



Article of National Self-Assessment Report & Plan for the Placement of the SSVC Course

This report aims to explore environmental and urban development issues related to spatial planning, as well as current urban planning law. The authors will identify the connection between population growth, city development and environmental quality, determine any gaps in environmental and spatial planning and subsequently recommend appropriate measures to fill these gaps.

The results of the report show that there are many environmental challenges in Vietnam, which include a supply shortage of sanitary water; a lack of wastewater treatment plants; increasing solid waste generation; air pollution in cities; and land use changes causing loss of green areas, agriculture land or old public transport systems.





Urban planning in Vietnam – administrative challenge or opportunity?

Vietnam faces many environmental challenges, such as a supply shortage of sanitary water; a lack of wastewater treatment plants; increasing solid waste generation; air pollution in cities; and land use changes causing loss of green areas, agriculture land or old public transport systems.

Socio-development issues are not fully recognized in the urban planning system, and with the virtual collapse of residency provisions and the growth of jobs in the cities, rural to urban migration is contributing to a large level of undocumented urban population. Lack of clarity to date over land tenure and land use rights is driving social and political concerns, fuelling new urban social movements that actively oppose some urban redevelopment projects.

In addition, environmental data is fragmented and there is no unified environmental information system for sharing and managing data, resulting in data overlap. Furthermore, compliance with development control laws, regulatory decrees and plans is low, due in part to the independent development of squatter settlements in urban areas and the inconsistent application of policies between central and local government. In practice, there is a wide discretion in local urban development decision-making, too frequently associated with corrupt practices.

In order to take advantage of any potential positive impacts and minimize the negative effects of urbanization and population development on the environment, it is necessary to integrate environmental planning and spatial planning to steer the development process.

Vietnam has a three-tiered system of local/regional/government. The first level in administrative terms is 'Provinces', the second level is 'Districts', and the third level is 'Communes and Towns'. Currently, there are three main types of plans related to the use of land in Vietnam: spatial plans, socio-economic plans and sector plans. Spatial plans include construction and land use plans, socio-economic plans cover the Vietnam Socio-economic Development Plan, and sector plans relate to functional ministry sectors, which, for example, include environmental plans.

City development is closely connected to socio-economic planning; spatial planning; natural resource management and integrated land use; infrastructure systems; and governance frameworks. City development is carried out through strategic environmental assessment (SEA) in the course of urban planning to protect the environment.

Due to professional and educational weaknesses relating to environmental and urban planning in Vietnam, several flaws can be identified. The responsibility for urban planning in Vietnam is fragmented between ministries and different levels of government. The planning system is unnecessarily complex, bureaucratic, and highly centralized. Laws and decrees that guide the administrative procedures are ambiguous, out-dated, and impractical. Collaboration between agencies involving plan preparation and implementation is poor. Environmental and urban planners are considered as architects, engineers, or in some cases, economists. There is no professional registration or certification for urban planners due to the absence of environmental and urban planning educational programs. Strengthening the capacity of urban planning institutions is critical in order to improve Vietnam's urban development, meet the challenges of rapid urbanization and



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transition to a market oriented economy, in line with the Vietnam Urban Development Orientation and Strategy with Vision toward year 2050.

Is Education the answer?

Vietnamese professionals in the urban sector have a long history of city building and are influenced by China, France, Japan and the US. Currently, there is a strong demand for skilled professionals in all areas of urban development. Government agencies recognize architecture, engineering and other professional qualifications but urban planning qualifications are less recognised, with no environmental planning qualification currently being recognised. Urban education has been carried out in a limited number of education institutions: 11 universities in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Hue. Furthermore, there is also a need for a fundamental education and training in GIS for all spatially related study programs, especially supporting tools for spatial planning, environmental management, utility administration and land registration.

In addition, training programs have generally not covered both the range of skills and the depth of knowledge needed. In-service training requires stronger links between workplaces and educational institutions for recognition of workplace learning among non-governmental agencies, consultants and international companies active in Vietnam.

It is also essential that methods are developed to allow for conservation, economic, environmental protection and social development. In addition, there is an urgent need to increase the quantity and quality of urban planning professionals for the urban sector to assist Vietnam's partners in the promotion of urban planning policy reform in a smarter and more sustainable direction.

Vietnamese universities are seeking to contribute to these tasks by trying to integrate new modules, opening new double degree programs on Urban and Environmental Planning, building up research programmes in environmental and urban planning, infrastructure and management with potential partners. According to the questionnaire, all Vietnamese partners involved are using conventional teaching methods. Practices and projects are implemented at many of the universities. Blended learning, practice, e-learning and projects are methods that nearly all of the universities wish to use in the future. Since there is no knowledge or experience in the field of blended learning, but a strong will to use it, this should be in the focus of the following work packages as well.

Self-assessments from Vietnamese partners show that Vietnamese universities lack modern facilities (information technology and experimental equipment), evaluation methods, difficulties with connection between the university and alumni, and co-operation between the university and work life. To evaluate the needs of the Vietnamese partners a questionnaire has been carried out. The outcome of the questionnaire shows that in terms of the content for the SSVC courses, there are six topics that are most important for all partner universities, however, there is a difference among the universities concerning the importance of the topics. The topics are: environmental challenges by the municipal land use; renewable energy, waste, water and wastewater management; food access and food security; energy efficiency; and energy supply. Since the topics are overlapping, a combination is recommended. The lecture coverage for the main topics must be reconsidered during the development of the tailor courses. If there are universities that are



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incapable of giving lectures on all topics, other universities could send professors or e-learning courses could be developed to offset the lack of teaching staff.

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