(Re)developing old apartment blocks in Hanoi: government vision, local resistance and spatial routines

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ABSTRACT
This article examines experiences from redevelopments of old housing estate in Hanoi via a case study of old Soviet-style apartment estates (KTT), which represents one important layer of the city’s built environment. As redevelopment of these housing estates have recently attached attention from local public and media, this article looks at the recent practices and challenges facing by local government, property developers and residents whose involvement and tensions will be also examined to have a better understanding of the nature of changes as well as local struggles in their making and remaking of housing environments. Implication from this study of Hanoi’s KTTs will hopefully help informing policy-makers and designers in making technical planning and housing strategies for redevelopment projects in Vietnam and other Asian cities with similar social and cultural contexts.

Introduction
(Re)development of urban housing estates, particularly in state-run housing projects, has presented on-going issues of dissatisfaction or incompetence in developing world including Vietnam. While new large-scale developments in Vietnamese major cities are clear evidences of the state’s vision and policy in moving them towards a “world-class” status, spatial practices and experiences from older medium-size housing estates and recent attempt to redevelop them seem to be a “hindrance” to the progress to such the status according to the state. Hanoi, for example, is increasingly transforming due to rapid urban development and global flow of investment. The city has been examined and understood as a place where the built environment is characterized by dynamic transformation as the result of more than 1000 years of Chinese domination, almost 100 years of French colonization, and several decades of post-independence with support and assistance from the former Soviet Union. The recent Doi Moi (economic reform) and opening up to the world have led to rapid (re)developments of both old and new housing estates that seem to bring another layer of urban experiences to Hanoi.

This article examines experiences from redevelopments of old housing estate in Hanoi via a case study of old Soviet-style apartment estates (KTT), which represents one important layer of the city’s built environment. As redevelopment of these housing estates have recently attached attention from local public and media, this article first examines architectural changes and spatial practices including first-hand observation and interpretation of everyday life and recent redevelopment made by local stakeholders and residents at inner-city KTTs. Existing studies that looked at different aspects of KTTs in Vietnam have provided a broader scholar context in which findings from this article is located. Tran and Dalholm (2005) looked at KTTs as a case study to examine the impact of privatization on the living conditions of tenants in comparison to those of owners. This study suggested that privatization actually added to the existing inequity between different social groups as privatization policy is more in favour of senior government officials, who are usually in high-income groups, than low-income residences. Privatization also contributes the increasing inequality between wealthier housing areas and poorer ones. Lack of ownership regulations after privatization also results in dilapidation of common areas in all KTTs.

Dan and Shiozaki (2011) looked at upgrading projects of public housing in Hanoi via reviewing local policies for and planning mechanism as well as an intensive household surveys to understand residents’ perceptions, opinions and consensus on upgrading projects prior to upgrading implementation of at some KTTs. This study found out that most KTTs are downgraded and in need of serious upgrading. Majority of residents interviewed are supportive to proposal to renovate the KTTs and the residents should be informed and part of the upgrading projects.

Phuong (2011) and (2015) examined the informal building extensions to KTTs via an intensive study of architectural changes at building block scale and individual apartment units. The author suggested that the nature of these changes raises the need to take into
account the influences of local everyday life routine and need that were manifested in the way local residents have adaptively changed the KTTs. Most recently, a monograph published by Vietnamese Writer Association (2018), presents a collection of studies focusing on memories of life in KTTs in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. These collected works recall the nostalgic feelings of everyday life and spaces including post-war difficulties amongst peoples who lives or used to live in the KTTs.

These existing studies set a contextual ground for the following questions to be further explored in the current research: How has local residents changed the KTTs, spatially and physically since the application of privatization policy? How have the upgrading projects regarding KTTs been progressed? What are the actual responses of local residents to the KTTs redevelopment projects? In what way have memories and living experiences been reflected in recent KTTs upgrading projects? How has tradition, as manifested in local spatial practices, been persisted or resilient to changes brought by KTT redevelopment projects? And what can the traditional practices of space, in turn, contribute to changes to urban housing policies?

To further address these questions, this article also looks at the recent practices and challenges facing by local government, property developers and residents whose involvement and tensions will be also examined to have a better understanding of the nature of changes as well as local struggles in their making and remaking of housing environments. These research findings will be supported by a review of relevant urban and architectural literature including those that deal with traditional settlements in urban Hanoi and other places with similar context. Material for this research was collected via both first-hand observations during recent field trips and secondary materials taken from local media, such as newspapers and television reports.

**Method of inquiry**

All information and data otherwise cited in this paper were collected by the author during the fieldtrips in 2009, 2014 and 2018. Data collection including first-person observation and interview were conducted at several KTTs, such as Nguyen Cong Tru, Thanh Cong and Giang Vo, some of the first public housing developments in Hanoi, which are currently under redevelopment. While most KTTs face problems regarding building renovation KTTs Nguyen Cong Tru and Thanh Cong are examined in more detail as they are two of the first KTTs in Hanoi and under ongoing redevelopment issues that have attracted great attention from general public and local public media. Looking at these two KTTs will bring in some implication for other with similar problems in Hanoi.

Observations were conducted in more details at blocks B1 and B2 in KTT Nguyen Cong Tru and block C1 in KTT Thanh Cong. Observations were recorded by sketching, taking notes and measured drawing, photography and video. This observation focused on everyday activities, such as vendors, home-based retailers and building facades and details. These were carried out at different times, which enabled an understanding of how streets and buildings work. Onsite sketching and building measurements were conducted, which gave more insight into the study process. The photos focused on the street space, inside and outside the apartment units, the footpaths, and the local activities and building elements.

The interviews and observations of physical characteristics of buildings were structured by a set of open guidelines. This research collected qualitative data from studying some apartment units in more detail, such as units 304 and 309 in block B1 in KTT Nguyen Cong Tru. For in-depth information, a series of other interviews were made, which targeted different professions including historians, architects, planners, local residents and most importantly, neighbourhood leaders. Each apartment block often has a neighbourhood leader selected by local residents to represent all households in the block in dealing with everyday issues and common works, including internal and external correspondences. Three neighbourhood leaders represented three apartment blocks were interviewed for this research. Another method to achieve collective information regarding KTT redevelopment was attending resident-run neighbourhood meetings, which were chaired by the neighbourhood leaders. (Figure 1)

Secondary data collection was conducted through researching back issues of major local newspapers and television reports. Archival documents and local housing policies including maps, old photos, plans, architectural drawings, memoirs, paintings, and videos were collected from various institutions. The nature of this research involves collecting different types of data across disciplines and from different sources, and then describing, comparing and reflecting on them and carrying out a content analysis of the materials from different perspectives.

In particular, old maps, photos, transcriptions of interviews with local historians and old residents were used to describe the historical characteristics of the selected KTTs. Photos, video, sketches, notes from interviews with house-owners were used to analyse the present-day condition of the places. The secondary data, including paintings and other related historical documents, such as archival photos and old maps were also described and analysed. Discussions and reflections on the nature of changes as well as local struggles in their making and remaking of housing environments were based on the analysis of collected data.
Soviet-style apartment estates (KTT)

Several decades of support from the former Soviet-Union had an impact on Hanoi’s built environment. While South Vietnam had American support, the North followed the socialist ideology of the Soviet-bloc. During and after Vietnam War (1956–1975), Hanoi received great economic and technological aid from the Soviet-Union. This also applied to the field of architecture and urban planning. Architects and urban planners from Russia were sent to Hanoi, while many Vietnamese were sent to universities in Soviet-bloc countries to study architecture and construction.

The influence of the Soviet socialist ideology on Hanoi’s urban fabric was probably most recognizable in housing. After 1954, houses and land were strictly controlled by the government. Hanoi’s government implemented subsidized public housing developments called khu tap the (KTT). There are several types of KTTs including single-level KTTs, double-level KTTs and medium-high KTTs. This article focuses on the later type, which were modelled after the Soviet housing system called microrayan. (Bater 1980) This scheme was implemented in Hanoi by Russian experts. (Hung and Thong 1995) Each KTT was a self-contained residential community that consisted of a number of four- or five-level apartment blocks with attached basic services, such as medical centres, schools and kindergartens. Each apartment block had standard units for different sized families with shared bathrooms and kitchens. They were often managed by a government company to provide homes for its employees and staff. (Figure 2)

Historically, KTT Nguyen Cong Tru, together with other KTTs, such as Giang Vo and Thanh Cong, represent an important layer of Hanoi’s architecture. The building of the KTTs began in 1954 and marked an historic change in Hanoi’s planning and architecture, hence transforming its urban image regarding housing and building development. For many people in Hanoi, such as Mr. Viet, this model of housing recalls the memorable so-called “government subsidized” period between the early 1960s and the late 1980s.1 It was a difficult time for the country, due to years of wars and a closed-door economic policy. (Figure 3)

Even though Hanoi’s KTT still remains as an architectural reminder of Vietnam’s socialist links, they have changed significantly since Doi Moi started in the late 1980s. Most changes are the result of informal building additions and interior renovation. On one hand these informal building activities are criticized as illegal and unsafe. On the other hand the changes show that this Soviet-style architectural model seems to have been adapted to meet local traditional lifestyles and routines, which have been practiced in Hanoi’s Ancient Quarters for centuries. Family-owned shops are added to most ground floor units. Not just mere residential space, much of these informal building additions to Hanoi’s KTT provide space for traditional family-based shops, restaurants and workshops, which are vital to social, cultural and economic life of individual households as well as neighbourhoods nearby. (Figure 4)

Everyday activities in the KTTs after Doi Moi seem to mimic the traditional patterns of life in Hanoi’s streets, including the presence the specialized street and family-run shops. More significantly, these local modes of living seem to exist despite the massive structure of the apartments, and have substantially transformed the buildings, which were imported from outside and not designed to foster such activity. These described characteristics are worth mentioning because they support local patterns of life. However, their roles are often taken for granted hence ignored by local policy-makers.

Before 1990, under strict socialist housing regulations, private ownerships, private construction and building renovation activities were discouraged in Hanoi. These activities were controlled by the government. All changes to both interior and exterior spaces of a building required a number of separated construction permits, which normally took very long to issue. Since the 1990s, some of these requirements were dropped but all construction activities supposedly need certain types of official papers from the ward or higher levels of local government.

Most construction activities, including building additions to KTTs, either with or without permits,
violated the construction regulations. This phenomenon is due to critical shortage of housing with standard living space during and after the Vietnam War. It is also partly due to a lack understanding of local everyday need by policy-makers as manifested in current construction rules, which appeared not to respond well to local housing need and changes. To get more living spaces, local residents did not have any options other than violating the rules. (Figure 5)

Mr. TBT, a resident in KTT Nguyen Cong Tru, said that his family has lived in this KTT for the last 50 years. As with most of his neighbours, his unit was able to accommodate his immediate family when he first moved in. It, however, was not
large enough for his extended family of three generations as his children got married and had children. His family had no other option but extending their unit by adding new rooms to existing structure.²

Moreover all family members work and study locally. The family’s income now mainly come from the shops opened at the additional room on the ground level of the KTTs. (Figure 6)

Redevelopment of downgraded KTTs has faced multiple issues that caused major delay since 2002 when the government decision to rebuild the KTTs was in place. According to Hanoi’s Department of Construction, there are about 1516 KTTs, mostly 3–5 levels, built between 1960s and 1990s in Hanoi. Fourteen KTTs, represent only one percent of the total number, were renovated since 2002. (TTXVN 2016a) Delay usually happens before the site clearance stage as most residents do not want to move

²Interview with Mr TBT at KTT Nguyen Cong Tru in 2018.

Nguyen Cong Tru, one of the earliest KTTs in Hanoi, and build a new housing and commercial estate. In early 2011, the first two apartment blocks in KTT Nguyen Cong Tru have been pulled down as part of this redevelopment.

Redevelopment issues

Figure 4. Section through the yard between Blocks B1 and B2 showing shops added to ground-floor units and bedrooms added to upper units (Measured and drawn by the author).

Figure 5. Floor-plan of unit 304: (1) original room; (2) kitchen, bathroom and toilet; (3) balcony used as an extra bedroom; (4) shared corridor (Measured and drawn by the author).
out due to concern about the living standard and amenities of temporary accommodation. They are worried that the move also affect their family every life routine to work and school. Delay also occurs during and even after the construction due to disagreement on relocation plan between local residents, government and developers. To get a better understanding of the issues this section looks at two of the KTTs: Nguyen Cong Tru and Thanh Cong.

A redevelopment plan of KTT Nguyen Cong Tru was started in 2002. As a pilot project only two out of 14 apartment buildings in this KTT were selected for the reconstruction supported by the government. The project progressed very slowly due to delays caused by disagreement between local government, developers and local residents. It took several years for a redevelopment plan to be done as not many developers were interested in it. The developers think that it was not potential compared to new development due to a lack of appropriate policies in dealing with complicated local issues. It also took a number of years to finish the site clearance as some residents, particularly those who lived and doing business on ground levels, refused to vacate and move out for the construction. All residents were provided with temporary accommodation during the construction. Those who refused to move out said that their retail businesses would be badly affected by the relocation.

The site clearance only finished in 2013, more than 10 year after the project started. Under the pressure from the government construction started at the end of 2013 and finished in early 2016. The new building is ready for residence in April 2016. It has 19 upper-ground levels and 3 under-ground levels. However, only 26 out of 242 families moved in the new building. (Cuong 2016) Each family is allocated an apartment unit that is larger than the old one to better meet the present-day living standard. The residents will need to pay for the exceeded area. Mr. MXC, the neighbourhood leader in the KTT, said that those families who have not moved in keep staying in temporary accommodation and said that the cost they need to pay for the exceeded areas is very high. They have stayed in the temporary residences without stable incomes for seven years because they cannot run family-based businesses as they could since moving out of the KTT. Those who are able to afford to pay to move in are the families living in the upper levels of the old apartment and whose family incomes are not locally relied on the home-based retails.
These residents ask for a price cut or if they can pay as mortgage.\textsuperscript{3}

The negotiations have not been resolved as of the last field trip in 2018. One of the main issues I believe is that the new buildings do not provide enough spaces that support home-based retail activities that have been an important part of local everyday life and economy for decades. It will be very hard for local residents to make a living without spaces for family business that they have practiced for generations.

Delay to KTT redevelopment also happen during the construction stage. The redevelopment of KTT Thanh Cong, for example, was delayed when the residents protested and stopped the construction. In 2008 building C1 in KTT Thanh Cong was redeveloped by the state-supported company named Cienco 1. This KTT was originally built in 1974 by the same company. The building had some structural issues so it was not hand over to the local council as the management body like other KTTs. The company reinforced its structure then used it as subsidiary accommodation for its employees. Due to a flood in 2008 the building was in high risk condition structurally and 110 families living in the building were requested to move to temporary accommodation. (Hoang 2013) (Figure 8)

In 2009, the developer started the reconstruction without consultation with local residents. The project was stopped by the residents as they believed there was not enough communication between them and the developer regarding the new development plan. In 2012, under the pressure from the local government, the developer restarted the project without a full agreement from all local residents. The project was further delayed.

Interestingly, the redevelopment proposal with a relocation and compensation plan was done and approved by local council. The new building will have 17 levels. The ground level will be rented out to local residents as retail space. Level 2–6 will be used for relocation of families formerly lived in the old building. As an initial plan each family will be relocated in a new apartment, which will be 1.4 times larger than the apartment the same family used to have in the old building. According to Mr. Nguyen Van Chinh, a resident in the building, as of 2013, the developer has not sent anyone to discuss the redevelopment issues with the residents. Starting the construction without a full agreement with the residents has made them very unhappy. He also said that the relocation and compensation plan is not reasonable as compared to some other similar projects in Hanoi given the increase in the living standard in the last few decades. Also local residents were not happy with the design and sizes of apartment units as almost 40 percent of the units were under 50 square meters, which are small according to present-day living standard. (Hoang 2013)

Under the pressure from the residents some progress were made in 2015 when the developer started to negotiate with the residents. More than 70% of the families (76 families) agreed on this a plan. Those who did not caused the further delay. When the building foundation was being done the residents who did not agree on the redevelopment plan protested and tried to stop the project. They asked for a better compensation plan with each of their new apartment will be 2 times larger than the old one. The residents who protested against the project usually lived on the

\textsuperscript{3}Interview with Mr MXC at KTT Nguyen Cong Tru in 2018.
\textsuperscript{4}Interview with Mr. Chinh by Chau Anh, published in VTC News (Vietnam Television Chanel), 05/08/2013, https://vtc.vn/nghi-an-la-san-sau-so-xay-dung-ha-noi-len-tieng-d123975.html.

\textbf{Figure 8.} A block in KTT Thanh Cong is fenced for redevelopment plan (Photo by the author).
ground and first level units of the old building. (Figure 9)

Like most other KTTs in Hanoi, families in the old building particularly those lived on the ground level, could make substantial extensions to their units and open shops. However, all building extensions did not have official permits hence illegally statuses. Developers and local council therefore could not take these extended spaces into account when doing the relocation plan.

This redevelopment, which was planned to finish in 2 years, was delayed for almost 8 years. Mr. Pham Van Ho,⁵ the former neighbourhood leader in the old building said that this project has disadvantage compared to other projects. It does not get good financial support from the local city council because it was not managed by the council like most other KTTs. Cienco 1, the builder of the KTT, has managed it since 1974, has a very tight budget also plays a role as the main developer in the redevelopment. Mr. Pham Van Ho also said that it is not fair for the majority of residents who agreed on the redevelopment plan as they have been living in temporary accommodation and waiting for settlement to the new homes for more than 8 years due to the delay. He also implies that some residents who have not agreed on the compensation plan seem to be over demanding.

One of the main issues in most state-own redevelopments is that there is a lack of grass-root consultation. While this may be partly reflect the “culture” of decision-making in more centralized governmental systems like Vietnam it also rooted from the old mentality stemmed from several decades of post-war recovery with government-subsidised system by which all decisions were given by governments and the residents, who only wanted to overcome the war hardship, often just accepted them without complain. The current disagreement is also caused by the government’s ignorance, either intentionally or unintentionally, of the large gap between official compensation rate and the free market property prices boosted up by their potential for local businesses in post Doi Moi.

Different perspectives towards KTTs

Since the end of 2015, public media, including local television and newspapers have had a large number of coverages on different issues related to the redevelopment of old KTTs in Hanoi. Most media coverages focused on the poor and downgrading standard of the KTTs and raised critical needs to “clean up” the old apartment blocks via redevelopment projects. Public media also looked at issue of delay caused by the disagreement on redevelopment plans in some KTTs. This section will discusses different viewpoints on this subject matter.

Government and general public perspectives

The government and general public are very negative about the current look and living standard of the KTTs as reflected in a number of media coverages on state-run television and newspapers. (Thoa 2018) For them, most KTTs need to be cleaned up because they represent a negative image of Hanoi hence a hindrance to urban development. Hanoi City Council reports that most KTTs are rundown and dilapidated due to the additional structures made by local residents and 42 of the KTTs are in special need to be redeveloped. (TTXVN 2016a) According to Mr. Vu Ngoc Dam, Head of Housing Development at Hanoi Department of Construction, redevelopments of KTTs face multiple...
difficulties, including a lack of fund from the government. (Ngoc 2017) Most projects rely on money from developers. (Figure 10)

Mr. Dao Ngoc Nghiem, former Chief Architect and Planner of Hanoi, suggests that urban planning scheme to redevelop old apartments areas should not be done by developers. He is worried that they will maximize the use of land for commercial purposes that bring benefits to them at the expense of some necessary communal open spaces and facilities, such as parks and playgrounds. He adds that redeveloping KTTs will help to reclaim the lost public spaces, which were taken by the building extension done by local residents. This will be feasible if there is some form of redevelopment and construction regulations that can help managing population density in the KTTs. Mr. Tran Ngoc Hung, Chairman of Vietnam General Construction Association, suggests that the redevelopment should only target local residents living around the area to avoid further increase in local population.7

Developers’ perspectives

Developers usually want to maximize the use of land with higher density buildings. Regarding KTT redevelopment, most developers in Hanoi see no profit with current planning regulations regarding building high limit. Therefore it took them much longer time to get a building permit. There are also not enough appropriate policies to deal with the complicated issues in most KTTs. They want the government to change the policy so they can have more motivation to get involved in redevelopment of KTTs. Due the lack of government support and complicated issues regarding site clearance, ownership and compensation, not many developers are interested in the redevelopment of KTTs. (Figure 11)

According to Mr. Tran Duc Thang,8 director of Cienco 1, the developer of KTT Thanh Cong, the major problem with most KTT redevelopments in Hanoi is the conflict of interest between the developers and local residents. It is very challenging to get an agreement from local residents as everyone is different. To ensure an agreement from all residents developers usually end up with paying more than required rate. And to recover this extra expense the developers push pressure on building high and maximize the number units in their redevelopment plan. They also heavily promote their development to increase the sell. One of the common ‘selling points’ of the KTT redevelopments is the promotion of European architectural styles and living standard to attract potential buyers.

Local residents’ perspectives

Residents who live in the KTTs are supportive, in principle, with redevelopment projects initiated by the government as they want to have better living spaces. However, most residents are not happy with the decision making process led by the government and developers, which seems lack of bottom-up consultation.

Regarding the relocation plan for redevelopment of KTT, local residents do not want to move to the outer suburbs as they said it is far away from all everyday services and works that they used to have for generations, such as school, market and hospital.

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7 Interview with Mr. Tran Ngoc Hung by Vietnam Television (VTV) broadcasted as ‘Increasing the high of KTTs’ on VTV in 14/05/2016.
8 Interview with Mr. Tran Duc Thang by Vietnam News Agency (TTXVN), published in Architecture and Construction News (Ashui), 14/4/2016, http://ashui.com/mag/tuongtac/goc-nhinh/12259-giai-phap-cai-tao-chun.
Main incomes of many families much rely on the family businesses that have run in the current location for decades. And they feel uncertainty if they need to move to other places. According to Mr. Nghiem Xuan Tuy, a local neighbourhood leader in KTT Thanh Cong, while most residents appreciate the redevelopment idea they are not fully confident about it. They need a full commitment from both developers and local government regarding the stability of their everyday need after the redevelopment. (Cuong 2016) Most residents agreed to relocate with conditions to make sure that temporary accommodation should have similar work and services opportunities to the area of the KTTs so their daily life will be least affected. (Figure 12)

In my recent field trip, Mr. M, who has lived and run a tea shop in KTT Thanh Cong for 30 years, said that he is not really positive about the KTT redevelopment plan as he believes that the redevelopment will not bring any better to the local residents but the developers. He does not really trust the developer and local government because of the way they made decision. According to Mr. Nguyen Van Chinh, another resident living in KTT Thanh Cong, the redevelopment was delay because local residents were not informed by anyone about the redevelopment plan. The developer only announced the plan when they were pushed by the residents. This caused disagreement. Mr Chinh suggested that redevelopment would go ahead if the decision making process were done properly by prior consultation with local residents. While these are only the comments from some residents, which may or may not

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9Interview with Mr. Mr. Nghiem Xuan Tuy by VietnamNet News published on 26/02/2016, http://vietnamnet.vn/vn/bat-dong-san/bat-dong-san-ha-noi-dan-chua-muon-chuyen-khoi-chung-cu-cu-291124.html.

10Interview with Mr. M in KTT Thanh Cong in 2018.

11Interview with Mr. Chinh by Vietnam Television Chanel (VTC News) in 05/08/2013, https://vtc.vn/nghi-an-la-san-sau-so-xay-dung-ha-noi-len-tieng-d123973.html.
represent the full picture of current issues related to the KTT redevelopment, local authorities and developers should take these concerns into account for any reconstruction plans.

**Conservationist perspectives: urban characters**

Given the public negativities addressed to the KTTs, there are some suggestions to maintain KTTs as an important part of Hanoi's building environment because they architecturally represent one important layer of the city's history. Artist Nguyen Thanh Son, suggested that while it is important to redevelop the KTTs, it would be worth maintaining some KTTs as living museums to remind people of a historical significance of Hanoi.\(^{12}\) Preserving the KTTs is also a topic of interest for some local architectural students whose graduation projects suggest to convert part of the KTTs into a museum to commemorate everyday life images of Hanoi's past under this "socialist" housing typology. There is also a proposal to redevelop the KTTs with consideration to preserve the physical form of apartment blocks, which can then be adaptively reused as local budget hotels or serviced apartments. (Figure 13)

Local visual artists show a different approach towards improvement of KTTs. They use art as a tool to improve the "public image" of old KTTs. One example that seems represent a good practice in dealing with KTTs is the recent community mural project at KTT Lang in Hanoi. A group of visual artist composes a number of mural paintings on the old and run-down walls of a number of apartment block in KTT Lang. The murals present romanticized and traditional pictures of Hanoi urban and rural landscape of the past, such as old Hanoi streets with trams, village houses and rice fields. Mr. Bui Thanh Trung,\(^{13}\) one of the mural artists suggested that his group wants to bring a new and more vibrant look to the KTT. He hopes that local residents particularly school children will have a visual experiences of Hanoi's past when looking at the mural on the way home. Both local residents and the government seem to support this project. State-run newspapers and television, such as Vietnam Television (VTV), had series of review that signify the role of the murals in enhancing the physical appearance as well as public spaces in the KTTs. Mrs Nguyen Thi Nghe,\(^{14}\) a local resident, said that the murals are attraction that encourage her to spend more time doing exercise while enjoying the colourfully painted landscapes. For her, the traditional images as shown in the murals recall memories hence a sentiment to Hanoi's everyday life and experiences in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

**Discussion and conclusion**

Different points of view discussed indicate on-going local struggle in relation to the redevelopment of KTTs. This brings us back to the classical and also global urban development issue that is there are always differences between involved parties. Perhaps, this local struggle is largely due to a lack of good communication between interested parties.

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\(^{12}\)Interview Nguyen Thanh Son by Vietnam Television (VTV) broadcasted as 'KTTs: Memories and Presence' on 11/10/2016.

\(^{13}\)Interview with Mr. Bui Thanh Trung by Vietnam Television (VTV 3), broadcasted in 'Morning Coffee: Street Mural', on 19/01/2018.

\(^{14}\)Interview with Mrs Nguyen Thi Nghe by Vietnam Television (VTV 1), broadcasted in 'Daily News: Mural Art', on 21/01/2018.
particularly in the more centralized planning systems like Vietnam. Given the turbulent history of Vietnam and the nature of social, economic and political context in Hanoi the conflicts of interest in dealing with KTT (re)development is scaled up as it involved multiple dimensions, such as public-private ownership issues, post-war experiences, lack of fund and illegal building extension etc. This local “complexity” further suggests a need to have enough communication between stake-holders.

Probably, what is missing in most problematic developments around the world, including KTTs is a good “communicative action”, to borrow the term coined by Habermas (1984) who suggested that communicative action is an action designed to promote common understanding in a group and to promote cooperation, as opposed to “strategic action” designed simply to achieve one’s personal goals. Clearly, it is not an easy task for designers to offer a solution to the complication like the case of KTTs redevelopment, because it involves many dimensions as mentioned earlier. However, one major step towards a solution is that designers can contribute to a good “communicative action” via raising the importance of traditional practices as well as challenges facing involved parties. This includes identifying the crucial role of traditional home-based retails to local economy, grass-roots daily difficulties, such as the shortage of living spaces and ownership issues that might influence the designing and planning process.

Different perspectives towards redevelopment of KTTs presents local struggles, which evoke ideas of space by the French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre (2002). The significance of referring to Lefebvre is his dialectical interpretation of space as a contestation of two modes of spatial construction: the first is defined as conceived space, which, according to Lefebvre, is the space formally created by profession, such as architects, designers, urban planners or decision-makers and the second, perceived space, is manifested in normal economic activities, everyday life practices and daily reality of the inhabitants, which often does not follow the rules appreciated by the professions, the creators of more “official” spaces, conceived spaces. (Lefebvre 1997)

The present-day KTT redevelopment represents the tension between conceived space, stands for local authorities’ and developers’ strategies for making formal changes and responding to informal building changes, and perceived space of the everyday life need, realities and associated changes to the built spaces. This tension or different viewpoints recalls top-down and bottom-up experiences. Building upon De Certeau (1984)’s two modes of experiencing places as voyeurs and walkers, King (1996) concerned about “our” (designers) preference in seeing places, including cities and buildings. In his reflection on this tension the author concluded that both extremes of experiencing places are part of the human, and there is a need to take an in-between mode in order to reinstate what it is to be human and to design in response to the reinstatement. De Certeau’s metaphor or top-down and bottom-up experiences, which, in my view, closely related to Lefebvre’s definition of conceived/perceived space, seems to imply that designers and decision-makers should also observe everyday built form from bottom-up viewpoint to fully understand different experiences and concerns, which are occurred in reality.

The in-between design and planning approach as implied by King may be achieved via a good “communicative action” in which, as Habermas theoretically suggests, stakeholders interact and coordinate their action based upon agreed interpretations of the situation. Regarding the redevelopment of KTTs, while it is a challenge to get everyone on the same boat it is possible if individual stakeholders could interpret the local struggles from the position of the others. Doing this first help changing local authority’s and developers’ perception that local residents just have to accept top-down decision on their homes and works. Secondly this also pushes local residents to take into account the government financial shortages, hence the inevitable need to engage developers as well as the nature of all housing developments in which developers will need to see potential profit to make a full commitment.

The ultimate implication for KTT redevelopment is that local designers, urban planners and authority should be more open to different ways of reading places, particularly those with more considerations for local tradition as manifested in everyday life reality of the local residents. Observed local struggles as shown in the KTT suggest that there is a persistence and resilience of a local tradition, such as the tradition of home-based retails and related spatial practices. This is a significant aspect of Hanoi’s urban characteristics as this tradition seem to exist in one form or another regardless of the urban mutation. Redevelopment policies should be informed by the understanding of this tradition. However to achieve this there is a need for “human encounters” that put together different viewpoints to relatively close the gaps between the experiences of residents, the ideological vision of authority, the abstract pictures created by developers and designers.

While murals painted on old KTT’s walls appear to be a good tool for “human encounters”, supported by the government, to partly and instantly “heal” the tumble-down standard of the KTTs, the use of local and traditional landscape for recalling public memory and images of the lost past represent another dimension of persistence and resilience of tradition. This tradition, which seems to be imagined via mean of public art that, either directly or indirectly, serve the government strategy to improve the negative aspects of KTTs by the romanticized paintings of traditional landscape and local experiences.

Spatial routines and changes, such as unit extension in home-based shops in KTTs reflect the local tradition of family-run retail in Hanoi Ancient Streets. Such the
traditional practices should be part of the design and planning policy in housing (re)development projects in Hanoi. The inclusion of local tradition at initial stage of policy-making process would bring crucial support to a more bottom-up “communicative action” that help mitigate local struggles caused by different viewpoints and interests regarding urban housing development.

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