Redevelopment of Giang Vo in Hanoi, Vietnam

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Diploma work for Master's degree, 30 ECTS credit points. Master's programme of Spatial Planning Blekinge Institute of Technology, 2007
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during September to December 2006.
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Local business and commerce

Park and recreation
Preface

This study is a diploma work in Spatial Planning at Blekinge Institute of Technology in Karlskrona, Sweden and has been possible thanks to the Minor Field Study Scholarship we received from SIDA. The study of the redevelopment of Giang Vo in Hanoi, Vietnam started with a three months stay in Hanoi from September to December 2006. During our stay in Hanoi, we studied our project area and tried to get to know the Vietnamese culture. In January to May 2007, we continued our work in Sweden with compiling background materials collected in Hanoi. Out of this information, we carried out analyses, a structure plan proposal for the redevelopment as well as two individual parts. The focus on the individual parts are on local business and commerce as well as parks and recreation.
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Abstract

The project area for this diploma work takes place in Giang Vo, a housing area situated four kilometres from the city centre of Hanoi, Vietnam. The housing area was financed by the Soviet Union in the 1970’s, during the time of socialist planning economy in Vietnam. 23 areas of Soviet financed housing were developed on state-owned land around Hanoi during this period. The buildings are low, three- to five stories and they all have the same design.

Since the opening of the market economy during the 1990’s, private individuals are allowed to run their own business and to buy their own apartment, resulting in new developments and a vivid street life with all types of businesses and commerce. A consequence of private owning is the lack of regulations of who is responsible for the open space between the buildings as well as the public space within the buildings. This has resulted in poor or no maintenance of the buildings over the years as well as the unplanned development of so called low housing. Low housing are a common sight in Giang Vo and are illegal extensions on original buildings made by residents on ground floor to increase their living space or space for business. Low housing are being developed on open state owned land, occupying sidewalks and green areas for private activities. There is a need of more parks and places for recreation in Giang Vo. The Giang Vo Lake within the area is a great asset for the residents and visitors but seems to have been disregarded when developing the area.

Several of the Soviet financed housing areas are today facing renovations or redevelopment. The Research Institute of Architecture in Hanoi has prepared three different plan proposals of a redevelopment of Giang Vo. All three of them consist of high-rise buildings with a mix of dwellings, office buildings and commerce. The proposals are contrary to the guidelines made by the City of Hanoi as well as the Hanoi Master Plan 2020, which oppose increasing density in central Hanoi.
The overall aim of our study of the redevelopment of Giang Vo is to develop an alternative proposal to the existing ones made by the Research Institute of Architecture.

Information about Giang Vo has been collected during our three months stay in Hanoi, through inventories of the area together with useful information and maps received from the Research Institute of Architecture and Tran Hoai Anh. With the inventories as a base, we analysed Giang Vo, both out of our own experiences and with the help of the City Structure Analysis by Kevin Lynch. The analyses led to a structure plan made by the two of us together. The structure plan proposes a development of Giang Vo with a density lying in between the proposals made by the Research Institute of Architecture and the guidelines from the City of Hanoi as well as the Master Plan 2020. We propose Giang Vo to be a section of Hanoi, consisting of a mix of housing, public service, businesses and places for recreation. Individually, Maria Hagelberg has focused on how to improve the situation for local business and commerce and Jenny Nagenius has focused on how to improve areas for parks and recreation.
1. introduction
Giang Vo is a housing area in central Hanoi, which consist of 1,452 apartments and have an estimated population of 7,000-8,000 inhabitants. Most of the areas was built during the 1970’s and financed by the Soviet Union during the period of centrally planned economy in Vietnam. Around 20 almost identical state-owned areas were built in Hanoi during this time, after the same principles; yellow plastered concrete buildings of three to five stories.

Buildings in Giang Vo are today in poor condition due to the lack of maintenance over the years. Since the opening of the market economy, “Doi Moi”, in the 1980’s, private owning of businesses and apartments is allowed. As a consequence, state owned land between and in front of the buildings, has been seized by the residents on ground floor for private activities.

Several of the areas from the Soviet supported period are going through a process of reconstruction today. Giang Vo will be totally redeveloped and the Research Institute of Architecture in Hanoi have prepared three different plan proposals for Giang Vo. When redeveloping Giang Vo, the open space need to be structured and improved. It is important to consider how to improve the situation of local shopkeepers and to help them maintain their businesses during and after the redevelopment. There is also a need of parks in Giang Vo and the advantage of the lake within the area should be regarded.

1.1 Aim

Our overall aim is to develop an alternative plan proposal to the existing ones made by the Research Institute of Architecture on how to redevelop Giang Vo. Our structure plan proposal is based on our inventory of the current situation within the Giang Vo area and the patterns of how people move in their everyday life activities. Our main focus is to redevelop Giang Vo so that observed advantages in the area will be improved for residents and visitors. Furthermore, two individual proposals aim to exemplify how space can be developed to improve the situation for local business and commerce as well as parks and recreation.
1.3 Method

Our project started with a three months fieldwork in Hanoi, Vietnam. When arriving in Hanoi, we began our study by exploring the city and visiting residential areas built during the Soviet period. We also visited new urban areas in the outskirts of Hanoi to get an understanding of different types of housing in Hanoi.

We met architects and planners from the Research Institute of Architecture in Hanoi, who told us about the planning situation in Giang Vo today and provided us with maps, statistics and surveys. Tran Hoai Anh, with a Swedish Ph D in Architecture who does research in Giang Vo, let us take part of her work as well as the conclusions of her interviews of residents in the area.

With the help of maps, we started our own documentations of the current situation of Giang Vo. We have walked around and spent time in the area at different times of the day and at different days of the week, while taking notes and photos. We also made inventories of the traffic situation and public transportation, housing situation and the placement of schools and public services.

Our main focus for our documentations was to experience the situation of local business and commerce as well as parks and recreation. By these visits, one main purpose was to get an overview and to understand where people spend their spare time and where important places for commerce can be found. In order to understand the situation for shopkeepers, we visited several types of marketplaces around Hanoi and observed conditions for small businesses. To gain knowledge of how people use recreational facilities, we spent time in different central parks of Hanoi.

With background material and our inventories as a basis, an analyse of Giang Vo have been carried out where we outlined the advantages and the disadvantages of the area. We used the method made by Kevin Lynch in his book *Image of the City* to help us sort out the physical structure and the relations of different elements in Giang Vo. The result of the analyses gave us directions for our work towards a new plan proposal for Giang Vo.
At the end of our visit in Hanoi, we presented our ideas about the redevelopment of Giang Vo for people at the Research Institute of Architecture as well as for Tran Hoai Anh. These occasions ended up in discussions, which gave us helpful feedback for our continuing work with our project back in Sweden.

The overall study of Giang Vo as well as a proposal of a structure plan over Giang Vo has been made by the two of us together. In addition to this, two individual proposals have been carried out. One individual proposal takes social life at street level into consideration and suggests new solutions to improve the situation of local commerce and shopkeepers in Giang Vo after the redevelopment, as well as how to keep their businesses running during the renewal of the area. The other individual proposal shows how to improve the open space within parts of the Giang Vo area and focus on how to make the Giang Vo Lake accessible and develop possibilities for recreation activities in the adjacent area surrounding the lake.
2. background
2.1 Vietnam and the city Hanoi

Hanoi is the capital of Vietnam and the second largest city after Ho Chi Minh City. The official number of inhabitants is about three millions (Vietnamguiden). According to the Hanoi Master Plan 2020, the population of the city’s urban area will increase to 4,5 to 5 million in the year 2020, with 2,5 million living in the city centre.

Of all the inhabitants of Hanoi, more than 50 % lives in the inner city. The inner city, which consists of seven districts, covers only about 9 % of the total municipal area. This makes the inner city of Hanoi the most dense area in Vietnam with about 19 000 persons per square kilometre. (Hau) For comparison, the inner city of Stockholm has close to 4 100 persons per square kilometre (Stockholm’s Stad) and central Karlskrona, Trossö, has just above 7 300 persons per square kilometre (Karlskrona kommun).
2.2 Presentation of Giang Vo

The Giang Vo area surrounds the Giang Vo Lake and is situated in the Ba Dinh District about four kilometres west of the Old Quarters of Hanoi. The total area is 21.5 hectares (excluding the lake) and the population is estimated to be 7,000-8,000 inhabitants. The Giang Vo Lake has an area of 7.5 hectares and a circumference of approximately one kilometre.

Giang Vo was built during the 1960’s and 1970’s, according to Soviet planning principles. Today, the area includes an urban mix of dwellings, commerce, office buildings and an exhibition centre. Even though most of the original apartment buildings are in poor condition, Giang Vo is a popular area to live in.

According to unpublished material of Tran Hoai Anh (interview 061218), the population of Giang Vo is young and active with relatively good income and living space standard. The largest group, almost 50% of the population, is 31 to 50 years old. Most of the people of working age are employed and less than 3% of the residents are unemployed. Among the heads of the households in Giang Vo there are two dominant employment groups. The largest group is made up of state employees and workers and the second group consists of employers and workers in the private sector. The majority of the old population is retired state employees.
2.3 Historical changes in Hanoi focusing on urban planning and architecture

As a small village, Hanoi was chosen to be the capital of Vietnam in the year 1010. According to the ancient Vietnamese way of thinking, the location of the new capital was perfect; the universe, the rivers, the mountains and the land formed the image of home. (Tran Hoai Anh 1999, p. 90) Since then, Hanoi’s history of urban planning and architecture has been influenced by many countries and different policies as well as affected by several wars.

The Feudal time (1010-1887)

Until the nineteenth century, Hanoi was ruled by the King, the Royal court and the mandarins in a feudal society. The city was split into two parts; the Royal city, which was reserved for the King and his court and the Commoners city, today called the Old Quarters, where the rest of the people lived. The streets were named after the kind of trade taking place there, for example Pho Hang Hanh (Street of onions) or Pho Hang Bo (Street of baskets). Yet today, different streets sell different products (Tran Hoai Anh 1999, p. 90).

The French Colonial periods (1887-1954)

In terms of architecture and urban planning, the French Colonial rule can be divided into two different periods. The first period (1888-1920) started when France occupied Hanoi in order to transform the city into the Capital of Indochina and a modern urban area that would suit the new French population. The Vietnamese population had to adopt the French lifestyle, including language and behavior. In the second period (1920-1945), the French strategy changed in order to win support from both sides of the population and efforts were made to combine the two cultures. The Master Plan, completed in 1924, was influenced by European modernism and functionalism and resulted in a spacious administrative area, which today is referred to as the French Quarters (Tran Hoai Anh 1999, pp. 102-105).
The socialist society and the centrally planned period (1954-1986)
At the Geneva Conference of 1954, it was decided to divide Vietnam into two states, which also led to the end of France’s colonial presence in Vietnam. After the independence from France, North Vietnam did not want to get involved with a western country again but worked on strengthening the linkages with the Soviet Union. The aim was to build a modern socialist society based on state-owned enterprises and collectives replacing all private-owned production. Because of the centrally planned economy policies, market demands were not considered. Private ownership of land was not allowed and public apartment blocks were introduced to the Vietnamese population as a modern socialist way of living. The directives for architecture and urban planning were changed to fit the standards of the Soviet design, which can be seen in the structure of the city and in buildings all over Hanoi today. This includes for example Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum by the Ba Dinh Square and the numerous public housing apartment blocks of three- to five stories (Tran Hoai Anh 1999, pp. 108-112). During the years of 1959-75, the Vietnam War went on. In 1976, North Vietnam and South Vietnam were reunited and Hanoi became the capital of the country.

Doi Moi – The renovation period (1987- )
In 1986 the Communist Party signalled a different way of government thinking with new policies. The party wanted to make linkages with western countries as well as open the economy for foreign investments and private ownerships. Vietnam entered a period of transition, called Doi Moi (renovation), which changed the shape of Hanoi. The economy shifted to a more market driven system, which allowed private businesses. Small shops, restaurants and street vendors started to pop up all over Hanoi (Horen 2005, p. 164). The state monopoly on housing construction was dissolved and private individuals are now allowed to own their apartment. (Tran Hoai Anh 1999, p. 13)

In the 1990’s, a new Master Plan for Hanoi 2010 was formulated, where the aims were to develop the economy and society of Hanoi to become competitive with other large cities in Asia (Horen 2005, pp. 161-170).
The current situation of Hanoi
The city of Hanoi is today experiencing the pressure of urbanization and foreign investments. More and more people want to live in the city centre and together with the rapid commercial development, this has resulted in increasing the already high density of Hanoi. Multi-million dollar hotels and offices are being erected all over the city. Hanoi’s overcrowding results in traffic congestions, loss of open space and damage to some of the heritage buildings.

Based on experiences of the development of high-rise central business districts (CBD’s) in other Asian cities, there have been big discussions of how Hanoi should develop in the future. The Hanoi Master Plan 2020 wants to slow down the increasing density in the city centre. Instead, new land in the outskirts of Hanoi is needed for development which leads to former agricultural land being rapidly transforming. Industrial zones are emerging and new urban areas, either large-scale or high-rise apartment buildings or dense three- to five storey housing areas are being developed. (Horen 2005, pp. 168-171)
2.4 Soviet financed housing areas

The Soviet financed housing areas of Hanoi were built during the period of 1960 to 1980 and were at the time a common way of urbanization. The state was responsible for all planning and there was no alternative housing as a part of the centrally planned economy. The areas were intended for state employees only, based on rank and duration of the employment. State employees were placed in a housing queue where the waiting time could be up to 15 years. Higher ranked employees received large apartments and did not have to wait for an apartment as long as lower ranked employees. Housing, together with other everyday life necessities, such as food and clothing, were provided by the state to its employees as part of their salary. Different housing areas belonged to different work places, which resulted in a mix of social groups in the neighbourhood. Private investors were not allowed to build on their own and people working in the private sector were excluded from the system. (Tran and Dalholm 2005, p. 899)

The Soviet financed housing areas were planned and constructed to be self-supporting with schools, day care centres and other necessary services according to Soviet principles. The houses of three- to five stories have the same design and were built by prefabricated blocks of yellow plastered concrete. To live in these areas during the time they were new was considered a good way of living and something that only a few people could achieve. (Tran and Dalholm 2005, p. 900)

Within the city of Hanoi, there are 23 Soviet financed housing areas. All together, these areas contain approximately 27 500 households and 137 000 residents. (Minh Binh Do 2005, p. 2) The density of the Soviet financed housing areas has increased since the development and the infrastructure systems concerning water and drainage were not dimensioned for as many people as are now living in the areas.
Housing in Kim Lien.

Characteristic building from a Soviet financed housing area.

The open spaces between the houses are used as second living rooms, Trung Tu.

Plan of Trung Tu.

Street vending in Giang Vo.

Housing in Giang Vo.

Street life in Kim Lien.
There are 23 Soviet financed housing areas in Hanoi, which form an annual ring in the city.
Privatization of state-owned housing
The Soviet financed housing areas were intended for state employees only. When an employee received an apartment, the rent was low and the tenants were given long-term rights of occupancy and were able to pass it on to their children. In the 1990’s, as a result of Doi Moi, the privatization started as individual persons were allowed to own their apartment. In Giang Vo, the proportion of owners is approximately 80 per cent today. A situation of both private-owned apartments and apartments belonging to the housing authorities in the same building is common in the Soviet financed housing areas today. Mixed ownerships and the lack of regulations about the duties and rights of owners and tenants after privatization have led to serious degradation of common areas in all residential blocks. (Tran and Dalholm 2005, pp. 899-904)

Low housing
The original building structure of many of the Soviet financed housing areas has been changed since the opening of the market economy. The possibility of owning an apartment and to run a business have together with the uncertainty of who is responsible for the outer space, led to ongoing unplanned development of so called low housing. Low housing are illegal extensions made by residents on original buildings to increase their living space or to get space for small businesses. The extensions are mostly one- to two stories, built on state-owned land which have led to open space and sidewalks being seized. (Tran and Dalholm 2005, p. 902)
Examples of low housing in Giang Vo.