**Compare and Contrast Two Policy Areas – Urban Regeneration, Housing, Local Government or Transport – In Urban Theory**

Abstract

Urban theory also known as urban economics focuses on the phenomenon of how a city is formed where the economic significances prevail in order to equip the city’s ability to realize the generation and accumulation of wealth. This paper will seek to highlight how federal aid in the UK affects and impacts on urban housing and transport. The authors have chosen these two policy areas because they have several common determinants: for example high unemployment rate would result in economic trends that influence both urban transport and housing.

**The Importance of Financial Aid in Urban Theory**

The financial aid, according to the urban theory, affect and influence cultural and economic facets of the modern society in the United Kingdom. The financial aid is a policy that directly affects one’s quality and access to urban transport and housing. While it supports people in living a better quality of life, it is also suitable to address unemployment issues, help residents get around the local area. There are, however, several constraints of the development of urban areas: geographical (lack of space for expansion), deprivation of areas (unemployment, lack of local businesses offering suitable work) and social, which draws a strong line between areas in towns occupied by owners, private tenants and social tenants. The below study is designed to review the related policies of the government and local councils and their effectiveness in addressing the above issues.

**Discussion**

**Review of Urban Environment in the United Kingdom**

The Royal Commission recently published a report on the urban environment. The report concludes that over 80 percent of the UK population lives in the urban environment, and this also means that 80 percent of people are directly affected by the government's urban policy and regulations. Urban areas do not only form complex systems and communities but also have their environmental, economic and social challenges, and governments need to address from time to time. The main challenges of these urban communities will be detailed below; however, the authors would like to focus on the two, currently examined policy areas of housing and transport. That stated, it is important to note that the quality of housing and transport systems has a direct implication on people's health, well-being, and overall life quality. Therefore, the importance of urban planning is great.

The housing market shortage and the consistency of the occupancy types create several problems, according to Spicker. (n.d.). The British housing urban policy has four different tenure types: owner-occupation, local authority housing (council homes), registered social landlords and private rented housing. Currently, the owner- occupation of the housing stock is much higher than at the beginning of the 20th Century, while the social housing sector grew after the building of social housing estates after the Second World War.

**Urban Transportation Policy Issues**

One of the main issues featured in the report of the Royal Commission (2012) is the increased car ownership and use in towns. It results in a decline in walking, which has health implications, alongside with the increased CO2 emission. (AdviceGuide.org.uk 2013) Further, increased car ownership does create a higher demand for parking and new roads. These factors also have implications for the urban environment, in the form of closing local shops, therefore, low-income families without a car would not be able to access fresh food. The complexity and interaction of the issues are detailed in Appendix A and will be a basis of the current policy study. (United Kingdom 2003:1)

According to a recent study, quoted by Jones, Leishman, and MacDonald (2005: 4) the average speed of traffic in urban areas is 21 miles per hour, This, obviously fluctuates according to the road use. Peak periods include the start and end of school day, as well as between 8 and 9 and 5 and 6 PM. This also results in the fast decline of road quality in towns, needing investments from local councils. While schemes for potholes have been created, urban residents are not satisfied with the condition of roads.

The main recommendations of the Royal Commission report (2007: 11) regarding transport and housing are noted below:

“We recommend that the government develops and strengthens requirements for Local Transport Plans, such that by the end of 2008 they can include statutory targets for reduction in urban trafﬁc.”

**Conclusion**

While councils have the authority to deal with issues on the local level, the government needs to ensure that there are guidelines in place that support communities living in urban areas. Planning of future developments should be reconsidered on local and government level in order to serve the benefit of urban residents: lower congestion, shorter travel time to work, support of local businesses, affordable and effective transport links, better air quality, healthy and up-to-standard housing, with social housing sector implementing fair, means-tested policies to ensure that those who are most in need are allocated the homes that suit their lifestyle. (Wonders 2013) While there are currently benefits and policies in place to address these issues, it has been proven through comparing three different cities' different factors that final decisions need to be made on the local authority level, regarding stock refurbishment, allocation, planning of developments and transport. The main problem areas determined by the current paper are not fully addressed by the government at the moment, such as the low stock of homes, social problems on so called “council estates” and urban congestion. The authors of the current study hope that these factors will be placed on the government's priority list and consolidated into policies.

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