

# Influences of Cultures on Open Space Planning for Hanoi City of Vietnam

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**Abstract:** During its long history, Hanoi City of Vietnam has experienced many different cultures including Chinese, French, Soviet and other contemporary influences. The question to be addressed in this paper, therefore, is: have different Eastern and Western cultures that have dominated the development of Hanoi City influenced open space planning? The review of the case study showed that the various fragmented historical and cultural periods of influence have generated different approaches to urban planning and provision of open space. In Hanoi, both capitalist and socialist planning approaches have been applied at different periods of time. These differences are still evident in present day of Hanoi City. The study concluded that although representative plans for each historical period highly valued open space, none of these plans met all the evaluation criteria. The analysis also highlighted the limitations of each plan which needed to be considered in order to achieve effective planning. Findings of this study will contribute to the research literature on the fields of planning for liveability and urban open space. They will also help to inform the city government, planners and communities of Hanoi City about issues related to city planning and provision of open space from the past to the present. In this manner, this study makes a contribution towards a “greener” Hanoi in a more liveable capital city.

*Keywords:* City, culture, Hanoi, open space, planning, urban.

## 1. Introduction

Hanoi is the oldest capital city in Southeast Asia and became the capital city of Vietnam in 1010. During its long history, Hanoi’s urban fabric has been shaped by a variety of influences. The history of this age-old city can be divided into four major periods, namely:

- The Feudal Period, up to 1873. In this period, Hanoi was influenced by traditional Vietnamese and Chinese culture. However, traditional Vietnamese culture was strongly influenced by the external Chinese principles. Therefore, it can be said that the dominant influence of Vietnamese culture in this period was Chinese culture;

- The French Colonial Period, from 1873 to 1954. In this period, Hanoi was mainly influenced by the French. In 1940, the Japanese took over Hanoi for a period of less than five

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years but this short interlude did not exert any deep or lasting influence on the planning and design for the city;

- The Post Independence Period, from 1955 to 1985. In this period, Hanoi had close relations with the former USSR and other countries of the Soviet bloc. Vietnam followed the former USSR command planning model and adopted the communist system; and

- The Contemporary Period, from 1986 to the present. In 1986, the Sixth Party Congress introduced the 'renovation' or 'open' policy and Vietnam opened up its economy with a view to becoming increasingly market-oriented. This policy has produced dramatic changes in Vietnam and Hanoi City. Vietnam began to introduce extensive liberalisation in all sectors of its previously hardline, centrally planned and closed economy.

In each period, city planning has had different tasks and objectives, and has been influenced by a prevailing dominant cultural influence, sometimes from an external source and other time of a domestic nature. It will be shown that these different cultural influences played an important part in the planning and provision for open space within the city. From a historical and cultural perspective, Hanoi has been subjected to external influences from the Chinese, French, Russian and other Western cultures. From a political perspective, Hanoi has experienced different political regimes including feudalism, colonialism, communism and the current market-oriented communism. Therefore, Hanoi can be seen as a historically and culturally fragmented city featuring many Eastern and Western values and influences. These different influences are reflected in the contemporary city landscape. The paper discusses about the different approaches to planning, the different schools of thought about the types and functions of open space and the

different approaches to planning for open space in Hanoi through different periods of time.

## **2. Methods and methodology**

### *2.1. Qualitative Methodology*

The question for this research is "Have different Eastern and Western cultures that have dominated the development of Hanoi City influenced open space planning?". The research examined the issues of open space planning and management in a major metropolitan centre and explored how different cultures have influenced those issues. Simply, it has looked at the 'quality', not the 'quantity' of an object or a phenomenon. As indicated, the notion of quality is essential to the nature of objects or phenomena while quantity is elementally an amount of something [1]. Quality refers to the what, how, when, and where of objects or phenomenon - its essence and ambience [2]. Qualitative research thus refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of objects or phenomena [3]. From this point of view, a qualitative methodology was chosen as an appropriate research methodology for this research.

### *2.2. Case Study*

The task of this research is to study whether and how different cultures have influenced the provision of open space in a capital city. Therefore, the appropriate research strategy is using a case study to address this research question. The case study is not only a data collection strategy or merely a design feature

alone, but also a comprehensive research strategy [4].

The rationale for conducting a single-case study of Hanoi is that the city has a long history that has experienced the imposition of a mixture of Eastern and Western views in city planning and the provision of open space. Chronologically, Hanoi has been influenced by traditional Vietnamese, Chinese, French, Soviet and Contemporary city planning approaches. The evidence of socialist and capitalist city planning exist together in this city. Review of the case study will be based on historical periods and will examine the dominant influence with each period. Hanoi can be divided into four areas including an Ancient

Quarter (built in the Feudal Period), a French Quarter (built in the French Colonial Period), Old Districts (built in the Post Independence Period) and New Development Areas (built in the Contemporary Period). These areas reflect different Eastern and Western open space values. Figure 1 illustrates the different embedded units of analysis which contribute to the understanding of the whole case study.

According to the above classification, this research is a descriptive case and includes four units of analysis as discussed in Figure1. For each embedded unit of analysis, a combination of different data collection techniques are used including semi-structured interviews, document review and field observations.

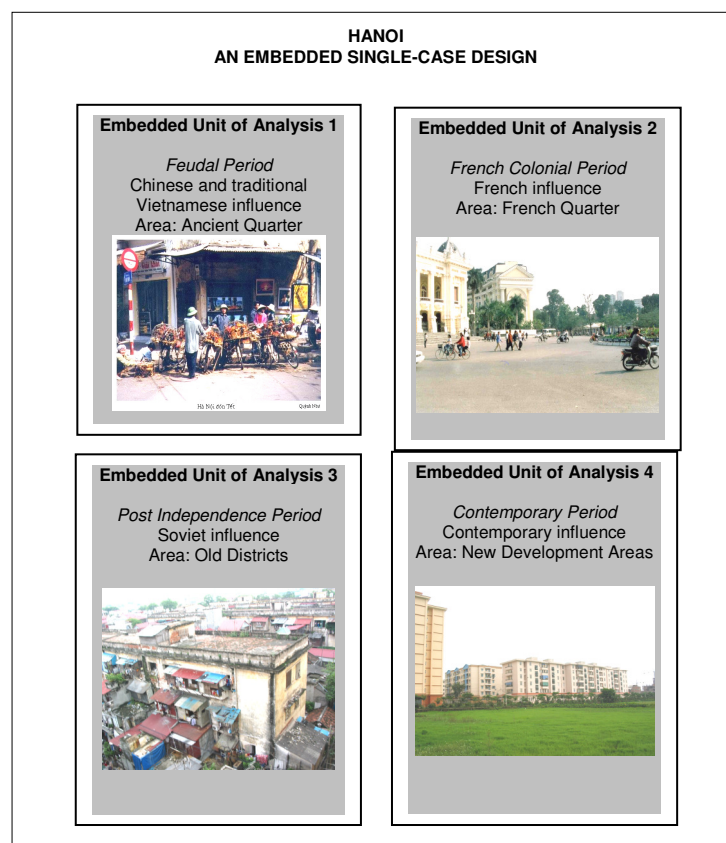


Figure 1. Hanoi, an embedded single-case design.

### 2.3. Review of Documents

The review of documents is an unobtrusive method and likely to be relevant in every case study topic [5]. The most important use of documents is to support and supplement evidence from other sources of data collection, such as interviews and observation. Since one task of this research is to study the context of past planning of Hanoi, a review of documents is an important method of data collection. This is a way to look back on the history of that city beyond observation of what remains today. This type of information takes many forms, such as written reports, administrative documents, strategies, planning and policies which are related to open space issues. It also includes other research reports on open space issues which have been conducted by other researchers and organisations. Another important source of documents is the electronic database. These can potentially help the researcher save time and cost in data collection.

### 2.4. Field Observations

Field observations are collected through field visits where observed evidence often provides additional information about the topic being studied. In this research, the field observations ranged from meetings, to field notes and taking photographs throughout the case study area. Findings drawn from observations and those meeting were recorded as notes for further analysis. In addition, photographs were taken in order to contribute to the value of observations and convey important case characteristics to outsiders. More importantly, the role of the researcher in this research was not only an observer but also a city resident. This background assisted the

researcher to integrate local knowledge during the research process.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. City Planning and Provision of Open Space in the Feudal Period (before 1873)

Vietnamese culture has been influenced by Chinese culture for thousands years. Especially, in the Feudal Period, both architecture and planning for Hanoi followed Chinese geomancy and *feng-shui* principles [6,7,8]. According to those principles, green and water space are the two important features of the urban environment. It was thought that green space helped to make a place more attractive and brought people closer to nature. Water was an important factor when choosing a place for living or doing business as a place which has a water area (rivers, lakes, ponds) in the front was seen as a good site for luck, happiness and prosperity. People often created artificial lakes or wells in front of an area which did not have a natural water area in order to make it a preferred site.

A review of Hanoi in feudal times indicates that the majority of the city's area was agricultural land and water areas and these were the main types of open and public spaces at that time. While agricultural land was productive space, water areas were spaces for sightseeing and amusement. However, in terms of the present concept of open space, there were three other types of spaces which can also be viewed as open space in the Feudal Period. Those spaces were communal houses, outdoor markets and streets. Although they were not considered as open space at that time, they still played very important roles in the daily life of Hanoians.

While communal houses were places for religious and community activities, outdoor markets and streets were not only merchant spaces but also communication areas. As noted, in feudal times, open space in Hanoi included:

#### (1) Agricultural Land

Hanoi is located in the Red River delta and agriculture has been the main economic activity of Hanoi since the Feudal Period. Paddy fields and agricultural land were scattered throughout the city. Major crops were rice, vegetables, medicinal plants and flowers. Agricultural activities and a communal lifestyle were formed around agricultural villages. These agricultural villages were not separate from the city but were component parts of the city. In the Feudal Period, there were many well-known agricultural villages such as Lang, Ngoc Ha, Nghi Tam or Nhat Tan. Agricultural villages like the “Thirty-Six streets and guilds” Quarter were important colourful examples of community life in Hanoi at that time. However, in feudal times, people only focused on the productive function of paddy fields and agricultural land, which helped to supply products for people and created jobs (see Figure 2). From the present point of view, agricultural land is a valuable type of open space which performs a productive function.

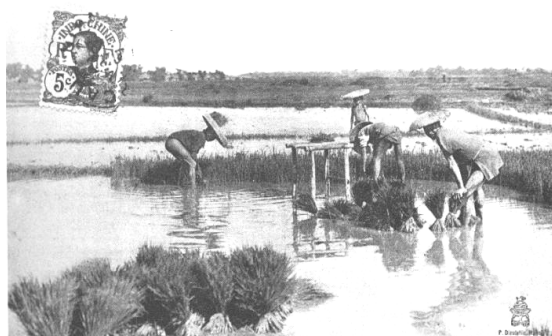


Figure 2. Rice Sowing.

(Source: Internet)

#### (2) Water Areas

In the Vietnamese language, the meaning of the word “DAT NUOC” (country) is the combination of two words “DAT” (land) and “NUOC” (water). Thus language highlights the importance of the “water” factor. Land and water come together, through lakes (which reflect the sky) and lead to the harmony of heaven and earth with human beings [9]. In the past, Hanoi had many rivers, marshes, canals and large lakes and the most famous places were the Red River, the Dam Dam Lake – the former name of the West Lake (see Figure 3), the Luc Thuy Lake – the former name of the Hoan Kiem Lake (see Figure 4) and the Thai Ho Lake.



Figure 3. Dam Dam Lake (the former name of the West Lake).

(Source: Internet)



Figure 4. Luc Thuy Lake (the former name of Hoan Kiem Lake).

(Source: Internet)

In the Feudal Period, rivers, lakes and ponds were pleasant sites for sightseeing, the amusement of Kings and mandarins and were seen as good sites according to *feng-shui* principles. This explains why Kings built many palaces and temples around these sites. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Ly Kings built four palaces along the banks of the Red River which were also places for Kings to watch boat races. The Ly Tran Kings also built many palaces or royal stop-over houses around West Lake to watch fishing or boating. Areas around Hoan Kiem Lake were chosen by the Ly Tran Kings to build victory monuments. The Thai Ho lake area became a school district with the famous Temple of Literature in the time of the Ly dynasty. All of these were places of harmony, sought after for relaxation by the royal family and nobles [6]. Many important religious, educational and cultural buildings were built near water areas such as the Tran Quoc Pagoda on the edge of the West Lake, the Ngoc Son Temple situated on an island in the Hoan Kiem Lake or Van Mieu adjacent to the Thai Ho Lake.

### (3) Communal House

Whilst a communal house by strict definition is not open space, it served many of the main functions of our contemporary understanding of open space. The communal house first appeared during the fifteenth century [6]. It was the biggest architectural entity in the village and was often located close to a landing on a river or a lake or near a busy crossroads. Scenes from daily life such as work, festivals and village activities were represented by decorative designs on the communal houses. Each hamlet had its own temple and communal house.

The communal house was a place of worship or for housing the God of the village. Each village chose its own protecting God, who may be the founder of the village or guild, a legendary or real hero [6]. The God looks after the destiny of the village and has a great influence on the lives of each of the inhabitants. The communal house was also the centre of the village's community life. It was the gathering place where villagers discussed affairs and concerns such as customs, the division of rice fields and the rights and obligations of the villagers. The communal house was also where ceremonies and traditional festivities took place. Popular activities were ceremonies marking the planting and harvesting of rice, performances of popular operas, dance and music, or the staging of games of ability, strength and intelligence [6].

Through those activities the communal house helped strengthen the links and communication between members of the community. Therefore, the communal house is now recognised as (performing) open space (functions) for religious and community activities in Hanoi during the Feudal Period. Unfortunately, nowadays many communal houses (e.g. Tuu Liet communal house) are not well preserved and maintained (see Figure 5).



Figure 5. Tuu Liet Communal House

(Photo taken by the author)

#### (4) Outdoor Market

In the Feudal Period, Hanoi was referred to as Ke Cho which means a huge market area. Merchant activities in Hanoi were thriving with a network of markets, ferry terminals and streets. There were many markets located in front of the city gates or along riversides as well as many small and mobile markets. However, for Hanoians, outdoor markets were not only merchant places but also places for community communication (see Figure 6).

People went to the markets for economic reasons and cultural exchanges but also for simple social contact and communications with each other.



Figure 6. A typical Outdoor Market towards the end of the Feudal Period.

(Source: Internet)



Figure 7. Dong Xuan Market.

(Source: Internet)

Markets also were places to post important notices and announcements, hold trials and display heads of criminals [10].

These spaces were the equivalent of formal squares and had Vietnamese cultural and communal characteristics. Later, some of those spaces were developed to become Western style squares when there was formal urban planning in Hanoi, e.g. Dong Xuan market (see Figure 7).

#### (5) Street in Hanoi – An Eastern style Open Space

A street in Hanoi like other Asian cities does not have the same meaning as in Western cities – i.e. a simple passageway [6]. The Vietnamese street has not only a traffic function but also has commercial, communication and leisure functions. Various daily activities of people take place in the street such as trade, meetings, food preparation, ablutions, leisure and rest [6,11].

A “sidewalk” life style was a special characteristic of traditional Hanoi. In the past, “sidewalk life” was recognised in the merchant area called the “Thirty-Six guilds and streets” Quarter. Each guild, the equivalent of a village in a rural area, was a place where people of the same craft lived and worked. The creation of guild communities strongly influenced the architecture of the quarter. This influence is still evident in the large number of long houses with narrow facades, called ‘shop-house’ or ‘Chinese compartment’ or ‘tube house’. Here, the room facing the street is used as a workspace and shop where products are made and sold [6,7]. The width of these houses can be either one room with exceptional example of three rooms or rarely five rooms depending on the wealth and status of the owner, while their depth was often sixty metres or more [7].



Figure 8. Hang Quat Street.

(Source: Internet)

People living in such long ‘tube houses’ communicated with the outside via the houses’ façades and the street. People ate, drank, sat and communicated on the sidewalk and joined in the atmosphere of the streets all of which contributed to the liveability of streets. Street can be recognised as a specific type of open space in Hanoi and different from Western cities.

Today, there are still traces of this arrangement in the names of the streets, which indicate the merchandise (Hang) made and sold in each hamlet. For example, Hang Duong or Sugar Street, Hang Tre or Bamboo Street, Hang Trong or Drums Street and Hang Quat or Fan Street (see Figure 8).

### 3.2. City Planning and Provision of Open Space in the French Colonial Period (1873 – 1954)

In the French Colonial Period, Hanoi was developed to take the role of the political capital of the French Indochinese Union. Planning for Hanoi reflected ideas current in metropolitan France or adopted in other French colonies as opposed to reflecting Hanoi’s specific and unique characteristics. These ideas formed the attitudes of the colonial authorities and the architects, town planners, engineers and builders who worked for them [7]. A formal urban planning approach was first introduced and applied in Hanoi for administrative and political purposes.

In this period, two planning projects for Hanoi were prepared by two French architects, Hébrard and Pineau. Hébrard was the first architect who between 1924 and 1926 designed the expansion of and planning for Hanoi. According to Hébrard’s Plan, the city was divided into four functional areas: (a) an administrative and political centre; (b) an industrial area; (c) a living area; and (d) a greenbelt of parks and sporting facilities. According to Hébrard’s project, Hanoi was planned to expand towards the West Lake area. A large park was planned to link the areas in the south of West Lake with the Quang Ba peninsula and Nhat Tan. The administrative and political areas and the French villas were constructed according to the new European planning approach called the ‘Garden City’ concept, even though this led to some parts of the Ancient Thang Long citadel being destroyed. Another early planning initiative for Hanoi was that of the French Architect G.Pineau in 1943. In this project, beside incorporating Hébrard’s ideas, star squares (squares with a star configuration of roads leading to other feature areas) along the French style were added which would help to develop the foundation of urban architecture of Hanoi.

Unfortunately, those projects were not executed due to financial reasons and the war. However, works constructed by the French in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century had strongly influenced the urban planning and architecture of Hanoi. Through those planning and construction activities, an open space system was designed based on modern Western planning principles. Lakes were still special open space components and furthermore, formal parks and Western style squares were introduced as new types of open space. This aspect is discussed in more detail below.



### (1) Water Areas

Upon their arrival, the French found that there was no natural drainage system in Hanoi, especially in the area around the Hoan Kiem Lake, other than the To Lich River which was partially converted into a canal. The hygienic environmental conditions in Hanoi at that time were very poor. A major concern of the French was the improvement of the environment for health and aesthetic reasons [7]. The French executed a program of draining and filling the hundreds of swamps and ponds in and around Hanoi. By doing so, the Hoan Kiem Lake was cut off from the To Lich River and Truc Bach Lake. Although this program helped to improve the living environment and human physical health, it destroyed the natural landscape.

However, during their time in Hanoi, the French contributed through planning to make lake areas and their surrounding landscapes attractive. They built promenades and planted trees surrounding Hoan Kiem Lake (see Figure 9). The water surface was used for boating and sightseeing and areas surrounding lakes were made places for relaxation and amusement. Areas surrounding the West Lake were planned to be a park – areas of vegetation and a green belt of parks and sporting facilities was proposed, stretching up to and around the northern end of this lake [7].



Figure 9. Promenade surrounds Hoan Kiem Lake

(Source: Internet)

### (2) Park and Green Space

The French were influenced by the English concept of the ‘Garden City’ which was reflected in the French Quarter where villas had attached private gardens. The French paid special attention to green space while planning for Hanoi and from 1886, they built promenades and planted trees around the Hoan Kiem Lake. When they opened and built new roads, they built wide sidewalks and grew shade trees along the roadsides. This new French style of planned tree lines and parks created a major change in the city’s appearance.

In this period, the French were trying to complete the construction of administrative and political centres in the east of the Hoan Kiem Lake. They built the first large formal park, Paul Bert park (see Figure 10), in Hanoi between 1886 and 1888. The Paul Bert park axis was the main axis and perpendicular to the Hoan Kiem Lake. This arrangement facilitated ventilation by a trees system and also linked the centre with an open space system including vegetation and promenades in the Hoan Kiem Lake area. This park was associated with surrounding works such as the City Hall, the Residents Superior Palace, the Treasury Building, the Post Office and the Indochinese Bank forming the overall structure for the central area. This area was designed and built based completely on the French architectural and planning style. Later, other large parks were built including the ‘Toad’ Park and the Botanic Garden.



Figure 10. Paul Bert Park

(Source: Internet)

These parks were not only important formal open spaces but also important in providing identity and a backbone for city expansion and planning based on the symmetric principle in vogue in France at that time. The Hoan Kiem Lake was in the centre, the Paul Bert Park was in the east, the ‘Toad’ Park was in the south and the Botanic Garden was in the west of the city. The Botanic Garden in the west was a prominent point of Hébrard’s Plan while the West Lake area was planned for relaxation and amusement activities with a system of vegetation and parks.

### (3) Western style Squares

Western style squares were established when the French carried out traffic planning in Hanoi during the Colonial Period. They built new roads and widened some old streets in the French Quarter. Streets were planned in a chessboard pattern and many large squares were established at the intersections of the main roads.



Top : French colonial time

Bottom: The present (renamed August Revolution square)

Fig. 11. Opera House Square  
(Source: Internet)

Those squares such as Opera House Square or August Revolution Square, Puginier Square or Lenin Park Square, Circle Square in front of Dau Xao or 1<sup>st</sup> May Square and St-Joseph’s Cathedral Square or Church Square quickly became important spaces in Hanoi [10] (see Figure 11).

These new open space features, which originated from Western planning, with their surrounding works and other elements such as trees, lakes, new buildings and planned streets were prominent landmarks and contributed to change the city’s appearance.

### 3.3. City Planning and Provision of Open Space in the Post Independence Period (1955 – 1985)

The ten years following the war against the French which finished in 1954 was a period of economic restoration, rehabilitation and gradual development. Hanoi had been severely damaged by the war and faced serious difficulties because of war damage and the political ‘cold war’. At that time, Vietnam only had a close relationship with and received significant help from the former USSR and other countries of the Soviet bloc. During the 1955-1985 period, Vietnam adopted a centrally planned economy and also command planning following the Soviet model [12]. The Soviet influence on Hanoi was expressed in both the design of individual buildings and housing estates and the planning of whole districts and cities. Many public buildings were constructed under the influence of Soviet style architecture such as the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum, the State Assembly Building, the Soviet-Vietnamese Friendship Cultural Palace, the Hanoi People’s Committee Building and the Hanoi Polytechnical Institute. In addition, a number of Soviet style industrial zones and residential

neighbourhoods were constructed during this period. Although, those buildings had significance as evidence of Soviet-Vietnamese friendship and cooperation, their appearance was undiversified and unattractive. A further problem was the fact that public housing blocks were designed for nuclear families, rather than the more common extended families and this caused constraints on the family living space within dwelling units.

During this period, several Soviet bloc architectural and planning experts helped local city planners by studying Hanoi's planning problems and needs. One of the first experts was P. Zaremba, a Professor from Poland who visited Hanoi in 1960 and presented a 'suggestive plan' [7]. This Plan proposed that Hanoi be a city of one million people and the amount of urban land planned for each person was 100 square meters per person. The city was to be expanded to the West Lake area and occupy the right bank of the Red River.

In 1962, the Soviet Architect I.A. Antyonov, in association with Vietnamese architects, completed the first Master Plan for Hanoi, which also incorporated Zaremba's Plan. According to this Plan, Hanoi was to be mainly developed on the right bank of the Red River and to be fan-shaped with four centripetal axes and three main ring roads. The city's centre would extend from the Hoan Kiem Lake then around the West Lake and incorporate the Ba Dinh area [7]. The main directions of development of the city was to the west of the West Lake, south-west to connect with Ha Dong township and west-north to Gia Lam across the Red River. The Hoan Kiem Lake, the West Lake and the Red River were highlighted as valuable open space features. The total area of the city was to be about 8,000 hectares and included four urban districts and four rural

districts. The population of one million people was predicted in twenty to twenty five years. The Plan was adopted by the Government in 1965 but it was not implemented because of the American War and aerial blitzes between 1965 and 1972 [7].

In 1974, a team from the Leningrad Institute of Urban Research and Planning, headed by S.I. Sokolov, drew up a new plan called the 'Leningrad Plan'. Standard Soviet planning techniques were used, such as the planning of residential communities as micro-regions, which normally equated to 'housing estates' in the West or translated as 'living quarters' in Vietnamese. According to this standard, planning units of residential and associated facilities were theoretically based on a fixed population formula and replicated around the city outskirts. In Hanoi's case, the size of the micro-region was to be set by the number of people required to provide a viable base for a senior high school – 60,000 to 70,000. Public housing and industrial development (including workers residences) were the top priorities of this Plan. Five industrial zones were planned, each housing about 60,000 workers and based on specialises trades. In this Plan, once again, the West Lake was respected. A new city centre was to be built on the southern and south-western banks of the West Lake and to have radial boulevards, green space, high-rise public buildings and pedestrian overpasses [7]. As in the earlier plan, Hanoi was proposed to develop to the north-west, west, south-west and across the Red River to Gia Lam and surrounding areas. The special importance was attached to the political function of Hanoi, the capital of the new socialist country. The Ba Dinh square area was radically changed to become the political centre of the city and the whole country. However, the redesign dramatically changed the

nature of the public space in this area. For example, the curved pathways and roundabouts were changed into two straight boulevards that were more suitable for military parades. The first stage of the Plan was approved in 1976 and the final Plan was fully approved in 1981 by the Vietnamese Government.

In this period, the first priority of urban construction and planning was housing construction including public housing and houses within industrial areas. In order to show the pre-eminence of the new political regime, the city's government also paid attention to the improvement of the city's appearance through providing public parks. The highlights of this period were the construction of two new parks, Thong Nhat Park or Unification Park (see Figure 12) and Thanh Nien Road Park (see Figure 13). These parks were the important public works with Hanoians contributing some 600,000 unpaid public work days to build both parks.



Figure 12. Thong Nhat Park

(Source: Internet)



Fig. 13. Thanh Nien Park

(Source: Internet)



Figure 14. Thu Le Park

(Source: Internet)

The Thong Nhat Park area was formerly refuse dumps and swamps. After two years of construction (1958-1959), this park was opened early in 1960 and became a popular relaxation and amusement site. The Thanh Nien Road Park was another attempt to improve the city's appearance. This park included Thanh Nien Park on the side of West Lake and Tay Ho Park adjacent to Quan Thanh Temple.

Urban construction and planning in Hanoi during the period from 1966 to 1975 was interrupted because of the expansion of the war against America. After the country was unified in 1976, urban construction and planning in Hanoi sped up and achieved significant results with parks and vegetation being given considerable attention. Thong Nhat Park was expanded and supplemented, and another new park was built, called Thu Le Park (see Figure 14). It was located in the area of Thu Le Lake and the Voi Phuc Temple where there were already many old trees.

#### 3.4. City Planning and Provision of Open Space in the Contemporary Period (1986 to present)

A profound change occurred after Vietnam initiated its renovation policy in 1986. State dominance made way for economic and social reforms. Since the introduction of the

renovation policy, Vietnam has shifted from a command economy toward a structured and more market driven system [12]. In this period, resource allocation was determined by a mix of market mechanisms and some state control and it was particularly apparent in the urban areas of the country. This policy has influenced the planning system in Vietnam in general and Hanoi in particular.

In *A Master Plan Hanoi 2020*, the task of increasing the areas of parks and green space and improving water quality of lakes and rivers has been raised. The Red River was seen as an important feature of the city landscape, and lakes and rivers were preserved to become relaxation and amusement areas. Importantly, the West Lake area, first mentioned in the Hébrard's Plan in 1926, was once again defined as a tourist and relaxation centre. Strong links were to be developed between it and Hoan Kiem Lake and the Ba Dinh Quarter. Thus the West Lake tourist centre closely connects with the Ba Dinh political centre and the Hoan Kiem Ancient Quarter. West Lake is a valuable open space in Hanoi with an area of 500 hectares and a perimeter of sixteen kilometres. According to the Plan, the water surface of West Lake would be reserved for sport and amusement activities such as swimming, boating or sailing.

The green space system would be improved by including existing parks, flower gardens, green areas attached to parks in the new urban areas and tree lines along the city's rivers. Tree lines were planned along rivers' banks and around lakes in order to improve environmental quality and create attractive scenery. The city's parks and gardens were planned to become relaxation and amusement areas within an attractive setting. Special attention was given to relaxation and amusement areas in Soc Son,

which is about forty kilometres from Hanoi's centre. In this rural district, there are nine man made water bodies with a total area of 300 hectares and 1,200 hectares of pine forest and local plants [13]. It has potential for tourist, entertainment and relaxation activities. However, this Plan has addressed the unequal distribution of vegetation and open space in the different parts of the city, especially the lack of green areas in urban districts.

Furthermore, the expansion of the central city will lead to the conversion of large areas of good agricultural land into construction and urban land in future suburban districts. Hanoi has changed rapidly with new construction and associated urban transportation and infrastructure development. Urban sprawl and population growth has led to increases in the human demand for land use. Consequently the city's expansion and new construction has led to the conversion of agricultural land and water spaces to urban land. Within the five years from 2000 to 2005, there was about 598 hectares of paddy fields converted to urban land in the many new development areas such as Dinh Cong, Linh Dam and Trung Hoa – Nhan Chinh (see Figure 15). According to the *City Land Use Plan 2006-2010*, a further 6,000 hectares of agricultural land will be converted to non-agricultural land in that five-year period [13].



Figure 15. Trung Hoa – Nhan Chinh New Development Area Built on former agricultural areas

(Photo taken by the author)

Another reason which brings about the urban conversion of non-urban land is the increase in land price. Under pressure of officials and real estate businessmen, some master and detailed plans have reduced the spaces that were set aside as non-commercial land, such as green spaces, squares or playing grounds.

The decrease in the quality and quantity of open space is considered to affect the quality of the environment and the quality of life in the city. Unfortunately, management and planning of open space in Hanoi has not been given adequate attention.

#### **4. Discussions**

This historical reviews show that open space issues have had different priorities during various period in the history of Hanoi City.

In the Feudal Period, open space areas were mainly based on natural features such as lakes and rivers. Large water areas were for the exclusive use of Royalty, mandarines and the wealthy. Other open space served only the people living within the guild areas. Many of these open spaces have not been well managed or have been replaced by other urban uses. However, the existing open space areas still play important roles in the daily life of people living in the Ancient Quarter and they also contribute to the liveability of the whole city.

In the French Colonial Period, open space was planned more systematically and was a high priority of the formal urban planning process. There were more types of open space than in the previous period. Open space was designed to serve various purposes such as enhancing the city's appearance, improving

hygienic and environmental conditions or promoting Hanoi as the capital of Indochina. However, the French focused only on planning for the French Quarter, where they lived. To this day, the French Quarter with its buildings, parks and other open space has been seen as the most liveable part of Hanoi City.

In the Post Independence Period, open space received less attention than housing and industrial construction. Parks and playgrounds were the main types of open space in this period which served to meet the standard needs of Hanoians. Parks and open space were seen as public welfare works which were open for everybody. They were also used to make 'political' statements about a 'classless' communist society. Some of these open spaces have not satisfied community needs in that some poorly designed public parks have not attracted visitors. Playgrounds in public housing blocks planned for nuclear families have not kept pace with the demands of extended families.

In the Contemporary Period, the need for the provision of open space has been put forward in city programs. An open space system has been managed and planned systematically from the city through the district to the neighbourhood level. However, open space in Hanoi has been impacted by rapid urbanisation. Large areas of water space and agricultural land have been converted to other urban land uses. This change has caused various effects such as a lack of recreational and amusement areas for residents, a decrease of agricultural land, loss of the city's valuable open space and a decline in the quality of life of the city. Thus, finding a way of dealing with these issues is part of the effort towards achieving a more liveable Hanoi.

## 5. Conclusions

The review and analysis of the case study showed that different cultures have impressed different schools of thought on the issues of urban planning and provision of open space throughout the extended history of Hanoi. This occurs because planning is carried out in a social context and is influenced by the interaction between planners and communities. The result is that each of the plans from the particular historical eras has contributed to the unique landscape of present day Hanoi City. Therefore, when planning for an age-old Hanoi City, it is recommended that the city government and planners adopt an inclusive approach and give effect to all the influences of past planning regimes.

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# Ảnh hưởng của văn hoá tới quy hoạch không gian mở cho thành phố Hà Nội, Việt Nam

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**Tóm tắt:** Trong suốt lịch sử hình thành và phát triển của mình, thành phố Hà Nội, Việt Nam đã chịu ảnh hưởng của nhiều nền văn hoá khác nhau từ Trung Quốc, Pháp, Liên Xô cũ và phương Tây hiện đại. Câu hỏi đặt ra là những nền văn hoá phương Tây và phương Đông khác biệt đó có ảnh hưởng như thế nào đến quy hoạch không gian mở của thành phố Hà Nội? Nghiên cứu đã chỉ ra rằng qua các

giai đoạn lịch sử và văn hoá này đã ghi nhận những phương thức tiếp cận khác nhau trong quy hoạch đô thị nói chung và không gian mở đô thị nói riêng cho thành phố Hà Nội. Hà Nội đã được thừa hưởng cả hai mô hình quy hoạch tư bản và xã hội chủ nghĩa, và minh chứng của những sự khác biệt này vẫn còn hiện diện ở thành phố này cho đến ngày nay. Mặc dù các quy hoạch đô thị qua các thời kỳ đều đánh giá cao vai trò của không gian mở, nhưng không bản quy hoạch nào đáp ứng các tiêu chí đặt ra. Bài báo đã phân tích những điểm hạn chế này và chỉ ra những vấn đề cần lưu tâm trong tương lai để có thể xây dựng quy hoạch đô thị và không gian mở đô thị hiệu quả hơn cho thành phố Hà Nội. Các kết quả nghiên cứu góp phần đóng góp khoa học trong lĩnh vực quy hoạch không gian mở đô thị bền vững, đồng thời giúp thông tin cho chính quyền thành phố, các nhà quy hoạch và cộng đồng về những vấn đề liên quan đến quy hoạch không gian mở của Hà Nội từ quá khứ đến hiện tại. Nghiên cứu kỳ vọng góp phần đóng góp vào việc quy hoạch một thành phố Hà Nội “xanh hơn” trong tương lai.

*Từ khoá:* Thành phố, văn hoá, Hà Nội, không gian mở, quy hoạch, đô thị.