

Trapped: The unfortunate reality of subdivided housing in
Hong Kong and the challenges for stakeholders to mitigate the crisis

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1. Abstract

Hong Kong is currently experiencing an affordable housing crisis. The immense wealth gap, inflated housing costs, and lack of access to public housing have driven tens of thousands of people to live in subdivided housing. While the government has been relatively inactive in addressing the situation, in recent years, grassroots groups have emerged and begun working towards solving this pressing issue. My research aims to examine the actions of different groups seeking to solve this problem and the collaborations between them. Through analyzing the different approaches by non-governmental organizations and the obstacles they have faced, this research suggests that both state and non-state action is needed to improve the problem.

Introduction

Although Hong Kong is a global center of wealth, the reality for many residents in this city is juxtaposed to the region's image of prosperity. While the lifestyles of some affluent Hong Kong residents are lavish, life for millions is filled with struggle and financial insecurity. In fact, the struggle to find housing impacts nearly half of the population (Hong Kong Housing Authority, 2017). The lack of affordable and adequate housing in Hong Kong coupled with the increasing demand for living spaces has led to the growth of a phenomenon known as subdivided housing.

Traditional subdivided housing refers to the division of a standard apartment into multiple dwellings in order to maximize the number of people who can occupy a small space. Another form of less common subdivided housing, known as "bedspace apartments" or "cage homes," are bed-sized rental spaces resembling animal cages that are often found in dilapidated factories and abandoned buildings. With astronomical rental rates in the private market and a lack of supply in the public market, hundreds of thousands of people in Hong Kong are left with no other option than to live in these types of inadequate housing arrangements (Ng, 2017).

Figure 1: Subdivided Housing



Source: South China Morning Post, 2017

Subdivided housing offers an opportunity for those with no other viable shelter option, but general livelihood is severely affected by the state of these residences. Makeshift wiring, lack of proper ventilation, and insect infestation are a just a few of the repercussions that arise when these facilities are constructed with no regard for building codes (Buildings Department, 2017). The cramped living spaces pose a hazard to all residents, yet the health and safety for tens of thousands subdivided housing residents is not accounted for. While government programs, such as Public Rental Housing (PRH), have provided affordable housing for some low-income individuals, the system has not been sufficient to solve the housing crisis. In Hong Kong, many are denied the service or are forced to wait up to ten years to acquire public housing (Zhao, 2016). Furthermore, the government has been largely criticized for their inaction on the issue. Their lack of rent control and failure to enforce landlord-tenant agreements in the past decade has not held people who are perpetuating this problem accountable, allowing for the growth of subdivided housing (Ngo, 2013).

Due to the negative reception of current government policy and the need for adequate housing across Hong Kong, non-governmental organizations have emerged and are currently at the forefront of developing methods to address this issue. My research explores the different initiatives by non-governmental organizations and how they have collaborated with one another in recent years. In order to rectify the crisis of subdivided housing, it is imperative to understand how different stakeholders can come together to address this matter.

2. Literature Review

A review of the complex history of Hong Kong's private and public housing market is key to gaining a better understanding of the current situation and conditions that have exacerbated the problem. While homelessness and poverty were societal dilemmas that Hong Kong faced prior to the 1950's, the lack of affordable housing was brought to the forefront in this decade when a surge of refugees came from mainland China and settled in squatter camps in the outskirts of the city (Smart, 2004). The public housing programs in Hong Kong emerged in the 1950's after a fire in a squatter settlement left tens of thousands of recent mainland Chinese immigrants homeless. As a result of this incident, the Resettlement Department was instituted by the Hong Kong government in an effort to provide immediate relief to the victims, and subsequently, the former Hong Kong Housing Authority was established in order to improve living conditions city-wide and eliminate the health and safety concerns present in low-income areas. In 1973, the former Hong Kong Housing authority was replaced by the new Hong Kong Housing Authority in an attempt to accelerate the development of public housing. To this day, this department maintains control over public housing units in Hong Kong and possesses authority over current housing policies (Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 2004).

Figure 2: Shek Kip Mei fire that spurred the development of public housing



Source: The University of Hong Kong Libraries, 2017

Today the Public Rental Housing Program is widely seen as an ineffective solution to the lack of affordable housing in Hong Kong, and has been a recipient of criticism from academics and community organizations (Ng, 2017). The requirements for living in Hong Kong's public housing are extremely strict and even those who are eligible face obstacles when seeking housing. Public rental housing in Hong Kong is distributed across four districts: the primary urban area, the extended urban area, the new territories, and outer islands. While the majority of work opportunities, community facilities, and general amenities are located in the urban area, finding public housing in this region is almost impossible. Not only is the wait time for PRH in the urban area approximately ten years, in comparison with a three-year wait for all other locations, but furthermore, but those who have registered for PRH after 2012 are limited to only applying for housing in non-urban areas (Hong Kong Housing Authority, 2017). Moreover, the specific and

strict requirements for applicants completely exclude a vast number of Hong Kong residents in need, leaving them without an option for adequate housing whatsoever. In order to gain a spot on the PRH waitlist, applicants must have seven years of residency in Hong Kong and their income can not exceed an amount set by the Hong Kong Housing Authority at anytime during the application period. For example, the income for a family of four applying for PRH cannot exceed \$26,690 HKD (\$3,414 USD) and they can be removed from the waitlist if their income fluctuates. Not only does this policy restrict recent immigrants from mainland China, who historically prompted the creation of the PRH system, but it also places applicants in a precarious financial position where they are de-incentivized from increasing their income in order to maintain a spot on the waitlist.

While the South China Morning Post has been the primary source recounting the growth of subdivided housing in Hong Kong, the most recent in-depth academic analysis of this issue is a 100 plus page report by the Hong Kong Institute of Education entitled *Subdivided Housing Issues: Causes and Solutions*. It is widely acknowledged that the imbalance between the supply and demand of housing has sparked this phenomenon, yet the reasons for which this imbalance is so prevalent are more complex. This complexity is the primary focus of the paper. The authors note that while the urban regions on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon possess population densities between 16,320 and 44,760 people per square kilometer, making the population density of Hong Kong one of the highest in the world, only one-fourth of Hong Kong land has been utilized, and furthermore, only 2% of total land has been designated for public residential purposes. Additionally, the government, which possesses a monopoly over land, has decreased its allocation between the 1990's and 2000's despite the simultaneous increase of migrants from mainland China. While reforming land allocation policies could ease the gap between the supply and demand

of land, nearly 40% of Hong Kong's territory is protected as natural reserves. The tension between environmental protection and housing justice adds another unique dimension to this shortage issue, demonstrating the complexity of territory allocation from the perspective of the government and suggesting that they have remained relatively inactive in order to avoid conflict with the many actors that have a stake in Hong Kong's housing market.

This report also contains an in-depth analysis of the Hong Kong government's position on subdivided income housing, suggesting that the government's inconsistent approach has also perpetuated this problem by shifting between long periods of inaction and sudden crackdowns on subdivided developments. The Buildings Department and Urban Renewal Authority have become more harsh on subdivided housing in recent years, yet their demolition schemes have not improved the subdivided housing crisis and only left vulnerable residents homeless. Although removal orders have been increasing since 2007, there are no official government statistics on subdivided housing or records of accidents related to their existence. Furthermore, new commercial developments have regularly followed the demolition of dilapidated buildings containing subdivided housing and those evicted have been left homeless. In a 2007 press conference, the Legislative Council's secretary for development Paul Chan warned that those who did not comply with removals could face a \$200,000 HKD fine and a year of imprisonment. However, with thousands of residents in subdivided housing and the government's ability to enforce this policy at their discretion, it is likely that those who are evicted are in the most vulnerable positions, and the incentive for the government to evict them is not to save them from inadequate housing but in order to demolish the existing structures to build way for profit accruing developments. The report illustrates that, despite attempts by the HKHA to make it appear as though they are working to rectify the problem, there has been a great lack of governmental action on this issue.

The primary recommendation from the report is for the government to increase availability for residential construction. The report also advises that the government accelerate construction plans for public housing and enforce policy to crackdown on landlords. While *Subdivided Housing Issues* presents a clear picture of the complexities of the problem and the failure of the government to solve this issue, their recommendations center around government-based changes and fail to acknowledge the potential of non-governmental actors to come up with innovative solutions. While government bodies have access to resources and possess the ability to accelerate projects, the list of suggestions based solely on a top-down governmental framework excludes community-based influences that have the ability to positively impact these kinds of societal problems.

The top-down urban planning approach of the Hong Kong Housing Authority and its lack of regard for the community in its decisions has been criticized by Dr. Mee Kam Ng, who has written extensively on sustainable regeneration options for Hong Kong. In *Property-led urban renewal in Hong Kong: any place for the community?* Ng argues that a “people-centered” renewal strategy is imperative in Hong Kong and that in order to have sustainable housing policies, community participation is a necessity. Ng’s critique of housing policies in Hong Kong reveals how community organizations and citizens are alienated from these processes, which exacerbates the issue as those experiencing the struggles of the housing crisis are left invisible and voiceless. In *The Wanchai Experiment*, Ng further discusses the struggles of governmental-grassroots collaboration, arguing that workshops and information sessions to engage the community with pressing issues are only facilitated by outside groups that lack the resources and outreach of the government. Ng’s writing on the breach between the community and the government in Hong Kong highlights the lack of collaboration across housing stakeholders in Hong Kong and suggests that there is an important element missing in the discussion of how to solve housing issues in this

region. In order to promote communication, liaisons are needed to effectively connect the government, who have the resources and authority to create change, with people who are impacted by the issues. Thus, non-governmental organizations can act as an important player in this process.

NGOs can be defined as non-governmental organizations concerned with the “promotion of social, political, or economic change” that have an agenda focused on some form of “development” (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). This term is helpful in understanding the different groups in Hong Kong that are working to combat subdivided housing, as regardless of their particular method in addressing this cause, their actions are not bound to a government agenda and their motives are based in the desire for societal improvement. Although the actions of these organizations greatly differ in the way in which they approach issues, NGOs can be generally distinguished by three categories: implementers, catalysts, and partners. Generally, an implementer mobilizes resources to provide a service, a catalyst facilitates awareness about an issue, and partners use their connections to make changes through joint ventures. Embodying at least one of these roles at a time, non-governmental agencies are able to organize around an issue and spark change.

In Hong Kong, it is evident that the government has not been productive in addressing the housing issue alone, and thus, NGOs have taken on different roles and used their connections both with one another and the people who are impacted by the housing crisis to create change. The actions of NGOs handling subdivided housing in Hong Kong have gained attention from the media in the past few years and have been regularly featured in the South China Morning Post (Hei-wah, 2017). While acclaimed universities such as the Chinese University of Hong Kong have begun producing literature on subdivided housing in recent years (Yiu, 2015) there is little to no writing on how NGOs in Hong Kong are addressing this housing issue.

Research Question:

How are NGOs in Hong Kong approaching the issue of subdivided housing and to what extent are they collaborating with other NGOs and/or the government?

Hypothesis:

NGO's are coming up with innovative solutions to improve the subdivided housing crisis in Hong Kong but the subdivided housing crisis will not improve without both non-state actor intervention as well as adequate government action. However, collaboration currently is happening across NGOs but not between NGOs and the government. Therefore, improvements are being seen on a small-scale in individual districts rather than across Hong Kong. Strategic collaboration is required.

3. Methodology

I interviewed four different non-governmental organizations that are working to improve the subdivided housing issue in Hong Kong. The organizations I interviewed were DOMAT Community Architecture, LightBe, Platform Concerning Subdivided Housing, and the Concerning Grassroots Housing Alliance. While there are many organizations working on the issue, these four groups are sufficient case studies because they all differ in their focus as an organization, yet they are separate from the Hong Kong Housing Authority governmental body.

In order to select these groups, I attended an annual demonstration on subdivided housing and interviewed the two groups that discussed their platform regarding the subdivided housing issue at the event, Concerning Grassroots Housing Alliance and Platform Concerning Subdivided

Housing. The other NGOs, LightBe and DOMAT, have been repeatedly featured on the South China Morning Post and are well known organizations combatting subdivided housing.

In my one hour interviews with each group, I structured my questions around four areas of concern: What led them to create their organization, the specific strategy of their particular organization to combat subdivided housing, the extent of their collaboration with other non-governmental organizations, and their perspective on what actors (either state or non-state) have the capability to significantly improve this issue.

4. Case studies

DOMAT

Background: DOMAT was founded by Maggie Ma, a graduate from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Mark Kingsley, an architect from the United Kingdom. Prior to starting this architecture firm, the two had both interned and worked in commercial offices and were unhappy with their roles at these businesses. Ma and Kingsley stated that the role of architects is more than to merely “design buildings” and rather, is a duty to use their knowledge to contribute to society. They were both interested in the role that architects could play in benefiting the community and the environment and thus started DOMAT in 2012. Their community-based architecture projects range across Hong Kong and mainland China.

Figure 3: DOMAT modular furniture



Source: DOMAT, 2017

Strategy to Address Subdivided Housing: The Home Modification Project improves the conditions of subdivided housing by giving low-income families modular furniture that maximizes the use of space in small areas. DOMAT believes that improving the building structure and renovating subdivided flats poses a risk to tenants because it may increase the market value and lead landlords to increase the rent for tenants. Ma and Kingsley believe that as architects, the rental market is “out of their control,” but the interiors of subdivided housing is something that they can manipulate and improve. The furniture given to subdivided residents includes a bed, desk, and cabinet that can be rearranged in multiple and different ways to accommodate the small area. The furniture is intended not only to supply storage space, but also to provide desk surfaces in order to improve the studying habits of children. By providing better study spaces for children, DOMAT aims to foster academic growth for young residents in order to help break the cycle of poverty in Hong Kong.

Collaboration with other NGO's: The Home Modification Project is a collaboration project with SoCO, the Society for Community Organization, a grassroots advocacy group concerning housing issues in the Sham Shui Po neighborhood. SoCO contacted DOMAT in order to start the Home Modification Project and provided funding to initiate the plan. Currently, DOMAT is only collaborating with SoCO and residents in Sham Shui Po but has been approached by other community organizations about implementing the program in different regions. With SoCO, they have already worked with over 100 different families in high density Sham Shui Po.

Perspectives on the Subdivided Housing issue in Hong Kong: DOMAT views the uncontrollable housing market as the reason for which the issue of subdivided housing persists. Additionally, Ma and Kingsley point out that corrupt property agents are responsible for the inflated subdivided rental rates. According to them, rental rates are often proposed by property agents who persuade landlords to rent their flats at above market prices, causing a cycle of rental inflation. Ma and Kingsley also believe that NGOs have played a key role in improving the state of housing by testing alternative methods to combat the problem. DOMAT suggests that NGOs do not have to be in conflict with the government. Instead, NGO's can identify successful methods to improve an aspect of subdivided housing and the government, which is bureaucratic and slow to test projects, can subsequently adopt their successful models.

Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats

Background: The Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats was founded in 2012. Despite the prevalence of subdivided housing in the last several decades, prior to the 2010's, there had been

little discussion on this in the academic world. Lai Kin Kwok, the founder of this organization, catalyzed this group by bringing over 30 non-governmental organizations, and academics together in order to utilize their different strengths and improve this issue. During the first three years following the organization's inception, they used their network of intellectuals, activists, and politicians to filter through different possible solutions and now have a number of goals they hope to complete in coming years.

Strategy to Address Subdivided Housing: This organization acts as a liaison between different subdivided housing stakeholders. By facilitating communication, the group provides a platform for these actors to come together to utilize their different abilities. The main strategy of the organization is political lobbying, however. Their extensive connections with academics and activists allows them to conduct research on subdivided housing and join in political actions. Currently, this organization is lobbying the government to award un-utilized buildings in the public sector to NGOs to manage in order to provide temporary homes to people on the waiting list at an affordable cost. Their academic background has allowed them to use the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural rights as a tangible framework to hold the government accountable for its housing policies.

Collaboration with other NGO's: While the platform itself exists as a forum for collaboration between members of their group, they have also worked with individuals and groups that are not directly associated with their organization. For example, in 2012, they began a project with students at Chinese University of Hong Kong to study the actual change in the rent-to-income ratio (RTIR) of subdivided units in Hong Kong. Furthermore, they not only collaborate with legislators

in their organization, but also lobby candidates in order to understand their positions on subdivided housing and to promote their political platform if aligned with their organization's efforts. Additionally, the platform has a relationship with the Hong Kong media, allowing them to publicize their events and actions as an organization in order to gain both civilian and government attention.

Perspectives on the Subdivided Housing issue in Hong Kong: The Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats sees the emergence of subdivided housing as a result of a supply and demand issue with public rental housing. If there is enough public rental housing built, the organization believes the issue of subdivided housing will not be as prevalent across Hong Kong. While they see government creation of PRH as the long term solution, they think that unutilized space should be transformed into transitional housing that could be regulated by public sector instead of private market agents. They also argue that the high demand for subdivided housing leads landlords to subdivide apartments, and hence the government should incentivize landlords to change their policies. They believe that NGOs can only help a small number of people and current organizations that operate with these arrangements at a small-scale eventually end up working as charities to provide their services because they do not have the resources of the government to sustain themselves.

Concerning Grassroots' Housing Rights Alliance

Background: This alliance was formed in 2010 after a massive fire on Fa Yuen street in Mong Kok spread to subdivided housing and led to nine deaths. The Hong Kong government blamed the street hawkers, yet this tragedy brought the government's allowance of the perpetuation of

subdivided housing to light. The alliance lobbied and protested, calling on the government to build public housing and reinstitute the rent control that was lifted in 2004. Yet, after four years of pressure, the issues of rooftop squatters and subdivided housing in factories had worsened. Therefore, the group subsequently changed its agenda, stating the government was nonrespondent to their calls for more government action.

Strategy to Address Subdivided Housing: Although this organization is founded on lobbying for greater construction of public housing and rent control, their current focus is to pilot the Tenancy Protection Scheme and the Good House Project. In the Tenancy Protection Scheme, this organization acts as an intermediary between landlords and tenants, helping write up contracts in which willing landlords make small concessions in the rental agreement in order to improve the lives of residents and give them greater protection for long-term tenancy. Due to the fact that the government is unwilling to change the landlord tenant agreement (landlord ordinance), Concerning Grassroots' Housing Rights Alliance identifies willing landlords and manages rental contract negotiations between tenants and landlords, hoping that case studies can be used to lobby for the review of tenancy policies. In the Good House project, they work with volunteer architects from a firm called Comma to improve the interiors of subdivided housing units, such as walls and windows, in order to improve safety.

Collaboration with other NGO's: The organization's primary collaboration partner is the architecture firm Comma, who provides volunteer services with the Good House Project in order to help renovate subdivided housing spaces. They also collaborate with local schools and give tours of subdivided housing to raise awareness about this issue. Additionally, this organization

also participates in solidarity actions, such as the annual subdivided housing protest each July in front of the legislative office alongside the Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats.

Figure 4: Annual Housing Protest in Admiralty, Hong Kong



Source: Olivia Wilk

Perspective on the Subdivided Housing Issue in Hong Kong: The Concerning Grassroots' Housing Rights Alliance believes that in order to significantly change the issue of subdivided housing in Hong Kong, the government must play a larger role in solving this issue by creating more public housing, re-implementing rental control, holding property agents accountable for distorting rental prices, and regulating the landlord ordinance so that more protection is offered to tenants. While they feel that their actions with the Good House Project and Tenancy Protection Scheme are contributing towards the goal of mitigating the housing crisis, they state that their ability is limited due to low funding for projects and lack of academic backing in their group. However, as a grassroots organization they are deeply connected with residents and familiar with

their hardship and believe that their role is imperative in this struggle regardless of the extent of government intervention.

LightBe

Background: LightBe is a member of the Social Ventures Hong Kong portfolio, an organization that incubates and invests in social enterprises related to societal improvements. The idea for LightBe came from Ricky Yu, CEO of LightBe, who while working in the commercial sector recognized that despite the lack of affordable housing in Hong Kong, there was an untapped supply of unutilized housing in Hong Kong. Yu began identifying these properties and launched the organization in 2013. Since its inception, LightBe has worked with approximately 500 residents.

Strategy to Address Subdivided Housing: LightBe recognizes that while there is viable “unlocked” space to rent out to residents, owners often fear that their apartments will be destroyed by renters. Therefore, owners often purchase multiple properties, yet leave them unused purely for the purpose of real estate investment and capital gains. LightBe acts as a property manager through LightHome and LightHouse, subletting apartments to families referred by social workers at a rate divorced from the market price. Light Home establishes co-living, not subdivided, spaces for single mothers and their children in apartments that were previously owned and unused by landlords. They allow residents to remain tenants for a 3-years-long period and require them to participate in a concurrent empowerment training so that they can find adequate housing and employment once they graduate from the program. In 2016, LightBe implemented the Light Housing project in Sham Tseng, subletting rooms from a government-owned abandoned textile

factory dormitory to over 90 families at low rates, illustrating further how they are looking to “unlock” unutilized property on increasingly larger scales.

Collaboration with other NGO’s: LightBe collaborates with social workers affiliated with different regional community organizations in order to identify qualified people in need for their LightHome and LightHouse programs. LightBe, while based in Sham Shui Po, works across Hong Kong and thus collaborates with social workers in the region. They receive charity funding from the Lee Hy San Foundation for the LightHome program and from the Chow Tai Fok foundation for LightHouse.

Perspectives on the Subdivided Housing issue in Hong Kong: LightBe does not view landlords who subdivide apartments and rent out flats at astronomical rates as bad intentioned, but rather as people that are simply responding to market forces due to the high demand and low supply of housing in Hong Kong. LightBe does not think that the government has the capability to solve the problem, as they do not have the land to build enough affordable housing. Furthermore, LightBe believes that the “free market” mentality defines the Hong Kong economy and Hong Kong way of life, arguing that thinking outside of the box to unlock under-utilized properties should be the first step in mitigating the subdivided housing epidemic rather than building more public housing. They do not take money from the government in order to maintain a neutral position, exhibiting how they view non-governmental alternative social enterprise as an effective way to provide housing to people in need.

Discussion and Conclusion

Based on these case studies, I found that NGOs are currently working to improve the physical built environment of rental spaces (DOMAT, and Grassroots Housing Alliance in their collaboration with Comma), lobbying for public rental housing, improving landlord ordinances, and rent control (Grassroots Housing Alliance and Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats), as well as “unlocking” unutilized rental spaces to rent at affordable rates (LightBe and Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats). Across all NGO’s studied, each one was collaborating with at least one other organization in order to advance their mission. In contrast to my hypothesis, two out of the four organizations were also collaborating with the government, Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats and LightBe. The number of individuals impacted by subdivided housing in Hong Kong is high in comparison with the amount of individuals who have been directly helped by these NGOs. However, Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats and LightBe, through their government partnerships, have been able to expand their reach across the region in comparison with their counterparts.

The NGO that was involved in the most collaboration is clearly Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats, as their group is founded on partnerships between academic, legislative, and grassroots communities. While having connections to communities affected by subdivided housing is greatly important, collaboration with academic and political figures allows for Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats to give marginalized groups a voice and effectively lobby for better conditions. For example, through the Platform Concerning Subdivided Flats’ involvement in the Chinese University of Hong Kong Subdivided Flat Rent to Income Ratio project, the organization was able to connect tenants with researchers at the CUHK in order to analyze the subdivided rental market. This project allowed the organization to justify their demand for government intervention in the market and use their connections with the media to publicize their findings. Comparably,

lack of collaboration can negatively impact the success of a group. For example, Grassroots Housing Rights Alliance noted their lack of academics in the organization as a reason for the government's lack of regard for their suggestions despite frequent lobbying and protesting.

The organizations believed that while their efforts can positively impact the housing crisis, ultimately, government intervention (i.e. public rental housing, rental control, etc) is necessary to significantly improve the problem. LightBe was an exception. Conversely, they did not view the government as capable of solving the issue. Rather, they viewed “unlocking” property within the private sphere as a better alternative to implementing policies that conflict with the “free market” mentality of Hong Kong. However, LightBe's revitalization of the Sham Tseng textile dormitories which has provided affordable housing for over forty families was only made possible by a government donation of property to their NGO. While there are challenges for both NGOs and government bodies when they work independently, bringing these state and non-state actors together allows for the voices and innovative ideas of the community to be heard and supported by government resources.

In my interview with DOMAT, Mark Kingsley and Maggie Ma described where they saw the solution for subdivided housing stemming from: NGOs can experiment with different approaches which the government can model and implement on a large scale. Connecting directly with the community affected while having access to academic organizations and advocacy networks, NGOs hold power in their ability to unite the strengths of different stakeholders. However, they are still limited by their lack of resources. In Hong Kong, NGOs should continue their innovative pilot programs and collaboration with one another. Additionally, they should explore ways in which they can use the power the government holds to their advantage through collaboration, rather than viewing them as an enemy against their cause. From this case study of

subdivided housing in Hong Kong, it is evident that when addressing large societal issues, the most effective approaches require action of all stakeholders involved, as both NGOs and governments acting alone face challenges. Urban density is a worldwide problem and there is much to be learned. A collaborative strategy is needed to address and improve issues of housing.

Further Research: The intersections between subdivided housing and ethnic inequality in Hong Kong

In my research I came across issues that are specific to ethnic minorities living in Hong Kong. While the living conditions of all subdivided housing residents are harsh, the circumstances of ethnic minorities has an additional dimension, as their plight is exacerbated by racial oppression in Hong Kong.

Caritas Hong Kong, a catholic charitable organization that connects subdivided housing residents to resources and advocacy networks, is currently working with the To Kwa Wan Ekta Housing Concern group in order to improve the lives of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong because people of non-Chinese descent are often denied both public rental housing and subdivided housing. In the cases where ethnic minorities are able to find subdivided housing, they are often forced to separate their families because the flats in Hong Kong are unable to accommodate for extensive family units. Furthermore, ethnic minorities are barred from equal treatment in applying for housing due to language barriers and perceived stereotypes by landlords and property agents.

With the number of ethnic minorities living in Hong Kong on the rise and attempts by NGOs to solve the problem of subdivided housing, it is important to understand how race plays a role Hong Kong's housing crisis. Despite the coverage of subdivided housing across both national

and international news, little research has been done on how these conditions have affected ethnic minorities.

Appendix A

Interview Guide for NGO's

1. What is your name and role in this organization?
2. What is the history of your organization?
3. How is your organization structured? (Who are the members, are people employed, etc)
4. What groups have you collaborated with in regards to subdivided housing and how did you end up working together?
5. What has been your strategy as an organization and what actions you have taken with that?

- a. Why do you take this approach and think it is important to improving the issue of subdivided housing?
6. What positive impacts have you seen thus far with the initiatives you have taken?
 - a. What are your future goals? (near and long term)
7. What are obstacles you have faced as an organization?
8. What barriers do you see in general across Hong Kong society in solving the subdivided housing problem?
9. Do you think that government intervention (i.e. creation of more public housing, rental control, increases in wage, etc) is necessary to address the problem of subdivided housing in the long term?
10. Do you see the possibility for long term change without changes in government policy if action is taken from the grassroots level or sparked by non-governmental organizations?
 - a. Where do you see the solution coming from?

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