

Towards a Responsive Housing Design for Mekong River Delta in Vietnam

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Abstract

Designing houses to withstand floods has always been in need for flood victims globally. Millions of people around the world are indeed struggling with this problem as floods, considered one of the most common natural disasters, remain a serious risk to their lives and properties. The impacts of such natural disasters are even more devastating for both residents and properties in developing countries like Vietnam where the Mekong River Delta areas have also been ravaged by annual monsoon rains, tropical typhoons and seriously threatened by sea level rise.

Towards a more sustainable design approach this research aims at a deeper understanding of the social life and housing conditions in the Mekong River Delta. More importantly, it aims at gaining insight into socio-cultural and environmental factors that influence the setting, uses and appropriation of architectural spaces in flood prone areas. This research first gives an overall view of flood problems in the Mekong River Delta specifically, it then examines existing housing typology in Vietnam and in the flood areas with references to local culture and daily activities as well as the way in which inhabitants contextually respond to the impact of flood in the areas or elsewhere. The paper suggests that a grounded understanding of how local residents have lived with nature and their resilience to changes caused by nature will be a crucial step towards a sustainable and responsive approach to housing design for areas with floods.

Research findings will be discussed with references to existing literature and recent practices as part of both local and international responses to the flood issues. This will hopefully result in some implication for involved parties including designers and policy makers to come up with more effective design strategies in attempt to deal with possible destruction caused by floods in the future.

Keywords: resilience to flood; architecture for flood, Vietnam Mekong River Delta

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