

A REVISITED OVERVIEW OF INDONESIAN PUBLIC HOUSING DESIGN PROGRAMME

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Housing programme has been preoccupying Indonesian government since its first establishment in 1947, but it was Dutch Indies government that started it around the end of the 19th century in response to strong pressure from the Dutch Parliament in the Netherlands to include the welfare of local people in government's policy. The implementation was to include houses for local people in a new housing complex of the Europeans since they were supposed to work for these communities. They had their own served facilities such as a market and shops as well as communal garden in a compound that was located nearby or adjacent to the European's. Classification was obvious. The European and their houses were at the frontage of the complex whereas local people and houses were at the backdrop, which corresponded to different types of building. The Europeans had a villa type of large houses whereas the local people's houses were small and usually in a row. The local people's houses adopted common domestic houses with a strong emphasis on designing formal appearances so as to give a degree of familiarity to the inhabitants. Hence, it was usually a half-brick and half-timber construction featuring an interesting local roof forms and simplified decoration whereas the floor plan consisted of at least one common room and two bedrooms with separate utilities at the backyard which were open or covered by temporary construction. These houses divided the floor directly into several rooms without any corridor; which was a common characteristic in designing a house during the period.

The building of such a complex had been halted during the Japanese occupation, but it was restarted after the Japanese surrender in 1945. The re-established Dutch Indies government continued the housing programmes with a new idea of a satellite town

planning and garden city design. Hence, the location was either at the edge of mother-city or in a distance and the design emphasis was on several public parks and gardens as focal points. Some of the houses encircled the public gardens whereas public amenities encircled the public parks but the majority were still facing the streets. There were no special designs for local people's houses in the satellite because it was built for the government employees only. Hence, there were only different types of houses that corresponded to the ranking of their inhabitants. As such, there were houses from the smallest to the luxurious one and from one storey to the two storey structure as well as flats; which were the first kind in the country. These flats were also classified according to the ranking of their inhabitants, using a single loaded corridor floor plan a coupling arrangement of units for the efficiency of vertical utilities. With such an arrangement, the balcony on each unit created a chess-board pattern of façade in one side and bands of straight lines on the reverse façade, hence featuring dynamic faces to the surrounding. The overall look of one storey houses type, on the other hand, was similar to the previous ones. The design still emphasized variety combinations of geometric building masses and roof forms whereas the two storey houses introduced a new eclectic style that featured either asymmetrical forms or rotated ones. The whole floors were to accommodate living units and separated from common facilities, which were located somewhere nearby. The layout was basically a single loaded corridor that served series of living units on each floor.

Indonesian government took over these satellite town's projects following its sovereignty in 1949 and determined to accomplish them. There were additional types of houses learning from housing facilities in military complex. As such, these new types had no beautifications but the main necessary needs only. They were either coupled or row houses with saddle roof forms and small terraces at the frontage that were covered by the extension of overhang while the utilities were still separated at the backyard similar to the earlier examples.

The Ministry of Public Works was the government's body that must taken care the national programme of housing at that time, financed mostly by outside resources such as the World Bank. Hence, there were many experiments on other programmes such as the self-help and site development as well as on new, easy-made and cheaper building materials. Unfortunately, there were no remaining examples of such experiments except for prototypes of houses design that used new experimented building materials. There were also new designs using experimented building materials to feature a modern life-style of living, such as the application of mezzanine floor and dynamic facades so as to provide sufficient space for the higher classes of inhabitants while at the same time reducing the required site area. Unfortunately, many of these housing experiments were neglected and the site was sold to private owners who made their own way of houses.

In 1970, the New Order government enlarged the scope of housing programme by establishing the State Ministry of National Housing. The main task was to fulfil the yearly target of constructing public houses by utilizing government's vacant sites in the urban area and acquiring sites in the periphery of big cities. Building classifications and types were standardized and officially regulated for all kinds of housing development in the country, including those that were done by the private sectors. There was regulation on the proportional numbers of house's types that should be provided within the area of development. For one luxury type of a house for the high-income family, the developers must built three houses of standard type for the middle income families and six small houses for the low incomes. The first completion of this new approach on public housing was in the seventies, featuring a built-environment that was similar to the phenomena of western urban sprawls in the fifties. Here, a multiplication of single type of house filled up the developed site or, in other cases, the three groups of neighbourhood units that contained the luxury, standard and small houses sit together in a different position within the site, with luxury and standard groups having the best view and easiest access to public facilities as well as to the main roads. Due to the regulation of building classifications and

typologies, all houses were basically a multiplication of box structure that necessitated low pitched roofs and the replacement of conventional roof tiles by manufactured materials such as asbestos and aluminium. Flats, on the other hand, used steel constructions as the main structure and manufactured panels or bricks as the main building components with two basic types, namely the single loaded corridor or linear type and the couple type. These flats were to accommodate the middle and low income groups only, without any consideration to the tropical climate. Hence, they were also a repetition of box-like buildings with similar type of floor plan containing the maximum of two bedrooms, a bath room and utility space. All of these functions must face heavy rains, strong sunlight and heat almost without any protection. Additionally, the period also saw a turning point in flats' floor plan layout in favour of the double loaded corridor, the main consideration of which was optimization of the building floors disregard the darkness and unhealthy environment it created inside the flats.

In the eighties, there were a strong movement from Indonesian academic experts on housing to formulate the community approach in designing and constructing public houses. A pilot project on such an approach in cooperation with Surabaya Municipal Government, East Java had even received an honourable mention from the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. Despite such a case, the Government still pursued its initial direction to stress the quantity instead of quality of living in public housing. In order to multiply the number, the standard and smaller types were averagely reduced from 75 to 54 square metres and from 45 to 37 square metres, yet it still unable to meet the growing need of houses in the country. Therefore, the Government started to ask the private sectors to participate in public housing programmes. The privates came up with cunning solutions by beautifying the frontage of the standard, small and flat types through cosmetic facades the main objective of which was to please the eyes. Unexpectedly, it received strong reception from the public. These types were sold very fast and it became a new style of living in many large cities in the country. In turn, the Government followed such a trend by designing its new public housing

projects according to such a technique. Variety combinations of roof forms that crowned the top of previous box-like buildings became a common feature in recent public housing projects as well as additional overhang to cover windows and balconies. The style has become a characteristic of public housing recently, but it is more costly than the previous ones so that only the middle income communities may afford to occupy such a type of housing. Hence, the initial objective to provide housing for the majority of low income people in Indonesia is still a problematic to overcome.

Recently, the new Ministry of Habitat and Regional Utilities that replaced the Ministry of Public Works held an open competition to design types of rented flat for lower incomes community. There were many interesting solutions coming in from Indonesian architects, but most of them were using Western standards of living in a combination with tropical climate of Indonesia. As such, the fact that such a type must be done under a very dense population and high building coverage was forgotten and it is still a big question as to whether the various designs would actually solve the problem of housing in Indonesia.