Reading Tips and Study Questions
CLASS FOURTEEN

Required reading

- (video lecture) Lawrence J. Vale, “Public Housing in the United States: Public Housing, Neighborhood Renewal and the Poor (or, Some Things to Think About Before Thinking About ‘Mixed-Income’ Housing).”
- HUD, Choice Neighborhoods program webpage.

Recommended


Session overview

In this session, with help from guest Larry Vale, we will consider the aims for, challenges of, and limits to “revitalizing” subsidized housing developments, especially public housing, often with mixed-income configuration and often involving private developer partners. Professor Vale has carried out significant research on efforts to redo public housing, including "twice-cleared communities" – sites that were cleared for the original, early phase of public housing decades ago and razed again recently for the HOPE VI public housing rebuilding program.

The Obama Administration has launched new versions of programs to redo public housing. The *Choice Neighborhoods* program differs from HOPE VI in that it proposes holistic neighborhood change around public housing sites, revises controversial HOPE VI provisions related to replacing housing (though not necessarily replacing it onsite), and relocates tenants more responsibly. The Rental...
Assistance Demonstration program (see article) allows local housing authorities to take on private debt and work with private development partners in order to obtain the capital needed to rebuild older developments.

Reminder: **Discussion questions**

1. What key “revisionist lenses” does Vale (in his video lecture) identify for interrogating the paradigm of “public housing failure”? And what lessons does he draw for planners about tenant activism and other aspects of the politics of public housing redevelopment?

2. What does Bristol say is the cause of the decline of Modernist public housing complexes like Pruitt-Igoe? What historical narrative is she arguing against?

3. In what ways does Vale (in “Myth #6”) suggest the potential of mixed-income development has been over-sold or poorly communicated? On what bases does he seem to be supportive of its potential, and under what conditions?

4. Skim the contents of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s (HUD’s) program webpage for Choice Neighborhoods. From your point of view, does the agency acknowledge the major challenges of mixed-income development or just the hoped-for benefits? What role does HUD imagine for social services, health, community organizing, or other “beyond bricks-and-mortar” elements of change?
11.401 Introduction to Housing, Community, and Economic Development
Fall 2015

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: http://ocw.mit.edu/terms.