examples of “private housing settlements” (gated communities) and “urban villas”

5. New situations and processes:

- *The emergence of private investor – corporate investor*
- The competences, rights and duties of the investor are not yet precisely defined and prescribed in rules and laws in the regulation of city planning
- A example: the introduction of garages in the core of Zagreb financed from the communal money...represented as “public interest”

6. The position of city government

- City government do not understand the principles of democratic decision making in urban planning?
- Clear criteria what to protect as historical monuments do not exist?
- Where is a plan for comprehensive urban renewal?
- What is really a public interest?

7. Conclusion: The Public interest

- It is not clear who define it, what it represents, what are the priorities...fountains, garages, of sewerage systems, running water provisions, retirement homes, kindergarten...
- The positions of citizens, city government, experts, investors...and other “stakeholders” must be much clearer defined – how to harmonize divergent interestsremains a question...

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION