

The Urbanization Process in Nha Trang City (Khanh Hoa Province, Vietnam) From 1989 To 1999



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ABSTRACT: In 1989, Khanh Hoa province underwent restructuring to facilitate the full utilization of the region's potential. Despite initial hurdles during the renovation period, the urbanization of Nha Trang city progressed dynamically, spurred by the positive effects of renovation policies, industrialization, and modernization efforts. Transitioning from a type III urban area, by 1999, Nha Trang had advanced to a type II urban area. Industries and services took precedence in the economic landscape, while significant investments were made to upgrade urban infrastructure. Consequently, population density surged, accompanied by gradual enhancements in both the physical and psychological well-being of the populace. Drawing upon information provided by the Khanh Hoa Provincial Statistics Office, the Party Committee of Nha Trang city, and neighborhood administrations, this article employs historical and logical approaches intricately intertwined with analytical, synthetic, and comparative methods. Through this comprehensive framework, the aim is to elucidate the accomplishments and challenges encountered by Nha Trang city throughout its urbanization journey from 1989 to 1999 across various domains.

KEYWORDS: urbanization, Nha Trang, Khanh Hoa, economy, society, urban infrastructure

INTRODUCTION

Since the reform period starting in 1986, Vietnam's urbanization has experienced notable transformations, with Nha Trang city, serving as the central hub for administration, politics, economy, culture, tourism, services, and transportation in Khanh Hoa province, being a prime example. As Nha Trang commemorates its centennial in 2024, marking 15 years since being designated as a type I urban area under Khanh Hoa province, the years from 1989 to 1999 carry particular historical importance in its development journey.

In 1989, upon the separation of Khanh Hoa province from the former Phu Khanh province, Nha Trang city, as the provincial capital, encountered numerous obstacles. The city's economic progress was hindered by the intricate effects of transitioning from a centrally managed economy to a socialist-oriented market economy, compounded by the international crises in socialist nations of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (resulting in a lack of consumer markets and social ideological influences). Infrastructure decayed, and the populace continued to face hardships. Essential items like rice and meat were occasionally in short supply. Various social issues including healthcare, education, environmental hygiene, transportation, utilities, and employment became urgent matters of concern (Party Committee of Nha Trang City, 2008, p. 86, p. 89).

In response to the circumstances, the Nha Trang City Party Committee steered efforts to tackle difficulties and maintain the momentum of reform, shaping the urban landscape through successive City Party Congresses - the 10th (1989-1990), 11th (1991-1995), and 12th (1996-2000). The economic framework of the city was identified as a blend of industry and services, tourism and agriculture, reflecting a diversified economy tailored to the city's potential and strengths.

By 1999, Nha Trang city had earned recognition as a tier II urban center within the province. This marked an opportune juncture to reflect on the urban development strides Nha Trang had made by the close of the 20th century. The accomplishments and constraints witnessed during the 1989-1999 period yielded valuable insights and lessons, paving the way for Nha Trang's advancement in the subsequent period.

THE OUTCOMES OF URBANIZATION IN NHA TRANG CITY (1989-1999)

Following a decade of urbanization efforts, Nha Trang city has undergone numerous positive transformations. The economy has sustained a robust growth trajectory, averaging approximately 10 - 12% annually. Agricultural production has seen a significant boost towards commodity production, particularly emphasizing food crops, alongside active restructuring of crop and livestock systems for enhanced productivity. The city has enacted various policies, including Resolution No. 10- Resolution/ Central

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Committee issued by the Politburo in 1988, focusing on revitalizing agricultural economic management. Moreover, Government Decree No. 64-Government from 1993 has facilitated the allocation of agricultural land to households and individuals for long-term, stable agricultural purposes as stipulated in the Land Law of 1993. These initiatives have instilled enthusiasm among the populace, fostering increased participation in agricultural endeavors and subsequently driving up labor productivity. Notably, rice yields have risen from 49 tons/ha in 1995 to 51 tons/hectare by 1999. The city has boosted the production of consumer goods and exports, elevating the value of various products like zippers, instant noodles, textiles, leather, electronics, and items crafted from Calamus. By 1999, Nha Trang city's industrial output amounted to 2,365.327 billion VND, constituting 72% of the provincial total (3,263.056 billion VND) (Khanh Hoa Provincial Statistics Office, 2003, p. 106). The seafood sector has flourished across 3 aspects: fishing, aquaculture, and processing, showcasing the city's potential and prowess. In 1999, seafood harvests reached 18,315 tons, representing 34.8% of the province's total catch (52,700 tons).

The city of Nha Trang holds immense tourism potential, boasting a diverse range of ecological landscapes such as plains, hills, forests, mountains, rivers, seas, and islands, making it particularly suitable for maritime tourism. In fact, its mild climate allows for year-round tourism, and it benefits from convenient transportation links via road, rail, air, and water routes, both domestically and internationally. Therefore, Nha Trang is renowned for its picturesque scenery and historical and cultural landmarks, including Nha Trang Bay, Hon Chong - Hon Do, Ponagar Tower, A.Yersin Memorial Site, and Long Son Pagoda, among others. In response to the tourism boom in 1990, significant investments of approximately 1 billion VND were made to upgrade hotels, develop new tourist attractions, and preserve existing scenic spots. The establishment of the Khanh Hoa Tourism Department in 1993 marked a milestone in the region's tourism development, with a focus on workforce training and technical infrastructure improvement. This led to the emergence of numerous accommodations, travel agencies, and tourism-related services, creating a vibrant tourism scene, particularly along Tran Phu Street, home to renowned hotels like Nha Trang Lodge and Yasaka - Saigon - Nha Trang Hotel. In 1995, the number of tourists visiting the city increased to 380,570, including 85,469 international visitors, accounting for 93.4% of the total international visitors to Khanh Hoa province. By the end of the 20th century, tourism in Nha Trang had affirmed its potential and strengths, continuously developing both in terms of infrastructure and service quality, becoming a tourism hub not only for the province but also for the entire South Central Coast and Central Highlands regions. The tourism brand of Nha Trang - Khanh Hoa has earned the trust of both domestic and international tourists.

The economic landscape shifted straightforward direction towards industry, services, and tourism. In 1995, the total of industrial products and cottage industry's amounted to 236.6 billion VND, while services and tourism reached 61.97 billion VND, and agriculture stood at 13.447 billion VND. By 2000, industrial production had soared to 2,032.291 trillion VND, constituting 52.4% of the economic makeup, with service and tourism revenue hitting 1,607 billion VND, making up 41.4% of the economic composition. Aquaculture brought in 164.376 billion VND, comprising 4.2%, and agricultural output reached 78.201 billion VND, contributing 2% to the economic structure (Party Committee of Nha Trang City, 2008, p. 112, p. 115, p. 116, pp. 158-159).

This economic growth significantly bolstered the city's financial resources. In 1991, the city's state budget revenues reached 16.257 trillion VND, escalating to 66.665 trillion VND by 1995 (with a set target of 21 billion VND for 1995), primarily sourced from non-state economic activities. State budget revenues saw an average annual increase of 24% (Party Committee of Nha Trang City, 2008, p. 117, p. 161). As a result, the city managed to promptly allocate funds for economic and social development, national security and defense, basic infrastructure projects, transportation networks, and public welfare initiatives.

The urban transportation system has been progressively upgraded, contributing to the city's improved aesthetics. Public amenities in various districts, such as schools, electricity, domestic water supply, and transportation routes like Huong Road 45, Vinh Thai - Vinh Hiep Road, Vinh Thai - Vinh Trung Road, Nha Trang - Phuoc Dong Road, Lu Cam - Phuong Sai Road, and the southwestern entrance to the city via the Binh Tan Bridge in Phuoc Dong commune, have been invested in, constructed, enhanced, and expanded by municipal authorities. The city's street lighting and household electricity infrastructure have also been given considerable attention and financial backing. All districts now have access to household and industrial electricity, radio stations, and television broadcasts. The city allocates over 4 billion VND annually to environmental sanitation efforts, resulting in gradual improvements in overall cleanliness.

City leaders have prioritized social initiatives aimed at developing infrastructure. Thus, residents have collectively contributed significant funds that reach tens of billions of VND toward building and renovating schools, acquiring educational equipment and materials, renovating narrow alleyways, and upgrading water and electricity provisions in select areas, thus aiding in the enhancement of residents' living standards and productivity.

The shift towards industry, services, and tourism in economic restructuring led to a rise in the number of industrial, service, and tourism enterprises. By 1999, Nha Trang city boasted 1,927 industrial establishments, representing 31.9% of the province's total (6,043 establishments), and 7,624 commercial, tourism, hotel, and restaurant businesses, accounting for 49.2% of the province's total (15,504 establishments), marking the highest figures in the province (Khanh Hoa Provincial Statistics Office, 2003, p. 101, p. 137). Between 1996 and 2000, over 31,700 the number of people who got new jobs has been enhanced. The non-agricultural workforce expanded across various sectors, including industry, small-scale industry, construction, transportation, postal services,

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banking, commerce, tourism, public administration, culture, education, healthcare, and scientific research. In 1999, the non-state industrial workforce totalled 10,233 individuals, reflecting a 43.3% increase from 1995 (7,143 individuals).

The living standards which consist of psychological and physical factors of the populace have seen a steady enhancement. By 1995, 599 impoverished households had been eradicated, and 1126 had seen an improvement in their circumstances. By 2000, the city had successfully eradicated poverty in 100% of households and reduced the impoverished population to just 1%. Per capita GDP surged from \$419 in (1990) to \$750 in (2000) (Party Committee of Nha Trang City, 2008, p. 172). Following the reforms, issues such as prohibiting the circulation of goods from one locality to another no longer existed. Distribution channels have seen enhancements, leading to a diverse and plentiful market of goods. Consequently, individuals now have access to audiovisual equipment, enriching their cultural life. Renowned markets like Dam Market, Xom Moi Market, and Vinh Hai Market have undergone renovations, while new markets such as Vinh Thai Market, Ngoc Hiep Market, Vinh Ngoc Market, and Hon Rong Market have been established with investments. Additionally, numerous grocery stores have sprung up to cater to the needs of the local population.

The urban area boasts a well-established infrastructure and skilled workforce catering to the healthcare, educational, cultural, and social needs of its inhabitants. By 1999, Nha Trang city boasted 65 secondary schools, comprising 1682 classes and staffed by 2260 teachers, serving a student population of 66094. Additionally, it had 725 healthcare professionals, including 266 doctors, 258 nurses, and 201 nursing assistants, along with 338 pharmaceutical personnel, consisting of 43 senior pharmacists, 73 junior pharmacists, and 222 pharmacy assistants. The city also boasted 3 hospitals, 4 regional clinics, 26 medical stations, village midwives, and 712 hospital beds (Khanh Hoa Provincial Statistics Office, 2000). Furthermore, the city hosts numerous esteemed scientific, educational, healthcare, and cultural institutions at both provincial and regional levels, such as the Institute of Oceanography, Pasteur Institute Nha Trang, Nha Trang Institute of Technology Research and Application, Central Highlands Veterinary Institute, Nha Trang Fisheries University, Le Quy Don High School, and Khanh Hoa Provincial General Hospital, among others. The city's living environment continues to improve steadily, with the attainment of national standards for universal primary education and literacy eradication. Regularly organized cultural, artistic, sporting, informational, and media events contribute positively to the city's socio-economic development objectives. The city's political security, social order, and safety are firmly maintained, facilitated by administrative reforms and enhanced work methodologies, including the implementation of streamlined "one-way" processes (one-way process means every administrative formality is resolved through a process that appears to be timely and apparent). These efforts have yielded promising initial outcomes, curbing negative behaviors and disturbances while enhancing the effectiveness of advisory departments and local authorities, thus fostering a conducive environment for residents.

Additionally, people from other places have been drawn to live in the coastal city of Nha Trang mainly because of the town's economic, cultural, and social development, which has caused significant growth in the city's population.

Table 1: Area, population, population density and administrative unit of Nha Trang city

Year	Area (km ²)	Population (number of individuals)	Population density (people/km ²)	Administrative unit
1989	238	263484	1108	25
1995	238	313673	1318	25
1999	250	331574	1326	26

Source: Summarized from the Statistics Office of Khanh Hoa province, Statistical Yearbook of Khanh Hoa province in 1989 (p. 13), 1995 (p. 24), 1999 (p. 17).

The table data indicates that during the decade-long urbanization period from 1989 to 1999, Nha Trang city experienced a 25.8% increase in its population and a 19.7% rise in population density. The central districts of the city, comprising Van Thang, Van Thanh, Phuong Sai, Phuoc Tan, Phuoc Tien, and Tan Lap, demonstrated notably higher population densities compared to certain suburban regions like Vinh Luong and Phuoc Dong. By as early as 1995, the city had already met the population density criteria for classification as a Type II urban area.

In response to the increasing demand for housing driven by population growth, the city concentrated on planning new residential zones like Nui San (in Vinh Phuoc), Thanh Gia (in Vinh Nguyen), Ngoc Son (in Ngoc Hiep), Hon Rong, Phuoc Ha, and Song Lo (in Phuoc Dong). Between 1991 and 1995, owing to population growth and natural disasters, 317 households from Xom Con in Xuong Huan Ward relocated to new dwellings in Nui San within Vinh Phuoc Ward (Xuong Huan Ward Party Committee, 2018, p. 130). By 1998, residents of the Duy Hai neighborhood (Xom Con, Xuong Huan Ward) moved to settle in the Hon Rong 1 residential area in Phuoc Dong commune to establish stable living conditions and facilitate their fishing activities. Presently, the population in Phuoc Dong mainly comprises relocated fisherman households from densely populated fishing communities in Xom Con (Cau Bong), along with individuals from downtown Nha Trang and other regions who relocate here for employment, residence, and entrepreneurial opportunities (Party Committee of Phuoc Dong Commune, 2013, p. 19).

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In 1989, Nha Trang city was composed of 25 administrative entities, which included 17 urban wards such as Vinh Hai, Vinh Phuoc, Vinh Tho, Xuong Huan, Van Thang, Van Thanh, Phuong Sai, Phuong Son, Ngoc Hiep, Phuoc Hoa, Phuoc Tan, Phuoc Tien, Phuoc Hai, Loc Tho, Tan Lap, Vinh Nguyen, Vinh Truong, and 8 suburban communes like Vinh Phuong, Vinh Trung, Vinh Thanh, Vinh Thai, Vinh Hiep, Vinh Ngoc, Vinh Luong, and Phuoc Dong.

By 1999, Nha Trang city had grown to encompass 26 wards, with the addition of one administrative unit, Phuoc Long ward (in November 1998). The creation of Phuoc Long ward was prompted by the urbanization process, with the goal of efficiently utilizing land resources, labor, and strengthen state oversight in administration, urban planning, construction regulation, land management, and environmental cleanliness towards sustainable development objectives (Party Committee of Phuoc Long Ward, 2015, p. 71).

Based on Nha Trang's achievements in urbanization, on April 22, 1999, the Prime Minister issued Decision No. 106/1999/Decision-Prime Minister recognizing Nha Trang city as a Type II urban area, affirming its increasingly important position in the national urban system and providing momentum for strong development in the 21st century.

THE REMAINED SHORTCOMINGS OF THE URBANIZATION PROCESS IN NHA TRANG CITY (1989-1999)

The urbanization process has led to a rise in the urban population, resulting in dense living conditions and posing challenging issues in addressing employment, housing, and creating significant pressure on education, healthcare, the environment, and social welfare. As per the findings of the citywide census conducted on April 1, 1999, the population aged 13 and above totalled 241,810 individuals, divided into various activities: 137,731 individuals were engaged in employment (making up 57%), while the remaining 43% consisted of homemakers, students, incapacitated individuals, or those unemployed. Regarding educational qualifications: 210,075 individuals had no formal education (representing 86.9%), 9,438 were skilled workers (3.9%), 7,466 attended vocational high schools (3.1%), 14,503 had completed college or university education (6%), and 328 held postgraduate degrees (0.1%). This illustrates that Nha Trang city still harbors a significant segment of the population facing unemployment and possessing lower educational levels.

Urban planning lacks synchronization, fails to satisfy practical needs, and fails to connect planning with resources for implementation. Urbanization with projects to build infrastructure, transport systems, new tourist areas and residential areas has affected the livelihoods of people with land recovery, creating income disparities between groups of households, leading to a deepening rich-poor divide. The implementation of projects is still inadequate such as low land prices, compensation and site clearance methods that do not ensure the legitimate interests of the people, cumbersome administrative procedures, officials at all levels do not do well in propaganda, causing confusion in a part of the people, leading to an increase in complaints (Truong, 2018). In case Song Lo tourist area was approved by the People's Committee of Khanh Hoa province in 1995 and then adjusted many times, up to now, so that many abandoned and wasteful land areas while people have no place to cultivate; land was recovered but a part of people did not receive compensation, low price compensation, causing public anger and complaints and denunciations until now have not been completely resolved (Nhiet, 2023).

The urbanization process has yet to integrate the quality of urban areas with the preservation of their distinctive character and traditional architecture, while ensuring comfortable living conditions for residents and maintaining urban landscape harmony (Do, 2013, p. 47). For example, the Evason Ana Mandara Resort, operational since 1997 and strategically located along nearly 400 meters of Nha Trang's coastline, features various amenities such as secluded villas, restaurants, swimming pools, and spas. However, it has faced repeated backlash from local residents and tourists for occupying a large portion of the beachfront. At the end of June 2022, the Khanh Hoa Provincial People's Committee instructed Sovico Khanh Hoa Company Limited (the project's investor) to cease accommodation activities at the resort and remove the barriers to improve accessibility and aesthetics in the area.

The shortage of housing, particularly for the urban poor and new arrivals in Nha Trang city, has prompted some individuals to disregard urban planning regulations. They engage in the unauthorized land filling, encroachment, and illicit transactions involving agricultural, project, warehouse, and aquaculture land in order to construct homes, resulting in the spontaneous formation of undocumented residential areas and streets in places like Phuoc Long ward, Vinh Thai commune, and Phuoc Dong commune. This situation has indirectly fostered social problems and criminal activities by circumventing legal measures, contributing to challenges in maintaining social order and safety, impeding drainage and waste management, causing environmental degradation, and exacerbating flooding issues during the rainy season. The failure of authorities to promptly detect and address these issues has led to wasted resources and efforts in forced evictions, eroding public trust in governmental management and administration, prompting grievances across different sectors and administrative levels.

Therefore, not only land management but also urban management, environmental sanitation, ect. have many shortcomings. Nevertheless, there remains much to be accomplished to address the issue of people reoccupying sidewalks for commercial use and carelessly discarding home rubbish into rivers, oceans, and streets. Inner-city road expansion and upgrade projects have been put off for longer, which has a negative impact on public health and mobility. Roads are clogged, subterranean water sources and rivers are in danger of major pollution from garbage, the air is becoming more and more contaminated with construction dust, car emissions, and industrial smoke, and the infrastructure system is insufficient (Party Committee of Nha Trang City, 2008, p. 119).

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The management qualifications and working capacity of the cadres, despite being regularly trained, fostered, arranged, and arranged, still do not meet the requirements of a developing city. The planning of cadres is still confused and there is a lack of cadre resources. Some policies and decisions of superiors are not close to reality, so many complicated and difficult conflicts arise (Party Committee of Nha Trang City, 2008, pp. 262-263). For example, the implementation of Phung Hung Street. In 1995, Nha Trang city planned to expand, pave and launch through Nguyen Duc Canh street to connect with Da Tuong street. According to the plan, many households have their houses and land repossessed when the road is expanded. From the time of planning, these households had to stop applying for certificates of land use rights, new construction, transfer, etc. However, this situation lasted for decades because the road from Nguyen Duc Canh to Da Tuong street almost had to be cleared by many households, so it was difficult to mobilize them to donate land. This makes the implementation of the planning more challenging (Dinh, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Given the outcomes, Nha Trang city deserves to be recognized as the province's and the region's political, economic, cultural, and scientific center, as well as one of the nation's major tourist destinations. Lessons learned from the 1989-1999 urbanization process include: sticking to the grassroots, recognizing the situation quickly, and coming up with the appropriate solutions; enhancing the quality of planning, mobilizing resources, and encouraging community participation in urban construction and development; and effectively utilizing the strengths and potential of the area, particularly the marine economy.

Overall, Nha Trang City needs to implement solutions for the management and implementation of urban planning, generate tourism-related incentives for urban development, create capital sources to build a synchronous infrastructure system proportionate to the urban area's population size, create jobs and shift industries in newly urbanized areas, develop housing, and construct new urban areas in order to effectively implement the urbanization process. To improve the quality of the population and cultivate human resources for urban planning, construction, and management staff, it is especially important to prioritize the development of education and training; additionally, environmental protection—especially with regard to marine landscapes—must be given careful consideration in order to promote sustainable urban development.

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