

Renewing the Urban Regeneration Approach in Hong Kong

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Abstract

The present research focused on formulating a comprehensive urban regeneration approach for Hong Kong by conducting a background study of the region, acknowledging the urban regeneration in United States and United Kingdom, and referencing the foreign experiences from Japan, South Korea, and Singapore. Secondary data analysis along with the comparative research method is used to study the raw materials across time and territory to gain the insights by identifying and explaining the similarities and differences of urban redevelopment procedure. Comparative variables included the institutional structure, number of planning system, level of urban redevelopment, role and approach adopted by government, as well as the level of public participation. Results indicated that the top-down approach of Hong Kong was still in the level of urban renewal, with a loose and messy structure and very little public participation. The findings suggested that while the Hong Kong Government was trying its best to improve the urban regeneration approach in a micro perspective, it missed out a long-sighted and comprehensive vision on urban regeneration. To improve the level of urban redevelopment, a macro-level of restructuring the government institutions, information database, and public participation is needed. Implication of the study includes giving a reference for other Asian cities and unifying the urban regeneration approach into an empirical theory through cultural comparison.

Introduction

To promote it as a world class city, Hong Kong is experiencing numerous and rapid changes in the society, including economic restructuring, policy review, and urban redevelopment. However, due to the local economic recession and the weak community development among districts, the redevelopment speed in Hong Kong is far behind the schedule. The Hong Kong Government was trying their best to tackle the challenges on the effectiveness of the traditional approach of urban redevelopment. However, conflicts between the government and public over urban redevelopment becoming a hot issue in Hong Kong.

On 25 September 2011, a group of Sham Shui Po citizens launched a parade to four reconstruction sites to protest against the rising property prices in Sham Shui Po since the expensive, private mansions constructions (Anon 2011). The spokesman of the group reflected that the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and Hong Kong Housing Society (HKHS) kept allowing those property constructions without accepting their opinions, which is totally contradicted to the stand of Hong Kong Government. According to the Policy Address (Information Services Department, 2010), the urban regeneration strategy “is based on the core values of people orientation, public engagement and respect for local characteristics” (p. 35). Later, the government explained that there is a miscommunication between the government, URA, HKHS, and the public. However, this is not the first or only case of conflicts on urban issues; ranging from the issue of Lee Tung Street, Queen’s Pier, to the issue of Wing Lee Street, the government, property developers, and public were arguing about the urban regeneration approach for Hong Kong.

More and more citizens concerning about the urban issues which reflected that there is a social need to review the traditional urban redevelopment approach and try to

explore a new approach of urban regeneration in Hong Kong.

Goals & Objectives

The aim of this research is to formulate a comprehensive urban regeneration approach by reviewing Hong Kong's urban redevelopment problems and learning from foreign countries' experiences, i.e. United Kingdom, Japan and Singapore etc. The objectives included:

1. to identify and distinguish the characteristics of urban redevelopment, urban renewal, and urban regeneration;
2. to study the foreign experiences of urban regeneration and bring inspiration to Hong Kong; and
3. to explore a urban regeneration framework for Hong Kong by conducting a background study including reviewing the problems of urban redevelopment approach and corresponding policy

Research Design & Methodology

Since urban redevelopment is an ongoing process and background works of Hong Kong and other countries had been carried out by scholars in the field of urban studies and mass media, secondary data analysis is adopted in this study. The method provides a unique opportunity to study raw materials across time and territory to provide bases for comparison by capturing comprehensive and historical information. Meanwhile, a comparative research method is adopted with the secondary data analysis to enable comparisons across different countries. With this multidisciplinary approach, the similarities and differences of urban redevelopment across countries can be identified and explained (Smelser 1976).

For the case selection, the Ground Theory is used as the specific socio-economic content plays the major role in comparing the urban regeneration systems in different geographic locations (Thelen and Steinmo 1999). Moreover, the systemic functionalism believes institutional structuring and their practices are very important when comparing the system among different countries. From these two aspects, significant characteristics can be drawn from divergence to convergence. However, it is important that the theory and practices is needed to compare separately. Meanwhile, case-oriented analysis is adopted in order to compare the concepts of urban regeneration through generalizing a small-N case study (Ragin 1987). Therefore, this study focuses on the institution structure, and how they deal with urban regeneration by using policies in general and their practices in case study.

This study has compared the theory and practices of urban redevelopment separately. For the theory part, the explanation and elaboration for the term 'urban redevelopment', 'urban renewal', and 'urban regeneration' will be examined, as well as their strengths, weaknesses and impacts. Definitions of urban redevelopment, urban renewal, and urban regeneration are mainly based on information from United States and United Kingdom as these places have undergone enormous urban changes that such terms are well-defined by scholars.

For the practice part, three countries including Japan (Tokyo), South Korea (Seoul), and Singapore are selected for case study. Since these four cities, including Hong Kong, are all Asian world-class cities that have experienced compressed modernity which is a very fast economic development with a huge population growth. As a result, various hazardous effects have created in social, political, and cultural life (Chang 2010). Moreover, according to the Human Development Index (HDI), all four countries are classified into the very high human development group in the world

(United Nations Development Programme 2011), which is shown in Table 1. It indicated that the four countries have similar socioeconomic status which is easier for comparison.

Table 1. Human Development Index (HDI) among four countries from 2008 to 2011.

	2011	2010	2009	2008
Japan	0.901 (12)	0.884 (11)	0.960 (10)	0.956 (8)
Hong Kong	0.898 (13)	0.862 (21)	0.944 (24)	0.942 (22)
South Korea	0.897 (15)	0.877 (12)	0.937 (26)	0.928 (25)
Singapore	0.866 (26)	0.846 (27)	0.944 (23)	0.918 (28)

* HDI value is ranged from 0 to 1, the brackets represent the HDI ranking in the world

Source: Human Development Report, United Nations Development Programme, 2011.

Based on the research method, some comparable variables are needed for a systematic analysis. In this study, comparable variables included i) institutional structure, ii) number of planning system, iii) level of urban redevelopment, iv) government role, v) approach used by the government, and vi) level of public participation will be used. They are defined mainly based on the study's focus.

Urban redevelopment, urban renewal and urban regeneration

At the very beginning, the public awareness on urban development issue was about the urban social movement. This form of social protest has been occurred over 30 years, and according to Chui and Lai (1994), a number of urban protests were found in the period of 1980-1991. Later, this kind of social movement was increasing, especially when democracy was introduced into the political system.

From a sociological perspective, these urban social movements are regarded as an important agent of social change (Zukin 1980). A city is an integration of market, political authority and community. When the city is developed in a positive way, it means there is good maintenance between the three parties. However, if imbalanced situation occurs, such as the community is facing the exploitation by the market or the domination by the government, these collective actions will be occurred for the protection of community (Walton 1993).

Therefore, the urban social movement is defined as

“a system of practices resulting from the articulation of the particular conjuncture, both by the insertion of the support-agents in the urban structure and in the social structure, and such that its development tends objectively towards structural transformation of the urban system or towards a substantial modification of the power relations in the class struggle, that is to say, in the last resort, in the state of power.” (Castells 1977, p. 432)

This idea has inspired by the Marxist urban sociology in the urban political aspect.

The practice of the urban social movement can be explained by the resource mobilization theory. Urban social movement is regarded as the product of the political participation of rational people. This view is an innovative idea that contrasts with the dominant classical perspective that believed the collective actions were participated by a group of irrational people (Pickvance 1977).

Past Studies

The idea of conducting studies of urban redevelopment was first come from the studies of cultural heritage. Issue of cultural heritage has become more popular in Hong Kong in recent years. Scholars and citizens had raised their concerns on balancing urban development between building new buildings and tourist attractions, and preserving cultural heritages which done by the Hong Kong Government. Cheung (1999) has made a concern that Hong Kong was building a new heritage for foreigners but not keeping the traditional one. He though Hong Kong Government was pulling down many heritage which represent the uniqueness of Hong Kong. Henderson (2001) has emphasized that Hong Kong should protect its own cultural identity by promoting its historical and cultural heritages as tourist attractions rather than just building those glamorous shopping malls. Therefore, there was an urgent call for urban redevelopment in Hong Kong so as to improve the urban fabrics with appropriate development.

The Gap between Government and Citizens

Conflicts generated from the urban issue became more vigorous after the implementation of urban redevelopment by the URA and HKHS in Hong Kong (Henderson 2008). Although the Hong Kong Government has tried its best to improve the urban redevelopment system, it seems that the result was not accepted by the general public and opposition even emerged. To show the gap between government and citizens, both ideas towards urban redevelopment was compared by scholars.

In the aspect of heritage preservation, the Hong Kong Government was aimed to promote tourism and to maximize social and economic benefits. However, the public concern retaining the local characteristics and protecting the heritages as they represent local cultural identity and continuity. Additionally, citizens believed that the local district residents should have the greatest right to decide the fate of the heritages, whether to be preserved, revitalized or demolished, in order to fulfill the needs of local community (Ma 2008).

It is obvious that the government and citizens had different interpretations on preservation. Government regarded preservation as merely a tool for development while citizens took it as the most important factor retaining local characteristics and strengthening cultural identity. The differences in interpreting preservation lead to conflicts among them. Apart from the definition difference, the weaknesses of the preservation system were also an important factor that contributed to the citizens against the preservation policies.

Firstly, there were only a few valuable heritages could be preserved under the grading system in historic buildings and sites. Currently in Hong Kong, there were totally 1,457 historical buildings that were being graded or declared as historic buildings or monuments. However, there were only 101 (about 7%) declared monuments and proposed monuments that must not be demolished by government. For the remaining buildings, government could demolish them even they were Grade I Historical Buildings (AMO 2012). It implied that preservation by government was based on the principle of profit maximization. Under the grading system, valuable heritages might also be torn down by government for economic development.

Secondly, government tends to preserve the heritages by adaptive re-use which might lead to the loss in tangible and intangible values of the buildings. Since adaptive re-use was not merely preservation but also alteration of the original use and injection of new elements for business, such as lifts and air-conditioners would destroy the original fabric of the heritage. The Former Marine Police Headquarter Compound is an

example to illustrate the difference after adaptive re-use for business use.

About the urban redevelopment, the Hong Kong Government was trying its best in ameliorating the physical environment, but the public concern more on the social and economic environment. In the case of To Kwa Wan 13 streets, some elder residents were asked to move to a new district for the sake of urban redevelopment. The elders have to adapt to a new, unfamiliar environment and perhaps lose their social connections with friends and neighbors, which would lead to social problems. Besides, many local businesses and traditional economic activities were destroyed due to the redevelopment that would lead to unemployment and the loss of local community.

As a result, scholars are trying to evaluate the current urban redevelopment strategy and tried to integrate the idea of sustainable development with urban renewal in Hong Kong in different aspects. Grace Lee and Edwin Chan are scholars who have been conducting researches in the field of urban redevelopment in Hong Kong for years. Their works have a great contribution of the urban design of sustainable urban renewal projects in the perspectives of economic, social, and the environment (Chan and Lee 2008a, 2008b, Lee and Chan 2008). They have worked out some factors that are essential to achieve sustainable urban renewal in Hong Kong (Lee and Chan 2006). Nevertheless, a comprehensive evaluation of current urban redevelopment approach at a macro-level is still missing. Stated by the Hong Kong government, the urban redevelopment was entering into a new stage (Information Services Department 2010), it is time to have a review on the urban regeneration approach in Hong Kong by looking at its problems and comparing the approach with other countries.

Conceptual Framework

Before the term urban regeneration was widely used across countries, several terms were used to describe the changing process of urban planning in cities, i.e. urban renewal and urban redevelopment. Indeed, these three terms have different meanings. Therefore, it is better to examine the major changing process of urban planning so as to understand the meaning and characteristics of urban renewal, urban redevelopment and urban regeneration before reviewing other countries' experiences.

Importance of the city – The Chicago School

In 1920s, the Chicago School has established the urban sociology. The School has emphasized that the natural environment and the community can shaped human behaviors, and believed that the scope of city was determined by urban planning that strongly controlled by community forces. These forces included the land values, planning and zoning ordinances, landscape features, transportation systems, and the historical issues of the city (Bulmer 1984, Abbott 1997, Vasisht and Sloane 2002).

Emergence of Urban Renewal in US after the World War II

Urban renewal was first used by US in late 1940s. After the Second World War, US had experienced a serious urban decay. The US Government, named Federal Government at that time, had implemented the policy “The Housing Act of 1949” (Maybank 1949, Martinez 2000) which contained a large scale of urban renewal projects to provide federal financing for slum clearance and to offer lands to private enterprise for new development. However, the projects ended in unsatisfied participation owing to the inadequate prospect of short-term benefits to the regions. Therefore, in the revisions to “The Housing Act of 1954” (Flanagan 1997), under the section of “Slum Clearance and Urban Renewal”, the project had been redesigned in the basis for comprehensive and city-wide social and economic revival. Nevertheless, the proposals were too clumsy

and costly. The Federal Government had eventually established the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1965 to manage the urban policies with a large amount of budgets, high-quality staff, and considerable power. One of the major tasks of the department was to handle the urban renewal projects in American cities (Bartlett and Quine 1987). At that time, urban renewal was defined as:

“those policies, measures, and activities that would do away with the major forms of physical blight in cities and bring about changes in urban structure and institutions contributing to a favorable environment for a healthy civic, economic, and social life for all urban dwellers.” (Woodbury 1953)

Although the large scale urban renewal projects were suspended, there were still lots of small scale projects occurred in 1980s. Most of them focused on the combination of urban texture among the old neighborhood and improvement of the transportation system within the areas. Therefore, the US government, at that time, used the term urban redevelopment instead of urban renewal to describe those projects.

Emergence of Urban Renewal and Urban Regeneration in UK

By taking the history of Urban Policy in UK, the difference between the terms ‘urban renewal’ and ‘urban regeneration’ can be clearly seen from their major strategies and orientations. Urban policy started in UK at 1950s. After the Second World War, UK was undergoing the process of Post-war recovery and reconstruction. The UK central government had authorized the Ministry of Town and Country Planning to offer detailed guidelines for local authorities to prepare redevelopment plans for central urban areas (Ministry of Town and Country Planning 1947, p. 1). During the period of urban reconstruction in 1940s to 1950s, UK government had emphasized on replacing the physical problems of the past and improving the housing and living standards in the older areas (Couch 1990, p. 29).

After the immediate post-war slum clearance, the growth of sub urban and peripheral area had become a challenge to the government. Several adjustments to the urban policy were made to adopt a more participatory and decentralized approach during the 1960s to 1970s. This shift of urban policy focused more on the social improvement and urban renewal, and from a local and site level to regional levels. During this period, namely “urban renewal”, was a greater co-ordination between the government, public and private sectors in the economic, social and physical aspects.

In 1980s, there was emphasis on public private partnership during the whole urban redevelopment process rather than just relied on the central state. During in 1990s, the concept of sustainable development was introduced to the UK urban redevelopment approach. With this concept, redevelopment projects in UK cities did not only have to co-ordinate the physical, social and economic aspects, but also the environmental objectives. This historic change had linked up past problems and present challenges, and helped to shape the urban regeneration in UK. To sum up, UK used the term ‘urban redevelopment’ as a categorical term and further classified it into 3 levels: urban reconstruction, urban renewal, and urban regeneration. Table 2 has summarized the evolution of urban policy with the corresponding characteristics in UK.

Table 2. The Evolution of Urban Regeneration in UK.

Time Period	1940s-1950s Reconstruction	1960s-1970s Renewal	1980s-1990s Regeneration
Main strategy	Replacing the physical problems with slum clearances	Periphery development with urban renewal in neighborhoods	Integrating the treatments with flagship projects
Spatial level	Local and site level	Regional and local level	Regional level
Parties involved	Central government and private developers	Local government, public and private sectors	Public private partnership
Physical aspect	Replacement of urban fabrics	Periphery growth and renewal of older areas	Heritage reservations with some new developments
Economical aspect	Government investment	Growth of private investment	Balance between public and private investment
Social aspect	Improvement of living environment	Improvement of social welfare	Community development
Environmental aspect	Greening	Landscaping and greening	Introducing the idea of environmental sustainability

Sources: Urban Regeneration: A Handbook, Peter Roberts (2000).

The Urban Regeneration Approach

Some major elements of urban regeneration were identified from the aforementioned history of urban regeneration in UK. However, they could only be considered as a basis for urban regeneration. The definition of urban regeneration should also include the future challenges of urban development, which is the sustainable development. Some scholars had defined urban regeneration as shown below.

Peter Roberts (2000), a popular UK scholar in the field of spatial sustainable development, urban regeneration, had defined urban regeneration as:

“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 condition of an area that has been subject to change.” (p. 17)

This definition has been widely used by scholars and politicians among nations, yet, only very few places could put the idea into practice. Therefore, Turok (2005) has identified three characteristics of contemporary urban regeneration, including the intention to change the nature of the place by involving the whole community and other stakeholders with the stake in its future, the multiple objectives and activities that focus on the area's particular problems and potential which can cut across the responsibilities of central government, and the partnership working among different stakeholders.

From the above definition, urban regeneration is a new generation of urban renewal that seeking a balance between ‘people’, ‘business’ and ‘place’. For people, regeneration provides opportunities for people to participate in and gain benefits by enhancing their skills, capacities and aspirations. For business, regeneration improves economic competitiveness by creating more local job and prosperity, hence, enhance

the business performance. For place, regeneration improves the general appeal of place so as to attract more people to do business inside. With the balance of the three elements, a long-term and sustainable manner can be achieved (Turok 2005, Tallon 2010). In short, urban regeneration can be framed as the interconnection of four dimensions, including social, economic, environmental, and governance.

Background Study of Urban Regeneration in Hong Kong

As stated in 2010-2011 Policy Address (HKSAR 2010), “Urban regeneration is a key topic straddling a number of policy areas, including planning, land, housing, heritage conservation and social development.” Several institutions were involved in the process of urban redevelopment, and could be divided into four categories according to their functions. The Development Bureau is responsible for policy formulation. The Antiquities Monuments Office (AMO), Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB), and Town Planning Board (TPB) work on advisement. The Commissioner for Heritage’s Office (CHO) and the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) are responsible implementation. The Planning Department, Lands Department, and Buildings Department are there to support them. It seems that there is a comprehensive system for heritage preservation in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, problems still appears throughout the urban regeneration process, including the “Twists-and-Turns” of urban regeneration system and the “Black Boxes” preservation practice of Hong Kong Government. In the following, the fundamental problems of urban regeneration in Hong Kong will be discussed so as to find out some possible solutions in the later part of the study.

The Twists and Turns of Hong Kong Urban Regeneration System

On one hand, the URA used to replace the residential buildings into commercial uses, most of the former residents had to move into new neighbourhoods in other districts. Hence, the former community is destroyed. Examples include the Langham Place in Mong Kok and K11 Art Shopping Mall in Tsim Sha Tsui. On the other hand, although some of the renewal projects have kept the residential use of lands, these projects tended to replace low-income class with middle-income class by transforming the rental housing into service apartments, thus result in gentrification. Many examples can be found in West Point and Mong Kok (Ma 2008).

The “Black Boxes” Preservation Practice of Hong Kong Government

In short, there are three similarities of government’s practice in preservation: no standard to decide which type of buildings/heritages should be preserved; tend to base on the foreign signal and proposal to implement preservation projects, and use heritage preservation as a tool to achieve its goals.

Fundamental problems of urban regeneration in Hong Kong

Though the Hong Kong Government worked hard to improve its urban regeneration approach by changing its institutions and policies, problems occur from planning to implementation during process of urban regeneration. Some fundamental problems in Hong Kong have hindered it from a well-round urban regeneration approach. They are namely the top-down urban regeneration approach, the economic-based redevelopment and the loose and messy urban regeneration structure.

Firstly, the format of top-down approach did not address the social, economic and environmental needs of the local communities. Residents from redeveloped areas have little participation throughout the whole process of urban regeneration, from layout

planning to the community redevelopment. The only thing that they can participate was the arrangement of the compensation given by the authority. They have to pay the cost even the redevelopment is not what the citizen desire.

One reason that the government adopted the top-down approach was due to the high living density compared to other Asian cities. Most buildings have more than one owner that the government will need a lot of time to gain the consensus from all the stakeholders. The top-down approach is time-saving as well as cost-saving. Meanwhile, the project-based redevelopment is adopted by the government as it believed the long lead-time for completing the redevelopment in a large area would make the projects ineffective. Therefore, the government believed it is better to centralize all decision making on the government to determine the place and procedure of urban redevelopment.

Secondly, the Hong Kong Government has adopted a property-led approach in urban regeneration which only focuses on renewing one property at one time. This approach is greatly counting on the performance of the local economy, especially the property market. After the crisis and globalization, Hong Kong was forced to have an economic transformation to maintain its competitiveness. With the economic restructuring, the property-led approach encounters great challenges. Both URA and the private developers have put off the urban redevelopment projects. At that time, the cost of redeveloping an old urban area was as high as new-town development. Most of the developers chose to take the new-town development as the time of construction was much shorter than redevelopment. Meanwhile, the URA was just set up to take over the work of the Land Development Corporation. Facing the serious financial problems and the decline of property market, the URA was not able to implement the redevelopment projects as most of them were not financially viable. The economic downturn had derived many social and environmental problems that have increased the difficulties in urban redevelopment.

Thirdly, the current Hong Kong urban redevelopment structure is very complicated. The government institutions were not closely linked. Take URA as an example, although it is responsible to implement the urban redevelopment project, it indeed have no actual power to carry out the whole project. Whenever the project encountered any problem related to policies, the URA has to seek the Development Bureau for policy clarification before it moves on. Meanwhile, the redevelopment projects also need approval from the Town Planning Board and other supporting departments to check whether the projects are complied with the regulations set by those governmental departments. Therefore, URA is still restricted to urban renewal level rather than the urban regeneration level that it can only manage urban redevelopment piece by piece but not as broader as a district. Still, the URA focused on improving the physical environment rather than revitalizing the entire local neighborhood. However, the local community is not only facing the deterioration of the physical living environment but also the social and economic problems including social equity, unemployment, and the loss of local businesses etc. Even if the URA takes the initiative to tackle these problems, the problems cannot be solved entirely. URA still has to negotiate with other government institutions to gain the resources, such as to negotiate with the Hong Kong Housing Society to provide the rehousing units for tenants. However, the tenants have to move to the rehousing units in other districts. As a result, the tenants, especially for the low-income group and the elders, not only losing their former community that they are familiar with, but also their jobs due to the unaffordable travelling costs. Thus, the social and economic problems occur.

Foreign Experiences in Urban Regeneration

In the following, experiences from other countries like Japan, Korea and Singapore will be listed out. The strategies used by other countries and the strengths of their systems will be elaborated. It is believed that some common characteristics can be dig out and serve as reference to benefit Hong Kong in urban regeneration.

Urban Regeneration Experiences in Japan

The idea of urban regeneration of Japan started after the 1923 Great Kantō Earthquake. The Japan government aimed to avoid the fire spreading due to natural or man-made disasters caused by urban buildings, and conduct post-disaster reconstruction and re-zoning. Until early 1990s, land prices have continuously fallen with the collapse of the bubble economy. At that time, Japan’s international competitiveness was kept falling among 60 indexed countries and regions. Its social and economic conditions were changed due to the declining birthrate and aging society. Therefore, it was necessary to reconstruct cities and enhanced the international competitiveness of large cities (Sorensen 2002).

The Institutional Structure

In May 2001, the Japan government has established the Urban Renaissance Headquarter (URH) which is led by the Prime Minister of Japan and assisted by other ministers (see Figure 1.). This kind of structure has gathered all the department head which are related to urban development. The missions of the headquarter are developing and promoting the basic guidelines for the implementation of urban redevelopment, as well as the specified emergency zoning policies and plans; and integrating and coordinating other measures which related to urban redevelopment (The Cabinet Public Relations Office of the Cabinet Secretariat 2006a).

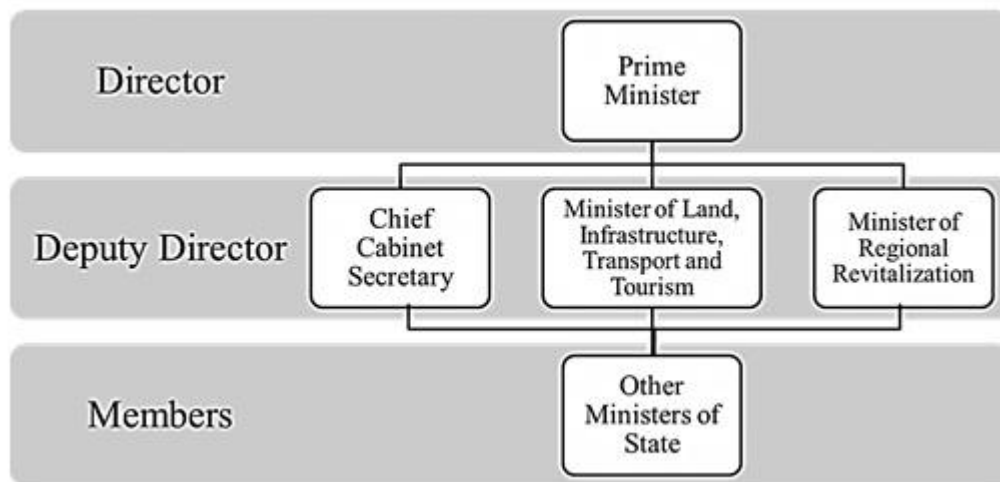


Figure 1. Institutional Structure of Japan Urban Renaissance Headquarter.

The Planning System

After a year of planning work, the Urban Renaissance Special Measure Law was enforced by the Urban Renaissance Headquarter. It covered the basic principles for urban renaissance (The Cabinet Public Relations Office of the Cabinet Secretariat 2006b). There were 3 sets of guidelines for different situations: the Urban Renaissance Urgent Development Area (URUDA), Special Districts for Urban Renaissance (SDUR), and Private-Sector Urban Renaissance Projects.

The Urban Renaissance Urgent Development Area was principles for regional development. First, the private sectors handed in the planning proposal to the local government. Then, the local government decided whether the proposed area can be defined as special districts for urban renaissance (The Cabinet Public Relations Office of the Cabinet Secretariat 2006b). This practice greatly shortened the processing time, adapted to the local characteristics by the use of citizens' creativity, and improved public facilities at the same time. The role of URH was to provide financial support for authorized urban renaissance projects. Until 2007, there were 65 URUDA involving over 6,600 hectares which have been designated throughout Japan, i.e. Tokyo and Osaka were the first designate areas.

The Special Districts for Urban Renaissance focused on areas that existing restrictions like land use, floor-space ratio, or other criteria that were excluded from the URUDA application (The Cabinet Public Relations Office of the Cabinet Secretariat 2006b). It was possible for private sectors proposing a decision on or changing in an urban plan which required the proposal for getting consent from 2/3 or more of land owners, and the area should be over 0.5 hectares. This regulation aimed to speed up the procedures for decision making on urban planning as it is necessary to decide whether or not to adopt the proposal within 6 months. 16 districts, about 29.7 hectares in so far, had been decided in this urban plan.

Finally, for the Private-Sector Urban Renaissance Projects, private sectors intended to undertake an urban renaissance project may prepare a plan and apply for authorization by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport. Moreover, before the projects can carry out, some requirements should be followed. For example, the area of the project must set inside the URUDA and it must be over 1 hectare. Meanwhile, the project must be effective in promoting development of already built-up area and greatly contribute to the renaissance of the city (The Cabinet Public Relations Office of the Cabinet Secretariat 2006b). Until 2007, there were 17 projects authorized by the Japan government.

The Government Role

With over 10 years experiences with URH, the role of the government for urban renaissance has improved from direct leadership of the central government, which spent large amount of national budget for commitment, to a middleman who support the urban renaissance led by the private sectors with the regulations of the Urban Renaissance Special Measure Law. This law's regulations include the designation of URUDA, the exemption of urban planning, and the financial support and tax measures. The effort made by the URH has made the citizens of Japan understand the importance of urban renaissance (Akashi 2007).

The Approach

In short, the Japan framework of urban renaissance is the public private partnership which the government is letting the private sectors to led the project (Tong, 2008). First, private sectors define their target areas and the government will zone it as special districts. Second, the urban planning procedure will occur to clarify the interest adjustment. Then, both the private sectors and the government will adopt certain conception in a limited time. Hence, the public-owned land will be fully utilized. Last but not least, they will set regulations of system to supply a large amount of money.

Unique Characteristic - The Urban Information System (UIS)

One of the reasons why the procedure of Japan's urban renaissance becomes more

effective and efficient is because of the social information management (Yukio 2008). This includes the geographic, economic, human and social information concerning urban space. With this comprehensive Urban Information System, it is very helpful for encouraging public participation, planning for sustainable development, and governing the urban regeneration projects.

The Urban Information System (UIS) was being used from 1975 which is developed in a Ministry of Construction project for the cities of Nishinomiya and KitaKyushu. According to Yasushi (2008), “Planning for urban regeneration should involve many analyses and estimates with regard to the urban and regional situation. These should consider issues such as population, land use, urban activity, market tendency, physical environment, and so forth within possible regeneration strategies.” (p. 1) it is essential for the urban planners to understand the current land use pattern before working out the urban regeneration plan. In 1985, the second phase started and the system is improved to Urban Policy Information System, UIS II (Urban Information Study Group 1987). This system has further input the municipal administration information, such as the data of road network, urban facilities, and taxation etc.

The advantage of having this system is to process a huge amount of digital urban data in the GIS, a 3-D geographic information system designed to manage all types of geographical data that related to urban development (Chang 2006), in a short period of time. It saves the cost of the administrative work for the government. Until now, most of the local governments of Japan are using this GIS for the large scale of urban regeneration projects. For example, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government has used the GIS in the previous urban renaissance project (Yasushi 2008).

The use of the UIS can also maintain the sustainable development of a city. When monitoring the urban infrastructure and environment, it requires a wide range of measurements from physical, chemical, biological, to geographical data. It also requires a comprehensive set of data in from local to regional scale, and from short-term to long-term periods. With the systematic database, high spatial resolution data can be retrieved shortly (Yoshifumi 2008). Planners can also retrieve the historical data from the UIS so as to get a review on the past development on a place.

Unique Characteristic - Public-Private Partnership with Public Participation

Since 1969, the urban redevelopment policy in Japan encouraged the private sectors to actively participate in the urban redevelopment process with limited government intervention (Tong 2008). Public-private partnership (PPP) has long been the major principle for urban redevelopment in Japan. Private sectors are responsible for the construction and planning costs with some subsidy by the government who wants to simulate the project, private sectors will then gain part of the redeveloped land or building once they completed the project. Local government as the public sector will only act as a supervisor to protect the interest of all parties that involved in the redevelopment project. This act can allow a high degree of citizens’ participation while saving the public expenditure for other development for Japan.

Besides the public-private partnership, public participation also plays an important role in urban redevelopment (Craig *et al.* 2002, Faga 2006). It emphasizes on citizen’s continuing interests in the planning of a place. Some attractive locations may draw more interest from a wide variety of people, and these places are usually lively for both residents and visitors. Interests in these places take many forms including shopping, sightseeing, visiting art galleries and museums, and other kinds of entertainment. One of the greatest interests both the residents and the visitors are concentrated on the history of the place. For example, youngsters living in the place

may wish to know how the town looked before they moved there. Visitors may wish to review on the development process, which may be over a hundred of years, of the place.

Therefore, the urban redevelopment policy in Japan is closely related to tourist measures. According to the Basic Policies for Urban Renaissance, one of the goals for urban renaissance is to boost up the economic activities by promoting the city sightseeing to the foreigners (The Cabinet Public Relations Office of the Cabinet Secretariat 2006b). Just like the case of Roppongi, the construction of the observation deck, named “Tokyo City View”, in the Mori Art Center is a tourist-oriented element for the visitor to see the views of Tokyo Tower, the most famous landmark in Japan.

With the public-private partnership and public participation, Japan’s urban renaissance can enhance the urban functions in the perspective of cultural, environmental and residential by the use of history and tourism measures, while the government, private sectors, residents and visitors can all gain the benefits from the urban redevelopment projects. Nevertheless, some assumptions are important for the success of this approach which require the citizens should be rationally and actively participate in the urban redevelopment and they have to have a strong sense of identity (see Figure 2.).

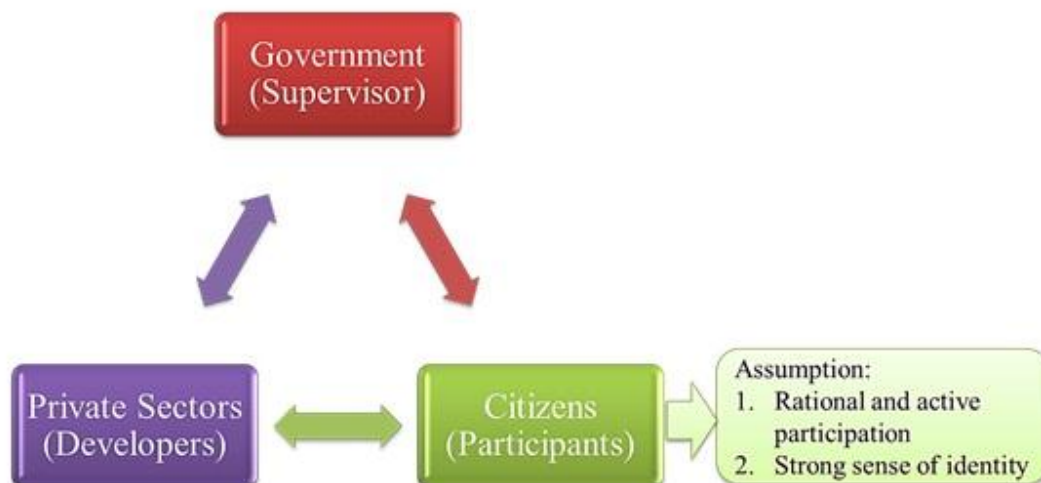


Figure 2. The Public-Private Partnership with Public Participation in Japan.

Urban Regeneration Experiences in South Korea

After the World War II, the population of Seoul began to grow rapidly from 900,000 to around 2.45 million in 1960. After the industrialization, the population reached to 9.64 million in 1985. This fast increase in population had made a huge demand for housing and urban development. By mid-2011, Seoul was the home of over 10 million Korean (Choe 2003, Seoul Development Institute 2005, Seoul Metropolitan Government 2011).

The start of the zoning system in South Korea was put in place during the industrialization while the urban planning began during the Japanese occupation (Choe 2003). With the housing shortage in Seoul, the Japanese colonial government set up the first public housing institution, Chosun Housing Corporation in Korea. The aim of setting up the Chosun Housing Corporation was to deal with the issue of the clearance of squatters and improve the substandard housing (Sohn 2003).

The Institutional Structure

Until now, there is no formal institutional structure of urban redevelopment in South Korea. They used to depend highly on the local government for making-decision and carry out the redevelopment work. For instance, the Seoul government was just established the Ministry of Land, Transport and Marine Affairs and the Seoul Development Institute to handle all the urban development issues in Seoul (Kim 1997).

The Approach & the Government Role

The current model of redevelopment, which is well-known as “Partnership (Hapdong) Renewal”, was first emerged in the 1980s. The Seoul City Government established the Implementation Guidelines for Joint Redevelopment in January 1984. According to the guideline (Lee 2000), the owners of squatter (buildings that were illegally constructed on public and private land) joined together and form a corporation and choose a construction firm to be the member of the corporation. The role of the construction firm was to provide interest-free loans to cover the redevelopment costs spent by the corporation. The corporation would use the loans to build flats that exceed in number of the original squatter unit, so they could sold the new flats to both the former owners of squatter as well as the public. In this kind of redevelopment project, the Seoul City Government acted as a middle-man to facilitate the redevelopment process led by the members of the corporation. However, although this could be defined as a bottom-up approach, the public could only participate in the beginning of the urban redevelopment project. They could not participate in the implementation part. To sum up, the 4 phases of urban redevelopment framework in South Korea is shown below (see Figure 3).

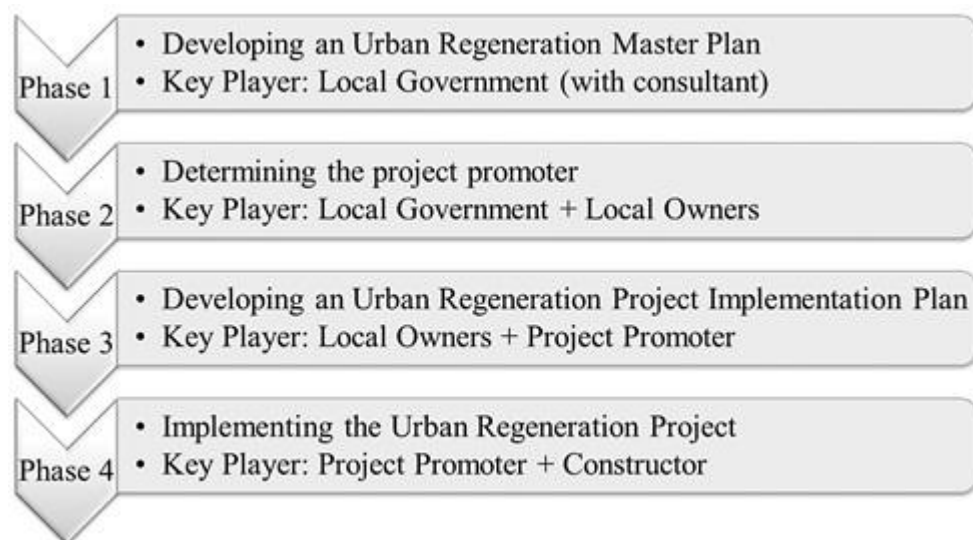


Figure 3. The Urban Redevelopment Framework in South Korea.

One of the essential elements lead to the success of the “Partnership Renewal” was the Seoul City Government letting the construction firms to build taller buildings by allowing higher floor area ratio (Kim 2001). With the sale of more flats by the redevelopment corporation, all the members of the corporation, including the former owners, can gain the profits from the project. For example, the former owners and tenants would be given 5 million won after the redevelopment. However, this element also created the conflicts between the construction firm and the former owners. Some construction firms may only focused on the profits they could gain from the project without fulfilling the concern of former owners about the improvement of living conditions (Lee 2000).

The other drawback of this model was the dispersion of the former community. Although, under the Implementation Guidelines for Joint Redevelopment (Lee 2000, Seoul Metropolitan Government 2007), the former owners could have the distribution of land ownership at around 50% of the market value and the priority ticket which they could brought the new flats before they sell to the public, the new market value of the flats might be too high for them. Therefore, most former owners would sell their land ownership and their priority ticket and moved to other district with a lower cost. Meanwhile, with the only 5 million won of the compensation, most former tenants would need to move to other old district or sub-urban area outside Seoul. There were only 10% to 20% of the former owners and tenants returned to live in the new flats. Therefore, the former community was destroyed and gentrification was the result after the redevelopment (Ha 2004). Hence, there were quite a lot of protests on redevelopment issues in the 1980's.

These drawbacks have implied that this popular model of partnership redevelopment had its own problems. By evaluating this model, three major problems were found which led to the conflicts between the government, developers and residents. Firstly, about the building density, the standard floor area ratio has been greatly increased from the beginning of 1.8 in 1981, to 4.0 in 1990, and finally to around 8.0 in the late 1990s (Kim 1997). This change has strongly affected the heights of the buildings in the partnership renewal programme. Taking Cheonggyecheon (清溪川) as an example, most of the old buildings were turned up to massive building clusters which highly affected the distant mountain views (Kim 2001). Secondly, there was a lacking of communal facilities for local residents. As each partnership renewal projects involved a part of areas but not the whole district, they were missing out the consideration of having communal facilities, such as schools, parks, and playgrounds etc., for the whole district. Thirdly, there was traffic disconnection between different renewal areas. This has lowered the accessibility of those areas. Moreover, with the build density increased the population, traffic conditions deterioration was the result.

In short, the major problem of the partnership renewal programme was the lack of comprehensive planning. The programme only used to focus on individual areas but not the whole district. It also missed out the long-term vision of development.

The Planning System

With the lesson learnt from the partnership renewal programme, the first Seoul Comprehensive Plan was established in 1990 under Seoul's City Planning Law (Choe 2003). This law has established the planning system of Seoul. In the current planning system, there are five levels of plan including the Regional Plan which shows the overview on the current development of Seoul; the 2020 Seoul Master Plan which shows the future development; the Sub-Regional Development Plan which breaks the Regional Plan to several sub-regions; the Urban Management Plan which enable for some district improvement and community development; and the Implementation Plan for planners to illustrate their ideas on how to undergo the urban development.

Apart from the planning system, the Seoul Government has also improved its redevelopment model into two types of models so as to enhance the living condition of the old district lived by the low-income groups. The first one was called the designated housing redevelopment districts model (Ministry of Land 2009). This was the modified model from the partnership renewal programme. Associations were formed by the residents, construction sectors and the local government to discuss on the development plan. In order to relocate the tenants of the area, the government was responsible to provide a loan of 25-30 million won, depended on the number of the housing unit,

through the National Housing Fund to construct rental housing for the tenants. According to the figures provided by the Ministry of Land, Transport and Marine Affairs, there were totally 119,000 housing units had been constructed by the government to replace 67,000 housing units which were already demolished in over 200 districts.

The second model was the residential environment improvement project which the owners of sub-standard housing can choose to reconstruct the whole house or just to improve some of the parts of the housing unit. By knowing the choice of the owners, the government would provide a loan of 20-30 million won per house for the owners to complete the project. The government would also loosen some of the building regulation so as to facilitate the projects (Ministry of Land 2009).

Preservation in Seoul

The practice of preserving cultural properties was enacted by the Cultural Properties Protection Law in 1962. During the outset of redevelopment in preservation, Seoul Government took a strong initiative in planning to carry out the preservation. The City Planning Law of Seoul was enacted to divide the potential preservation sites into three types of Special Districts, including the Preservation District, Aesthetic District, and Height Limit District, so as to group up similar districts which shared the same characteristics. However, in the past 50 years, this organized framework was not systematically applied to the real practice. Such conservation policies were only carried out when there were some mega-events took place in South Korea (Seoul Development Institute 2005). For example, the 1988 Olympics Game and the 2002 World Cup had given the driving force for Seoul to preserve its own history and culture like restoration of temples. Nevertheless, some of the preservation projects had valuable contribution in improving the redevelopment system in South Korea.

Unique Characteristic - The Voluntary Registration System

In 2001, the Seoul Government started a voluntary Traditional Korean House Registration System which proposed by the residents. The main reason why the government implemented this system was that the government also agreed that this measure was very helpful for regenerating Bukchon in the Bukchon Village Preservation Project. With the showcase of the voluntary Traditional Korean House Registration System in Bukchon, other places started to follow this measure so as to manage the number of hanoks in Seoul. According to the Seoul Development Institute, there were about 20,000 hanoks located in Seoul in 2006. Around 900 hanoks were located in Bukchon which were originally owned by the residents in Bukchon. (Seoul Metropolitan Government 2007) With the successful model of Bukchon, the Seoul Development Institute was recommending to spread this measure to other places in Seoul. However, with the unique condition of Bukchon, including the location of Bukchon and its building height restriction, the measure of preservation of hanoks could only be applied in Bukchon voluntarily.

From the review of Seoul's redevelopment projects, the redevelopment condition of Seoul is quite similar to Hong Kong which the Seoul Government used different redevelopment models in redevelopment depending on the situations of each project. It ranged from total reconstructions to small parts of urban environmental improvement projects. However, due to the limitations such as the building high, plot ratio, and other environmental management regulations, it is very hard to keep the existing buildings and urban structures while complying with the legal framework set by the government. As a result, the redevelopment projects in Seoul tend to be a total reconstruction. By

putting this into the evolution of urban regeneration of UK, South Korea can only be defined into the level of urban reconstruction.

Nevertheless, there are still some successful factors which Hong Kong can learn from Seoul. In the management aspect, the planning of overall redevelopment project phases are very clear as it showed that there are communication among different stakeholders in the process of urban redevelopment. In the contextual factors, there are various stakeholders which can generate public-private benefit sharing and a strong involvement of the public. These are all factors that made Seoul urban redevelopment become better.

Urban Regeneration Experiences in Singapore

With the similarity between Hong Kong and Singapore, it is quite useful for Hong Kong to learn from the urban redevelopment problems faced by Singapore. Similar to Hong Kong, Singapore had been a British colony. In 1959, Singapore was empowered to be a self-governing state under British Empire and became an independent state in 1965 as the People's Action Party had won the control of the Parliament (Beamish and Ferguson 1989).

Land ownership and housing system

On one hand, all the lands in Singapore are officially belongs to the state. However, the Singapore government has leased out the land ownership in different forms, including freehold, leasehold for 999 years, and leasehold for 99 years. Since the leasehold for 999 years are too long for individuals and companies to have a coherent as sustainable development. Therefore, most of the lands in Singapore are leased in the form of 99 years' leasehold. According to the research done by the Singapore Land Authority (Singapore Land Authority 2012), most of the leasehold will not be renewed after they were expired. This decision was very common since it is hard to achieve the long-term development goals without the support by the URA.

On the other hand, there was 82% of Singapore population living in public housing under the management of Housing and Development Board in 2010 (Department of Statistics Singapore 2011). This included the owners and the tenants who lived in public housing. For the private housing, there were only 22% of total housing stocks in Singapore. Among the private housing, condominium and apartments were relatively new in Singapore, they started to build in the late 1970's. In 2010, condominium got the biggest numbers of private housing which occupied 47% of the total private housing stock in Singapore while about 26% of total private housing stocks were apartment (Table 3).

Table 3. Singapore Housing Stock in 2010.

Public Housing managed by Housing & Development Board	898,532
Total Private Housing Stock	258,243
Housing (detached, semi-detached, terrace)	69,743
Condominiums and Apartments	188,500

Source: Yearbook of Statistics Singapore, Department of Statistics Singapore, 2011.

The Institutional Structure

In 1964, the Singapore government has formulated the first urban renewal policy. Later in 1966, the Singapore government has established the first institution, the Urban Renewal Department under the Housing and Development Board, to handle the

reconstruction issues in Singapore (Housing and Development Board 1967). In 1974, the Urban Renewal Department has further turned into an independent authoritative organization named the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) which directly under the Ministry of National Development (Urban Redevelopment Authority 1975).

In the early years of the establishment of the URA, the primary aims of the URA changed from demolition and reconstruction to preservation of Singapore's historical heritages and buildings with unique architectural characteristics. However, its practices were not consistent with its objectives. They still focused on the slum clearance and reconstruction in the central area of Singapore. The reason behind is that the power of URA was not strong enough to make a comprehensive plan for a place. Additionally, the URA did not have the data to define which buildings were valuable to preserved in the aspect of history and architecture. After the evaluation done by the Singapore government on urban development, in 1989, the URA started to join the development works with the Planning Department, and the Research & Statistic Unit of Ministry of National Development. Moreover, the enactment of the Planning Act has made the URA became the central planning authority which carries out the national conservation in Singapore (Urban Redevelopment Authority 2010).

Another aspect that Singapore is quite popular is the conservation. It was officially started in 1971 with the establishment of the Preservation of Monuments Board and the Preservation of Monuments Act which are currently operated under the Ministry of Information, Communications and Arts (Urban Redevelopment Authority 2010). In 1976, the aspect of preservation was highly considered by the URA when undergoing urban redevelopment. Later in 1989, the Planning Act empowered the URA to designate the conservation sites and provide guidelines for the conservation.

Several measures were adopted by the URA to facilitate conservation (Urban Redevelopment Authority 2010). The charges of redevelopment were levied on any improvement projects in Singapore that approved by the government. Second, the "Tax Exemption Scheme for Donations to National Monuments" was used to raise some funding for restoring and maintaining the national monuments that donors under this scheme could enjoy a double-tax exemption, which equaled to twice amount of the donation value. And the annual URA Architectural Heritage Awards to praise the outstanding restoration which has gone beyond the basic requirements for restoring and maintaining the monuments and buildings.

Figure 4 showed the institutional structure of urban redevelopment in Singapore.



Figure 4. The Institutional Structure of Urban Redevelopment in Singapore.

The Planning System

The major characters of the planning system in Singapore are the Concept Plan and Master Plan (Urban Redevelopment Authority 2010). The Concept Plan is a strategic land-use and transportation plan to guide the development of the country in the next 50 years and this is reviewed every 10 years. It is used to ensure the country can achieve sustainable development by providing enjoyable sufficient land and living environment to meet the population and economic growth. The Master Plan is similar to the Concept Plan but it is more practical. It is a statutory land-use plan to guide the development in the next 10 years and this is reviewed every 5 years. The Master Plan further explains the details of the Concept Plan by showing the density and feasibility of each district for future development.

The Approach

As stated above, most of the housing in Singapore was managed by the Housing & Development Board. Therefore, most of the development projects in Singapore were basically related to the public housing. However, major challenges faced by the URA came from the redevelopment of private housing. Normally, the redevelopment of the private housing was privately led unless the proposed project matched with the Concept Plan as well as the Master Plan under the URA (Urban Redevelopment Authority 2010). There were 3 main measures of redevelopment which used by the Singapore Government on private housing. They included lifting of rent control, En Bloc Sale, and wavier of building premium.

For the Lifting of Rent Control, it was introduced in 1947 with the aim of restricting the owner of the property to raise the rent or remove the tenant by controlling the rent. Hence, this measure protected the tenants from unscrupulous owners during the housing shortage period (Ministry of National Development 2001). However, this negatively affected the incentive of the owners to maintain their properties as they had little benefits on additional investment. Therefore, dilapidation was the result. Later in 1970, this measure was improved by the Controlled Premises Act which allowing the owners to compensate the tenants for vacating their property to undergo the redevelopment. The tenants, of course, should be eligible for the compensation which is examined by the Tenants' Compensation Board. The eligible tenants can move to the

public housing which provided by the Singapore Government. Although the Controlled Premises Act can remove some limitations of the rent control, other problems existed. As the number of private housing increased, the cost of managing the Tenants' Compensation Board is too high. As a result, the government decided to abolish both the Control of Rent Act and the Controlled Premises Act in 2001. Thus, the Tenants' Compensation Board was also phased out after completing all the current projects.

En Bloc Sale was the collective sale for private residential and commercial buildings with multiple owners to undergo the redevelopment. When it first introduced in Singapore in 1994, it required a 100% consensus from the existing owners before the redevelopment was carried out (Christudason 2004). Buildings less than 10-year-old should gain at least 90% consensus from the existing owners before selling all the units of property or land to a particular buyer. Those agreed owner should sign the sale and purchase agreement so as to prove their consensus towards the sale of the property or land. The required percentage was further reduced to 80% for buildings over 10-year-old. Although there was no requirement for the government to consider the condition of the building as required in Hong Kong, the Singapore Government has its right to reject any applications that was not satisfied by all parties, including the buyer, the existing owners and the government.

The aim of waiver of building premium was to enhance the incentive of owners when considering about the redevelopment of the aging property. In the past, the Singapore Government used to collect a lump-sum amount of land premium and building premium from the owners of ageing property when they extend their lease. Whenever the owners want to maintain, improve, or rebuild the building, they needed to pay for the building premium. Therefore, most of the owners used not to maintain the old buildings or even demolished the whole building in order to avoid paying money. As a result, almost no one was willing to redevelopment their property. To remove this redevelopment barrier, the waiver of building premium was applied to all kinds of buildings in September 2008 (Anon 2008).

The effort of the URA to motivate redevelopment of private buildings was shown in the case of One Shenton Way. It is located in the central business district of Singapore which near to the Marina Bay. The previous building was built in 1975 and the developer City Developments was decided to redevelop the building into a two-tower apartment building in the late 2000s so as to create vibrancy in the central business district at night (Rashiwala 2008). As the plan is compatible with the plan by URA, the government has approved this redevelopment by allowing the developer to build the building in the total pilot ratio of 11.2 and to lease it up to 99 years. This case has successfully revitalized the central business district in Singapore by moving the citizens back to the district at night.

The Government Role

From the experience of urban regeneration in Singapore, one of the most impressive parts is the institutional framework and the overall planning strategy in urban redevelopment. Unlike Hong Kong, the URA in Singapore is the powerful authority in both planning and conservation in Singapore. Although there are other urban development related institutions in Singapore, such as the Housing and Development Board, the Land Authority, and Strata Title Boards etc., the URA in Singapore is established as the central coordination authority for conservation. For example, the URA is responsible to consult the affected owners. The URA can also designate any buildings and lands that is 30 years old or more for conservation (Urban Redevelopment Authority 2010). Moreover, the overall planning strategy which

reflected in the Concept Plan and Master Plan is very important for the URA to work with the private sectors on the future development through conservation. With the redevelopment measures for private housing, the Singapore Government can act as a facilitator to assist the private-led redevelopment projects.

Besides, the experience of Singapore’s conservation has showed the importance on balancing the preservation of former community and the development of tourism. Although the interest of tourist industry development is primarily concurrent with the preservation of local culture and heritage, over-emphasizing on tourists may neglect the basic needs of the local residents. The driving out of the daily goods and services in that area may lead to conflicts between the redeveloper and the residents. As the result, gentrification may occur as the residents will move to elsewhere while the traditional shops and restaurants are driving out (Henderson 2000). Hence, the former community is destroyed. With the above experiences shown, the level of urban redevelopment of Singapore was classified in the level of urban renewal, which is the same level of Hong Kong, in the model of evolution of urban regeneration in UK.

Summary of the Lesson Learnt from the Foreign Experiences in Urban Regeneration

After studying the urban regeneration experiences from Japan, South Korea, and Singapore in details, the summary of foreign experiences in urban regeneration is shown with Hong Kong below according to the comparable variables and the unique characteristics (Table 4.3).

Table 5. Summary of Foreign Experiences in Urban Regeneration.

Comparable Variables	Japan	South Korea	Singapore	Hong Kong
Institutional Structure	Centralized Institution (URH)	Local Government	3 Closely-Packed institutions	Loose and Messy Structure
No. of Planning System	3	5	2	2
Level of Urban Redevelopment	Urban Regeneration	Urban Reconstruction	Urban Renewal	Urban Renewal
Government Role	Middleman	Facilitator	Facilitator	Implementer & Facilitator
Urban Redevelopment Approach	Public-Private Partnership	Bottom-up Approach	Private-led Approach	Top-down Approach
Level of Public Participation	2/3 consent	Mainly in the beginning	Nil	Tiny
Unique Characteristics	The Urban Information System	Voluntary Registration System	-	-
Example	Roppongi Hills	Cheonggye-Cheon	Chinatown – Far East Square	Wing Lee Street

Renewing the Urban Regeneration Approach in Hong Kong

In the past, the Hong Kong Government was trying very hard to improve its urban redevelopment system. However, the government’s measures were only focused on solving the practical problems but not the fundamental problems. Therefore, the struggle between the government and citizens still occurs. To solve this struggle and to

reach the level of urban regeneration, a revolution of the urban redevelopment system is needed. In this section, practical measures are suggested from the foreign experiences of urban regeneration to solve the fundamental problems in Hong Kong.

Before suggesting the practical measures, the feasibility of applying foreign system into Hong Kong will be discussed first. Based on the comparable variables and the unique characteristics, Hong Kong can renew its own system by modifying others' existing approaches. For the institutional structure, Hong Kong can combine the major idea from Japan and Singapore which Hong Kong can simplify the current structure and centralize the institution that related to urban redevelopment. For the planning system, Singapore's planning system can be applied in Hong Kong. For the government role, Hong Kong government should forsake the role of implementer and just act as a facilitator like South Korea and Singapore. For the urban redevelopment approach, top-down approach is no longer suitable and it should be replaced by the public-private partnership which Japan is using. For the level of public participation, a true public participation is more suitable for Hong Kong. Meanwhile, it is suggested that the urban information system used in Japan can be applied in Hong Kong to improve the current system.

In the following, three practical measures are suggested for Hong Kong. They include the centralization of government institution with a comprehensive planning and facilitation system, the GIS-based urban information database, as well as the true public participation. After performing all the suggestions, there will be a strong balance between the political authority, the market and the community which proposed in the resource mobilization theory. Hence, the social protest and conflicts on urban redevelopment issue can be solved.

Centralization of Government Institution

Currently, there are mainly nine institutions involved in the urban redevelopment process. There is no clear and definite guide on who is responsible for the urban redevelopment and who have the power to control the whole redevelopment projects. Every redevelopment project needed to spend unreasonable time to finish as they need to gain the approval from different government institutions one by one. Therefore, the centralization of government institution should accomplish first to solve the fundamental problems. From the foreign experience of Singapore, all the urban redevelopment power and policy-making are concentrated in the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore. Therefore, it is suggested to regroup the Urban Renewal Authority back into the Development Bureau so as to combine the policy making power with the implemental power in one institution. Meanwhile, all urban regeneration-related sectors, including the Antiquities and Monuments Office, the Antiquities Advisory Board, and the Commissioner for Heritage's Office, should reform under the Development Bureau except the Town Planning Board that should kept under the Planning Department as it also responsible for new-town development (the new institutional structure is shown in Fig 5.1). With this rearrangement, the power to carry out urban regeneration can be strengthened and the procedure of urban regeneration can be condensed.

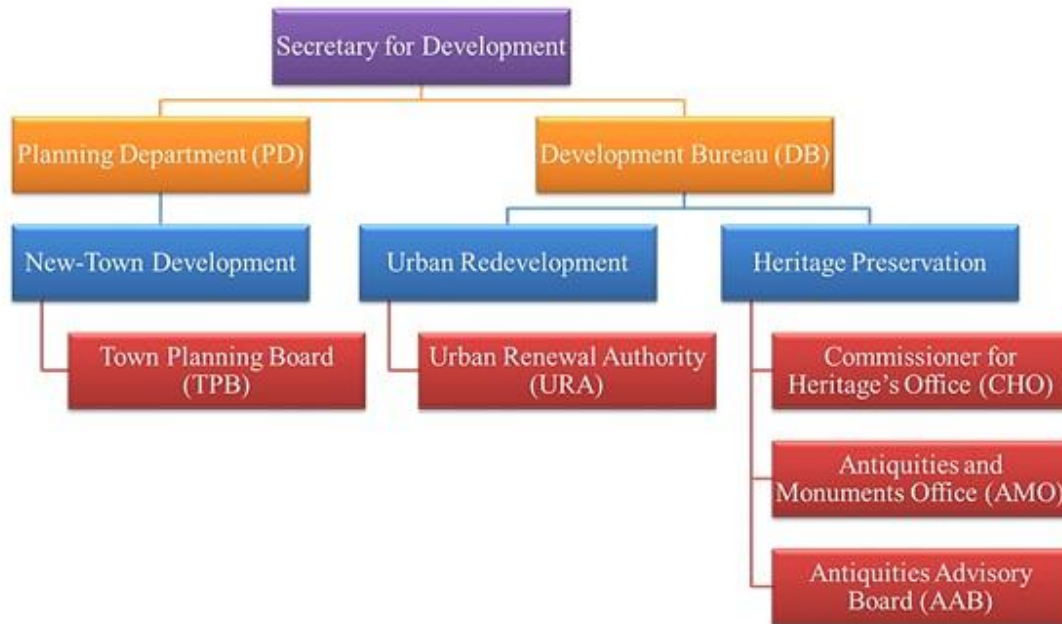


Figure 5. The New Institutional Structure for Hong Kong.

The role of the Development Bureau should also be redefined. First, the former approach of property-led should be replaced by a district-based approach. Currently, the planning system in Hong Kong contains two unrelated plans named the Hong Kong 2030 Planning Vision and Strategy and Outline Zoning Plan. It is suggested to enhance their linkage by adopting Singapore's planning system, including the Concept Plan and Master Plan. When sketching those plans, the Development Bureau is suggested to work with the Planning Department, Lands Department, and Buildings Department. After the formation of Master Plan, it is suggested that any redevelopment projects that are consistent to the Master Plan can simplify the application procedure by just directly gain the consensus from the Development Bureau and Town Planning Board and skip all the application process from the other institutions. This measure not only shows the centralization of urban redevelopment power of the Development Bureau, but also highly encourages the development to consider urban regeneration rather than undertaking the new development. Hence, Hong Kong can achieve the sustainable development.

Second, the approach of self-financing authority should be cancelled. To maintain the financial viability of the redevelopment projects, the role of the Development Bureau should be changed from an implementer to a facilitator by letting the developers to be the implementers who are responsible for the reconstruction costs. What the Development Bureau can do is to provide a lump-sum subsidy to the development project like the Partnership Renewal Programme that managed by the Seoul Government. The amount of the subsidy depends on the size of each redevelopment project.

With the above measures, the fundamental problems of the economic-based redevelopment and the loose and messy urban regeneration structure can be solved by centralizing the government institution with a comprehensive planning and facilitation system.

The GIS-based Urban Information Database

Among the four places, Japan's urban regeneration system is better than the others. One

of the major reasons is because of the GIS-based urban information database. Therefore, it is suggested that Hong Kong should build up a GIS-based urban information database. Hence, the government, the developers, and the public can make good use of this database to enhance the whole redevelopment project by gathering more useful information.

Normally, people will get the spatial information from the paper maps and old documents like books, pictures, and TV programs. However, with the technology improved, paper maps have been replaced by the GIS – digital spatial data (Longley *et al.* 2005, Campagna 2005, Maantay *et al.* 2006). The GIS map has scanned the existing maps and converted them into digital maps. These digital maps can be widely used by adding different kinds of data from historical and archaeological data to geographical and city planning data. In addition, the GIS database is not limited to the historical and urban data, it also covers the economic aspects including the land price and rent level etc. It can even report the social data like the property right situations. These data are very helpful when discussing on the urban regeneration issues.

Currently, Hong Kong is already adopting the GIS-based urban information database called Statutory Planning Portal constructed by TPB. However, it does not cover all the information for the entire area of Hong Kong with limited information provided. Therefore, before adopting the GIS database, two things are needed to be considered. Firstly, the GIS database is not easily accessible by the public as they must have to learn how to retrieve the former data since the GIS will normally display the latest data without further request. Secondly, the maintenance expense of the GIS database is quite high. The more data you create, the more expenditure is needed for maintenance. Nevertheless, the GIS database can save up a huge amount of information costs for each urban redevelopment project.

A True Public Participation - a solution to solve the conflicts

From the above analysis, it is clear that although government tried to improve the institutions and policies to preserve heritage, it still cannot fulfill citizens' requests and even deepen conflicts between government and citizens.

In fact, public participation could be the solution to resolve the conflict by providing official public channel for citizens to participate, express their feelings and communicate with government. According to Arnstein (1969), there are eight stages in public participation which are manipulation, therapy, informing, consultation, placation, partnership, delegated power and citizen control. However Hong Kong government is always staying at the stage of consultation.

The stage of consultation is a tokenism that government provides a plan beforehand. Then government announces the plan to citizens and held a meeting to collect public opinions. After all, the opinions were just for reference and the final decision will be made by the government. In fact, under consultation, public opinions cannot be truly expressed and seriously considered. Citizens only play the role of receiver to receive the plan and information that provided by the government instead of getting involved into the initial planning process and presenting their needs.

For a long period of time, Hong Kong government believes in elitism. Therefore, it tends to cooperate with business sectors and created a pro-growth coalition. As the coalition thinks that they contain abundant knowledge and capital, they know what the best for the city is. For this reason, government usually stagnates in the consultation stage during heritage preservation. But unfortunately, as this kind of coalition was developed under an incomplete democratic system, government tends to ignore public interests and opinions.

In order to ease the conflicts between government and citizens, the government needs to implement true public participation precisely. According to Arnstein (1969), the true public participation only occurs at the final two stages which are delegated power and citizen control. In these two stages, preservation is not controlled by government anymore. Citizens will participate from the initial project planning process and tell government what and how they want to preserve. At this stage, government only plays the role of consultant to provide professional opinions and give advices while citizens will dominant the whole preservation process.

To improve the level of public participation, firstly, the government needs to decentralize the power to citizens and invites all stakeholders to participate at the very beginning of project planning process by allowing them to create their own original plan for heritage preservation. The role of government should be passive and should not get involvement into the process directly and government needs to be a consultant to provide professional opinions.

Secondly, as a consultant, government should endeavor to assist all stakeholders to accomplish the preservation projects. In fact, there are many complex procedures and knowledge integrated with the projects, most of the stakeholders may not have the ability to comprehend those complicated information. Therefore, government should bear the responsibility to provide complete resources and professions such as architecture and urban planner to help stakeholders to create a comprehensive and workable plan.

Some people may question that this kind of public participation need longer time to complete the redevelopment project. However, since the Development Bureau will simplify the application procedure of the redevelopment project which implies that the Development Bureau can transfer the time cost from the procedure of getting approval from other institutions to the procedure of public discussion. Therefore, it is worth to implement a true public participation. Besides, if the true public participation is carried out, Hong Kong can further establish the measure of Voluntary Registration System which South Korea is undertaking.

Implications

Until now, there is still the absence of a single well-defined theory to explain the whole process of urban regeneration. This study can provide a reference of urban regeneration in Asian cities. By formulating a more comprehensive approach of urban regeneration in Hong Kong, sociologists and politicians can make good use of this approach for local redevelopment. Moreover, as researchers questioned that the cultural difference is crucial to the effectiveness of urban regeneration in the dimension of initiatives and the competitiveness of cities (Landry *et al.* 1996, URBACT Culture Network 2006), this approach can be used to compare with the western approach to see if there are cultural differences.

Besides, scholars can also try to unify the approaches into an empirical theory. Though each country have their unique set of problem in urban development, there should be strategic agenda and criteria that suitable to all nations to solve the integrated problems in urban redevelopment (Tallon 2010). For this reason, the theory should be focused on the urban redevelopment process rather than its content. It is because urban regeneration has its inherent weaknesses that it was “short-term, fragmented, ad hoc and project-based without an overall strategic framework for city-wide development” (Hausner 1993, p. 526). What urban regeneration can do is only provide ways to tackle the problems in the city by concentrating the problems as a whole. Nevertheless, there should be long-term strategies and purposes that can apply to all urban problems across

countries. Therefore, this comprehensive approach of urban regeneration can provide a means of mobilizing collective effort and a basis for negotiating appropriate solutions.

Apart from sociologists, politicians and scholars, Hong Kong government can also make good use of this comprehensive approach as a mean to determine policies and actions designed to enhance the condition of urban areas or develop necessary institutional structures. It serves as a potential guide for the implementation of urban policy and improvement of urban redevelopment since this approach will integrate the unique problems and Hong Kong culture in the analysis. With this strategic agenda of urban regeneration approach, the Hong Kong government can establish a more systematic, consistent and feasible urban redevelopment system.

Limitations

Nevertheless, there are some limitations in this study. First, for the design of secondary data analysis, although this method can gather larger and higher quality of data with a limited time and manpower, the information collected may be incomplete, outdated, inconclusive, or inaccurate. For example, some government documents may be lost due to fire accident. Meanwhile, some research findings may be inconclusive as the original research report was quite humble and there was no way to prove. In addition, the data used in this study is limited to what already exist. No additional raw data is used in this study.

Second, for the comparative research method, there is a limitation on accessing comparable data. Since the works and studies done by different countries are not strictly comparative at the design and purpose, the findings cannot be compared as systematic as quantitative research (Oyen 1990). For instance, findings of similar design of studies may still be varying as the purpose of the studies was different or the studies were done by different group of people, i.e. sociologists and politicians. Therefore, it is hard to compare data that the basis was not the same. Hence, it might lead to inaccurate result.

Moreover, due to the different purposes of the researches, there may be incomparable variables exist. For example, most of the Japan research did not contain the environmental variable when studying urban redevelopment. It will lead to an unfair comparison when using the comparative research method. Therefore, some of the important variable may be missed out.

Third, during the data collection, the linguistic barrier is the hardest challenge. It is because when studying the foreign experiences in Japan and South Korea, most of the government official websites, documents and reports were written in Japanese and Korean and they do not have English version. Therefore, most of the Japan and South Korea's data are highly rely on other researches and reports done by the Western countries. Hence, some of the data may not be up-to-date.

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