

A HOUSING STRATEGY FOR THE URBAN POOR

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FORWARD

This dissertation on "A housing strategy for the Urban Poor" was submitted as one part of the M.Sc (Town and Country Planning) degree examination in December 1976. It was written over a period of 2 - 3 months and during part of this time the student was engaged in other course work.

During the course the students prepared group projects in the fields of Housing, National Urbanisation Planning, Regional Planning and Urban Development Planning. Written papers were submitted on the subjects of Development Planning and Planning Methods and Policies, and examinations held in Applied Planning Theory (two papers) and Planning Practice.

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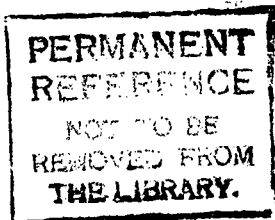
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' A HOUSING STRATEGY FOR THE URBAN POOR'

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF TOWN AND
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FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE MASTER
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A.L.B. LANKATILLEKE.

DECEMBER 21ST, 1976



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THE OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS OF THE STUDY

The argument in this work is based on the hypothesis that there is a certain group of people in our society who have been overlooked by all housing procedures, programmes and legislation. In other words this group of people who account for more than 50% of the urban population have become 'invisible' to the formal frame-work of housing. Due to constraints imposed through procedures, standards and legislation and also due to the lack of accessibility to resources, these people suffer from great hardship and do not have the freedom to improvise the shelter that is within their means.

This dissertation attempts to answer three fundamental questions arising from the hypothesis - WHO are these invisible people ? WHY are they excluded from procedures, standards, legislation and accessibility to resources ? and HOW can we take measures to recognise and improve peoples' efforts to house themselves.

Part one of this dissertation tries to identify these people in terms of their economic and housing condition. In the analysis of the economic condition in Chapter 1 the (urban) poor are identified in terms of their employment which is a direct function of the economic dualism. Chapter 2 discusses the fallacy of applying physical standards to measure good housing and good housing is judged in terms of its usefulness to the users. However in order to assess the magnitude of the problem conventional quantitative methods of stating the housing problem are also used.

The analysis of WHY this group of people are invisible to the formal framework is dealt with in part two. This is analysed in terms of accessibility to housing finance, houses constructed by public authorities, land and how official standards and legislation inhibit people from seeking solutions to their own personal housing problem.

In the analysis of housing finance in chapter 3 the difficulty of arriving at a fixed figure as the households' ability to pay is discussed and it is concluded that the housing process should be such that the households have the freedom to decide on how much they are going to pay for housing. Examining the loan systems it has been observed that the procedure involved in getting a housing loan restricts its accessibility to a limited group of people in the society. The households' ability to compete in the officially recognised housing market and the type of houses that are in demand are also discussed in this chapter.

THE OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS OF THE STUDY - contd

The contribution of public authority housing to the housing stock and its accessibility to the poor is discussed in chapter 4. It shows that unauthorised form of building has surpassed all official forms of construction. To compare and contrast two types of housing delivery the case studies of Madiwala Aided Self/^{Help}Housing Scheme and the middle income group flats scheme at Ratmalana are taken into consideration. From these case studies it was evident that freedom given to people to decide on the way they should be housed, gives greater satisfaction and pride in the housing process.

Chapter 5 deals with land for housing. The question of whether market values are more important than human values is discussed here. It also states the necessity of a better land distribution policy.

The gap between what ought to be achieved and what can be achieved in terms of housing standards is discussed in chapter 6. It emphasises the need for performance standards rather than the conventional method of saying how it can be achieved through regulations. It also states how administrative procedures have overlooked the poor and the ignorant.



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In the analysis of how effective the housing legislation has been, chapter 7 it is concluded that the impact of the legislation has not been felt by the poor. Although in theory the legislation seemed good it has not been possible to implement it to the best intended purposes. The need for an act that promotes building is also stressed in this chapter.

The most crucial of the three questions is HOW to alleviate the problem ? which in fact is the title of this dissertation. A strategy has been developed which recognises people's initiative and freedom of decision making in the housing process. Reforms needed in the administrative structure and allocation of resources to implement the proposed strategy are outlined here. The essence of this strategy is depicted in the Multiple Choice Housing Process Chart. It has to be noted that the strategy has been evolved from positive conclusions made in the analysis stage. The conclusions made in each chapter are given in the underlined statements. The Strategy is essentially one that is in keeping with the economic conditions of the country, in that it does not call for a massive investment. This has been possible because the emphasis has been on improving the housing process rather than on the end product - the houses.

THE OBJECTIVES AND PROCESS OF THE STUDY - contd

Incidentally this Strategy conforms to two main resolutions passed at the United Nations Habitat Conference on Human Settlements. One is that, in planning settlements emphasis has to be given to development of the poorest sectors of the society and the other is that governments should make the necessary institutional frame-work to help people to house themselves.

The flow diagram indicates the process of the study and the method in which the problem has been tackled. In writing this thesis a chapter has been dedicated to each stage of the flow diagram.

In the analysis various parameters have been discussed in relation to identified systems of delivering shelter. System 1 is free-hold dwellings constructed by own resources. System 2 is free hold dwellings constructed by borrowed resources. System 3 is ~~rented~~ houses constructed by private individuals. System 4 is ~~rented~~ house constructed by public authorities, System 5 is squatting in public and private land and System 6 is squatting in public buildings. In the text reference is made to the same numerals to identify the delivery system.



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Although this study refers generally to urban areas of Sri Lanka, the main concern has been the urban areas of the Colombo Metropolitan Region and in particular to the city of Colombo. The Colombo Metropolitan Region considered coincides with the Colombo Metropolitan Region as defined by the Colombo Master Plan Project, which is given in Map No. 2. This restriction of the physical area of the study was mainly because of the familiarity of the area and the easy access to statistical information. However the strategy developed can be applied to all urban areas of Sri Lanka with only a modification to the land allocation.

THE PROCESS

PROBLEM DEFINITION
& MAGNITUDE

WHO suffer from
poor housing?

ECONOMIC
CONDITION

HOUSING
CONDITION



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ANALYSIS

WHY are they
invisible?

HOUSING
FINANCE

PUBLIC AUTHORITY
CONSTRUCTION

LAND

STANDARDS
&
PROCEDURES

LEGISLATION

STRATEGY

HOW to alleviate
the problem?

THE HOUSING STRATEGY FOR THE URBAN POOR



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