

Title: “Spacious” or “not spacious”?

From under-occupation to overall housing planning of grassroots in Hong Kong

by

Siu, Kin-man

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(With a review focusing on the current situation of  
tackling under-occupation households in public rental housing on June 2014)

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### Abstract

In 2010, the changes in the measures to tackle the under-occupation households in public rental housing caused a resident movement from some under-occupation households in Hong Kong. The research aims at understanding the under-occupation of public rental housing.

The households have shared similar stories that they are affected by the redevelopment programmes in public rental housing. The Housing Department had adopted some flexible measures on flat allocation to those households. They had accepted the living arrangement, moving into the current flat and have lived in for many years. After the Housing Authority had changed the measures to tackle the serious under-occupation households in 2010, those households become under-occupation households suddenly and they think that the Housing Department violates the original intention of the flexible measures on flat allocation. Although many people do not understand or accept the situation of the under-occupation households, the households still stand out to fight for the right to stay in the original flats. They have addressed that the problems of the under-occupation are not the simple cases and it should relate to Hong Kong housing problems.

In the research, there is a discussion on the measures to tackle the under-occupation households and it tries to show out a linkage between different housing problems faced by the grassroots in Hong Kong. At last, recommendations have been given to the government to solve the under-occupation and long-term housing policy planning should be made to solve the housing problems faced by the grassroots in Hong Kong.

## Introduction

In November 2011, there was an individual interview about “under-occupation” reported by the Hong Kong Economic Times (see Appendix 1). The report showed out a description from an under-occupation household living in a public rental housing estate about how he became “the serious under-occupation household” and what he had done to confront the removal. The report had also shared on the inmediahk.net (獨立媒體) and it brings some criticism about the abuse of public housing resource from those households (see Appendix 2). This web page stimulates me to think about some questions. What is under-occupation? Why the households can mention their dissatisfaction confidently with their justification? What is the relationship between under-occupation and other housing problems in public rental housing? Through this research, I would like to explore more on under-occupation and other related housing problems in public rental housing of Hong Kong.

### Purpose for study

Although public rental housing has a long history in Hong Kong, there is little attention on the issue of under-occupation. The standard of under-occupation was established in 1981 and it had been revised in 1992 (Audit Commission, 2007). In fact, the issue of under-occupation has aroused public concern since 2007. From the report of Audit Commission (2007), it reflects that the Housing Authority and Housing Department do not handle the under-occupation proactively. At present, there are no scholars to investigate on the under-occupation of public rental housing in Hong Kong. Therefore, one of the reasons to do this research is to observe the measures to tackle under-occupation on the effect to different housing policies and effectiveness on solving some housing problems.

Another reason is that there is an increasing trend on the serious under-occupation households in the future. According to the Housing Authority (2007, 2010), there will be almost 50,000 under-occupation households, including 2,950 the serious under-occupation households. The measures will be reviewed in late 2012 by the Housing Authority. It seems that the authority may continue to decrease the standard of “the serious under-occupation households”.

Also, the disputes on under-occupation are another reason to conduct this research. Normally, the government and public agree on the removal of under-occupation because the public rental housing resource should make a good use. But Li (2011) had reported that many under-occupation households were produced by the Hong Kong public rental housing redevelopment programmes. So, it is important to find out the

root of the disputes.

### Literature Review

#### A. Brief introduction on public rental housing in Hong Kong

Housing Authority and Housing Department are the main operators on planning, building and managing public rental housing in Hong Kong. They have some 160 public rental housing estates, including around 720,000 flats and over 2 million people living in at the moment (Hong Kong Housing Authority, 2012a).

According to Yeung (2003), there are few stages to develop public rental housing. It started in 1950s from the fire accident in Shek Kip Mei. Hong Kong government had to build a lot of resettlement blocks for relocating affected people. This is a milestone to start public rental housing in Hong Kong. In 1950-60s, the aims of public rental housing are to settle residents living in squatters and help the poor to improve their housing environment. Resettlement Department and the Public Work Department were in charge of planning, building and managing public rental housing at that time.

Another stage was started from 1970s. The governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, had announced a Ten-year Housing Programme to improve the living environment. The plan includes a target on building 1,800,000 flats for Hong Kong people, developing new towns and establishing new housing authority and department for the future development on public housing. Therefore, Housing Authority and Housing Department are established and tried to build more public rental housing, especially in new towns to meet the target of the programme. Although the target cannot meet at last, it still provides a lot of public rental housing to Hong Kong citizens.

In the 1980-90s, some old public rental housing had been redeveloped to improve the living environment. Also, many of the defective housing blocks were exposed and had to be disassembled for the redevelopment. Many public rental housing buildings had been replaced by the Harmony Blocks and it becomes normal in building public rental housing. The directions of public rental housing are changed to encourage home ownership and make good use of public rental housing by the introduction of “under-occupation households”, “well-off tenants” and assets test.

The final stage is from 2000s. The number of constructing public rental housing reduced to around 15,000 units to fulfill the housing policy of “back to the market”, which stimulates the private housing market. At the same time, the Housing Authority

and Housing Department have promised to the three years commitment for entering public rental housing for normal families, which does not include non-elderly one-person applicants.

#### B. Under-occupation on public rental housing in Hong Kong

According to the Hong Kong Housing Authority (2007), under-occupation means some families live more living space because of the changes in the number of family members which exceed very much in the allocation standard. The standard has been used since 1981 and there was a revise in 1992 (Audit Commission, 2007). Figure 1 is the current standard of under-occupation and maximum allocation standard for different household sizes.

Internal Floor Area ( Square Metres )		Household size		1 person	2 persons	3 persons	4 persons	5 persons	6 persons
Under-occupation Standard (i.e. internal floor area above)				25	35	44	56	62	71
Maximum Allocation Standard	PRH flats built before 1992			19.8	31	34	42	44	50
	New type of PRH flats built after 1992			17.81	23	34.5	46.08	54.25	54.25
	PRH flats in Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung			17.81	30.34	39.74	49.06	54.25	54.25

Figure 1: The current standard of under-occupation and maximum allocation standard for different household sizes (Source: The Hong Kong Housing Authority, 2007)

Although the standard has existed in many years, the Housing Authority only strictly enforced the standard from 2007 because of the reply to the criticism from Director of Audit's Report No.48 by Audit Commission in the same year. According to the Audit Commission (2007), the report mentioned the speed of handling under-occupation households is very slow and the response by the Housing Department is that it is difficult to handle the under-occupation because of different reasons.

After the report, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (2007, 2010) claimed that they need to handle under-occupation because of the good use of public rental housing. It

will firstly handle “the serious under-occupation households” which mean 1-person households living in over 35m<sup>2</sup> flats in 2007 and then 34m<sup>2</sup> flats in 2010 without the factors of elderly or disabled. The serious cases will give them 4 chances to allocate a small flat near the neighborhood and related allowance for the removal. If the households refuse all the chances, the Housing Department has the right to cut off the lease.

#### C. The directions on studying public rental housing in Hong Kong

Although there is no scholar to do research on the under-occupation, I had tried to find out some perspectives that other scholars may use in their research about public rental housing in Hong Kong. One of the research directions is to focus on the housing development in Hong Kong. For example, Yeung and Wong (2001) had done a survey about the public opinion in assessing the housing policy in Hong Kong. Also, some scholars may investigate on the housing problems in Hong Kong. For example, housing right had been discussed by Hong Kong People's Council on Housing Policy (2000a). Some scholars may conduct research about the social movements from housing problems. For example, Ho (2000) had conducted a research about the aged temporary housing areas.

In fact, the research may have the limitations on observing the housing problems. Some of the research is looking for the whole housing development in Hong Kong which cannot explore in small issues in particular housing policies. For example, the research from Yeung and Wong cannot reflect the situation on overcrowded households, well-off tenants or under-occupation households in the public rental housing. Some of the research may try to focus on the relationship between different housing problems by using some terms as housing right. In fact, it cannot discuss a process that the grassroots is facing on different housing problems.

#### D. The difference between my research and others

In this research, I will try to adopt the research direction from Lui Tai-lok and Kung Kai-sing. They had done an exploratory research on urban social movements with using a lot of resident movements from 1960-80s (Lui & Gong, 1985). They focused on the urban development, resident movements and urban order. Although they only covered little on exploring the roots of the housing problems, they had pointed out the importance on understanding resident movements. Scholars can find out more social problems through those resident movements to understand the life of the grassroots. Urban social movements are the results and responses from the contradictions produced by the bias on urban resource allocation. Lui and Gong (1985) also thinks



that the allocation of the city resource are competition and bargain from different social power that people should attend on finding out the relationship between it and other sections. In the research, I will try to join in NotSpacious, which is a concern group of the under-occupation to find out more about the under-occupation and other housing problems.

Besides that, I will also try to find out the relationship between under-occupation, housing need, housing right and other housing problems. Doval and Gough (1991) mentioned that adequate protective housing is one of the intermediate needs to gain basic needs on physical health and autonomy of agency. There are three characteristic to lead the adequate protective housing. The housing can be a shelter to prevent dangerous from weather, animals and diseases. It also needs clean water supply and enough living space for physical and mental health. Hong Kong People's Council on Housing Policy (2000a) had developed the concept of housing right from the convention of United Nations, including the legal protection, basic facilities, affordability, preventing dangerous, living opportunities, places and culture environment.

#### Theoretical Framework

As I mentioned in the literature review, Lui and Gong (1985) had observed residents' movements to find out the root of the social problems. They had explored a social movement with understanding the origins, development and predictions. So, I will also adopt this approach to find out more about the resident movement in the under-occupation.

To apply the housing needs and housing rights in the research, I have to select some of the elements to observe the relationship between under-occupation, housing needs and housing rights. Figure 2 shows out the relationship between the theories and under-occupation:

	Elements	The relationship between under-occupation and the elements
Housing need	Living space	m <sup>2</sup> of the flat
Housing right	Legal protection	Regulations
	Affordability	Rent and spending of the removal

	Living opportunities	Applicants of public rental housing
	Places	The influence of personal life

Figure 2: Chosen elements to observe the under-occupation

The combinations of different elements can find out the questions on why the households can mention their dissatisfaction confidently with their justification. Besides, it also shows out the relationship between under-occupation and other housing problems, the effects from the under-occupation to different housing policies and effectiveness on solving some housing problems. It can also shows out the contradictions between different public rental housing policies.

Figure 3 is the conceptual framework to give out a guideline for the research. Firstly, the research will find out the measures of the under-occupation. For example, I have to find out the number of under-occupation households in Hong Kong. Then, I will observe the struggle of under-occupation for answering the justifications that make the households to respond the removal confidently. I can also find out the common characteristics of the households, the operation of the measures and feelings about the measures. Next, I will use housing need and housing right to find out the influence to the households, others and society. I will also try to find out the relationship and process between under-occupation and other housing problems.

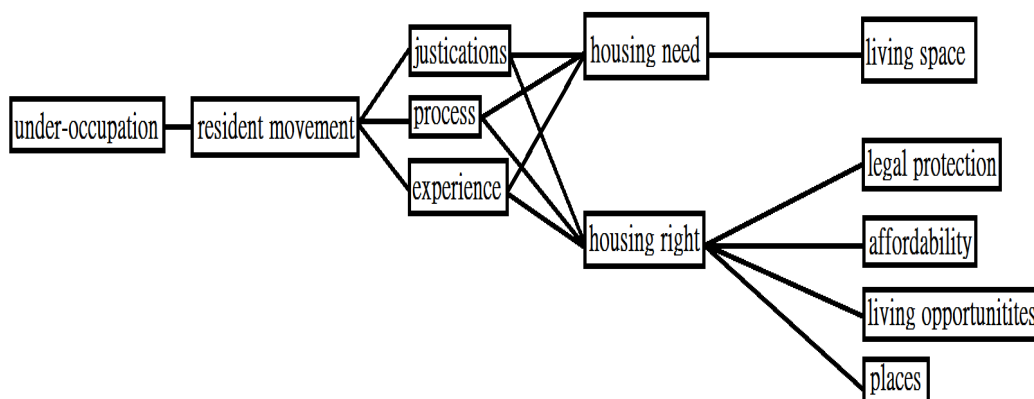


Figure 3: The conceptual framework to observe under-occupation in Hong Kong

## Methodology

This research is a qualitative research because of the limitations on finding the sampling of under-occupation households. Although there are around 50,000 under-occupation households, it is difficult to find them because they are living around different public housing estates. To find out the under-occupation households, I had participated in the NotSpacious to touch with the households, which focuses on the under-occupation in public rental housing. Through the help from the concern group, five households and one of the leaders agree to do the interview.

The reasons of using interview are to understand their justifications, process and experience in the struggle. In the interview, I would like to ask for understanding the cases of the under-occupation, the process of the struggle, gain and lost during the struggle. I would also like to know any relationship or process on housing problems that the leader can observe from the struggle.

Besides, I also use the direct-participation in NotSpacious to observe my research question. It established in 2010 with discontent. For example, the households do not agree on the changes in the standard of “the serious under-occupation” from 35m<sup>2</sup> to 34m<sup>2</sup> because it violates the “promises” on the relaxed allocation standard and the opportunities of buying PRH. Except the advertisement in different PRH estates, the group also takes action to fight for better interest to the households. For example, they had visited Legislative Council members in January 2012 for help. The group has handled more than 100 cases in the under-occupation. In the concern group, I am in charge of participating and recording meetings and actions. I also have chances to contact and visit some under-occupation households.

## Findings

Appendix 3 shows the questions and responses from the interviews. Mr. Lai is the coordinator in NotSpacious since its establishment. According to So (2011), he had thought to participate in the 2011 District Council election with conducting preliminary work. Because of helping the under-occupation households, he had to give up the elections because the issue would lose the voters’ support. Many council members do not care the households because they think elections and voters are the most important. But he thinks that helping the households is the most important because the issue is not individual cases and the responsibility should not only focus on the households.

Besides, all households are coming from Kwai Tsing district with 4 male and 1 female. One of the households is the youth and others are middle-aged. One of the households had move away from the original flat and others are still facing on the struggle on the under-occupation. To protect the interest of the under-occupation households, codes will be used to address the interviewees of the households. Some households do not answer all the interview questions because of their experience.

Appendix 4 shows the secondary information as reports from media or documents to find out the justifications from different stakeholders, the operation of the measures and more cases of under-occupation households.

#### 1. Common characteristics of under-occupation households

After the interview and the observation, I will firstly describe the situation that the households and leader have faced in the issue of under-occupation. NotSpacious have handled around 100 cases of under-occupation households. Many of them were received the notice of “the serious under-occupation” after the change on the standard of “the serious under-occupation” in 2010. Most of them are living in Harmony Blocks, especially in 1-bedroom flats with 34m<sup>2</sup>. The households are scattered in different district as Kwai Tsing, Sham Shui Po and other districts.

#### 2. The comparison on the justifications on different stakeholders

Figure 4 and 5 shows out the justifications on Audit Commission, Housing Department and NotSpacious. In 2007, Housing Department mentioned that it is difficult to handle under-occupation households because of different reasons. First, the flat should be allocated to applicants of public rental housing and households affected from the redevelopment programmes. Under-occupation households should be handled at the last stage. Also, the department said the supply of public rental housing is not allowed to conduct the measures because it is hard to find small flats from the design of public rental housing. Although the supply of big flats would increase, it is hard to rent out because of the decreasing trend on big families. It also needed to consider the cases based on particular situation like elderly, disability or other concerns.

Audit Commission	Housing Department
<p>The contradiction between the current standard of under-occupation and maximum allocation standard for different household sizes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flexibility</li> <li>● Priority in the allocation to public rental housing applicants and households affected by the redevelopment programmes</li> <li>● The design of public rental housing</li> </ul>
<p>Unclear internal guidelines</p>	<p>Depending on the cases with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flexibility</li> <li>● Final disposition of elderly and disabled under-occupation households</li> <li>● Adopted a flexible approach which takes into account on both reasonableness and feelings from the tenants</li> </ul> <p>The supply on the flats with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Priority in the allocation to public rental housing applicants and households affected by the redevelopment programmes</li> <li>● The design of public rental housing</li> <li>● Understanding the concern of the households with mental and economy</li> <li>● The shortage of small flats</li> <li>● Big flats are hard to rent out because of the decreasing trend of big families</li> <li>● 49,000 flats changed its usage from sell to rent and the relaxed allocation standard that it is easy to become under-occupation households from 3 to 2-person households</li> </ul>
<p>Inefficiency on handling under-occupation households</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 10 cases with seriously overweight the under-occupation standard</li> <li>● 1,664 under-occupation households with 2-3 flats</li> </ul>	<p>Besides the explanations mentioned above, Housing Department also replied that it will review the measures later and consider the concern of the households with mental and economy</p>

Figure 4: The summary on the justifications between Audit Commission and the Housing Department (Audit Commission, 2007)

Housing Department (2007, 2010)	NotSpacious
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It had relaxed the allocation standard to partial households</li> <li>● Good use in public housing resources</li> </ul>	<p>Redevelopment programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The contradiction between the current standard of under-occupation and maximum allocation standard for different household sizes</li> <li>● Priority in the allocation to public rental housing applicants and households affected by the redevelopment programmes</li> <li>● The design of public rental housing</li> <li>● 49,000 flats changed its usage from sell to rent and the relaxed allocation standard that it is easy to become under-occupation households from 3 to 2-person households</li> </ul>
<p>The procedures are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Setting up the targets (2007 – 35m<sup>2</sup> or above, 2010- 34m<sup>2</sup> or above)</li> <li>● Allocating a small flat to the households in the same estate or other public housing estates in the same district</li> <li>● If the households are voluntarily relocated, they may receive faster removal with the allowance and the chance to new public housing estates</li> </ul>	<p>Injustice procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The households said that the Housing Department does not hold any public consultation to the households</li> <li>● Many households need to sign up the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書) but they are not relocated voluntarily <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The officials in Housing Department had used different methods or excuses to lead households to sign up the document</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Unclear on the time to receive the four chances of the removal</li> <li>● The bad attitude from some officials in the Housing Department</li> <li>● Adopted a flexible approach which takes into account on both reasonableness and feelings from the tenants</li> <li>● Handling the households who are near the elderly very fast</li> <li>● The households do not understand why they need to spend their savings for the removal, especially to restore the original unit</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adopted a flexible approach which takes into account on both reasonableness and feelings from the tenants</li> <li>● Understanding the small changes in the number of family members but do not consider on 2 to 1-person households</li> </ul>	<p>Violating commitments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tenant Purchase Scheme does not include Harmony Blocks</li> <li>● Allowing only one people living in the current flats</li> <li>● 49,000 flats changed its usage from sell to rent and the relaxed allocation standard that it is easy to become under-occupation households from 3 to 2-person households</li> <li>● Do not understand why 2 to 1-person households do not belong to small changes in the number of family members</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Releasing big flats to 3 to 4-person families because of the big demand</li> </ul>	<p>Supply of public rental housing flats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The competition on small flats</li> <li>● Big flats are hard to rent out because of the decreasing trend of big families</li> </ul>

Figure 5: The summary on the justifications between the Housing Department and NotSpacious

#### A. Redevelopment programmes

First, the households think that they are also the victims in the measures. It is because many of them are the households affected by the redevelopment programme in 1980-2000s. Housing Department had relaxed the allocation standard that 2-person households can allocate with 1-bedroom flats, which should be given to 3-4 people families. It also promised to sell the flats to the households and it was no problem if there are only one people living in those flats. Therefore, the households may choose the bigger flats that they are easy to become under-occupation after the change of family members because of the changes in public housing policies. But the Housing Department only replies that it had done for the allocation standard in the past but now the resource of public rental housing should be good use to all citizens.

It shows out a contradiction that the Housing Authority has difficulties on handling the allocation of public rental housing because it wants to give better living conditions to the households affected by redevelopment programmes but it also needs to handle the households which are mainly created by the authority.

#### B. Injustice procedures

Also, injustice procedures are another resistance ground to the NotSpacious. They mentioned that there is no public consultation on the issue. Housing Authority and Housing Department changes the measures by themselves with internal meetings, which is not open to public. No one expected the changes of the measures from non-mandatory relocation to mandatory relocation.

Although the Housing Department had mentioned little about the operation of handling under-occupation households, the households in the concern group think that the officials in the department does not follow the internal guidelines to handle themselves. For example, “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書) leads one of the most controversial issues because different households receive different messages from the officials and they are relocated voluntarily. The officials in Housing Department had used different methods or excuses to lead households to sign up the document. Many households do not understand the real meaning of “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書).

Some households are angry on the attitude from the Housing Department. It is because the department does not consider their concerns and it only speeds up the removal for responding the Audit Commission and public. For examples, some of the households may receive 4 chances of the removal in two months or they still receive

the removal letter when they have reasons to postpone the removal of under-occupation. The measures only tighten up one's living space and it does not consider one's ability on the removal and effects of one's daily life.

### C. The supply of public rental housing

Another problem is on the supply of public rental housing flats. From the Housing Department, the measures can release 1-bedroom flats to 3 to 4-person families because of the big demand. In fact, it creates some new contradictions as the competition of small flats between under-occupation households and small family applicants of public rental housing.

In April and May, NotSpacious had held some meetings with other concern groups which relates to applicants of public rental housing. Some of them are non-elderly one-person applicants and they mentioned that they can only be allocated not more than 2,000 flats in each year. This violates the priority in the allocation to public rental housing applicants because the under-occupation may allocate to new public housing estates. Although the supply of big flats increases, many under-occupation households said that the original flat is still unoccupied more than few years, especially in the old public housing estates.

### 3. The process on the struggle

To face on the struggle, the households had done different actions. Before participating NotSpacious, many households had sought help from different District Council members and Legislative Council members. However, it seems useless because the members do not handle the issue or just handling it as individual cases that Housing Department did not pay attention on them. In the interview, the leader told that NotSpacious adopts the both strategies. In the long term, the group wants to make changes in the policy to prevent new under-occupation households and fight for exoneration to some under-occupation households affected by the redevelopment programmes before. In the short term, the group will help them to fight for discretion or delay. In fact, some households can escape from the under-occupation because of aged, medical reasons or adding family members. The actions include two parts. The first part is to appeal and bargain with the Housing Department. Another part is to advertise the message to public for the support.

The procedure is toilsome in the beginning stage because there are only few members to run the group. The Housing Department and public do not care them and attack the group with the statement on fair distribution of public rental housing. They have to spend a lot of time to do the advertisement and find more under-occupation



households to join the group. After more under-occupation households join the group, the Housing Department had relaxed the treat on some cases. For examples, the Housing Department has more clear criterions on giving discretions and some households may postpone their removal with different reasons.

#### 4. The experience in the struggle

##### A. Future situation of the under-occupation

The interviewees had expressed their opinion on the forecast of the issue on under-occupation. Some of the households may think that more people will concern the issue and the Housing Department may give more concessions if the group continues the struggle. Other households may think that it is only a delaying tactic that cannot make sure that they do not need to move away. The leader may think that the Housing Department will release the handle of under-occupation households or allow them to participate in the review of under-occupation but he still worry about the increasing trend on the number of under-occupation households.

##### B. The relationship and process on different housing problems in the grassroots

NotSpacious had figured out a wheel to reflect the housing problems that the grassroots may need to face in their life (see Figure 6 below). Under-occupation is only a part of the housing problems in the grassroots. It can relate to other housing problems as well-off tenants, different kinds of applicants in public rental housing with poor living conditions. The situation is a vicious circle that makes everyone cannot have a stable living environment. The composition of the circle is from the contradictions on different housing policies. I will explain the contradictions later in the discussion section. The government should review on the supply of public rental housing and reduce the contradictions that create more victims in different housing problems.

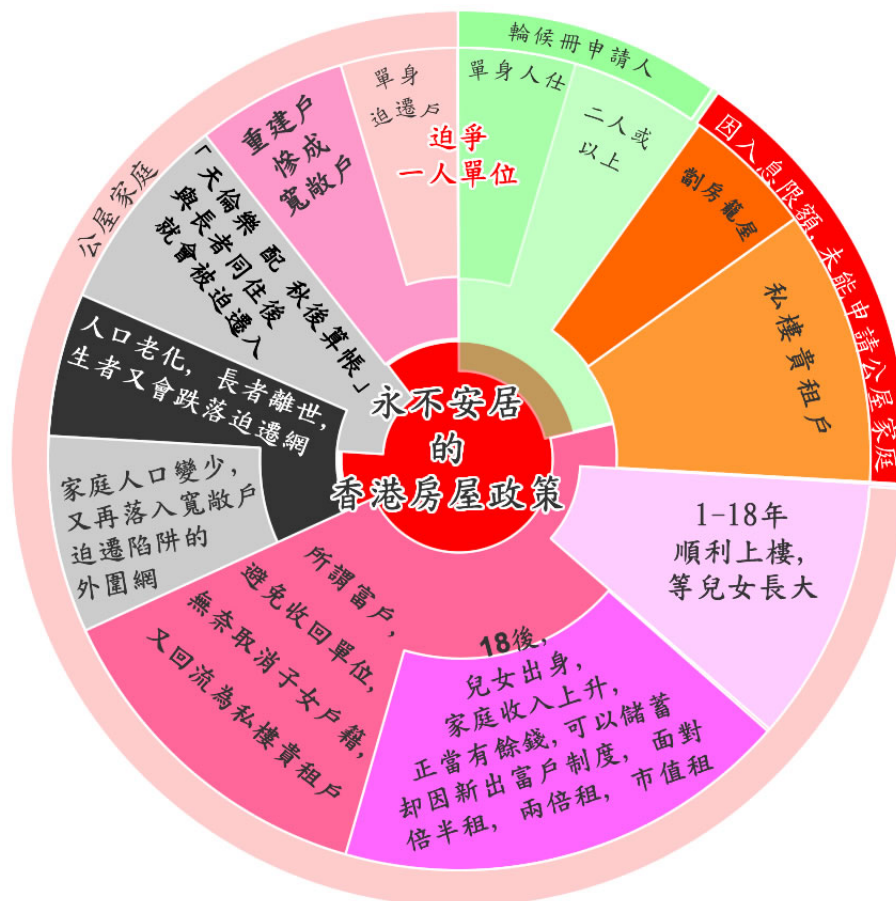


Figure 6: The housing problems in the grassroots living in Hong Kong

### C. Affordability

Affordability had mentioned from the interview. Although the households can decrease the rent by moving to small flats, they need to spend a lot in the removal. Each removal of under-occupation will cost around \$100,000, including basic spending for the removal and the cost on restoring the original unit. Unfortunately, the allowance for the removal is only \$3,388 as same as the tenants facing the redevelopment programmes (Housing Authority, 2011). The removal is mandatory that it is not fair to the poor. They need to spend their savings to move that cannot improve ones' economic situation and life.

### D. Living space

The standard of living space in public rental housing has not revised for many years since 1990s. According to the Hong Kong People's Council on Housing Policy (2000b), the living space to each person should be increased from 7m<sup>2</sup> in 1993 to 10m<sup>2</sup> in the late 1990s step-by-step. Nowadays, the living space is still 7m<sup>2</sup>. It is because the Living Space Improvement Transfer Scheme is still using 7m<sup>2</sup> as the standard to assess the households if they are over-crowded or not (Housing Authority,

2012c). Comparing to other countries, Singapore and UK has more space to each people. For example, UK had set up a minimum living space standard on public housing that 1-person households should live in a 29.7m<sup>2</sup> flat (Department of the Environment, 1961). In Japan, it had set up a minimum living space standard that 1-person households should live in a 21m<sup>2</sup> flat (Ben Jian, 1983).

In fact, the living size of public rental housing is reducing. In the past, 1 to 2-person households can be allocated a 17 m<sup>2</sup> flat and 3 to 4-person households can be allocated to 34 m<sup>2</sup> flat. Nowadays, 1 to 2-person households can be allocated a 14 m<sup>2</sup> flat and 3 to 4-person households can be allocated to 30 m<sup>2</sup> flat. It shows out that each people can allocate smaller flat than before. Therefore, allocating under-occupation households to new public housing estates may not increase their incentives for the removal because the living space is smaller than the flats in old public housing estate.

Another problem is that the small flats in harmony blocks are unpractical because of the design. According to Hong Kong Place (2012), old type of 1 to 2-person flats are split from 3-bedroom flats, which make big size in toilets and kitchens. In fact, the space for drawing room is very small. Although, the Housing Authority had redesigned the 1 to 2-people flats, the space is unpractical because there are still many of the electric appliances or furniture as washing machines or Chinese altars cannot put into the flat. Therefore, the under-occupation households need to spend a lot of money to replace the furniture which affords much in affordability.

Also, the standard does not include the concept of private space. Comparing to other countries, Singapore and UK has considered private space to each household as each people should have a private room for their life. According to Wilson (2012), the measures of under-occupation are calculated only on the number of bedrooms and family members. Although the households may become under-occupation households, the effect is smaller than Hong Kong because it only reduces the space from bedrooms but not the overall living space.

Because of the above reasons, many households do not want to move because they need to spend a lot for the removal and the whole living space is reducing without suitable living space for basic life.

##### 5. The phenomenon of achieving similar targets between the households and the Housing Department

Although the disputes are still continuing between the under-occupation households

and the Housing Department, it seems that they are looking for similar targets in the measures to tackle the under-occupation households. To the households, they prefer to stay in the current flat because they had believed that they can own the flat or live in it with only a person when they moved by the redevelopment programmes. The measures violate the original intention on the flat allocation after the changes in 2010. For the Housing Department, I regard the department does not want to handle the under-occupation households proactively. The issue of under-occupation has existed for many years but the department did not execute to handle the under-occupation households actively until 2007. It seems that the Housing Department needs to reserve the elasticity to allocate the public rental housing and maintain good relationship to the tenants. For example, it had relaxed the allocation standard for the households affected from the redevelopment programmes because of the supply of the flats and reducing dissatisfaction from the tenants. In fact, the department also knows that it is troublesome to handle the households because it involves a lot of procedures, resources allocation and quell the dissatisfaction from the households.

Also, the objection may help the Housing Department to respond the criticism from the Audit Commission. It is because the department is in awkward to handle the under-occupation households. It needs to respond to Audit Commission and public that it maintains good use in public rental housing. It also wants to reserve the elasticity to allocate the public rental housing and maintain good relationship to current tenants. If more people stand out to object the measures, the department may have more power to suspend the operation on the measures to tackle the under-occupation households because it has to respond the demands from the households. It also shows out that the measures should not implement strictly.

### Discussion

Figure 7 is the combination from the findings by using the conceptual framework. It can show out the reasons of producing the resident movement on under-occupation and the relationship between different housing problems in Hong Kong.

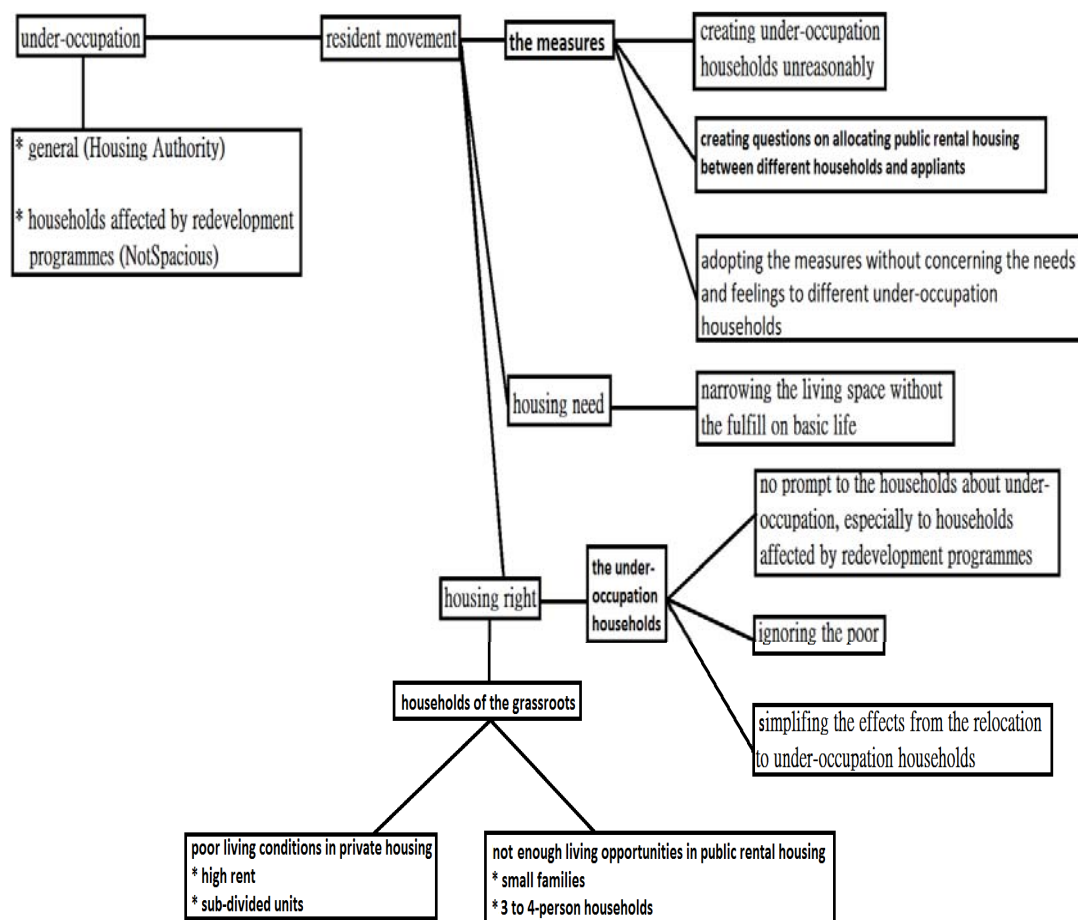


Figure 7: The conceptual framework to observe under-occupation in Hong Kong

### A. The root of the dispute

#### 1. Differences on understanding under-occupation

From the justification comparison between Housing Authority and NotSpacious, it is not difficult to show out that they have different understanding on under-occupation. Housing Authority regards that providing public housing to suitable families with fair mechanism is the important objective. The authority needs to do something to make sure the good use on public housing because of the criticisms from Audit Commission and public. Under-occupation households are abusers on public housing because they break the objective which is not fair to other users and applicants. Therefore, the authority should adopt any measure to tackle under-occupation households.

To the under-occupation households in NotSpacious, they regard Housing Authority and Housing Department as liars. The authority is using the residents to fulfill their desires. When the authority wants to redevelop the public housing estates, it does not mind to give more living space to households. When the authority needs to ensure the

fairness of public housing resources, the households need to sacrifice for the accountability of the authority. They are not satisfied on being cheated and become “the goods” for Housing Authority. Also, they do not understand why they are the abusers of public housing because of the relaxed allocation from Housing Authority.

## 2. The measures without considering the poor and bereavement

First, the measures are not fair to the poor and near-retirees. The spending for the removal is around \$100,000, including the fee on recovering the original flat and decoration for the new flat. Although each household can receive \$3,388 allowance for the removal, it is a heavy burden to the poor and near-retirees because there will be a crisis in the future that they cannot maintain their life with their savings.

Second, the measures against the under-occupation households with the relatives passed away. In the UK, the measures have a grace period to those households up to 52 weeks (Wilson, 2012). But in Hong Kong, NotSpacious reflects that the Housing Department will speed up the procedures of changing the head of the household and then inform the households to move because of the under-occupation. It gives big pressure to those households.

## 3. Creating more questions in allocating public rental housing

It is difficult to know about how the measures can solve the demand of 1-bedroom flats. The reason is that the government has not announced the number of waiting list applicants according to different household size since 2010. The documents about the measures only mention that about 5,600 1-bedroom flats can be released if the standard of serious under-occupation reduces to 30 m<sup>2</sup>. It cannot show out how the measures can speed up on the flat allocation to 3 to 4-person households specifically.

Another problem is that waiting list applicants of small families are affected by the measures. Except some under-occupation households give up the flats, other under-occupation households need 1 to 2-person flats to conduct the measures. But the action is violating the statement by Housing Department in 2007 that waiting list applicants should have the priority in the allocation to public rental housing. In fact, applicants have few opportunities to choose the flats in new public housing estates because the flats are allocated to under-occupation households. For example, resident e in the interview had accepted the offer to Kwai Luen Estate which is new public housing estate in the district. Besides, many of the households in NotSpacious had received the offer in Kwai Luen Estate.

## B. Housing problems of the grassroots in Hong Kong

Through the issue of under-occupation, it also shows out different housing problems and what are the relationships between them.

### 1. The contradictions in public rental housing policies

From the above, the interviewees had mentioned one of the contradictions that 2-person households affected by the redevelopment programmes can allocate with 1-bedroom flats with 34m<sup>2</sup>, which should be given to 3-4 people families. For example, the 2-person households with a family member under 60 years old living in old Shek Lei Estate had adopted the arrangement as the interviews mentioned above in 2001 (see figure 8). This arrangement did not fulfill the expected allocation standard in the past because the living space is over the regulations of 14.9m<sup>2</sup>, 25.4m<sup>2</sup> and 31m<sup>2</sup> (see figure 9, 10 and 11). In the past, the Housing Authority had used the flexible allocation arrangement to speed up the redevelopment programmes and appease the dissatisfaction from the households. But it cannot consider that the arrangement may produce the under-occupation households easily which breaks the principle of appeasing the dissatisfaction from the households

When the public rental housing redevelopment programmes are conducted, it still creates a hidden trap to 2-person households too. Nowadays, the households should be offered a not more than 31m<sup>2</sup> flat in their removal on the redevelopment programmes (see figure 11). In fact, the size of many new 1-bedroom flats is only around 30.34m<sup>2</sup>. The 2-person households can also be allocated with those 1-bedroom flats. If the standard on “the serious under-occupation household” changed from 34m<sup>2</sup> to 30m<sup>2</sup>, the number of the households will increase over 2,000 (The Hong Kong Housing Authority, 2010). In fact, applicants of 2-person households can be allocated to around 21 m<sup>2</sup> 2 to 3-person flats. Therefore, the arrangements create more under-occupation households unreasonably because the Housing Department has the right to allocate suitable flats to the households.

Harmonious Families Transfer Exercise cannot encourage young family members living with their elderly family members because of the under-occupation. Nowadays, elderly are not affected by the measures to tackle under-occupation although they are under-occupation households. If young family members want to live with them, they can use the exercise to apply the arrangement. But the problem is that if the elderly pass away, the youth will become under-occupation households that facing the removal. Therefore, the arrangements create more under-occupation households unreasonably because the department cannot fulfill the main objective of the exercise.

Figure 8. The evidence of the 2-person households affected by the redevelopment programme allocating with 1-bedroom flats

「提早調遷計劃」住戶可選擇之單位  
(適用於第 1、2、3、8、9 座居民)

屋邨	單位類別	編配人數	可供編配單位數量
石籬邨第七期	小型單位	1-2 人	480
石禧樓	一睡房單位	3-4 人#	40
石蔭邨第二期	二人單位	2 人**	272
勇石樓	一睡房單位	2-4 人#	273
	二睡房單位	4-6 人	133
葵芳邨第六期	小型單位	1-2 人	140
	二睡房單位	4-6 人	112
梨木樹邨松樹樓	三睡房單位	7 人	10

\*\*二人單位主要編配給戶主及家庭成員皆六十歲或以上的長者二人家庭申請。由於在「自選單位計劃」內的接收資源是沒有二人單位，所以住戶若放棄「提早調遷計劃」申請勇石樓二人單位的機會，便要入住其他和諧式公屋的小型單位（面積約 16 平方米）。

# 一睡房單位主要編配給三至四人家庭，餘額方可提供給有機會增加人口的二人家庭（即有家庭成員未滿六十歲者）。編配以攪珠方式決定先後次序揀樓。

上述可供調遷的單位，將採用住戶自行揀選的方法編配。由於上述可供調遷單位數量有限，編配的先後次序以大家庭優先，同一組別的家庭人數相同時，則以戶籍內年齡最高的年齡作編排，家有年齡較大成員可獲優先。如歲數相同時，則以入住本邨單位年期較長的一戶為優先。入住年期均相同時，則以居住密度排列，較擠迫的家庭優先。 P.2

Source: Kui qing qu yi hui fang wu shi wu wei yuan yuan guan zhu gong wu ching jian gong zuo xiao zu (2001)

Figure 9. Housing Arrangements for tenants housing affected by estate clearance in 1986

十、一、二人家庭可獲編配何種公屋單位？

- 單身人士可以選擇下列其中的一種安排：
- (一) 入住單身人士居住單位；
  - (二) 入住單身人士宿舍；
  - (三) 與另外一位單身人士合住一個不超過 14.9 平方米（160 平方呎）的公屋單位；
  - (四) 加入其他家庭而一同遷往其他單位；或
  - (五) 領取五千八百元的單身人士津貼。

- 二人家庭可以選擇下列其中的一種安排：
- (一) 入住一個不超過 14.9 平方米（160 平方呎）的公屋單位；
  - (二) 加入其他家庭而一同遷往其他單位；或
  - (三) 領取一萬一千六百元的「二人家庭」津貼。

凡選擇領取「單身人士」或「二人家庭」津貼者，仍可獲得二千元之特別津貼及八百元的搬遷津貼，但在領取此項津貼後的兩年內，領取者不得享受房屋署所提供的任何形式安置。

Source: The Hong Kong Housing Department (1986)

Figure 10. Housing Arrangements for tenants housing affected by estate clearance in 1989

十、一、二人家庭可獲編配何種公屋單位？

單身人士可以選擇下列任何一種安排：

- (一) 入住單身人士居住單位；
- (二) 入住單身人士宿舍，但無搬遷及特別津貼；
- (三) 入住一個不超過 19.5 平方米的公屋單位，但必須視乎該類單位的供求情況而定；
- (四) 與其他家庭合伙而一同遷往其他單位；
- (五) 領取 11,520 元的單身人士津貼。

二人家庭可以選擇下列任何一種安排：

- (一) 入住一個不超過 25.4 平方米的公屋單位，但必須視乎該類單位的供求情況而定；
- (二) 與其他家庭合伙而一同遷往其他單位；
- (三) 領取 15,360 元的「二人家庭」津貼；
- (四) 入住「二人家庭」居住單位。

凡選擇領取「單身人士」或「二人家庭」津貼者，仍可獲得特別及搬遷津貼，但在領取此等津貼後的兩年內，不會獲房屋署編配任何形式的公營房屋。除上述安排外，身體健康的老年人士更可選擇入住「老人住屋」。

Source: The Hong Kong Housing Department (1989)



Figure 11. Section B - Chapter 19: Housing Arrangements for tenants housing affected by estate clearance

附件 1. 重建清拆戶二人家庭被配一睡房資料 ,

(資料來源:  
<http://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/tc/common/pdf/about-us/policy-focus/policies-on-public-housing/B19/B19.pdf>)

乙部  
第十九章：受「屋邨清拆」項目影響居民的房屋編配安排

房委會沒有原區安置受「屋邨清拆」項目影響住戶的政策，但住戶可以自由選擇往任何地區的公屋單位，只要該區有合適單位供應。

在房屋委員會主動進行的「屋邨清拆」項目包括蘇屋邨第一、二期及葵盛東邨第 12 座中轉房屋，受影響而獲安置於並無安裝鐵閘公屋單位的公屋租戶，會獲發放一筆 2,500 元特惠津貼。

所有受「屋邨清拆」影響的家庭，在遷離現居單位時，均可獲發搬遷津貼。

受「屋邨清拆」項目影響的單身人士可以選擇下列任何一種安排：

- 入住單身人士居所（年老或弱能人士可優先入住）；或
- 入住「長者住屋」單位；或
- 入住一個居住面積不超過 19.8 平方米的空置單位；或
- 領取 37,330 元的「單身人士津貼」\*，以代替公共房屋編配。

受「屋邨清拆」項目影響的二人住戶可以選擇下列任何一種安排：

- 入住二人居所（年老或弱能人士可優先入住）；或
- 入住「長者住屋」單位；或
- 入住一個居住面積不超過 31 平方米的空置單位；或
- 領取 48,310 元的「二人住戶津貼」\*，以替代公共房屋編配。

凡選擇領取「單身人士津貼」或「二人住戶津貼」者，仍可獲得搬遷津貼，但他們在領取此等津貼後兩年內不可再領取該等津貼及不會獲編配任何形式的公營房屋。 79

除了選擇遷往公屋單位外，受「屋邨清拆」影響的家庭，亦可選擇購買於 2007 年年初恢復出售的剩餘居屋單位，並會獲得優先購買資格。

註：\*此項發放「單身人士津貼」或「二人住戶津貼」予上述計劃受影響住戶的政策，會於適當時間作出檢討。

2002 年後所建新和諧公屋一睡房單位面積是 30.34 m<sup>2</sup>。二人家庭可配一睡房單位，但只要一人離去，住戶又成為寬敞新標準 34 m<sup>2</sup> 下的犧牲者，迫使居民一搬再搬。

9 / 17 頁

Source: The Hong Kong Housing Authority (2012b)

## 2. Vicious circle in housing problems to the grassroots

From Figure 6, it shows out that the grassroots always need to face on bad and unstable living conditions. When they live in private housing, they need to spend a lot in high rent but living in a very small living space as sub-divided units. Therefore, there are so many applicants for public rental housing to reduce the rent and improve the living conditions. Unfortunately, the supply is not enough so the Housing Department need to increase the turnover of public rental housing. In fact, it cannot encourage the households of public rental housing to move out because there is not enough supply in subsidized housing or suitable private housing. The result is that some households continue to live in the bad living conditions. Others may become under-occupation households and they need to move into small flat that make competition with applicants of small families. The situation is unhealthy because there is no stable living environment and opportunities to improve living conditions.

### Recommendations

Solutions should be adopted by the government in different aspects to stop the unreasonable production of under-occupation households and setting up long-term policies to change the vicious circle in housing problems to the grassroots.

#### 1. Prompting the maximum allocation standard to the 2-person households affected by redevelopment programmes

The errors on the allocation standard to the 2-person households affected by redevelopment programmes have created under-occupation households unreasonably. NotSpacious had mentioned that many households living in public rental housing do not know about under-occupation. Therefore, dissatisfaction is created to some under-occupation households because they cannot make the better decision without the information of under-occupation. To improve the situation, new households affected by the redevelopment programmes should be told about the measures to tackle under-occupation when they make decisions on choosing flats for the removal. At the same time, the Housing Department can encourage the households to choose 2 to 3-person flats for the removal because 2 to 3-person flats are enough to provide the 2-people households nowadays. This can maintain the elasticity for allocating public rental housing and reduce the dissatisfaction from inadequate information of under-occupation.

#### 2. Exempting to the 2-person households affected by the relaxed allocation standard of redevelopment programmes

Exemption should be given to the 2-person households affected by the redevelopment programs in the past and become under-occupation. It is because the mistakes are made by the Housing Authority and Housing Department. The residents cannot expect that they were living in the defective housing blocks. They also do not expect the changes in Tenant Purchase Scheme and the standard of under-occupation in the past. Even some under-occupation households had been promised that they can live in the flat if there is only 1 person. Therefore, they should not become under-occupation if they understand enough information. So, giving exemption is reasonable to those households. At the same time, the Housing Authority and Housing Department can continue to encourage the households to move into small flats.

### 3. Clear measures to tackle under-occupation with compensatory to the households

Another reason to form the resident movement is unclear information to public. On the one hand, Housing Authority and Housing Department cannot explain the benefits of the measures. Public only knows how many under-occupation households can be handled and the related public expenditure in each time. On the other hand, Housing Authority and Housing Department do not consider the difficulties on operating the measures. For example, how the Housing Authority and Housing Department make the balance on allocating flats between settling down the under-occupation households and applicants of public rental housing. Also, the resident movement reflects that the measures lack of considerations on the interest of the households. For example, how can the measures protect the interest to the poor and near-retirees?

Therefore, impact assessment should be conducted immediately. UK government has handled the under-occupation through social housing reform from 2010. The Department for Work and Pensions had done an impact assessment in 2012 to find out how the measures to tackle under-occupation households affect to targets, regions and society. According to Wilson (2012), the standard of under-occupation is based on the number of family members and bedrooms that the households are using. For example, a child under 15 years old should share a bedroom with another child of the same gender. The measures will give absolutions to elderly, disabled with overnight care and households living in sheltered and supported housing. There are the 1-year protections for the households who are recently bereaved to postpone the execution of the measures.

In the UK, the impact assessment had mentioned about the definition of under-occupation, the benefits and lost in conducting the measures, the criterions on having exemption and the compensatory to particulate households with special

situation. But in Hong Kong, the measures have not done any impact assessment to assess and support the measures. The result is arousing the disputes between the under-occupation households and the Housing Department.

Besides, Housing Authority and Housing Department should give more compensatory to under-occupation households to encourage them for the removal. According to Xian, He & Wu (2010), Dr. Chung Kim-wah had mentioned to increase the incentives for under-occupation households. I have followed up the statement and he replied that there are two ways for the compensatory to the households: rent concessions and more options for the removal. The former can reduce the burden to the poor directly. The latter can increase the incentives for the households to move into small flats. It can also solve the problems on the differences on the speed to handle the under-occupation households in different regions.

Another way is to give more opportunities for having exemption. One of the available exemptions is that there should be one year grace period for the under-occupation households with the relatives passed away or cross-border families for family reunion. The reason of this suggestion is to give more protection to those families' interest. It can reduce their worry.

Another available exemption is to accept more cases for the addition of family members. From the responses of NotSpacious, some of the cases cannot use addition of family members to escape from under-occupation because of the original regulations in the addition of family members. Housing Authority and Housing Department should give elasticity to under-occupation households that they can use addition of family members if the immediate family members can meet the requirements of applying public rental housing or living in public rental housing currently. In fact, the resources can become more good use because more people can benefit in public rental housing with better allocation.

#### 4. Long-term housing policy planning

After 1997, the government had not conducted any long-term housing policy planning. It only focuses on adaptable strategies to develop housing. For example, "back to the market" had been adapted from 2002 to 2009 for stimulating private housing market. In fact, the vicious circle has been appeared because of the high price in private housing market. The results are producing different housing problems to the grassroots in Hong Kong. On the one hand, the grassroots cannot improve their living conditions because of no opportunities to afford private housing or using public rental

housing. On the other hand, they have to worry about their life because of the unstable living conditions. Therefore, long-term housing policy planning should be conducted to try for the changes in the vicious circle.

The planning is not only focus on the supply of different housing but also adds more considerations on the housing need and housing rights. Leung Chun-ying had mentioned that everyone should have more living space if it is possible in a residents' meeting of the Chief-executive visiting Kwai Fong in 16<sup>th</sup> June. Therefore, setting up a minimum standard of living standard is a milestone to explore housing need and housing right in Hong Kong. Also, legal protection, affordability, living opportunities and places are important when the government considers the long-term housing policy planning. Hong Kong People's Council on Housing Policy (2000a) had spoken the importance of housing right to public. The key is how to implement the concepts into housing policies. Through the planning, it is a good opportunity to reflect the problems in the current housing policies and how to make it better in the future.

#### Limitation of the research

There are two limitations in this research. First, it is difficult to find some important information in the issue of under-occupation. As I have mentioned above, the effectiveness of the measures cannot be proved because the Housing Authority and Housing Department have not provide announced the number of waiting list applicants according to different household size since 2010. Despite some Legislative Council members had asked about the information in the meetings, the Transport and Housing Bureau did not provide it. Therefore, I can only use existing information to make comments on the measures.

Another example is to prove the statement from the interviewees. They had mentioned that the Housing Authority had done on the relaxed allocation standard when they move from the defective housing blocks. In fact, there are little documents to prove about the statement. Luckily, I can find the related information from a booklet to talk about the redevelopment programmes in Shek Lei Estate that 2-person households can be allocated to 1-bedroom flats. I also find the documents about the allocation standard to 2-person households affected by the redevelopment programmes in the past. Otherwise, it is difficult to analysis the justifications is correct or not.

Second, the interview and direct-participation may have some bias to observe the under-occupation. It is because NotSpacious can only reflect some under-occupation

households' situation when they are facing on the measures. Therefore, further studies should be conducted to understand the opinion from different stakeholders.

### Conclusion

Under-occupation is not a small problem to particular households living in public rental housing. The effects can be expanded to other households living in public rental housing and applicants of public rental housing. The vicious circle shows out the current housing problems facing by the grassroots in Hong Kong that they cannot have a stable living environment and advance to improve their living conditions through public rental housing and home ownership. So, the government should create a long-term housing policy planning to change the current situation.

In operating the measures to tackle the under-occupation households, Housing Authority and Housing Department should make an impact assessment to assess the effect to different stakeholders. At the same time, they should prevent the production of intent under-occupation households affected by redevelopment programmes. They can also continue to adopt a flexible approach consistently by providing more incentives and exemptions. This can reduce the disputes on the issue of under-occupation.

This is an inductive research to observe about the issue of under-occupation in Hong Kong. I suggest other scholars may continue the research in two ways. One is to do a detailed comparison between Hong Kong and the UK. It is because the comparison can give a way to Hong Kong to think about the impact assessment and recreate a structure to explain and conduct the measures to tackle under-occupation households. Another way is to find out more contradictions between different housing problems to explore better policies on public rental housing or other housing policies to the grassroots in Hong Kong.

### The Review (June 2014)

In 2012, I had done a research to explore the measures to tackle the under-occupation households in public rental housing. It involves all households living in public rental housing and applicants of public rental housing. It can also combine other housing problems facing by the grassroots in Hong Kong that creates a vicious circle to hinder the basic level for the stable living environment and opportunities to improve their living conditions. Therefore, the review of the measures to tackle the under-occupation households in public rental housing and long-term housing policy

planning should be adopted to reduce the disputes on the issue of tackling the under-occupation households.

In 2013, more and more households living in public housing are affected by the poor changes in the measures which increase the victims of the elderly and two-person households. It shows that the Housing Authority does not try to respond the problems which caused by the measures. For example, the authority does not explain why there is still a contradiction in the idea between the flexible allocation arrangement from the redevelopment programmes and the measures to tackle the under-occupation households. Conversely, the authority increases the number of under-occupation households on highlighting the false appearance of releasing more 1-bedroom flats for families. In fact, some committees from the authority recognized that the measures cannot solve the long queue of the applicants of public rental housing at the same year. It seems that the measures still have a lot of controversy which should be suspended for further exploration.

The root of promoting the measures to tackle the under-occupation households in public rental housing is the lack of the protection in housing right to the grassroots. Housing right is the basic to every people in the world. The residence is not only a shelter or commodity but also the base to develop your life. According to Kopec (2012), a residence should contain the functions to satisfy people's need in daily life, emotion and privacy. Therefore, the government needs to establish the concept of appropriate residence for fulfilling the housing right.

Some people or group may agree with the existence of subdivided units because of the inevitable result from the economy or transitional measures on handling the housing problems in Hong Kong. Therefore, the under-occupation households are unusual of "occupying better housing environment" comparing with the others. It is ridiculous that subdivided units cannot fulfill the satisfaction on people's need in daily life. Many subdivided units are not safe because of the lack on fire control or community facilities. Also, the rent of the units is high and becomes a heavy burden to the grassroots. Increasing the build of public housing is the solution to improve the housing right of the grassroots. It is not fair to pressure the under-occupation households only on solving the long queue of applying public housing.

Also, Doval and Gough (1991) mentioned that adequate protective housing is one of the intermediate needs to gain basic needs on physical health and autonomy of agency. Enough living space is one of the elements which can maintain physical and mental

health for everyone. For example, Kopec had said that if people live in a micro-apartment, working pressure cannot be released which leads different diseases (Urist, 2013).

But in Hong Kong, enough living space is luxury to the grassroots. The Housing Authority still keeps 7m<sup>2</sup> as basic living space for 1 people in designing and allocating public housing from the late 1990s. Small flats in harmony blocks are unpractical because of the design. Old types of 1 to 2-person flats are split from 3-bedroom flats, which make big size in toilets and kitchens (Hong Kong Place, 2012). In fact, the space for drawing room is very small. Although, the Housing Authority had redesigned the 1 to 2-people flats, the space is unpractical because there are still many of the electric appliances or furniture as washing machines or Chinese altars cannot put into the flat. Therefore, Small flats with harmony block design should not be the standard to solve the housing problems of the grassroots in Hong Kong because they cannot satisfy people's need in daily life.

Comparing to other countries, UK and Japan has more living space to each people. UK had set up a minimum living space standard on public housing that 1-person households should live in a 29.7m<sup>2</sup> flat (Department of the Environment, 1961). In Japan, it had set up a minimum living space standard that 1-person households should live in a 21m<sup>2</sup> flat (Ben Jian, 1983). Therefore, reviewing the old living space standard in public housing should be done before adopting the measures of tackling the under-occupation households. 1 people living in 1-bedroom should become the standard because it fulfills the concept of appropriate residence to satisfy people's need in daily life, emotion and privacy.

To conclude, I disagree with the implement of the measures to tackle under-occupation households in public rental housing because it cannot solve the housing problems of the grassroots. The government should clear the concept of appropriate residence and suitable living space. It also needs to build enough public housing for the grassroots.



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Appendix:

我(吳國雄)今年54歲，單身，一人身兼多職，裝修、水電、的士司機樣樣都做，我現在擁有的一切都是靠雙手掙出來的。

1971年我已住在深水埗，至1994年因受法律影響，我和母親擠進平安樂邨，當年房署推出出售公屋計劃，房署職員指日後有機會將公屋售給我，故建議我不妨挑大一點的單位，就是一家兩口就住得34.76平方呎的公屋。後來母親過世，房署職員叫我放心居於現址。去年10月我亦收到房署來信，叫我遷往「最嚴重寬敞戶」(註：居住密度超過35平方米)，資料相稱1個月，但寬敞戶卻變變(註：居住密度超過34平方米)，我又被變成「罪人」，成為坊間口中的「最嚴重寬敞戶」，要住舊。

香港地打工仔，賺錢只為一磚一瓦，收到房署的信我好難過，當時剛好收到一張「官署投訴信」的傳單，於是居住甚且一試的心理，還記得第一次出席行動，連我在內只有3個街坊。當時心想：小蝦三四隻，怎會有成效？但我只能堅持。去年12月至今，就一共出席了17次區民會議，參與遊行至樓實社交談關係，到美利大廈靜坐，參與劇本創作及演說活動劇團……所做的一切為構建「公民有住屋權」的小市民心聲。

「辭職不一定要有成效，但爭取卻是必須的。」(黃絲曼啟)

## 我不妥協！ 一個「最嚴重寬敞戶」的自白

行動不止為自己

我去歲行示威也幫幫人說「唔妥協」，出萬事情願共事犧牲，香港屋租層層人口眾多，有人住劏房，有人住難處，執意就屋邊安事，甚苦和是時舉失信，一方面給予五條線期望，一方面新策對「寬敞戶」的標準一減再減，保障則多交改，我就不能妥協！想當年發生我也試過參工運，二千幾歲在電腦社理公司的打工，一個月才得一日假，於是後向老闆爭取假期以及調整薪金，我和十多名工友發起罷工，老闆怕了，跟我講數，結果老闆總是在加薪。

4 區民會議(白粉堂)區民會議的「心腹」(白粉堂)區民會議的「心腹」(白粉堂)區民會議的「心腹」

5 定期集訓，有工友動化了，但我仍是覺得不甘，最後選擇離開。我就先這樣，事事做到底，即使行動有時不見成效。

其實早就我獲第二次調遷機會，雖編配的單位比之前好，有22平方米，我仍未決定要遷是不去。無論如何，我總想會繼續爭取下去，的難處畢竟許多仍未獲調遷分配，亦有許多即將變成「最嚴重寬敞戶」的街坊面臨困境，我現在所做的並非只為個人，因為明白一個人的力量有限，聽見街坊反應不覺太熱烈，我選擇組織成會員廣印傳單，採取逐戶去話。「最嚴重寬敞戶」不止是文檔，幫街坊的問題，是令港性的。我們就這到全港去，嘗試讓一眾人到些難山這傳單，是有點累，但我希望能組織更多人一起爭取，存得「拒絕動遷」的自由，保住住家權，保住一個家。

6 區民會議位質到大廈靜坐。

1. The newspaper report of under-occupation in public rental housing (Li, 2011)

## 貪得無厭

週四, 2011-11-10 16:19 — Albert

搬走吧, 把大單位留給有需要的香港市民, 這種行為在香港是沒有人認同的, 就算你遊行一千次不沒有用。

## 保住住屋權、保住一個家

週四, 2011-11-10 22:26 — yumama

你不會失去住屋權, 也不會失去家園, 只不過搬到細一點的地方。

但是許多住劏房、危樓及工廈的人, 他們就隨時因塌樓、舊區重建、工廈改用途等而失去家園, 甚至失去生命。

我自己無物業, 也沒有資格申請公屋, 我經常要搬遷。我不明白你是怎麼搞的? 你其實已經好幸福。

## 寬敞戶需調遷, 合約一早言明

週五, 2011-11-11 21:40 — yumama

公屋聯會資料 <http://www.hkph.org/main/policy/Transfer3.html> :

「現時租約條文已規定, 倘成為寬敞戶, 租戶須遷往房委會認為適合承租人家庭所需的單位。」

「房屋委於 2007 年 5 月通過處理寬敞戶的中期措施, 計劃在 2007/08 和 2008/09 的兩個年度, 對人均居住面積超過 35 平方米的非長者或非殘障成員的「超級寬敞戶」, 給予 4 次機會原區調遷, 否則會被取消租約。

2007-10年, 房屋署已解決大約 7,800 宗寬敞戶個案, 其中 1,800 宗較為嚴重的寬敞戶個案, 人均居住面積超過 35 平方米。**寬敞戶個案有增無減, 2010 年 6 月, 寬敞戶約有 45,900 戶, 房委會將於 2011 年 1 月進一步收緊寬敞戶強遷規定, 在未來兩年優先處理 3,000 宗人均居住面積超過 34 平方米的個案。**

為鼓勵住戶調遷, 房委會將發放 3,388 元 (一人家庭) 至 12,292 元 (六人或以上的家庭) 的住戶搬遷津貼。」

## 34.76平方米已是現時3人家庭的居住面積

週五, 2011-11-11 22:13 — yumama

本來一個人住開34.76平方米, 要搬到細約一半的單位, 不情願是可以理解的, 但這寬敞戶調遷政策並非不合理。

## 多謝yumama的資料

週五, 2011-11-11 23:32 — 韋言

不過呢, 無人話周生咁, 只係對佢俾房署官僚誤導 (話咗無咁快執行, 轉頭有執行), 有些少同情咁啫。

## 2. The criticism about the under-occupation households on the inmediahk.net (2011)

### 3. The questions and records of the interviews

Interviewee: Mr. Lai Chi-po, Billy (Leader of NotSpacious)

1. When did you receive the cases from “the serious under-occupation households”?  
I started to receive the cases since November 2010. There are over 10 cases from Kwai Fong Estate, Kwai Shing East Estate and On Yam Estate received by the District Council members’ offices. NWSC had arranged them to meet the officials from the Housing Department but there is no progress to help the households.

2. When did you created the concern group “NotSpacious” for the households?  
In the middle of 2011, NotSpacious had been created to fight for the under-occupation.

3. How many “the serious under-occupation households” you have helped in the concern group?  
The group has helped around 100 under-occupation households from many districts as Kwai Tsing, Tsuen Wan or Tin Shui Wai.

4. Why do the households in the concern group become the under-occupation households?  
Almost 90% of them are living in Harmony Blocks and they started to receive the notice of removal from November 2010 because the standard on “the serious under-occupation households” had been tightened up from 35m<sup>2</sup> to 34m<sup>2</sup>. Those families had the changes in the number of family members. The households living in old public housing estates may also become under-occupation households but the chance is not as high as the households living in Harmony Blocks.

Many of the households are also affected by the public rental housing redevelopment programmes in 1980s-2000s. Because of the defective housing blocks around different housing estates in Hong Kong, the households have to move to the current flats with the relaxed allocation standard. For example, 2-person households can be allocated to 34m<sup>2</sup> flat and they were told that they might buy the flat with the Tenants Purchase Scheme. They were also told that they do not need to move when there are only one people living in the flats. In fact, they cannot buy the flat and they become the under-occupation households in 2010.

5. Do the households experience any unusual procedure in the process on the struggle?

Yes, there are some procedures that it is strange to me and the households.

First, the households are requested to sign up the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書). The document is abnormal because if the lease has the articles about the under-occupation, it is no need to sign any document and the Housing Department can exercise their power to force the households moving to another flat. Another question is that the consent can shirk the responsibility from the Housing Department that means the households agree on the removal. In fact, the officials of the Housing Department have tried to use different methods or excuses to lead the households to sign up the consent. Also, the consent can speed up the removal because it can arrange the removal in the same estate or other estates in the same district by the district officials. I want to emphasize that if the households do not sign up the consent, they still face on the removal.

Second, the speed on handling the under-occupation households is different. Normally, the households will receive one chance of the removal each three months. If the households have some reasons on medical, social or aged ground, they can apply for the postponement on the removal. In fact, some cases are handled in strange ways. One of the examples is that the household receive four chances in two months. Although some cases have the deferral by verifying the reasons, they still receive the chances of the removal. The cases reflect the measures are to respond the criticism from the Audit Commission.

6. Do the households get any help by others before the help from the group?

Almost all of them had found the District Council members or even Legislative Council members near their public housing estates. But many of them do not receive the cases of under-occupation because it may affect their benefit in electioneering. Few of them may handle their cases with only writing letters or arranging the meetings with the officials of the Housing Department. Those methods are usefulness because the Housing Department was still to take the tough line on the issue.

7. What does the group help the households?

The households do not have any bargaining power at the beginning stage. So, I need to help them in different ways. For the short term, the group will try to fight for discretion or delay to some of the households. This may help some of the families to escape from the under-occupation in the short time. Some of them may escape from

the under-occupation fundamentally. The direction is also important for the group because it can create the relationship between leader and the households. This can release their pressure of under-occupation and participate in the group.

For the long term, the group needs to argue in the policy aspect. We will try to collect more justifications to support the statement of “the Housing Department violating the promises on the relaxed allocation standard and Tenant Purchase Scheme”. The group also takes different actions as petition to create more chances for negotiation. For example, we have attended the “Members’ Meeting with Concern Group” and the group can lobby the Housing Authority to postpone the removal till to the next review on the under-occupation in this year.

8. What are the difficulties to the concern group on helping the households?

Firstly, the Housing Department took a tough line in the issue of under-occupation at the beginning. Our group had taken some actions but there is no respond from the officials of the Housing Department. Many of the case do not get any discretion or delay. For example, one of the cases is that the Housing Department refused to let a family to have a delay with the reason of family reunion. The households had to bear the pressure from the Housing Department for the removal.

Secondly, the number of people affected in the under-occupation is almost few thousands of people only. The Housing Department is easy to conduct the differentiation to move the households away their flats.

Thirdly, the group still cannot get public recognition at the movement. Because of the term, many people may think that the under-occupation households are wasting the resources of public housing. In fact, the households do not seize the public housing and they are also the households by the Housing Authority and Housing Department.

Also, there were only few members coming from On Yam Estate at the beginning. It lacks power to conduct the collective actions. For example, the households had taken actions to the officials of the Housing Department on September to November in 2011. But the households still received the removal letter by the Housing Department. It seems the actions were useless to the households facing to the Housing Department.

The last difficulty is the 2011 District Council electioneering. It may affect the struggles if I need to continue the electioneering because the issue of under-occupation has much controversy which will affect the voters in supporting the candidates.



9. How does the group solve the problems mentioned about?

First, I had given up the 2011 District Council election. This can let me focus on the struggles.

Second, the group had done different advertisements in many public housing estates around Kowloon and New Territories. For example, it had put the leaflets into the mailbox of the residents living in 34m<sup>2</sup> 1-bedroom flats which may have more chances to touch with the under-occupation households. After the advertisement, it can accumulate more and more households to join the group. Nowadays, the concern group has around 15 active members for the meetings and actions. Besides that, many of the residents living in public housing estates had changed their opinion on the under-occupation households. They may support us to continue our struggle but the result is not enough to create public recognition.

Third, another leader had appeared in the group to share the duties in the concern group and he helps a lot in thinking about the policies, actions and advertisement. Through his help, the process to handle the pressure from the Housing Department had been created. It can help the citizens to confront the differentiation from the Housing Department. Besides that, the actions may produce the effect on releasing the tough line on the under-occupation by the Housing Department.

Fourth, our group has insisted on taking actions to the officials of Housing Department and may produce the effect on releasing the tough line on the under-occupation by the Housing Department. Luckily, we can express our opinion in the Roster for Members' Meeting with Concern Groups in 2011. Housing Department had promised to postpone the removal of the under-occupation to the households who were affected from the redevelopment programmes. Also, some of the cases may use other reasons to escape from the removal of the under-occupation.

10. What are the opportunities and crises for the struggles in the future?

For the crisis, I think the Housing Authority may tighten up the standard on "the serious under-occupation households". It means that more households have to face on the removal of under-occupation.

On the other hand, the group may discuss the issue in the review meeting of the under-occupation. It is because the officials of Housing Department had replied that the group cannot join the review meeting because of no traditions to let the public to join the meetings. There is no regulation to limit the participation of public in the

meetings. The group can also request the participation of the affected residents to conduct real consultations by adding the pressure to the Housing Authority.

Also, the Housing Department may release the tough line if the group continues to give the pressure to the Housing Department. For example, some households with the family reunion may gain the discretions on postponing the removal or even escape from the under-occupation by adding the number of family members.

11. From the under-occupation, what does the concern group notice on the housing problems in Hong Kong?

First, different housing problems have the relationships that can link together. Our concern group had created a wheel to talk about different housing problems in the grassroots. Under-occupation in public rental housing is caused by the deletion from the change in the number of family members as the death of elderly. Then, households with under-occupation have to move to small flats which make competition between applicants of 1-person households and them. It also cannot solve the problems of mass number of applicants in the waiting list of PRH, which still face on bad living conditions. Although the applicants can enter PRH, they may become well-off tenants, under-occupation households or to live in bad conditions again in the future. The situation is a vicious circle that makes everyone cannot have a stable living environment.

Second, living space of public rental housing becomes smaller. Nowadays, the size of 1-2 people flats is only around 14m<sup>2</sup> comparing to 16m<sup>2</sup> in the past. 1 bedroom flats is also getting smaller from around 34m<sup>2</sup> to 30m<sup>2</sup>. In other countries, the living standard is not as small as in Hong Kong.

Third, under-occupation households have to spend their personal savings on the removal of under-occupation. Although the Housing Department will give the allowance of the removal to the households, it is not enough because the amount is too low for the reduction of the original flat and the removal to the new flat. This violates the original intention of public rental housing which can help the poor to escape from poverty by the accumulation of wealth.

Fourth, housing rights do not have any protection in Hong Kong. From the under-occupation, it seems that the Housing Authority and Housing Department can change the relations without the public consultations. Residents living in public rental housing are goods for allocating to different flats under the principles organized by

the Housing Authority and Housing Department.

12. How does the government solve the housing problems you have mentioned above?

I think the main concept should be focused on to live and work in peace and contentment. There are few ways to achieve on this concept.

First, the residents should provide the freedom for choosing the removal. It is because the residents have to spend their savings to move from one place to another place. The residents may afford the rent but not the spending of the removal. The Housing Authority and Housing Department should open the right to the residents who wish to move into small flats. In fact, the measures are mandatory and cannot consider some households with the relaxed allocation standard because of the redevelopment programmes. Therefore, the measures should be stopped to solve some disputes on the relaxed allocation standard from the redevelopment programmes.

Also, the housing policy should take more considerations on the people-oriented elements. The public rental housing is not only a place to solve the housing problems. It should be a place for live and work in peace and contentment. The households can accumulate the wealth, cultivate their children and transit the economic difficulties by living in the relatives home temporarily. So, the housing policy should reduce the contradictions that lead expected effect. For example, Harmonious Families Priority Scheme should consider that the households may become the under-occupation households after the death of the elderly.

Another thing is that the public rental housing should be reviewed. Leung Chun-ying had mentioned that the under-occupation households and overcrowded households are the two sides of the same questions. He also claimed that the residents living in public rental housing should live bigger if it is possible.

Therefore, the living space of public rental housing should be adjusted. It is because the standard is far less than other countries. Also, the standard of public rental housing has not been changed for many years. Many residents have complained that the design of Harmony Blocks is useless because the toilet and kitchen are too big and it leads the small parlor in the flats.

Also, the government should increase the supply of the public rental housing. It is because the supply of the public rental housing is the root on producing under-occupation households, overcrowded households, well-off tenants and tenants with poor living conditions. Therefore, increasing the supply can reduce the produce of different households I mentioned above.

Interviewee: The under-occupation households in NotSpacious

Background of the households:

A	Male	Shek Lei Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Households affected from the redevelopment programmes</li> <li>● Do not agree to sign up the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書)</li> <li>● Staying the status on to sign up the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書)</li> </ul>
B	Male	Kwai Fong Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Households affected from the redevelopment programmes</li> <li>● Do not agree to sign up the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書)</li> <li>● Youth (aged around 25)</li> <li>● Being postponed by the medical reasons</li> </ul>
C	Male	Kwai Shing East Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Households affected from the redevelopment programmes</li> <li>● Finishing the sign on the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書)</li> <li>● Civil servants</li> <li>● Receiving some letters to choose the flat for the removal from the under-occupation</li> </ul>
D	Female	Shek Yam East Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Finishing the sign on the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書)</li> <li>● Having medical reasons but not accepted by the Housing Department</li> <li>● Receiving the third letter to choose the flat for the removal from the under-occupation</li> </ul>
E	Male	On Yam Estate to Kwai Luen Estate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do not agree to sign up the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書)</li> <li>● Entering NotSpacious in the beginning stage</li> <li>● Receiving the second letter and choosing the flat for the removal from the under-occupation</li> </ul>

1. When did you receive the notice that you are “the serious under-occupation households”? What did you feel about the notice?

A	B	C	D	E
The end of the 2010	The end of the 2010	2010.10	2010.10	2010.10
End of the world	To deal with the problem calmly deal	The misconception that he can escape from the removal but he cannot	Frustration	Unpleasant

2. Do you agree the measures to tackle the under-occupation households by the Housing Authority and Housing Department? What are the reasons to support your arguments?

A	B	C	D	E
No	No	No	No	No
<p>Do not agree to sign up the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書) because he is not relocated voluntarily</p> <p>The chance of getting marry in the future but the living space had been narrowed</p> <p>Poverty that he cannot afford the removal although he can get the removal allowance</p> <p>The feelings of a family as history and the connections with the community</p>	<p>Handling under-occupation households is the scarecrow to hide the fact on the difficulties to continue the housing circulation</p> <p>Creating contradictions on the competition on small flats between the under-occupation households and the public rental housing applicants with small number of family members</p> <p>The measures do not listen the voices from citizens because the government lacks of public opinion</p> <p>The measures give convenience to the government only on responding the issue of housing circulation</p>	<p>In the past 10 year, he had received the notice of the removal from the Housing Department but he can escape from the removal easily</p> <p>This time, the measures are mandatory which do not respect the tenants</p> <p>Although some under-occupation households may use some reasons to postpone the removal, it is still uselessness because the discretions are hard to fulfill</p>	<p>Misleading by the Housing Department because she had told that she does not need to worry about the under-occupation when there is only one people living in the flat</p> <p>Unfair to the under-occupation households because the households do not usurp the resource of public rental housing</p> <p>The formation of the households are affected by the change of the measures by the Housing Authority and Housing Department</p> <p>The measures cannot handle the tenants that is not living in the flats or using the flats for other purposes, which is the real case of wasting public rental housing resources</p>	<p>Misleading by the Housing Department because he had told that he can buy the flats and does not need to worry about the under-occupation when there is only one people living in the flat</p> <p>The measures do not consider the relaxed allocation standard from the redevelopment programmes of public rental housing</p> <p>Housing right should be protected but not to be deprived by the government</p>

3. Have you used any reason to postpone the removal?

	A	B	C	D	E
The households affected from the redevelopment programmes of public rental housing (2-person households allocating to 1 bedroom flats)	√	√ (3-person household allocating to 1 bedroom flats)	√ (3-person household allocating to 1 bedroom flats)	√	√
Medical ground		√		√	
Aged					
Other reasons	√ (No money for the removal)				

4. Can you be postponed the removal with using the reasons?

A	B	C	D	E
Yes but it is not related to the reasons	Yes	No	No	No

6. What had you done in NotSpacious to continue the struggle?

	A	B	C	D	E
Do not sign up the “voluntarily relocated consent” (自願調遷書)	√	√			√
Writing letter to the Housing Department	√	√	√	√	√
Propaganda in different public rental housing estates	√	√	√	√	√
Appeal through facing to the officials, procession, demonstrate and assembly	√	√	√	√	√

7. What do you think about the NotSpacious?

A	B	C	D	E
Sharing the pressure from my case  In fact, I need to continue my struggle by myself.	Sharing information from different under-occupation households	People power to face the officials of the Housing Authority and Housing Department	Postponing the removal  Sharing information from different under-occupation households	Fighting for better offer from the Housing Department

	Supporting the struggle with each other  Fighting for better offer from the Housing Department			Improving the attitude to the households from the officials by Housing Department
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10. What do you think about the issue in the future?

A	B	C	D	E
Not optimistic  The government is still ignored the voice from the households deliberately  Although some households can postpone to give the chances on the removal, the period can be very short  No justice in society	Not optimistic  He had used the postpone on the medical ground, it is more difficult to postpone the removal again  Having to accept the removal eventually	Optimistic  The issue has more people to concern and agree with it  Housing Department may make more concessions if the concern group continues the struggle	Not optimistic  The pressure from the third chance for the removal  Although the households may not need to move, she had to move before the this concession	Optimistic  The issue has more people to concern and agree with it  Housing Department may make more concessions if the concern group continues the struggle

14. How much living space should be provided to the public rental housing estates?

A + B + C + D + E	250-300 ft. which can accommodate basic electric equipment like refrigerator or washing machine.
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Follow up and respond to individual cases

5. Have you find others to help in the struggle before joining NotSpacious?

C: Yes, I had found the District Council member near my flat. She had helped me to arrange a meeting to the officials of the Housing Department. In fact, there is no good news from the meeting so I find NotSpacious for my cases.

8. Have you experienced the criticisms from public? How do you respond to those criticisms?

B: I think some of them may have a bad mentality that if he or she does not own one thing and others cannot own the things too. Therefore, it is usual to face the criticisms from the others.

E: To respond the criticisms, we will use the propaganda in different public housing estates. We have used the leaflets or brochures to express our situation. Some of the households talk to public proactively. We also used the Internet to spread our messages to others, including articles, songs or videos through Facebook, blog and YouTube. I do not think I can persuade all people to agree with us but I suppose that it is important to continue the struggle.

9. What had you learnt in NotSpacious?

C: The residents' movement is useful for me to fight for labor rights on my job. For example, I can use it to fight for reducing the working hours.

E: I have experienced in the residents' movement from the beginning stage to now. I think the cooperation between the residents brings changes in the measures or policies.

11. Can you tell me about the property browser when you receive the chances for the removal?

D: I have received three chances before. One of my experiences is that a flat is very near the refuse room and it always opens. I think it is quite dangerous for me. Another flat is in an elderly building. I do not mind to live in the building but the neighbors near the flat are single men. It is not convenient for me.

E: I cannot say it is fortune or infortune to my removal because I had prepared for decoration in my old flat. I only lose the spending on buying the materials for the decoration. Because of my situation, I accept the removal in my second chance. Luckily, he was allocated a bigger flat which many households want the similar flats.

12. How much do you spend for the removal?

E: In my case, almost \$60,000-70,000 had been spent. The allowance of the removal is not enough to me because it is only \$3,388 which is not enough to clear up the building materials.

13. Comparing to the housing environment between the old flat and the new flat, which one do you like best?

E: It is difficult for me to compare them directly. For the space of the flats, the old one must be better. I do not think there is too much differences between the community and there is no bad effect for my work.