

**Term Paper for the M.A. in Comparative and Public  
History Course HIS 5507C  
Special Topic in Public History:  
Fieldwork: Theory and Practice**

**Prepared by Fong Tin Chuen, Victor**

**Student No.: 08056360**

## **Preliminary**

At present, there are over three millions of Hong Kong population living in public housing estates and related subsidised housing units under the Home Ownership Scheme managed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority. According to the Annual Report of the Hong Kong Housing Authority 2006-07, there are 677,800 units of public housing flats and 380,500 units of subsidised housing flats at the end of March 2007. In addition, the Housing Authority plans to construct about 18,000 public housing flats every year to meet further housing needs of the Hong Kong people. As a matter of fact, the Hong Kong Housing Authority is one of the most important public organizations in the history of Hong Kong. Not only, does it provide homes to many low income people in the past, the Housing Authority still provides substantial amount of residences for many families in Hong Kong, including the middle-class people nowadays.

This public organization controls not only the supply of residential homes, but also affects the supply of valuable land in Hong Kong. It has the vital power for regional development and contributed to the urbanization of the New Territories in the local history. From the early day development of Wah Fu Estate in 1971 in the unpopulated southern part of Hong Kong Island, through the New Towns development in Shatin, Tai Po, Tuen Mun in the 1970s - 80s, up to the present day development of the Tin Shui Wai and Tseung Kwan O areas, its impacts on the social and economic development of the Hong Kong are far-reaching, in particular to the traditional livelihoods of the rural areas in the New Territories. One could conclude that the face of Hong Kong society would have been totally different, if the Hong Kong Housing Authority never existed and did its work.

There have been many literature and studies on the Hong Kong public housing development and history, on the housing problem in relation to the influx of population from China to Hong Kong in the 1950s -60s and the ways how Hong Kong resolves its housing problem through time. One particular study is the article “Housing Intervention in

Hong Kong: From Laissez Faire to Privatization” by Rebecca L.H. Chiu<sup>1</sup> which classified the history of public housing development of Hong Kong into three phases, divided according to the intensity and methods of housing subsidy. According to Chiu’s classification, there were three phases of government intervention in housing in Hong Kong. It includes (1) From Laissez-faire to Limited Intervention, 1842-1972; (2) Intensified Intervention, 1973-1986; (3) Privatization, 1987-2011. Each phase was related to the social and political situation at that time, as well as the economic and financial development of the Hong Kong society.

While Chiu’s study is emphasized on the social, economic, political and financial factors of government interventions in housing, the current study would take a further look at the development of the Hong Kong Housing Authority - the important housing agency of the Government in the history of housing development in Hong Kong in relation to the different phases of public housing development as classified by Chiu (1994). I shall also examine the Housing Authority’s relationship with the Hong Kong Government and how it helps to implement and achieve the housing policy of the government through this closed relationship. How the appointment system of the HA Chairman by the Governor helps to maintain this special relationship with the Hong Kong Government which hold firm of the Government’s control and influence over a public organization.

## **The Beginning of the Hong Kong Housing Authority**

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (The then Chinese name was 「香港屋宇建設委員會」) was first established in April 1954 under the Housing Ordinance enacted No.18 of 1954. The HA Chairman was appointed by the Governor of Hong Kong, which composed of all members of the Urban Council, ex officio, together with not more than three persons to be nominated by the Governor. A list of the first term

---

<sup>1</sup> Rebecca L. H. Chiu, “Housing Intervention in Hong Kong: From Laissez Faire to Privatization”, in *25 Years of Social and Economic Development in Hong Kong*, eds. Benjamin K.P. Leung and Teresa Y.C. Wong (Centre of Asian Studies: The University of Hong Kong Press, 1994), p.336 - 356

members of the Authority is shown below:

LIST OF HONG KONG HOUSING AUTHORITY MEMBERS<sup>2</sup>

Ex-officio Members

Chairman, the Chairman of the Urban Council (The Honourable Harold Giles Richards, O.B.E.)

Vice Chairman, The Director of Public Works (The Honourable Theodore Louis Bowring, C.M.G., O.B.E.)

The Secretary for Chinese Affairs (The Honourable Brain Charles Keith Hawkins, C.M.G., O.B.E.)

The Social Welfare Officer (Kenneth Keen, Esq.)

The Commissioner for Resettlement (David Ronald Holmes, Esq., M.B.E., M.C.)

The Acting Deputy Director of Health Services (Dr. Teng Pin Hui).

The Honourable Kwok Chan, O.B.E.

The Honourable Dhun Ruttonjee.

Dr. Edurado Liberato Gosano.

Fung Ping Fan, Esq.

Colonel John Douglas Clague, C.B.E., M.C., T.D.

Brook Antony Bernacchi, Esq.

Woo Pak Chuen, Esq.

Philip Dalen Au, Esq.

Dr. Raymond Harry Shoon Lee, M.B.E.

The Honourable Richard Charles Lee, O.B.E.

Additional Members:

Bevan Clarence Field, Esq., M.B.B., M.C., E.D.

Li Fook Shu, Esq.

When it was first established in 1954, the role of the Authority

---

<sup>2</sup> Hong Kong Housing Authority Annual Report 1954-1955, Government Printer, Hong Kong, p.10-11.

was described as: “Under the terms of the Ordinance, the Authority is given wide powers to deal with the housing problem in many of its aspects, subject to general Government control. It is granted land at half upset price and loans from Government at a low rate of interest. It is to operate as a commercial undertaking and its housing projects must pay their own way.”<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, eight Select Committees were set up to carry out its functions, including (1) General Administration Select Committee, (2) Sites Select Committee, (3) Architectural and Planning Select Committee, (4) Tenancy Select Committee, (5) Estates Organization Select Committee, (6) Finance and Accountancy Select Committee, (7) By-laws and Rules Select Committee and (8) Publicity Select Committee.

Broadly speaking, the Authority had to use the government funding, in the form of loan at its start, to build low-cost rental housing on the land site provided by the Government. Although it was set up as a public organization, but the Housing Authority has to operate in a commercial way, i.e. it had to generate income from the rent of its public rental flats and pay its own bills, such as on construction of flats, management of estates and other operational expense etc. At the end of the day, the Authority has to pay back the loan, plus interest, to the government as well.

Apart from the financial relationship with the government, the Administration of the Authority was performed by the Housing Division of the Urban Service Department, the executive arm of the Urban Council. However, the Housing Division was set up in October 1953 as a small office, with a handful of staff and worked under a Housing Manager recruited from the UK, an Accountant and an Administrative Officer, each responsible for the Estate Management Section, the Accounts Section and the Administration Section respectively. The original idea was that all the construction and design works of the Authority should be handled by the Public Works Department (PWD) of the Government. Yet, this arrangement was never realized as due to shortage of staff, the PWD did not offer its service to the Authority. It was understandable, as the PWD was busy in its own programme to provide resettlement blocks for the over 50,000 refugees of the tragic slum fire of the Shek Kip Mei squatter

---

<sup>3</sup> Hong Kong Housing Authority Annual Report 1954-1955, Government Printer, Hong Kong, p.3-4.

in 1953 Christmas eve. It was then fully occupied by its own resettlement housing project as a result of the subsequent clearance programme of the squatter areas all over Hong Kong throughout 1950s to 60s.

Alternatively, the Housing Authority looked for help from the private sector for its own public housing project which provided flats of a better standard with self-contained facilities, each with its own kitchen and lavatory, and even with a small balcony. The first estate of the Authority was the North Point Estate, designed by a private architect, Mr. Eric Cumine F.R.I.B.A., and completed in 1958. The estate had over 1,900 flats in 11 storey blocks and provided homes for 16,000 people. Subsequently, the second estate, the West Point Estate (the Cadogan Street site project) was commissioned to another private architect, Mr. T.S.C. Feltham, A.R.I.B.A. In fact, the Public Works Department of the Government never involved in these housing projects.

Nevertheless, it must not neglect the input from the Government on the success of these housing development projects in two aspects. First of all, the supply of land sites for the housing development. After the establishment of the Housing Authority on April 1954, two building sites were allocated to it by the Government by the end of August of the same year. These were the Java Road site of 6.5 acres and the Cadogan Street site of 3.5 acres and later developed into the first two housing estates of the Authority. In December, 1954, a further site of much large size was allocated by the Government. This was the 15 acres site at the Li Cheng Uk in Cheung Sha Wan, which was later developed to the famous So Uk Estate. All these sites were granted by the Government with no or nominated land premium for the start of the housing projects of the Authority. Without this supply of land sites from the Government, the Housing Authority's housing development would never get its feet off the ground.

It was also another important factor for the Government to approve the funding, in the form of loans to finance the housing projects. According to the Housing Authority, it was in the amount of \$33 millions for the North Point Estate, \$7.5 millions for the Cadogan Street Estate and \$50 millions for the So Uk Estate.<sup>4</sup> Comparing to the rental income

---

<sup>4</sup> Report of the Hong Kong Housing Authority for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 1955 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1957, W.F.C.

at that time, ranging from \$50 to \$100 a month in accordance with the flat size, the investment was really beyond the interest of a commercial enterprise. In addition, the Authority also received its set up loan fund of one million dollars from the Government for its administrative cost. Therefore, at the very beginning of the Housing Authority, the Government was controlling the housing activities behind the screen. It was stated quite obviously and openly in the first Annual Report of the Housing Authority that its activities were “*subject to general Government control*”<sup>5</sup>.

Apart from this fact, the composition of the Housing Authority as outlined above also shown that The Director of Public Works was the vice-chairman and that The Secretary for Chinese Affairs, The Social Welfare Officer, The Commissioner for Resettlement, and The Deputy Director of Health Services were all Official Members of the Authority. The influence of the Government over the policy and decision of the Housing Authority was by no means less than its general control of the activities of the Housing Authority through the finance and land supply of the housing development projects.

Before the formation of the Authority, there were no or little public concerns on the housing problems which reflected the non-intervention attitude of the Government under the philosophy of laissez-faire. The 1953 tragic squatter fire in Shek Kip Mei marked the change in Hong Kong Government’s housing policy and led to the establishment of the Housing Authority. While the Government began to set foot on the housing issues, this intervention on housing was through the Housing Authority and under the complete control of the Government. While Chiu has described this period as “limited intervention”<sup>6</sup>, she must be comparing this period with the second phase of “intensified invention” from 1973-86.

Judging from the organization of the Housing Authority and on the scale of input of substantial public funds and land, I would prefer

---

Jenner, Government Printer (Government Press, Hong Kong), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Hong Kong Housing Authority Annual Report 1954-1955, Government Printer, Hong Kong, p.3-4

<sup>6</sup> Rebecca L. H. Chiu, “Housing Intervention in Hong Kong: From Laissez Faire to Privatization”, in *25 Years of Social and Economic Development in Hong Kong*, eds. Benjamin K.P. Leung and Teresa Y.C. Wong (Centre of Asian Studies: The University of Hong Kong Press, 1994), p.340

to describe that this is a period of “indirect involvement” rather than “limited intervention”. In the Colony days, the Hong Kong Government was rather skillful in consciously distancing herself from the hot issue or problem which might not have an immediate solution. While the appointed Chairman of Housing Authority was also the Chairman of Urban Council, the housing problem was perceived as a city (urban) problem of hygiene, cleanliness, sanitary, crowding etc, rather than a problem of basic need and right for the people in Hong Kong. The first housing office of the Government was in fact set up as a small unit called the Housing Division in the Urban Services Department.

## **The Development of the Hong Kong Housing Authority**

### **The first period from 1954 to 1972**

Ever since its establishment, the Hong Kong Housing Authority was chaired by the Chairmen of Urban Council, as appointed by the Governor of Hong Kong, starting from The Hon. H. G. Richards (1954-56), The Hon. E. B. Teesdale (1957-58 and 59-60), The Hon. C. G. M. Morrison (1958-59), The Hon. K. S. Kinghorn (1961-62 and 1964-65), The Hon. G. M. Tingle (1962-63 and 1966-68) and The Hon. D. R.W. Alexander (1969-72). There were a number of achievements for the public housing development in Hong Kong, including the implementation of Low-income Housing Programme in 1961, the launch of the Temporary Housing Scheme in 1964, the building of high rise resettlement housing block (Mark IV, V and VI types with improved household facilities) the completion of the Wah Fu Estate (the first “New Town” development in the southern part of the Hong Kong Island) in 1971. This was the first phase of the development of the public housing in Hong Kong, with indirect control of the Government behind the screen.

### **The second period from 1972 to 1986**

The second phase started in late 1972 which marked the important and substantive changes of both the Hong Kong Housing



Authority and the public housing development in Hong Kong. In October, 1972, The Governor Sir Murray MacLehose, the new Governor at that time, announced the “Ten-year Housing Programme” which was his ambitious plan to improve the living environment of 1.8 million Hong Kong people with a large quantity of high-quality but low-cost housing estates in his Policy Address. This was done among his other visions and foresight to bring an overall improvement to social environment of Hong Kong, including the setting up of the ICAC to fight corruption in the society. A new Hong Kong Housing Authority was created (with the new Chinese name as 「香港房屋委員會」) and enacted under the new Housing Ordinance (Chapter 283). At the same time, the Housing Section in the Urban Service Department (a small supporting office serving the former Housing Authority) and the Resettlement Department were amalgamated into the Housing Department.

The establishment of the new Hong Kong Housing Authority and its executive arm, the Housing Department marked a new phase of public housing development in Hong Kong. As contrast to the previous phase of “indirect involvement”, I would suggest that this is the phase of “direct involvement” of the Hong Kong Government on the public housing development. Correspondingly, the Government also exerts a direct control on the business of the Housing Authority.

The following were the appointments of the Chairman of Hong Kong Housing Authority by the Governor from 1.4.1973 onward and up to the end of the financial year 1988:

The Hon I. M. Lightbody, Secretary for Housing (1973/74 – 1976/77);

The Hon. A. J. Scott, Secretary for Housing (1977/78 – 1979/80);

The Hon. D. P. H. Liao, Secretary for Housing (1980/81 – 10.2.1985);

The Hon. D. R. Ford, Secretary for Housing (11.2.1985 – 19.7.1985);

The Hon. Y. L. Pamg, Secretary for Housing (20.7.1985 – 31.3.1986);

and The Hon. J. R. Todd, Secretary for Housing (1986/87 – 1987/88).

It was so obvious that from 1973 onward, the chairmanship of Housing Authority were suddenly taken up by the government official, the Secretary for Housing, rather than the traditional appointment of the Chairman of Urban Council ever since the establishment of the Authority. The reason for this change reflected a direct control of the Housing

Authority under the hands of government officials, though in the previous period, the Housing Authority was subject to the influence of the government. During this period, the Governor MacLehose had changed the Government's public housing policy to a positive and forthcoming one. In order to achieve the Ten-year Housing Programme, extensive development of public housing estates had speeded up the New Towns development, which then changed permanently the face of the New Territories by turning the traditional rural living into urban life style. Meanwhile, the old resettlement housing blocks (Mark I and II types) with communal facilities, such as kitchen and bathroom, were pull down and rebuilt into more comfortable and better standard homes for the people of Hong Kong.

During this phase of public housing development, commercial element and investment were drawn in and changed the fundamental nature of the Housing Authority from the provision of low-income rental housing to satisfying the desire of the Hong Kong people on ownership of their own homes. In 1978, the "Home Ownership Scheme (居者有其屋計劃)" was launched with public housing flats offered for sale to the eligible Hong Kong people. Although there were income criteria for those eligible, but obviously they are better off financially than the low-income group. In fact, in 1979, the HOS was further expanded to the "Private Sector Participation Scheme (私人機構參建居屋計劃)" which provided even better quality public housing units to those who could afford to buy better homes for themselves. All these changes could hardly be implemented without the strong and direct involvement and directive of the government.

While Chiu (1994) believed that this phase was classified as "Intensified Intervention" of the government action on public housing development due to various social, economic, political and financial factors. He was not fully aware that such intensified intervention was still through the Hong Kong Housing Authority- the housing agency of the government, yet with direct involvement and control of this public body under the Chairmanship of a top government official appointed by the Governor.

### *The third period from 1987 to 1999*

The third period of public housing development was arising from the issue of “The Long Term Housing Strategy (1987-2001)” in April 1987. This new strategy was actually a shift from the traditional role of constructing rental public housing to provide assistance in home purchase for the Hong Kong people. As a result of this changes, the “Home Purchase Loan Scheme (自置居所貸款計劃)” and the “Sale of Flats to Sitting Tenants Scheme (出售公屋予住戶計劃)” were introduced, in addition to the Home Ownership Scheme and the Private Sector Participation Scheme, Under the new Home Purchase Loan Scheme, housing loans without interest were made available for public rental housing tenants and eligible Hong Kong people (again with income criteria) to purchase residential flats from the private developer in the market.

For this period, there was also corresponding changes in the organization of the Housing Authority which were then reorganized to become more financially independent from the Government and with its Chairman was reverted back to be an non-government official appointed by the Governor, similar to the first period before 1973. The first appointed Chairman during this period was Sir David Akers-Jones (1989/90 to 1992/93), who was a retired senior government official and had served as Chief Secretary and Acting Governor before his retirement. His successors were The Hon. Rosanna Wong (1993/94 to 1999/2000) and followed by Dr. Cheng Hon-kwan from April 2000 to 30.6.2002. As discussed before, the appointment of Chairman of the Housing Authority had actually reflected how much control of the Government over the Authority and its involvement in public housing programme behind the screen. Furthermore, it showed how this special relationship between the Government and the Housing Authority is maintained through the appointment system.

During this third period, housing matters had already become a hot and political issue, due to the introduction of the District Administration and the setting up of various District Boards in Hong Kong. Sir Akers-Jones recalled his tenure as Chairman of Housing Authority that “at that time, Hong Kong was going through a process of

politicalization. New political groups were full of vigour. They frequently over-reacted to government policies, and took an opposite position.”<sup>7</sup> In saying that, he had inconspicuously revealed the motive of the Government in appointing him as the Chairman of the Housing Authority, right after his retirement. First, it was the old tactics and traditional strategy of the Colony Government to go behind the screen in facing a hot pot of fire and allowed the Secretary for Housing, a senior government official, thus stepped down from the hot seat. Secondly, it was to appoint someone whom was fully trust by the Government, in this case a retired ex-Chief Secretary, to handle the political climax.

However, the society of Hong Kong had changed and never be the same as the old colony days. After introducing the unpopular policy of charging double rent to the “well-off families” living in public housing, Sir Akers-Jones was under great political pressure and eventually resigned from the Chairman post in March 1993. He said “I decide that it was time for a Chinese to take over the chairmanship of the Housing Authority”<sup>8</sup> after he was criticized openly and urged to step down by local political group. It was obviously that the attack was not on a foreigner nor it would be better for a Chinese to chair the Housing Authority as remarked by Sir Akers-Jones. It was because of his personal background of a retired senior official of the colony government that was under fire. While the hot seat of the Chairman of Housing Authority left vacant for a few months, the Government did appointed a Chinese woman to take over the responsibility. She was The Hon. Rosanna Wong.

While Chiu (1994) classified this third phase as “Privatization (1987 - 2011)”, she took the official line by saying that “The projected diminishing rental demand but growing home ownership demand has led to the adjustment of the financial relationship between the Government and the Housing Authority. Subsequent to the announcement of the Long Term Housing Strategy, the Secretary for Housing announced in November 1987 the revamping of the Housing Authority and the new financial arrangements between the Housing Authority as from April

---

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Leung Mei-yee, *From Shelter to Home – 45 Years of Public Housing Development in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong Housing Authority, 1999, p. 211

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Leung Mei-yee, *From Shelter to Home – 45 Years of Public Housing Development in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong Housing Authority, 1999, p. 215

1988. Although the restructuring has not transformed the Housing Authority into a regulated corporation, it has given the Housing Authority a higher degree of administrative autonomy and financial independence as from 1 April 1988.”<sup>9</sup>

While Chiu (1994) had correctly pointed out the changes in financial relationship between the Housing Authority and the Government, she was not entirely aware that the underlying force behind the screen for the autonomy and privatization was the appointment of The Hon. Rosanna Wong, the successor of Sir Akers-Jones. Wong’s appointment was in the climate at that time that the public housing programme was not only a construction business, it was also a trading commodities in the housing market and a financial business involving huge sum of money in the form of housing loans. The Government needed someone outside the government who knew the market force and the private sector well. Wong was the best fit candidate who could be trusted by the Government (as Member of the Executive Council and the Legislative Council) and that by her profession (as Executive Director of a NGO), she did not seem to have personal interests or conflict of interests in the position of Chairman of Housing Authority and the commercial sector.

During the seven years tenure of Chairmanship, Wong had attempted to change the Housing Authority into an more independent organization by a corporization process of the Authority. Under her directive, the Housing Authority improved its image to the Hong Kong people and enhanced communication with the general public, as well as the political parties and pressure groups. It became a less bureaucratic organization. From 1991, all regular meetings of the Housing Authority were held in public. Members of the political parties and pressure groups were also absorbed into the Authority, though the majority were still professionals and with pro-government background.

As the executive arm of Housing Authority, she tried to change the culture of the Housing Department from government bureaucracy to

---

<sup>9</sup> Rebecca L. H. Chiu, “Housing Intervention in Hong Kong: From Laissez Faire to Privatization”, in *25 Years of Social and Economic Development in Hong Kong*, eds. Benjamin K.P. Leung and Teresa Y.C. Wong (Centre of Asian Studies: The University of Hong Kong Press, 1994), p.350

private sector customer-oriented one. Her ambitious plan was to replace the civil servants in the Department by the Housing Authority's own employees and to transfer the service of estate management and maintenance to the private sector. A Voluntary Department Scheme was introduced to allow the civil servants to retire early and left the Department. It was reported in a Memorandum for the Housing Authority that by the end of March 2002, over 3,550 applications were received, 2,100 were approved and over 1,870 staff had departed under the scheme.<sup>10</sup>

This road to corporization was by no means smooth. Resistance from the existing civil service staff was received against this privatization direction which caused the concerns of the Government. In December 1999, when the short-piling scandal broke out in a public housing estate under construction in Shatin, Wong, as the Chairman of Housing Authority, was heavily blamed by the public of not taking any responsibility. Under great political pressure, she had to resign from the Housing Authority in June 2000.

Her successor was Dr. Cheng Hon-kwan who was appointed the Chairman of Housing Authority after the resignation of Wong and held the office until 30.6.2002. Cheng was essentially a pro-government and conservative figure. He marked the transitional period to the next phase which the Government held the fortress again in the time of political unrest against the SAR Government.

#### **The fourth period from 2002 to present**

By June 2002, the Government published a report on the Review of the Institutional Framework for Public Housing. In its Executive Summary, the report stated "This review was commissioned in mid-2000 by the Chief Executive in the wake of public concern over a number of serious incidents affecting the quality of public housing developments. In examining the four organizations principally involved in the development and implementation of the Government's public

---

<sup>10</sup> The Hong Kong Housing Authority, "Greater Private Sector Involvement in Housing Authority's Estate management and maintenance Services – report on the Progress of Implementation", Memorandum for the Housing Authority Paper No. HA 26/2002, 21 May 2002.

housing programme namely, the Housing Bureau, the Hong Kong Housing Authority, the Housing Department and the Hong Kong Housing Society, we were drawn into a clarification of the policy which these programmes were intended to deliver. We were also obliged to look, albeit in less details, at the roles of other organizations involved in the process of developing public housing, as well as the Government's role with respect to private sector housing.”<sup>11</sup> This brought a new chapter to the public housing development and hence a fourth period of the Housing Authority history.

The changes were against the background of the economic downturn of the property market after the property market boom was exposed upon the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Another background was the political reform of the new accountability system for the Principal Officials in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government. The Chairmanship of the Housing Authority was placed back in the hand of the Principal Officials from 1.7.2002, the then Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands, Mr. Michael Suen (2002 to 2007) and his successor, Ms. Eva Cheng, Secretary for Transport and Housing (1.7.2007 to present). The relationship between the Government and the Housing Authority is once again maintained a closed link and the housing policy of the Government would be implemented smoothly.

An interview with the current Committee Secretary of the Housing Authority, Ms. Francoise Chow, was conducted on 19.6.09. She has served the two Chairmen, Suen and Cheng, during the meetings of the Housing Authority and provided some personal views on the conduct of Housing Authority business with the relationship of the Government. A written record of the interview is attached. While the view expressed in the interview was quite personal experience, it was interesting to note that Chow had pointed out the closed relationship between the Housing Authority and the Government through the important role of the Chairman. She has also recalled her experience of public protest during the open meeting of the Housing Authority. This was quite a reflection of the social and political atmosphere of the public housing issue nowadays in Hong Kong and as a result of the openness of the Housing Authority

---

<sup>11</sup> Hong Kong Government, Review of the Institutional Framework for Public Housing, THE REPORT, June 2002, Printing Department, 2002, p. 1

brought about by the Wong's era.

## **Conclusion**

Following the classification of public housing development of Chiu (1994), namely (1) From Laissez-faire to Limited Intervention, 1842-1972; (2) Intensified Intervention, 1973-1986; (3) Privatization, 1987-2011 (assuming this was her prediction into the future), the current study has examined the corresponding development of the Hong Kong Housing Authority and its relationship with the Government through the appointment of the Chairman by the Government. It is noted that the first two periods of the Housing Authority's development fitted in the classification, even though the 'limited intervention' was still arguable.

In fact, the involvement of the Government throughout the history of public housing development in Hong Kong was substantial, but it was sometime perceived as more directly or indirectly through its housing agent – the Housing Authority. This was interpreted as the tactics and strategy of a colony government in the old days in handling the thorny housing problem in the past. After the establishment of the SAR Government in 1997, the housing problem was even more politicalized as the public housing programme had turned into a keen competition with the private housing developers on the supply of land and flats. The vast profits and interests of the property market have once again demanded the Government to hand on the business of the public housing development and keep a tight control on the Housing Authority. Therefore, the year 2002 has made another substantial change to the housing policy, as well as the organization of the Housing Authority – the fourth period of public housing development from 2002 to present, which marked the opposition to Privatization as predicted by Chiu (1994).

As a matter of fact, the Government, either the colony or the SAR, has never kept its hand off the public housing programme and the Housing Authority ever since the year 1954. It was only a matter of different degree of involvement through the Hong Kong Housing Authority that the vital issue of housing for millions of Hong Kong people was handled in the past and probably in the future.



\*\*\*\*\*

Reference:

Rebecca L. H. Chiu, “Housing Intervention in Hong Kong: From Laissez Faire to Privatization”, in *25 Years of Social and Economic Development in Hong Kong*, eds. Benjamin K.P. Leung and Teresa Y.C. Wong (Centre of Asian Studies: The University of Hong Kong Press, 1994)

Ho Pui-yin, *The Administrative History of the Hong Kong Government Agencies 1841-2002*, Hong Kong University Press, 2004

Dr. Leung Mei-ye, *From Shelter to Home – 45 Years of Public Housing Development in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong Housing Authority, 1999

Hong Kong Government, Review of the Institutional Framework for Public Housing, THE REPORT, June 2002, Printing Department, 2002

The Hong Kong Housing Authority, Memorandum for the Housing Authority Paper No. HA 26/2002, “*Greater Private Sector Involvement in Housing Authority’s Estate management and maintenance Services – report on the Progress of Implementation*”, 21 May 2002

*Hong Kong Housing Authority Annual Report 1954-1955*, Government Printer, Hong Kong

*Report of the Hong Kong Housing Authority for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 1955 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1957*, Government Printer, Government Press, Hong Kong

D.P.H. Liao, Commissioner for Housing, *Annual Report of the Hong Kong Housing Authority for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 1972 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 1973*, Government Printer, Government Press, Hong Kong

香港城市大學中國文化中心編，《考察香港 - 文化歷史個案研究》，（香港：三聯書店、2005）

廖迪生、張兆和、蔡志祥合編，《香港歷史、文化與社會（三），田野與文獻篇》，（香港：香港科技大學出版技術中心, 2001）

Housing Authority Homepage, <http://www.housingauthority.com.hk/en/>  
(30.5.09)

Legislative Council Homepage,  
<http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr08-09/english/panels/hg/> (15.5.09)