

Characterization of Housing Culture and Direction of Housing Policy Implication

Youm, Chirl Ho
Ha, Ji Young
Kim, Chan Ho

Housing policy has thus far focused on supplying housing, securing the housing market and creating housing welfare. Relatively less attention has been paid to housing quality. On the contrary the supply-oriented housing policy stimulated the lowering of the quality standards of residential culture. However, entering the 2000s the housing supply rate exceeded 100 per cent. At the same time the income level improved and the definition of family was broadened to include families of one or two people as well as the elderly population. These factors contributed to an increase in a new housing supply with greater social demands on the residential culture beyond simply supplying housing and securing residential convenience. Reflecting on this demand to housing policy lately, an alternative plan to improve the residential environment and culture was dealt with as a housing policy. However, it is hard to find evidence of the related policy direction in reality. The housing policy remains focused on quantity of housing supply. Thus a new attempt to improve residential culture is limited to a one-off project or a continued weakening of the overall housing policy in general.

As the housing supply rate exceeds 100 per cent, there is an argument that the supply-oriented housing policy is no longer effective, and that housing policy should be shifted to focus on improving the residential quality, is no longer a new idea as it has gained support from the public. And for a long time the demands of

self-examination and necessary changes on apartment-oriented residential space have been presented many times both from within and without. Now the time has come when we should fundamentally explore the practical strategy of housing policy in terms of residential culture. For this we need a fundamental diagnosis of the problems and current conditions of our housing from diverse angles that have been previously presented. Based on this diagnosis, we need to figure out a direction for housing policy and a practical strategy to reach our goal.

Recognizing that the housing policy thus far has not dealt with the improvement of residential culture as a policy priority and raising the question as to why and making an alternative plan to improve residential culture has remained an idea, this paper tries to suggest a housing policy that will shift its direction to improving residential culture based on the diagnosis of residential culture itself from various angles and to actualize the improvement of residential culture.

The second chapter approaches the concept of culture and residential culture by analyzing literature on culture and discourses about residential culture. Based on this it establishes an analysis of residential culture followed by an investigation into the background of housing policy in creating residential culture. It then deduces the problems of housing policy that influences the creation of residential cultures. Based on the study and theory of diverse cultures this study organizes the framework of analysis with regards to residential culture by three elements. Firstly, in terms of actualizing their “cultural independence” through the purchase of a home, the consuming public should not depend on the commercialized argument of construction agents who act as the main agents who lead the residential culture and thereby influence the housing market. Secondly, in terms of “cultural diversity” the housing type should not be classified as certain types according to the income level. Selection options from diverse housing types within a similar level in the housing market should be provided. And thirdly, in terms of “cultural identity” the housing area and residential landscape should not be created identically everywhere. The residential environment should reflect the character of the area and place. In looking into the background of housing policy related to creating a residential culture, as a result of

apartment-oriented supply policy, the range of selecting the houses and housing area that suit the residents' economic condition and taste is still narrow. In addition, the housing policy focuses only on easing the private sector's capacity to supply housing. As a result the residential culture in the housing market is led by the construction companies, and consumers' influence in the housing market has shrunk. And the housing policy based on supplying large apartment complex at a big scale made it difficult to find a spatial culture of houses and residential areas that are differentiated based on the identity and characteristics of the area and place.

The third chapter organizes by units of 10 years since the 1960s how the housing policy and system of the United States, Britain and Japan have evolved according to the political, economical and social changes of the times. It looks into the characteristics of the main policy related to residential culture, and by so doing it deduces the implications of changes to foreign housing policy in terms of a residential culture of independence, diversity, and identity. From this study we can see that around the time when the insufficient housing supply problem was somewhat solved, all three countries of the United States, Britain and Japan shifted the base of housing policy from supplying new housing to improving the quality of the residential environment. In addition they all showed the movement in which they shifted the housing policy to be one led by the locals while utilizing private markets and the government's direction on housing policy was shifted to indirect support to create a sound and secure housing market. In terms of the independence of residential culture, as the housing policy is shifted to a market-driven policy, the public agent's role focuses on establishing an environment of private housing markets, and accordingly pursues a policy that supports the participation of diverse private agents in housing supply and management with the consumers making wise judgments and decisions. In addition, in terms of diversity of residential culture, an environment is being established in which the quality of housing for low and middle income families is improved and consumers can select various housing types according to their "taste". In terms of identity of residential culture as a pursuit of housing policy in which housing policy and urban planning are connected in combination with a variety of

programs is expanded, the local housing policy is carried out under the lead of local governments and residents.

The fourth chapter analyzes the feasibility and limits in terms of policy evaluation and residential culture, targeting the housing policy that was introduced and carried out in the 2000s with regards to improving the residential standard of low-income families, gradually bettering the residential areas, diversifying residential types and supply method, improving residential design and securing public service. As a result of evaluating the policy, it is found that setting the goal is unclear and a long-term enforcement system is nonexistent. Thus many systems and projects are carried out on a whim. As the policy and construction are carried out without clearly and sufficiently setting the target residential area and residents, they are not applied to the appropriate place and area. The leading role of the public is absent, and establishing multilateral liaison and partnership to effectively carry out the policy are insufficient. In terms of a residential culture, the establishment of an environment where in the consumers play a role in creating a residential culture is insufficient and as the residential supply method is stratified by the income level, consumers' selection right and taste is not exercising its influence. In addition the segmented regulations promote a unified design environment, function as a cause of preventing special and functional connections between urban spaces and housing. Due to the limitation of feasibility and insufficient shared understanding of housing among the main players involved, the housing policy is not bringing any obvious result in terms of establishing the identity of the area and place.

As a way to shift the present housing policy in order to create a desirable residential culture for the future, firstly, the policy should focus on strengthening the consumers' capacity and rights as the agent to lead the residential culture to secure the independency of residential culture. It should be under the premise that the new policy should get out of the old policy in which the government directly control the housing supply in the market, or allow the market to lead the way by relaxing regulations or giving incentives. The response to the diversifying residential supply is in the end to establish an environment that allows the people to select diverse

housing. It will be desirable that developing and providing diverse housing selection elements are solved through a free function of the private market, and its importance will get bigger in the future. Secondly, in order to secure the diversity of residential culture, the policy should focus on making the housing related systems flexible to reflect the consumers' taste in the housing market.

A premise should be established that the policy will no longer define a specific residential type within the framework of a system, nor classify the supply targets according to the income level and nor supply new housing at a massive quantity. The housing supply system which focuses on massive supply of new housing tends to play a role in narrowing the consumers' range of choice and distorting it at this present time when the quantitative insufficiency of housing has been resolved and the housing supply is changing due to diverse social and economic environmental changes. Thirdly, in order to secure the identity of residential culture, the housing policy should focus on establishing a consultative mechanism to realize a design based on a place unit. Since each area has a different housing condition, the housing policy certainly should evolve from a quantity-oriented top-down method to respond to the hierarchy to a locally responsive and local-oriented bottom-up method. And the central government should play the main role in supporting and managing the tasks among local governments or builders, and the local government should be the main agent to establish a plan for housing policy and carrying it out.

The previous studies on housing policy have been weighted to expanding housing supply, securing housing market and increasing housing welfare. The criticism on the residential culture put too much emphasis on the outer view of the residential environment rather than policy view. Regarding these points, this paper finds significance in diagnosing the current status of housing policy from the viewpoint of the residential culture and suggesting a new direction. For the future a theoretical study is needed that deals in more detail with each concept of the independence, diversity and identity of the residential culture. In addition, since the residential environment is the result of the interaction among many interest groups involved in

the housing supply process, an examination of the cause of how the residential culture is formed and how to improve it will be needed. In order to apply the policy task to the real policy to improve the residential culture suggested in this study, concrete further studies on each task will have to be followed.

Keyword :Housing Culture, Housing Policy, Independency, Diversity, Identity