

Sense of Community in Collective Living Quarters in Hanoi: Changes and Restructuring

Nguyen Vu Hoang

VNU University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Hanoi, Vietnam

Email: hoang.nguyen@vnu.edu.vn

Received: September 19, 2024

Revised: January 6, 2025

Accepted: June 21, 2025

Abstract

The term “collective living quarters” (KTT) in Hanoi refers to the architectural structures built in the city with support from Soviet and North Korean experts after the end of the war against the French in 1954. These quarters provided living space for thousands of people working in the government sector. While historical and architectural approaches have been discussed in relation to the historical expansion of the city and technologies/materials, the literature shows a lack of understanding of the community from an insider’s perspective. The present article, using an anthropological approach, analyzes the sense of community among the members of KTTs in Hanoi. The research was based on ethnographic data and materials gathered from 2020 to 2022 in several KTTs in Hanoi. The article questions whether there is a sense of community and how it has changed through different periods of time. By analyzing the changes in socio-economic situations in Vietnam, this article argues that while the sense of community has been established by the daily interactions of local residents, it is very dynamic and has changed constantly with the alternation of the stakeholders.

Keywords: collective living quarters, socialism, sense of community, neighborhood unit, housing issues

Introduction

Two well-known heritage areas of Hanoi are the Old Quarter and the French Quarter. However, another set of zones that have recently attracted scholars is the Soviet-style apartment buildings in the southwest of the core of Hanoi. This type of housing consists of several quarters spread through three districts of the city: Hai Ba Trung, Dong Da, and Ba Dinh. The Soviet-style collective living quarters (KTT) are the products of the Soviet-influenced period in Hanoi after the war against the French (1946-1954). While the history of these quarters has been published by Tat Thanh Duong (2022), David H. Koh (2006), and William S. Logan (2000), there is still a wide gap in information about much of the residents’ daily life interactions. This article will contribute an analysis of the sense of community through an anthropological perspective. It argues that although a sense of community was established by the daily interactions of local residents, it has been very dynamic and has transformed over time with the change of stakeholders.

In Hanoi, collective housing developed in three main phases. The first phase (1955-1960) featured two-story houses along the Red River dike, known as “Riverside” KTTs, located in areas like An Duong and Phuc Xa, and later expanded to Mai Dong and Dai La. The second phase (1960-1974) introduced four- to five-story Soviet-style buildings made of brick or prefab panels, with major examples in Kim Lien,

Trung Tu, and Tho Lao. The third phase (1975-1986), after national reunification, saw the use of new materials and modern construction technologies (Koh, 2006; Tat Thanh Duong, 2022).

In the decade following the victory of North Vietnam in 1954, the Vietnamese government adopted a Soviet-style socialist model. This arrangement fostered strong diplomatic and developmental ties with the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea. Numerous Vietnamese delegations were sent to these allied countries to learn from their experiences, and in return, international experts supported Hanoi in drafting its urban master plan. The emergence of KTTs was a direct outcome of this collaboration (Nguyen Van Huy and Nguyen Vu Hoang, 2023). The term “Soviet-style” came to denote the mid-rise apartment buildings constructed from 1960 onward with technical assistance from Soviet Union and North Korean experts. Notably, the Kim Lien KTT, built in 1961, was among the first of its type in Hanoi and has since become a symbol of the city’s socialist-era architecture. This period, under the centrally-planned economy also fostered a strong sense of community among KTT residents. However, the introduction of the Doi Moi reforms in 1986 and the transition to a socialist-oriented market economy brought significant shifts in residents’ livelihoods, demographics, and the physical and social fabric of these neighborhoods. The coexistence of older and newer residents has transformed the nature of community life in KTTs. This article draws on ethnographic data from Kim Lien KTT to trace these transformations and examine how the sense of community has evolved over time.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the article focuses on the daily interactions of local residents in Kim Lien KTT, a collective living quarter of Hanoi. The literature shows that scholars in this field often focus on the history of the establishment of the KTTs in Hanoi or the architectural and construction technology rather than the relationship among residents. The article questions whether there was a sense of community in Kim Lien KTT, and if so, how did it change? Were there problems in the community under the socio-economic changes? Should it be considered either a new modern sense of community or a broken community?

By looking into the different social-historical contexts of Hanoi from 1960 until today, the article will pinpoint how the contexts helped change the daily interaction in the collective living quarters and therefore transformed the sense of community.

Research Methods

The research used ethnographic methods for data collection. Through the period from June 2020 to December 2022, the author conducted several field trips to four KTTs in Hanoi, i.e., KTT Nguyen Cong Tru, KTT Kim Lien, KTT Trung Tu and KTT Giang Vo. In each KTT, the author introduced the research project and conducted interviews with local residents, supplemented by participant observation in various everyday settings. Employing the snowball sampling strategy, the author expanded the interview network and conducted 80 qualitative semi-structured interviews. At the same time, a quantitative approach was applied by randomly selecting 80 samples from household registration records maintained at the commune level. A total of 320 survey questionnaires were administered and analyzed using SPSS to generate statistical findings. In addition, the author gathered secondary data from newspaper articles and historical

booklets compiled by local residential units. All qualitative and quantitative data were subsequently coded and analyzed through the lens of the “sense of community” framework to generate the study’s core insights.

The Soviet-Style Apartment Buildings in Hanoi

Studies of collective living quarters in Hanoi have been increasing over the last few decades. William S. Logan (2000) described the changes in housing and city plans after 1954 in Hanoi with a focus on the establishment of KTTs. In the early 1960s, the Nguyen Cong Tru collective living quarters began to serve 4,200 people, then the 40-acre Kim Lien collective living quarters with 22 buildings. Logan (2000: 205) pointed out that as Hanoi’s population increased, the city lacked architects with experience in designing high-rise buildings. This shortage led to a number of planning errors, resulting in poor air circulation, limited access to natural sunlight, and substandard construction quality—all of which negatively impacted residents’ daily lives. Although Logan offered a broad overview of Hanoi’s urban development over time, he did not provide detailed insights into life within the KTTs or the interpersonal relationships among their residents.

From a historical perspective, Tat Thanh Duong (2022) examined the development of collective housing quarters in Hanoi since the late 1950s. He identified four main research approaches: (1) planning, construction, and architectural changes; (2) the transition from state-owned to private housing; (3) the cultural and historical significance of KTTs; and (4) literary reflections, including poems, stories, and memoirs. Duong regarded KTTs as a legacy of the socialist era (2022: 52), tracing their conceptual origins to Le Corbusier’s modernist ideals of the 1920s and Clarence Perry’s “neighborhood unit” model developed in New York in 1929. This model later inspired the Soviet and Eastern European “microrayon” or micro-district planning. Analyzing the post-Doi Moi period (1986-2000), Duong noted the decline of KTTs due to population growth, infrastructure strain, and unauthorized modifications. Nonetheless, he emphasized their enduring value as architectural reminders of a distinct historical era in Hanoi.

In their study of Nguyen Cong Tru KTT in Hanoi, Lisa Drummond and Nguyen Thanh Binh (2020) observed that this complex was constructed using “the materials and technologies employed under the colonial regime” and designed merely as a high-density solution to the urgent housing shortage in the city. As a result, the project was implemented without any input from prospective residents. The authors highlighted several everyday challenges faced by occupants after moving in. One major source of tension was the shared kitchen and bathroom facilities on each floor, used by multiple households. While some residents made efforts to keep these communal spaces clean and orderly, others neglected their upkeep, leading to ongoing conflict and dissatisfaction (Drummond and Nguyen, 2020: 74, 84).

In response to critiques regarding the deterioration of KTTs, Takanari Fujita (2021) examined the materiality of these structures in Hanoi and emphasized the need to distinguish between the physical buildings and residents’ meaning-making practices. Through his analysis of failed government redevelopment efforts, Fujita highlighted the divergence between official objectives and the lived realities of residents. For the latter, KTTs function not only as residential spaces but also as vital social environments where community ties and spatial management are deeply embedded. Renovation and reconstruction of old collective housing quarters have emerged as key solutions to Hanoi’s current housing shortages. Dinh Quoc Phuong (2019) conducted surveys and interviews in 2009, 2014, and

2018 in KTTs such as Nguyen Cong Tru, Thanh Cong, and Giang Vo. He argued that post-Doi Moi unauthorized extensions and interior renovations have contributed to structural degradation and safety concerns. Dinh also presented a case study of a newly-constructed 19-story building (2013-2016) in Nguyen Cong Tru KTT as part of the city's redevelopment plan. However, instead of improving residents' living conditions, the transition introduced tensions due to service fees and compensation disputes among relocated households. Meanwhile, Hong and Kim (2021) analyzed the spatial transformation of Hanoi's KTTs from the pre-reform era to the present. As the city expanded, former suburban KTTs became part of the urban core, making them valuable assets sought by major developers such as Sun Group and Vingroup. The authors noted that post-reform privatization intensified competition over these centrally located spaces, which are now seen as advantageous for employment, education, and community continuity—factors contributing to a continued desire to live in KTTs.

The literature on KTTs in Hanoi shows that this topic has attracted a number of researchers from different approaches: history, architecture and construction, sociology, and recently anthropology. However, there are also a number of gaps in the findings. First, none of the works discussed the impact of the change in socio-economic conditions on local residents in KTTs although some mentioned the value of KTT locations in the current city of Hanoi. Second, KTTs are discussed mainly in terms of the historical establishment and physical changes in the buildings without mentioning residents' roles and needs. Finally, while historical and sociological approaches can help explain the origin and change of residents, the literature lacks an anthropological perspective from the insiders to explain the establishment and change in the sense of community. The present article analyzes the case in Kim Lien KTT under two different socio-economic situations: the command economy (1955-1986) and the socialist-oriented market economy (after 1986), thereby providing a new perspective on the existing literature on KTTs in Hanoi.

The Establishment of a Sense of Community in the Command Economy (1955-1986)

The Concept of Community Revisited

The term “community” has been a significant topic in anthropology. It can be characterized in several ways: (i) common interests between people; or (ii) a common ecology and locality; or (iii) a common social system or structure (Rapport and Overing, 2003). Elizabeth Dinnie and Anke Fischer (2019) explored the development of the meanings of community in the social sciences in the 20th century. Community initially referred to rural villages and then urban neighborhoods with social ties based on close, personal interactions. By the 1970s, place-based approaches became less favored than the notions of belonging with the concepts of identity, culture, and ethnicity. The focus then shifted to how community was “symbolically enacted and culturally imagined,” giving attention to the discursive power of community and the social relations people imagined they shared with others (Dinnie and Fischer, 2019). The authors point out that the term, community, today is used by action researchers and multicultural working-class residents in connection with themes of social and environmental justice.

From a human security approach, Zygmunt Bauman argued that community is related to insecurity in the sense that people who were formerly in an insecure situation feel secure in a community (Bauman, 2001: 142). A community provides for them a safe and warm feeling like being at home although the payment for that is the loss of freedom. Community has rules, and its members must either obey them or get expelled. The term “community” is also understood under terms such as “community

consciousness,” “community development and rebuilding,” and “community values and works.” However, according to Rapport and Overing (2003: 64), “whether that community is defined in terms of locality, ethnicity, religion, occupation, recreation, special interest, even humanity, people maintain the idea that it is this milieu which is most essentially ‘theirs,’ and that they are prepared to assert their ownership and membership, vocally and aggressively, in the face of opposing ideas and groups.” For Rapport and Overing, community members express and elicit a socio-cultural grouping and milieu to which people would expect, advocate, or wish to belong.

Although many scholars acknowledge different understandings of community, the literature shows little attention to the ways that communities are created and maintained, or how a community is felt and how different members experience it. The present article will explore the establishment and development of the Kim Lien KTT neighborhood and pinpoint the different meanings connected with its residents. With the assembly small panel construction method, the first wave of Kim Lien residential households was assigned to settle down in the finished buildings in 1961. The sense of community will be explored through the lenses of common interests, locality, and social structure by the case study of residents living in the Kim Lien KTT. While *common locality* refers to the physical space that connects residents, *common interests* highlight the connectedness formed through shared facilities and daily practices. Meanwhile, *social structure* captures the origins, occupations, and interrelationships among residents that shape communal bonds.

Life in a Shared Facilities Environment

Shared facilities created a sense of locality among the residents. In the initial phase, collective housing quarters were designed with shared facilities for residents. For example, in the early building blocks of Kim Lien KTT (B4, B7, B10, B14), each floor accommodated seven households that shared an auxiliary space consisting of two toilets and two bathrooms. In a later phase, this arrangement was modified: new infrastructure systems were introduced, and the auxiliary facilities were redesigned to be shared by two households living in a two-room apartment. Before analyzing the sense of community, this section will present the advantages and disadvantages of living in such circumstances. Two kinds of shared structures also led to different interactions of the residents. In the initial shared living arrangement, residents of seven rooms on the same floor shared a communal toilet and bathroom, with no designated kitchen area, as meals were provided by a canteen located in a separate building (Tat Thanh Duong, 2022: 64). Approximately 21 individuals living in these rooms took turns maintaining the cleanliness of the shared facilities. Cleaning responsibilities were organized based on mutual agreements among residents, often rotating weekly from one room to the next. However, the system was not always effective, as some individuals neglected their duties during their assigned week, leading to an unclean and disorganized environment.

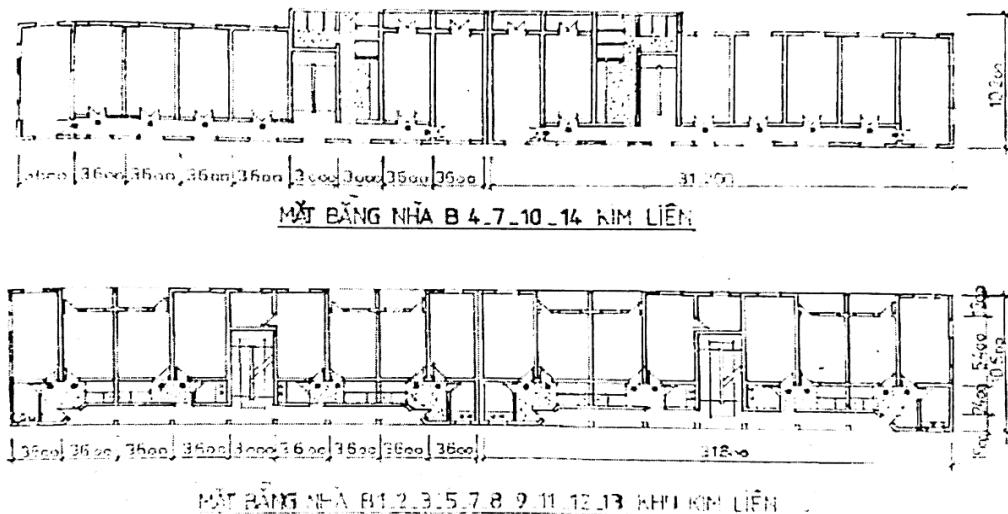


Figure 1 Architectural design plan of Kim Lien KTT

Source: Tat Thanh Duong (2019:46)

The second shared structure was different because only two rooms shared one kitchen and a toilet with a bathroom. Each of the households in the two-room apartments would take turns cleaning the auxiliary area. Although still shared, the number of people using the auxiliary area was much lower than in the first case. The kitchen area was small but tidy. It was convenient for the residents as it was included in the apartment. Compared to the former model, this was a significant step forward. However, if one household were cooking, the other household had to wait for their turn. This situation was inconvenient for residents.

In positive terms, the shared facilities sometimes made the neighbors closer. Cleaning the common space was a priority in the location. Since 1964, Hanoi authorities ran several campaigns that encouraged local people to clean their space. A local newspaper reported: “Cleaning common space was carried out once a week, but now it is done two to three times a week; in some blocks people clean everyday” (N.C., 1965). People not only worked together but also got to know each other better. A former resident recalled, “The shared kitchen area had a good sense in that neighbors knew what you cooked for that day’s meals. It was fun to see the whole floor fry fat or cook the same vegetable,” (Mrs. Ngoc [Pseudonym], 2022). In the past under the subsidy economy, portions of food, clothing, and gas were distributed to every household. It was the economic model that first operated in the Soviet Union and then was applied in Vietnam during the Vietnam War (1955-1975). In Kim Lien KTT, people queued up in front of government grocery shops to use stamps to buy their portions. The sharing of facilities, similar economic conditions, and participation in collective activities among residents contributed to the cultivation of a localized sense of community, characterized by interpersonal familiarity and neighborly recognition.

The Government-employed Status

In the early days of Kim Lien KTT, nearly all apartment household heads were government employees. As mentioned above, following 1954, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam faced an urgent need for housing to accommodate its cadres and civil servants. To address the housing shortage, Circular No. 529-TTg, issued by the Office of the Prime Minister on December 8, 1958, introduced a semi-subsidized housing scheme for state employees. The Circular allowed the government to provide

housing, electricity, water, and facilities for its employees based on certain categories such as high-ranking cadres, mid-ranking cadres, and staff.

By 1962, more than 5,000 residents had settled in the Kim Lien KTT. Findings from our survey in 2022 indicate that a significant number of residents were allocated apartments through state distribution. A comparative analysis of four collective housing areas in Hanoi reveals that over 50 percent of current households were originally assigned their units through such allocation mechanisms.

Table 1 Ownership types of apartment owned by households, by residential area

Getting ownership		Collective Living Quarter (KTT)				Total
		Trung Tu	Kim Lien	Nguyen Cong Tru	Giang Vo	
Allocated	Frequency	56	49	45	37	187
	Percentage	70.9	62.0	56.3	46.3	58.8
Purchased	Frequency	23	27	33	35	118
	Percentage	29.1	34.2	41.3	43.8	37.1
Other (inherit, rent)	Frequency	0	3	2	8	13
	Percentage	0	3.8	2.5	10.0	4.1
Total	Frequency	79	79	80	80	318
	Percentage	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Author's survey research

Each ministry was allocated dozens of apartments across different buildings, which were then distributed to staff members based on criteria such as seniority, merit, and managerial rank. As a result, certain buildings became occupied predominantly by personnel from specific ministries. For instance, buildings B1 to B4 were largely inhabited by employees of the Hanoi Railway Office; B5.1 housed staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Farming; while B5.2 accommodated those working in the Ministry of Foreign Trade and the Ministry of Light Industry; and B9 was for the Department of Geography.

The Warmth of Community

During the 1960s, socialist ideology reached a peak when the whole nation (Northern region) was working to build socialism in the North and to help fight against the American army in the South. In the socialist-building agenda, the state-owned corporations and the collective economic sector were considered two main forces. Discussing the role of KTTs in Soviet countries in Eastern Europe, Victor Buchli (1998) argued that under Khrushchev, the KTTs were not only a residential arrangement, but also a crucial instrument for shaping socialist lifestyle and subjectivity. The implementation of collective living quarters in Vietnam was taken for granted as one of the symbols of socialism (Vu Cong Chien, 2019; Tat Thanh Duong, 2019). Christina Schwenkel (2020) further highlights the involvement of East German experts in training Vietnamese architects during the construction of KTTs in Vinh City, demonstrating the transnational circulation of socialist planning ideals.

Socialist ideology spread into society and convincingly caused residents to "live according to their needs." The propaganda of the party-state was so effective that government employees understood and followed the instructions well. Each person took only enough space enough for their needs. One of the residents from the early period, recalled:

The office chief gave me options of 10m 2 rooms, 12m 2 rooms, 15m 2 rooms, and 20m 2 rooms. I told him that I was single, please give me the smallest room. He then said that now there were rooms to choose, but in a few years when I had a wife and children, I wouldn't be able to change, I should take any big room. I replied firmly 'no,' taking a big room would be too much, I was living alone, so if I took it, other people had no place to live. I definitely refused. So, I took the 10-square meter room on the third floor. Moving here was very enjoyable because this area was built with help from North Korea, this was the first KTT in Hanoi and Vietnam (Mr. An [Pseudonym], 2022).

This type of feeling was common for the residents in the early period as they were assigned to have a space in the most modern residential area.

The buildings in Kim Lien KTT itself were merely structures, but how the life of the buildings went depended on the residents. The daily life activities brought residents together—from strangers to close neighbors. It was the result of several dimensions such as the historical context, the national economy, and stakeholders. As one early resident shared:

I see many good things about Kim Lien KTT. First, although life was very difficult in terms of materiality, people lived together in harmony, without jealousy, without grudges, without one person staring at the other. That was the best thing. Second, we took care of ourselves, no one complained, and almost everyone was satisfied with their lives. Back then, it was very comfortable, after work, we had rice to eat, porridge to eat (Mr. An [Pseudonym], 2022).

Mr. An's deep sentiments about life and culture in the collective housing area are echoed by many others. At that time, neighbors lived in close proximity, sharing not only physical space but also workplace affiliations, and they developed bonds akin to those of an extended family. They supported one another day and night, "sharing both the sweet and the bitter," much like the close neighborly relations found in rural communities. Nevertheless, there were many disadvantages to living in the KTT locality. Mr. An recalled:

Can you imagine how stressful it would be in the morning if four families for a total of 25 people shared a toilet, a kitchen, and a bathroom. I rarely used that shared toilet and usually went to the office. At the office, it was also terrible. You know, the collective apartment building was crowded, and there were no professional cleaners. Now, I can't imagine how we could sit on that toilet, how we could bathe in a place like that. It was so awful (Mr. An [Pseudonym], 2022).

Other people remembered the hardship period in which households had to hide their food from other people. According to an early resident, "In the early 1980s when the economy was bad, it was hard to get meat. My parents lived in the countryside, and I sometimes had chicken. However, I didn't dare to chop it with a big knife. Instead, I had to use scissors to cut it into pieces," (Mrs. Ha [Pseudonym], 2022). In addition, after eating, they had to wrap the bones up and throw the package away far from their place, so that no one would know which household had had a meal of chicken. It was really a common memorable scene for those living in the command economy. So, the price for the privilege of being in a community was the freedom and the right to be ourselves (see Bauman, 2001). In the case of Kim Lien KTT in the early period, the residents, while enjoying life in the most modern residential place in Hanoi

along with a familial feeling like that found in traditional villages in Vietnam, had to sacrifice their freedom by accepting the rules and surveillance in the community.

Lifestyle Changes after Socio-economic Renovation

The Economic Renovation in 1986

After the Reunification of Vietnam in 1975, the united government continued applying the command economy model throughout the whole country (Nguyen Van Canh, 1983). On the national scale, Huynh Kim Khanh (1989) compared how the country produced 350 kg of rice per capita in 1975, its food production was reduced to 304 kg of rice per capita in 1985, and in 1987, this figure was 280 kg. At the same time, the food assistance from China and Russia was no longer available. The Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) recognized the tension of the national economy and decided to implement economic reform in 1986. The renovation aimed to transition the national economy from a centrally-planned system to a socialist-oriented market economy. This shift introduced new economic sectors alongside the state and collective sectors, including private enterprises and household businesses (Dang Phong, 2013). These macroeconomic changes had far-reaching impacts—not only at the national level, but also at the level of residents in Kim Lien KTT.

Lifestyle Changes in KTTs

Initiated in 1986, the Renovation started to have clear impacts in the early 1990s. Since 1994, with the enactment of the 1993 Land Law and the guiding documents of the government, Decree 61-CP in 1994, residents in KTT were granted the right to own the apartments that they had been living in under long-term leases.¹ The government priced the apartments and sold them to the renters with consideration of the length of their work with the government. The result was that residents could buy their apartments at a reasonable price. Other households with shared facilities started to divide the space separately and invested in consolidating and expanding their private space through illegal constructions (Dinh Quoc Phuong, 2019; Nguyen Vu Hoang and Tran Thi Quynh Trang, 2024).

After several decades living in Kim Lien KTT apartments, many people got married and the households had more people. The 24-square-meter apartments did not provide enough space for the growing size of the households. In the past, people mainly needed space to sleep and cook for meals. However, the open-market economy led people to have more desires, such as private space, a living room, and entertainment. The space of the apartments in KTT became too small for these desires. At the same time, the buildings became degraded after several decades without significant maintenance. People with substantial finances chose to move out of KTTs to individual houses, such as townhouses or newly constructed urban areas in Hanoi. Consequently, Kim Lien KTT and other KTTs in Hanoi were no longer desirable areas.

The wave of move-outs rose together with the move-in flow. The new wave of move-in people was more diverse than the allocated residents in the past. They were not only government employees but also open market entrepreneurs, local shop dealers, employees in non-government sectors. Kim Lien KTT residents had lived as small communities in the past few decades before new residents arrived.

¹ Decree 61/CP dated July 5, 1994, is an important legal document that marked a turning point in housing policy after the subsidy era, allowing the sale of state-owned housing to current tenants, primarily apartments in KTTs and government-assigned residences.

The communities formed when the command economy they lived in were disrupted by a new wave of residents. Long-term residents were familiar with one another, understood each household's circumstances, and actively participated in various local community activities. By contrast, newer residents did not share the same lived experiences, and many were less inclined to engage in a lifestyle where personal privacy was limited.

The open-market economy not only brought about new opportunities for the Vietnamese people, but also changed their sense of privacy. Privacy became a need for each family. While before Doi Moi (1986), most apartment doors were open for neighbors to visit and talk, today the doors are closed as people want to have more privacy, to relax after work, and better protect their properties.

The Broken and/or Re-making Sense of Community

The socialist ideology on KTT was thought to be applicable in Russia and Eastern European countries since the Soviet period. Scholars such as Henry Lefebvre (1991) and Caroline Humphrey (2005) discussed the failure of this model in these socialist countries due to the inappropriate living conditions. However, there has been a lack of scholarly publications that closely examine the lives and perspectives of residents in Vietnam's KTT areas. My research reveals that long-term residents perceive the post-Doi Moi era as a period of profound transformation—changes that often evoke nostalgia for the past. These transformations include the weakening of neighborly ties, a decline in shared community activities, and the erosion of mutual support networks. The strong sense of community once rooted in shared status as government employees and affiliation with the public sector was gradually dismantled due to the influx of new residents. These newcomers did not share the same occupational background or collective experiences as pre-Doi Moi residents, resulting in a diminished sense of commonality both with long-term residents and among themselves.

Life in KTTs involved shared responsibilities, such as splitting electricity fees for stairways and corridors and participating in a cleaning schedule, where each household took turns maintaining communal spaces (Nguyen Vu Hoang and Tran Thi Quynh Trang, 2024). Some blocks hired cleaners collectively, while others assigned duties to residents. However, these activities did not always foster a strong sense of community. Tensions arose between homeowners and renters, as the latter were often seen as less committed to collective responsibilities. One of the renters remarked, "I don't know anybody here... the nearby apartments' doors are not open," (Mr. Hanh [Pseudonym], 2022). Meanwhile, another long-term resident, noted, "Renters don't contribute to the local fund or follow the cleaning schedule. I've had to complain several times," (Mrs. Hoa [Pseudonym], 2022).

In terms of personality, many people express their favor of privacy. They do not want to exchange information with neighbors. In the past, people opened their doors and visited each other regularly. The visits made neighbors feel closer and they knew well each household's situation. The positive side of the situation was that if someone was ill or needed help, they could share the information and ask around for support. The negative side was that as they got to know each other well, household events/activities were often reported or shared among the local residents. A former resident shared his experience: "I don't like people gossiping about my family. That's disrespectful. We used to be good friends and neighbors in the pre-Doi Moi. However, since Doi Moi, I earned more money and some people started to gossip about my family and my job," (Mr. Tung [Pseudonym], 2022). He felt embarrassed when neighbors brought his

family issues to the public. Therefore, he decided to sell his apartment in Kim Lien KTT to buy a house in another place. He said, "Living in an individual house feels much better," (Mr. Tung [Pseudonym], 2022).

Hence, the contemporary community in Kim Lien KTT, constructed by a compilation of residential cells, is not built by people with the same status as it was in the pre-Doi Moi period. This shift has not only disrupted the bonds once sustained among state-employed residents, but has also given rise to a reconfigured sense of community. Today, KTT residents rely increasingly on social networks and local organizations to negotiate and perform various community roles. The new digital and social context presents both opportunities and challenges for ethnographers seeking to engage with the field.

Conclusion

While a historical view like Tat Thanh Duong (2022) examines the establishment progress of KTTs in Hanoi and identifies the role of collective living quarters, the present article focuses on the sense of community in the KTTs in Hanoi through the case in Kim Lien KTT with an anthropological approach. The article shows that this sense is not a static one, but has changed over time with influence from the socio-economic conditions. KTTs, a new type of residential areas in Hanoi after 1955, provided living space for thousands of people who lived and worked for the government in Hanoi. KTT residents, sharing the same status as government employees, living in the same locality, and receiving socialist public subsistence, expressed a closeness and attachment to the locality during the war time (1960-1975) and experienced the shared hardship during the command economy (1976-1986). Following Doi Moi in 1986, the socialist-oriented market economy has brought new waves of change to the community. KTT residents, after being solely government employees, have become more diverse. The influx of new residents broke the pre-existing community network and turned the sense of community in a new direction. Hence, instead of adhering to the old KTT characteristics, a new community has been created with residents sharing the residential place, obeying community rules, and respecting members' privacy.

Acknowledgements

This research is funded by the Vietnam National Foundation for Science and Technology Development (NAFOSTED) under grant number 602.08-2020.03.

References

Bauman, Z. (2001). **Community: Seeking safety in an insecure world**. Cambridge: Polity.

Buchli, V. (1998). Moisei Ginzburg's Narkomfin Communal House in Moscow: Contesting the social and material world. *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 52(2), 160-181.

Đặng Phong. (2013). *Tư duy kinh tế Việt Nam 1975-1989: Nhat ky thoi bao cap*. (In Vietnamese) [Vietnamese economic thinking 1975-1989]. Hanoi: Tri thuc Publishing House.

Dinh Quoc Phuong. (2019). (Re)developing old apartment blocks in Hanoi: Government vision, local resistance and spatial routines. *Journal of Asian Architecture and Building Engineering*, 18(4), 311-323.

Dinnie, E. and Fischer, A. (2019). The trouble with community: How 'sense of community' influences participation in formal, community-led organisations and rural governance. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 60(1), 243-259.

Drummond, L. and Nguyen Thanh Binh. (2020). The rise and fall of collective housing: Hanoi between vision and decision. In L. Drummond and D. Young (Eds.). **Socialist and post-socialist urbanisms: Critical reflections from a global perspective.** (pp. 69-88). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Fujita, T. (2021). Hanoi's built materiality and the scales of anthropology: Toward a theory of 'Architectural Facts.' **Social Analysis: The International Journal of Anthropology**, 66(1), 1-25.

Government of Vietnam. (1994). *Ngi dinh 61-CP cua Chinh phu ve mua ban va kinh doanh nha.* (In Vietnamese) [Decree No. 61-CP on buying and doing business on houses], Hanoi.

Hong, N. and Kim, S. (2021). Persistence of the socialist collective housing areas (KTTs): The evolution and contemporary transformation of mass housing in Hanoi, Vietnam. **Journal of Housing and the Built Environment**, 36, 601-625.

Humphrey, C. (2005). Ideology in infrastructure: Architecture and Soviet imagination. **The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute**, 11(1), 39-58.

Huynh Kim Khanh. (1989). Revolution at an impasse: Impressions of Vietnamese communism circa 1990. In R. Stubbs (Ed.). **Vietnam: Facing the 1990s.** (pp.2-20), Toronto: Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies.

Koh, D. (2006). **Wards of Hanoi.** Singapore: ISEAS Publishing.

Lefebvre, H. (1991). **The production of space.** Oxford, Cambridge: Blackwell.

Logan, W. S. (2000). **Hanoi: Biography of a city.** Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

N. C. (1965). *Phong trao phat trien manh me, toan dien va vung chac.* (In Vietnamese) [A strong, comprehensive, and sustainable development movement]. Hanoi Capital News, (1973), 04.

Nguyen Van Huy and Nguyen Vu Hoang. (2023). Soviet-style apartment blocks in Hanoi: Architecture and intellectual exchange. In J. Copeman, N. J. Long, Lam Minh Chau, J. Cook, and M. Marsden (Eds.). **An anthropology of intellectual exchange: Interactions, transactions and ethics in Asia and beyond.** (pp. 89-112), Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Nguyen Van Canh. (1983). **Vietnam under communism, 1975-1982.** Stanford: Hoover Institution.

Nguyen Vu Hoang and Tran Thi Quynh Trang (2024). *Qua trinh kien tao khong gian tu trong khu tap the cu o Ha Noi.* (In Vietnamese) [The production of private space in Soviet-style collective apartments in Hanoi]. **Tap chi Dan toc hoc (Vietnam Anthropology Review)**, 2(242), 74-87.

Rapport, N. and Overing, J. (2003). **Social and cultural anthropology: The key concepts.** New York: Routledge.

Schwenkel, C. (2020). **Building socialism: The afterlife of East German architecture in urban Vietnam.** Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Tat Thanh Duong. (2019). *Gia tri lich su-van hoa cua cac khu tap the cu o Ha Noi: Nghien cuu truong hop khu tap the Trung Tu.* (In Vietnamese) [Historical and cultural values of old apartment buildings in Hanoi: A case study of Trung Tu apartment building]. **Khoa hoc xa hoi va Nhan van (Hanoi) (VNU Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities)**, 5(1), 128-140.

Tat Thanh Duong. (2022). A symbol of socialist society: The collective living quarters in Hanoi 1954-2000. **Journal of Mekong Societies**, 18(2), 46-75.

Vu Cong Chien. (2019). **Kim Lien mot thuoc.** (In Vietnamese) [Once Upon a Time in Kim Lien]. Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers.

Interviews

Mr. An. (Pseudonym). (2022, April, 15). **Interview.** A resident of Kim Lien KTT from the early period. Hanoi.

Mr. Hanh. (Pseudonym). (2022, March, 17). **Interview.** A renter of Kim Lien KTT. Hanoi.

Mr. Tung. (Pseudonym). (2022, February, 17). **Interview.** A resident of Kim Lien KTT from the early period, moved out 10 years ago. Hanoi.

Mrs. Ha. (Pseudonym). (2022, March, 19). **Interview.** A resident of Kim Lien KTT from the early period. Hanoi.

Mrs. Hoa. (Pseudonym). (2022, April, 21). **Interview.** A resident of Kim Lien KTT from the early period. Hanoi.

Mrs. Ngoc. (Pseudonym.) (2022, February, 26). **Interview.** A resident of Kim Lien KTT from the early period. Hanoi.