

Urban planning in Vietnam: A constructed field of patriarchy

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ABSTRACT

The prolonged absence of women in urban planning and its consequences have been brought to the fore since the 1960s in Western societies to strive for inclusiveness, social justice and sustainability. In Vietnam - a socialist nation seeking to blend traditionalism and modernism- urban planning is intellectually viewed from a different sense, which pays the way for the establishment of a patriarchal field. It is widely acknowledged that the course of urbanisation is shaped by gender and this phenomenon at the same time affects men and women differently. However, it has not been in the mind of most urban planning thinkers to question the distasteful establishment even though the discourse of gender awareness has been round for decades. In fact, there is lack of literature on the connection of gender and urban planning in Vietnam, and it seems that the majority of universities and other institutions providing urban planning educational and training services have taken for granted the notion of gender-neutrality in urban planning. This paper therefore is the first effort aiming to provide a scholarly and interdisciplinary exploration of the nature of this negligence or rather exasperated ignorance. As such, the paper will examine the origin and development of urban planning in Vietnam through a gender lens. It particularly will analyses the nation's unique historical development, which results from the entanglement of Confucianism, socialism, nationalism and modernisation. Collectively, the paper argues that urban planning has been culturally, politically and socially constructed as a for-man profession, relegating women to a "fit-in position", undervaluing the roles and contributions of women in the industry. It in the end calls for a radical change in re-conceptualising and re-framing urban planning in Vietnam as well as calls for more interdisciplinary investigations, bringing different points of view into urban planning issues.

Key words: Confucianism, Feminism, Gender perspectives, Socialism, Urban planning

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality dimension is increasingly demonstrated as a key factor to ensure the establishment of a civilised, balanced and democratic society. Gender relations have gained traction in modern urban planning, mostly in the developed world through the enhancement of gender mainstreaming, the adoption of gender-sensitive approach, as well as many gender-related issues in urban development that have been extensively investigated and addressed¹⁻⁴. That is why the United Nations has placed gender equality alongside seventeen goals of sustainable development to multiple disciplines, ranging from having equal rights in politics, participating in decisions making process to being independent in career choices⁵. In this respect, urban planning's aim is to envisage and comprehensively strategise policies culminated in plans to meet gender equality goals as this discipline's core value is to creating and nurturing better places for people regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, ages and genders in any democratic societies. In order to do that planning educators and experts whose positions and roles are highly in-

fluential in the field need to be in the lead. These key figures more or less should be sensitive to the gender dimension in urban planning education.

Unfortunately, it seems that there has been a prolonged dominance of men roles in Vietnam's urban planning industry, let alone in urban planning education. There is a common-sense view that people working in urban planning are better to be men. This actually makes sense since urban planning in Vietnam is still strongly associated with physical planning or spatial construction, which primarily focuses on physical and material creation while paying less attention to social dynamics^{6,7}. Under urban planning law No.30/2009/QH12, urban planning means urban construction planning which refers to the organisation of urban and architectural landscape space; the organisation of housing, technical and social infrastructure system in order to design out a suitable environment for urbanites. Accordingly, urban planning in Vietnam is disproportionately technical and it entirely endorses an environmental determinist approach, overemphasising the material creation of built environments and lacking multidisciplinary cooperation. This approach gradually manifests in planning

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History

- Received: 13-9-2021
- Accepted: 06-4-2022
- Published: 13-8-2022

DOI : 10.32508/stdjelm.v5iS12.1051



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Cite this article : Le P.D. **Urban planning in Vietnam: A constructed field of patriarchy.** *Sci. Tech. Dev. J. - Eco. Law Manag.*; 5(S12):112-122.

education in which planning students are typically taught to carry out planning projects that are culminated in blueprint master plans. These final one-end plans indicate the predicted future of what a neighbourhood, a town or a city physically looks like, while related social concerns such as who lives there and what their needs are, which among other social factors highly depends on their genders are barely touched. In this sense, the roles of leading experts and educators in urban planning in making a model shift in the field are paramount. However, the majority of these key figures seem to internalise the idea of gender neutrality, thereby being unaware of or even downplaying gender matters, which have been extensively proved elsewhere to affect and shape urban forms and the distribution of functional areas in cities. Listerborn⁸ argues that if urban planning practitioners bear prejudice against the community that they are planning for, the consequences of the planning process will be tamed with the same bias and prejudice. In this sense, it is possible to claim that if leading experts and educators in urban planning education have poor knowledge about systemically constructed differences between men and women in experiencing urban life, there will be less chance for Vietnam's urban planning industry to experience changes towards more inclusive and intersectional approaches, in which every voice and differentiated perspectives count. Here, raising awareness of the problematic gender-neutrality in urban planning education serves as a first step in the journey.

Therefore, the paper calls into question the constructed view on gender neutrality, discusses and raises awareness of the necessity of studying gender amongst experts and educators working in urban planning education. It commences showing an outline of urban planning education in Vietnam, which also traces back the origin of urban planning and how it has become this existence. The paper then provides an analysis on the root cause of gender unequal distribution in urban planning education and training, the legacy of intertwined ideologies on women's career progression in urban planning and the epistemic construction of urban planning as unfit for Vietnamese women.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW AND THE ORIGIN OF URBAN PLANNING EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

Urban planning education and training in Vietnam have officially established since the late 20th century. Prior to this time, there was no valid education or training for urban planning but intuitive and

experiential lessons passed down from one period to another. Urban planning before colonial occupation and modernity was associated with an imperial regime under which planning activity was a part of the expansion of colonial territory and the construction of imperial cities and their citadels. It is noteworthy that decisions regarding these activities were totally in the hands of kings and governors who were men only. The appearance of France troops in Vietnam gradually spelled the end of the imperial system, and put the country under colonial governance. Urban planning education was born during this time with two opposing existences. One was the adaptation and transformation of Western urban planning ideas into the built environment of some major cities including Da Nang, Ha Noi and Sai Gon to create a conducive environment for exploitation and colonisation. Another was the training courses for engineers and architects who presided over the construction of infrastructure to support the Vietnamese military to stop the invaders and to rebuild the nation. A socialist system has been put into governance under the lead of one-party government after Vietnam defeated the American invasion in 1975, which was a turn of events that marked an important shift from a prolonged war mode to a modern one. Urban planning or now so-called construction urban planning during this time was to build and organise physical spaces including basic infrastructures for social and economic development. This core objective of planning has had its root from that time on.

The first urban planning course took place at The Division of Urban and Regional planning – the Faculty of Architecture and Planning – National University of Civil Engineering (NUCE), which educated the first architect and engineer generation, whose roles often included urban planning activities, shaping a foundation for urban planning in Vietnam. The Division originated from the Faculty of Construction of Hanoi University of Science and Technology. Its inception was literally an extension of general civil engineering, and the first urban planning construction course was separated from the third course of civil engineering in Vietnam. In this course, male figures held supreme power. They were literally in charge of establishing course structure and deciding the necessary subjects for the course, which became pillars of urban planning educational curriculum of the current universities⁹. The Division has continuously developed ever since with many of its experts who have become leaders at many other construction-based universities, institutes, and local councils across the country.

One of them is the Faculty of Urban and Regional Planning at Hanoi Architectural University (HAU). The Faculty was found in 1992 as an integration of some parts of the Faculty of Architecture and the Faculty of Urban Engineering and Environment under Decision No.283/BXD-TCLĐ declared by the Minister of the Ministry of Construction. Since its establishment, the Faculty has gained its nationwide reputation through its standard and comprehensive services in educating students at different levels from undergraduate to postgraduate on regional planning, urban planning, rural planning, urban design, architectural landscaping design and urban eco-environmental management, thereby sustaining Vietnam’s urban planning workforce.

Another major institute that has a significant role in the field is The Department of Urban Planning at The University of Architecture Ho Chi Minh (UAH). While the two aforementioned institutes are in the northern part of the country, this Department takes center at the most populous city in Vietnam. The Department used to be a Division in the Faculty of Architecture in 1976 with four male figures as its core lecturers. Currently, it as a part of the UAH is legally monitored and managed by the Ministry of Construction with the responsibility of formulating programs, creating curriculum and delivering educational services for urban planning¹⁰. Apart from the three major institutes, urban planning is also taught in other less well-known and mainly privately owned universities namely Da Nang Architecture University, Thu Dau Mot University, Mien Tay Construction University and Ton Duc Thang University. Nonetheless, urban planning, regardless of which universities provide the course, has always been an integral part of civil construction or architectural disciplines or even an extension of these fields. Also, students who graduate from this course are therefore automatically entitled as “architect planners” or “urban planning engineers”.

THE ROOT CAUSE OF GENDERED UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION IN URBAN PLANNING EDUCATION.

Urban planning, considered as a scientific discipline in Vietnam historically appears to be laden with gender bias. According to Le and Do¹¹, the ratio of men to women who were educators, experts and practitioners in the urban planning field holding executive positions was roughly 75% to 25%, albeit some differences, in three previous years. The ratio gap in universities such as HAU and NUCE was persistently wide, 80% to 20% (see Table 1).

In addition, the number of male students choosing urban planning courses in three major universities was consistently three to four times higher than that of female students (Figures 1 and 2). It is worth noticing that there are no statistical records on the number of students who stay working in the field and who change their occupation. However, it is possible to claim that it is the female ones who willingly relinquish their interest if it compromises their familial responsibilities.

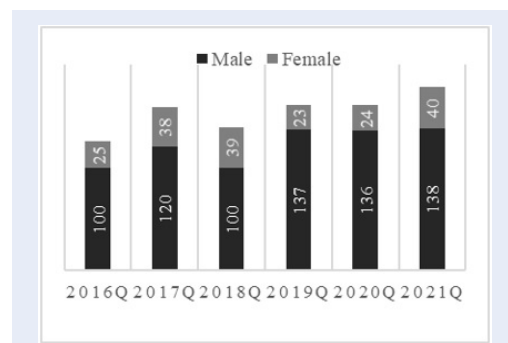


Figure 1: Male and female students’ distribution at HAU

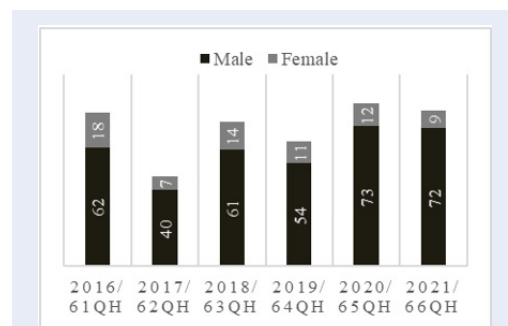


Figure 2: Male and female students’ distribution at NUCE

To understand this, one must look at the existential conception and philosophy of urban planning which is embodied in architecture and civil engineering - two areas that are commonly viewed as “heavy industries”. This thereby is associated with masculinity. The fact is that urban planning is perceived as an extended discipline within the construction arena and not as an integrated discipline that comprises many other fields. This discipline, therefore, is too male dominant. Consequently, the purposes of the inception of urban planning institutes were to educate mostly male students to become architects, construction engineers and other urban technicians. Most of them

Table 1: Periodic Executive Dean of three major university (source ¹²)

Name	Profession title	Serving term	Gender/sex
Division of Urban and Regional Planning (National University of Civil Engineering)			
Truong, Quang Thao	Professor	1961-1965	male
Nguyen, Phung Vo	Architect	1966-1968	male
Truong, Quang Thao	Professor	1969- 1989	male
Ton, Dai	Professor	1990 -1992	male
Nguyen, Kim Luyen	Professor	1993- 1995	male
Tran, Van Khom	Architect	1996 -1999	male
Nguyen, Sy Que	Doctor/Architect	1999 - 2003	male
Pham, Hung Cuong	Doctor/ Architect	2004 -present	male
Faculty of Urban and Regional Planning (Hanoi Architectural University)			
Do, Duc Viem	Professor	1992-2001	male
Le, Duc Thang	Professor	2001-2011	male
Nguyen, Xuan Hinh	Architect/Doctor	2011-2018	male
Luong, Tu Quyen	Architect/Professor	2018-present	female
Department of Urban Planning (University of Architecture Ho Chi Minh)			
Huynh, Kim Mang	Architect	1976-1980	male
Vo, Khac Van	Architect	1981-1993	male
Khuong, Van Muoi	Architect	1993-2009	male
Nguyen, Thanh Ha	Architect/Professor	2009-2011	male
Do, Phu Hung	Architect/Doctor	2011- present	male

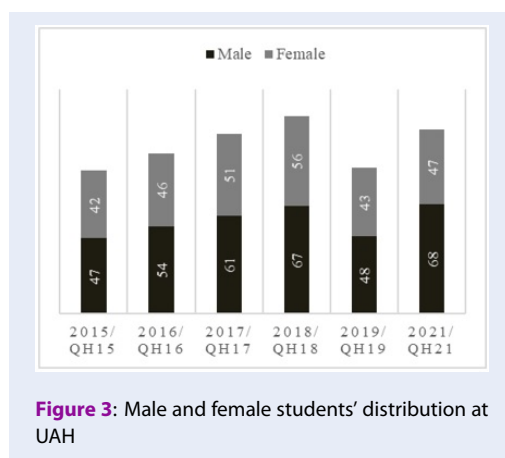


Figure 3: Male and female students' distribution at UAH

were going to shoulder the responsibility of designing and organising suitable environments or in other words, to do the physical groundwork for other industries, especially during the aftermath of the destructive American war between the 1960s and the

1980s. Biologically, due to the physical advantages of the male body over the females' since men are generally stronger than women, the physical contribution of Vietnamese men in this aftermath was the most important attribute to defend and secure the nation. Women on the other hand were literally evolved to be supportive figures or a "solid rear" (hậu phương vững chắc).

Consequently, male figures were entirely dominant in urban planning education at the early stage of its development. These male architect-planners have laid a solid foundation for urban planning education and continued shaping the industry in Vietnam. Most of them are the leading experts and seniors lecturers in the field and have had high achievements in their academic and professional life (see Table 1). This means that the power granted from their positions and their achievements allows them to continue to dominate in establishing urban planning theories, adopting urban planning methodologies and teaching mechanisms, formulating planning curriculum as well as making ultimate decisions.

It can be seen that female lecturers and students have slowly taken part in this field since the 1990s as a byproduct of women's movement rallying against Confucian tradition. In fact, the underlying reasons for this were both international and internal. Internationally, the women's movement in Vietnam stems from France colonisation where feminism movements were strongly endorsed particularly in the early 20th century. French occupation of Vietnam inadvertently transferred Western thinking on gender matters in relation to redefinition and empowerment of women's roles in family and society^{13,14}. Prior to this colonial period, Vietnam was perpetually dominated by Chinese Confucian tradition and prolonged history of imperialism with an absolute ideology, resting heavily on patriarchal and patrilineal society that foisted superior roles and responsibilities upon men and inferior ones on women in every aspect of their lives. Collectively, Vietnamese public life, political, kinship and familial system are male-centered^{15,16}. However, the colonial period witnessed the participation of women in education and public services such as schoolteachers for the first time. It also weakened the deeply entrenched Confucian ideology, which provided a springboard for women's movements in the following periods.

Domestically, Vietnam witnessed a radical change in its economic regime in 1986 under the administration of the Sixth Vietnamese Communist Party. The groundbreaking policy "Đổi Mới" commonly translated as "economic renovation" has systematically aimed to reform its economy and improve all social aspects of the Vietnamese¹⁷⁻²¹. This "open" policy resulted in the enactment of the 1992 Constitution, which was an essential legal framework that truly brought gender equality matters into the national agenda for the first time. Accordingly, issues relating to women's rights matters in the domestic sphere and in the public arena were legally brought to the fore. These legal rights include women's protection from all kinds of discrimination, their equal rights in marital, familial and societal relations, and equal employment opportunities, all of which were elaborated in a trio of statutes: the 1986 Marriage and the Family Law, the 1995 Civil Code and the 1996 Labor Code¹⁹. Although these legal reforms were far from perfect as being revised and amended afterward, they had ripple effects on Vietnamese society, theoretically and lawfully announcing the equal status of women in society. However, these laws in reality contributed to rampant gender inequality. According to Duong¹⁹, the legal framework during "Doi Moi" period acknowledged the society's high regard for the

family unit and motherhood, creating a favourable condition for women's capacity of being good mothers and good wives, at the same time regarding being pregnant as an inherent disability, continuing reinforcing traditional roles, thereby further restricting women's employment and education opportunities.

LEGACY OF INTERTWINED IDEOLOGIES AND WOMEN'S CAREER PROGRESSION IN URBAN PLANNING

To date, Vietnam has committed to multiple implementations of gender equality goals from Millennium Development Goals, the 2006 Gender Equality Law and the 2011-2020 National Strategy on Gender Equality through the operation of the Vietnam Women's Union or the National Committee for the Advancement of Women. As a result, there have been positive impacts on the promotion of gender equality in many sectors of life, including more women participating in the economy, politics, and especially in education at higher degrees^{15,22,23}. In light of that, it is arguable that the increasing number of women and girls participating and enrolling in urban planning education today actually results from these efforts. However, although Vietnamese women are legally and lawfully protected and supported to have more authority and to feel fewer restrictions over their life, they still find themselves trapped in an unpleasant quagmire in which Confucianism, Socialism, and modernisation are inextricably intertwined.

In her research on the effects of these three theoretical perspectives, Grosse²³ argues that Vietnamese womanhood is continuously and simultaneously shaped by conservative traditions, norms and attitudes and modern lifestyle, all of which are ambivalent to gender equality. This is supported by Higgins'²⁴ ethnographic study, in which the author found that Vietnamese urban middle-class women are being burdened by multiple layers of modernity that are placed upon traditional expectations and norms. The author argues that Vietnamese women in urban areas have to work harder to meet modernised standards as daughters, wives, and mothers while conforming to traditional standards of maintaining family bonds and affairs, making family as first priority. Similarly, Truong²⁵, whose work focuses on Vietnamese women's leadership contends that women are less willingly to acquire leadership positions due to the difficulty of balancing multiple roles in family and responsibilities at work. They have appeared to internalise the idea of limiting their potentials and somehow sacrificing their career to make peace in their

marriage, to maintain familial values and thereafter to strengthen the coherence and order of the socialist society reverberated with Confucian ideology.

It is therefore understandable for Vietnamese women and girls who choose a less demanding career path in which they can meet a double standard²⁶ thereby, not encompassing or hampering their familial roles, the ones that historically honoured them as “inferior marshal” (“Nội Tướng”). The position that gives women power to manage all aspects of domestic affairs so that their husbands can be free to pursue their interests¹⁹. Recent statistic data on the percentage of women participating in different sectors of the economy shows that far fewer women work in scientific and technical industries compared to men, around 30% to 70%²⁷. According to the report, women rather dominantly work as petty traders, office workers and especially in education as school teachers. The figure for women working as teachers at all levels of education was about 70% in 2007 - a light industry that is considered as the most appropriate for women with a family. Being a teacher is preferable to women as it provides them with a suitable condition to fulfill their roles as main caretakers of the elderly, children and their husband of a household. However, when it comes to the percentage of women having higher degrees as master, Ph.D. and professor, which are compulsorily required for lecturers in universities, the figure shows that a third of women had a master degree, a fifth with a Ph.D. and a seventeenth with a professor title compared to men who had the same degrees in 2006. The ratios respectively were 30,53% - 69,47%, 17,02% - 82,92% and 5,10% - 94,90%²⁷. In addition, just about 20% women were in leadership positions in all sectors in the same year.

In this light, it is challenging for women and girls to enter the male-dominated industry such as urban planning and to share equal distribution in the male-female number, let alone to hold a leadership position in Vietnam while there are gendered perceptions, norms and traditions historically and incrementally imprinted in the country's familial and social structure. Women and girls who chose to work and study in urban planning will face discriminatory attitudes and male preference attitudes regarding job opportunities as well as long-term development due to their biological capacity considered as an inherent weakness and their traditional roles in the family. The fact is that after many years of implementing policies to meet gender equality's goals, the number of female lecturers and students in Vietnam's urban planning education has oscillated between one-fourth and one-third that of male counterparts.

Even if the number of female students appears to be nearly equal to that of male students, such as in case of the students at UAH (see Figure 3), this does not guarantee equal contributions with respect to their ability and their life-experiential perspectives. Researchers elsewhere in Western societies acknowledge the systematic and cumulative drawbacks that women and students continue to encounter despite the increasing proportion of female figures in an industry that is persistently male-dominated like urban planning²⁸⁻³². These disadvantages present at institutional, behaviour and content levels of urban planning education, which results in the lack of female role models and gender-sensitive supports for female students, the dominance of male perceptions and ideas over females' and the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, manifested in sexist language and other subtle means (Brion, as cited in Rahder and O'Neill³⁰). According to the authors, simply adding women to urban planning education or profession is not comparable with better changes because these women will automatically try to fit in the male-dominated subculture, focusing on the professional rather than experiential dimension as a woman. This is particularly true for Vietnamese women who have been professionally well achieved. The common expression and judgment often articulated to assess a successful woman in urban planning is her ability and attitude to perform the task as likely as men do³³. In other words, male standards of success are often deployed to judge female performance in the construction industry as well as its sub-industry: urban planning.

EPISTEMIC CONSTRUCTION OF URBAN PLANNING AS UNFIT FOR VIETNAMESE WOMEN

Gender has become a fundamental criterion in making decisions for men and women when it comes to career progression. However, scholars studying gender relations in Vietnam have struggled in creating a framework of reference from which gender-related issues can be interpreted. The main concern is to whether seeing gender through a culturalist or Western feminist lens. While the latter views women as individuals endorsing individualism, the former sees women as both individuals and collectivities, defining Vietnamese women through multiple relationships that intimately link their well-being to their sense of responsibility for their families¹⁶.

Nonetheless, as a sub-field of cultural studies, feminist perspectives are often filtered through a different cultural lens, and cultural differences are often employed to justify gender inequality. In some cases,

culture creates a vessel for women's subordination to men and the patriarchal system and it is in the name of culture that allows men to oppress women^{34,35}. The uniqueness of Vietnamese society that manifests itself in the intricately intertwined ideologies is often used to distance gender discourse from Western feminism. However, Weedon³⁶ put it simply that feminism is a politics that is concerned about power relations between men and women in society. These power relations, according to the author "structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure". In this sense, culture goes hand in hand with politics. Cultural differences can be worldwide seen as political tools utilised by both men and women to wield social powers, or the lack thereof in everyday affairs consciously and unconsciously.

Culturally, the universal notions of femininity and masculinity are useful in providing an epistemological framework to interpret gender differences, expectations, norms, stereotypes, as well as their implications in urban planning education. Accordingly, being a woman equates with nature, often culturally and stereotypically portrayed as passive, frail, emotional, patient, sympathetic and self-sacrificing; whereas, being a man equates with culture, which is characterised as active, strong, assertive, rational and systematic^{37,38}. In addition to these traits and dispositions, Vietnamese women and men have been expected to comply with prolonged ideas and rules of Confucianism and communism. Confucian thinking, albeit weakened, is still echoing to remind men and women to act and behave accordingly to their biologically determined roles as husbands, fathers and leaders and wives, mother and caretakers of parents-in-law. Fundamentally, men are expected to govern public life while women should control the domestic sphere and support their husbands. A woman's success is often judged by the quality of her domestic or reproductive work³⁹. These binary positions should not be switched to keep social order and balance⁴⁰. Communist or socialist rules on the other hand equalised women's roles to the national level, enhancing women to be responsible for both family and society harmony^{41,42}.

Although the socialist model liberates women from the domestic sphere, it acknowledges feminine identities as a disadvantage needed to be protected; thereby implicitly encouraging women to choose a career that suits their dual roles, which limits women's choices of professions and ignores their freedom of choice. Take the declaration of Circular No.10/2020/TT-BLĐTBXH for example. This specific legal regulation

lists a series of jobs and occupations that are considered to have negative effects on women and men's productive health and women's capacity to taking care of children. At a glance, it seems that the government is trying to provide employers and female employees with useful knowledge about the job that women need pay more attention to before taking health risks doing it. However, the Circular per se is problematic. This can be seen by the fact that women and men are separately evaluated based entirely on their biological abilities. While there are 51 jobs and occupations negatively affecting women's productive health, there are only 11 affecting their male counterpart. Also, an addition of 38 jobs and occupations that are considered to be bad for pregnant women. All of this seemingly reinforces the notion of women's disability and weakness as being pregnant and that being a man is more advantageous. This has a ripple effect on all aspects of professional life in which women are structurally viewed as secondary to men. Hence, women are socially expected to choose occupations that philosophically suit well to their constructed feminine capacity and incapacity while avoiding professions that are traditionally masculinity-associated. Women who venture to work in male-dominated fields are considered as violating traditional rules or what Anderson, Diab⁴³ calls trespassing on masculine world.

Masculinity-oriented profession, as urban planning is not far from the ripple effect of this gender binary - femininity/masculinity - since its emergence. The worldwide epistemological perspectives underlying urban planning theory and practice are objective, rational and technically derived, which are constituted in absolute knowledge and understanding that are independent of temporal, spatial and social identity⁸. Since men are associated with culture and conventional science, their gendered traits are somehow analogous to rationality and objectivity. This means that men intrinsically or at least believed and expected to best suit the urban planning profession. At the same time, men are considered as physically stronger, less emotional and not constrained by pregnancy period, all of which provide them with the ability and convenience to work in the construction and urban planning industry that often require assertiveness, flexibility and a certain amount of fieldwork. The fact of urban planning courses supplied only by architecture, engineering and construction-based knowledge universities under the monitoring of the Ministry of Construction (MOC) conveys a clear message of male preference over the female to all Vietnamese students.

Urban planning is also an act of future envisioning and forecasting, often for a long period of 10 to 30 years, which is another factor used for discrediting women. It is socially not in the nature of Vietnamese women's capacity to have broad vision "*tâm nhìn rộng*". Rather, being visionary is yet another ability, socially attached to men. According to Vu, Lee¹⁴ Vietnamese women are often questioned about their proficiency and sufficiency in making objective decisions or holding leadership positions. Because of these gendered stereotypes, women working in urban planning organizations and companies are usually assigned the tasks of typing and review planning documents or other office work. This in return can be seen to reinforce men-lead-women-follow gender stereotypes¹⁴, which goes against female lecturers' contribution and urban planning savvy in their teaching. Indeed, almost all urban planning lecturers – both men and women are employed or promoted from those who are architects or architect planners. However, once the women become lecturers they often give up their first position to meet other gendered duties in the domestic sphere, while the men continue to work in both positions. This allows male lecturers opportunities to advance further both academically and practically, thereby continuing predominating while subjugating their female colleagues. Female lecturers on the other hand seemingly accept this reality and acknowledge their secondary place as long as their traditional roles are not compromised³³.

There is not entirely wrong with the above attitude, indeed. It should be well encouraged if women do not just take for granted objective knowledge but embrace and bring their own experience as being mothers, wives and daughters having their distinctive needs and biological differences in reframing differently urban planning theoretical and methodological roots. In Vietnam top-down, hierarchical and rational approach has been utilised to serve as a platform for the establishment of planning standards, regulations, guides, forecasting and analysing methods. This in turn is used for the orientation of planning research and practice, and for planning education in undergraduate and postgraduate courses. However, this kind of approach is according to Westmarland⁴⁴ dictated from quantitative methodology with its intellectual root featured in the positivist objectivity and value- neutrality of knowledge. The author claims that quantitative methodology emphasises the absolute power of experts in extending new scientific knowledge while separating this knowledge from experience. This is because 'the "knowledge" based on

experience is not true knowledge, but considered partial, particular, and tainted by subjectivity or emotion' (Code, cited in Westmarland⁴⁴, p.100). Such experienced, intuitive, empathetic forms of knowledge have been associated with femininity⁴⁵. Hence, Vietnamese students undertaking urban planning courses are taught to detach their subjective experience from the scientific way of thinking and knowing. Given such teaching approach, there will not be any real change even if the number of female lecturers and students increases.

The impacts of subjective experience in urban planning are paramount and there are reasons for this. Hall and Tewdwr-Jones⁴⁶ compare that dealing with urban planning problems is much harder than putting humans onto the moon. This is because the journey to the moon is clear in objectives and all physically based while urban planning involves the complicated relations of human behaviour, which are hard to study by merely employing scientific methods used in physics or other natural sciences. Given that, MacGregor⁴⁵ supposes that qualitative methodology featured with storytelling, ideas elicitation with the utilisation symbolic forms, intuition, or learning via doing is more effective. This is critically important because again men and women differently perceive and use urban spaces such as safety concerns⁴⁷, travel patterns⁴⁸ and green space⁴⁹. Rather than bombard students with objective knowledge regarding planning theories and methodologies that reflect prejudice against women's perceptions and feelings, female lecturers teaching urban planning need to become pioneers in advocating gender equality and raising concerns about the matter since they are socially attached to these qualitative methods. These key figures have academic, professional, personally experiential insights, which grant them the power to give voice to the silent, exploited and powerless just like what they are experiencing for the time being.

CONCLUSION

This paper provides a few preliminary discussions distilled from the unequal distribution of men and women including university lecturers and students in urban planning education based on a view of gender as socially constructed. Gender has become a fundamental factor considered by both men, boys and women, girls when it comes to choosing their profession as lecturers and architect planners. The paper argues that this social trend is systemically and historically associated with broader gender values, roles, norms and expectations foisted upon Vietnamese males and females. All of these gender val-

ues have been permeated by the interplayed ideologies of Confucianism, nationalism and communism. This gender construction culminated in masculinity and femininity is also resonated with the intellectual roots of urban planning that rests heavily on objective and rational knowledge while ignoring subjective forms of knowing and experiencing. Rather than associate objectivity and rationality associated with masculine traits, and subjectivity and intuition with feminine prepositions, it would be more complete and comprehensive to start to acknowledge the authentic balance between the bilateral contributions. Imagine if women were considered as equal as men regarding their potentials in building and shaping urban, cities and any other forms of human space, how different it would be as opposed to the current stage of development. One difference would be that of urban planning ideologies, theories and epistemological standpoints. The paper is far from an insightful account. Given the fact that this gender matter in urban planning is rather new to the Vietnamese context, the author just scratches the surface of this controversial matter. However, this does not downplay the paper's initial intention of offering an indicative account while at the same time providing scope for further investigations, which can generate more insight building intersectional literature that can bridge the gap between two fields: urban planning and gender study. Future research needs to be dynamic in terms of methodologies it adopted, which should include and mix multiple methods of collecting data such as in-depth interview, biography enquiry, storytelling and other subjectivity-based methods. These ways of collecting data will provide a more balance in generating new knowledge. To this end, the author highlights the critical role of Vietnamese urban educators in the midst of all these gender relations. The position that grants them the authoritative power to do conduct the research, generate unbiased knowledge and change the course of future urban planning, maybe to a better one.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

All content of the article is done by the author only.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The article in this Special Issue of the STDJELM is selected from the International Conference on Feminism, Gender and Law held virtually in October 29,

2021. The publication and the Conference were organized and sponsored by the University of Economics and Law, VNU-HCM, and the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Southeast Asia, Hanoi office.

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Quy hoạch đô thị ở Việt Nam: Lĩnh vực được xây dựng trên tư tưởng nam quyền

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TÓM TẮT

Sự tham gia của phụ nữ trong lĩnh vực quy hoạch đô thị được bắt đầu từ nửa cuối thế kỷ 20 ở các nước phương Tây có thể nói là kết quả của các phong trào đấu tranh đòi quyền bình đẳng, quyền được nêu quan điểm, quyền được đối xử công bằng như nam giới cộng với sự cần thiết của quá trình phát triển bền vững nhằm giảm thiểu các tác động tiêu cực do sự phát triển không cân đối. Ở Việt Nam - một quốc gia vận hành theo cơ chế thị trường nhưng theo định hướng xã hội chủ nghĩa, đang tìm cách phát triển theo hướng hiện đại nhưng vẫn bảo lưu được những giá trị văn hóa truyền thống, thì lĩnh vực quy hoạch đô thị được nhìn nhận theo một góc độ khác về mặt tư tưởng và lý luận. Điều này đã tạo tiền đề cho sự hình thành một lĩnh vực mang đậm tư tưởng nam quyền. Rất nhiều nghiên cứu đã nêu ra rằng quá trình đô thị hóa được định hình bởi giới tính và hiện tượng này ảnh hưởng đến nam giới và phụ nữ một cách khác nhau. Tuy nhiên ở Việt Nam hầu như vấn đề về giới tính trong quy hoạch chưa được đề cao và các nhân tố nòng cốt hoạt động trong lĩnh vực quy hoạch ít quan tâm đến vấn đề này mặc dầu khía cạnh giới trong quy hoạch đã được quan tâm sâu sắc đó đây trong nhiều thập kỷ. Trên thực tế, chúng ta thiếu các bài nghiên cứu về mối liên hệ giữa giới và quy hoạch đô thị, và dường như phần lớn các trường đại học và các công ty, tổ chức cung cấp dịch vụ giáo dục và đào tạo về quy hoạch đô thị xem quy hoạch đô thị là lĩnh vực trung lập. Trong bài viết này, tác giả muốn vận dụng các nghiên cứu liên ngành trong nước và quốc tế để phân tích và thảo luận nguyên nhân cốt lõi của việc giới tính bị phớt lờ hoặc xem nhẹ trong lĩnh vực quy hoạch đô thị. Để làm được điều đó bài viết sẽ truy nguồn gốc ra đời và phát triển của lĩnh vực quy hoạch đô thị ở Việt Nam dựa trên quan điểm giới. Tác giả đặc biệt phân tích lịch sử phát triển của Việt Nam trên nền tảng được thành lập là sự kết hợp giữa các dòng tư tưởng Nho giáo, xã hội chủ nghĩa, dân tộc -tổ quốc và hiện đại hóa. Từ đó tác giả cho rằng quy hoạch đô thị đã được xây dựng về mặt văn hóa, tư tưởng chính trị và xã hội như một lĩnh vực dành cho nam giới. Phụ nữ trong ngành được xem là nằm ở vị trí "đu theo" và bị đánh giá thấp vai trò và đóng góp. Cuối cùng, bài viết kêu gọi sự thay đổi căn bản trong việc tư duy và phương pháp tiếp cận quy hoạch đô thị ở Việt Nam, cũng như kêu gọi các nghiên cứu liên ngành, thể hiện đa dạng quan điểm về các vấn đề quy hoạch đô thị.

Từ khóa: Nho giáo, Nữ Quyền, Quan điểm giới, Quy hoạch đô thị, Xã hội chủ nghĩa

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Lịch sử

- Ngày nhận: 13-9-2021
- Ngày chấp nhận: 06-4-2022
- Ngày đăng: 13-8-2022

DOI: 10.32508/stdjelm.v5iS12.1051



Bản quyền

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Trích dẫn bài báo này: Phước L.D. Quy hoạch đô thị ở Việt Nam: Lĩnh vực được xây dựng trên tư tưởng nam quyền. *Sci. Tech. Dev. J. - Eco. Law Manag.*; 5(S12):112-122.