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An overview of public housing characteristics and living satisfactions: old and new public housing project in Bangkok

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Abstract

Public housing has been provided in Thailand for low income people more than 40 years especially in urban area such as Bangkok. There are more than thirty public housing projects with different schemes built. Most importantly the quality of living to enhance low income satisfaction has been widely concerned. This study is to investigate the existing public housing pattern development and its characteristics. Two case studies of different public housing project period under the National Housing Authority operation in Bangkok are employed to be examined by comparative content analysis. The result finds that the five-story walk-up flat still becomes a prototype in operating the basic element of function. The unit area of new public housing project is quite smaller (33 sq.m.) than the old project, but it meets the standard. The dwelling unit satisfaction indicates the moderate level. This result enables analytical platform of in-depth public housing study to identify the ways in improving the quality of life for low income people through living and cultural context approach to sustainable social development vision.

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1. Introduction

A dynamic population growth has brought about rapid urbanization in Thailand. It has resulted in more rush transformation of people's life, especially low income people who live in urban area such Bangkok. They have encountered a living place under their circumstance limitations. Affordable public housing program for low income in Thailand is ongoing to support. Nevertheless, ensuring the affordable public housing for all low income people could be difficult in the urban areas because of land speculation, housing unit price, and social issue [1]. To provide a high number of housing unit in urban area and maximize the land utilization, the low rise (4-5 stories of flat) building has been a new approach to meet those requirements since 1963[2]. Currently, the public housing provision in Thailand is continuing to support a housing shortage for low income group. However, the quality of living is addressed as a skepticism condition on how dwellers satisfy their living based on physical housing characteristics. Therefore, the existing affordable housing program in term of old and new development schemes which are operated by National Housing Authority (NHA), government agency, should be placed to investigation and reviewed.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this study are to investigate and identify the public housing program under the NHA operation by comparing the existing public housing characteristics in different period, to review the study on previous low income's satisfaction and to understand the residents' references in public housing development project.

3. Public Housing in Thailand Context

Housing delivery system in Thailand can be divided into three types: "owned housing sector", "public housing sector", and "private housing sector" [3]. National and local government organizations play as a key actor of low-cost public housing in offering various patterns; flat, twin house, or detached house. NHA was established in 1973 to afford and provide an accessible public housing for low to middle income group. The largest group of low income is still the priority since it is a challenging issue in social development to enhance the quality of life of the citizen. Public housing vision and policy follow National Development Plan since the 3rd National Plan until the present (11th National Plan, 2011-2016) under the welfare equality policy [4]. Housing development particularly determines human and social security as a milestone policy of the country to establish a housing security for all. In 2010, the total number of public housing completed in the whole country by NHA was approximately 730,000 units [4]. 524,267 of housing units were highly constructed in Bangkok Metropolitan Region (BMR) due to the population growth and the increase of housing demand as shown in Table 1. Additionally, the NHA's project of condominium, apartment and flat (low-rise building) consists of 294,835 units of the whole country in 2011[5].

Table.1 Number of housing unit in Thailand, 2010.

Area	Total	Sharing of public housing sector by government			
		NHA*	CODI*	Total	%
BMR	4,451,540	524,267	11,104	535,371	12.0
Central	4,244,683	71,300	9,098	80,398	1.9
Northern	4,134,288	49,460	2,711	52,171	1.3
Northeastern	5,939,879	50,733	4,609	55,342	0.9
Southern	2,911,245	33,288	3,747	37,035	1.3
Whole country	21,681,635	729,048	31,269	760,317	3.5

Source: National Housing Authority of Thailand, 2013

Both NHA* and CODI* are the organization under the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. NHA is the state enterprise to resolve the problems on residential insecurity of low and middle income citizens by focusing on large scale of public housing development project and to fill a gap of housing market. CODI is the public organization to handle a community's housing problem by slum upgrading program with community involvement based and self-cooperative financial system method

During 2000-2010, it was found that the housing volume in urban area a condominium, apartment, and flat increased 31% from 16% (2000), whereas single detached house was remain the same at 32%; and townhouse decreased from 45% (2010) to 35% (2010) [4]. This implies that housing development pattern in condominium and apartment, such kind of high rise and low rise building in urban area, is spreading to support urban lifestyle. However, condominium and apartment are not a new pattern. NHA has provided low-rise building for low income

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