Urban governance in preservation and management of neighborhood parks/playgrounds in inner-city districts of Hanoi

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<td>Action Center for City Development</td>
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<td>ACVN</td>
<td>Association of Cities of Vietnam</td>
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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>AF</td>
<td>Asian Foundation</td>
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<td>CECR</td>
<td>Center for Environment and Community Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>DoC</td>
<td>Department of Construction</td>
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<td>DoNRE</td>
<td>Department of Natural Resources and Environment</td>
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<td>ENDA</td>
<td>Environment and Development in Action</td>
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<td>Greenery</td>
<td>Short terminology for “greenery for public use”</td>
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<td>GRC</td>
<td>Globalization Research Center, University of Hawaii</td>
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<td>Ha Noi Greenery Planning</td>
<td>Ha Noi Planning of Greenery, Parks, Flower Gardens and Lakes to 2030, Vision to 2050</td>
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<td>HAU</td>
<td>Ha Noi Architecture University</td>
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<tr>
<td>HB</td>
<td>HealthBridge</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCMC</td>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City</td>
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<td>HDPA</td>
<td>Ha Noi Department of Planning and Architecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>HPC</td>
<td>Ha Noi Peoples Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIN</td>
<td>Center for Community Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoC</td>
<td>Ministry of Construction</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoNRE</td>
<td>Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>National Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>PADDI</td>
<td>Center de Prospective et d’Etudes Urbaines</td>
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<tr>
<td>PC</td>
<td>Peoples Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>QCVN</td>
<td>Viet Nam Code</td>
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<td>SDC</td>
<td>Switzerland Agency for Development and Cooperation</td>
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<td>TCVN</td>
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<td>Vietnam Urban Development Agency</td>
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<td>Vietnam Urban Forum</td>
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<td>VUUP</td>
<td>Vietnam Urban Upgrading Program</td>
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<td>VWU</td>
<td>Vietnam Women’s Union</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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<td>World Health Organization</td>
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1 USD = 21,000 VND
Summary

1. Introduction

Viet Nam is experiencing a rapid urbanization process which needs to be sustainable. Ha Noi city has expanded its territory to become about three times larger than it was before, so has to use that land effectively to improve quality of life for people, including those living in the historical inner-city districts where population and construction density is high.

Neighborhood parks/playgrounds are physical environments and social places for people to relax, exercise and interact. Located at a short distance from houses, they have an advantage of attracting people on a more regular basis than bigger parks that are farther away.

This research aims to provide a situational analysis that addresses how and why public spaces have been lost or degraded, and to develop a practical strategy to increase their number and quality in urban districts of Ha Noi.

2. Legal and institutional framework

Ha Noi city’s government is pro-active in making the city green and healthy for its citizens. The Ha Noi Greenery Planning aims to turn Ha Noi into a green and clean city, reduce pollution levels and improve the quality of life for Hanoians. Its goals include providing inner-city districts with urban parks that have an average area of 3.9m²/head; and housing unit level flower gardens that are 1m²/head.

A number of government policies on parks/playgrounds/sport yards have been adopted. There are overlaps, gaps, competition and conflicts among these policies. Demand for land use of many public policies creates a fierce competition for the scarce public land available. While Ha Noi Greenery Planning spells out measures to create new stock of public land for public facilities, there is another policy to auction remaining public land plots to the private investors.

There are no adequate policy measures to achieve targets set for neighborhood parks/playgrounds. Ha Noi Greenery Planning’s measures of 1) relocating industrial facilities, and 2) upgrading old state-owned housing quarters have been facing lots of obstacles in cost, time and resistance of those who are to move. Even if successful, they can provide neighborhood parks/playgrounds for people living nearby them, but not for those that live farther away. This policy also has no budget line for these spaces.

Ha Noi city lacks a comprehensive urban upgrading program, of which a tiered greenery system would be an inseparable part. Without this, the lower levels of governments may want to auction public land plots if they believe that all demand of public land use at their level of management has been met, while public land is needed for social facilities at the city level.

The legal framework on urban planning and management has been rapidly developed to meet changing need. Some of laws and regulations highlight the importance of urban greenery and guide its planning.

There is insufficient/unrealistic planning guidance for parks/playgrounds, especially for old housing quarters. The laws focus on planning new urban areas and new housing projects, but do not adequately mention assured planning of social infrastructure and urban upgrading. The planning code sets unrealistically high requirements for the neighborhood parks/playgrounds in old quarters while planning code/standards for playgrounds are not available.

The terminologies used in legal documents related to greenery planning are not consistent. Different documents use the definitions of greenery, parks, flower gardens, walk gardens, playgrounds, sport yards etc. in different ways, leading to inaccurate and inconsistent data for planning and management.

Regulations on apartment management do not enable places for community meetings/activities. The Housing Law accords significant power to the city’s Housing Management Board (in the case of social housing) and to the investors (in the case of commercial housing), who often occupy common areas to make private profit, while the inhabitants do not have spaces for meeting and playing.

Transparency in management of public land is lacking. Land use map scales are too small for marking changes in land use. The upper levels of government often rely on information provided by the lower levels for decision making, without proper tools for cross-checking. Public
land can be sold to private people by land holding agency's leadership for their private benefit.

The process of urban planning lacks citizen participation. Inadequately disclosed information, the narrow limit of stakeholders invited to participate, irrational steps in the urban planning process to include citizen participation, and the lack of feedback mechanism are among many obstacles.

3. Stakeholders

Regulation on Management of Urban Greenery, Parks, Flower Gardens and Zoos in Ha Noi ignores the role of ward governments, who are actually managing neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

There is an overlap of tasks between several city departments that are responsible for land use planning, while there is weak coordination among them. There is also inconsistency in territory between two tasks of 1) urban planning and 2) urban planning implementation, in which the territory of the first is often surrounded by roads while that of the second is within one administrative territory.

Awareness of government on neighborhood parks/playgrounds is low. This is reflected in the high priority in development of big parks, rather than that at neighborhood levels in Ha Noi Greenery Planning. The ward governments also have other higher priorities in their work than ensuring parks/playgrounds for their citizens. Some ward governments rent out public land for commercial activities.

There is no government agency in charge of the city's integrated information management system. Different city departments are responsible for providing information on the field of their management. Lacking such an agency, the greenery planning would face 1) lack of sufficient information, 2) unreliable information; 3) ineffective sharing of information.

People clearly see the values of neighborhood parks/playgrounds. They are interested in participating in the development and management of these spaces, as they know how public land is being used and how it can be best used, but they lack sufficient opportunity to participate, especially the low-income migrants.

Other non-government stakeholders have limited influence over policy decisions. The socio-political organizations are not active enough in community activities. Not many domestic organizations work on the issue, and also face weak coordination, as well as a lacking budget. They are invited to comment on policies only when documents have been drafted, not in the fact gathering stage, and their opinion is not always taken into serious consideration by the government.

State research institutes, rather than independent ones, play a major role in proposing new policies. Training institutions provide limited knowledge on planning and management of greenery. The media involvement in promoting public spaces has not been systematic. Few international agencies are interested in neighborhood parks/playgrounds. Businesses are interested in making profit but can also make social contributions.

4. Current situation

General situation

Since Doi Moi in 1986, housing construction has been mushrooming. While urban management was neglected, public land was occupied for housing and other private use, resulting in the disappearance of public parks/playgrounds.

Neighborhood parks/playgrounds are lacking. In inner-city districts, the coverage of parks and flower gardens accounts only for 1.92% of total land. The current average area of parks and flower gardens is only 2.08m²/head, and that of flower gardens in living areas is only 0.63m²/head. There are a very limited number of neighborhood parks/playgrounds in each studied ward.

Neighborhood parks/playgrounds are not well planned, designed and invested. Many of them were established on any available public land plot, and didn’t follow approved urban planning projects/drawings. They are often small, can be unsafe from traffic. Playing facilities are often primitive, of low quality, degraded, not rationally arranged etc. Neighborhood parks/playgrounds are not well managed. While they can be managed by ward government or by the community, many of them are occupied for other purposes and are not well maintained.

The remaining public land is facing several types of competition of land use need, including 1) a competition between using land for public facilities and the policy to auction land plots to private investors, and 2) a competition in land use among public facilities.

Situation in state-owned housing quarters
During the last decades of the previous century, tenants of the state-owned apartments tried to expand their housing areas, occupying public land. Some low-rise apartments were re-developed by the tenants to become self-help housing. The remaining spaces have been occupied for other purposes, or have been filled-in with temporary and permanent buildings. Efforts to re-develop old state-owned housing to create land stock for parks/playgrounds have not been successful.

Situation in self-help housing quarters

The self-help housing quarters cover the largest territory and share of population, and are often located away from major roads and lack public land for parks/playgrounds, having high population and construction density. Self-help housing areas can hardly achieve their objective of creating parks/playgrounds, as this would require numerous housing relocations.

Situation in “new urban areas”

In new urban areas, adequate parks/playgrounds were not planned or invested in. Investors often tried to increase construction density and floor area, or rent out land to gain more profit rather than to provide public facilities. Many businesses renting ground floor expand their service area into public spaces, disturbing people’s movement and activities. Many people living in apartment building do not have community spaces inside the building.

5. Stories

Story No.1: Community mapping of public spaces – A case of Ha Dinh ward is an example of a successful community participation in identifying, mapping, and surveying public spaces, developing community proposals, negotiating with the government and investing funds to turn these spaces into neighborhood parks/playgrounds. To accomplish this, awareness and capacity building for the community is necessary.

Story No.2: Sweden Housing Cooperative for apartment housing management introduces a new model of apartment housing management, in which the residents establish their own housing cooperative to do most of their own housing services while hiring contractors to do the remaining services with high quality at a reasonable cost, with decisions based on members’ resolutions.

Story No.3: A model of government-citizen-business cooperation - Playground making in Thuong Dinh ward presents a successful partnership of above stakeholders in playground development. Using this model, the government contributed political, technical and some financial support; the contractor built not for profit but provided employment to community members; while the residents participated in the design and construction process, contributed finances and materials, and maintained the playground in a sustainable way.

Story No.4: Creative model of playground making – Playground for poor migrants at Bai Giua of Red River concerns making creative, low cost playgrounds for children to play for free with recycled materials and volunteer labor, in a close collaboration with the community and effectively using social networks for mobilizing, learning, coordinating and sharing.

Story No.5: Government leadership in playground making – An example of Hoi An gives an example about the government commitment in providing playgrounds for each ward through resolutions and action plans as well as their learning process in facilitating community participation.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Central government

The approved National Urban Upgrading Program needs to be revised to ensure enough neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

Urban Planning Law, Housing Law, Land Law, and Law on Capital City need to properly address social infrastructures including neighborhood parks and playgrounds as well as urban upgrading which should have a more flexible planning code/standard; and a better citizen participation mechanism. Additionally, the urban planning and land use planning mechanism in urban centers should be merged to be a sole responsibility of MoC to avoid overlaps between MoC and MoNRE.

Planning/design codes and standards should be created 1) for playgrounds, delineating the minimum required area and list of minimum facilities; and 2) for urban upgrading, especially for inner-city districts of Ha Noi.

The terminologies of greenery for public use should be synchronized to ensure the information collected is consistent. Specifications should be developed to
separate the terminology of playgrounds from that of parks/flower gardens, streets trees, sport yards etc. to use in cadastral maps and for inventory/statistics of public land use.

**Ha Noi city’s local governments**

An Urban Upgrading Program and its Action Plan for Ha Noi should be developed, where a network of neighborhood parks/playgrounds is an inseparable part. The Ha Noi Greenery Planning should be supplemented with contents related to flower gardens and playgrounds at a housing unit level.

To avoid overlaps, the land use planning function of DoNRE and the greenery planning function of DoC should be transferred to be the sole responsibility of HDPA. In addition, the management mechanism for urban parks should be improved to include ward governments and to have better coordination and reporting between agencies. For existing neighborhood parks/playgrounds, discussions between ward authorities and communities should be carried out on how they can be better managed. Ward staff in charge of social and cultural affairs should organize playing activities for the children.

Land use planning and management should be improved to ensure land availability for neighborhood parks/playgrounds. An inventory of existing neighborhood parks/playgrounds should be taken. The public land inventory should involve citizen participation and its results be publicized for citizen commentary.

The current policy of auctioning public land in inner-city districts should stop until the city has allocated sufficient public land for social facilities at all ward, district and city levels. Different needs for public land use should be considered in a well-coordinated way.

A common information management system for urban planning and management needs to be established at city level to contain comprehensive, multi-sectoral data and information, which include that on parks, flower gardens and playgrounds. Information can be provided/sold to all stakeholders as a public service.

In the time-being, any public land available in the neighborhoods should be retained for creating more parks/playgrounds, regardless they can be temporary or permanent. Different resources should be mobilized for creating/improvement of neighborhoods parks/playgrounds. Playing facilities can be created at low costs, by using donated used materials, volunteering labor and the creativity of architects/artists and community members.

**Other stakeholders**

Fatherland Front and its member organizations should work more with communities to understand their needs and lead their dialogue with the government for preserving public land for public spaces and mobilizing resources to build/improve/maintain neighborhood parks/playgrounds.

Experts and professional associations need to improve their coordination for more effective policy critiques. Urban planning training programs should discuss greenery planning at housing unit level, and teach future urban planners and architects so they can be more user oriented.

NGOs could 1) do advocacy campaigns to promote the values of neighborhood parks/playgrounds, provide assessments of the current situation of these spaces and related policies, suggest recommendations, and provide good practices, 2) conduct a more in-depth study on neighborhood parks/playgrounds in the old state-owned housing quarters and/or 3) conduct a pilot project on public land inventory at the ward level, with citizen participation, to serve as a new model of transparent land management.

The mass media needs to promote awareness about neighborhood parks/playgrounds, and have solid cases when leading public discussions to influence the future policies.

The private sector can provide used materials for creating playing facilities and can also directly invest in the public parks while making indirect profit. They need awareness building and to be better informed on this issue.
1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Viet Nam is experiencing the most rapid urbanization process in its region. The country is expecting to have an urbanization rate of 45% in 2020 as opposed to 30% in 2009. With an average 3.5% annual growth of the urban population since 2000, Viet Nam will see about one million people added to the urban population in each coming year\(^1\).

While urbanization brings good opportunities to develop the country’s economy, it is important, while cities grow in size, to ensure they are sustainable. Among the biggest challenges is developing sufficient technical and social infrastructure for economic development and to provide good living conditions for urban citizens.

Ha Noi has expanded its territory to become about three times larger than it was before 2008\(^2\). While this is a “golden” opportunity for the city to have more land stock for development, the government will have to work hard to use that land effectively. It is especially a difficult task to make land use serve the improvement of the quality of life for people living in the historical inner-city districts (spreading from the southern bank of Red River to the city ring road No.2)\(^3\), due to high population and construction density, as well as the need to preserve historical, cultural, and political sites.

Neighborhood parks/playgrounds play an important role in the development of people’s physical and mental health. They are a physical environment where people can relax, play, and enjoy greenery and fresh air, all of which helps children to grow robustly and adults to stay healthy and energized. Parks/playgrounds are also a social place where people meet and share, help each other, and organize collective activities. Neighborhood parks/playgrounds can be a connecting point for people of different perspectives and backgrounds and thus help enhance social cohesiveness and mutual assistance\(^4\). Small neighborhood parks/playgrounds, located within a short walk from the residences within a living quarter, have the advantage of attracting local residents to visit on a much more regular basis than parks that are bigger but farther away. They are the most important for the children and the elderly, who are the most in need of using public spaces and have time for this however have difficulty in going far away from home without support/supervision of the others. Neighborhood parks/playgrounds, together with people’s specific activities, form a place that is dear to people living nearby and creates an identity of each neighborhood.

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\(^1\)UN-Habitat. 2014. Vietnam Housing Sector Profile.
\(^2\)National Assembly’s Resolution No.15/2008/QH12 dated 29/5/2008 approving the Adjustment of Administrative Boundary of Ha Noi City and Adjacent Provinces.
\(^3\)Prime Minister’s Decision No.1259/QĐ-TTg dated 26/7/2011 approving General Construction Planning of Ha Noi toward 2030, Vision toward 2050.
Play allows children to use their creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. Play is important for healthy brain development. It is through play that children engage and interact in the world around them from the early age. Play allows children to create and explore a world they can master, conquering their fears while practicing adult roles, sometimes in conjunction with other children or adult caregivers. As they master their world, play helps children develop new competencies that lead to enhanced confidence and resilience that they will need to face future challenges. Other benefits derived from play include allowing children to learn how to work in groups, to share, negotiate and resolve conflict and to learn self-advocacy skills. When play is allowed to be child-driven, children practice decision making skills, move at their own space, discover their own areas of interest, and ultimately engage fully in the passion they wish to pursue. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

Lots of public spaces in Ha Noi, including the neighborhood parks/playgrounds, have been shrinking or disappearing for decades as they are used for housing and other construction objects due to loose urban management in the rapid urbanization process. Recently, the awareness of public space value among the population has increased. Ha Noi city’s government has also become more proactive in making policies to develop more greenery for public use. However, the neighborhood parks/playgrounds have not been paid enough attention. The reasons for this, among the others, include the fact that the city planners do not have enough information on the current situation of the neighborhood parks/playgrounds and are not aware enough of the need to have them in greater quantity and better managed.

Not much research has been done to raise people’s awareness on this topic and there are not many organizations that work on public spaces, in general, and on neighborhood parks/playgrounds, in particular. There is a small amount of research done on public spaces; among them, only few are related to the neighborhood parks/playgrounds in Ha Noi done in the first decade of this Century. Since then, the situation and policies have seen a lot of changes and the research needs to be updated.

This research was initiated by HealthBridge, a non-government organization of Canada and funded by Asian Foundation. These two organizations have a common interest in supporting the partner countries in urban governance, which includes developing livable cities that allow people to walk to school and to work, have access to parks and public spaces and enjoy community life, including the most vulnerable populations, such as women, children and the poor.

1.2. Objectives

The overall objective of this research is to provide a situational analysis that addresses why and how neighborhood parks/playgrounds have been lost or degraded, and develop a practical strategy to increase their number and quality.

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5 Quoted from article “Children lack space to play in capital” by Hong Thuy. Viet Nam News. 07/09/2014
6 See the illustrations for these statements in Chapter 3 - Stakeholder analysis
7 1) Community Spaces in Low-Income Housing Areas – A Case Study of Ha Noi, Viet Nam by Nguyen Thi Hien and Nghiern Thi Thuy in 2006, and 2) a survey on playgrounds in Hanoi by the Committee on Population, Family, and Children in 2006.
The objectives of this research are:
1. To understand how and why neighborhood parks/playgrounds in Hanoi have been lost or degraded; what the incentives and constraints are that lead to the loss of these spaces;
2. To understand the organizations and actors that can support the creation, protection and maintenance of neighborhood parks/playgrounds at the local and city levels in Hanoi; and,
3. To develop a set of recommendations that will support increasing the number and quality of neighborhood parks/playgrounds in Hanoi.

1.3. Approach and methodology

The term “public spaces” first appeared officially in the Government Decree No.42/2009 on the grading of urban centers. It is firstly defined as “(public) parks and parks/playgrounds” in the MoC’s Circular No.19/2010/TT-BXD guiding the formulation of regulations on management of urban planning and architecture. In other government documents, there are other definitions for different spaces such as greenery for public use, flower gardens, walk gardens, waterfronts, playgrounds, and public squares.

Neighborhood parks/playgrounds in this study are understood as open public spaces that are, or can potentially be, used for people living nearby to relax, do exercise, play, interact etc. The neighborhood parks/playgrounds include flower gardens, playgrounds, walk paths around ponds/lakes, open spaces between fixed objects, possibly larger segments of community roads, or any unused public land plot(s). This research looks at the neighborhoods that are within the nine urban districts of Ha Noi, defined as such before the city’s territorial expansion in 2008.

The research questions include:
- How have the neighborhood parks/playgrounds been formed, changed over time, currently used and maintained, and why?
- Who are the stakeholders, and what is their interest and level of influence in the preservation and management of neighborhood parks/playgrounds?
- What is the state management structure, policies and legal framework related to the neighborhood parks/playgrounds?
- What are the best practices available in creating/protecting and maintaining neighborhood parks/playgrounds including through community engagement, in Viet Nam generally, and in Ha Noi particularly? and
- What are the policy recommendations to propose to the government and Ha Noi authorities in preserving and managing neighborhood parks/playground as well as engaging community members?

The research uses qualitative methods, including both secondary and primary source data. The following documents were reviewed:

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5 Government Decree No.42/2009/ND-CP on Urban Classification
6 In the MoC’s Circular No.19/2010/TT-BXD, and firstly defined as “(public) parks and parks/playgrounds”.
10 The term “inner-city districts” are understood to include nine inner-city districts that were established before Ha Noi city has expanded its territory in 2008. These districts are Ba Dinh, Hoan Kiem, Hai Ba Trung, Dong Da, Thanh Xuan, Cau Giay, Long Bien, Tay Ho and Hoang Mai.
- Government documents (of central and city levels) related to the research theme including policies, law and guiding regulations, planning codes, and government management structures;
- Available existing research on parks/playgrounds in Hanoi;
- Documents related to best practices (public space mapping in Ha Dinh, Swedish Housing Cooperative, Thuong Dinh playground, Think Playgrounds, playground making in Hoi An, etc.); and
- Other available materials.

Primary data collection was carried out in various ways. Semi-structured interviews were conducted during the period from May to August 2014 with government staff of Ha Noi at city, district, ward levels; national and international urban experts, representatives of social organizations, NGOs and volunteers as well as media etc., in order to collect different views on the issue.

In addition, stories were collected about good practices that have been implemented. The authors focus on three types of neighborhoods in inner-city districts, where the majority of population are living, especially those who belong to low and (emerging) middle-income groups. They include 1) old state-owned housing quarters (Van Chuong ward of Dong Da district), 2) “self-help” housing quarters\(^\text{11}\) (Ha Dinh and Thuong Dinh wards of Thanh Xuan District), and 3) new urban areas (Trung Hoa - Nhan Chinh new urban area). There are also stories that came from other places in Viet Nam. The authors hope that each story shared in this research can help preserve, create and manage neighborhood parks/ playgrounds by learning from both successes and challenges. The story collection activities included 1) collecting information from secondary sources, 2) conducting observations and taking photos of neighborhood parks/playgrounds; 3) conduct interviews with ward authorities, representatives of social organizations, businesses occupying parks/playgrounds, and residents (migrants, women, children, the elderly etc.). In total, more than 40 people were interviewed; a list of them is presented in Annex 1.

A draft report was developed and presented at a round-table meeting organized on 20\(\text{th}\) July 2014, where specific representatives from the Hanoi city’s Government and experts contributed their comments and suggestions. The draft report also received comments from the Asia Foundation before the final report was made.

2. **Legal framework**

2.1. **Government policies**

*City’s government is pro-active in making the city green and healthy for its citizens*

As a local government, Ha Noi city makes its policies based on the orientation of national policies. The rights of people, including the elderly, women and children, to relax and play, has been confirmed by the *Ordinance on Elderly, the Law on Gender Equality*\(^\text{12}\) and the *Law on"

\(^{11}\) “Self-help” housing is understood in this research as housing that people build for themselves.

Protection, Caring and Education of Children\textsuperscript{13}. Social policies have been created with a goal to develop - physically, mentally and morally - the country’s human resources, which include national strategies for development of health, sports, education and culture\textsuperscript{14}. At the local level, Ha Noi has developed city development planning for similar sectors\textsuperscript{15}. Besides, the Criteria for Children Friendly Ward/ Commune\textsuperscript{16} says that children friendly wards must have playing areas and organize cultural activities for the children.

Urban planning policies play a cross-cutting role as they facilitate spatial planning for building physical facilities to implement the social policies. There are a number of urban planning policies which set objectives for social infrastructure, including one on greenery and parks for Ha Noi City. They include:
- Adjusted Orientation of Master Plan for Development of Urban Centers System in Viet Nam to 2025, Vision toward 2050\textsuperscript{17};
- National Urban Development Program for the period of 2012-2020\textsuperscript{18};
- National Urban Upgrading Program for the period of 2009-2010\textsuperscript{19};
- National Housing Development Strategy toward 2020, vision toward 2030\textsuperscript{20};
- Ha Noi Construction Master Plan toward 2030, vision toward 2050\textsuperscript{21};
- Ha Noi Land Use Planning toward 2020 and Land Use Plan for the period of 2011-2015\textsuperscript{22}; and
- Planning of Greenery, Parks, Flower Gardens and Waterfront’s System of Ha Noi toward 2030, vision toward 2050\textsuperscript{23}.

\textsuperscript{14}Prime Minister’s Decision No.122/QD-TTg dated 10/1/2013 approving the National Strategy of Protection, Caring and Strengthening the Peoples’ Health for the Period of 2011-2020, Vision toward 2030; Prime Minister’s Decision No.711/QD-TTg dated 13/6/2012 approving National Strategy of Education Development for the Period of 2011-2020; Prime Minister’s Decision No.581/QD-TTg dated 06/05/2009 approving the National Strategy for Cultural Development; Prime Minister’s Decision No.641/QD-TTg dated 28/4/2011 approving the Comprehensive Proposal for Strengthening Health and Weight of the Vietnamese for the period of 2011-2025.
\textsuperscript{15}Ha Noi Peoples Council’s Resolution No.22/2013/NQ-HDND dated 03/12/2013 approving the Hanoi Sport Development Planning toward 2020, Vision toward 2030, Resolution No. 05/2012/NQ-HDND dated 05/04/2012 approving Ha Noi Development Planning for Pre-school, School, Regular and Professional Education toward 2020, Vision toward 2030; Resolution No. 11/2012/NQ-HDND dated 13/07/2012 approving Ha Noi Development Planning for Culture toward 2020, Vision toward 2030.
\textsuperscript{16}Prime Minister Decision No.34/QD-TTg/2014 dated 30/5/2014 on Criteria of Children Friendly Wards/Communes
\textsuperscript{17}Prime Minister Decision No.445/QD-TTg dated 07/04/2009 approving the Adjusted Orientation of Master Plan for Development of Urban Centers System in Viet Nam to 2025, Vision toward 2050.
\textsuperscript{18}Prime Minister Decision No.1659/QD-TTg dated 07/11/2012 approving the National Urban Development Program for the period of 2012-2020.
\textsuperscript{19}Prime Minister Decision No.758/QD-TTg dated 08/06/2009 approving the National Urban Upgrading Program for the period of 2009-2020.
\textsuperscript{20}Prime Minister’s Decision No.2127/QD-TTg dated 30/11/2011 approving the National Housing Development Strategy toward 2020, vision toward 2030.
\textsuperscript{21}Prime Minister’s Decision No.1878/QD-TTg dated 22/12/2008 approving Ha Noi Construction Master Plan toward 2030, vision toward 2050
\textsuperscript{22}Government Resolution No.06/NQ-CP dated 09/01/2013 on Land Use Planning toward 2020 and Land Use Plan for the period of 2011 – 2015 for Ha Noi city.
\textsuperscript{23}Ha Noi Peoples Committee’s Decision No.1495/QD-UBND dated 18/03/2014 approving the Planning of Green Trees, Parks, Flower Gardens and Waterfront’s System of Ha Noi toward 2030, vision toward 2050 (in this report referred as “Ha Noi Greenery Planning”).
The most important document is the *Planning of Green Trees, Parks, Flower Gardens and Lake’s System of Ha Noi toward 2030, vision toward 2050* (hereinafter referred as *Hanoi Greenery Planning*). This policy has a goal to turn Ha Noi into a green and clean city, to reduce the pollution in old urban inner-city areas, and to improve the quality of life for the Hanoians by 2030. The contents related to parks and flower gardens are:

- Urban green planning is to be a part of urban planning;
- Diversify the typology of parks and trees; create a tiered system of parks, including those at 1) urban region, 2) city, 3) district, 4) zone (ward), 5) housing unit, and 6) house group levels;
- In the historical inner-city districts, the green areas will not be changed for other land use;
- Develop new parks in the extended inner-city districts; and,
- Inner-city districts, for a targeted population of 1.8 million in 2030, will have 710 hectares of urban parks, equivalent to 3.9 m²/ head; and 180 hectares of parks/flower gardens at housing unit level, equivalent to 1 m²/ head.

Measures include:

- Upgrading existing parks;
- Relocation of industrial, training, healthcare facilities to create a new public land stock. It is expected that a land stock created from relocating industrial facilities will be 178.21 hectares. Most of land created, as a priority, will be given to public facilities, which include green spaces, especially for Thanh Xuan and Dong Da districts;
- Re-development/upgrading of old state-owned apartment quarters to create about 40 hectares for flower/walk gardens at housing unit level;
- Planting more trees along roads and better use of waterfront of lakes; and
- Budget allocations to the inner-city area, for the period from the present toward 2030, will be 13,742 billion VND (equivalent to 654 million USD), for a list of big parks, which will come from both state budget and private investors. No budget for flower/walk gardens is mentioned.

The above-listed policies show that the city Government has been paying a great deal of attention to improving the quality of life for the people. However, some shortcomings of the urban planning and greenery planning policies remain, which are discussed below.

*Overlaps, competition, gaps and conflicts among policies*

There are overlaps, gaps and competition in using public land among the policies. The Ha Noi Sport Development Planning has a target to, by 2020, create at least 0.3 to 1.0 hectares for sports activities in each ward (except for the four historical central districts), which will accommodate a stadium, a gymnastic building, sport yards, a swimming pool, and playgrounds for children. The Ha Noi Greenery Planning has a target to have 1 m²/ head of flower gardens at housing unit level in inner-city districts, which will combine playgrounds but no sport yards mentioned. This shows that playgrounds are included in targets of at least two policies. The Ha Noi Education Development Planning has a target that inner-city districts will have, for the existing schools, a minimum school land area of 6 m² for each school child, 8 m² for each pre-

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24 Ha Noi Sport Development Planning toward 2020, Vision toward 2030.
school child, and, for any newly built school/kindergarten, 15m² for each child. It is noted that demand in land use of the above sectors, together with the other ones, such as commerce, transport etc. creates a competition for the scarce public land resource.

There is also a possible conflict in policy objectives and measures to achieve them. To develop greenery, Ha Noi Greenery Planning spells out measures to create new stock of public land by relocating industrial facilities and upgrading old state-owned housing areas. In the meantime, another policy is being implemented to auction public land plots of less than 5,000 square meters that are within the residential areas to private investors, to “increase the efficiency of use of land stock, meet the land use demand of people and businesses and increase the budget revenue.” Another example of conflict of policy measures is that while the Ha Noi Greenery Planning says that in the historical inner-city districts, the green areas will not be changed for another land use, during the time this report was written, there was a government plan to cut down trees along many central streets for a transport project.

No adequate policy measures to achieve targets for neighborhood parks/playgrounds

Ha Noi Greenery Planning has set an objective that inner-city districts will have 3.9m²/head for urban parks, and 1m²/head for flower gardens at housing unit level for the population of 1.8 million people expected in 2030. The city will need to create some 455.3 hectares of parks and flower gardens to achieve both targets. See Table 1.

Table 1 Current situation versus the targets for 2030

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Total land area (km²)</th>
<th>Target population (million people)</th>
<th>Area per head</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Current (m²/head)</td>
<td>Target (m²/head)</td>
<td>Current (ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban parks</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower gardens at housing unit level</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>137</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.8</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.43</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Synthesis Complementary Report to the Ha Noi Greenery Planning

²⁵ Ha Noi Education Development Planning toward 2020, Vision toward 2030.
²⁶ Ha Noi Peoples Committee’s Plan No.29/KH-UBND dated 20/2/2013 on Plan to Implement Auction of Land Use Right in 2013 of Ha Noi City.
²⁸ The figure of 132 hectare in above table is understood as the total area of parks that are listed as “living area level” in Annex 6 of Synthesis Complementary Report to Hanoi Greenery Planning, including Indira Gandhi, Linh Dam, Den Lu, Vinh Hung, Dong Da, Nghia Do, Yen Hoa, and Cau Giay, although most of them are managed by the city.
It was reported by the consultant team, who proposed the Ha Noi Greenery Planning that, for meeting the target of future urban parks, land has been sufficiently allocated in approved urban planning. For meeting the target of flower gardens at housing unit level, the measures include to 1) relocate the industrial facilities (in which a part of land stock of about 178 hectares created will be given as flower gardens) and 2) upgrading the old state-owned housing quarters (in which the land stock of about 40 hectares created will be given to flower gardens at housing unit level).

To relocate industrial facilities and upgrading old state-owned housing quarters requires significant time and budget for preparation, resettlement, and construction investment of new facilities. In reality, these processes are reported to face lots of obstacles, which include intended delays of agencies to be relocated, the hesitance of potential investors in the property market’s downturn as well as lack of government budget. Therefore, it is hard to believe that the said land stock can be achieved at the scale and time planned. Even if successful, this land stock can create neighborhood parks/playgrounds for people living nearby them, but not for others living farther away, taking into account that the flower gardens within a housing unit should be no farther than 500 meters from any home.

Besides, this policy intends to spend its entire planned budget to construct big parks in its priority investment program, with no budget line for small parks/playgrounds at the neighborhood level.

It is noted that hundreds of flower gardens and playgrounds that currently exist in Ha Noi’s urban wards are not counted in the formal greenery database and therefore the Ha Noi Greenery Planning does not have any measures for the preservation, upgrading and management of these spaces.

Lack of a city’s comprehensive urban upgrading program, in which greenery planning is an inseparable part

Ha Noi city lacks a comprehensive urban upgrading program, in which greenery planning would be an inseparable part. Something like an urban upgrading program would allow an integrated social infrastructure network, including a tiered greenery system that Ha Noi Greenery Planning aims to have for inner-city districts. Without such an urban upgrading program, it is difficult for the governments at lower levels to have a broader vision, such that a territory of a ward may be planned to also accommodate greenery of district and/or city levels. They therefore may want to auction public land plots for private use if they believe that all demand of public land use at their level of management has been met, while the governments of higher levels have no planning basis to monitor this process.

“I believe that land auction is happening because all public need of land use has been met. There are clear regulations to guide this.”

An elected body

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29. Interview with a retired high ranking planning official of Ha Noi.
30. Building Code QCVN 01-2008
31. In Synthesis Complementary Report to Ha Noi Greenery Planning
2.2. Laws

Legislative system of urban planning is progressive to cope with changes

The legal framework on urban planning and management has been rapidly developed in the last three decades to meet changing need and is considered the most progressive among that of other sectors. The most important documents include laws, guiding regulations, technical codes, and standards like those shown in Table 2 below. Many of them have contents that highlight the importance of urban greenery and guide its planning.

Table 2 Major related legal documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of document</th>
<th>Year of issuance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Laws &amp; Regulations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Construction Law$^{33}$</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Urban Planning Law$^{34}$</td>
<td>2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Housing Law$^{35}$</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Law on Capital City$^{36}$</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Land Law 2013$^{37}$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Government Decree No.38/2010/ND-CP on the management of urban space, architecture and landscape</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Ministry of Construction's Circular No.19/2010/TT-BXD guiding the formulation of Urban Planning and Architecture Management Regulation</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Ordinance on the Implementation of Democracy in Communes/Wards/Township</td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Planning codes and standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^{32}$ A speech of a senior urban planning expert in a VUPDA workshop of to contribute to legal documents related to urban planning and construction held on 10/05/2013.


$^{34}$ National Assembly’s Resolution No.30/2009/QH12 dated 17/06/2009 approving Urban Planning Law.


$^{36}$ National Assembly’s Resolution No.25/2012/QH13 approving Law on Capital City.

$^{37}$ National Assembly’s Resolution No.45/2015/QH13 approving Land Law.
Some outstanding issues in the legal framework are listed below.

**Insufficient/unrealistic planning guidance for parks/playgrounds in old housing quarters**

The *Urban Planning Law* says that urban planning should meet the demand for parks, trees, waterfront, and other social infrastructures. However, this law and its guiding regulations\(^\text{39}\) do not delineate the planning of social infrastructure as concretely as it does for technical infrastructure. Besides, while focusing mostly on planning new urban areas, this law touches on the urban upgrading planning in a very superficial way, in one small article. It is reported that, currently, the National Institute of Urban-Rural Planning of Ministry of Construction is preparing a specific planning code for upgrading the four historical central districts of Ha Noi\(^\text{40}\). The *Housing Law 2005* pays attention to developing floor area but does not have wording to ensure that housing includes spaces for meetings, relaxation and play for people. This law also guides developing new housing areas rather than improvement of existing housing quarters, where most of urban inhabitants are living, and many of them lack essential social infrastructure, including neighborhood parks/playgrounds. Similarly, the *Law on Capital City* does not have specific contents to ensure that Ha Noi will have sufficient parks/playgrounds at the neighborhood level.

These laws seem to rely on available planning codes and standards instead of guiding them. In these documents, the main content related to the neighborhood parks/playgrounds is that, for new housing areas, at house group and housing unit levels\(^\text{41}\), there will be at least 1m\(^2\)/head and 2m\(^2\)/head of flower gardens, at a maximum distance of 300m and 500m from any house, respectively\(^\text{42}\). For neighborhoods that are in old quarters, it is required that, at housing unit level, there is at least 2m\(^2\)/head of flower gardens at a maximum distance of 500m from any house\(^\text{43}\), while no requirements are set for house groups. It is understood that it may be very costly to achieve this requirement for Ha Noi’s inner-city areas where population

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\(^{38}\) This Design Standard is mentioned in the Synthesis Complementary Report to Ha Noi Greenery Planning but is said by many interviewed experts to have been withdrawn by the MoC

\(^{39}\) For example, the Government Decree No.38/2010/N.-CP dated 07/04/2010 on management of spaces, architecture, urban landscape; the MoC’s Circular No.19/2010/TT-BXD dated 22/10/2010 guiding the formation of Urban Planning and Architecture Management Regulation.

\(^{40}\) Interview with the head of consultant team proposing Hanoi Greenery Planning

\(^{41}\) Building Code 01-2008 defines:

- **Housing unit**: a functional area, which includes house groups. Main urban roads shall not cut through housing units. The maximum population is 20,000 people and the minimum is 4,000 people. Service facilities, among the others, include flower gardens and playgrounds.
- **House Group**: is bounded by sub-zoning roads or bigger roads. A house group includes area occupied by the apartment buildings or/and household’s land plots and, among the others, area occupied by internal roads and flower gardens and playgrounds. In the internal playground it is allowed to accommodate community cultural facilities.

\(^{42}\) Building Code 01-2008. Section 2.4 – Planning housing units

\(^{43}\) Building Code 01-2008. Section 2.10 – Upgrading Planning for old urban quarters
and construction density are extremely high, Ha Noi Greenery Planning has set a lower target of 1m²/head for flower gardens at housing unit level.

Planning codes/standards for playgrounds and their facilities including minimum area of playgrounds and list of minimum playing facilities, is not available.

**Lack of consistency of terminology in legal documents**

The terminologies used in legal documents related to greenery planning are not consistent. Some examples include:

- Planning Standard TCVN 362-2005\(^{44}\) includes term “street trees in term “greenery for public use while the Planning Code QCVN 01-2008\(^{45}\) does not;

- The term “flower garden” is defined in TCVN 352-2005 as “having a small area of few hectares”, however there is no threshold in area for a flower garden to become a park. A number of parks in the Synthesis Complementary Report to the Ha Noi Greenery Planning are referred as “neighborhood parks” (Indira Gandhi, Linh Dam, Den Lu, Dong Da, Nghia Do, and Yen Hoa) but there is no criteria given for them to be named as such. No definition of “walk garden” is given, though it is mentioned in different legal documents;

- There is no definition of how greenery areas can be measured (for example, area of land allocated for greener, area of sun shade of trees etc.) There is also no fixed formula for converting waterfront areas into greenery areas in the related Planning Codes and Design Standards;

- Green trees and parks are defined as social infrastructure in Urban Planning Law but technical infrastructure in Ha Noi Peoples Committee Decision No.6541/QD-UBND dated 15/12/2009 on Functions and Tasks of Ha Noi Department of Construction;

- In the Synthesis Complementary Report to the Ha Noi Greenery Planning, Picture 2 gives a specifications of “Urban Park” and “Flower Garden and Walk Garden”, while in Tables No. 13 and 14 of the same document, these terminologies turn into “Urban Greenery” and “Greenery at Housing unit Level” respectively; and

- In the Synthesis Complementary Report to the Ha Noi Greenery Planning, inner-city districts include 9, sometimes 10 districts (with additional Ha Dong district) in different places. The historical central districts of Ha Noi include 5 districts, which include the newly recognized Tay Ho district but not Thanh Xuan, which was urbanized a much longer time ago.

The said inconsistencies may create obstacles in collecting and presenting information and lead to different sets of data that are not accurate and inconsistent with each other. For example, the area of parks in 9 inner-city districts in 2004 stated in HAIDEP\(^{46}\) report is 0.9m²/head, while the one calculated based on conversion from the Synthesis Complementary Report for Ha Noi Greenery Planning is 2.08m²/head. Another example is that the said report shows that no parks and flower gardens exist in Thanh Xuan district, while observation proves that a number do exist in each ward of this district. It is understood that the current official data

\(^{44}\) The Building Standard No.9257-2012 on Planning of Greenery for Public Use in Urban Centers.

\(^{45}\) Building Code QCVN 01-2008.

of flower gardens at the housing unit level does not reflect the true situation as it does not include those flower gardens and playgrounds that are being managed at ward level.

“Our current data does not include flower gardens at housing unit level”
_A senior consultant proposing Ha Noi Greenery Planning_

*Regulations on apartment management not enable places for meetings/playing*

The _Housing Law 2005_ allows people owning and using apartments, through their Building Management Board, to decide how to use their common spaces. However, this law accords significant power to the city’s Housing Management Board (in the case of social housing) and to the investors (in the case of commercial housing), who are in charge of the building management in the first period since the building is put into operation until the Building Management Board has been established. These people often intentionally delay the establishment of the Building Management Board to prolong their illegal occupation of common areas for making private profit, while the inhabitants do not have spaces for meeting and playing. To overcome this, the recent _Regulation on Management of Apartment Buildings in Ha Noi_\(^{47}\) says that if an apartment building project has no place for community activities, the investor is responsible for allocating a space for this purpose, which have an area calculated based at the minimum area of 0.8m\(^2\)/apartment but less than 36m\(^2\). However, many people who are living in the apartments that were built before the time this regulation was declared still suffer.

*Lack of transparency in management of public land*

According to the regulations guiding the implementation of _Land Law 2003_\(^{48}\), maps for monitoring and making the land use plan should have a maximum scale of only 1/2000, on which the urban residential land is marked with a certain color, which covers houses, lanes, greenery, parks/playgrounds etc., with no specification to distinguish them. Such maps do not allow displayed changes in land use. For example, how the public land surrounding the old state-owned apartment building was occupied by the inhabitants has not been recorded\(^{49}\). See _Figure 1_ below.

\(^{47}\) Ha Noi Peoples’ Committee Decision No.01/2013/QD-UBND dated 04/01/2013 promulgating Regulation on Management of Apartment Buildings in Ha Noi
\(^{49}\) Interview with a senior cadastral staff of Ha Noi DoNRE
There is no reliable statistics on public land in Ha Noi. In the state management system, the upper levels often rely on the information provided by the lower levels for decision making while lacking tools to cross-check the information. In many cases, the lower levels do not report planning violations because it can be seen as admitting their weakness (or even involvement) in planning management. The current reporting, coordination and information management system does not enable a clear picture on how much public land is available and how it is being used to serve future planning.

“The land use statistics and inventory made by ward/commune People’s Committees do not reflect the true situation of land use. This has happened across many generations of officials in charge, with land use documents not being properly transferred between them, leading to a chronic problem that is difficult to deal with.”

Conclusion of an online meeting on 6th August 2014 of the Ha Noi People’s Committee on the progress of implementing the Directive no.04/CT-UBND dated 14/1/2014 on strengthening the state management of agricultural and public land in Ha Noi city’s territory

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50 http://hanoi.gov.vn/web/guest/mobile/-/vcmsviewcontent/CJle/701/701/120199;jsessionid=358C6BB6E256BAD8392870FECB208C9A
“We know that sometimes the lower levels of government do not report the truth of using public land, but we do not have tools to check it. Our land inspectors can come to the field only when we receive complaints of the people.”

Cadastral staff of Ha Noi DoNRE

In some studied wards there are public land plots that have been under the management of former state-owned businesses or agricultural cooperatives that are no longer in operation. They can be illegally sold to private people by the company's leadership for their private benefit. This reduces the chance for residents to have their neighborhood parks/playgrounds.

“There is a public land plot of 150m² which has been managed by a state construction company which is no longer in operation. Now they are trying to sell it illegally to earn private money.”

Community leaders

Recently, the city government has expressed its concerns about the misuse and illegal transfer of public land and given a direction for the government agencies to strengthen the state management of public land, which stipulates that 1) district and ward People's Committees must assess and record the current use of agricultural and public land in each ward/commune and deal with any violation; 2) the city inspectors and DoNRE must propose a plan for comprehensive management and use of agricultural and public land in concrete districts and wards, and to report to the City PC before 15/09/2014; and 3) DoNRE and DARD, together with district PCs of Hoan Kiem, Ba Dinh, Tay Ho, Hai Ba Trung, Thanh Xuan, Dong Da, and Cau Giay to check and propose a policy for management and use of agricultural land managed by cooperatives, and report to the city PC before 30/09/2014. This action is a good step to make land use management more transparent and can give a better picture of public land stock which can be partly used for neighborhood parks/playgrounds. However, so far no results have been disclosed.

Process of urban planning lacks citizen participation

The right of citizens to participate is promulgated in the Ordinance on the Implementation of Democracy in Communes/Wards/Townships. This document says that urban planning and land use planning shall be disclosed to, discussed, or decided by, opinions solicited from, or supervised by, the people before the authorized bodies come to a decision. The Urban Planning Law and Construction Law also has content addressing citizen participation in urban planning. However, shortcomings still exist.

Narrow limit of stakeholders to participate. It often happens that only heads of citizen groups or leaders of mass organizations are invited to the meetings to contribute to planning. These

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51 Ha Noi Peoples Committee’s Directive No.04/CT-UBND dated 14/01/2014 on the strengthening the state management for agricultural and public land in the territory of Ha Noi.
52 Ha Noi Peoples Committee’s Official Letter No.5464/VP-TNMT dated 22/08/2014 on the strengthening the management and use of agricultural land in the city’s territory.
people tend to agree with what the investors want, instead of reflecting the citizens’ opinions55.

**Inadequate information disclosure.** The Urban Planning Law stipulates that planning information must be provided. However, in many cases, people are not properly informed, and it not easy for them to know where the relevant information can be found, or if it is available, the information is expressed in technical language that is difficult for non-specialists to understand. Particularly, the information posted on government portals is often poor in content, and not updated in a timely fashion. The situation is bad, especially in the case of each district’s website, and no government websites are available at the ward level.

**Inappropriate steps for citizen participation in urban planning process.** The current urban planning process is divided into two steps that require citizen participation for approval by authorized bodies, which are:

1) “Development of planning tasks”, which include the most important contents of urban planning, such as 1) defining the purpose of land use; 2) identification of nature, role and development motivation/direction of planned area, identification of boundary, area, estimated population, requirements on land use, functional zoning and architecture, arrangement of technical and social infrastructure and its connection to trunk infrastructure, requirements on ensuring that the planned area is in balance with surrounding areas, preserving architecture and identity of the city and improve the living conditions of people, requirements on strategic environmental assessment etc.; and 3) organization of implementation56. The planning tasks are to be approved by a competent body as a basis for the development of urban planning design; and

2) “Development of planning design”, which reflects the content of urban planning in the form of drawings/sketches, model, specifications and management mechanisms57.

Defining the “purpose of land use” is understood to be the prerequisite for the development of the remaining contents of “planning tasks”. However, according to Urban Planning Law, it is just a small content in a big step of “development of planning tasks”. Practice has shown that the “purpose of land use” has been the main focus of people’s protests because it can affect the lives of many. Therefore, when it happens that the “purpose of land use” has to change because of people’s protest, it leads to the changing of the remaining contents of the “development of planning tasks” step, meaning that big efforts of the Government and the investors spent on the whole development of planning tasks can be wasted.

**Lack of feedback mechanism.** There is no mechanism for the government to provide feedback to the people about how their opinions have been received and addressed. As a result, people may lose their belief in the meaningfulness of their contribution.

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56 Article 23, Urban Planning Law
57 Urban Planning Law, Article 3
3. Stakeholder analysis

3.1. The government structure

*Mechanism for planning and management of greenery misses the role of ward governments who are actually managing neighborhood parks/ playgrounds*

Ha Noi has issued the *Regulation on Management of Urban Greenery, Parks, Flower Gardens and Zoos in Ha Noi*[^58], which assigns tasks for different levels of local government and other stakeholders as follows:

- **At city level**, the Ha Noi Department of Construction[^59] is responsible for general management of urban greenery, parks, and flower gardens within the city’s territory. It is also responsible for directly managing greenery and gardens that are located along the main roads (of at least 7.5m wide) in inner-city districts, as well as those located along roads that have names; and big parks, the list of which is decided by the City’s People’s Committee. It is responsible, among other tasks, for:
  o Developing guiding regulations;
  o Leading the development of the city’s planning for urban greenery, parks, flower gardens etc.;
  o Giving comments on new construction or upgrading projects of parks/flower gardens; and
  o Being responsible for inspection of violations.

- **At district level**, District PCs are responsible for organizing management of greenery along the remaining roads and of the remaining parks, flower gardens and other public spaces within the district territory. It is their responsibility, among other tasks, to:
  o Organize development and approval of planning for the development of parks and flower gardens;
  o Supervise investment projects to ensure the approved proportion of greenery is in place;
  o Sign contracts with greenery service providers and supervise their quality; and
  o Guide their ward People’s Committees in identifying and applying measures, or reporting to authorized bodies to address violations.

- **The service providers** (understood to include both state-owned and private providers) are assigned by authorized government levels to directly manage urban greenery, parks and flower gardens are responsible, among other tasks, for:
  o Managing, protecting, and utilizing urban greenery according to the contracts;
  o Issuing, implementing, and supervising the implementation of regulations on protection of greenery; and
  o Giving space for organizing public activities based on permission/approval by the authorities.

[^58]: The Hanoi Peoples Committee’s Decision No.19/2010 issuing Regulation on Management of Urban Greenery, Parks, Flower Gardens and Zoos in Ha Noi dated 14/5/2010
[^59]: Ha Noi Peoples Committee Decision No.6541/QĐ-UBND dated 15/12/2009 on Functions and tasks of Ha Noi Department of Construction.
The management structure of greenery and parks can be described in Figure 2 and Figure 3 below.

**Figure 2**  Management structure of greenery and parks at city level

![Image of Figure 2](image1.png)

*Source: Decision No.19//2010/QĐ-UBND on Management of greenery, parks, flower gardens, and zoos in Ha Noi*

**Figure 3**  Management structure of greenery and parks at district level

![Image of Figure 3](image2.png)

*Source: Decision No.19//2010/QĐ-UBND on Management of greenery, parks, flower gardens, and zoos in Ha Noi*

Currently, most of the parks in Ha Noi are managed by the city government; only some are managed by districts (Den Lu Park, Vinh Hoang Park, Nghia Do Park, Ngoc Lam, and Bac Long Bien) or by investors (Ho Tay Water Park, Yen So Parks, and those within new urban development areas)\(^60\).

The main controversy in management of greenery, as shown in the above charts, is that the Regulation on Management of Urban Greenery, Parks, Flower Gardens and Zoos in Ha Noi has ignored the most important actors, the ward governments, who are actually managing the

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\(^{60}\) Synthesis Complementary Report to Ha Noi Greenery Planning. Annex 6
neighborhood parks/playgrounds but under another mechanism of the Land Law, with the Ha Noi Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DoNRE) as the government agency in charge. According to the Land Law 2013\(^6\), for the residential land, the provincial government is responsible for approving land use planning, the district government is responsible for land use planning, land allocation, land renting, and changing the purpose of land use, and the ward government is responsible for:

- Using the non-agricultural land allocated to the ward level for construction of public facilities such as cultural, educational, healthcare, sports and relaxation/play centers;
- Renting agricultural land for the ward’s public use; and
- Conducting land statistics every year and a land inventory every five years.

At ward level, there is a Vice Chairman of the People’s Committee and 2-3 staffs in charge of urban and land management\(^6\). This leader proposes the preservation of public land for building neighborhood parks/playgrounds, while the ward leader in charge of cultural/social affairs is responsible for the investment and management of playground facilities. Approval for both land use and funding for construction/improvement of playgrounds comes from the district government. The ward governments often establish Ward Cultural/Sport Centers to manage these public facilities. See Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4** Management structure of parks/playgrounds at the neighborhood level

![Diagram of Management Structure](source)

*Source: Analysis based on Land Law and interviews with ward government staff*

**Overlaps in responsibilities and lack of coordination/cooperation between sectors and levels of government in planning and management of neighborhood parks/playgrounds**

There is an overlap of tasks between Ha Noi city’s departments that at the same time have responsibilities related to land use planning for greenery and parks, which are 1) Department of Planning and Architecture, which is in charge of urban planning; 2) Department of Planning and Architecture, which is in charge of urban planning; 3) Department of Planning and Architecture, which is in charge of urban planning; and 4) Department of Planning and Architecture, which is in charge of urban planning.

\(^5\) National Assembly’s Resolution No.45/3013/QH13 dated 29/11/2013 approving the new Land Law.

\(^6\) Ha Noi PC’s Decision No.20/2014/QĐ-UBND dated 16/5/2014 on recruitment of ward staff in territory of Ha Noi.
Construction, which is in charge of planning of greenery for public use; and 3) Department of Natural Resources and Environment, which is in charge of land use planning. This overlap causes waste of time and resources.

There is weak coordination between the government sectors. Different government sectors have their development planning that requires land, which creates a competition in using scarce public land stock. Besides, while an urban planning agency tries to explore ways to identify more stock of public land for development of greenery, there are public land plots that can potentially be auctioned to the private sector following a policy made by another agency in charge of land management, as mentioned in Section 2.1 Government policies above.

“We have a planning system that looks like a jackfruit’s thorns, in which everything is a priority.”

A leading urban planner

There is also a weak coordination between the levels of government management. Despite the city’s policy that public land can be auctioned only after it has met the need of land use for 1) facilities of social benefit and 2) resettlement, Thanh Xuan district plans to auction several plots of public land in Ha Dinh ward, while neighborhood parks/playgrounds are still lacking. Another example is that ward governments were not consulted, and public land stock available at ward level was not counted in the assessment of current situation when the Ha Noi Greenery Planning was developed by the city government. Therefore, no adequate measures have been set to achieve targets for them in this document.

“We lack a proper mechanism for coordination between the government agencies.”

A district leader

In addition, there is an inconsistency in territory between the urban planning tasks and urban planning implementation tasks. Urban planning is done for territories that are surrounded by roads and can cover more than one administrative territory, while the management of planning implementation is implemented by local governments, within one administrative territory.

As described in the Section 2.1 Government policies above, the city government, when making Greenery Planning, set as a priority developing big parks rather than smaller and more numerous parks at the neighborhood level. Later on, in the conversations with the authors of this report, they express their regret at this.

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63 Interview with a lead urban planner
64 Ha Noi Peoples Committee’s Decision No.29/2011/QĐ-UBND dated 14/09/2011 regulating the auction of land use in the territory of Ha Noi.
65 Interview with a ward leader in charge of urban and cadastral management.
66 Interview with an expert involved in the development of Ha Noi Greenery Planning
67 Interview with an expert involved in the development of Ha Noi Greenery Planning
“Oh, what a pity that Ha Noi Greenery Planning does not have priority on neighborhood parks/playgrounds. People have more need to go there, than to big parks.”

Former high ranking urban planning official

“Now we have realized that Ha Noi needs to preserve every square meter of public land for neighborhood parks/playgrounds.”

Speech of a planning official at roundtable meeting on the initial findings of this research organized on 30th July 2014

At a ward level, some government leaders expressed their interest in having parks/playgrounds for their citizens. However, when being asked about how public land can be reserved for that purpose, some of them said that other land uses have higher priority.

“We have no chance to think about preserving public land for building playgrounds. The ward government has many other tasks to do and parks/playgrounds are the last priority. I guess we can give priority to it after ten years. I think what people need now is to have a home and employment, not parks or playgrounds. If people do not have enough housing space, what is the meaning of green parks or playgrounds for them?”

Ward leader in charge of urban and land use management

While there are not enough community spaces for people to use, some ward governments rent out public land for commercial activities (car parking and others). In some places, areas of a ward’s cultural house are also rented out to the private sector to organize table tennis, gym, dances etc... to participate in which people have to pay. Some ward governments of new urban areas also expressed their interest in directly providing housing services and management of common spaces in the apartment buildings. However, people are not happy, believing that the local government is turning the public property into a tool for making private profit, and that ward governments tend to work as service providers rather than do their state management function.

Lack of a government agency in charge of the city’s integrated information management system

Ha Noi has two agencies that are responsible for providing urban planning information, the Department of Planning and Architecture and the Construction Planning Institute. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment is responsible for providing information on land management. Other city departments have their own specific data. However, the city has no agency that manages a common multi-sectoral information system which can collect, store and share information in an integrated and transparent manner.

Lacking such an agency in charge of city information system persists, greenery planning and management would face the following difficulties.

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68 Interviewed resident
69 Interview with ward leader in charge of culture and social affairs
70 Interviewed residents
71 Interviewed with an urban planning official
Lack of sufficient information. No database exists on neighborhood parks/playgrounds. The Synthesis Complementary Report to Ha Noi Greenery Planning misses most of the existing neighborhood parks/playgrounds in its current statistics, leading to inadequate measures to achieve the targets for those places.

Information is not reliable. Currently, each project/research related to public greenery collects information from different sources, who may have a different understanding of what the greenery is. As mentioned in Section 2.2 Laws, Thanh Xuan district is officially considered not to have any parks, while observation shows that there exist numerous neighborhoods parks/playgrounds. Besides, the current area of parks and flower gardens per nine inner-city districts (converted from figures provided in Synthesis Complementary Report of Ha Noi Greenery Planning) is 2.08m², which is much different from the 0.9m² provided in the HAIDEP report. Such a significant difference in current data may lead to less confidence in policy making or planning for neighborhood parks/playgrounds.

Information is not being shared effectively. Information posted on the websites of city departments is not adequate, is not updated in a timely fashion, and is not easy to find or access. For example, it is not easy to find the Vietnam Building Standard 9257-2012 on “Planning Urban Greenery for Public Use - Design Standard” on the government portals, although it was used to develop Ha Noi Greenery Planning. In addition, some government staffs create obstacles for information sharing. The limit of information sharing may also be understood as power holding.

“The data on current situation of greenery was collected from different agencies, including Department of Planning and Architecture, Department of Construction, businesses that are managing parks and zoos. The street trees are managed by different local governments and investors without any integration. Department of Construction does not fully know the situation, while the information is not being shared. It is not easy to prove whether the data on greenery current situation is correct or not. We need an agency that is solely in charge of information.”

A senior urban planner

“I will not talk to you unless a written request comes to me through administrative staff, then through my boss. I conform to the government regulation on public spokespersons and it is not my job to tell you in what document it is. I will share openly only when a sufficient mechanism to protect spokespeople is in place.”

Head of a section in a city department

Lack of proper information may affect the decision making. For example, if the inventory of public land was recorded and shared in an integrated and transparent manner, the city government would know whether the available stock of public land is enough for meeting the need of social infrastructure, including that for greenery and parks/playgrounds; and if not, whether the policy of auctioning public land should be in place.

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72 Interview with an expert involved in the Synthesis Complementary Report to Ha Noi Greenery Planning
73Oxfam GB. 2013. Political Economy Research on Urban Planning and Management in Viet Nam.
74Prime Minister’s Decision No.25/2013/QĐ-TTg dated04/05/2013 issuing a Mechanism of Spokesperson and Information Disclosure to the Media.
3.2. The citizens

People are aware of value of neighborhood parks/playgrounds

People clearly see the values of neighborhood parks/playgrounds in their life. They are interested in the health, education, and cultural values that neighborhood parks/playgrounds can bring.

“We feel sad that our generation had a chance to play when we were small, but our children do not. We need spaces where our children can run/play safely and behave better under our supervision, where the women can gather to share employment opportunities, education information, family and religious values to become closer to each other and have more solidarity.”

Resident

“I’m worried about my son’s future. Because outdoor play time has been markedly reduced for children, he is spending long hours in front of a screen instead of playing outside and may become lonely right in his own home.”

Quoted in article “Children lack space to play in capital” by Hong Thuy
Viet Nam News, 07/09/2014

The people interviewed said that they would be happy to contribute to the playground making. Some of them said that the elderly can play a more important role in preservation and management of neighborhood parks/playgrounds than the others, as they spend most of their time in the neighborhood.

“If the government gives this playground to the people, we are happy to contribute finances to buy equipment and will organize community activities ourselves.”

Resident

People know how public land is being used and how it can be best used

People, especially those who have lived a long time in their locality, know the land use history in their neighborhood. They know when public land is wrongly used, and many of them gradually recognize their right to take it back for public use.

“This land area was allocated by the government to our construction company for temporary camping during the construction time of the Ha Noi Mechanical Factory in 1969. Later on, the land was divided into small plots which were then granted to company’s workers for housing purpose during 1990s. There are some land plots remained, which for a long time have been rented to private people by the company’s leaders for their private profit. We have recently heard that the company leaders are illegally selling them to private individuals. We want to get them back for public use.”

Community leaders
People lack sufficient opportunity to participate

While the authorities think that they have involved people in all steps of designing and investment of neighborhood playgrounds\textsuperscript{75}, the residents think that they have no chance to contribute their opinions or that no one listens when they do speak. This sensation of being ignored disappoints them. The low-income immigrants feel that they have little chance to get information and participate as they are not invited to community meetings\textsuperscript{76}.

3.3. Other stakeholders

3.3.1. Socio-political organizations

Socio-political organizations not fully playing their overseeing role

The Fatherland Front and its member organizations are responsible for giving feedback in law and policy making and in supervising investment projects\textsuperscript{77}. Among them, the Women’s Union is considered to have the most substantial role in community activities. However, these organizations may be hesitant to supervise the government as conflict of interest arises when their activities are funded from the state budget\textsuperscript{78,79} instead of by the contribution of their members. Some community members even believe that the socio-political organizations play no role in decision-making at the local level.

“Women’s Union and Fatherland Front leaders have chairs in the ward Peoples Committee office; but they just sit there with doing nothing. Sometimes they propose things that the ward PC did not respond to, saying that the proposals have been sent to the higher level but received no feedback. The Youth Union is very weak. Even those youth who stay home most of time having no stable job do not participate in community activities.”

\textit{Older male resident}

3.3.2. The local non-government organizations

Local NGOs have limited policy influence

The Viet Nam Urban Forum (VUF) is where the government, donors and other agencies and individuals share opinions to contribute to urban development policies. The challenge of this organization is lack of human resources as its Secretariat involves staffs from the Ministry of Construction (MoC) who are busy with their primary government tasks. The Association of Cities of Viet Nam (ACVN) connects urban centers to share experience, cooperate, and support each other in urban development and management. There are Viet Nam Urban Planning and Development Association (VUPDA), Viet Nam (and Ha Noi) Association of

\textsuperscript{75}Interviews with ward leaders.

\textsuperscript{76}Interview with low-income migrants.

\textsuperscript{77}Prime Minister’s Decision No.80/2005/QD-TTg dated 18/04/2005 issuing the Mechanism on Community Supervision on Investment.

\textsuperscript{78}Article 2, Part 4, Multi-sectoral Circular No.04/2006/TTTLT/KH\&DT-UBTUUMTTQVN-TC dated 04/12/2006 guiding the implementation of the Prime Minister’s Decision No.80/2005/QD-TTg dated 18/4/2005 issuing Mechanism on Community Supervision on Investment.

\textsuperscript{79}Article 16, Law on Fatherland Front of Viet Nam.
Architects, Green Park Association as well as individual experts. These organizations/individuals have been invited by the government to give their comments to urban policies and planning. So far, discussions have been on larger green spaces rather than those at the neighborhood level.

Some local NGOs such as Action Center for the City Development (ACCD) and Center for Environment and Community Research (CECR) are working to protect public spaces, for improvement of tertiary infrastructure, and for protection of the lakes of Ha Noi and other cities. There is a very small number of such NGOs, and they work mostly on provision of community services rather than on policy advocacy; although their work can provide an excellent illustration of how neighborhood parks/playgrounds can be preserved/created/maintained80.

During recent years, the role of social organizations in policy critique has increased, although no legal framework for civil society exists. However, these organizations are often invited to contribute to the policy/planning only when these documents have been drafted, rather than in the period of fact finding; and their comments have not been always considered seriously by the policymakers. Besides, a lack of good leadership, good coordination, and sufficient budget hinder many of them in working effectively81.

3.3.3. Research institutions

State institutes, rather than independent ones, play a major role in proposing policy

The Viet Nam Institute for Urban and Rural Planning (VIUP) of the Ministry of Construction and the Ha Noi Institute for Construction Planning are government agencies which study and propose urban planning and policies including Ha Noi Master Planning and Ha Noi Greenery Planning. There is no well recognized national independent institute that conducts research, which could provide a more objective view of urban planning.

3.3.4. Training institutions

Training institutions provide limited knowledge on planning and management of greenery in the neighborhood

Ha Noi has the Construction University and the Architecture University which provide knowledge in urban planning. The Ministry of Construction has its Academy of Managers for Construction and Cities, which provides training for the government staff in charge of construction management. The National Academy of Public Administration has a Faculty for State Urban and Rural Management. However, no evidence has been found that any of the agencies listed above are currently advocating for neighborhood parks/playgrounds.

3.3.5. Media

Media involvement in promoting public spaces not systematic

80 Interview with a leader of an NGO working in urban development.
81 Center for Action for the City Development. 2007. Research “Citizen Participation in Planning and Management of Public Spaces – A Case Study of Thong Nhat Park of Ha Noi”.

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The media, which includes newspapers, websites, and television, communicates opinions to stakeholders and raises issues to help people understand their rights. The mass media has been active in preventing private sector investment in encroachment of public spaces such as in the cases of Thong Nhat Park, Am Phu market, Elephant playground etc. However, the media’s involvement in these issues has been case-by-case, rather than systematic.\footnote{Interview with a journalist}

The media often chases hot issues to attract readers while their awareness on neighborhood parks/playgrounds has not been high enough to raise the issue for discussion. Media would need a good study or pilot model as a basis for this.\footnote{http://www.paddi.vn/vi/hoat-dong/cac-khoa-tap-huan-dao-tao}

\section*{International agencies}

\textit{Few international agencies are interested in neighborhood parks/playgrounds}

There are international donors working on urban development (World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNHabitat etc.). Most of them focus on providing technical infrastructure. The World Bank has funded an Urban Upgrading Project for several cities, where the neighborhoods have been upgraded to have tertiary technical infrastructure while neighborhood parks/playgrounds were not put in the focus. UNHabitat has done a comprehensive study on Viet Nam Housing Profile, in which no attention was paid to neighborhood parks/playgrounds.

PADDI (Centre de Prospective et d'Études Urbaines) is a decentralized cooperation project between the Rhône-Alpes region of France and Ho Chi Minh City that has been functioning since 1997. It has a focus on urban management training, targeting the government staff of Ho Chi Minh City. It has organized 46 training courses, including one on management of urban greenery.\footnote{http://www.paddi.vn/vi/hoat-dong/cac-khoa-tap-huan-dao-tao} Ha Noi city has no similar project.

The Globalization Research Center of Hawaii University carried out, in four consecutive years, Summer Seminars on Livable Cities for dozens Vietnamese experts, in which public spaces were in focus. It, together with the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency, also funded an action research “Community Spaces in Low-Income Housing Areas - a Case Study of of Hanoi, Vietnam”, which will be introduced in the Section 5.3 - Story No.3: A model of government-citizen-business cooperation - Playground making in Thuong Dinh ward.

There are a few international NGOs that are active in urban development in Viet Nam, including ENDA (Environment and Development in Action), HealthBridge, and LIN (Center for Community Development). With their research projects and interventions, these organizations bring to Viet Nam a new participatory planning approach and share good international experience. However, the number of such organizations is still very limited. So far, only HealthBridge has a focus on public spaces and particularly on neighborhood parks/playgrounds, while ENDA is planning a project to carry out community mapping.\footnote{Interview with ENDA Viet Nam’s director, for the Oxfam GB’s research “Political Economy of Urban Planning and Governance in Viet Nam”. 2012.}
3.3.7. Private sector

*Businesses are interested in making profit but can also make social contributions*

Investors and individuals are interested in acquiring the remaining public land plots in inner-city districts for construction investment, or for conducting commercial activities such as car/bike parking, food service, or even cultural/sports activities, for which people have to pay.

Nevertheless, the case of Think Playground that is presented in **Section 5.4 Story No.4: Creative model of playground making - Playground for poor migrants at Bai Giua of Red River** below shows that businesses, if well aware of the issue, can make good contributions through donating used materials to the creation of neighborhood parks/playgrounds. Another example of private sector’s contribution to place making is that Unilever - an international soap producer - had invested two playgrounds in Thong Nhat Park of Hanoi and Tao Dan Park in Ho Chi Minh City as their gifts to the Vietnamese children, with a business philosophy behind, that “the more children play, the more soap their parents will buy to clean their dirty cloth”. The private sector can also provide free playing facilities to the public parks; in turn, they can gain a right to put their name on these facilities, which means they can advertise their business for free. In other words, the private businesses can directly invest in the public parks but make indirect profit.\(^{85}\)

4. The situation of neighborhood parks/playgrounds in Ha Noi

4.1. General situation

*Public land occupied for private use*

The system of greenery and parks of Ha Noi dates to the French colonial time. Parks were developed mostly in Ba Dinh and Hoan Kiem districts. Small parks were also built at the cross-streets. Since the end of the French colonial period, the Socialist government has built a number of other parks and has planted greenery along streets and in spaces between apartment buildings\(^{86}\).

Since Doi Moi in 1986, the economy has been booming, leading to rapid urbanization with a high demand for housing. The government encouraged residents to build houses for themselves and ensured their right to use land and to own property\(^{87}\). Housing construction started mushrooming. Within the ten years from 1999 to 2009, the number of housing units increased from 4 million to 6.8 million and the average housing area per head increased from 7\(m^2\) to 16.7\(m^2\)\(^{88}\). At the same time, the urban management was neglected. Residents

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\(^{85}\) Action Center for City Development. 2007. Nguyen Thi Hien. Research "Citizen Participation in Planning and Management of Public Spaces – A Case Study of Thong Nhat Park in Ha Noi"

\(^{86}\) Synthesis Complementary Report to the Planning for Greenery, Parks, Flower Gardens and Lakes of Ha Noi toward 2030, Vision toward 2050.

\(^{87}\) Prime Minister’s Decision No.118/QD-Ttg (27/11/1992) on Including Housing Allowance in Salary, Government Decree No.61/1994/ND-CP dated 05/7/1994 on Housing Transactions

\(^{88}\) UNHabitat’s Viet Nam Housing Profile
spontaneously upgraded, expanded and constructed housing anywhere they could, including on public spaces\textsuperscript{89}. Public land also was occupied by businesses and individuals for other private use, resulting in disappearance of public spaces.

Since the beginning of the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, the city government has been working to limit illegal occupation of public spaces and develop new greenery areas\textsuperscript{90}. However, a significant amount of public land is still being misused.

Ha Noi city has about 20 million square meters of public land that are misused but not have been dealt with. The agencies holding public land have changed (in leadership, in business etc.) a lot over time. Many of them have allocated public land to their staffs for housing purpose, some occupied public land to do other things or rent out illegally.

\begin{quote}
At conference on dealing with misuse of public land and state-owned housing in the territory of Ha Noi city held on 29/5/2013.
\end{quote}

**Lack of neighborhood parks/playgrounds**

According to the Synthesis Complementary Report to Ha Noi Greenery Planning, currently, the coverage of parks and flower gardens in the ten inner-city districts\textsuperscript{91} accounts only for 1.92\% of the total land. Of these ten districts, Hai Ba Trung district has the highest percentage of greenery coverage of 12.83\%, while those having the lowest ones include Thanh Xuan (0\%), Dong Da (0.19\%), and Long Bien (0.59\%). See Table 3.

\begin{table}
\end{table}


\textsuperscript{90} Synthesis Complementary Report to the Planning for Greenery, Parks and Lakes of Ha Noi toward 2030, Vision toward 2050.

\textsuperscript{91} Ten districts include Ba Dinh, Hoan Kiem, Hai Ba Trung, Dong Da, Cau Giay, Tay Ho, Hoang Mai, Ha Dong, Thanh Xuan, Long Bien. Usually, inner-city districts are understood to include only 9 districts, Ha Dong is not counted
### Table 3 Current situation of parks and flower gardens in inner-city districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Parks + flower gardens</th>
<th>Waterfront (ha)</th>
<th>Total area (ha)</th>
<th>% of total area of land (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Park No.</td>
<td>Area (ha)</td>
<td>Flower garden No.</td>
<td>Area (ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hai Ba Trung</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>76.76</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ba Dinh</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41.83</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>HoanKiem</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>19.77</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hoang Mai</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>105.86</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cau Giay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tay Ho</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Long Bien</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Dong Da</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Thanh Xuan</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ha Dong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.73</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>270.97</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>27.58</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: - The Synthesis Complementary Report to the Ha Noi Greenery Planning. Table 4.
Note: In this table, inner-city districts include ten districts, including former Ha Dong Town.

In the nine inner-city districts, the current average area of parks and flower gardens, converted from the figures in the Synthesis Complementary Report to Ha Noi Greenery Planning is 2.08m²/head; and that in the living quarters is 0.63m²/head. See Table 4.
Table 4 Current area of parks/flower gardens versus planned and current population of inner-city of Ha Noi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place name</th>
<th>Total land area (km²)</th>
<th>Current park/flower garden area (ha)</th>
<th>Target population in 2030 (million people)</th>
<th>Current park/flower garden for target population (m²/head)</th>
<th>Current population (mln people)</th>
<th>Converted current park/flower garden for current population (m²/head)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(1)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(2)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(3)</strong></td>
<td><strong>(4)</strong></td>
<td><em>(5)=(3)/(4)</em></td>
<td><em>(6)</em></td>
<td><em>(7)=(3)/(6)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inner-city</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 historical center districts</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>302.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.081</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 extended inner-city districts</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>135.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(ii) For flower gardens in living quarters</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inner-city</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 historical center districts</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>166.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.218</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 extended inner-city districts</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(iii) Total = (i) + (ii)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inner-city</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 historical center districts</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>178.9</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.218</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 extended inner-city districts</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>255.8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>0.863</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Synthesis Complementary Report for Ha Noi Greenery Planning. Table 1 (on population) and Tables 13, 14, 15.

Note: - 5 historical center districts include Tay Ho, Ba Dinh, Hoan Kiem, Dong Da, Hai Ba Trung
- 4 extended inner-city includes Cau Giay, Thanh Xuan, Hoang Mai, Tu Liem (Ha Dong and Long Bien districts are not in the list)
The above stated area of parks/flower gardens area at 2.08m²/head for Ha Noi 9 inner-city districts is bigger than that given in the HAIDEP report of only 0.9m²/head⁹², but is much smaller than the standard of 9m²/head stipulated by the World Health Organization and that of other cities in the world (New York: 23.1m²/head, Paris: 11.5m²/head, Tokyo: 3m²/head). See Figure 5 below.

It is worth noting that the official data in the Synthesis Complementary Report includes only current area of parks and flower gardens that have official names and are under management of city, district governments and/or investors. This official data does not include neighborhood flower gardens and playgrounds managed at ward level.

Observations have shown that there is a very limited number of neighborhood parks/playgrounds that exist in each of the studied wards. Van Chuong ward has only three playgrounds for a population of more than 18,000, of which the largest one is only about 500m². Ha Dinh ward has only one playground of about 1,000m² for the total population of nearly 20,000. The Trung Hoa - Nhan Chinh urban area has spaces between the high-rise buildings that were built for people to pass through rather than to gather or play⁹³. Nevertheless, all of them are being actively used. They are crowded every morning and

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evening when the sun is not strong. People say that they have no other choice but to make use of them\textsuperscript{94}. Maps showing waterfront and playgrounds in some studied wards are shown in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6 Little waterfront and playgrounds remaining in inner-city wards

![Maps showing waterfront and playgrounds in some studied wards](image)

Source: Arch. Tran Huy Anh

(Brown color: residential area, blue color: waterfront, green color: playgrounds)

Existing neighborhood parks/playgrounds are not well planned/designed/ invested/ managed

Playgrounds are not well planned. Most of the existing neighborhood parks/playgrounds have been established on available public land plots rather than following approved urban planning. Many of them are located next to the street where there is heavy traffic and access to them is unsafe.

Most neighborhood parks/playgrounds are very small in area, ranging from under one hundred to several hundred square meters. They do not have enough space for all users, which often leads to competition between those of different ages (small children versus the youth versus old people) and sexes (girls versus boys), as well as between types of activities (relaxing versus more active activities etc.), at different times during the day, as well as the week or year.

\textsuperscript{94} Interview with a resident.
“The playground is named “Grandfather’s and Grandchildren’s”, but sometimes the grandfathers kick the grandchildren out to occupy playing spaces.”

*Older female resident*

**Playgrounds are not well designed/invested.** Most of them have a hard concrete floor that can hurt the children when playing. The playing facilities are often primitive, of low quality, not attractive; most of them are for small children but are also used by bigger children and therefore can quickly degrade. The facilities are often not rationally arranged, leaving too little space for children to run. Many playgrounds do not have shade, not enough lighting, lack of benches, waste bins etc. See Figure 7.

![Figure 7](image1.jpg)

**Small playgrounds with poor playing facilities**

Playground D-E, Van Chuong ward  
Playground B1, Van Chuong ward

**Playgrounds are not well managed.** There are two major models of management applied to the existing neighborhood parks/playgrounds.

*Parks/playgrounds managed by ward government.* Some wards either directly manage the cultural house, sport yard or playground, or establish a Cultural-Sport Center to do this job. They rent out a part of these spaces to private individuals for organizing events and cultural/sport activities (dancing, table tennis, gyms, etc.) for which people have to pay.

*Parks/playgrounds managed by the community.* In some wards, the playgrounds have been given to the community for management. Some local residents are allowed to do business in these places and contribute small amounts of money (a few dollars per month each) to pay expenses of maintaining the spaces in return. Local people take care of cleaning the spaces.

Whatever the management model is, many neighborhood parks/playgrounds are being occupied or used for other purposes such as food provision, haircuts, motorbike parking, and so on, which create obstacles and unsafe conditions for the users. Some spaces have been taken by the local government to build objects which harm the landscape and limit the playing activities, such as the Martyrs Memorials at Playground H1 of Kham Thien ward and

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95Interview with a women playing with her grandchild.
Playground 3A of Ha Dinh ward. Some playgrounds have also been used by additional children from private kindergartens established nearby (playground D-E of Van Chuong ward and playground 38A of Thuong Dinh ward), making them even more crowded. Most of the playgrounds are not well maintained. Many of them have become damaged, with broken pavements, stagnant water, and rusted and broken play equipment. Cleaning is infrequent, and dumping of waste occurs. In addition, in the government-managed model, while government staffs complain about the lack of budgets to maintain these facilities\textsuperscript{96}, the residents complain that while the government charges them money for using spaces, they are not sure whether the money is being spent for maintaining public spaces or not. See Figure 8.

“The ward manages the cultural house, and people have to pay for playing table tennis, to use the gym, or for dancing. We do not know whether the money is really being used for maintaining the public spaces or not.”

\textit{Older female resident}

Figure 8 Playgrounds occupied for motorbike parking and washing

The only playground studied that is well managed is that in Thuong Dinh ward, where a dozen of houses directly face the playground, which has become their common yard; and people try to protect and maintain it as their private property.

\textit{Remaining public land faces competition for different usage needs}

Currently, the remaining public land in neighborhoods is under management of ward governments. It is facing several types of competition between different usage needs. There is a competition between the need to use public land for public facilities and a policy of Ha Noi city government to auction public land plots to private investors to gain more state revenue.

\textsuperscript{96}Interview with a ward leader in charge of cultural and social affairs.
“Our ward still has public land plots. We want to develop parks/playgrounds for the people but we have heard that the district Peoples Committee has a plan to auction them to gain more budget revenue.”

Ward leader in charge of urban and land use management

There is a competition for land use among public facilities, including needs for green spaces, education, healthcare, sports, cultural and other essential community facilities. In some wards, there is also a need to build a better office for the Ward People’s Committee (as in the case of Van Chuong ward).

“There is a conflict in the need of land use between the parks/playgrounds and schools. Ha Noi Department of Planning and Architecture has proposed land for twenty schools that is waiting for approval. Besides, the commercial network planning also needs land to meet its objective of 2m²/head from the current 1.09m²/head. Each sector wants urban land for its own interest. But one should not forget that schools can increase their building’s height to save land, but land for public spaces has been running out.”

Retired high-ranking planning official of Ha Noi

The neighborhood parks/playgrounds in the inner-city of Ha Noi vary, depending on the models of inhabitance. There are three major models of inhabitance that cover a majority of the population in inner-city districts, namely: 1) old state-owned housing quarters, 2) self-help housing quarters, and 3) new urban development areas. The current situation of neighborhood parks/playgrounds in these neighborhoods is described below.

4.2. Situation in old state-owned housing quarters

During the 1960s-1980s, there was a large number of apartment housing complexes built by the State in Ha Noi. In these housing quarters, there was plenty of open space between the buildings. To date, about forty such housing quarters remain, occupying more than 400 hectares of land, consisting of about 2,000 buildings of about 1.8 million square meters of floor area. Among them, about 90% of land is occupied by multi-story buildings with a total floor area of about 1.4 million square meters. See Table 5.

Table 5 Housing quarters built by the government before the Housing Ordinance in 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of housing</th>
<th>No. of housing quarters</th>
<th>Land area occupied (ha)</th>
<th>No. of buildings</th>
<th>Floor area (m²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multi-story housing quarters</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>363.58</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>1,415,315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low-rise housing quarters</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>51.04</td>
<td>1,535</td>
<td>397,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>414.62</td>
<td>1,937</td>
<td>1,812,340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is the situation of neighborhood parks/playgrounds in these areas.

**Public land in state-owned housing quarters occupied for private benefit**

During the last two decades of the previous century, when housing construction was booming and government management was loose, tenants of the state-owned apartments tried to expand their housing to the area around the buildings, occupying areas of greenery and roads. Some low-rise apartments have been re-developed by tenants, which also occupied the surrounding public land, and have become self-help housing. The high-rise apartment buildings remain, including but not limited to Nguyen Cong Tru, Kim Lien, Trung Tu, Van Chuong, Giang Vo, and Khuong Thuong. Most of the people living in these apartments are low and middle income status.

The remaining spaces between the high-rise apartment buildings have been occupied mostly for organizing services such as motorbike parking or food services. These services were not taken into consideration when the buildings were built forty years ago, when motorbikes did not exist and food was provided in state shops, but now have become essential for the inhabitants and provide some employment. Many public spaces have been filled-in with temporary and permanent buildings for other commercial and housing purposes. As a result, neighborhood parks and playgrounds have been shrinking and/or disappearing.

**Efforts to re-develop old state-owned housing to create land stock for parks/playgrounds have not been successful**

The government has a plan to re-develop the state-owned apartment housing, in which higher buildings will be built at a lower construction density to save land for public facilities, including parks and playgrounds. It is planned that about 40 hectares, accounting for about 10% of the total land area of 400 hectares, will be used for green trees and parks. Nguyen Cong Tru housing quarter is a pilot project. However, obstacles in resettlement, the housing market’s downturn, and new policy on the building height restriction in historical central districts have been discouraging the investors to put money into the project. After ten years of implementation, this project has not completed any of the planned nine buildings. It is clear that the re-development of all old apartment quarters cannot be done in 2015 as planned.

4.3. **Situation in self-help housing quarters**

**Self-help housing quarters seriously lack public land for parks/playgrounds**

The self-help housing quarters cover the largest territory and share of city population. This research focuses on areas where the poorer population is living. They include but are not limited to:

97 Ha Noi Greenery Planning
98 Government Resolution No. 34/2007/NQ-CP dated 03/07/2007 on measures to implement upgrading and redevelopment of old and deteriorated apartment buildings, which plans to complete upgrading and redevelopment of all old and deteriorated apartment buildings country-wide in 2015.
99 “Self-help” housing in this research is understood as housing that people manage to build for themselves.
1) Long-established villages and living quarters, where people have been using the residential land for several generations and continue dividing land into smaller plots to share among their children. In these areas, many village common spaces have been occupied by individuals;
2) Suburban areas where unused public land has been illegally occupied and spontaneously developed over time;
3) A part of the low-rise state-owned housing areas, which have been re-developed by the tenants to become self-help housing and recognized by the state as private property; and
4) Areas where land plots were given by state agencies to their employees for housing purposes.

These self-help housing quarters are often located away from major roads. During the last decades of the previous century, there was a significant tendency of spontaneous filling-in construction, meaning that people tried to construct on any available land. This happened especially in Dong Da and Thanh Xuan districts, which have the fastest rates of urbanization, leaving the lowest percentage of land for parks/playgrounds (0.19% for Dong Da and 0% for Thanh Xuan\(^\text{100}\)\). The typical characteristics of these areas include extremely high density of construction due to high density of population (Kham Thien ward, for example, has a population density of 52,000 people/km\(^2\) and Van Chuong has 54,000 people/km\(^2\)\(^\text{101}\)), tree-branch-like narrow and winding lanes, and lack of greenery and public spaces.

The most recent pattern of self-help housing is where land plots of 40-60 square meters were given by the state agencies to their staff for housing purpose. These areas were better planned compared with other spontaneously built areas. However, in most cases, the land was allocated only for houses while social infrastructure was neglected.

“During the 1990s, the Ha Noi Chief Architect Office introduced about 500 land plots to the state agencies, which were divided into smaller plots and distributed to their employees for self-help housing. Land plots were also given for resettled people to build their housing. In both cases, land was allocated only for houses, without social infrastructure. People have to use the city’s facilities that are available nearby.”

Former high ranking urban planning official of Ha Noi

**Self-help housing areas can hardly achieve objective for parks/playgrounds**

As mentioned above, high construction density and high percentage of private land use are typical for self-help housing quarters. This means that very little public land is available in these areas that can be used for neighborhood parks/playgrounds. To achieve the objectives of greenery and parks in inner-city districts, as stated in Section 2.1 Government policies above, Ha Noi Greenery Planning proposes to 1) relocate the industrial, healthcare and education facilities to suburban areas and 2) re-develop the degraded old state-owned housing quarters. However, if successful, the land stock created can bring benefits to the few people living nearby re-developed areas rather than the majority that live farther away.

\(^\text{100}\) Synthesis Complementary Report to Ha Noi Planning for Greenery, Parks, Flower Gardens and Lakes toward 2030, Vision toward 2050 (Ha Noi Greenery Planning).
4.4. Situation in “new urban areas”

The term “new urban area” appeared in the 1980s, when Ha Noi and Ho Chi Minh City started to develop housing projects with integrated technical and social infrastructure. Since then, numerous housing projects have been implemented, with an increasing rate of high-rise apartment buildings, in order to save land and increase the efficiency of urban infrastructure.

The new urban quarters are located mainly in Cau Giay, Tay Ho and Hoang Mai districts. They may also include resettlement and other kinds of social housing. The new urban quarters of larger scales that were built on former agriculture land often have more space for social infrastructure than the smaller ones that were developed within existing urban quarters.

Some problems of neighborhood parks/playgrounds in new urban quarters are listed below.

Adequate parks/playgrounds were not planned/invested in

Policies and regulations for investment in new urban quarters have substantially improved since the first new urban areas were built. In their early stage, when the management was loose, investors often tried to increase construction density and floor area to gain more profit, neglecting the requirements for public spaces, parks, playgrounds, and sports yards. Trung Hoa - Nhan Chinh urban area has spaces between the buildings for passing through rather than for people to gather and play. The investors of Linh Dam urban area utilized the opportunity of having the city park nearby to ignore parks/playgrounds at the housing unit level. In particular, the resettlement and social housing quarters that were built as not-for-profit housing often lack essential social infrastructure.

When implementing urban planning, many investors intentionally delayed in investing in social facilities, while renting out the land to the private sector to gain more profit. Some of them apply to change the designate land use of these areas to ones that can bring them more profit.

In some new urban areas, investors did not invest adequately in facilities such as lighting, benches, playing and sport facilities for the inhabitants, while businesses (cafeterias, fast food restaurants, etc.) that rent the ground floor often expand their service area into public

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102 Interview with a former high ranking urban planning official of Ha Noi.
103 Cau Giay (Cau Giay, Dich Vong, Communication City, South Trung Yen, Trung Yen, Trung Hoa-Nhan Chinh, Yen Hoa, Thang Long International Village); Tay Ho (Ciputra); Hoang Mai (Linh Dam, North Linh Dam, Dinh Cong, Dai Kim, Phap Van-Tu Hiep, Kim Van-Kim Lu).
104 Unfinished Research “Assessment of 10-years implementation of new urban quarter development model in Ha Noi for the period of 2000-2010”. Code 01C-04/02-2012-2.
106 Interview with a former high-ranking urban planning official of Ha Noi.
108 Interview with a former high ranking urban planning official of Ha Noi.
109 Interview with a ward leader in charge of cultural and social affairs.
spaces, disturbing people’s movement and activities\textsuperscript{110}. The implementation of urban planning is seen as lacking sufficient government supervision.

“The government, having approved the projects, will wait for the handover, with no supervision in the implementation process. Some projects (Linh Dam, for example) have been under construction for a long time but are not finished and not handed over. The government does not know what the investors are doing. Some authorities may know about the violations, but have no power to deal with them.”

\textit{Former high ranking urban planning official of Ha Noi}

\textbf{Community spaces occupied for private profit making}

Many people living in new urban quarters do not have community spaces. As per law, at the early stage after the hand-over of buildings, the resettlement apartments were put under the management of one-(state) member Ha Noi Housing Management and Development Company of Ha Noi Peoples Committee and the commercial apartments under the management of the investors. These boards/investors often tried to delay the establishment of the Building Management Board of which the inhabitants are members and could decide how to use the common spaces and select housing service providers. Their purpose was to rent out the community spaces and to impose low quality management services at high prices to inhabitants to earn more private profit\textsuperscript{111}.

In Thang Long International Village, the space in front of apartment buildings has become a parking area. The first floor of the apartment building of Dong Nam Urban Area in Tran Duy Hung Street is rented to restaurants, banks, supermarkets, and so on, which occupy the public spaces in front of them for parking and for customer seating. The basement floor (designed for motorbike parking for the residents) and the playground of the CT2 building of Me Tri Thuong urban area have been used as commercial offices and other such uses.

\textit{To protect playgrounds of apartment areas, community determination is needed}

\textit{www.nhandan.com.vn/hanoi/tin-moi-nhan/item/847602-.html?tmpl=component&print=1}

5. \textbf{Stories}

The following are some stories about innovative in creating and management of neighborhood parks/playgrounds that have been done in Ha Noi and some other spaces in Viet Nam, which may suggest other initiatives in the future.

5.1. \textbf{Story No.1: Community mapping of public spaces – a case of Ha Dinh ward}

Ha Dinh ward (Thanh Xuan district) is located at the city’s edge. It has an area of 68.7 hectares and a population of about 16,000 (in 2009)\textsuperscript{112} for a population density of nearly 23,000 people/km\textsuperscript{2}, which is lower than the average figure of inner-city wards (for example,


\textsuperscript{111}Interview with inhabitants of several apartment buildings.

\textsuperscript{112}http://gis.chinhphu.vn/ and http://www.gso.gov.vn/khodulieudanso2009/
Van Chuong has 54,000 people/km^2. About 50% of the ward’s territory was agricultural land before it became an urban ward in 1997. Rapid urbanization has resulted in the disappearance of traditional common spaces as can be seen in Annex 2 Changes in land use of Ha Dinh ward over times.

The ward has a Cultural Center’s building that can accommodate about 350 people, one playground of about 1,000m², and four community cultural houses for eight residential groups. The Cultural Center is under the People's Committee's management, which rents out the space to the private sector to organized sports and cultural activities, for which people have to pay. The only playground which has free access is degraded and is too small to meet the demand. Local people have to walk and exercise, and children have to play, on unsafe roads. Other public spaces have been rented out for car parking or storage. While it is reported by the ward staff that there is no more public land for parks/playgrounds, there are several land plots that are planned to be auctioned to the private sector to gain more state revenue.

From 2010 to date, a project called “Community work together to protect public spaces” has been implemented by the Viet Nam Association of Architects (VAA) and the Action Center for City Development (ACCD). The following activities have been implemented:

1. Development of information-education-communication (IEC) materials and tools, including:
   - A manual guiding the legal framework on planning and management of public spaces and the community role in supervision;
   - Leaflets to introduce regulations on community supervision of public spaces; and
   - A website, where regulations on community participation and information on planning are posted, including a digital map of public spaces of Ha Dinh ward.

2. Training of residents on:
   - Legal framework on planning and management of public spaces and community supervision. The training focuses on two main contents: 1) guiding the residents in finding the public spaces in the ward, and 2) providing knowledge of people’s rights and responsibilities in supervising and protecting public spaces. About 200 people have been trained; and
   - “Surveying the public spaces”, consisting of seven training courses for about 150 people who were then able to do community mapping, collecting on-site information, and surveying the use of public spaces.

3. Organization of surveys on public spaces in the locality, which include the following steps:
   - Carry out a pilot survey of public spaces within the territory of a residential group; and
   - Select a list of public spaces for in-depth surveying, which includes measuring the area, taking photos, and collecting and analyzing information. This information

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114 Interviewed elderly man and middle aged woman.
115 Interviewed ward leader in charge of urban and land use management.
includes number of users, their sex, frequency of using public spaces, current situation of public spaces (quality, occupation, safety, accessibility etc.), and people's expectations (tree plantation, upgrading, playing facilities etc.). The residents have found about ten places that can be used for playgrounds.

4. **Organizing dialogues between people and the authorities** on alternatives for upgrading public spaces, where people's opinions were presented. The result was positive: the ward PC expressed their political support and willingness to participate in protecting and upgrading the public spaces;

5. **Organize a contest on protecting and upgrading public spaces.** Fourteen proposals were prepared by the communities, with the support of architects, and have been approved by the ward government. The proposals focused on 1) upgrading community houses and 2) upgrading existing playgrounds and turning some unused land into public spaces. Some projects have been implemented with a budget created by community people and local businesses. Community members continue to contribute ideas for upgrading other public spaces.

6. **Communication activities to promote this model** on different television channels, websites, and magazines.

The story of Ha Dinh ward shows that people are eager to participate. They need to understand their rights in protecting public land, and to build their capacity in creating/managing public spaces. Experts can play a supporting and encouraging role. The communities also need key persons to take the lead. See Figure 9.
Figure 9  Community participation in preservation and upgrading of public spaces

Manual guiding community supervision in planning and management of public spaces

Training on community right in supervision of planning and management of public spaces

Community discussions

Community survey on public spaces
5.2. **Story No.2: Sweden Housing Cooperative for apartment housing management**

Trung Hoa ward is located in Cau Giay district. It has an area of 246 hectares, population of about 32,000 (in 2009)\(^{118}\), which is a population density of about 13,000 people/km\(^2\); much lower than the other studied wards. The reason it is smaller is that a part of the ward’s territory is taken up by commercial buildings and for a future big city park.

The apartment building No.17T-10 is one of the resettlement buildings at Trung Hoa - Nhan Chinh urban area. It accommodates nearly 200 resettled households. The building was originally managed by the Housing Management Board (CHMB), a state agency that manages all kinds of social housing in the city. It is reported that CHMB, as a state monopoly, used to charge high management prices while providing bad services, and rent out common spaces for making private profit. It often happened that electricity or water was cut off, the elevator did not work properly, and people did not have spaces for meeting. This situation lasted for many years.

In 2008, Mr. Pham Dinh Thai, who was the Deputy Head of the Resident Group, led the inhabitants to establish a Building Management Committee (BMC). This committee has established an agency named “Sweden Housing Cooperative”, which operates as a registered business providing housing management self-service for the 17T-10 building, following one of four housing cooperative models introduced by a Swedish Housing Cooperative Project\(^{119}\). Members of the Cooperative consist of the building’s inhabitants. The management board is elected among the members, who work without salary. The Cooperative applies transparent financial principles and decides common issues through resolutions made by the members or their representatives.

The Cooperative used the inhabitants’ right promulgated by the Housing Law to take over the common spaces for the use of the residents. It has chosen contractors that provide better services at lower prices. It has also arranged housing self-services, giving opportunities to the building’s inhabitants to clean, guard, set up a kindergarten, provide food services, motorbike repairing and washing, car parking, etc. to earn income. It also rents out spaces, e.g. an ATM stand and digital advertising screens, to raise additional income. The revenue gained goes to the benefit of the inhabitants, such as supporting those who are sick, organizing festivals for children, buying presents to every household at the New Year, giving small allowances to those who make a good contribution for community etc.

The activities of the Swedish Housing Cooperative have completely changed the situation of the 17T-10 building. Currently, the inhabitants have common spaces where they can meet, play and organize events for free, and they enjoy much better management services at lower costs. In addition, many inhabitants have income generation opportunities. Residents are well informed and can participate in decision-making processes.

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\(^{117}\) The story is based on interviews with concerned people.  
\(^{119}\) The Swedish Housing Cooperative Project introduced four housing cooperative models: 1) housing saving fund cooperative, 2) housing development cooperative for the low- and middle-income people, 3) housing management cooperative and 4) housing service provision cooperative.
The Cooperative has become a good model for apartment management. It won the Viet Nam Anti-corruption Initiative in 2011. The city government has requested the Cooperative’s involvement in development of new regulations of apartment management to apply city-wide. The city government also has issued new regulations that the investors shall reserve a space for community activities that has at least 0.8m²/household and be at least 36m². The Cooperative’s management team has received many requests from other apartment buildings for help. As a result, a second Swedish Housing Cooperative has been established, which provides housing management services for other apartment buildings in Ha Noi. The second Cooperative has provided consultancy to hundreds of apartment buildings, and has signed contracts to provide management service to about forty of them. The inhabitants of buildings visited by the research team expressed their satisfaction with the common spaces that they have taken back for community use, with better services at lower costs, and with the good attitude of the service provider. See Figure 10.

![Figure 10](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community playgrounds of the apartment buildings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Playing space inside apartment building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized parking service to raise income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside playing area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3. **Story No.3: A model of government-citizen-business cooperation - Playground making in Thuong Dinh ward**

Thuong Dinh ward (Thanh Xuan district) is located at the Hanoi inner-city fringe. In 2007, the ward had an area of 66.5 hectares and a population of 18,000 people (4,200 households) for a population density of more than 27,000 people/m². Most of the residents have unstable jobs and low income. The ward lacks public spaces. The studied playground is among few playgrounds that exist in the ward. It has an area of about 500m². Before the intervention, the playground was surrounded by a high, mold-green and deteriorated wall, with few trees and damaged equipment. Its floor was low and sunken, and would flood after rains and fill up with waste. Visitors of the playground sometimes consisted of drug users.

An action research was implemented, which included a component of upgrading the playground. Works included lifting the floor higher to drain rain water, making the

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120 Ha Noi Peoples Committee’s Decision No. 01/2013/QĐ-UBND dated 04/01/2013 issuing Mechanism for Management of Apartment Buildings in the Territory of Ha Noi.


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surrounding walls lower so that the place would look more spacious and people could sit on them, placing benches, and repairing some playing equipment. The ward leaders agreed to fund a part of the upgrading cost and appointed a staff person to help in making technical drawings, cost estimates, and in negotiating prices with the contractor. People, including migrants, contributed to the design and made cash contributions. They requested a cost estimate in order to see clearly the amount of work and costs required and to know how their contribution would be used. People proposed a female contractor who lives in the community and is well-known among them as a construction expert and a good neighbor. A contract was signed between the ward authorities and the contractor, in which the contractor charged only for direct costs, sacrificing her management cost and profit, saying that it would be her personal contribution to the community. The contract amount agreed was only approximately 32 million VND, saving about 25% from the initial estimation of 42 million VND. The ratio of financial contribution by the government, the donors and the residents to the upgrading cost was 44%, 47% and 7%, respectively.

The upgrading work was carried out in two weeks. Many innovations were applied to save costs and improve quality. Additional materials were donated by the residents. Although the final cost was 20 percent over the agreed one, the contractor did not claim any additional payment. About ten local people were employed, the majority of whom were middle-aged women. These people worked until late hours “to do a good job for the happiness of our children”. A Community Management Committee was established, which, together with the residents and ward representatives, supervised the construction works on a daily basis.

The upgraded playground was handed over to the community for management. Households living nearby regularly clean the playground and protect the playing equipment. Eight years on, the playground remains very well maintained. It is reported that everyday a hundred people, including both adults and children, come to meet and play. Many community events have been organized at the playground.

Thuong Dinh playground is an illustration of a successful cooperation between government, community, and business for the public interest. The community had 1) leaders who negotiated on their behalf with the government; 2) a contractor who devoted her efforts for the public benefit without being concerned about the profit she could not make; 3) an employment opportunity, in which community people could earn income while working for their own benefit; and 4) ownership of the playground which became a part of their premises and which they are willing to protect and maintain in a sustainable way. Some pictures of the playground making are shown in Figure 11.
Figure 11 Playground at Block 38A of Thuong Dinh ward

Before – Playground occupied for other activities

Before – Playground degraded

During – Community participation

During – Government support

During – Community hero/contractor
5.4. **Story No.4: Creative model of playground making - Playground for poor migrants at Bai Giua of Red River**

Bai Giua is a land strip floating in the middle of the Red River, which is isolated from other populated areas in the city. There is a group of 24 poor migrant households with more than twenty small children who live in floating houses, made of barrels and other temporary materials, and earn their living from planting vegetables, selling various food stuffs, or doing temporary manual work. Having no household registration, these people have little attention or support from the local government.

A group of young volunteers came to the place and proposed creating a playground for the children. They were inspired by an American photographer who takes pictures of playgrounds around the world, who has recognized that Ha Noi does not have real playgrounds where children can actually play, and she wanted to sponsor a small amount of money to create a playground for the children, where community involvement is encouraged.
“Ha Noi does not have real playgrounds where children can play for free, because many of them are not free. Besides, children have to sit on moving equipment, instead of running and playing by themselves.”

Ms. Judith Hansen, an American playground photographer

The volunteers have utilized several strategies:
- Closely collaborating with the community;
- Communicating for support and contributions through the Facebook account “Think Playgrounds!”;
- Creating a low-cost playground, using cheap, used materials and volunteer labor; and
- Making creative playing equipment, applying initiatives that are shared on the internet or learned from other projects.

At the beginning, the residents were hesitant to talk to the strangers; they predicted high costs that they could not pay, or troubles they might have with the authorities. Discussions were carried out between the volunteers and local people about design, method of building the playground, safety, and community participation. The volunteers devoted time they could have used to earn money for making the place. The community leader has contributed about 100m² of a land plot that he is renting from the government for planting vegetable to build the playground. The community members actively worked: women did logistical jobs, the youth carried heavy materials and did excavation and erection of equipment; and children painted. While the American photographer contributed some cash, other people made in-kind contributions through Facebook, such as robes, used wood from construction, steel pipes, paints, cores of cable reels, and used tires. As a result, the land plot has turned into a fancy playground with swings, seesaws, rope nets, and climbing shapes - mostly equipment that the local people had never seen before. To date, the playground has children actively playing all day, and adults also gather there. People are very happy and thankful for the project.

The playground has become well-known through media and the internet. The replication of this model of playground making has started in different places in Ha Noi and country-wide. There are several lessons to be learned from the project:
- Social networking is an effective way of communication. The Facebook page “Think Playgrounds!” has been shared rapidly and reached more than 1,000 friends/followers within two months from its creation. This has become a place for individuals and agencies, including businesses, to know about the project, share knowledge/innovations and made their donations;
- Playgrounds can be built at low costs. At the time of research team’s visit in July 2014, the total cost of Bai Giua Playground was only 15 million Vietnam Dong (about 750 USD), that was much cheaper than if the same playground was built with newly purchased equipment or by government budgeting. Besides, utilization of used materials helps reduce waste and protect the environment;
- The project provides a good opportunity for architects to be creative and user-oriented. As no planning and design codes and standards exist to guide making playgrounds, they can apply what they have learned from the internet or do what they think is good and safe for the children to play; and
- The project helps improve awareness of parents and the government on the need of providing more playgrounds where children can play for free; and shows a good way to reduce the inequality in the public realm, in which poor children have just as much of a chance to play as those better-off. Figure 12 shows some pictures of the playground making.
“The Prime Minister’s Decision No.34/2014 on Standard of Children Friendly Ward/Commune says that a children-friendly ward shall have playing areas and cultural activities for the children. However, I have noticed that the word “free” is lacking in this document. I think the Government should care that the children have free playing areas.”

A volunteer of Bai Giua playground

Figure 12 Playground making in Bai Giua of Red River

Floating houses of the poor migrants

Young fathers at work

Children paint their toys

Women do logistics

122 Prime Minister’s Decision No.34/QĐ-TTg/2014 dated 30/5/2014 on Criteria of Children-Friendly Wards/Communes.
5.5. **Story No.5: Government leadership of Hoi An city in playground making**

Hoi An, a coastal city of 120,000 population, is a World Cultural Heritage site. The city government has committed to developing it into an ecological city with abundant greenery and parks. The city has developed many types of public spaces. However, these spaces have not been well maintained, and some of them are difficult to access. There was a limited cooperation among the government agencies, weak community participation, and a lack of a proper master planning of these spaces.

A project on “Improving public space for better quality of life for urban residents” has been implemented by the Action Center for City Development (ACCD) with support from HealthBridge. The project aims to develop more public spaces with community participation and to promote local government policies to better develop and manage public spaces in Hoi An. Project activities include:

1. **Awareness building.** A workshop was organized for city government staff on the necessity of a master plan for public spaces, of community participation, of the private sector’s role in development of public spaces, and the need for assessment of the current situation of public spaces. The outcome was that the city government started planning an inventory of public spaces.

2. **Supporting a formulation and capacity building of a City Taskforce on policy of public spaces.** Workshops and meetings were held to build awareness and capacity of local government, to discuss public space development planning, to develop and implement an
action plan, on community participation, and to share experience. As a result, the city has issued a resolution that each ward/commune will have at least one playground.$^{123}$

3. Place making with community participation

Three playgrounds have been built, including: 1) An My playground of Cam Chau ward, 2) Thanh Tam Tay playground of Cam Thanh ward, and 3) Cam Thanh playground.

For the first two playgrounds, a good design company (1+1>2) was invited to propose concept design options. Meetings were held with the city, ward and community leaders, contractors, and the residents on the proposed design and the methods of place making. In the construction process, people participated in site clearing, food and beverage donations, supervising, and cleaning. The ward leaders learned how to facilitate the participation process. The cost for construction of these playgrounds was funded jointly by HealthBridge, local government, and the local people.

Another playground of Cam Thanh ward was built with playing facilities donated by a Canadian organization and erected jointly by international volunteers and the local people.

4. Sharing experiences and replication

A workshop was held where project materials and lessons were shared with government officials. As a result, different city departments have planned their budget to support place making, and some ward leaders approached ACCD for technical support in building playgrounds in their wards.

In 2013, the city government began developing its five year Public Spaces Master Plan for 2015-2020 as follows:

**Ultimate outcome**

Increased dweller’s participation in regular physical activities, social interactions and recreation at public spaces, which leads to better quality of life, improved health for people and enhanced image of the city.

**Intermediate outcomes**

- Increased integration of public health matters in urban planning;
- Increased accessibility to public spaces for residents; and
- Increased citizen participation in healthy neighborhood development.

**Immediate outcomes**

- Increased awareness in public space development;
- Strengthened perspective for public space planning with community engagement;

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$^{123}$ Notice of Secretariat of Communist Party of Hoi An No.204-TB/TU dated 12/03/2013 on the conclusions of the Party’s Secretary in the periodic meeting on 11/3/2013
- Increased understanding of existing situation of public spaces;
- Increased number of policies on public spaces with community engagement;
- Improved existing public spaces and increased number of new public spaces; and
- Increased number of evidence and lessons learned for public space development.

The case of Hoi An shows that a combination of Government commitment, technical support of professionals and community participation is the key to success. It also shows that the capacity building process for all stakeholders, not just the built playgrounds, is the most important result. Some pictures of three pilot projects are shown in Figure 13.

**Figure 13** New playgrounds in Hoi An

An My Playground

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124Interview with a leader of Action Center for the City Development.
6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

Ha Noi city has made an important step to ensure its sustainable development by creating the Planning of Greenery, Parks, Flower Gardens and Lakes System for Ha Noi in 2030, Vision toward 2050 (Ha Noi Greenery Planning) to turn Ha Noi into a green and clean city. The city authorities have also been concerned about the need of preserving public land to serve the public benefit, including for greenery and parks. At lower levels of government, the district and ward authorities have been taking initiative to turn many public land plots within living quarters into parks/playgrounds for the people to gather, relax, and play.

Despite the efforts made, there are major obstacles related to preservation and management of neighborhood parks/playgrounds, as follows.

The Ha Noi Greenery Planning has no adequate measures to achieve targets set for neighborhood parks/playgrounds, especially those measures to ensure they are within the maximum distance of 500 meters from any home as regulated by planning codes. There is also a city policy to auction land plots in living quarters to private sector to gain more city budget, while the public facilities desperately need public land.
Ha Noi city lacks its own Urban Upgrading Program, following the National Urban Upgrading Program for the period of 2009-2020, in which the preservation and development of neighborhood parks/playgrounds for inner-city districts would be an inseparable part.

There is a lack of a legal framework to guide planning/design of playgrounds as well as that to guide the urban upgrading in inner-city districts of Ha Noi, where high construction density and high percentage of private land use are typical.

Ha Noi lacks a common information management system for urban planning and management at the city level, which can be used by all stakeholders in an integrated manner. The city also lacks reliable information on neighborhood parks/playgrounds and on public land use for planning.

There is an improper management mechanism for greenery, which neglects the role of ward governments, which are actually managing hundreds of existing neighborhood parks/playgrounds. There is also improper management of public land use, where different sectors do land use planning at the same time, without proper coordination and transparent information on public land use.

The urban planning process lacks citizen participation, in which the “definition of purpose of land use” is not separated from the step of the “development of planning tasks” to be the first step for citizen participation, which causes waste of time and efforts if facing people’s protest. None-state stakeholders do not have enough chance to participate, because they are not properly informed, and there is no mechanism to provide feedback to their opinions. The public land therefore may be allocated for commercial purposes rather than be preserved for parks/playgrounds.

Neighborhood parks/playgrounds are severely lacking in inner-city districts. Current neighborhood parks/playgrounds are not properly planned, designed, invested and managed. They are small in size, have primitive playing facilities, are degraded, are not clean and safe for playing, and are being occupied by private people for other purposes.

6.2. Recommendations

Following are some recommendations for the improvement of, preservation, and management of neighborhood parks/playgrounds for different stakeholders.

6.2.1. Central government

*Improvement of laws and policies*

While policies and laws have concrete guidance for planning new urban areas, it is important that they also address upgrading existing neighborhoods, where the majority of urban inhabitants are living and many of them are lacking essential social infrastructure, including neighborhood parks/playgrounds. The following are some concrete recommendations.

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125 Prime Minister Decision No. 758/QĐ-TTg dated 08/06/2009 approving the National Urban Upgrading Program for the period of 2009-2020.
The National Urban Upgrading Program has been in place since 2009, in which technical infrastructure was put in focus while social infrastructure, including neighborhood parks/playgrounds, were neglected. This policy should be revised to fill this gap. Since the urban upgrading has strong local characteristics, depending on the strategic location, geographic, land use, socio-economic situation, development strategies, financial capacity etc. of each urban center, Ministry of Construction should guide provincial level of government to develop City Urban Upgrading Program and Action Plan for each of their cities, in which attention should be paid to ensure enough neighborhood parks and playgrounds.

The Urban Planning Law should be amended to:
- Include a chapter on planning social infrastructure, to ensure a tiered system of parks and playgrounds, including that in the neighborhoods, in each city. The law should ensure that neighborhood parks/playgrounds are in walking distance of any house, are planned/designed/ invested in a proper way, and that people have free access to them;
- Include a chapter of urban upgrading. Urban upgrading planning should be carried out in a different way than the urban planning in a new area. It should be noted that 1) urban upgrading should have more flexible design codes and standards to suit diversely varying existing situations, and 2) it should involve more participation of affected people;
- Revise the urban planning process. For citizen participation and government approval, urban planning process should be divided into 3 separate steps instead of 2 current ones, which include 1) “definition of purpose of land use” should be separated to be the first and independent step for the citizens to participation before the government approves, 2) “development of planning tasks” which is based on the approved land use, and 3) development of planning design; and
- Improve the citizen participation in urban planning. Better access to information, more suitable time and scope of people participation, better methods of opinion collection and feedback and so on, should be in place in order to make genuine public participation a reality. Stakeholders other than the state agencies should be enabled to participate in policy making during the research/fact-finding period, not when the policy documents have been drafted. For urban upgrading projects, as such projects may severely impact people's lives, specific citizen participation regulations should be in place to involve not only those who have to relocate but also those who will be affected in other aspects of their life when urban planning changes.

The Land Law should be revised to transfer the land use planning within the territory of urban centers to the urban planning function to eliminate the current overlaps, because urban planning already means land use planning. It means that Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment should transfer the land use planning within the territory of urban centers to Ministry of Construction.

The new Housing Law should not only focus on the development of housing floor areas as it currently does, but pay more attention on the provision of social infrastructure to ensure quality of life for the inhabitants, which include neighborhood parks/playgrounds. Also, it should have a chapter that guides the improvement of existing housing quarters, not focusing only on the development of new housing projects.
**Improvement of greenery and urban upgrading planning codes/standards**

Planning/design codes and standards should be created for neighborhood playgrounds, with specified minimum area and list of minimum facilities.

Planning codes should be created for urban upgrading. The urban upgrading planning code cannot be similar to that for newly planned areas, taking into account existing construction and population situation. Especially, a special planning code is needed for Ha Noi historical central districts, which have extremely high population and construction density and involve historical or cultural heritage, both physical and non-physical. The urban upgrading code should ensure that:
- The upgraded infrastructure is not excessively in conflict with the current infrastructure retained in the upgraded area;
- Urban upgrading involves efforts to create public land stock for social infrastructure, which includes neighborhood parks/playgrounds;
- Urban upgrading ensures a minimum consequent upgrading of existing built objects; and
- Urban upgrading ensures minimum relocations.

The terminologies of greenery for public use in legal documents should be synchronized to ensure the information collected is consistent. At the moment, the definition of greenery for public use differs in different planning codes. Besides, there should be specifications to separate the terminology of playgrounds from parks/flower gardens, streets trees, sport yards etc. to use in cadastral maps for inventory, statistics of public land use. This would help better collect information for monitoring and planning.

6.2.2. Ha Noi city's government

**Development of Ha Noi City’s Urban Upgrading Program and Urban Upgrading Action Plan, where a network of neighborhood parks/ playgronds is an inseparable part**

The city government should work closely with the Ministry of Construction to develop an Urban Upgrading Program and an Urban Upgrading Action Plan for Ha Noi within the framework of a National Urban Upgrading Program, of which a tiered network of parks/flower gardens/playgrounds would be an inseparable part. This would enable the city to have a comprehensive consideration of how to make the best use of the current and set measures to create a new stock of public land to meet different public priorities, including neighborhood parks/playgrounds. As mentioned in Section 6.2.1 Central government above, Ha Noi historical central districts should apply a specific set of urban upgrading planning codes. Besides, Ha Noi can learn from the experience of four cities (Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, Nam Dinh, and Hai Phong) that have implemented the Urban Upgrading Project funded by the World Bank to make Ha Noi Urban Upgrading Program more successful.
Supplement the Ha Noi Greenery Planning to include concrete measures for development of neighborhood parks/playgrounds

The Ha Noi Greenery Planning should be supplemented to include feasible measures to ensure flower gardens and playgrounds at housing unit level. In addition, its Priority Investment Program should include a budget line for their creation/improvement.

Improvement of planning and management system of parks/flower gardens/playgrounds

At Ha Noi city level of government, the land use planning function of DoNRE and the greenery planning function of DoC should be transferred to be the sole responsibility of HDPA which is responsible for urban planning, which is land use planning, to avoid overlaps between these three agencies in planning greenery for public use.

The management mechanism for urban greenery/parks should be revised to include ward governments, which are actually managing the neighborhood parks/playgrounds. Coordination, cooperation and reporting between the related agencies at similar and different levels of government should be improved for better planning and management of these spaces.

For the existing neighborhood parks/playgrounds, the ward governments should discuss with the communities how they could be better managed and used. Besides, ward staff in charge of social and cultural affairs should better fulfill their tasks in organizing playing activities for the children to implement the Prime Minister’s Decision No.34/QĐ-TTg/2014 dated 30/5/2014 on Criteria of Children Friendly Wards/Communes.

Improvement of planning and management of land use to ensure land available for neighborhood parks/playgrounds

Ha Noi has been implementing a city policy on strengthening the management and use of agricultural land in the city’s territory, which includes 1) reporting the current use of agriculture and public land at ward/commune level and 2) proposing land use for it. In addition, the city government should carry out an inventory of neighborhood parks and playgrounds. These actions should be carried out with citizen participation and its result should be publicized in each ward for people to comment and contribute their opinion, because people know the best how public land has been used and how it should be used. The information should be summarized at district, then at city levels.

The city should stop the current policy of auctioning public land in inner-city districts until the public land inventory has been completed and the city has allocated sufficient public land for social facilities at all ward, district and city levels. To do this, a better coordination mechanism between the urban planning, land management agencies and other sectors should be in place, in which the need for public land use can be considered in a more comprehensive way.

126 Ha Noi Peoples Committee’s Directive No.04 / CT-UBND dated 14/01/2014 on strengthening the state management on agriculture and public land in the territory of Ha Noi and Official Document No.5464 / VP-TNMT, dated 22/08/2014
Establish a city integrated information management system for better urban planning and management

A common information management system for urban planning and management needs to be established at city level. This information system should contain comprehensive, multi-sectoral information, which includes that on parks, flower gardens and playgrounds and becomes the only official source of information for all stakeholders. The said system should be managed by a government agency, which will collect, process, store the information in a coordinated and consistent manner, update it on a regular basis, and provide it to agencies and individuals as a public service, to use which certain organizations/individuals have to pay. All government agencies should use this source of information in order to have a common understanding of data. This task can be assigned to Ha Noi Construction Planning Institute, which can better merge with Ha Noi Socio-Economic Development Research Institute to become Ha Noi Institute of Development Studies, following a similar model of Ho Chi Minh City, to be able to pursue a more integrated urban planning approach.

Mobilize available land, resources and innovative for creation/improvement of neighborhood parks/playgrounds

District and ward governments should allocate any public land available in the neighborhoods for creating more neighborhood parks/playgrounds for their citizens, regardless they can be temporary or permanent. Land plots can be those waiting to be planned/built, larger road segments, school yards during non-academic hours or on the weekend, market places during not-busy hours etc. To do this, raising awareness for government officials on the importance of neighborhood parks/playgrounds, should be carried out.

While the government lacks budget to invest in parks and playgrounds, resources can also be mobilized from communities, businesses and other donors. Playing facilities can be created at low costs, by using donated used materials and volunteering labor. While planning codes and design standards for playgrounds are lacking, creativity of architects/artists and community people can be mobilized, as shown in Section 5.4 Story No.4: Creative model of playground making - Playground for poor migrants at Bai Giua of Red River.

“Playgrounds do not need big size or expensive facilities. They need just to be safe. For example, sand is cheap but good for playing. Children need to know how to play together and share toys. Schools can allow children to play in their yards on the weekend and community adults can repair, decorate facilities and organize playing activities for the children.”

Ms. Judith Hansen, an American playground photographer

6.2.3. Other stakeholders

The Fatherland Front, its member organizations and elected bodies at ward level should be more active in policy over-sighting, organizing community supervision and facilitating community activities. They should work more with people to learn their needs and lead conversations with the government about preserving public land for public spaces and mobilizing resources to build/improve/maintaining neighborhood parks/playgrounds.

Experts and professional associations can influence urban planning policies and methods through their professional networks. For this, they need to be better aware of the importance
of neighborhood parks/playgrounds in urban planning and improve the coordination within their network for more effective policy intervention. Urban planning training programs should include greenery planning at housing unit level, and teach the future urban planners and architects to care about how urban planning and urban design can impact people’s life to make their products more user oriented.

NGOs could hold advocacy campaigns to 1) promote the values of neighborhood parks/playgrounds, 2) recommend what could be done to improve the situation, and 3) provide good practices that could be applied. The content of this research can be used as materials for advocacy.

NGOs could conduct a more in-depth study on neighborhood parks/playgrounds in the old state-owned housing quarters to assess current government policies to upgrade/re-develop them as well as the pilot project being carried out in Nguyen Cong Tru housing quarter.

NGOs could also conduct a pilot project on public land inventory at the ward level, with citizen participation. This could serve as a new model of transparent land management and provide evidence of the advantages of citizen involvement, as well as possible obstacles that may arise in this process for policymakers to consider in future urban planning and land use planning.

The mass media should be more active in transferring multi-dimensional information to contribute to the protection of neighborhood parks/playgrounds. It is necessary to build their awareness on the issue and provide good cases, so they, in turn, can inform the public and raise public discussions to influence the future policies. Besides, the media needs to build capacity in reporting objectively and with a good understanding of the laws.

The private sector is often perceived to be interested only in profit making. In practice, they can also make good contributions to building neighborhood parks/playgrounds, in different ways, including providing used materials or providing finance. They can also directly invest in the public parks while making indirect profit from them, as shown in Section 3.3.7 Private sector of this report. They need to be well informed and better aware of the issue.

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## Annexes

### Annex 1 List of people interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>People interviewed</th>
<th>No. of individual interviews</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>City government official</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>District government official</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ward government official</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Women Union leader at community level</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Party leader at ward level</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Community leaders</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Youth resident</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Elderly residents (women and men)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Female resident</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Male resident</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Poor migrant</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Vietnamese expert</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>International expert</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Journalist</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Vietnamese NGO leader</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Volunteers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Vendor occupying public spaces</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Business managing apartment buildings</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Cooperative providing housing services</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>43</strong></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Annex 2  Changes in land use of Ha Dinh ward over times

The figures below show the changes of land use in Ha Dinh ward over time. Ha Dinh has been rapidly urbanized since it has become an urban ward of Ha Noi in 1997, with land being occupied for housing and other construction investments. The ward to date is a contrasting combination of old villages, newly built objects and unused land; of winding, narrow lanes and big new roads cutting through.

Changes in land use of Ha Dinh ward over times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Map Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Map showing land use in 1917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Map showing land use in 1955, indicating increased urbanization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Map showing further urbanization and changes in land use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Map showing the current state of Ha Dinh ward, highlighting recent developments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Source: Arch. Tran Huy Anh
(Brown color: residential areas, blue color: waterfront, green color: public spaces)