



Causal theories and proposals for urban upgrades in historic city centres

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Abstract

Urban upgrades are instituted when there are designed improvements on one or more of the urban systems to increase efficiency and promote a better environment within the urban setting. While the choice of place and programme for an upgrade is often determined via political processes that are supposed to resolve socio-spatial dysfunctionality, the undertones are ultimately for fiscal benefits for the government and sponsors. The historic city centres are at an advantage for attracting urban upgrade programmes as policy makers are unobtrusively guided by theoretical positions like urban bias, historic urban form and fabric, land economics and urban tourism to improve the centres. The centres by virtue of their centrality, not only in the spatial context, but in all aspects of urban life, also need to be understood as formidable starting points for urban change and morphology. This paper which is entirely based on information from literature analyses the concept of urban upgrades and why they are more common in historic city centres. It goes further to explain the common denominator of human behaviour as a catalyst for urban degeneration, policy position and redevelopment which will ultimately give rise to urban upgrades as a consequence in the morphology of the city. It is concluded with a literary discussion on the advantages of embracing sustainability and conservation in the execution of urban upgrades in the historic city centres for the purpose of urban tourism.

Keywords: conservation, heritage value, preservation, urban morphology, urban systems

1. Introduction

Within the urban setting, the concept of growth and development is a constant that dictates the rate of change of the environment. While growth and development should be controlled and managed for the ultimate benefit of the inhabitants of the city, the issue of degeneration of physical structures within the city over time is very real. When degeneration occurs, the urban space is thrown into socio-spatial dysfunctionality where the physical collapse of the city systems aggravate social problems (Oyinloye *et al.*, 2017). The occurrence of degeneration is very challenging to address without intrusive action to rectify the trend. The trend will not change without a conscious effort to displace the rot. The normal run of growth and development will simply leave the rundown areas in the urban setting behind and concentrate development in new areas. The action by statutory authorities to legislate and quickly address the dysfunctionality by improving one or more of the urban systems is regarded as urban upgrade (Adenaike *et al.*, 2022) ^[1]. Urban upgrades are given different names by virtue of the parts of the world where they occur and the specifics of the actions carried out. They include urban renewal, down town regeneration, neighborhood revitalization, state led gentrification and other common terms as shown in the figure.

Urban systems are processes and entities that occur within the city and are used to organize the urban setting. While a wide range of such entities and processes may occur within the city, there are four major groups of urban systems that are clearly visible from the viewpoint of System and Information

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Engineering. These include the built environment, administration, infrastructure and municipal services. The built environment is made up of the physical structures like the buildings and the roads. The administration refers to the government and other decision making bodies with authority within the urban setting. The infrastructure in this context refers to the utilities like power, communication and water supply lines that are present but not as visible as those grouped under built environment. The municipal services are internal urban organizational services like waste disposal and transportation services.

Urban upgrades are a resolve through policy positions to address degeneration in the urban systems and occur regularly in all parts of the world (Carpenter, 2020) ^[8]. Most upgrade programmes are labeled as 'urban renewal'. Other forms of upgrades are neighborhood revitalization, land reallocation, gentrification, urban regeneration, housing renewal and urban transformation (Knippschild & Zöllter, 2021; Lai *et al.*, 2020; Gibbons *et al.*, 2018; Tallon, 2020) ^[22, 25, 18]. They become necessary when time and use wear down the urban systems or in cases where the systems have become inefficient and unable to meet current demands. The dysfunctionality in the urban systems eventually reflect on the socio-economic integrity of the people and the need for drastic change is required to correct the situation. The upgrades are instituted by identifying the urban systems involved and making policy decisions to improve the output of the systems. Sometimes, a complete overhaul of some of the urban systems may be necessary. Urban upgrades are seldom directed at the buildings except in

the cases of heavily blighted areas (Jiang *et al.*, 2020) ^[20] where slums have found themselves in the city centre with very high potential economic value. In such instances, state-led gentrification processes with public/private collaborations are deployed to encourage regeneration of the area. The government and other financiers will eventually reap financial benefits over time. Upgrades are more likely to be directed at infrastructure and municipal services. Over time, the built environment will respond to the improved systems and regenerate itself. Once urban systems are freshly introduced or improved, patronage and fresh capital are attracted to the area, bringing about changes in socio-economic indices (Rousseau, 2009) ^[38]. The physical environment will also witness changes (Wang *et al.*, 2015) ^[53]. In urban morphology, urban upgrades have become one of the major causal factors that redirect existing trends in development.

At the lower end, physical planning policies can be used to institute urban upgrades (Adenaik *et al.*, 2020) ^[3]. Legislative positions on setbacks, accesses, limits to development and execution of a master plan for the city can be termed as urban upgrades if they reinvigorate the urban systems. The highest level of urban upgrading is the execution of “eminent domain” where the government takes over the targeted area from the property owners and redevelops it (Oyebode, 2018) ^[32].

2. Historic city centres and centrality

The historic city centre is central to the urban existence in many ramifications. Most cities that have historic centres will usually possess a rallying entity that promotes the social cohesion for the initial settlers in the area. The dwelling of the ruler, the market, the town square or meeting place and the religious centre for worship are some of the socio-spatial entities that bring about cohesion and urban growth to eventually develop the settlements into full-fledged cities (Asomani-Boateng, 2011) ^[6]. When the cities start to grow, the direction of growth is radial from the centre and generally align with established theories of urban growth like the concentric circle and sector theories of urban growth in uncentric cities and multi-nucleic theory in multi-centric cities (Ajobiwe, 2020) ^[2].

The historic city centre remains a centre for urban activities for as long as it remains economically viable. Being the oldest part of the city, it is probably the curator of the physico-socio-cultural legacies of the initial settlers and the structures that hold these ideals may become old and decrepit if not properly preserved over time. This is not unconnected with the synonyms that are used to refer to the part of the city. Names like downtown, old city, Altstadt and others that signify aging represent the historic city centre in different parts of the world. In uncentric cities, there is a tendency to locate commercial ventures and administrative offices close to the centre just as it forms the hub for transportation and communication lines. This part of town will lose its centrality for the urban systems

mentioned if it is not regenerated to accommodate the growing demands for their benefits as population increases.

In multi-centric cities that evolved from the merging of groups of smaller settlements, there are multiple historic centres. Over time, the dominant centre will attract the centrality of the urban systems to the detriment of the others. As urbanization continues, the distant settlements along the major transportation lines are also annexed and can cede the centrality of their urban systems to the dominant historic centre. Further urbanisation and population growth will eventually lead to congestion and overwhelm the historic centre. At that point, the urban systems and economic activities are unable to grow further and begin to locate to outlying areas (Melo & Cruz, 2017) ^[28]. The historic city centre however retains its position as the geographical centre of the town.

3. Human behaviour and city centre upgrading

Current global issues which include climate change, urbanization, conservation, and sustainability have already permeated all fields in academic pursuit including architecture and building morphology which come under the umbrella of urban studies. Urban studies offer many researchable constituents that are relevant to pressing global issues and they are veritable platforms for cross-pollination of fields like public health, economics, environmental studies, logistics and sociology. Other fields like engineering, politics, and the arts which also contribute to the urban domain are relevant. Urban studies research can identify trends and identify causes and effects of the urbanization processes.

Urban architecture is more concerned with buildings, public spaces, landscape and street design. The morphologies of street design, landscape, buildings and public spaces combine to inform urban morphology. While urban design is usually informed by the culture and preferences of the people involved, the influence of trends in formal and spatial configuration in time and legislation in physical planning cannot be discountenanced. Current urban morphological trends are more likely to be informed by legislation. Cities are not left to develop in an organic manner anymore. New cities are now designed in full details before construction begins. Old cities are being regenerated and modified to conform to current knowledge on how cities should evolve. Urban upgrades proffer institutionalized transformation of cities towards a targeted ideal (Mehanna & Mehanna, 2019) ^[27]. While culture and regular developmental growth need an appreciable period time to reflect on urban morphology, urban upgrades have the ability to change the course of urban development almost immediately. Some of the manifestations can take some time, but the developmental trajectory is set on a new course and may not be easily altered. In the immediate, the urban design can also be altered giving rise to a new direction in the urban morphology.

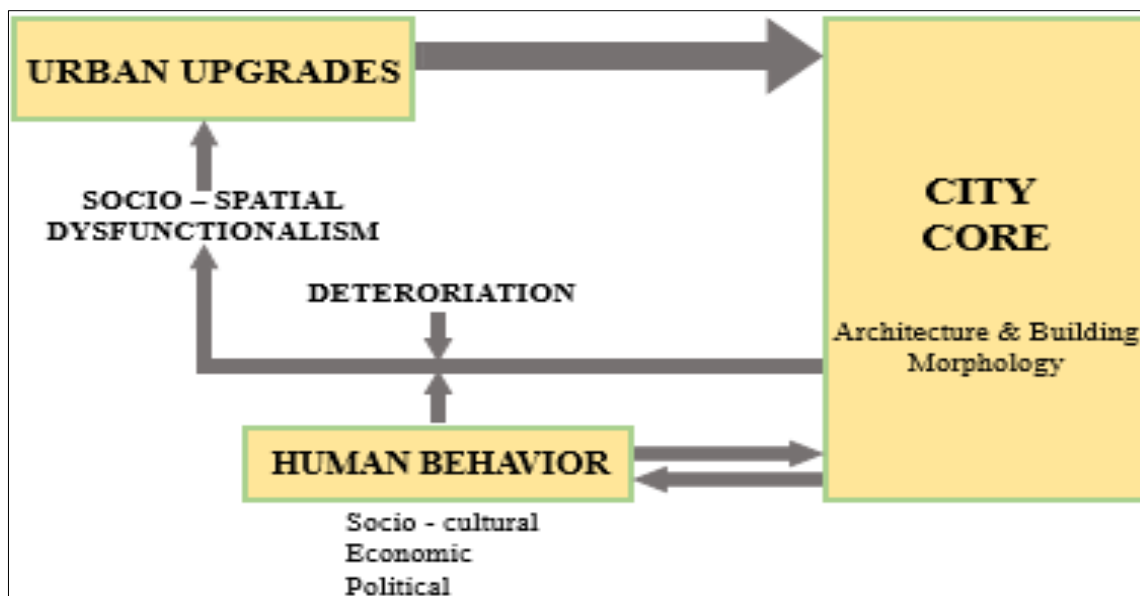


Fig 1: How human behaviour influences urban upgrades and the city core morphology.

There appears to be a lack of synergy between urban design and urban morphology because urban morphology at every threshold should inform the next outcome of urban design (Whitehand & Morton, 2004) [54]. Urban design is a culmination of the attributes of the built form within the environment and when the built form changes, the urban fabric also changes (Pushpita *et al.*, 2015) [33]. Urban morphology therefore correlates directly with changes in social behavior within the urban environment. This is because human behavior which is informed by the prevailing environment and culture will form the built environment within which we have the urban design. Previous changes in the built environment and the changing culture will instigate more changes in the urban design to accommodate new demands. These morphological changes which are determined by human behavior are ever present in the historic city centre. There is however a limit to the changes as the physical structures that exist in the historic city centre are unable to meet up with the demand for changes as they become obsolete and stall further socio-spatial changes. At that point, radical changes are required. Urban upgrades become necessary if the area is to accommodate the trends in urban morphology that exist in other parts of the city. With the coming of upgrades, the population starts to respond in the quality and composition of the forms they build and maintain (García-Amaya *et al.*, 2021) [17].

The city centre is a focus for developmental trends and very active interference by human activity within the continuum of the city. The identity of the city is deep rooted in the centre. While the centre may have slums and blighted areas, there is always a subconscious agitation by those who identify with the city to improve the outlook of the centre. This makes upgrading imminent in most historic city centres that can afford it. While upgrading may improve the outlook of the centre, it often casts out the poor (Vidal, 2019) [52]. The declaration of a state of “blight” and the subsequent demolition and reconstruction of Flint, in Michigan, USA is regarded as a creation of a social problem for the area than a solution in the aftermath of the reconstruction (Highsmith, 2009) [19].

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4. Theories that influence upgrading in historic city centres

The centrality of the historic city centre for the urban systems ensures that the systems are ever present at the core. Even when it starts to lose its centrality these systems are still present but may not be centered at the core anymore. While human behaviour will cause most historic city centres to demand for upgrading, other postulations that ensure that the historic city centre is a prime area for urban upgrading effort can be identified. The theories of urban form and fabric, land economics, heritage value, urban tourism and urban bias are different theories that combine to give the historic core a primacy in the need for urban upgrades.

4.1 Land economics

Location is a key factor in bid rents for land. The “bid rent theory” proposes that users in need of commercial plots, residential and office use are ready to pay more for land due to accessibility. The central business district and the city centre are prime areas for the higher rents and will ultimately have the most expensive land (Lestegás *et al.*, 2018) [26]. As location of property moves farther from the core, commercial concerns willingness to pay high rents decline. There is however the concept of “bid curve” where the industrial concerns price land on the outskirts at a reasonable price because they are able to secure more land for their use. This willingness also declines as you move farther out into the countryside. Generally, the farther from the inner core, the cheaper the land. For the governments, the higher the land costs, the more the taxes that can be levied on the properties. In the instances of direct investments by the government, areas that have higher land costs and bid rents are preferred. Inner city upgrade programmes are generally premised on the need to address socio-spatial dysfunctionality but end up being focused more on economic gains for the government in form of higher taxes and the private investors in terms of high returns on investment (Troy, 2018; Zhuang *et al.*, 2019; Highsmith, 2009) [48, 58, 19].

4.1 Urban form and fabric theories

Architectural urban fabric explains the nature of buildings as they exist in different sections of the city. Buildings that are erected at the same period tend to have the same outlook. Since the uni-centric cities develop in concentric rings outwards from the centre, the clusters of buildings with their characteristic identities in outlook tend to represent different epochs in the development of the city (Uzun, 2003) [50]. They tell the history of the city from the origins to the current form with their designs which are transformed in time. The theory assumes that the oldest houses in the city are located at the geographical centre. This position throws up those buildings and structures in the centre as first to be in need of renovation in the life of

the city. In multi-centric cities the historical cores within the sprawl will also contain the oldest structures. Urban upgrades will first be directed at the areas that have witnessed the most degeneration due to the dysfunctionality of the urban systems within them.

The Historic Theory of Urban Form was first postulated by Park and Burges in 1925 (Dempwolf, 2010) [11]. This was followed by Haig in 1926 (Richardson, 2013) [36]. Other modifications of the theory have followed the initial explanations over time. The theory explains the form of the city as a concept that evolves in concentric rings with the historical core as the focal point for activities and constant focus for upgrading efforts.

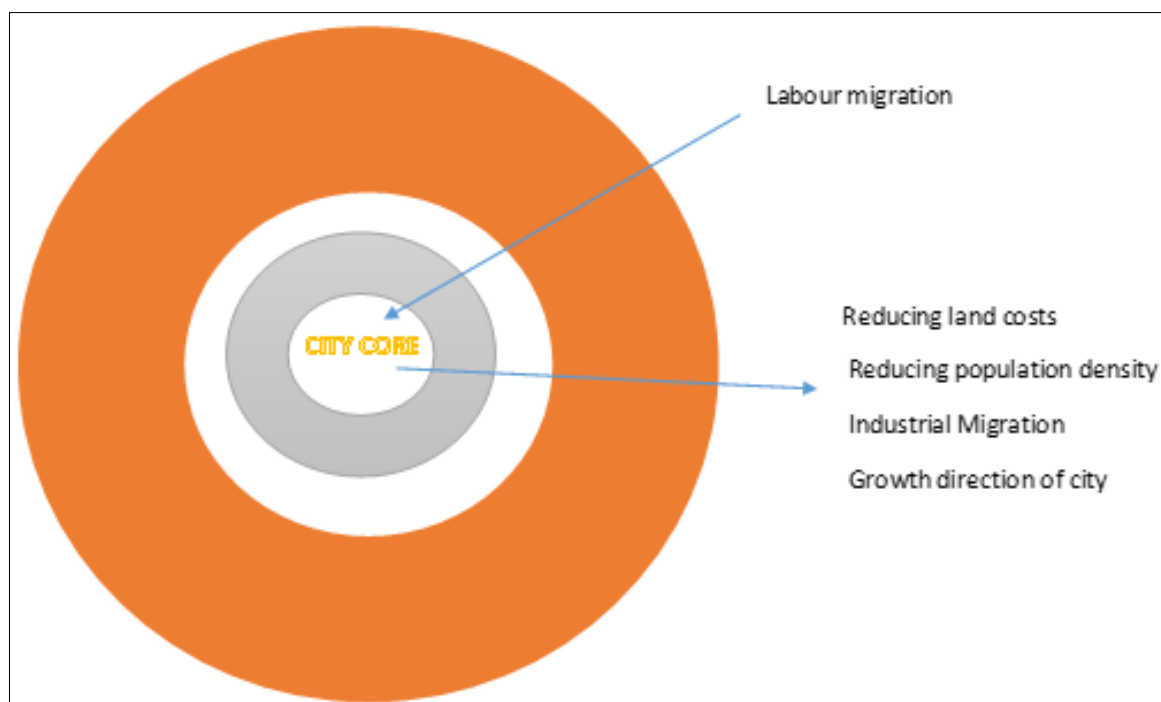


Fig 2: Historic theory of urban form

The theory which is based on the uni-centric city model also assumes that property values reduce as you transit from the city core. In reality, the city centre houses the slums and the poor. A paradox becomes obvious from the theory. Land values reduce with distance from the city core while income increases. The more affluent citizens by virtue of lower population densities prefer to move away from the historical core. Is the rich living on cheaper land while the poor live on more expensive land?

Beyond the historic theory of urban form is the structural theory of urban form. The structural theory of urban form lays more emphasis on availability of space for the richer people to build to their taste. As the city core degenerates, the rich will migrate towards the outskirts to provide better housing for themselves. These new neighborhoods are rarely in need of upgrades and when the city core is upgraded the rich never go back.

4.2 Urban bias

Michael Lipton's Urban Bias Theory insists that there is a preponderance to initiate more social welfare programmes in www.dzarc.com/education

the urban areas that will eventually lead to rural-urban migration (Shifa & Xiao, 2020; Askar *et al.*, 2021) [41, 5]. This drift will lead to higher population in the urban areas and more pressure to provide social amenities and urban upgrades to the detriment of the rural areas. By extension, the city centre which is the focus of urban systems stands at a vantage point to benefit most in the workings of the theory. The theory assumes that the economic power blocks and pressure groups within the city structure are able to influence the political decisions on the allocation of greater portions of state resources for urban development.

4.3 Heritage preservation and urban tourism

To preserve the heritage value of city cores and encourage urban tourism, measured and deliberate amounts of urban upgrading also need to be carried out. Postulations and documentations on urban upgrades of historic districts dwell a lot on preservation. It is always a debate on whether to opt for preservation or renovation. Historical consciousness and artistic value of cultural heritage have favoured preservation in almost all instances (De Cesari & Dimova, 2019; DeSilvey &

Harrison, 2020) ^[10, 12]. People in all parts of the world tend to romanticize monumentalism and aestheticism. The historic city centre is viewed as a historical monument that should be preserved in totality. The presence of the poor people within the centre is sometimes viewed as part of the heritage. Guidelines for rehabilitating and preserving urban structures with heritage value have been proposed for developing countries (Steinberg, 2011b) ^[45] where urban tourism is encouraged by cultural preservation of historic areas (Diaz-Parra & Jover, 2021) ^[13].

While the upgrade of the city centre can help the government to compete for private investments and footloose capital in the national economy, heritage preservation can also promote local entrepreneurship and encourage tourism. Indigenous residents can have the economic advantage when the choice is made in favour of preservation. Heritage preservation is one of the identified urban development strategies in the building of tourist cities (Ragheb *et al.*, 2022) ^[35]. Investment in city centre upgrading through selective demolition, reconstruction and preservation for urban tourism is fast becoming a norm around the world (Shin, 2010) ^[42].

Urban upgrades are very common features in major cities of the world. The Nigerian situation is not exempted with all state capitals undergoing upgrades regularly. It must be reiterated that the historic city centre where urban development began is more likely to possess heritage value (Sabeeh Lafta Farhan *et al.*, 2021) ^[16]. The curators of the social culture of original inhabitants are also likely to reside within or have affinities with the historic core. The architecture of these city centres

may also have direct relationships with the indigenous architecture, especially in their vernacular and traditional forms (Umar & Said, 2018; Sgobbo & Moccia, 2016) ^[49, 40], since the culture of the people is often preserved in their architectural forms (Mihaila, 2014) ^[31]. When cities undergo urban upgrades, the visible intention is usually to resolve social-spatial problems that have manifested in the urban form (Zhuang *et al.*, 2019) ^[58]. This is carried out by working on the degenerative urban systems.

The historical core possesses a fundamental nature that is likely to have been preserved over time. Regular growth and development is unable to completely alter this nature. On the other hand, deterioration and congestion can wear down the urban systems, giving rise to need for urban upgrades (Yoade, 2018) ^[55]. Economic, cultural and social changes are regularly being introduced into the centre to reflect on the dynamic nature of the interrelated urban systems. The way the urban morphology reacts to the changes is a unique pattern in itself (Yoade, 2018) ^[55]. In most historic city cores around the world, the more enlightened population are always seeking to preserve the fundamental nature of the centre. The heritage values of the structures in the historic core is of great importance to them. However, the degeneration of the urban systems in the historic core must be addressed. In some centres, the deteriorations are addressed by deploying upgrade programmes that allow for some specific structures in the historic core to be preserved. Some others limit the urban upgrade programmes to those that are not too obtrusive to the fundamental nature of the core (Shin, 2010) ^[42].

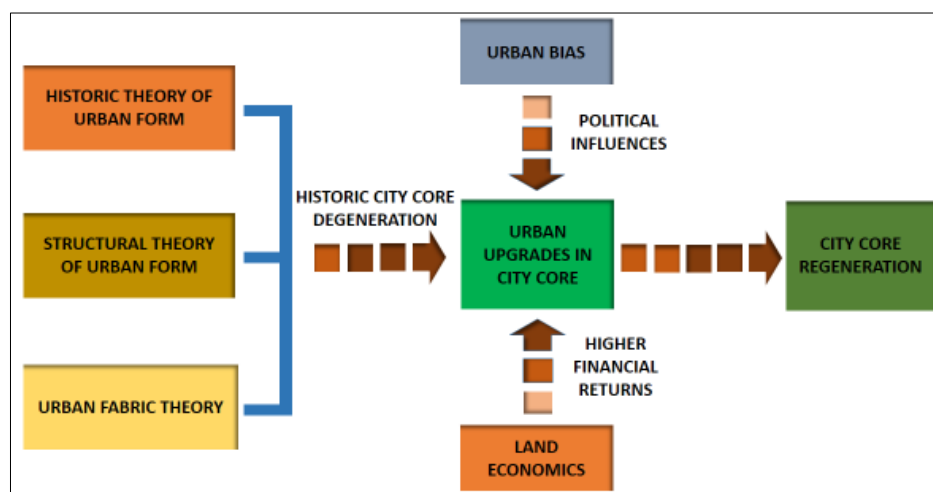


Fig 3: Causal theories of urban upgrades and ultimately city core regeneration

5. Conservation and urban tourism in historic city centres upgrading

To make a case for conservation and urban tourism when upgrades are being executed, it is pertinent to examine the outcomes of previous studies and publications on the subject matter. Literature proposes guidelines for achieving upgrades in historic city centres without obliterating the heritage values in the centres and social fabric of the neighbourhoods (Steinberg, 2011; Shin, 2010; Mezini & Nepravishita, 2018) ^[44, 42, 29]. Other writers have labelled the preservation of heritage values in urban upgrade programmes “sustainable urban www.dzarc.com/education

regeneration” (Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2018; Korkmaz & Balaban, 2020) ^[9, 23]. In some instances, proposals are made on how to itemize and manage historical artifacts and monumental structures in the way of urban upgrades (Steinberg, 2011) ^[44]. There are also mentions on neighbourhood fabric and communal cohesion of downtown cities that are destroyed by urban upgrade schemes (Adenaike *et al.*, 2022; Riera Pérez *et al.*, 2018; Kährlik *et al.*, 2016) ^[1, 37, 21].

Each city is a unique entity and it is difficult to typify cities according to challenges by placing them in a continuum. To be able to address the issue of form and space in every city is a

one-off exercise per city because each urban setting is a unique entity with unique problems (Sallis *et al.*, 2016) ^[39]. In the evolution of cities, the centrality of the city centre goes far beyond the physical. The historic centre or core of the city is a focus for the culture, the administration, the history and almost all the physical and non – physical aspects of the city. It also makes the centre a hub of activities including regenerative efforts. These efforts may not be conscious enough of the intrinsic interests of the city centre. In 2007, the European Union promulgated the “Leipzig Charter for Sustainable European Cities”. It was the first international effort to save the historic city centres of Europe from destruction. The policies allowed for inclusive participation and more sustainable approaches to the revitalization and development of city centres. A deeper understanding of the historic city centre is required to be able to apply such a holistic revitalization effort in the city core. Without this, the socio- cultural imbalances created by upgrading the centre may cause a collapse in the centrality of the historic centre (Radoslav *et al.*, 2013) ^[34]. The heritage value of the city core can be tangible and intangible (Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2018) ^[9]. While the tangible aspects of the heritage can be preserved just by recognizing the need for their preservation, the non-tangible values may elude the stakeholders. Upgrading of European cities are now witnessing better integrated strategies since the enactment of the policy. Encouraging higher levels of participation is key to this approach (Blanco *et al.*, 2011) ^[7]. In many cases the concept of heritage may not be obvious since it means different things to different stakeholders. There may be a need to define “heritage” where preservation is being discussed in upgrading the city centre (Vicente *et al.*, 2015) ^[51]. When it comes to the issue of buildings in the centre, there may be a need to renovate at certain instances. The city core easily has the oldest buildings in the city spread. These buildings may become too old to be allowed to exist in their original states. Such a situation may prescribe the need for restoration of the building stock when upgrades are required in the city centre. Safeguarding the patrimonial value of the building stock in urban regeneration is always challenging (Thatcher, 2018) ^[47]. When upgrades are effected and the buildings are renovated with their patrimonial values intact, the sense of identity in the socio-cultural spheres of the city is preserved (Steinberg, 1996) ^[43]. The public open spaces and the landscape also have heritage values that can be preserved (De Cesari & Dimova, 2019) ^[10]. Preservation of the original forms of historic city centres is very common in tourist destinations of Europe and Asia.

In Southeast Asia, the rate of urbanization around the late 20th century was rapid and went hand in hand with industrialization. The scenario is different from what obtained in North America and Western Europe. Leading the break-neck industrialization of Southeast Asia is China. In the process, megacities with multiple city cores which harboured serious environmental problems due to the concentration of industries began to emerge. The city centres also witnessed population explosions and overbearing densities as low-income earners congregated the centres in slums that provide a cheap labour for the

industries. While the problems that confronted the Western city centres were basically socio-economic (Blanco *et al.*, 2011) ^[7], the Southeast Asian countries have to contend with environmental problems and socio-ecological imbalances (Križnik, 2018) ^[24]. Urban upgrading of the city cores in such a circumstance may have to be more intrusive. Population displacement and gentrification are common in Southeast Asia and are usually targeted at achieving urban sustainability by directly improving the environment.

Of recent, the various policies positions adopted by the different governments are being challenged by stakeholders who clamour for “urban conservation”. At the very heart of the urban conservation movement, lies the quest to preserve the “historic quarters” in the city cores (Shin, 2010) ^[42]. By the early 2000s, the municipal government in Beijing came up with a series of policy positions to institute urban conservation measures in 25 historic city cores in the megacity (Beijing Municipal Planning Commission, 2002). However there were arguments that the outcomes of the exercise exposed economic interests in spite of the inherent benefits in urban conservation (Shin, 2010; Yung *et al.*, 2017) ^[42, 56]. The situation arose due to the non-inclusiveness of the urban upgrades process. By the time Nanluoguxiang area revitalization project in China started in 2006, residents of the neighbourhoods involved complained that no official notice was received from the authorities *let alone* consultation. Local residents were very upset about the loss of legacy in spite of the obvious efforts by government to preserve the heritage. One resident whose structure was partly demolished and then renovated said “the soul is not there anymore” (Shin, 2010) ^[42]. If more stakeholders are carried along in decision making and policy implementation processes, it is quite possible that urban upgrading efforts to preserve the heritage value of the city cores will enjoy a higher level of acceptability.

The downstream effects of city upgrade effort are reflected on the built form in certain instances (Zheng *et al.*, 2015; García-Amaya *et al.*, 2021) ^[57, 17]. In such circumstances, other urban systems that are targeted by the urban upgrade programmes are mainly municipal services and infrastructure. The immediate effects of such upgrades efforts can stimulate drastic changes in the socio-economic environment. In the aftermath of the upgrade efforts, the people will start to alter the built environment. For upgrade programmes that are intended to stimulate gentrification, population displacement or population migration, the socio-economic fabric is immediately altered and the new occupants of the upgraded area are likely to bring in fresh socio-cultural values that more often different from that of the old residents (Mehanna & Mehanna, 2019) ^[27]. When this happens, the new socio-cultural environment tends to express itself differently through its building patterns and building disposition. The legacy is then lost forever.

A different scenario plays out when the consciousness involved in socio-cultural preservation of urban centres is taken to an extreme. In such peculiar situations, the urban fabric of the core is preserved to large extent with modern infrastructure and services deliberately kept out to preserve the original outlook of the city core (Adenaike *et al.*, 2022) ^[1]. Many municipal

authorities go this extra mile for to promote tourism and encourage heritage preservation. Sections of the city core that house religious and historical sites are common enclaves in such cases of historical city core upgrading (Dastgerdi & De Luca, 2018; Farhan *et al.*, 2018; Arkaraprasertkul, 2019) ^{19, 15, 41}. Many old city centres in Europe, Asia and Middle East have carved out sections that are denied municipal services and modern infrastructure to preserve the socio-cultural heritage (Ertan & Eğercioğlu, 2016) ^[14]. In cases where contemporary infrastructure and modern services like drains and utility lines are expedient, they are specifically designed to be unobtrusive. These measures leave the built form largely unchanged during urban upgrades of such city centres.



Fig 4: Historic city centre of Parte Vieja, San Sebastian, Spain

The Post medieval setting in downtown Parte Vieja, Spain is maintained after many urban upgrade programmes with the architectural legacy of the buildings and the original layout of the city centre preserved as a heritage that encourages tourism. In Nanluoguxiang Street of Central Beijing, China, controlled and selective demolition within regenerative programmes tried to preserve the ancient neighbourhood in Central Beijing (Shin, 2010) ^[42]. While fresh materials and modern have been deployed to replace the old and decrepit elements in the area, the socio-cultural ambience of the area is still largely preserved. Emerging building forms and renovated public spaces have largely retained their old outlook.



Fig 5: View of Nanluoguxiang Street, Central Beijing

In other instances, where preservation is the buildings clusters

are the objective, modern infrastructure and services can still be introduced in limited extents. This practice is common in older European city centres where centuries old building clusters that are preserved in their original conditions as historical artefacts. Naples, Copenhagen Madrid, Rome and Barcelona are some of such cities that have legislated on the protection of certain building clusters during urban upgrades.

6. Conclusion

The intention to embark on upgrade processes in historic centres are usually hinged on regeneration and revitalization of the socio-spatial downturn in the centres. The concomitants of such actions often lead to losses in the intrinsic values of that define the existence of the centres. While discussing the causal theories of urban upgrades in historic city centres, this presentation has subtly led the discussion towards the precepts that can guide government and other stakeholders towards sustainable urban upgrading. They include heritage preservation, holistic planning and inclusiveness in the planning process. Apart from ensuring a sustainable upgrade exercise, a far reaching advantage of enhancing urban tourism is inherent in approaching city centre upgrading from the right perspective. While the Asian countries and the western world have made giant strides in this direction as seen from the body of the discussion, the developing world is lagging behind. Of note is the need to increase the awareness of the benefits of legacy preservation in historic city centres to prevent permanent loss in the quest for upgrading.

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