SUSTAINABLE URBAN REGENERATION,
AN ONGOING DISCOURSE
(WESTERN) EUROPE, GERMANY

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Modernization and industrialization left a large number of negative impacts on Iranian cities (Habibi, 2007) including the large extent of urban areas that became run down and demanding of improvement, known as Baft-Farsooodeh. This issue becomes markedly critical and crucial in the case of the city of Tehran, due to the vastness of its deteriorated areas, their social and environmental problems, and the low quality of construction which renders the built environment vulnerable to natural disasters such as earthquake. Over 3,268 ha of the city can be categorised as ‘deteriorated area’, amounting to approximately 5% of the whole city. In response to this problem, the first serious step toward developing a concept of urban regeneration in Tehran was the re-establishment of the Tehran Urban Regeneration Organization in 2006. While previous interventions were based on a compulsory purchase order (CPO) as the core tool of urban redevelopment plans, TURO accepted and promoted a participatory approach to designing and implementing regeneration projects. At first glance, even this latest attitude of Iran towards its deteriorated urban areas suffers from various problems relating to aspects of management, policy, strategy, and definition (Andalib, 2010) which indicates that there is a growing necessity to re-visit existing policies around deteriorated areas in order to reduce their shortcomings.
One of the milestones in improving an urban regeneration framework is the exchange of experiences beyond national boundaries. This helps the scholar ‘to have an understanding of the wider urban geographical context for urban regeneration’ (Tallon, 2010: 21). Europe, as the first continent to experience an extensive modernisation process and its attendant urban problems, has dealt with issues of urban renewal and redevelopment in various forms for decades (Couch et al. 2003), so learning from its experiences may give us some constructive pointers towards improving the existing process of urban regeneration in Iran, to make the approaches used more efficient. In that relation, this text reviews the current urban policies of Germany, and more particularly Berlin, for redeveloping its urban areas, namely ‘integrated urban regeneration’. This review will be preceded with an introduction to the urban regeneration’s goals and principles in Europe.

**HISTORY AND EMERGENCE OF THE ‘URBAN REGENERATION’**

Urban areas are dynamic systems which change with time. As ever-changing entities, their expansion or contraction is influenced by and can affect physical, social, environmental and economic transitions, or combinations of these (Jones et al. 2008; Stouten, 2010).

The response to such changes, namely the idea of intervening in existing urban textures on a systematic level, emerged in European countries in the 1930s and has varied over time, mirroring the socio-political and economic values and structures of urban society (Friedrichs, 1978). The first phase, urban reconstruction, addressed wartime damage and nineteenth century slum housing (Roberts, 2000; Jones et al. 2008); while the emphasis in 1940s and 1950s was on reconstructing the fabric of towns and cities ‘in the sense of a radical, car-friendly redesign’ (Bodenschatz, 2003: 16), which led to embracing ‘high-rise housing and industrialized building techniques’ (Couch, 1990:29). In the 1970s and 80s a fundamental change in policy highlighted careful urban renewal and redevelopment; being concerned with architectural and social preservation, with the emphasis on rehabilitation and improvement rather than demolition, an approach which called for residents’ participation in the renewal process and decentralized control (Czeskleba et al. 1971; Bodenschatz, 2003). Since the 1990s, a more integrated approach to urban redevelopment has emerged across Europe, known as urban regeneration, which began as an attempt to ameliorate the negative effects of deindustrialization and to direct development and investment towards areas of greatest need (Jones et al. 2008: 4). Urban regeneration, in this sense, moves beyond the aims and achievements of earlier approaches (Couch, 1990:2),
linking economic activities and environmental improvements to wider social and cultural elements (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011:4); it implies that any approach to tackling urban problems should be constructed with a ‘longer-term, more strategic, purpose in mind’ (Roberts, 2000:18); and recognizes the long-term environmental benefits of maintaining and improving existing urban areas – for instance in the Green Paper on the Urban Environment (Couch and Fraser, 2003). Although the urban renaissance metaphor appeared in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the report: ‘Towards an Urban Renaissance’ in England, ‘regeneration remains the most recognised and widely used term by professionals and academics alike’ (Tallon, 2010: 5).

DEFINITION, AIMS, AND DIMENSIONS
The process of urban regeneration is a series of urban interventions in policies about the built environment seeking to bring back the quality of life of local people in derelict and underused urban areas by creating new forms of employment, improving the urban environment and tackling urban social problems (Couch et al. 2003; Stouten, 2010). It is a ‘comprehensive and integrated vision and action aimed at the resolution of urban problems and seeking to bring about a lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental conditions of an area that has been subjected to change’ (Robert, 2000: 17), and attempts to create sustainable communities (Couch et al. 2011).

As a biological [disputed] metaphor, regeneration means ‘the regrowth of lost or injured tissues, or the restoration of a system to its initial state’ (Couch and Fraser, 2003:2). In urban areas, the urban regeneration process diagnoses the problems that have led to urban deprivation or deterioration and attempts to find a solution to them. These problems and the proposed solutions vary according to the initiative being pursued. For example in some cases, the aim is to bring social welfare to deprived areas, or to foster social inclusion where there has been exclusion; by improving physical living conditions, or local cultural activities, or facilities for particular social groups, or the provision of basic social services in certain areas and for certain populations. In these cases, it is local communities or neighbourhoods that are being regenerated or renewed. In others, regeneration is concerned with the regrowth of lost economic activity, so it is urban economies that are being revitalised or restructured with a view to achieving the economic well-being of residents and in order to make cities competitive. In yet others it is the physical environment that is being regenerated, to restore the environmental quality or ecological balance where it has been lost and to improve the built environment, concerns which have now embraced environmental sustainability (Couch and Fraser, 2003; Cochrane, 2007; Tallon, 2010).
In addition, within urban regeneration there has been a shift from government to governance approaches, which highlights ‘the importance of partnership, community engagement and multiple stakeholders in the process and delivery of urban regeneration’ (Tallon, 2010: 8).

SUSTAINABLE URBAN REGENERATION
In 1987 the report of the Brundtland Commission introduced sustainable development to worldwide policy in order ‘to ensure that development meets the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future’ (WCED, 1987: 8). That is to say, sustainability is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources is made consistent with present as well as future needs and which involves the simultaneous pursuit of economic prosperity, environmental quality, social equity and justice (Williams et al., 2003). Nowadays the idea of sustainability as a multidimensional concept has become one of the core aims of humanity in all aspects of life, including architecture and urbanism (Jenks et al. 1996; Rana and Piracha, 2007). In urbanism it is being widely deployed as an urban strategy (White, 1994) which aims to create ‘spatial arrangement and living environments that minimize environmental hazards to citizens, provide access to the resources and opportunities of the city, and enable citizen participation’ (Mehrhoff, 2005: 443). Sustainability has been an underpinning aspect of the concept of regeneration since the 1980s, aiming to establish lasting solutions and bring together the physical, economic and social dimensions of urban development (Parkinson, 1998). On the one hand, the long-term environmental benefits of maintaining and improving existing urban districts (Couch et al. 2003; Ravetz, 2000), promoting social justice (Stouten, 2010), removing obstacles to the proper physical, economic, social and environmental functioning of deteriorated textures (Pakseresht and Fazeli, 2011), which are integral parts of urban regeneration, make it inherently and essentially a sustainability-promoting programme. On the other hand, the definitions that are widely provided for urban regeneration show that it integrates the principle of ensuring physical, social and economic sustainable development in all areas of public and private policy (Stouten, 2010).
LEVELS

In Europe since late 1990s, there has been an explicit urban policy at the European Union (EU) level and the issues of urban regeneration and sustainable development have risen up the policy agenda in Europe’s member states (Berg et al., 1998). Some common actions at the urban level have been undertaken in order to ensure the effectiveness of European policies such as ‘innovation, energy efficiency, the environment and, in particular, social cohesion’ (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011: 84) – some examples of this kind are: the EU’s Sustainable Development Strategy; the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities; URBAN I and II; Agenda 21 (Williamson et al. 2003). Nevertheless, despite the uniform policy of cooperation, local governments are taking the initiative, within their own constitutional limits, of launching their own particular programmes of urban regeneration at the level where it is most effective and closest to citizens – such as Städtebauforderungsgesetz in Germany and operations programmées in France (Couch and Fraser, 2003).

URBAN REGENERATION IN THE GERMAN CONTEXT

Germany is among those European countries with a long history of encountering different urban problems in existing inner urban textures since 1971. Up to that point, German urban development policy mainly concentrated on the benefits of new housing. But in 1971, under the motto ‘Save our cities now’, following a change in urban planning philosophy, the need for change within cities and the modernization of existing buildings gained recognition. The current urban regeneration approach in Germany is reflected through the concept of ‘Urban Redevelopment’, which is the German urbanists’ main response to the changes of post-industrialisation and globalisation. The objective of ‘Urban Redevelopment’ is to save or reconstruct the traditional European compact city, which is assumed to have ‘a relatively high density of buildings, a system of networked public spaces, a social, functional and architectural mix, as well as a spatial hierarchy with a city centre as the highlight’ (Bodenschatz, 2003:12). ‘Urban Redevelopment’ is an integrated concept which accords economic, social, cultural and environmental issues an equal footing, through a collaborative planning methodology that involves the participation of relevant stakeholders in planning and development processes, in particular, private sector and civil society actors from business and civil society. Its main aims are coping with structural change, creating social integration, strengthening historic centres and inner city centres, creating a climate-friendly city, improving public infrastructure and housing stock, and following sustainable urban development based on integrated urban development concepts.

Sustainability is defined as a benchmark in German Federal Government policy, including its ‘Urban Redevelopment’ programmes, whose aims are to promote inter-generational equity, a good quality of life, social cohesion and international responsibility. It is defined as the future question facing cities not as an isolated task but in relation to economic, social and cultural conditions, and can be achieved by the careful renovation of traditional buildings and neighbourhoods and the development of a modified mobility.
PROGRAMMES OF ‘URBAN REDEVELOPMENT’

Demographic and structural changes in the cities result from deindustrialisation, which caused changes to the structure of the city in the form of a long-term lack of occupants in housing complexes, large industrial sites, underused manufacturing plants, and empty spaces, inner-city areas, town centres, brownfield sites, former military sites, industrial and railroad wastelands, and in the areas which demanded reorganisation of the social infrastructure, mainly constituted the discourse of urban redevelopment in Germany, which tended to include both urban growth and contraction in urban planning and urban design. To respond to these problems in practice, the German Federal Government and Federal States initiated the ‘Integrated Urban Development’ and initiated a strategy of financial support for local authorities’ urban restructuring initiatives (Urban Development Promotion Program). The program, as the only spatial-neighbourhood-related policy of reunification of all aspects, not only includes urban design and residential interventions but also economic, social and employment policies, consisting of six major programmes:

1) ‘Urban Redevelopment’ consisting of ‘Urban Redevelopment West’ and ‘Urban Redevelopment East’ to adapt the city to demographic and structural changes;

The Urban Redevelopment East is an improvement strategy of large-scale urban districts with the aim to improve the social infrastructure and to upgrade courses, parks and trails for increasing the quality of life. An important feature of the Urban Redevelopment East is the combination of deconstruction and revaluation: residential buildings, kindergartens or schools which have been remained empty or unneeded for a long term that would potentiate vandalism are demolished and a new space and use are designed for them.

The main aim of the Urban Redevelopment West is the redesign of the underused industrial and railway land or wasteland, and the adaptation of large-scale developments to demographic change. Some areas which are near the new stations or highways have recovered due to a new location quality and thus have a diverse, future-oriented development potential, which must be awakened. The goal is, stimulating private initiative and investment and thus contributing to a territorial development and upgrading by targeted public investment. This happens essentially in a close cooperation with the residents, the traders and local businesses and other local stakeholders. In the large housing districts, the adaptation of public infrastructure and open spaces to the changing needs of the residents stands in the foreground.

2) ‘Active City- and local centres’ to develop inner urban areas;

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This program has begun since 2008 and gives an important impetus to economic and urban structural strengthening of selected business streets. The centres are developed as important points of the city and neighbourhoods. The quality of life, social and ethnic integration, access to education, a dynamic cultural life and an attractive public space are central aims. Major partners are the retailers’ associations, neighborhood committees, trade associations and powerful interest groups.

3) ‘Social City’ or ‘Social Urban Development’ to undertake integrative acts in disadvantaged and socially deprived neighbourhoods;

People living in districts and neighborhoods that culturally, economically and socially meet their circumstances or preferences. Conversely, the urban space impacts their lives, their habits and their wishes. This causes that the social differentiations are displayed in the urban space. Problems emerge when the development leads to the exclusion of the entire neighborhood and its residents. Social Urban Development program supports the idea of solidarity in the society and the matter that the city is a place for people to getting qualified by living together. Its programs consist of social and cultural events and upgrading which encourage the residents’ inclusion.

4) ‘Urban Heritage Protection’ for the preservation of historic city centres and neighbourhoods;

After the unification of West and East Germany, the old buildings in the inner urban parts of the cities in the former East Germany were evaluated as physically very poor conditioned. The Urban Heritage Protection program has been initiated to save this cultural and architectural history from decay. The funds go to the protection, restoration and upgrading of historic buildings, ensembles or other physical structures of historical, artistic or urban significance and for the preservation and transformation of urban and architectural heritage including significant streets and squares.

5) ‘Smaller Cities and Towns’ to safeguard general interests in rural or sparsely populated areas;

By the impact of demographic and economic change, such as loss of employment, migration and aging of the population, the feeling of insecurity are increasing in the rural and sparsely populated areas, and many of them cannot guarantee the sustainability of public services facilities anymore due to changing patterns of demand. Thus, securing of general interest in the rural areas becomes a particular focus of urban policy in Germany, and the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs has initiated the urban development program of ‘Small towns and communities - through local collaboration and networks’ in 2010.

The concept of the program is empowering important smaller cities of the regions because they can play the role of significant functional and attractive points for the population and for the urban environment. In these areas, smaller towns and cities are important economic, social and cultural centers and anchor points for securing the general interest; since, with their local infrastructure, they offer basic central functions for the village-dominated cities in the surrounding area.
All of the mentioned programmes have been accompanied by complementary research and evaluation, analysis of progress, and monitoring, including actions by the information, coordination and networking agency of the Federal Transfer Agency, written surveys of all municipalities, and the Research Program of Experimental Housing and Town Planning. The tasks of evaluation include ascertaining the progress of implementation and the achievement of programme objectives, identifying successes and obstacles in programme implementation, optimising and giving recommendations for future plans.

‘URBAN REDEVELOPMENT’ PROGRAM IN BERLIN

Due to its historic development, Berlin is the city in which almost all the current Urban Redevelopment Programs have been implemented simultaneously. As the two main programmes, Urban Redevelopment East and West in Berlin have established processes to deal with different tasks: to stabilize and strengthen residential quarters, neighbourhoods or commercial development sites; to preserve the “European city”; to stabilize housing markets in neighbourhoods; to adapt the housing and social infrastructure to demographic change; and to improve the quality of public space. In other words, the programs are used as essential tools to achieve integrated urban development, respond effectively to structural changes in urban deficits brought about by demographic, economic and social structural changes, and to create sustainable areas for living and working.

By the end of 2009, 13 urban areas in Berlin were defined as potential redevelopment areas, covering an area of around 5,700 ha with about 600,000 residents. Seven Urban Redevelopment East-areas and six Urban Redevelopment West-areas have been categorized, according to their goals, characteristics and types of redevelopment, into three categories: 1) large residential complexes or mixed-use zones with high vacancies, in which a good quality for life for different social groups should be ensured by controlling population loss, high fluctuations in population, social segregation and age structure of inhabitants; 2) ‘The founder Epoch’ (residential) districts with high emission loads which should be upgraded in terms of infrastructure and open spaces; and 3) brownfield sites, including under-used industrial wastelands, which need to assume new functions and a better quality of life, and whose urban design should be integrated into the body of the city.

The Senate Department for Urban Development is responsible for controlling the implementation of these programmes. On-site coordination and responsibility for the implementation of individual measures is the duty of the respective district offices. Systematic urban redevelopment monitoring is conducted to assess whether the desired appreciations of the districts has been achieved through the urban renewal process. The objectives of this monitoring process are to make current changes in the Stadtumbau areas visible, enabling a performance review of the Stadtumbau programme, and supporting the concept of prioritizing the implementation of Stadtumbau.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the western European countries including Germany, from defining the aims down to interventions in the body of the city, there are different levels of decision and action in the urban regeneration processes, varying from the most abstract international policies down to city-level objectives. The existing diverse approach to urban regeneration aroused from the particular urban problems common to each nation and the ways each has attempted to deal with them. And it has been reflected in the different terminologies used to address this discipline in the countries. One of the principles of urban regeneration is contextualizing the urban problems and solutions while sticking to the main international agendas.

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