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SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

Nzimande, Ntombifuthi Precious. *The socio-economic impacts of urban regeneration programs as a tool of housing in post-socialist era: a comparison of Hungarian case studies*. University of Szeged (Hungary), November 2022. Directors: Prof. Tivadar Tóth, Dr. György Csomós, Dr. Erika Nagy, Dr. Márton Berki & Dr. Márton Kiss.

Research problem one

The appearance of market forces on the housing market after 1990 triggered new residential mobility processes in post-socialist cities like Budapest. In inner-city districts, the intensifying privatisation led higher-status residents to leave for peri-urban and suburban areas while several problems were concentrated in these neighbourhoods: for example, poverty, homelessness and crime with some elements of the slum- or even ghetto-formation (Kovács et al., 2013). This seemed to have perpetuated the rate of deteriorated houses and social erosion, especially in relatively poor areas (Kovács, 2009). Tackling these urban issues has required a new take on urban regeneration programs (URPs) by incorporating social sustainability (Nzimande and Fabula, 2020). The social, environmental and economic pressures that cities have experienced in the past few decades have impacted urban neighbourhoods immensely. However, published housing research has looked at issues concerning segregation and gentrification through quantitative data. Thus, further investigation from the perspectives of the stakeholders and residents is required.

Research problem two

Residential satisfaction studies have been used to determine the factors contributing to a resident being either satisfied or dissatisfied with their overall residential environment. However, the type of determinants chosen to evaluate satisfaction are often tailored to the specific case study, researcher and overall aim of the research, as this concept is based on perception. Specifically, within the context of Hungary, residential satisfaction research in housing estates has received scant attention with a few exceptions, e.g. Tosics et al. (2005) and Herfert et al. (2012). No

known published questionnaire or conceptual model suitable for studying residential satisfaction in ex-post housing-led URPs in post-socialist cities exists. Therefore, this research attempts to fill this gap and further develop the conceptual model of residential satisfaction concerning urban regeneration.

Research objectives and methodology

The overall aim of the PhD research was to model the extent to which dwelling unit features, neighbourhood features, housing support services, housing conditions, residents' participation, social features, and environmental awareness features predict residents' residential satisfaction. Most importantly, this research is centrally focused on the importance of residents perception of social housing-led social regeneration and their level of participation (or lack of) in the entire process.

This aim was achieved through the following objectives:

Theoretical objectives:

- i. To reveal how governance practices and structures influence social sustainability in different geographical contexts
- ii. To improve the concept of residential satisfaction by building on empirical findings

Methodological objectives:

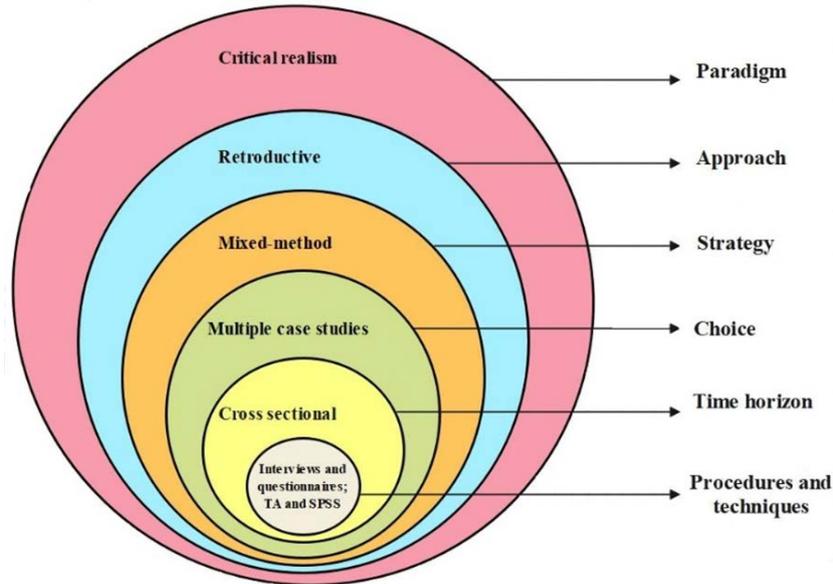
- iii. To investigate the role, perception, and participation of stakeholders in promoting community engagement in affordable housing projects
- iv. To assess the socio-economic impacts of affordable housing based on the residents' perceptions and conditions before and after URPs
- v. To develop and test a model to determine residential satisfaction in housing estates

Practical objectives:

- vi. To identify the best practice initiatives implemented in the communities of major URPs and provide relevant recommendations that can be adopted for other similar programs

The "onion" research process (Figure 1), used throughout the thesis, is helpful as it provides young researchers with a practical guide through the research process (Saunders et al., 2009).

Figure 1. The “onion” research process

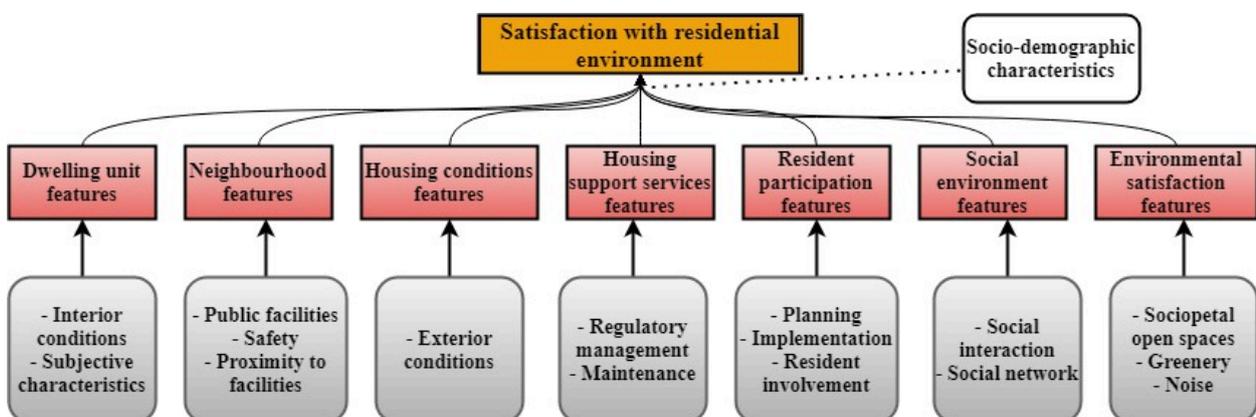


Source: inspired by Saunders et al. (2009)

Results

First, findings revealed that stakeholders were not satisfied with the overall programs as public participation, which was supposed to be the main focus due to the nature of the programs, was superficial. In this case, these results corroborated those of the residents. However, when looking at the reasons by both the stakeholders and residents – differing views arise, such as little enthusiasm. Second, the developed and test model proved that exogenous variables influence the endogenous variable (i.e., residential satisfaction) and thus support the holistic residential satisfaction conceptual model (Nzimande, 2022), as this model can predict residential satisfaction in post-socialist cities (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Holistic residential satisfaction conceptual model



Source: author’s own elaboration

Conclusions

Urban regeneration processes have the potential to eradicate, if not alleviate, urban injustices through engaging with local communities and key stakeholders to ensure the improvement of physical and social infrastructures. URPs should involve an intensive, long-term implementation that provides housing affordability long after the program's closure. And finally, as much as government is responsible for ensuring housing affordability, citizens have great power as it is difficult for municipalities to win votes as most voters may not support helping vulnerable populations. Civil society and academia have an enormous task of raising public awareness about this.

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