

Housing for Low-income Groups in Ho Chi Minh City between Re-Integration and Fragmentation

Approaches to Adequate Urban Typologies and Spatial Strategies

Michael Waibel, Ronald Eckert, Michael Bose, Volker Martin¹

Summary

The metropolitan region of Ho Chi Minh City has been the greatest beneficiary of the ongoing transitional process in Vietnam, but this has been accompanied by a sharp rise of social polarization and spatial fragmentation. This paper analyzes the housing sector as an example of the complex dynamics of the transitional urban development. One of the highest income-housing price ratios in the world excludes large parts of the population, especially rural-urban migrants, from access to formal housing and has aggravated housing inequalities in general. New ideas on the provision of housing for low-income people are presented. Hereby, the concept 'Low Rise – High Density' for adequate urban typologies and spatial strategies is promoted. This comprehensive approach, based on proven strategies for sustainable urban development, is adapted to local culture, minimizes financial expenditure, considers socio-economic needs and provides environmental feasibility. A strategy towards re-integration, also requires the participation of all relevant stakeholders and the stronger incorporation of bottom-up initiatives and of residents' real-life expertise into public planning. Spatial strategies should be specifically developed concerning the redevelopment of residential areas in the inner city and housing in the areas of urban expansion as well as in the surrounding provinces.

Manuscript received on 2007-01-25, accepted on 2007-02-24

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Housing, Low-income Groups, Re-Integration

1 Introduction

The recent WTO entry of Vietnam marked the successful conclusion of the country's integration into the world economy and was a significant milestone of a gradual transitional process from a centrally-planned economy to a market-oriented economy since this process was started in the mid-1980s. The opening-up towards global capital and the adoption of an export-orientated industrialization policy has resulted in continuously high rates of economic growth, a huge decrease of the national

¹ With contributions by Thomas Knorr-Siedow M.A., Urban Sociologist at the Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning/Erkner.