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Julie Clark · Nicholas Wise  
Editors

# Urban Renewal, Community and Participation

Theory, Policy and Practice

 Springer

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# Introduction

This edited collection investigates the human dimension of urban renewal, using case studies from Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and beyond to explore how the conception and delivery of regeneration initiatives can strengthen or undermine local communities. Ultimately aiming to advance our understanding of how urban residents can successfully influence or manage change in their own communities, the contributing authors analyse the complex relationships between policy, planning, economic development, governance systems, history and urban morphology. With a focus on policy, planning and practice, chapters in this book offer a range of theoretical approaches and concepts to show how urban renewal, community and participation are valued and assessed across different geographies. Alongside more conventional methods, the investigative approaches taken include built form analysis, participant observation, photographic analysis and the use of urban labs.

The level of both scholarly and professional interest in urban renewal is evidenced by the ongoing attention upon the topic across a number of recent academic contributions (see Roberts et al. 2016; Tallon 2013; Watt and Smets 2017; Wise and Clark 2017). In earlier collections, Porter and Shaw (2009) critique the concept of an urban renaissance, while Hutton's works (2009) examine the economic challenges facing inner-city communities. More recently, Kee et al. (2016) have contributed a valuable analysis of the intersection between social factors and community well-being. Like Tallon (2013), O'Brien and Matthews (2015) adopted a UK focus in relation to urban renewal, exploring studies from the Arts and Humanities Research Council Connected Communities programme (primarily in England). Numerous other authors have also addressed critical topics pertinent to urban renewal, concentrating on an individual case (e.g. Corbett and Corbett 2000; Hyra 2008; MacLaran and Kelly 2014) or on an environmentalist agenda (Shand 2013; Warburton 2009).

While these texts engage with community as an important issue, this book extends the existing literature by contributing contemporary research on a range of international cases, which examine urban renewal as it relates to community and participation across different geographical scales. Smith (2000, p. 724) defines scale as 'one or more levels of representation, experience, and organisation of

geographical events and processes'. In an increasingly connected world, there is a need to maintain focus on how the local, regional, national and global forces act upon neighbourhood communities, affecting residents socially and economically. The micro-community, or micro-locale, depending on the site and situation, can encourage people to mobilise in a manner that will benefit a community when burdened by exclusion or austerity measures. Micro-locale academic research helps to create awareness by giving people a voice to share their wants, needs, demands and frustrations. Intended for students and scholars engaged with urban and social geography, as well as those with an interest in community activism and policy, this book offers a rich combination of theoretical insight and empirical analysis, contributing to the literature on gentrification, the right to the city and community participation in neighbourhood change.

Contributors stress the significance of the social impacts of policy, challenging theoretical assumptions and examining the effects of both the presence and the absence of community participation in urban change. The urban spatial lens offered by this volume, emphasising the importance of place and context for community well-being, adds a further dimension to Kee et al.'s timely analysis, furthering critical debates on regeneration as gentrification, the right to the city, social inclusion/exclusion and community engagement, alongside examination of urban planning, development and capacity policies. In order to explore ideas about how change can transform wider urban areas—for better and for worse—the authors examine micro-cases impacted by change in a range of different urban contexts, from neighbourhood level down to the case study of an individual market. Case studies are drawn from China, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Korea and South Africa, as well as different examples from both the United Kingdom and the United States, finishing with a cross-European theory–practice chapter on the use of Urban Labs.

## **Outline of the Book**

The 12 chapters that make up this collection extend our knowledge of the importance of community and the critical role that community participation can play in driving and adapting to urban change. The contributing authors question the theoretical basis on which interventions are made and present case study evidence intended to highlight community agency as central to policy and practice for thriving city neighbourhoods with strong social networks.

The opening chapter, by 'Mee Kam Ng', deploys the concept of place-framing to understand the impacts of macro socio-economic and political contexts on competing discourses of community within two case study areas in Hong Kong. Ng argues that, in a liberal political economy dominated by the state, debates concerning urban renewal have a strongly infrastructural focus, which can result in the break-up of communities. The chapter emphasises the scope for a civil society to resist and reframe discourse around the proper function of place, supporting community and social capital to benefit the health and well-being of residents. The

contrasting case studies offered demonstrate the value of *place-reframing*, when local actors resist imposed place-frames and build their own community identity. The chapter concludes by revisiting the theoretical implications of the research for case studies.

Linking theoretical writings across disciplinary boundaries, which encompass political philosophy, geography and community psychology, 'Amie Thurber', a scholar-practitioner focussed on small-scale neighbourhood geographies in the United States, continues the discussion of the ways in which community truly matters. Drawing on her work alongside vulnerable, low-income residents in gentrifying neighbourhoods, Thurber analyses neighbourhood in terms of material, epistemic and affective dimensions. As well as offering a deeper understanding of the harms done by gentrification, the chapter proposes its 'more than material' conceptual framework as a means of imagining then enacting positive interventions to create spaces of resident representation, build relationships between neighbours and support participatory action.

Motivated by the imbalance of power between community, state and private actors, 'Julie Clark and Valerie Wright' interrogate the 'successful' regeneration of a working-class neighbourhood that has been subjected to repeated cycles of renewal: the Gorbals area of Glasgow, in Scotland. Taking a research approach that prioritises the meaning and experience of regeneration within a community, the authors explore the impacts of policy in relation to the history and changing geography of an area that has been widely celebrated as an exemplar of regeneration practice. Over the span of a lifetime, material conditions have improved dramatically and stigma associated with living in the area has reduced. However, changes to population and well as place obscure the question of who might, ultimately, be the intended audience for this showpiece regeneration. The authors argue that to call any regeneration a genuine success requires a longer lens and wider field of vision than is generally applied and advocate for the centrality of both current and previous resident narratives in evaluating the complex interrelations between space, place, community and time.

The role of governance systems in supporting community aspirations is a core concern as 'Pablo Sendra' investigates the regeneration of social housing in London, contrasting state-led with localist, 'Big Society' state-enabling models. The chapter considers tensions and limitations in different governance mechanisms intended to foster community involvement and participation, considering resident involvement in Partnership Boards in 'New Deal for Communities' areas, examining neighbourhood planning as an approach to community-led regeneration, and exploring initiatives that support resident-led funding proposals. Sendra's work emphasises the need for targeted support and funding sources, not dependent upon private investment, to encourage active community involvement in regeneration and avoid negative or displacement impacts.

The following three chapters develop the issue of urban renewal and disadvantage, discussing community displacement, marginalisation and the impact of infrastructure decisions on adjacent neighbourhoods. Investigating the experiences of displacement of inner-city residents in Johannesburg, South Africa 'Delia Ah

Goo' is also concerned with at-risk citizens, given urban renewal is all too often associated with the displacement of working-class residents. Highlighting that the greater part of gentrification research has focussed on cities in the global north, the author uncovers the unfolding processes of gentrification in the Maboneng Precinct of the inner city of Johannesburg, where an old, industrial quarter is being developed into a global city-style arts-orientated complex. In emphasising the lived experiences of people evicted from the area, Ah Goo challenges the contention that suitable, affordable housing is available elsewhere and warns of escalating protests, if the voices of the dispossessed remain unregarded.

Echoing earlier discussions of the community as central to the meaning of place, 'Sungkyung Lee' examines the Jagalchi Market Modernization, a street renovation accompanied by the redevelopment of an existing building in one of the most historic seafood markets in Busan, South Korea. The historic market has considerable cultural significance as an important space for urban life in traditional Korean society. However, in the face of declining commercial competitiveness, national agencies and local governments across Korea have launched various market revitalization programmes to assist with modernising market facilities and improving business management. Lee uses photographic analysis to unpack the significance of the market's historical particularities and authentic sense of place, contrasting the functionality of the renovated street for outside users and tourists with the loss of community and an inclusive cultural space for, particularly, female street vendors. The chapter endorses policy approaches that regard physical redevelopment as a starting point, supporting the restoration of local community and culture, rather than as the end goal.

Studying the long-term relationship between railway terminals and their surrounding neighbourhoods, 'Tom Bolton' uses a combination of historical investigation, land use mapping and built form analysis to examine Paddington and Marylebone stations in London during two periods of time, the 1890s (at the height of railway activity) and the 2010s. While research into urban renewal tends to focus on housing developments, Bolton contends that the social implications of separation caused by railway lines are under-examined, impacting upon the social, cultural and economic development of communities, separated from city centres, on the 'wrong side of the tracks' behind large stations. Counter-posing the once-in-a-generation investment required by major infrastructure developments against the long-term exclusion and entrenched disadvantage suffered by communities close to the busiest stations, the chapter closes with a call for attention to the neighbourhood dominated by railway stations and planning to mitigate exclusion.

In the next two chapters, different research approaches are used to illustrate how community perceptions might influence urban renewal policies and practice. 'Xiaolin Zang and Bouke van Gorp' are concerned with resident participation in local heritage conservation in Qingdao, China. Although public participation in heritage conservation and area revitalisation is increasing, the authors argue that traditional, expert-led heritage practices are challenged by multi-participation and dissonant heritage narratives. Drawing on a blend of heritage review, professional interviews and community survey approaches, the chapter demonstrates that

although community residents generally support heritage conservation, there are obstacles to overcome before the aspiration of community participation in heritage preservation can become a reality. Residents who encounter that heritage on a daily basis value it differently from professionals and visitors, connecting through intangible factors, such as personal connections, stories and associations, rather than what professionals regard as the ‘right’ reasons. The authors advocate connecting with the lay understandings of the historical and cultural environment as a means of building greater community support for an investment in local heritage.

‘Nicholas Wise, Lucia Aquilino and Tanja Armenski’ assesses how residents of Matera, Italy view their destination’s competitiveness ahead of the 2019 European Capital of Culture (ECoC) using the Integrated Model of Destination Competitiveness. Cities (and regions) across Europe use events to catalyse culture and aid community development. This chapter analyses results from 200 competitiveness surveys completed by residents from Matera and the immediate Basilicata region, identifying strengths and weaknesses across 83 indicators. The ECoC promotes economic production using culture to drive the restructuring of social legacies, job creation and civic re-positioning, which will influence community practice and participation in the lead up to during and after the event. Based on the information from local residents, a new determinant is considered (social conditions to improve local well-being), as a way to understand how the event will benefit the local city community of Matera. Such perspective from local residents offers insight on the need for urban renewal, social impacts and community well-being as the destination prepares to host events and future, increased tourism.

The following two chapters are underpinned by the theme of agency in the practice of urban interventions, as both practitioners and community members find different ways of engaging with formal policy systems. Focusing on the Community Development Block Grant programme for neighbourhood revitalisation in the state of Ohio (in the United States), ‘Amy E. Rock’ argues that, although demonstrating citizen participation is a key requirement of publicly funded community development projects, more work is needed to better understand citizen and community engagement. In particular, given that some groups are known to have greater involvement in public decision-making, it would be advantageous to have insight into whether low participation rates in community-based grant applications and levels of citizen participation might be a product of demographic factors. In seeking a predictive model for participation, the chapter warns that a demographic model with a good fit in urban neighbourhoods may not function well across a large group of rural communities. The author emphasises a correspondence between spatial patterns of higher participation scores and the presence of outreach initiatives by programme administrators and dedicated staff before adding, as closing note, that study which resulted in the simplification of funding application processes.

Researching in India, where cities are seeing increased investment and institutional reform, ‘Priti Narayan’ takes a multi-scalar approach to examining participation in urban renewal. As a means of investigating the rise of cities as investment epicentres, Narayan situates the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Project (JNNURM) within a wider trajectory of attempts to improve infrastructure and

empower governance at urban level. Commencing in 2006, this modernisation project involved over 7bn US dollars made available to deliver world-class urban infrastructure. Asking the question, *where does democracy thrive*, this chapter points out both the foreclosures from participation and the agency of the poor, navigating urban renewal at local scale, beyond formal, institutionalised participation.

In the final chapter of the collection, ‘Thomas Höflechner and Friedrich M. Zimmermann’ introduce the URB@Exp project, an EU-funded transdisciplinary research initiative which ran from 2014 to 2017. The chapter outlines findings from multi-method action research projects conducted in five European cities, in order to improve the engagement of diverse groups of actors and citizens in Urban Labs. Stressing governance as a core mechanism through which sustainable urban development might be achieved, the authors highlight the potential of labs in new governance structures. The chapter investigates the benefits and challenges of implementing Urban Labs, offering a more open, inclusive, democratic and creative approach through which policymakers, civil society and academics can come together and collaboratively develop ways to meet today’s ‘grand challenges’. Amongst the evidence-based guidelines and design principles for implementing labs presented, the authors profile aligning agendas and fostering plurality as crucial in the functioning of the labs: perspectives from non-traditional and excluded groups, and consideration of how all participants, including marginal actors, can initiate and manage their own processes within the lab are key to fostering genuine democratic governance.

This edited book is the result of four special sessions on urban renewal organised at the 2016 Association of American Geographers annual conference in San Francisco, California. The themes, discussions and debates from these sessions are brought forward in this collection in the following 12 chapters.

Julie Clark  
Nicholas Wise

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