

# Changes in the Public Spaces at the Collective Living Quarters in Hanoi: A Case Study of Thanh Cong Living Quarter

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**Abstract:** The collective living quarters, referred to as '*khu tập thể*' in Vietnamese, a familiar phrase used by Hanoians, is connected with periods of subsidy and is an unforgettable memory that is part of the lives of many families, who were officers and civil servants working in the State sector. Thanh Cong quarter is one of the most prominent areas in Hanoi with upgraded design, constructions, and landscape compared to other collective living quarters in the city. It is seen as a completed living area offering a fully functioning lifestyle for its community. Thanh Cong quarter underwent a lot of changes under the transition to a socialist oriented economy in Vietnam in the late 1980s. The original design of the collective living quarters was not suitable for private businesses, which led to the encroachment on public spaces. As a result, the quarter could not avoid impacts on the appearances and daily routines of residents. Step-by-step changes were a common phenomenon within all collective living quarters from this period.

**Keywords:** Thanh Cong Quarters; Collective Living Quarter; Public Spaces; Subsidy; Encroachment.

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## 1. Introduction

The model of collective living quarters was introduced to Hanoi after 1954, starting with those designed by North Korean experts. This movement then progressed to new zones with an upgraded system built according to the concept '*microrayon*' from the Soviet Union as well as a few areas that were modeled on Chinese style. Looking at the history of urban housing development in the world, we can clearly see that these kinds of housing models are the products of Modernism which was established by Le

Corbusier and some other architects in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the first collective living quarters were introduced to New York in 1929, the '*neighborhood unit*' designed by Clarence Perry<sup>1</sup>, this approach to urban design was officially published. Basically, this model was oriented to the development of cities by dividing urban areas into different planning areas, housing areas, and living quarters. This structure was widely applied in European countries after World War II, such as in London, France, Germany, and Sweden, and later on, continued to be introduced and modified by Socialist countries.

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<sup>1</sup> This model began to be researched in the period from 1923 to 1926.

The collective living quarters, referred to as *khu tập thể* in Vietnamese, a familiar phrase used by Hanoians, is connected with periods of subsidy and is an unforgettable memory that is part of the lives of many families, who were officers and civil servants working in the State sector. Later, people used different phrases such as *chung cư* (apartment) or *cư xá* (residency) to gradually replace *khu tập thể*. This phrase has a high ‘collective’ factor that exists in itself, which seems to be disappearing in modern Hanoian society. The collective living quarters were built during the period where the country was transitioning to socialism, so they were affected by many influences including characteristics associated with the process of constructing facilities for the socialist society in Hanoi. One of the important goals associated with the transitional process was improving the people’s living conditions, including material and spiritual life, and ensuring a reasonable balance between the factors that constitute a socialist society (Nguyen Duy Quy 1988).

After more than half of a century, the collective living quarters are still present in the rapid development of modern urban areas. Many buildings were built next to or interspersed amongst the collective living quarters, which caused both positive and negative changes. These changes received mixed reviews, not only in terms of the urban landscape, but the structure of the whole living quarters had many transformations connected with the impact of the long periods of self-extension and encroachment in public spaces. Gradually, the phenomenon created a new lifestyle and routines which local people found extremely difficult to adjust to.

The specialties connected with the collective living quarters are the

architectural systems with ‘self-contained’ characteristics and functions designed to provide for the needs of all residents. Besides the construction elements, the designs brought many unique features including public spaces that were ideally constructed for extending and starting new relationships within the community. Living routines were eventually formed in synch with these community places. Importantly, these public spaces exist today despite modifications and changes in the period largely due to market influences from 1986.

Changes in collective living quarters are necessary to ensure they are responsive to the current standards accepted in society. These human-made changes were both legal and illegal in their approach due to the phenomenon of self-renovating living spaces and encroaching on public spaces for spontaneous personal business (e.g., ‘Pop-up’ enterprises).

There are several studies on housing ownership and public spaces in collective living quarters such as Tran Van Ty (1983) on “Family preferences regarding housing distribution”, Nami Hong and Saehoon Kim (2020) on “Persistence of the socialist collective housing areas (KTTs): the evolution and contemporary transformation of mass housing in Hanoi, Vietnam”. These studies mainly explored the change in the transition from collective or state ownership to privatization or individual factors affecting ownership in the 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 the lifestyles of the 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 (Pham Van Trinh 1986). Many programs gathered a number of researchers from different ministries, research centers, and universities to conduct surveys on the housing supply in Vietnam, mainly in big cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The main studies were concerned about the distribution of housing, and some were aimed at solving long-term issues.

In this study, the author researches the case of the Thanh Cong living quarters by drawing on specific examples, observations, viewpoints, and perspectives of the changes in this space over time.

## **2. Literature Review**

Firstly, research into planning, construction, and architecture primarily takes the form of theses and dissertations at Vietnamese universities, such as the National University of Civil Engineering and Hanoi Architectural University. These investigations focus on detailed technical parameters, building designs, and the societal factors influencing the renovation, maintenance, and replacement of aging collective buildings. The architecture of collective living spaces is significant, reflecting socialist values in Vietnam. Soviet influence has notably shaped Hanoi's architectural landscape, impacting construction designs, artistic expression, and the overall development of Vietnamese architecture. This influence brings both

advantages and limitations, as discussed by Vu (2016). Additional research on collective living quarters in Hanoi from 1954 to 1986 examines the realities and motivations behind changes in planning models, functionality, and infrastructure in response to modern societal shifts. Scholars are also exploring policies for renovating and maintaining these living spaces, particularly regarding safety and urban aesthetics during upgrades (Nguyen Huy Dan and Shiozaki 2018). Case studies of specific Vietnamese quarters, like Nguyen Cong Tru, Kim Lien, Thanh Xuan Bac, and Thanh Cong, provide foundational information for reference.

Secondly, research on housing ownership examines the shift from collective and state ownership to privatization and the individual factors influencing homeownership in collective living spaces. Initially, these buildings were state-owned and managed, with specific individuals assigned to them. However, post-1990 policy changes regarding land ownership and the emergence of individual agreements for purchasing apartments led to significant transitions in societal awareness and lifestyle among residents. These housing studies are crucial to understanding the daily lives of citizens and align with broader socio-economic goals, such as the housing program initiated by Pham Van Trinh in 1986. Various programs have engaged scientists from multiple ministries, research centers, and universities to survey housing conditions in Vietnam, focusing on major cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. Those research projects have assessed housing situations and proposed long-term solutions. The main method used is sociological research, investigating the social characteristics of housing, which resulted in a draft of 26

standards, norms, and technical guidelines, comprising over 40 volumes of documents, reports, and collected films.

Overall, the issues emerging from the relevant research mainly focus on exploiting the transformation of public spaces located inside the collective living quarters – the places that inherently are used for community activities and creating a shared atmosphere. It is noted in these studies that these communal spaces have been gradually encroached on for commercial purposes or personalization purposes. This research, therefore, will contribute a case study to the body of knowledge and provide an overview of the changes experienced amongst collective living quarters in Hanoi. This particular research will go further in clarifying the changes in using those public spaces as a result of the impact of human beings. The transformations will be identified in the case study to show the changes in the functions, the historical contexts, and other aspects related to the public spaces of the

collective living quarters. Additionally, it will emphasize the reflection of the changes in people's mindsets resulting from socio-economic shifts, especially after 1986, when the State implemented Doi Moi (reform). These changes broke the existing structures of collective living quarters and rearranged the daily routines of residents providing evidence into the issues connected with the contemporary notion of urban management and highlighting where these issues arose from.

### 3. Research context

Thanh Cong quarter is located in Thanh Cong ward, Ba Dinh district, Hanoi. According to statistics, the living quarter consists collectively of 87 buildings, which includes 4684 apartments within a 23-hectare area and approximately 1.2 hectares of row houses. All buildings are two to five floors high and were built in the period ranging from 1970 to 1980.

**Figure 1:** *Thanh Cong quarter*



(Source: Ecopark group)

Thanh Cong quarter located in the south of the inner city of Hanoi (see Figure 1 above). It has a mixed urban structure with different elements appearing within this one quarter, including a village, pagoda, communal house, collective living quarters, a lake, and the later addition of modern high-rise buildings. Through this case study, it was discovered that Thanh Cong quarter was constructed on agricultural lands of Thanh Cong village. The source of the lands used to build these buildings does not encroach on the scope of the village per se but did diminish the land for farming.

The development of urban areas over time created more and more new houses and as a result, Thanh Cong village itself became urbanized. Originally, there were only a few constructions, such as a communal house, pagoda, and road system, which have remained to this day (see Figure 2 and Figure 3 below). The rest of the original village has largely been replaced by rows of houses. Moreover, the collective living quarters and all constructions, which belong to Thanh Cong village, have gradually become more interconnected and have now become part of each other.

**Figure 2:** *The gate of Thanh Cong village*



*(photo captured by Nhat Long on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022)*



**Figure 3:** Thanh Cong communal house

(photo captured by *Nhat Long* on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022)

**Figure 4:** Thanh Cong quarter with other constructions in Thanh Cong ward

(Source: *Geertman, S.J.L (2007: 248)*)

Thanh Cong quarter is classified as a group of second-generation collective living quarters in Hanoi following the Soviet-style of design (see Figure 4 above). The housing structure has many changes in

terms of height and width and the scale is also bigger than those of previously constructed areas such as Kim Lien and Nguyen Cong Tru. At the same time, there were several living quarters built at the

same time as Thanh Cong like Trung Tu and Giang Vo. It is important to note that this was a generation of collective living quarters that had many advances in technology and construction scale. As a result, they could accommodate a larger number of residents than those belonging to the previous period.

It is notable that the design has evolved to focus more attention to the living functions needed to supply households. There were initial steps made to detach from the *collective* by minimizing shared areas such as kitchens or toilets. Conversely, some areas were designed with a kindergarten, school or public spaces (e.g., ponds, parks, playgrounds) located in

the center. The living quarter was then divided into a small group of buildings with a school positioned in the middle. This design approach was meant to serve the learning and living needs of residents in the areas. In addition, the transportation systems were designed to suit the types of vehicles commonly used in the 80s, which were bicycles.

Apartments in this period were mainly designed following the ‘corridor’ style, which typically featured a single staircase in the middle of the space. The corridor was arranged on one side and the apartments were divided in the form of tubes. Doors and windows open to the side of the shared hallway (Dang Hoang Vu 2016).

**Figure 5:** Block E9 – Thanh Cong quarter



(photo captured by Tat Thanh on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022)

**Figure 6:** Block E1 – Thanh Cong Quarter

(photo captured by Nhat Long on 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2022)

The public spaces of Thanh Cong quarter were designed following the Soviet concept. There was investment in landscaping, as well as in functions that meet human needs.

The difference between the Thanh Cong quarter (also known as the Giang Vo quarter) and other living quarters is that it has well-arranged green spaces in the form of parks and a lake (Thanh Cong Lake). These places serve as gathering spots for people to meet each other and exercise every day. Additionally, there are courtyards, or so-called playgrounds (because they are also used for children to play), which support both daily routines and activities, as well as being suitable for special occasions. All public spaces provide a place for residents to meet, communicate, and interact with each other. Besides the green spaces, there are also several schools ranging from kindergarten to secondary level located in central positions. These educational facilities form the core of the collective living quarter, which follows precisely the planning concept used in the

original Soviet constructions. The location of these facilities as part of the construction is essential and necessary to ensure that the lives of residents are made as simple as possible with easy access to required daily services. In addition, a developed society places a high priority on investing in and developing children from the perspective of caring for, protecting, and helping children grow up in the best conditions possible. This is also the key reason behind placing these constructions in the center of the collective living quarters.

While these conditions may sound ideal, it is important to note that Thanh Cong quarter has the same issues as other collective housing buildings in Hanoi, especially after the state changed from a subsidy-based into a market-driven economy. The issues related to owning apartments within the collective living quarters were eased and gradually they became personal properties as part of the phenomenon of freely expanding residential areas through encroachment onto public spaces.



**Figure 7:** Thanh Cong quarter with the groups of self-extension (2004)

(Source: Geertman, S.J.L (2007:250))

#### 4. Research Methods

This case study draws on research situated within cultural and historical values of the collective living quarters. There is particular focus given to information about campaigns or projects connected with organizations, institutes, and museums that aimed to enhance the value and influence of collective living quarters in the development of the socialist period in the 60s, 70s, and 80s (Duong Tat Thanh 2022: 47-48).

The main data collection methods employed in this research belong to the fields of sociology and anthropology, such as surveying documents and fieldwork in conjunction with in-depth interviews with several residents who have been living in Thanh Cong Quarter since the establishment of the buildings. Through the use of the stories shared by the residents, we have been able to ‘sketch’ a vivid picture of the Thanh Cong Quarter.

Three key data collection methods have been employed. First, archival research was done, primarily utilizing the archives of Hanoi City and documents gathered by the

Ministry of Construction from various archival centers in Hanoi. Second, by conducting a thorough analysis of the data obtained from archives and libraries, analysis and synthesis methods have provided valuable information for constructing the narrative of the papers. Lastly, fieldwork was done by surveying several collective living quarters in Hanoi and conducting interviews with residents.

Thanh Cong Quarter was chosen to be the main research object for this study because of its unique characteristics. This location was one of the main collective living quarters built in the period of the 1970s using well-planned design and aesthetic. Moreover, Thanh Cong Quarter still consists of the original design combined with some new building approaches, which enables the researcher to compare and evaluate the changes within Thanh Cong Quarter itself.

#### 5. The changes in public spaces in Thanh Cong quarter

Public space takes many spatial forms, including parks, streets, sidewalks and footpaths that connect, playgrounds of

recreation, marketplaces, but also ‘edge spaces’ that exist between buildings or roadsides. Public space forms the setting for a panoply of activities, including the ceremonial festivities of the multi-cultural city, trade connected with the commercial elements of the city, the movement of goods and people, provision of infrastructure, or the setting for community life and livelihoods of the urban poor (e.g., street vendors or waste collectors). Having sufficient open public space allows cities and towns to function efficiently and equitably (UN-Habitat 2018).

In this case, the public spaces were built among apartments blocks or located on the ground floor of each block. These buildings offer essential services organized to ensure they are easily accessible within a convenient radius, following a hierarchical principle that includes grocery stores, green spaces, and fitness facilities. Utilities are set up to grow in response to population changes, and all services are accessible based on their priority and the urgency of human needs. Each area serves specific purposes; for instance, there is a demand for education through schools and kindergartens, as well as a need for goods like grocery stores. Furthermore, there are open green spaces for residents to enjoy, socialize, and for children to play. Initially, public spaces were designed in accordance with regulations that prevented interference with unrelated functions. For instance, the yard between two blocks is intended exclusively for gatherings and prohibits any economic or commercial activities. The economy was subsidized, leading to restrictions on spontaneous or individual business activities, particularly within collective living quarters, where private trading activities were entirely banned.

Conceptually, in terms of design, public spaces were generally created with interspersed rows of houses which were arranged appropriately for each separate function area, creating convenience for the movement and access of residents. Moreover, the public spaces also created emphasis, decorations, and harmony among urban elements. The inclusion of nature, with the presence of gardens and trees, gives people a sense of connection to the environment and contributes to cleaner air.

The public spaces of Thanh Cong quarter were clearly planned and constructed to capitalize on the aesthetics and maximise the use of their functions. However, these constructions have experience certain changes due to human impacts. Some parts remain original in design and function but some have been upgraded or encroached on for different purposes.

In particular, there is a ‘park complex’ inside Thanh Cong quarter which has a system of trees and a large lake (Thanh Cong lake). They were included in the early stage of construction and have become an ideal place for residents to exercise and interact with others. In general, many different activities take place in this area and are still maintained today. This environmental feature is the highlight of Thanh Cong quarter, which is slightly different from the other collective living including those built in the same period. The scale of Thanh Cong is large with fully enclosed green systems which are close to nature and create a space for residents to relax, communicate and interact between people and nature. All of the spaces belonging to the park are well-kept and protected only for the purpose of creating open spaces for residents. In addition, the requirement of no commercial or business activities has been strictly upheld. Some

common activities that can be witnessed are dancing, walking around the lake, playing chess, or just simply sitting and relaxing, breathing fresh air.

Besides the park and Thanh Cong lake, there is another public space with highly valuable outdoors use – the empty courtyards between apartment blocks, which are known as ‘playgrounds’. Prior to the self-extension phenomenon, the spaces of the yards were quite large with the design ensuring that the width of the space was equal to the height of the blocks and that the length was equal to the length of the blocks. Some activities that have occurred in these spaces in the past, include cleaning the common areas, weddings, funerals, and festivals (e.g., Tet holiday (Lunar new year), and mid-autumn festival (Trung thu). These are also places for children to play after school and for the elderly look after their grandchildren. Over time, however, the market mechanism has appeared, which had led to encroachment of private business activities on these yards.

The occurrence of change is based on two main reasons. Firstly, the number of

people in each household increased which led to the need to expand the living spaces, drying spaces, and kitchens. Secondly, those who live on the first floor benefit from direct access to the spacious courtyard in front of their apartments. At the same time, there was a period of transition between the end of the subsidy mechanism and the beginning of the market mechanism. As a result, the phenomenon of starting various business activities by the residents living on the first floor emerged. Buildings were built to serve a society in which people mostly used bicycles for transport. In the past, each family only had one or two bicycles, which they could park in their apartments. However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the lives of residents became better and the number of motorbikes gradually increased. Residents living on the first floor saw a business opportunity to open parking services to address this change in conditions. Accordingly, they were able to use the entire front yard to serve as parking lots for residents (see Figure 8 below).

**Figure 8:** *Parking service in Thanh Cong quarter*



*(photo captured by Nhat Long on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022)*



Besides parking services, there used to be a model of centralized grocery stores which has now changed to personal businesses. There has also been the addition of restaurants and street eateries. Households living on the first floor started to engage in food selling if they had missed the opportunity to offer parking services. Many small restaurants were built within the extension spaces and developed

quickly. Residents not only have different activities in these extended spaces, but also encroached on the outer areas so they were able to serve a large number of guests as seen in Figure 9 below. This model expanded with people outside of the collective living quarter (e.g., not Thanh Cong residents) opening businesses, such as coffee shops and cafeterias, to capitalize on this economic opportunity.

**Figure 9:** Street food in Thanh Cong quarter



*(photo captured by Nhat Long on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022)*

However, not all the courtyards between the blocks in Thanh Cong quarter are used for business activities. There are still some that retain their original intention and are enclosed with low walls to avoid the expansion of such enterprises. For example, new exercise machines were installed to

serve people so they do not have to go to Thanh Cong lake to exercise and can now access physical activity options near their apartments as shown in Figures 10 and 11 below. In addition, some courtyards are also used as places to plant small trees, and grow vegetables in the style of communal gardens.



**Figure 10:** *Exercising and playground in Thanh Cong quarter*



*(photo captured by Tat Thanh on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022)*

**Figure 11:** *Elder people exercising*



*(photo captured by Nhat Long on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022)*

Within Thanh Cong quarter, the market is also considered a public space because it gathers many people and provides them with food supplies. Previously, under the subsidy system, the food supply stores were managed by the state and used a system of stamps to purchase goods. Each person had

certain limits and could not over-purchase. The sellers also imported a limited source of goods and traded them under the management of the state. During the period of economic change, private businesses appeared and competition arose around the quality and price of goods. There were two

types of market in the Thanh Cong quarter: the traditional market (chợ truyền thống) and the “toad markets” (chợ cóc). The Traditional Market is more aligned with the original version and is recognized by the administration as it focuses on selling vegetables, meat, and fruits to the residents of the collective living quarter and surrounding areas. Most of the sellers are residents of Thanh Cong quarter or Thanh Cong village. The price in the Traditional Market is usually a bit higher than other sellers outside of the market as the sellers have to pay the rent. Due to this requirement, when the Toad Market appeared, the sellers in the traditional market met some difficulties. Toad Market is different in approach and appears in the middle of the inner roads of Thanh Cong quarter. The way the market is organized is seen as spontaneous as it does not follow any regulations. Over time, it has developed its own routines and has certain clarity about the location and time (from 5 am to

11 am every morning). The sellers of the Toad Market are all from the countryside or suburban areas of Hanoi. The prices of their goods are cheaper compared to those sold in the Traditional Market, which makes them more competitive for the residents. The administrators have tried several solutions and applied some actions to reduce the size and scale of Toad Market due to negative impacts on the appearance of the collective living quarter, unsanitary activities, and the encroachment on the public road (as evident in Figure 12 and Figure 13 below). However, the phenomenon of the Toad Market has evolved over time so it is difficult to eliminate because it has become a part of residents’ lives with residents of Thanh Cong quarter standing up to protect sellers of the Toad Market from being evicted. In addition, some households living on the first floor have room for sellers of the Toad Market to rent.

**Figure 12:** *Small part of toad market in Thanh Cong quarter*



*(photo captured by Tat Thanh on May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022)*



**Figure 13:** *Small kiosk selling meat at Thanh Cong quarter*

(photo captured by Nhat Long on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022)

## 6. Factors leading to changes in the collective living quarters in Hanoi in general and Thanh Cong quarter in particular

Through an interview with Ms. T. B. Thuy, it was known that “each block of apartments in Thanh Cong quarter was categorized for a specific group of people. For example, Block E9 is for staff of the National Children's Hospital, Block E6 is for staff working in the medical and education sector, and Block E3 is for those who work in the oil and gas industry. She also revealed that her block – E9 – which contained mostly doctors, nurses, and staff of the National Children's Hospital, aged between 20 and 50 years and many were single. However, the state made some recent changes in passing new policies including those related to housing issues. These changes have led to the transition of the residents' composition to ensure that not only specific civil servants from an office move into one block, but instead there is a mix of people with different

occupations, family composition, and diverse ages living in Thanh Cong quarter. New groups of people moving to Thanh Cong quarter have created a new lifestyle that was different from the existing one as they have mostly come to run businesses and have a different mindset to local residents”.

A National Housing program (mainly focusing on urban areas) was implemented by the Ministry of Construction in collaboration with research institutes to focus on housing policies and current housing conditions in Vietnam from 1975 to 1985. Urban housing policies during this period centered around the practice of subsidization, reflecting a mindset that prioritized economic-technical solutions and the subjective imposition of an ideal of average distribution for all residents. At the time, the typical residential spaces were collective living quarters which were accompanied by a higher proportion of people living in the areas built by the state.

In the 1980s, the shortage of housing sources became increasingly serious due to the rapid increase in population, which later turned into a direct threat to the stability of the regime that was concurrently experiencing an economic crisis. The phenomenon of self-expanding the living spaces in many apartments within the collective living quarters caused issues related to safety as well as urban landscaping and appearance. The state had implemented a strategy to prevent and limit such spontaneity as well as privatization activities, both of which were affecting public housing areas by complicating the procedures relevant to permit requirements and increasing the time for processing and issuing licenses. Accordingly, people who wanted to remodel or expand their apartments needed to have a certificate from the ward administration providing the necessary permissions to increase their dwelling size. Equally, permits related to construction and repair were required if residents wanted to do something on the structure of the apartment during the period of the 70s-80s, even if the work seemed as inconsequential as repainting the doors (Nguyen Dieu Linh 2017). However, households were still built and repaired without permission and these kinds of activities took place in the period between 1975 and the late 1990s. It was reported in a survey conducted in 1983 that up to 83% of the residents living on the ground floor and 50% of whom living on the upper floors removed the walls inside their apartments without any permission to open up and increase the space inside any one room (Nguyen Dieu Linh 2017).

All collective living quarters including Thanh Cong quarter were built before 1986 as part of the subsidized housing program with apartments distributed by the state and

constructed without comprehensive housing policies. Apartments in the collective living quarters were considered as a type of 'goods' owned by the state. The beneficiaries of housing distribution were clearly identified, but in reality, the housing programs could only satisfy one-third of the housing needs of civil servants and employees (Tran Mai Anh 2017).

It can be assessed in general that policies directly related to housing issues have been issued since the implementation of the Doi Moi policy in 1986 and are related to the abolition of the state against the subsidy regime, which had a strong effect on the properties within the collective living quarters. The state encouraged people to take care of their apartments themselves, including construction and repair which had previously been the responsibility of the state management. Until 1987, due to the shortages in human resources and economic capacity, the housing production programs, under the main subsidy by the state, were halted. For the first time, private corporations were officially involved in constructing housing estates and a few years later, they were recognized as legal owners, and the ownership of the state was gradually removed. Decision No.3327/QĐ-UB was promulgated on August 11th, 1987 signed by the Chairman of the Hanoi People's Committee on "Organizing the construction and sale of houses for civil servants and employees". This decision created a mechanism to mobilize capital sources of the state, collectives, and people to develop housing funds. The state's investment in 1989 accounted for only about 30% of the housing funds required with the agencies and enterprises accounting for about 35% and self-investment by people accounted for about 33%. This was a transitional step



to gradually move towards the market mechanism in dealing with housing issues (Phan Huy Le 2012: 904).

The Housing Law in 1991 ensured people's housing ownership rights by encouraging all individuals and organizations to maintain and develop housing resources, and at the same time giving people the right to build and upgrade, rent, or sell their apartments. This was a complete change compared to the previous period, especially during the subsidy period when the above-mentioned actions were ultimately restricted. The state's completely subsidized housing mechanism was removed and people had the right to their own apartments. In addition, according to the 1992 Constitution, there was

a guarantee of people's rights to long-term and stable land use.

Decision No.188/TTg issued on November 27<sup>th</sup>, 1992 showed that housing subsidies by the state were abolished, including housing subsidies based on the salaries of civil servants and employees in the state sector. In the same year, the city implemented the policy of abolishing the subsidized housing regime. There were also a number of other laws and documents that had impacts on the issue of house ownership in collective living quarters such as Land law 1993, Decree No.60-61/CP in 1994 related to housing, residential land, and the housing business. From this point, residents living in collective living quarters had their own rights to their apartments.

**Table 1:** Construction/Upgrade of apartments through the years in the process of housing development

| Period  | 1930-1954 | 1955-1975 | 1976-1985 | 1986-1990 | 1991-1996 |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Percentage of households self-constructing or self-upgrading their apartments (%) | 1.0       | 6.4       | 13.1      | 19.4      | 51.4      |

(Source: Nguyen Xuan Mai 2001)

Under these change of policy as well as the mindset of the people, the collective living quarters gradually transformed well beyond the original urban planning. Thanh Cong quarter is a part of this changing process. Residents living here, through the above-mentioned impacts, had changed their thinking from the 'collective' to a more 'individual' outlook and took advantage, used, and encroached on public spaces for themselves and business purposes. In fact, during the transition between economic periods, many phenomena were difficult to manage and resulted in the current appearance of the

quarter. In addition to objective factors such as state policies, changes in the mechanism and subjective factors connected with the thoughts and actions of residents at Thanh Cong quarter, there was a change in significant resident composition. The commercial activities were not only allowed, but have appeared more frequently. Many households, after gaining better financial conditions, had moved out and left apartments for rent or sale. New residents coming from other places came with different living styles and habits than those who had been living in Thanh Cong quarter for a long time. Understandably,

these changes have led to some conflicts in the lifestyle as well as transformed the old way of living styles in Thanh Cong quarter.

## 7. Conclusion

Thanh Cong quarter is one of the most prominent areas in Hanoi with upgraded design, constructions, and landscape compared to other collective living quarters in the city. It is seen as a completed living area offering a fully functioning lifestyle for its community. Thanh Cong quarter underwent a lot of changes under the transition to a socialist oriented economy in Vietnam in the late 1980s. As a result, the quarter could not avoid impacts on the appearances and daily routines of residents. Step-by-step changes were a common phenomenon within all collective living quarters from this period.

The culture and daily activities of residents show the social and cultural characteristics of this neighborhood. Additionally, the relationship between architecture, urban planning, and daily life shapes the living style of people in the collective living quarters.

The changes in the architecture of living spaces are the direct result of the urbanization process and the change in the economy in Vietnam. The opening mindset goes along with the development of private business and leads to the appearance of different services in the collective living quarters. The original design of the collective living quarters was not suitable for private businesses, which led to the encroachment on public spaces. Moreover, the change in people's needs over time leads to the notion that "if there is demand, there will be supply". External factors influenced the collective living quarters, leading residents to start their own

businesses in order to take advantage of opportunities for higher profits and income to support their livelihoods.

The changes in living spaces partly reflect the change in people's mindsets as a direct result of the impact of market mechanisms. However, there are still many living spaces that maintain their original function. Several places in Thanh Cong Quarter are invested, maintained, and renovated to serve residents with 'green' areas and open community spaces.

Thanh Cong Quarter has both old and new structures. The researcher can easily notice the differences compared to the original design. The existing problems in the collective living quarters are a major concern for city planners, but they also present an interesting challenge for researchers to explore from various viewpoints. The issues related to the buildings in these living quarters are significant, prompting investment in solutions, whether through renovation, rebuilding, relocation, or replacement of the current structures. Analyzing and evaluating changes in public spaces within the collective living quarters can provide insights into shifts in living routines, offering researchers and city planners detailed, scientific information to develop effective long-term strategies.

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