

Development of Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies in Malaysia through Best Practice and Transferable Lessons from South Korea and England

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Abstract. Market-led urban redevelopment is the main strategy in Malaysia resulted imbalance developments especially for old neighbourhoods located in city centre. Hence a more holistic approach in urban regeneration, i.e. area-based neighbourhood renewal with integration of people, place and system shall be implemented. The objective of this paper is to review the neighbourhood renewal in developed countries and to identify elements that can be adapted in Malaysia. This study was conducted through comparative analysis via literature resources. It found that the current practices in project selection and funding system heavily affected by human factors, i.e. political and economic preferences; and resource optimization has not been emphasis at neighbourhood level. This paper concluded neighbourhood renewal shall be initiated by local communities, through collaboration with private sectors and specialists, with local authorities shall act as resource providers rather than implementers. In addition, resource optimization, i.e. “Share Town” shall be implemented at neighbourhood level.

Keywords: area-based, community engagement, diversity, sustainable funding

1 Introduction

Many scholars suggest that small scale projects that are sensitive to the local context, social capital and neighbourhood networks are important elements in the renewal process [1]. The final goal of neighbourhood renewal is to create a self-reliance and sustainable neighbourhood, i.e. a place where people willing to live and work for now and in future [2] as well as to promote equity during renewal process.

South Korea (hereafter Korea) has been selected for this study as it has demonstrated some good examples that emphasis not only urban redevelopment but the integration of urban rehabilitation, revitalization and preservation whereas area-based neighbourhood renewals were conducted in England since 1990s resulted the development of comprehensive strategies that serve as role models to Malaysia.

This paper aimed to determine the future direction of neighbourhood renewal in Malaysia through the reviewing of the practices in Korea and England. This study was conducted through comparative analysis via literature resources. Fig. 1 indicated the basic framework for the comparison of neighbourhood renewal in Korea and

England. This framework was derived based on the practices in UK as area-based neighbourhood renewal have been practiced in UK since decades ago. The study was based on three basic elements, i.e. people, place and system [3]-[4] and their inter-connection with the main sustainable pillars. There are three main focus in this study, i.e. resource optimization that emphasis on function-mix and social-mix; community engagement and project selection; and funding system.

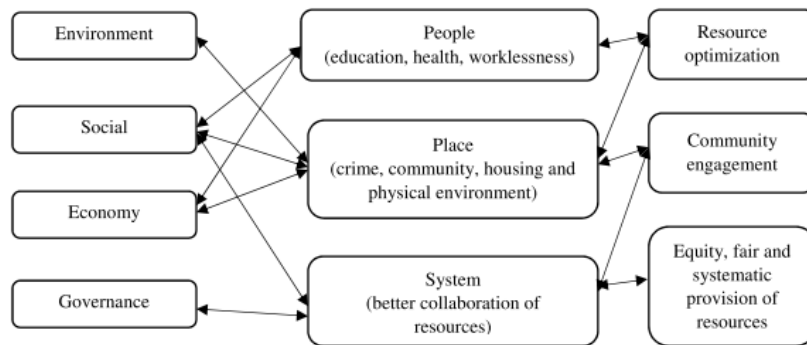


Fig. 1. Research framework

2 Comparison of Neighbourhood Renewal in Korea and England

2.1 People

Education programmes that encourage the locals to participate in their neighbourhood renewals [5] and job creation through renewal programmes are among those renewal strategies in Korea despite there are no clear directions that emphasis on people-based strategies. In the meanwhile, neighbourhood renewal in England which had clear objectives rely heavily on the public funding and local business partnerships in term of job creation and education. These programmes aimed to reduce the worklessness through the improving of the economic performance [6] and to improve the level of education and health in deprived neighbourhoods.

2.2 Place

Increasing of ageing population and single-aged household; and shrinkage in household size are the similarities in both countries hence resulted the emphasis on physical rehabilitation, i.e. to improve common facilities for ageing society and sharing policy aimed for resource optimization. Nevertheless, both countries have different approaches due to their dissimilarities in housing stock, history and cultural backgrounds. Even though both countries emphasis on clean and safe environment, neighbourhood renewal in Korea accentuates tourism-based renewal, i.e. heritage restoration and physical rehabilitation that enable tourists to travel conveniently

whereas area-based neighbourhood renewal in England have clear objectives, i.e. to reduce crime rate, to empower resident, provision of decent housing and improvement in physical living condition. Market-led urban redevelopment is still the main priority due to economic perspective as apartments is the main housing stock in Korea [7]. This is in contrast with England where semi-detached or detached houses is the main housing stock [8].

2.3 System

Both countries have developed comprehensive neighbourhood renewal policies and strategies emphasis on local partnerships with the direct involvement of local communities. Both targeted on deprived neighbourhoods with the project selection is based on deprivation index and local authorities as the final decision makers as they are the main funding providers. Neighbourhood renewal in Korea have been credited due to its success in local business establishment and the improvement in living condition of underprivileged groups whereas neighbourhood renewal in England have been criticized as its failed to achieve the final goal as there has been no dramatic change in the relative ranking of the most deprived areas in England [9] despite the deprivation index of these neighbourhoods have been improved.

Sanbokdoro Renaissance Project (SRP) in Busan and Kensington, Liverpool in England were the case references in this study. Unlike SRP that was initiated by local artists with the injection of public funds only after its initial success [10], neighbourhood renewal in Kensington received sufficient public funds. Both encouraged the involvement of local communities in idea generating. Nevertheless, SRP emphasis on the creativity of local authorities and local communities in the neighbourhood revitalization through the provision of technical resources by local authorities whereas Kensington emphasis on the integration of redevelopment and rehabilitation through the local partnerships in order to achieve the objectives that covered wider scopes, i.e. people- and place-based objectives. Both evidenced the improvement in physical environments. However, resource optimization were not being emphasis in both programmes. Reusing the vacant units and rehabilitation of existing houses in SRP was the only resource optimization strategy. While SRP was credited as one of the successful renewal projects from social viewpoint, Kensington had been criticized in failing to create sustainable jobs and lack of locals' participation despite it obtained sufficient public funds [11].

3 Lessons Learnt and Neighbourhood Renewal Development in Malaysia

3.1 Project Selection or Local Participation?

Project selection in both countries are based on deprivation index with local authorities as final decision makers. It can be interpreted as the project selection is rely upon human factor which is affected by political and economic aspects. In

general, area with higher economic potentiality will be selected as it is easier to showcase the profit return and achievements in these potential areas. Furthermore, area with powerful local politicians may benefited from the selection process. Local communities play a passive role, i.e. they are able to participate only if their neighbourhood is being selected as part of renewal programmes.

A sustainable neighbourhood renewal shall be initiated by local communities with local authorities shall act as resource providers rather than implementers. These will eliminate inequitable and less transparency during project selection hence resulted better distribution of resources and enable the entire nation stand the similar opportunities to implement neighbourhood renewal in their living place whenever is necessary despite their social and economic backgrounds (Fig. 2).

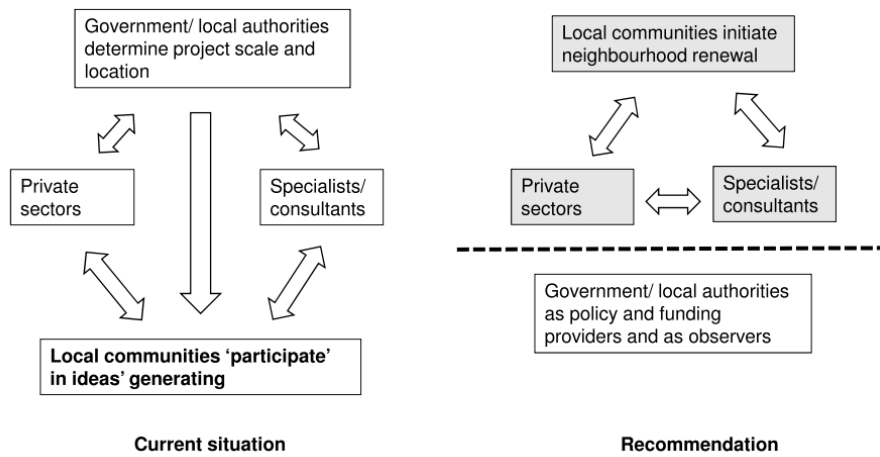


Fig. 2. The current practice and recommendation in project hierarchy

3.2 Regulated Funding Enrich the Creativity in Neighbourhood Renewal

Subsidy, grants, private investments and public-private partnerships are among those strategies that have been implemented in both countries. Nevertheless, project scale and scope is very much depending on these funds and local communities are in passive mode as they rely upon the decision of funding providers which have been affected by political influences and profit-oriented decisions, e.g. changed of policy in England resulted the ceased operation of Kensington Regeneration.

Regulated funding from both public and private sectors shall be explored (Fig. 3). Public sectors will provide the regulated funding for routine maintenance whereas private sectors will provide the regulated funding to their adopted neighbourhoods, through the collaboration with third party consultants. Subsidy and tax refund will be given by government to private sectors as profit return. These will eliminate profit-oriented decisions which are mainly based on the concept “the winner takes all”. In addition, this will enhance the “real participation” from local communities based on

their creativity through the consultation from specialists without too much interferences from local authorities.

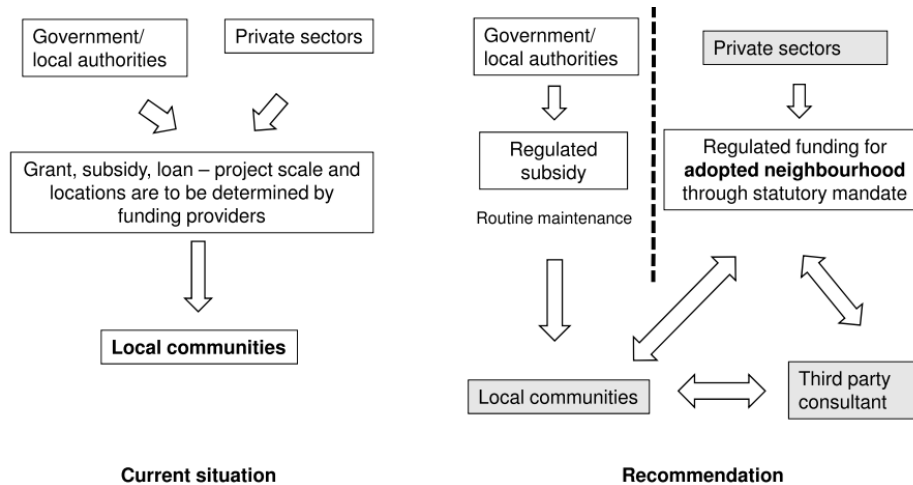


Fig. 3. The current practice and recommendation in funding system

3.3 Diversity for Resource Optimization

Diversity in function and social aspects have been emphasis in both countries due to the stagnant in the growth of both economy and population, even though these were not accentuated in both case references. Both countries have emphasis on function-mix, i.e. sharing policy [12] and home swaps [11] at regional level. Despite both have different objectives, they aimed for resource optimization and can be adopted in neighbourhood renewal, i.e. the establishment of “Share Town” at neighbourhood level through information sharing (Fig. 4).

This “Share Town” emphasis the collaboration at neighbourhood level in which it accentuates on the information exchange within the local communities as the main priority with the inclusive of information pertaining to education, health, worklessness, crime, housing and physical environment; which is in line with people- and place-based strategies that emphasis on both function mix and social mix. The main purpose of this programme is to share “extra things” with neighbours for the benefit of local communities rather than profit-oriented business. These diversities aimed for resource optimization meanwhile to prevent social climbers from moving out as they are the key person that keep the neighbourhood alive meanwhile to attract others into the neighbourhood.

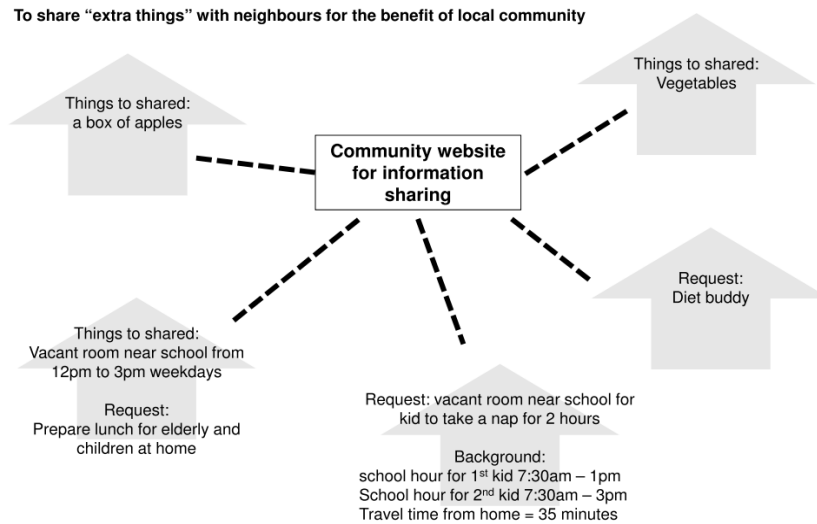


Fig. 4. "Share Town" at neighbourhood level

4 Conclusion and Recommendations

In sum, neighbourhood renewal in Korea and England resulted a more mature system in terms of resource provision. Nevertheless, they faced the similar challenges, i.e. a fair and equitable project selection system, provision of sustainable funding and real local engagement. Study indicated that neighbourhood renewal shall be initiated and controlled by local communities in term of project scale and funding through the collaboration with third party consultants and private sectors. Local authorities shall act as resource providers rather than implementers. "Share Town" that emphasis on information sharing on people- and place-based strategies at neighbourhood level shall be implemented during neighbourhood renewal for resource optimization and to prevent social climbers from moving out of their neighbourhood. In short, project selection from local authorities is no longer exist resulted from the systematic provision of regulated funding; and the implementation of "share town", will enable Malaysia to form sustainable neighbourhood renewal strategies that emphasis on equity, transparency and resource optimization.

Detailed study on regulated funding system shall be conducted in order to ensure the practicality of this strategy.

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