Urban Planning as Interdisciplinary Research in Human Studies

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As the interventions of architects and urban designers in the built environment have a significant direct and indirect impact on peoples' lives, such as its consequences on a city's racial and ethnic composition, urban planning and design must integrate interdisciplinary research from the field of human studies to its processes.

In the early twentieth century, the expansion of highway transportation systems brought on the exit of middle-class families to the suburbs. The consequent decline in the populations of cities caused tax bases to shrink. This decline in municipal revenues had several knock-on effects: investment in urban areas decreased, inner cities deteriorated, rates of crime rose, and the incidence of poverty increased (Richardson & Franco, 2019). Crime and poverty, the human manifestations of the descent of the city, came to be seen as one of the main urban issues.

The 1950s and 1960s marked the beginning of a discernible era of inner-city revitalization in many cities in northern America. Aiming to improve the quality of life in inner-city neighborhoods, different approaches, some of them very invasive, were taken (DeVerteuil, 1993). In most cases, the problematic neighborhoods were destroyed, and either redeveloped as commercial or residential space or replaced with public places, such as parks. In the 1960s, slum clearance became the key measure of urban renewal projects (Kahler & Harrison, 2020).

Everything proceeded very quickly; effective decision making was equated with quick decision-making; very invasive architectural interventions were approved with astounding speed. Rapid and dramatic change was imposed on many cities.

Sudbury, like many cities in Northern America, welcomed a period of prosperity in the mid twentieth century. The city was the quickest developing city and perhaps the richest city in Canada for a large portion of the 1930s (Hall, 2009). The city began to think that it required a renewal plan to solve its inner-city problems. An urban renewal project during the 1960s expropriated the historic downtown Borgia Street area and razed to make room for a large shopping mall facility. The occupants of Borgia Street were compelled to leave their neighborhood.

This research will examine the consequences of Sudbury's urban renewal plan, as well as others during this period of urban planning history. Such urban redeveloping projects wiped out entire neighborhoods, in some cases, the redevelopment of the neighborhood was based on a new zoning and a new use. While some new residential units and new urban facilities were made available through redevelopment, the new accommodation often was not affordable for the former residents

of the area. They would have had no other choice but to leave in order to find a place to live commensurate with their means.

As municipalities occupied themselves wiping out their inner-city neighborhoods and ridding themselves of its resident population, they also had the luxury of choosing their alternative residents for their redeveloped areas. Not surprisingly, they chose white middle-class families; the poor and Indigenous communities found themselves marginalized or excluded from the selection process through their lack of financial means (Teaford, 2000). Such urban redevelopment projects have Criticism for systematically marginalizing the poor and minorities in favor of property prices has been a hallmark of such urban development projects (Watson, 2009).

The concept of gentrification captures the reciprocal social movement of exclusion and inclusion, exclusion of poverty and cultural and racial diversity, inclusion of bourgeois wealth with its attendant cultural uniformity. The process of gentrification changes the character of a neighborhood by bringing in more affluent residents to it (Lees et al., 2010). It transforms a neighborhood's racial and ethnic composition and its average household income. This produces spatial segregation which is the result of application of the concept of zoning based on social classes (Avila & Rose, 2009).

In other cases, neighborhoods were destroyed and in their stead, public places were built. In these instances, urban renewal plans completely ignored the rights of the former residents and denied them any possibility of staying in their neighborhoods. The former residences were marginalized (Fainstein, 2009). That is an apt description of what happened to the Borgia street area. Interestingly, such plans were very popular with city authorities for two reasons, First, they allowed them to satisfy voters by providing them with new public places, in the case of Borgia Street a new public shopping mall, while they pretended to solve the problem of poverty. In fact, such approaches are not a resolve the poverty which structures the life of the residents of these areas; they just shift the poor to somewhere else, somewhere out of sight, somewhere out of mind.

This picture from Mumbai speaks to poverty[1], on the left side, and redevelopment on the right side. Displaced from the redeveloped area, the poor have rebuilt close by their former neighborhood. They are still deprived; in addition, they have lost their neighborhood and only have memories.

This research will show that urban renewal plans provide authorities with the opportunity to manipulate the races and social classes composing a neighborhood. This power is a big threat to spatial justice in cities. When urban planners make a change in a city, not only do they make physical changes, but these physical changes deeply impact many diverse aspects of society, often contributing to spatial injustice. Therefore, urban renewal plans should be prepared by teams composed of researchers in different areas of human studies. This will allow for advance consideration of the potential varied human consequences of urban renewal plans.

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[1] Johnny Miller's photo series *Unequal Sciences* is available here: https://unequalscenes.com/mumbai

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