

# Changes in housing styles in Hanoi in the process of the city development

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Looking at the appearance of Hanoi, it is a peaceful city with the quietness of rivers, waters and green trees.

In fact it has been greatly affected by the pressure of a diversified development. The pressure can break its traditional urban structure, which we can feel through its peacefulness.

Housing problem is also involved in this rule because it plays a great role in forming the appearance of the city. Thus, how to develop but keep characteristic features and satisfy development demands of the city is our difficult task and great challenge in the process of settling housing problem.

Herein, I am going to mention two main parts: Part I will be a general introduction of existing housing styles in Hanoi. Part II will focus on relevant problems and solutions.

## **Part I: General introduction of exiting housing styles in Hanoi**

In the process of housing style formation in Hanoi since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are six main style groups.

### Group 1:

Including houses in the zone of 36 guild streets, which is called the ancient street one. It has been ranked in the list of architectural heritages – national ranking plan in 2004. This zone was formed a long time ago in the area of 100ha. However, the oldest remained architectures are over 100 years old only.

The characteristics of this zone are that streets were formed on the basis of various vocations. Houses are attached to shops to form houses with narrow width (from 2.5m – 5m, but 3m in average) and long length (some houses have the length of 65m) so they are called *pipe* houses. Conditions and facilities in these houses are very poor. Families living here have to share WC. The average living area is about 3sqm per person. However, the land price in this zone is extremely high and most of people do not want to move to other places because this is a traditional commercial zone. The lifestyle here has a lot of typical characteristics of ancient urban inhabitants of Vietnam.

### Group 2:

Including houses in the zone built under French plans and styles, which is called old street zone. This zone was formed in 1883, however, until 1900 the construction of villas started developing here. These villas have European styles and are mainly affected by the French architecture. Conditions and facilities in this zone are relatively high.

### Group 3:

Including separate houses formed in streets with the width of 3,5 – 8m, the length of 15 – 40m and the common height of 1 – 3 floors. There are some houses attached to shops like

the ones of traditional urban inhabitants but most of them are designed under functions. The conditions and facilities of those are quite good. This housing style developed from 1920 to 1945.

From 1986 to 2000, due to changes in the State land policies, this housing style reborn. However, the conditions and facilities of them are much higher. This is because each house now owned by one family. Houses have the width of 3.5 – 6m, length of 12 – 25m. The number of floor is often from 3 – 5 floors. These houses are often attached to shops.

Group 4:

Developed from 1960 to 1985, including apartment buildings with 3- 5 floors built in sub-zones. This is a new and strange housing style for both designers and inhabitants so that designs were much influenced by Russian characteristics. As a result of low economic conditions and state housing subsidiary system, the standard area is only 3-6sqm per person. Besides, public services are incomplete so that conditions and facilities here are low, especially in years when these houses were just built.

Group 5:

Since 1985, the Vietnamese Government has issued renovation policies on economic development, which have made great influences on housing development. Housing socialization has speeded up the construction of a lot of high apartments (from 9-25 floors) invested by various economic sectors. Conditions and facilities have been improved, the standard area for each person has risen to 12 – 18sqm. The public service system is quite complete and the quality of the projects is high.

Group 6:

In the process of urbanization, some villages appear among urban areas, which make the picture of lifestyles become more and more vivid. However, they still remain their own living colors. Houses of families here have typically traditional characteristics such as 3 – 4 generations living together, houses and gardens are attached to each other.

## **Part II: Problems and Solutions**

Every housing style has its own strengths and weaknesses. However, it is important that how it can be appropriate to each urban development period but does not break a general lifestyle and structure of the city.

Houses of groups 1 and 6 can be considered being typical features of Hanoi and were chosen to put in the Architectural - Planning heritage system. These two housing styles have suffered from a lot of pressures of keeping old ones and satisfying a modern life. For being fair, we have encourage owners to repair houses under authority's guidelines in order to satisfy life demands but remain characteristic features of each house, each street section. From 2000 – 2003 a professor group, including Prof. Kojima and Nischimura from Tokyo University cooperated with us to study and recommend a housing style based on the pipe house one of 36 guild streets but its living spaces are modernized. At the moment, this style is a good example for Hanoi.

Houses of group 2 originated from separate villas of families. However, in the process of speedy population development, they have not been separate at all. People living in these houses alter their spaces in various ways so that the houses do not keep their initial values. For these houses, we plan to reduce the number of inhabitants living therein by

encouraging them to move to other places or facilitating people who have financial capacities to buy such houses to repair. In Hanoi, statistics of villas with architectural values has been made to give repairing suggestions to users under instructions. In 1995, Prof. Fujimori and Prof. Muramatsu from Tokyo University joined us to study this issue.

Houses of group 3, which were built with bad infrastructure system should be upgraded and completed. These houses take a lot of construction areas and mix up the street appearance so that their development is not encouraged in Hanoi.

Low apartment buildings of group 5 have been seriously downgraded so that buildings with quite good in condition will be upgraded, others will be pulled down for new construction.

New housing zones, which have been being under construction, have good standards and facilities but there are some relevant problems such as the little high density in development and the connection of infrastructure of such zones and general system of the city, especially traffic problems.

We hope that with the mentioned solutions we will establish an environment, which is suitable to the development of Hanoi city and create a modern urban appearance with typical features.