

MIXED-INCOME HOUSING AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE 'PROJEK
PERUMAHAN RAKYAT' IN MALAYSIA

RYAN D'CRUZ

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Specially dedicated to *Mum* and *Dad* and *the rest of the family*.

Thank you God for everything.

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ABSTRACT

In most countries today, governments are required to provide housing to those that live in poor living conditions. The Malaysian government has introduced various schemes to allocate adequate housing to those who cannot enter market-rate housing. Unfortunately, housing schemes such as the Projek Perumahan Rakyat (PPR) apartment has created an environment of concentrated poverty and stigmatization that has led to negative land value, limited job prospects and segregation to those who live in such housing. Many developed nations have realised that the traditional public housing does not work because it create 'ghettos' and have moved on to introduce various forms of housing with one of them being affordable housing or mixed-income housing (MIH). MIH refers to the placement of people from different income groups under the same development where by residents share, own and manage the development with the hope that this then dissipates the concentration of poverty. The purpose of this research is to identify the benefits that mixed-income housing can have over public housing. This research is carried out to review other studies on MIH and propose an architectural-based guideline with relevant arguments. The findings indicate that MIH is still a fairly new concept and objectively determining the success of MIH is difficult because of the variables involved in defining successful social interactions. Nevertheless, better facilities and quality of housing indicates a shift towards better public housing. This research hopefully provides an alternative to the PPR in Malaysia that can improve the overall standard of living for the nation.

ABSTRAK

Di kebanyakan negara pada hari ini, kerajaan perlu menyediakan perumahan untuk penduduk yang tinggal dalam keadaan kemiskinan. Kerajaan Malaysia telah memperkenalkan pelbagai skim untuk memperuntukkan perumahan yang cukup untuk mereka yang tidak dapat membeli rumah pada kadar pasaran. Malangnya, skim perumahan seperti pangsapuri projek perumahan rakyat (PPR) adalah terlalu padat kependudukannya dan ini telah mewujudkan persekitaran yang tidak sihat yang secara langsung membawa kepada penurunan nilai harga tanah, prospek pekerjaan yang terhad dan stigma kepada orang-orang yang tinggal dalam perumahan seperti yang dinyatakan. Banyak negara-negara maju telah sedar bahawa perumahan tradisional sebegitu adalah tidak sesuai kerana ia mewujudkan kawasan-kawasan 'ghetto' dan telah memperkenalkan pelbagai bentuk perumahan. Salah satu daripadanya ialah rumah mampu milik atau perumahan bercampur pendapatan (MIH). MIH merujuk kepada penempatan penduduk dari kumpulan pendapatan yang berbeza di bawah pembangunan yang sama di mana penduduk berkongsi, memiliki dan mengurus kediaman mereka supaya kepadatan kemiskinan dalam sesebuah pembangunan dapat dikurangkan. Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji mengenai keberkesanan MIH dan mencadangkan garis panduan dengan hujah-hujah yang relevan. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti manfaat yang perumahan bercampur pendapatan ada berbanding dengan perumahan awam. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa MIH masih satu konsep yang agak baru dan ia adalah sukar untuk menentukan keberkesanan MIH kerana terdapat pelbagai pembolehubah yang terlibat dalam mentakrifkan interaksi sosial. Walau bagaimanapun, penyediaan kemudahan dan kualiti perumahan yang lebih baik menunjukkan peralihan ke arah perumahan awam yang lebih baik. Diharapkan kajian ini dapat menyediakan alternatif kepada perumahan awam di Malaysia dan sekaligus meningkatkan taraf hidup keseluruhan rakyat.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Mixed-income housing is a type of housing that caters for residents of varying income levels to live together in a particular development. The idea of mixed-income housing is not new and has been around since the 1970's and this idea was the result of the failure of public housing primarily in the west. Concentrated poverty in public housing developments proved to have a compounding effect on the neighbourhood and crime levels within such places were high. The result was that although people were not living in dilapidated houses or on the street, there was an absence in the quality of life.

By creating a community of varying household incomes the concentration of poverty stricken households can be reduced and their standard of living can be improved by introducing middle-income groups into the community that demand a higher quality of living (Schwartz & Tajbakhsh, 1997). Mixed-income housing involves attracting middle or high income dwellers into the development, in which high quality facilities are demanded. Hence, lower income residents are able to reap the benefits such as better housing options and quality and better amenities and facilities that those of high income bring into the neighbourhood.

There are several case studies that indicate mixed-income housing bringing about a better change to a neighbourhood and at times there has been no significant

change. Therefore, mixed-income housing requires a thorough understanding of the demographics of people that are going to reside in a particular development, the right level of 'mix' and how social interaction that crosses all boundaries of income within a development can be created. There are several challenges that need to be addressed when implementing mixed-income for example, sustaining those of middle or high income within the development and the delicate balance of understanding that those higher income do not always desire having a home beside a person of significant lower income.

The current public housing policy in Malaysia does not look into mixed-income housing as the way forward in housing for the poor and continues to provide high density housing that caters solely for low-income residents. This paper intends to look at the factors that need to be considered when implementing a mixed-income housing scheme within the Malaysian context.

1.2 Problem Statement

Public housing is often seen as the solution to better living standards for those that can't afford a home for themselves and are not able to compete in the housing market. Although public housing provides better dwelling spaces to live in as compared to slums, they do not provide a conducive environment for families or individuals to live in. Opportunities for a better life has been denied to those already deemed excluded by society for merely living in public housing (Aderson, et al., 2003). The main contention is that public housing creates a concentration of poverty that increases negative social and behavioural outcomes of that particular region. The stigma often associated with public housing means that individuals are often deprived of employment opportunities, land prices surrounding the area are low and basic facilities or amenities are often insufficient (Aderson, et al., 2003).

Looking into the Malaysian context, the country is seen to be on the rise in becoming a developed nation in the east and adequate provision of housing for the poor has been included as part of the 10th Malaysian Plan (National Housing Policy,

Ministry of Housing and Local Government) but in light of such policies, care must be taken so as to not make the same mistakes that other nations have made and learned for the solution of public housing may not always be the best. Such can be said for the United States that learnt this lesson from the Pruitt Igoe's public housing scheme in 1954 St. Louis, Missouri. The public housing attracted crimes through its concentration of the poor and budget cuts made during construction contributed to the dissatisfaction of living there. Eventually it was demolished in the mid-1970's (Schwartz & Tajbakhsh, 1997). Malaysia's solution to poverty by providing public housing Projek Perumahan rakyat (PPR) may be headed down the same path unless tackled differently.

There are gaps that exist within the research. These gaps provide the opportunity to further develop the research. One of the noticeable gaps in this research is the lack of empirical evidence to support the idea that designing for social interaction would have visible benefits for those living in MIH. Interaction can be considered an intangible trait that is rather difficult to assess. The number of variables involved and the different levels in which interaction can occur makes it hard to determine whether or not designing for social interaction can be successful. For the design of interaction to be successful, the success criteria in what is deemed as an acceptable level of interaction, either be it from neighbours having a meal together or to a casual greeting, has to be established.

The other gap identified in which this research hopes to address is the strategies prescribed in terms of design solutions. Creating MIH requires not only a shift in policies and financial structures but also in the design of the housing in itself. In this matter, very little research is offered for both developers and designers who choose to introduce MIH. This research hopefully sheds some light on how MIH can be designed to mitigate the issues identified within the PPR apartment.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to provide an alternative look into public housing that can raise the standard of living for the nation. This research was initially derived from the author's proposal for his Architectural Design Thesis in UTM, the issue for this research is raised from the site analysis of the project. This research, provides the overview of the Design Thesis; enriching the understanding on certain aspects when designing MIC. Throughout this research, there are several objectives that need to be fulfilled which are:

- i) To identify the issues with the housing quality of the 'Projek Perumahan Rakyat' in Malaysia.
- ii) To examine the benefits of mixed-income housing as well as its limitations.
- iii) To outline strategies in creating mixed-income housing.

1.4 Research Question

Based on literature studies, research questions arising are:-

- i) What are the housing problems with the 'Projek Perumahan Rakyat' in Malaysia?
- ii) What are the benefits that mixed-income housing can bring to Malaysia?
- iii) What strategies should be adopted to increase the quality of housing for low-income households?

1.5 Research Methodology

Research methodology indicates the direction and methods used to formulate the research. This is discussed in Chapter 3 where the framework is explained

comprehensively. Establishing the methodology helps articulate the theory and formulate the literature review into a coherent and extensive analysis. This research is based on literature reviews from which findings are discussed and analysed and strategies and possible solutions are offered in regards to the design implementation of MIH.

Secondary data are books, grey literature, journal article and internet-based article and previous theses that related to the subject matter which is mixed-income cohousing. This will be further discussed in the Chapter 3.

1.5.1 Literature Review

The literature review based research discusses the findings from previous thesis, books and journal papers. These findings serve as references to this research. The literature review begins with the understanding of the current scenario of public housing in Malaysia. How did it begin and develop into what it is today; with the various schemes allocated for the poor. It then looks into the definition of low-cost and the income margins that are associated with it. With these definitions and broader look in place, the PPR apartments are then zoomed in and the issues and concerns for it are highlighted. This forms the main contention for the reason of introducing mixed-income housing (MIH). With this formed, MIH is then introduced and defined. Many of the literature review is based on studies primarily conducted in the U.S. with some examples in the U.K. The history of evolution of MIH policy in the U.S. is critical as it provides the information of how it transformed from high density low-income public housing in the 1960s to that of mixed-income.

Consequently this, various types of mixed-income schemes are discussed and the type that hopefully can be implemented and is singled out. This implantation will then be elaborated in chapter 4. After providing a thorough view of MIH, the benefits of the scheme is discussed. These benefits translate to the need for a shift in the public housing scenario in Malaysia.

1.6 Expected Findings

From this study, it is expected that MIH can reduce the concentration of poverty and help alleviate negative land value and stigma that is associated with the PPR apartments. Creating a community of varying incomes creates its own set of challenges though that must be addressed. Some of the considerations that need to be addressed are how people of different incomes will live next to each other and the interactions that will take place. The role and responsibilities of various stakeholders are also important considerations in the building of MIC. These considerations form part of the strategies to accommodate MIH. What is anticipated is that MIH requires a shift in some of the policies and land regulations that are in place in Malaysia. Developers and various stakeholders need to be aware of the benefits of MIH and that the funding process for MIH is not a direct path either. Both government and the private sector will have to work together to produce quality housing for low-income households as national allocation for housing is not going to increase anytime soon. The strategies for implementing MIH will be both policy based and design based. When all these questions and strategies can be in place, what should be observed is the growing of a sustainable community system where different groups of people from different social spheres are interlinked and interdependent.

1.7 Structure of Thesis

Generally, the research is divided into five main chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research starting with the background of the study, the research objectives, research questions, literature review, and outline of the framework, methodology and the expected findings of the study.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review which includes understanding mixed-income housing, relevant case studies and other topics to support the research.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology of the dissertation comprised by the research paradigm and research design; and the outlining of the framework of research.

Chapter 4 is the analysis and findings of the research. In this chapter, by using case studies, applications of mixed-income housing can be analysed. At the end of the chapter, the synthesis of this information will be discussed to form possible strategies to achieve the aim and objectives that was mentioned in the earlier chapter.

Chapter 5 concludes this dissertation with a summary of the research; mentioning the significance of the overall research. In addition, this chapter will also highlight the shortcomings of the research and recommend potential ways to further develop the research.

1.8 Summary

This study is an extension of research done on *mixed-income housing* focused on its strategies and how it can address the public housing issue in Malaysia. Through this, better understanding of the different forms of affordable housing can help stimulate change for government and developers to provide better living conditions and alternatives to those that cannot afford quality homes. The findings that affordable cohousing may create sustainable communities will hopefully shift the direction of housing in Malaysia and improve the overall standard of living for the nation.

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