

BASIC CHALLENGES OF URBAN CULTURE IN HO CHI MINH CITY IN THE NEW ERA TODAY

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Abstract: Ho Chi Minh City, the largest metropolis in Vietnam, is also facing a series of cultural challenges in the context of globalization and rapid urbanization. Increased migration, economic pressures, consumer lifestyles, and digital technology have eroded community spirit and changed urban values. At the same time, the local cultural identity is at risk of fading when public spaces are commercialized and the living environment is degraded. From the perspective of cultural philosophy and development philosophy, the study emphasizes the need for harmony between economy, spirit, and environment, thereby affirming the role of the humanistic value system and Vietnamese identity in creating a Ho Chi Minh City with modernity, creativity, and sustainability.

Keywords: *Urban culture, identity, community, value system, sustainable development.*

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Introduction

Moving with the benefits of meeting the needs of socio-economic development of the country, the rapid and widespread urbanization is causing many undesirable consequences in terms of both culture and social security. For the country to industrialize and modernize, urbanization is an important requirement and a driving force for development, but at the same time, it also creates many new pressures and challenges for urban development. Vietnam is currently one of the countries with a high urbanization rate in the region and compared to the world. In the context of deep international integration and the strong transformation of the industrial revolution 4.0, urban culture in Ho Chi Minh City is an issue that has emerged as an urgent requirement. The city is not only the largest economic and cultural center of the country, but it is also a place of cultural convergence, exchange, and creation, and it faces many basic challenges. These are the risks of identity fading in globalization, the decline of community cohesion under the pressure of urbanization, and the imbalance between economic development – material, and spiritual needs - living environment. Researching and clearly identifying these challenges not only has theoretical significance in cultural philosophy and development philosophy, but also has practical significance in planning strategies to build Ho Chi Minh City into a creative, civilized, and sustainable city in the new era.

Research Method

The research mainly uses an interdisciplinary approach; theories and conceptual frameworks related to urban culture in Ho Chi Minh City are applied and linked to practice. In addition, the article

also appropriately uses the methods of analysis, synthesis, and generalization.

Research questions

- Question 1: What are the basic challenges of urban culture in Ho Chi Minh City in the new era?
- Question 2: What are the basic issues of Ho Chi Minh City urban culture in the new era today?

Research Objective

The purpose of the article is to analyze and clarify the fundamental content related to the basic challenges of urban culture in Ho Chi Minh City in the new era.

Research Result

The basic challenges of urban culture in Ho Chi Minh City in the new era

“New era” is a term used to refer to a new historical period, marked by important events or changes that have a great impact on the development of society. In the context of Vietnam, the term “new era” refers to a new period of national development, characterized by new strategic goals and tasks aimed at promoting progress and prosperity. The era of the Vietnamese people’s rise is a new stage of development, marking the country’s remarkable progress in many fields. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, the country is striving to build a rich, strong, democratic, equitable, and civilized nation. In the urbanization process, urban culture is one of the criteria to evaluate the current status and level of lifestyle in urban areas. In other words, urban culture is a mirror reflecting the urbanization process, and the

adaptability of people to the changes in the appearance of the city. Considering urban culture in general, we must examine it from three basic aspects, specifically:

- **Firstly**, the cultural awareness of the community, people, government, and relevant levels. We have to look at how they live, traditional or completely integrated into the new lifestyle, and whether they see culture as a common problem of the whole society, which reflects the mirror of the new urban area. Or do they see culture as a problem of their own?
- **Secondly**, looking at solutions for culture, art, and all types of performing arts (do we only have tradition, or connect to new forms...) and people's attitudes towards those forms. It is also necessary to consider how people relate to each other (do people connect directly or use modern technology?).
- **Thirdly**, the lifestyle in the family, clan, community, and intangible factors. Because the family is the cell of society, the evaluation of the lifestyle of each stage needs to look at that aspect. In addition, we need to consider intangible factors, which means new spiritual factors. For example, nature is now also considered a soulful factor to be favored by humans. Spirituality here is not religion, but is understood as belief in the laws of nature.

Ho Chi Minh City – the largest metropolis of the country – is a space for cultural convergence, exchange, and strong creativity. In the new era, the city not only has opportunities for comprehensive development but also faces many basic cultural challenges. From the perspective of cultural philosophy and development philosophy, many basic and prominent challenges can be considered as follows:

Firstly, the challenge of identity in the process of globalization and community, social relations

Cultural philosophy asserts that identity serves as a foundation for maintaining the continuity and meaning of communal life. In the case of Ho Chi Minh City, the process of globalization highlights diversity and integration, while simultaneously posing the risk of diluting local identity. Heritage architecture is increasingly obscured by commercial high-rises, traditional cuisine competes with fast food culture, and urban lifestyles are heavily influenced by consumerist values. The development philosophy emphasizes “Sustainable cultural development”, which means ensuring harmony between innovation and conservation. The challenge is how to make urban identity not commercialized, but become an endogenous resource in development. Cultural philosophy considers community as a living environment of humans where values, beliefs, and norms are formed and maintained. However, in the urban life of Ho Chi Minh City, the increase in immigration, the fast pace of life, and economic pressure have blurred the sense of community. Neighborhood relationships are gradually replaced by many functional relationships, and the social connectivity is declining. From the perspective of development philosophy, this is a manifestation of the imbalance between material development and spiritual cohesion. The great challenge is to build an urban culture that is not only based on modern infrastructure but also strengthens community spirit, connecting people with sustainable cultural and ethical values.

Secondly, challenges of governance, public space, lifestyle, and value norms

Public space is a symbol of urban culture, a place that shows the level of civilization in a community. In Ho Chi Minh City, the rapid urbanization process leads to encroachment, commercialization, and a lack of quality public space. Cultural philosophy emphasizes that people live not only in physical space but also in symbolic space; when public space is narrowed, spiritual and cultural life is also affected. From the perspective of development philosophy, this reflects the lack of harmony in the development model, emphasizing economic growth without paying attention to cultural and social values. This is a challenge that requires urban governance to take culture as the foundation, aiming for a “humane city” model in terms of lifestyle and value standards. In the digital age, Ho Chi Minh City is a place that quickly adopts global trends: consumer lifestyle, social networks, online entertainment... This enriches the cultural life, but also poses many challenges regarding value deviation. Cultural philosophy views lifestyle as a specific cultural form of human beings; when traditional norms no longer play a guiding role, the risk of a value crisis will appear. Development philosophy emphasizes the need to build a new value system, both inheriting tradition and adapting to the times. For Ho Chi Minh City, the challenge is to shape an “urban value system” that is modern, civilized, and humanistic, yet remains rooted in the core values of Vietnamese culture. In addition, development philosophy affirms that development is not only about material growth but must also be associated with the harmonious development between people, society, and nature. Ho Chi Minh City is now facing pollution, traffic jams, loss of green space, flooding... These problems are not only in the technical field but also reflect the “Culture of interaction with nature” of the city. Cultural philosophy considers the environment as a living space organically connected to people; when the environment is damaged, the cultural foundation of the community is also threatened. This is a basic challenge in creating a green, sustainable urban culture.

The basic issues of Ho Chi Minh City urban culture in the new era

Ho Chi Minh City – the largest and most dynamic metropolis in Vietnam – is not only the economic center but also the convergence and cultural exchange point of the whole country. In the new era, the city faces numerous challenges, but they can be generalized into three basic and long-term shaping issues: (1) preserving identity amidst globalization, (2) strengthening the community spirit and urban value system, (3) ensuring the balance between material and spiritual development, and living environment.

The identity of urban culture and the risk of fading

Identity is the “core” that helps the city maintain continuity and assert its position. Ho Chi Minh City has a typical Southern identity: liberal, dynamic, multicultural, both adapting Vietnamese traditions and accepting the quintessence of Chinese, Khmer, Cham, and Western culture. However, in the context of globalization and integration, that identity is under many great pressures: heritage architecture is overwhelmed by commercial high-rises; traditional cultural spaces give way to shopping malls; street food, which is a symbol of identity, is at risk of over-commercialization. The underlying cause lies in the economic approach to urban development, which emphasizes short-term benefits without paying enough attention to long-term cultural values. From the perspective of development philosophy, this is a manifestation of the contradiction between development and conservation, when rapid growth easily weakens the endogenous

cultural foundation. The problem is not only to preserve some physical heritage, but also to protect the “urban spirit”, so that Ho Chi Minh City does not become an “unknown” city among a series of similar global cities.

Community spirit and value system in urban life.

Urban culture is not only tied to architecture and landscape, but also to people – the way they live, interact, and connect together. In Ho Chi Minh City, community spirit is a strong point, formed from the open spirit of the immigrant land. However, today, massive migration, industrial life, and economic pressure have weakened social cohesion. People focus more on work, neighborhood relationships become loose, and community ties weaken. Alongside this shift, the transformation of value systems, consumer lifestyles, social networks, online culture, etc., has created the new value scales, sometimes in conflict with traditional norms. Individualism, pragmatism, and a lack of public awareness have become increasingly visible phenomena. Cultural philosophy considers this a manifestation of a “value crisis,” when old values lose their influence while a new one has not yet fully taken shape. From the perspective of development philosophy, this problem reflects the lack of harmony between the material and the spiritual, when society focuses too much on economic growth while neglecting the cultivation of urban cultural and ethical standards.

Balance between economic development, spirit, and living environment

Another general and fundamental problem is the imbalance between economic growth - rapid urbanization, and the spiritual needs - the living environment of residents. Ho Chi Minh City is now facing a series of problems: air pollution, flooding, loss of green space, traffic jams, and noise. These factors are not only related to management techniques but also reflect the culture of human behavior towards nature and society. Development philosophy affirms that sustainable development requires a harmony between three pillars - economy, society, and environment. When the environment is sacrificed for short-term growth, the quality of life declines, and urban culture also weakens. A modern city is not measured solely by its GDP or the number of high-rise buildings, but by its ability to provide residents with a healthy, humane living environment. On the other hand, the lack of public cultural institutions — such as libraries, theaters, and creative parks — has left the city’s spiritual life lagging behind its role as a major cultural hub. This reflects an imbalance between material and spiritual development, leading to the risk of a “superficial urbanization” that lacks a deep humanistic foundation.

Conclusion

Ho Chi Minh City – the largest economic and cultural center of Vietnam – is entering a new era with rapid urbanization and international integration. This process has both created a series of development opportunities and posed many basic cultural challenges. The study pointed out three major issues: (1) the risk of fading urban identity in globalization, when heritage and urban spirit are overwhelmed by commercialization and consumer lifestyle; (2) the decline of community cohesion and change in value system, when migration, industrial life and digital technology blur the social cohesion, and at the same time create the risk of value crisis; (3) the imbalance between material growth, spiritual life and environment, reflected in pollution, decline in green areas, flooding, and lack of public cultural space. Approaching from the cultural philosophy and development philosophy, the study affirms

that culture is not only an outcome but also a driving force of development. The novelty of the study is the generalization of three core groups of challenges, thereby pointing out the necessity of a new urban value system: modern, humane, creative, but still connected with Vietnamese tradition and identity. These findings contribute to the theoretical basis for urban culture research in the context of globalization. In terms of policy implications, Ho Chi Minh City needs to put culture on par with economics and society in urban governance. This includes: preserving heritage, developing public spaces, strengthening cultural institutions, and building a system of values that guide sustainable lifestyles and community awareness. In addition, policies need to encourage a culture of behaving with nature to protect the environment and improve the quality of life. The coordination between the State, the community, and businesses will be the foundation for Ho Chi Minh City to become a civilized, creative, and sustainable city in the new era.

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