Mobility is in the eye of the beholder: A comparison of travel patterns and urban spatial use between migrants and the original residents of Danang, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT
The development of an arterial road named the Nguyen Tat Thanh Road along the Danang Bay in Vietnam shows how changes in mobility can influence the transformation of the urban landscape in a formerly residential neighborhood. The road opened along the coastal lines of the city in 2003. In this study, approximately 460 residents, including migrants who moved to the area after the road development and the original residents who live near the road, were interviewed. The survey was designed to identify the travel routes, mode of transportation, and location of jobs, shopping, leisure, education, and religious activities of residents before and after the road development. The research found that the original residents endured longer commutes than the migrants, which was associated with a greater dispersion of jobs after the road development. Compared to the original residents, migrants often lived in a newly available parcel close to the new road and formed a mixed-use community with a good jobs-housing balance. However, migrants traveled farther to non-job-related destinations. For the use of urban space, the original residents attempted to improve the quality of their daily lives through small-scale transformations of privately owned outdoor spaces, which were often shared by their neighbors and other family members. Migrants largely contributed to the formation of commercialized streets that were scattered with fairly large accommodations and high-end residential buildings.

1. Introduction

One of the key principles for planning transportation infrastructure is striking a balance between mobility and livability (Cervero, 2009; Deshkar, Hayashia, & Mori, 2011; Kim, Lee, & Choi, 2015). Good mobility denotes improvements in vehicular speed and movement capacity in an urban area. The definition of livability varies according to previous studies (Balsas, 2004; McCann, 2007; Smith, Nelischer, & Perkins, 1997; Van Kamp, Leidelmeijer, Marsman, & De Hollander, 2003; Wang, Su, Chen, Chen, & Liang, 2011), but generally means the quality of an economically vibrant neighborhood that is composed of a safe environment, convenient neighborhood places, a well-serviced infrastructure, and availability of employment opportunities for job seekers (Wang et al., 2011).

Not all road development projects have achieved this balance. For example, many theorists have criticized contemporary cities as being heavily skewed in favor of high-speed mobility (Neuman & Smith, 2010; Vilhelmson, 2007). In recent decades, cities in Asia have been no exception (Lee, Won, & Kim, 2015). In Vietnam, which has seen an average economic growth of 6.1% for the last 10 years, approximately 80% of the total capital investments in the transportation infrastructure have been used for building high-speed vehicular roads (World Bank, 2011). This was criticized for further promoting overly ambitious investment in the expansion of road infrastructure and inattentive layout of the road to the spatial demand of affected communities (Huynh, 2015).

Despite the criticism, road development frequently serves as an essential policy vehicle that boosts the local economy and improves labor mobility in a former neighborhood. In Vietnam, as elsewhere, the presence of new roads or railways often acts as a catalyst for short- and long-term economic growth. During this process, in-migration of newcomers and out-migration of traditional communities commonly take...
This is because road development is not only associated with greater mobility in and around a city but also provides a number of developable lands for housing and retail, which attracts a group of opportunistic migrants seeking a chance to start a new business or achieve home ownership in the new location. In this study, the city of Danang, Vietnam was chosen to investigate the changes in the community characteristics of migrants and the original residents. The Thanh Khe District, among others, was formerly a residential neighborhood in the city that was intersected by a new arterial road named the Nguyen Tat Thanh Road in 2003 (Fig. 1). The road connects downtown Danang with the western area of the city and is part of the East-West Economic Corridor (EWEC) that crosses the Indochinese Peninsula from the Danang Port in Vietnam to Mawlamyine in Myanmar. The development of the road has caused multiple redevelopment activities in Danang Bay, introducing a variety of commercial locations and tourism venues, such as high-end hotels, inexpensive accommodations, restaurants, bars, cafes, and massage shops of a range of sizes. Additionally, small-scale food retail stores, snack bars, and karaoke locations were established along the road, providing the neighborhood with a variety of choices for eating, drinking, entertainment, and purchasing daily products. However, the road development was also associated with assorted negative impacts on residents. For example, the width of the six-lane road and its sidewalk was designed at 40 m, cutting off one edge of the intimate residential area. The remaining area of the cut-off parcels was often merged and sold to new property investors, which forced the original landowners, whose livelihoods were dependent on fishing or selling daily goods near the bay area, to move away from their workplace. Additionally, noise and air pollution from increased traffic along the road raised public health concerns. An increasing number of motorbikes occupied the busy crossroads and made the street environment less walking-friendly and more prone to traffic accidents.

According to previous studies on Danang, such as that of Won, Cho, and Kim (2015), road development in the city had not only affected the form, density, or use of nearby buildings or the occupation, income levels, or hometown of the post-development community members. Among the forces that are involved socioeconomic change, an inflow of migrants and their families was one of the major factors. Migrants who were relatively affluent were aware of the economic benefits associated with a neighborhood that has greatly improved mobility and accessibility. During the migration process, migrants preferred to purchase a newly subdivided parcel that was directly adjacent to the new road and then build a large, mixed-use tube house building to increase their profits from property development.

In a few studies, some of the factors affecting mobility were related to lifestyle including household incomes (Krisjane, Berzins, Ilevs, & Bauls, 2012; Marquet & Miralles-Guasch, 2015; Punpuing & Ross, 2001) or strong government policies (Cervero & Duncan, 2006; Lau & Chiu, 2013; Lin, Allan, & Cui, 2015), rather than the availability of the built environment such as road construction. What we have noticed in Thanh Khe district, however, is that socio-economic changes and the transformation of urban spatial use after the relocation is quite strongly associated with the road development. Because the residents used the new road according to their own practical purposes and were also affected by the newly available road infrastructure. Previous studies indicated that the development of the transportation infrastructure not only stimulated the influx of the population, but also affected the quality of life by spurring active utilization of urban spaces associated with an increase in commercial and non-commercial activities (Cervero, 2009; Kelly, 1994; Neuman & Smith, 2010; Polzin, 1999; Sullivan & Lovell, 2006). However, detailed social surveys that examine the relationship between road development and neighborhood change in terms of mobility appeared to be very limited until now, especially within the urban context of developing countries. Against this background, the following hypotheses were proposed in this study.

**Hypothesis 1.** While the opening of an arterial road greatly improved mobility in a formerly residential neighborhood, the effects have been perceived differently between the original residents and migrants. In a city with a limited road infrastructure, a new road often allows for rapid vehicular movement at peak hours and the associated dispersion of urban uses. Greater mobility and reduced travel time to distant locations may lead to the dispersion of jobs and other important places to visit. Since the purpose, method, and frequency of daily

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**Fig. 1.** Masterplan of Danang and the study area. (Modified based on the Masterplan of Danang city (2030–2050) by the authors).
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