

Suggestion from Experience of Some Asian Countries Regarding “City-inside City”: A Case Study of Thu Duc City of Ho Chi Minh City

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ABSTRACT

On November 16th, 2020, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam’s National Assembly had passed the Resolution for Organizing Ho Chi Minh City’s urban administration (at the 10th meeting, National Assembly session XIV). By deciding to “implement without the need of testing”, the National Assembly expresses great trust in not only the idea of ‘city-inside-city’ but also in innovative decisions from Ho Chi Minh City’s administrators throughout history. However, along with massive potential comes enormous challenges that Thu Duc City needs to surpass. This paper will discuss: the concept of ‘city-inside-city’ and the Eastern innovative urban area; potentials and challenges for Thu Duc City; and some solutions to manage Thu Duc City more effectively as using international experiences as references.

Keywords: *community development, community economy, resilience.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Continually updating and involving itself vis-à-vis the global context, Ho Chi Minh City has been a major empirical data contributor towards building and developing the government’s economic policies and a place that coins many original development models. The Political Bureau’s conclusion no. 21-KL/TW – dated October 24th, 2017 (Bộ Chính trị, 2012; Bộ Chính trị, 2017), and the National Assembly’s Resolution no. 54/2017/QH14 – dated November 24th, 2017 regarding testing specific development structures and policies on Ho Chi Minh City as a smart, modern, rapidly-yet-sustainably growing, and nation’s economically leading city are two cases in point (Quốc Hội. 2017). Amid globalization and the Industrial Revo-

lution 4.0, based on the knowledge economy, a project of building a smart city with cutting-edge technology usage is Ho Chi Minh City’s present developing direction. This path results from the city’s previous inventive methods and models, i.e., export processing zone, software park, biotechnology center, high-tech park, etc. (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. 2020).

Thu Duc District (that has 12 wards), District 2 (that has 11 wards), and District 9 (that has 13 wards) were established on April 1st, 1997 from a larger Thu Duc Division – with 211,56km² in area, a population of 1,013,795 people and will soon reach 2 million citizens with the current growth rate. Over 20 years, the area’s economy is now moving on a correct path – having a fast-growing pace in the investment, trading, ser-

vice market compared to many years ago. The group situates in Ho Chi Minh City's ideal Northeast position - bordering the upcoming Long Thanh international airport; is the core of Vietnam's Southern key economic zone; holds a crucial role in the country's foreign trading activities, and has up-to-date, synchronized infrastructure system. (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. 2020). Therefore, the three Ho Chi Minh City's Eastern districts (District 2, District 9, Thu Duc District) have been chosen to further transform into an inspired growth 'pole', a leading economic area with the knowledge economy as the base, and also a center of innovations. This decision results from a need for a comprehensive administrative system that has the adequate legal power and sufficient management capability to actively, independently, and fully exploit the prominent resources of Ho Chi Minh City's innovative and reactive Eastern urban area. The new city's suggested name – Thu Duc City, expresses the local geographical heritage while still aligns with the Ho Chi Minh City majority's wishes (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. 2020).

2 DISCUSSIONS

2.1 *The concept of “city-inside-city” and the innovation Easterns urban are*

The definition of a city mainly indicates an urban area with a dense population. Although there is no settlement or limit in defining a city and a town in the realm of linguistics, many cities have their administrative system, legal policies, and certain history in accordance with the local law. Generally speaking, there are residential areas, industrial parks, and trading zones inside a city with possibly managerial accountabilities related to a larger region. A large portion of any municipality consists of a housing system that closely relied on infrastructures such as roads and public transportations. Though significant growth density has a critical role in connecting companies

and citizens, thus benefiting both parties, it also brings challenges to urban administration. A big city is commonly linked to other urban and suburban areas, creating a thriving market for intra-regional, work-related traveling services. When a city is large enough to meet another city, it could be classified as a megacity (Wikipedia 2021).

The 2015 organizing the local Government Law, Clause 2 Article 2 regarding the Socialist Republic of Vietnam's administrative units, stated: *“Town, District, Provincial City, Governmental City-inside-city (shared the same level of town)”* (Quốc Hội 2015).

Grouping three above districts into one Thu Duc city has, to some extent, satisfied the criteria for being a First-class city of a **governmental city-inside-city**, according to National Assembly Standing Committee's Article 5 Resolution no. 1211/2016/UBTVQH13 considering standard criteria administrative units and dividing administrative units (Ủy ban Thường vụ Quốc Hội 2016).

“City-inside-city” is a model that would transform the area into a 'core', a 'pole' of new growth, stimulating rapid progress from Ho Chi Minh City and Southern key economic zone during Industrial Revolution 4.0. Thu Duc City – Innovative and highly reactive urban area, located in Ho Chi Minh City's Eastern side, will contribute to a value chain created on a modern, high-tech, world-class infrastructure system and society. That desired state will arrive from activities such as building a new intellectual scene, training labor forces, providing and commercializing high-quality solutions and products thanks to adequate financial support for scientific research, start-ups, and companies' manufacturing processes (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020).

The Eastern innovative urban area will be the stimulus for Ho Chi Minh City's new economic developing phase. Not only will it be a model area founded on innovations, intellectual economy, and technology economy together with friendly living environment and sustainable family development, but will the zone also be the point for trans-

ferring cutting-edge technology to South-eastern provinces, expanding 4.0-technology services and products to Eastern and South-western provinces. After gaining positive outcomes, the area can distribute monetary funds and thoroughly trained human resources for the entire region's economic development activity. (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020).

2.2 Potentials and challenges for Thu Duc city

2.2.1. Potentials

Following the proposed design of Ho Chi Minh City's Eastern innovative and highly reactive urban area (including the entire geographical administrative area of District 2, District 9, and Thu Duc District) to create Ho Chi Minh City's new motivative growth area, there are eight chosen centers inside the zone, namely: (1) Financial center in Thu Thiem new urban area; (2) Rach Chiec Sports and Health center; (3) High-tech Manufacturing center (including a high-tech park, industrial zones, and export processing zones); (4) Higher Education and Sciences - Technology Research center (including Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City, Fulbright University, Ho Chi Minh City University of Agriculture and Forestry and other nearby institutions); (5) Vietnam's largest start-up zone; (6) The southeast area's commuting midpoint center and Cat Lai container port; and (8) Truong Tho port urban zone – the future urban (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020).

Concluding from Ho Chi Minh City's Eastern impressive growth with existing functional areas and synchronized modern infrastructures, Thu Duc City is expected to be the midpoint of technology, education, and research between Ho Chi Minh City, the Southeastern zone, and the entire nation. According to the blueprint, the city will contribute one-third of Ho Chi Minh city's Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP), equal to 7% of Vietnam's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is impressive, as the statistics are only below the capital city –

Hanoi's GRDP and even higher Binh Duong's and Dong Nai's GRDP – two major industrial areas (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020).

Besides, there are five future logistics centers inside Eastern Ho Chi Minh City's innovative, reactive urban area, namely: Long Binh logistics center (District 9), Cat Lai logistics center (District 9 and District 2), Linh Trung logistics center (District 9), and Truong Tho logistics center (Thu Duc District). These centers further prove Thu Duc City's high potential in expanding logistics service thanks to its strategic position and multi-connection ability (land transportation, railroad, maritime transport) with Cat Lai port and a convenient road system to the airport and other provinces (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020).

Moreover, other cultural and sports-related, regional and national constructions, such as Rach Chiec complex sports arena in District 9 (expected to be 180,000m² in the area); Ethnic Cultural and Historical Park in District 9 (expected to be 98,000m² in the area); Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City's sports center in Thu Duc District (expected to be 31,000m² in the area) – also contribute to the zone's diversity. On the other hand, establishing a Thu Duc City with distinct urban traits will ease administrating and implementing labor market development policies while ensuring a higher social security level (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020).

Expanding Thu Duc City's geographical border by combining three districts will enhance the city's prospect in economic growth, real estate, and value, founding an environment for intensive sciences and technology enactment in various social life aspects. Specifically, administrators will minimize inefficient funding, motivate the local economy's growing process and speed, and effectively reconstruct the economic and labor structure. Additionally, positive modifications related to the labor field are projected, specifically, new job and career opportunities, increasing work value, better salaries and wages for the workforce, etc.

Lastly, with proper residence distribution, Thu Duc City is guaranteed to attract many domestic and international investors' interests. (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020).

2.2.2. Challenges

Managing a now larger geographical border can bring some barriers to the surface regarding controlling these new administrative units, such as: how to do social planning properly, increase social issues, lack of social security and order, mentally and emotionally effecting some surplus number of civil servants due to the readjustment process. (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020)

Utilizing the reactive and innovative urban area must be under one governmental unit's supervision, not three separate administration systems from three independent districts - like the present. Thu Duc City's future administration should be a synchronized, modern, and practical structure with an adequate amount of legal authority and reactivity to combine each district's strength with Ho Chi Minh City's, the region's, and Vietnam's. As a result, Thu Duc City will soon become Ho Chi Minh City's and the zone's most extensive, most robust 'pole' of economic growth. (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020)

Regarding the labor aspect, since the area has the highest blue-collar worker and factory population, the employment market is very dynamic, yet no less problematic. The place also consists of people from diverse religions and ethnicities, even different countries – to make a living or study. Hence, malevolence organizations have made many attempts to approach, attract citizens, and ignite ill-intentioned activities towards Vietnam's Government and Communist Party. (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020)

As one of Ho Chi Minh City's entrances, Thu Duc City has radical urbanization with many critical construction projects, gathering many industrial zones, universities, education institutions, and ports with many mi-

grant workers. The place thus has become a hot spot regarding social security's violations. Criminal offense, specifically ownership violation cases, guilty individuals usually take advantage of Thu Duc City's crowded and complicated nature to hide, causing chaos in the community. (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020)

Taking advantage of the marine port for illegal activities such as smuggling, unlawful freight of products and drugs - namely cocaine - remains the area's hot issue. Besides, labor strikes in industrial sites around the area bring up many underlying problems. In case of a remarkable population density, significant transportation flow at Ho Chi Minh City's entrances often turns into traffic jams and might even lead to accidents. Furthermore, social-security-related aspect, especially migrant resident management and resolving administrative formalities for the local community's purpose, brings out many challenges for the administration if they stay with the traditional managing style. (Ủy ban nhân dân thành phố Hồ Chí Minh 2020).

2.3. Some solutions to manage Thu Duc City more effectively (using international experiences as references)

2.3.1. Applying technology and digital transformation to increase the city managing process' efficiency

With an area of 728km² (three-and-a-half-fold larger than Thu Duc City) and a population of 5.6 million citizens (five times more than Thu Duc City), using Singapore's urban administrating model as a reference would benefit Ho Chi Minh City in managing Thu Duc City.

Singapore started the idea of the smart country at the end of 2014. Since then, this country began to apply analyzed data, AI, the Internet of things, and other digital technologies in serving its citizens and companies. From Singapore's point of view, to become a 'fully digitalized' government, the public area must have the ability to utilize data as a crucial resource. In other words, a digitalized government requires a total

mindset revolution in every aspect. Not only in interactions with citizens but digital technology should now also be integrated more into other activities, such as developing policies, planning, providing, and operating services with the people's participation. Hence, the shifting process naturally admits data as a form of resource and a foundation for the digitalization revolution. Policies would then be adjusted and modified constantly based on data; activities would be more synchronized than reactive and reflective; and services would also be more personalized than generalized. In the future, by utilizing data in the digitalization phase, instead of providing mass services, the digitalized government would shift its focus towards satisfying the citizens' needs.

Regarding the people and companies: The government should pay attention to providing digital services to increase the communication rate and provide faster assistance and problem-solving solutions to the majority. Regarding the civil servants: The government should focus on providing facilities for citizens on various digital platforms, digital services, and solutions so that the administrative formalities could be effectively resolved. On the other hand, citizens could also have access to data and information with ease and low costs instead of wasting time filling in papers and forms.

Municipal Services Office (MSO) should utilize and digitalize data to renovate the city's response system. Data such as documents, photos, and geographical location collected by AI technology will be automatically sent to involved parties. Simultaneously, the city's hotspots can take pictures and send them to MSO's One Service App.

By digitalizing data, the government will simultaneously create more data and open more possibilities for bolder innovations. Data collected from sensors and IoT gadgets will improve the city's response towards developing models, solving core problems, and increasing interactions between the citizens and the government. (Trang 2020).

2.3.2 Promoting law education and urban citizens' awareness.

There is a need for a quality law education program among member universities of Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City system, kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, high schools, and vocational education institutions. Changes should revolve around updated content, teaching, and learning methods in law-related and civic education subjects. Engaging these subjects' extracurricular activities with relatable content is also a good idea to educate the youth on a sophisticated and healthy lifestyle, patriotism, and a law-abiding mindset. To organize training courses on legal knowledge, skills to disseminate the quality of extracurricular education to teachers and legal practitioners in the education sector are needed to build an official criterion for civic education and law education teachers. Taking reference from Japan's experience shows that ethics, law, and public manner education are essential in shaping a city's human resources quality.

Japanese children will spare 15 minutes every day to clean up the classroom with their teacher, creating a modest and tidy habit for one entire Japanese generation. Every Japanese citizen who owns a pet must carry a bag specifically to wrap up their pet's waste. Protecting personal hygiene and the surroundings' cleanliness are parts of the Japanese moral value. A Japanese janitor is called 'an environment engineer' with a salary of US\$ 5,000 to 8,000 per month. To ensure that they understand the nature and importance of their job, all candidates must take a challenging entrance test (including a written and oral examination).

4. CONCLUSION

The blueprint planning for Thu Duc City is quite ambitious and modern, yet, besides the potential advantages, there are many underlying challenges that Thu Duc City's administrator needs to resolve, i.e., upgrading infrastructures to minimize and eliminate

floods and decrease traffic jam rate, in order to realize a high-quality living city.

Intending to contribute suggestions for Thu Duc City to enhance its managing ability and reaching its development's goals, this paper takes reference from Singapore's (building a digitalized government and their digital transformation process) and Japan's experience (promoting law and ethics for Thu Duc City's students and citizens).

From Singapore's viewpoint, a government should rely on its data resources to make decisions and interact with its people in the digital era. As the core of any digitalized government, it can be concluded that: data is gradually becoming one of the essential assets of cities and governments. Along with the digital transformation process, administrators should also pay attention to innovate cultural and ethics education like the Japanese morality: "No child in a family and no family in a community should be left uneducated" – focusing on mentally and physically balanced development for children in terms of manners, attitudes,

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