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HOUSING THE POOR

**A study of The People's Participation
in Urban Low Income Community Dwellings**

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ABSTRACT

In the process of housing the low income communities two paradigms could be identified. Among these two paradigms the provider based mass housing is happened only with the provider's attitudes and preferences without providing provisions to convert the house into a home according to the dweller's aspirations. With this paradigm which has less difficulties in the process of implementation in terms of time and construction, most of the time the governments deal with the problem of housing in a much easier way. Therefore this method of housing usually could be seen in developing countries which does not allow opportunities for people to make homes as they wish.

The other paradigm that is the 'Support based' shows as a process which provide every opportunity to make home for people themselves, always encourage the people's decision making power and thereby the owner or the person who lives in the house involves, participate authentically in the process of making his place of living.

In the practice of housing the poor there can be identified three major themes.

1. Participation
2. Flexibility
3. Enablement as professional role

In this study more concern is to be given about the participation which increases owner control over his home design. As a provision to this discussion at the beginning the concept of community architecture and status each party and this relationship to each other is discussed thoroughly.

Then the actual meaning of people's participation and its deep psychological relationship with the home as a meaningful authentic place has been discussed in terms of human existence.

In chapter three the life of shanty communities in terms of socio-cultural and behavioural criteria is taken into the discussion and try to develop the theoretical perspective about the shanty dweller, and also as a support based community design process the million housing programme is taken to the

discussion considering its structure and limitations within which the programme was carried out.

At the end, as case studies 'Navagampura' and 'Bandaranayakapura housing projects which were carried out under the million housing programme, are examined and discussed under the following important criteria.

1. Extent of people's participation
2. Success in terms of Architectural compositioning

To identify the above criteria of the case studies first the million housing programme has been discussed in terms of political, economic and social concepts. In order to evaluate the support based paradigm through the million housing programme, the extent of people's participation towards place making also has been taken into account at this stage.



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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

As Clare cooper once stated "House is a symbol of self". This is clear when status of two persons are considered. Both of them are completely different to each other. They are unique from one to another. Considering the houses when they convert it to homes by looking at them it could be clearly identified the uniqueness of different people. It changes its appearance according to attitudes, behaviour of individual and social status of the dweller.

Therefore this complexity has to be focused not only in its external appearance but also in its internal planning. Unfortunately, present day provider based settlements have difficulties in personalization. It is found that almost majority of them are lack of fundamental necessities which is common to any human society.

Hence, it is important to recognise, basically in mass housing

- (a) The fact that every family and every person is unique and must be able to express that uniqueness.
- (b) The fact that every family and every person is a part of society and requires bonds of association with one another.

Today in the process of mass housing the user or the owner, in much more sense, is given a less consideration. By using the word 'user' still, it is clear that the 'house' considered as a product in the market. Therefore the necessary fundamental aspects which ties with the term of 'home', is completely neglected in the present conventional process of design. This does not upgrade the dweller. Because the upgrading of any person has a strong linkage with his place of living. Therefore this provider based process has to be changed and the design process with bottom up decision making power has to be encouraged.

Architect who belong to support based paradigm identify these necessity and they support the idea of people's participation. Million housing programme in Sri Lanka is much more closer to this design approach. This study is thus focused on an evaluational study of the Million housing programme in terms of the extent of people's participation and the success of the design from the architect's point of view.

Various scholars believe that maximum people's participation expresses the complexity that society has, and it enables the case of personalising the individual dwelling and preserves the identity of the society.



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Therefore the intention of this study is to evaluate the idea of people's participation and highlighting its requirements to personalise the settlements.

Home is a single building unit that an individual person can change, add and alter according to his expectations and in accordance with the basic psychological need of human existence.



Present day mass housing and lump development reduces the owner's role into a consumer status and this tension makes the owner an outsider.

Therefore any design process, specially in mass housing, the owner's or the people's control has to be enhanced to reach maximum and has to be empowered to minimise the phenomenon of alienation. Participation is not only for individual success but it also enables community betterment and understanding of common interests and priorities at community level.



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As Macgill and Horton point out,

“ Individuals seeking information and action on their own problems converge with other individuals with similar needs for research and action.....

..... the convergence of interests establishes a special phase of participant commitment and involvement which is continuously drawn upon and further developed as the process proceeds”.

[Hamdi 1991:77]

History shows the fact of provider based housing policy is a failure and this paradigm gradually shifts towards the support housing policy. This happens not only in third world countries according to Nabeel Hamdi.

He says,

“In the developing countries, community participation become a buzzword in international urban development policy when a world bank accepted sites and services as legitimate programmes in housing in the mid 1970's.

[Hamdi 1987:76]

Million housing programme is basically a process oriented programme. Success or failure of this programme can be looked upon as a subjective matter. Most of the evaluations are carried out in terms of MHP. The planners, politicians are mostly concerned about facts and figures. For the sake of implementing a new housing policy for the urban poor, it is important to evaluate and conduct research on the success of previous policies in terms of community building policies, socio-cultural upliftments and the architectural points of view in housing for the poor is a continuous process and does not end as a static product. Comparing the support based and the provider based housing policies there is no doubt that the first one provides

grater opportunity to the dweller theoretically, but yet, it is to be observed with the actual housing projects carried out under this concept. Now it is the most suitable time after 13 years to evaluate the MHP in terms of socio-cultural and architectural points of view.

At the very beginning of this study what is basically called 'community design' will be discussed. The prime attention is given to its process, the role it plays and responsibilities among its participants and to their relationships.

With the above aspect in the first chapter of this dissertation it is discussed the concept of place and place consciousness in terms of settlements and its need for the human existence, also.

Second chapter deal with the discussion of the validity of participation of people and its appropriateness to the self conscious place making.

In the third chapter to give a clear picture of these low income communities, it is discussed the socio-cultural context of them and some theoretical ideologies forwarded by various

scholars .Evaluating the MHP under the support based housing policy, two case s have been selected .

Basically these case studies address on following aspects, which makes the interest of the reader.

1. Extent of people's participation
2. Success of architectural compositioning

According to Nabeel Hamdi, following main themes can be identified.

- a. Participation
- b. Flexibility
- c. Enablement

In this study the participation by the people is the main concern. The main aim is to evaluate shanty upgrading under MHP and to examine to what extent it is successfully achieved.

Following reasons were mattered to concentrate the discussion on the shanty dweller inner city areas.

Since the marginal territoriality and the way of their life they are passing the transitional period socially and economically from low income categories to middle income urban society. then there can be seen some variation and complexities among their society. And also they have very limited area of land when compared to the village dweller and have complex need and requirements than in village, such as home based economic activities etc..