

Contemporary Research in Urban Planning



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CHAPTER 2

WELFARE STATE REGIMES AND LOW COST HOUSING PROVISION IN MALAYSIA

Syafiee Shuid

INTRODUCTION

Welfare state regimes usually used by many researchers to determine the housing provision regime in particular country. However many previous studies focussed on the western and selected East Asian countries particularly Japan. Meanwhile according to La Grange (1999), most studies of housing policy related to welfare state regime debates in the 'old industrial' countries, new industrial countries, transitional socialist countries and developing countries tend to focus on privatisation of public housing. Therefore, there is a lack of understanding in terms of the applicability of the prevailing concept of welfare regimes, refinement and adaptation in areas other than North America, European and the East Asian 'Tiger Economies'. Therefore, in this chapter, the analysis will focus on identifying welfare state regimes from Western and East Asian perspectives and their relationships with housing provision, particularly in the production and consumption stages. Finally to relates the outcome in the context of low cost housing in Malaysia.

WELFARE STATE REGIMES DEBATES

Esping-Andersen (1990) has made an important theoretical contribution to the comparison of social policy, including housing, via the development of a welfare regime typology which identified three welfare regimes from a study of 18 countries. Although Esping-Andersen did not include housing in his analysis, subsequent researchers have used his typology in the housing context. Barlow and Duncan (1994), for example, have used the Esping-Andersen framework to study the relative effectiveness of the market and governments in housing provision in Western Europe. Esping-Andersen's typology has been commonly adopted by housing researchers to examine the relationship between welfare state regimes and housing provision. He argues that different regimes derive from different power structures and constellations of class-derived power relationships.

The three distinctive welfare regimes identified by Esping-Andersen are: liberal, corporatist and social democratic. In Liberal Welfare States, social and labour market policies are characteristically based around means-tested assistance. Benefits are mostly aimed at people with low income, the working class and state dependents. In these countries, the social policies system is normally used to uphold traditional and liberal work ethic norms. The state encourages the market over other forms of state organisation. According to Esping-Andersen (1990: 15), the United States of America and the United Kingdom are archetypal examples of this cluster. Typically, in liberal welfare regimes, state intervention in housing is limited to stigmatised provision for a residual population who cannot meet their housing needs in the market, with homeownership usually the dominant tenure (La Grange, 1999: 18). Meanwhile, in Corporatist Welfare States, the state focuses on the preservation of status differentials. The state is also ready to reinforce rights attached to class and to displace the market