

The difficulties and challenges of upgrading the old living quarters in Hanoi city

Luong Tu Quyen

Hanoi Architectural University, Hanoi, Vietnam

ABSTRACT: Hanoi has 23 old living quarters and they consist of 450 building blocks with approximately 1 billion m² floor. The population in these areas is about 13,361. After more than 40 years of existence, most of them have been downgraded in both living quality and living environment. But these old living quarters represent one of the historical periods of Hanoi: the centralised economic era. With parallel existing of both ancient and colonial areas, the old living units contribute to determining the identity of Hanoi city.

The Hanoi County Council has implemented a programme on upgrading and repairing all 23 old living quarters of the city. The citizen has been interested in the programme and supported it. However it has to face many challenges and difficulties, such as unreasonable resettlement policies, unsuitable architectural and urban planning solutions, limited budget, weak urban management..ect.

The paper aims to analyse the challenges and difficulties of the mentioned programme and propose some major solutions to improve the programme, focusing on architectural and urban planning issues.

Key word: living quarter, dwelling unit, upgrade, maintain, resettlement.

1. Introduction

The old living quarters are the representation of common dwelling form in the main cities in northern Vietnam during the socialist construction period. With parallel existing of both Feudal and Colonial areas, the old living units contribute to determining the identity of Hanoi city.

In the 1990s, the conservation research focused on the Feudal 36 streets and then to French Colonial Areas while the old living quarters which were considered as historical unvaluable areas could be demolished whenever needed.

Today, the community turns to the important role of the old living quarters: it is the evidence of one unforgettable historical period of Hanoi development during centralised economy era. It is necessary to have a model and solution to improve the area which will be an urban heritage in the next few years.

context and construction technology by which were they constructed.

1. The buildings built in 1960- 1970
2. The buildings built in 1970- 1980
3. The buildings built in 1980- 1990

(Vu An Khanh- 2003)

The comparison could be shown in tab. 1.

2. Current state of Hanoi old living quarters:

Hanoi has 23 old living quarters (dwelling units) and they consist of 450 building blocks with approximately 1 billion m² floor. The population in these areas is about 137,361 (Nguyen Anh Dung- 2005). After more than 40 years of existence, most of them have been downgraded in both living quality and living environment.

The Hanoi old living quarters could be divided into 3 characteristic areas according to the socio-economical

The current state of Hanoi old living quarters
Tab. 1: Key characteristic of 3 old living quarter types

Period	Location	Area	Structure	Flat design	Height and Architectural form	Construction technology
1960-1970	Inside the 1st and second ringroad	3-15ha Nguyen Cong Tru, Kim Lien, Van Chuong, Mai Dong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Group of buildings-not a living unit ▪ Separate social affair building ▪ Uncomplex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4- 8 Rooms per Common WC, bathroom, kitchen ▪ 8 roms per storey ▪ Central Corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1-3 floor building ▪ The block is straight and simple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simple technology ▪ Bricklaying
1970-1980	Inside the second and third ringroad	3-50ha Trung Tu, Glang Vo, Thanh Cong, Khuong THuong, Quynh Mai...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dwelling unite ▪ Neighbourhood Unite ▪ Hierarchical ▪ Complex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2-room flat with narrow WC and kitchen. ▪ 8 flats per storey ▪ Corridor in one side 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4-6 floor building ▪ The block is straight and simple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prefabricated panels ▪ Bricklaying
1980- 1990	Inside the second and third ringroad	25-50ha Thanh Xuan, Nghia Do, Kim Giang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dwelling unite ▪ Neighbourhood Unite ▪ Unhierarchical ▪ Multilevel center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2,3 room- flat. WC, kitchen combined ▪ 4, 8 flats per storey ▪ Corridor in one side ▪ Segmented corridor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4-6 floor building ▪ The block is straight and simple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Big prefabricated panels

Although 3 areas have different characteristics because of their conditions but nowadays they have the same problems.

The main problems:

- Low living conditions
- Uncontinuity space structure
- High population density
- Overloaded and downgraded infrastructure
- Housing shortage
- Exploded illegal construction
- Lack of open space and public space

Some indicators

- 70-80% building is unsafe
- 50% household haven't got private bedroom
- Average floor area: 1,5- 6 m²/person
- Constructed area density: 80%
- 50% household have extra-legal construction
- 50% household supplied fresh water
- 77% waste collected, 30% waste treated
- 31,8% household flooded in rain season

(Duong Duc Tuan –2005)

The cause of the problems

- Unsuitable model of space structure
- Unefficient operation
- Unefficient land use
- Uncontrollable urban management
- Lack of investment fund

In recent years, the Old living quarters have become the research subject of various Vietnam and Foreign institutions. Firstly, the researches focused on upgrading the physical state of the buildings, space structure, environment and infrastructure. Now, the conservation has been considered when the cultural and historical value of these areas were recognised not only by the urban planning experts but also by the vast community.

The solution should be improved:

- Flexible space structure
- Living conditions
- Socializing the housing investment fund
- Integrating to the Hanoi urban heritage system

Conclusion:

The Hanoi County Council has implemented a programme on upgrading and repairing all 23 old living quarters of the city. The program has received the great interest and support from citizens. However it has to face many difficulties, such as unreasonable resettlement policies, unsuitable architectural and urban planning solutions, limited budget, weak urban management, etc.

Today, a new challenge should be considered in reforming and upgrading the Hanoi old living quarters: how to harmonise conserving their historical, cultural values and fulfilling living requires of the citizen.

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