BOOK REVIEW: REQUALIFYING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES BY Roderick J. Lawrence, Hulya Turgut, and Peter Kellett (editors).

Publisher: Hogrefe 2012 - ISBN 978-0-88937-430-0

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Requalifying the Built Environment: Challenges and Responses is the fourth volume of a book series entitled ‘Advances in People-Environment Studies,’ published by Hogrefe in collaboration with the International Association for People-Environment Studies (IAPS: www.iaps-association.org). It is a product of an international symposium held in 2009. This book addresses three highly important issues relevant to contemporary urban regeneration of old quarters that are indivisibly associated. Explicitly, the book shares thoughts within i) Issues and theories of heritage and cultural identity, ii) The institutional, economic, and political contexts of revitalization, and iii) Implementation, the way in which key challenges can be addressed. Hereby, the book is designed in three sections including 10 chapters representing different international experiences. It is evident that the book is a conscious work from academics, professionals, and experts, emphasizing topics of aging places as a source of identity and synergies toward a responsive process of urban development.

The book can be seen as a gift due to its successful attempt at linking the contemporary...
phenomena of globalization, urban change and transformation with the approaches of re-qualifying as revitalization, gentrification, or adaptive reuse. In addition, it reflects different socio-cultural, socio-economic and urban landscape circumstances. The book serves a broad spectrum of readers including students, academics, professional planners, and designers. Technically, the book presents several case studies and conveys several important messages; these are - policies require reformulation and the revisit of motivating objectives, - the built heritage is a value that may contribute to the efficiency and sense of place via unconventional approaches, and – solidify the relation between the theory, practice, and policy to apply more hands-on- solutions.

Section 1: Heritage and Cultural Identity: Key Issues
The first section of the book consists of three chapters that concentrate on the values of heritage and cultural identity and their roles in the process of urban regeneration. In Chapter One, ‘The Heritage of the Built Environment as Development: Paradigms, Possibilities, and Problems,’ Ashworth outlines a number of experiences in the utilization of the built heritage within development schemes throughout the near past. He supports his idea of built heritage utilization by investigating the role of heritage in development while questioning if it is a source of challenge or collaboration between various efforts initiated toward urban regeneration. Ashworth believes that the built heritage is a multi-usable resource that may affect urban development by producing different strategies and products. In addition, he stresses that development of historic quarters without economic, social and political support would usually stall and weaken by time. Ashworth asserts that it is worth accepting that urban transformation is a changeable concept and our theories toward the built heritage require continuous process of change to meet the new markets.

In Chapter Two, ‘Historic City Centers as Catalysts for Wider Sustainable Urban Regeneration,’ written by Elnokaly and Elseragy, focuses on the Historic Centre of Barcelona. The authors are investigating the experiences of Barcelona City and the efforts poured within the urban regeneration schemes. Their study relies on exploring the strategies implemented to upgrade the environmental quality since the 1992 Olympic Games development plans. Specifically, strategies investigated include; a) Improvement of natural and man-made environments, b) Optimization of energy and waste management, c) Improvement of ambient air and water quality, d) Enhancing socio-economic equality and social and cultural sustainability, and e) Transportation. The authors confirm that urban regeneration is an efficient tool to ensure sustainability. This analytical chapter pulled some vital lessons learned from the Barcelona experience, few concentrated on the image and branding of the city regionally and internationally, the essential need to promote athletic and socio-cultural led regeneration systems, ensure to work out effective set of policies to drive the urban regeneration process in the proper direction with less averseness, and others concerning the role of public participation toward the urban regeneration. The chapter ends with a discussion of the different strategies introduced and the actual experiences of the City Council of Barcelona as well as other important key players.
In Chapter Three, Rolf Johansson introduces, ‘Case Studies in Renovation and Urban Regeneration: Learning by Doing.’ This study aims to adapt the role of case-based reasoning in the field of architecture and planning by applying the study of repertoire onto several cases. The advantage of this examination is to deliver multi dimensions explanation toward the characteristics and lessons learned of the case study. Johansson offered the case of Hammarby Sjostad, a Brownfield development of a neglected port and industrial district in Stockholm. The chapter succeeds in delivering a lessons learned section, demonstrating the approaches of urban regeneration through environmental goals. The methodology utilized places emphasis on the organizational models and technological solutions, in addition, it focuses on the operational details and tools measuring the degree to which goals are achieved. From another perspective, the author revealed the efforts generated by project management to gather opinions and advise of the city stakeholders and local firms. The author even touched how governance had changed its direction from rules to goals and how such governing modifications require resources and incentives to complete the regeneration process.

**Section 2: Challenges of the Institutional, Economic, and Political Context**

The second section of the book focuses on a group of interrelated topics – institutional, economic, and political – toward urban conservation. This section consists of three chapters with different international perspectives. In Chapter Four, Loretta Lees presents ‘Ideologies of Gentrification and the Right to the City,’ in which she argues how neo-liberal urban revitalization strategies in cities of the Global North allowed other governing ideologies to share participation. The crux of this chapter revolves within the development of concepts of urbanity, diversity, and social mix toward refurbishing urban life. In general, Loretta is questioning these concepts in drawing the direction of revitalization in the Northern hemisphere, yet with a responsible conscious toward the emerging cities of the South. The chapter surfs among several examples of cities in most of the European and North American countries demonstrating gentrification through the rhetoric social and communal values. In contrary, gentrification in Global South cities, is aspired by the rhetoric of modernization and importation. The main challenge that the author addressed was to tie the neo-liberal ideologies of governance with the different approaches of gentrification, such as the ‘Right of the inner City.’

In Chapter Five, ‘Social and Spatial Re-structuring in Inner-City Residential Areas: The Case of Fener-Balat, Istanbul.’ Turgut and Sismanyazici examine the social and spatial restructuring of inner-city housing in Istanbul with a particular focus of the historical housing quarters’ rehabilitation. The chapter delivers a theoretical understanding of gentrification and the implication of social and spatial restructuring in general and later with a deeper gaze upon Istanbul. I believe that the chapter would have been better if located before the previous chapter as it provides a wider understanding of gentrification definitions and the process of inner-city developments. These studies construct several views and ideas of gentrification and its relationship with urban culture. Along the study, the authors promote the essentiality of comprehensive urban regeneration constituted by multidimensional visions based on participatory decision-making.

In Chapter Six, the last of this section, and the most related to the cultural and political struggle.
The author, Tarek S. Ragab presents ‘Who Won the Battle of Beirut Downtown? Revisiting the Crisis of Cultural Identity in Rehabilitating Post-War Beirut.’ Technically, the chapter responds to the recommendations of the previous chapter by acknowledging the participative efforts introduced in the Lebanese Capital’s City Centre. He maintains that urban rehabilitation projects were not limited to the development of destroyed infrastructure, yet, pouring new collective socio-political memory and image. The study investigates the approaches of urban rehabilitation and the degree of preserving the intangible meanings. Tarek covers the value of cultural identity, challenges of cross-cultural conflicts in quarters of crisis, and the attempts of how some challenges overruled with the Solidere Urban rehabilitation project. Nevertheless, the study reached to two important findings, the first concerns itself with the shortcoming of management and the investment approaches with fewer concerns toward the cultural and integral structure, while the second stimulates the strong bond between the wealthy business sector and decision-makers, reflecting utilization of the cultural identity as a branding gadget.

Section 3: Implementation Addressing Key Challenges
The third section of the book, presents in more details the concepts, principles, and methods of several examples in re-qualifying the built environment. In Chapter Seven, Despres, Fortin, and Vachon from Quebec City – Canada participated in this publication with a very interesting chapter ‘Requalifying Aging Suburbs to Counter Urban Sprawl: The Contribution of GIRBa to Cultural Sustainability.’ They focus on engaging the academic stratum into cultural developments and play as an agent of change. The chapter delivers through the GIRBa research project the requalification of aging inner-city principles, in addition it demonstrate the quantitative, qualitative, design and participatory criteria for revealing the challenges and potentials of the re-qualification processes. The authors are keen to declare the leadership role of academics in encouraging the concepts of requalification and gentrification than new construction. However, it would be remarkably important that the partaking academics are aware of the cultural aspects in order to enforce sustainable re-qualification models. Therefore, it is essential that the academics stratum get involved in the research and study of social sciences as they relate to the local context to draw tailored re-qualification parameters.

From London, Chapter Eight discusses urban regeneration by the Residents’ extraordinary enforcements. Levent Kerimol contributes with the ‘Resident Led Regeneration: Proposals for Large Scale Self-Build Development in London.’ As part of a design thesis submitted at the Architectural Association, the author attempts to promote a self-building mechanism for urban regeneration. The study is very innovative in its kind, addressing the concepts of cooperation, independence, social anonymity merged with singular self-building initiatives. The study relies on several international attempts and the lessons learned from these experiences and the degree of relevancy or adaptation. Furthermore, the study tackled several socio-economic methods to offer a liberal governing system within this resident led regeneration model. However, some of the methods discussed in details are hypothetical in nature but maybe useful for local authorities and other governing bodies.
Once more, but from South America, Camilo Calderon presents in Chapter Nine ‘Social Urbanism: Integrated and Participatory Urban Upgrading in Medelin, Columbia.’ This chapter discusses the use of participatory urban upgrading and integrated solutions, while addressing the advantages and setbacks. The author claims that while implementing urban upgrading some cultural aspects revitalized, due to the communal involvement, produce intangible products. Therefore, while focusing on the tangible built environment, the upgrading programs may need to focus on the cultural potentials within the new public spaces. The author argues that Social Urbanism unifies physical and social improvements, and that this is achievable throughout the upgrading process with effective participatory approaches.

Finally, in Chapter Ten, Maye Yehia reenter the concept of enforcing the power of communities in shaping their urban environments. She presents ‘Empowering Local Communities to Revitalize Old Quarters: Cases from Egypt.’ Maye takes the Aga Khan Trust of Culture development in Darb Al Ahmar of Old Cairo as raw model of empowering the residents through the energetic and innovative NGOs’ founded by the program implementers and handed to the local community for future continuation. She sets a series of learned lessons to test their potentials upon the Turkish quarter development in Alexandria and then examines the possibilities for future urban revitalization developments in a similar community based manner.

Personally, I believe that the book would have been uplifted higher if it was supported with full colored images to give strong sense of the cases. However, it is a great work by the editors and contributors to deliver a concise and efficient academic research rooted in actual experiences. The book is an important reading for academics, students, and researchers in the field of urban heritage, revitalization and conservation.

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