URBAN RENEWAL AND AMERICAN CITIES

The Dilemma of Democratic Intervention

SCOTT GREER

The Center for Metropolitan Studies, Northwestern University

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CONSULTING EDITOR
The Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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To the memory of
CATHERINE BAUER WURSTER,
a good and gallant lady

Contents

Preface

In this essay I have attempted to survey a complex program already spread among hundreds of American cities. Each city is in some respects unique, as is each local public authority and program. Working alone, I could only sample a few cities and talk with a few responsible officials out of the hundreds involved. I am certain that my ignorance far outweighs my knowledge.

Nevertheless, I have put my findings and my conclusions in unambiguous terms, for several reasons. First, I think certain aspects of the program do not require an elaborate sampling scheme: They are integral parts of the beast, wherever he comes to earth. There is, after all, only one federal government, one urban renewal administration, and one current Housing Act. Secondly, I think there is virtue in a straightforward, even if dogmatic, presentation of conclusions. The argument stands forth with greater clarity. Thirdly, and kin to this latter point, I feel that urban renewal will gain more at present from central questions of central purpose than from a highly qualified memorandum of impressions.

One reason for my inability to prove some of my conclusions is our general ignorance of the program's outline and effects. This is partly due to the youth and retarded development of the program, partly

to the administrative blindness built in by a Congress that will spend billions of dollars for action and not a cent for research. (See Chapter 8.) Another reason for my inability to prove strong statements is, simply, that some statements rest upon one's commitments to values, not upon one's estimate of facts. My own commitments are, generally, to an increase in the range of social choice, for individuals and for communities. In the process, I would like to see a more general acknowledgment of the inevitability of governmental action in a large-scale society, and more general concern for *social innovation,* which might improve that action in its competence and in its responsibility to broader values.

The urban renewal officials, who helped me to understand the program through discussing with me their problems and their goals, are equally committed to broader values. They are Americans and public servants, and proud to be. The quality of these persons and the integrity of their dedication to the public business I found impressive and moving. So, I believe, would the reader. Yet I sometimes found their programs questionable and their achievements ambiguous in the light of my own judgment. I also found an undercurrent of genuine intellectual concern and uneasiness among them. Because I am on their side in believing we must be inventive, committed, responsible for our collective destiny, I feel this essay is not an attack upon them individually or as a professional group. I have tried to concern myself with urban renewal as a very large, very radical program venturing into unknown territory, one whose basic ambiguities are reflected in their own day-to-day problems. Indeed, the local public authority (LPA) officials are vividly aware of these connections. I remember one perplexed man, who finally thought aloud: "Do you suppose it's the people, or the way the damned system works?" Because I think it is largely "the way the damned system works" I have ventured, as a political sociologist, to try to describe and analyze that system.

My field observation and interviewing took place during 1961–1962, in the following cities: Boston; Chicago; Eugene, Oregon; Los

Angeles; Little Rock, Arkansas; Milwaukee; Miami; New Orleans; North Little Rock, Arkansas; Pittsburgh; Saint Louis; San Francisco; Tacoma, Washington; and Springfield, Oregon. I also spent brief but intensive periods of fieldwork in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and Kingston, Jamaica. The latter cities not only gave me some perspective on "un-American" housing problems, but also threw into sharp relief the very high standards for housing that are official policy in the fifty states. They also reinforced belief in the great importance of governmental structure in the failure or success of public intervention in the housing market.

Beyond these field experiences I relied upon the published reports of the local public authorities and the Urban Renewal Agency. I also leaned heavily upon certain case studies of urban renewal, particularly the Rossi and Dentler volume, *The Politics of Urban Renewal;* the study of the Boston West End project by Herbert Gans, published as *The Urban Villagers;* and the study of Newark by Harold Kaufman, *Urban Renewal Politics: Slum Clearance in Newark.* I had the privilege of seeing, in manuscript, two recent economic analyses of the urban renewal program, *Housing Markets and Public Policy,* by William Grigsby; and *Economic Evaluation of Urban Renewal: Conceptual Foundation of Benefit-Cost Analysis,* by Jerome Rothenberg. The selected bibliography gives (though inadequately) credit to the wide variety of scholars and spokesmen who helped me develop my own direction through the complex moral and intellectual problem.

In approaching this problem I used the conventional analytic tools of the sociologist. These are concepts that emphasize the coercive effects of the *culture,* the inherited moral (or normative) system. They also emphasize the nature of *social organization* as a set of constraints upon our behavior and a powerful tool of control. Finally, they underline the ubiquity and the scope of *social change,* the vast and cumulative trends in the society.

Culture is the beginning. Here we see the very framework within which the quality of housing and the nature of our cities are defined as "problems." These problems are translated, through the political process, into legally defined programs empowered by laws. But laws

are only legitimatized aspirations until they affect the actions of men; to have such effect they must be translated into the efforts of organized social groups. As this occurs, they are subject to all the qualifications that such organization entails—the struggles between line and staff, between local autonomy and centralized administration, between survival tactics and long-run policy. As we shall see, these and many more side-effects occur in the implementation of that legitimatized aspiration called the urban renewal program. The end product, the projects and programs in hundreds of American cities, must then be seen within the framework of massive social trends including, for example, changes in housing standards and supply, in transportation and the layout of cities, in the distribution of income and the segregation of ethnic minorities. Although such trends are hardly produced by the program, they still contain it and set the resistances and opportunities for its achievements.

Thus the structure of this report will be tripartite. The first part is a brief analysis of urban renewal as part of the culture, a result of the interaction between social structure and accepted thinking (Chapters 1 and 2). The second part is an organizational analysis of the program, with an emphasis upon the local public authority as the major locus of action (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). The last consideration is the massive and intertwined social trends that constitute, at a given moment, "the nature of things" (Chapter 6). After this analysis I offer, in the last chapters, such modest proposals as I can for strengthening the program and achieving its goals.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge the support of various organizations and individuals. I am most grateful to the dozens of urban renewal officials who assisted me so generously; to such scholars as Robert Agger of the University of Oregon, George Duggar of the University of Pittsburgh, Edward Banfield and James Wilson of Harvard, Henry Schmandt of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and my colleagues here at Northwestern; to the other members of the Ford Foundation research group on urban renewal. I am also grateful to the Public Affairs Program of the Ford Foundation for their generous financial support. Grateful acknowledgment is made to the American Society of Planning Officials and to the Executive Director, Mr. Dennis O'Harrow, for permission to use portions of my article "Key Issues for the Central City" which was included in their book *Planning 1963* (Interstate, November 1963).

SCOTT GREER

Evanston, Illinois
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Chapter 1

AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

At a cost of more than three billion dollars the Urban Renewal Agency (URA) has succeeded in materially reducing the supply of low-cost housing in American cities. Like highways and streets, the program has ripped through the neighborhoods of the poor, powered by the right of eminent domain. Slums are being cleared, and bright patches of new construction dot the central areas of the big cities. From Boston to San Francisco, from Portland, Oregon, to Portland, Maine, hundreds of American cities and their citizens are involved. The program is so widespread, so varied, and so complex that few people have more than a skewed random image of it.

We see skid row being renewed out of the path of the bank in one town, the Orthodox synagogue being displaced by the telephone company's new building in another. We see a well-kept and charming neighborhood of working men and their families, where once stood a depressing collection of shacks inhabited by many of the same people. We also see the Italian parishioners, returned to their destroyed neighborhood for the "blessing of the house." Each *pater familias* stands in front of the vacant lot where his house once stood to receive the benediction of the priest. In the Greek neighborhood of Chicago the film, *Goodbye Socrates,* vividly demonstrates some of the costs of the program.

Because it *is* a big program, complex and varied, this study

attempts to organize an over-all, birdseye view of it. It does not generalize from one case in one city. Nor does it ignore the complex structure of politics and government, reaching from the halls of Congress to the chambers of the city councils, which initiate and undergird programs in hundreds of cities. Today the program is expanding rapidly, and as it expands there are changes in emphasis and goals. We must be aware of this, for it is a *new* program, still capable of reformulation in terms of its effectiveness as democratic intervention in the shape of cities. Under the Kennedy and Johnson regimes the program has been accelerated; with new and highly committed personnel there is every prospect it will become a part of life in every American city of any size. Since it has already been in operation for fifteen years, it seems fair and useful to take a look at its operations and results.

Because urban renewal is a novel effort, we must look at it from several angles—as an aspiration, as an organization, and as given result. Since it began in the acts of the 81st Congress, and since its possibilities and limits are still derived, finally, from the action of the Congress, we shall begin at the beginning: What are the bare bones, the statutory nature of the urban renewal program?

Objectives and Means

The declaration of national housing policy in the Housing Act of 1949 states the goals of all the various housing agencies, including those of the Urban Renewal Agency.

> The Congress hereby declares that the general welfare and security of the Nation and the health and living standards of its people require housing production and related community development sufficient to remedy the serious housing shortage, the elimination of sub-standard and other inadequate housing through the clearance of slums and blighted areas, and the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family, thus contributing to the development and redevelopment of communities and the advancement of the growth, wealth, and security of the Nation.[1]

The aims expressed in the Housing Act, then, heavily emphasize the elimination of substandard housing and the provision of better housing. The sections dealing with urban renewal are no less specific.

> . . . appropriate local public bodies shall be encouraged and assisted to undertake positive programs of encouraging and assisting the development of well-planned, integrated residential neighborhoods, the development and redevelopment of communities, and the production, at lower costs, of housing of sound standards of design, construction, livability, and size for adequate family life . . .[2]

Perhaps it is pretentious to speak of the assumptions that undergird the law as a "theory." Nevertheless, an effort at controlled social change must rest upon a belief, however incoherent, as to the nature of things and how they can be changed: It must also posit a desired condition as an achievable end. We shall look, then, at the ends desired by those who wrote the Housing Act, then at the constraints within which they must be achieved, and finally at the kinds of tools that are to be used in their achievement.

Although the chief emphasis in the law creating the Urban Renewal Agency is on housing, it does not stand alone in the statement of policy. In fact, the statement allows three levels of judgment: They approximate the aged trinity of "the good, the true, and the beautiful." The good is represented by a welfare aim, "a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family"; the true is represented by the invocation of rational order, "well-planned, integrated residential neighborhoods"; while the beautiful seems covertly present in the phrases "of sound standards of *design*" and "the development and redevelopment of *communities*" (my

[1] The Housing Act of 1949, As Amended Through June, 1961 (Public Law 171, 81st Congress), Sec. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, Sec. 3.

italics). Such terms are extraordinarily vague: They may all simply refer to better houses in better neighborhoods, or they may also encompass such goals as a rational location pattern for an entire metropolis and a "city beautiful," replete with monuments and parks. As we shall see, they have increasingly been interpreted in the latter sense by the Congress and the administrative branch.

These goals are to be attained, however, only within some rigid conditions.[3] The two most salient ones require that this program, though supported by the federal treasury and the police power, be brought into being in any locality only at the instigation of the local political structure ("appropriate *local* bodies shall be encouraged and assisted . . ."), and that it rely for actual construction of private use buildings (excepting public housing) upon the private market ("*private* enterprise shall be encouraged to serve as large a part of the total need as it can").[4] Underlying these provisos are basic norms, held widely by Americans, as to what the federal government should and should not do. It should not usurp the rights of localities, and it should not interfere with the right of private enterprise to exploit the market (especially, it might be noted, in real estate). Government should do, as the late Senator Taft was fond of remarking, "what the private market is unable to do." The requirement that local agencies initiate programs and that local communities contribute part of their costs is meant to assure both the free choice of the local community and its commitment to the program. The inability of urban renewal authorities to build assures a dependence on the private real estate industry.

Within these limits, what are to be the means for achieving these goals? At the highest level of generality, the Housing Act requires planning.

[3]Underlying any governmental program is the assumption that existing law and order will not be violated, and so many other conditions are assumed. I have only highlighted those that have basic consequences for the program *and that could, theoretically, have been differently defined.*

[4]Housing Act of 1949, As Amended Through June, 1961, Sec. 2 (my italics). The only other exception (besides public housing) is that local public facilities may be built by governmental bodies.

> No contract shall be entered into for any loan or capital grant . . . unless (1) there is presented to the Administrator by the locality a workable program for community improvement (which shall include an official plan of action, as it exists from time to time, for effectively dealing with the establishment and preservation of a well-planned community with well-organized residential neighborhoods of decent homes and suitable living environment for adequate family life) for utilizing appropriate private and public resources to eliminate, and prevent the development or spread of, slums and urban blight, to encourage needed urban rehabilitation, to provide for the redevelopment of blighted, deteriorated, or slum areas, or to undertake such of the aforesaid activities or other feasible community activities as may be suitably employed to achieve the objective of such a program . . .[5]

This is extremely vague language. We shall see later how it has been administratively translated into the "Workable Program" requirement. For the rest it is enough to remember that *federal grants and loans are made contingent upon compliance with the Urban Renewal Agency's theories.* These are theories of (1) slum elimination and prevention, (2) rational urban location, and (3) proper community development.

Achievement Tools

The program can generate two basic kinds of leverage. First, and most spectacularly, it can be used to buy land through market negotiations or through forced purchase under the right of eminent domain. This land can then be cleared of structures and disposed of to new owners for specified kinds of development. Secondly, it can require that local governments pass and enforce ordinances respecting, for example, the maintenance and use of structures. Each of these requires a movement of policy from the federal program to the local public authority (LPA, as it is usually abbreviated). The American jealousy of local community rights supports this require-

[5]*Ibid.* Sec. 101, parens. (c).

ment; it is in the municipality, after all, that land is cleared and sold, that code violations are detected and corrected.

These tools are used differently for the three purposes of the program. Generalizing from the way the law is usually interpreted, the elimination and prevention of slums is to be brought about in this fashion. First, those structures that are so far gone that the cost of rehabilitating them would be greater than their final market value are destroyed. The land on which they stood is sold to other users, frequently for other uses. Secondly, through code enforcement those structures that are capable of rehabilitation are brought up to the specifications of the housing codes. Crowding, dilapidation, and inadequate sanitary facilities are remedied. As a net product, one will eliminate slums at a given time. A program of continuous enforcement should prevent their further development.

The promotion of a well-planned neighborhood is expanded to mean the development of well-planned cities, for the character of the neighborhood is due to its place in a larger system. And, since cities are already developed, this can only mean changing land uses. Here the achievement tools are used to change property ownership. Structures are razed, and the land is sold to new owners for new purposes; one then moves toward a situation that finds the right use in the right place, the right business on the right corner, the right people in the right neighborhood.

The development and redevelopment of the community is interpreted to mean the particular municipality in which the LPA is situated. Thus it usually means the central city of a metropolitan area and, within that city, the central business district (or CBD, as it is usually called). In creating the "city beautiful" at the center, the major tool is large-scale clearance and planned redevelopment, with the LPA using, wherever possible, architectural competitions to produce the most pleasant designs.

It is, then, with these three different goals and separate strategies that the urban renewal program is put in the field. But it is a long way from the aims of a federal document, no matter how legitimate it may be, to the specific action taken on *this* block in *this* city. It is

wise to look briefly now at the organizational structure that is to translate this law, this set of "legitimatized aspirations," into living, concrete fact.

Organizational Structure

Urban renewal is a program that moves directly from an agency of the federal government to the municipality. Between the office in Washington and City Hall lies only the regional office, and the regional office functions chiefly as a monitor and processing point, implementing decisions ultimately made in Washington. Thus the program brings about one of the closest organizational ties between Washington and local municipal government that has ever existed.

The specific reasons for generating projects are as varied as the local political systems. In general, however, the "carrot" is the federal government's ability to take two-thirds of the cash loss involved in the process of buying land and "writing down" its value to what the market will bring. (There are also various kinds of minor grants, loans, and advances available, useful in piecing out the scanty fiscal powers of the municipality.) The projects, as noted earlier, are initiated at the local level. They must, however, be passed upon by the federal agency at a number of points. The first stage is in the granting of a "planning advance" to be used in working out the detailed plan specified in the legislation (cf., *supra,* footnote 5). The second stage of surveillance is the most crucial; it is the evaluation of the urban renewal plan by the national office which culminates in either an execution grant or the rejection of a plan. Finally, the agency exercises surveillance during the course of a project, through spot checks of relocated families, through independent assessments of property values, and through the acceptance or rejection of project costs, local contributions, and so forth.

Federal acceptance of a plan, leading to an execution grant for a project, requires that three kinds of evidence be supplied by the

LPA. First, the financial feasibility of a specific project must be demonstrated. Secondly, evidence of local political commitment, in the shape of a statement signed by the responsible head(s) of local government, must be presented to the agency. Finally, a "workable program to eliminate and prevent slums" in the city proposing the project must be judged acceptable by the federal agency.

The Workable Program

Because it is the chief technical instrument used in guaranteeing that urban renewal will lead to the elimination and prevention of slums, the Workable Program is worth discussion in some detail. It amounts to a series of seven requirements upon the locality: Each LPA must present evidence that it is indeed fulfilling these requirements. They are:

1. adequate codes and ordinances for structure and use, adequately enforced;
2. a comprehensive community plan for land use and public capital development;
3. neighborhood analysis for the determination of blight;
4. administrative organization adequate to an all-out attack on slums and blight;
5. a responsible program for relocation of displaced families;
6. citizen participation in the entire program;
7. adequate financial resources for carrying out (1) through (6) above.

In total, this amounts to an extremely strenuous set of demands upon the typical municipal government. According to the Program, however, each is indispensable. Together they spell out the logical implications of the strategy discussed earlier. The elimination of slums and blight requires the identification of target areas; adequate

code enforcement; a program to relocate families so as to minimize the amount of social cost levied upon the poorest and to prevent other neighborhoods from overcrowding; and, at the same time, creates the fiscal and administrative resources for doing these things. Then too, prevention of future slums requires a plan for over-all land use while citizen participation is required (or thought to be required) if the program is not to die through lack of political support. It is, after all, a program sponsored by local elected political officials—no matter how much federal money is involved.

The Local Public Authority

George Duggar has given to the local urban renewal program the apt designation of "enterprise." Neither a bounded, centralized organization, nor a spontaneous expression of separate groups, it is a complex of agreements among groups that must go on over several years if the program is to have any results. LPAs may be subagencies of a city government, they may be combined with existing housing authorities, or they may be separate legal entities. In any case, they must have the active cooperation of a wide range of organizations and groups. It would be superfluous to list them all, but certain categories are basic. They include local political officials, potential redevelopers in the private real estate business, and the federal Urban Renewal Administration. The LPA reflects, vividly, the double commitments of the program: to local and federal polities and to public and private sectors of the economy.

The men who head these agencies are appointed officials of local governments. They are usually well-paid by governmental standards, but they often have no strong rights to tenure. They are, along with their key line officers, soldiers of local political fortune. Like the city managers, they hold their jobs by the will of the political leaders and, like them, they exercise such power and influence as they can generate through their multiple commitments and alliances. Their

sources of support include the political leaders, other influential people in the community, and sources of "outside" money and professional recognition (including large redevelopment firms and the federal agency). The directors of the LPAs may be thought of as "public entrepreneurs."

This, then, is the formal structure of urban renewal as a program. Its charter spells out broad purposes—to eliminate slums from American cities, plan neighborhoods, and develop communities. It also confers great powers, including a substantial sum from the public treasury. But it works within certain radical limits: It must act only in cooperation with local municipal governments and the private real estate industry. Then, to protect the purposes of the program, the federal agency makes rigid requirements of the LPA that proposes a local action. These are rules of procedure backed up by the ability of the URA to refuse to certify a project as desirable, a "workable program" as acceptable; they can lead to a refusal to disburse public funds for the given project. Thus the public entrepreneurs at the local level must satisfy the requirements of their job through accommodating two sets of pressures—those from the local community and those from the federal agency.

This is not a simple or an easy task.

Chapter 2

URBAN RENEWAL AS A THEORY

The movement to clear the slums had its origins during the Great Depression of the 1930's. It rested upon accumulated dissatisfaction with some of the social consequences of city life, as well as the desire to get people to work, "builders to building, lenders to lending." Those who pressed for attention to such matters were not, however, slum dwellers themselves; they were self-selected members of middle-class society concerned with social welfare and the public interest. Such people try to represent both the interest of the poor and the society's interest in the consequences of urban slums. Ashworth speaks of English slums in the early nineteenth century:

> Their inhabitants were in no position to obtain the constitution of any additional (governing) body, and for a time no one from outside felt much interest in discovering what their problems were or, indeed, that they had any special problems of their own. But the societies of the new congested districts were not discrete entities and more and more people outside them gradually become aware of the pressure of their novel, powerful, and alarming qualities. Even if he were not his brother's keeper, every man of property was affected by the multiplication of thieves; everyone who valued his life felt it desirable not to have a mass of carriers of virulent diseases too close at hand. . . . It was morality (or, more exactly, criminality) and disease that were causing concern. Overcrowding and congestion, poverty,

crime, ill-health and heavy mortality were shown to be conditions found together.[1]

Concern with slums as centers of poverty, crime, and ill-health is still with us.

In America the accelerating growth of urban concentrations during the nineteenth century had also produced these enormous neighborhoods of the poor. Here, too, investigators and reformers began to define them as major urban problems. Some reformers even defined the city itself as the cause of evil and attempted to recapture the agrarian virtues—going so far as to export slum children to the hinterland.[2] In time, the effort changed toward the settlement house movement, the growth of private charities, and pressure for public aid. These efforts were illuminated by social surveys that defined the poor neighborhoods of the city as "problems"—and type-cast *places* as villains. Poverty, crime, disease, broken families, and the like were linked together in certain geographical areas of the city where housing was deteriorated and rents low; these neighborhoods were given the summary name, "the slums."

Slums were seen as threats to the larger society. As the centers of concentration for criminals and diseased persons, they were "contagious," for their effects were apt to spill over into the city as a whole. Then too, as aggregations of the most unfortunate, speaking foreign languages and living in different worlds, they were suspected as aliens, seditionists, and possibly anarchists. Some observers, like Jane Addams, considered the development of children in such environment as grounds for anxiety; what kind of equity was this—and what kind of new generation was being reared in the "city within a city," as Robert Park called it?

The complex interaction of poverty, the housing market, and the layout of the city were all lumped together in the term, slums. Poor

[1]William Ashworth, *The Genesis of Modern British Town Planning* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1954), pp. 47–48.

[2]Cf., Anselm Strauss, *Images of the American City* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), pp. 178–179. See also the discussion of rural values in urban America found in Robert Wood, *Suburbia* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1959).

people lived in certain houses on certain streets, mostly through necessity. And poor folks have poor ways. Yet these observations were combined and reified, and slums were thought of as things in themselves, having malignant powers and spreading like cancer. Buildings infected buildings and the latter, in turn, infected people. Thus the physical environment took on an overweening importance in the minds of reformers: Out of all the important consumer goods, *housing* became a major focus, for housing was considered the key to the elimination of slums.

The Program to Eliminate Slums: 1937

The New Deal launched many new programs aimed at achieving certain social goals immediately, as well as contributing to the long-run aim of "priming the pump" of the economy. One major goal was the improvement of housing, which resulted in the Housing Act of 1937. For those who could afford to buy or build if they could obtain money, this act provided help with mortgages; for those who could not afford decent housing, it provided public housing. Thus the first slum-clearance effort consisted simply of tearing down the offending slums and replacing them with publicly subsidized housing. The program had the anticipated effect of stimulating the construction industry and it eventually produced nearly three million public-housing units for the poor. In the process, an approximately equal number of dilapidated houses in crowded city neighborhoods was demolished. Tall public-housing apartment buildings took their place.

The program might be called, indifferently, public housing or slum clearance. Few public-housing units were ever built in the middle-class areas of the outer city because citizens protested vigorously at the threat of public housing nearby; they were built on the site of slums. Then, as housing became more plentiful, public housing became increasingly a service for the bottom dogs—broken families, the

aged poor, the ill, and, especially, residentially restricted Negroes. Objections to public housing now combined distaste for Negroes with distaste for the poor as neighbors. As a result of citizen pressure on local politicians, public housing was more and more often sited in the center of the Negro districts and, to avoid a net decrease in available housing, the structures grew taller.[3]

This public housing has been called, with some justice, "minimal charity." Those with no choice were housed in apartments high up in tall buildings, in the center of the city. This was the exact opposite of the housing preferred by Americans who had a choice—the single family unit surrounded by its own yard, convenient for the surveillance of children and offering a degree of privacy. Public housing was operated by managers who carried over criteria of the real estate business to what was essentially a welfare program, men whose pride was in high collection rates and low vacancies, low breakage and minimal costs. These are all useful rules for real estate management no doubt; they are not so relevant to the problems of maintaining order, safety, and community among the concentrated mass of the poor who make up public housing's clientele.

Thus, as typical public housing became slab towers filled with poor Negroes in the middle of Negro working-class neighborhoods, it developed its own critics among the liberals who once fought for it. They spoke of it as "immuring the slums," or "slums with hot running water."[4] Some spoke of it as a way of increasing segregation in the slums. As the social climate of the Depression evaporated in the economic sun of the postwar years, the program steadily lost popularity.

[3]Martin Meyerson and Edward C. Banfield, *Politics, Planning, and the Public Interest* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1955), describe in convincing detail the struggle over public-housing sites in Chicago.

[4]See, for example, Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961); also Catherine Bauer, "The Dreary Deadlock in Public Housing," *Architectural Forum*, CVI (May 1957), 140–142, 219–222.

Urban Redevelopment: 1949

Disenchantment with the public-housing kind of slum clearance was caused by more than its unpopularity as a housing program. It was becoming clear that, at the then current rate of development, public housing could never rebuild all the neighborhoods that had deteriorated during the decade of the Depression and five years of war. And, in the post-Depression climate of thought, continued large-scale investment in public works did not appear politically unpopular. Thus a bipartisan coalition developed the legislation that eventually became the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Bill, the Housing Act of 1949. A portfolio bill including provisions for public housing and mortgage insurance as well, it provided the basic charter for urban redevelopment.

This bill was a center of controversy for several years before its enactment.[5] It was felt to be popular because of the severe housing shortage resulting from depression and war. On the other hand, "Objections to the comprehensive housing legislation as a whole, and particularly bitter objections to the public housing provisions, were expressed by every national trade organization whose members were primarily engaged in producing, financing, or dealing with residential property."[6] Foard and Fefferman believe that the public housing provision acted as a stalking horse for urban redevelopment: In the intensity of opposition to public housing, the program to clear land and sell it on the market escaped radical censure. As one conservative critic put it, "I am in favor of the slum elimination section. I am opposed to the public housing section."[7] This schism between the support for public housing and that for urban development continues

[5]See the excellent brief history of urban renewal law in Ashley A. Foard and Hilbert Fefferman, "Federal Urban Renewal Legislation," *Law and Contemporary Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Autumn 1960), pp. 635–684.

[6]*Ibid.*, p. 650.

[7]Senator John Bricker, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 648.

to the present, and is one of the important horns in several dilemmas.

The new program was popular with a wide range of supporters, and those concerned with rebuilding the cities had high hopes for it. The bill was still primarily focused upon housing and the neighborhood, however, and required that any area redeveloped should be predominantly residential—that is, over half the acreage should be devoted to residential uses. As the Taft subcommittee report put it: "The Subcommittee is not convinced that the federal government should embark upon a general program of aid to cities looking to their rebuilding in more attractive and economical patterns."[8]

Senator Taft argued that the over-all structure of the urban areas should be taken as given. The program should be aimed at a constant improvement of housing within the existing layout of cities—a concentration upon "spot removal." The planners, with whom he argued in the hearings on the bill, tended to see "spots" as symptoms of the larger system. This dichotomy runs throughout the history of the urban renewal program.

Urban Renewal: 1954

The urban redevelopment program created by the 1949 Housing Act was criticized on several counts. Many were distressed at the problems created for the very poor who were displaced by projects in a time of severe housing shortage. Others pointed out the impossibility of financing over-all redevelopment, when evidence accumulated to show that "blight" was growing faster than redevelopment. The weakness of housing codes and their enforcement seemed to some an obvious contributory factor in the problem; the continued unplanned development of cities bothered others. In response to a wide range of criticisms, the Housing Act of 1949 was amended in 1954 with support from a bipartisan coalition and a Republican administration.

[8]Quoted in Foard and Fefferman, "Legislation," p. 663.

The major innovation in redevelopment was the Workable Program. As described earlier, it is a logical answer to many, if not all, of the Acts' criticisms. It was so written as to increase the contributions of private enterprise, the responsibility of local government, and the participation of private citizens in the neighborhoods to be conserved or rehabilitated. In sum, these changes were expected to produce more results with fewer federal dollars. The amendments allocated funds for more public housing, needed for the displaced, but they also allowed the use of 10 per cent of grants-in-aid for areas not primarily residential or not to be redeveloped as residential. The overwhelming emphasis upon housing was moderated for the first time.

The slum clearance programs of 1937 had evolved into the urban renewal program of 1954. The program was now focused upon much more than the redevelopment of deteriorated neighborhoods; it was assigned the task of conserving the existing stock of housing, rehabilitating that which was beginning to deteriorate, and planning that which was to be built. It was to result in the clarification and enforcement of housing standards as statutory acts. Cities had to be planned in a comprehensive fashion, nonresidential areas redeveloped, rehabilitated, or conserved, and the private real estate market controlled through indirection.

The planners won with a vengeance, and Senator Taft lost. If "slums and blight" are but symptoms of a larger whole, whoever defines that whole and its proper nature is defining the program. The Housing Act was further amended in 1961; again the emphasis was upon nonresidential redevelopment. The percentage allowed was extended to 30 per cent, while the major intellectual innovation was the provision for a comprehensive renewal program, to encompass the entire city in one plan for the future.

The reader has probably noticed how few definitions have been given. This is partly because in the universe of discourse definitions are very rare, and partly because the problem is so basic to an understanding of the way urban renewal is practiced that it deserves systematic discussion.