

Urban development trends in Hanoi & impact on ways of life, public health and happiness. *Liveability from a Health Perspective*

Author: Stephanie Geertman
Consultant for HealthBridge Canada in Vietnam

Presented at Conference: *Hanoi Millennium – City Past and Future* Organized by UN-Habitat and Global Research Center Hawaii, 12-13 October 2010, Hanoi.

Published in Vietnamese Urban Planning Journal (*Tap Chi Xay Dung*) 2010

1. Introduction

In less than 30 years, Vietnam has developed from one of the poorest nations in the world to the third fastest growing economy of Asia¹, and is the fourth fastest growing economy in the world². The country aspires to be a developed country by 2020³. While some of these changes have improved people's living standards, many of the changes are having a negative impact on people's quality of life, particularly that of the poor and important groups such as children and the elderly.

This paper utilises two examples, the renovation of Hang Da market and the new suburban area Ciputra to outline current urban development trends of Hanoi and their impact on public health, lifestyles and happiness. The paper then introduces the key ingredients for a Liveable City from a Public Health perspective, and ends with the proposal of some alternative approaches for urban development in order to open discussion on the future of Hanoi.

2 Current Urban Development Trends in Hanoi

During the 1990s, Hanoi went through a significant metamorphosis, changing from a city of walking and cycling to a city of personalized motorized transport. Simultaneously, the city changed from one in which people live and work in the same place to a city in which residences are separated from workplaces. These changes have resulted in an enormous increase in traffic movement in the city, consisting mainly of motorbikes and an increasing number of cars. While personalized motorized transport may be considered more convenient than walking, cycling or public transport, the change has led to an increase in traffic injuries and deaths, air pollution, noise pollution, and unrelenting congestion. It has also had a strong and negative impact on the independent mobility of children and the elderly, as well as their ability to utilise quiet streets as places for play, socializing and recreation.

Since the start of the Millennium, the city's skyline is rapidly changing as well, from a city of low buildings to one of high rises, a development mostly taking place in the specialized districts in the new suburbs around Hanoi. The existing urban fabric with which citizens identify themselves is rapidly being replaced by a 'modern' city, a new urban form unfamiliar to most of the city's residents.

The redevelopment of the Hang Da market, and the new urban area Ciputra, are examples of this modernization trend in urban form in Hanoi today.

2.1 Redevelopment of a retail space - destruction of a social space – *Hang Da market*

"Dusty vegetable stalls, reeking seafood, food stalls mixed here and there, crowded narrow roads and swift-handed sellers, who always smile with their customers and sometimes argue loudly with each other, make up the special atmosphere found at traditional markets" (Le, 2008:26).

The scene described by Le will be recognized by anyone who knows Hanoi, or probably anyone who ever visited other Asian fresh markets. In Hanoi, it is reported (Le, 2008:26, Efrogmson *et.al* 2009.:17-18) and observed by the author that most people still prefer the local fresh markets over supermarkets. In any case, due to their stuffy and messy appearance, the markets do not contribute to the civilization policy (clean and organized street), the

¹ After China and Cambodia, according to the International Monetary Fund in 2009.

² After Equatorial Guinea, China and Ireland. Retrieved from: <http://www.mapsofworld.com/world-top-ten/world-top-ten-fastest-growing-economies-map.html>. 8/9/10

³ http://www.vietnambassy-usa.org/learn_about_vietnam/history/

economic profits they generate mostly remain in the hands of the poor and middle class. Possibly also due to food safety issues, the Hanoi People's Committee (HPC) started a policy in which traditional fresh markets are largely going to be replaced by supermarkets and hypermarkets. Hang Da is one of these markets.

Hang Da market is located in the 36 street area, at Ha Trung Street. The old Hang Da market is already demolished, but has many similar characteristic with, for example, the Hom Market (figure 1-3). The new Hang Da market covers the old space of the traditional Hang Da market, 3,367 square meters (0.3367 ha). In this development, the HPC works together with private investors. The design of this market is from Ho Thieu Tri, a well-known French architect of Vietnamese origin⁴.



Figures 1-3. Hom Market (source: Internet)

The construction started in the second quarter of 2009 and it is expected to be ready for the celebration of the 1000 years of Thang Long/Hanoi⁵. The project involves an investment of 220 billion VND (11.5 million USD)⁶ by three companies: the Red River Construction Joint Stock Company (PVC Incomex), Nhat Nam Joint Stock Company and Investment & Trade Limited Company KAF. Exclusive leasing is done by the global real estate consultant, Savills⁷, for Savills Vietnam Limited Company⁸. In other words, the profit from Hang Da market will now go not to small business people but to large companies. As shown by the architect's drawing of the new market, the new building has 'French Style' aesthetics, will host many luxurious shops, and is planned for people with cars (see figure 4).

⁴, 'The Globalisation of Urban Forms in Hanoi', Geertman, Chi & Söderstrom. 2010.

⁵ <http://www.incomex.com.vn/index.php?q=projects/du-dau-tu-xay-dung-cho-hang-da> - date consulted website: 30 January 2009. Language: Vietnamese.

⁶ <http://www.thesaigontimes.vn/Home/dothi/hatang/14077/> - date consulted website: 30 January 2009. Language: Vietnamese

⁷ Savills is a global real estate services provider listed on the London Stock Exchange . They have an international network of more than 200 offices and associates throughout the Americas, the UK, continental Europe, Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East, offering a broad range of specialist property advisory, management and transactional services to clients all over the world.

⁸ <http://www.vnexpress.net/GL/Kinh-doanh/Bat-Dong-san/Du-an/2009/07/3BA10BE4/> - date consulted website: 30 January 2009. Language: Vietnamese.



Figure 4. Art Impression Design Hang Da Market. Source: Architect Ho Thieu Tri.

All the sellers at Hang Da are temporarily relocated in a linear street behind the market area. In interviews conducted with vendors at this market⁹, they said that they expect to move back to the market when it is finished. However, the new building will be a shopping center, and as with most other new markets in Hanoi today, its design is not suitable for local vendors and customers buying fresh products¹⁰. Further, it will become too expensive for the vendors to return. It is designed for middle and upper class customers who are neatly dressed to 'go shopping', and definitely not for daily household shopping where people view the market as part of their private lives, and where they can go to chat with others and buy affordable products while walking in slippers and dressed in casual clothes -- the ultimate character of the traditional market in Hanoi until now. That is, markets have traditionally been a place where people can be themselves, interact with others, buy cheap fresh foods, be considered worthy citizens regardless of their income, and which they often access by foot.

Specifically, the change from the traditional fresh food markets in Hanoi, as with Hang Da, is affecting public health and sense of well-being in the city in several ways:

- (1) The replacement of traditional markets with shopping malls is supporting the development of a car-based city. The drawing of the new Hang Da market/shopping mall shows wide streets and cars. The use of cars in the middle of the old city center in Hanoi is a very unhealthy and problematic development as it will increase traffic jams and thus pollution and will result in a decline in physical activity as well as further deterioration of the quality of life for those living and working in the old city;
- (2) The replacement of traditional markets with shopping malls is increasing the already growing gap between rich and poor even more. Recent research in Vietnam has shown that the well-off use the new shopping centers, while the poor will go to the (replaced) fresh-markets (Figuie & Moustier 2009). This process further sharpens segregation, and will bring about more competition, stress and disharmony among citizens;
- (3) The replacement of traditional markets with shopping malls is supporting industrialized foods through their availability in the new supermarkets. Respected nutrition authorities have stated that in middle income countries, which Vietnam will be soon, hyper/supermarkets are primarily responsible for the diffusion of the high energy, low nutrient processed foods which are associated with the negative consequences of the nutrition transition including obesity, diabetes, and increased rates of other diseases such as heart disease, cancers and stroke (Mendez and Popkin, 2004). In public health terms this is not a desirable development given that the plant-based foods available to large numbers of Vietnamese through fresh markets at affordable prices are considered to be among the health protective foods (Mann, 2000). While supermarkets in Hanoi do sell components of traditional local diets, they do so only to a very limited extent and fresh produce in supermarkets is typically of lower quality than that found at fresh markets. Given that supermarkets actively target the new rising middle-class which is demanding more hygiene and blemish-free products, the problems of poor sanitation in fresh markets are being replaced with the potentially far more dangerous problems of extensive use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and preservatives. Extensive packaging of food not only harms health due to the

⁹ Interviews part of project 'The Globalisation of Urban Forms in Hanoi', Geertman, Chi & Söderstrom. 2010.

¹⁰ From working paper 'Fresh-markets and Liveable Cities; experiences in Europe and Asia and action for Hanoi' Geertman 2010.

lack of freshness but also the environment, in the production and disposal of packaging; it also means that more of the food dollar goes to processors and packagers rather than to farmers, contributing further to inequity and distortions of economic return;

- (4) The replacement of traditional markets with shopping malls is destroying social (public) spaces in the city; fresh markets are the places where people interact with each other, meet old friends and make new ones. Fresh-markets have proven to greatly contribute to social integration, and as such social cohesion in neighborhoods (Ellaway et al 2001, Esselink et al 2004, Dines et al 2006). This is an important feature for residents to feel attached to a local area. Research has shown that public spaces as markets (and streets, and parks) are perceived by users as therapeutic spaces (Dines et al 2006:30). Their value lies in the shared elements of public space, in the social vibrancy of urban life and seeing other people. Destroying this social fabric can destroy social cohesion in a neighborhood, and can cause feelings of isolation in people, especially the elderly and women; public spaces, meanwhile, do much to enhance people's feeling of connection to neighbourhoods, to others, and even their happiness (Efroymsen et al 2009).
- (5) The replacement of traditional markets with shopping malls is damaging the local economy. Fresh-markets not only provide customers with cheap fresh food, but also provide jobs for many people in the area, especially the less well off. Today food production in Vietnam mostly involves small-scale production. Of the total 390,000 units, 80% are small-scale and household producers (Vietnam News 2007). This means the fresh markets in Vietnam are still the main places where fresh food is sold. As such, renovating these markets needs to be done with great care in order to preserve this large scale local economy, which is particularly important given the lack of alternative economic generating opportunities for the poor in the city and the lack of a government safety net for those in need (Efroymsen et al 2009);
- (6) The replacement of traditional markets with shopping malls is replacing cultural ways of living, and cultural and historical symbolic places in the city. Due to the special culture of fresh markets in which local people interact and local foods are sold, the fresh markets have become important places for local culture. Fresh markets in cities are important assets that have key roles in neighborhood place identity (Dines et al. 2006:14). This is very important for people to feel connected to an area, to bond with each other, and as such to feel happy; thus for example one of the main pillars of 'Gross National Happiness', an alternative measure to GDP which sets out to measure people's wellbeing, social connectedness and happiness, is preservation of local culture (Centre for Bhutan Studies 1999).

2.2 From social equality to social exclusion: *Ciputra*

Ciputra is located in the northwest of Hanoi, about 7,4 km from the city center and 21,5 km from Noi Bai international airport. The area is largely built on the previous peach tree fields belonging to the commune Phu Thuong, and other agricultural fields. Ciputra is marketed as 'Ciputra International City'; when finished it will cover 323 hectares of former agricultural fields. The total registered investment of the project is 2.11 billion USD which was licensed on December 30, 1996. The project was invested by Nam Thang Long Development Co., Ltd – a joint venture between Ciputra Group (Indonesia) and the Investment and Development of Urban Infrastructure Corporation (UDIC), operating under the HPC11.

Ciputra is surrounded by villages and agricultural land. There is a sharp contrast between the area of Ciputra and its surroundings. Inside Ciputra it is quiet, with a few cars and a lost motorbike, and people walking. Directly outside the Ciputra area, motorbikes dominate, and all public space is used for parking or local business activities. Ciputra is accessed by guarded gates. The aesthetics used for its urban design and planning is based on earlier designs by the Indonesian Ciputra Group, which in turn are influenced by gated communities and low rise planning in the USA – models of building which are now being widely criticized and rejected for their contribution to traffic, air and noise pollution, social isolation, and unsustainable use of resources.



Fig. 5-6. Ciputra International City 2010 (Source: Internet)

Now, many of you might say that this new Ciputra area has many features of a 'Liveable City': it has green spaces, people can walk inside the area, there is fresh air, and it has some playgrounds. However, there are some serious ways in which this type of new residential area developing in Hanoi today is having a negative impact on the health and happiness of people in the city:

- (1) Ciputra contributes to an increasing gap between rich and poor. The place is promoted as "*The Key to Change Your Life*"; another slogan is "*There are certain moments when we are presented with the opportunity to make changes to better our lives*" (from brochure 2004). However this place is only affordable by the well-off; there is no space here for the poorer population 'to change their lives'. While all houses and apartments in Ciputra are owned by Vietnamese, half of the houses and apartments are rented to foreigners. Villas are leased for 2.500 USD – 4.500 USD a month¹², apartments for 800-2.500¹³ a month. As such the area has generated an exceptional source of income for the owners owning properties here. Villas bought in 2004 for 400.000 USD are today worth 2 million USD¹⁴. Thus, this area is not only a place affordable only for the upper-class Vietnamese, it also makes them even wealthier. This brings great pressure to Hanoi's urban society, some have it 'all', and some have 'almost nothing'; such social differences bring about a lot of tension and stress, affecting people's sense of well-being and health, especially of the urban poor.
- (2) Ciputra increases traffic problems in the city. In the area there are essentially no facilities for its residents and essentially no workplaces. For children, the 'city' only has two schools in Ciputra: the UN International School (UNIS) and Singapore International School (SIS), the new International School Hanoi Academy. But not everyone wants to put their children into an International School. The whole area only has two small grocery shops and only one restaurant/bar. Such limited services are not enough to serve all of Ciputra's residents. People who live in Ciputra and want other options need to commute to other areas for services such as shops and schools. This means almost all of the residents need to commute daily to other parts of the city, often the inner city. The traveling is, in most if not all cases, by car and often in large SUVs which are particularly inappropriate in a densely populated city such as Hanoi. This means more traffic on the roads of Hanoi and more pressure to provide car parking, while each car likely only carries 1-2 persons in it.
- (3) Ciputra impacts social relationships. Good social relationships are vital to feelings of happiness (Easterlin 2003, Christakis & Fowler 2009). Scientific evidence shows that they are even more important for people's happiness than money. Other research has shown that social relationships are vital to social cohesion in a neighborhood, which is needed to improve feelings of safety and belonging. People in Ciputra have money, however social relationships are not adequately supported here. The area is very empty in the daytime as most of its residents are away at work and school; grandparents living in extended families walk through the neighborhood and some sit on benches in the playground. From talks with them we know they are bored and miss the bustling city life on the streets elsewhere in Hanoi. Other people in Ciputra during the day are servants, gardeners, nannies and traffic guards. As a result there is little interaction during the day among residents or anyone else. Ciputra does have neighborhood organizations, but the gatherings they organize are limited to certain events and certain types of people, and is not the same as daily socializing. Thus the social relationships vital to people's happiness are to a great extent lacking in Ciputra.

¹² <http://www.hanoiproperty.com>, issued on 26/03/2010

¹³ idem

¹⁴ From talks with people living in Ciputra in 2009.

- (4) Ciputra facilitates the process of newly well-off people excluding themselves from others. In its urban design this is seen in the high walls which surround the area. Residents in Ciputra are socially connected with each other through their similarities in life. They have similar incomes and status, they drive big cars, use supermarkets instead of open and fresh markets, play tennis at tennis courts, and play golf. Due to their new status, they are excluding themselves from others and are not interacting with other people in Hanoi anymore. Half of the residents in Ciputra are foreigners, and the Vietnamese in Ciputra feel very much bonded with them, and sometimes even look down on 'uncivilized' Vietnamese living outside of Ciputra¹⁵. The users of Ciputra told us they feel 'more civilized' living in Ciputra, as opposed to those living elsewhere in the city. That is, Ciputra is not only un-Vietnamese but anti-Vietnamese, rejecting much of what characterizes day-to-day life for the locals of Hanoi.

- (5) Ciputra has destroyed a historical and traditional symbolic place. Ciputra is built on the peach tree fields that were grown here for the Vietnamese New Year. This used to be an important symbolic place. It changed from a place that people in the city identified and bonded with – a place they loved about 'their' city, to a place which is unfamiliar to them, a place which refers in its aesthetics to Malaysia and Indonesia. It has been proven that citizens need places with continuity, places of history and symbolic places; those are the places with which people identify, which give them a feeling of belonging. In addition Ciputra has destroyed the agricultural fields of communities who live in this area, as such it has a strong negative impact on the local economy in this area as well as the environment. Again, it is replacing what is Vietnamese with a bland, characterless, globalized but placeless area that is anything *but* a community.

2.3 Trends in Urban Development in Hanoi and Their Impact on Public Health & Happiness

From these two examples we can summarize seven important trends in Hanoi's urban development which threaten public health and the well-being of the city's inhabitants.

The first trend is the choice for car-based urban development. The idea behind motorized transport is to commute faster, do more business, be more dynamic, and make more money. Cars are of course also an important status symbol. Although Hanoi is a city of small streets, when people get wealthier they often aspire to have a bigger car than their neighbour. However, streets in Hanoi have become overcrowded, and at rush hour traffic can come to a complete standstill. As a result, people waste time and fuel, and the city suffers from unacceptably high rates of air pollution; related to this, citizens suffer from high rates of respiratory problems. Scientific evidence suggests that road users of all kinds are exposed to higher levels of air pollution due to the fact that they are part of the motorized traffic (Han & Naeher 2006). This is especially the case with motorbike drivers and other people in the streets openly exposed to the motorized traffic. This air pollution generates health problems such as asthma and death from stroke¹⁶ and dramatically reduces quality of life in the city.

The second trend is related to the first: the disappearance of spaces where people can walk or cycle. This has led to drastic declines in physical activity as part of daily life. The only physical activity which we observed in the city of Hanoi are those people still exercising in the parks and around the lakes. This change from active transport (walking and cycling) to passive transport (motorized), and the lessening social contacts in the city, have great impact on people's health. Daily physical activity is of great importance to public health. It is important to understand that even moderate levels of physical activity can reduce the risk of various chronic diseases. Specifically, physical activity can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, colon cancer (risk can be reduced by as much as 50%), breast cancer in women, type-2 diabetes (the risk of developing it can be reduced by as much as 50%), osteoporosis (weak and easily broken bones), arthritis (physical activity improves function, relieves symptoms, and decreases need for medication) and obesity. A common phrase in Hanoi is that "people here do not like to walk/cycle". A more accurate phrase would be, "This city is not designed to facilitate or encourage walking or cycling." It is also important to note that while physical activity is essential for health and happiness, it is far easier to maintain an active regimen when it is part of one's daily routine; gyms and even parks are no substitute for a walkable, cycleable city where people can do their errands and commuting by foot and bicycle. Since walking and cycling are, along with public transit, the most space-efficient means of transport, reductions in their prevalence further contribute to traffic congestion, leading to a vicious cycle where traffic continues to get

¹⁵ Interviews as part of the project 'The Globalisation of Urban Forms in Hanoi', Geertman, Chi & Söderstrom. 2010.

¹⁶ While everyone suffers, those particularly affected include newborns, children, the elderly, the poor, and people with pre-existing health problems such as heart disease, asthma and diabetes: that is, a significant portion of the population.

worse as the space-efficient means become too unpleasant or dangerous to be an option.

The third trend is the disappearance of spaces where people can interact, where they can meet others and make new friends. Public spaces include parks, playgrounds and lakes, fresh markets, and even sidewalks, walking streets and the space in front of houses. As mentioned earlier, all these spaces are essential for social interactions and physical activity, and their quality contributes to people's affection for and sense of belonging to their city. The once-charming city of Hanoi risks losing much of what made it special and valuable as it continues to destroy public spaces and fails to create new ones in new areas.

The fourth trend is the design of a new city for the well-off, from shopping centers to residential areas. This leads to sharp segregation and contributes to great stress among the population. It also involves the decline of affordable fresh foods and other local products, which means a less healthy diet for the wealthy and fewer income-earning opportunities for the poor.

The fifth trend is the replacement of historical and traditional places important in the daily lives of residents. Traditional places function as symbols, providing continuity in places, and are important for people's perception of the city, for their feeling that they are 'part of the city', to be able to identify and bond with the city. Today these places are replaced by new anonymous spaces and buildings. As a result people feel less connected to the city and even with each other. The risk of social isolation increases and related to this is the risk for depression, as well as vandalism and other crime.

The sixth trend is the development of homogenous/specialized areas. Residential places like Ciputra are devoid of services and workplaces. This increases traffic movement in the city, especially by private motorized transport, greatly contributing to pollution and assorted diseases. In addition the traffic contributes greatly to stress, and thus impacts negatively on the functioning of the heart, and as well leads again to depression. More traffic also means less outdoor play, less socializing, and less independent movement of children and the elderly, thereby further contributing to declines in quality of life despite rising incomes.

The seventh trend is 'civilization' through banning informal activities and reducing local diversity in the urban fabric. Informal activities in the streets of Hanoi, like food sellers, small restaurants, and other vendors and activities are an important part of daily life. Such activities produce a culture of 'seen and be seen', of interactions between people in the city, and they enable jobs and affordable foods and other products for the lesser-well off. In Hanoi it is an important local culture that even the new well-off driving cars are enjoying: witness the great popularity of many sidewalk restaurants, bars and cafes. You can see people driving in big cars that stop at local /famous traditional food shops on streets to eat. This culture is appreciated not only by tourists but also by local people and is an important part of the city's identity. Therefore we believe that respecting this informal economy and way of life in new urban design will support a Liveable Hanoi. Another important aspect is diversity in the urban fabric. Many new urban areas are designed in a homogenous way. People need variation, excitement, and uniqueness. Keeping a diverse form and encouraging household production will support creativity and participation, cohesion, and a strong, durable, healthy social fabric.

Thus, many of the trends in urban development in Hanoi are in our view not supportive for the health and happiness of the city's residents. In the discussion of the trends we have already addressed many of the key ingredients for Liveable Cities from a public health perspective; the following section provides more information on this topic.

3. Key Ingredients for a Liveable City from a Public Health Perspective

A Liveable City from a public health perspective is a city that supports quality of life and happiness - a city which supports citizens' good health and well-being. Well-being is understood as a positive concept; a dimension of a 'social model' of health that locates individual experience within social contexts (Bowling, 1991; Blaxter, 2004). Much is already known about influences such as the role of social networks, social support, humour and leisure activities as well as job satisfaction on people's quality of life, well-being and perceptions of happiness (see, for example, Diener and Ratz, 2000). Recently, concerted attempts have been made to examine how such questions play out in urban environments, in particular in all kinds of open and public spaces (from parks, streets, sidewalks, and fresh markets, to porches). This research shows that there is a direct relationship between people's experiences of the urban environment and their sense of well-being (Ellaway et al, 2001; Airey, 2003, Dines et al 2006).

Thus for a Liveable City from a public health perspective we are not only looking at problems related to health due to pollution, physical activity, access to healthy foods and so on, but also how the design of the urban

environment can contribute to establishing and keeping social networks, social support, humour and leisure activities. This is, thus, a broad concept which includes good health due to the people's quality of life, well-being and perceptions of happiness.

Key ingredients which good urban design and urban planning should support to contribute to a Liveable City include:

(1) The flow of fresh air in the city

This means the urban fabric supports an environment with little pollution, clean modes to commute like walking and cycling, and environmentally-friendly and space efficient public transit. The urban environment should not allow factories or other production that contribute greatly to air pollution inside the city. Nature, in the form of trees, water bodies, and grassy parks are vital parts of this Liveable City, contributing to fresh air and also good drainage. All residents should have free access to visit these places.

(2) A low-stress environment

The urban environment should have spaces where people can retreat: places free of noise. Fun places. Events such as festivals that occur at specific times in the year contribute to fun, as do water bodies in the city that children and adults can play in when it is hot. Benches under trees should provide shady retreats, parks big and small should give people quiet environments. Hard (paved) spaces such as traffic-free squares should also provide people with places to walk, play, sit...and interact.

(3) Abundant physical activity

The urban environment should support physical activity which is crucial for mental and physical health. Urban forms which support walking and cycling are important. To enable walking and cycling, urban planners need to consider density, and diversity in their design. One concept we encourage planners to use is the 3D approach (Density, Diversity, Design¹⁷). Out of respect for pedestrians and in acknowledgment of all the narrow streets, not all the surfaces should accommodate cars; making some lanes also motorbike-free would greatly enhance social interaction, physical activity, independent movement of the elderly and children, and opportunities for life-enhancing recreation and play as well as soul-nurturing quiet.

(4) A safe environment (low in accidents and crime)

The urban environment should support healthy foods, safe ways to commute, an environment low in pollution and crime. Quality environments enhance social relations, and when social relations in a neighborhood are good there is less chance for crime. People keep an eye on each other and trust each other. Fresh markets have an important role in supplying enough healthy food; rather than tearing them down, the quality and hygiene of the food available in the markets should be improved – though notably *not* by replacing them with far less healthy processed foods.

(5) Social networking

The urban environment should support social networking, that is, the interaction within a group of people in a neighborhood, family, company or elsewhere. Research has shown that local social networks are a principal source of attachment to place (Dines et al 2006:13). One person feels that he or she 'belongs' to a group, and as such people feel connected to a place. This is also known as 'bonding' and is an important contributor to happiness and sense of well-being. When people feel more attached to their environment they are more likely to avoid trashing it and to work to preserve its quality. Public spaces where people can meet are essential for social networking.

(6) Social integration

The urban environment should support social integration. Many outdoor activities occur in groups, which leads to shared experiences which are likely to exert a positive influence on social integration in neighborhoods. Social integration can occur on different levels. First, on the level of seeing and being seen, meeting people in the neighborhood that belong to a different group. Undertaking activities together can be considered as a second level, such as playing football together. A third level is the development of friendships and other intimate relationships (visiting each other's houses). Social integration is not self-evident. Many residential areas are dominated by one class or ethnic group. When people interact with those different from themselves, they gain more understanding of and sympathy for others, and are less likely to harbor harmful prejudices about people.

¹⁷ See working paper "Walkability in Hanoi: Design, Density and Diversity +", Daniels et al 2010 for HealthBridge. Those interested in this paper, please contact HealthBridge in Hanoi.

Such interactions are often called 'bridging'. This is an important aspect in the well-being of individuals and in contributing to social relationships in a city, to understanding each other, to respect, genuine civility and equality.

(7) Active citizenship & participation

The urban environment and its design should support active citizenship. This includes participation (coming outside and letting your voice be heard), taking care of the physical and social living environment, developing responsibility for the quality of communal areas, and developing a sense of pride and identification with the neighborhood, of belonging to the place where you live.

(8) Continuity

The (design of) urban environment should support continuity. Research has shown that emotional attachment to place can become consolidated over time (Dines et al 2006:13). Length of residence in one place can therefore be important. Urban design and planning should respect historical icons in the existing urban fabric with which citizens identify themselves, and which are landmarks in orientation. Related to this, urban design and planning should respect and support local traditions.

(9) Distinctiveness & diversity

The (design of) urban environment should support distinctiveness and diversity. Certain physical and social characteristics are found important for people to feel part of a city (Dines et al 2006:13), such as public spaces like the local market and local parks. However, this could also include historical icons as mentioned above. Distinctiveness and diversity are also needed for people to be creative, to be part of one's city. In addition to inclusion is the importance of people being able to feel different and proud of this difference. Another important aspect of diversity is diversity in functions and in services in different areas. When there are enough services of different kinds in one area, people do not have to commute long distances throughout the city; areas diverse in uses (schools, shops, various workplaces, and other services) support walking and cycling which in turn make the area far more livable.

(10) The local economy

The local economy in the form of small scale shops is extremely important for the lesser well-off in society. In times of global economic downturn, these local economies become even more important. Respecting local economies in places of renewal and supporting these local economies gives those less well off more flexibility to make a living, helps make the city's economy less dependent on global forces, and will contribute to continuity in the city: local and informal trade are a vital part of the city's culture but also its economy and viability.

4. Towards a Liveable Hanoi: alternative ways of urban development

There are two competing models of cities (Douglass 2009). One is based on consumption, whereby people use advertising to choose an array of products that will bring them personal and individual pleasure. They work hard to afford those purchases, and in being able to buy the goods that are constantly promoted, they believe they will experience happiness, which at a national level is measured albeit rather indirectly through economic growth. The other model is based on social networks, wherein people's links to community – interactions with family, neighbours and friends – brings a lasting contentment and even happiness. In the one, moments of pleasure and joy can be purchased, in the other, they are freely available in daily encounters on streets, in parks and in other public spaces. "The 'modern' city of luxury apartments, shopping malls, highways, and gated communities encourages consumption while the 'old fashioned' city of plazas, parks, markets, pedestrian walkways, and busy sidewalks encourages interaction. In the modernization view, plazas and parks represent a waste of space that could be utilized for economic purposes, and shopping malls replace open markets in the drive towards ever-increasing consumption; in the socialization or quality of life view, such open and public spaces are considered vital for people's interactions, health and well-being" (Efroymsen et.al. 2009:5).

"..the thoroughly "modern city" fails to address many of people's basic psychological needs: to watch, be around, and interact with others at different levels of intimacy, in order to feel part of a community and to reaffirm human connections. This is not surprising; research has shown that happiness continues to rise with income only to a certain level, and then is associated more with community and social connections than with money; further, the more people are exposed to advertising, the less happy they are" (Easton 2006).

The new developments discussed in this paper -- the Hang Da market and the residential area Ciputra -- are clearly products of urban design which aspires to produce a 'modern' city; that is, a city of consumption. From a

public health perspective, however, it is important not only to produce a city that supports economic prosperity, but also one marked by social prosperity, which is needed to support citizens' happiness and good health. It is proven that when people have a good sense of well-being and happiness which is supported by the environment, people will be sick less often and more pro-active. This will lead to people happy in their jobs and lives – more energy and creativity which, in turn, leads to more chances for positive innovations in society. Such dynamism will contribute directly to a growing economy. As such, we are not only promoting a city of social relations; we believe that happy and healthy people are also vital for an innovative, growing, flourishing economy.

At the same time many citizens and urban professionals are dreaming of a different Hanoi, a city vibrant with nature, lakes, fresh markets, parks, other fun places, and human interactions¹⁸. A city that reflects the fact that a rich social fabric and healthy environment can enhance quality of life even more than rising incomes.

A question which is asked very often by urban professionals in Hanoi is: How can we build this Liveable City? What methods can we use? Well, we can't supply one method, because there is no single solution, no 'one size fits all' method to create a Liveable City. However, we offer in this paper the key ingredients that should be taken into account in urban design and planning to support the development of a Liveable Hanoi from a public health perspective: fresh air, a low-stress environment, abundant opportunities to be physically active no matter your age or income, a safe environment low in traffic injuries and crime, social networking, social integration, active citizenship & participation, continuity, distinctiveness & diversity, and a thriving local economy.

In addition, we propose to work with multi-disciplinary teams. At present Hanoi is developing with the help of many professionals who often work separately from one another. This often leads to highly bureaucratic procedures, unrealistic plans and waste of time and money. In multi-disciplinary teams, specialists can work together, and be more flexible, realistic and innovative. It is important to have the participation and voice of different types of professionals working together. Thus, next to inviting public health advisors in urban development there should be other advisors, from traffic advisors to sociologists, geographers, urban planners, architects, economists, and others. In addition, the participation of citizens in Hanoi is important to ensure inclusion of their voices not just after but during the urban planning process, not as passive listeners but as active, informed participants. This will not only prevent waste of money and time after the urban planning process, but even more important, it will restore to the city's residents the feeling of being part of the development of 'their' city, making them feel proud (again) of Hanoi. We can start producing a city which supports people's health, happiness, well-being and quality of life in general. It is not too late for Hanoi, but it is urgent. The time to start is today!

For any questions, comments, discussions, or collaborations please contact us:

Stephanie Geertman / Tran Thi Kieu Thanh Ha
HealthBridge Vietnam Office
No. 15-16, 232 Lane, Ton Duc Thang Street
Dong Da District, Hanoi, Vietnam
Tel: +84.4.3.511.9904

email: stephanie@healthbridge.org.vn / hatran@healthbridge.org.vn

References

Airey, L. 2003. "'Nae as nice a scheme as it used to be": lay accounts of neighbourhood incivilities and well-being', *Health & Place*, vol 9, pp 129-37.

Blaxter, M. 2004. *Health*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bowling, A. 1991. *Measuring Health: A review of quality of life measurement scales*, Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Centre for Bhutan Studies 1999, *Gross National Happiness*. Thimphu, Bhutan.

Christakis, N.A. & Fowler J.H. 2009. *Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks and How They*

¹⁸ From experience with 'saving Thong Nhat Park' campaign in which HealthBridge cooperated with many motivated local urban professionals and citizens.

Shape Our Lives. Little, Brown and Company.

Daniel, K., Efroymson, D. & Geertman, S. 2010. "Walkability in Hanoi: Design, Density and Diversity +". HealthBridge Position Paper.

Diener, E. and Ratz. D.R. (eds) 2000. *Advances in quality of life theory and research*. London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Dines, N. and Cattell, V. with Gesler, W., and Curtis, S. 2006. *Public Spaces, social relations and well-being in East London*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, University of London. Policy Press, Bristol.

Douglass, M. 2009. 'Liveable Cities: Conviviality Versus Neo-Developmentalism in Pacific Asia's Urban Future'. Presentation at International Conference on Hanoi – A Liveable City for All, Hanoi 1-2 July 2009.

Easterlin, R.A. 2003. 'Explaining Happiness', Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences No. 100.

Easton, M. 'The politics of happiness'. *BBC News*, 22 May 2006.

Efroymson, D, TTKT Ha and PT Ha, (2009). *Public Spaces, How they humanize cities*. HealthBridge and WBB Trust, Dhaka.

Efroymson, D, Hafiz, RH, and Jones, L, ed. 2008. *Ecocity Planning: Images and Ideas*. WBB Trust, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, and HealthBridge, Dhaka.

Efroymson, D, M Rahman and R Shama 2009. *Making Cities More Liveable*. HealthBridge and WBB Trust, Dhaka

Ellaway, A., MacIntyre, S. and Kearns, A. 2001. 'Perceptions of place and health in socially contrasting neighborhoods', *Urban Studies*, vol 38, no 12, pp 2299-318.

Esselink et al 2004:5. 'Markt in zicht!' Results of national market research in the Netherlands 2004. I&O research for CVAH.

Figuie, M., Moustier, P., 2009. 'Market appeal in an emerging economy: Supermarkets and poor consumers'. *Food Policy* 34 (2), 210-217.

Geertman 2010. 'Fresh-markets and Liveable Cities; experiences in Europe and Asia and action for Hanoi'. HealthBridge Position Paper.

Geertman, Chi & Söderstrom 2010. The Globalization of Urban Forms in Hanoi. Research for the University of Neuchâtel. Available online after 15/10/2010, website University of Neuchâtel.

Geertman & Thong 2010. "TOAN CẦU HOA VỚI KIẾN TRÚC VÀ BIỂU HIỆN VĂN HÓA ĐÔ THỊ MỚI Ở HÀ NỘI" / "Globalization, architecture and new urban cultures in Hanoi". *Thap Thi Xay Dung /Construction Magazine*, Ministry of Construction Vietnam. May 2010.

Han, X. & Naeher, L.P. 2006. 'A review of traffic-related air pollution exposure assessment studies in the developing world'. *Environment International* 32 (2006) 106 – 120

Le Cam Le 2008. 'Never Fade Away'. *Vietnam Economic Times*, special report on fresh markets in Vietnam, page 26-27. July 2008.

Mann 2000. 'Optimizing the plant-based diet'. *Asia Pacific J Clin Nutr* (2000) 9 (Suppl.): S60-S64

Mendez, M., Popkin, B., 2004. 'Globalization, urbanization and nutritional change in the developing world'. *Electronic Journal of Agricultural and Development Economics* 1 (2), 220-241.

Vietnam News 2007. 'Food hygiene inspections tightened'. 13/08/2007.