

Housing the urban poor in social harmony?: Low-rent housing policy in the contemporary Chinese city

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As a part of comprehensive economic reform, China's urban housing has been transformed over the last 25 year. With greater marketization and commodification, the problems of housing shortages and poor conditions have been, however, diminished.

Nationwide economic reforms have produced different social classes: a high income group, a salary income group and a low income group. The growing conflict between rich and poor is reflected in the housing sphere, especially in the recent ten years. On one hand, the rich could speculate in the housing market and reap substantial benefits. As a result, commercial sector house prices have been driven up to unsustainable levels. On the other hand, most middle and low income families could not afford to purchase a property. At the same time, peasant workers have joined the ranks of the urban poor, which has made the situation more complex. Under Hu-Wen's leadership, 'building a harmony society' has become a key objective- the most important task of the Chinese government since 2003. China is at a historic point, and the government has made the decision to achieve a better balance between economic and social development. Against this background, Chinese welfare housing policy is the one of the key elements required to build a more harmonious society. This paper will try to review the historical process of the Low Rent Housing Policy issues and evaluates the current Low Rent Housing Policy, which is one main component of welfare housing policy, in contemporary big cities of China.

Suggested stream: Social Security Systems and the Management of Risk

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