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## Community Building in Social-Mix Public Housing: Participatory planning of Ankang redevelopment plan

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### Abstract

The AnKang Affordable Housing is the biggest low-income community in Taipei. The city government is promoting the new public rental housing policies to renew the community. The social mix strategy is adopted to expect a more healthy and cohesive community. By means of participatory research, this paper suggests that the different income-mixed community have to plan various social programs and spaces for empowering low-income households. Then, the shaping of positive social interaction among diverse groups of residents needs to be fully integrated into the future housing management system.

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*Keywords:* Public rental housing; social mix; community building; participatory planning

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### 1. Introduction

Young people in Taiwan have continually suffered due to high housing prices in recent years. Many social groups have allied to appeal to the government to provide social housing in order to protect human rights. The social housing stock rate of Taipei is only 0.6%. It is much lower than the average rate of other Asian countries, such as Japan (3.1%), South Korea (6.1%), Singapore (3%), and Hong Kong (30%)(Taipei City Government, 2013). In

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response the social group's advocacy, the central government formulated the Housing Act of 2012, which provides the legal base for local government's housing policies. The Taipei city government has begun to promote public rental housing policy as an urgent goal. The public housing policy became a hot issue in the 2014 mayoral election. The newly elected Mayor Ko has promised to establish 50,000 housing units during his term of office. This phenomenon demonstrates that enhancing the quantity of public housing gradually turns into a social consensus policy.

During the initial phase in 2010, the surrounding neighborhoods of the social housing plan sites were against the city's projects. They have a negative awareness of disadvantageous habitats that will lead to a decrease in environmental quality, deterioration of community security, and a decline in the market price of their property. In response to the neighbors' discontent, the city government declared that the public housing will pursue a high quality of construction, multiple shared public facilities, and social mix principals. Among these policies, the social mix principal is the crucial point that disperses low-income tenants among higher income tenants to eliminate the negative effects of accommodating low-income households.

On the other hand, the living patterns of Taipei are gradually moving to high density, high rise developments. The housing owners organize their community management committees to shape a sense of community that differs according to various values they pursue, such as an elderly friendly environment, ecological community, etc. Residents involved in these activities nurture mutual understanding and community coherence. From this perspective, is public rental housing a community or only units that are provided to rent? In a socially mixed community, will social cohesion be shaped naturally? Does a potential contradiction between different income tenures exist?

Methods of building a successful social mix public rental housing community have barely been studied in Taiwan. This study aims to explore the social mix policy and community building in the public rental housing case.

## **2. Literature review and research methods**

### *2.1. Community building in social-mix developments*

In a growing number of countries, policy makers have already adopted the social mix strategy as the major mechanism for solving the low-income public estates problems. These problems are usually characterized by high levels of deprivation, social isolation and anti-social behaviors, stigma, drug abuse, unemployment, invalid parental education, etc. (Morris, Michelle & Patulny, 2012). Most of these cases involve the demolition, redevelopment, and sale of old public housing stock and the construction of mixed-income housing developments aimed at creating a neighborhood that contains market-rate homes and subsidized or public rental apartments. With the variety of income levels in households, the goals of the social mix policy expect to provide opportunities for access to a high quality of life (Chaskin & Joseph, 2010).

Socially mixed public housing is not only a spatial unit but also a social space to nurture residents' community identity. The community-oriented expectations of a social mix public housing include many factors: first, people living in concentrated low-income estates may suffer from the limitations of social networks that could provide access to information and opportunities. Living in a socially mixed community may increase the opportunity to interact with people who have diverse networks. Low-income households may benefit from such interactions. Second, higher-income residents are more stressed to maintain a social order that has advantages to promote a safe and harmonious community. Third, higher-income people may contribute to the modification of aspirations and behaviors to promote more social engagement in community and the possibility of upward mobility. These three categories — social capital, social control, and social norms — are interconnected to intervene in response to community problems (Chaskin & Joseph, 2010: 303).

However, there is little empirical evidence to prove that such expectations will be met or that social mix will necessarily lead to fewer disadvantages among public housing tenants (Morris, Michelle & Patulny, 2012). These arguments prove that the social mix policies merely incline a political rhetoric. The reality is that social mix policies ignore the hidden stress between different social and ethnic groups. In Western cities, suitable social norms are always decided by white, middle-class people with their logic of community integration (Melis, Marra & Gelormino, 2013). Also, the social mix strategy produces new stigmas from management schemes formulated by

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