

YOURSAY | Urban renewal should not be at expense of the poor

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Yoursay

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True Fiction: It is not the Urban Renewal Act (URA) that is wrong. It is our policymakers and implementors -read politicians and civil servants.

Look at the MRT and the former Pekeliling flats. The Pekeliling public flat residents got moved out to don't-know-where. The land is sold to fund the MRT.

Private developers build new expensive condos next to the new MRT station. Condominiums are expensive because there is an MRT station downstairs.

The silly thing with this entire episode is that a piece of public property was monetised to fund a public transport system which enhanced the value of non-low-cost private property.

If you examine the value flow, you might notice that the government transferred

the value of public assets to the profit of a private developer.

And guess what? It is not the previous poor Pekeliling flat residents who get to use the MRT. It is the new owners or tenants of the new expensive condos.

Ketuanan Moronism: I don't support the URA. Why?

1. Look at history. Local government has a track record of being very pro-developers. Look at the rampant over-development today in areas like Taman Desa.

Does that show a local government that prioritises residents over developers?

2. After they redevelop the building, the maintenance fees will go up. Many of the older residents will not be able to afford to stay in these redeveloped buildings. They have to move out.

3. It only moves the slums to the outskirts. The residents will be given alternative housing in the outskirts and distant, low-value areas. There, the alternative housing will deteriorate. The slums will continue but in a different place.

That doesn't stop the developers from monetising prime real estate. Many of these B40 residents will continue to travel to the city to work, adding to traffic

jams.

4. If the intent is to rejuvenate these slums, then why must there be a change of ownership?

The local government can upgrade the flats, clean them up, improve the facilities, fix the amenities, and improve garbage collection.

No change of ownership or sale of the property is required. In Singapore, the government upgrades the old HDB flats, so the owners are not forced to sell and move out.

5. The URA is supposed to maintain the ownership demographic. So, if it was a Malay owner, then the ownership remains as Malay.

But the B40 Malay will move out, and be replaced with a T20 Malay who rents it out to any other race. This is not racial displacement - it is a class displacement.

In the end, the city will be for the rich, and the outskirts for the poor. The city will be nice and clean, and the ghettos will be on the outskirts.

The ones who benefit are the developers and the rich property owners who will be foreigners, especially from China.

Annus Horribilis: The underlying concern about the URA is, as veteran journalist Andrew Sia rightly asserted, class-based and not race-based.

PAS should take off its racial lens if it wants to wrap its head around the issue.

Redevelopment of these areas should not be profit-making at the expense of the vulnerable.

By the way, I like how the writer playfully threw in the name, Developers Action Party, which, incidentally, is more appropriate in the context of Penang.

Hex Mesh: If only there was no corruption and all developments only approved when in full compliance with all regulations and guidelines, Kuala Lumpur would still be a beautiful place.

Koel: Will affected residents be given adequate notice? Will the unique character of places such as Kampung Baru in Kuala Lumpur be wiped out forever?

I can't help thinking the URA is really to make it easier for vulture developers to swoop down on properties they've been greedily eyeing for years.

KK Voter: Bottom line - if existing residents are guaranteed units of the same or bigger size, without spending a sen, and are provided temporary residences

during the development process, then hardly anyone will object to the URA -
except developers.

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