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A Study on a Reevaluation of the Old Apartment Complexes in Hanoi

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ABSTRACT

Though apartment complexes in Hanoi are in need of regeneration, they function as core facilities in local society. However, the regeneration plan of the government is to rebuild the apartments so as to effectively utilize the land. It does not consider the positioning in the district. This survey defines the relationship between the apartment complexes and adjoining villages, changes of recent years in the apartment complexes, and the effects of those changes according to a hearing of the people concerned and the materials. As a result, the following things have been defined: (1) The building of the apartment complexes comes at the sacrifice of the village, (2) Rebuilding the apartment complexes is driving out the illegal elements and further widening the difference of social infrastructure between the village and the apartment complexes, (3) The consciousness of both the people in the apartment complexes and in the village is beginning to grow, thus improving their living environment.

KEYWORDS

Apartment Complex, Downtown Maintenance, City Regeneration, Village

1. Introduction: Background and Purpose of the Study

To secure the houses of government bureaucrats or officers who were gathered in capital, Hanoi, the government of Vietnam has built many apartment complexes near the border of the downtown region since the establishment of their independence in 1954. In the 1970s, the goal of securing a house has changed to the employees of national enterprises or the laborers of national factories, and the places available in which to build houses has widened to the outskirts with the spread of the downtown region. These days, many of the apartment complexes have been swallowed by the downtown area and form part of the downtown district.

In the downtown region of Hanoi, there are 50 apartment complexes that consist of plural apartments built under such circumstances. These apartment complexes, which are under the control of DONRE (the Department of Natural Resources and Environment), include 22 apartment complexes consisting of 434 apartments higher than the fourth floor (23,989 houses) and 5 apartment complexes lower than the third floor (4,192 houses). The total is 27 apartment complexes.

The thesis presented at the seminar in 2005 reports that these apartment complexes: (1) have open space, such as parks and pools, though both are in the downtown district, (2) are located near public facilities, such as elementary or junior-high schools, the People's Committee, the police, the hospital and the market, and (3) are mostly built adjoined to the villages. It also reports that the apartment complexes connote facilities that seem to be the local core of the downtown area. In this way, the apartment complexes are important properties for the future of downtown of Hanoi; these are thought to be utilizable for the regeneration of the downtown district.

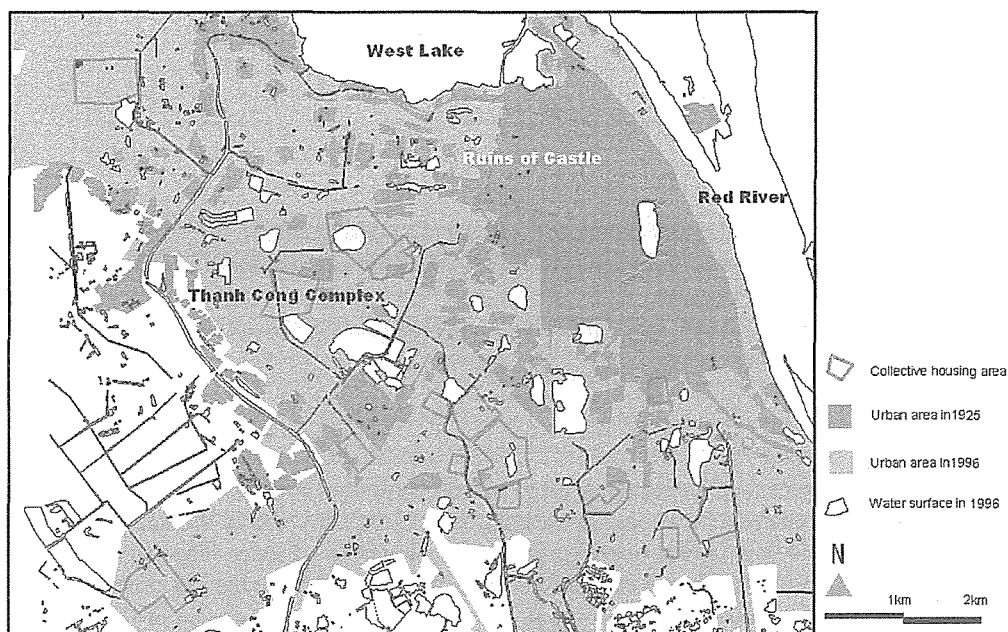


Figure 1. Urbanization process from 1925~1980

“The policy to improve the apartment complexes” on March 3, 2005 refers to (1) a new and modern living model responding to the social economic development of the capital Hanoi by reorganization, replacement of the apartments and the improvement of the residents, and (2) effectively utilizing the premises of the apartment complexes. It also states that in the apartment complexes, their regeneration is advancing, and that the policy is to rebuild using outside investment and to encourage the ex-resident to settle down in another place. Even though the apartment complexes are properties that seem to be the local core, the material does not refer to the policy of the apartment complexes themselves or the peripheral residences.

Therefore, this survey pays attention to one apartment complex and revalues the apartment complexes as city stocks by defining 1) the relationships between the building of the complexes and the villages, 2) the change between the time the complexes were built until the present, and the response of the administration. Defining these two things leads to the definition of the change of the apartment complexes and their circumferences.

2. Survey Method

This survey researched the Thanh Con complex, which was built in 1974 from the apartment complexes controlled by DONRE and consisted of 22 middle-rise and high-rise apartment complexes. Chart 1 shows the position of the 22 apartment complexes and Thanh Cong in the downtown area of Hanoi. We performed the survey by obtaining materials and information from public hearings. A public hearing was held from October 20 to one month later for the representatives of Thanh Cong village, adjoining the Thang Cong apartment complex, Thanh Cong People’s Committee, the residents of the apartment complexes and tenants.

3. The outline of the Thanh Cong complexes

The Thanh Cong complex was built in 1974 as housing for employees of national companies adjoining Thanh Cong village, which covers 18.6 ha. As of 2006, it has 62 apartments, and 10459 people in 2215 houses live there (Chart 2). The Thanh Cong complex consists of four towns, which

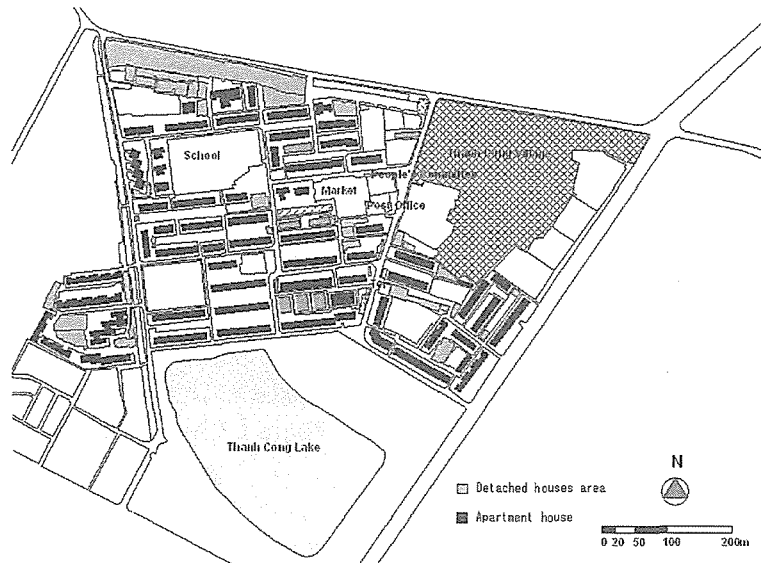


Figure 2. Town plan of Thanh Cong Complex and Thanh Cong Village

are surrounded by wide roads. In its southern town, there is a well-maintained lake. Though it is the southern town mainly that is the apartment complex, part of this area is crowded with detached houses. The western part of town contains the apartment complex. The eastern half of the town consists of Thanh Cong village. Between the southern town and the eastern houses, which is almost the center of the complex, there is the People's Committee, the post office and the village shrine (a meeting place). A map from 1986 shows that 37 apartment complexes, house, schools, kindergartens and markets were built.

4. The relationship between the building of the Thanh Cong complex and Thanh Cong village

Because the main industry of Thanh Cong village was weaving clothes, the people of the adjoining Lang village has its land and all the people in it were tenant farmers. Due to the enforcement of the Land Reform Law, the 400 m² of land per person was distributed, and 200 people of 50 houses of Thanh Cong village began to work in agriculture. The 1966 map shows that the surroundings of the village were all wetlands, and people grew vegetables and raised fish.

In 1959, "The rules about impounding the lands" were established. These rules were established regarding the compensation of the farmers when the government impounds farmland to develop the downtown area. These rules mainly urged the impounding of the wetlands and agricultural lands.

In 1970, "The rules about damage compensation when building constructions to widen the downtown area" were established. These rules were established with regard to impounding the land where buildings are situated, and these made it possible to impound not only the land where there are buildings, but also agricultural lands or wetlands. According to these laws, the land of Thanh Cong was impounded and the building of apartment complexes was commenced; however, the compensation money was seldom paid. The village cemetery was also impounded. The pool now existing in Thanh Cong village was created by digging out the earth to build the apartment complexes.

The village people who had their land impound to build the apartment complexes lost their employment, many of whom were engaged in physical work, such as porters or driving cyclos. They started to use the elementary schools, junior-high schools, kindergartens and markets newly built in the complex. Though the apartment complexes had completed infrastructures, like electrical and water services, the village did not have these. Though the government officials lived in the apartment complexes, the life in the village was unstable, and there was a wide social difference. The children of the people living in the apartment complexes and those in the village went to the

same schools, but they seldom intermixed. The children of the people in the village were sometimes discriminated against.

Although the Tei (a meeting place, Photo 1) was reduced by the building of the complexes, nowadays the village people actively hold events, such as festivals, centered at this facility. In 2005, events, such as rebuilding the gate of the shrine showed that the cohesiveness of the village had been further strengthened. Some of the people who live in the apartment complexes wanted to participate in the festivals, but they were not permitted to.

Nowadays, many aspects of the village peoples' lives make use of the facilities in the apartment complexes.

Government officers have ceased to live in the apartment complexes. Although the apartment complex has modernized the lives of the village people with regard to education, medical care, and so on, the village is still a crowded downtown area consisting of narrow alleys (Photo 2), and there is still insufficient social infrastructure.

Together with the regeneration of the apartment complexes, the voices calling for the maintenance of the living environment of the village are many and loud.

5. The change from the time of completion of Thanh Cong complex to the present and the response of the administration

The change since the time of the completion of the apartment complexes to the present may be the following: (1) the appearance of detached houses, (2) the appearance of shop buildings, (3) the partial conversion of the apartment complexes, (4) the rebuilding of the apartment complexes.

The following are the recent status, the development and the effects of these changes.

5.1 The appearance of the detached houses (Photo 3)

Between the apartment complexes and the northern part of the sites of the complexes there are some detached houses. The detached houses in the apartments became detached because the houses of the workers who built the complexes did not move after the complexes were completed. The detached houses in the northern part were built by the Thanh Cong village people, with the redeemed pools and channel being sold because "the Land Law" began to allow the use of the lands in 1993. These lands have been neglected, and they were impounded from the village people to build the complexes. The detached houses were

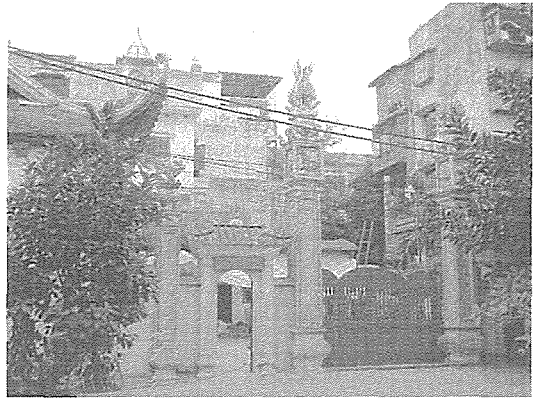


Photo 1. The Tei in Thanh Cong Village

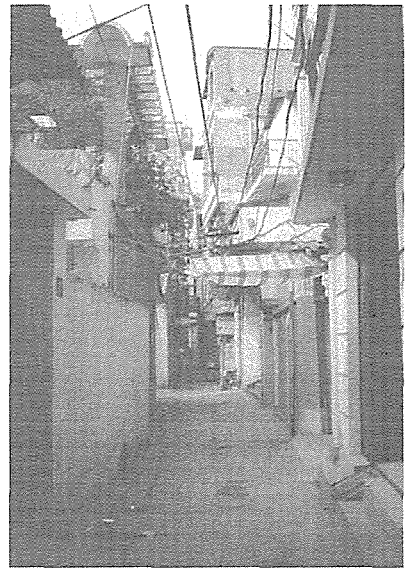


Photo 2. Thanh Cong Village

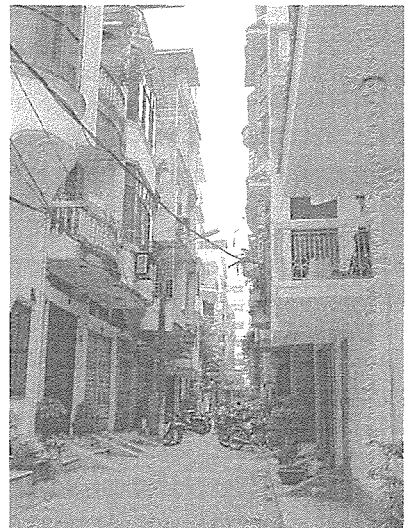


Photo 3. The Detached houses area

also built in the lands distributed by the national companies, some of which were sold.

5.2 The appearance of the shop buildings (Photo 4)

The shops in the complexes include those on the first floor of the apartment, the groups of shops between the apartments, and the markets with individual structures. The socialist country of Vietnam has prohibited individuals from running the shops, but nowadays an approval system has started. Selling perishable food, such as fish, meat and vegetables on the first floor is technically prohibited, but in fact can be seen in many places. The walls in the first floor of the houses have been cleared away and the first floor has become shops. Clearing away the walls is a big problem with respect to the strength of the buildings.

We heard a story about three people borrowing the first floor of the house and selling dry food, vegetables and seasoning. They said that none of them received permission to sell, but that there are no crackdowns. Many of the people who have the right to use the first floor of the house lease the merchant the part or all of the houses.

The groups of shops between the apartments are the naturally-occurring markets. The markets with their own structure are the public markets that have received permission to sell and abide by the rules of the market control center, while the naturally occurring markets are different from them and not illegal.

5.3 The partially converted apartment complexes

Many of the houses in the apartments have been individually converted. On July 5, 1994, "The rules about the right to possess the house and to use the lands" were established, and these rules made it possible for individuals to possess or use the houses. At the same time, "The rules about selling the houses and management" were established, and the disposal system came to be enforced. This circumstance made it possible to convert the houses freely. The materials of the Thanh Cong People's Committee show the gross area of apartments in the complexes was 187,021 m², while the gross area of the converted part was 39,415 m², which shows that 20 percent of the area was converted. The People's Committee is planning to remove the converted part, but this plan has not yet been executed.

Though the conversion has been happened independently, it has come to happen on a house-by-house basis recently (Photo 5). We call this way of converting "concurrent conversion", corresponding to individual conversion. Because the government used to positively recommend the conversion per house, there is one concurrent conversion in the Thanh Cong complexes held by the assistance of the government. The government assists with the cost of the skeleton, while the resident pays the cost of the interior and private parts of the exterior. Problems, such as differential settlement after undertaking construction, have occurred; therefore, concurrent conversion no longer takes place. In the Thanh Cong complex, the concurrent conversion that is not permitted by the government is underway in 9 places. The concurrent conversion by the residents is suggested by themselves, which is carried out if they tell the vertically overlapping houses about this and the

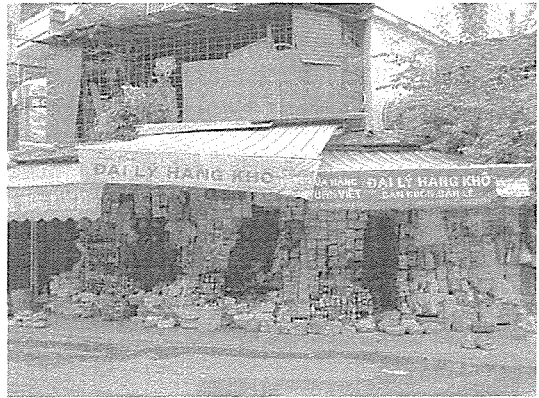


Photo 4. The shops of the first floor of apartment

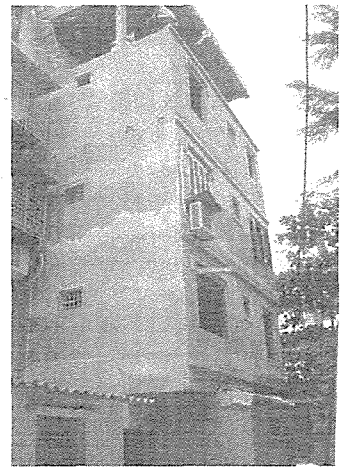


Photo 5. The Concurrent Conversion

people in these houses are in consensus. They request the building of the skeleton to builders and divide the cost equally. Each resident of each house converts the interior and exterior. There are the cases where they do it themselves, or request it of the vendors, and leave the houses with an unconverted interior or exterior until they can amass the requisite finances. The concurrent conversion carried out like this has problems like chapping in the part of joint because of differential settlement.



Photo 6. Rebuilding of apartments

5.4 Rebuilding of the apartment (Photo 6)

In the Thanh Cong complex, there was a converted apartment completed in November, 2003. The converted B7 apartment completed in 1974 has five floors, of which the floor area per house was only 32 m². This apartment was a house that contributed to the Vietnam War. The survey for ground sinking of the houses in 1992 found that differential settlement had occurred; therefore, the residents of the first floor soon moved to the neighboring apartments. The money to rebuild was provided by DONRE. The rebuilt apartment has six floors. The residents of the first floor, who lived in the former apartments, remained. The residents between the second floor and fifth floor lived in other apartment complexes during the rebuilding construction work, but moved again to live in the same place of the same floor after its completion. The houses on the first floor and sixth floor were sold as houses for sale. Though the first floor houses were auctioned, there were no shops. In the converted apartments, individual conversion has already occurred because of the bad usability of the ventilation or plan. Hanoi City is planning to carry out the complete conversion of the Thanh Cong complex; therefore, it is going to solicit investors for the projects and bankroll the conversion with outside funds.

6. Conclusions

We will summarize what has become clear from this survey.

- The lands of the apartment complexes are originally those of Thanh Cong village. However, building the apartment complexes has caused the village people to lose their jobs. Though the daily life of the village people is widely dependant on the apartment complexes, the village is a crowded downtown of intricate alleys, and the regeneration of the apartment complexes is assumed to further widen the house environment difference between the apartment complexes and the village.
- In Thanh Cong village, action in parts of the village has commenced. Among the residents of the apartment complexes, actions to attack, in cooperation with each other, to improve the living environment, such as trying to convert apartment units, are underway. This action has begun to grow, and they are trying to be conscious of their cohesiveness and improve their living environment.
- The conversion in the complexes results in the getting rid of the commercial architectures that have been run without permission and in accepting the wealthy new residents who have new and modern lifestyles; therefore, it is not a general regeneration.

7. Discussion

The apartment complexes are thought to be located as a local core, not only as the place of public facilities, such as elementary and junior-high schools, nursery schools, or hospitals, but also non-permitted accumulated land of commercial architecture, including the adjoining villages. The regeneration plan of the apartment complexes that Hanoi City is going to undertake involves the full conversion of apartments. Although it promises the opportunity for ex-residents to settle

again, it intends to get rid of non-permitted commercial architecture. The houses generated as redundant floors are going to be sold in lots at a high price, even though they are not valued as comfortable houses. And, they are going to be passed to many residents who have a modern lifestyle. Although the government is attending to this matter, the social infrastructure difference is going to widen as a result. If the conversion of the apartment complexes is carried out in each apartment in the same way henceforth, the apartment complexes that have the same kind of apartments are going to be generated again.

In the old downtown region of Hanoi, city creation considering the historical aspects of Hanoi is planned. Thanh Cong village is going to regain the power of self-government, which could be discovered from the fact that the festivals have become active, under the socialist state. In the apartment complexes, the residents are able to cooperate.

Thinking about the regeneration of the apartment complexes, the apartment complexes and villages should be maintained in the same area while rebuilding the relationship between them. The regeneration of 22 apartment complexes in Hanoi should not simply be the conversion of apartments, but also be carried out while making the aspect of the location of the apartment complexes in the downtown area clearly relate to the history and endemism of the village. We think that this will lead to the possibility of regenerating the city of Hanoi in its own way.

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