

Building a Sustainable Urban Cultural Value System in Ho Chi Minh City in the Context of Globalization and Digital Transformation: A Cultural-Philosophical and Developmental Perspective

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Abstract: This article examines the construction of a sustainable urban cultural value system in Ho Chi Minh City in the context of deepening globalization and digital transformation. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of cultural philosophy and development philosophy, the study analyzes the role of cultural values as an endogenous resource that shapes urban identity, strengthens social cohesion, and supports sustainable development. The research demonstrates that globalization and digital transformation simultaneously create opportunities for the adoption of progressive cultural values and generate significant value conflicts and crises of orientation in urban life. These challenges are manifested in the erosion of behavioral norms, the imbalance between economic growth and cultural-spiritual development, and the risk of diminishing urban cultural identity. Based on an analysis of the practical context of Ho Chi Minh City, the article proposes a systematic set of solutions to consolidate a sustainable urban cultural value system, including the redefinition and institutionalization of core values, the integration of culture into development strategies, cultural education for younger generations, the application of digital technologies in cultural preservation and promotion, and the establishment of a multi-actor model of cultural governance. The study contributes to both theoretical and practical discussions on sustainable urban development in the era of globalization and digitalization.

Keywords: Urban culture; cultural value system; sustainable development; globalization and digital transformation; Ho Chi Minh City.

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Introduction

In a rapidly integrating and continuously transforming world, culture has increasingly emerged as a central pillar of sustainable urban development. Beyond its role as a spiritual foundation, culture functions as an endogenous resource that drives innovation, enhances quality of life, and constructs the distinctive identity of cities. Consequently, the study and construction of sustainable urban cultural value systems have become an urgent requirement, particularly for large cities undergoing profound structural transformations. Ho Chi Minh City, as Vietnam's most dynamic economic and cultural center, possesses all the characteristics of a valuable case study. Cultural diversity, social dynamism, and rapid economic growth have created a vibrant urban environment with significant developmental potential. At the same time, the city faces serious challenges arising from globalization and digital transformation. Globalization offers access to advanced cultural values and new forms of knowledge, yet it also poses risks of cultural homogenization and the erosion of traditional cultural identity. Digital transformation, driven by the rapid expansion of information technologies, generates new cultural spaces and modes of interaction while simultaneously raising concerns regarding heritage preservation, information governance, and privacy protection.

In this context, constructing a new and sustainable urban cultural value system for Ho Chi Minh City is of critical importance. Such a system must inherit and promote positive traditional cultural values while selectively integrating progressive

global values in ways that correspond to the city's specific characteristics and developmental requirements. Moreover, it must remain adaptive to transformations in the digital era, fostering a healthy and creative cultural environment that enhances residents' quality of life and supports the vision of Ho Chi Minh City as a modern, civilized, and humane metropolis.

Research Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

Research Objectives

The study aims to analyze the role and significance of urban cultural value systems in sustainable urban development, with particular emphasis on Ho Chi Minh City. It seeks to clarify the dual impacts of globalization and digital transformation on traditional urban cultural values and the formation of new value orientations.

Research Object and Scope

The research focuses on urban cultural value systems, the influencing factors of globalization and digital transformation, and proposed solutions for their development in Ho Chi Minh City. The scope of the study is limited to the city within the broader context of accelerating global integration and digitalization.

Research Methodology

The study employs conceptual analysis and theoretical systematization of key notions related to culture, values,

sustainable urban development, globalization, and digital transformation. In addition, document analysis is conducted using policy texts, academic publications, scientific reports, and books addressing culture, urban development, globalization, and digitalization.

Theoretical Foundations

Core Concepts from Cultural Philosophy

From the perspective of cultural philosophy, cultural values are not fixed entities but socially constructed processes shaped by historical and contextual conditions. Cultural values may be spiritual, material, instrumental, or intrinsic, and may be universal or context-specific. In urban contexts, these values interact dynamically to form distinctive cultural identities.

Cultural identity is understood as the synthesis of characteristics that distinguish one city from another. Under globalization, preserving urban cultural identity requires a delicate balance between openness to external influences and the protection of core cultural elements. Community also plays a fundamental role, as urban culture is sustained through social interaction, shared practices, and collective memory. In the digital era, the concepts of “community” and “public space” must be redefined to include both physical and virtual dimensions.

Development Philosophy and Cultural Sustainability

Development philosophy provides a critical lens for examining the balance among the three pillars of sustainable development: economic growth, social equity, and environmental protection. A sustainable urban cultural value system must align with these pillars by promoting creativity, social cohesion, and ecological awareness.

Digital culture represents a new domain of cultural sustainability. While digital technologies reshape modes of expression, interaction, and dissemination, they also introduce challenges such as information overload and digital alienation. Addressing these challenges is essential for the long-term sustainability of urban culture.

The Impact of Globalization on Urban Cultural Values in Ho Chi Minh City

Globalization has profoundly reshaped the urban cultural value system of Ho Chi Minh City in complex and multidimensional ways, involving processes of reception, transformation, and conflict.

First, globalization has facilitated the reception and integration of external cultural values. As a major center of economic activity and international exchange, Ho Chi Minh City has actively absorbed values related to economic efficiency, labor productivity, entrepreneurship, and professional ethics, thereby enhancing its dynamism and competitiveness. Global trends in fashion, music, cinema, and cuisine have enriched cultural life, while values such as human rights, gender equality, transparency, and freedom of expression have gained broader social recognition.

Second, globalization has generated processes of cultural hybridization rather than simple imitation. Urban architecture reflects the blending of European styles with local elements, producing distinctive forms such as Indochinese architecture. Culinary practices, language use, and everyday lifestyles similarly

exhibit hybrid characteristics, combining global influences with local traditions.

Third, globalization has produced cultural conflicts and challenges. Tensions arise between individualism and collectivist values, consumerism and spiritual depth, and global cultural dominance and local identity preservation. These conflicts highlight the need for strategic cultural orientations that maximize the benefits of globalization while mitigating its adverse effects.

Challenges to Urban Cultural Values from Cultural and Developmental Philosophical Perspectives

From a cultural-philosophical perspective, Ho Chi Minh City faces increasing conflicts within its urban value system. Traditional values of solidarity, compassion, and tolerance - once central to the city’s cultural identity—are challenged by pragmatic and material-oriented lifestyles. This shift is reflected in declining standards of public behavior, weakened community bonds, and manifestations of social indifference.

Development philosophy interprets these phenomena as consequences of imbalance between economic growth and cultural–social development. While Ho Chi Minh City has achieved rapid economic expansion, cultural and social development has not progressed at the same pace. Urban success is often measured primarily through economic indicators, marginalizing cultural, environmental, and humanistic considerations. This imbalance results in a form of “developmental alienation,” in which material affluence coexists with spiritual impoverishment. Moreover, the rapid pace of social change has generated a crisis of value orientation. Traditional norms are losing their guiding function, while new norms remain underdeveloped. Younger generations, in particular, are exposed to hybrid value systems shaped by digital culture and consumerism, often lacking deep connections to traditional values. Consequently, the city’s identity as “dynamic, humane, creative, and open” risks becoming symbolic rather than lived reality.

Policy and Philosophical Solutions for a Sustainable Urban Cultural Value System

From the perspectives of cultural philosophy and development philosophy, solutions must aim not merely to address isolated phenomena but to restructure the foundational value system of urban life.

First, the core values of Ho Chi Minh City—such as solidarity, dynamism, creativity, and openness—should be redefined and institutionalized as normative principles of urban behavior. Cultural philosophy emphasizes that values achieve sustainability only when they are socially internalized and formally embedded in governance frameworks.

Second, cultural development must be positioned on an equal footing with economic development. Investment in cultural infrastructure, public cultural spaces, heritage conservation, and creative industries should be regarded as strategic investments that enhance long-term urban resilience and quality of life.

Third, cultural education for younger generations should be strengthened. Education should foster cultural self-awareness, pride in urban identity, and the capacity to selectively engage with global values. Schools, civic education programs, and youth movements play a crucial role in ensuring intergenerational cultural continuity.

Fourth, digital technologies should be strategically applied to preserve and promote urban culture. Digital databases, virtual exhibitions, and online cultural platforms can expand access and participation, while ethical governance mechanisms must address issues of digital inequality and information integrity.

Fifth, a multi-centered model of cultural governance should be developed, involving collaboration among government, communities, and businesses. The state provides policy direction, communities serve as both creators and custodians of culture, and businesses contribute through social responsibility and cultural investment. This synergy generates collective momentum for embedding cultural values in everyday urban life.

Conclusion

Constructing a sustainable urban cultural value system in Ho Chi Minh City is not merely a response to current challenges but a strategic task grounded in cultural philosophy and development philosophy. In the context of globalization and digital transformation, culture must be recognized as the normative foundation and driving force of sustainable urban development. Only by integrating cultural values with economic, social, and technological strategies can cities achieve balanced, humane, and resilient growth. The case of Ho Chi Minh City offers valuable insights for other rapidly transforming cities seeking to reconcile development, identity, and sustainability in an increasingly interconnected world.

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