

# **RURAL - URBAN MIGRATION IN VIETNAM: FATE OF TWO ANCIENT VILLAGES**

Authors: Thai Minh Hai Ha & Nguyen Vinh Quang

*Lecturers at Faculty of Architecture and Engineering, Phuong Dong University, Hanoi*

## **Abstract**

*After Doi Moi policy, Vietnam witnessed the strong urbanization, entailing a massive population movement from rural to urban areas. The flow of this population shift has provided urban areas with an important and cheap labor force to serve for the urban operation process. This population shift occurs under many forms, many dimensions. There is a part of the rural population moving to the urban area permanently to live, whereas the other parts just shift seasonally (after harvesting, before and during traditional holidays,...). This paper serves two purposes, of which the first is to figure out the reason for the population transfer or resettlement mentioned above in Vietnam. Resettlement derived from the decline of traditional villages with special occupations (farming, pottery, carpentry, and other crafts...). These traditional products could not compete with a batch of industrial ones, or were no longer favored by consumers. The second purpose of the paper is to identify the key development strategies for two Vietnamese ancient villages, which are under a severe population decline, named Duong Lam and Phuoc Tich.*

## **Urbanization & its impact to the migration from rural to urban areas after Doi Moi in Vietnam.**

After Doi Moi (renovation period) in 1986, Vietnam entered the development phase with the open door policy in many areas, especially in the economic field. The economic reforms have created favorable conditions for the different economic models flourished. The process of economic transition from the subsidized economy to the economy following market mechanism, controlled by the state, helped the economy growing rapidly in Vietnam. This period also known as “open door period”, marked the significant development of Vietnam, including the urban development in major cities. The migration from rural to urban areas (most of rural labours come to cities for looking better job opportunities) is one of the reasons to promote the urbanization process in Vietnam constantly stronger until present. The translation of this migration leads to the change of economic structure markedly. As a result, the structure of traditional rural space has been continuously narrowed or changed, even disappeared by the different impacts of the urbanization process. Many traditional villages in suburban areas were located in the new urban areas following planned expansion of the cities, causing the change or disappearance of structure of typical rural populations. The change in the economic structure also led to various changes in the countryside. For instance, many the traditional crafts disappeared in rural areas because of the technological development; handcrafted products are no longer popular, and the demand for change is growing, ...

Over recent 10 years, numerous international & domestic studies have warned about the population explosion and "hot" phenomenon of urbanization in Vietnam. More specifically, this problem occurs in the context of climate change and habitat severely affected, leading to unsustainable patterns of urban settlements and rural areas in Vietnam.

Urbanization trend is very difficult to control, impacting directly to the migration from the rural to the city, while the status of urban management today seems to be hardly harmonized the balance between immediate benefits and long-term benefits of residence.

## **The impact of the migration to the process of translating economic structure and residential spaces in rural villages in Vietnam**

As mentioned above, the rural - urban migration clearly significant impacts to the economic structure, as well as the residential spaces in rural villages in Vietnam. Young people no longer focused on the traditional crafts which previous generations handed down from ancient times. For example, thanks to the development of science and technology, the production of a commodity product in the form of mass civil is more economical than the manual work in rural areas to complete traditional products inefficiently. Many traditional crafts still exist weakly and could disappear at any time. This is clearly a worrying trend in the modern world, because traditional agricultural activities play a very important role, not only as an important part of the economic structure, but also as the valuable heritage marking the developmental stages of Vietnam agriculture. The rural population in villages is significantly reduced, because most residents in working age moved to cities; This led to the labour shortages in rural areas and strongly impact on the spatial structure of residence: Many houses in rural areas are abandoned; agricultural land is not used or used for the wrong purpose; other agricultural spaces are also affected by the lack of worker hands (According to Labour Department statistics, nearly 94% of urban migrants are in the working-age). Agricultural production is hampered; the ecological environment is also seriously affected. Besides, the land-use projects for other purposes are being developed taking places in rural areas (developing tourist resorts, golf courses ...) also shrinking agricultural land increasingly. The short-term benefits of rural migration to urban areas cannot help mend the long-term damage which can be seen happening to farmers & rural areas in Vietnam. The traditional residential spaces would be hurt and lose the positive inherent coherence.

Following organizations	10 %
Following relatives	40 %
Following friends	50 %
The migration patterns	

### **The tale of two ancient villages: Duong Lam and Phuoc Tich**

Phuoc Tich and Duong Lam are two ancient villages which are awarded by Vietnamese Government as national historical heritage. However, many of the economic and social events have made both positive and negative impact on socio-economic relation of each ancient village – neighborhood.

Urbanization in Vietnam has taken place not only in space but also in the structure of every household, and in each individual's mind. Urbanization is taking place outside this neighborhood in the form of urban expansion; within each unit in the form of increasing (or decreasing) settlers due to strong density settlements migration process. At a deeper level, it changes the orientation of individuals, destabilizing long-lasting social relations, moving them in different directions with great gap. Arising demands such as car usage, diverse consumption, urban living style, have put the settlement units in the unprecedented challenges. Whether the binder of these units can afford to keep them to assert itself, can evolve... or not are those under research and needs support.

The fates of these two ancient villages are now the subject of research and debate among both urban - architecture - conservation professionals, the media and native people.

## **Duong Lam Ancient Village**

Duong Lam village is located in the Northern West of Son Tay town, 4.5 km away from Son Tay town center, 47km away from central Hanoi, and near Highway 32.

Duong Lam ancient village is situated on a mountainous-hilly place in which there are ponds , gardens , fields surrounding and lying lower than the village. There is Tich River crossing the village in the southwest. This is a Vietnamese typical village with similar criteria for it to be shaped and developed, such as: being built on high mound to avoid flooding ,making use of prominent topographical advantage to easily get a cool living environment . The sunken land around the village serves as ponds, where the smooth places are used as arable farming. Ponds, lakes and bamboo are both shaping territorial boundaries, and as a means to improve the village's defense against foreign invaders. Currently, these belts of most villages in Vietnam have either disappeared or been shredded or remained only scattered pieces.

Through many ups and downs, Duong Lam has kept a picture of an ancient Vietnamese village with the village gate, banyan trees, water wells, lotus pond ... Visitors to this remote ancient place can easily recognize its special characters, which are the log house built with laterite located in the laterite-walled campus and tilt-brick village road running between those walls... The oldest house over 400 years has still kept the ritual texts written in Chinese ink on a plank. Each house is a family heirloom, is history, and is culture and also has sacred places of worship of each family. The old door frame painting tables are often creakily closed in their own worlds now is leaned to serve its function whenever there is work to do.

### **The situation of migrants from the ancient village, the problem of population growth and a shortage of living space**

Duong Lam villagers often rely on agriculture. Some households make soya sauce while the majority raises agricultural products such as rice, seasonal plants vegetables which are typical agricultural products in most agricultural villages in the North of Vietnam.

Being famous for its traditional fondness for learning, and that a lot of people were mandarins in the feudal dynasties, many people of this land nowadays have passed higher education, holding important positions in the society. In addition, due to the benefits from its proximity to the capital of Hanoi and large-scaled industrial zones, labor in Duong Lam village is easily attracted away from the traditional manufacturing activities. Many young people are leaving the village soon to find themselves active lives; some have become civil servants, employees of companies in the city, while a remarkable part is earning a living in the sub-urban industrial zones. Accordingly, agriculture has been weakened due to insufficient and unsatisfactory income that it brings compared to hard work they have to devote. However, no one ever forgets his origin and the proud of being the son of the "two Kings" land. Many of them either still have parents living in the village or expect to go back to their home land when they retire. Others do not yet intend to repatriate; however, they often return to visit on their holidays and make significant contribution in building their motherland.

This temporary migration has led to a fundamental change in social relations. The direct workforce for production activities in the village has decreased rapidly; even in some areas there has not enough young workers, which leads to the disappearance of a number of professions, or the lack of conditions to develop new ones, such as tourism services.

However, the household incomes remain stable; they can even have savings thanks to their children's financial support. It is the social changes, the innovative mindset, and the legitimate demand of raising living standards to catch up with modern amenities of life

have arisen the needs to improve, to enlarge old houses, and to build new structures for additional living spaces. Many old houses have thus been torn down, discarded or sold to architecture collectors since then. Afterwards, many new homes have been built in a spacious, modern and self-built way.

The shortage of guidance factors in construction management have led to the sloppy and embarrassing organization of ancient villages, along with the passive response to rampant construction of households without approval from the government. A simple routine of the management in Duong Lam is to ban in case it is unable to control anything.

### **Conservation in the continuing development**

Duong Lam ancient village must be considered not only as an organic product to be formed through continuous historic process, but also a living entity which includes architectural heritages, scenic villages, and a vibrant residential community. Antagonism between conservation and development stems from misconceptions about the heritage fund in this ancient village. Duong Lam is not a heritage, but a traditional rural community of Vietnam that has the oldest existence, being inherited and developed through lots of generations. Preserving Duong Lam is not the preservation of some models or scenery village street alleys only, but it is the preservation of the traditional architecture, in which all of them must be in a symbiotic structure comprising all social and production relations.

It is necessary to meet the needs of living and preservation requirements parallelly. Turning it museum means blocking the living vessel of the ancient village. Duong Lam needs to be further developed with inevitable hallmark of the contemporary society. Cultural-tourism-based conservation and development is the most appropriate exit for the conditions and characteristics of the village. The establishment of eco-tourism and the existence in symbiosis will help Duong Lam achieve an abundant, attractive and sustainable development.

### **Phuoc Tich Ancient Village**

Phuoc Tich village is located in Phuoc Phu Hamlet, Hoa Phong Commune, Huong Dien District, Thua Thien – Hue Province. It is acknowledged and awarded the Ancient village of "National Monument" on June 13, 2009. This is the second one to be recognized by the State and is certified after Duong Lam.

Many cultural, historical and architectural researchers visiting here were astonished and interested in the integrity of beam house and family church systems. In particular, the "ruong" houses (houses with garden) which have been nearly 500 years of age in Phuoc Tich are preserved almost intact, and having the old Central North shadows and characteristics. Local capital of Hue is basically well-known for having various "ruong" houses such as Phu Mong-Kim Long, Nguyet Bieu, Lai The,... but only Phuoc Tich owns a system of dense and nearly intact ones like that.

Old houses here are organized and arranged properly, making the spaces surrounding roads and alleys have order and discipline. Each house possesses extensive gardens of 1000 - 1.500m<sup>2</sup> in width, with fruit trees varies on a seasonal basis. Encompassing the house and its driveway are Chinese tea-tree fence, which are all in perfect and straight trim.

### **The migration and its consequences**

Nowadays, Phuoc Tich has been witnessing a severe decline in population due to a migration of younger generation towards large urban areas. Phuoc Tich village population was previously at up to 1,900 people. By the end of 1981, there were 651

people, while by the end of 2003, there were only 452 people divided into 125 household units. At present, the number of homes living in the village continued to reduce to 117 units.

According to calculation, the number of Phuoc Tich villagers earn their living elsewhere is much higher than the number of people living in the village, as follows:

- Hue: 180 people
- HCM City: 220 people
- Hanoi: 34 households
- Da Nang: 32 households
- Other provinces: 70 households
- Overseas: 22 households
- Total: 558 households (approximately 2,200 people)

After Liberation, the Centrally Planned Economy (CPE) led to an elimination of private kilns instead of ceramic production cooperatives. As a consequence, the status of “everybody’s business is nobody’s business” was the cause of inefficiently operating cooperatives.

After Renovation, the flourish of the economy has attracted many Phuoc Tich’s villagers to leave for the city. As a result, there is a decline in ceramic production which results in losing the market in other manufactured or industrialized substitutes which are cheaper or more durable. Furthermore, the open-door policy has filled the market with numerous diversified and quality-competitive ones. These factors are to blame for fading the traditional profession of making pottery that is by its very nature requires not only labor-intensive but capital-intensive and a stable market for its output as well.

### **Challenges and proposals**

For a village - heritage, questions are always raised in contrary: how should it be preserved?, and how should it be developed? In fact, preservation and development are not necessarily opposites, they can be parallel and complementary. Nonetheless, the case of Phuoc Tich is quite different, it is necessary to find a new and proper approach because of some specific characteristics regarding the length of its heritage together with the weakening of its vitality.

The first thing is to maintain and adapt the body of the village to becoming a living museum of a traditionally settled village.

Secondly, it is necessary to bear in mind that the development of the village must be under proper consideration, because the self-motivation for it is so weak that any intervention ideas for developing this place are essentially exotic, which can easily make negative impact on the inherently fragile and old “body” of the heritage.

Thirdly, tourism should be used as a move to achieve multiple goals: promoting the heritage, making jobs and creating other kinds of income for local people, and in turn using resources from tourism to sustain the heritage.

Last but not least, the adaptation of a certain number of spaces serving as tourism infrastructure while the extent of adaptation must be reasonably determined to avoid breaking the traditional spatial structure and social relations.

Phuoc Tich today is in poverty with hardly growth prospects. It is the tourism based on making use of existing resources without heavy investment that would be the most feasible pathways to improve people's living standards and preserve their heritage. A

key thing is that tourism should bring about practical benefits to the heritages masters themselves. When their heritage becomes the means of support and the motivation for growth, there will be a chance to attract villagers to come back to their native land.

### **Conclusion & recommendation**

Do we need to develop a more positive settlement model for farmers - the human recourse accounted for nearly 70% of the population in the country, playing important role in the development of Vietnam - a strong agricultural country?

*Reorganization settlement models firstly for local residents*

Settlement is a process of human life which has adapted to the geographical conditions and climate. This process has gone through hundreds or thousands of years. Currently, along with the economic development of the country, many potential risks are destabilizing and impacting to the living conditions of people. Development trends of economic growth is irreversible; therefore, we must always focus on economic growth in parallel with improving the life quality of residents. We need to renew awareness of urbanization in the state management agencies. Basing on the practical needs of the huge urbanization, we need to plan the policies, strategies and action plans for the future of residential areas in Vietnam. The selection of the traditional settlement model for urban and rural areas, in accordance with Vietnam in the period of industrialization and modernization under the impact of global climate change should be one of top priorities.

*Rethinking policies related to urban - rural development and management orienting the sustainable development.*

Currently, the state management issues and the practice of architects and planners in Vietnam need to be thoroughly respected. Professionals need to constantly update the theoretical and technical means as well as the practical issues of urban development, rural living space protection. Quality of construction & development planning need to be controlled tightly based on the proper legal documents.

Urban development policies need to be based on scientific data, to balance land resources as well as the social consequences of its long-term, water resources, use of clean energy and environmental protection. Resources in urban - rural and the economical development need to be considered for the economic growth in parallel with the quality of life for residents.

*Authors' contact detail:*

<b>THAI MINH HAI HA</b> <i>MArch., MAUD.</i> tel: (+84) 943459669 email: <a href="mailto:thaiminhhaiha@gmail.com">thaiminhhaiha@gmail.com</a>	<b>NGUYEN VINH QUANG</b> <i>MScArch. MSc. Project Mgnt</i> tel: (+84) 903255722 email: <a href="mailto:quangnguyenkts@gmail.com">quangnguyenkts@gmail.com</a>
Address: <b>Faculty of Architecture and Engineering, Phuong Dong University</b> 228 Minh Khai Street, Hai Ba Trung District, Hanoi, Vietnam	