

Discussion: Housing and sustainability – demolition or refurbishment?

Anne Power PhD, CIH, RIBA

Professor of Social Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

Zvi Weinstein

Project Renewal Coordinator, Ministry of Construction and Housing
Department of Project Renewal, Israel

Contribution by Z. Weinstein

This discussion presents the Israeli point of view regarding housing demolition or refurbishment in deprived neighbourhoods. The author first supports the arguments presented by Power (2010) and then introduces other perspectives beside reducing energy and carbon emission.

The Israeli Project Renewal (PR) began in 1978. It comprises 104 sites, some of which are developing towns, neighbourhoods in inner cities or in big metropolitan cities. All together a population of 1.3 million inhabitants (out of 7.6 million) lives in 260 000 household units. PR housing policy stated 'no' to demolition and 'no' to population displacement. Instead it supported three main policies:

- (a) To renovate the existing buildings stock. Physically deteriorated buildings were refurbished from bottom to top including the development of the yard around them. In the early years there were no standards of green buildings, and they were renovated according to the technology that was known at that time.
- (b) To enlarge apartments. This policy was implemented especially for households which consisted of big families that lived in high-density housing and suffered severe dwelling conditions. Up to 2011 more than 45 000 units were extended. Most of them doubled their original size of 45–60 m² to 100–130 m².
- (c) To sell public housing units to their tenants. Owners of flats in deprived neighbourhoods included in PR were entitled to renovate and extend them with subsidies from the government. Furthermore, they became owners of a real estate property that had a value in the market.

These policies were intended to create a new situation in the neighbourhoods and cities: to decrease the high rates of outmigration from the neighbourhoods and to attract new residents to them by developing new community, social and educational services and other established facilities at a high level. In addition the policies resulted in: new housing developments built by private developers; a strengthening of local

leadership and community building; an end to neighborhood stigma; local municipality investment in infrastructures and decentralisation of local government services to the neighborhood. The enlargement policy was adopted by other cities and neighbourhoods that were not included in PR. housing units prices went up and residents became part of the decision making processes regarding planning; residents were exempt by law from land taxes payment.

There are start-up activities to use green building planning and materials according to local standards and guides of the Israeli Institute of Standardization. Green building elements in existing buildings include: solar energy, water recycling, wall cover with special materials, ventilation; changing of lights, vegetation and so on.

REFERENCE

Power A (2010) Housing and sustainability: demolition or refurbishment? *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers – Urban Design and Planning* **163**(4): 205–216.

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