GLOBALISATION AND URBAN PLANNING

New ways of communication and transportation are having a strong impact on urban development and urbanism itself. Former issues of urbanism are today to be replaced due to new ways of living, new technology, global networks and also the development in developing countries. Distances are decreasing, both locally and globally at the same time as everyday life more and more is depending on transports and communication on different levels. Motorized traffic and public transportation means possibilities for people to commute longer distances to work, activities, shops, leisure etc. Improved worldwide communications by aircraft and ships have opened up new markets for multinational and trans-national companies to provide products worldwide. The manufacturing have also been affected by this as the cost-benefit analysis nowadays include a large amount of countries to choose between to keep quality up to a lower cost. This is called competitive advantage and means that every country shall do what no one else can do better20.

Architects, Rem Koolhaas among others, mean that globalisation has strong impact on urbanism and that urbanism is being transformed into something new21. The globalisation process is connecting what happens on the global area to the local society, an interaction where both parts are linked and depending on one another. Urbanism is not just spatial structures but activities and variety. Living in urban areas is today more and more about transportation between different places and less about a complete and static unit of built space.

In TransUrbanism22 the author Arjeen Mulder discusses two types of cities. The first one is mentioned as the medieval city and the second as the semi-industrialized/parks and boulevards city. Traditionally, the city was built up around a town hall, church and market square where the political decisions, religious acts and businesses were made. Small neighbourhoods with narrow, winding streets are characteristic for the medieval city and are well settled for a military purpose. Borders between urban and rural areas are clearly defined.

The second kind of city has broken urban impenetrability and rigidity open. Broad boulevards accompanied by parks and open spaces are the genius loci in the semi-industrialized city. Politics and business are separated from each other. The streets follow the principle of a grid, the scale is larger, buildings are more voluminous and the character is scenographic instead of purpose oriented23.

20 Abrahamsson (2003)
21 Arkitekturteorier (1999)
22 Mulder (2002)
23 Ibid.
Ha Noi has both types of characters which today are integrated and overlapping. The development has erased formed, defined borders between politics and businesses, from communism to a one-party market economy with big traffic monuments surrounding small streets and alleys. Even though the two kinds of cities mentioned in *TransUrbanism* are describing different principles for different urban areas, the two characters of cities can be seen as footprints from the urban development over time within the city. Spatial issues are long lasting whereas movements, businesses and social behaviour are changing. In Ha Noi the interaction between the medieval city and the industrialized society can be seen in the old quarters; the street patterns are the spatial expression of the medieval city in the semi-industrialized city’s movements.

Globalisation means that world trade and financial markets are getting more integrated. The increasing global trade leads to increased, but unequally divided, prosperity in developing countries. The consequences are partly a demand for modern and high standard houses and buildings and partly a reduction and destruction of traditional quarters. Another consequence of prosperity is increasing motorized traffic. Globalisation can therefore be seen as one of the underlying causes for the transformation of the urban structures. The contrast between the global and the local arena can always cause conflicts. The conflicts will appear in different situations and in a varied scale. The economic globalisation is strongly criticized by some for top-down
ruling and for causing increased income gaps. A conflict will appear in the battle between traditions and the search of a modern development. In somewhat, this struggle has been palpable in the urban development in previous times in Ha Noi as well; the French aimed to create a French society in classical colonial manners followed by the communism neglecting both the French history as well as religious and traditional ways of living. Today, focus has changed from strictly politics to economy due to globalisation, still with the same aim to create something new and modern. I think the globalisation sometime is a threat but also an opportunity when it comes to urban planning. It is possible to create a dynamic city as a result of globalisation, because of new influences and inputs. That is in my point of view positive if this urban development can be adaptable to historical conditions by adding new layers into the existing city structure without totally erasing the traditional ones.

In Europe the urbanisation started at the same time as the industrialization and today approximately 80% of the population lives in cities. In Vietnam, the figures are the opposite, but are now changing. In the last ten years the population in Ha Noi has increased from 2.7 million to 3.9 million people, which is a rapid growth. The industrial sector is growing in Vietnam and I think the urbanisation will increase too as a result, just like in Europe. Agriculture will become modernized but also the secular sector with few employ-

Hotel behind Notre Dam in Ho Chi Minh City.

Even small shops have products from multinational companies, e.g. Coca Cola.

24 HUD 2001
I found two globalisation topics I consider important for planning the study area.

Firstly, the importance of movements. In globalisation perspective, movements are of course mainly meant as flows of products, information and people over country borders world wide across countries, but in a way I consider these world wide movements to also be reflected within countries and cities. New products, for example motorbikes, have dramatically changed the urban space and pace. Owning a motorbike is one of those things that has become tremendously popular over the last ten years. China is a leading motorbike producer in Southeast Asia and has established an uncountable number of retail dealers in Vietnam. The speed has increased and influences the visual impression of the urban environments. Walking through a city will give a more detailed impression than going by car for example. In higher speeds the surroundings will be diffuse and details will be lost. Slow speeds on the other hands can be hard to combine with surroundings with few or no details. What you see will be depending on your speed. This means that motorized traffic in higher speed legitimate larger volumes while areas for slower pace require more details to make the stroll interesting. Motorized traffic has turned Ha Noi to a buzzing beehive with an uncountable numbers of motorbikes. Thus, streets become crowded and lack of parking spots causes confusion. Like in China, the number of cars is increasing.
What you see, depends on your speed - if you move slowly you will see details, if you move fast you will only see larger structures.
in Vietnam in correlation with economic growth. In Ha Noi, motorbikes are the dominating vehicles on the streets, compared to HCMC where cars are much more common. According to my own and others’ experiences, the accessibility in Ha Noi is better than in HCMC. The slow movements of cars and the space they need on the narrow street cause traffic jams and slow down the pace of flow. The way people cross the street and change lanes is depending on flexibility and smoothness; cars do not possess these qualities, which affect the flow in a negative way. Still, effective transitions between different areas are necessary for all motorized vehicles. By separating the traffic driving through the area from the traffic within the area, different types of movements can be established. The first type is faster and demands more space to reach the final destination whereas the second type can be slower and more adjusted to a more human scale and pace.

Secondly, investments are important. Private investors and establishments are, as mentioned above, a result of doi moi and globalisation and due to the situation in Ha Noi these investments are essential for both economic growth and urban development at the moment. More and more of dwelling houses and office buildings are being put under private ownership and companies want to be established on good locations. It is no secret that investments all over the world are done for marketing and profit purposes. Modern, designed buildings located on strategically good spots are demanded by the companies, but can also be a positive occurrence in the urban life in form of shops and commerce.

I will take these two globalisation aspects - movements and investments - in consideration in my proceeding work with the planning proposal for Van Quan.
In my opinion, the urban atmosphere in Ha Noi is created by mainly two topics; movements and commerce\(^\text{25}\). The density of people leads to a constant flow, meetings, interaction, interlacing private life and public life.

In the same way as people are concerned to take part in the construction of their houses, there is an eagerness to contribute in arranging the urban environment surrounding them. In other words, the individual affection is important for the urban way of life, creating a peculiar urban atmosphere. The built spaces are in this sense of secondary importance, while the buildings rarely limit how they can be used in the context. It is rather the ideas and enterprise that define the usage. To make the character concrete and how the city is being used, I will illustrate how people I have observed and talked to are living their everyday life in the city in short stories.

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\(^{25}\) By commerce I mean formal and informal activities. The commerce therefore includes everything from ordinary shops, offices, agencies to women selling bananas on the street, xe om (motobike taxis), street restaurants etc.

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**Tuan**

Mr Nguyen Minh Tuan is a man in his middle forties. He lives in the Ancient Quarters with his wife and their two-year-old son in a small house close to the meat and vegetable market. He was born and raised in Ha Noi, but went to Germany in the late 1980s to work as a construction worker for 8 years. When he returned to Ha Noi, he decided the best way of making money was to set up his own “xe om”-business (“xe om” are the common motorbike taxis; “xe” means motorbike and “om” simply hold tight). Every morning, after breakfast, he puts his motorbike on the pavement on Hang Be Street with a handwritten “xe om” sign on the handlebar. After that, he usually takes a cup of green Vietnamese tea, tra, at the old man’s tea stall next to him and smokes a cigarette, waiting for the day’s first customer. He spends most of
the day on the street; waiting for customers, having a chat, feeding his son, smoking a package of cigarettes. If he is lucky, the morning will be busy, bringing enough money in for the day so he can take the afternoon off. Mr Tuan doesn't speak any English, just a little German. Hence are most of his customers Vietnamese. “It’s a pity” he says, “tourists pay more for a ride. But most of them doesn’t know what my sign says!” Sometimes German speaking tourists walk down the street and Mr Tuan tries to convince them to take a ride with him, but sometimes he doesn’t bother to call at them. “Germans are heavy, takes more fuel to drive them” he chuckles. His business is doing quite well and he often takes the afternoons off to spend time with his family and friends. A woman selling roasted chestnuts then occupies the square meter on the pavement, being “his office”.

Hanna

Hanna is working in a recently opened bar/restaurant in the northern parts of the city. Her parents own the restaurant and Hanna is working there seven days a week. She is working in the bar and takes care of the bills. She calls herself Hanna when speaking to foreigners, it is easier to remember and pronounce, she says. The spatial arrangements of rooms in the restaurant were not obvious to me; the kitchen was on the first floor, the dishes on the ground floor in the alley, smaller rooms for 8 to 16 guests were divided on four floors, the bar had a separate entrance next to the restaurant and a couple of tables were squeezed in between two other restaurants on the pavement outside. “My family used to live in the rooms where the restaurant is, but we’ve moved our furniture to open up the restaurant” Hanna tells me. “But what about the tables on the pavement? It’s very hard to tell which tables belong to your res-
restaurant and which belong to the two restaurants next to yours!” I complained. “Yes, I know. You should have seen yesterday! There was a fight on the street, because one of the owners accused the other one for stealing his guests. The woman started throwing things at him! But that’s the way it is, sometimes you win, sometimes you loose customers. It’s good to be on the street, then people see us, want to come here and eat.” Street restaurants and food corners, literally speaking, are enormously popular and are to be found everywhere in Ha Noi. These restaurants are part of the character and private and public spaces are overlapping, because owners or employees can live there too, like in this case. “You know, some people don’t want to sit inside when they are eating, they want to be on the streets to see what’s happening. If you are inside, you see nothing!” Hanna says.

Ngoc

At first, Quynh Anh Hotel on Ma May Street looked like an ordinary hotel, with a reception on the ground floor and a dining room for the guests facing the street. The hotel was quite new, I was told. It used to be a karaoke bar and the hotel was opened just a couple of weeks before my own arrival in September 2004. It is a small hotel, with six rooms only. One day, all of a sudden, all the furniture were removed while a young woman, called Ngoc, made a deal with the manager to start a business on the ground floor. In a couple of hours, she turned the reception to a souvenir shop, containing more things then you could possibly count in one day. This was Ngoc’s first shop and she was very enthusiastic about it and very satisfied to have a shop in a hotel. She told me this was the perfect location – customers staying in the hotel could buy all their gifts without leaving the building! The customers were caught by
surprise coming back after a sightseeing tour or a day shopping on the markets, wondering if they had walked into the wrong house. No, the hotel sign was still on the door and behind all the handicrafts and Buddha statues, they got a glimpse of the reception, recognizing the staff of the hotel. “The manager is happy to have me here” Ngoc told me. “There are not so many rooms in the hotel and I pay rent. Nobody was eating here anyway – they don’t have a kitchen here so if the customers wanted to eat, they had to bring food from the street restaurant on the other side of the street. Then it was easier for the customers to go there themselves.” The hotel has glass doors, which are becoming more and more popular in Hanoi, to keep the dust out without decreasing the visibility. Ngoc thought it made her shop look modern and that it would attract tourists to come in and have a look. Weeks went by and Ngoc’s enthusiasm decreased day by day. “I haven’t sold anything in five days now. The customers at the hotel are not buying from me and nobody else does it either,” she said one day as I came to speak to her. She looked sad and didn’t pay any attention at all to the customers coming into the shop, knowing by bitter experience they wouldn’t buy anything anyway. A week later she packed her things and moved her shop to a street closer to Hoan Kiem Lake. “Chi oi, come and visit me there! I think it is better for business to be near the lake, don’t you think?” she said, lifting up the last box with unsold souvenirs on her motorbike. The guests at the hotel got caught by surprise once again; instead of walking into a souvenir shop, they came back to a travel agency. An older woman having two travel agencies in Ho Chi Minh City wanted to open an office in Hanoi to expand her business. I didn’t even get to know her name; she got kicked out two weeks later as the hotel manager decided to sell his business – all of a sudden – and move. To Ireland.
Phong

Among the Vietnamese people I got to know, Mr. Phong is probably the smallest one, but with the biggest heart. He is a photographer and runs a photo shop in the house where he lives. Mr. Phong is 48 years old, married to Lieu and has two charming young daughters. His days start early with exercising at five o’clock every morning. He thinks it is important to stay fit to have a long life and is very concerned to live healthy. He wakes his wife and children up to join him for breakfast around the corner on the pavement. The common breakfast is pho bo, a beef noodle soup served with fresh chopped chilli. As the children get dressed (I could mention that Lieu and the girls usually are eating their breakfast in their pyjamas), Mr Phong opens his shop around half past seven, putting the big sign “Best Quality in Ha Noi” in front of his desk. Lieu drives the girls to school with her motorbike, before she starts helping her husband in the shop. Mr. Phong tells me that his father was a photographer, so it was an obvious choice for him to take over the business. The first time I came to visit Mr. Phong, he was selling Fuji Film, but he had changed the next time I came. “Why have you started selling Kodak Film, Phong?” I asked him. “You see, my neighbour is selling Kodak”, he said pointing at the shop next door, “and I wanted to be the same as him. Maybe people would prefer to go to him instead otherwise”. “But it could be the other way around as well...” I tried, but Mr. Phong was too busy telling the painter which yellow colour to use on the walls in the shop. The only entrance to Mr Phong’s house is behind the shop. This is a typical solution for the tube-houses, interlacing the public and private spaces in the shop. Mr. Phong and his family are spending a lot of time in the shop, as a matter of fact; the shop is always open when they are awake. When the children are coming back home from school in the afternoon, they stay downstairs in the shop with their parents. Lieu goes out in the evenings to buy dinner to take back home to the family. She is a good cook herself, but she finds it more convenient to go for take-away. Sometimes she goes to a friend running a rice restaurant a couple of kilometres away and sometimes to one of the street restau-
rants around the block. Mr. Phong eats behind the desk when no customers need his attention. The girls are playing and eating at the same time on the pavement, Lieu is very patient feeding the youngest daughter as she runs to the neighbour and back all the time. “Are you never worried when the children are playing on the street?” I asked Mr. Phong and Lieu. “Why do you think that?” Lieu replied. “Well... I am afraid when I’m crossing the street due to the traffic. There is an uncountable number of motorbikes passing here – every minute! And the girls are playing just a meter away from it.” “Look”, Mr. Phong said, “I grew up on this street and survived. I know what you mean, but I think we would miss the traffic if it wasn’t there. The girls know they must be careful and there is always someone to keep an eye on them, we or our neighbours.” Mr. Phong certainly had a point; the social security in the neighbourhood is exemplary. It is quarter past ten in the evening and Mr. Phong decides to close for the day. “I don’t think there will be any more customers tonight” he says, closing the gate. Tomorrow is another day with Mr. Phong doing his morning exercise before dawn, working long after dusk in his little photo shop.

Huyen

“How do you tell your parents you have met western man and that you love him?” When Huyen met the love of her life two years ago, she realised how difficult it could be to convince her parents their love was for real. It is no secret too many Western men buy their love and people generally get suspicious when a Western man is walking hand in hand with a Vietnamese woman. Huyen and Neil were dating for more than six months before she dared to mention it to her parents and she tells me how difficult it was in the beginning for her family to accept Neil. A couple of months later Neil proposed to her and they moved in to a newly built house in a residential area near Ho Tay (the West Lake). Both Huyen and Neil are working for the British Council in Ha Noi, jobs with a high status and good salary. They are only renting the place and I was told it is rather common someone builds a house and rent it out for a couple of
years to bring back the money they spent building it. Their landlord actually lives next door in a torn one-storey house, not as modern and lavish at all as the new house. Huyen is a very determined, modern woman with a strong will and personality. She is a career woman, though when we discussed it she said making money and having a career is not the most important thing in life after all. “But I’m having a very good job already and I like what I do, so I guess it’s easy for me to continue my career there. I want to be successful and I’m not ashamed of it” Huyen says, with a distinct Britttish accent. Huyen and Neil is living a life very similar to other 30 year old in Europe, Australia or America; they are working five days a week during ordinary office hours, watching TV or just chilling out in the evenings if nothing particular is up, order home delivery pizzas and go out for a drink with their friends in the weekends. Neil is playing football for the Ha Noi Capitols a few nights a week while Huyen meet her girl friends for a cup of coffee or a glass of wine. All over Ha Noi, you can find fashion magazines, like Vogue, Marie Claire or Elle, and Huyen is one of many women buying them to get fashion news, tips on how to put your make up on or the latest method on how to loose weight. She says adult women are in to Western fashion whereas the teenagers get their influences mainly from Japan. Neither Huyen nor Neil is doing any housework unless it is something they sincerely fancy to do. Two maids are working three days a week in the house, cleaning, washing, making the beds, watering the plants, doing the dishes etc. Neil tells me all of his colleagues at the office have got maids doing the housework. I wondered if it doesn’t feel strange letting someone else do all the boring things, but Huyen and Neil just smile “Now we got time for other things” they both say. Neil puts his hand on Huyen’s stomach; the baby will come in July.

Speaking to and learning to know these people gave me a better idea of how people in different ages and with different jobs live. It was important to me not just to observe but to speak the inhabitants about the activities taking place around me. I found out that social control is important in the neighbourhoods and how private and public life interweave, but also that different activities take place on the same place at different times. This is important to consider designing the structure and public space in my planning proposal. I also want to pass my impressions from Ha Noi onto the reader and hopefully make him or her understand what everyday life can look like.
Travel through Ha Noi can definitely be described as moving through a never-ending spectrum of pictures, characters, emotions, atmospheres, typology etc. Advertisements are colouring the cityscape, hiding facades and promoting shop after shop along the streets. Shops are extending from the house to the pavement, pedestrians walking on the streets instead of the pavement, motorbikes being parked in the houses and restaurants being found in the small open space between parking lots for motorbikes. In my opinion, urbanism in Ha Noi is in many ways attractive. The life on the streets is outstanding, unexpected meetings are taking place frequently and the social control is high. Places, that seem odd in a Western point of view, possess high urban qualities for public life and integration, even though they are located next to a busy street with noise and pollution or on a non-space; a spot where no one happened to park their bike that specific day or obsessing part of the street, putting up a table for selling newspapers.

A few dichotomies often appear in the discussions of urban planning; urban – rural, public – private, centre – periphery, city – countryside and negative space – built space. To see these features as only contradictions, provides a one-sided black and white picture. Instead, most of the dichotomies are interacting and cannot be totally separated from each other. For example, I think most people like the view, the air and the light in the countryside at the same time as some of us wish to have a 24 h per day shopping opportunity. Flexibility of work and improved transportations have brought new opportunities to decide where and when to work (at the office, at home, in a café) and where to go, which makes it possible to change between an urban or rural life.

Manuel Solà-Morales discusses collective space as one of the most important issues of a city. The collective space is all the places in a city where every day life takes place and presents itself and its present as memory and where a variety of activities are replacing each other over shorter or longer periods of time. Collective space is neither public nor private, but a mixture between the two; private activities are taking place in the
public as well as private spaces allow public use. The focus is removed from the spatial aspects in favour of underlining the social importance. By introducing the expression collective space, Solá-Morales means it is possible to get over the dichotomy public/private. The quality of a collective space can be measured in its ability of answer to diverted needs and to function in the context of the city.26

In my opinion, several examples of collective space exist in Ha Noi. Corners can have several expressions over the day depending on the activities or non-activities. The pavements, open spaces and first floors of houses all serve as collective spaces where private life is taking part in the open air at the same time as public activities move into of the house. The collective spaces can be described as a layering of time - different users of certain areas at different times. Each time and use leave traces, physically or emotionally, that characterizes the place itself in different time periods. Another thing to remember is that empty space is also space, sometimes just as valuable as the built one.

Collective space is a mixture of public and private space where private activities take place in the public and vice versa.

TRADITIONS AND MODERN LIFE

According to Vietnamese tradition, generations are still living together in the same house.27 When the son is getting married, the bride moves into the groom’s house to live with his family. There are of course many practical reasons why generations, still, are living together, such as economical issues, lack of space, baby-sitting, and lack of homes for elderly people. Nevertheless, it is not uncomplicated sharing house especially today.

26 Nielsen et. al. (2003)

27 NIURP
when globalisation is growing stronger and the wish for a modern (modern is not simply referred to a Western life style or adapting western living standards, but combining own needs and wishes with modern ideals and technologies) life with more privacy and private space. Getting married and moving together, with not only a husband but also his family, is, as far as I am concerned, tough for the young women. Expectations and prejudices from both sides can of course be tough to deal with and whenever possible, larger houses are preferred for the families. One of the best things, according to Hoai Anh Tran (1999), moving to/building a new house is to have more space and privacy. This can be seen in the residential areas where the houses are planned for more privacy, dividing receptions, living rooms and sleeping rooms from each other. Bathrooms are often directly attached to the sleeping rooms and the solution to manage a separation between the floors is actually quite convenient for generations living together; children and parents can have time for themselves reading, studying, listening to music etc., in their rooms but still get together for dinner and family occasions. To plan new houses for privacy for the different generations is probably a good way to go today, transforming traditional life to modern without jeopardizing the social security system.

Feng shui is often seen as an important factor building and decorating a new house or apartment. The combination geomancy and modern architecture is an important issue when designing both houses and new residential areas. Directions, sizes, dimensions, entrances, locations are examples of parameters being concerned according to the complex laws of feng shui. Thus, to restrict construction only to feng shui would be very complicated in a city and there are ways to avoid ‘bad spirits’ even if the direction of the house, the number of steps or entrance is wrong for you. For example, I was told, an entrance in the wrong direction can be in order if you place a mirror or an aquarium in front of the door as water and the mirror itself will reflect the ‘bad spirits’ out from the house. Even if few are totally convinced of the power of feng shui, taking the risk not concerning it, and thereby getting bad luck is reason enough, just to be on the sure side, that is.

29 I will not describe the parameters of feng shui more than very briefly. My knowledge on the subject is limited to what I have been told in a number of discussions about architecture in Vietnam in general and reading *Another Modernism?* by Hoai Anh Tran (1999), where she describes some basic issues on the subject, which were important for her study on modern architecture in Ha Noi. Nevertheless, feng shui is important in Vietnam and even though this thesis will not go deeper on the subject, I don’t underestimate its importance nor neglect the fact of its impact on people’s lives.
Worshipping is an important part of Vietnamese everyday life. The unlimited numbers of pagodas are frequently visited for worshipping and praying, rather to the family and ancestors than to the gods. In every house, there is at least one altar for worshipping, normally placed high up, just under the ceiling, on the top floor, or even an altar on the roof, to honour the relatives with the highest position in the house. Even though people I have spoken to, Vietnamese friends and temporary acquaintances of different age and sex, do not really follow a religion fully, worshipping ancestors is essential and the pagodas and home altars are therefore very important elements in the Vietnamese society. Possibilities for worshipping, whether people are living in houses, flats, new urban areas or villages, should be considered in architecture. I think this could be one reason why people seem to be active in the design of their homes. Odd elements or proportions in architecture can therefore not simply be considered as low aesthetic values but as an expression of something in between traditions and modern architecture. The width of the house, size of the door, number of steps in the staircase, and location of the entrance are examples of elements giving the house a personal character according what is good for the people living there.

30 Tran (1999)