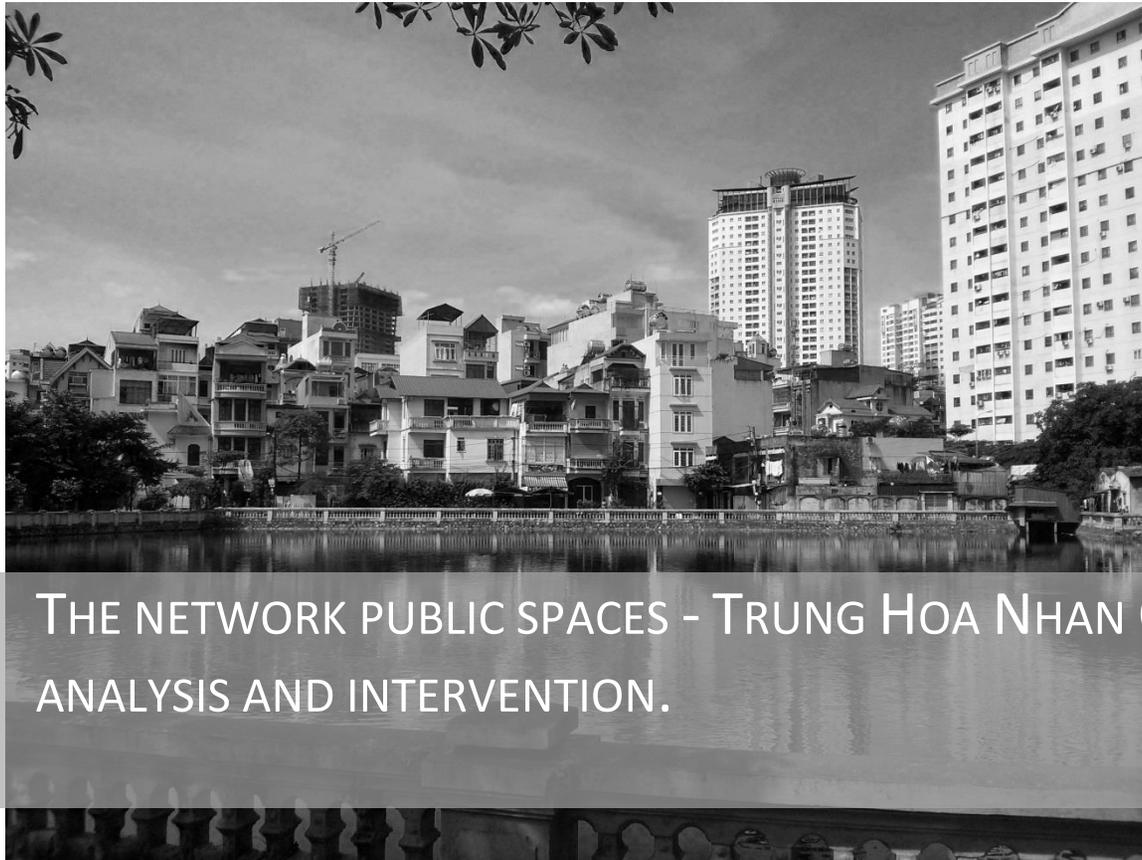


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UNIVERSITÉ DE
MONTRÉAL

THE NETWORK PUBLIC SPACES - TRUNG HOA NHAN CHINH AREA,
ANALYSIS AND INTERVENTION.

| Giang Tran , Huyen Chu & Linh Pham

Introduction

The rapid urbanization of Hanoi puts its public spaces in a vulnerable situation. The city is facing an enormous lack of public spaces, the ratio of $\dots\text{m}^2/\text{person}$ in the city shows this threatening situation. The problem of public spaces exists everywhere in the city. Many researches has been done in the city center, however, the peripheral area also has their own problem regarding public spaces.

With the pressure of fast growth in demography and economic in the past decades, Hanoi requires a large demand of housing. Therefore, the government has put in a lot of effort to manage the situation by enlarging the city towards the periphery area. They decided to construct New urban zones (NUZ) next to peripheral agricultural villages. These NUZs are supposed to be auto sufficient machines, which generate a balanced life style for their new residents. This seems to us as a perfect chance to improve the lack of public spaces of the city as a part of the city is literally built from scratch. However, in many NUZ the force of commercialization has greatly affected public spaces in a negative way. Low ratio of public spaces; commercialization of public spaces; incoherent network of public spaces with the surrounding areas are so far problems that we can address.

In our research we studied the area of Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh (THNC). THNC is one of the first NUZ developed in Hanoi with a strong vision of creating a new urban lifestyle with great urbanity

and clean living environment – “*văn minh, sạch đẹp*”. However, after over ten years of habitation, THNC has revealed many shortcomings in terms of physical and social infrastructure. Most significantly, the public spaces ratio in THNC is not proportional with its size and population. Over the total area of 30ha, there is about 1ha reserved for public spaces ¹. THNC is built for a total population of 15,000 people which gives a ratio of 0.67m^2 of public space per person. This rate is extremely low compared to \dots . Moreover, “the type of public space here is in small scale and in a service nature rather than green open space. Therefore, the accessibility is less friendly for residents”. ²

Just next door, across Nguyen Thi Dinh Street is the newly urbanized villages of Trung Kinh and Hoa Muc with a completely different story. These villages have had to cope with the arrival of a massive urban structure just beside them. Their rice fields became high rise towers within a couple of years, some lost their land for cultivation, and some lost their houses. With the pressure brought by THNC, these villages were put on a spin of rapid urbanization. This way of urban formation leaves very few open spaces between the urban fabrics, or if there is any, they are very difficult to access.

¹ Calculated from the Master plan of THNC

² Vietnamnet 2014, “Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh, the verticle slum”, <http://vietnamnet.vn/vn/kinh-te/165118/trung-hoa---nhan-chinh--bai-hoc--khu-o-chuot-tren-cao-.html>

These two urban bodies mentioned above exist beside each other without any coherence. They each have their own stories. The development of THNC has shown no effort in connecting physically and socially with the existing villages and their organic urbanization has no chance to blend into the rationalized development of THNC. The difference in urban structure, in population brings them apart. However, they do have one thing in common, they have public spaces and their population need public spaces. That is the reason why we looked into public spaces as a solution to connect these two distinctive areas.

In this research we looked at THNC and the village area as only one research site. We tried to better understand the public spaces network of this site and evaluate it as a whole. With this approach, we hoped to understand the distribution of the public spaces in the area. We then took a closer look and compared the public spaces between THNC and the village area in order to understand each side's characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. In the end we found a common ground and developed a proposition to connect them together; ways that they can compensate each other to better cohabit. We do believe that solving the problem of public space can be a strategic intervention in the social and physical connection problem of the area.

Project overview

Objective

Our project's objective is to understand the public space network of Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh including official and unofficial public spaces. In this research we looked at two main aspects of this network: physical and social. We tried to understand physically where are the public spaces located, how are they structured; and socially who is using the space, for what purposes and what do they think about the space. We will also studied the ownership of the public spaces and how it affects the parks' characteristics.

Public spaces in THNC area and in village area are quite distinctive. We studied this difference in order to find out the main problems of the public space network. After identifying the problems, we proposed a group of interventions in order to improve the public space network in the area.

Research boundary

Our research boundary is limited by Tran Duy Hung, Vu Ngoc Quang, Le Van Luong and Hoang Minh Giam streets. This site consists of two areas Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh New urban zone in the South and the Village area in the North divided by Nguyen Thi Dinh street.



Research methodology

In order to understand the formation and transformation of THNC's public space network, we combined the following data collection and analysis techniques: we first created a photographic report of the area showing our first impressions in my first site visits. Then, we recorded and mapped of all the spaces used for public recreation purposes in the area. This tool helped to evaluate the density and distribution of public spaces and to identify the different types of public spaces in the area.

We then conducted a detailed audit of four different types of public spaces in the area which I observed at different times of the day to understand their physical characteristics and usage. Finally, we will conducted about 10 semi-structured interviews with users and owners of two chosen public spaces in order to better understand their usage and ownership.

The public spaces network, distribution and their categories.

The distribution of public spaces in the area.

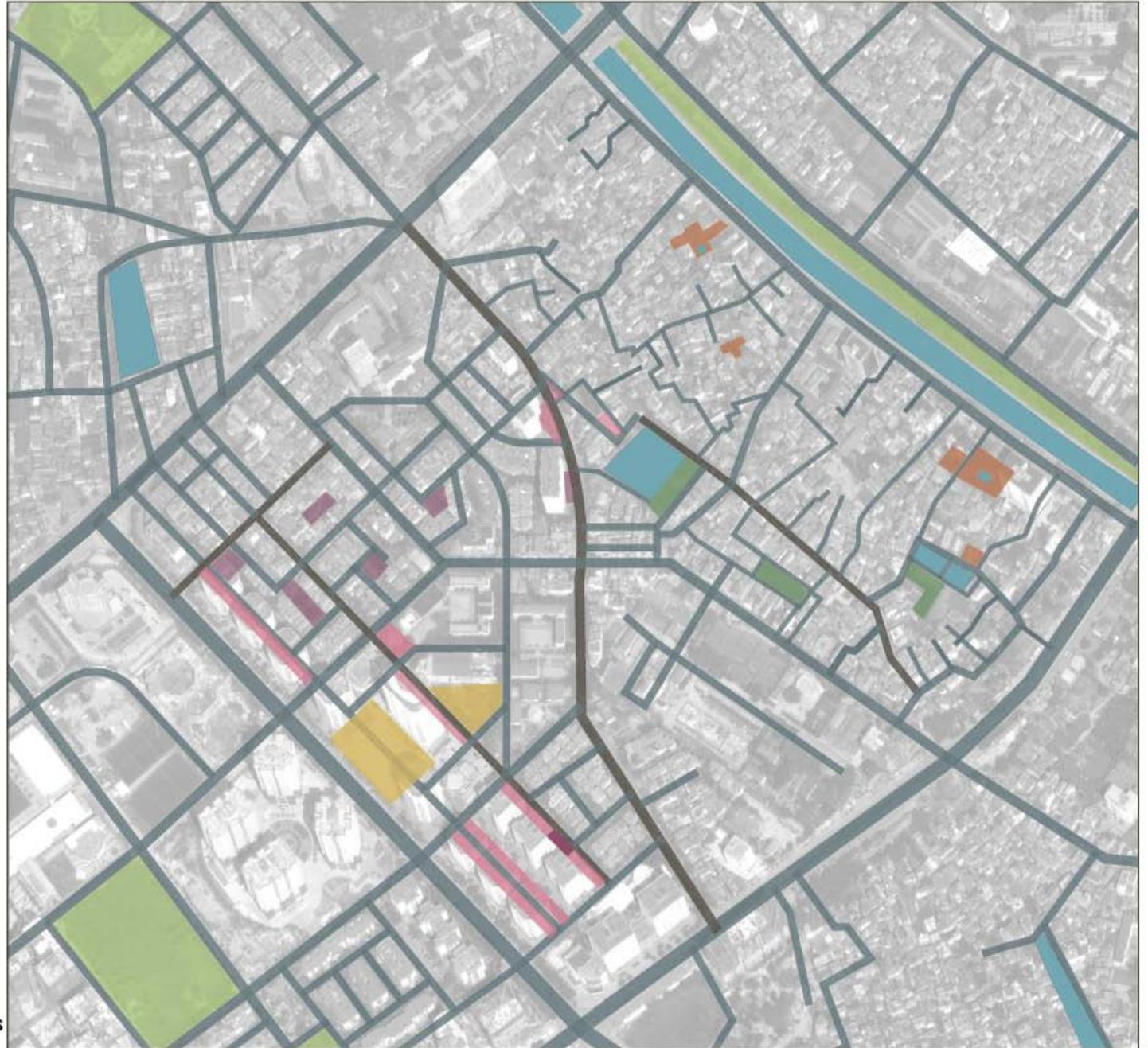
Looking at the map we can see that the public spaces in the area is quite equally distributed. As we expected, we found many unofficial public spaces in the THNC side, showing residents' struggle and ability to utilize all spaces available for their leisure and sport activities. Besides official spaces designated to be public spaces, some street corners, sidewalks, plazas in front of high-rise buildings, etc. are considered as unofficial public spaces.

Those kinds of spaces are less present in the village area due to their high density of the urban fabric. However, there are more public spaces in the village area than we assumed before starting our site survey. We expected the village area to be extremely compact with no breathing space for the residents. But in fact we were wrong; the local authority has managed to

reserve a number of open spaces to develop playgrounds, public spaces for their residents. Furthermore, these public spaces are in rather good shape.

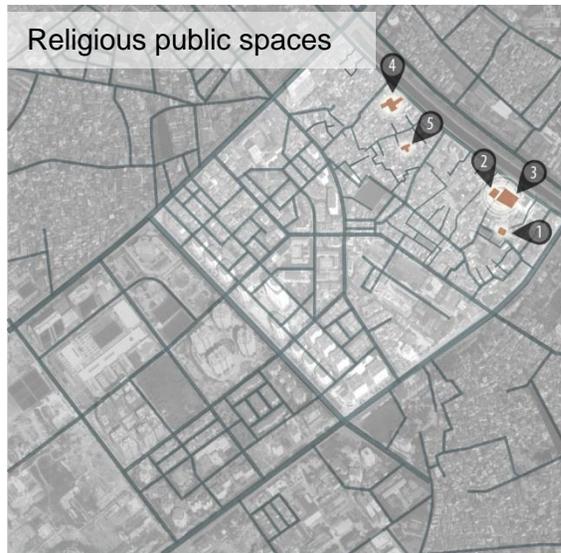
MAP OF PUBLIC SPACES

-  Religious public spaces
-  Neighbourhood public spaces
-  Neighbourhood semi-public spaces
-  Water front
-  Residential breathing space
-  Unofficial open spaces
-  Other parks
-  Street with public activities



Panel 1: Map of public spaces in research area

Public spaces categories

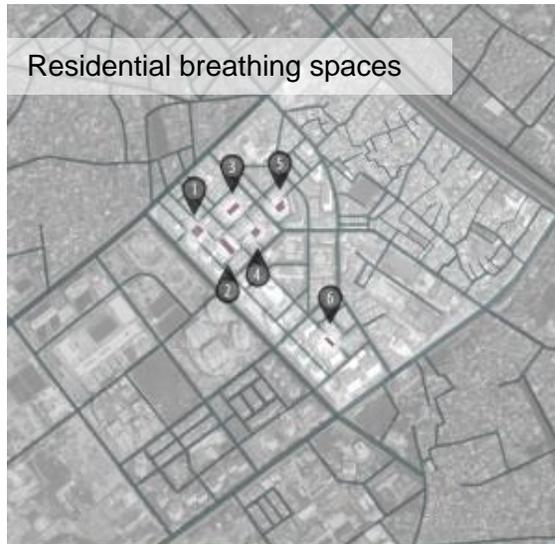


Religious public spaces are traditional kind of public spaces which surrounds Den and Dinh. These spaces are strongly connected to the development of the villages. They were originally gathering spaces for villagers in the old time. Nowadays Den and Dinh are still important spaces for the village in a religious sense but less as gathering spaces. On the village side of our research area there are 4 such spaces of different sizes. These religious compounds include several traditional buildings serve as praying area and one or two yard with hard surface and decorated with planted bonsai. These yards are partially accessible to public. Everybody can come in for praying or resting though a proper dress code is required (no shorts or miniskirts allowed). Therefore these religious public are used mostly for sightseeing and praying activities, some spaces are used by children as playground.





Panel 3: Neighbourhood public spaces



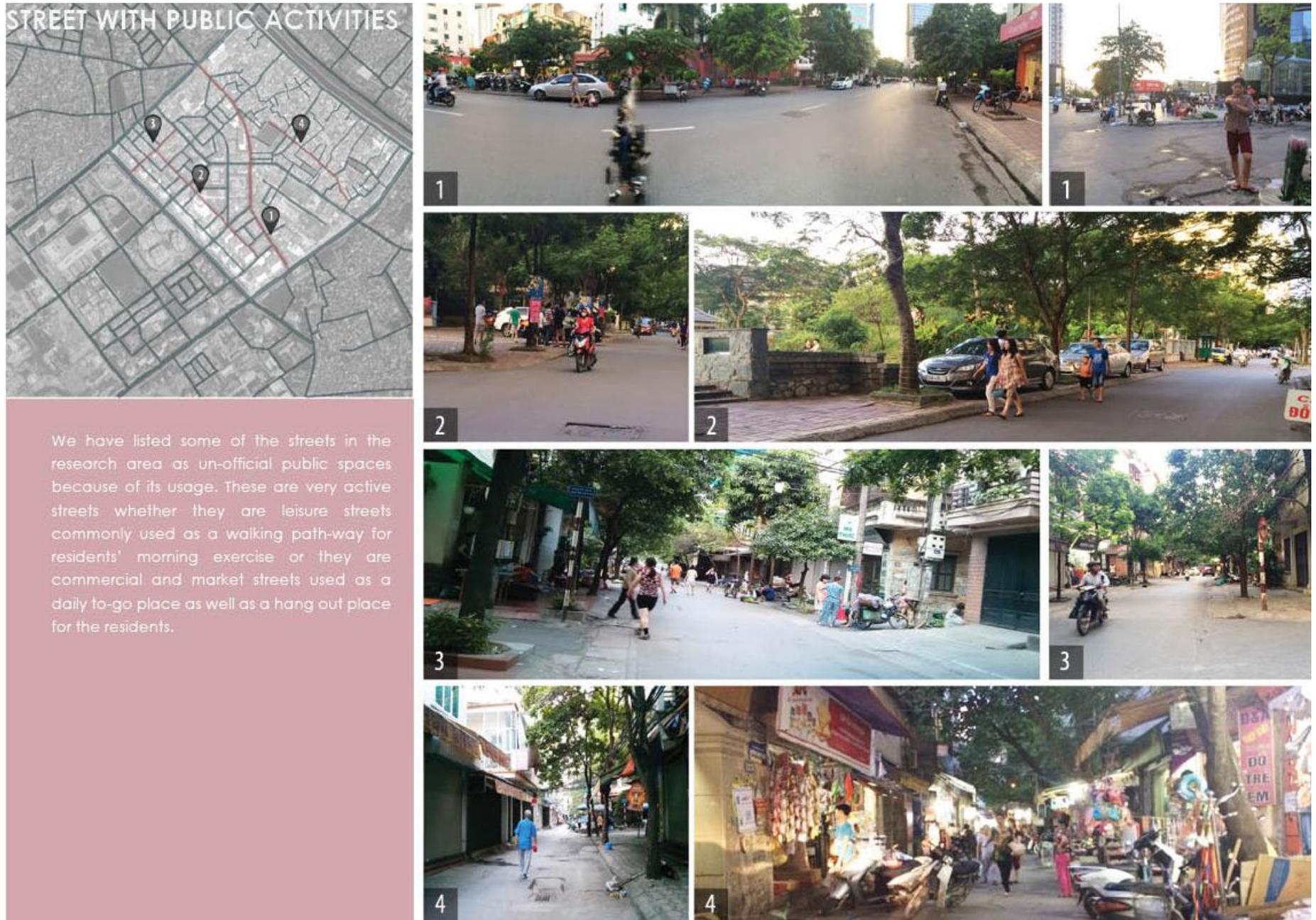
Residential breathing spaces are small open spaces between residential areas mostly seen in the New urban zone both in individual and collective residential areas. In individual residential areas (villas and townhouses), these breathing spaces are mostly planted with tree bed and big trees for shading. Some are well used with playing facilities for children of walkway around the spaces, but many breathing spaces near commercial areas are highly invaded by car parking. In front of high-rise residential buildings there are small plazas in-front used as breathing spaces. However, they are mostly used as parking. Some buildings manage to reserve an area in front for the residents to hangout during the day or do some exercise early in the morning and in the evening.



Panel 4: Residential breathing spaces



Panel 5: Un-official public spaces - open areas



Panel 6: Un-official public spaces: streets with public activities

Park case studies

In order to better understand the physical characteristics of the public spaces in the area, their users' behaviors and the difference between the two areas of the study site, we have chosen some case studies to do a deeper research. We have used two main research tools including Park audits - an observation grading system to analyse the physical structure of the space as well as some obvious behavior of users; and some semi-structured interviews with users and representatives of owners in order to understand their opinion towards the public space that they frequent and those of the area.

Case studies introduction

The first case study that we have chosen is Trung Hoa park, a neighbourhood park including a planted playground for children and a lake on the village side. This park was previously a village pond used for cultivation purpose. During the village urbanization, this pond remained a water surface of the village. Later, the pond was excavated and purified to become a lake. The open area beside the pond was made to become a small park for the residents. This is a rather pleasant public space in the village area which is placed right beside Nguyen Thi Dinh road – the border line between the village area and the New urban zone. We find its location very strategic and we would like to explore further to see whether the functioning of the park meets the importance of its location.



Figure 1: Entrance to Trung Hoa park from Nguyen Thi Dinh

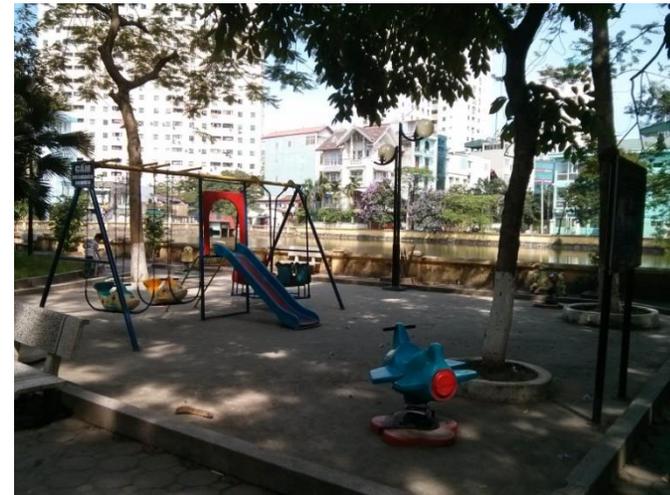


Figure 2: Children playground in Trung Hoa park

Our second case study is the area of Dinh Trong Hoa Muc, also on the village side. Before the village urbanization, this area was the village's Dinh with its surrounding area including 2

ponds and a large piece of agriculture land in front. Nowadays, a ward level cultural house is built on the agriculture land with a large yard in front. This yard is considered to be a public space for the residents; the two ponds are now made into two lakes in front of the Dinh and a part of the Dinh is cut out to be another Cultural house at the commune level with a yard in front. The combination of these different enclosed front yards with different program of usages appears interesting to us. We would like to understand how the space is distributed and how it affects the usage of the space.



Figure 3, 4, 5: Dinh Trong Hoa Muc and Trung Hoa cultural house

The third case study is located in THNC and is called 34T plaza. This is an open plaza in front of three high-rise residential buildings. 34T plaza is an open hard surface which can accommodate a lot of users with a large variety of activities. This

is the biggest public space in the new urban zone. We would like to put this space in consideration to compare with the public spaces in village side to understand the difference in terms of physical appearance and usage.



Figure 6, 7: 34T plaza

Our final case study is a quite a unique space – the Phuc Thanh garden. This is a privately owned and managed public space. The area is reserved for a neighbourhood playground. This garden is design, invested and maintained by the Phuc Thanh Group – a private corporation. Phuc Thanh garden is includes a café which is confusing for the users who wonders whether it is

a public space or not. The space itself is very well designed; the landscape is beautiful and highly appreciated by users. This model of integration between public and private is very interesting and potentially advantageous, therefore we would like to have a closer look to better understand the space itself and its operation system.



Figure 8, 9, 10: Phuc Thanh garden

To analyse and compare our case studies, we used an audit tool which is an observation grid. This tool helped us understand not only the physical structure of the spaces, but also the behavior of the users in the space (Appendix 1). We conducted audits in 4 parks in 4 periods of the day (5 am to 6am, 6pm to 7pm, 8pm to 9pm) when people most often go to park for exercise and relax before or after work, and from 12am to 1pm when there is likely to be much less people in the park because of the hot weather. This data collection does have a limitation due to the period of research which is summer when the sunlight is very strong and limits usage during certain times of the day.

In terms of physical appearance, we have combined our observation into a table as follow:

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARKS

Table 1: Physical activities of the park

Name of public space	Accessibility				Publicness			Maintenance		Design			Shaded	Facilities	
	Physical accessibility	Visual accessibility	Walking convenience	Boundary limitation	Ownership	Indication	Prohibition	Security	Cleanliness	Maintenance	Design	Flexibility			Surface
Trung Kinh lake	●●	●	●●	✓	Public	✓	✓		●●●●	●●●●	✓	✓		●●●	Benches Children playground facility Recycle bin Penjing
Đình Trong Hòa Mục	●	●●	●●	✓	Public				●●●●	●●●●	✓	✓		●	
34T Plaza	●●●	●●●	●●●	✓	Semi public		✓	✓	●●●●	●●●●	✓	✓		●	Decorative lights decorative flowers
Phuc Thanh garden	●	●●	●●		Semi public	✓	✓	✓	●●●●	●●●●	✓	✓		●●	Benches Art work Shelters Animal statues

LEGEND

- HARD SURFACE
- GREEN SURFACE
- WATER SURFACE

Accessibility

Looking at *table 1* we can see that the physical and visual accessibility of public spaces on the village side is rather limited. This is the result of an organic urbanization of the village towards an “alley neighbourhood”³ which use the “fish-bone” urban grid⁴ of old village and fill them up with high density of housing creating small alleys between rows of townhouses. Both Trung Hoa park and Dinh Hoa Muc are accessible through small alleyways lost in the village urban fabric. Trung Hoa park is accessible by Nguyen Thi Dinh – one of the major road. However, the visual connection to the space is rather poor. You can hardly see the space through the street front filled with parking and signboards that partially block the entrance.

On the THNC side, both public spaces are next to large roads. While 34T is fully accessible, Phuc Thanh garden can only be accessed from one side due to its particular design intergrated with a café. This enclosed design makes unfamiliar users wonder whether this place is actually a public space. Our Phuc Thanh 4 interviewee remarked “I didn’t know this is a public space. I thought this space belong to a business compound of an organization.”

³ Pham Thai Son, 2010

⁴ Fish-bone urban grid is an urban form constructed following a main street axis with Cul-de-sac streets that attached to it on both sides which visually look like a fish bone.

The structure of the space

All four case studies are relatively well-designed with clean surface and facilities for users. In terms of design, Phuc Thanh garden, in our point of view, is overly done with too many decorative elements in a small space which lessens the flexibility of the space. The users have very few choices of activities; they mostly walk and exercise individually. On the other hand, 34T is an extremely flexible place. Users coming here can use the space as they want, bringing a large variety of activities to the space. Trung Hoa park area has a good design with many facilities for users, especially for children. Three quarter of the space is designated for children activities with playground equipment. This layout with strong definition of walkway and planting area restrict the ability to use the space of other groups of users such as elderly and youth. Dinh Hoa Muc’s space is over divided with different closed area and some fixed facilities, therefore it is not very flexible for users. In Dinh Hoa Muc area, public and private users share the same place (wedding hall, badminton field, children playground, community meeting, etc).

In terms of ground coverage, all spaces are well balanced between hard, soft and water surface, except 34T where 70% of the space is covered in paved hard surface leading to a lack of shaded area. Among the three other spaces, Trung Hoa park is the most shaded with high trees whereas Dinh Hoa Muc and

Phuc Thanh garden are partially shaded with mostly shrubs and few high trees.

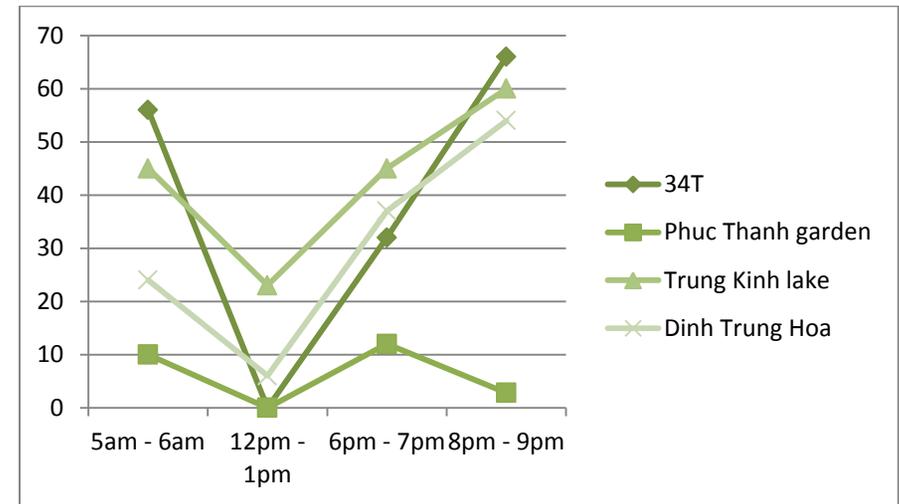
The usage of the parks

The physical characteristics of the parks strongly define their usage in terms of users' density, activities variation, age group, etc. Through our observation sessions and interviews, we have discovered some interesting findings as follow.

The accessibility of the parks affects a lot the mix of users in terms of origin. Easily accessible spaces in the New urban zone area like 34T and Phuc Thanh garden have users coming not only from Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh area but also from the village side and even from other parts of the city. For example our Phuc Thanh 4 interviewee lives in Nguyen Trai but comes to Phuc Thanh garden to visit the place as he passes by many times and thinks that it is beautiful. On the other hand, public spaces on the village side mostly serve their surrounding residents only, some live 500 meters away (*respondent of Trung Hoa 1, 4*), some live just 100 meters away (*Trung Hoa 3*)⁵.

The design and physical structure of the park define a lot the number of users, the mix of activities, the age groups in the park, etc.

Chart 1: Number of users in park case studies during different times of the day.



Looking at the *chart 1* above, we can see that the number of users varies between parks and between times of the day. When we relate this to the physical characteristics of the parks, there are always logical links. For instant, the highest number of users is seen in 34T, however in the graph of 34T we see a dead point which is 12am to 1pm when there is nobody in the space. The large number of users is explained by its open design and large area, giving users more space and flexibility to do their activities, the dead point is due to the 70% of hard surface and 95% non-shaded area which created an unbearable microclimate at noon. On the other side, Trung Hoa Park has a much more stable number of users, even though there is a slight dismination at noon, the number of users remain rather large throughout the day. Most of the lines take a V shape, showing

⁵ Appendix 3 – Profile of semi-structured interview respondents

that the peak of users is early in the morning and late in the evening. Phuc Thanh garden is an exception with two lower points at noon and late in the evening due most likely to its small size and the opening time from 6am to 11pm.

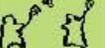
The *table 2* below shows the kind of activities present in the parks at different times of the day, including leisure and sport activities. This table allows us to compare differences between parks in terms of variety of activities and their flexibility. We can see that Phuc Thanh garden has the least activities within the day, which is already predicted from its over-designed layout in our observation. On the opposite end, 34T has the greatest variety of activities thanks to its open design. Trung Hoa park and Dinh Hoa Muc have an average level of flexibility. The area of Dinh Hoa Muc is over divided and has scheduled activities within the day, so there are quite a lot of activities, but there is not much flexibility, for example you cannot play football within time or at the place reserved for badminton group. Trung Hoa Park is designed mostly for children, and the space is also designed in a way that limits the flexibility of activities, especially group activities. However, people still try to make use of the spaces to do their activities (the aerobic group in the morning and the shuttle cock group in the afternoon do their activities around a fountain). This problem will be better explained in the discussion of our intervention.

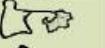
ACTIVITIES IN THE PARKS

Table 2: Activities in the park case studies during the day

Name of public space	5 - 6 AM		11 - 12 AM		5H30 -6H30 PM		8 - 9 PM	
Trung Kinh lake	 	 		 	  	 	 	 
Đình Trong Hòa Mục		 			 	 		 
34T Plaza	  	  			  	 	  	 
Phuc Thanh garden						 		 

LEGEND

	Bicycle
	Walking
	Badminton
	Running
	Aerobic
	Muscular training
	Skating

	Playing with children
	Watching others
	Walking a dog
	Eating
	Fishing

The perception of users toward the park case studies and the public space network.

Table 3: Keywords in responds of interviewees

	Phuc Thanh garden interviewees	Trung Hoa park interviewees
	beautiful landscape, local trees, harmonious design fresh air, cool breeze	fresh-air, children facility, good-motivation, lake, initiative from authority, crowded
	too-small, many mosquitoes, over commercialized	too many children, stinky lake, no space for youth
 About the other area	messy, old style, live by service, better social connection, separate from THNC	big clean street, many trees dusty, noisy, a part of their neighbourhood
 About the other area's public space	nothing interesting, stuffy, stinky	no-public-space, strong sport spirit, large

In order to understand the opinion of users towards the park that they are using as well as their perception of the public network of the area, we have done nine semi structured interviews with users in Phuc Thanh garden and Trung Hoa park.⁶

In general, all interviewed users are happy with the park that they have chosen to come to. Users are most happy about the microclimate of the park created by shaded trees, water front and greeneries. Users in Phuc Thanh garden highly appreciate the “sophisticated and harmonious landscape design with a variety of local trees”⁷. Users in Trung Hoa park value the fact that “there are a lot of places and facilities for children to play” which “no other place in the surrounding has”⁸

Users also come to accept the disadvantages of the park they frequent. When asked about the inconvenience of the park, very few weak points were pointed out by our respondents. The most important disadvantage of Phuc Thanh garden is said to be “too small” and “over commercialized”. Respondent of interview *Phuc Thanh 1* strongly emphasized the fact that the whole lot was supposed to be a park, but they “pushed to have a swimming pool, then a café, after that they squeezed in another restaurant, leaving just a tiny green space” which is way too small compare to “the enormous amount of concrete surface” in THNC⁹.

⁶ Refer to Appendix 2 for questionnaire

⁷ Interview Phuc Thanh 1

⁸ Interview Trung Hoa 1

⁹ Interview Phuc Thanh 1

Among the few complaints about Trung Hoa park were: “the lake smells bad”¹⁰; “there are too many children, I am afraid to hit them”¹¹.

Among the complaints about Trung Hoa park, there is one that appears very interesting to us. The respondent of *Phuc Thanh 2* interview who is actually a resident of the village area explained to us “the new park was renovated by the ward, they added slides and stuff for the children, they planted trees to prevent folks like me to go there and play football” therefore “before I used to go there to hang out with my friends, but now there are only children there, there is nothing for us to play, so we don’t go there anymore”.¹² This reaction to the new initiative of the ward brings up a conflict of interest between youths and other groups of users.

In our interviews, we were also asking people their opinion about the other side of our research site (about THNC for village residents and about the village area for THNC inhabitants). We have received some very interesting answers. People in THNC refer to the village area as “they develop from village to city, but they still live in their old village way”, “it is very messy”¹³ and “polluted”¹⁴. And they talked about the village side as a different identity. Residents in the village area naturally include THNC as

a part of their neighbourhood. Respondent of *Trung Hoa 1* said “this area has a lot of services, supermarket, restaurants, it is the same as in the center”. Respondent of *Phuc Thanh 2* claims that he lives “in this area” when he talked about his place of residency when he actually lives in the village area.

When asked whether they often go to the other side, residents from the THNC side said “I only go there for ward’s celebration like new year or mid-autumn festival”¹⁵ or “I used to go there before because I was obliged to use their service, but now we have service here, so I don’t go there anymore”. Respondents from Trung Hoa Park said they usually go to 34T or to THNC area to walk as a part of their morning exercise. “There are a lot of young people who go to there to walk, run and come back here to train”¹⁶, “people go there a lot for aerobic, and there is a big group there”, sometime I walk to 34T and come back here”¹⁷.

¹⁰ Interview Trung Hoa 5

¹¹ Interview Trung Hoa 2

¹² Interview Phuc Thanh 2

¹³ Interview Phuc Thanh 1

¹⁴ Interview Phuc Thanh 3

¹⁵ Interview Phuc Thanh 3

¹⁶ Interview Trung Hoa 3

¹⁷ Interview Trung Hoa 4

These two groups of answers show a one-way relationship between the two sides of our research area. It is an important issue that is worth considering. In our intervention, we will propose some urban design ideas to initiate a two-way relationship between THNC and the village area.

Ownership

We were also curious about the ownership and management system of these public spaces. We have done one informal interview with owners' representative of Phuc Thanh garden and referenced an interview with Trung Hoa ward's authority representative done by Health Bridge¹⁸. These materials helped us understand briefly the ownership of each space as well as the differences between them.

	Phúc Thanh garden	Trung Hoa park
Invested by	Phuc Thanh group	Trung Hoa ward
Fund acquired from	Private fund	Rental for activities in the ward's cultural center
Management (maintenance) run by	Phuc Thanh group	Cultural department of Trung Hoa ward
Usable from	6am to 11pm	All day
Prohibition	Littering, causing fire, destroy landscape, cycling, going by motorbike, playing football	Destroying the facility, playing destructive sports like cycling or football, using the space for private purpose like selling stuff, gathering construction material, etc.

Table 4: Summary of park case studies' ownership

¹⁸ Indepth interview with Mdm Pham Thi Hai Yen, Vice president of Trung Hoa ward people's committee, conducted by Ms Nguyen Thi Hien, Health Bridge.

In the case of Phuc Thanh garden, it is a semi-public space in the sense that it is public, but privately invested and managed. This garden is invested by the Phuc Thanh Group, an investor of public amenities in Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh. They have invested in a hospital, a swimming pool and a café in the area. Phuc Thanh garden is built as a part of the Phuc Thanh café. According to the café's manager, the land is assigned to Phuc Thanh Group by the city. We can assume that Phuc Thanh Group gained the right to invest in the CX1 land lot which was reserved to be a park for THNC New urban zone. But in the end, they managed to fit in a swimming pool, a restaurant and a café, taking 50% of the total area of the park. Even though Phuc Thanh garden is a public space, it is still attached to Phuc Thanh café leading to an ambiguity in the publicness of the park. Moreover, its enclosed design with only one entrance appears unwelcoming for users. The idea of involving a private investor in the provision of public spaces is a good initiative and can potentially be a good model. However, in this case, the borderline between good private initiative and over commercialization and invasion is very thin. We should consider whether 50% of the total park footprint devoted for commercial in exchange for a small well designed public garden is a fair trade.

Trung Hoa park area has completely different investment resources and management system. Trung Hoa park area is an open area that the ward's authority has reserved for public

space since the urbanization of the village. Since then, the ward has invested twice in the construction of this space. First, some trees were planted and the yard was paved in concrete. Recently, the yard was upgraded another time with landscape features and children playground facility. According to a cadre of Trung Hoa Ward's People's Committee, investment in this park came from the business activities of the Cultural house of the ward (Dinh Trong Hoa Muc area) such as room rental for wedding, gym rental, conference room rental. A large amount of the total investment fund was contributed by the residents as well. The management and maintenance of all public spaces in the village area is assigned to the Ward's Center of sport and culture. This center is in charge of recruiting security guards, cleaning staff and conducting other maintenance of the facilities. She also emphasized that the public land in the village area is strictly designated for public purposes and no private commercial activities such as parking or vendors are allowed. Talking about the public spaces in THNC, she said that the ward has an ambiguous responsibility as it is a part of the ward, but the management is run by the investor. The investors only care about their revenue, so the public spaces are highly commercialized. To conclude, she proposed that the management of public spaces in THNC should be assigned to the ward so they can better protect the well-being of the residents.

These two models of operation have their own strengths and weaknesses. Semi-public space can be better designed and maintained. The public space's design and maintenance is in a slightly poorer condition. On the other hand, public space can be better protected from the commercialization, while semi-public spaces risks being over commercialized. The middle point between these two models is something that we are looking for. In this research, we do not have the resource to do a deeper research but we do think that it is a very important issue that is worth being studied further.

Street case studies

While doing our observation and interviews, we have discovered that one very popular exercising activity of residents in this area is walking. They usually walk around the parks or walk through the new urban zone area as the streets are large and well shaded. Many people use parks just as resting points between their loops of walking. We find this fact very interesting, and we have done another observation grid for streets (street audit form: appendix 4). We have done audits in four streets, each streets in two periods of time 5 to 6am when people usually do morning exercise and from 6 to 7pm when there is a potential of conflict as it is the time for exercising as well as the end of the rush hour in the afternoon.

Our case studies are mostly streets that have public activities happening besides circulation. These streets can be considered a kind of unofficial public spaces. Our first case study is Nguyen Thi Dinh street, the main street running across the site. It is the borderline between Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh and the village area. The second street that we observed is a street within Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh area which runs between Phuc Thanh garden and 34T building. This street is a small scale and very comfortable in terms of microclimate. Many people use this street as a part of their walking route. Our third and fourth case studies are two market streets one on thr Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh side (Do Quang Street) and one in the village area. The market street in the village is actually the main spine of a "fish-bone" grid; therefore it is the most important street of the village with a fulltime fresh market and many other commercial activities.

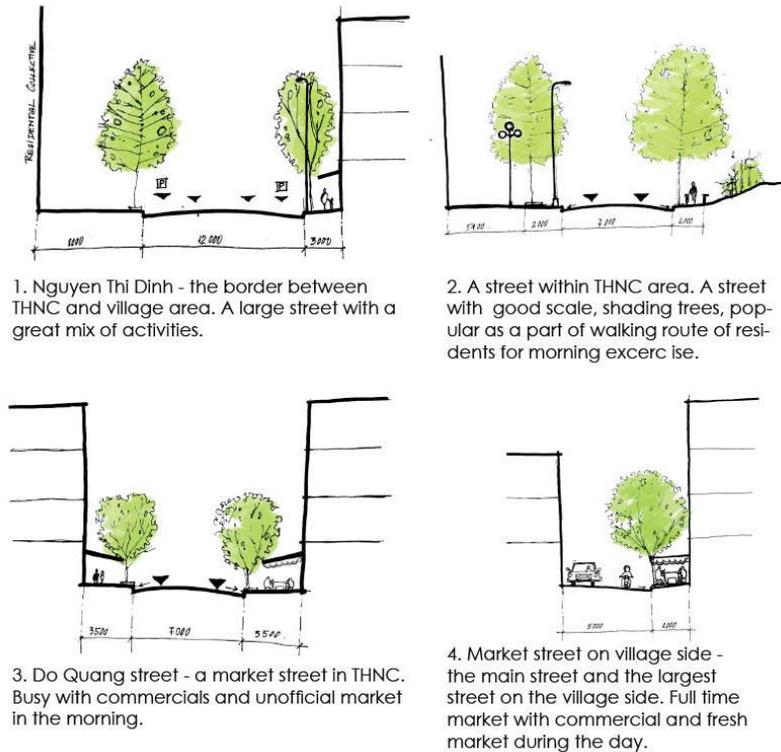


Figure 11: Street case studies' sections

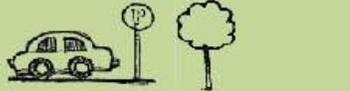
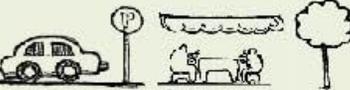
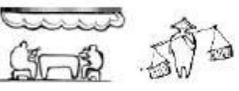
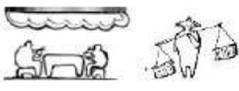
Looking at sections of each street in *figure 11*, we can see that Nguyen Thi Dinh is the largest street while the village Market Street is the narrowest. All streets have sidewalk on both sides, except the village market street which has a sidewalk only on one side. We can also see from the section that Nguyen Thi Dinh has a larger scale, probably more for cars and motorbikes whereas the other street has a smaller scale and look more pedestrian friendly.

As our main interest is pedestrians on the street, we have observed the main users of the streets as well as the obstacles that pedestrians have to face while walking on the street in the two chosen period of time. Our observation results are compiled in the *table 5* below.

From this table, we can see that, the bigger the street is, the more users there is and the bigger the sidewalks is, the more obstacles there are for the pedestrians. While in Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh side, the most common obstacles that block pedestrians are parking areas for cars and motorbikes, in the village area, the main obstacles are vendors and extended commerce.

ACTIVITIES ON THE STREET

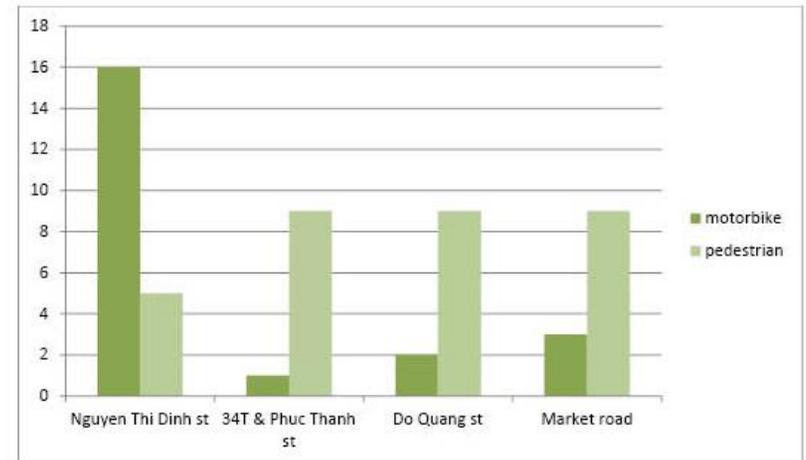
Table 5: Activities on street case studies

Name of street	Time	Obstacle for pedestrian	Users
Nguyen Thi Dinh	5 AM - 6AM		
	6 PM - 7 PM		
34T & Phuc Thanh street	5 AM - 6AM		
	6 PM - 7 PM		
Đỗ Quang	5 AM - 6AM		
	6 PM - 7 PM		
Market street	5 AM - 6AM		
	6 PM - 7 PM		

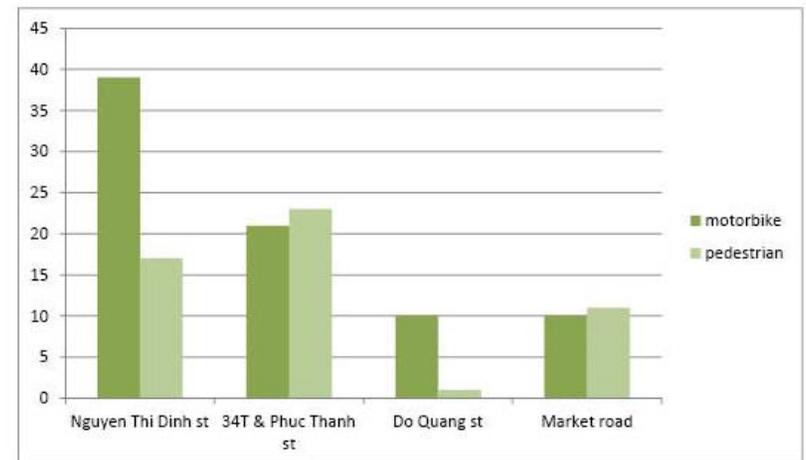
Legend			
	Car parking		Pedestrians
	Motorbike parking		Bike
	Extended shop		Motorbike
	Street vendor		Car
	Trees		

We have also measured the vehicular and the pedestrian volume of each street in the two chosen period of time. *Chart 2* shows very clearly the balance between pedestrians and vehicles using the streets. While Nguyen Thi Dinh stays stable as a mainly vehicular street with much higher volume of vehicles in both times of the day, the other streets all show a high level of pedestrian usage compared to vehicle usage from 5 to 6am. In the afternoon, Do Quang Street becomes vehicular, whereas THNC inside street and village Market Street have an equal balance between pedestrians and vehicles. This result confirms our assumption of considering walking as the main exercising activity in the area. And despite the high density of vehicular circulation even during rush hours, there are still a lot of pedestrians using the street.

Chart 2: Pedestrian and vehicular volume in two time slots of the day on street case studies



5am-6am



6pm - 7pm

Intervention and a vision for the public spaces network in the area.

After having analyzed our data, we have brainstormed and come up with some ideas of intervention in order to strengthen the public space network in the research area. Considering the limited budget for public spaces in Hanoi and the difficulty of land clearance, we have come up with some minimal interventions at strategic points that could improve the whole system and best benefit the residents in the area. The interventions are presented in order of importance and priority. In our opinion, the first ideas are the easiest to execute and could be implemented right away with some management restriction. Then we present some improvements that can be done when there is budget available in the long run.

Create a secured walking loop

Based on our observation as well as the result of our street audit, we have come to the conclusion that people likes to walk as an exercise, and that they usually walk in loops. In Trung Hoa park people walk around the park, in 34T people walk around the plaza and around the block, some people say they walk from Trung Hoa park to 34T and back. However, our research shows that streets in the village are too small and crowded for walking¹⁹, and streets in Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh are large but highly invaded by parking. This issue made us think about a

good way to better facilitate walking activities in the area, then use walking as a way to connect the two sides together.

Our first intervention is to create a series of walking loops that go into the two urban fabric Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh and village area (*Figure 12*). This walkway will encourage people to walk more, leading them to walk to the other side, and perhaps get to know places where they don't usually go. Based on the existing loops that exist (in black) we propose a larger loop (in blue) that connects the existing loops together with a series of destinations such as parks, plaza, schools or markets, giving many choices for people to walk according to their needs and their convenience.

¹⁹ Interview Trung Hoa 4

on the Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh side, and by The Ward's center of sport and culture on the village side.

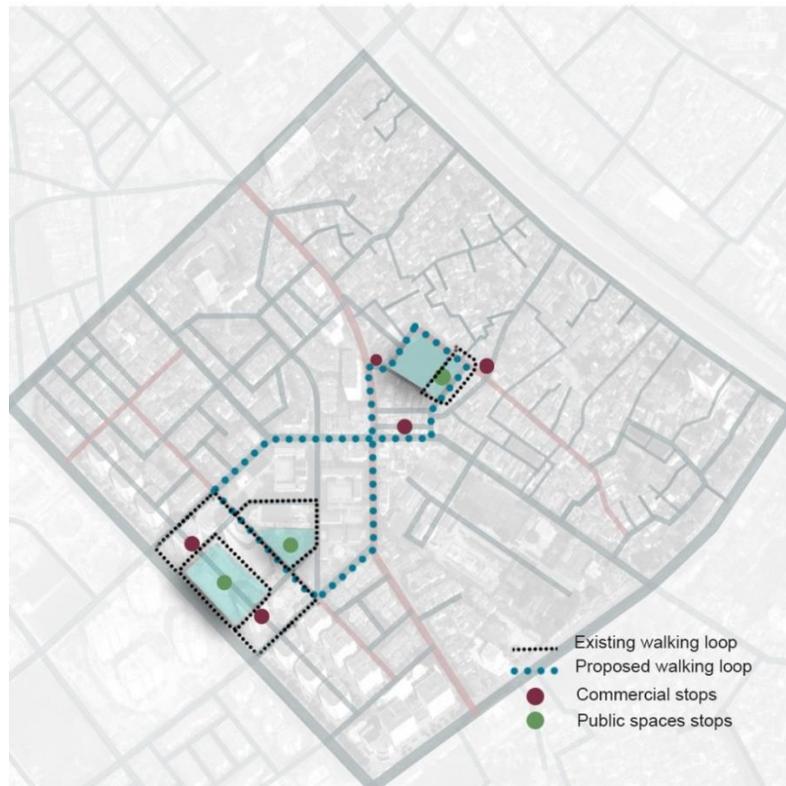


Figure 12: Map of walking loops and destinations

To facilitate walking in this loop, we suggest clearing all parking on one side of the street (including parking on the sidewalk and in the driveway), leaving the space for pedestrian to walk in two periods of time 5 to 6 am and 8 to 9pm. This way, pedestrians can walk on the sidewalks where they belong and be protected from vehicle circulation. This policy can be issued by the Trung Hoa Ward People's Committee and executed by the management company of Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh – Vinasinco



Before



After

Figure 13: Street between Phuc Thanh garden and 34T before and after intervention

Intervention in a strategic park – Trung Hoa park

From our interviews with the residents, we have understood that there is a mostly one-way relationship between the residents from THNC and from the village. While people from the village consider THNC as a part of their neighbourhood, people from THNC refer to the village as having different identity which is somewhat far behind in terms of urbanity. In order to resolve this problem, we propose to use a public space as an interface for communication between the two communities. Having place where both groups spend their time in everyday, it would potentially open up conversations. And if people talk to each other, there will potentially be a social connection between the two groups and the one way relationship would become two ways.

Throughout our observation and research of all the public spaces, we concluded that Trung Hoa Park is the most interesting and has the best potential to play this connecting role. It has great potential to be the interface that we are looking for thanks to its strategic location. Trung Hoa park is located right at the edge of Nguyen Thi Dinh street, the main street between THNC and the village area but it is hardly visible because of its small entrance which is invaded by parking and commercial extensions. Among our case studies, Trung Hoa Park appears to be the best public space in the area in terms of usage and microclimate. However, most people using this park are village area residents. According to THNC residents, this is

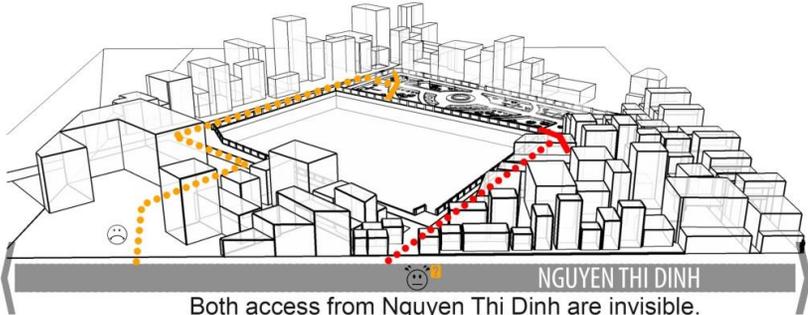
a polluted area with a stinky lake and people burning charcoal everywhere²⁰. Our objective is to bring people to the park, especially people from the THNC side and allow them to revisit their false perception about the park, eventually make this park an interface for THNC and village area residents.

Our first group of interventions in Trung Hoa Park aims to improve its visibility and physical accessibility (*Panel 8*). To do so, we recommend to widen the path along the park in the East corner of the lake, giving users the possibility to walk around the lake and at the same time connect this lake to the proposed walking loop mentioned above. At the same time, we would like to clear out all invasions (building, parking, terrace seats for cafes, etc.) at the same corner that is attached to Nguyen Thi Dinh Street. At the moment, there is a temporary shelter at the corner of the lake, blocking all the view from the street to the lake that we would propose to remove. Moreover two restaurants and a café beside the entrance utilize the space for seating, cooking and parking. We do not propose any land clearance, but we propose a stronger restriction of sidewalk and roadway usage. No informal extension allowed at all level of the façade, no parking, no seating allowed on the sidewalk and in the street. With this very simple measure, people can see that there is a park inside when they go along Nguyen Thi Dinh Street. With this group of intervention, we will open the park to

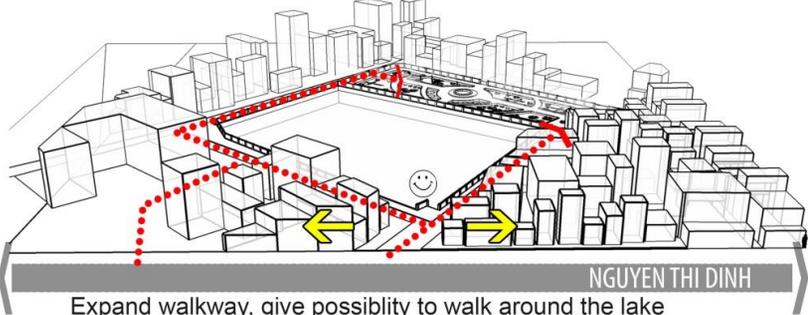
²⁰ Interview Phuc Thanh 3

THNC side and let people know there is another park exists in proximity to their house.

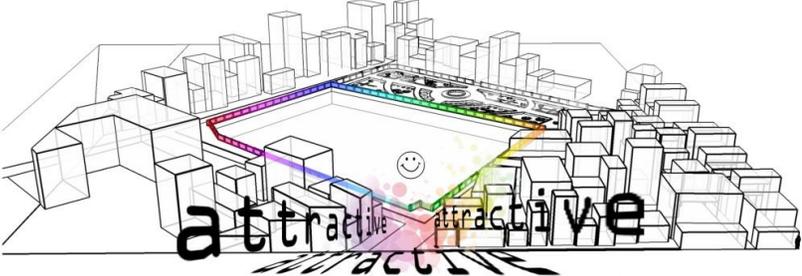
Improve accessibility and visibility



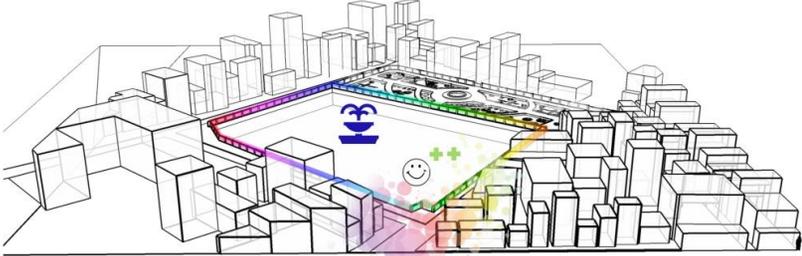
Both access from Nguyen Thi Dinh are invisible. Path around the lake is blocked



Expand walkway, give possibility to walk around the lake



Clear out all commercial extension. Give wide visibility to the lake



Create a landmark by putting a fountain in the lake



Before 1



Before 2

After 1: Clear accessibility from NTD Street



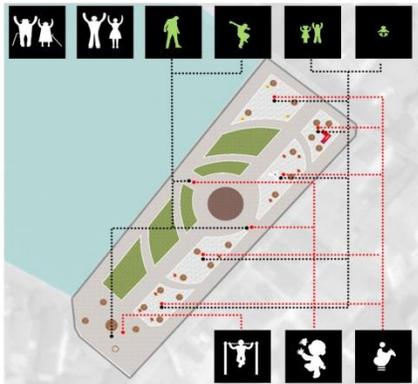
After 2: Clear accessibility around the lake



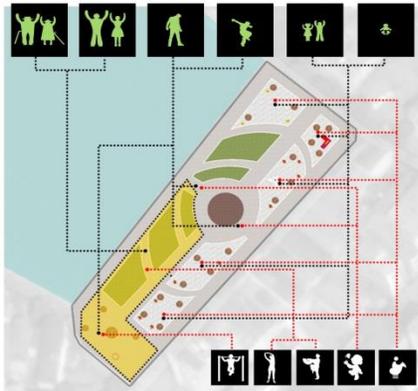
Our second group of interventions aims to improve the design of the park to accommodate a larger variety of age groups and activities (*Panel 9*). The current design, with narrow walkways around islands of playground or landscape tree beds, gives the park less flexibility for group activities, especially for youth. At the moment, such group activities as aerobic, taichi or shuttlecock have to take place in narrow walkways. Moreover, as we have mentioned in the interview results, youths are disadvantaged in this park. They don't have spaces that can accommodate their activities such as skateboarding, parkour, roller skater, etc. We have analysed the site and realized that the East corner of the park is only a tree bed with decorative trees. These trees have no shading function and because it is just an island of grass and bushes, nobody can use this space. We suggest clearing out this island and combining with the planted area with existing the muscular training area. This combination will create an open hard surface area for group activities, and give youth more chance to use the park. This intervention will help increase the flexibility of the park, giving users the opportunity to use the park in different way, according to their needs.

One other problem of Trung Hoa Park is the quality of the water. We have heard complaints about the unpleasant smell of the lake from time to time, even though we have not experienced it ourselves. This lead to our third intervention which aim to purify the water of the lake using water fountain and water bicycle. We

would like to propose a fountain in the middle of the lake with a water purifying system, which will not only clear the water, but also give a landmark for the park looking from Nguyen Thi Dinh Street. This will help to improve the visibility and attraction of the park. On the other hand, we would like to install some water purifying exercise machines that have already been tested in Ngoc Khanh Lake beside Trung Kinh Lake. We believe these two in one interventions will help improve the water quality of the lake as well as benefit the park's activities and accessibility.



Lack of space for youth and group activities



Transform decorative tree bed into open space for activities



Some proposed activities



Before 1



After 1: Muscular training area



Before 2



After 2: Group activities area for all age



Before 3



After 3: Cohabitation of different activities

Panel 8: Re-design Trung Hoa park to better accommodate different activities and age groups



1. Enlarge entrance from Nguyen Thi Dinh street
2. Enlarge walkway for possible access around the lake
3. Install a fountain in the middle of the lake as a landmark
4. Install water purifying exercise machines
5. Transform decorative tree bed into an open shaded area
6. Re-design muscular training area and combine with new area

Panel 9: Master plan of Trung Hoa park after intervention

Conclusion

Within this three-month summer project, we have experimented a number of research methodologies and learned how to combine them together in order to best understand our research case studies. After analyzing the data, we have come to a better and evidence-based understandings of the public space network of the Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh area. Some were predictable, others greatly surprised us.

One of our most important findings is that, the public spaces in the village area are actually in better shape than those of THNC. Even though THNC is designed from scratch and supposed to be a well-balanced urban body, its network of public spaces is very limited in size and over commercialized. The semi-public and private ownership of these spaces affect a lot their publicness. However, the surprising valuable quality of THNC for the residents is its rationalized and wide road network. Although it was not designed for recreational activities, the road network is highly utilized by residents in both THNC and in the village area for exercising and socializing.

Before the research, we assumed that there would be a strong social connection between THNC and the village side as they exist side by side with many clues of interaction such as markets, public spaces, etc. However, after some interviews, we discovered that it is only a one-way social relationship. This

finding is one of our challenges in the project and we have proposed a number of interventions in order to balance the social relations between both sides.

We are satisfied to be able to propose a series of interventions with low cost and minimal impact on the surrounding. We do believe that these small touches can greatly change the physical structure of the public space network, therefore strengthening the social connection between THNC and the village area.

We would like to put some more time into our first interventions regarding the walking loops across the site from THNC to village area. The intervention would be more complete with a deeper research of all street sections. We would like to better understand the transition between different types of streets and come up with specific solutions for each type. There is also a potential for a streetscape design project with urban furnitures and landscape for all streets in the loop.

There are also some very interesting findings that we were able to reveal such as the conflict of interest between youth and other age groups in public space; the issue of privately owned and maintained public spaces in the case of Phuc Thanh garden or the solution for plaza shading in the case of 34T, etc. These findings can potentially be the topic of our future research.

This project has also provided us with a series of general understandings which set up a basic knowledge ground for our

future projects. Such as our public spaces' map, graphs and tables representing physical characteristics and social behavior of users in parks. Our categorization of public spaces and observation of each category's case study brings us a sense of how activities and social behaviors are shaped by each kind of design and space structure. This reciprocal relationship will be a strong foundation for our future public space design and renovation projects.

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Appendix 1 – Park audit tool

Park audit tool is an observation guideline in order to better understand the physical and social characteristics of the park. The observing area contains the park and sidewalks or walkway attached to the park.

Auditor will observe each park in four different period of time in the day

5am – 6am

12pm – 1pm

6pm – 7pm

8pm – 9pm

In each time period, the auditor will spend about 20 minutes in the park, answer all the question listed in the guideline and note down any interesting event or behavior that take place in the park.

Survey Information

Name of public space:

Date:

Day of the week:

Time:

Weather condition:

Overall experience

- The area of the park is
 - Large* *Medium* *Small*

34T, Trung Kinh lake: large; Phuc Thanh garden, Dinh Trung Hoa: Medium; To 27: small
- The ambiance of the park is

The ambiance of a park is good when you feel comfortable sitting there for long time to read a book for example. If you come to the park and feel the urge to leave because of negative attributes (ex: noise, heat, odor, other people, etc) then it has a poor ambiance.

 - Good* *Average* *Poor*

Explain in detail
why?:.....
.....
- The overall mood of users is

The mood of the users is positive when they look happy, comfortable with what they are doing, have no conflict with others. The mood of the users is negative when they are aggressive, seems uncomfortable, argue with each other, etc.

 - Positive* *Average*

Bad/negative

Explain in detail
why?:.....
.....

Accessibility

- The physical accessibility to the park is
 - Easy* *Average* *Difficult*

What are the obstacles or conveniences?
.....
- The visual accessibility to the park is
 - Easy* *Average* *Difficult*

What are the obstacles or conveniences?
.....
- The walking convenience within the park
 - Easy* *Average* *Difficult*

What are the obstacles or convenience?
.....
- Is there a boundary limitation in the park?
 - Yes* *No*

If yes, what is it?

 - Fence* *Different ground Level*
 - Street with high speed vehicles* *Others.....*

Publicness of the park

- The ownership of the park is
 - Public* *Join venture*
 - Private*

How is it indicated?

 - By sign board* *By personnel present at the site*

By mutual understanding *Others.....*
What is
written:.....
.....

2. Is there any indication of the function and regulation in the park ?

Yes No

3. Are there any activities prohibited by signboards in the park?

Yes No

If yes, which activities are prohibited?.....

4. Is there presence of security or law enforcement in the park?

Yes No

Maintenance

1. Cleanliness

Clean Average
Dirty

2. Maintenance

Well maintained *Average*
Neglected

Design

1. The effort in design of the park (landscape and space design).

This question is to determine the way the park is designed. A designed space is a space where can see that there was an involvement of a designer (in whatever level) before the construction of the space. For example we would say the Ly Thai To statue area is a designed space and whereas the “bãi đá” on the red riverside is not designed.

Designed *Average* *Not designed*

2. Does the design of the park give opportunities for different activities

Yes No

3. Surface (approximate percentage per type of surface)

Trees and greenery *Hard* *surface*
..... *Water surface*

4. The park is

Well shaded *Partially shaded*

Mostly not shaded *Not shaded*

Source of shade for the park is/are:

Buildings around *Shelters*
Trees

5. Other supporting facilities

Benches *Children playground* *facility*

Toilet *Art work*

Others.....

Usage of the park

1. Number of users

- Crowded* *Quite crowded* *Few people*
 Almost nobody

2. Age group of users (Choose all that apply)

- Elderly* *Middle age* *Young adults*
 Teenagers *Children*
 Babies

3. Commercial activities

About how many people participate in commercial activities?

Which types of commercial activities are there?

- Restaurant/ Café* *Street vendors*
 Rental service of toys *Others.....*

Percentage of commercial area compared to the whole area

Do the commercial activities interfere with the function of the park?

- Yes* *No*

If yes, how?

4. Parking

Which types of parking are there?

- Spontaneous parking* *Organized parking with fee*

The parking is for

- Car* *Motorbike* *Both*

Percentage of parking area compare to the whole area.....

Does the parking interfere with the function of the park?

Sport activities

- Yes* *No*

If yes, how?

5. Sport activities

How many people participate in sport activities.....

Which types of sports are there?

- Skating* *Bicycle* *Football*
 Running *Aerobic*
 Walking *Other:*

6. Leisure activities

How many people participate in leisure activities?

Which kind of leisure activities are there in the park?

- Walking a dog* *Playing with children (Per group of parents and children)*

- Reading Watching others
- Other.....

Activities on the edge of the park

1. North edge
- Big road Medium road Small road
(alley way) No road

- (On the other side of the street)
- Commercial Residential individual
Residential collective
- Nothing (wall or empty space)
- Other.....

2. East edge
- Big road Medium road Small road
(alley way) No road

- (On the other side of the street)
- Commercial Residential individual
Residential collective
- Nothing (wall or empty space)
- Other.....

3. South edge
- Big road Medium road Small road
(alley way) No road

- (On the other side of the street)
- Commercial Residential individual
Residential collective
- Nothing (wall or empty space)
- Other.....

4. West edge
- Big road Medium road Small road
(alley way) No road
- (On the other side of the street)
- Commercial Residential individual
Residential collective
- Nothing (wall or empty space)
- Other.....

Appendix 2: Semi-structured interview with users

I am a student of University of Montreal and an intern in Health Bridge Vietnam. We are doing a small research about the network of public spaces in the area. I would like to ask some of

your opinion in order to better understand this park and the public spaces in the area. The interview will take about 15- 20 minutes, do you think you will have time for me? First I would like to ask some questions to understand the relationship between you and this park.

1. What are you doing here today?
2. Is that an activity that you often do in this park?
3. Which other activities do you do in this park?
4. How many times do you come here per week?
5. During which time of the day do you generally come here?
6. Do you come here alone today? If yes, do you sometime come with a companion? When you come with somebody else, what do you do?
7. How do you get here?
8. Why do you choose to come here, but not to other places?

Now I would like to ask your opinions about this park

9. What do you like about this park? Why?
10. What do you dislike about this park? Why?

I would like to discuss with you about other public spaces that are close from here.

11. Do you know other public spaces in the area (the ward)? Which one?

12. Do you often go to those other spaces? If yes, for which kind of activities? If no, why?
13. Which one is your favourite? Why?
14. Which one is your least favourite? Why?

In our research we are also trying to understand the relationship between the KDTM Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh and the village area. So we would like to ask you about your relationship with the other side.

15. Do you know if there are public spaces in KDTM Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh area/Village area? What are they? Are they far from here?
16. Do you often go to KDTM Trung Hoa Nhan Chinh area/Village area for any purpose (not necessarily for public space)? (For villagers explain clearly the research boundary)
17. If yes, how do you go there, for what purpose?
18. If no, why?
19. Is it convenient for you to go from here to the other side? If yes, why is it convenient? (close distance, well shaded streets, etc.). If no, what are the obstacles? (Too far, nothing to do there, bad people, etc.)
20. Do you like the other side (THNC/village)? Why?

Thank you for your time and answers, some last quick questions to finish our interview.

1. How old are you?
2. What is your job?
3. Where do you live?

Appendix 3: Profile of semi-structured interviewees

No	Name of interview	Respondents description	Age	Occupation	Activity in the park at time of interview
1	Trung Hoa 1	A young couple with a child	26, 28	Work for airlines company	Playing with their child in the playground
2	Trung Hoa 2	Young man	25	Fruit delivery	Training at the horizontal bar
3	Trung Hoa 3	Young man	30		Training and running
4	Trung Hoa 4	Two old women	Over 50	Retired	Joining a group of aerobic
5	Trung Hoa 5	An old couple	68	Retired	Resting after a walk
6	Phuc Thanh 1	Old man	70	Retired	Sitting to rest
7	Phuc Thanh 2	Young couple	17, 19	Students	Sitting to rest after a walk, listening to music
8	Phuc Thanh 3	Old couple	Over 70	Retired	Sitting to rest after a walk
9	Phuc Thanh 4	Young couple with a child	29	Architect	Visiting the garden

Appendix 4: Street audit tool

Street audit tool is an observation guideline in order to better understand the physical and social characteristics of streets (else from vehicular circulation) within the research boundary. Auditor will observe each street in two different period of time in the day: 5am – 6am and 6pm – 7pm.

In each time period, the auditor will spend about 20 minutes to walk along the street, answer the questions listed in the guideline and note down any interesting event or behavior that take place on the street.

Survey Information

Name of street:

Date:

Day of the week:

Time:

Weather condition :

1. Draw a typical section of the street and note down the dimensions (Including houses on the side, sidewalks, street, trees and street furniture if any)

2. Does the street have sidewalk?

- Yes, on both side* *Yes, on one side*
 No

3. Is there any obstacle for pedestrians on the sidewalk?

What are they? (Choose all that apply)

Street vendors *Shop extension*

Parking

Trees or tree beds *Others*

No obstacle

4. Which kind of trees are there on the street?(Choose all that apply)

Tall trees for shade *Bushes and decorative trees*

No trees

5. How would you describe the main characteristics of the street

Commercial *In formal market*

Residential low rise

Residential collective

Others.....

6. Who is using the street

Pedestrians *Bicycle*

Motorbike

Cars

Trucks/Van

Others.....

7. What is the traffic volume of the street

..... motorbikes/minute

8. What is the pedestrian volume of the street?

..... pedestrians/minute

9. The walking purpose of most pedestrians is

Walking as an exercise

Walking as a

means of transportation

Walk to shop

10. What are the other activities that happen on the street

(other than circulation)

Commercial with shops. Which kind of shops?

.....

Street vendors. Which kind of vendors?

.....

Parking. Which kind of parking(car or motor, organized or spontaneous)?

.....

.....

*People hanging out in the street. What do they do?
(talking, talking on their phone, watching others, etc)*

.....

...

Others

.....

.....

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