EXPLORING THE CONCEPT OF URBAN RENEWAL IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT
Transformation is the single most consistent factor in the life of a city. How to control or direct transformations to get the best combination of benefits from renewal and redevelopment is perpetual issue for the planners, as how to decide for the spatial sustainability as per its available potentials, they are also dynamic in nature and inevitable for change. The prevailing planning system emphasizes mostly on the future planning and development of urban areas by acquisition of land and does not address distinctly the problems of existing cities. Because, planning in India has followed the western role models of technocratic planning. Technocratic planning is now obsolete, and that planning tools have not been able to contain growth in sustainable ways. In India there is an amazing amalgamation of infrastructure from several centuries in the form of haphazardly built layers of urban fabric under which the common urbanite of India feels suffocated and crushed. Unlike their western counterparts the Indian urban settlements never had the fortune (or the misfortune) of being reduced as ruins of war and thereby necessitating the need for fresh development and renewal. The paper attempts to highlight the understanding of the concept of urban renewal.

1. INTRODUCTION
Every city is affected by trends of transformations or the process of change. The term decline in the context of urban development is used to describe undesirable changes. Local policies and strategies designed to deal with urban decline, decay or transformation are termed as urban renewal. Roberts and Sykes (2000) state that 'Urban renewal can be defined as a comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of an area that has been subject to change'. In Eurocities (1996) it is noted that urban renewal is about the sustainable development of cities which is holistic in approach, and targeted at economic and cultural redevelopment, social cohesion and physical rehabilitation of cities.

2. DIMENSIONS OF URBAN RENEWAL
Different definitions given by planners, academicians and researchers aim at sustainability by integrating the different dimensions of urban renewal. These are:

- Physical renewal leads to improvement of urban fabric;
- Social renewal leads to improvement of community and housing;
- Cultural renewal promotes enhancement of culture and traditions;
- Economic renewal leads to new generation of employment and revenue; and
- Environmental renewal leads to minimizing ecological imbalances in urban environment

Urban renewal is a dynamic term, which is evolved with reference to transformations of city and its economy. It refers to the various attempts to reverse the decline in cities that have been worst hit by the capitalist urbanization.

Most of the cities have large blighted areas, with severe stress on the existing, aged infrastructure and services. Many of them have lost businesses, and are functioning at sub-optimal productivity levels. Notwithstanding the valuable land on which such areas stand, they contribute little to city finances. Maintaining them in their present state without any returns has become a liability.

It is important also to recognize that renewal embraces more holistic perspectives such as economic and social improvement. Urban renewal
seeks ways to improve disadvantaged places and the lives of people who live and work there. Regeneration and renewal activities are varied and may reflect joined-up holistic or relatively less integrated programmes of physical, social and economic change.

3. CHANGING PERSPECTIVES OF URBAN RENEWAL

Urban renewal is controversial, as it often implies the use of eminent domain law to enforce reclaiming private property for civic projects. While envisioned as a way to redevelop residential slums and blighted commercial areas, ‘renewal’ often resulted in the creation of urban sprawl - vast areas being demolished and replaced by freeways and expressways, housing projects, and vacant lots - some of which remained vacant at the beginning of the 21st century. Urban renewal was widely resisted by movements of residents of US in it is the then contemporary form. In 1961 the book ‘The Death and Life of Great American Cities’ by Jane Jacobs led to organized movements to oppose urban renewal.

While renewal projects did revitalize many cities, it was often at a high cost to existing communities, and in many cases simply resulted in the destruction of vibrant - if run down - neighborhoods. Urban renewal in its original form has been called a failure by many urban planners and civic leaders, and has since been reformulated with a focus on redevelopment of existing communities. However, many cities link the revitalization of the central business district and gentrification of residential neighborhoods to earlier urban renewal programs. Over time, urban renewal evolved into a policy based less on destruction and more on renovation and investment, and today is an integral part of many local governments, often combined with small and big business incentives.

Urban renewal has become a multi-dimensional task. Whilst traditionally urban renewal in Europe was mainly concerned with physical improvement, over time the aims and the means of regeneration have become multi-faceted and more complex to deal with. They integrate different sectors and actors on several levels and contexts, combining physical investment in ‘hardware’ with investment in the social ‘software’ of a neighborhood. It is against in this background that partnership led regeneration becomes pivotal.

Cases and experience suggests strongly that a new set of regeneration aim is emerging that reflects the objectives to integrate ‘people, business and place’ and bring about appropriate policies to achieve this aim. They are embedded in wider city and national aims and strategies; they promote the objective of community capacity building and aim at delivering tangible changes and exploit the geographical competitiveness of the neighborhood in the long run.

As urban renewal is becoming a multi-dimensional task it not only integrates various dimensions of urban development. It also has to manage tensions and conflicts between them. In order to balance the occurring ambiguities, urban renewal policies often work with a hierarchical system of primary and secondary aims – the more aims there are, the more important is the need to prioritize aims. In some cases, at the local level there are efforts to make this agenda setting more transparent and more based on democratic processes.

Traditional physical approaches to urban renewal were mainly concerned with outputs. They were conceived in a static fashion as objectives to be achieved: to improve the physical environment. The new integrated approaches are much more concerned with processes of neighborhood development themselves. They are flexible and see the renewal process as a learning system.

Renewal is being redefined yet again, this time fitting into a politics concerned with social inclusion.
**Fig. 2 Paradigm Shifts: Concept of Urban Renewal in Developed and Developing Nations.**

- **United Kingdom**: Reconstruction
  - Focus on urban landscape
- **United State**: Historic preservation
  - Physical fabric
- **India**: Historic preservation
  - Physical infrastructure

- **Reconstruction**: Focus on urban landscape
- **Revitalization**: Focus on social and cultural dimension
- **Renewal**: Physical, social and economic dimensions
- **Redevelopment**: Community oriented
- **Regeneration**: Holistic and integrated

**Fig. 3 Conceptual Framework of Urban Renewal: Indian interpretation**

- **Physical renewal**:
  - Reconstruction, Restoration, Renovation, Replacement, Augmentation, Improving infrastructure.
  - Demolition, Destruction, Dislocation.

- **Social renewal**:
  - Rehabilitation, Social security, Upgrading Quality of life.
  - Removal of obsolescence, Eradicating deprivation, Removing decline and distress

- **Economic renewal**: Employment opportunities, Generation of funds, Revenue generation, Upgrading reforms, Build local economies, Tax incentives.

- **Environmental renewal**: Improve the quality of a local environment, Balancing ecosystem, Restore sustainability, Preserve environment sensitive open spaces, Utilization of natural resources.

- **Cultural renewal**: Creative tourism, Inspire civic pride, Marketing of urban culture, Preservation of cultural and historic heritage, Use of new technologies for improved management of archaeological, historic and religious collections

- **Urban renewal**:
  - Re-allocation of land uses, Renovation and adaptive reuse of historic areas, Redevelopment of blighted areas, Development of Physical urban infrastructure.
  - Rehabilitation of weaker sections, Upgrading of community spaces, Poverty alleviation programmes, Social Awareness camps.
  - Emphasis on utilization of fund rather than fund generation, Revenue generation mainly through taxation and charges.
  - Emphasis on conserving nature, Developing oxygen spaces, Awareness to sustainability issues.
  - Conservation of heritages sites traditionalist, nationalistic and modernist approach for cultural renewal.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Policy Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1950's</strong></td>
<td><strong>1960's</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Major strategy and orientation</strong></td>
<td>Reconstruction and extension of older areas of towns and cities often based on a Master Plan, suburban growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key actors and stakeholders</strong></td>
<td>National and local government private sector developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spatial activity level</strong></td>
<td>Local and site level</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic focus</strong></td>
<td>Public sector investment with some private sector involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social context</strong></td>
<td>Improvement and housing and living standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical context</strong></td>
<td>Replacement of inner areas and peripheral development Gentrification in UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental approach</strong></td>
<td>Landscaping and some greenery</td>
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It seems to recognize that there is such a thing as communities and that these communities, damaged by deindustrialization and neglect, need help. It is not socialism and certainly not municipal socialism, the pressure is on local government to support, not dictate to, local people. If there is a ‘third way’ it might be found in the best of the renewal initiatives.

4. URBAN RENEWAL IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Indian cities in history emerged with two primary characteristics first - a high density of population concentrated within a limited space and second a predominantly non-agricultural, particularly non-cultivating occupation of these people (Amos and Hawley, 1971). Indians by and large have been nature oriented rather than city oriented. The report of the National Commission on Urbanization (National Commission on Urbanization Reports Volume - II, 1988) made commendable proposals to change the paradigm of urban planning to become more responsive to the existing urban condition, but without success.

Indian experience of urban renewal is fairly recent, though several cities, particularly metropolises, have been attempting to tackle the problem of decline and dilapidation through ad-hoc initiatives. In diverse and complex nature of Indian society, problems are different, contexts differ, needs change, and therefore, policies and programme to deal with each city and town would also differ. For example, urban renewal of Jaipur city would be conservation and restoration of its cultural heritage of being a pink city while in Delhi it would be effective use of traditional core areas or in Calcutta it would revolve around the phenomenon of bastis as providing ameliorative measures. Basically it can be at macro level like redevelopment of inner city core or at micro scale like traffic operation plan, conservation of old buildings and up gradation of services, depending upon the character or issues of town or a city.

There is absence of holistic and integrated approach in understanding the term urban renewal. The six dimensions of urban renewal should be integrated focusing at quality of life. The prevailing planning tool, master plan, does not incorporate the integrated concept of renewal.

The concept of renewal was restricted to conservation of heritage sites in early master plan of metro cities. No specific efforts were made for development of heritage zones. Even the present urban renewal mission is more inclined towards provision of infrastructure rather than renewal. The redevelopment is taking place only on the prime locations of the cities occupied by slums without proper social and economic interventions resulting into displacement of slums.

5. CONCLUSIONS

For the success of any planning, diagnosis and measurement of urban health is a prerequisite. Unfortunately there is no scale for measuring urban decline, urban stress or deprivation which do not alarm when the city reaches the threshold. There is a need to establish causal relationship and correlation between the six dimensions of urban renewal. This can be achieved by further breaking up each dimension in the form of indicators which can be measured and scaled quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

Proper understanding of the concept of urban renewal we can target changing problem spaces to opportunity spaces. In Long term perspective of the cities can manage to grow old gracefully.

REFERENCES