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URBANIZATION OF PERI-URBAN DISTRICTS OF HO CHI MINH CITY IN VIETNAM: CHALLENGES AND FORESIGHT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine existing challenges and explore foresight solutions for sustainable urbanization, particularly focusing on the role of traditional cultural community values and natural resources conservation beside various factors impact in urbanization in the suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City in 10 years later. A mixed-method approach was employed. Start a quantitative survey involving 2000 randomly selected respondents with the questionnaire conducted based on national evaluation criteria standards. Additionally, a qualitative study included semi-structured interviews with 20 participants who have experience with urbanization. The results revealed significant challenges related to village land use, declining cultural values, and a decrease in quality of life in both of physical and mental health life. Effective solutions for sustainable development were discussed across various areas, including Education & Communication, Housing Support Policies, Transportation System Improvement, Increasing Employment Opportunities, and Healthcare Services. Furthermore, the study emphasized the importance of building cohesive and sustainable communities and protecting ecological diversity and natural landscapes throughout the urbanization process. The solutions expect to contribute to an action plan aimed at revitalizing rural areas to better integrate in the future for the suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City during this new phase of urbanization. The current challenges expressed by local leaders serve as a valuable basis for making predictions about suitable and diverse solutions and policies. The urbanization efforts in the suburban districts of HCMC. Social Implication: Significant impact in various areas as findings mentioned.

KEYWORD: Urbanization, Suburban Districts Of Ho Chi Minh City, Sustainable Development.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), formerly known as Saigon, serves as Vietnam's largest and most dynamic economic, socio-cultural, and scientific-technological hub in the southern region. With a population of 8,993,082 (2019), it surpasses all other provinces and cities in size and economic significance. HCMC is also unique in its demographic composition, hosting 54 ethnic groups. Among these, the Kinh people form the majority, followed by significant Chinese, Khmer, Cham, and other minority populations. Economically, the city is robust, with 239,623 active enterprises spanning key industries, complemented by cooperatives and non-agricultural establishments contributing to a diverse and thriving economy.

Over the past decade, the city has made notable strides in rural development, particularly through the implementation of the National Target Program for New Rural Area Development. This initiative has transformed rural areas into urbanized spaces, improving infrastructure, income levels, and living standards in communes and districts such as Cu Chi, Hoc Mon, Nha Be, and Can Gio. Despite these advancements, challenges persist, particularly in the peri-urban districts, where economic disparities, cultural stagnation, and weak management of cultural institutions hinder sustainable growth and community development.

HCMC's rapid urbanization has not only reshaped its economic landscape but also impacted the cultural and spiritual life of its peri-urban communities. While urbanization offers

opportunities for modernization and improved living standards, it simultaneously challenges the preservation of traditional values and the establishment of a vibrant cultural identity. Recent surveys reveal significant gaps in cultural engagement, leisure participation, and community cohesion in peri-urban districts. For instance, 38% of residents rarely participate in cultural activities, and only 17.2% regularly engage in sports or leisure, highlighting a critical need for focused cultural development initiatives.

These challenges underscore the importance of addressing the socio-cultural dynamics of urbanization in peri-urban areas. This study seeks to explore three critical research questions:

1. What solutions can enhance the adaptability of peri-urban residents to the changing environment during urbanization?
2. What strategies are effective for building cohesive and sustainable communities in urbanizing districts?
3. How can environmental protection and cultural preservation be integrated into the urbanization process?

By investigating these issues, this research aims to contribute valuable insights and practical recommendations for promoting cultural development, fostering social cohesion, and ensuring sustainable urbanization in HCMC's peri-urban districts. The findings will inform policymakers, urban planners, and stakeholders on strategies to balance modernization with cultural preservation and community well-being.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 General assessment of the global urbanization issue based on database data

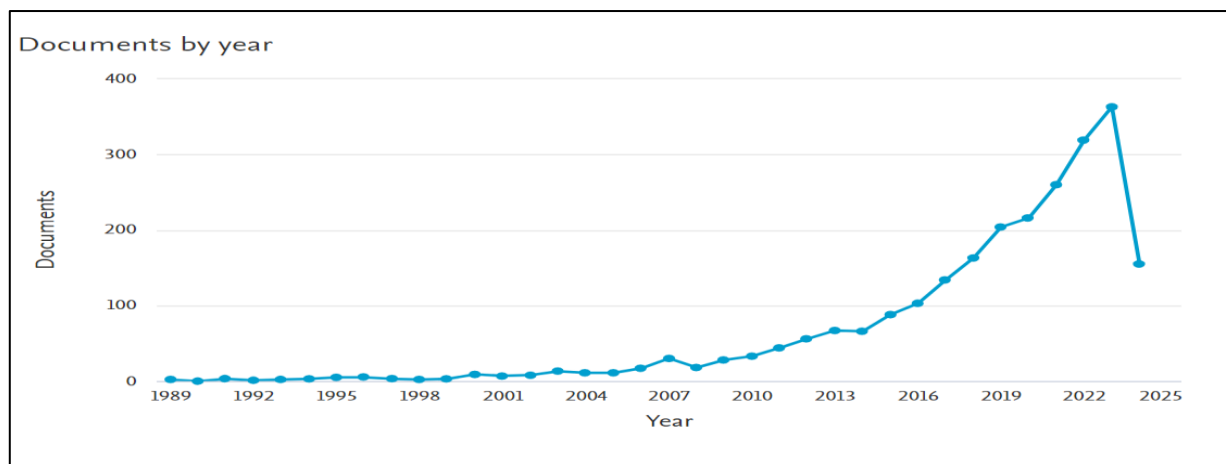


Figure 1. Number of articles on urbanization per year based on Scopus data.

According to Scopus data, the number of research articles on urbanization began to appear in the 1990s

but started to increase significantly from 2007 with 30 articles, steadily rising over the next 10 years. In 2017,

there were 134 articles, and in just five years, the number of studies increased tenfold compared to 15 years ago, with 313 articles in 2022 and 363 articles in 2023. This indicates that research on urbanization has

attracted a lot of attention in recent years. This also reflects the trend of global urbanization expansion aimed at reducing the gap between urban and rural areas to improve the quality of life for people.

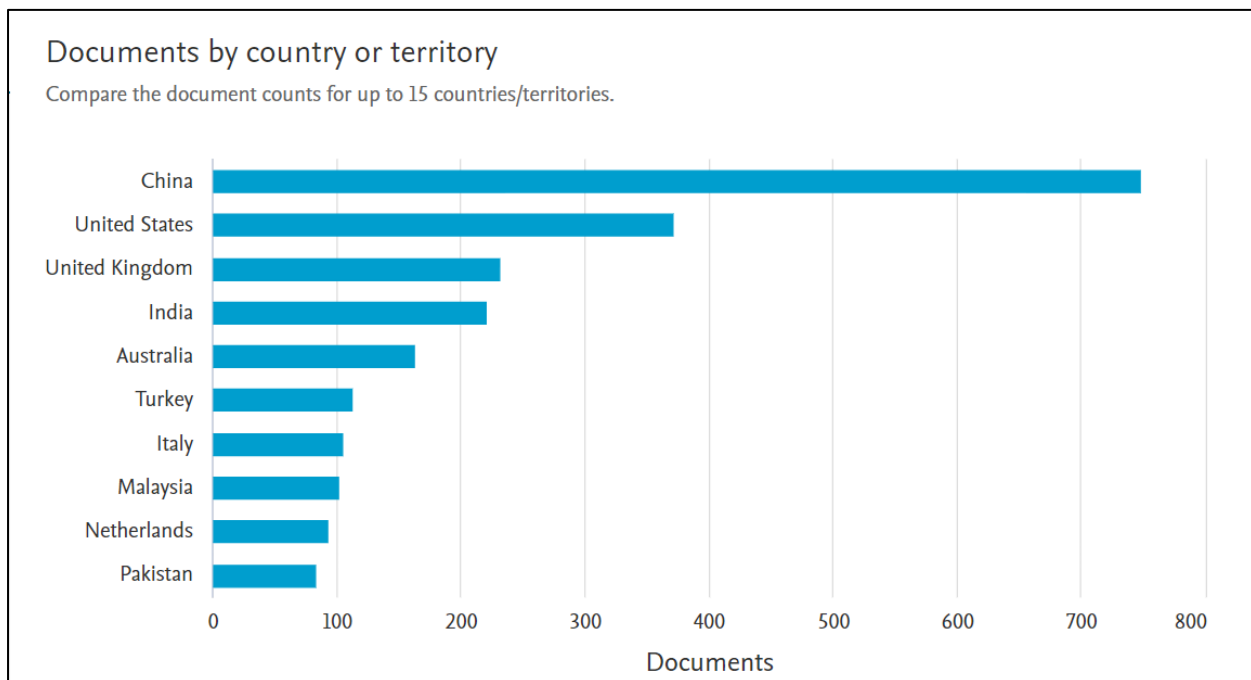


Figure 2. Number of articles on urbanization per country based on Scopus data.

The highest number of articles on urbanization is from China (748), followed by the US (371), and the UK (231). The next group of countries with high article counts includes India (221), Australia (163), Turkey (112), Italy (105). Surprisingly, some developed countries also make it into the top 10, such as Malaysia

(101), the Netherlands (93), and Pakistan (83). In reality, China has maintained the highest urbanization rate in the past twenty years, with a booming economy in real estate and construction. Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia and Pakistan exhibit rapid urbanization rates along with vibrant economies.

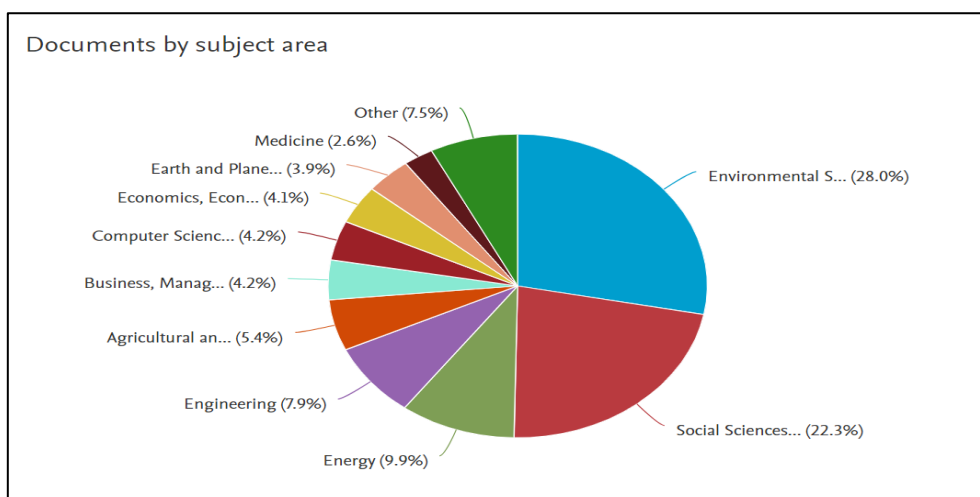


Figure 3. Number of articles on urbanization categorized by research field.

The data reflects the distribution of research articles on urbanization across Environmental Science (28%), followed by Social Sciences (22.3%); and Energy Science (9.9%). This indicates that urbanization strongly affects the environment, space,

and has a significant impact on social issues. Economic management and agricultural science make up a notable proportion under the influence of urbanization (4.2%; 5.4%).

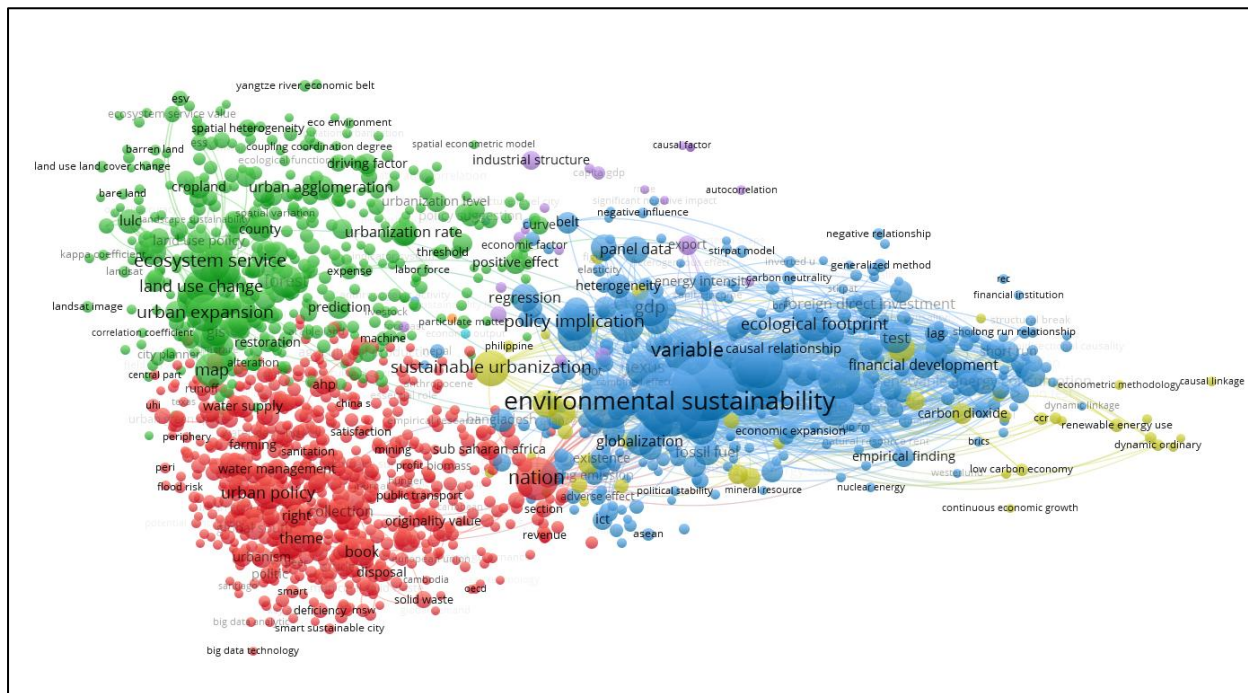


Figure 4a. Summary analysis results and keywords from Scopus data by VOS viewer software.

From the results depicted in the model above, analyzing the frequency of keywords and abstracts from 2000 reputable articles on urbanization in Scopus data, in recent studies, 'sustainable urbanization' is closely associated with 'sustainable

environment', 'expansion of peri-urban areas', and 'urbanization policies'. Sustainable urbanization is linked with 'financial resource development', 'stable and healthy economy', 'renewable energy sources', and 'resource stability'.

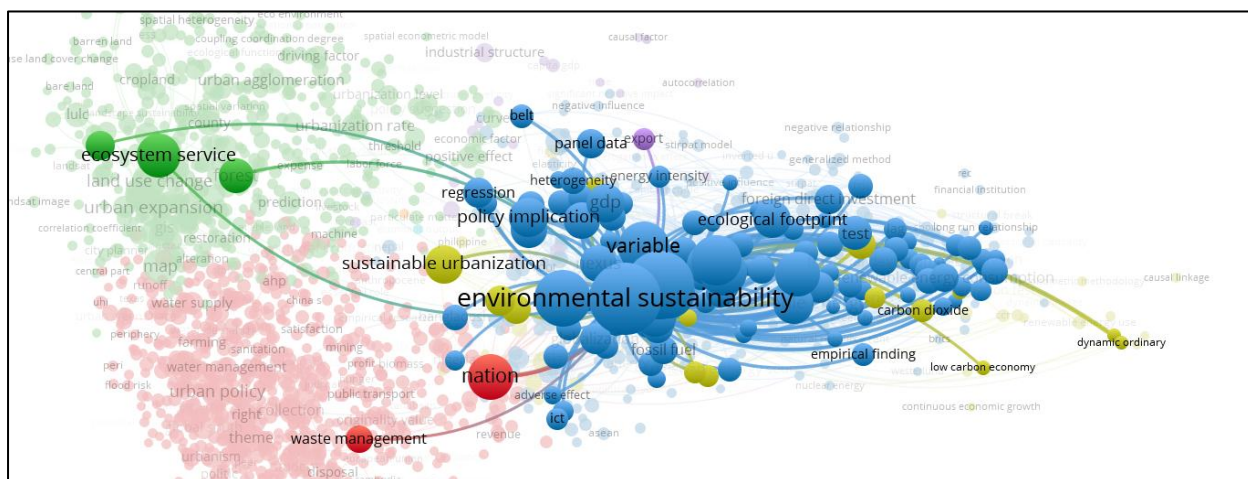


Figure 4b. Summary analysis results and keywords from Scopus data by VOS viewer software.

2.2 Environmental Sustainability in Urbanization and Green Economic Development

The concept of environmental sustainability plays a pivotal role in green economic development, emphasizing programs that minimize environmental emissions and maintain low carbon concentrations. In the context of urbanization, the expansion of economic territories necessitates a focus on resource conservation, particularly regarding critical resources such as land, water, and air. Ecosystem

preservation and efforts to mitigate environmental imbalances are essential to ensure sustainable urbanization processes. A significant challenge in expanding urban territories is the effective use of land and the formulation of strategic planning. This requires consistency in policy frameworks, clear guidance, and coordinated implementation efforts. Interdisciplinary collaboration is indispensable to ensure that plans are effectively translated into practice, supporting the sustainable development of

(Abdullah et al., 2023; Matt et al., 2006). However, the rapid pace of urbanization poses significant challenges to sustainability, resource conservation, and cultural preservation.

One major challenge is the distortion in the relationship between people and land caused by dual land ownership systems in some developing countries. Agricultural land, often held collectively, cannot be freely converted to non-agricultural uses, leading to inequitable compensation when land is requisitioned for urbanization. This results in conflicts, land loss, and economic instability for rural residents, exacerbating inequalities between urban and rural areas (Irene et al., 2023; Matthias & Sroczinski, 2023).

Moreover, land sales have become a primary revenue source for governments, creating incentives for excessive land urbanization. For instance, in China, the urban construction area has expanded disproportionately compared to population growth, resulting in land overuse and economic imbalances (Xiaoling et al., 2023). Rural areas, often providing cheap land for urban projects, lose fertile agricultural land and face disrupted cultural and religious activities during urbanization (Ruchira et al., 2014).

The migration of young laborers from rural to urban areas also contributes to the challenges of urbanization. Many rural villages face depopulation, loss of traditional occupations, and inadequate infrastructure, leaving behind vulnerable populations, including the elderly and children, to contend with poor living conditions, limited healthcare, and reduced economic opportunities. This widens the gap between urban and rural areas, undermining the sustainability of rural development (Michael et al., 2008; Clemente & Navarro-Yáñez, 2021).

To address these challenges, cities are adopting sustainable development strategies, incorporating green infrastructure, renewable energy, and smart solutions while emphasizing community participation. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 11, advocate for inclusive, safe, and sustainable cities. Transforming urbanization models to integrate environmentally friendly practices and equitable policies is essential for addressing global urbanization and environmental challenges (Simona et al., 2023; Tove et al., 2016).

2.5 Urbanization in the Outskirts of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

As the largest urban center in southern Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) is experiencing rapid

urbanization, particularly in its suburban districts. This process brings significant opportunities, such as improved infrastructure, public services, and economic growth, but it also creates challenges, including reduced agricultural land, shrinking rural spaces, and environmental degradation.

Rapid urbanization in areas bordering Thu Duc, Binh Duong, and Dong Nai has contributed to a decline in community cohesion. Residents in suburban districts report diminished engagement in communal activities and a loss of unique cultural traits, exacerbated by changes in population composition and living spaces (Huynh Quoc Thang, 1991, 2006, 2016, 2022). Despite these challenges, surveys indicate that community lifestyles remain highly valued among residents, emphasizing the importance of preserving and promoting cultural and community values during the urbanization process.

Addressing the challenges of urbanization in HCMC's suburban districts requires a balanced approach that prioritizes sustainable development while fostering a sense of community and cultural pride. By integrating community-centric strategies with urban planning, the city can ensure the long-term sustainability and well-being of its residents (Dao Thi Hien, 2008).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the current urbanization dynamics in suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City, identify challenges, and propose solutions for sustainable urbanization. A quantitative data were collected through a survey of 2,000 residents from the suburban districts of Hoc Mon, Can Gio, Binh Chanh, and Nha Be. The questionnaire was developed based on sets of criteria for evaluating rural development quality in Vietnam. The surveys were distributed in physical form, and the data collected were analyzed using SPSS software to ensure rigorous statistical evaluation.

Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 20 individuals, each lasting approximately 45 minutes. These interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy and reliability, enhancing the credibility of the study. The research team designed interview questions to explore urbanization issues and sustainable development solutions comprehensively, focusing on three pillars: economic development, socio-cultural preservation, and resource-environmental sustainability. The qualitative data were analyzed

using N-VIVO software, which enabled the synthesis of response frequencies and comparison of multi-dimensional perspectives. This approach provided deep, practical insights and rich experiential input from interviewees, contributing to the production of high-quality research outcomes. The combined use of quantitative and qualitative methods ensures a comprehensive understanding of the urbanization process and the formulation of actionable, sustainable solutions.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

RQ1: Solutions to Enhance the Adaptation Capacity of Suburban Residents Transitioning from Rural to Urban Environments during the Urbanization Process.

The urbanization process in the suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC)—Hoc Mon, Can Gio, Binh Chanh, and Nha Be—has been underway for over a decade under the government’s urbanization program. This process has brought significant transformations in infrastructure, as well as economic, cultural, and socio-political aspects, contributing to an improved outlook for these districts. However, persistent challenges remain that need to be addressed for the urbanization process to achieve its intended goals effectively.

Analysis and synthesis of responses from in-depth interviews conducted in this study have highlighted several critical issues, including: 1) **Infrastructure Gaps:** Despite improvements, essential infrastructure such as roads, public transport, and utilities remains underdeveloped or insufficient to meet the growing demands of urbanization; 2) **Economic Disparities:** Economic growth is uneven, with some districts benefiting more significantly than others. This has created income disparities and limited opportunities for residents in less-developed areas. 3) **Socio-Cultural Impact:** Urbanization has affected the socio-cultural fabric, leading to a gradual erosion of community spirit, traditional values, and cultural identity among residents. 4) **Environmental Concerns:** The rapid pace of urbanization has posed challenges for sustainable resource management, including the loss of agricultural land, environmental degradation, and inadequate waste management systems. 5) **Governance and Planning:** Inconsistencies in urban planning and implementation, as well as a lack of interdisciplinary collaboration, have hindered the effectiveness of urbanization policies and programs.

Addressing these issues is essential for ensuring that urbanization in the suburban districts of HCMC is sustainable, inclusive, and aligned with long-term development goals.

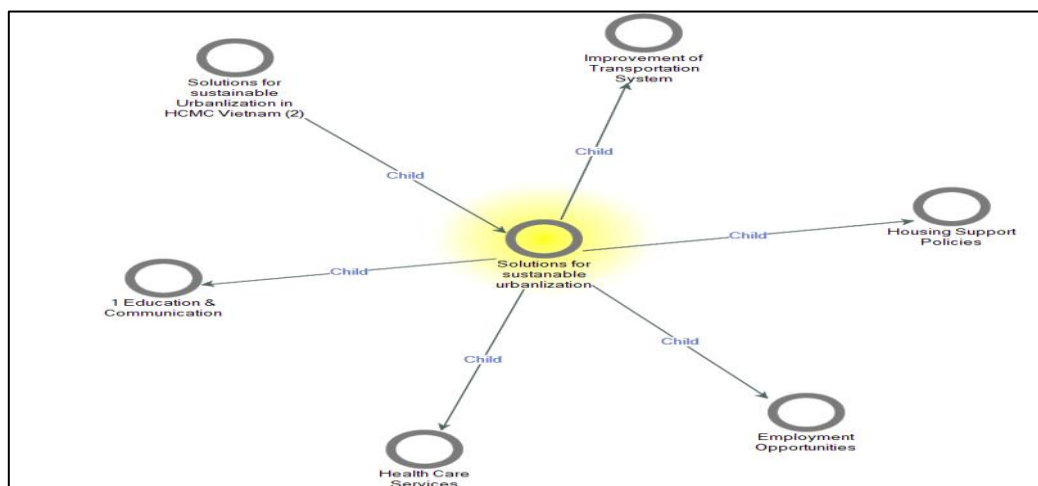


Fig. 5 Themes development by coding analysis for RQ 1

4.1.1 Education & Communication

Education and communication play a crucial role in the urbanization process by influencing the perception, attitudes, and behaviors of residents to meet the new requirements of economic, sustainable, and innovative development in cities. The primary and tertiary education systems contribute to building a quality workforce for socio-economic development. Collaboration between higher education institutions

and industries is essential in creating innovation zones in the urbanization process, where education acts as a catalyst for industrial restructuring and specialization, thus contributing to the success of urban development projects. Successful urbanization relies on rational investment in education policies, which can not only enhance the urbanization process but also address socio-economic challenges and promote long-term sustainability in urban areas. Effective local government organization and

management of the education and training system are crucial for building and developing human resources for the future and maximizing the impact of education and other areas.

- As urbanization progresses, the education system is also upgraded due to funding from concerned authorities to build better school facilities; For parents, especially migrants, they are reassured to work knowing that their children are receiving education in a good educational environment.
- The quality of education in suburban districts is not much different from the city due to the national education system; Annual results remain good, achieving universal education goals; There are not many dropouts. Some limitations:
- The economy in suburban districts of HCMC is developing and undergoing significant changes, but not evenly. In residential areas near industrial parks, there are many job opportunities and high incomes; They often send their children to private schools with excellent facilities and quality teaching staff at high tuition fees, while other households cannot afford public schools. There is a significant difference in preschool education between public and private schools. These are also concerns about education inequality.
- Large colleges and universities are still concentrated in the city, and students have to commute to study; there are not many good universities in suburban districts. Graduates often stay in the city to find jobs, fewer want to return to suburban areas due to lower salaries and fewer job opportunities. More effective education policies are needed to balance high-quality human resources in rural areas during the urbanization process. Regarding communication, successful urbanization occurs when people adopt a civilized urban lifestyle, such as initiatives to build and maintain a green, clean city; Ensuring safety and order; Civilized behavior in public spaces... Education and communication play a crucial role in this. Nowadays, with the use of digital technology, communication work in suburban districts of HCMC is focused on and effectively developed:
- Communication work is conducted through various channels such as radio, television; each commune in suburban districts has a cultural house for community meetings to convey necessary information. Additionally, each neighborhood has a Zalo group, which is very convenient for exchanging information.
- Currently, Facebook and YouTube are very popular among residents. Almost all information

on the internet reaches residents quickly, helping bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, both domestically and internationally, for mutual understanding and learning. However, multidimensional communication also harbors harmful cultures that have not been screened. Therefore, when there is any negative or potentially harmful information, responsible communication managers immediately notify residents via Zalo groups to raise awareness and prevent online scams, high-interest loans, and information from hostile forces opposing the state.

4.1.2 Housing Support Policies

The urbanization process always involves restructuring urban infrastructure and residential areas. A portion of agricultural land is reclaimed for urbanization, including some sold at high prices to finance urban development. This leads to low-income individuals having difficulty buying houses, although they may have been local residents or migrants. The rapid and poorly planned urbanization poses challenges such as the lack of affordable housing, inadequate infrastructure, and increased pollution, emphasizing the need for sustainable urban development to ensure comprehensive prosperity and the resilience of cities. Solving environmental and social issues such as slums, pollution, and housing shortages is necessary for developing sustainable cities that can support current and future generations, requiring active participation from residents, planners, and governments. Therefore, good housing planning and accompanying policies are prerequisites for stable, secure urban areas and conducive living, business, and development environments. New settlements bring new livelihoods, and when people are supported with housing, they feel assured in their work and perceive government support, which encourages them to contribute wholeheartedly to building new cities.

- "Currently, in Hoc Mon, Nha Be, Binh Chanh districts, there are many households with three generations living together just because they cannot afford to buy land to build separate houses. This significantly affects both material and spiritual life. There are latent conflicts and contradictions within families. The need for separate households, the need for housing is very high, but there is no support policy." (Nguyen Van Tien - Hoc Mon).
- "Hoc Mon district has over 600,000 people, a large influx of migrants, who come to buy land and

build houses, but according to reports, the budget for that is used up; This year increases by 19,300 people/year. Land does not expand but is being sold; there needs to be investment policy for businesses, investors to develop the economy." (Nguyen Van Muoi)

- "Some industrial zones in suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City have dormitories for workers, with houses accommodating up to 30 people; Affordable dormitories also accommodate 5-7 people, overcrowded and cramped. We hope the government has policies not only for housing for locals but also for affordable quality dormitories for workers to have better lives, as they contribute to the development of these districts and the city."

4.1.3 Improvement of Transportation System

Successful urbanization changes the face of rural areas to become more orderly and modern. Besides construction projects, the transportation system is considered vital for people's mobility and trade goods transport in commerce to promote economic development. Urban quality is evaluated highly when the transportation system is efficient. Vietnam's urban transport system is often congested and flooded during the rainy season, a pressing issue needing improvement, hence the urbanization process in suburban districts of HCMC.

- Improving the transportation network including roads, waterways, railways, and airways, optimizing public transportation, and upgrading intersections are essential for the urbanization process.
- "In Hoc Mon, Nhi Binh commune, far from the city center, although the road infrastructure is deteriorating, drainage systems have not been built, causing flooding when it rains. In the past, water flowed into fields, now fields are raised to build houses, and the water has nowhere to go." (Nguyen Van Truong - Hoc Mon).
- "The most desired thing is for the transportation system in villages to be improved before inviting artistic groups to serve in Nhi Ha commune. In the evening, the roads in the villages are not good enough for anyone to travel on. Even if cultural activities are organized, they cannot reach because the roads are very bad! Currently, Nhi Binh commune has two main transportation routes: the Saigon River dike and Nguyen Trung Truc road, which need to be upgraded and perfected. Meanwhile, rural roads in Hoc Mon have seriously deteriorated, posing hazards and being unsafe for residents participating in traffic. Therefore, it is necessary to repair and upgrade

them first for safe travel before investing in major cultural programs.

In summary, for the development of urbanization, a comprehensive approach to improving the urban transportation system is essential. Studies emphasize the crucial role of improving road networks, optimizing public transportation, and enhancing intersections. Solving traffic congestion through development measures, management, and restrictions is crucial, focusing on enhancing urban transportation capacity and improving management levels. Implementing a transportation management system is vital to cope with challenges posed by population and vehicle increases in cities, emphasizing the need for comprehensive strategies and smart infrastructure management systems. If technology can be applied to optimize traffic flow, reduce congestion, and create environmentally sustainable transportation systems to support the urbanization process and ensure high-quality living standards for residents.

4.1.4 Increasing Employment Opportunities

To enhance employment strategies for urban development, focusing on creating significant job opportunities in both rural and urban areas is crucial. Building production capacity to generate employment and income for the growing urban population is necessary. Additionally, promoting employment opportunities for the poor during urbanization is essential to ensure food security and meet basic needs for survival, thereby improving their quality of life. In the process of urbanization, initial income often comes from land transfers and real estate trading. Therefore, without employment generation plans, there may be a situation where many affluent families become poor again after a while. This necessitates overarching policies to support job creation, calculated within the context of urban poverty reduction and sustainable development as a prerequisite strategy for "wealthy people, strong nation." Furthermore, a mixed and multidimensional policy approach is crucial in urban development projects to leverage complementary impacts among measures aimed at sustainable economic development in various regions, such as enhancing job skills, nurturing knowledge, and fostering good personal ethics, thereby increasing income linked to improving standards and the quality of life for the labor force, thereby enhancing the attractiveness of the labor force in an increasingly competitive labor market. Success requires a tiered policy and responsibility-sharing approach among various stakeholders in urban development

strategies.

- Industrial zones in districts like Hoc Mon, Binh Chanh, Nha Be, and Can Gio have emerged, creating many job opportunities, but they are also dependent on orders. Sometimes, when there are no orders, there's temporary unemployment. At these times, workers face considerable instability.
- Areas near industrial zones also see significant development in services catering to workers, such as trading, entertainment venues, restaurants, and eateries. Consequently, businesses thrive in these areas. Meanwhile, in more remote areas, people mainly engage in agriculture, with little change.
- After completing their education, young people often stay in the city to find jobs, which are easier to come by. Fewer aspire to become industrial workers after graduating from university.
- Recently, districts have initiated community tourism programs, such as Nhi Ha in Hoc Mon and eco-tourism in Can Gio. While these initiatives create some employment opportunities, they primarily involve private enterprises, lacking major investment projects to create jobs for local residents. These tourist spots are still small-scale and lack connections for cluster or regional tourism development.

4.1.5 People's Health Care Services

- Basic public health services play a crucial role in the urbanization process, particularly in enhancing the integration of rural migrant workers into urban areas. These services have been shown to significantly improve the subjective well-being of migrant workers and promote urban integration. Alongside providing

public services like healthcare, education, and public utilities are necessary for urban development and improving living conditions in developing countries, contributing to economic growth and human development goals. Modern technologies can enhance the quality of public utility services in cities, promoting sustainable development and efficient resource management. Therefore, ensuring access to basic services like healthcare, education, and public utilities is a vital lifeline for successful urbanization and overall societal welfare.

- Binh Chanh district, adjacent to District 12 and with the highest population density, has recently built a new hospital to meet the healthcare needs of its residents.
- Not every district is capable of building new hospitals like Binh Chanh; other districts face significant challenges, with a shortage of doctors and weak doctor-to-population ratios.
- There aren't many policies addressing healthcare for the elderly... Hospitals are overloaded and chaotic...

4.2 Solutions for Building Cohesive and Sustainable Communities

The urbanization process always involves migration and community transformations according to the new urban structure. This often leads to the disruption of traditional cultural aspects and potential conflicts arising from diverse communities. Surveying the districts surrounding Ho Chi Minh City during the urbanization process is essential for building sustainable and cohesive communities.

4.2.1 Survey Results on Desired Cultural Lifestyles of Residents in Districts within the Area of Ho Chi Minh City

Table 1. Survey' results of residents needs on desired cultural lifestyles

	None necessary	No idea	Less necessary	Necessary	Fair necessary	Very necessary
Enjoy the arts	30	66	138	405	828	533
Sport and outdoor activities	34	63	122	503	809	469
Personal entertainment	97	73	330	703	445	352
Participant Festivals / Tet	28	54	139	470	736	573
Freedom of belief activities	217	139	298	564	438	344
Tourism activities	143	75	197	585	573	427

	None necessary	No idea	Less necessary	Necessary	Fair necessary	Very necessary
Enjoy the arts	1.5%	3.3%	6.9%	20.3%	41.4%	26.7%
Sport and outdoor activities	1.7%	3.2%	6.1%	25.2%	40.5%	23.5
Personal entertainment	4.9%	3.7%	16.5%	35.2%	22.3%	17.6%
Participant Festivals / Tet	1.4%	2.7%	7%	23.5%	36.8%	28.7%
Freedom of belief activities	10.9%	7.0%	14.9%	28.2%	21.9%	17.2%
Tourism activities	7.1%	3.8%	9.9%	29.3%	28.7%	21.3%



Fig. 6. The needs of cultural and spirits activities

The chart representing the results of a survey of 2000 randomly selected citizens in all districts on the demand for spiritual and cultural life shows that almost all citizens are in great need of participating in activities related to spiritual life. The essential, quite essential, and very essential indices account for over 70% across all 5 categories. Among them, the most essential activities are festivals - holidays, enjoying arts and sports, with the highest level of necessity (nearly 90%); The number of people who stated that they have no need or opinions on religious activities is the highest compared to other categories surveyed (32.8%).

In summary, the demand for spiritual and cultural life of citizens in the suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City is very high. This indicates that during the urbanization process in these districts, citizens have achieved economic and social achievements. However, the demand for spiritual and cultural life is currently a very essential need of the people, and this is a legitimate demand to serve as the basis for developing policies to support citizens in the urbanization process.

4.2.2 Solutions to Enhance Cultural Integration for Sustainable Community Development

Community engagement

Communities formed during the urbanization process, if developed sustainably, will play a significant role in maintaining the balance between economic and social growth, while also considering the preservation of natural resources for future generations. Community engagement is emphasized as the main driving force for innovation and creativity in sustainable smart cities, highlighting the importance of mobilizing stakeholders to jointly create innovative services, such as waste management, food safety, and green parks. With the intrinsic cultural values such as festivals, cuisine, clothing, and customs in the urbanization process, mixed communities integrating urban and rural areas serve as transitional areas for communities transitioning from agriculture to urbanization. Therefore, organizing community activities and events to create an environment for interaction and support between new and existing residents helps foster an inclusive and supportive community. However, the issue of preservation and promotion of cultural values to build sustainable communities is addressed by cultural officials in suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City in the following interviews:

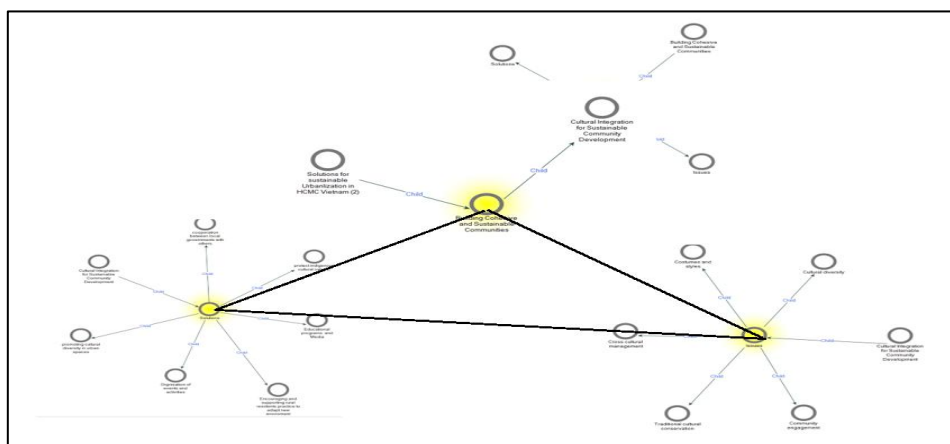


Fig 6. Themes development by coding analysis for RQ 2.

Cultural diversity

- Urbanization enriches and diversifies culture due to migration from various places, including foreigners; culture is no longer pure as it used to be, creating an environment for exchange and sharing but also harboring cultural conflicts and regional security concerns. (Nguyen Ngoc Huong)

Cross cultural

- There are very few officials left after the downsizing policy, having to take on many responsibilities, sometimes overwhelmed and unable to supervise everything. Almost all cultural clubs in hamlets are ineffective. There are 27 clubs in a district, but only 5 are active: Traditional music, health, arts, soccer, volleyball. Some have only a few music clubs attached to their business premises. Nowadays, people enjoy cultural entertainment through their phones only. Clubs like "three generations", "happy women", etc., are now just names. (Nguyen Van Truong)

Costumes and styles

- Costumes and styles have also changed. In the past, rural areas dressed simply, according to the seasons. Now, as they urbanize, when they go to town, clothes and styles are different, more elegant. Online services, delivery drivers providing home delivery, so women dress up more; Media, television have a significant impact. The internet has changed perceptions, access is very fast, and the main issue is still weak financial resources, so the economy has not developed strongly. Government directives on combating domestic violence, public security, and neighborhood solidarity are still communicated regularly through propaganda and radio broadcasts.

Traditional cultural conservation

- Because of the number of workers, migrants, they have entertainment needs, so karaoke services, singing to each other, music venues, etc., emerge. Traditional cultural performances are mainly for competition achievements; otherwise points will be deducted. Self-practice to serve the community is not much. However, local people really like traditional opera, folk music.

Policies for traditional cultural values conservation

- In terms of finances, events are needed to socialize, contribute more. Villages only have tea, cakes for elders to sit and chat, sometimes asking

for a little extra for gasoline support, not much. Generally, meeting each other is very fun, forget about time.

- Regarding festivals, the Kỳ Yên Festival, Nghinh Ông Festival are still preserved, but the budget for these festivals is limited.

The opinions above indicate that the management and development of culture in suburban districts during the urbanization process still face many challenges and difficulties; some synthesized solutions include: 1) Enhancing organization of educational programs and dissemination of local culture and history to raise awareness and consensus among residents from various regions; 2) Organizing cultural, artistic, and sports events and activities to create opportunities for communication and interaction between new rural residents and urban residents. This helps them understand and respect diverse cultural values; 3) Encouraging and supporting rural residents to participate in community activities and community management, helping them feel meaningful and connected to their new community; 4) Ensuring that urban policies and regulations respect and protect indigenous cultural values, and promoting cultural diversity in urban spaces; 5) Promoting cooperation between local governments, community organizations, and civil society to create an inclusive, multicultural, and prosperous urban environment. By implementing these measures, we can enhance the cultural and social integration of rural migrants into urban areas while also preserving and developing indigenous cultural values.

4.3 Environmental Protection of Ecological Diversity and Natural Landscapes in the Urbanization Process.

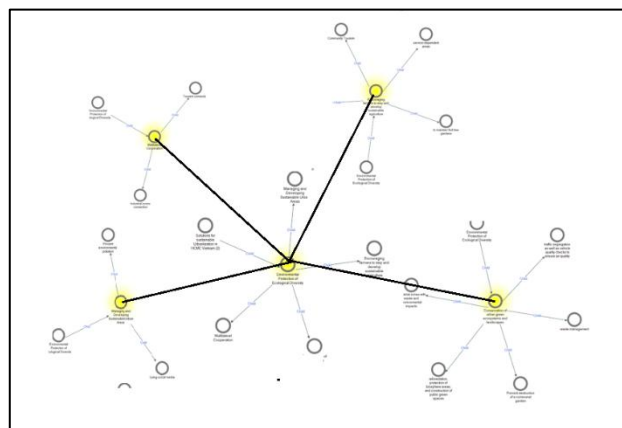


Fig.7 Theme development by coding analysis for RQ3

Urbanization poses a significant threat to biodiversity and the ecological environment, and

integrating urban green infrastructure can mitigate these impacts by providing vital ecosystem services and supporting biodiversity in cities. Urban landscape management plays a crucial role in promoting ecological cities and enhancing the quality of life for residents by combining natural environments with aesthetic and architectural assessments. Previous conservation efforts have often focused on protecting rural or wilderness areas, typically concentrating on establishing protected areas. Nowadays, urban biodiversity management with sustainable urban development measures is facilitated by technological platforms to assess the impact of urbanization on biodiversity and green infrastructure. By implementing urban landscape management and improving biodiversity monitoring, cities can protect the ecological environment and natural landscapes amidst the pressures of urbanization. Some evaluations of ecological environmental protection work in suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City are as follows:

Conservation of urban green ecosystems and landscapes.

- To preserve urban green ecosystems and environmental landscapes in the urbanization process, it is necessary to promote conservation and restoration activities in natural landscape areas in suburban areas, including reforestation, protection of biosphere areas, and construction of public green spaces. In Hoc Mon, Can Gio, Nha Be, Binh Chanh districts, overall, there are plenty of green trees and parks. Many gardeners live here, so the environment is very good. Especially in Can Gio, there are eco-tourism areas such as Vam Sat, Monkey Island, which are considered famous tourist destinations.
- Binh Chanh district, adjacent to District 12, often suffers from traffic congestion and dust pollution due to transportation. There needs to be traffic segregation as well as vehicle quality checks to ensure air quality.
- The construction of embankments along the Saigon River has led to the destruction of a communal garden. This affects the environment and limits the source of garden support for community tourism.
- The demand for parks in these districts is not high because it seems that many people have gardens. However, migration has increased the population, and the amount of waste is also large, affecting the environment here.
- Although the impact of industrial zones in suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City on the

ecological environment has not been reflected, the urbanization process certainly involves industrial zones with waste and environmental impacts.

Managing and Developing Sustainable Urban Areas

Establishing regulations and policies for the sustainable development of urban areas to ensure that urban development does not negatively impact natural landscapes and local cultures:

- In all communes, there are broadcasting, editing, and news reading departments to disseminate among the people the policies and strategies for sustainable urban development in each specific area so that residents have full information and coordinate implementation. This is also coordinated with the "Movement of the entire people unite to build a new life" program, which often engages in direct exchanges in neighborhoods or Zalo groups.
- Unusual phenomena causing environmental pollution, such as household waste dumping or industrial waste, illegal construction, or deforestation affecting the ecological environment, are monitored by the public and immediately discussed in Zalo groups.

Encouraging farmers to stay and develop sustainable agriculture

A phenomenon that occurs during urbanization is deep polarization among population groups regarding livelihoods related to land conversion. Some people have to move to new areas with new livelihoods, while some people still stay and engage in agriculture with low income and many difficulties. Without supportive policies for farmers to stay and develop agriculture, it often leads to disparities between rural and urban areas; farmers will have to consider migration for a better life and new livelihoods. This harbors economic, cultural, and social instability. Indigenous culture will decline, food security will depend on imports, and if there are pandemics or natural disasters, local food sources will no longer exist. Therefore, policies that promote both industrialization and retention of rural areas with strong support for safe livelihoods are the direction of many countries to ensure sustainable development during urbanization.

- Apart from industrial zones and service-dependent areas, people in other regions, such as Hoc Mon, Nha Be, Can Gio, have to live by farming, with very low incomes, while living costs are increasing due to urbanization.
- Only the children of people in central areas can attend private schools with good facilities and

high tuition fees; meanwhile, children in rural areas still attend public schools with many difficulties in terms of school conditions.

- It is necessary to maintain fruit tree gardens in these districts because they have the potential for community tourism development and preservation of indigenous culture, such as listening to traditional music performances on the waterways. Therefore, the government needs to create support programs to encourage farmers to stay and develop sustainable agriculture in suburban districts, helping to minimize migration and changes in livelihoods.

Multilateral Cooperation

During the process of urbanization, there is a significant shift in the organizational work of the government from rural management to an urban-oriented management model, gradually transitioning towards smart city management. This process requires continuous adaptation, support, and transfer from the old management system to the new one, demanding that the government enhance and expand multilateral cooperation across various aspects so that people have opportunities to access many new models for learning and successful transfer.

- Interregional cooperation is needed to exploit the tourism potential in the suburban areas of Ho Chi Minh City. Although tourism services have begun to emerge, their scale is too small to organize multi-day tours. The government and the Department of Tourism need to connect tourist destinations in districts like Hoc Mon and Can Gio with other areas to create a comprehensive and attractive network of destinations for tourists.
- Industrial zones still lack continuous orders, and the phenomenon of unemployment among workers persists. The government needs to implement policies to cooperate with importing and exporting countries to ensure stable orders, thereby helping businesses secure stable orders, which in turn stabilizes the lives of workers.

By implementing these measures, we can

minimize changes in livelihoods and culture in suburban districts while protecting natural landscapes, biodiversity, and indigenous cultural traditions.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The process of urbanization in the suburban districts of Ho Chi Minh City has been underway for over a decade and is entering a new phase from 2020 to 2030. Community policies play a crucial role in supporting the integration and sustainable development of new residents in urban areas. These policies are necessary to promote community integration by addressing external factors such as government support, economic integration, and community environment, as well as internal factors such as rural-urban and indigenous-immigrant cultural integration. Community governance policies reflect the core values of "people-oriented" direction and aim to achieve "better quality of life" for residents, emphasizing the importance of policy direction in improving the quality of life and happiness of both existing residents and immigrants. Furthermore, public policies can either facilitate or hinder sustainable development initiatives led by the community, emphasizing the necessity of a supportive policy environment to allow for a smoother transition to sustainable community development. By considering these factors and adjusting policies to align with the values and needs of the community, urbanization efforts can become more comprehensive and successful in promoting the happiness of all residents.

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