

# From ruin to renewal: The social implications of continuity and delay in realizing urban renewal

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## ABSTRACT

In recent decades, urban renewal is promoted as a neoliberal deal between entrepreneurs and property rights holders. The literature has examined the degree to which longtime residents are pushed out, and the changes caused by redevelopment in the communities where it takes place. In Israel and worldwide, researchers have studied the impact of urban renewal projects on particularly low-income marginalized neighborhoods and communities. Unlike these studies, in the present article we examine the social implications of urban renewal from the homeowners' perspective, focusing on the pre-implementation period. The high proportion of homeowners involved in urban renewal projects, combined with dramatic price increases and population growth, result in the Israeli case in a social dynamic that is distinct from exclusion and gentrification. In this dynamic, renewal is not seen as a spatial and social rift, but rather as the way out of an ongoing crisis.

In a quantitative and qualitative mixed-methods sociospatial study, we have found that this dynamic may be divided into three stages. The first is ongoing neglect and deterioration of the building, due to the tenants' inability to organize, and of public space, due to the condition of the local authority. In the second stage, the homeowners adopt the real-estate discourse and promote urban renewal in order to turn their property into a stepping stone to upgrading their economic status. In the third, however, they encounter a municipal planning reality that prevents them from moving rapidly to implementing the project, and experience disappointment and failure. The article contributes to the international literature on the encounter between neoliberal forces and marginalized residential environments under development pressure, as well as to understanding the local context where renewal plans are promoted.

**Keywords:** urban renewal; raze and rebuild; homeowners; displacement; building maintenance

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