

Regeneration - Why not get it right first time?

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Places fail for lots of complex reasons – sometimes poor layout and design are as big a cause as poor management and maintenance – lack of funding is another factor.

Ballymun was a project that was doomed from the start but homeownership and allocation policies that stripped the area of its social capital over the years made the need for regeneration inevitable. Private markets have always failed poor people; investment by the private sector always follows public investment. Once areas are stripped of their communities do they become legitimate blank urban slates for investors and where do those who are displaced go and what happens to them when they get there. Is it somehow better to be poor in a poor area or poor in an affluent area – certainly there seems to be no benefit to a rich person to live in a poor area. Is there a limit to how many people from a regeneration project an area will absorb into its community before it reaches capacity – the experience in Dublin would support the view that there is a finite capacity and that as with all housing and social policies there are unintended and unexpected consequences.

Regenerations sounds like a nice cosy term but it often means displacement of one set of people and their replacement with another social class – gentrification.

Who decides who goes and who stays in a regeneration process. Who decides what happens and how? Do regeneration boards take the long term view and act for the city of the future. Is it inevitable that the economically mobile will leave before an area is regenerated and does being on a regeneration board speed up that process for individuals.

Is regeneration bound to fail because it takes on too much and the challenges are overwhelming?

Why did Council housing go from being tenure of choice to being a residualised and marginalised tenure? Is it possible to resurrect that public housing and is it even necessary with the options now available through Voluntary Housing, RAS, Leasing and the potential to directly involve the private sector.