



Gender and the Housing “Questions” in Taiwan

Yi-Ling Chen

Associate Professor
Global and Area Studies/ Geography
University of Wyoming
Ychen8@uwyo.edu

Abstract

This paper argues that the housing system is not only capitalist but also patriarchal by analyzing how the interrelations of the state, housing market, and the family reproduce gender divisions. In contrast to the housing condition of the working class in pre-welfare state Europe, as originally described by Friedrich Engels, Taiwan’s housing system was constructed by an *authoritarian developmental* state that repressed labor movements and emphasized economic development over social welfare. However, since the late 1980s, pro-market housing policies have greatly enhanced the commodification of housing, resulting in a unique combination of high homeownership rates, high vacancy rates, and high housing prices. This paper examines the formation of housing questions in Taiwan and its impact on women. In doing so it reveals how a social housing movement emerged in the context of a recent housing boom – on that that has occurred despite a global economic downturn – and which could provide an opportunity for feminist intervention within the housing system to transform gender relations.



Introduction

Housing prices in Taiwan have nearly doubled since the most recent housing boom, which began in 2005. This escalation has led to a strong social housing movement for renters, beginning in Taiwan in 2010. Social rental housing itself is a new idea, because most of the government-constructed housing has been sold to the buyers at subsidized prices, so the number of available social rental properties remains extremely small: with only about 0.08 percent of the housing stock qualifying as social rental housing. When the idea of social housing was proposed, it immediately received widespread social support. Under popular pressure, the central government quickly announced five future social housing projects in 2011. Nonetheless, while having strong social support, these five projects faced protests from the residents in surrounding neighborhoods who wished to protect their property values.

Twenty years ago, when I was an urban planning graduate student in Taiwan, I became interested in the housing conditions of poor single mothers, and began conducting research. Given the rise of this social housing movement, I decided to revisit the group of single mothers who are living in Taipei’s “low-cost” housing projects, which were designed for low-income people. Twenty years later, I found most of the problems remain unchanged in 2012. The only difference was that the housing quality was deteriorating and housing quantity was declining. Single mothers had to work and take care of their children with insufficient support. When interviewing one single mother who had paid close attention to the social housing movement whether she had the chance to confront the residents who were against social rental housing projects, I enquired about what she would say to them: the expression on her face became one of frustration. Finally, she said, “What if you were poor one day?” Then I said, “Is that all? How nice.”

I know why she cannot express her anger. People in Taiwan still do not consider housing as a basic right: it is not recognized as a basic right by housing policies, law, or constitution. Indeed housing has been constructed as a highly privatized commodity and a private issue, so owning a place to live is perceived as the best solution for each individual.

Housing is, of course, more than bricks and mortar. The housing system bears many gendered assumptions, which affect not only the design of housing but also the distribution of resources. Linda Peake and Martina Rieker (2013) called for immediate feminist intervention in neoliberal urbanism and for a feminist re-imagination of the city. A key question here is what kind of feminist actions are needed to reverse the tide? In order to answer this question, this paper focuses on how the housing questions are formulated in Taiwan and its implication for women.

Gendered assumptions in housing

The relationship between capitalism and patriarchy was a heated topic in the 1970s and 1980s. In the article, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism,” Heidi Hartmann (1981) argued that the attempts to integrate Marxism and feminism were unsatisfactory because feminist struggles had been subsumed into the larger struggle against capitalism, leading to some calls for an ideological divorce (Sargent, 1981, xii). This separation had unmasked the gender relations underpinning the New Left movement of the 1960s. However, although radical, socialist, and Marxist feminism weighed up capitalism and patriarchy differently, they shared a common concern about the sexual division of labor and reproduction (ibid, xii-xx).

The recognition of gender relations in the planning system and the awareness of patriarchy are crucial because certain planning priorities may lead to gender inequality (Little, 1994). Marxist definitions of class and work assumed “male forms of paid labor” in a workplace that was separated from the home (Watson, 1991, 137). To reveal the interaction of workplace and home, public and private domains, and production and reproduction is the key theoretical impetus of feminist housing research. Spatial arrangements not only reflect but also shape gender relations, so it is important to explore the spatial division between the public and the private which “plays a central role in the social construction of gender divisions” (McDowell, 1999, 12).

In order to conduct a gendered analysis of housing, Sophie Watson (1986, 1) argued that housing, family and labor market structures represent three key factors:

We need a dynamic spatial and historical analysis of housing which seeks to link housing with family and labor market structures in order to uncover the interrelations which serve to produce and reproduce patriarchal capitalist relations.

Susan Saegert and Helene Clark (2006) used domestic centrality and economic marginality to explain why women are frequently dependent on men or the state to provide housing. Domestic centrality means that women are the primary caretakers of the home, children, and dependent parents. Women’s economic marginality stems from the lower wages they “often receive in the economic marketplace as well as the remnants of their historical role as a reserve labor force” (Saegert and Clark, 2006, 296). Domestic centrality and economic marginality connect to Sophie Watson’s point about the triangular relations between housing, family and labor markets. These two criteria also relate to women’s disadvantaged housing conditions under capitalism and patriarchy.

Patriarchy is path-dependent and contingent on different places and contexts. This paper will examine domestic centrality and economic marginality in the social policies of Taiwan. The category of “female-headed households” will be

spotlighted because they are critical cases for an examination of gendered assumptions in the housing system. Female-headed households are often among the groups that suffer most from the binary distinctions that separate space into the distinct domains of public/private, production/reproduction, and workplace/home. To set the stage for this gender-based analysis, it is time to situate and contextualize “the housing question” in a location far from the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

The housing question revisited

In the mid-nineteenth century, rapid industrialization led to the proletarianization of workers and increasing migration towards cities, causing a severe housing shortage in European cities. Workers' housing in Paris was worsened by Haussmann's renovation. The extensive project to rebuild Paris removed slums and neighborhoods that the workers dwelled in (Harvey, 2008). French anarchist, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, proposed homeownership for workers and argued that this would make the propertyless poor avoid additional exploitation from landlords and regain their independence. Friedrich Engels opposed Proudhon's proposals, arguing that such housing solutions would mitigate workers' will to struggle, not least in that the housing crisis is not solely about housing itself, but rather the crisis of capitalism. To solve the housing question, one has to recognize how the capitalist system exploits workers and then fashions them into agents of the transformation of capitalism, so a society of cooperation can be achieved (Hodkinson, 2012, 427). David Harvey employed Engels's idea to argue that the answer should be “greater democratic control over the production and utilization of the surplus” (2008, 37).

To use Engels's analysis to explore women and housing problems in Taiwan, two major gaps must be addressed. The first is about the collective identity of workers, as Taiwan has a long history of repressing class consciousness. The second is what a solution, based on cooperation and greater democracy, might look like when the gendered division of labor is taken into account.

Modern capitalism's establishment in Taiwan owes not to industrialization but to colonialism. The process was never linear and was interrupted repeatedly by different colonizers. In 1872, when Engels's “The Housing Question” was first published, China's ruling Qing Dynasty was on the wane. Triumphant after winning The First Opium War, Great Britain forced the Qing court to sign the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, an unequal treaty that led to the opening of five trading harbors in China. The treaty fixed tariffs, established extraterritoriality that effectively allowed the British to extend their national territory into special zones within Chinese cities, and instituted “most favored nation” provisions that further served British interests (Hsu, 1999). Later, major industrial nations, including Russia, France, Germany, and the US followed the British and signed a variety of treaties with China. When the Qing attempted to industrialize in the 1860s to strengthen the nation in the face of foreign incursions, it was already too late.

China's neighbor, Japan, following the Meiji Restoration reforms of 1868, transformed into a powerful modern capitalist state by the 1890s. Japan followed the western colonists, ambitiously looking for new markets and sources of raw materials in Asia, and turned to China, where they won a naval battle against the Qing in 1894 (Hsu, 1999). As part of the settlement, the Qing ceded Taiwan to Japan with the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895.

To resist the handover, groups in Taiwan quickly declared themselves an independent country, the Republic of Taiwan, but this regime only lasted for five months (Wu, 1996). During the following fifty years of Japanese colonization, Taiwanese people lived under unequal conditions, but the whole island underwent modernization and industrialization. Compulsory education, city planning, railroads, water and power plants, and manufacturing were gradually instituted or built by the colonial government. However, urbanization did not develop very quickly because Taiwan served primarily as a source of agricultural products, such as rice and sugar, cultivated to meet market demand in Japan (Chang, 1996).

The Japanese colonial administration ended in 1945 at the close of World War II. The Kuomintang KMT (or Chinese Nationalist Party) government soon lost a civil war with the Chinese Communist Party and then finally retreated to Taiwan in 1949. Thus began the era of the developmental state in Taiwan. The economy went through many major transformations. By the mid-1970s, employment in manufacturing exceeded that of the agricultural sector. In the mid-1980s, the service industry became the major sector. During this development, Taiwan was under authoritarian rule, which lasted until democratization in the late-1980s. Throughout these transformations, Taiwan's housing system became shaped by a particular developmental principle described by Ian Holiday (2000) as "productivist welfare capitalism," in which social policies are subordinated to economic growth.

Given this history of disruptions, when compared with Europe's "housing question" of 140 years ago, several differences and similarities of the contemporary Taiwanese condition deserve to be highlighted. The first major difference is that the concept of class has been underdeveloped in Taiwan. In the 1920s, under Japanese rule, leftist movements emerged among different Taiwanese elites. Various solidarity movements, based on class, nationality, gender, and ethnicity, also emerged. However, these were usually also associated with resistance to colonization, so the subject position of "the colonized" remained the most salient category. Leftist movements premised upon class relations were relatively strong in Taiwan only for a short period of time. Before they were able to organize the labor unions and peasants, they were destroyed by the Japanese government (Chang, 1996b). After 1949, class consciousness was strongly repressed by the KMT's anti-communist policies. Another obstacle preventing the rise of workers' collective consciousness was structural: The majority of Taiwan's industries were small or medium-sized enterprises. Their size affected "the breadth of workers' solidarity and the extent to which workers were able to exercise leverage vis-a-vis the state

and capital,” leaving Taiwanese workers in a disadvantaged position (Liu, 2011, 30). Although labor movements were active following democratization, their influence has since declined due to deindustrialization and the outflow of capital overseas, mainly to China, in the 1990s. The rise of neoliberalism as the new ideological hegemony after the 1990s also led to the decline of labor activism (Ho, 2014).

Second, there is no shortage of housing in Taiwan. Taiwan’s housing system features high homeownership rates, high vacancy rates, and high housing prices. The housing system is designed to commodify housing and facilitate speculation. Given such a limited amount of social rental housing options, the social character of the housing is lacking. Housing, even if it has a physical form, is a kind of financial product, a good method for saving and investing money. Its potential exchange value far exceeds its use value.

Related to this, indeed Taipei is ranked as the eighteenth most expensive city in the world (Monaco is the first, followed by London, Hong Kong, Singapore, Moscow, New York, Geneva, and Paris) (Global Property Guide, 2013a). The homeownership rate in Taiwan has been rising and reached 83.9 percent in 2010. Meanwhile, the vacant housing rate also rose to 19.3 percent (Table 1). In the most expensive area, Taipei City, the homeownership rate was lower, at 75.2 percent, but its vacant housing rate was a high 13.4 percent.

Table 1: Homeownership rates and vacant housing rates, 1966-2010

	1966	1980	1990	2000	2010
HOUSING STATUS					
Homeownership rate (%)	66.3%	79.1%	78.5%	82.5%	83.9%
Vacant housing rate (%)	1.4%	13.1%	13.3%	17.6%	19.3%

Source: (DGBAS, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010)

Third, in such a homeowner-oriented society, housing for disadvantaged people becomes in political terms a very marginal issue. As mentioned above, public rental housing only comprises about 0.08 percent of all housing stock in Taiwan (Social Housing Advocacy Consortium, 2010a). And while 19.3 percent of total housing capacity remains vacant, disadvantaged people suffer from the lack of affordable housing. The housing problems are especially severe for the elderly, mentally ill, the disabled, single parents, victims of domestic violence, and HIV-infected people because of discrimination in the rental housing market and the lack of state intervention (Social Housing Advocacy Consortium, 2013). Even though the number of homeless people is less than 4,000 people in Taiwan due to a relatively strong role of family (MOHW, 2014), the social assistance available for the homeless remains insufficient. Most local governments only provide food, showers, and temporary shelters during a few cold winter days (Fang, 2012).

The similarities with industrial-era Europe relate to the minor role played by the state in the provision of housing and the close coalition between the state and the capitalist class. This coalition was greatly strengthened following political democratization and economic liberalization in the late 1980s, which made the capitalist class in Taiwan a more powerful force for driving housing policy towards a more pro-market system.

Pro-market housing system in Taiwan

Housing in Taiwan has a very strong commodity character because the state makes few efforts to decommodify housing (La Grange, et al., 2005:53). This can be demonstrated in three ways.

First, housing taxation schemes neither prohibit excessive profits from housing transactions, nor do they redistribute the surplus to the whole society. Low housing transaction taxes encourage investment and speculation, while low property taxes keep the cost of property maintenance low. As a result, many housing units are treated like goods in storage.

Second, the government often intervenes in the market to enhance housing's commodity status. In doing so, it behaves more or less like a private developer (Lee et al., 2003). The housing provided by different government housing projects is only 3.5 percent of all housing stock, and this housing is primarily for sale, not rent (Social Housing Advocacy Consortium, 2010b). Since 2000, the provision of home mortgages has become a major focus of housing policy because the system relies on the private market to resolve housing demand (Chen and Li, 2012). Low-interest loans broaden the customer base and stimulate the housing market. Even the limited assistance for low-income people is based on the same logic. A small amount of rental allowance is available by application every year to help low-income people seek housing in the private market.

Third, the housing system does little to remedy market failure and has instead passed on the responsibility for resolution of housing problems to individual families. Homeownership is encouraged because the state intends to minimize its welfare duty (Ronald, 2008): a system that provides little protection for the people who are not homeowners. The system of social housing was never built, and the state hardly regulates the rental housing market, so rental housing has not offered sufficient and fair protection for either landlords or, especially, tenants. For these reasons, owning a home is the best way to ensure a stable and secure housing condition.

This pro-market system has evolved through different political economic contexts since the quelling of working class resistance in 1949 (Chen, 2013a). Initially it arose because the KMT government was incapable of managing the chaos and serious urban housing shortage due to the massive influx of refugees from China's civil war. It therefore adopted a *laissez-faire* approach to the housing market, but much of this market was informal and characterized by construction

without permits or licenses and informal financial arrangements. In the 1970s, the government began to take action to regulate the housing market, including direct construction of public housing for sale. The given rationale was an increase of supply to cool down the overheated housing market. But the government neither intended to establish long-term market regulation nor to decommodify housing. This major political purpose of this limited housing intervention was the maintenance of the KMT government, with government employees, including military personnel, being the major beneficiaries.

Since at least the late 1980s, the private housing market has dominated the housing system. This neoliberalization process has happened in the context of the political democratization and economic liberalization of Taiwan. Therefore, in contrast to the diminishing state involvement in the housing policies of the United Kingdom and United States, state intervention in housing in Taiwan in the 1990s greatly expanded by increasing the supply of affordable housing and low-interest mortgages. Monetary programs guided by neoliberalism gradually became the methods of choice after 2000 in the attempt to stimulate the real estate market (Chen and Li, 2012, 219). Even during the administration of the Democratic Progressive Party from 2000 to 2008, housing policies also followed market principles because they were considered the best and most efficient solution for both voters and real estate developers.

On the other hand, neoliberalization was accompanied by the rise of Taiwan’s capitalist class. Following economic liberalization in 1986, business groups began to play an increasingly vital part in Taiwan’s economy and have since rapidly consolidated their positions. Following democratization, the relationship between the state and the developers grew even closer, as the state needed to rely even more on their support. The developers themselves participated in elections and promoted their own representatives to stand in the legislature. This resulted in the goal of the housing policy being an increase in the proportion of consumers in the housing market. This was to be achieved through the extension of mortgages, so subsidized mortgages became the primary tool of housing policy.

Housing booms and crises of affordability

Economic liberalization led to greater uncertainty in the housing market. There have been two dramatic housing price surges since the 1980s. From 1987 to 1990, real pre-sale housing prices in Taipei City rose by more than four times (Chang et al., 2010). In the second housing boom, from 2005 to 2011, the housing prices in Taipei City rose 1.8 times (Liao, 2013, 3). The prices are still rising. According to *Global Property Guide*, in 2013, Taiwan’s house prices soared by 14.52% during the year to Q2 2013. This is the second highest rise in the global survey, after Dubai (2013b). A survey of recent Taipei homebuyers showed that they paid 46.6 percent of their household income toward their mortgage every month. The average home price ratio relative to annual income was 14.3 in Taipei

City and 9.2 in the six other major cities (Institute for Physical Planning and Information [IPPI], 2010).

These housing booms occurred at times of economic restructuring in Taiwan. As one of the policies applied to liberalize the economy, the Taiwanese dollar appreciated rapidly in the late 1980s, increasing the cost of labor. Production lines gradually moved to China. The first concerned the low-skilled and labor-intensive industry, followed by the high-skilled and high-tech industry whereby economic growth subsequently slowed down. In the 1980s, the growth rate surpassed 10 percent for three years, but in the 1990s, it never reached that mark. The rate has slowed even more since the second period, the 2000. Following the financial crisis of 2008, economic growth rates have moved like a roller coaster: 0.73 percent in 2008, -1.81 percent in 2009, a jump to 10.76 percent in 2010, then 4.07 percent in 2011, and 1.32 percent in 2012 (DGBAS, 2013).

With this new international division of labor, job opportunities have decreased and workers' conditions have deteriorated. The unemployment rate has increased since the 1990s, and reached a high point of 5.9 percent in 2009. Working conditions have worsened as the proportion of non-regular workers has increased and the number of part-time workers more than tripled from 2001 to 2009 (Li, 2010). During the same period, their average monthly income decreased by a very high 50 percent (Lin et al., 2011: 134). Even if economic growth remains positive most of the year, average worker income has not kept pace with the economy.

Economic restructuring has therefore widened the income gap. The average income of the top 20 percent of the population was 4.6 times than that of the lowest 20 percent in 1981, and it rose to 6.19 in 2010 (DGBAS, 2011a). This gap increased as economic policies heavily subsidized business, provided tax incentives, and repressed the rise of wages in order to reduce the capital outflow. As a result, the limited growth in real wages, adjusted for inflation, leaves workers struggling to keep up with rising living expenses. According to a recent survey, the real wage in 2013 was at the same level as it was sixteen years ago (Apple News, 2013). On the other hand, increased surpluses created by these pro-capitalist economic policies have flowed into the housing market and skyrocketing housing prices have thus further worsened workers' living conditions; a sadly ironic result.

Such conditions have triggered several waves of housing movements. During the real estate boom in the late-1980s, Taiwan's first housing movement was primarily targeted at rising prices, and it successfully pressed the government to curb price increases. The government also began to provide various mortgage programs to assist homeownership because movement activists were mostly middle-class people, and their primary goal was to be able to buy affordable housing. Social rental housing was not a concern at that time. As mentioned above, neoliberal policies after 1990 intensified the commodification of housing, served the interests of developers and housing investors, and sacrificed disadvantaged

people. In 2010, increasing housing prices during a time of economic recession triggered a strong social rental housing movement. Unlike in the 1980s, more middle-class people realized that homeownership was an unattainable dream given outrageous housing prices, a stagnant economy, and limited salary growth. In such circumstances, then, social housing became the main agenda of the movement and gained popular support. In 2011 and 2012, there were reports in newspapers and magazines calling for the introduction of social housing. Several international conferences invited social rental housing specialists from Europe, America, Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore to talk about policies and practices (Social Housing Advocacy Consortium, 2014). For the first time, social rental housing became an important topic in Taiwan (Chen, 2011). This movement has also opened an opportunity to generate feminist interventions in housing.

Gender relations and economic development in Taiwan

In Taiwan, consumerism, privatization, financialization, commodification, and the concentration of power in a narrow, capitalist class frame the housing system. The provision of housing can transform gender relations, or at least play a supportive role for the reduction of women’s social reproduction responsibilities; but the strong tendency to commodify housing prevents many progressive possibilities from improving gender relations in Taiwan.

The domestic centrality and economic marginality faced by Taiwanese women has shifted since the Second World War due to industrialization and family change. Economic development in the 1950s was guided largely through an import-substitution strategy, which aimed at transferring agricultural surplus into light industry. By the end of the 1950s, the domestic market was saturated. Economic policies in the 1960s switched to encourage export-oriented industries and multinational operations, which caused rapid economic growth. The labor-intensive, export-oriented manufacturers recruited young and mostly unmarried women (Cheng & Hsiung, 1993: 43). Wage-paying jobs, located in big cities or in villages, gave young women opportunities to work outside their rural homes and, hence, increase their freedom and economic independence.

During the so called economic “take-off” period between 1960s and 1980s, the status of women was improved, but, unsurprisingly, the endurance of gender inequality and a patriarchal culture still obliged Taiwan’s women to assume domestic and subordinate roles. The sexual division of labor was part of the fabric of Taiwan’s society. The state, serving as “an agent of capitalist production and accumulation,” did not “protect women against capitalist exploitation” (Hsiung, 1996: 53-54). Women were often paid below the minimum wage and very few of them enjoyed upward mobility (*ibid*, 54 and 146).

Throughout the economic restructuring, women have played an increasingly important role in the labor market. The female labor participation rate has increased from 32.3 percent in 1980 to 49.9 percent in 2010, while the rate for men has

decreased from 77.1 percent in 1980 to 66.5 percent in 2010 (Table 2). Their wage gap is continuing to close: the percentage of average female wage relative to male rose from 69.0 percent in 1980 to 80.1 percent in 2010 (Table 2).

Table 2: Gender, Marriage, Family, and Housing Status in Taiwan, 1980-2010.

	1980	1990	2000	2010
Female labor participation rate (%) *	32.2%	44.5%	46.0%	49.9%
Male labor participation rate (%) *	77.1%	74.0%	69.4%	66.5%
Female to male average wage (%) **	69.0%	67.0%	74.1%	80.1%

*(DGBAS, 2012); **(Chang, 2011: 283)

Beginning in the 1970s, the women's movement has had a significant impact on women's status. Democratization since the late 1980s has further increased women's involvement in political affairs. This has led to laws to enhance gender equality, including acts for the prevention of sexual assault and domestic violence, the provision of equitable education and workplaces, and several revisions of civil codes with regard to divorce, property, and family. The improvement of women's status has given women more autonomy in decisions regarding marriage and family. Fewer women are married than before, and the percentages of never married, divorced, or separated women have increased significantly. From 1999 to 2009, the rate of divorced women rose from 4.2 percent to 7.2 percent, and the rate of women who have never married also rose slightly from 30.3 percent to 31.6 percent in the same period of time (DGBAS, 2011b). The number of never married women rose more significantly among the younger generation. In 2010, the rate of single women in the age group 15-24 was 95.9 percent, 25-34 was 47.8 percent, and 35-44 was 14.7 percent. Compared to 2000, these proportions rose 6.2 per cent, 14.6 per cent, and 5.7 percent, respectively (DGBAS, 2011c).

Gender and family formation

Relating the three pillars of housing system—the state, the housing market, and the family—the state relies on the private market to provide housing. People with insufficient economic means must rely on family to provide shelter. Increasingly, families have been exposed to the problem of housing affordability. In reaction to such economic pressure, the family itself has undergone several changes.

First, women in Taiwan are increasingly the major income earners of the household. Also, low-income households show an increase of female householders: from 18.2 percent in 1990 to 33.0 percent in 2010 (Table 3). However, households headed by women are more likely to be poor, with an average income of only 81.3 percent of those headed by men in 2009 (DGBAS, 2011b). Among the low-income households that are served by social welfare programs, the number of female-

headed households reached 45.2 percent in 2008 (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior, 2008). Single parent families were 7.6 percent of all households in 2010, while 73.7 percent of single parents were female (Table 3). Women’s status has indeed changed, but it has changed in a time of economic stagnation and increasing social inequality. In this sense, it is hard to conclude that women have improved their status.

Table 3: Gender, Marriage, Family, and Housing Status in Taiwan, 1956-2010.

	1956	1966	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010
FAMILY STATUS							
Age 25-34 population, never married (%)	11.4%	15.0%	14.3%	20.9%	31.6%	42.3%	56.7%
Average persons in household	5.7	5.7	5.5	4.8	4.0	3.3	3.0
Single household (%)	--	9.4%	6.7%	11.8%	13.4%	21.5%	22.0%
Nuclear families (%)	--	--	--	--	63.6%	55.1%	54.5%
Female householder (%)	--	--	--	--	18.2%	29.2%	33.0%
Single parent families (%)	--	--	--	--	5.8%	5.8%	7.6%
Total fertility rate***	6.5	4.8	4.0	2.5	1.8	1.7	0.9
Number of the elderly living alone (age 65+)	--	--	--	--	167827	299328	350456

Source: (DGBAS, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010); ***(Department of Household Registration, Ministry of Interior, 2012)

Second, the proportion of never-married people has increased significantly. From 1956 to 2010, the percentage of adults aged 25 to 34 who had never married rose from 11.4 percent to 56.7 percent (Table 3). Also, families are smaller than before. It is important to notice that the proportions of single households only changed slightly between 2000 and 2010, even though the proportion of never-married people increased dramatically, because never-married people have increasingly chosen to stay with their parents or share housing with other people. Even married young couples are increasingly choosing to live with their parents (Li, 2013). This explains why nuclear families are still the dominant household type.

Third, the most striking effect of the economic restructuring has been the dramatic fall in Taiwan’s birth rate, with births per 1000 women between ages 15 to 49 dropping from 6.5 in 1956 to 0.9 in 2010 (Table 1), which is among the lowest in the world. The rapid decline in the fertility rate has greatly changed the composition of the population, contributing to the rapid aging of the population. The sudden drop in the fertility rate could be a manifestation of a “fertility strike” against the lack of public support for child care (Lin et al., 2011). The “fertility strike” was first proposed by the women’s movement in the early 1990s, and recalled twenty years later in the Taiwanese book, *Generation of Falling*, published by the Taiwan Labour Front, which warned of the state’s lack of support for the

family. Low fertility rate and low marriage rates also reflect a generational gap. The younger generation nowadays does not follow their parents' path to form new families or have similar economic means to accumulate wealth. *Generation of Falling* explains very well the crisis Taiwan is facing. And the speculative housing system represents one significant factor in explaining this.

Taiwan's families have long been based on patrilineal assumptions, in which co-residence, residential proximity, frequency of visits, and financial support occur more often or closer between parents and their sons (Weistein, et al., 1994, 334). The patrilineal culture is not as strong as it was before, but it is still persistent. In 2006, 35.33 percent of married couples lived with the parents of the husband and only 0.32 percent lived with the parents of the wife (Chen, 2013; Lin, 2012). The intergenerational transfer of housing assets is primarily based on the patrilineal principle. The law has guaranteed women's inheritance rights, but among the people who gave up their share of inheritance in 2009, 64.9 percent were women. Of the receivers of the gift, 59.5 percent were men and 40.5 percent were women (DGBAS, 2011b: 3). Partly as a result of such practices, there are twice as many male landowners than female landowners; however, the difference is reducing every year because of women's rising economic status (DGBAS, 2011b, 3).

More evidence of the persistence of patriarchy is revealed by the fact that women continue to be largely responsible for housework. As of 2004, 75 percent of women over the age of 15 reported regularly handling housework duties and providing primary care for family members and their children, as opposed to 31.3 percent for men (DGBAS, 2007). Social welfare policies are based on a "familial ideology" that holds the family primarily responsible for providing for the welfare of its members (Fu, 2010; Hu, 1995). In 2010, 88.3 percent of children under four did not attend day care (DGBAS, 2011c). Only 7.1 percent of day care centers are run by the government (Xie, 2010). And while some subsidies are provided for the day care expenses of the lower income families, child care policy is largely reliant on private initiatives and market mechanisms (Lin et al., 2011).

Families are also the primary caretakers for older people in Taiwan. In 2010, 52.2 percent of people over 65 years old lived with their children (DGBAS, 2011c). However, the number of people, aged 65 or older, who were living alone more than doubled between 1990 and 2010 (Table 1). About 16.8 percent of older people require assistance in their everyday lives. Among these, only 3.9 percent live in institutions, 16.6 percent hired a foreign or domestic helper, 62.8 percent relied on their families, and the remaining 12.1 percent lived without any assistance (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior, 2011).

The women's movements in Taiwan have aimed at socializing domestic work and advocated a greater role of the state in the provision of social services such as childcare and elderly care (Liu, 1997; from Wong & Wong, 2013). Although several policies, including the *Act of Assistance for Family in Hardship*,

Employment Insurance Act, and *National Pension Act*, have been enacted to provide family support, women’s organizations criticize these policies as being primarily monetary programs (Wong & Wong, 2013). They request that the government directly establish institutions and services for childcare and elderly care rather than relying primarily on the private market.

Under the “familial ideology” approach, direct state intervention in the care of older people is very limited. The social welfare policies of Taiwan’s government offer little support for families. Rather than provide direct aid or services, the government prefers to subsidize the purchase of services from the private market, and the market-led housing system leaves families primarily responsible for securing their own welfare and housing. The deceleration of family formation is a signal that the family unit is no longer able to assume such a heavy burden for social reproduction, especially in times of economic restructuring and evolving gender relations.

The unknown housing questions

Women’s movements in Taiwan have been less focused on housing issue for several reasons. Urban planning and architecture are still male-dominated, so the design of housing has limited feminist perspectives. Homeownership has been the primary ideology, so the affordability of housing is the major concern for most people, including women. Another very important reason for this is that women’s housing problems remain invisible because of the lack of information on this issue.

How serious are the housing problems for the disadvantaged people in Taiwan? Unfortunately, finding the answer to this question is very difficult because the official statistics are not aimed at exposing problems; instead, they serve more to measure housing consumer behavior and the prosperity of the housing market. There is still no information about real housing transaction prices. Increased transparency has been a goal of the social housing movement in Taiwan. In 2012, before the presidential election, the legislature finally passed the Housing Act which aims at improving housing market, housing quality, adequate housing, and the housing dignity of every people. However, the real estate industry came out strongly against the release of real transaction prices. After negotiations took place, a final decision was made to provide the average prices for a particular block of housing, defined as the rectangular section of a city bounded on each side by consecutive streets, and to prohibit taxation based on real transaction prices. Efforts towards transparency were not successful. This is another example of the power of the real estate capitalists.

Housing statistics reflect little concern about inequality; there is almost no information about housing problems for people of different classes, genders, nationalities, or ethnicities. Thus, it is hard to measure the inequality of the distribution of housing resources. Even the accuracy of homeownership rates is also doubtful due to the prevalence of tax evasion among landlords, and the

number of housing units that are shared by more than one household. The only thing certain is that the price of housing is incredibly high. Occasional newspaper reports reflect the discrimination suffered by disadvantaged people in the private rental housing market, but there is no regular survey that tracks the trajectory of housing problems

Conclusion: Women's rights in the city

For Taiwanese people, the right to the city links closely with the right of housing in the city. The concept of "rights" has usually come from bottom-up social struggles. This concept has been repressed through several colonial governments. Democracy since the late 1980s paved the way for the growth of the concept of "rights," but this also came in a time of economic restructuring during which the capitalist class gained a greater influence.

The three "highs"— high homeownership rates, high vacancy rates, and high housing prices— is a form of accumulation by repossession because the use value of housing has become meaningless through the process of commodification and conversion of housing into a financial product. The forces of financial speculation turn the city into a warehouse for vacant housing while excluding people in need.

For Taiwanese women, the housing problem is not only about prices but also about the commodification and privatization of housing and social welfare. Increasingly, Taiwanese women have to take on the responsibility for both paid work and house work, in the spheres of both production and reproduction. Redesigning the city and redefining public and private space are urgent matters (Chen, 2013b). More public support for domestic work within the family is greatly needed. Therefore, from the feminist point of view, the social housing movement is not only about socializing ownership; it is also about socializing domestic work and family responsibility because the housing system is not only capitalist but also patriarchal.

References

- Apple News. 2013. Shangban ju zezhi nanguo shizhe xingzi daotuei 16 nian (Workers are having a hard time: the real wage fell to the level of 16 years ago). Taiwan. (in Chinese)
<http://www.appledaily.com.tw/realtimenews/article/new/20131022/278935/>, date accessed 9 September 2016.
- Chang, Chin-Oh, Ming-Chi Chen and Chi-Yuan Yang. 2010. Taibai shi fangjia paomo hua zhi zai yen (Re-examine the housing bubble in Taipei). Taipei, Taiwan: Institute for Physical Planning and Information. (in Chinese)
<http://www.ippi.org.tw/realestate/report/FILES/acc100701-3.pdf>;
<http://www.realestate.com.tw/duckhouse/bubble%20press%20conference/bubble%20news.pdf> , date accessed 1 November 2012.

- Chang, Gou-Xing. 1996. Ziban zhiming tungzhi shidai taiwan zhehui de bianhua (1895-1945) (The transformation of Taiwan’s society under the Japanese governance). In, Bao-chuen Dai, Xiao-Feng Li, and Yan-Xiang Chang (eds.), *Taiwan Shi Luenwen Jingxuen II (Selected Articles on Taiwan History)*. Taiwan: Yusan She, pp.161-201. (in Chinese)
- Chang, Jin-Feng. 2011. *Laodong shehui xue (Lobar sociology)*. Taiwan: Chengchi University Press. (In Chinese)
- Chang, Yan-Xiang. 1996b. Taiwan wenhua xie hui de chengli yu fenglie (The dismantle and establishment of Taiwan Cultural Association). In, Bao-chuen Dai, Xiao-Feng Li, and Yan-Xiang Chang (eds.), *Taiwan Shi Luenwen Jingxuen II (Selected Articles on Taiwan History)*. Taiwan: Yusan she, pp.131-59. (in Chinese)
- Chen, Chao-Ju. 2013a. Haishi bu pingdeng (Still unequal: the obstacle and unfinished task of feminist law reform on patriarchal family). In, Women Studies Association (ed.), *White Paper for Women’s Conditions*. Taipei, Taiwan: Executive Yuan. (in Chinese)
- Chen, Yi-Ling. 2011. New prospects for social rental housing in Taiwan: The role of housing affordability crises and the housing movement. *International Journal of Housing Policy* 11, 325-38.
- Chen, Yi-Ling. 2013a. Taiwan de zhuzhai tixi (Taiwan’s Housing System: The Crises under Free Market and Commodification). *Gouji chengshi gueihua (Urban Planning International, Beijing, China)* 28(4), 10-17. (in Chinese)
- Chen, Yi-Ling. 2013b. Yige xingjia de xiangxian (Imagining a New Home—Feminism and Architecture). *Taiwan Architect* June, 90-96. (in Chinese)
- Chen, Yi-Ling and Li, William. 2012. Neo-liberalism, the developmental state and housing policy in Taiwan. In, Bae-Gyoon Park, Asato Saito and Richard Child Hill (eds.), *Locating Neoliberalism in East Asia: Neoliberalizing Spaces in Developmental States*. Oxford and Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 196-224.
- Cheng, Lucie and Ping-Chun Hsiung. 1993. Funu, waixiao daoxiang chengzhang han guojia: Taiwan ge an (Women, export-oriented growth, and the state: the case of Taiwan). *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 14, 39-76. (in Chinese)
- Department of Household Registration, Ministry of Interior. 2012. Zenkou ziliao ku (Demographic database). Taiwan: Ministry of the Interior. (in Chinese) http://www.ris.gov.tw/zh_TW/37, date accessed 1 November 2012.
- Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior. 2008. *Dishou ruhu shenghuo zhuangkuang xingbie fexi (Gender analysis of low-income household survey)*. Taiwan: Ministry of the Interior. (in Chinese) <http://sowf.moi.gov.tw/stat/sex/genderstat9802.doc>, date accessed 1 November 2012.

- Department of Statistics, Ministry of Interior. 2011. *98 nian laozen diaocha jiekou (2009 survey on the elderly)*. Taiwan: Ministry of the Interior. (in Chinese) http://www.moi.gov.tw/stat/news_content.aspx?sn=5060, date accessed 1 November 2012.
- Directorate-General Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS). 2007. *2007 Xingbie tuxiang (The general report on Gender)*. Taiwan: Executive Yuan. (in Chinese)
- Directorate-General Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS). 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010. *Population and Housing Census*. Taiwan: Executive Yuan.
- Directorate-General Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS). 2011a. *Report on the Survey of Family Income and Expenditure*. Taiwan: Executive Yuan.
- Directorate-General Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS). 2011b. Images of Women, 2011. Taiwan: Executive Yuan. <http://eng.stat.gov.tw/public/data/dgbas03/bs2/gender/2011ImagesOfWomen.pdf>, date accessed 22 October 2013.
- Directorate-General Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS). 2011c. Brief Report on 2010 Census Survey. Taiwan: Executive Yuan. (in Chinese) <http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=30077&ctNode=3272>, date accessed 22 October 2013.
- Directorate-General Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS). 2012. Important indicators based on manpower survey results, by year. Taiwan: Executive Yuan. <http://www.dgbas.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=28980&ctNode=3247>, date accessed 1 November 2012.
- Directorate-General Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS). 2013. National Statistics, Republic of China (Taiwan: Executive Yuan). <http://ebas1.ebas.gov.tw/pxweb/Dialog/NI.asp>, date accessed 20 October 2013.
- Fang, Xiao-Ding. 2014. Taiwan Youming zuangkuang yu shehuei zenyi (The conditions of homeless people and social disputes in Taiwan). (in Chinese) http://www.laf.org.tw/tw/b3_1_2.php?msg1=34&msg2=404&PHPSESSID=afnppvpqt78jppggomvk3e1lu0, date accessed 4 October 2014.
- Fu, Li-Yeh. 2010. Congxing beikuang dian kan Taiwan de kuojia fuli tizhi (The model of the state welfare: Analysis from a gender perspective). *Taiwan: A Radical Quarterly in Social Studies* 80, 207-36. (in Chinese)
- Global Property Guide. 2013a. World's most expensive cities. <http://www.globalpropertyguide.com/most-expensive-cities>, date accessed 20 October 2013.
- Global Property Guide. 2013b. Q2 2013: Global house price boom accelerating further, led by Asia Pacific. <http://www.globalpropertyguide.com/investment->

analysis/Q2-2013-Global-house-price-boom-accelerating-further-led-by-Asia-Pacific, date accessed 20 October 2013.

- Hartmann, Heidi. 1981. The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism: towards a more progressive union. In, Lydia Sargent (ed.), *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: A Debate of Class and Patriarchy*. London and Sydney: Pluto Press, pp. 1-41.
- Harvey, David. 2008. The Right to the City. *New Left Review* 53, 23-40.
- Ho, Ming-Sho. 2014. *Working Class Formation in Taiwan: Fractured Solidarity in State-Owned Enterprises, 1945-2012*. Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Hodkinson, Stuart. 2012. The return of the housing question. *Ephemera* 12, 423-444
- Holliday, Ian. 2000. Productivist welfare capitalism: Social policy in East Asia. *Political Studies* 48, 706-23.
- Hsiung, Ping-Chun. 1996. *Living Rooms as Factories: Class, Gender, and the Satellite Factory System in Taiwan*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Hsu, Immanuel C. Y. 1999. *The Rise of Modern China*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Hu, You-Huei. 1995. *Santai tungtang (Three-generation families: Myth and trap)*. Taiwan: Chu Liu. (in Chinese)
- Institute for Physical Planning and Information (IPPI). 2011. *Housing Demand Survey*. Taipei, Taiwan: Ministry of Interior. (in Chinese)
<http://www.ippi.org.tw/>, date accessed 1 November 2012.
- La Grange, Adrienne, Ching-Oh Chang and Ngai Ming Yip (2006) Commodification and urban development: a case study of Taiwan. *Housing Studies* 21(1), 53-76.
- Lee, James, Ray Forrest and Wei Keung Tam. 2003. Home-ownership in East and South East Asia: Market, State and Institutions. In, Ray. Forrest & James Lee (eds.), *Housing and Social Change: East and West Perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Li, Jiang-Hung. 2010. The Formation of New Poor Class and the Solutions. *Xing shehuei (New society for Taiwan)* 10, 16-20. (in Chinese)
http://www.taiwansig.tw/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2730&Itemid=123, date accessed 1 November 2012.
- Liao, Jun-nan. 2013. Jinnian da taibei diqu fangshi fengxi (The analysis of housing market in the greater Taipei metropolitan area: the application of housing information dataset). Taiwan: Construction and Planning Agency, Ministry of the Interior. (in Chinese)

- Lin, J.-H., Hung, J.-S., Li, J.-H., Wang, J.-C., and Chang, F.-Y., 2011. *The generation of falling: the crises of big corporation, poverty, and low fertility rate*. Taiwan: Taiwan Labor Front. (in Chinese)
- Lin, Ju-Ping. 2012. Taiwan jiating de daijian guanxi yu daijian hudong leizing zhi bian qian qushi (The transformation of generational relations and interaction in Taiwan's families), In, Chin-Chun Yi and Yin-Hua Chang (eds.), *Taiwan de shehui biangqian : 1985~2005, Jiating yu hunyin (Social Change in Taiwan, 1985-2005: Family and Marriage, Taiwan Social Change Survey Symposium Series 1*, pp.75-124. Taipei, Taiwan: Institute of Sociology, Academia Sinica. (in Chinese)
- Little, Jo. 1994. *Gender, Planning, and the Policy Process (Policy, Planning, and Critical Theory)*. Oxford, UK: Pergamon Press.
- Liu, Hwa-Jen. 2011. When labor and nature strike back: A double movement saga in Taiwan. *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 22, 22-39.
- Liu, Yu-Shiou. 1997. Nuxing, goujia, gung ming shanfeng (Women, state and citizenship). In, Yu-Shiou Liu (ed.), *Nuxing, goujia, zhaogu gungjuo (Women, State, and Care work)*. Taipei, Taiwan: Nushu wenhu, pp. 13-56. (in Chinese)
- McDowell, Linda. 1999. *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*. Minnesota: The University of Minnesota Press.
- Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW). 2014. *Statistics of Homeless Assistance*. http://www.mohw.gov.tw/cht/DOSAASW/DM1.aspx?f_list_no=114&fod_list_no=1537, date accessed 4 October 2014.
- Peak, Linda and Martina Rieker (eds). 2013. *Rethinking Feminist Interventions into the Urban*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Ronald, Richard. 2008. *The Ideology of Homeownership: Homeownership Societies and the Role of Housing*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sargent, Lydia (ed.) 1981. *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: A Debate of Class and Patriarchy*. London and Sydney: Pluto Press.
- Saegert, Susan and Helen Clark. 2006. Opening doors: What a right to housing means for women. In, Rachel G. Bratt, Michael Stone and Chester Hartman (eds.), *A Right to Housing: Foundation of a New Social Agenda*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 296-315.
- Social Housing Advocacy Consortium. 2010a. Taiwan shehui zhuzhai shuotie (The arguments for "social rented housing" in Taiwan). 4 October 2010. (in Chinese) http://socialhousingtw.blogspot.com/2010/10/blog-post_04.html, date accessed 9 September 2016.
- Social Housing Advocacy Consortium. 2010b. What is Social Housing? (in Chinese), http://socialhousingtw.blogspot.kr/2010/10/blog-post_7547.html, date accessed 9 September 2016.

- Social Housing Advocacy Consortium. 2013. Shijie zenju ri taiwan zuoshi ju wu ningri (In the World Habitat Day, the disadvantaged people in Taiwan do not live in a good life), (in Chinese) <http://socialhousingtw.blogspot.tw/>, date accessed 22 October 2013.
- Social Housing Advocacy Consortium. 2014. Important events from 2010 to 2014. http://socialhousingtw.blogspot.tw/p/blog-page_3.html, date accessed 9 September, 2016.
- Watson, Sophie. 1986. Women and housing or feminist housing analysis. *Housing Studies* 2, 1-10.
- Watson, Sophie. 1991. The Restructuring of work and home: productive and reproductive relations. In, John Allen and Chris Hamnett (eds.), *Housing and Labour Markets: Building the Connections*. London & Boston: Unwin Hyman.
- Weinstein, M., T. H. Sun, M. C. Chang, and R. Freedman. 1994. Co-Residence and other ties linking couples and their parents. In, A. Thornton and H.-S. Lin (eds.), *Social Change and the Family in Taiwan*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 305-34.
- Wong, Shu-Yung and Pin Wong. 2013. Taiwan zhaogu fuli de fazhang yu kuenjing, 1990~2010 (The development and obstacle of care welfare in Taiwan, 1990~2010). In, Women Studies Association (ed.), *White Paper for Women's Conditions*. Taipei, Taiwan: Executive Yuan. (in Chinese)
- Wu, Mi-Cha. 1996. “Taiwan mingzhu guo” de chengli jing guo (The establishment of “Republic of Taiwan”). In, Bao-chuen Dai, Xiao-Feng Li, and Yan-Xiang Chang (eds.), *Taiwan Shi Luenwen Jingxuen II (Selected Articles on Taiwan History)*. Taiwan: Yusan she, pp.11-54. (in Chinese)
- Xie, W.-Y. 2010. Haizi sheilai zhaoku (Who is going to take care of the kids? The analysis of Taiwan’s childcare policy). Taiwan: Child Welfare League Foundation. (in Chinese)
<http://www.children.org.tw/upload/File/researcher/3vision2-1-1.pdf>, date accessed 1 November 2012.