

Transforming Informal Public Spaces into Formal Favorite Public Places for the Youth in Hanoi City in Consideration of Transgressive Activities with Critical Mapping and Participatory Spatial Visualization Approaches

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Abstract

High-quality public space forms an indispensable part in the social life of any city worldwide. making the city vibrant and livable for all people. Attractiveness includes openness, accessibility, quality of landscape and spatial design, equipment, diversity of activities and so on. For the youth, transgressive activities are often the top factor of attractiveness today and represent a bold step in spatial design for use, because transgression is normally associated with the youth. However, as a new theme transgression has not been properly investigated in Vietnam. Thus, the authors aim to analyze those activities from different perspectives and identify which ones can be regarded as positive in order to be accepted, so that they can be allowed to take place in public places, hereby making them more attractive, at least to the youth as the majority of users. The research paper also explores what kinds of transgressive activities can be suitable to a particular public place through three case studies in Hanoi (one café, one footbridge and one alley), supported with mapping and participatory visualization as key research methods, and discusses how such a public place can be improved as a result of having something new to offer the youth. The initial research findings are expected to pave the way for future projects to study transgression in urban/peri-urban public places more systematically and comprehensively, first in theory and then in practice, in order to enhance the quality of those places as well as to “upgrade” them from “informal” to “formal” in terms of social awareness and legal recognition.

1. Introduction

1.1 Aim of Research

This research aims to explore informal public spaces in Hanoi and understand how the youth in Hanoi will interact with those public spaces through normal activities and then with transgressive activities.

1.2 Context of Urban Development in Hanoi and Current Situation of Public Spaces

Public space is considered an indispensable element in the social life of any city in the world. High-quality public space is a prerequisite for a vibrant urban life, making a city livable for all people. However, under the impact of rapid urbanization and population growth, public spaces in big cities across Vietnam are decreasing in both quantity and quality [1]. As the capital city, Hanoi has been facing a crisis of public space as a consequence of urbanization boom and population explosion since 2008. The 2019 census showed that Hanoi's population exceeded 8 million and the demographic density increased to 9,343 people/km² [2]. With the population growth and the city expansion [3], public spaces decreased abruptly in both area and quality [4]. The statistics provided by the National Institute of Urban Planning in 2017 revealed that the public space area accounted for only 0.3% of the city's total land area and the per capita public space area was estimated at only 1.48 m², compared to 20 m² per person in developed countries [5]. The so-called "gaps in the administrative systems" result in violations in urban planning regulation, sometimes for individual purposes or because of the authorities' compromises with the residents while they are trying to secure a place to live in the city with uncertain land use tenure [6]. In a recent study, Julie-Anne Boudreau pointed out that public spaces are unevenly distributed in Hanoi, with both green areas and water bodies being investigated. Sports and recreational facilities fail to meet the needs of most inhabitants [7].

1.3 The Youth and Current Situation of Public Spaces for the Youth in Hanoi

Youth is a useful concept to be referred to in our research, because of the significant influence of this age group on the urban transition, particularly on public spaces. First of all, this group of young people makes up a large proportion of the population age pyramid in Vietnam, and they tend to go to large cities, especially Hanoi, which has been selected as a case study, because Hanoi is home to a large number of higher education and vocational training institutions. Hanoi city also offers many employment opportunities, economic potential, a high quality of social as well as technical infrastructure, etc. Secondly, the youth is also the age group that may be the most vulnerable to the impact of the integration process, characterized with the ability to keep up with the trends of the time, leading to the formation of non-traditional standards reflecting the diverse needs of young people in their spiritual daily life. Thirdly, young people appear to better understand the outer world, the changing society and the standards of human relations than the others. They even need to understand themselves and demonstrate that they play certain roles in modern society. In addition, young people are able (and prefer) to think independently, which is closely related to the ability to discover new things and to be creative. Finally, the youth is a really complex social group, showing a diversity of ages, genders, occupations, places of residence, origins, orientations for values, interests, spiritual practices, behavioral aspects and social options. However, in Vietnam, there has been no comprehensive or systematic research so far on the needs or ways of using public spaces among young people and their most frequently visited places. Furthermore, by means of on-site observation, it is possible to realize that many spaces are somehow not officially recognized as public spaces in urban areas, but they actually attract a large number of young people. In the so-called informal public spaces, many activities take place with the active and/or frequent participation of the youth [8]. Nevertheless, both formal and informal public spaces are gradually lost and transformed in reality for various reasons. Public spaces are privatized, occupied or controlled, and thus could no longer be common spaces for all citizens [9].

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions of Public Spaces Worldwide

There is no universal definition of public space, because it is a complex and multi-dimensional concept. In America and Europe, public space is related to access and exclusion [10]. Although public space includes spatial and social aspects, social aspects are more often emphasized in definitions and concepts. Irvin and Erwin believe that public space is a space where everyone has the right to access, regardless of his/her social status or economic condition, without distinction of age, sex, ethnicity and this right is granted or legally protected. Those spaces are truly shared by everyone [11]. In the 1960s, Hannah Arendt argued that public spaces helped people meet, talk and recognize each other's presence in a space, which could be an indispensable condition for a civil society [12]. That

is to say, public spaces are places where anyone can go, where most activities are spontaneous rather than planned, and where people can communicate or connect with one another, simply walk through or sit, if they wish, and watch others doing different things there [13]. The social role of public spaces was accentuated as they provide opportunities for individuals and communities to develop and enrich their lives. Four social roles of public spaces were identified: (1) as a forum for public life; (2) as a meeting place for different social groups; (3) as a place to display icons and images in the society; (4) as a part of the communication system about urban activities. Good public spaces offer a kind of playground for citizens to participate and have dialogues, thereby creating an ideal environment for spontaneous or predetermined meetings, with experience of a variety of interactions, behavior and trust [14].

2.2 The Concept of Public Space in the Legal Documents in Vietnam

In Vietnam, historically, public spaces in urban areas have always existed in two patterns: formal and informal. So-called informal public spaces appeared early, when community activities took place in communal yards. Paddy fields, after harvesting the crops, could be used as playgrounds in leisure time. In case of a festival, people went out to the vacant land lots that had been cleaned before or some private yards as well as community yards, depending on the level and size of each activity. Formal public spaces, such as city squares, city parks and gardens, etc., came much later, when the French started planning the cities in Vietnam.

However, from the perspective of state management, public space in Vietnam has not yet been officially defined, mentioned or specified in the law in general, or in technical regulations on planning and architecture in particular [15]. The concept of public space was first mentioned in the Government's Decree No. 38/2010/ND-CP on management of space, architecture and urban landscape. Article No. 9 in Section 1 refers to the minimum ratio of green areas and land areas for public spaces, and Article 11 focuses on the landscape of streets, roads and squares. Section 1 also requires the creation of public spaces and cityscape, as well as the improvement of the quality of urban environment [16]. But what can be categorized in a public space term has not yet been defined or described in this document. Circular No. 22/2019/TT-BXD about promulgating the National Technical Regulation on Construction Planning, in sub-section 1.4.15 (Urban green areas) annotated that green land to be used for the public in urban areas includes parks, gardens and playgrounds, ensuring the access for all people. Thus, in the National Regulation on Urban Planning, public space is not defined directly, but indirectly mentioned instead [17].

From a social perspective, public spaces are largely considered spaces that allow people to satisfy their needs for interaction, sharing, meeting, entertainment, relaxation and comfort of individuals in the society while trying to integrate themselves into the society. These public spaces can take any form, possibly a park, a rustic tea or coffee shop or even a sidewalk, or an open air area between buildings, regardless of the type of ownership or the shape of that space. A public space is thought to provide an environment for social activities and interactions to take place. These are called informal public spaces, because they have not yet been officially recognized in legal documents by the authority or widely accepted by experts, but they always play an important role in everyday city life and are enthusiastically endorsed by the public. Streets or sidewalk restaurants are the most common informal public spaces in large cities in Vietnam, clearly showing the lifestyle, culture and features of the urban landscape.

2.3 Perceptions of Transgression of Young People in the World and in Vietnam

In the world

Cambridge Dictionary of English defines "transgression is the act or process of breaking a law or a moral rule". Transgressing social and moral standards is a commonplace human phenomenon. This is particularly the case for children and adolescents who are in the process of developing their understanding of the social world around them [18]. Midgette's research shows that children and adolescents in Western countries (mostly in North America) who engage in social and moral transgressions may be influenced by social-cultural factors, such as how their life is organized and how they spend their time [19]. Nic Crowe and Kate Hoskins in their research on the youth cultures conceptualize transgressive behavior as a violation of moral or social boundaries [20]. In the relation with spaces, Cresswell states that "Transgressing can be understood as any public behavior that goes against the assumed and normalized rules of a given space, thereby infringing upon, or violating, the status quo. To transgress is to have crossed a line that was not meant to be crossed, to have acted in a way that deviates from the established norms of a place, therefore bringing into question that which was previously considered natural and assumed [21]. In Asian countries, the youth transgression has not been properly investigated. Lui J. tries to explore Chinese adolescent's social and moral transgressions and strategies for self-correction. This study found that Chinese youth reported conventional transgression events and academic considerations involving transgression occurred more frequently than other domains [22].

In Vietnam

In recent years, there have been some studies conducted on the transgression of the youth, but mostly undertaken by international scholars. Transgression in Vietnam is not tightly associated with youthfulness, whereas it is at the core of the understanding of young people in the West. Hence, unlike the often negative connotation ascribed to (mostly male) youths in the West, the youth in Vietnam has for many years symbolized hope and social dynamism. While young people have been a key target group of political propaganda and a strategic group for the Communist Party (through mass youth organizations, for instance), recent research on the youth suggests that they can no longer be organized through conventional socialist mechanisms [23]. Some signs in public spaces are considered transgression in Vietnam, for example: romantic expression of love in public spaces are not encouraged, because sexual behavior to be seen in the public contradicts social codes [24], the youth's activities to express their hope to live their "lives as an art" are often regarded as transgressive in nature, because this lifestyle is often thought to come from Western culture which is somehow still strange in the Vietnamese culture, at least in view of the authority and some elderly people who are conservative in thoughts and unable (or not ready) to accept new things as a result of globalization and international exchange. The youth uses the city's squares, plazas, parks and streets for study groups, music groups, circus groups, meeting a lover, or engaging in lifestyle sports (street-arts) such as skateboarding, hip-hop dancing, parkour, etc. [25].

In a study on the transformation of public spaces for young people, the collaborative project TRYSPACES, which started in 2018 by the HUCE research team, deals with the concept of "transgression" when we began to study young people's behavior and attitudes. This project focused mostly on how young people could express themselves, their desires and dreams in public spaces. The team found out that the definition of the core subject transgression/transgressive in behavior and/or action in public places varied among different groups of young people. For low-income young immigrants, the study addressed traditional judgments in esthetics, morality, clothing, etc. in public spaces. For those working in creative hubs, their definition of transgression has gone beyond traditional judgments to clearly demonstrate their egos, as well as their viewpoints on real issues of the society, for example the distance between the city and the village or the differences between rural and urban lifestyles, which could be accepted by the community with the same concept and nature. But in general, most of them try to avoid "unnecessary" trouble with the authorities instinctively or with inadequate knowledge of the law. To the HUCE team members, in this project, "transgression" means a kind of people's behavior that should show their needs and desires to express themselves, overcoming barriers, discriminations or prejudices about standards and principles that tend to "avoid the law", so as not to be considered breaking the law [26].

2.4 Participatory and Critical Mapping Approaches

According to Herlihy and Knapp, participatory and critical mapping became a great tool to understand the youth's spatial appropriation of physical and virtual public spaces, as it offers a powerful means to express, describe and communicate spatial knowledges and experiences [27], [28]. Brown and Kytta highlight "Cities are complex adaptive systems that combine spatial, temporal, social, and cultural processes and structures in unique ways. This complexity is difficult to manage with any single participatory mapping methodology or approach." [29]. However diverse these approaches are, they are also brought together here by the conviction that they can support cities' transformation [30] and the right to the city for youth of various backgrounds [31]. Hence, this themed section will acknowledge the specialization of critical mapping knowledge and practice developed by Brown and Kytta in each city, context and project, while aiming at a certain integration of the specialization into a comparative perspective.

In Vietnam, the method of participatory and critical mapping has not been widely applied in studies on the relationship between urban space and people. The method of community participation in technical infrastructure improvement and urban reconstruction has been piloted recently, mainly in projects with financial and technical support from foreign agencies. Ta Quynh Hoa, in her past study (in 2007) on promoting community participation in the conservation and reconstruction of Hanoi's Old Quarter (within HAIDEP project sponsored by JICA from Japan), mentioned the participatory and critical approach mapping in which people chose to map out the values and characteristics of their street for the preservation and improvement of the historic street. They were given cameras to take pictures of the spaces they considered the most beautiful and/or the most valuable, as well as photographing dilapidated ancient buildings and living spaces with poor quality [32]. However, there have been no in-depth studies applying this efficient method in the studies of public spaces in urban areas with various and complex relationships between space, culture, people and the creation of new values.

3. Research Questions

There are two key research questions to be interpreted and clarified:

- 1) Are informal public spaces really attractive to the youth because of the freedom they may find there to demonstrate their talents and egos, as well as do something transgressive as a way of showing off this strong characteristic of the youth?
- 2) How to improve the quality of informal public spaces and make them more attractive and safer for the youth, so that they will be regarded as “formal” public spaces in the future?

4. Research Methods

4.1 Site Introduction

Three sites were selected (K17 dormitory yard in Bach Khoa ward - Site 1, pedestrian footbridge near National Economics University - Site 2 and Tu Do alley - Site 3). They are all located in the so-called “well-known” Uni-Triangle made up of three universities, namely Hanoi University of Science and Technology, Hanoi University of Civil Engineering and National Economics University, as highlighted in Figure 1. This place is where informal public spaces can be found in a high density and with a convenient link, as a favorite destination of students who are a main group of users. The three case study sites all have open and friendly spaces to young people and are connected together to form a really attractive row of places, allowing young people to express their creativity and capacity which seem to have no limits. Site 1 is characterized with the architecture of dormitory buildings constructed in the late 1970s, known as a subsidy period in the economic development, arousing a nostalgic feeling as well as an old-fashioned color regarded by many as a distinctive and unique character, thus attracting a large number of young people. Site 2 is a special informal public space, while it is actually a space for pedestrians to go back and forth, but has been somehow heavily used by young people for a completely different purpose, because of its airy space and nice view. Site 3 is a culinary space, also attracting so many young people, not only because of the large number of options and types of culinary services but also at affordable prices.

4.2 Research Methods

The site survey was divided into two phases.

- Phase I: Preliminary survey research on public spaces (within Hanoi city) that attract young people from the perspective of students of Hanoi University of Civil Engineering, who were also young people at the time and the target group of the research. The aim of this phase is to identify favorite public spaces to young people by type and their distribution in the city, then to select the most typical and interesting examples in reality for further studies (case studies). The students involved in this phase described the places and their outstanding features by means of photos and drawings, which could be free in style. In addition, on-site observations and quick interviews were employed in combination with taking note of their feelings and thoughts of those public spaces. At the end, after discussions and comparisons, three most characteristic public spaces were chosen. Interestingly, they were quite close, within a short walk to reach from one to another.

- Phase II: In continuation of the research results of the previous phase, the research team selected three case study sites to systematically and comprehensively analyze the characteristics of informal public spaces and the relationship/interaction of those informal public spaces with Hanoi's youth. The aim of this phase is to explore the activities of the youth, especially those seen as “transgressive ones”, and to find out what the youth expect from more attractive public spaces, and if transgression may form part of the quality. Mapping (localizing certain activities on the map during the day) and participatory visualization (displaying the activities, such as the scale, level and type, while taking part in the activities on-site) were applied to understand the way young people use those public spaces. Specifically, the three chosen sites were carefully surveyed on two days of the week (when students go to university) and any weekend days (when students do not go to university) in the following time intervals: 7h00 – 9h00, 12h00 – 14h00, 17h00 – 19h00, 21h00 – 23h00. The selection of interviewees was based on the criteria of young people between 15 and 30 in age. A total of 284 young users were asked, including 34 in-depth interviews and 250 quick interviews. The number of people aged from 15 years old to under 20 years old accounts for 25% while young people aged from 20 to 30 years old make up 75%. The gender ratio is recorded as follows: 64% male and 36% female.

Participatory visualization as another crucial research method helps the research team put together different perspectives, identify opportunities, establish collective viewpoints, build a consensus and facilitate decision-making by means of empowering stakeholders, leading them to common benefits, reducing the gap between research and application in the targeted sites [33]. Six students from Hanoi University of Civil Engineering were involved in this phase of study. They carried out data collection through survey activities, site potential assessment, problem observations and on-site interviews. Additionally, the young people using public spaces, most of whom are students from three universities in the area, have shown their views on the quality of public spaces and their understanding of transgression.



Fig. 1 Locations of three case study sites; 1 - K17 dormitory yard in Bach Khoa ward; 2 - Pedestrian footbridge near the National Economics University; 3 - Tu Do alley, also near the National Economics University (Source of background map: Hanoi City Department of Planning and Architecture, 2020)



Fig. 2 K17 dormitory yard in Bach Khoa ward and Bomb shelter café as a part of it (a) Day-time activity; (b) Night-time activity (Photo credit: Authors, 2023)



Fig. 3 Pedestrian footbridge near the National Economics University in the evening (Photo credit: Authors, 2023)



Fig. 4 Tu Do alley near the National Economics University at day time where many students come to enjoy various kinds of food and drinks (Photo credit: Authors, 2023)

Mapping plays an important role in the study because it is useful in discovering “hidden” connections and “potential” problems by means of collecting information and overlaying research data, as well as interpreting correlations among factors and aspects, which may not have been found at first when studying them independently. Mapping as an efficient method is applied on two scales: a large scale within Hanoi city and a small scale focusing on three selected study sites. On a large scale, information about starting location, means of transport used by young people to access the site in correlation with factors such as frequency of use, properties of the site and special features of use, if possible, should be collected. On a small scale, data about public spaces where the participation of the youth in terms of functionality, occupation of the space and flexibility in sharing and negotiation among groups of users could be gathered and analyzed.

5. Results

5.1 Access and Frequency of Use of Informal Public Space

In terms of distance between the start and the destination, the survey reveals that 57% of the young people interviewed go to public spaces from homes, 36% of respondents go from offices or universities/schools. From

in-depth interviews, it is noted that 44% of the young people said that it takes them less than five minutes to go to public spaces, 35% spend between five and 15 minutes to access public spaces and 21% have to travel longer than 15 minutes to get there. Within five minutes, those who choose to go daily to public spaces make up 65% of the total respondents and they often go there with friends and colleagues. For users who have to spend more than 15 minutes on the road, the choice to go to public spaces weekly is lower - 58%.

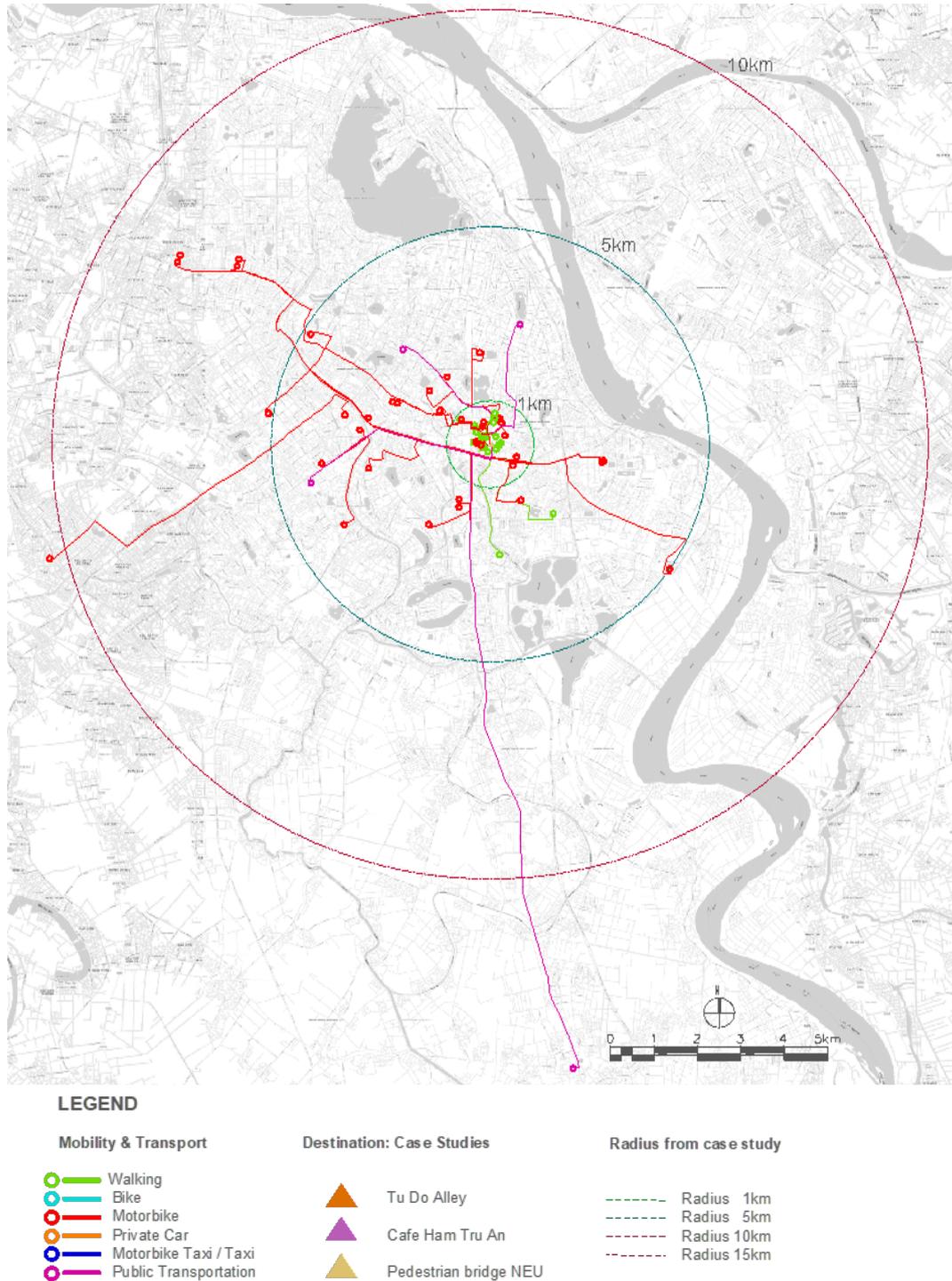
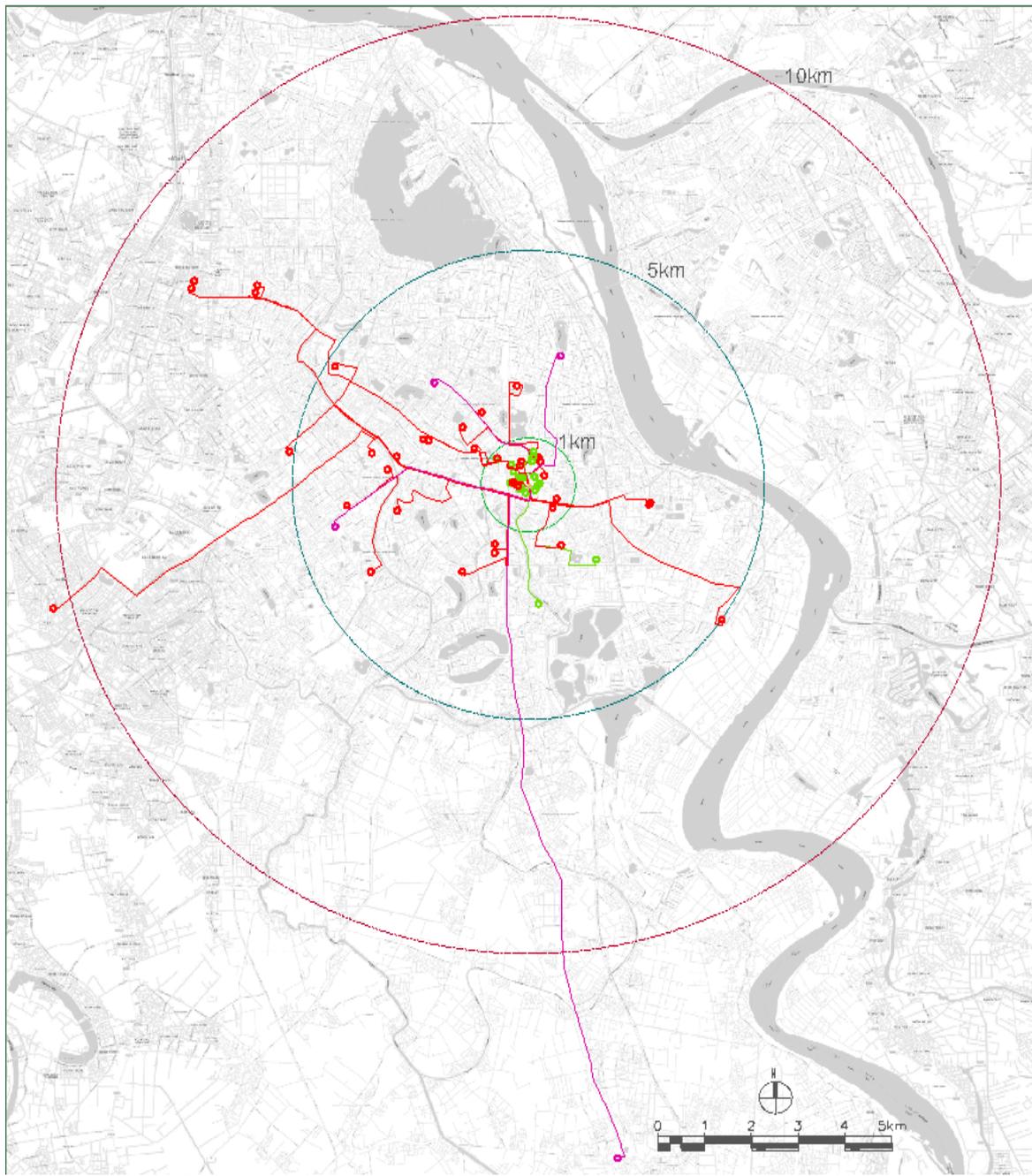


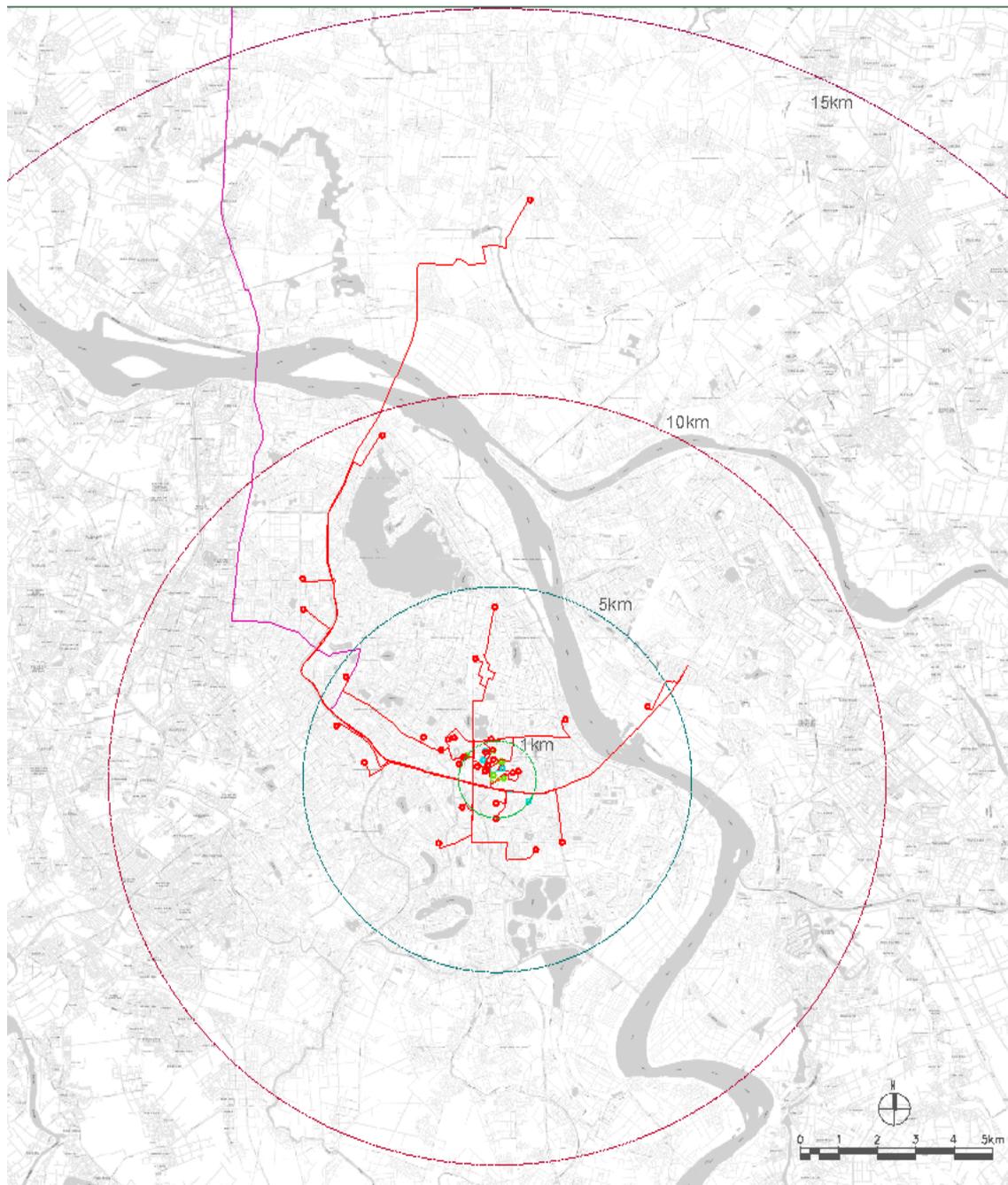
Fig. 5 Map of distance to Site 1 (yard and café) in Bach Khoa ward (Authors, 2023)



LEGEND

Mobility & Transport	Destination: Case Studies	Radius from case study
Walking	Tu Do Alley	Radius 1km
Bike	Cafe Ham Tru An	Radius 5km
Motorbike	Pedestrian bridge NEU	Radius 10km
Private Car		Radius 15km
Motorbike Taxi / Taxi		
Public Transportation		

Fig. 6 Map of distance to Site 2 (footbridge) near the National Economics University (Authors, 2023)



LEGEND

Mobility & Transport	Destination: Case Studies	Radius from case study
Walking	Tu Do Alley	Radius 1km
Bike	Cafe Ham Tru An	Radius 5km
Motorbike	Pedestrian bridge NEU	Radius 10km
Private Car		Radius 15km
Motorbike Taxi / Taxi		
Public Transportation		

Fig. 7 Map of distance to Site 3 (Tu Do alley) near the National Economics University (Authors, 2023)

From the three analysis maps above, it is apparent that the majority of young people approaching informal public spaces travel within a radius of 5,000 m. In the case of Bomb Shelter café, most of the young people go there within a much shorter distance, less than 1,000 m. As for Tu Do alley, there are some users coming from quite distant places, 10 to 15 km away and this can also speak for the attractiveness of activities related to food-and-drink service offered by many small restaurants along the alley. The above-mentioned results show the purpose of using public spaces, when most young people go to public spaces intentionally, not accidentally, and these public

spaces may not be near their homes, but often adjacent to their study or workplaces. Normally, the closer and easier to access a public space it is, the more frequently used it will become. The statistics also indicate that most of the young people go to public spaces by motorbike (77%), by walking (14%) and by bicycle (7%). Only 2% choose to go there by bus or by using other vehicles.

With regard to the frequency of use, 47% of the respondents go there every week, 16% every month and 13% say that they go there for the first time. Most daily users live or study/work within 1 km from the site, thus they often decide to walk. In Site 2 and Site 3, the frequency of use is higher than in Site 1, because both places are located near schools and universities and students have a high demand for drinks and food. Those who use public spaces less frequently (weekly, monthly and first-time users) live and study or work within 5 km from the site, and they often go there by motorbike. For daily and weekly users, they appreciate the following qualities of a public space and regard them as attractive: easy access, large area, having many people sharing the space, having kiosks and small shops/restaurants, clean ground and having many options for entertainment. In the meantime, some respondents prefer quiet and not-so-crowded spaces for their meetings with friends every week.

Other interesting information can also be given: 77% go to the site with friends and colleagues, 15% go alone, 7% go with boyfriends or girlfriends, and only 1% of them go with family members. Thus, it is apparent that public spaces are places designed or aimed to satisfy the needs for meeting and talking with friends and colleagues, thereby enhancing social communication. Only a few people go there on their own to relax, to find new experiences or simply to watch other people. In consideration of how they got to know the site, 54% say that they have been recommended by friends and acquaintances (54%), they have found the place by chance (36%) and through forums on several social networks (only 10%).

5.2 Feelings About Informal Public Spaces Among the Youth

The results of in-depth interviews with 34 young people showed that 59% of the respondents feel very comfortable when going to the site, 26% feel quite comfortable and 15% do not feel so comfortable when using the public space. The reasons why they feel comfortable are given in descending order as follows: feeling free to choose favorite food and drinks (38%), feeling free to talk about anything they like (24%), relaxing after hard work (24%) and smoking (9%). What makes them feel not so comfortable includes hygiene (near trash containers), bad odors, smoke, noise and full occupation of sidewalks. In their opinions, the most appropriate as well as most favorite public spaces are: cafés (35%), pedestrian streets or walkways (32%), pavement iced tea shops (15%), lakeside promenade routes (12%), parks (9%), internet shops (9%), playgrounds (6%) and beer restaurants (3%). The statistics show that the public spaces that allow young people to talk and walk as much as they can with good food and drink options turn out to be the most attractive. Equally important is landscape, especially with a nice lake view.

The key criteria for choosing public spaces can be drawn from the survey: easy access (47%), airy space with a broad view (46%), food stores or kiosks (41%), always full of people (28%), quiet place (25%) and clean place (23%). The number one factor – easy access – speaks so well for what Asian people often think about attractive public spaces. Full of people as the fourth most important thing to consider is also psychologically understandable.

There is a big difference between the two groups of users, as far as gender is concerned, as noted from in-depth interviews: 82% of young female users say that they feel agreeable in the public spaces of their choices, whereas 48% of young male users feel the same. This result seems so fascinating, because most people often think that the difference between the two gender groups, if noted, is just minor. What the two groups have in common regarding the quality of public spaces includes: a) watching street activities and people passing by, b) talking with friends, c) enjoying food and drinks, d) having no trouble or disturbance while sitting there. Female users tend to prefer open and cozy spaces with nice landscape as well as a wide range of service options. In the meantime, male users appreciate closed spaces where they can smoke without being told to stop.

In view of young people, in order to attract more users, a public space needs to offer a nice view and a beautiful landscape (41% of respondents), an environment or an atmosphere full of fun that enables exchange, conversation, learning and social interaction to take place (33%), pleasant music, adequate lighting, diverse and flexible spaces and good food service (24%). Moreover, 12% of the interviewees choose cleanliness, 18% are interested in private and quiet spaces, 12% find safety really essential, as reflected in strict rules and regulations, and only 6% expect that a long-awaited public space must be a place for young people to express themselves, where their freedom should be respected.

5.3 Transgression

When asked about the definition and perception of “transgression”, 21% of young people from the interview do not know or understand what transgression means. The majority (79%) have a simple understanding of transgression, but it is very different among young people in Hanoi. 49% say that transgression is “going against

what others impose on one person". To 21%, it means "surpassing or exceeding one's own limits" or "overcoming prejudices of the family and the society".

Also when asked two questions: "What have you ever done that may go beyond the limit?" and "How is your connection with informal public spaces?". The responses were listed as follows: 41% regard the gathering of friends in the evening and coming home very late (after midnight) as a form of family protest and it can break the family's rules. Next, 21% of young people chose to change the way they look in public spaces as a demonstration of transgression, such as hair dyeing, hippy outfits, tattooing, ear and/or nose piercing, etc. Violating the traffic rules to feel thrilled is also considered a kind of transgression (15%). Some students (12%) think dropping out of school or university could be a protest against the rules imposed on them, while 6% say that by using addictive substances (cigarettes, alcohol, and even drugs) and having sex before marriage, they want to show their resistance against rigid rules in the traditional Asian rituals and rites. So, in the end, it is possible to realize that a protest might be reflected in transgression and that the youth often demonstrate their transgression in public spaces, especially informal ones. By doing so they can find support and sympathy from other people of the same age group. But such an act of transgression is not related to politics or religions and it shows a bold step forward in the young people's awareness of culture, lifestyle and ego in a modern society.

In Site 1, the transgression takes the form of "going against what others impose on one person" with crazy outfits, smoking and drinking while group gathering and sitting on the overpass bridge happens more often in Site 2 and group chatting and drinking until late at night turns out to be the most notable in Site 3. The common activity of transgression is the youth demonstrating hippy appearances and breaking the family's rules, the social rules that impose on them. The transgression is facilitated by the change of the youth's awareness in expressing the personality and the freedom in the society.

5.4 Mapping-based Analyse

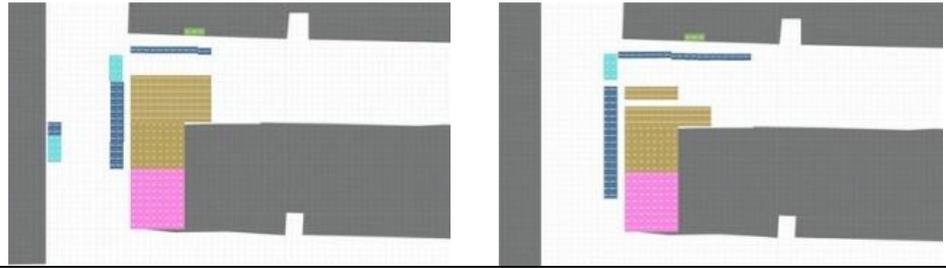
It is essential to understand through the mapping how the youth uses a public space during the day (three times a week) in four specific time intervals, how they share that space with each other/one another, as well as how they interact with the space and its elements while staying there with certain activities. The three sites are documented as follows:

- Site 1: Yard and Café in front of a collective housing block

Table 1 Mapping of how the youth uses public space in Site 1 – A café within an old socialist housing block

Time	Weekday	Weekend day
7h00 - 9h00		
12h00 - 14h00		
17h00 - 19h00		

21h00 - 23h00



Legend for public spaces:



From the map that analyzed the change in using public space for activities among the youth at the café Bomb Shelter in front of the courtyard of the old dormitory building, it is apparent that the area for outdoor coffee drinking is expanded the most on the weekend day, in the evening hours (from 9 pm to 11 pm), as well as on a weekday (from 5 pm to 7 pm). They like to sit along the walkway connecting the sports ground and the old living area, because of the airy and cool space there, where they can observe other activities taking place in the area while talking. This is also a space where they feel comfortable in communication and can play musical instruments or sing in groups of friends. In addition to coffee and drinks, there are also bicycle and motorbike repair services, and also car parking. These services are regarded as “bonus factors” in terms of attracting young people to this coffee shop.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 8 A café with more places is a highly attractive public place to the youth (a) They can feel free to show who they are; (b) Many activities take place here, such as talking, singing, personal storytelling, etc.

- Site 2: Footbridge

Table 2 Mapping of how the youth uses public space in Site 2 – A footbridge near a university campus

Time	Weekday	Weekend day
7h00 - 9h00		
12h00 - 14h00		
17h00 - 19h00		
21h00 - 23h00		

Legend for public spaces:

- Food stall
- Cheap food stall
- Motorbike park
- Café
- Convenience store
- Car wash
- Beer shop
- Motorbike repair
- Hair salon

There are not so many activities in the space around the pedestrian bridge and the surrounding area. However, young people gather on the pedestrian bridge primarily in the evening, from 9 pm to 11 pm, when the weather is favorable (cool and not rainy). At day, because meetings and street vendors are prohibited, but students still like to go there and gather for some activities.



Fig. 9 Public space near the footbridge (a) Young manual laborers are relaxing; (b) Students are gathering after lectures (student sketch)

- Site 3: Tu Do alley

Table 3 Mapping of how the youth uses public space in Site 3 – an alley full of sidewalk mini-restaurants

Time	Weekday	Weekend day
7h00 - 9h00		
12h00 - 14h00		
17h00 - 19h00		
21h00 - 23h00		

Legend for public spaces:

 Food stall	 Cheap food stall	 Motorbike park
 Café	 Convenience store	 Car wash
 Beer shop	 Motorbike repair	 Hair salon

The map shows many types of outdoor business services along Tu Do Alley on sidewalks and even taking place on the road. The activities here are both thriving and bustling, from high noon to midnight. From 5 pm to 11 pm it is possible to see the largest number of restaurants and service shops. The whole public spaces are fully occupied for eating, drinking, gathering and talking, while in the morning, too few activities take place. The alley is characterized with a small number of motor vehicles and so many seats under the shade of the trees or the rows of houses, thus it attracts hundreds of young people to come and share the place.



Fig. 10 Tu Do Alley as an attractive place to students and young people, both at day and at night (a) Various activities take place on both the sidewalks and the road, most of the visitors are the youth; (b) Part of the alley between two old housing blocks is a favorite place among the youth with iced tea drinking and talking without any disturbance or trouble (student sketch).

6. Conclusion

Informal public spaces form an integral part in the social and cultural life of the youth in Hanoi. With great advantages (easy access, high level of open space, creativity in design, etc.), they have in most cases attracted more young people than official public spaces characterized with poor facilities and inadequate design. In fact, formal public spaces overlook an important group of users – the youth. Informal public spaces in the meantime provide essential conditions for young people to express themselves and show their transgressive behavior towards some old-fashioned social rules. However, at present, informal public spaces for young people in Vietnam have not yet taken “sustainability” into account, in both tangible and intangible aspects. They lack good-quality facilities and well-designed landscapes. Furthermore, most of them can be called “temporary” in terms of use, as a consequence of “making use of a place for a short time” and “spontaneous development”.

In parallel with population growth and the lack of formal public spaces, the planning and design of public spaces for young people in Hanoi city have not been properly considered or developed. Meanwhile, informal public spaces of so many different forms and sizes are sought by young people to satisfy their needs and fulfill their desires of having their own spaces to express themselves as well as show their viewpoints and talents in response to the rules of the society as an act of reaction and sometimes transgression for a more positive change in a more open-minded society. As time goes by and the globalization continues to grow stronger, the public will become more familiarized with transgression and new transgressive activities emerge in the city among the youth. Therefore, the investigations into various aspects of the attractiveness of informal public spaces for young people

will help transform these spaces into officially recognized public spaces, such as creative hubs, youth centers, etc. This attempt will stimulate the dynamism and creativity of young people, with which they can choose their lifestyles and show their positive philosophy in accordance with a new cultural revolution in a modern society coming as an inevitable trend.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of the paper.

Author Contribution

The authors confirm contribution to the paper as follows: **Overview:** Ta Quynh Hoa and Nguyen Quang Minh; **Literature review:** Ta Quynh Hoa, Nguyen Quang Minh, Doan The Trung and Phan Tien Hau; **Survey supervision and data collection:** Phan Tien Hau, Chu Ngoc Huyen and Bui Phuong Ngoc; **Data analysis:** Ta Quynh Hoa, Nguyen Quang Minh, Doan The Trung and Bui Phuong Ngoc; **Photographing:** Doan The Trung, Chu Ngoc Huyen and Bui Phuong Ngoc; **Mapping:** Phan Tien Hau, Chu Ngoc Huyen; **Manuscript:** Ta Quynh Hoa and Nguyen Quang Minh; **Language editing:** Nguyen Quang Minh and Ta Quynh Hoa.

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