A widening of the pavement outside a shop entrance, allows these gentlemen to temporary furnish a part of the city. This way their coffee break helps animate the street-scape and make the neighbourhood a tad more sociable.
Norrköping, Sweden
Chapter 4
Planning for Sociable space

The study area, Nguyen Cong Tru, awaits extensive refurbishment. The authorities in Hanoi have expressed a wish to upgrade the housing standards in the area. If density of population is to be kept at current level (or increased), this means that the current 4-5 storey structure will have to be replaced by much higher buildings. This will radically change the appearance of the Nguyen Cong Tru housing quarters.

Additionally, when people’s economy and housing standards improve, people change their behaviours accordingly. When people no longer need to use the outdoor environment for cooking, washing clothes and doing the dishes, the environment must be converted to be able to maintain the social life of the streets. (See Chapter 2, page 42-43). The aim of the proposals presented at the end of this chapter, is to present ideas on how the urban environment can be designed so that people are attracted to occupy it, regardless of if it is for necessary or voluntary activities - regardless of if they are obliged to be there or not.

The two proposals aim to conceptually show how sociability can be incorporated in the planning of urban environments. The proposals are based on ideas around sociable space, six human needs and the representational system presented in Chapter 3.

Purposely, the two proposals differ regarding car and pedestrian accessibility, public transportation and preservation of existing buildings. By this we would like to show to what degree sociability is affected if man or if cars are prioritized. The question now is what comes out of keeping in mind: for whom and for what uses do we plan? Let’s find out!
The study area Nguyen Cong Tru is located quite centrally in Hanoi. Nguyen Cong Tru is located in a close range of both the city centre and large recreational areas. Within a few kilometres, important attraction points are available, like Hanoi Old Town, where much shopping is located and Hoan Kiem Lake and Lenin Park which are popular recreation areas.
4.6 The study area Nguyen Cong Tru’s location in Hanoi and attraction points in its surroundings.
The structure of 1960’s Nguyen Cong Tru

One of the first priorities after gaining independence from the French 1954 was to construct new homes for the large quantity of people coming to Hanoi from the countryside. The new apartments that were built could however only provide families with single room apartments and they had to share kitchen and bathroom with neighbours. In theory they had only four square metres of space per person, but as population rose, this space decreased accordingly.  

Nguyen Cong Tru was planned and built 1963. Many areas of this type were built in the outskirts of Hanoi during 1956-1985, in a period of high state subsidy. These areas were developed to provide housing mainly for state employees. The buildings were generally four storey’s high and the design was based on a Soviet housing model.

Before construction, the area consisted of a park belonging to the French funeral chapel (see figure 4.10) located in the southern part of the area. The chapel was preserved but lost its previous role when the area was developed. Between the buildings, many of the old park trees remained intact. The enclosures, linking buildings to each other, were spacious to accommodate several outdoor activities. The large trees provided shade and made the yards usable also during the warmest months of the year. The buildings in Nguyen Cong Tru consisted of large blocks of flats and were later complemented by four two-storey buildings in the western part. The area was originally designed to accommodate around 3-4000 inhabitants.

35 P. Boothroyd & P. X. Nam (Editors), 2000, Socioeconomic Renovation in Viet Nam - The Origin, Evolution, and Impact of Doi Moi, Stylsys Publishers
36 Architectural Research Institute, Hanoi
37 Tran H. A., 1999, Another modernism? - Form, Content and Meaning of the new Housing Architecture of Hanoi, Lund University, Sweden

4.7
Picture taken 2003 of one of the buildings in Nguyen Cong Tru. The exterior on this building still resembles its original appearance from 1960.

4.8
Plan showing how common facilities are shared between apartments in the Soviet housing model.

_Illustration from H. A. Tran._

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>K</th>
<th>Kitchen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Bathroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 8</td>
<td>Apartment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When Nguyen Cong Tru was originally planned the space between the buildings was quite spacious.

4.10 (below)
The French funeral chapel.

1960’s Nguyen Cong Tru
Plot area, m²  56 340
Inhabitants  4000
Inhabitants/ha  715
Dwelling units/ha  186
Housing typology, floors 2-4
Plot coverage, %  38
Floor area ratio (FAR)  0.75
The structure of today’s Nguyen Cong Tru

A lot has happened since Nguyen Cong Tru first was built. Much of the open space in the area is now occupied by unauthorised apartment expansions. People have also expanded their apartments by adding walled balconies on the facades. The expanded ground floor apartments now function as living space in the evenings and as shops, restaurants and all sorts of repair shops during day time. These fill-ins with extra apartment space and shops have become a necessity for many families in the area. The extra apartment space can either be let out to others or be used when families grow. The shop space can also provide families with income; either by setting up a business or by letting the space out to others.

A recent Society Statistic Report for Nguyen Cong Tru shows that in May 2003 over 6000 people lived there. Apartments are relatively small in the area and apartment sizes range between 10 to 70 m². Only 8% percent of the area’s 1649 apartments are larger than 30 – 32 m².38

These types of housing projects focused more on the construction of housing and not on infrastructure requirements. The infrastructure in these areas is often strained causing problem regarding water supply, electricity, drainage, roads and sanitation. Another issue is that the rent is extremely low and was sometimes set as low as one percent of an employee’s salary. This has left very little over for maintenance and the buildings have deteriorated very quickly since the date of construction.39 (See fig. 4.12).

38 2003, Nguyen Cong Tru’s current situation, The Architectural Research Institute, Hanoi
39 P. Boothroyd & P. X. Nam (Editors), 2000, Socioeconomic Renovation in Viet Nam - The Origin, Evolution, and Impact of Doi Moi, Stylys Pub

4.11-4.13 (above, left & right)
The buildings in Nguyen Cong Tru have deteriorated and been extensively modified during the past decades.
Over the years public open space in the area has become occupied by new, and to a large extent illegal settlements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nguyen Cong Tru today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plot area, m²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwelling units/ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing typology, floors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plot coverage, %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor area ratio (FAR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
People and outdoor life in Nguyen Cong Tru

The outdoor environment in Nguyen Cong Tru is full of life and activity. Much of the commerce in the area take place outdoor or in store-front shops alongside the streets. Also work-shops, services, barbers, restaurants and markets are to a large extent located to streets and courtyards. Since standard of housing is low, much private activities such as cooking and washing clothes are obliged to take place in the outdoor environment. This makes the area lively during a large portion of the day and cause people to meet and interact. The area provide service and commerce to residents both in and outside the area and Nguyen Cong Tru has become an important provider of both groceries, household products, tools and spare parts to motorbikes. (See figure 4.15-4.26 on this and on opposite page).
Greenery in Nguyen Cong Tru

During our visits in Nguyen Cong Tru we noticed that the area is full of trees and that people make use them in numerous ways. The trees provide important shade and a place for drying laundry. They create ‘roofs’ for the backyards and variety to the street-scape. Many different species of trees can be found in the area. During our tree inventory in Nguyen Cong Tru, we got much appreciated help from people living in the area. They assisted us in naming all the different tree species. Trees seem greatly respected in the area. When people construct extensions to the houses, and trees stand in the way, they build around the tree-trunks, keeping the trees untouched.

4.27
Many of the trees in Nguyen Cong Tru are built-in due to the fact that people have constructed extensions around them.

4.28
A ‘Lim’ tree. One of the largest and oldest trees found in the area. An altar has been attached to the tree trunk, revealing some of the tree’s significance.
Inventory of trees in Nguyen Cong Tru
Today government officials consider the buildings in Nguyen Cong Tru to be in such a poor state of repair and the living standard so low in the area that the most feasible solution is to replace most of the existing structure. The only thing that seemingly will be left intact in Nguyen Cong Tru is its location in Hanoi and the fact that the area still will be populated by people. (Not necessarily the same people as today though.)

The proposed solution from the Vietnamese government is to substitute the current structure with modern housing for the current 6000 inhabitants living in the area plus housing for an additional 2000 inhabitants. The task is to plan modern housing and services for 8000 inhabitants on a six hectare ‘large’ land area, located centrally in Hanoi. There are de facto two main preconditional statements to consider: 1) the area is already populated by 6000 inhabitants and 2) the existing 4-storey building structure will have to be replaced by high-rise buildings in order to meet current housing standards and fit in housing for the planned 8000 inhabitants. This radical change will surely have an impact on the outdoor space in the area.

When redeveloping such a large, dense housing quarter it is of great importance to consider not only high standard of housing but also qualities of the space between the buildings. This is in focus in our proposals.
The buildings in Nguyen Cong Tru have been left for decades without maintenance. People do their best to patch and repair their part of the facade, but it seems the force of nature is stronger.
Preconditional aspects - in general

Climate and seasons
The climate of Hanoi is regarded subtropical and Hanoi has four seasons. Winter and summer are the two most distinguishable seasons; winter stretches from November to April, and summer from May to October. The climate is humid and the annual average humidity is 83%. At highest, the humidity reaches 87% in Mar-Apr and goes down to 81% in Nov-Dec.

The annual average sunshine duration is around 1500 hours and on average Hanoi has only 11.7 cloudy days annually. The average temperature is over 30° C in summer, (May-October) with extremes up to 40° C. The average temperature goes down to around 15-20° C during winter, (November-April), with extremes as low as 6° C. The main wind direction during winter in Hanoi is NE, and the main direction during summer is SE.

High solar radiation and long sunshine duration during the hot summer season are causing much discomfort in the city. During summer, shade and breeze are desirable in the urban environment, in that they provide protection and relief against the hot summer sun. During winter the opposite apply. In the cold winter climate, the sun radiation is important to make use of. The few degrees of extra warmth a sunny space can obtain during winter, could very well be what make a certain space populated or not.

Hanoi is subject to occasional and unpredictable typhoons during June-August, blowing over the city with wind speeds around 20m/s (40m/s at it peaks). Apart from the strong winds, these typhoons often bring hefty rains to the area. These storms are often followed by rainfall up to 200mm during 2-6 days. The urban environment must be able to handle both strong winds and large quantities of precipitation.40

Heavy rains have flooded the street, but life goes on as usual it seems. A city needs its accessibility regardless of season.

Hoi An, Vietnam
Building densely
The density concept can be both complicated and confusing to fully grasp. Firstly, there are many ways of measuring and stating density and secondly, people perceive density differently. This different way of perceiving density comes out of people’s diverse personal backgrounds and what kind of environments they are used to.

There are many consequences of density, both positive and negative, to be aware of. The land-use issue is one, but also health, productivity and development issues are important to take into consideration when planning urban environments. Acioly and Davidson have put together a figure (see figure 4.39) in which they arrange different advantages and disadvantages of high vs. low density.

Different aspects of density

*Plot coverage* is an interesting aspect of density. It shows how much of a plot that is occupied by buildings and is often presented as a percentage value. The plot coverage defines the physical structure of an area and it is quite easy to estimate on ground level if a plot is to be considered sparsely developed or not. Narrowsness, wideness, enclosures and openness are key elements in our urban environments that help us perceive and estimate this type of density.

*Floor Area Ratio (FAR)* describes the ratio between the buildings’s total floor area and the plot size. As definition, it can show if land is efficiently used according to supply and demand of land in an area. It can therefore also be used as a tool to study land-use and development economy. A high floor area ratio does not however necessarily lead to a densely populated area if people have spacious apartments.

*Inhabitants/ha* is a definition of density that describes how densely or sparsely populated an area is. This definition makes it easy to compare the population density of two areas more justly than if one simply compared the exact population of the two areas, without concern for differences in plot size.

*Dwellings/ha* is a definition that describes the dwelling density of an area. As a definition of density it can reveal how many dwellings a certain land area contains and an indication of the number of households. It does however not reveal how many people that actually live in each dwelling. If combined with figures of inhabitants/ha one can however calculate the amount of people confined to each apartment and thus find out the housing standard situation in an area.

The different aspects of density mentioned above, often need to be evaluated together, to be able to properly judge the density of an area. A high number of inhabitants/hectare can for instance be accomplished by achieving a high Floor Area Ratio in an area, but also by a situation of overcrowding where available space per person in dwellings is low.

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42 Definitions of density in this section are based on Acioly C. Jr. & Davidson F., 1996, Density in Urban Development - Building Issues 1996/3, LCHS, Lund, Sweden
From high-dense to high-rise in Hanoi

High density can be accomplished in many different ways. Population density in Hanoi is quite high, despite the fact that building heights traditionally are quite low. The high density is caused by extremely high plot coverage in combination with small apartments. Each person only has a few square meters of living space. A problem arises when housing standard and the demand for more living space increases at the same time as the population increases. If plot coverage already is at its limits, people can only find new housing space either on new land in the outskirts or by an increase of the Floor Area Ratio on already built land. The alternative of building on agricultural land may not be a particularly sustainable method in the long run and an increased Floor Area Ratio can radically change the appearance of the urban environment.

The vision for Hanoi’s expansion is to create a modern city with high-rise buildings but this has turned out to be a topic for discussion. The building costs for high-rise buildings are higher due to the additional need for technical equipment such as elevators, fire protection, staircases, and ventilation. From an aesthetic point of view, the high-rise buildings have been criticised for both their poor architectural appearance and for problems regarding maintenance and building repairs. Little concern has also been given to the design and use of public space around the houses.43

The Curitiba example44

In Curitiba Brazil, the concept of density was in focus when the 1996 Master Plan suggested a large urban transformation. The density aspect played an important role when zoning of the city was used as a means to control the concentric city growth and to balance traffic generation and public transport usage. The zoning aimed to concentrate high density to certain areas alongside a ‘structural axis’ making it possible to limit density in others. The ‘structural sectors’ of Curitiba, closest to this axis have densities up to 600 inhab/ha and these areas accommodate buildings for commercial and residential uses. Other areas which are dominated by single family housing have densities below 70 inhab/ha.

By controlling the city’s density pattern, the municipality could accomplish a well functioning public transport system and create a clear profile of the city. By reinforcing the public transport axis with high-density areas, they could apart from maximise benefits of public investments also reduce traffic and fuel consumption by 25%. For many big cities, including Hanoi, this is a pressing issue. With increasing population the need for sustainable alternatives to urban sprawl and private transportation is imminent and in our proposals we present ideas on how this could be done.

44 This section is based on Acioly C. Jr. & Davidson F., 1996, Density in Urban Development - Building Issues 1996/3, LCHS, Lund, Sweden
Density study for Nguyen Cong Tru
Below is a table showing the result of our study on how different plot coverage affects the perceived aspect of density (see figure 4.40). The examples show that the plot coverage aspect of density is very important. All the examples below are based on exactly the same preconditions regarding dwellings/ha and floor area ratio to be comparable (see page 111 for definitions). To be able to keep these aspects unchanged when plot coverage is altered, building heights have been adjusted accordingly.

Nguyen Cong Tru has today a plot coverage of 66% and a population of around 6000. The ‘66%’ example below shows that if the Nguyen Cong Tru area was to be reconstructed using the same plot coverage as today, but with higher standard of housing and increased population to 8000 inhabitants, it would mean average building heights around 5-6 floors in the area. At 66% plot coverage (or higher) however it becomes difficult to create a functional outdoor environment for 8000 inhabitants it seems.

When plot coverage decreases below 40%, openness begins to dominate, making it difficult to create pleasant, enclosed rooms. A total plot coverage between 40 - 50% seems to offer a lot of possibilities. By varying the plot coverage within an area, space for parks and large occasional events as well as space for small, enclosed meeting grounds can be provided. Our needs vary and so should the environment.

4.40
Illustration showing how building heights increase when plot coverage (% value) decrease, if the same amount of dwellings/ha and the same floor area ratio is to be kept.
**Proposals for a sociable**
Nguyen Cong Tru

**These two redevelopment proposals**, aim to conceptually exemplify how sociable and people-friendly urban environments can be created. The proposals are based on ideas around sociable space, presented in Chapter 3. The two proposals are shown side by side in order to simplify comparison. The proposals differ in the way they consider motor vehicles, pedestrian accessibility and preservation of existing buildings. In Proposal 1, motor vehicles are in a fairly prioritized position. Streets cut the area into ‘enclaves’ in which pedestrian accessibility and

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**Proposal 1**
*Created by Mikael Bäckman*

The French Chapel and other buildings in the Southwest corner of the area (marked grey) have been preserved. These will provide the area with variation regarding size, age and building type. In this proposal, car and traffic accessibility is rather apparent. Parking is available alongside many of the streets, and garages are located in basements and under ground. The different quarters are to be considered ‘traffic-free’ zones and all traffic within the different quarters has to move at pedestrian speed.

---

**Certain aspects Proposal 1 aims to meet - in short.**

**General aims:**
Provide the area with great sociable spaces of various kinds.
Provide housing for around 8000 inhabitants.
Provide the area with markets and parks.
Provide the area with sports facilities.
Provide the area with a school.
Make it possible for formal and informal commerce to establish.
Make use of large trees already available in the area.
Use building heights below 30 storeys.

**Specific aims:**
Make the area accessible for pedestrians.
Prioritize accessibility for cars and provide space for outdoor car parking.
Provide possibilities for public transports to be arranged in the area.
Reach plot coverage of around 40%.
Make use of the old French chapel.
Preserve some of the buildings in the Southwest corner of the area.
In this proposal pedestrians and public transportation are prioritized. All blocks are to be regarded as ‘traffic-free’ zones and here good walkability, readability and accessibility for pedestrians are made possible. All motor vehicles within these quarters have to move at pedestrian speed. No outdoor car parking is suggested for the area to discourage car use and economize land-use. A Bus Rapid Transit Street runs through the area (see fig. 4.42 page 117) providing an attractive alternative to private transportation, and spares Hanoi from additional traffic in already crowded streets.

Certain aspects Proposal 2 aims to meet - in short.

**General aims:**
- Provide the area with great sociable spaces of various kinds.
- Provide housing for around 8000 inhabitants.
- Provide the area with markets and parks.
- Provide the area with sports facilities.
- Provide the area with a school.
- Make it possible for formal and informal commerce to establish.
- Make use of large trees already available in the area.
- Use building heights below 30 storeys.

**Specific aims:**
- Make the area highly accessible for pedestrians.
- Prioritize public transports by high accessibility and bus stops near attraction points.
- No outdoor parking space for cars.
- Reach plot coverage between 40-50%.
- Replacement of all existing buildings.
The area consists of seven building blocks surrounded by streets. Buildings are placed so that enclosed courtyards are created in these blocks. Plot coverage varies between 38-47% in the area but the total plot coverage is only 34% if streets are included. To be able to house 8000 inhabitants using this plot coverage, building heights must be 10 storeys on average. The highest buildings are suggested for the blocks along the primary road stretching North-South through the area. High density along this road helps support the customer base of public transports, service and commerce in this area. Building heights are kept low in the Western part, in scale with the preserved building quarters and the quarters West of the area.
All existing buildings are replaced in this proposal. Building heights vary in the area and are placed so that large and small enclosures are created. The visual and physical linkage between these enclosures, strengthen the readability and accessibility in the area. A majority of the high buildings are suggested for the area next to the BRT-street and along Nguyen Cong Tru street. To economize land-use in the area and to discourage the use of cars, no outdoor car parking space is suggested. Limited car parking is instead arranged in underground garages or in buildings’s ground floor. Plot coverage for the whole area is 45% including the BRT-street and this means that buildings must average 8 storeys in the area to be able to house 8000 inhabitants.
Illustrations showing conceptual ideas in the proposals

Both proposals contain a mixture of high and low buildings. High-rise buildings are known to bring down strong winds along their facades. By adding smaller constructions below these, winds can be countered. Lower buildings can further increase the possibility for communication to occur, between people in the buildings and on the street. The ground floors of the buildings in the area allow for commerce and service to establish. Commercial facilities are im-
portant attractors of people to the urban environments. The streets are lined with large trees in both proposals, providing shade and comfort for pedestrians. The trees, in addition help bring down the scale of the streetscapes. The paving of the ground and the appearance of the first few storeys are important factors to consider. They affect the atmosphere of the streetscapes and functions as the walls of the urban environment in which we live.
The structure in Proposal 1 is designed for connectedness with both visual and physical linkage. The streets are located so that motor vehicles gain high accessibility through and within the area. Several secondary roads with street side parkings divide the area into ‘enclaves’ where pedestrian accessibility is prioritized and motor vehicles have to adapt their speed accordingly. Generous pathways line the streets in the area improving walkability and accessibility. A primary road however divides the area into two and pose a conflicting barrier for pedestrians. When there is visual contact between ‘enclaves’ but pedestrians must cross a primary road to get to the other ‘enclave’, safe pedestrian crossing must be ensured.
The structure in Proposal 2 is designed primarily for pedestrian accessibility. The traffic system is unhierarchical and motor vehicles share space with pedestrians and cyclists. Walkability and linkage for pedestrians are prioritized and all motor vehicles have to travel at pedestrian speed. By this on-foot activities gain advantages. Public transport is suggested to become the inhabitants’ first choice of transportation and to accomplish this a Bus Rapid Transit Street (BRT-street) is arranged in a North-South direction. The area is surrounded by secondary roads, and these creates only limited barriers to the surrounding neighbourhoods. At the northern end however, a primary road pose a severe conflict between pedestrians and motor vehicles.
Public transportation is suggested for the densest part of the area where a majority of the inhabitants will live. One bus line (route 2) is suggested to run right through the area heading North to Hanoi city centre and South towards large housing districts. The other bus line is East and West bound (route 1) and links the area with neighbouring districts. Pedestrian passage within the area is arranged for nearness and connectedness, both to service and commerce but also to bus stops located in and North of the area. People can move freely within the different quarters, with exception for the school area which naturally is blocked for passage.
The Bus Rapid Transit Street allows only buses and taxis. By this, public transport can become an efficient and attractive alternative to private cars. Bus stops are located within short walking distance and near important attraction points such as school, shopping and sports facilities. Air-conditioned bus shelters located in an interesting area, can provide a comfortable and lively waiting environment for passengers. The BRT-street heads North, towards the central area of Hanoi and South, towards the New Urban Areas. A regular bus route is suggested in an East-West direction to make important attraction points also in these areas accessible.
Service & Commerce

The East part of the area where most of the high-rise buildings and public transports are located has great conditions for formal service and commerce to establish. It is accessible to many and the large buildings can also house large ventures and malls. Commerce attracts people but people also attracts commerce. Informal commerce will therefore have great possibility to flourish on courtyards, squares and intersections where people are on foot. A permanent outdoor market is located at an easily accessible position at the Northeast entrance of the area.

Sources - specifics

Service & Commerce

A city needs to provide space for all kinds of services and both the formal and the informal commerce needs its space. Service and commerce are strong attractors of people and are therefore good at making the urban environments lively.

4.47
Display of ‘Service & Commerce’ areas.
(See also Chapter 3, page 60-63)

- Suggested ground floor space for formal commerce and public service.
- Area proposed to house a permanent outdoor market
- Area where more informal outdoor commerce and restaurants are proposed.
- School area located centrally, but set aside from the most dense part of the area.
Service & Commerce - Proposal 2

The structure in this proposal creates opportunities for a variety of commerce and services. Alongside the BRT-street a diversity of shops can establish. In this dense area they have access also to people using the public transportation system. Here also much of the service needed in the area can be located. Away from this street, informal commerce can reside on varied coherent pathways stretching North and South through the area. At a square next to one of these pathways a permanent greenmarket is located accessible by both pedestrians and motorized customers.
Greenery & Recreation
There are today hundreds of large trees present in the Nguyen Cong Tru area. Many of these trees are suggested to be incorporated also in the redevelopment of the area, for example in parks or as street-side greenery.

4.49
Display of ‘Greenery & Recreation’ areas.
(See also Chapter 3, page 64-67)

- Street-side greenery brings down the scale of streetscapes and courtyards and provides comforting shade.
- Park with trees and plantings, suitable for recreation and outdoor sports is proposed for this area.
- Building which provide space for sports and other recreational functions.

Greenery and Recreation - Proposal 1
A large park is proposed for the Southwest corner of the area. Here many existing large Lim trees can be used as a basis for a varied and interesting recreational park. Around this park, several buildings, of which one is the French Chapel, can house sports facilities of various kind. Many of the courtyards in the area are large enough to room small recreational parks or restful paved squares with fountains or sculptures. Alongside all streets and in all courtyards, existing and new trees help create a comfortable local climate. These trees also helps create small rooms below the high ‘sky-rise’ buildings.
Greenery & Recreation - Proposal 2

This proposal offers a rather verdurous urban environment. A park in the Southern part stretches through the area, connecting the West and East side with its ‘green’ passage way. This park offers both calm and eventful parts. Centrally in the area, a sports centre is located adjacent to park areas both North and South of it. Streets and pathways are lined with trees of various species. Rows of trees help create visual pathways between the buildings and lead and orientate pedestrians to certain attraction points. Many of the old Lim trees present today can continuously ‘stand tall’ on courtyards and squares in this proposal.
History & Aesthetics

The Nguyen Cong Tru area is planned to undergo almost total refurbishment. Old trees and the French Chapel are the few historical remnants that can be spared in the redevelopment. Aesthetics will have to come with the new structure.

Important commercial areas affected by the atmosphere of these places and therefore need ‘people-friendly’ design.
(See fig. 3.3 page 50 and fig. 3.30 page 69 for two Don’t’s!)

Squares, parks, courtyards and pathways in the area, which need an attractive design providing comfort and variety for both residents and visitors.
(See fig. 3.9 page 53 and fig. 3.67 page 91 for two Do’s!)

Preserved housing quarters with 4-5 storey buildings from the late 20th century and the French Chapel built in the early 20th century.

Area with large and old Lim trees.

(see fig. 4.28, page 104)
History and Aesthetics - Proposal 2

Buildings alongside the BRT-street and along Nguyen Cong Tru street are important in that they advertise the area’s existence to passers by. Also along certain pathways building design is an important attractor of both commerce and people. The design of the pathway stretching from north, down to the school area is suggested to be coherent and have aesthetical elements that attracts people to make use of it. The large public square in the northwest corner is an important meeting ground and therefore require an apt design approach that can appeal to people of all ages.

4.52
Display of areas where ‘History & Aesthetics’ function as important environmental aspects.
(See also Chapter 3, page 68-71)

- Important commercial areas affected by the atmosphere of these places and therefore need ‘people-friendly’ design.
  (See fig. 3.3 page 50 and fig. 3.30 page 69 for two Don’t’s!)

- Squares, parks, courtyards and pathways in the area, which need an attractive design providing comfort and variety for both residents and visitors.
  (See fig. 3.9 page 53 and fig. 3.67 page 91 for two Do’s!)

- Area with large and old Lim trees.
Activities - specifics
Activities of all sorts can occur almost anywhere in an urban environment. Certain areas in a city can however be better at promoting a particular activity. These in turn promotes other activities to occur.

4.53
Display of areas where certain ‘activities’ are promoted by structural and functional aspects of the proposal, presented on page 120-129. (See also Chapter 3, page 72-93).

‘The street as a living room’
A street or a courtyard which will function as an extension to people’s homes.

‘Daily delivery of serendipity and expectedness’
Lively space which offers everyday services and unexpected events.

‘When the occasional intervenes’
Space which can be transformed to house occasional events like concerts, festivals and celebrations.

‘A space for challenge and learning’
Space for creative and challenging activities where people of all ages can meet.

‘Harmony and contrast’
A calm space which lies adjacent to a lively pathway offering a quiet yet eventful rest.

The primary road area, stretching North-South through Nguyen Cong Tru, is lined with high-rise buildings and is easily accessed also by other Hanoians through public transports, motorbikes and cars. Formal commerce and service is suggested for the buildings alongside this road, making the streetscape full of opportunities for both expected and unexpected events to take place. The proposal also contains quiet secondary streets which will have a possibility to function as extensions to people’s homes. Adjacent to the roads, several squares are located which can provide space for markets, concerts and all sorts of occasional events. There are also possibilities to create calm spaces in connection to the more eventful parts of the area.
The bus rapid transit street (BRT) in this proposal functions as a dynamic axis through the area. It simplifies accessibility to service and commerce in the area and provides the street-scape with life. In the eastern part, buildings are placed so that several open spaces have connection with each other, making it possible for occasional events like festivals and markets to be arranged. The western part of the area is rich in both calm and busy spaces and pedestrians are steered to certain passages. The parks in the area provide generous opportunities for people of all ages to interact and escape noise and traffic. These parks can further function as spaces for challenging sport activities.

4.54
Display of areas where certain ‘activities’ are promoted by structural and functional aspects of the proposal, presented on page 120-129. (See also Chapter 3, page 72-93).

‘The street as a living room’
A street or a courtyard which will function as an extension to people’s homes.

‘Daily delivery of serendipity and expectedness’
Lively space which offers everyday services and unexpected events.

‘When the occasional intervenes’
Space which can be transformed to house occasional events like concerts, festivals and celebrations.

‘A space for challenge and learning’
Space for creative and challenging activities where people of all ages can meet.

‘Harmony and contrast’
A calm space which lies adjacent to a lively pathway offering a quiet yet eventful rest.
The urban environment sometimes functions as an extension to people’s homes. The proposals provide space for activities related to ‘The street as a living room’, giving residents an outdoor arena for a game of chess, for discussing the latest news or for sharing a meal. These zones provide sun, shade and comfort and thus offer a space which can function as a pleasant alternative to staying at home. If the urban environment attracts people to inhabit it, there is a
possibility for ‘Daily delivery of serendipity and expectedness’ to occur. The urban environment can easily provide space for the expected. Our favourite shop or restaurant is located at the same place every day but the people we meet there or the things that happen on the way to it vary. This gives us an exciting dosage of serendipity. Permanent markets proposed for the area, are great at providing both of this; an expected location with ever changing goods and customers.
Squares and plazas suggested in both proposals, can easily be transformed ‘When the occasional intervenes’. Festivals, concerts and other temporary events are important to provide space for in an urban environment. Celebrations of various kind and cultural events are part of our lives and the urban environment must be able to house these. Occasional events taking place in an urban neighbourhood strengthen the local community and attract visitors to the area. Parks arranged in the proposals provide necessary space for ‘Challenge and learning’
activities. Here young and old get space for all sorts of activities from which they can learn and grow. These parks are suggested to have both soft and hard surfaced grounds, allowing for various activities to be performed. An urban environment also needs to provide calm yet interesting ‘Harmony and contrast’ environments. A comfortable space adjacent to a busy pedestrian pathway or next to a plaza or square can provide a restful time, full of sensory impressions. When the urban environment gives room for all these types of activities it becomes truly sociable!
For whom and for what uses do we plan?

This study, *Sociable Space in a City of Life – the Case of Hanoi*, with its proposals for the redevelopment of Nguyen Cong Tru, aimed to describe how the physical structure sets the arena for sociability in the urban environment. The sociable spaces of the urban environment are spaces where people without effort can meet and interact. Spaces in which we can learn from others and grow by experiences. These spaces must be designed for accessibility by pedestrians and must further appeal to all our senses and meet our needs.

A city should have a people-friendly design all over and the sociable spaces should not be confined to ‘islands’ surrounded by its opposite. The more the structure forces (or encourages) people to use private vehicles to transport themselves to work, to school and home again, the more difficult it will be to move about in the city on foot. Heavy traffic creates barriers and hazardous environments for young and old. If people can not move about on foot in the urban environment it will never have the possibility to become people-friendly.

The simple truth is that the traffic system we promote is the traffic system that will grow. Public transportation is very affordable in Hanoi, but it is still far from being an attractive option to the private motorbike or car. During rush hour all public transportation have to force their way through the heavy traffic and this with little luck. The authorities are today widening many streets in an attempt to remedy the crowding. Soon enough however, these streets will again stand crowded. This time also with traffic attracted from all the New Urban Areas constructed in the outskirts of Hanoi.

One thing we have learnt while performing this study is that if one wish to create truly people-friendly environments then nothing can be simpler;
- plan for man and not for man’s cars!

*Mikael Bäckman and Maria Rundqvist*
Traffic in Hanoi is already over the limit. Something radical must be done.
Hanoi, Vietnam
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**Illustrations and photographs**

All photos and illustrations in this report are created by the authors, with exceptions for:

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