Unbounded

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On the Interior and Interiority

Edited by

Dolly Daou, DJ Huppatz
and Dinh Quoc Phuong

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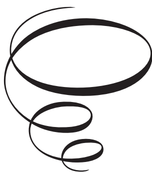

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INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for this book was an academic colloquium titled "Unbounded" organised by the Interior Design/Architecture program at Swinburne University of Technology in November 2012. Contributors to that event were scholars from different disciplines who presented papers focused on the interior. The colloquium papers addressed issues of privacy, containment, access, exposure, virtual spaces, interiority, urbanism, surveillance and social networks. This book contains some of these original colloquium papers, in addition to invited papers, that provide additional perspectives on the shifting understanding of the interior and its recent transformations.

In interior design, the definition and popular perception of the interior has long been concerned with bounded spaces, and with the relationship between private and public realms. However, two issues have challenged traditional boundaries between interior and exterior, private and public: first, the emergence of new technological practices, and second, a broader understanding of diverse cultures. Popular perceptions of public and private space are currently being revised, and the interior is increasingly unbound in various ways, as many of the contributors to the colloquium and to this volume have argued. Both technological and cultural practices challenge and disrupt the common sense idea of an interior space as a contained enclosure with clearly defined boundaries. Instead, the blurriness and ambiguity between public and private, inside and outside, and interiority and exteriority are challenging understandings of the interior.

During the past two decades, scholarship about interior design has grown exponentially. This is evidenced by the numerous anthologies, monographs and journals devoted to the study of the interior. For example, in the past decade, there have been at least five significant edited anthologies focused on theorising the interior: Mark Taylor and Julianna Preston's *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader* (2006), Edward Hollis et al.'s *Thinking Inside the Box: A Reader in Interiors for the 21st Century* (2007), Lois Weinthal's *Toward a New Interior: An Anthology of Interior Design Theory* (2011), Mark Taylor's *Interior Design and Architecture: Critical and Primary Sources* (2013) and Lois Weinthal and Graeme

Brooker's *The Handbook of Interior Architecture and Design* (2013).[1] The volume and diversity of this scholarship suggests that the interior is a dynamic field of interest for scholars from a variety of disciplines beyond interior design and architecture, including media studies, art, performance studies, anthropology, sociology, geography and psychology.

An early attempt at defining the interior was Stanley Abercrombie's *A Philosophy of Interior Design*, in which he begins with the common understanding of a fundamental physical division between interior and exterior spaces. However, Abercrombie argues that this divide is more than simply physical. "Outside", he writes, "we are exposed".[2] He continues with the common assumptions that often ground discussions about the exterior and the interior. Of the exterior, he writes, "As in the wilderness or in the city, we are not sheltered there, nor safe, nor in control. Let us go inside".[3] Abercrombie thus characterises the exterior as a potentially dangerous realm and an unpredictable wilderness, while the interior is characterised by its association with shelter and safety.

More recently, Christine McCarthy has proposed an expanded understanding of this common definition of the interior to include the more abstract term "interiority". McCarthy defines interiority as:

> *Containment, confinement, enclosure, imprisonment, privacy, protection, security, shelter*: These are words to which understandings of interiority adhere. Interiority is that abstract quality that enables the recognition and definition of an interior. It is a theoretical and immaterial set of coincidences and variables from which "interior" is made possible. It is not an absolute condition that depends on a restrictive architectural definition. Interiority is instead mobile and promiscuous.[4]

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[1] M. Taylor and J. Preston, eds. *Intimus: Interior Design Theory Reader* (Chichester, England, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Academy, 2006); E. Hollis and Interiors Forum Scotland, *Thinking Inside the Box: A Reader in Interiors for the 21st Century* (London: Middlesex University Press, 2007); Lois Weinthal, ed. *Toward a New Interior: An Anthology of Interior Design Theory* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2011); Mark Taylor, ed. *Interior Design and Architecture: Critical and Primary Sources* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013); Lois Weinthal and Graeme Brooker, eds. *The Handbook of Interior Architecture and Design* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

[2] Stanley Abercrombie, *A Philosophy of Interior Design* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), 1.

[3] Abercrombie, *A Philosophy of Interior Design*, 3.

[4] Christine McCarthy, "Towards a Definition of Interiority," *Space and Culture* 8, 2 (2005): 112 (original emphasis).

Emerging technological trends and cultural practices of the twenty-first century, such as new forms of surveillance and mobile digital technologies, have contributed to the potential public exposure of formerly private realms. For example, virtual spaces, such as internet social network sites, viewed from the privacy of a physical domestic space, project an illusion of security, as the user's private life and information are publicly exposed. However, the user's internet privacy settings produce another virtual interior within a networked public domain.

Fundamentally, the interior involves social interaction. This understanding of the interior as founded on interaction offers a more expansive definition of the interior as situated temporally in both the past and present, and situated physically both inside and outside. The occupants of interior spaces appropriate their environments according to their everyday needs, desires and memories. Meanwhile, closer attention to alternative conceptions of privacy, security and public exposure from non-Western and Indigenous cultures has questioned long-standing assumptions. For example, domestic cooking may be practised in public spaces in some indigenous societies, in contrast to Western practice, where this activity is normally performed in a private enclosed interior space. Given these shifts, we propose the following questions: what is the changing definition of the interior and interiority, and how do contemporary technological and cultural values challenge an unbound conception of the interior? The essays in this edited collection consider these questions in order to provide insight into new definitions of the interior and interiority. Following McCarthy's definition of interiority, this book examines an expanded definition of the interior by exploring spaces from the context of urbanity, virtuality, adapted traditions and the transformation of domestic spaces.

With these thoughts in mind, we have included in this book case studies of both real and "unreal" places. This includes writings about the interiority of rooms, buildings, streets and cities with diverse social, cultural and political contexts: the transformation of Soviet-style living spaces in Hanoi and Bishkek, the appropriation of everyday spaces in Tokyo, the uses of *fengshui* in corporate office towers in Shanghai and Hong Kong, the exploration of urban boundaries in Beirut, and the relationship between making domestic spaces and urban planning practices in Guatemalan communities in Florida. This volume also features chapters on virtual spaces, including one that examines human interaction with spaces of virtual reality in the Vitthala Temple in India, and another that analyses the representation and development of modern interiors through popular tapestries from the 1920s and 1930s.

In Chapter 1, Dinh Quoc Phuong and DJ Huppatz examine the appropriation and transformation of modernist domestic space in Hanoi's Soviet-style *khu tap the* (KTT) buildings. Their detailed case studies of the unbounding of Soviet-style socialist interiors in the light of recent political and economic changes in Vietnam reveal tensions between professional designers' ideal spaces and the inhabitants' use of those same spaces. Working on a similar intimate scale, in Chapter 2, Davisi Boontharm's analysis of the often hidden creative spaces of Tokyo also analyses everyday appropriation of the built environment. Adaptive reuse and the specificity of Japanese spatial practices offer an original perspective on the contemporary interior. In a further examination of Asian spatial practices, in Chapter 3, Kirsten Day analyses *fengshui* in corporate office towers in Shanghai and Hong Kong. She argues that *fengshui* is used not simply as a traditional spatial practice, but also as a marketing tool in the brand-scape of the contemporary Chinese city.

In Chapter 4, Dolly Daou explores the transformation of traditional architectonic walls into modern fortifications that join, divide, protect and attack the city. Daou compares the Demarcation Line of Beirut's city centre, Sahat al-Borj, to the Berlin Wall through exploring six forms of urban boundaries: limitless, physical, virtual, temporal, external and internal boundaries. Similarly, in Chapter 5, Alison de Kruiff explores the boundary between the tangible and intangible experience of heritage sites through human interaction with a virtual heritage environment. Users of virtual heritage models base their interactions on past experiences in real and virtual spaces, as in similar historical buildings and/or computer games. De Kruiff's project examines the interior boundaries beyond the traditional enclosed room, while introducing the reader to new constraints within the virtual heritage model and its spatial restriction, and how they interact with such constraints. In Chapter 6, Robert Crocker explores attachment to "period style" and the relationship between collecting, consumption and nostalgia, which all played a role in expressing the identity of consumers and users from 1990 to 1940. Using the example of the once-popular tapestries of the 1920s and 1930s, Crocker argues that this association and its relationship to the attachment of period style remain an unacknowledged presence in history and theory of the modern interior.

In Chapter 7, Emil Nasritdinov, Yelena Gareyeva and Tatiana Efremenko explore the post-Soviet transformation of boundaries between the public and private domain in the Soviet-style microrayons of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. The authors reveal that, due to the transformation of these Soviet-style housing estates as part of the switch to consumerism and

privatisation, the residents' lives became more bounded to their private realms, which was reinforced by both physical and social detachment to their places. While such a boundary appears to be persistent for the older population, whose nostalgic feeling of losing the public domain (public places and social interaction in them) is taken into account, the younger generation is able to cross the boundary of the private space by extending it into the virtual public domain (the internet and social networks).

In Chapter 8, Kasama Polakit examines the concept of "home" and "homemaking practices" that go beyond the private domain of a physical house. This chapter includes a case study of an undocumented Guatemalan community in suburban South Florida. The everyday social and spatial practices of these immigrants extend beyond the physical and administrative boundary of the city in which they live. The practices manifested in the process of what the author calls the "Latinisation" of the American suburban landscape, and domestic spaces contribute greatly to the construction of place identity. For these immigrants, a sense of home is represented by the duality of their home "here" (Florida) and their homeland (Guatemala). By examining the notion of "unboundedness" in relation to the transnational homemaking process, Polakit suggests that a better understanding of the unbounded notion of home can bring insight into the everyday placemaking practices of different groups who share spaces. This can help urban planners and designers better manage diversity and conflict in communities with a multi-ethnic context.

One common theme addressed by many of these contributions is the tension between professional designers who design according to regulations, guidelines and ideological positions, in contrast to inhabitants who adapt and transform interiors according to their everyday practices, needs and wants. The designers are restricted in their practices by static conditions, while people who inhabit unregulated interiors have more flexible means of redesigning these interiors without building codes and restrictions. These codes are implemented as generic regulatory guidelines to protect people and stakeholders' interests, health and wellbeing. Each chapter offers an interesting case study between the regulated and non-regulated interiors living outside the generic, ideological, Western definition of interior spaces. The tensions between different viewpoints—particularly those between professional designers, decision makers and inhabitants—are unavoidable because the design process is often influenced by a number of factors that are triggered by social, cultural and economic struggles. However, the total disregard of one viewpoint for another may not be an appropriate design approach.

The case studies presented in this book also support the point that, while it is useful to examine the idea of "unbounded" in research and design practices, it is important to consider this term from specific contexts. Due to different social, cultural and political backgrounds, people in various places respond to changes differently. For example, given the similar Soviet-ideological root, it is interesting to see differences in the processes of unbounding spaces in Hanoi and Bishkek's microrayons. While changes to consumerism and privatisation bring more life to the monotonous microrayons in Hanoi, they seem to bring the opposite to residents of Bishkek. In Hanoi, the Soviet-style spaces have been appropriated and locally unbounded to be architecturally, culturally and practically closer to the existing urban grain, and spaces with human scale, home-based retail and daily activities in the flats and public spaces. The lives of residents, particularly the older ones, in Bishkek's microrayons have become more bound to their private realms as a result of both physical and social detachment from the interior and public places. Differences can also be found in the larger urban scale in Beirut and Florida, where urban boundaries are analysed as going beyond physical boundaries. The "limitless boundaries" of Beirut are affected by political conflict—hence, the internal communal separation results in internal mental boundaries that reinforce communal interests and urban conflict, rather than the interests of the nation and its inhabitants. The notion of "unboundedness" in the city of Lake Worth, Florida, is more associated with social and cultural boundaries, as presented in immigrants' struggles to make transnational and transcultural senses of their home, often ignoring administrative and legal boundaries.

As editors, we do not intend to offer a comprehensive and concrete definition of "unbounded". Instead, we have collated new perspectives of this subject matter, both theoretically and practically. For readers, the chapters of this book may contribute additional ways to understand the concept of "unbounded" in relation to the dialectic of interiority and exteriority. For practitioners, these "unbounded" case studies provide new insights into everyday practices and how people interact with the interior. For researchers, the additional possibilities of "unbounded" might provide fertile grounds or enrich existing grounds for further discussion, speculation and philosophical analysis. We hope these discussions will continue to contribute to ongoing research and debates about the interior and interiority.

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CHAPTER ONE

UNBOUNDING MODERNISM IN HANOI

DINH QUOC PHUONG AND DJ HUPPATZ

Hanoi KTT

While modernist architecture in the West has been an ongoing obsession of architectural and design historians, the idea of a distinctive socialist modernism is a relatively new research theme. In the decades following World War II, a distinctive modernist architecture spread from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to Eastern Europe and beyond, including other countries under Soviet influence, such as Vietnam. In terms of housing, the standardised, partially prefabricated apartment blocks that rose quickly and with little attention to quality throughout socialist countries in the 1950s and 1960s have begun to attract English-language scholarship.[1] In addition to this reassessment of post-war socialist modernism, since 1989, architectural and urban transformations in formerly socialist countries have also attracted attention, particularly due to their focus on recent intersections between the everyday spaces of domestic life and broader political and economic changes.[2]

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[1] See, eg, Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Greg Castillo, *Cold War on the Home Front: The Soft Power of Midcentury Design* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010); Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Kimberly Elman Zarecor, *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia a, 1945-60* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

[2] See, eg, Kiril Stanilov, ed., *The Post-Socialist City: Urban Form and Space Transformations in Central and Eastern Europe after Socialism* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007); Alfrun Kliems and Marina Dmitrieva, eds., *The Post-Socialist City: Continuity and Change in Urban Space and Imagery* (Berlin: Jovis Verlag

In order to expand this growing research field to include Vietnam, this chapter analyses Soviet-style apartment blocks in Hanoi. In particular, it examines socialist architecture and domestic spaces in relation to the idea of "unbounded space" in the context of social and political changes in Vietnam. To provide a full and fresh picture of these complex changes, this chapter first presents the story of architectural changes in KTT Nguyen Cong Tru—one of the first Soviet-style housing estates in Hanoi. The chapter then contextualises this investigation within a broader discussion of socialist modernism and concludes with a reflection on "unbounding modernism" in Hanoi. In this chapter, "unbounding" refers to the process of releasing, breaking or blurring not only physical boundaries, but also social, economic and legal boundaries.

Several decades of support from the former Soviet Union had a significant effect on Hanoi's built environment. While South Vietnam received American support, the North followed the socialist ideology of the Soviet bloc. The influence of this Soviet ideology on Hanoi's urban fabric was perhaps most recognisable in housing. After 1954, houses and land were strictly controlled by the government. Hanoi's government implemented subsidised public housing developments, called *khu tap the* (KTT), which were modelled after the Soviet "microrayon" housing system.[3] Russian experts implemented this scheme in Hanoi.[4] Each KTT was a self-contained residential community that consisted of a number of four- or five-level apartment blocks with attached basic services, such as a medical centre, school and kindergarten.

This housing development strategy represented a modernist solution to the post-war housing shortage—a common concern of governments around the world. Although Hanoi's KTT remain as architectural reminders of Vietnam's socialist links, they have changed significantly since *Doi Moi* (literally meaning "renovation", although the term specifically refers to economic reforms initiated by the government in 1986), and due to an increase in population, rural–urban migration and rapid urbanisation. Before 1990, under strict socialist housing regulations, private ownership, construction and building renovation activities were discouraged in Hanoi. All changes to the interior and exterior spaces of a building required a number of separate construction permits that normally

GmbH, 2010); Sonia A. Hirt, *Iron Curtains: Gates, Suburbs and Privatization of Space in the Post-socialist City* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2012).

[3] See James H. Bater, *The Soviet Cities: Idea and Reality* (London: Edward Arnold, 1980).

[4] See Tran Hung and Nguyen Quoc Thong, *Thang Long—Hanoi: Ten Centuries of Urbanization* (Hanoi: Construction Publishing House, 1995). (In Vietnamese.)

took a long time to organise because there was no specific policy, guidelines or legal framework that supported these activities. Since the 1990s, some of these requirements have been dropped; however, to this day, all construction activities supposedly require specific official approvals from the local government.[5]

According to Mr Vinh,[6] who has lived in KTT Nguyen Cong Tru since it opened, most construction activities—including building additions to his KTT, either with or without permits—were considered to violate the construction regulations, which were usually vague. This phenomenon, which was also widespread in other KTT, was due to the critical housing shortage during and after the Vietnam War. It was also partly due to a lack of understanding by policy makers of local needs—an issue that continues in contemporary construction rules, which have not responded well to local housing needs and demographic changes. To attain extra living space, local residents did not have any options other than violating the rules. The following brief description of Hanoi's KTT begins to explain the intricate context that transformed Soviet-style modernist buildings. To record such a significant process in more detail, the following section focuses on several units at block B1—an apartment building in KTT Nguyen Cong Tru.

KTT Nguyen Cong Tru

KTT Nguyen Cong Tru, located south of Hanoi's Ancient Quarter, was planned to provide new homes for 4,200 residents from rural areas.[7] Opened in 1963,[8] KTT Nguyen Cong Tru comprises 14 apartment buildings arranged from north to south on three allotments divided by main roads. Public buildings, such as a general store, food market, primary school and kindergarten, are located on the eastern allotment, while most apartment blocks were built in the western and central allotments. There is a spacious tree-lined yard between the pairs of buildings. The apartment blocks have rendered concrete and brick walls with a yellow finish, and precast-concrete panel floors supported by brick walls. Like many of their counterparts in Central Europe, the apartments in Nguyen Cong Tru have simple facades, with a monotonous pattern of windows and balconies. Generally, employees who worked in the same state-owned company or

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[5] Interview with Mrs Long in 2009, Hanoi.
[6] Interview with Mr Vinh in 2009, Hanoi.
[7] See Dang Thai Hoang, *Hanoi's Architecture in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (Hanoi: Hanoi Publishing House, 1999). (In Vietnamese.)
[8] Interview with Mrs Long in 2009, Hanoi.

factory lived in the same apartment block, and such blocks came to symbolise a modern lifestyle in Hanoi. In fact, such developments represented a dream home for many people who had suffered during the wars.

Each apartment block has four levels, and measures 60 by 13 metres. For example, a typical floor plan of block B1 contains 20 flats, with shared kitchens, bathrooms and toilets. One amenity unit containing a kitchen, bathroom and toilet was originally shared by five apartments. This worked well until the 1980s, when an increase in inhabitants made it very difficult to use this communal space efficiently. While inhabitants were not legally allowed to make substantial changes to their flats, the critical need to improve living conditions placed additional pressure on the government to release permits to rearrange the block's internal spaces. In some rare cases, the shared kitchen, bathroom and toilet was subdivided into smaller rooms, thereby providing space for a private kitchen, bathroom and toilet for each family. Basic expenses for this spatial rearrangement, such as building internal walls and fixing or replacing standard domestic equipment, were funded by the government. However, if families wanted better equipment or non-standard building materials, they had to pay the difference. Few families were granted the necessary permits to renovate the interiors of their flats, representing a legal boundary to their desire for improved living spaces within KTT Nguyen Cong Tru. The few government permits that allowed some families to rearrange interior spaces signified the inevitable process of "unbounding" legal barriers on the one hand, while "bounding" communal interior spaces (for increased privacy, such as by subdividing the shared kitchens and toilets) on the other.

"Unbounded" Apartment Blocks: KTT Nguyen Cong Tru

Massive changes occurred to the KTT after *Doi Moi* primarily due to an increase in local business activities and the number of residents. A housing survey conducted in 2007 suggested that the population of KTT Nguyen Cong Tru had almost doubled from its initial population in the early 1960s. At present, there are 7,000 people living this KTT, including 346 families who earn a living from home businesses in ground-level apartments. Moreover, 320 families, consisting of 1,350 people, have illegally occupied the open spaces between the apartment blocks to build houses or open stalls selling different items.[9]

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[9] Dang Quan, "Redevelopment of KTT Nguyen Cong Tru—Report on an Interview with Mrs To Thi Hanh, Head of Management Board," *Bao Kinh Te Do Thi* (Economic and Urban News), accessed on March 23, 2008 at

Most apartments are overpopulated and dilapidated due to lack of maintenance during several decades of war and economic struggle. Since *Doi Moi*, and especially during the late 1990s, many families have extended and renovated their units to better suit the increases in the size of their families, their wealth and the general living standard in Hanoi. The renovations have led to significant changes in the interior layouts of the units, as well as the overall appearance of the apartment blocks. The once-monotonous buildings with dull façades are now more lively looking structures, due to the additions made to accommodate daily activities and business interactions. By adding extra rooms to the front and back of their flats, inhabitants have extended original floor plans. Interior spaces, once bounded by concrete walls, now extend into public spaces between the apartment blocks (see Fig. 1-1).

Fig. 1-1. Left: Original plan of KTT Nguyen Cong Tru. Right: Contemporary plan showing additional structures built onto the apartment blocks and into open space.[10]

For instance, the space between blocks B1 and B2 is characterised by these extended structures, locally known as *chuong cop* or "tiger cages" (see Fig. 1-2). To attain extra living space, many residents have extended their balconies and converted them into small rooms for domestic use, such as bedrooms. Through negotiations, many residents, especially those on the second levels, have built their *chuong cop* on top of the extended shops on the ground level. Most *chuong cop* were built by the owners

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http://www.ktdt.com.vn/newsdetail.asp?CatId=44&NewsId=42479.

[10] Source: Drawings done by Dinh Quoc Phuong (2009).

themselves, and completed using recycled materials that the owners had available. Thus, many of the do-it-yourself *chuong cop* have a similar structure, supported by steel frames with lightweight flat roofs, but presenting different patterns of use, decoration and colours. Partly covered *chuong cop* also function as mini gardens or spaces for a variety of domestic activities, such as drying clothes, exercising and cooking with charcoal ovens.

Fig. 1-2. *Chuong cop* or "tiger cages"—additional structures that have broken the concrete walls of the KTT.[11]

Family-based businesses once bound by the rigid economic policy now bring more life and character to the KTT. The outdoor environment in KTT Nguyen Cong Tru is nourished by everyday life activities. Most retail businesses occur outside or at the front of the shops, which are opened to the streets and yards. The lack of space inside the apartment units causes the residents to make more use of open public spaces for both retail and private domestic activities, such as cooking, eating and bathing (see Fig. 1-3). Moreover, units in each level of an apartment block such as B1 share a central corridor that is often lined with kitchen facilities, such as cookers and dust bins, because not all families have sufficient kitchen space. The corridors are also full of shoes and slippers due to the inhabitants' habit of removing their shoes before entering their units.

[11] Source: Photos taken by Dinh Quoc Phuong (2009).

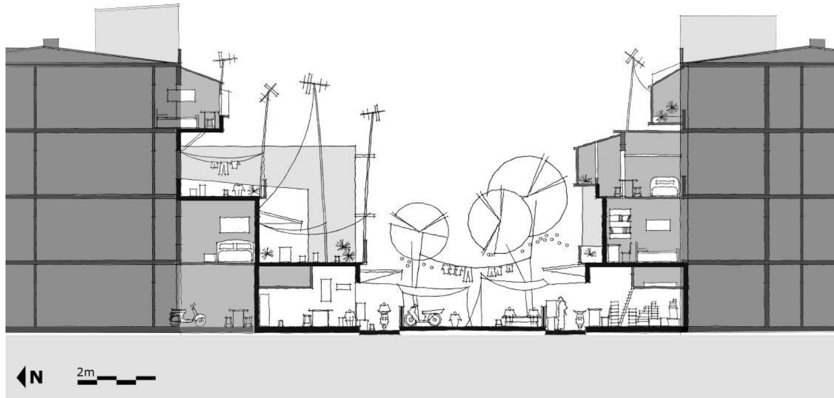

Fig. 1-3. Section through the yard between blocks B1 and B2, showing the blurred demarcation between interior and exterior.[12]

The ad-hoc changes made to KTT Nguyen Cong Tru since *Doi Moi* are evident in most other Soviet-style apartment blocks in Hanoi. The spatial and formal transformations of the KTT were a result of the poor living standards and lack of living space that have become unacceptable since *Doi Moi*. The changes illustrate the process of "unbounding" physical and economic spaces at the apartment block scale. Via ad-hoc extensions and additions, the massive and monotonous KTT buildings have been adapted by residents to resemble the existing urban grain and human scale of Hanoi's Ancient Quarter.

"Unbounded" Units 304 and 309

This section comprises a detailed analysis of units 304 and 309 on the third floor of block B1, owned by Mrs Viet and Mr Long, respectively. The owners, both former government employees, migrated to live and work in Hanoi after the war. Focusing on the physical conditions, internal spaces and ownership exchange of these units will lead to a further understanding of the nature of the spatial changes of Hanoi's KTT, and how the process of unbounding spaces is enacted at the household level.

Initially these two units had similar layouts. However, in the late 1990s, unit 309 changed significantly, while unit 304 remained relatively

[12] Source: Drawings done by Dinh Quoc Phuong (2009).

unchanged. In 1996, both families were granted ownership of their units as a result of the government's new private ownership policy. Mr Long lived in 304 and wished to extend his flat; however, he needed the cooperation, or at least the support, of the owners of the two units underneath his, which shared the same footprint. The owners of these units were unwilling to cooperate, while those underneath 309 were; thus, Mr Long suggested to Mrs Viet—the owner of unit 309—that they should swap . As a result, Mr Long's family now resides at 309, while Mrs Viet resides at 304.

Unit 304 is one of the few that remains almost the same as it was 40 years ago. This one-room unit provides accommodation for five family members: Mrs Viet, her husband, her mother-in-law and her two sons. The main room serves as both a living room and bedroom for the whole family. The family previously shared an amenity block that contained a kitchen, toilet and bathroom with four other families, which was located opposite unit 304, over the central corridor of the apartment block. However, this has been divided into four, with each section now used by one family. The facilities of Mrs Viet's kitchen and bathroom are almost original, consisting of an old squat toilet, bathroom, built-in water tank and built-in kitchen table. These are in a narrow and long room that looks rather shabby and deteriorated. Since the unit is very small, the family makes use of open spaces for extra storage. A small mezzanine located above the entrance door inside the main room is full of boxes, and there are items stored on top of the wardrobe and in the corridor between the units.

Mrs Viet and Mr Long agreed to exchange units so that Mr Long could renovate and enlarge his flat to accommodate his extended family. Originally, unit 309 had one room that was 3.3 metres wide and 7.2 metres long, with a balcony and shared kitchen, bathroom and toilet. In the late 1980s, as part of the KTT renovation project supported by the government, the shared kitchen, bathroom and toilet of unit 309 were divided into smaller rooms, providing space for a private kitchen, bathroom and toilet for each family. Mr Long's unit thus had its own kitchen. The government's acceptance of private ownership broke down the legal barrier and enabled further flexibility that encouraged KTT residents to look beyond the immediate boundary of their units for better solutions to spatial shortages.

While Mr Long's initial interior renovation was approved by the government, further changes to the interior and exterior—such as adding more rooms to the front and back of the unit—were not. Most external changes such as those in Mr Long's unit, initiated and constructed by residents, were classified by the government as informal and dangerous.

However, these changes were critical in order to satisfactorily accommodate the need for extra space for everyday activities.

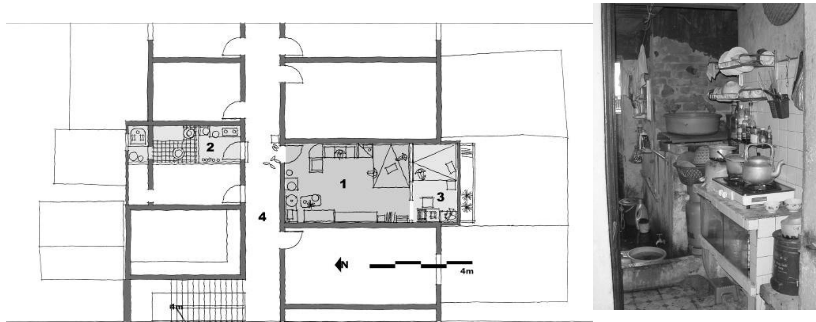

Fig. 1-4. Left: Floor plan of Mrs Viet's unit: (1) original room; (2) kitchen, bathroom and toilet; (3) balcony used as an extra bedroom; (4) shared corridor. Right: The kitchen of Mrs Viet's unit.[13]

Similar to other units, the transformation of Mr Long's unit followed changes in his family's structure. When Mr Long's son married, the newly-weds stayed in the one-room unit, thereby placing increased pressure on the living space. Finding a solution that provided an extra room was the obvious response. While many people could only add a small space by converting their balconies into rooms, Mr Long found a better solution. He discussed the situation with the two families underneath his new unit and, since all three units shared the same footprint and all owners were under pressure to attain greater living space, they agreed to collaborate to extend their units. The family on the ground floor built the walls of an additional room that could bear the load of additional structures on the two upper units, including Mr Long's unit, and the costs for laying the foundations were shared among the three families.

After building this addition, the area of Mr Long's unit almost doubled. Mr Long stated that he may extend his flat even further to the north in the near future.[14] Since the neighbouring family in unit 310 is not home very often, Mr Long has tried to convince them to sell the unit so he can enlarge his unit by joining the two. Mr Long stated that another benefit of this purchase would be that he could further extend his unit by adding

[13] Source: Drawing and photo done by Dinh Quoc Phuong (2009).
[14] Interview with Mr Long in 2009, Hanoi.

more rooms to unit 310. If this scheme is successful, Mr Long's combined unit will be up to 30 metres long.

Since the unit above Mr Long did not participate in the collaborative building renovation work, Mr Long was unable to have an open inner-courtyard between the rooms. The inner-courtyard has become an important part of the unit by improving circulation and ventilation, and providing an open space for domestic activities, such as cooking, drying clothes, planting and resting.

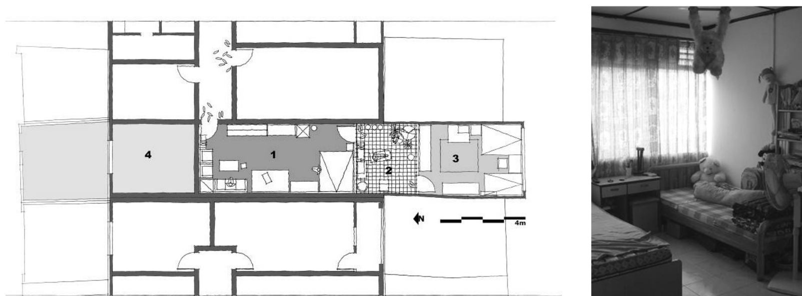

Fig. 1-5. Left: Floor plan of Mr Long's unit: (1) original room; (2) added courtyard; (3) added room for the son's family; (4) neighbour unit. Right: Inside the extended room of Mr Long's unit.[15]

The original room is now used as a sitting room and bedroom for Mr Long and his wife. The new room has a double bed, child-sized bed and large home theatre television set. Mr Long's extended room is one example that showcases an innovative mixed use of space because it accommodates different functions: a sleeping place for a couple and their child and a space for cooking, studying, play and entertainment.

The extended structures of Hanoi's KTT illustrate local adaptations and reactions to this imported built form, as well as the changes created by *Doi Moi*. Even though *chuong cop* are often criticised as being ugly and unsafe, they are unique in Hanoi and, with appropriate design guides and technical support, they could be an interesting and safe architectural element that creates a unique sense of place in the city. Moreover, the additional structures of the apartments, such as shop fronts, mezzanines, internal courtyards, mixed-use rooms and shops, resemble the multi-purpose spaces of the shop-houses of Hanoi's Ancient Quarter.

[15] Source: Drawing and photo done by Dinh Quoc Phuong (2009).

While it is not this paper's intention to question the roles of local officials who are responsible for controlling local building activities, it is worth noting some observations from our field study that illustrate the way in which legal structures become "unbounded" locally. Local officials appear to be relatively flexible in dealing with building renovation activities. Although the law requires the attainment of permits from local officials, for owners such as Mr Long, the major obstacle for interior renovation and the addition of extra rooms is attaining agreement from neighbours. Mr Long stated that his primary concern was not receiving an official building approval, but obtaining agreement from his neighbours.[16] If his neighbours supported the building additions, they would prepare a case to convince local officials that the building activities would not negatively affect their units. Local officials would then "ignore" the case by not enforcing building regulations. However, if the neighbours were unhappy, they could object to the plans, and it is likely that local officials would terminate the building activities by declaring them illegal. Even though most building additions such as Mr Long's are officially "illegal", they are possible due to an informal agreement between neighbours, which is the key to obtaining "informal" approval from local authorities.

As an important layer of Hanoi's architectural and urban history, Soviet-style apartment blocks, such as KTT Nguyen Cong Tru, contribute to Hanoi's sense of place, which is not only characterised by their massive structures, but also their transformation by local inhabitants. Recent informal renovations and negotiations, such as those of units 304 and 309, have unbound the KTT concrete walls and legal barriers, making it difficult to define inside and outside, domestic and public space, and modern and traditional space. To place this investigation of Hanoi's KTT into a broader context of architectural modernism, the next section will discuss some points developing from our story of Hanoi's KTT supported by relevant literature, and reflect on the issues of socialist modernism, privatisation and the appropriation of space.

Unbounded Modernism in Hanoi: A Discussion

Socialist Modernism

The origins of socialist-era large scale public housing lie in Soviet interpretations of the modernist ideas of architects such as Le Corbusier, Ernst May and others associated with CIAM in the 1930s, combined with

[16] Interview with Mr Long in 2009, Hanoi.

American planner Clarence Perry's 1930s "Neighborhood Unit" concept.[17] The Russian ideal community unit—known as the *mikrorayon* and containing between 5,000 and 15,000 residents—centred, like Perry's scheme, on a primary school. The *mikrorayons* could be combined to form larger housing estates that contained additional community services, such as playgrounds, libraries, hospitals and leisure facilities. Typically located on greenfield sites on the urban fringes of cities, these housing estates became an integral part of state modernisation programs within the highly planned cities of Eastern Europe. Formally, the housing blocks conformed with pre-war modernist aesthetics and, due to the centralised nature of the design and planning, there was little consideration for local context, climate or culture. A further emphasis was on industrialisation, with prefabrication and concrete slab construction equating to an efficient, rational and systematic means for housing mass populations. As far as living spaces were concerned, these mass housing estates were designed to eliminate social and spatial differences as a physical embodiment of the communist utopia—they were to be new spaces for a new living style.

The story of the KTT Nguyen Cong Tru presented earlier illustrated the implementation of this socialist-era housing strategy in Vietnam. The ideas to eliminate social and spatial differences via housing were evident in the KTT, with government employees who worked as managerial staff and labour workers allocated housing in the same apartment blocks. However, contrary to this democratic aim, in the case of KTT Nguyen Cong Tru, state employees with higher positions usually received relatively larger spaces than those in lower positions. Moreover, each KTT usually had one or two apartment blocks with units in much better condition—up to three bedrooms, with separate kitchens, bathrooms and toilets—that were allocated to high-ranking government officials. On the surface, there appeared to be no social and spatial division or boundaries between residents in a KTT; however, on closer inspection, the allocation of flats and blocks in accordance with employees' ranks created internal social boundaries.

Further, the KTT model, imported from the former Soviet bloc, with massive blocks of housing organised within an estate, presented a strong sense of territory against Hanoi's existing and more organic urban fabric, comprising small, narrow and low-rise shop-houses. The social difference created with the advent of socialist-era housing was that KTT residents were government employees who usually received greater priority in most aspects of life, while those living in the existing streets and shop-houses

[17] Kiril Stanilov, "Housing Trends in Central and Eastern European Cities," in *The Post-Socialist City*, ed. Stanilov, 173–90.