

15: Epilogue: Renewal or Release?

At the middle age plateau, it isn't clear whether we're nearer to our birth, or nearer to our demise. In some societies, the wisdom of the elderly is revered. In some cultures, the elderly step aside to make room for the young, even though they are still vital. The two are not mutually exclusive.

15.1 Renewal conserves energy by maintaining order in existing systems

It requires more energy to create a new system than to keep one going.

Consider the cases of urban renewal, and home renovation. Why gut an old Victorian house that has fallen into disrepair? It's because the house is in an established neighbourhood where city services such as water, electricity, and schools are already in place.

There are examples of companies that have renewed as organizations, changing their products. Nokia, a Finnish company known for rubber products, made the leap to the information world to lead the rise of mobile cellular telephones. IBM, a company that produced clocks and meat grinders, evolved to products on mainframe digital computers, and most recently receives most of its revenue from services and consulting to businesses.

Sidebar: The 4 R's

In ecology conservation programs, there are 4 R's: reduce, reuse, recycle and recover. ¹⁾

15.2 Release frees energies to create new systems

Some systems are beyond redemption, and require more energy to maintain than to replace.

Sidebar: The Gardiner Extension roadway in Toronto

In Toronto, the Gardiner Extension roadway was a onramp to an expressway that was never built. It towered over an existing road, Lakeshore Drive, that was underused. Built in the 1960s, the Gardiner Extension was an integral part of the local traffic systems, but gradually fell into disrepair. In addition to being an eyesore, it served as a visual barrier between the city and its waterfront portlands. Since the cost to maintain the structure was estimated to be roughly equal to the cost of tearing it down, it was demolished in 2000. ²⁾

15.3 Wisdom informs the paths of renewal or release

The perpetuation of any system drives debates on whether renewal or release should be preferred.

{2005/07/16, DI: Notes from Cancun remind me that having the old die faster is a strategy for change!}

Elderly Inuit used to isolate themselves on ice floes, when they were near death. By sacrificing themselves, they preserved the way of life for a community that was always on the knife's edge between survival and oblivion.

Sidebar: Creative destruction

{A summary of some Schumpeter work should appear here}

Sidebar: Business spin-offs

Should we discuss business spin-offs in Finland as a way to rechannel energy?

¹⁾

A description of the 4 R's is available from Environment Canada at

<http://www.ns.ec.gc.ca/udo/reuse.html> .

²⁾

Photographs of the demolition of the Gardiner Expressway East can be viewed as part of the City of Toronto archives at <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/archives/gardiner/>

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