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# HOUSING MODEL AND URBAN LIFE STYLE

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## KEYWORDS

Housing model, urban life style

### 1. Introduction

With affection of industrialization, modernization nowadays, big cities like Hanoi, HCMC are under pressure of increasing population and social issues include employment, unemployment, housing, prostitution and drug addiction, etc. Those issues have been addressed in different measure in various sociological researches. However, urban social changes are happening so strongly that forecasts on urban planning and social issues in recent research have not met the pace. Urgent matters include housing and matters in related to lifestyle of population group. Lifestyle has close relation with housing. Like a traditional proverb saying “to live and work in peace and contentment”, man need a stable residence in order to pursue his lifework (career). On the other hand, residence also associates with income, expenditure, and family’s lifestyle. Secondary data analysis and observation in some research location would lighten this supposition.

### 2. Some briefings on Hanoi’s housing and urban planning

Hanoi population is accelerating in recent years. Currently its population is around 2.700.000, while it increased from only 20,000 in 1954 up to 1 million in 1994. Average housing area of 6.6 sqm per head in 1954 has declined to 4.7 spm per head in 1994 [1, Nguyen Dinh Huong, p 67] but reach 7 sqm per head in 2000. To response to the increasing population in Hanoi the state has paid attention to the development and has planned for 2 million sqm of new housing in 2000 compare to 700,000 sqm in period 1991-1994. Housing area within inner-urban for 1954 is only 2,435,000 sqm but it has risen to 5.1 million sqm. From these numbers we can see that population size has risen 3 folds while dwelling area has risen only 2 folds during the period 1954-1994[1, Nguyen Dinh Huong, p 67]. It means housing demand is always at the tendency of larger than supply. The state has brought into play the economic relationship and ownership of different social entities in urban planning. Urban planning and housing planning in particular has obstacles such as “small size production” thought, thus lack of comprehensive and strategy can be obviously seen in urban building. After 1990s when Vietnam’s embargo was lifted its economic relationship and trade have a remarkable development pace with strong comparative advantage in export industries like garment, handicraft, agro product, etc. With those specific characteristics, urbanization has been accelerating in 2 ends of the country represented by Hanoi and HCMC. There developed satellite cities around Hanoi and HCMC, too.

However, there are notably differences between HN and HCMC due to different cultural and socio-economic characteristics. The focus in urban planning for Hanoi is political and socio-economic functions. A society is a system of function networks. The gathering of strength for certain central areas of the system in order to best utilize natural and social resources is of objective rules. Hanoi is political centre serving for long-term nation development strategy. The urban planning for Hanoi should account not only land resource, infrastructure and technique but also culture and lifestyle of different

population groups. Since 1990, many construction projects have been built up and under-construction making remarkable changes in Hanoi's urban space in comparison to it during subsidized period. Important projects are: Vietnam-Japan Village, Linh Dam complex, Nghia Tan, lang Trung, South Thanh Cong, South Thang Long, Hoang Cau in Dong Da District, Student Village in Nhan Chinh, Yen Hoa, Trung Hoa etc. Together with planning and construction of housing complexes other big works for political and administrative activities of central, provincial and district authorities are also built with modern technology and scale. The planning and construction of office building for cities and central administration are also making notable changes in architectural space in Hanoi. The cluster of working place for authorities at district level (e.g. Thanh Xuan and Tay Ho Districts) has strong impact on price of houses and land nearby, which lead to the natural move of city population groups. Once a house become nearby administrative or cultural centers its services and economic value will increased. Therefore the owner easily tend to transfer in order to make its economic value appropriate to his family's income and expenditure, also regarding the utility of educational and cultural environment. The change of urban structure drives lifestyle of city people. The changing rate of lifestyle depends on speed of urbanization and the State's socio-economic policy system. The selling of construction land within city area to people and different social entities by the state also strongly affects opportunity to choose house of different people groups. Some groups grasp more social opportunities than others. For instance, they are entitled a dwelling in modern living-quarter, or provided housing land by employer authority, or they do real estate business or they have some contact and get information about new urban planning (not yet at public) from that get to buy agricultural-transfer-to-housing land. Besides, the formulation of IP of Hanoi such as Sai Dong, North Thang Long, Noi Bai etc. has attracted labour force from rural or nearby areas. Therefore land market is in a tendency of scarce toward low income people. High incomers with full 3 capitals of economics, culture and power are easier to do business on low incomer's labour through intermediary, earning on different prices, obtain profit from selling house at high price or leasing or selling other related services, have created a new type in housing and land business. Housing and land market is at the formulation and development leading to harmonization between dwelling and working place, suitable to demand and lifestyle of each family.

### **3. Emigration and social policy for housing and lifestyle of city people.**

Stream of immigrating people into Hanoi is getting bid due to strong urbanization process in comparison with other neighbourhood provinces such as Hai Duong, H-ng Y<sup>a</sup>n, Vŭnh Phóc, Vŭnh Y<sup>a</sup>n, H<sub>u</sub> T<sup>o</sup>y, H<sub>u</sub> Nam etc. In addition, Hanoi is the biggest culture and education centre with the focus of most universities, colleges, high schools, social organizations, cultural and sport centers etc. With those reasons Hanoi's attraction is not only economics and employment but also cultural and political and social elements. Those are main forces of gravity attracting immigrating people stream into Hanoi. Between 1986 and 1999, in Hanoi, population increased of around 55,000 of which emigrants are 22,000 every years. According to census dated 1/4/2001 pure rate of emigrants from provinces into Hanoi is 23.85%, to Binh Duong is 27.18%. On this ratio Hanoi ranks 2<sup>nd</sup> to Binh Duong (6,Nguy<sup>o</sup>n Thi<sup>o</sup>n Tr-<sup>o</sup>ng, p. 160). Emigrants to Hanoi are increasing and increasing from 1998 to 2002.

As such, in recent years number of emigrants to Hanoi without permanent resident permit is at the tendency of climbing. Research on emigration reveals that there are 2 main immigrating groups include long term emigrants and seasonal ones. According to research by Dr. Nguyen Thien Truong, emigrants are often young, strong, men overwhelm women. Especially among seasonal emigrants, unmarried people are majority. For instance, seasonal emigrants to Hanoi for working account for 50% while this ratio in HCMC reach 68%. Also according to Dr. Nguyen Thien Truong, "technical and professional skills of long-term emigrants are not less than the localities where they immigrate to, while qualification of seasonal emigrants is rather low". Results from a survey in Hanoi reveal that 92% of

seasonal emigrants have no technical skill. The main reason for emigration to cities is the difference in average monthly income per head. As of 1999, average income per head in city is 3.7 folds higher than that in rural. Thus, free time of farmers is extended 5-6 physical months in a year. Long-term emigrants have tendency to immigrate in Hanoi. Therefore they bring with family due to one family member has residence permit and employment in Hanoi and he/she can draw in other family members and relatives to Hanoi so as compulsory living cost for him/her can be eliminated and on the other hand increase relative contacts in the way of relative's relative. Some immigrate to Hanoi as the result of family rationalization, for example mone family member is moved to Hanoi for working purpose he/she will probably ask for rationalization of family and dependants who are his/her relatives. Other notable immigration source is graduates from universities, colleges, high schools in Hanoi. In addition, a number of students coming back from studying overseas and work mainly in Hanoi, HCMC, Vung Tau and some other big cities. Due to pressure of immigration, emigration and natural population increase process housing issue has become more and more urgent. Small numbers of seasonal emigrants and immigrants who have not got a resident permit have to live in guesthouse and rental houses, under bridge dwellings, truck park dwellings, on pavement. At the same time there emerges service for cheap for-rent houses building with poor furniture and facilities and without safety ensure, and the renters themselves also add to the social security of the area. According to research by author Nga My 61.9% free immigrants live in unsettle, rudimentary, torn-to-pieces houses the metropolitans have created un-ruled housing areas that break urban's scenery.

**Table 1 Free emigrants without permanent resident permit**

*unit: people*

Year	Free emigrants without permanent resident permit	
	KT3	KT4
1998	76. 848	63. 112
2000	78. 135	64. 135
2002	93. 761	79. 329

*Source: Synthesis data of Hanoi DOLISA  
(1,NguyÔn §×nh H-ng. P. 160).*

In summary, immigration stream from different sources to Hanoi as well as immigration policy of the state have strong affect on housing market and urban management. Although the state have introduce open policies to immigrants, for example if you have legal house you will have residence permit and if you have a resident permit you will have change to buy a house (living –quarter flat) built by the state. However, policies have not fully met increasing demand resulted form population growth and immigration stream to Hanoi.

#### **4. Demand and housing model among urban lifestyle:**

Many sociological research reveal that the meeting of housing demands not in line with construction speed and housing supply is one of the reasons leading to big rich-poor gap in urban area. Although the State have been in effort to accommodate by joining multi housing construction models such as works done by both state and people. In this model, people are responsible for construction cost while the state give land to corporate and enterprises, the state construct residential areas, villa areas to sell people while the state actively regulate the construction of houses. However, it is not completely appropriate due to different incomes by different population groups. According to statistic book for 1996 in whole Hanoi 21.3% households is classified as rich household while 1.94% is of very poor.

Although there have not been a full statistics, research by sampling and field observation recognize that population group of low income is not small in Hanoi. Result from sampling research by Sociology Institute in 7/1998 reveals that 11.9% households is with low income. Through another research in Quynh Mai Ward, author Nga My state in article namely “current life situation and community development of low income population” that low income households account for 37.31% and most poor households gather in high-rise living quarter buildings (i.e. 4-5 floor building in subsidized period and 10 up floor buildings for now) managed by March 8<sup>th</sup> Company. In subsidized period this kind of house is typical among worker and normal staff or civil servant classes. Life with main income of salary and a given-house in a living quarter is ideal for workers, high or medium income classes among normal staff and civil servant. They commonly afford to buy or are provided a flat on 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Flats on 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floor are not preferred reasoning that it is not convenient for living. For example, 1<sup>st</sup> floor flats usually get affected by noise or humid and mosquito’s while 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floor too high and difficult to prevent from summer heat. However, since the country transform into market economy, especially after nineteen nineties people tend to prefer 1<sup>st</sup> floor as it is convenient for business. Thus, many first floor flats have become small business facility such as motorbike keeping, groceries etc. Low incomers who can not afford 1 and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor tend to transfer for or buy a flat on high floor (i.e. 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> floor in short buildings). The number of staff who are provided house or entitled to buy house at cheap price account for only 30% [1, NguyÔn D×nh H-ng, tr.66]. Other from living quart model for civil servant, households without any members of with only one member is civil servant, having medium downward income often have to build or buy house of 4<sup>th</sup> level. Concrete roof flat in subsidized period are often of medium upward incomers. The rate of several households living in a same house in urban area is 7.7% while that in rural is 5.8%. In Hanoi, that rate is even higher than 7.7%. However, the living together is not fully depends on income but also partly on family’s lifestyle.

Inhabitants who are having a high standard of living still would like to live together to assist their children due to a family had to face to some given difficulties during the subsidized period. However, since 1990 family division and nucleus is higher than in the subsidized period. Economic changes make young marital couples to have higher income then they would like to independently live from parents and their siblings. Blood relation still remains by the way of buying a house near parents’ to exchange sentiment together. House model conversion of inhabitant groups with different incomes has lead to changes of their house model and act. Inhabitants with high income normally do not select apartment block, but they select the good environment and beautiful places or street houses having commercial business conditions or central areas with good socio-economic infrastructure. Richer inhabitants can buy villas which are fully equipped by modern facilities, good environment, beautiful landscape ...etc. Inner villa areas have been planned to meet this requirement. For example: Villa area Southern Thang Long, Linh Dam, Nghia Tan Lake. In addition there is a trend to buying villa in the urban fringe and weekend country-seat model of some high income habitant groups. Study results of author Nguyen Xuan Mai shown that: “About 70% households living in the Trung Tu apartment block have expenditure approximately at city average level”. The author asserted that almost households living in that apartment block have an average living level in Hanoi. Physical and technical conditions of apartment block relatively met habitants’ demands.

Table 2 shows us that the inhabitant of apartment block have accepted the main area (30, 3% satisfaction; 43, 4 % passableness) but unsatisfied ratio to subordinate area is 47, 4%. With respect to number of room only 32, 9% households do not satisfy, in other words, they like to have more room. 36, 6% households is unsatisfied with the sustainable & secure measure and only 1, 8% felt satisfied. Like this, unsatisfied household number to the sustainable & secure measure is not a few so it should consider the secure measure while building up the new one. The ventilation measure meets the requirements and households relatively satisfy (only 14, 8% unsatisfied), there is a high rate of

satisfaction to water supply 53, 9% and the rate of passableness is 21, 4%. With regard to subordinate area quality the unsatisfied ratio is rather high 51, 3%. This demonstrates the required level of household regarding sanitation and living facilities in subordinate area of apartment is rather high. The drainage is having a problem due to there is 35, 5% unsatisfied. The households have relatively accepted the environment (only 22, 4% is unsatisfied), the apartment block ensures family life and reunion, only 4, 2% of unsatisfaction. There is a special of household satisfaction to learning for their children. This is an important demand of the family (only 1, 3% is not satisfied about that issue). Security of residential quarter is rather good; 50% is satisfied and 40, 8% is passable. Accompanying with the apartment block is other services so they really satisfy with these services, only 3, 1% is unsatisfied.

**Table 2: Satisfaction of housing demands in Trung Tu Apartment Block (%)**

Housing demand	Satisfaction	Passableness	Unsatisfaction
Main area	30, 3	43, 4	26, 3
Subordinate area	26, 3	26, 3	47, 4
Number of room	32, 9	34, 2	32, 9
Sustainable & secure measure	11, 8	47, 4	36, 8
Ventilation measure	35, 5	42, 1	18, 4
Water supply	53, 9	21, 1	22, 4
Subordinate area quality	19, 7	26, 3	51, 3
Drainage	29, 0	35, 5	35, 5
Sanitation and environment	27, 6	50, 0	22, 4
Comfortableness for family activities	34, 2	46, 1	15, 8
Family reunion	47, 7	26, 3	4, 2
Comfortableness for children learning	43, 5	31, 6	1, 3
Security	50, 0	40, 8	7, 9
Near market and civil service centers	76, 6	21, 1	1, 3
Near working place	21, 0	46, 1	1, 3
Both living and producing, doing business	7, 9	11, 8	34, 2
Can produce and do business near the house	11, 8	10, 5	31, 6

*Nguyen Xuan Mai, Some ideas on Apartment Block from Sociology View. Sociology Journal, No. 2.*

Housing can be used for both living and commercial purpose. Not many people (7.9%) choose a house of this kind. It is attributable to the fact that only houses on the ground can be serving these two purposes simultaneously. Similar to function “Can produce and do business near the house ...both did not receive significant satisfaction.

The result of the survey on desirable urban housing style conducted by Sociology Institution in 1998 showed a close tie between housing style and lifestyle of urban residents. Urban housing serves at least two purposes: for living and for business. 32,5% of surveyed households showed their desire for a double-purposed house, 67% wanted their houses to be used for living only. In reality, there is certain number of houses being used for business and accordingly incomes are generated.

Households who living in the Old Quarter and other old streets wish for a change in housing style as old tile-roofed, low-rise housing is not suitable for modern lifestyle any longer. It is

because low ceiling and high humidity inside the house easily get their electric appliances damaged. Thus, they expect for new style of high-rise and flat-roofed housing. 47,1% households at Old Quarter and 49,4% at other old streets wished for a house of flat roof. In the meantime, 54,6% households living in low-rise apartment blocks and 62,3% in lanes and alleys desired for a house of this kind. Obviously, Old Quarter maintenance and preservation are difficult tasks because Old Quarter residents themselves find it inconvenient and unsuitable for the new way of living. Therefore, it is recommended that urban planning should be implemented to their expectations.

Having sound economic status, a large number of well-off households hope for a house which is built based on the style of a villa. Among them, 45,4% want to live in a villa.

Rich households paid little attention to apartment block style (only 15.2%). On the other hand, households of average and above average living standard were prone to high-rise apartment buildings and households of average and below average living standard to low-rise apartment complex.

High-class flats in apartment buildings hardly attracted interest of people of below average living standard (1,8%). The real reasons were that they could not afford these flats and that they had no demand for them. Meanwhile, 5,8% of the asked inclined to choose houses with forecourts in the suburban areas. Housing is not only considered a shelter from rain and sunshine as it was before, but it also satisfies needs for recreations and family gatherings, etc. Thus, apartment house style is still popular among people of average living standards.

Majority of Hanoi residents psychologically favor houses in the centre of the city as it is of excellent social services and tight security. Headquarters of many central management agencies are situated in this area so that it is more rigorously safeguarded than the others. Usually, the ones who lean towards central area are of above average living standards. Attraction of central area is ensuant on not only its security and services but also its political status. Central area residents sense more “respect” from the others.

In addition, metropolitans are also in the habit of residing in condominiums. This is dwelling style formed in the ration regime. Yet, the dwelling habit of technical workers is different from that of intellectuals or civil servants. Taking 8/3 condominium in Quynh Mai quarter for example, we found that vast majority of middle and low income workers kept staying there while higher income ones moved to other places after the removal of ration regime. However, the number of mobilities was not substantial. Their vacancies in cheap apartment blocks then were often filled by some immigrants. People in well-positioned condominium such as Hoang Cau-Dong Da or condominium under Foreign Trade University did things differently. They often sold their allocated land plots or got houses built on these sites for later legal sale. Thus, house holders in these areas are not the people who are allocated land to and almost all of them have decent income. Lands allocated to civil servants by the state for housing are concretely planned on socio-geographically- focused basis. New immigrants, therefore, should adapt their lifestyles to social activities. Although urban lifestyles show a relatively clear independence of each individual and family or household, a harmony of ecological surroundings is desired. As the result, formation of housing complexes with similar lifestyles of households illustrates rather distinct class. Most of buildings at the condominium under Foreign Trade University are of four floors and are planned by block. Almost householders are not the land owner. However, they have one thing in common that they are all civil servants with relatively high income. Only small proportion of new householders engages in business and then they modify housing structure, differentiating their houses from those of civil servants surrounding. Making differences in housing structures and designs is a description of householders’ own lifestyles.

Lifestyles of urban households are also described by the area and the number of rooms in the house. Up to 56,4% of asked households want to have a house of less than 50 square meters in area. 34,5% of

poor households just hope for a house with the area of less than 30 square meters meanwhile 52,2% of well-off households expect for that of less than 100 square meters. This fact prove a significant difference in housing orientations of poor and well-off households. The outcome of the study by Sociology Institution in 1998 (5, Trinh Duy Lan, page 188) also showed that 26,7% of population with average and below average living standards wished for a one or two – roomed house; 30,3% for a three-roomed house; 24,9% for a four - roomed house. However, 17,7% of households with average and below average living standards expected for a house of more than 5 rooms because of having many children. Most of prosperous households wished for more than 4 rooms in their houses. City life has urged them to form an independent way of life which is evident in the way houses are designed. The design which allows each family member to have a separate room for more privacy has become an unavoidable trend. However, for economic reasons, demands for more privacy have not been satisfied yet. Housing modification in the time coming is a solution to the above problem. For example, 61,1% households in the west and 42,7% in alleys and 41,7% in old streets of the city plan to modify their houses. The modification plans of well-off households are more feasible than those of low income households (45,8% against 21,9%). Housing modification places impacts on not only living standards but also lifestyles as it ensures basic necessities for social and cultural activities and relationships within the family as well.

Besides, planning of inner city areas and new urban zones, high-rise apartment blocks has made substantial impacts on the formation of nuclear families and the partial separation of the young generations from their parents. Urban space tends to live a part from neighbor families in communication but link them together in environment, thus resulting in residential areas and living quarters with similar class and social status.

## **CONCLUSION**

With impact of urbanization process, the immigration to Hanoi is accelerating. The annual population increase obtains three main resources: natural population increase, immigration line from rural areas and graduated peoples from Universities, Colleges and Technical Schools have stayed in Hanoi. Those strongly affect to Hanoi housing market. With the effort of the Government of Vietnam to bring Hanoi the face of civilization and elegance, the Government has regulated and issued many policies on land and housing to meet the development needs of Hanoi being a political, cultural, social center of Vietnam. Land and housing distribution of the Government in subsidized period as well as at the present has assured the relative balance on housing function for almost of officials, workers and Hanoi people. However, centralization process of housing areas and industrial zones, service centers v.v created social concerns such as: housingless, unemployment, social evil, corruption v. v. The formulation of habitant precinct partly depends on the State planning policy, other part it depends on adjustment laws of land and housing market and urban cultural lifestyle. After the State construction planning, habitant groups who are living together in the same area distribute themselves the resident space following the criteria of occupation, income, hobby, psychology, traditional lifestyle v. v. Can be say that housing is a model to reflect the lifestyle of habitant groups. So that, urban planning has to consider to factors of social psychology, culture, socio-economic of difference habitant communities. The urban planning must participate by habitant communities and based on survey results, sociology forecast in meeting the targets on politics of urbanization process and housing planning.

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