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Cultural and Social Elements in the Development of Green Architecture in Vietnam

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Abstract

In the context of climate change and energy crises worldwide, green architecture is a current topic of special interest in Vietnam where traditional architecture has accumulated some experiences of green behaviors in response to the changing climate. In the global integration context, learning experiences is vital to ensure that the country will develop rapidly and modernly. However, the consideration of various humanities perspectives and local advantages in green architecture development is very necessary. This paper discusses the influence of the local climate, economy and unique culture, the challenges and opportunities, and some recommendations for green architecture development in Vietnam today.

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1. Introduction

Vietnam is in an industrialization and modernization stage to become an industrialized country in 2020. After nearly thirty years of reform, opening its doors to the world and international integration, the country's economy has gained continuous progress as the country itself takes a complete face-lift. Many new cities have taken shape along with the strong and pervasive drive of urbanization. New cities received renovation, expansion and upgrading. Infrastructure systems are ceaselessly improved and newly developed, especially transportation system. Modern high-rise buildings springing up on the sides of large avenues are now no longer the wonder they used to be. The advent of new urban developments, packed

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with advanced and convenient high-rise apartment buildings, adds new perspectives to the urban living landscape. As a country of diversified natural conditions and many ethnic groups, architectural forms and life styles as well as socio-economic conditions are significant various between different areas and regions; today each urban and rural area has its specific orientation for architecture and planning development.

This fast development, however, has brought with it the challenges of non-sustainable urban development, and commercialized and uncharacteristic architectural trends. Added to that, environmental pollution is becoming worse as a consequence of urbanization. Lakes and ponds are filled up, leveled and devoured to provide land for buildings. Parks, gardens and the likes, the green lungs of a city, are narrowed down (Fig. 1). Valuable water resources once thought to be unlimited are being contaminated and tend to decline.



Fig. 1. Urbanization in Vietnam

In the world, recent alarming evidence about the adverse impacts of industry to habitats, landscape and biodiversity has called for the need to find new directions for the building industry in a sustainable development approach. Concepts like ecological cities, climate-adaptive architecture, sustainable architecture, ecological building, green building and so on have emerged and brought to life, becoming part of the sustainable development trend in many countries in urban planning and architecture.

In recent years, Vietnam has felt the adverse effects of climate change. Climate change may have serious impacts on various levels: resources, environment, economy and society. The danger of climate change places Vietnam and other countries around the world before a not so promising future and requires humanity to act to relieve the impacts and adapt to such changes. That is where green architecture comes in as a major response to alleviate the adverse effects of climate change.

Against the backdrop of climate change and energy crises, the green architecture concept that was driven by advanced countries and is making its way to developing countries like Vietnam may be viewed as a best practice to replicate. The existing green architecture models have indeed overwhelmed the developing world with state-of-the-art technologies and advanced building materials (glass, steel etc.). But for them to be applied in a flexible and commensurate way, given the unique national and local contexts, major gaps remain to be filled.

In the world, Asia and Vietnam, the last few years have seen various efforts in creating a pathway for 'green' architecture. The focus on the unique economic, culture, climate conditions, among others of different regions appear the way to be for green architecture to come to life.

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