

A Symbol of Socialist Society: The Collective Living Quarters in Hanoi 1954-2000

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Abstract

The term “collective living quarters” in Hanoi is used to distinguish these structures from others with similar functions that were built from the 2000s onwards. These structures are imprints of Soviet architects and they are characteristic of Hanoi’s lifestyle in the past. The collective living quarters were constructed from 1954 to 2000 and soon became a symbol of modern life with all of the essential conditions integrated within a specific area. Their historical and cultural value is my main research focus. The research was based on three major sources of data, namely: 1) archives in Hanoi containing original records, documents, and government decisions; 2) relevant books and research papers published by several publishing houses or academic journals; and 3) fieldtrips and interviews. The research results reveal diverse perspectives regarding decisions on whether to keep or replace collective living quarters based on the value and impact of these structures on Hanoi. It is expected that the outcome of the research will reveal the position of collective living quarters in the historical process of Hanoi and offer some ideas for city development.

Keywords: collective living quarters, socialism, neighborhood unit, housing issues, urban planning

Introduction

“Collective living quarters”–or more accurately, the “old collective living quarters”–is a term commonly used to distinguish these structures from other buildings having similar functions constructed from the 2000s

onwards in Hanoi. These old structures are imprints of Soviet architects and they characterize Hanoi’s lifestyle in the past. The collective living quarters with all essential conditions integrated inside a specific area soon became a symbol of modern life at that time. A new urban lifestyle that was much different from that of the previous periods was formed with a different mindset and everyday routines. It was a mixture of rural and urban lifestyles interacting with each other that still exists.

There are many urban studies publications, especially on urban planning in Vietnam, in general, and on Hanoi, in particular. These publications focus on the pre-colonial, colonial, and modern periods, but leave a serious gap in research on the beginning of the socialist development period, from 1954 to the 1990s.

The present study aims to close that gap. It involves several types of research, which can be divided into four groups. The first group is research on planning, construction, and architecture. These studies are mainly in the form of theses or dissertations at universities in Vietnam such as the National University of Civil Engineering and Hanoi Architectural University. They focus on technical parameters, detailed designs of buildings, and the factors affecting current society leading to the adjustment, restructure, maintenance, and replacement of old, degraded collective buildings. The architecture of collective living quarters plays an important role and is the imprint of socialist characteristics in Vietnam. The Soviet relationship had various major impacts on the appearance of Hanoi’s architecture, mainly the design of structures, artistic expression, specific characteristics, and evaluations of positions and roles in the process of developing Vietnamese architecture. The influence of Soviet architecture on that of Hanoi has both positive and negative aspects (Vu, 2016).

Other research on the architecture of collective living quarters in Hanoi from 1954 to 1986 focuses directly on the realities and reasons for making changes in collective living quarters, such as planning models, functions, uses, and infrastructure in the changes in society; and seeking regulations, solutions for renovation, and preservation to suit the ways or visions for city development of Hanoi (Tuan, 2004).

Policies on renovating or repairing collective living quarters are also a concern of some researchers, especially matters on the management and regulations concerned with safety and urban appearance during the process of maintaining and upgrading these quarters (Dan and Shiozaki, 2018: 71-72). Several case studies of collective living quarters, such as Nguyen Cong Tru, Kim Lien, Thanh Xuan Bac, and Thanh Cong Quarters, have basic information for referencing.

The second group of research involves housing ownership. These studies mainly explore the change in the transition from collective/state ownership to privatization or individual factors affecting ownership in collective living quarters. When collective buildings were first constructed in the early period, they were all publicly owned, managed by the state, and assigned directly to certain people. Later, after the 90s, there were adjustments to policies related to land ownership as well as the impact of individual collective apartment owners leading to purchase under individual agreements. This change was based on changes in general state policies concerning issues of land and housing. It was also related to transitions in society, awareness, and lifestyle of residents living in those collective living quarters. These studies all concern dwelling issues, which are very important and necessary in the daily routines of citizens. They can be seen as a strategy, one of the state's main socio-economy targets like the housing program of Pham Van Trinh in 1986. Many programs gathered a number of researchers from different ministries, research centers, and universities to do surveys on the housing supply in Vietnam, mainly in big cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh city. The main works concerned distribution of housing situations, and some were aimed at solving long-term issues. The methodology consisted of surveys of the characteristics of dwelling issues and provided a draft of 26 standards, quotas, and technical guidance in about 40 volumes of archives, reports, and photo collections. These results represented a major contribution to the five-year plan of 1981-1985 and also predicted the developing plans on housing issues in the period 1986-1990 and the year 2000 (Trinh, 1986: 4).

The third group of studies consists of research on cultural and historical values. It contains information about campaigns or projects of organizations, institutes, and museums to enhance the value and influence of collective living quarters in the development of the socialist period in the 60s, 70s, and 80s.

Finally, the fourth group consists of poems, stories, and memoirs composed by famous writers about collective living quarters or monographs in commemoration of subsidized living in the collective buildings in the 70s, 80s, and 90s. They recall the impressions, feelings, and nostalgia of a generation of people in Hanoi.

In addition, there are also studies on collective housing in general located in other areas in Vietnam, especially those in Vinh city where there are many similarities with those in East Germany which German scholars are very interested in.

Research Objectives

The main research objective here represents an important part in the history of housing architecture, in particular, as well as Vietnam's cultural and social history, in general. Among various general housing issues, the collective houses/apartments are part of a larger picture of Hanoi's urban development which contains relevant aspects such as economics, society, political issues, laws, etc. The research examines only those collective structures built from 1954 to 2000 and located in Hanoi before the city extension in 2008.

Clarifying the social history and culture of the old collective living quarters will answer questions concerning their impacts on society, the heritage sites which remain until now, and efforts to preserve, maintain, upgrade, and, most importantly, to keep the "historical witness" in Hanoi. When we evaluate the roles and values of the old collective living quarters with the memories attached to many generations of Hanoians, we will have different points of view regarding whether to keep or replace these structures. Hanoi is a special city with its own uniqueness where architecture plays an important role

in creating its appearance. There are several models of structures from the feudal, colonial, socialist, and contemporary periods. The socialist period contains collective living quarters which, if replaced, will create a gap in the process of historical development as no more “living” evidence will exist, only stories to be told with less interesting factors compared to those that people can see in reality. Numerous ingredients have made Hanoi become the city it is nowadays. Although there are some other structures that belong to the socialist time in Hanoi, the collective living quarters are closer to people’s lives with cultural values deep inside. These are the places where most Hanoians have memories of their childhood experiences. The younger generations will appreciate them more and be proud when reminded of the images of these living quarters. Thus, the research helps people to remember the beauty as well as the values of the past so that they will be aware of retaining and appreciating the achievements, and promoting traditions to contribute to building a modern capital.

Data Sources and Methods

The present research was based on three major sources of data. The first includes original records, documents, and government decisions from various archives in Hanoi. These include the Vietnam National Archives Center No. 3, Branch of Record and Archives Department Hanoi city, and National Library of Vietnam. The next source consists of secondary sources, including relevant books and research papers which were published by several publishing houses or scientific journals. The third is information gathered through fieldtrips and interviews, aimed at observing collective living quarters in Hanoi and interviewing residents living there.

The methods used were historical and logical methods, synchronic and chronological methods, archival research, analysis and synthesis, comparative study, and fieldwork. The combination of historical and logical methods allowed me to highlight the basic content of the long process of understanding and applying a new model,

constructing and managing a completely new kind of residence in Vietnam. Synchronic and chronological methods were used simultaneously. If the chronological approach helps reconstruct the timeline of this historical process, the synchronic approach provides us with historical insights, such as the awareness of Vietnamese authorities, their policy over and implementation of the collective living quarters in Hanoi, and especially the social reactions towards the new kind of residence. Archival research consisted mainly of the archives of Hanoi city and the collection of papers produced by the Ministry of Construction collected from different archives centers in Hanoi. Analysis and synthetic methods entail a detailed analysis of the data extracted from archives and libraries offering supportive information for the synthesis and, hence, the narrative of the papers.

Comparative study took into consideration the fact that the model of living quarters was introduced into Vietnam by the Soviet Union and its allies during the second half of the twentieth century. Applying the comparative method helps to highlight the unique characteristics of each quarter and period so that we can evaluate the effects of time on the buildings in many fields or even compare the buildings in terms of quality of improvement, upgrading in the same collective living quarters model through the previous and next stage. It is even possible to make comparisons within a quarter due to the process of its development. There is also the expansion and construction of new buildings or maintenance and remodeling of old ones. Fieldwork consisted of surveying a number of collective living quarters around Hanoi and conducting interviews with residents.

The History of the Living Quarters in Hanoi

Among a myriad of urban issues during the second half of the twentieth century, reconstruction in Europe after the Second World War and city building in other countries around the world under the pressure of the demographic and economic boom were the most significant. After the wave of urban restoration in Europe during the post-war decades (the 1950s and 1960s), there was another matter which arose in the

1970s: urban construction and planning to deal with the housing shortage owing to the rapid growth in population. City leaders and managers had buildings constructed such as houses and apartments which were arranged in blocks and areas in a modern way. Throughout these decades, many theories of urban planning were applied in various ways in which the residential areas were organized. Some of the theories were inherited from those of the previous period, for instance, that of the American architects during the 1930s (University of Architecture Ho Chi Minh City, 2006: 57).

Besides general tendencies, each country, depending specific economic-political factors like capitalism or socialism, had its own planning style, according to the specific characteristics of social institutions. Vietnam was one of these. After the French left Vietnam in 1954, the North was completely liberated and the Vietnamese government chose to move towards socialism, following the Soviet model. Thus, during the first decades of establishing and developing the socialist regime in the North, Vietnam learned and applied urban planning from its allied countries such as the Soviet Union and China. Besides sending students to pursue expertise in the socialist block, Vietnam also welcomed urban planning experts from socialist countries who could contribute instantly to the urban physiognomy of Vietnam. They concentrated mainly on major cities, such as the capital of Hanoi, the seaside city of Hai Phong, the industrial city of Vinh, etc., during the very start of urban development (Kaiser, 2013). The collective living quarters, therefore, were the product of this period, embracing not only architectural characteristics but also aesthetic, historical, cultural, and to a lesser extent, political values. We can consider this type of housing as a legacy of the socialist period in Hanoi as these structures have existed side by side with many Hanoians since they were children until now.

Housing issues in particular were among many other issues in the content of a five-year plan; they were proposed and applied directly into Hanoi during the development of the city. They were also necessary issues which were important to the leaders at the time. After the war, in 1960, a large number of people migrated to Hanoi in search of the

opportunities there in terms of investment and construction of a massive number of factories and enterprises. New jobs were created, attracting human resources from many other provinces in Vietnam. Because the population of Hanoi increased through the years, there was a serious problem in providing living areas for workers that required timely solutions. Housing programs were promulgated and applied, as can be seen in the city planning following the functional subdivision (arranging houses, blocks of houses, apartments) apartment and collective living quarters, especially, were created with the system of collective houses which solved problems of living quarters for residents.

In the years from 1960 to 1975, the main source of investment for building houses was from the government; the highest year with the rate of 5.75 percent compared to number of total investments for basic construction in 1961, the lowest year was 0.26 percent in 1968 (State and people in situation of lacking housing sources, 1983: 70).

Table 1 Investment in basic construction in the period of 1955 to 1975 for houses, schools, and hospitals.

Unit: thousand VND

Year	Total	Type of structure		
		House	School	Hospital
1955-1960	3185	2687	314	184
1961	8715	8267	367	81
1962	10584	9336	415	833
1963	6819	5969	355	768
1964	4835	3457	960	389
1965	2539	1593	557	389
1966	1494	121	1054	319
1967	1680	350	583	747
1968	1804	323	1044	437
1969	4231	2417	1404	410
1970	9226	7340	1351	535
1971	13999	11295	2346	358
1972	9987	8197	1790	-
1973	16139	12303	3457	379
1974	15949	11396	4421	132
1975	32570	25463	6678	429

Following the above statistics, we can see that the amount of money invested in constructing houses was greater than that for schools and hospitals, revealing how important housing was to the state. During some periods, depending on the needs of people, it led to some fluctuations and changes in the proportion of investment among fields. However, in general, housing was a necessary issue.

In the early 1960s, housing for civil servants encountered many problems, such as the shortage of houses and residential areas that were divided into many parts of the city. The goal of Hanoi city was to build the entire city following the planning, functional subdivision, and creation of residential areas. On June 5, 1960, President Ho Chi Minh visited the first residential area of Kim Lien. This was the first structure built with steel cranes and it had the features of socialist countries. Subsequently, Hanoi arranged to build such structures in other areas. Some buildings which were constructed in this period are Nguyen Binh Khiem, Tuong Mai, An Duong, Quynh Loi, and Van Chuong. The plan was to construct houses over an area of 150,000 square meters in five years. Within three years, Hanoi had built an area of 99,700 square meters to provide 1/6 of the houses needed (Le, 2012: 678).

With support from the Soviet Union, there were two urban studies plans in 1965: “Hanoi planning and constructing” by Polish Professor P. Zaremba, and “the Leningrad Plan” by research groups from the Institute of Research and Planning Leningrad, whose leader was S.I. Sokolov. The Soviet style living areas were arranged around urban and industrial areas. Some large-scale areas like Truong Dinh, Thanh Xuan, and Nghia Do were built near industrial sites, allowing people to get to work in a short time. The welfare constructions were invested in, upgraded, and rebuilt such as Thong Nhat Park, Thu Le Park, enlarging the convalescent home of Quang Ba, and creating some other hospitals in Dong Anh, Gia Lam, and Thanh Tri.

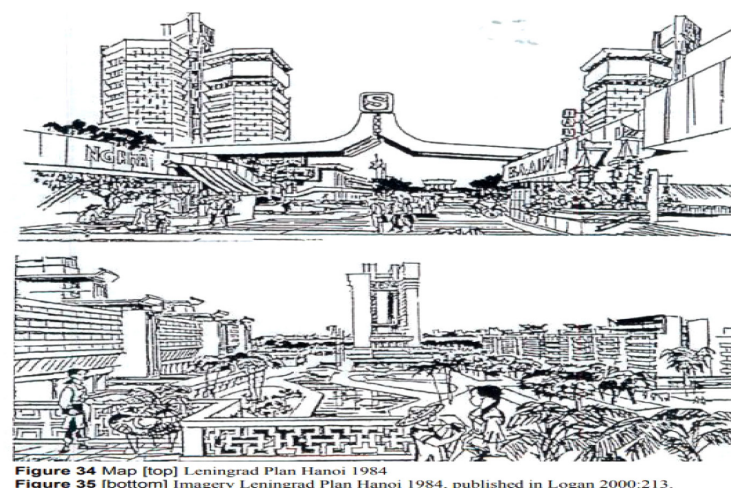


Figure 1 Leningrad Plan

Source: Geertman (2007): 159

From 1974 to 1980, the growth rate of the population increased, especially in the years 1975-1976.

Table 2 The growth of population in Hanoi from 1974 to 1980

Year	Hanoi		Urban		Suburban	
	Population	Growth rate (%)	Population	Growth rate (%)	Population	Growth rate (%)
1974	1.378.335	3.43	736.211	3.24	642.124	3.67
1976	2.383.000	31.49	750.650	0.98	1.632.350	59.44
1978	2.462.000	1.64	769.700	1.26	1.692.300	1.82
1979	2.570.095	4.42	788.705	2.47	1.782.200	5.31
1980	2.497.300	2.86	790.645	0.25	1.706.655	4.24

Source: Ke (2008): 97

Because of the steady increase in population over the years, the need for housing was one of the most important issues to be addressed. In addition to the living quarters which were built in the 1960s,

the situation required quick expansion, the upgrading of old living areas, and the construction of more new living quarters. Following the five-year plan of 1976-1980, the Committee of National Planning mobilized collective and private welfare investments to build houses.

The period 1975 to 1980 was a time when both high- and low-rise buildings were built inside the city as well as in suburban areas. At the same time, traffic routes were developed and more public structures were added. The rule of architectural space planning was emphasized to illustrate the essence of the capital city of a socialist country (Le, 2012: 798).

Hanoi was clearly a city of functional subdivisions. Hanoi has different areas with different levels in urban planning. For example, Area A is used for houses; Area B is used for industrial zones, etc. The civil area consisted of living areas of 150-200 hectares with reasonable traffic organization, guaranteed safety, and convenience for vehicles like bicycles and motorcycles or people walking to work and back.

The period 1975 to 1980 belongs to the second generation of architecture in Hanoi. Its features were brought by Soviet experts or architects who had trained abroad from socialist countries (Le, 2012: 799). In 1978, the city established the Department of Housing Management and the Department of Urban Construction.

During the same period, low-rise collective houses (normally not over five floors) were built in living quarters such as Giang Vo, Trung Tu, Thanh Cong, Vinh Ho, and Truong Dinh. Apartments were distributed to cadres and other civil servants. The difference between the second generation and the first is the function. There were fewer collective factors such as toilets or kitchens shared with other residents. Some living quarters housed primary and secondary schools or open spaces (such as ponds, lakes, and empty lots) and centers for residents to study or participate in activities. In 1975, the city administration established the Company of Housing Construction and carried out the target of increasing the acreage of housing sites.

The guideline in the period 1981-1986 showed that the housing issues had to be connected with planning, constructing, and developing a large urban area like Hanoi. Foreign experts supported the planning;

however, there were many projects which were not realized because they lacked basic plans, as well as information about natural resources, water resources, energy resources, and completed population census.

Cooperating with foreign countries in three years, from 1981 to 1983, Vietnam imported devices and materials to build 232 structures (socialist countries aided in 193 structures, including the Soviet Union with 117 structures, and 39 from capitalist countries) for a total of 927 thousand tons of materials (to build those structures). According to the statistics of the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (State Commission for Basic Structure, 1984) investments for building houses from 1955 to 1980 by National budget were:

- 1955-1960: 58 million VND (Vietnamese Dong)
- 1961-1965: 134 million VND
- 1966-1970: 32.5 million VND
- 1971-1975: 139.7 million VND
- 1976-1980: 549.3 million VND

Moreover, the government continued to invest in constructing infrastructure; the field of housing was always the top priority and occupied a high rate among other basic construction.

Table 3 The invested capital of basic construction for infrastructure from 1980 to 1985

Unit: Million VND

Type	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Total	154.2	156.1	238.0	442.5	543.3	604.1
Transportation	7.7	27.4	50.5	74.2	101.0	112.8
Water station	1.4	8.6	15.1	27.0	32.0	29.2
Plumbing systems	0.5	1.0	6.2	9.6	6.5	12.0
Houses	79.8	89.4	112.4	215.5	247.7	227.2
Culture	8.8	11.0	33.3	61.6	103.4	133.8
Medical, sports	12.0	5.2	10.1	22.8	18.8	25.3
Education and training	10.8	3.1	10.4	17.6	16.0	30.7
Drainage	33.2	10.4	N.A.	14.2	14.9	33.1

The period 1981-1986 was one of continuing development inherited from the previous period. Several more buildings and living

areas were built such as Kim Giang, Quynh Loi, and North Thanh Xuan. Apartments were constructed out of molded concrete composite panels similar to the Hungarian style. These living quarters had many advantages in utilities that were quiet, independent, and self-contained.

In the three years from 1981 to 1983, the government finished building housing on a site measuring 51 thousand square meters. The largest portion, 18 thousand square meters, was devoted to Hanoi and represented 78 percent of investment and 35 percent of finished acreage (State Commission for Basic Structure, 1984).

Hanoi applied the model of living quarters with the characteristics of systems as well as theories which were inherited from the Soviet Union and also the previous period. It refers to a unit consisting of many blocks of apartments combined in a range which provides infrastructures for necessary activities. The living quarters were delineated by roads or natural borders such as rivers and rows of trees. A living unit includes a set with different levels of apartments and the public structures which satisfy the residents' daily needs. These spaces create a miniature society whose members are connected and associated with each other through different needs and neighboring relationships. In the U.S., it is called the neighborhood unit; in the former Soviet Union, it is called collective living quarters; in France, it is called *unité de voisinage*.

The concept of living quarters is a product of urban studies created in the 1920s following the ideas of modernism by Le Corbusier and other architects. The model and theory of living quarters were first established in 1929 in New York and were referred to as "neighborhood units" by American urban planner, Clarence Perry.

Perry showed the rules of arranging and organizing the residential areas having cultural activities services with three purposes: 1) satisfying the material and spiritual needs of people living in this area by public services; 2) separating main routes traffic to be outside the living quarters in order to create a living environment for relaxation and safety for residents, especially children; and 3) requiring social contact, the close connection among residents.

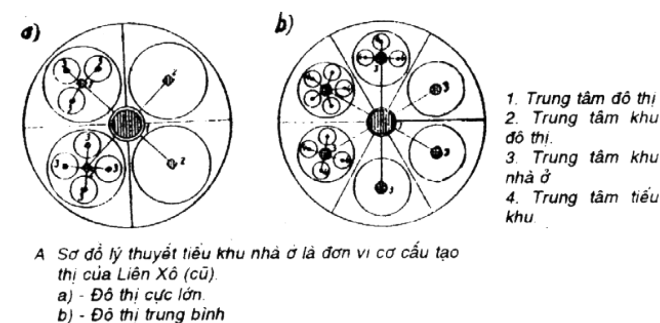


Figure 2 The Soviet theory of collective living quarters

Source: Urban Planning Department, University of Architecture Ho Chi Minh (2006:58)

Note: a) Giant urban area; b) Average urban area

1. Center; 2. Center of an urban area; 3. Center of living area; 4. Center of living quarter

The Soviet Union and East European socialist countries started applying this model after the Second World War. The Soviet planners called this model "*microrayon*" or micro-district, which was shown in many projects in 1960 at the International Convention of Architecture. The details of living quarters depended on the rules of the neighborhood unit, included some upgrades, and created some regulations rules which were suitable for socialist institutions.

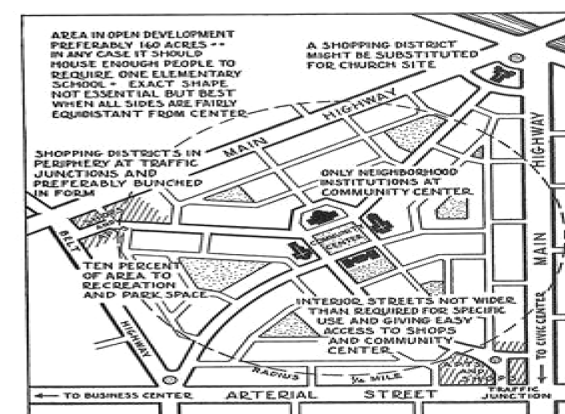


Figure 3 Theory of Living Quarters of the Soviet Union

Source: University of Architecture Ho Chi Minh (2006: 58)

The old collective living quarters in Hanoi are not only residential areas—a solution to deal with the lack of living spaces at that time. They also contain hidden values that need to be discovered through new perspectives and research, such as values and cultural values. Jean Noel Poirier, former French ambassador in Hanoi, considered living quarters as a type of special architectural heritage of Hanoi. Those structures embedded the characteristics of Soviet architects and Hanoians' lifestyle and routines in history.

The collective houses were created and became a symbol for modern life at that time with all necessary facilities were combined in one particular area. It could be said that from these collective houses, a new urban lifestyle was created—a different lifestyle with changing mindsets, and daily routines of residents. Although there were still lifestyles of the village inside, there were changes, and both factors impacted each other.

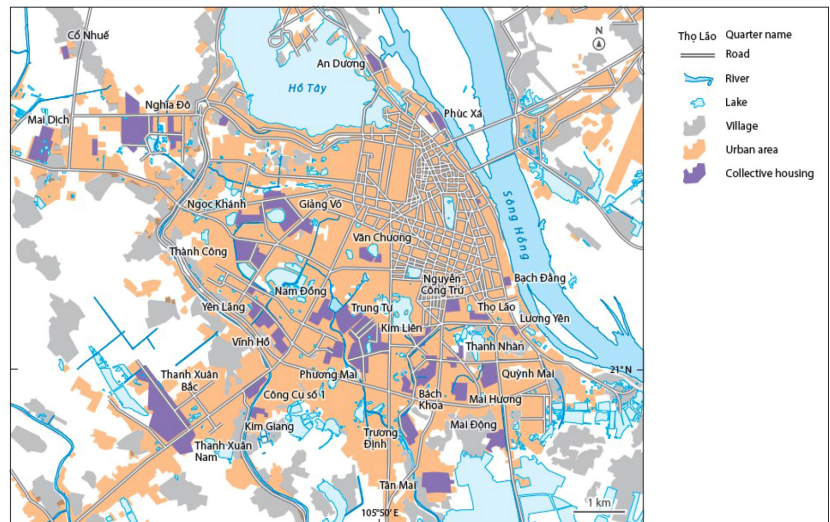


Figure 4 Position of the collective living quarters in Hanoi

Source: Fanchette (2016: 84)

The history of developing the collective living quarters in Hanoi can be divided into three periods:

- The 1960s to 1975: This is the first period with testing and applying the model of living quarters in Hanoi with prefabricated concrete panels—single material and low-rise buildings.
- 1975 to 1986: This is the second period with many new upgrades in techniques; collective houses built of large assembled concrete panels; high-rise buildings (5 floors).
- The period after 1986 to 2000: This is the last period of developing the model of collective living quarters with some new structures. However, those old buildings were downgraded, and the new types of higher-quality houses were built.

The model of the collective living quarters was established after 1954 when the government disposed of an old villa to provide space for a few households. Before 1960, the Hanoi administration built some living areas with one-story buildings in An Duong, Phuc Xa, Mai Huong, and Dai La. However, the purpose of building those houses was to deal with the lack of houses so the architecture consisted of very simple, narrow spaces. Most of the apartments were distributed to officers, employees of some ministries, and the military.

A collective living quarters at this period was required to respond to and depended on some specific factors:

- The number of residents justified the existence of one primary school and it needed to be used.
- Selling, buying and trading activities must be in the range of the living quarters near the residential areas and the public traffic system.
- It must have an open space, such as area for entertaining, and trees.
- The borders of the living quarters must be defined clearly by both artificial and natural factors.

- The center of the living quarters must be reserved for public areas like kindergartens and primary schools.
- Transportation systems inside the living quarters were intended to satisfy the needs of residents in the most convenient way.

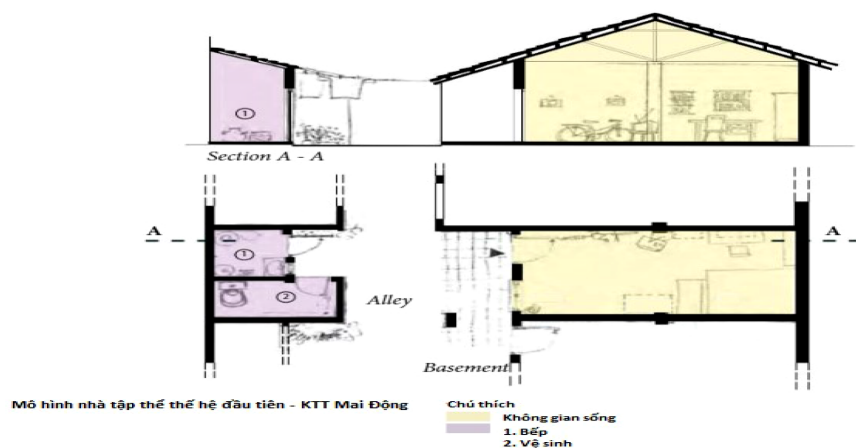


Figure 5 The model of collective living quarters in Hanoi period 1954-1960

Source: Ngoc (2017: 87)

The 1960s to 1975

Hanoi began reconstructing and rebuilding, replanning the whole city through 5-year plans. The first such plan, from 1961 to 1965, created the fundamentals, premises, and orientations to arrange living areas in the urban area. The policies relating to construction in this period as well as the investments in infrastructure solved one part of housing needs.

In the first period with the model of collective living quarters, the houses were built with only one to three floors within the structure (it was not an open space, everything was included in one area), independence, and simple assembled houses. The main quarters were Nguyen Cong Tru, Kim Lien, Tuong Mai, Tan Mai, Mai Huong, Mai

Dong, and Van Chuong. The technique of constructing was mainly of brick and concrete slag (Tuan, 2004).

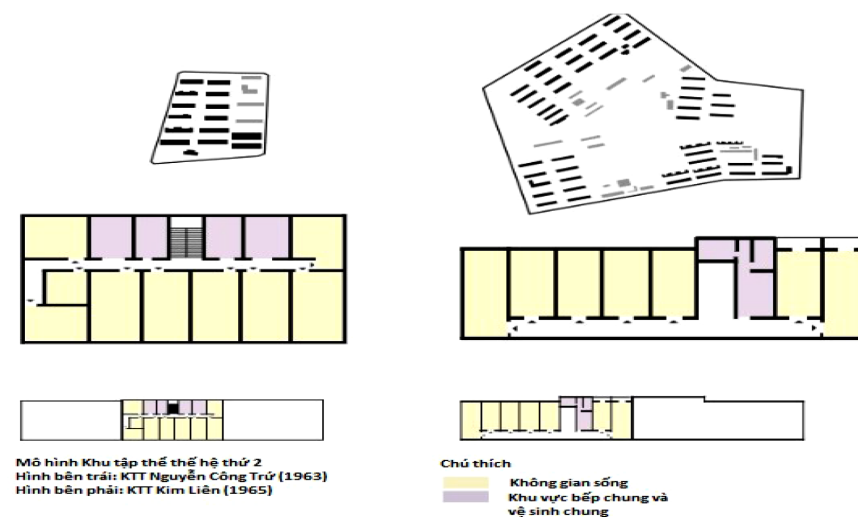


Figure 6 The model of collective living quarters in Hanoi, 1964-1970

Source: Ngoc (2017: 88)

In 1960, Hanoi began constructing the model at Kim Lien using the method of assembling small panels, which was supported by experts from North Korea. This is the first model in Hanoi which was built and applied following the theory of “Living Quarters” of the Soviet Union and socialist countries. Kim Lien Quarters was built through two periods: 1960-1965 and 1965-1970. This is the first quarter which was arranged with blocks of buildings, including a kindergarten, schools, a stadium, and stores. The buildings were high-rise and could provide living spaces for 20,000 people. In the early stage, this living quarters was designed for six households that shared a kitchen and a toilet. In the second period, it was adjusted with a system of infrastructures, each shared by two households. Nguyen Cong Tru Quarters used the same model as Kim Lien.

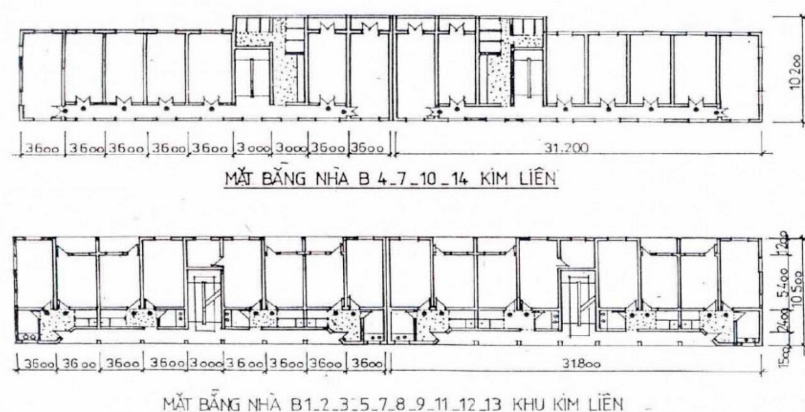


Figure 7 Design of buildings in Kim Lien Quarters

Source: Branch of record and archives department Hanoi city–original document

In the first phase, the collective buildings were built on the testing of those in the previous period. Therefore, it could be seen that the buildings were not large (compared to those in the later period), low-rise, and extremely simple. The auxiliary structures like the kitchen or toilet were shared among all of the households living on the same floor. This can be explained by considering the socio-economic context at that time. As mentioned above, this period was a time of needing to restructure the entire city after years of war. The loss and damage caused were too great for Hanoi and some urgent policies and actions were required to recover quickly. At that time, the economy was still weak because it had to supply many different fields and had to be divided to supply funds to the important situations at the same time. In terms of ideology, the state chose socialism and it led to creating a socialist identity with unique characteristics and lifestyles. The criterion of sharing or supporting each other was one of the main characteristics of the collectivization mechanism, so the housing issue was also applied and used the phrase “collective houses.” In addition, the Vietnamese had little experience in constructing and planning in this period, so the model of collective living quarters had to rely on experts from other socialist countries.

1975 to 1986

From the 1970s, the high-rise collective living houses were built. In the year 1971-1972, the model of assembled with combining slag materials was applied in areas such as Truong Dinh, Yen Lang. Then, the larger and higher buildings (five floors) with more amenities were built. Those collective living houses were built on average on 3-25 hectares with rows of buildings (4-6 floors). The main quarters of this period are Trung Tu, Giang Vo, Thanh Cong, Khuong Thuong, Bach Khoa, Ngoc Khanh, which were built with the technique of assembling large panels manufactured at the construction site. In the late 1970s, more quarters were constructed, such as Thanh Xuan, Nghia Do, and Kim Giang.

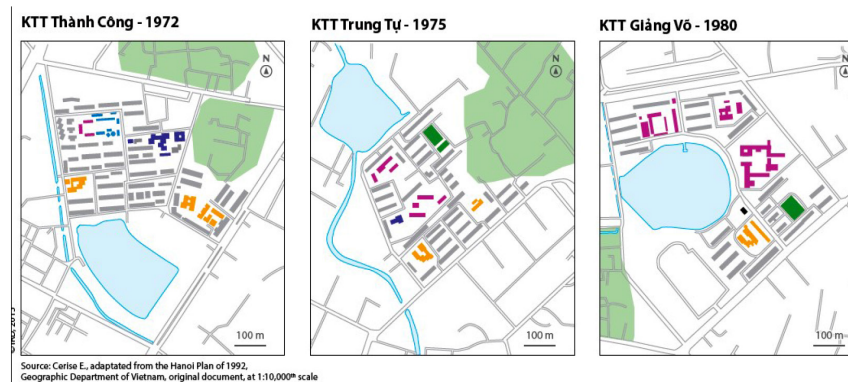


Figure 8 Maps of some collective living quarters in Hanoi in period 1970-1980

Source: Fanchette (2016: 83)

The construction of these collective living quarters was all arranged in the subdivision: the center was located in the middle of the living quarters, but was not an open space, everything was included in one area, and independent.

One limitation in the period 1960-1975 was the lack of experience in planning and urban management which led to the problem of only focusing on the numbers of apartments built rather than organizing the overall planning of the infrastructures (electricity system, road, environment sanitation, drainage).

In general, the large assembled-panel buildings used at this period marked a new renovation in the history of housing construction in Hanoi. It was not only about applying upgraded techniques; creativity also overcame difficulties stemming from a shortage of facilities and techniques (Thanh, 2008).

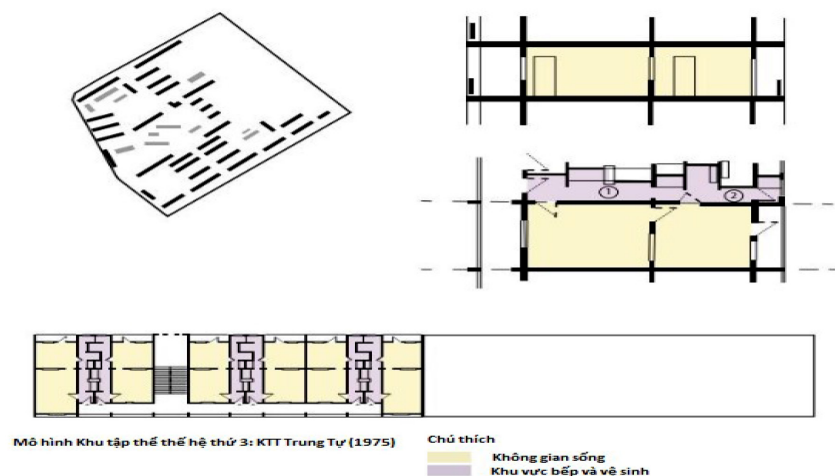


Figure 9 The model of collective living quarters in Hanoi, period 1975-1986

Source: Ngọc (2017: 88)

In the second phase, Soviet experts actively helped, and Vietnamese architects who were sent to study abroad in the socialist countries in the previous period returned and contributed their knowledge in practice. Consequently, collective living quarters improved in many ways. At the same time, because of the experience gained from the previous stage and advanced techniques applied in the construction process as well as materials, the construction process became faster and problems of lacking accommodation for people living in Hanoi were solved effectively. Although, the new structures still contained the character of “collectivization,” individuality was gradually shown in the design as well as the auxiliary construction of the blocks in the living quarters. The number of households sharing areas such as kitchens

and toilets decreased. If the whole floor shared this kind of area in the previous time, then it was divided into three to four households sharing one. This showed the advancement in design thinking and the mindset of society. The economy improved, leading to houses being built larger, with more rooms and more fully equipped. In the past, economic difficulties made architects build those buildings according to simple criteria and low cost which was highly recommended; in the second phase, the aesthetics and environment were paid attention as well. Moreover, the urban lifestyle had been formed and became more familiar; however, elements of the village/countryside still existed within the urban life. If the rural lifestyle was clearly shown in the past because many people moved from such areas to the city, it formed an urban lifestyle in this period and there was a harmonious integration of urban and rural factors.

After 1986 to 2000

The collective living houses at this period mainly were 4-6 floors high and self-contained. Moreover, rooms of the living quarters existing could be extended without permission of the state. The public areas could be changed into places for uses such as storing vehicles and trading activities. Many households extended their living space by building over the limitation to create one more room, resulting in great changes in the structure of the living quarter buildings.

The collective living quarters also deteriorated at this time in terms of facilities and narrow spaces for living. Infrastructures were overloaded because of the increase in population in the quarter and also daily life needs. Urbanization also had an impact on the daily routines of residents and the structure of the collective living quarters in general. Some new style modern apartments replaced the old collective living quarters which had existed since the 1960s.

Through changes in policies, especially after the *Doi Moi* policy, the market economy had an immense impact on socio-economic restructuring. Over time, the role of the collective factors in society became less significant. Economic changes led to changes in people's

lives. People gradually had better living conditions and could afford to buy more things. Their income increased and their lives were affected by changes in society. As a result, the collective living quarters soon failed to satisfy people's needs, causing some households to move out to new areas.

The permission to buy and sell apartments in the living quarters was not allowed in the past, and the procedures were extremely complicated. However, in 1991, the Land Law was passed with regulations on land use issues and the new policy led to changes that impacted people's lives. Many new classes of residents moved in, causing disruption of the social structure and the connections between residents living here. Associations were not as solid as they used to be, and crimes began to emerge. In the past, the care and mutual help among residents had been close and people helped each other not for personal benefit but out of their loyalty to the community. With the changes during this period, the linkages also changed and were no longer as strong as before.

After the state removed the subsidized system in housing, the owners had some rights with their apartments and were provided a certificate of land use rights (*Sổ đỏ*) with the duty of paying taxes. From then, people could sell, buy, or lease their apartments or buy an apartment right beside theirs to expand their living space. Many people moved out and new residents moved in but the newcomers did not have close relationships with residents who had been living here before. Also, there were sometimes problems with the security in the living quarters (Thuy, 2021).

Later, before the beginning of the 2000s, through the advancement of science and technology along with investment in housing and planning, new models of collective houses—also known as apartments in urban areas—were created which met the needs of modern life replacing previously existing collective areas. However, there was still a group of people who stayed and adhered to the collective living

quarters. They were mainly those who had been there for a long time—possibly since the starting date of the collective buildings. Many households no longer used the house for living purposes, but rented them out or modified them into small grocery stores, street restaurants, cafes, internet services, and so on.

The Values of the Collective Living Quarters in Hanoi

The collective living quarters in Hanoi played an important role in contemporary society at that time. It was not only about the simple purpose of creating a living space for people but also the deeply internal values of society, history, architecture, and culture.

Aspects of Society

Hanoi's population increased through the years from 1954 to the 1990s. A wave of migrants into Hanoi sought stable jobs, higher income, and quality education as well as social welfare. The movement created population pressure on Hanoi. Because of inexperience in urban planning and the hardships of war, Hanoi could not respond immediately to all of the urgent needs in the years after independence. From the 1960s onwards, this issue was resolved step by step and satisfied the needs of citizens. The collective living quarters created sufficient space for the large number of residents. The post-war recovery created factories, offices, and numerous jobs attracting people from areas surroundings or outside Hanoi. Therefore, population growth was obvious, accompanied by the requirements for accommodation. The collective living quarters solved this problem.

The collective living quarters also led to the formation of a new urban lifestyle that was different from the previous periods. The urban lifestyle had both modern thinking and a collective way of living in which sharing and helping each other were part of every daily routine. However, village culture still had certain influences on the urban lifestyle. Citizens residing in the collective living quarters whose main income came from work in offices and enterprises also had other income

from planting vegetables and raising cattle in the space outside their apartments. It was a popular phenomenon in Hanoi at that time.

Owning a small apartment in these quarters was a dream and not everyone was fortunate enough to be provided such a home. All of the apartments were granted to persons selected by the state, and they could not be bought, sold, or traded freely like nowadays. Therefore, the residents living there were well-educated, skillful, and knowledgeable people from the elite classes. Later, industrial zones were also built with collective living quarters for their workers, which led to a greater variety of people who could live in such houses.

Using the advanced and modern techniques applied by architects from socialist countries such as the Soviet Union and China, these buildings were constructed quickly. The materials were large, made of concrete, and pre-assembled. Every part of the production was implemented at the construction site and quickly assembled so that all buildings were finished before their deadlines.

These buildings were located near industrial areas or schools, making it convenient for people to get to work. The center of the living quarters normally included kindergartens and primary schools, clearly demonstrating the thoughts, orientation, and deep concern for the young generation. The country had suffered from long wars and loss of lives. Those sacrifices eventually brought peace, a good way of life, and stability to the nation.

The collective living quarters were also the product of socialism, which was born when the country was moving upward in this process. Their characteristics were suited to the social context and gave birth to a socialist lifestyle and socialist people. Mrs. P. Mai, who lived in Trung Tu quarters, said:

Everyone followed a socialist living style, meaning that everyone was living with collective, rather than personal, purposes. You were living in a collective society so you always had to behave well in that community. “One for all” was a common slogan. Living in those quarters made people become closer and more united (Mai, 2019).

Historical Value

The collective living quarters are products of a period that was representative of socialism in Vietnam. These structures reflect the essence of a social-political institution and can be seen as the heritage which is the quintessence and the symbol of a period in Hanoi's development. This model was later applied in other provinces.

If we look at the length of the historical development of Hanoi in particular, and Vietnam in general, each period has characteristics of the political institution in which it existed—from feudalism to colonialism to the period of socialist construction and the reform period afterward. The collective living quarters left many marks on the city's historical process. It was a period of creating a mindset, of evaluating and recognizing values by which to choose a future orientation not only for the city but also for the entire country.

The collective living quarters' unique architectural influences from the Soviet Union, North Korea, and China made the ambiance of Hanoi more pleasant. These structures are a historical witness to the values that exist nowadays. If we look more deeply at the historical aspects of the architecture, the Old Quarters can be compared with the architecture of the feudal periods, and Western Street can be compared with the colonial architecture of the French or modern luxury buildings of today. This is both an advancement in awareness and at the same time a reflection of the dominant ideology of socialism. It could be considered an achievement of Vietnamese architecture when it was brought, applied, and adjusted appropriately to suit people and cultural characteristics while still ensuring the functions of the original Soviet, North Korean, or Chinese designs.

When people look at these buildings, they will remember a special period with many memories because it is part of their lives. It is not only the history of the country but also a part of the history of individual Hanoians. Mrs. P.T. Hang related her memories of living in Kim Lien Quarters that although she has moved to a different neighborhood, she still keeps her apartment in Kim Lien. She had lived there since 1963 with her family of five. Because her mother was a teacher, her family was provided with housing. She recalled:

Life before the 1990s was peaceful and full of mutual support among residents. People helped and shared everything with their neighbors in activities such as cleaning the area, organizing weddings, or holding funerals. Smiles always appeared on their faces. Activities planned by organizations like the Youth Union and the Women's Union always received good response from the people. At that time, public areas like playgrounds or big yards were all used for children and elders, with no commercial activities. All sell-buy-trade activities took place at the grocery shops and people had to queue—first-come, first-served. Not only did people living in the same block know each other, but those living in different areas did so as well (Hang, 2019).

The community characteristics that existed within collective living quarters show how people interacted with each other in every daily routine. Despite differences in social status or financial conditions, people did not hesitate to support each other. The arrangement with different structures, such as grocery stores and yards, was one of the main methods that created a space for people to meet and talk and thereby build good relationships and connections.

Conclusion

The results from the research on collective living quarters in Hanoi can have practical applicability for understanding the site's cultural and social history. Moreover, it will allow people—not only those currently living in the collective quarters, but also Hanoians who lived there in the period from the 1970s to the 1980s and 1990s—to appreciate the heritage belonging to the past. It can also lead to sound decisions for preserving, maintaining, and upgrading the old living quarters because they were built over a half-century ago and are in need of restoration.

We have identified the role of collective living quarters not only in providing accommodations but also in having cultural and historical value for an entire period. Thus, future researchers will have many assessments, strategies, and methods to deal with the situation which

the collective living quarters are facing today. A major question is whether to keep all of these buildings, keep some of them, or demolish all of them and replace them with modern, high-end buildings. This matter needs to be discussed and considered carefully.

We can see the core values of these living quarters as a historical witness for people to imagine a period of Hanoi in the past: What was Hanoi like? How were the people? These living quarters reflect most vividly the way in which Hanoi society can be seen through a multitude of economic, cultural, social, and policy-making issues.

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