



Urban renewal in China: practice, policies, and trajectory



Prof. Dr. Sun Sheng Han

Urban renewal is a process in which derelict buildings are transformed and poor infrastructure is uplifted to an acceptable standard. Embedded deeply in everyday life, especially in terms of economic performance and social justice, urban renewal is both a technical subject for urban planning and a multi-disciplinary subject for examining social change. The purpose of this presentation is to provide a critical review of China's urban renewal practice, policies, and trajectory over the past 70 years. Benchmarked against a wide range of experiences in multiple countries, this presentation aims to answer three questions: what is unique in urban renewal in China? How have political upheavals and economic reforms shaped the process? And what are the key indicators for gauging its future trajectory? China's urban renewal shares several characteristics commonly observed in other countries, such as those relating its purposes, difficulties, public sector role, and the shifting foci in the process. However, urban renewal in China is unique in its pace, approaches, how it is shaped by the political system and the property right regime, and the way that social justice is managed. Urban renewal is

used as a policy instrument for the government to realise its ambition.

As such, the practice was largely symbolic in the 1950s, followed by a minimal effort in the 1960s and the 1970s. Economic reform was a big pushing factor towards urban renewal, leading to sweeping changes to the built environment from 1980 onwards for almost three decades. More recent policies begin to include residents' participation in the process, though the method and impact are questionable. China's urban renewal trajectory has already projected an upward trend towards sustainability, as measured by evolving barometers monitoring the participation and recognition of and benefit distribution among the stakeholders.

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Habitat Unit
Fishbowl, A625

and on Zoom:

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