

Steering Committee on Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy

Progress Report by the Policy Study Consultant

(As of December 31, 2008)

Study visits

1. Study visits to six selected cities were conducted from 12 October to 14 November 2008. Taipei (12-17 October), Seoul (14-18 October) Singapore (29-31 October), Guangzhou (6-7 November), Tokyo (9-12 November), and Shanghai (12-14 November) were visited respectively.
2. Over 50 informants were being identified and interviewed from cities being visited. Most of these informants were from government departments, public bodies, tertiary institutes and non-government organizations (NGOs) with relation to land policy, urban renewal and preservation matters and the rest were residents and shop owners being affected in the redevelopment process in projects studied.
3. With the assistance of local government departments and NGOs, at least one urban redevelopment project and one preservation project were identified and visited in each selected city. Among the 24 projects being visited, 13 were redevelopment projects and 11 were preservation projects.
4. In fact, for some of the redevelopment projects that the research team had visited, elements of rehabilitation, revitalization and preservation would also be included.
5. As mentioned earlier, the study visits would include both redevelopment projects and preservation projects. But, in the case of Singapore, the major focus of visit was on preservation, as redevelopment in the private sector in Singapore is rather limited and mostly related to redevelopment of industrial or commercial sites. The redevelopment of public housing which accounts for 85% of the housing in Singapore was not quite relevant to the focus of the present study. The relevant issues of redevelopment of residential sites in the private sector were only emerging recently due to the “aging” of strata-title developments in the 1970s’.
6. In each of the cities that the Research Team had visited and the projects that had been selected as case studies, the following issues had been examined:

Institutional framework

- Institutional arrangements in formulating and implementing urban renewal policies.
- Statutory and executive power of implementation agencies and its composition of the board and public accountability.
- Land law and administration related to land ownership/tenure in the context of planning and development, the policy approach and powers to enable property acquisition or resumption.
- Compensation and re-housing policies.

Models/Approaches in Urban Renewal

- Financial model of urban renewal, financial arrangement of implementation agencies, and other financial instruments (e.g. tax relief or tax incentives).
- Relative emphasis on different types of urban renewal (i.e. redevelopment, rehabilitation, revitalization and preservation).
- Role of the public sector (planner/facilitator/developer/etc.), business sector, NGOs, and the affected bodies.
- Approaches used in different types of urban renewal including initiation of project, community participation, and financing.
- Approaches used in various types of urban renewal (e.g. voluntary/statutory).
- The use of Social Impact Assessment.
- Methods used to deal with development potentials or development rights in cases of preservation.

Community engagement

- Community engagement processes (statutory/non-statutory).
- Community involvement in shaping the content, mode, land use, conservation, development intensity and scale of urban renewal projects.

Urban Renewal Seminar

7. The Research Team had assisted in the invitation of overseas speakers and the organization of a seminar on “Models and Challenges of Urban Renewal – Sharing of Asian Experience” by the Urban Renewal Authority on 15 December 2008. As all the invited speakers from Tokyo and Singapore were not able to join the seminar, members of the research team Dr. Ernest Chui and Dr. C.K. Law had also helped to present some of their findings related to Tokyo and Singapore in the seminar.

8. Dr. C.K. Law on behalf of the Research Team had also presented its initial thoughts on the lessons learnt from the other Asian cities in the seminar(Annex).

Study Report

9. The Research team had developed working draft for chapters on the overseas city study report and had been improving and enriching the content of these working drafts. Basing on the presentations made by various invited speakers from Seoul, Taipei, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, and the discussions in the seminar, the Research Team was working on improving its draft chapters further. The expected completion date of the report is end January, 2009.
10. After discussing with the Development Bureau and the URA, the Research Team has agreed to work on a paper related to the urban regeneration of the South Bank of London, United Kingdom. Dr. C.K. Law had visited London during December 10-12th, 2008, after performing his other academic duties in United Kingdom, to meet with some of the academics and stakeholders, including employers groups, community groups, the relevant members of parliament, and some of the residents.

HKU Research Team
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