



# Việt Nam

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Cultural Cities Profile,  
East Asia

[www.britishcouncil.vn](http://www.britishcouncil.vn)

# Overview

## Vietnam in Numbers

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### Snapshot

City-level strategies for cultural development  
Art, culture and creative industries

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### City headlines

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Cover photo:  
Plastic Planet exhibition at VCCA by Tôhe  
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## Special Thanks

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Commissioned by the British Council, the research is led by Dr. Tom Fleming, director; Nana Yu-I Lee, senior researcher; and Chris Joynes, research consultant from Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (TFCC). The Vietnam research team was led by Dr. Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, Director of VICAS Art Studio, Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS), and included Nguyen Vu Tu Hang, Nguyen Thi Bich Dao and Dinh Vu Nhat Hong from Hanoi Grapevine.

The **British Council** builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/>

**Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy** is the leading international consultancy for culture and the creative economy. We offer research, strategy and policy leadership across the creative, cultural and arts sectors. We offer technical expertise, strategic thinking and the tools to position creativity to the heart of society. With offices in London and Porto and associates in 12 countries, we are an international agency operating in every region. <http://tfconsultancy.co.uk/>

Established in 1971, the **Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS)** is a research and development institution under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MoCST) which conducts scientific and strategic research and provides PhD training in culture and arts. <http://vicas.org.vn>

**Hanoi Grapevine** is an independent and not-for-profit online platform that aims to support the Vietnamese art scene by connecting local artists, arts spaces and high quality event organisers with their audience. The platform was identified by the British Council as a pioneering and major virtual creative hub in Vietnam. <https://hanoigrapevine.com/>



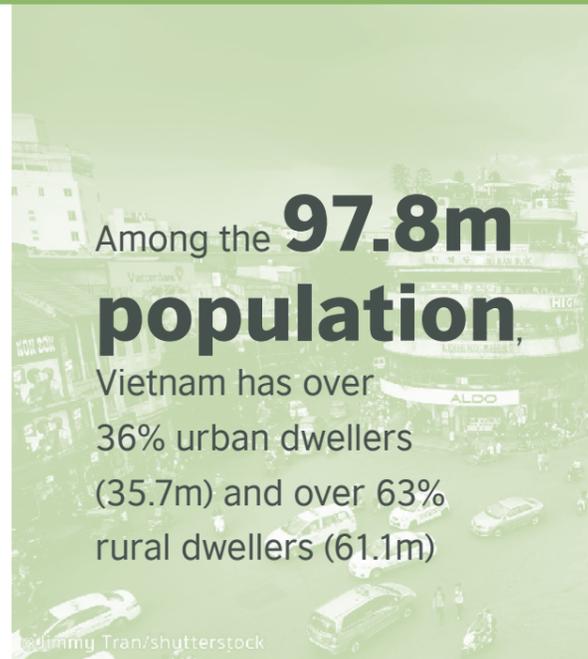
# Việt Nam in numbers

## Vietnamese

is the national language, with minority group languages including Tay, Thai, Cham, Khmer, Chinese, Nung, H'mong and others



The country belongs to **regional networks** such as the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, Asian Network of Major Cities 21, and ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN)



Among the **97.8m population**, Vietnam has over 36% urban dwellers (35.7m) and over 63% rural dwellers (61.1m)

Jimmy Tran/shutterstock

It has **5 UNESCO World Heritage Sites**

## Key **cultural assets:**

Advertising, Architecture, Software and Entertaining Games, Handicrafts, Design, Film, Publishing, Fashion, Performing Arts, Fine Arts, Photography, Television and Radio, Cultural and Ecological Tourism, Heritage and Preservation



It has **13 UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage titles**



**GRDP**  
per capita is **USD\$2,343**

Major Industries in the country includes: **Agriculture; Science & Technology; Tourism**



## Common strategic objectives and activities

Within both national and regional cultural plans, key strategic objectives for the development of Vietnam's cultural industries.

These include:

- Communication and awareness-raising
- Training and developing human capital
- Market development
- Attracting and supporting investment
- Encouraging international exchange and cooperation

Within this, specific activities, both nationally and regionally, focus on tasks such as:

- Building a database of cultural industries
- Training and building a skilled and entrepreneurial cultural workforce
- Projects for communication, social awareness and audience engagement in cultural activity
- Projects for the branding of national and city-specific cultural industries
- Improving the legal framework for cultural industries
- Reinforcing the protection of intellectual properties

# Snapshot

Vietnam has seen remarkable economic growth and social development since the Đổi Mới reforms 30 years ago. As a country which suffered incredible hardship both through the 1955-1973 war with the United States and during the subsequent recovery process, Vietnam is today one of the fastest-growing and most dynamic major economies in the world while remaining a single-party socialist state under the rule of Communist Party of Vietnam.

Vietnam has seen major demographic change in recent years, with a population of 95 million, 70 per cent of whom are under 35, a rapidly growing middle class (13 per cent, estimated 26 per cent by 2026) and GDP per capita of \$2,343.10.<sup>(1)</sup>

- Coupled with the growth of the country's digital and technological industries, Vietnam is increasingly known as a country of young producers and consumers with expanding investment opportunities.
- The country's management of the Covid-19 pandemic, with relatively few cases of the disease, has reinforced a growing appreciation of Vietnam's capability as an increasingly developed nation.
- The country is showing increasing confidence with regard to its cultural assets and the potential of its creative economy. Huge growth in tourism and inward investment have opened-up Vietnam's economy and triggered a new generation of arts and creative practice.
- Yet the country's openness is tempered by a still very active approach to cultural censorship and the denial of truly diverse cultural practice.

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>

## City-level strategies for cultural development

The last decade has seen a substantial change in the awareness, formulation and implementation of cultural policy in Vietnam. This is as part of the country's 'marketisation' of the economy, with the cultural industries and 'creative cities' recognised for their potential to drive up GDP and to showcase the country's distinctive culture on an international stage.

In 2014, the government selected the development of cultural industries as a new key national objective to:

**“Explore and promote the unique potential and values of Vietnamese culture; encourage cultural product exportation, and contribute to promoting Vietnamese culture to the world.”**

–11<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam<sup>(2)</sup>

In implementing this, in 2016, the government introduced the National Strategy of Cultural Industries Development in Vietnam by 2020, with a vision to 2030.

- The process of Strategy development was supported by UNESCO under the 2005 UN Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions; and by the British Council as part of its creative economy programme.
- The Vietnam Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS) played an instrumental role in developing the Strategy, working in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism.

As a direct extension of this national strategy, local government have since produced parallel strategies and action plans for the development of arts and culture at city level.

- Depending on local strengths, these city action plans focus on areas such as cultural tourism, film, performing arts, fine arts, photography, urban development, advertising, and so on.

<sup>(2)</sup> 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam on Building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the demands of national sustainable development Resolution no. 33-NQ/TW, 9th June 2014

## Creative economy ecosystem – opportunities and trends

In terms of the creative industries, Vietnam is active both internationally and regionally, and has membership of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, the Asian Network of Major Cities, and the ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN).

Domestically, the majority of established cultural organisations in Vietnam are state-owned, with a particular focus on national cultural heritage and the development of traditional crafts and performing arts.

In addition to museums and theatres, the widespread establishment of provincial 'Crafts Villages' are key examples of how such initiatives operate at regional and community level.

There is also an emergent regional and city-level ecosystem of independent creative hubs and networks, maintained by individual creative and social entrepreneurs.

The 2016 *National Strategy for the Cultural Industries Development of Vietnam to 2020, vision to 2030* highlights the importance of these creative hubs within the development of cultural industries and the creative economy.

However, while there is an increasing support for and presence of such initiatives at city level, their role as key enablers for an innovative creative economy is still to be fully and formally acknowledged by the state.

## Art, culture and creative industries

### Cultural heritage

**Vietnam's cultural heritage occupies a central role within both the country's national identity and its creative industries.**

Vietnam's 5 UNESCO World Heritage Sites and 13 entries in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list are only the most high-profile examples of a historical culture that includes unique and distinctive traditions of architecture, musical and theatrical performance, handicrafts and cuisine that are known around the world.

At national and regional levels, well-established institutions and initiatives for the preservation and promotion of these traditions act a key driver for numerous arts and cultural industries. Most directly, these include heritage and ecological tourism, fine arts, music and performance, and also heavily inform contemporary architecture, urban planning, and exhibitions.

### Design

**Design has an emerging role within Vietnam's creative industries, evidenced in part by Hanoi's 2019 award as a UNESCO Creative City for Design.**

Informed by many elements within the country's historical and cultural heritage, Vietnam's contemporary profile in design is based on the potential shown by a young generation of designers and design-savvy consumers. Initiatives driving this growth in design include the Vietnam Festival of Creativity & Design, Vietnam Design Week<sup>(3)</sup> and the Hanoi Design Centre.<sup>(4)</sup>

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://vietnamdesignweek.com/en/>

<sup>(4)</sup> <http://hanoidesigncentre.com/>

## Digital technology and the creative industries

Within cultural planning in Vietnam there is an emphasis on expanding the application of science and technology within cultural activities.

This is evidenced both by the significant number of digital creatives operating in media, communications and gaming industries, as well as a recent series of high-profile national exhibitions utilising online, 3D and virtual reality technologies.

This particular thematic strand has a strong co-relation with Vietnam's recent and widely-adopted digital roadmap, an initiative which itself is aligned with the on-going process of rapid urbanisation.

In 2018, the government announced its 'Plan on the Sustainable Development of Smart Cities 2018-2025 with a vision to 2030'. To improve the quality of life for their citizens based on key industry 4.0 technologies, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, and Can Tho were selected as the first core smart cities in Vietnam, with phased targets for:

- establishing infrastructure,
- integrating smart technologies into public sector work and social living, and
- developing the knowledge economy.

At a national level, the overarching economic goal is to improve the position of Vietnam's telecommunications and to develop the country's information technology industries, continuing to assert the position of Vietnam's communications and information industries in the digital economy.

(Source: Plan on the Sustainable Development of Smart Cities 2018-2025 with a vision to 2030; and Communist Review)

## Digital creativity

**Digital creativity has become a recent focus for both government-supported and private-sector industries.**

Awareness of the digitizing trends in cultural industries, especially for public cultural agencies, has highlighted the potential creative opportunities arising from Vietnam's already-established tech and communications industry.

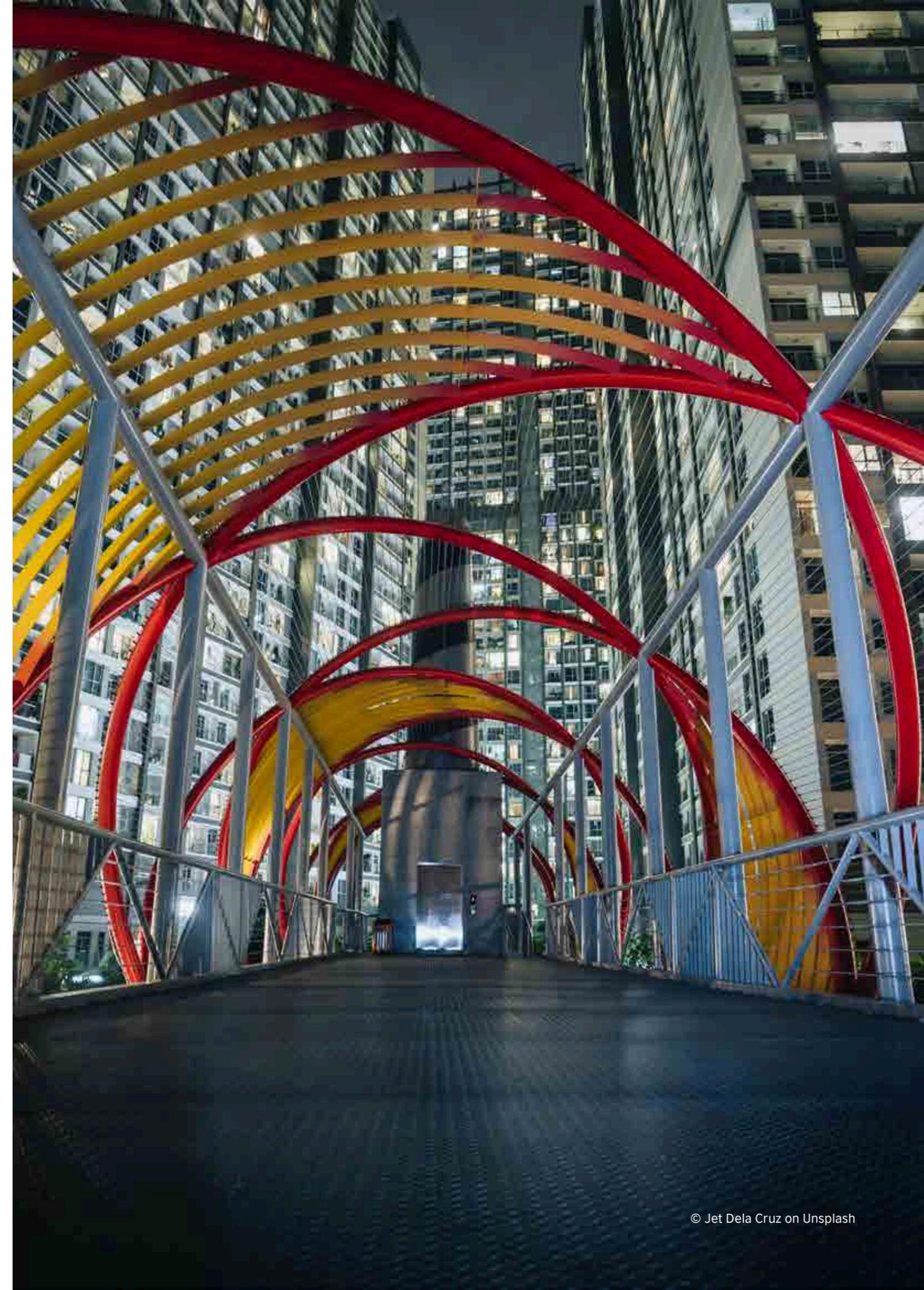
Most immediately, the use of digital tech by public arts and cultural institutions has opened up new directions for archiving, cultural heritage preservation, restoration and creating simulations, which themselves support exhibitions, tourism and the promotion of museums and heritage.

Meanwhile, for independent creative practitioners, digital art is also on the rise, establishing such technologies not only as platforms for exhibition, but also as instruments for creativity.

## Architecture and urban planning

**Architecture and urban planning have a key role to play given the increased urbanisation of Vietnam,** especially in the context of recent national policies and strategies for the development of urban spaces that are environmentally sustainable, culturally appropriate, technologically smart and which contribute to health and well-being.

**Important examples of city-level programmes and initiatives have given architecture and urban planning a key role in urban development, regeneration and preservation.** However, there are also concerns that the current application of these creative sectors is neither systematic nor sustainable, and that, strategically, culture and arts have yet to be fully integrated within many urban planning programs.



# City headlines

6 cultural city profiles are featured for Vietnam:

City at a glance	In numbers
<p><b>Hanoi</b> is the nation's capital, an international hub for cultural organisations, an emerging centre for contemporary design and crafts, a city famed for its cuisine.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Population:</b> 8.3m</li> <li>• <b>GRDP per capita:</b> USD\$4,080</li> <li>• <b>City cultural status:</b> UNESCO Creative Cities Network; UNESCO Creative City in Design, awarded 2019; UNESCO City for Peace, awarded 1999; UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Imperial Citadel of Thăng Long (7th-9th century); Asian Network of Major Cities 21; ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN)</li> <li>• <b>Key cultural assets:</b> Advertising, Architecture, Software and Entertaining Games, Handicrafts, Design, Film, Publishing, Fashion, Performing Arts, Fine Arts, Photography, Television and Radio, Cultural Tourism</li> </ul>
<p><b>Hue</b> is a deeply textured centre of culture where music, performance, cuisine and handicrafts are giving this historic city (Vietnam's ancient capital) a more contemporary profile, seeding a new vibrancy amidst the heritage landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Population: Urban:</b> 1.1m</li> <li>• <b>GRDP per capita:</b> USD\$2,009</li> <li>• <b>City cultural status:</b> UNESCO World Heritage Site: Complex of Hue Monuments; 6 UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage titles; Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC); ASEAN Green Tourism City (2018); World Wildlife Fund (WWF); National Green City (2016); ASEAN Green City (2014)</li> <li>• <b>Key cultural assets:</b> Ecological and Cultural Tourism; Cultural Heritage Preservation and Management; Traditional Handicrafts; Traditional Performing Arts; Cuisine</li> </ul>
<p><b>Da Nang</b> is a youthful and fast-growing city, with many cultural activities and events driven by tourism and increased local demand. Danang has a creative community of cultural start-ups working with support from local and city government.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Population:</b> 1.1m</li> <li>• <b>GRDP per capita:</b> USD\$4,434</li> <li>• <b>City cultural status:</b> ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN); Vietnam Smart City Award 2020; ASEAN Green City (2018); World Travel Awards: Asia's Leading Festival &amp; Event Destination (2016)</li> <li>• <b>Key cultural assets:</b> Innovative Startups Performing Arts, Fine Arts, Event and Cultural tourism, Architecture, and Design</li> </ul>

City at a glance	In numbers
<p><b>Hoi An</b> is a deeply historical city forged through centuries of international trade, Hoi An is a jewel of tangible and intangible heritage and a growing hub for international tourism, and contemporary creative practice. The city is attracting independent artists and creatives from across Vietnam and internationally to establish studios and workshops.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Population:</b> 98,600</li> <li>• <b>GRDP per capita:</b> USD\$1,742</li> <li>• <b>City cultural status:</b> UNESCO World Heritage Site: Hoi An Ancient Town; Cu Lao Cham - Hoi An Biosphere Reserve;</li> <li>• <b>Key cultural assets:</b> Ecological and Cultural Tourism; Cultural Heritage Preservation and Management; Traditional Handicrafts; Traditional Performing Arts, Cuisine</li> </ul>
<p><b>Da Lat</b> is a diverse and multi-cultural city with a strong urban heritage of French colonial architecture. A centre for environmental and ecological tourism, landscape architecture and green urban planning, with an emerging independent fine arts scene.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Population:</b> 266,500</li> <li>• <b>GRDP per capita:</b> USD\$3,100</li> <li>• <b>City cultural status:</b> UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage: Gong Cultural Space; French colonial architecture heritage; ASEAN Environmentally Sustainable City 2017; Langbiang Biosphere Reserve</li> <li>• <b>Key cultural assets:</b> Environmental and Ecological Tourism, Landscape and Urban Architecture, Photography, Fine Art, Digital Development</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ho Chi Minh City</b> is Vietnam's largest city and economic hub. This is a hugely dynamic and fast-changing city with a network of government, private and independent initiatives for arts and culture and a rapidly growing economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Population:</b> 9m</li> <li>• <b>GRDP per capita:</b> USD\$6,588</li> <li>• <b>City cultural status:</b> ASEAN Smart Cities Network (ASCN); UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage: Don Ca Tai Tu Nam Bo performing art</li> <li>• <b>Key cultural assets:</b> Digital technology, Advertising, Film, Music, Fine Arts, Photography, Performing Arts, Contemporary Arts</li> </ul>

Phuc Tan Public  
Art Project  
© Minh Duc on VOV

# Hà Nội

## Introducing Hanoi

City vision / mission / slogan  
Creative industries and cultural services

## Hanoi in numbers

### 1. What makes this city unique?

### 2. Context

Location / region  
Ethnic diversity  
Heritage status

### 3. Culture, arts and civic policy

Cultural funding  
Culture, environment and sustainability  
Culture, health and wellbeing  
Culture and education

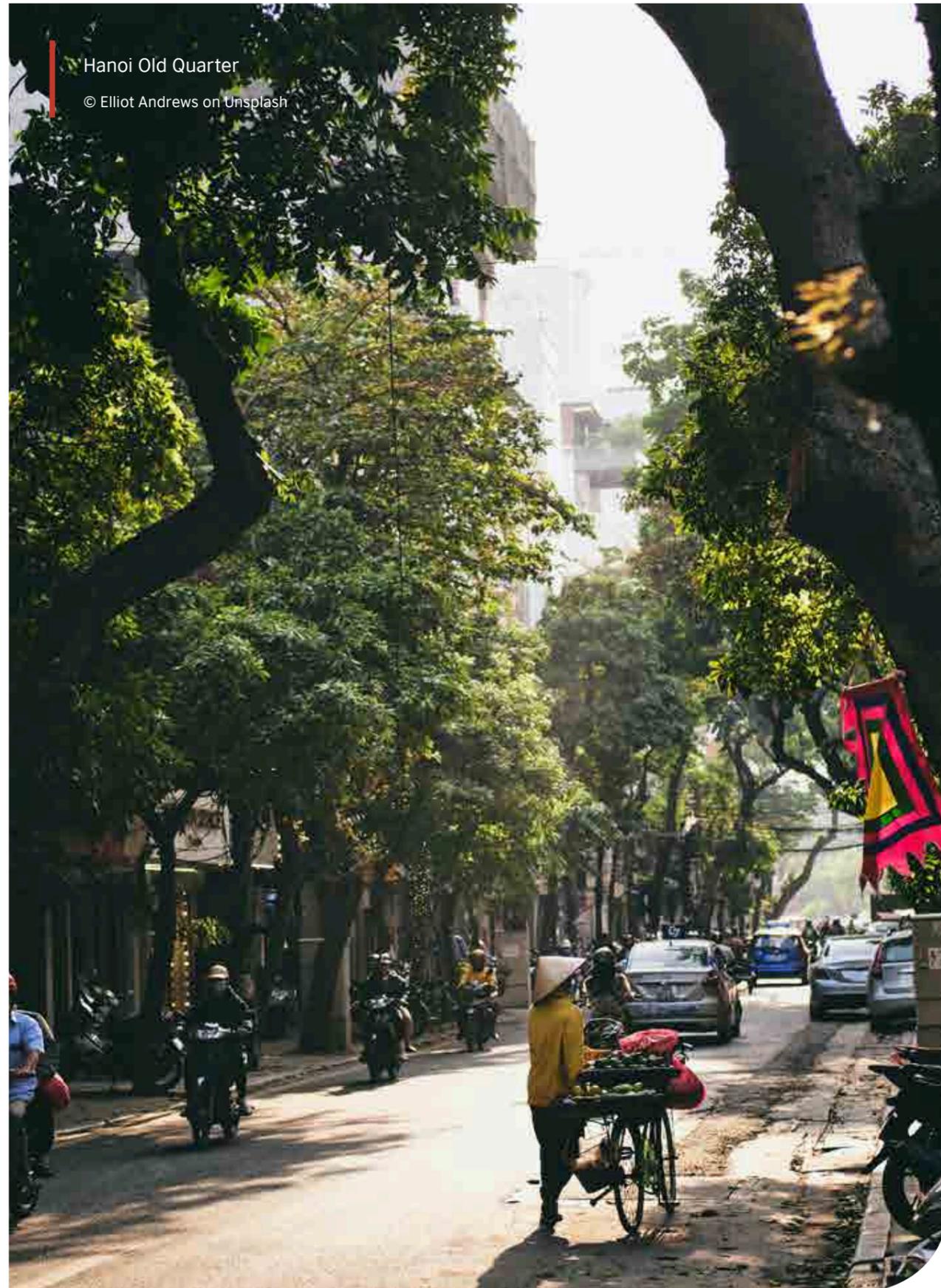
### 4. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Cultural institutions  
Creative hubs and marketplaces  
Festivals  
Movers and shakers  
Social enterprises to watch

### 5. Opportunities

# Hà Nội

Cultural Cities Profile,  
Việt Nam



Hanoi Old Quarter

© Elliot Andrews on Unsplash

# Introducing Hanoi

**“As the cultural and political capital of Vietnam, Hanoi has played a central role in the country’s political history while nurturing creative talent. Following two decades of profound expansion, Hanoi now seeks to situate itself at the forefront of the rapid socio-economic transformation of Vietnam through its cultural legacy to define a new model of economic activity based on creativity and strong youth empowerment.”**

– UNESCO<sup>(1)</sup>

Hanoi (Hà Nội) has been the capital of Vietnam for more than a thousand year since 1010 when King Ly Thai To, by the Edict on the Transfer of the Capital<sup>(2)</sup>, officially relocated the capital from Hoa Lu in Ninh Binh province to Dai La (Hanoi today) and renamed it Thang Long (“Ascending Dragon”). Hanoi today, is the second largest city in Vietnam (after Ho Chi Minh City). It is the political and cultural hub for the nation, as well as a major centre for commerce, contributing 16% to national GDP.

Hanoi has rich and profound cultural resources which have accumulated over many generations. The capital owns 5,922 cultural and historical relics, 1,350 craft villages, 1,186 unique festivals associated with traditional beliefs, rituals, cuisine, and Hanoi’s way of life. Hanoi’s crafts are a vital resource and an inspiration for city’s burgeoning design industry. Hanoi is the first city in Vietnam to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network – as a City of Design.

Hanoi’s creative industries were, pre-Covid, on the ascendancy. In 2018 they contributed around USD 1.49 billion to its GRDP – accounting for 3.7 % of the total economy. Cultural tourism is a major beneficiary from and contributor to the city’s creative economy, showing an annual (pre-Covid) growth of 12.1%. In 2019, Hanoi welcomed more than 7 million international tourists.

Creative sectors such as performing arts, cinema, publishing, fine arts, software and architecture have shown considerable growth - powered by a growing portfolio of independent creative hubs and supported by a growing festival and events scene – such as via Hanoi International Film Festival, Vietnam Design Week, Vietnam Festival of Creativity and Design, and Hanoi New Music Festival.

These sectors, while vital for the city’s economic diversification, soft power and confidence, are also viewed as driving factors in delivering Hanoi’s overarching vision (see below).

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/joining-hands-promote-ha-noi-creative-city-and-unesco-creative-cities-network-viet-nam#:~:text=On%2030%20October%202019%2C%20Ha,a%20UNESCO%20City%20for%20Peace.>

<sup>(2)</sup> <http://thanglong1000.blogspot.com/2009/04/capital-transferring-edict-in-ceramic.html>

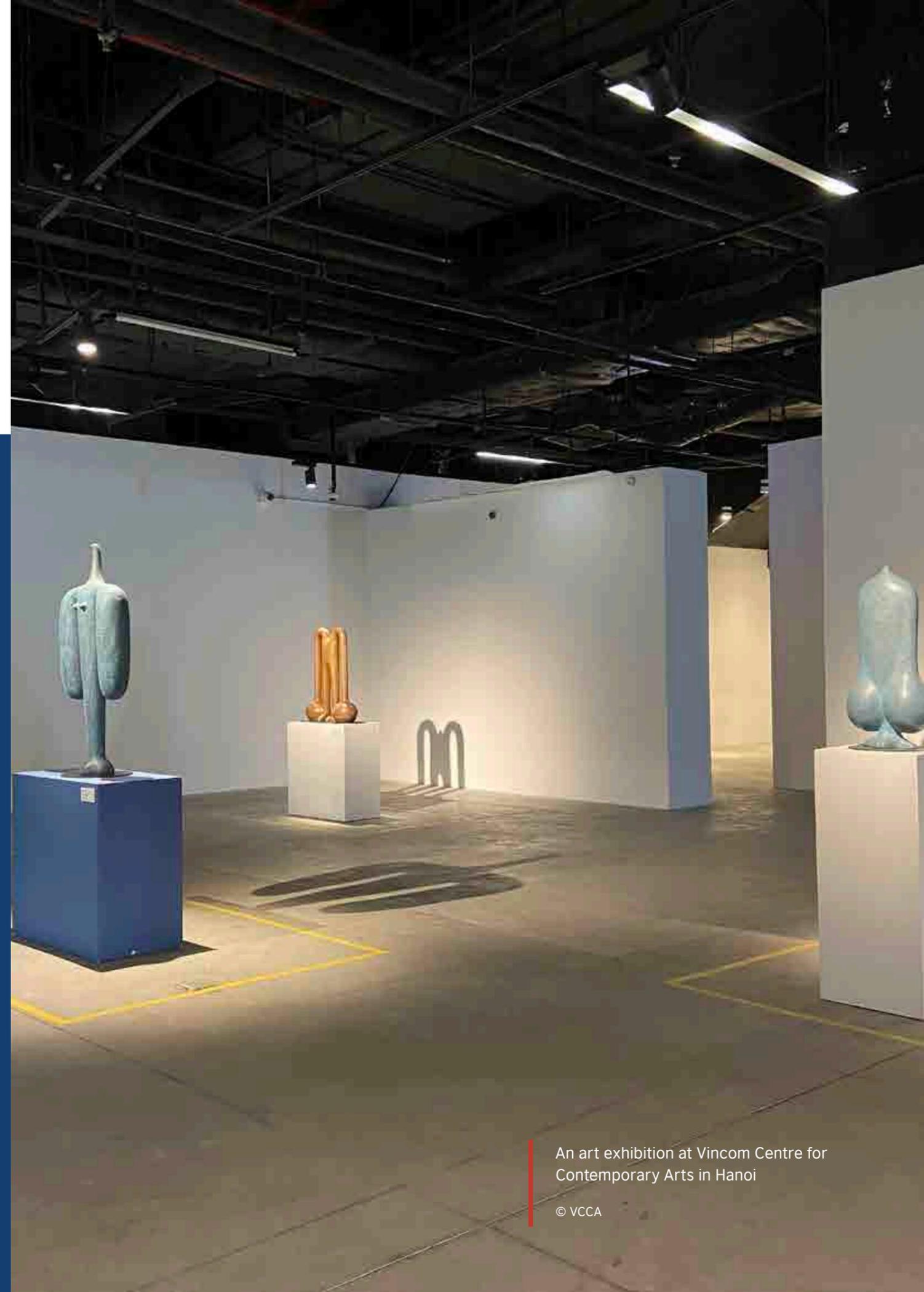
# City vision mission slogan

By 2030, Hanoi will become a “Green – Smart – Modern”. By 2045, Hanoi will have high quality of life and comprehensive and sustainable development in economic, social, cultural areas, and become a globally connected city. To deliver this vision, the city will focus on the following mission themes:

- Modernise and rapidly and synchronously develop the socio-economic infrastructure system; strongly develop inter-connected, synchronous and unified digital, IT, and data infrastructure, creating a foundation for the development of digital economy and society.
- Continue to improving institutions, mechanisms and policies; strengthen law enforcement, improve the efficiency of social governance and urban management; and complete the building of e-government, moving towards the digital government.
- Develop human resources, especially those in highly skilled industries.

*HANOI Cradle of Heritage*<sup>(3)</sup> CNN Hanoi is a promo film approved by the authority of Hanoi, which captures the characteristics and aspiration of the budding city.

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0-zzPQSWk>



An art exhibition at Vincom Centre for Contemporary Arts in Hanoi

**“With a history of over 1000 years old, Hanoi capital is in the process of renovation and integration. The city is ready to take creativity and creative economy as the core element for the dynamic, comprehensive and sustainable development process of the city.”**

– Mr. To Van Dong, Director of Hanoi Department of Culture and Sports<sup>(4)</sup>

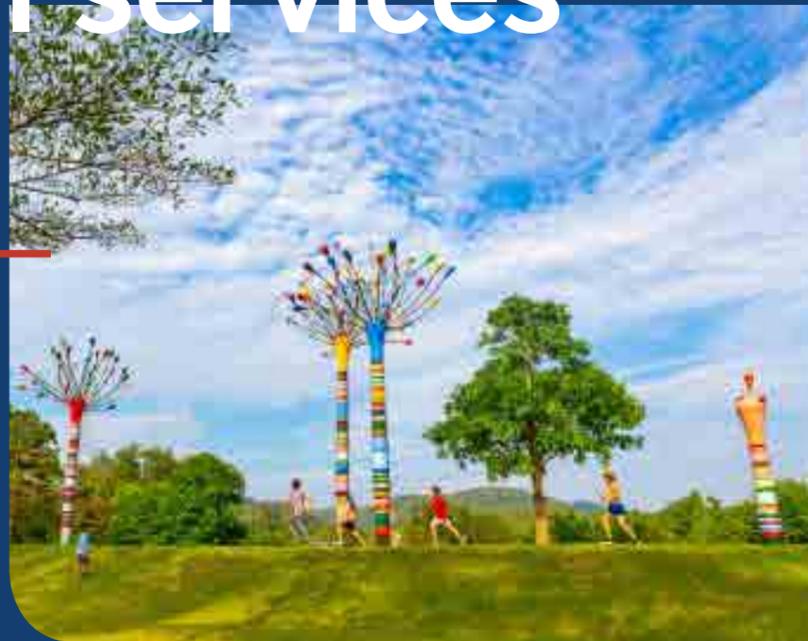
In line with the *National Strategy for the Development of Cultural Industries in Vietnam to 2020, vision to 2030*, Hanoi has developed its own city strategy to develop cultural industries in which identified the following sectors are Hanoi’s cultural industries<sup>(5)</sup>. Among more than 45,000 cultural enterprises operating across Vietnam, 46,535<sup>(6)</sup>, Hanoi has 2,764 enterprises in design, 270 in arts businesses, 380 in culture related business and 1,436 in fashion. Hanoi is home to 16,000 ICT firms and two of the five hi-tech parks in Vietnam.

According to a survey conducted by Vietnam Creative Hubs Initiatives (ViCHI), in 2019, Vietnam has approximately 198 micro and small creative hubs (less than 10 staff) (ViCHI, 2019). In Hanoi there are 78 creative hubs, growing from 26 in 2017. The city also houses several creative networks such as ASHUI.com, Vietnam Creative Entrepreneurs Club (VCE Club), VCE Club’s Social Creative Enterprises Network, Vietnam Creative Hubs Initiative (ViCHI), Proactive Audience Network (PAN), and the Vietnam Local Artist Group.

# Creative industries and cultural services

Art In The Forest (AIF) is the largest outside visual arts exhibition in Vietnam. Held annually since 2015 by the Flamingo Group, it has recently been transformed into a private contemporary art museum

© Art in The Forest



A performance of contemporary dance by the people of Kinergie Studio

© Kinergie Studio

<sup>(4)</sup> <https://www.tapchikientruc.com.vn/tin-tuc/le-phan-dong-cuoc-thi-thiet-ke-khong-gian-sang-tao-ha-noi.html>

<sup>(5)</sup> Plan no. 112/KH-UBND on the Development Strategy for Hanoi’s Cultural Industries by 2020, with a vision to 2030

<sup>(6)</sup> GSO, Enterprise Survey 2018; 2019



# Hà Nội in numbers

## Classification of the Cultural Industries

in Hanoi includes Cinema, Performance Arts, Fine Arts, Photography and Exhibition, Advertising; Cultural Tourism, Architecture, Handicrafts, and Design

Total Area:  
**3,358.6 km<sup>2</sup>**

**Capital  
city** of Vietnam



**5,900** cultural and historical **relics**; **1,793** **intangible cultural heritage** elements; and **1,350 craft villages** in 2020



Year of constitution  
**1010**



Average life expectancy was  
**75.4 years old** in 2020

**2nd largest** city of Vietnam



Hanoi **GRDP** per capita was **USD\$5,285** in 2020

Hanoi's **cultural industries** in 2018 contributed **USD\$1.49 billion**, accounting for 3.7 % of city GRDP

Total population was **8.28m** in 2019 with population density at **2,410 persons per km<sup>2</sup>**

**4,850 creative business** in 2018 and **78 creative hubs** in 2019

# 1. What makes this city unique?

Hanoi, as the capital, is the most significant political, administrative, economic, diplomatic, and cultural centre in Vietnam. As one of the most fast-growing and fast-changing cities in the ASEAN region, Hanoi has largely managed to marry growth with heritage protection. The city is well-known for its efforts in protecting, preserving and promoting its cultural heritage- whether in the built environment or through intangible heritage such as Hanoi's richness in traditional crafts. The city's distinctive blend of French-influenced architecture, networks of lakes and waterways, and still diverse flora, give it an evocative appeal which complements the city's rising star as a hub for design, IT and cultural exchange. In turn this has inspired the local cultural sector to internationalise in its connections; and exposed local audiences to a diversity of cultural practice unavailable in most parts of Vietnam. For the Generation X and Z of Hanoians, this has dovetailed with the 'marketisation' of the Vietnamese economy, offering opportunities to connect with global trends and to innovate and create their own version of local culture. This blend of heritage and modernity, antiquity and dynamism, are perhaps Hanoi's main appeal.

**“Hanoi, Vietnam’s capital, is home to more than just culinary delights and cultural sites. Look beyond the architecture and numerous coffee shops, and you’ll find an emerging art scene that’s brimming with talent and creativity.”**

– Cultural Trip<sup>(7)</sup>

**“Hanoi, Vietnam’s capital, is home to more than just culinary delights and cultural sites. Look beyond the architecture and numerous coffee shops, and you’ll find an emerging art scene that’s brimming with talent and creativity.”**

– Truong Uyen Ly, Director of Hanoi Grapevine<sup>(8)</sup>

Hanoi has been always a hub for talent - from across Vietnam and internationally. As a centre of Government with international embassies and NGOs, it draws cultural organisations and practitioners, cultural experts and creative enthusiasts. This has introduced to the city a diversity of cultural events, residencies, commissions and happenings.

In turn this has inspired the local cultural sector to internationalise in its connections; and exposed local audiences to a diversity of cultural practice unavailable in most parts of Vietnam. For the Generation X and Z of Hanoians, this has dovetailed with the 'marketisation' of the Vietnamese economy, offering opportunities to connect with global trends and to innovate and create their own version of local culture. This blend of heritage and modernity, antiquity and dynamism, are perhaps Hanoi's main appeal.

In 1999, Hanoi received the title of “City for Peace” designated by UNESCO and 20 years after that milestone, in October 2019, Hanoi became an official member of UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) as a Creative City of Design. By joining UCCN, Hanoi has the opportunity to showcase its cultural identity to the world, and at the same time, develop a comprehensive cultural strategy, re-imagining the city's cultural and social development, preserving its valuable traditions while consciously learning from and exchanging with the rest of the world.

<sup>(7)</sup> <https://theculturetrip.com/asia/vietnam/articles/a-guide-to-hanois-best-art-galleries-and-art-collectives/>

<sup>(8)</sup> <sup>(9)</sup> Interview by research team

Manzi is one of the first and most influential independent cultural hubs in Hanoi

© Anh To



**“There is a significant increase in the number of younger audiences joining and showing interest in art events. They don’t just attend to pose for check-in selfies, but truly enjoy and interact with the art pieces. This is a positive signal for the potential of young audiences in Hanoi as well as the interest of the wider public in arts and culture in a time when social values undergo multiple changes.”**

– Vu Tram, co-founder of Manzi<sup>(9)</sup>

## 2. Context

Administratively, Hanoi is one of two special municipal cities in Vietnam together with Ho Chi Minh City. In 2008, after expanding the administrative boundaries, Hanoi has 30 districts. In 2020, the GRDP per capita of Hanoi was US\$5,285, ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in Vietnam (an increase of 2.34% on 2019)<sup>(10)</sup>.

Hanoi has a major international airport (Noi Bai) and is railway hub, converging 5 railway lines to connect with different provinces and to Beijing and Yunnan (China). The city has 6 inter-provincial bus stations. Yet public transport is underdeveloped in Hanoi, which lacks a mass transport system. While just a generation ago, most journeys were undertaken by foot or cycle, today the motorbike rules the road, followed by growing car ownership which together are contributing to significant congestion and air pollution.

The City plan to develop public transportation to meet 50-55% of travel demand by 2030. Yet at the same time, a major road development programme is underway. The major challenge for Hanoi over the coming years will be to marry its growth and increased economic prosperity with a 'smart city' approach that prioritises clean air and wellbeing.

### Location / region

Hanoi is located in northern region of Vietnam, situated in the Vietnam's Red River delta, sharing the borders with Thai Nguyen – Vinh Phuc at the North; Ha Nam – Hoa Binh at the South; Bac Giang – Bac Ninh – Hung Yen at the East; and Hoa Binh – Phu Tho at the West.

### Ethnic diversity

Residents of Hanoi are mainly Kinh people, accounting for 98.65%. Other ethnic groups such as Dao, Muong, Tay account for 1.35%.

**“Hanoi - the capital city - is first and foremost the national centre of politics and administration, then a centre of social, cultural, educational, technological development, a centre of international exchange, but among those the most prominent is its role as a centre of culture. Hanoi and each of its citizens have the right to be proud of the city's rich and diverse cultural heritage that was created by history and the previous generations in their work and fight for this land.”**

– Professor Phan Huy Le, former President of the Association of Vietnamese Historians<sup>(11)</sup>

### Heritage status<sup>(12)</sup>

Much of Hanoi's tangible and intangible cultural heritage has been internationally recognised. Other than 6,000 historical relics and sites, traditional architectural buildings of great historical, cultural and aesthetic value include the Central Sector of Imperial Citadel of Thang Long<sup>(13)</sup>, Temple of Literature – Quoc Tu Giam<sup>(14)</sup>, Ngoc Son Temple, One Pillar Pagoda, Co Loa Ancient Citadel, and Quan Thanh Temple. Hanoi is also a place of cultural exchange and reinterpretation - as witnessed in the French influenced Hanoi Opera House<sup>(15)</sup>, Vietnam Fine Arts Museum<sup>(16)</sup>, Hanoi Museum<sup>(17)</sup>, and the former Tonkin Palace.

Additionally, Hanoi has identified and inventoried 1,793 intangible cultural heritage assets. Of these, 270 have been inscribed onto a priority safeguarding list. These include Gióng Festival, Ca Trù folk singing, traditional tugging rituals and games, Le Mat Village Festival, Hat Mon Temple Festival,

Trống quân singing, Ải Lao singing and dancing, embroidery, and many more. The city is becoming a global hub for craft, with 1350 craft villages (designated centres of craft production) covering specialisms in lacquerware, ceramics, gold, silver, embroidery, bamboo and rattan, weaving, paper, folk paintings, wood, stone, flowers, and ornamental plants.

Of these, Bat Trang pottery, Van Phuc silk and Phu Xuyen bamboo and rattan have been recognised as national brands.

Both the tangible and intangible heritage of Hanoi are, for all their qualities, still vulnerable to over-development and issues such as corruption which seek to bypass protection regulation. For example, Hanoi's wonderful old town has seen some irresponsible developments over recent years which over time could threaten the district's historic integrity.



<sup>(12)</sup> <https://vov.vn/van-hoa-giai-tri/di-san-van-hoa-o-da-nang-tai-nguyen-du-lich-hap-dan-856837.vov>

<sup>(13)</sup> <https://hoangthanhthanglong.vn/>

<sup>(14)</sup> <http://vanmieu.gov.vn/vi/>

<sup>(15)</sup> <http://hanoioperahouse.org.vn/>

<sup>(16)</sup> <https://vnfam.vn/vi/>

<sup>(17)</sup> <http://baotanghanoi.com.vn/>

<sup>(10)</sup> Source: Hanoi Statistic Office, Economic and social report 2020 of Hanoi City, p.71

<sup>(11)</sup> <http://hanoimoi.com.vn/Tin-tuc/Van-hoa/723779/ban-sac-van-hoa-la-thuong-hieu-cua-ha-noi>

# 3. Culture, arts and civic policy

“Joining the UNESCO Network of Creative Cities has increased recognition of Hanoi as a cultural and creative hub with the emphasis on being an important destination for creative design in the region, or in other way, a creative capital in Southeast Asia. This is an opportunity for Hanoi to incorporate creativity into all of its development plans to create a milestone and a driving force for the capital’s sustainable development in the coming years. We need more participation and contribution of all organisations and people in the society to make the title of Hanoi - Creative City really meaningful for not only the development of the capital but also of the nation.”

– Associate Professor, Dr. Bui Hoai Son,  
Director of VICAS<sup>(18)</sup>

Culture and arts have always been the focus of Hanoi during all its development. This is because the city is itself a cultural idea, a story, an identity laden with expressive meaning. In recent years, the city has taken an intrinsic asset and as a resource to drive the city’s growth and sustainable development.

Today Hanoi prioritises science, technology, culture, and knowledge for its development strategy. With this affirmed approach, culture is placed in a vital position where it is a ‘golden thread’ across several policy areas – e.g. cultural development, heritage preservation and promotion, cultural education, cultural industries development and tourism; plus education, welfare, environment, economic development, urban planning, urban regeneration.

Since the city was enlisted as member of UNESCO Creative Cities Network (2019), the city authorities have committed that Hanoi will put forth long-term programmes and action plans, and facilitate the creative design sector in the city as a ‘foundation and internal force for Hanoi to become not only a creative city but the creative capital of the nation and the region’.

Based on this commitment, together with other policies on economic and social development for the period of 2021-2025, vision to 2030, Hanoi city government has set out four development pillars:

- Culture-based urbanisation and urban regeneration;
- An education network that prioritises culture as its foundation;
- A comprehensive system of events, fairs, exhibitions; and
- A cultural festival associated with creative city brand building and promoting.

## Key policies

### Development Strategy for Hanoi’s Cultural Industries by 2020, with a vision to 2030<sup>(19)</sup>

The Plan aims to develop Hanoi’s cultural industries to become key economic and service industries with considerable improvement in quantity and quality, actively contributing to the Capital’s economic growth and job creation through producing a wide range of diverse, high-quality cultural products and services for people’s cultural enjoyment and exportation; promoting the image of the capital city and its citizens; creating prominent brands of cultural products and services; prioritizing areas which are the strengths of Hanoi.. In order to achieve those objectives, the city will prioritise: communication and raising awareness; completing and improving legal frameworks and policies; developing human capital; Improving the application of science and technology; attracting and supporting investments; market development; and encouraging international exchange and cooperation.

### From a Creative City to a Creative Capital

In October 2019, 20 years since Hanoi was named a UNESCO City for Peace, the Vietnamese capital officially became a member of the UNESCO Network of Creative Cities in the ‘Design’ category. Following this designation, the Hanoi city authority will focus on:

- Establishing the Hanoi Creative Design Centre
- Building and supporting creative hubs in Hanoi
- Implementing the Hanoi Creative Talent TV Series Project
- Organising the Hanoi Festival of Creative Design
- Hosting the Southeast Asian Forum for the UNESCO Creative Cities Network
- Establishing the Young Creative Designers’ Network<sup>(20)</sup>

The city has already kickstarted several initiatives to implement their commitment with UNESCO and Hanoians including consultation meeting between city leaders and creative and design communities and businesses, city leaders with experts and scholars for more concrete roadway to develop Hanoi as a ‘creative city’; a Festival of Folk Culture in the contemporary society to showcase the significance of craft and design potential of Hanoi<sup>(21)</sup>; and a Hanoi Creative Hub Design Competition.

### Developing the capital’s tourism industry for the 2016 - 2020 period and the following years<sup>(22)</sup>

Issued on 26th June 2016 by the Standing Committee of Hanoi Party Committee, the plan highlighted the importance of cultural tourism and its role in shaping other tourism forms, seeing this as a crucial mission to develop tourism into a key industry.

Other than activities to improve human resources and infrastructure (e.g. Hanoi Book street, and Hanoi Walking Street, which offer pedestrianised zones in areas of significant cultural significance.), the city has focused on developing better creative content such as via art performances, film screenings, sport events, and cultural festivals such as Hanoi International Film Festival, Dragon Boat Racing Festival.

In 2019, Hanoi welcomed nearly 29 million visitors, including more than 7 million international visitors with total revenue increased 34% compared with previous year. In addition, Hanoi was a recipient of many prestigious tourism awards (TripAdvisor, Business Insider, World Travel Awards). Hanoi was capturing the global imagination. Then Covid-19 struck.

<sup>(19)</sup> <https://vanban.hanoi.gov.vn/documents/10182/2518750/KH-112-2017.pdf>

<sup>(20)</sup> <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/unesco-aims-to-help-hanoi-become-creative-capital-of-asia/182717.vnp>

<sup>(21)</sup> <https://nhandan.com.vn/hanoi/khai-mac-le-hoi-van-hoa-dan-gian-trong-doi-song-duong-dai-ha-noi-2020-627851/>

<sup>(22)</sup> <http://kinhtedothi.vn/nghi-quyet-so-06-nqtu-cua-thanh-uy-ha-noi-cu-hich-cho-du-lich-thu-do-cat-can-278031.html>

Exhibition at Work Room Four  
Gallery and Studio

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## Cultural funding

Hanoi's local budget expenditure in the creative fields includes spending for education, training; science and technology; culture and information; broadcasting and television; social relief; and economic services. Hanoi's expenditure in 2018 was USD\$ 1.882 billion while its budget expenditures for the creative fields in was USD\$ 1.216 million.

Since the 1990s, the Vietnam Government and in particular Hanoi municipality have shifted the focus on culture and the arts from one of protection to one where the sector can be more open to the market and able to generate revenue independent of State funding. There is a long way to go compared with other countries in the region and globally, but the cultural system in Vietnam is progressively more open, entrepreneurial and able to diversify income streams.

**“The cultural market will be more professionalised and there may be more pronounced marketisation.”**

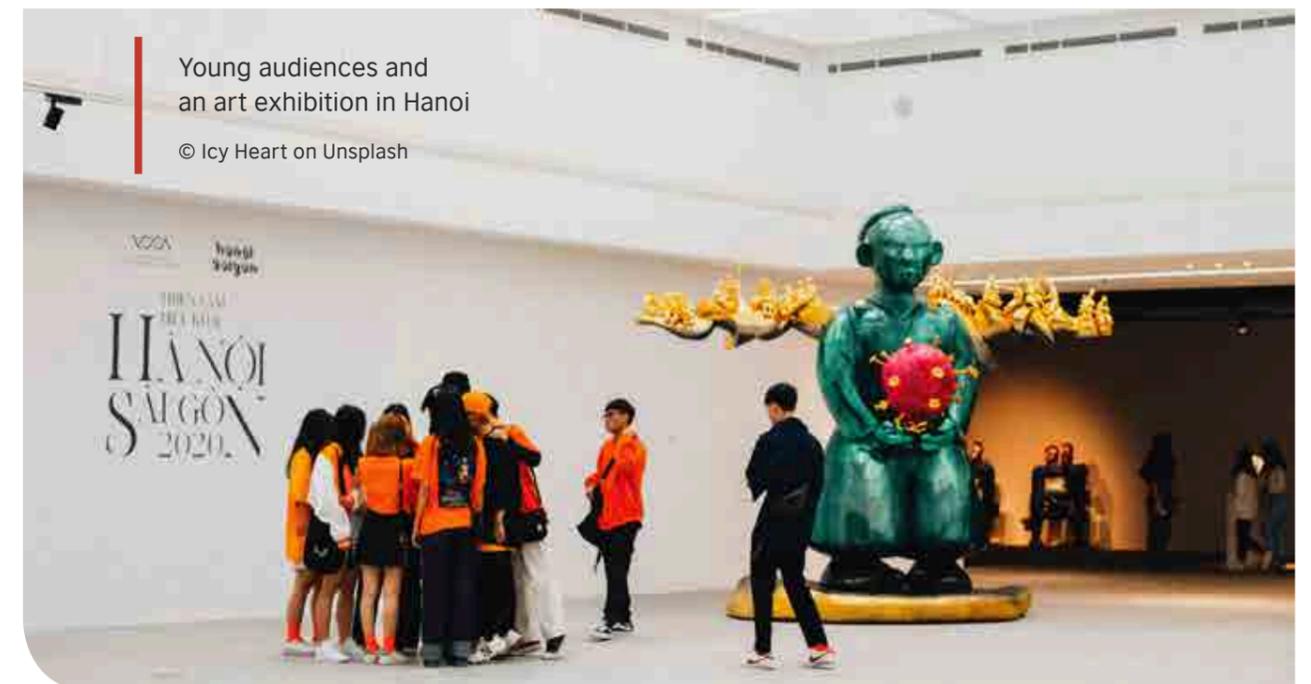
– Truong Uyen Ly, Director of Hanoi Grapevine<sup>(23)</sup>

Most cultural investment in Hanoi remains state-sponsored (nationally and locally). Public-private partnership is still emergent (known as "funding socialisation" in Vietnam). International funding (from international culture and arts organisations such as the British Council, UNESCO, EU, Goethe Institute, embassies and international fund), plays a vital role in the cultural dynamism of the capital city and connects Hanoi to artists and organisations from across the world. Self-funded activities (crowd-funding, community-based fundraising, income from tickets, services or non-cultural sources), plays an increasingly important role – especially for the independent cultural sector for which organisations are often registered as cafes, shops etc.

For independent hubs and artists, most of which are exposed to censorship or other types of state intervention, opportunities to raise funding and generate revenue have improved since the launch of the National Strategy for the Cultural Industries was launched. In Hanoi, city authorities are becoming more supportive, even if this means simply allowing organisations to develop and programme new work without such interference.

### Young audiences and an art exhibition in Hanoi

© Icy Heart on Unsplash



<sup>(23)</sup> Interview by research team

## Culture, environment and sustainability

Hanoi has placed environment and sustainability as a key priority for city-wide development, as recently reaffirmed in its newest master plan of city development to 2030: “Green – Smart – Modern” City. Key environmental policies and strategies include the Law on the Capital City Planning for a system of green trees, parks, flower gardens and lakes (2030, with a vision to 2050)<sup>(24)</sup>; and Transportation Planning for Hanoi Capital (2030, with a vision to 2050)<sup>(25)</sup> By 2050, the urban core of Hanoi will have 60 parks and flower gardens, of which 18 parks will be newly built and 42 existing parks and gardens will be renovated.

To realise these aims, one of the main priorities is to increase people's awareness and generate active participants in environment protection. Culture and arts practices are to be positioned as a key means to raising awareness and mobilising responsible citizenship.

## Cultural and environment case studies

### 1 Million Trees Project, 2012<sup>(26)</sup>

Supported by various embassies, local authorities and environmental groups, the Project aimed to bring positive environmental and aesthetic changes to 120 streets in the city via 1 million newly planted trees.<sup>(27)</sup>

### “Plastic Planet”, 2019<sup>(28)</sup>

Six giant works of art made from tens of thousands of used plastic materials were displayed in the “Plastic Planet” exhibition by Tòhe at Vincom Center for Contemporary Art (VCCA), giving the community a message of awareness of using plastic products, limiting negative impacts on the environment.

### Phuc Tan Public Art, 2019<sup>(29)</sup>

Initiated by the People's Committee of Hoan Kiem district in the summer of 2019, a group of 16 volunteer artists led by contemporary artist Nguyen The Son transformed a giant landfill into a contemporary art venue. This attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors and has significantly transformed local community's awareness on the living environment self-protection and self-improvement.

### Citizen Earth, 2019<sup>(30)</sup>

In 2019, Six Space launched CITIZEN EARTH – Citizens of the Earth, a project aiming to increase environmental awareness through art, cultural, community-based education and interdisciplinary dialogue between artists, researchers and experts in different fields of natural sciences, engineering and humanities. The exhibition of the Citizen Earth project took place at the historic building of the University of Natural Sciences - Hanoi National University. It offered different approaches to the environment in relation to history, spirituality, urbanization, post-human perspectives and post-colonial affairs.

<sup>(24)</sup> <http://www.soxaydung.hanoi.gov.vn/vi-vn/tin/quy-hoach-he-thong-cay-xanh--cong-vien--vuon-hoa-va-ho-thanh-pho-ha-noi-den-nam-2030--tam-nhin-den-nam-2050/891398-825645-468810>

<sup>(25)</sup> Decision no. 519/QĐ-TTg on the Approval for Transportation Planning of Hanoi Capital by 2030

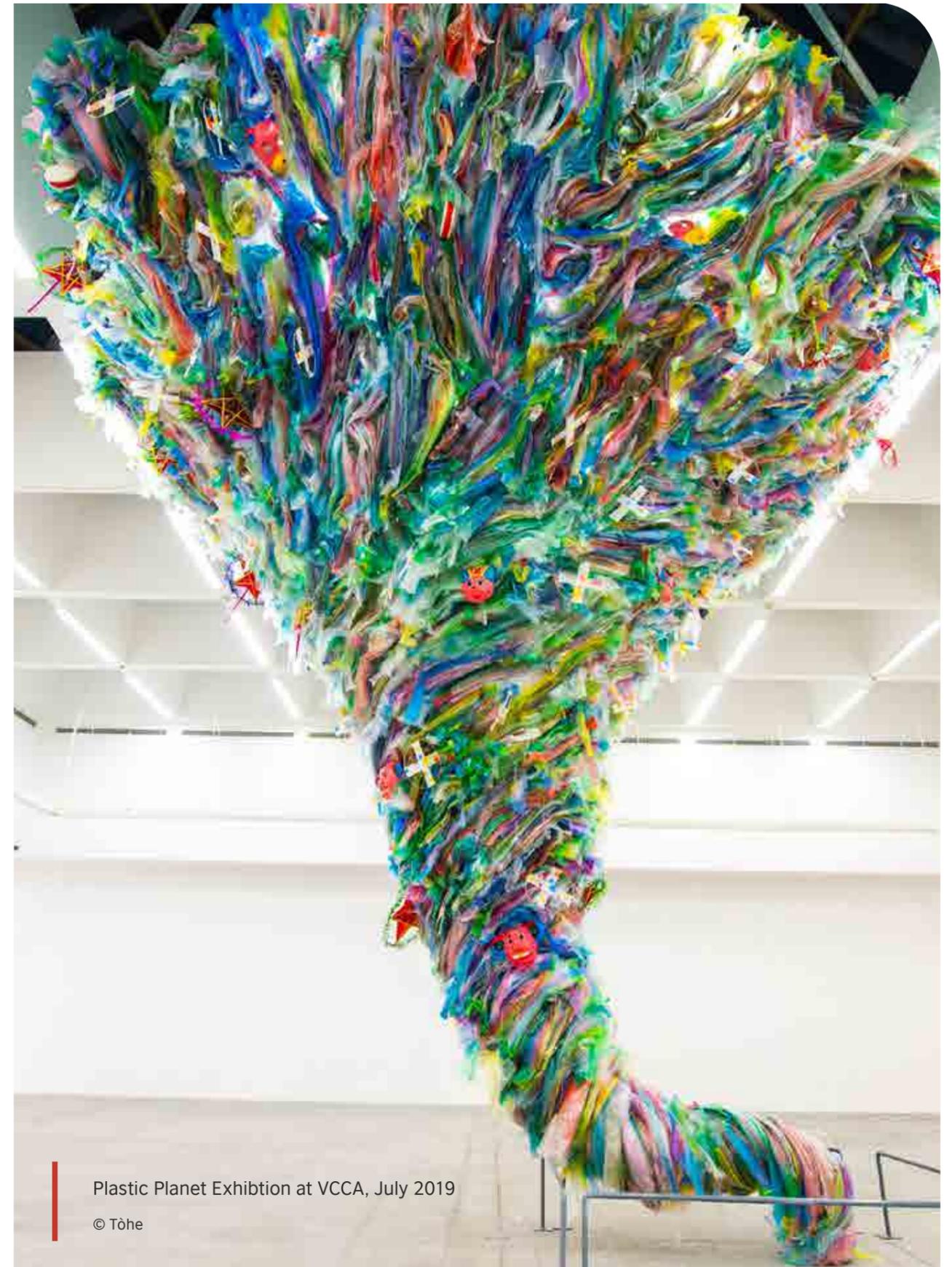
<sup>(26)</sup> <https://en.nhandan.org.vn/society/item/1203002-.html>

<sup>(27)</sup> <https://tuoitre.vn/vooc-cha-va-chan-nau-ap-dao-cuoc-thi-anh-moi-truong-da-nang-20201128141529244.htm>

<sup>(28)</sup> <http://vccavietnam.com/trien-lam-hanh-tinh-nhua-cac-nghe-si-muon-ke-dieu-gi>

<sup>(29)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Public%20Art%20Phuc%20Tan/110441590554182/>

<sup>(30)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/events/363742151581425>



Plastic Planet Exhibition at VCCA, July 2019

© Tòhe



© The Painter Studio

## Culture, health and wellbeing

In the vision of Hanoi striving to become a green, smart and modern city, Hanoi authorities have identified several key priorities, in which, by 2030, Hanoi citizens will have a high quality of life. Culture and arts activities in many forms have been widely used as a means to improving Hanoi's wellbeing and health, with the city authority increasingly aware of the cultural dimension to quality of life.

### Cultural and wellbeing case studies

#### Workshop series: Emotional Self-care through art therapy and music therapy, 2020<sup>(31)</sup>

Organised by MAI:tri và Blossom Art House in November 2020, the four workshops facilitated by art therapist Nguyen Phuong Linh and music therapist Ian Richer offered participants opportunities to explore the relationship between the body, sound and emotional wellbeing.

#### Diviners Fest, 2020

An annual event of Diviners Vietnam<sup>(32)</sup>, a non-profit organisation working in arts and meditation. The event consisted of several activities such as music and dance performances, a creative and craft fair, exhibition, and art talks.

#### Empathy Museum, 2017<sup>(33)</sup>

Empathy Museum (Bao Tang Thau Cam)<sup>(34)</sup> is a social culture project geared to promote empathy in society through exhibitions, art talks, workshops and performances. Inspired by the UK-based writer, thinker and empathy advocate Roman Krznaric's Empathy Museum, the Vietnamese edition had a vision to: build a better world through greater focus on empathy, love and care. The museum has produced memorable exhibitions showcasing audio interviews which tell the stories of lesser-heard members of society like criminals and drug abusers. Bao Tang Thau Cam also organises talks and workshops with writers, researchers, musicians, painters, amongst others, aiming to discover, analyse and practice empathy and creativity in daily life.



A cine-concert by Empathy Museum

© Anh To

<sup>(31)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/events/1259225684445694/>

<sup>(32)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/events/361830165064431>

<sup>(33)</sup> Mapping Creative Hubs in Vietnam, A report carried on by Truong Uyen Ly for British Council in Vietnam, 2018

<sup>(34)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/BaoTangThauCam>

## Culture and education

**“Hanoi is a major hub of culture, science, education, economy, and international transactions.”**

– Vice Secretary of Hanoi’s Party Committee Nguyen Van Phong, the 13<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress in 2021<sup>(35)</sup>

For the last 10 years, cultural education in Hanoi has been implemented to:

- Maintain and enhance the role of education and training as the key in building Hanoian culture, a learning society and the development of a knowledge economy.
- Develop human resources to respond to technological change and new industries.

Parallel to this, there is growing awareness of the need to build capacity and technical expertise in the cultural sector – so it can deliver positive outcomes in education and skills.

Currently, Hanoi has a diversity of creative education and training programmes being provided by public schools, universities, institutes such as VICAS with (PhD training in arts) Hanoi University of Industrial Fine Arts (arts and applied arts), Hanoi University of Culture (with a significant cultural management and cultural industries programme), The National University of Arts Education (with applied art, design and cultural management courses), Hanoi University of Architecture (with architecture, infrastructure, urban planning and development courses), The University of Science & Technology of Hanoi and Hanoi University of Technology (with variety of programmes in innovation and technology, data Sciences and AI), and The Academy of Journalism & Communication (with advertising, journalism and communication courses).

In addition, Hanoi has a growing private education and training sector – providing long and short courses and programmes on creative disciplines such as web design, digital design, filmmaking and animation. Key institutions include FPT Arena Multimedia<sup>(36)</sup>(for digital media), The London College for Design & Fashion<sup>(37)</sup>, and The Centre for Assistance and Development of Movie Talents.

## Culture and education case studies

### Film related training programmes and courses of TPD Centre, 2002 to present<sup>(38)</sup>

The Centre for Assistance and Development of Movie Talents (TPD) was established in 2002 as a not-for-profit training institute with the purpose of designing and implementing programmes to assist and develop movie talents and other activities for the development of Vietnamese cinema. Since its establishment, the centre has played an important role in supporting a new generation of film makers, film lovers and film community in Hanoi and nationwide. The Centre has been providing the following training courses:

- Film programing & curating
- Acting
- Film Studies
- Film editing
- Basic Film Shooting
- Film marketing & distribution
- Documentary
- Teen filmmakers

The Centre is also well-known for its diversified film related festivals and events such as Golden Lotus Film Festival, Classic Film Library, Film Summer Camps, and Famlab x Stories.

<sup>(35)</sup> <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/feature/13th-national-party-congress-hanoi-hcm-city-aim-for-digital-government-708953.html>

<sup>(36)</sup> <https://arena.fpt.edu.vn/>

<sup>(37)</sup> <http://www.designstudies.vn/en/>

### VCCA Vincom Center for Contemporary Art’s arts workshop series

Vincom Center for Contemporary Art (VCCA)<sup>(39)</sup> is a non-profit art centre, sponsored by Vingroup JSC, with a mission to connect artists to the community, artworks to the public, and Vietnamese contemporary art to the global arts scene.

Equipped with infrastructure and facilities of international standards, VCCA develops on the basis of diverse artistic activities and attracts both domestic and international artistic talents. The centre also offers workshops for all ages in contemporary dance, printing with clay, creative storytelling, art appreciation.

### The Erato School of Music and Performing Arts (ESMPA), 2008 to present<sup>(40)</sup>

ESMPA has four branches in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. It is a leading private institution for art and culture. The Curriculum includes: Instruments (Classical and Contemporary), Performance Arts, Fine Arts, Physical Wellbeing and Lifelong Skills. In Hanoi, Erato has provided venues and facilities for art events and projects by independent artists and organisations. For example: the “Future of Tradition” project, and learning spaces for Dom Dom Experimental Music.

### VICAS’s PhD training programmes on arts and culture, 1991 to present<sup>(41)</sup>

Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS) is a leading research and training institute of Vietnam. It has a well-established PhD training programme for cultural and arts managers, administrators and practitioners. It has created a significant impact in improving the quality of creative education, policy making and cultural management in Vietnam. Currently, VICAS provides PhD training in cultural studies, cultural management, cultural tourism, theatre studies, art history and cultural industries. It also offers a diversified short training courses in arts, heritage, culture and cultural industries.



Hanoi is a major hub of culture

© Anh To

<sup>(38)</sup> <http://tpd.24h.co/khoa-hoc/>

<sup>(39)</sup> <http://vccvietnam.com/en/education>

<sup>(40)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/EratoHanoi>

<sup>(41)</sup> <http://vicas.org.vn/>

# 4. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Hanoi, as a major capital city, has a well-established system of public-run cultural institutions across art, culture and education. Hanoi is also a gathering place for many enterprises, businesses, private organisations, networks, hubs and communities working across the cultural and creative industries.

Following Hanoi's UNESCO Creative City of Design designation, the city government has committed to build and support for creative hubs. Further plans include the establishment of a Hanoi Creative Design Centre and the implementation of initiatives such as the Hanoi Festival of Creative Design, the Young Creative Designers Network, and the Southeast Asian Forum for the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

For the coming period of 2021-2025, vision to 2030, based on the new perspectives of the Party and the city government and Hanoi's current development context, Hanoi has been revising its developmental master plan. Within this, the role of cultural ecosystems and infrastructure is seen as vital in ensuring the sustainable development of Hanoi's cultural industries in years to come.

**“Private actors are creating trends and leading in the transformation of the city's culture scene, providing opportunities for international and domestic talent to interact with each other.”**

– Truong Uyen Ly, Director of Hanoi Grapevine<sup>(42)</sup>

Most cultural and arts institutions in Hanoi are public-run - such as museums, galleries, exhibition centres, cultural centres, schools and universities. They are normally funded by the state or city budgets with occasional private investment or international funding for specific projects. Most of these public sector institutions are in the process of reform and / or are in severe need of reform – to modernise their infrastructure, enhance the visitor experience, and generate a more interactive and immersive cultural offer. There is a long way to go to establish open, interactive and entrepreneurial cultural institutes which benefit from a blend of public and private support.

## Cultural institutions

### Vietnam Fine Art Museum, est. 1966

The Vietnam National Fine Arts Museum<sup>(43)</sup> is one of the nation's most important institutions of culture and arts. The Museum's mission is to research, collect, inventory, preserve, repair, restore, display, educate, communicate and promote the value of archives, artifacts, distinctive fine art works of Vietnam to a domestic and international audience.

Other than its permanent and themed exhibitions, research, artwork restoration, the museum also has educational programmes for visitors and a creative space where children can experience arts with different topic workshops. The museum has been also active in exchange with international organisations such as museums in fine arts.

### Vietnam Women's Museum (VWM), est. 1987

The mission of Vietnamese Women's Museum<sup>(44)</sup> is to enhance public knowledge and understanding of the history and cultural heritage of Vietnamese women in historical and contemporary life; to build up the museum to become a centre for preservation and cultural exchange, thus contributing to promoting gender equality and the progress of women.

The Museum is well-known among Vietnamese people and international tourists not only because of its excellent design and curation but also because of its unique exhibition on the Mother Goddess Belief of Vietnam. It also provides excellent outreach programmes such as woman-related craft making workshops, a fashion show, flower festival, agricultural product fair, and book fair.

The museum was voted on the TripAdvisor website as the most attractive destination in Hanoi for several years running.

### Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS), est. 1971

VICAS<sup>(45)</sup> with its headquarters in Hanoi, is a leading research and development organisation operating directly under the umbrella of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MoCST) of Vietnam with main missions are to develop research, advise on cultural policy and implement and programmes in the field of arts and culture. Significantly, since 2006, VICAS has made a great contribution to the policy development of culture, arts, cultural industries in Vietnam and in numerous localities including Hanoi. VICAS was the R&D team behind the development of Vietnam National Strategy of Cultural Industries to 2020, vision to 2030 as well as the Hanoi Creative City of Design initiative. For 50 years, VICAS has collaborated with numerous international organisations and institutions in culture, arts, creative industries, and heritage management.

VICAS is running several programmes on creative and cultural industries development including Vietnam Festival of Creative & Design, Vietnam Design Week, Cultural and Creative Hub Viet Nam, IFCD's funded project on IP, and numerous educational, training, networking, consulting activities which have a major impact on the development of culture and arts of Vietnam.

### Vietnam National Opera and Ballet (VNOB), est. 1959

Vietnam National Opera and Ballet (VNOB)<sup>(46)</sup> is a theatre under Vietnam's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. VNOB has made many international cooperation programmes. In 2019, for the first time, the VNOB recreated Swan Lake with an all Vietnamese cast. The project was awarded 'Audience's choice' by Hanoi Grapevine's Finest of 2019. Remarkably, in 2021, despite Covid-19, VNOB is producing Les Misérables. VNOB also provides a children's educational programme with courses on ballet, opera, pop dance, and contemporary dance.

### Hanoi Design Centre, est. 2017

Hanoi Design Centre<sup>(47)</sup> was established as a result of cooperation between Vietnam Handicraft Exporters Association (Vietnam) and Lund Design School (Sweden). This cooperation is supported by The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in Hanoi. The main functions of the Centre are to develop design capacities, provide consultancies for Vietnamese handicraft producers and at the same time to promote the handicraft sector of Vietnam.

The Centre has worked with more than 3,000 (mostly women) artisans in different rural areas of Vietnam to build capacity, entrepreneurship and sustainable practice. The Centre also provides design capacity development, consultancy, design promotion services, manages a design shop and design library.



Hanoi Design Centre

© British Council

<sup>(42)</sup> Interview by research team

<sup>(43)</sup> <https://www.vnfam.vn/en/>

<sup>(44)</sup> <https://baotangphunu.org.vn/en/home/>

<sup>(45)</sup> <http://vicas.org.vn/>

<sup>(46)</sup> <https://nhahatnhacvukichvietnam.com/en/home/>

<sup>(47)</sup> <http://hanoidesigncentre.com/>



© Hanoi Grapevine



© A Queer Museum



© Empathy Musuem



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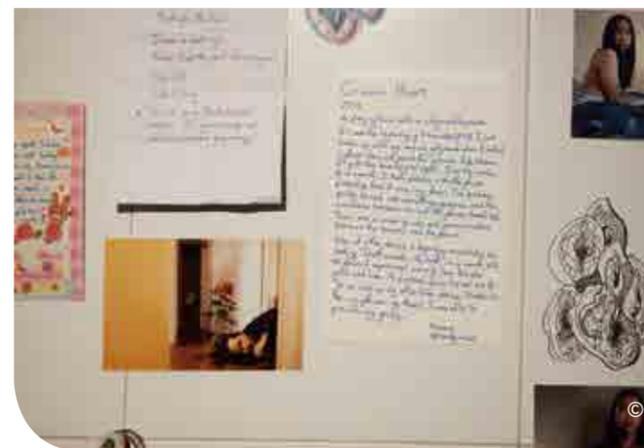
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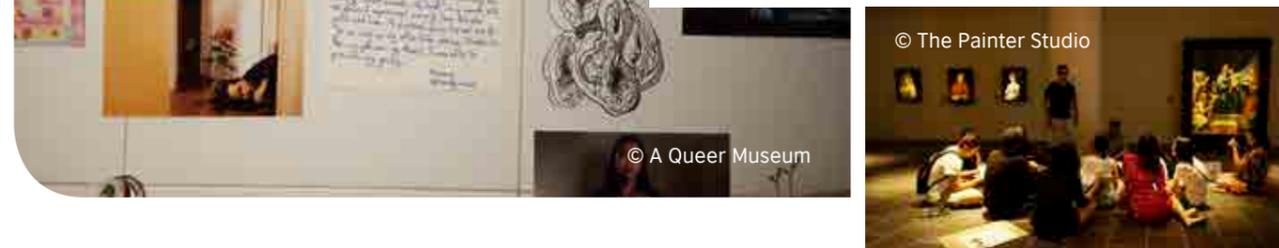
© Matca



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## Creative hubs and marketplaces

In 2016, Hanoi started to implement its action plan to develop the cultural and creative industries of the city. This has focused on enterprise development, capacity building, events and showcases and nurturing a network of creative hubs. For years, independent creative hubs in Hanoi fell prey to licensing and censorship issues and most were forced to function to the margins, unable to register as NGOs and subject to somewhat random closure by the authorities. Thanks to the National Cultural Industries Strategy and its commitment to the Protection and Promotion of a Diversity of Cultural Expressions via the 2005 UN Convention; and with consistent advocacy from international agencies such as UNESCO, British Council and Goethe Institute; creative hubs are today recognised as vital enablers of a safe, inclusive and innovative cultural industries sector.

Hanoi is today a breeding ground for creative practice, with multiple hubs giving energy and purpose to the cultural industries sector. Mapping by the British Council shows that the number of creative hubs in Hanoi increased from 26 hubs in 2017 to 78 hubs in 2019<sup>(48)</sup>.

“Artistic, organic, changing yet traditional, Hanoi is one of Vietnam’s most atmospheric cities. To explore the city’s art scene takes some effort and a little insider knowledge, but the rewards are worth it.”

–Vietnam Travel<sup>(49)</sup>

### Vincom Center for Contemporary Arts (VCCA), est. 2017

Vincom Center for Contemporary Art (VCCA)<sup>(50)</sup> is a non-profit art centre, sponsored by Vingroup JSC, with a mission to connect artists to the community, artworks to the public, and Vietnamese contemporary art to the global arts scene.

### Matca, est. 2016

Matca<sup>(51)</sup> is an independent initiative dedicated to photography as a form of visual art. Founded in 2016, Matca has evolved across many platforms, including but not limited to an online journal, a physical space and a publishing project. By not constraining Matca to a specific organisational structure, the team believes that they can experiment, evolve and adapt to the changing local context.

### Manzi, est. 2012

Located in the centre of Hanoi, Manzi is known as one of the most dynamic art spaces in South East Asia. Through art exhibitions, talks, workshops, book introductions, movie screenings, music and dance performances, Manzi's mission is to promote contemporary arts, build new audiences, inspire critical thinking and nurture a culture of debate. Manzi has two locations: Manzi Art Space, Cafe & Art Shop and Manzi Exhibition Space & Artist Residency Studio. In 2019, Manzi successfully organised two remarkable projects including Into Thin Air 2nd version, an art project that challenged many boundaries with an outstanding merger of art and technology; and Art For You – an art fair that aimed to nurture a contemporary art market for locals in Vietnam.

### Toong, est. 2017

Toong is the largest network of coworking spaces in Vietnam and also one of the first of its kind. Starting off with its Trang Thi headquarter located at the heart of Hanoi, Toong has branched out to open other locations in the city as well as in the other cities in Vietnam and the region (Laos and Cambodia). Not only providing a working venue for individuals and the startup community, Toong also co-assists multidisciplinary artists, organisations and cultural centres in Hanoi in need of facility support to actualise their art projects, programmes or events. In addition, Toong in Hanoi also curates and hosts interdisciplinary, culture-themed events such as Flashback Now and 30 is yet the End.

### Kinergie Studio, est. 2014

Kinergie Studio<sup>(52)</sup> is a dance studio co-founded by Dancer/Choreographer Do Hoang Thi Ngoc and Long Sleepy. Kinergie Studio was established in hope of bringing Performing Arts, especially Contemporary Dance and Ballet, closer to the community via Dance Education and Productions. Kinergie Studio is also a nurturing space for young artists with creative and daring projects and an artistic vision. The hub currently provides training courses for people at all ages such as ballet classes, contemporary dance.

Since its inception in 2014, the Kinergie Studio has created unique contemporary dance productions that not only reaches lovers of contemporary dance and ballet but also contributes to the development of contemporary art in Vietnam.

<sup>(48)</sup><https://www.britishcouncil.vn/en/en/arts/resources/mapping-creative-hubs-vietnam>

<sup>(49)</sup><https://vietnam.travel/things-to-do/hanoi-art-lovers>

<sup>(50)</sup><http://vccavietnam.com/>

<sup>(51)</sup><https://matca.vn/>

<sup>(52)</sup><http://www.kinergiestudio.com/>



## Festivals

Hanoi, has close to 2,000 unique festivals. Many are community-led, often linked to traditional rituals, craft or local history. In recent years, the city has become a hub for internationally facing festival development – from events co-developed with international agencies to contemporary creative showcases which link cultural expression to market making and trade. The city is taking seriously its role as a capital and UNESCO Creative city status has energised and given confidence to the creative sector, mobilised audiences, and raised awareness in the city authorities on the link between culture and economic development<sup>(53)</sup>.

## Festivals – case studies

### Vietnam Design Week<sup>(54)</sup>

Vietnam Design Week 2020 took place in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Hoian. It was organised by the Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS) (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) in collaboration with Ashui.com, ConsMedia and other specialised partners.

The festival's activities include a series of city-specific exhibitions, workshops and design shows aimed to increase the international and domestic value of Vietnamese products and promote the development of national design industry.

With the theme “Regeneration”, Vietnam Design Week 2020 focused on using materials in an economical, sustainable and optimal way. In Hanoi, the Week's events included a “Designed by Vietnam” Finalist Contest Exhibition, and Regenerative Design & Vietnamese Traditional Crafts seminars at 282 Design.

### Vietnam Festival of Media & Design 2019 and Vietnam Festival of Creativity & Design 2020

Vietnam Festival of Creativity & Design<sup>(55)</sup> is a series of inspirational, informative events and diverse creative experiences initiated by RMIT University Vietnam in partnership with VICAS, UNESCO Hanoi Office and Colab Vietnam.

The first version of the festival took place in 2019 with a series of events including exhibitions, discussions and workshops across two weeks. The second version took place in November 2020 in Hanoi, Hue, and Ho Chi Minh City, with multiple online and offline events such as cultural heritage exploration tours, talks/seminars, workshops and exhibitions. The festival is an opportunity for creative organisations and individuals to connect and celebrate their unique talents and contributions to the creative culture.

### Monsoon Music Festival (2014-2019)

Since 2014, Monsoon Music Festival (MMF) – founded by well known composer Nguyen Quoc Trung and produced by Thanh Viet Production – has become the ideal place to be for music lovers and culture enthusiasts right in the historical setting of the Imperial Citadel of Thang Long. With live performances from both upcoming and well-established local and international artists, Monsoon attracts over 40 thousand festival goers every year. Monsoon also offers an eclectic art programme, with a compelling line-up of different sights, sounds and experiences. The festival has gradually become an icon of the city and it has been recognized as an official cultural event of the capital. Since its beginnings, the Festival has contributed significantly to the contemporary cultural and art scene of Vietnam in promoting artistic innovation and cultural tourism.

“...the Vietnam Festival for Design and Creativity in November 2020...could demonstrate good practices for other Vietnamese cities who aspire to join the UNESCO Creative Cities Network... the festival can be a great medium to build the creative identity of Vietnam, shifting production from ‘made in Vietnam’ to ‘designed in Vietnam.’”

–Julia Gaimster, Dean at Royal Melbourne Institute for Technology (RMIT)<sup>(56)</sup>

<sup>(53)</sup> <http://kinhtedothi.vn/nghi-quyet-so-06-nqtu-cua-thanh-uy-ha-noi-cu-hich-cho-du-lich-thu-do-cat-can-278031.html>

<sup>(55)</sup> <https://vfcd.events/about/>

<sup>(54)</sup> <https://www.vietnamdesignweek.org>

<sup>(56)</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/news/joining-hands-promote-ha-noi-creative-city-and-unesco-creative-cities-network-viet-nam#:~:text=On%2030%20October%202019%2C%20Ha,a%20UNESCO%20City%20for%20Peace.>

### Hanoi International Film Festival, 2010 (biennial)

Initiated in 2010, Hanoi International Film Festival<sup>(57)</sup> is one of the city's most prominent cultural events. It features and honours outstanding cinematographic works and films from international filmmakers. Its mission is to:

- build local audiences, creating impetus to develop Vietnamese cinema towards international integration
- create opportunities to expand Vietnamese film into international markets
- promote the image of Vietnam and Hanoi

It is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Vietnam Cinema Department, Hanoi People's Committee and Hanoi Department of Culture and Sports.

### The Hanoi New Music Festival 2018

Organised by Dom Dom, the third version of Hanoi New Music Festival was the largest festival of exploratory new music held in Vietnam. It convened artists from across Southeast Asia and Japan. The concert programme included contemporary classical music, music theatre, traditional and electronic genres. Alongside these elements, Dom Dom included a symposium as an opportunity for researchers and musical scholars to contribute to the music discourse in Southeast Asia, a region traditionally absent from the global contemporary music discourse<sup>(58)</sup>.

### The fifth National Young Fine Arts Festival, 2020

The festival is held by the Department of Fine Arts, Photography and Exhibitions under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, in collaboration with the Vietnam University of Fine Arts and Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts University. It was staged in Hanoi in June 2020, for young Vietnamese artists aged between 18 and 35. The festival offers an opportunity for young artists to show their artistic creativity and introduce their new art works to the public. The Young Fine Arts Festival 2020 attracted 365 works, including 281 paintings, 42 graphic works, 38 sculptures, three installations and one video art piece by 197 artists from 36 provinces and cities around the country.

### Hanoi's Folk Culture in Contemporary Life Festival, 2019

Organised by Hanoi People's Committee and Hanoi Department of Culture & Sports, the festival aimed to celebrate Hanoi's new title as it has been named one of 66 new members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Hundreds of products by traditional handicraft villages around the city were featured at the event while various folk art forms of the city were performed or presented during the festival - such as ca trù singing (ceremonial singing), hát xẩm (singing by buskers), folk dances, Hang Trong and Dong Ho folk paintings.



© Hanoi New Music Festival

<sup>(57)</sup> <http://www.haniff.vn/>

<sup>(58)</sup> [https://urbanisthanoi.com/hanoi-art/15840-tran-kim-ngoc-a-pioneer-of-experimental-music-and-mixed-media-art-in-vietnam?fbclid=IwAR06OMpoRpe2b\\_oRdTqFEZ72hplyCZw30CRYshUfydlqVGs6VOcgZnvo-Zk#](https://urbanisthanoi.com/hanoi-art/15840-tran-kim-ngoc-a-pioneer-of-experimental-music-and-mixed-media-art-in-vietnam?fbclid=IwAR06OMpoRpe2b_oRdTqFEZ72hplyCZw30CRYshUfydlqVGs6VOcgZnvo-Zk#)

## Movers and shakers

For many years, Hanoi city has been a meeting point of artists, creative individuals, cultural researchers and cultural activists. A few of the key enablers are described below.

### Truong Uyen Ly, Director of Hanoi Grapevine<sup>(59)</sup>

Graduated from University of Social Sciences and Humanities majoring in journalism in 2002, Truong Uyen Ly worked at Tuoi Tre Newspaper until 2009 as a reporter in charge of culture and arts. During this time, she won the national journalism award (2005). Truong Uyen Ly is the chief editor and director of Hanoigravevine.com, an important online information channel for cultural and artistic activities in Vietnam. Ly is a journalist, media consultant and independent researcher on Vietnamese creative hubs since 2015. Her work has helped many public institutions and researchers as well as private and international organisations to understand the creative landscape of Hanoi. Ly is also an inspiring speaker, trainer and facilitator in creative communities in Hanoi. She is founder of PAN, a network of proactive audience for art and culture in Hanoi and one of 6 founders of ViCHI, a network for creative hubs in Vietnam<sup>(60)</sup>.

### Trang Trinh, Pianist

Trang Trinh<sup>(61)</sup> established her talent and reputation with dozens of world-renowned awards by the age of 20. Hailed as a Vietnamese classical music phenomenon, Trang was featured in projects such as Piano Diaries, Beethoven - A Fantasy, The Preludes and Animal Festival, and was one of Forbes Vietnam's 30 under 30 in 2015. In 2018, she was conferred an honorary award by the Associate of the Royal Academy of Music (UK) for her outstanding contribution to the international professional music scene. In 2013, together with her husband - opera singer Park Sung Min - she founded the Miracle Choir & Orchestra, organising music lessons for over 100 youths with disadvantaged backgrounds in Hanoi. Afterwards, she went on to establish the social enterprise Wonder, a research-based organization in art education, specifically focusing on kindergarten education.

In 2020, Trang Trinh developed Hà Nội Reo Vang Binh Minh, a non-profit project within Wonder Art Research, Practice and Education. Originated from the community initiative contest "For a worth-living Hanoi", the project aims to spread great values, optimism, and positive mindset in the midst of Covid-19, while strengthening the connection between Hanoi and its citizens, especially for children aged from two years old<sup>(62)</sup>.

<sup>(59)</sup> <https://hanoigravevine.com/>

<sup>(60)</sup> [https://factoryartscentre.com/en/artist\\_maker/uyen-ly-2/](https://factoryartscentre.com/en/artist_maker/uyen-ly-2/)

<sup>(61)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/trinh.mai.trang>

<sup>(62)</sup> Hanoi Grapevine Finest 2019

<sup>(63)</sup> <https://kimngoc.weebly.com/about.html>

<sup>(64)</sup> <https://urbanisthanoi.com/hanoi-art/15840-tran-kim-ngoc-a-pioneer-of-experimental-music-and-mixed-media-art-in-vietnam>

### Le Quoc Vinh, CEO of Le Invest (Holdings) Corporation

Le Quoc Vinh is currently Chairman and CEO of Le Invest (Holdings) Corporation with four affiliated companies including Le Media Joint Stock Company, Le & Brothers Limited, Vietnam CEO Corporation and Le Digital Co., Ltd. All four companies are widely considered as leading Vietnam companies in the fields of publishing, journalism, communication, marketing, public relations and event management. Le Quoc Vinh is also a marketing and communication expert. Le Quoc Vinh established his reputation as Public Relations specialist, speaker and visiting lecturer in public relations subject at Academy of Journalism and Communication (AJC), University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) and RMIT University. He is the founder and president of Vietnam Creative Entrepreneurs Club (VCE Club) with more than 10,000 members. He is one co-founder at Elite PR School, which is a PR training centre established in early 2014. For last decade, Mr. Vinh has been an influential advocate for a strategic approach to the cultural and creative industries in Vietnam. Currently, he is supporting Vụn Art, an inclusive creative hub for disabilities in Hanoi.

### Kim Ngoc, experimental music pioneer and a mixed media composer/improviser

Kim Ngoc<sup>(63)</sup> is known not only for chamber and orchestra music but also for her music-theatre compositions. Starting as a music composer, Kim Ngoc has invested her talent in musical discovery and exploring the interdisciplinary language of art. Kim Ngoc now lives and works as an independent composer/musician in Hanoi. She travels all over the world to present her own pieces and perform as improviser. In November 2012 Kim Ngoc founded and operated DomDom (The Hub for Experimental Music & Art in Hanoi). Kim Ngoc is also a founder and organiser of Hanoi New Music Festival 2018<sup>(64)</sup>. The contribution of Kim Ngoc to Vietnam's avant-garde sound art scene has led to recognition by Forbes Magazine as one of the 50 most influential women in Vietnam in 2019. With Dom Dom, she created a valuable platform for young music artists (especially experimental ones). She also helps to put Vietnamese contemporary music in the regional map and showcase a creative approach in connecting Vietnamese traditional arts with contemporary arts.

**Assoc. Professor, Dr. Bui Quang Thang, Art Director of VICAS Art Studio**

Dr. Bui Quang Thang<sup>(65)</sup> was a senior researcher of Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies since 1982. He studied art sociology at Humboldt University (Germany) for his PhD program from 1988 – 1993. In 2017, he became the artistic director of VICAS Art Studio, a public-run centre to support contemporary arts in Vietnam under the direct administration of VICAS. He is widely appreciated as a “mid-wife” for contemporary art in Vietnam, based on his critical perspective and strong will in supporting contemporary artists of all backgrounds.

**Nguyen Phuong Hoa, Director of International Cooperation Department, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism**

Nguyen Phuong Hoa<sup>(66)</sup> has been a vital champion and advocate for the arts and for a strategic approach to the cultural industries. She has worked as the main champion for the development of a National Cultural Industries Strategy and works closely as partner and gatekeeper with key international bodies. She is the main enabler for the final completion of the “National Strategy for cultural industries in Vietnam by 2020 and vision to 2030” in 2016. This was a critical moment which unlocked subsequent Government support for and investment in the Cultural Industries.

**Vu Thao, Founder of Kilomet109**

Vu Thao<sup>(67)</sup> is the founder and Design Director of a sustainable fashion brand from Hanoi called Kilomet109<sup>(68)</sup>. She is a fashion designer by training and also a practicing textile artist. Her art and design work focus on sustainable textile practices in contemporary Vietnam. They have been exhibited around the world in prominent international art and design shows, university symposiums, and featured across multiple media channels. She founded Kilomet109 in 2012 as a fashion label and social enterprise that blends contemporary design with traditional Vietnamese craftsmanship. Her work uses design innovation as a means of raising public awareness about at-risk rural minority communities in Vietnam, and supporting the preservation of craft villages. Thao collaborates with communities of indigenous artisan women, representing different ethnic minority groups to create eco-friendly textiles and dyes that are incorporated into Kilomet109’s collections and art installations.

**Vu Hong Nguyen, Curator and Co-founder of Flamingo Contemporary Art Museum**

Vu Hong Nguyen<sup>(69)</sup> co-founded Flamingo Contemporary Art Museum in 2020, 6 years after curating and managing Art in the Forest - an annual art residency and exhibition project hosted by Flamingo Group since 2015. This has been hugely influential for the development of contemporary art in Vietnam by bringing contemporary arts closer to the wider public.

<sup>(65)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/bui.q.thang.54>

<sup>(66)</sup> <https://www.britishcouncil.vn/en/about/25-years-ebook/cultural-connections/nguyen-phuong-hoa>

<sup>(67)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/thao.vu.12532>

<sup>(68)</sup> <https://www.kilomet109.com/>

<sup>(69)</sup> <https://hanoigravine.com/2021/03/vu-hong-nguyen-muc-dich-song-con-la-xay-dung-tang-lop-nguoi-xem-moi/>

**Duong Do, Co-founder and CEO of Toong – Vietnam’s the first co-working space chain**

Initially a marketing and brand strategy consultant, in 2015 Duong Do<sup>(70)</sup> set up Toong – the first co-working space chain in Vietnam. Duong is also a champion of the arts, integrating contemporary art into the Toong spaces. He also set up Goclub in 2019 as an art exhibition space within public spaces.

**Tran Ly Ly, Director of VNOB**

Artist Tran Ly Ly<sup>(71)</sup> graduated from Queensland University of Technology, Australia, in 2003. After graduating, she worked in France for a while and then returned to Vietnam, quickly becoming a prominent face in academic arts, especially ballet and contemporary dance. Since 2020, under her management and expertise, the VNOB has moved toward a more contemporary approach and international quality standard with excellent projects and training programmes for children. She is one of the most influential women in Vietnam according to Forbes Vietnam - based on her contribution to VNOB and the wider creative scene in Vietnam.

**Nguyen The Son artist, Curator of Phuc Tan Public Art Project**

Nguyen The Son<sup>(72)</sup> is a Master’s degree graduate from the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing. Since 2012, he has been working as a lecturer at the Vietnam Fine Arts University. Son is the curator of 2018 Contemporary art project in the basement of the National Assembly of Vietnam. He also set up the Phuc Tan Public Art Project, which has had a major impact on the energy and profile of the Hanoi contemporary arts scene.

**Quoc Trung, Music composer and Founder of Monsoon**

Quoc Trung<sup>(73)</sup> is the founder of Monsoon (2013 – present), one of the biggest annual international music festivals in Vietnam – where Vietnamese audience have opportunities to experience performances from both international artists and Vietnamese artists.

**Nguyen Trinh Thi, Artist**

Contemporary artist Nguyen Trinh Thi<sup>(74)</sup> received her MA in Journalism from the University of Iowa in 1999, and her Master of International Pacific Studies from the University of California, San Diego in 2005. Her moving image work – including documentary and experimental films and single-channels and video installations – consistently engage with memory and history, and reflect on the roles and positions of art and artists in society and the environment. Based in Hanoi, she also founded and directs Hanoi DOCLAB (est 2019), a centre for documentary films and the moving image which has contributed significantly to the development of documentary film and moving image in Vietnam.

<sup>(70)</sup> <https://luxuo.vn/culture/ceo-toong-duong-do-coworking-space-nghe-thuat-cong-dong.html>

<sup>(71)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/lyly.tran.925>

<sup>(72)</sup> <http://nguyentheson.com/>

<sup>(73)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/quoctrungmusic>

<sup>(74)</sup> <https://san-art.org/producer/nguyen-trinh-thi/>



Art work showcasing at Mør Art Space, Hanoi

## Social enterprises to watch

The social enterprise, as a legal status, did not exist in Vietnam until 2014. Since then, many creative hubs, groups and independent organizations in Hanoi have applied or are considering to apply for social enterprise legal status – to distinguish their contribution from commercially driven enterprises and to open up opportunities for partnership, especially with international agencies.

### Heritage Space, est. 2014

Established in 2014, Heritage Space<sup>(75)</sup> is an independent art space for many interdisciplinary activities including: art exhibitions and projects, library, music concert and performance, education and exchange programs and other activities. Month of Arts Practice<sup>(76)</sup> is an annual art project by Heritage Space, initiated by artist Tran Trong Vu with the aim to establish a space for creating, experimenting and practicing new art ideas, based on the collaboration and interaction between local and international artists. In each MAP version, Vietnamese artists and international artists in different areas such as music, video art, performing art, sculpture, mix-media, visual art, and sound, collaborate over one month, either face to face or online (for 2020) to co-create a new piece of work.

Heritage Space is also one of 6 co-founders of ViCHI, a network of creative hubs in Vietnam. It often plays a connecting role for creative practitioners, artists across Vietnam, Southeast Asia and more to the world.

### Dom Dom - The Hub for Experimental Music & Art, est. 2012

Dom Dom<sup>(77)</sup> was created in 2012 as the first independent interdisciplinary centre fully dedicated to the operation and advancement of Vietnamese experimental music and its interdisciplinary collaborations with other arts forms.

Dom Dom is currently an organiser of Hanoi New Music Festival<sup>(78)</sup> – a biennial music festival and the training institution for experimental music in Hanoi. This hub in fact is the 1st local NGO in contemporary art in Vietnam.

### Think Playground, est. 2014

Think Playgrounds is a Social Enterprise established with the goal of finding simple, effective and creative solutions to build playgrounds for children living in central urban areas. After several years of working, the group has built more than 30 playgrounds for children in Hanoi and many other provinces and cities such as Lao Cai, Hoi An. The group's operating approach is to work closely with the local communities to reserve a part of their public land for the playground; partner with architects in creating appropriate designs and equipment built from recycled materials and objects while ensuring safety, durability and creativity.

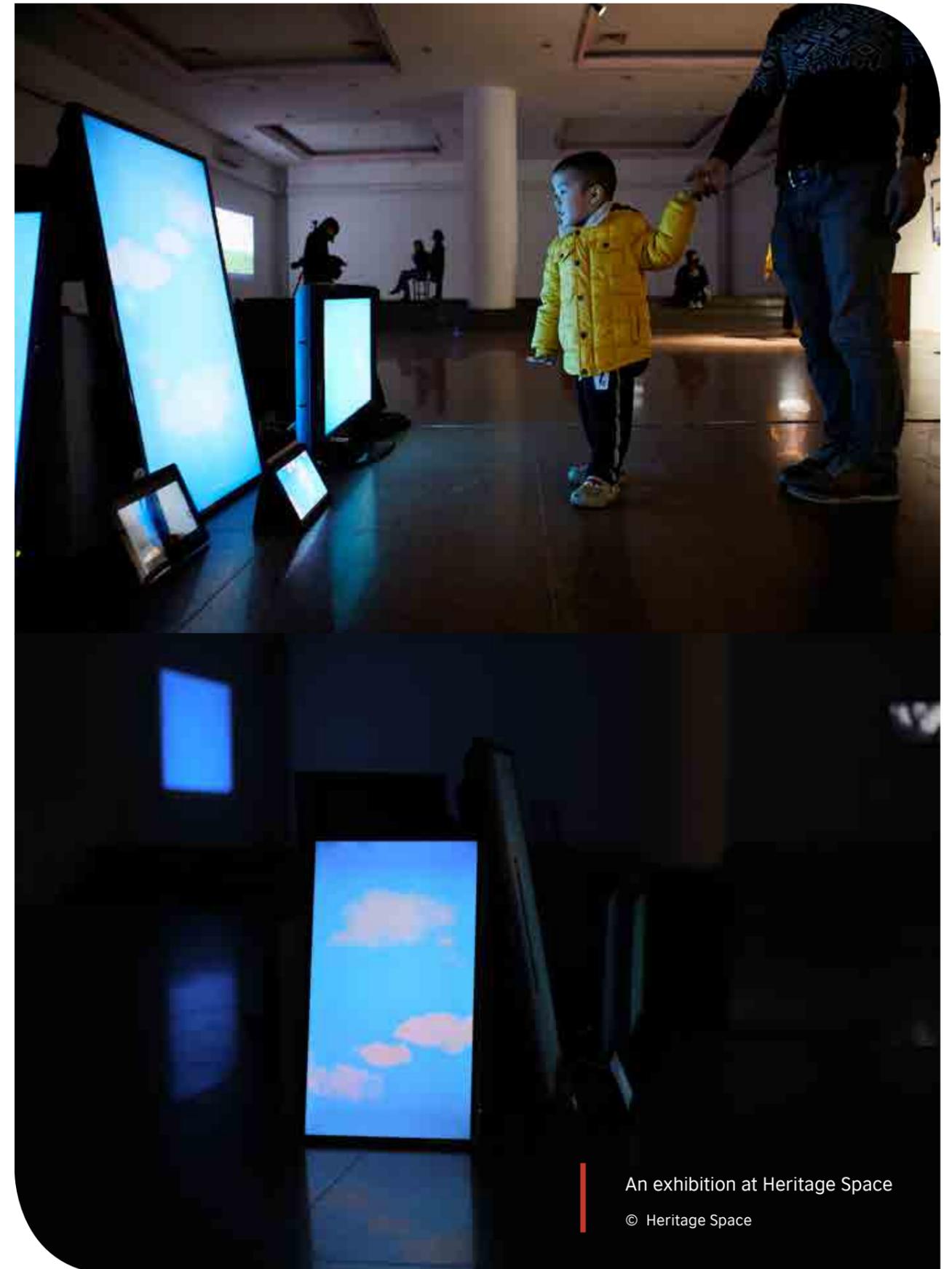
Since 2014, the enterprise has built more than 180 playgrounds. In 2020, Chu Kim Duc, co-founder of Think Playground, was recognised by the BBC on the list of 100 women who make change in the world.

<sup>(75)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/HeritageSpace>

<sup>(76)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/monthofartpractice/>

<sup>(77)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/domdom.hanoi>

<sup>(78)</sup><https://khosim.com/>



An exhibition at Heritage Space

© Heritage Space

# 5. Opportunities

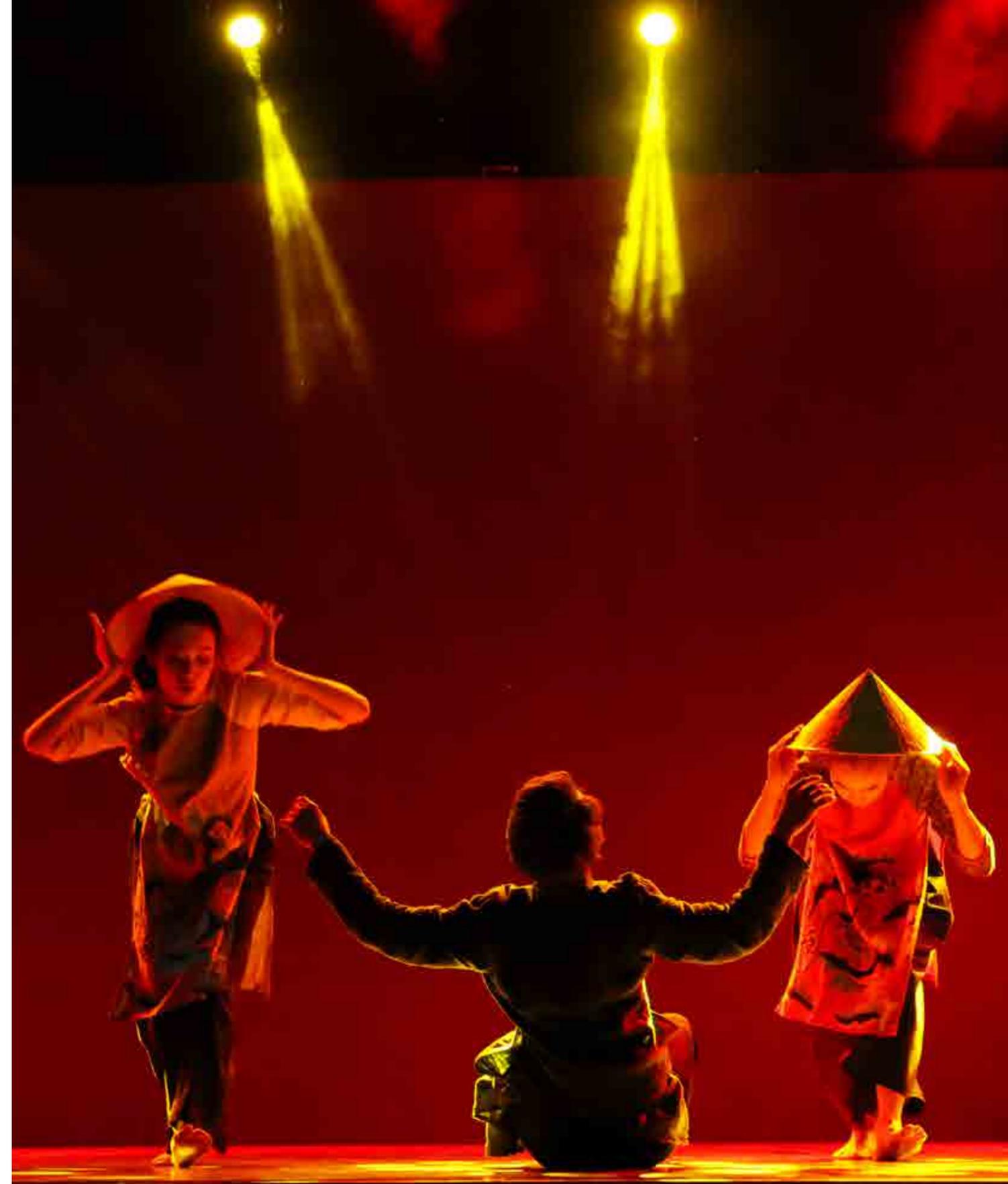
“To realise the development goals in the next period, the city of Hanoi is determined to further tap into culture, education, training, science, technology and human resources.”

– Hanoi Party Secretary Vuong Dinh Hue, at the meeting with more than 300 delegates of intellectuals, writers, artists, leaders of universities, colleges and religious dignitaries of the capital, at the Lunar New Year<sup>(79)</sup>

Hanoi is a compelling, fast-changing city which manages to balance its deep history and distinctive cultural ambiance with a forward-facing and increasingly youthful and international energy. As the capital of Vietnam, it is the hub for international agencies and NGOs working across fields such as culture, environment and inclusive development. The growth of creative hubs, of the festival economy, and of networks of creative entrepreneurs, signals a city open to a new stage of cultural and creative development. The city offers an incredible range of opportunities for artists seeking inspiration and collaboration opportunities; socially engaged practitioners and organisations looking for fresh partnership; and entrepreneurs in sectors such as crafts, design and music, hungry to explore new markets and aesthetics.

Key areas to look out for include:

- **Hanoi Creative Capital:** Leveraging the city’s ambitious UNESCO Creative City agenda, Hanoi is looking for content, collaborations and production expertise to boost its events and festivals sector.
- **Digital capacity and transformation:** The city’s cultural system and its key institutions are in need of reform: in governance, infrastructure, brand and offer. Experts in innovation for museums, digitalisation and communications are needed to support a process of cultural infrastructure renewal. There are also collaboration opportunities for organisations and academics interested in connecting with Hanoi cultural organisations as they proceed to reform.
- **Urban planning and place-making:** Hanoi is an evocative, high density city with a patchwork of neighbourhoods interlaced with road, rail and waterways. It has the ‘fine grain’ that many urban planners from the West crave, but it has structural challenges such as a lack of green space (especially ‘pocket parks’), crumbling pavements, poor drainage and some development blight where historic buildings are insensitively replaced by new developments. Hanoi can then be a ‘playground’ for progressive urbanists - helping the city to renew without losing its essential qualities.
- **Cultural policy innovation:** Although Hanoi and Vietnam have made great strides in their approach to culture and the cultural industries, there are still significant policy and expertise gaps – e.g. on intellectual property, financial mechanisms, regulatory aspects, copyright infringement and censorship. The city and nation are keen to build policy dialogue and benefit from advice and support from experts in these fields.



A performance at Vietnam Design Week

© Vietnam Design Week 2020

<sup>(79)</sup><https://daibieunhandan.vn/van-hoa-con-nguoi-la-nguon-luc-noi-sinh-de-ha-noi-phat-trien-tehswakcox-52465>



# Huế

## Introducing Hue

City vision / mission / slogan  
Creative industries and cultural services

## Hue in numbers

### 1. What makes this city unique?

### 2. Context

Location / region  
Ethnic diversity  
Heritage status

### 3. Culture, arts and civic policy

Cultural funding  
Culture, environment and sustainability  
Culture and urban planning  
Culture and education

### 4. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Cultural institutions  
Creative hubs and marketplaces  
Festivals  
Movers and shakers

### 5. Opportunities

# Huế

Cultural Cities Profile,  
Việt Nam

# Introducing Hue

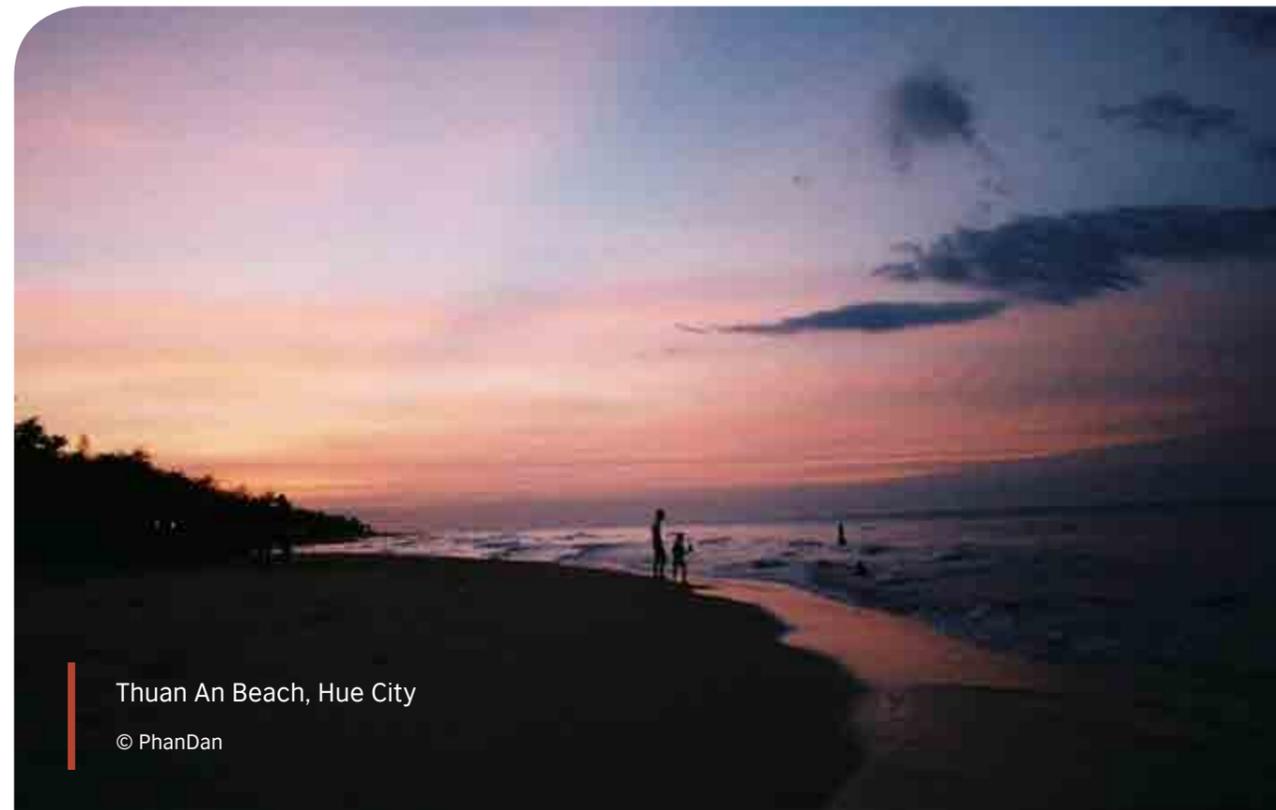
Hue is in Thua Thien Hue province, central Vietnam. A former historic capital of Vietnam between 1788 - 1945, Hue is one of the country's fastest-growing economic centres, with an average economic growth rate of 7.2% per year. The economic structure has shifted towards services and tourism has become a key economic driver.

The city is a longstanding cultural centre for both the Central Highlands and the country as a whole. Its history as the ancient capital of Vietnam has created a rich resource of cultural heritage, including the complex of Hue Monuments, woodblocks of Nguyen Dynasty, Nguyen Dynasty's Imperial Archives, Royal Literature on Hue Royal Architecture, Hue Royal Court Music, and the art of Bài Chòi (hut singing). Many of these tangible and intangible elements have been awarded with UNESCO titles.

Hue's success in the preservation and promotion of this cultural heritage has helped the city become a world- recognised cultural destination and festival host.

Recently, in acknowledging the role of creative industries within Hue, the city's cultural policies are increasingly prioritising the contemporary arts and creative scene. Independent initiatives such as creative hubs, contemporary arts spaces, art events and projects are now supported by the establishment of the Hue Institute for Development Studies (2018), the Hue Innovation Hub (2019) and the Hue Innovation Day Program (2020).

Meanwhile, both well-established and emerging Vietnamese contemporary artists including Hai Brothers, Andy Cao, No Cai Bum, Then Café, and Mua Space by But Chi have also found Hue as a city that can accommodate their creativity and experimentation. This recent trend is now strengthening and transforming Hue's cultural brand, adding creative value and diversifying the tourism industry.



Thuan An Beach, Hue City

© PhanDan

# City vision mission slogan

The city's stated vision is, by 2030, to become a major centre of:

- culture, tourism and healthcare in Southeast Asia;
- science, technology and high-quality multidisciplinary education in Vietnam.<sup>(1)</sup>

In realising this vision, the city government is aiming to develop tourism as a key economic sector and invest in information and communication technology and high-tech agriculture, while also preserving Hue's distinctive cultural heritage and identity as the ancient capital of the old Vietnam.



© Callum Parker on unsplash

# A heritage city A creative city

<sup>(1)</sup> Politburo's Resolution no. 54-NQ/TW on 10 December 2019 on the construction and development of Thua Thien Hue province to 2030, with a vision to 2045.

## Creative industries and cultural services

Based on national policy for the development of cultural industries and taking into consideration the city's existing resources and developmental context, Hue's local authorities are focusing on the development of a small selection of specific cultural industries: cultural tourism; performing arts; fine arts; photography; cinema; and advertising. Of these, cultural tourism is regarded as key, thanks to the city's UNESCO-recognised heritage as well as the surrounding coastal and natural landscapes.

In attracting domestic tourists and international tourists, the local government has initiated a series of large-scale cultural events, including the Biennial Hue Festival, the Hue Traditional Craft Festival, the Hue Cuisine Festival, and Hue Ao Dai Festival. While the city's cultural and arts events are aligned largely with domestic and international tourism, this has helped create a taste for arts and culture among the local community. Most of those festivals are well-established, regular and publicly-funded, making them well-known and easily-accessible by the general public and local communities.

In terms of fine arts, regular exhibitions held by Hue Association of Fine Arts have found a small but stable audience. Occasional art and cultural events are also held by institutions such as Institut Français in Hue, Le Ba Dang Memory Space, Hue Cultural Museum, and Diem Phung Thi Art Exhibition House.

Independent artist-run art spaces, such as New Space Arts Foundation, Then Cafe, Mờ Đơ, Mua Space, have recently emerged actively. However, these are still all relatively small-scale, privately-funded and less well-known by local communities and tourists.

**“For a long time Be Cafe has been working with New Space Arts Foundation. I worked as translator and art talk organiser for Lê Brothers and other spaces – including Mờ Đơ and Then Cafe. I realised that there was a lack of art spaces in Hue... I have been a coordinator for the American NGO Rock Paper Scissors for 5 years, I teach children art on Sundays, so I want to open the door to a more diverse audience. In Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, I see that there are many art ‘dishes’ for everyone, so I wish that here we will also have events for our young enthusiasts. That’s why I created this multi-purpose space”**

–Dang Lam Phuong, owner of Be Cafe – a popular venue for art events<sup>(2)</sup>

<sup>(2)</sup> Interview by research team





# Huế in numbers

## Total population

in 2019 is **≈1.1M**  
with **558,000 urban**  
residents and  
**570,000 rural**  
ones

Year of constitution

**1899**

Demographic  
composed of

**95.11% Kinh**  
people

## No Cai Bum Contemporary Art Week

in 2019 was  
participated by  
**56 Vietnamese**  
contemporary  
**artists** and attended by  
international art lovers from  
across the region

Average life  
expectancy:  
**71.7 years**  
**old** in 2020



Total Area:

**71,68 km<sup>2</sup>**

Hue's total revenue from  
**tourism**  
in 2019 was

**USD\$490m**



Hue's **GRDP**  
per capital is  
**USD\$2,007**  
in 2019



The city attracted  
**4.8m tourists**  
in 2019 and among these,  
**45%** is  
**international**  
tourists

**7 UNESCO**  
tangible and intangible  
cultural heritage  
**titles, 1,000**  
**relics and**  
**historical sites,**  
and **100 folk**  
**festivals**

# 1. What makes this city unique?

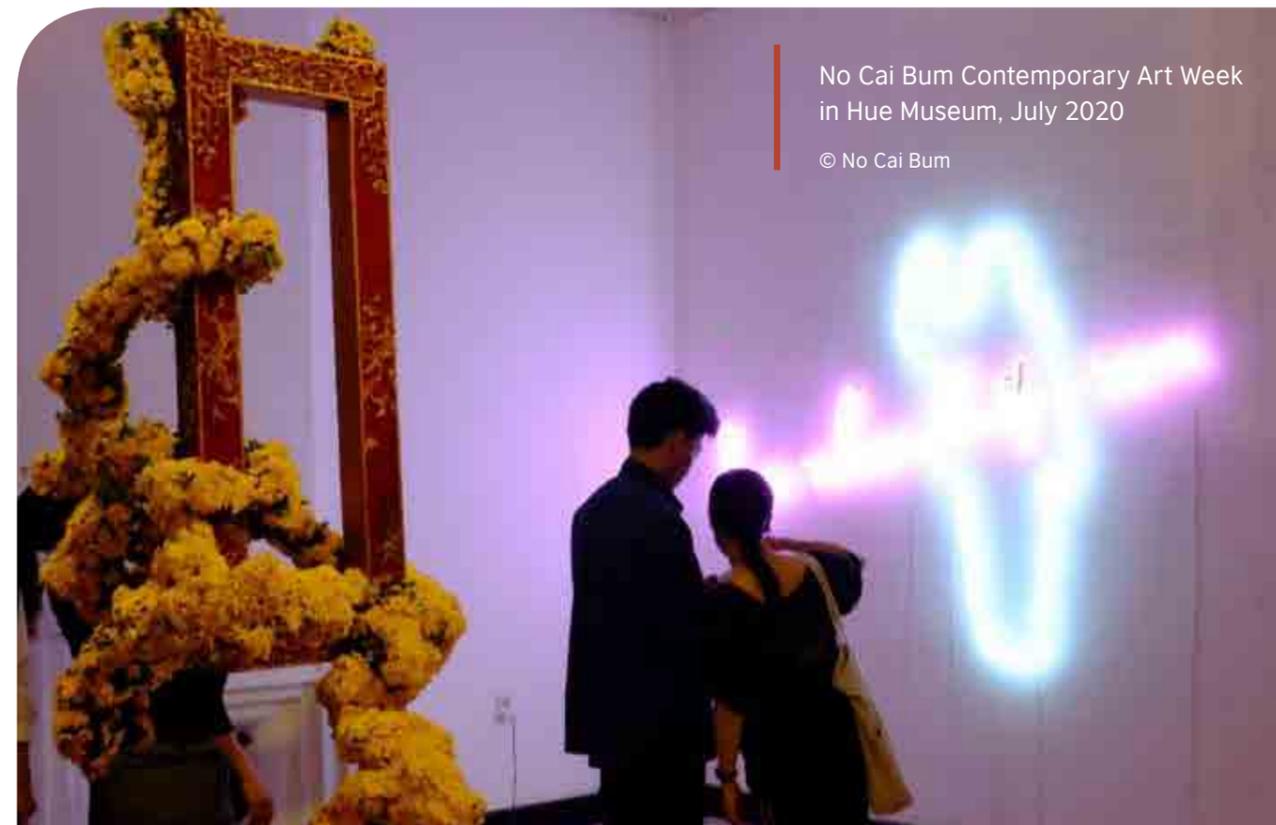
Hue (Huế) culture represents a historic blend of village folkloric traditions with royal scholarly culture, forming an excellent environment for both cultural tourism and the flourishing of creative and arts activities.

As capital of the Nguyen Dynasty, the royal scholarly culture helped develop strong traditions of poetry, music, dance, architecture and decorative arts. Yet the city is also surrounded by villages whose agricultural traditions are reflected in Hue's local customs and practices in farming, horticulture and crafts-making, as well as folk beliefs, traditional annual festivals and spiritual practices.

Today Hue is still home to multiple architectural and intangible royal heritage and folk traditions, and acts as a representative of the culture in the Central regions: the cultures of Dong Son - Sa Huynh, of Vietnamese ethnicities, and of Cham, Chinese, Indian, and French peoples.

**“Pronounced ‘hway’, this deeply evocative capital of the Nguyen emperors still resonates with the glories of imperial Vietnam.”**

– Lonely Planet



No Cai Bum Contemporary Art Week  
in Hue Museum, July 2020

© No Cai Bum

## The city is a new host for contemporary arts, creativity and cultural industries for craft, cuisine and design

Thanks to its history, the city has an abundance of diverse cultural assets and natural beauty, and well-developed cultural facilities such as museums and public spaces. The scale of contemporary arts and the volume of creative industries in Hue is small, yet the city offers room for creative individuals who wish to seek for inspiration and materials for their contemporary activities. The city's No Cai Bum Contemporary Art Week in 2019 involved participation of 56 Vietnamese contemporary artists, attended by international art lovers from across the region.

## Local authorities are supportive of innovation, creative startup and digital transformation

As the city seeks to realise its vision of becoming both a centrally- managed, smart media city and a cultural centre of Southeast Asia, the city authorities are keen to support creative development through initiatives such as Hue Smart City project, Hue Innovation Day, Hue Innovation Hubs, the Startup Club, and the Hue Institute for Development Studies, as well as through sponsoring the city's application to join the UNESCO Creative City Network as a City for Cuisine or Design.

## A changing cultural landscape

The development of cultural tourism over two decades has helped bring the city a large international audience.

With its unique historical position as former capital of Vietnam, combined with a rich cultural heritage and beautiful landscape, the economic development of the city over the last two decades has mainly relied on tourism.

Annually, the city welcomes visits from around 3-4 million tourists, approximately 45-50% of whom are international visitors.

Hue's culture and arts are the primary reason they travel to this destination, and the tourists who visit Hue tend to stay for longer periods of time in order to immerse themselves in experiencing Hue's culture.

- Hue's total revenue from tourism in 2019 was VND11.300 billion (USD\$490m).

- Revenue from tourism has contributed significantly to the city public budget, part of which has been used to preserve and safeguard the city's cultural assets, to organise cultural and arts events, and to promote the city tourism's "heritage city" brand.

(Source: Resource & Environment Newspaper)

## Unique heritage offers

Hue hosts a unique intangible heritage which is the combination of both imperial and folk cultures, including royal cultural activities, festivals, music and dance, and traditional crafts.

**“A city where tangible and intangible heritage co-exist and where new hubs and art spaces are shaping a new generation of creative expression.”**

Hue city has the single largest number of UNESCO-listed heritage items:

- 1 tangible heritage (Complex of Hue Monuments, listed 1993),
- 3 intangible heritages (Nha Nhac - Vietnamese court music, listed 2003; The practice of the belief in Mother Goddesses, listed 2016; and The art of Bài chòi singing, listed 2017), and
- 3 documentary heritages (Woodblocks in the Nguyen Dynasty, listed 2009; Nguyen Dynasty's Imperial Archives, listed 2014; and Royal Literature on Hue Royal Architecture, listed 2016).

Hue is home to more than 100 folk festivals.

- These traditional events have been preserved, restored and promoted to serve the cultural needs of the local population as well as contributing to local economic development through tourism activities and services.
- Key events in the annual calendar include: Sinh Village wrestling competition; Thai Duong village Cau Ngu festival; and Hien Luong village ceremony to worship the forging god.

In addition, Hue is surrounded by unique natural heritage sites including Huong River, Tam Giang-Cau Hai lagoon, Lang Co-Chan May bay, and Bach Ma national forest.

# 2. Context

In 1802, after reunifying the old Vietnam, King Gia Long “stationed the capital in Phu Xuan, the new name Kinh Su (Capital)”, formalising a process of urbanisation in the area now known as Hue that began in 1636, when Lord Nguyen Phuc Lan moved his residence to Kim Long.

Hue was an informal name for the royal Citadel given during the early French colonial period. It was not until 1899, under the influence of the colonial government, that King Thanh Thai acted to establish Hue town (Center urbain de Hué) in the area surrounding the capital area and along the southern bank of the Huong River.

## Location / region

Hue city lies on the coast at the centre of the country. It is connected through the North-South axis of routes, railways, air and sea routes, close to the East-West corridor of the Trans-Asia Route.

As the capital of Thua Thien Hue Province, Hue is 675 kilometres away from Hanoi and 1,060 kilometres from Ho Chi Minh City. The city has an established transportation system with connections to the capital city Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and many other cities and provinces.

## Ethnic diversity

Kinh people are the majority ethnic group within Hue, at 95.11%. Other minorities include: Tà Ôi, Cơ Tu, Bru-Vân Kiều, Chinese, Tay, Ngái, and Muong. Most of these ethnic communities are now based in the rural areas of Thua Thien Hue Province.

<sup>(3)</sup> <https://vov.vn/van-hoa-giai-tri/di-san-van-hoa-o-da-nang-tai-nguyen-du-lich-hap-dan-856837.vov>

<sup>(4)</sup> These include the Citadel Wall, the Imperial Citadel and Forbidden City, the tomb system of Nguyen Kings, An Dinh Palace, Trai Palace, the Royal Port, Tran Binh Dai, Tran Hai Thanh, Hon Chen Palace, Tu Cung Queen's House, Temple of Literature, Thien Mu pagoda, Vo Mieu, and Hai Van Pass. Many of these present a unique combination of the principles of Vietnamese traditional architecture and Eastern philosophical thinking, as well as influential features of Western military architecture, all situated in harmony with a natural environment of landscape, rivers, mountains and beaches.

## Heritage status<sup>(3)</sup>

Hue's heritage inventory consists of nearly 1,000 relics, monuments and cultural resources with a diverse history, cultural value, format, and structure.

In term of tangible heritages, Hue contains a large number of imperial architectural complexes and structures, including imperial palaces, traditional houses, temples and pagodas.<sup>4</sup>

The heritage resources that Hue city has accumulated and maintained for hundreds of years are now regarded as the most valuable cultural assets for the city and its local communities. They are both a source of cultural pride and material benefit, central to the city's economic development through cultural tourism. According to the city's newly-revised development policy, Hue's strategic priority is to continue preserving and promoting its ancient heritage and cultural identity in order to ensure sustainable development and maintain tourism as a central component of the city's economic structure.



Thien Mu Pagoda, Hue City

© PhanDan

# 3. Culture, arts and civic policy

Hue city as a whole is considered a living museum in which tangible cultural sites, such as imperial complex, palaces, garden houses, religious buildings and artifacts, are intertwined with examples of intangible cultural such as festivals, crafts, performing arts, music, cuisine, creating a distinctive and unique tradition of culture and arts.

Existing policies for culture and arts prioritise cultural tourism development and the preservation and promotion of existing heritage. This focus is retained within Thua Thien Hue province's largest and recent development policy, Resolution no. 54-NQ/TW, issued in December 2019.

Many cultural and art activities in Hue, including Hue Festival, Hue Craft Village Festival, Hue Long Dress Festival, plus various exhibitions, performing arts or public art installations, are directly aligned with the implementation of both this policy as well as previous policies on tourism and heritage. As such, the implementation of these events has become increasingly integral to the city's overall development, and not just associated with the products of tourism development or heritage management.

## Key policies

### Politburo's Resolution no. 54-NQ/TW, 2019: Building and developing Thua Thien Hue Province to 2030, with a vision to 2045

The policy aims to build and develop Hue into a city directly under the central government on the foundation of preserving and promoting values of the ancient capital heritage and Hue cultural identity; with its cultural, heritage, ecologic, landscape and environmentally-friendly, smart-city characteristics. Key targets include:

- By 2025, Hue is a city under the direct administration of the central government.
- By 2030, Hue is one of the major unique centres of Southeast Asia in culture, tourism and healthcare; one of the country's major centres in science, technology, and high-quality multidisciplinary education.
- By 2045, Thua Thien Hue is a province of Festival, a unique and specialised cultural, educational and healthcare centre of Asia.

### Policies on tourism development of Hue

Thua Thien Hue province's master plan on tourism development 2013-2020 aimed to develop Hue tourism by ensuring its sustainability, quality and competitiveness. The plan is directly associated with the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage values, the city's landscape, and environment protection. Based on the plan, by 2030, Hue will become the 1st class cultural and heritage destination, both nationally and regionally.

In implementing this masterplan, the city undertakes an annual review of programs and activities, informing both the improvement of tourism infrastructure and human resources, and the creation of new tourism products.

### Hue city's policies on heritage preservation and promotion

The city inventory contains almost 1000 heritage assets and elements (tangible, intangible) registered for intensive care and protection. In this field, the city continues to:

- restore and preserve the Imperial Complex of Hue: since 1993, more than 130 structures and parts of this complex and the surrounding landscape have been restored and preserved. In 2019, 16 related projects were carried out by the city with a public budget of USD\$ 4.3m.
- collect, research, revitalise, safeguard and promote its rich and profound intangible cultural heritage, including craft, festivals and rituals, costumes, cuisine, and arts. Key examples include: Ca Hue singing; Nha Nhac imperial court music; Bai Choi singing; Phuoc Tich ceramic; paper art; and local cultural knowledge.

“In the strategy to preserve and develop the culinary heritage of Hue, the goal of becoming ‘The Creative City of UNESCO Cuisine’ together with ‘The culinary capital of Vietnam’ and ‘UNESCO Heritage’ will be the three pillars creating a foundation to maximise potentials and strengths for the city. These three focuses will strengthen the city's position as an influential and unique cultural centre in Vietnam. It will also elevate the profile of Hue's cuisine on the wider international stage.”

–Dr. Le Anh Tuan, researcher, Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies, Hue Office<sup>(5)</sup>

## Cultural funding

Funding for culture and arts in Hue has accounted for up to 80% of direct investments in heritage conservation and promotion. Hue has the highest levels of investment in cultural heritage when compared to other cities and provinces in Vietnam.

Over the past 22 years, state and local government has invested USD\$65m in collection, restoration, conservation, research and promotion of Hue's heritage, and this level of investment is increasing. In 2019, 16 city-funded heritage conservation projects were carried out with a public budget of USD\$4.3m.

The Hue Monuments Conservation Center received more than USD\$ 5.2m investment and support from individuals and organisations to restore and remodel Hue Nam Dien relics (Hon Chen)<sup>(6)</sup>. In addition to public funding, private funds and aid agencies have also contributed significantly to heritage conservation, particularly in relation to the Imperial Complex of Hue City.

A similar approach has been applied in tourism development, where city programmes have been funded by the provincial and city budget. Additionally, public-private partnerships have been encouraged by the city government: greater levels of private support and investment have recently contributed to tourism projects such as Hue Festival 2018, which received financial support from Carlsberg Việt Nam, Agribank, Vietnam Airlines, Jetstar Pacific Airlines and from the family of artist Trinh Cong Son.

“The next 10 years is the time when we have to invest a lot in cultural institutions. A worthy cultural centre, international convention centre; the theatre must also be beautiful; Museums and libraries are also attractive places to visitors. If we want to organise world-class cultural events, we must have an adequate cultural institution.”

– Dr. Phan Thanh Hai, former director of Hue Monuments Conservation Center; Director of the Department of Culture and Sports of the province<sup>(7)</sup>

Private funding for contemporary cultural and arts activities is still limited, yet is growing in potential with the development of Hue's profile as a home for contemporary arts and creative industries. No Cai Bum Contemporary Art Week 2019 was funded by NEST Studio, Mơ Đơ Art Space, Symbioses Project, and by participating artists themselves. In 2021, a community art project “Bờ Thành”<sup>(8)</sup> initiated by Mơ Đơ Art Space will take place in Hue with financial support from the Cultural and Creative Hubs Vietnam Project.



<sup>(5)</sup> <http://tintuc.hues.vn/thanh-pho-sang-tao-ve-am-thuc-cua-unesco/>

<sup>(6)</sup> <https://baotintuc.vn/van-hoa/nhung-ket-qua-quan-trong-trong-cong-tac-trung-tu-bao-ton-co-do-hue-20191124081101035.htm>

<sup>(7)</sup> Interview by research team

<sup>(8)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/BritishCouncilVietnam/photos/a.3743764505709331/3768050073280774/>

## Culture, environment and sustainability

According to the national and city resolutions for Hue's socio-economic development 2021-2030, with a vision to 2045, Hue city will continue to protect the city environment and by 2025, Hue should be the city with "green landscape" where historical architecture is blended in harmony with natural resources such as Huong river, Lang Co beach, and Bach Ma National Park.

The city's objective is for all organisations, businesses, individuals and households to develop their awareness of environmental protection, and to ensure no environmental pollution in urban and natural settings. Thua Thien Hue province and Hue City, following those umbrella policies, have been implementing many practical solutions to limit the impact of waste on the environment. These include the no-plastic bag campaign, the Green Sunday and Green Huong River programmes, the "Report from the field" app, and severe punishments for the violation of environmental protection laws.

## Cultural and environment case studies

### "Green Sunday" project, 2019

Initiated in January 2019 by Hue city government, this project aimed to change people's awareness and action on environmental protection by mobilising the city population to the streets every Sunday morning to clean up, pick up trash, and plant trees to protect a clean urban landscape environment.<sup>(9)</sup>

### Hue 'city with 4 seasons of flower' project, 2019

The project aimed to improve the green area in the city by designating selected streets as 'four-season flower roads' and establishing seasonal flower-beds in offices, schools, parks, road separators, and pavements. The project has helped to improve the living quality of local people and visitors.

## Culture and urban planning

Culture and heritage clearly play a key role in Hue City's urban planning and development, both in terms of the inputs and outcomes of the city's planned regeneration and urbanisation.

As part of Thua Thien - Hue province's 2019 development master plan, Hue city is seeking to strengthen the management and implementation of urban planning and planning-related projects on public spaces, bus stations, and other civic infrastructure, particularly in order to maintain Hue's cultural characteristics and ensure harmony between heritage architecture and the natural landscape. Key interventions include: re-planning the city's central urban space; restoring all major relics in Dai Noi (Imperial City) area, Gia Hoi old quarter, Chi Lang and Bao Vinh; preserving the old town, traditional houses, garden houses, and Phuoc Tich ancient village.

## Cultural and environment case studies

### "Art and Cultural Space in Hue City Centre", 2018<sup>(10)</sup>

In 2018, the City approved a plan for the establishment of "Art and Cultural Space in Hue City Centre" in order to create a system of art centres, galleries, and museums between Phu Xuan bridge and Truong Tien bridge. The goal is to develop a cultural space for the general public and create an attractive destination for tourists that also contributes to socio-economic development of the city.

- The project included a range of interventions including the redesign of public spaces, upgrading of cultural and arts infrastructure and facilities, the introduction of new cultural and art products and activities, and the application of digital technology for culture and arts.
- The project was implemented from 2018-2020 and its outcomes have helped to transform the cultural landscape of the city centre. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the impact of this project has not been evaluated.<sup>(11)</sup>

### "Bờ Thành" (Citadel's banks), 2021

This art event, initiated by Mơ Đơ<sup>(12)</sup>, is part of the "In Progress" Art Festival<sup>(13)</sup>, funded by British Council within the framework of the Vietnam Cultural and Creative Hubs Project. Set within a historic location of households around the Hue Imperial Citadel Protection Zone I, it involves a programme of site-specific activities involving visual display, performances, art tours and a "Farewell" market, through which artists and local audiences interact with this historical space on the edge of the Hue Citadel. It is anticipated that this contemporary art project will also contribute to the city authorities' ongoing survey on the needs of the city communities recently relocated from Citadel Zone I to Huong So ward.

<sup>(9)</sup> <https://baotainguyenmoitruong.vn/thua-thien-hue-tiep-tuc-day-manh-phong-trao-ngay-chu-nhat-xanh-305915.html>

<sup>(10)</sup> <https://congthuong.vn/thua-thien-hue-phe-duyet-de-an-khong-gian-van-hoa-nghe-thuat-trung-tam-thanh-pho-hue-110223.html>

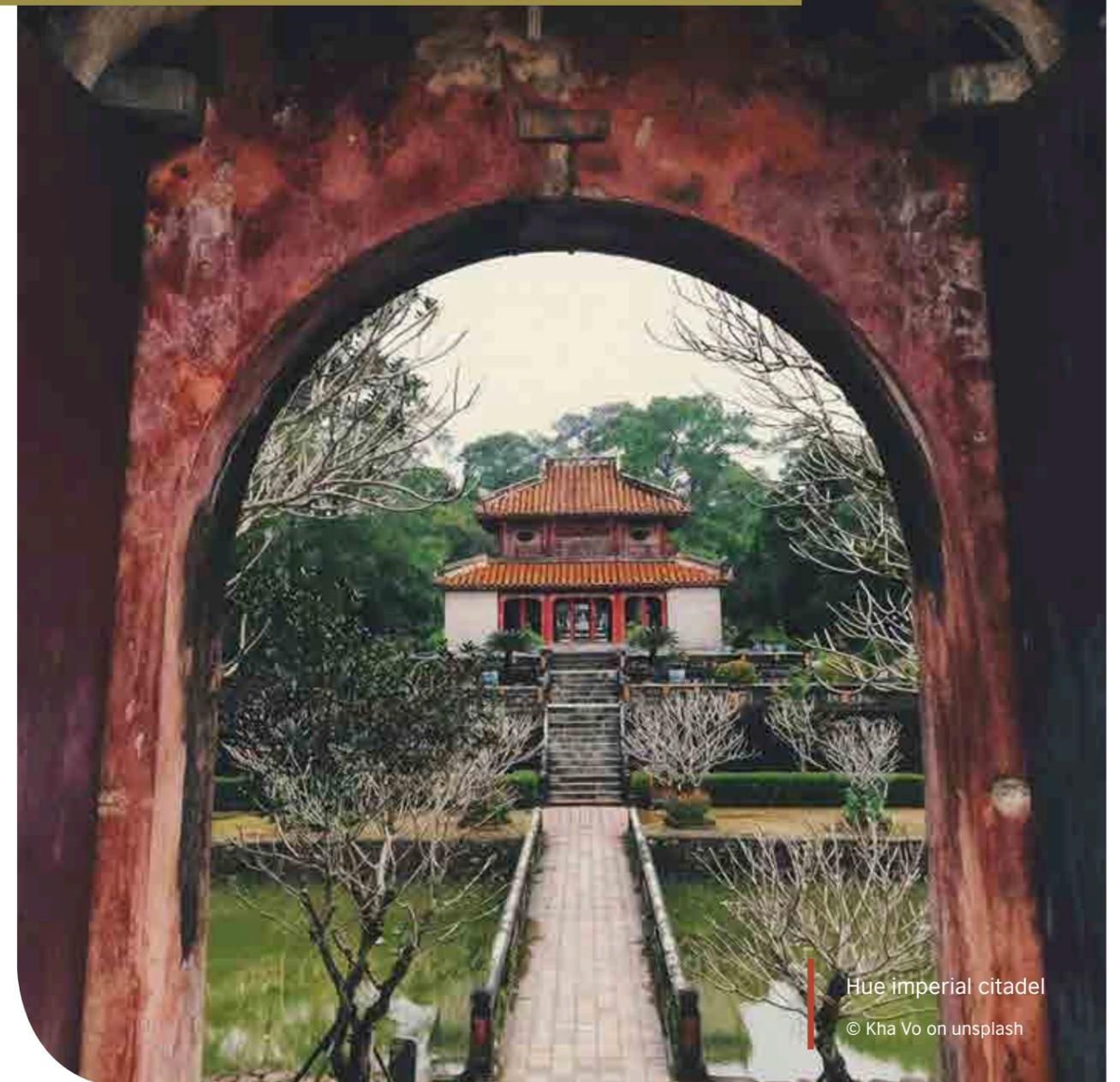
<sup>(11)</sup> <http://huecity.gov.vn/DuLich/NewCatId/54/NewVid/19513>

<sup>(12)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/M-%C6%A0-%C4%90-%C6%A0-2026996810935856>

<sup>(13)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/events/2849907568599845>

"Our model is open to all, for example, for people who haven't known how to enjoy art, who Le Ba Dang is, a visit [to Le Ba Dang Memory Space] can allow them to learn more and inspire them. What the artist wished for is also educating people on aesthetic sense. In the West, many spend their weekends visiting museums and then share their ideas in online discussions. We want to cultivate more people like that, because after an extended period of time working with Dang, I was immensely influenced and feel a responsibility to spread knowledge on true beauty and emotions. There have been times when we maintain our operation even without guests. There have been times when people came here assuming that museums were free-entry, but after the visit, they took a picture of the ticket and wrote a long review for our space."

– Hoang Thi Le Phuong, deputy director of Le Ba Dang Memory Space



Hue imperial citadel

© Kha Vo on unsplash

## Culture and education

In Hue city, formal education and professional training in culture and art has been offered mainly at Thua Thien – Hue College of Culture and Arts<sup>(14)</sup> and Hue Academy of Music<sup>(15)</sup>, through their diversified professional cultural and arts courses. Another key institution is the Hue College of Arts of Hue University<sup>(16)</sup>, established in 1957 as Hue College of Fine Arts, which offers courses in painting, graphic design, graphics, sculpture, fashion design, interior design and fine art pedagogy.

Recently, with the emerging trend of creative and innovative startups among young creatives in Hue, several public-run institutes are offering a number of courses in creative knowledge and skills. These include Hue Innovation Hub, Hue Institute for Development Studies, HISC - Hue Innovation & Startup Center<sup>(17)</sup> and Hue University Center of Entrepreneurship and Innovation<sup>(18)</sup>.

Non-formal education for arts and culture in Hue are still only in small volume, as the city's creative industries and contemporary arts is only beginning to develop. Examples include: paper art classes at artist Phan Hai Bang's Truc Chi Project, free painting workshops at Mua Space of But Chi, and the Rock Paper Scissors Children's Fund.

**“The city should have an art education network, because art education will interact with families and society, thus there must be people who understand, there must be a network. Now however there is such a small number of students that many university faculties were closed - including sculpture and graphic designs - leaving only fine arts.”**

– Le Thanh Hai (of Le Brothers) of New Space Arts Foundation

## Culture and education case studies

### “Hue Bookcase” project, 2020

This project aims to introduce and promote Hue culture of valuable books, develop a reading culture, and explore the humanities heritage of the ancient capital.

### Ca Hue Art Heritage in Schools Programme, 2019

Thua Thien Hue College of Culture and Arts and the city's Cultural Heritage Management Division have collaborated with secondary schools in Hue city to raise awareness of and engage younger generations Hue's heritage<sup>(19)</sup>. The programme included a training workshop for school music teachers, support for the teachers to establish traditional music clubs within the schools, and teaching pupils on Hue's musical traditions such as Ca Hue (Hue folk singing).

### Hue Innovation Hub, 2019

Founded by Thua Thien Hue Institute for Development Studies, the centre provides short-term training in business management, information technology, innovation for businesses, organisations and individuals. It also provides additional and up-to-date knowledge and skills for students and young people who want to launch a startup. Other than training, the Hub also functions as a startup incubator and a co-working space, one of the first of its kind in Hue city.<sup>(20)</sup>

<sup>(14)</sup> <http://cdvht-tthue.edu.vn/?catid=60>

<sup>(15)</sup> <http://hocvienamnhachue.edu.vn/vi/gioi-thieu-hoc-vien/>

<sup>(16)</sup> <http://hufa.hueuni.edu.vn/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/TRUONG-2017.jpg>

<sup>(17)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/hiscvn/>

<sup>(18)</sup> <https://thuathienhue.gov.vn/en-us/Investor/Investor-detail/tid/Hue-University-Center-for-Entrepreneurship-and-Innovation-inaugurated/newsid/3DF0FDC7-73C8-4E38-B3C2-A9C1009AC883/cid/A188E73D-A1A6-4843-A990-C4E40BC3B182>

<sup>(19)</sup> <http://baovanhoa.vn/%C4%91oi-song/giao-duc/artmid/583/articleid/24127/dua-di-san-ca-hue-vao-truong-hoc>

<sup>(20)</sup> <https://hueids.vn/dao-tao/>



# 4. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Hue city has a strong cultural and arts ecosystem, predominantly based on state institutes and public-run schools and universities rather than private and independent organisations.

Funded by the provincial and city public budget, most state and public institutions and their programmes focus on Hue's cultural heritage and its preservation and promotion, combined with cultural tourism development and traditional arts training and education. Through these bodies, the city's history, cultural identity, and heritage resources are well-recognised both by Vietnamese people and an international audience.

Private institutions and organisations often operate through public-private partnerships with key public institutions, or engage through partial investment or support for the city's cultural and arts programmes such as Hue Festival, the Hue Traditional Craft Festival, Hue Ao Dai Festival, and the Hue Cuisine Festival.

Independent or community-led initiatives such as New Space Art Foundation, Then Café, Mơ Đơ, Sông Như Art Gallery, Be Cafe, Trúc Chỉ garden play an increasingly important role in bringing contemporary arts to Hue.

“New Space Arts Foundation...has a balanced audience consisting of local and international audiences. They began operating quite early on, serving as the supporting platform for many artists of the following generations. They can also balance the relationships with both the authority and the underground art scene. Around 2010 – 2014, the space was very active with artist residency and exchange programs, exhibitions, talks, and more. Their location is provided by local authority and businesses, and they receive sponsorships for exhibition openings. The two founding artists themselves have been presented in multiple prestigious international exhibitions, which increases the space's credibility, and forms the connection between the local and international communities. Unfortunately from 2015 onwards, they have not been as active as before, especially when their location on Le Loi street is being recovered.”

– Nguyen Thi Thanh Mai, member of Mơ Đơ, organizer of No Cai Bum<sup>(21)</sup>

## Cultural institutions

Hue city has well-established public-run cultural institutions, thanks to its historical and political position in the Central region of Vietnam. Many public cultural and arts institutions within Hue are long-established and operate with stable administrative and financial support from local government.

Such institutions include Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities (founded in 1923), Thua Thien – Hue Museum of History (founded in 1989), Hue Cultural Museum, Museum of Nguyen Trade Ceramics, Hue Theatre of Traditional and Royal Arts, Hue Academy of Music, Hue Theatre of Traditional and Royal Arts, Duyet Thi Duong Royal Theater, Diem Phung Thi Art Exhibition House, Le Ba Dang Memory Space, Thua Thien Hue College of Arts, and the Hue Festival Centre.

## Cultural institution case studies

### Diem Phung Thi Art Exhibition House, est. 1975

Diem Phung Thi Museum displays 146 artworks of Diem Phung Thi Hue-born artist (1920 - 2002), a Vietnamese - French sculptor. Those artworks, together with her own villa, was gifted to Hue City after she passed away in 2002. The museum has been a key space for contemporary art since then.

### Hue Museum of Royal Antiquities, est. 1923

Hue Royal Antiquities Museum<sup>(22)</sup> was established in 1923 - one of the first museums in Vietnam. The museum maintains and displays many collections of ancient Hue, including royal antiquities in ranges of porcelain, enamelled bronze wares, royal attires, royal seals, musical instruments used in offering ceremonies, glass paintings, red lacquered and gilded and mother-of-pearl inlaid woodwork, etc. There is also a collection of unique and diversified Cham sculptures.

### Le Ba Dang Memory Space<sup>(23)</sup>

This space was established in memory of the late artist Le Ba Dang. Apart from showcasing artworks by Le Ba Dang and his wife Myshu, Le Ba Dang Memory Space also hosts events for lovers of fine art in general and Le Ba Dang's art in particular.

### Thua Thien – Hue College of Culture and Arts<sup>(24)</sup>, est. 1977

The College of Culture and Arts is under direct management of local government, and delivers courses on choreography and dance, cinema and film-making, theatre, acting, music and traditional performing arts, graphic design, and cultural courses such as library studies, cultural management, heritage preservation, and museum, event and festival management.

Students graduating from this college have played an important role in shaping the cultural and art landscape of Hue city as cultural and art administrators and managers and also as artists and cultural practitioners.



© Claudette Bleijenberg on Unsplash

### Hue Academy of Music<sup>(25)</sup>, est. 2007

The institute specialises in researching, preserving and promoting traditional music values, especially the musical heritage recognised by UNESCO such as: Hue Nha Music, The Central Highlands Gong culture space. The academy also provides training and capacity development in the field of music at high schools, universities and at postgraduate level. Other activities such as research and musical performance contribute to the preservation and promotion of Vietnamese music in the Central and Central Highlands region.

<sup>(22)</sup> <http://www.baotangcungdinh.vn/default.aspx?l=en>

<sup>(23)</sup> <https://lebadangmemoryspace.com/>

<sup>(24)</sup> <http://cdvht-tthue.edu.vn/?catid=60>

<sup>(25)</sup> <http://hocvienamnhachue.edu.vn/vi/gioi-thieu-hoc-vien/>

## Creative hubs and marketplaces

The number of creative hubs, creative enterprises and marketplaces in Hue City is relatively small, yet in recent years, their programs and initiatives have helped to change Hue city's position in the creative landscape of Vietnam. Prominent creative hubs and art spaces such as New Art Space Foundation, Then Café, and Truc Chi Garden have been working consistently hard to realise their own vision, mission and aims. These organisations are largely self-funded, but also operate with financial support from international organisations and artists.

“...small artist spaces like Then Cafe and Mơ Đơ. Their operation leans more towards contemporary arts of multiple types. Activities are of small scales and there is not much audience. Sponsorships mainly come from foundation funds and self-funding through businesses. Small as they are, their networks are wide. Their events and projects connect to other spaces in Vietnam, in the region and in the international community..”

– Mai, member of Mơ Đơ

### New Space Art Foundation, est. 2009

The New Space Art Foundation (NSAF)<sup>(26)</sup> is an independent art space in Hue city, founded in 2009 by the twins Le Duc Hai and Le Ngoc Thanh. With more than ten years' experience in coordinating multiple and different visual art activities, New Space Art gallery has organised more than a hundred of contemporary art events in Hue as well as elsewhere in Vietnam and abroad. Activities include exhibitions, talks, installation, art residencies, and community art projects such as The Sea Of Life exhibition (2019), Inner City Exhibition (2019), Le Brothers Party (2017), Sung Tieu Artist Talk (2016), and DMZ Party Performance (2016).

For the last decade, this space has been a pioneer and influencer of the contemporary art scene in Hue City. It has succeeded in establishing Hue on the contemporary art map by introducing contemporary arts to local communities and tourists, and connecting Vietnamese artists with international artists via various platforms for art exchange.

### Mơ Đơ, est. 2019

Established in April 2019, Mơ Đơ<sup>(27)</sup> is well-connected with contemporary art networks in Vietnam. Art spaces in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City often refer international artists to Mơ Đơ, which has hosted exhibitions, talks, film screenings, workshops, poetry readings, and more.

However, these networks are still quite scattered, and in the long-term, Mơ Đơ hopes to establish sustainable collaborative partnerships. “We think that if underground art spaces like us can connect and work with state/city departments in 3 to 4 years, maybe the situation will get better, connections and support will also be more generous” says -Mơ Đơ's Mai, who is also a member of Mekong Cultural Hub (2021 - 2022). For their project Bo Thanh in 2021, it is anticipated that the city will allow them to use Thuong Thanh in Hue Citadel as an event venue.

### Then Café, est. 2013

Located at 63 Le Trung Dinh in Hue, Then Cafe<sup>(28)</sup> was established by artist Tran Tuan in 2013. It is a compound coffee shop, gallery and co-working space for artists, architects and musicians in Hue.

Then Cafe has frequent international collaboration programs, working with Vietnamese artists on exchanges with Thailand, Indonesia, etc., as well as many other diverse activities in the local community. Then Café's programme acts as a catalyst, inspiring and motivating local artists through different types of art events and projects such as: music performances, visual art exhibition, art party, performance shows, experimental music, sound installations, and workshops.

### Làng Art Dorm<sup>(29)</sup>

Founded by Then Café and Gakka Gallery, Lang Art Dorm is an art residency program in Hue that aims to bridge the exchange between local and international artists. This hub regularly works with other creative hubs such as Mơ Đơ, and Then Café in Hue and As Space Experimental in Hanoi to organise residency projects and other art events and create a network for contemporary art practice.

<sup>(26)</sup> <http://www.newspacearts.com/>

<sup>(27)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/M-%C6%A0-%C4%90-%C6%A0-2026996810935856>

<sup>(28)</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/ThenCafe.Hue/events/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/ThenCafe.Hue/events/?ref=page_internal)

<sup>(29)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/langartdorm/>



Truc Chi Garden,  
Hue City

© PhanDan

## Festivals

Since the 2000s, Hue's local authorities have sought to establish Hue as a City of Festivals in Vietnam. The city's 2019 development master plan formalises this goal, planning by 2045 to establish Thua Thien Hue as a province of festival, and as a unique and specialised cultural, educational and healthcare centre within Asia. In addition to numerous traditional villages, crafts and religious festivals regularly taking place within local communities, the city has developed a number of large-scale cultural festivals aimed at domestic and international tourism. Les Brothers, the famous identical twin artists of Hue, are emblematic of the city's changing personality – from a heavy city of deep tradition to a new energy of internationalism, creative expression and adventure.

# Hue – ancient capital, new experience



## Festivals – case studies

### Hue Festival, est. 2000

The Hue Festival is an international festival of culture, arts, tourism. Commencing in 2000 with the support and cooperation of the French Government via the French Embassy to Vietnam, the 1st Hue Festival was planned in order to help restore the economy of Thua Thien Hue Province after floods in 1999. The festival was seen as a huge success. It took place over 12 days, involving more than 30 Vietnamese and French art groups, and over 1,000 artists and performers. It was attended by approximately 410,000 people, including 41,000 tourists and 6,000 foreign visitors.

Since then, Hue Festival takes place every two years, with the aim of promoting Hue's cultural heritages, developing tourism as key sector of city economy, and acting as a forum for international exchange in heritage, arts and culture.

After 10 Hue Festivals, the event has significantly contributed to reviving, preserving and promoting the rich and diversified cultural heritage of Hue and Vietnam, and created a strong international cultural brand for Hue city as A City of Festivals in Vietnam.<sup>(30)</sup>

### No Cai Bum Contemporary Art Week, est. 2019

No Cai Bum<sup>(31)</sup> is the first large-scale contemporary art event in Hue city. Co-initiated and organised by NEST Studio, Mo Do Art Space and the Symbioses project, with the support of sponsors and art community nationwide, the event took place over the course of a week in July 2019. 56 artists from across Vietnam exhibited in 6 spaces: Hue Museum of Fine Arts (Diem Phung Thi Art Center), Mo Do, NEST studio, Then cafe, Nam Mua and Hue University of the Arts. The festival also received support from public institutions such as Thua Thien Hue Department of Culture and Sports, Hue Museum of Fine Art, and Hue University-College of Arts, and independent artists such as Phan Hai Bang of Truc Chi Project,

Attended by hundreds of artists and art lovers, the event offered artists and art makers of different generations the opportunity to exchange and share ideas. The young art-loving community in Hue was also very enthusiastic about the inclusion of new art forms including contemporary dance, performance art, installation, and video art alongside traditional art forms.

No Cai Bum 2019 was an important driver within the current context of contemporary arts in Vietnam in general, and in Hue in particular. In 2021, using the same format, No Cai Bum will take place in Dalat city.

<sup>(30)</sup> <http://www.huefestival.com/c145/t145-1271/hue-festival-history.html>

<sup>(31)</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/nocaiBUM.hue/events/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/nocaiBUM.hue/events/?ref=page_internal)

### Vietnam Festival of Creativity & Design<sup>(32)</sup> est. 2020

Vietnam Festival of Creativity & Design is a national event taking place in Hanoi, Hue, and HCMC, and organised by RMIT University Vietnam, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS), and COLAB Vietnam. With contributions from across the creative industries, the festival is an opportunity for creative organizations and individuals to connect and celebrate contributions to creative culture.

By organising a series of creative activities that opens to all, Vietnam Festival of Creativity & Design 2020 actively contributed to the Vietnamese government's objectives, consolidating its exploration of the potential of culture in socio-economic development. Specifically, the festival helps to build a global brand for Vietnam and develop its local resources through establishing a "belt of creativity" — encouraging the expansion of UNESCO Creative Cities Network in Vietnam with events in Hanoi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City.

### Hue Traditional Crafts Festival, est. 2005

The biennial Festival aims to attract tourists to Hue, through the preservation and promotion of traditional crafts. The 9th edition Hue Traditional Crafts Festival 2021<sup>(33)</sup> will be a month-long event, scheduled to take place from 29 May to 26 June 2021. Titled "The quintessence of Vietnamese Craft", it features 56 Hue's traditional craft villages (84% of the city's craft villages) and 21 other craft villages from provinces in Vietnam. The programme will include a design competition; camps and workshop; Hue Long Dress Fashion Week – Living Heritage; Hue Book Fair 2021; Hue Culinary Festival; worshipping rituals and processions; as well as numerous fringe activities such as Hue Marathon Competition; Hue bronze trumpet festival; Hut Singing; Human Chess Competition; Rap music festival; Street magic; Kite Festival, and more.

<sup>(32)</sup> <https://vfcd.events>

<sup>(33)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/huefestival.official>



© Then Café

## Movers and shakers

When the Nguyen Dynasty established Hue as the capital of Vietnam in 1802, the city was a point of convergence for culture from across the country. Hue is no longer the capital city, but remains a major centre for education and training, and well-known as a place for study and intellectual exploration.

In this context, many talented individuals have chosen to use Hue as a base for their creative and cultural career, both in public and private sectors. With their commitment and will, they have helped shape and develop the cultural landscape of the whole city.

### Le Ngoc Thanh and Le Duc Hai of New Space Art Foundation

Le Ngoc Thanh and Le Duc Hai<sup>(34)</sup>, known as 'Le Brothers', are painters and performance artists, and the managers and artistic directors of NSAF since 2009. The twin brothers enrolled to study at Hue Arts University in 1992, and started to exhibit in 1996. Since then, having supported hundreds of arts projects and events, they are considered among the most prominent contemporary artists in Vietnam.

They chose to base themselves in Hue city in order to increase contemporary art appreciation amongst the general public. With diversified art programs including video art, performance art, installation, film screenings, workshops, art discussions and an annual residency programme, the two artists have helped to transform the art landscape of Hue into a more promising place for contemporary arts.

### Dr. Phan Thanh Hải, Director of the Department of Culture and Sports, former director of Hue Monuments Conservation Center

In 2018, Dr. Phan Thanh Hai was identified as one of 17 representative intellectuals of Thua Thien Hue province due to his lifetime contribution to the preservation and promotion of Hue cultural heritage, achieving the milestone of Hue becoming one of Vietnam's top five heritage destinations.

Since 2019, Dr. Phan was promoted to director of Thua Thien Hue Department of Culture and Sports, a position that enables him to contribute further to the heritage preservation and promotion in Hue.<sup>(35)</sup> He is a director of several innovative projects, including the application of GIS technology in both the management and conservation of Minh Mang Palaces and the management of Hue Royal Festival.

### Tran Tuan, Founder of Then Café

Artist Tran Tuan, was born and raised in Hue and graduated from Hue Fine Arts University. His installation artwork "Forefinger" was displayed in Singapore Biennale in 2014. Tran founded Then Café in 2013, one of the few independent art spaces in Hue city, now a familiar destination for young people and contemporary art lovers visiting Hue.

<sup>(34)</sup> <http://www.newspacearts.com/index.php/home/twinbrothers>

<sup>(35)</sup> <https://husta.org/tin-tuc/dien-dan-tri-thuc/tien-si-phan-thanh-hai-nguoi-tam-huyet-voi-cong-tac-bao-ton-phat-huy-2194>



A corner at Then Café

© Then Café facebook

# 5. Opportunities

Hue is an increasingly open and outward-looking city. Its festival sector and the flow of international tourism have elevated the city's cultural life and helped energise the city's economy so it can move beyond a city of heritage to a city of tomorrow. Hue city has organised a number of outward and inward missions for many years in order to seek opportunities for partnership, cooperation, international exchanges, foreign investment and funding, export opportunities for cultural goods and services and tourism promotion. From 2021, in addition to ongoing programmes on cultural heritage preservation, restoration and promotion, heritage tourism development, the following provide opportunity areas for collaboration:

- **Smart city:** Hue is undertaking an active process of re-imagining, with opportunities for architecture, design and digital to explore new approaches to city mobility, place-making, heritage animation, and environmental sustainability. The fragility of the city's heritage and natural environment require a sensitive approach to growth and development.
- **Creative city of Cuisine or design or craft (UNESCO Creative City Network):** Hue is exploring options to become a UNESCO Creative City. It would welcome collaboration with other UNESCO Creative Cities and with expert city-makers who can advise on sustainable and inclusive approaches to city development. The city would value structured and long-term exchange with other heritage cities which are undergoing a process of renewal.
- **Festivals:** Hue, perhaps more than any other city in Vietnam, is truly a city of festivals. From its strong track record in heritage festivals, Hue is becoming a hub for interdisciplinary cultural practice across its festival portfolio. This presents significant opportunities in cultural programming (e.g. for music, visual arts, performing arts and literature); for co-commissioning; and for festival management / production. Hue would benefit from an overarching festival strategy and development programme which lifts capacity and skills in its festival sector, coordinates programming and back-office functions, and generates new demand for cultural content. Hue could be a great R&D hub for artistic practice with festivals providing a hub and catalyst role.
- **Startups and Innovation:** Hue's emergent start-up scene, its higher education sector, and the growing network of hubs, provide a fresh opportunity for creative entrepreneurship and R&D. The heritage landscape, greenery and relatively relaxed pace of the city make for an excellent base in R&D and 'slow residencies' across different art forms.
- **Contemporary arts:** The city is aesthetically inspiring and it offers a chance to reflect, embrace its heritage, and develop new work. As evidence by Then Studio and New Space Arts, Hue can offer a sanctuary for artists looking for inspiration and a welcoming collaborative environment.

**“The city has the need for an expanded art education network, where it interacts with families and society. Education is key to help people understand contemporary art – for that to happen, we need more connections and networks.”**

– Le Thanh Hai (part of Le Brothers) of New Space Arts Foundation<sup>(36)</sup>

# Đà Nẵng

## Introducing Danang

City vision / mission / slogan

## Danang in numbers

### 1. What makes this city unique?

Location / region  
Ethnic diversity  
Heritage status

### 2. Culture, arts and civic policy

Cultural funding  
Culture and wellbeing  
Culture, environment and sustainability  
Culture and education

### 3. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Cultural institutions  
Creative hubs and marketplaces  
Festivals  
Movers and shakers

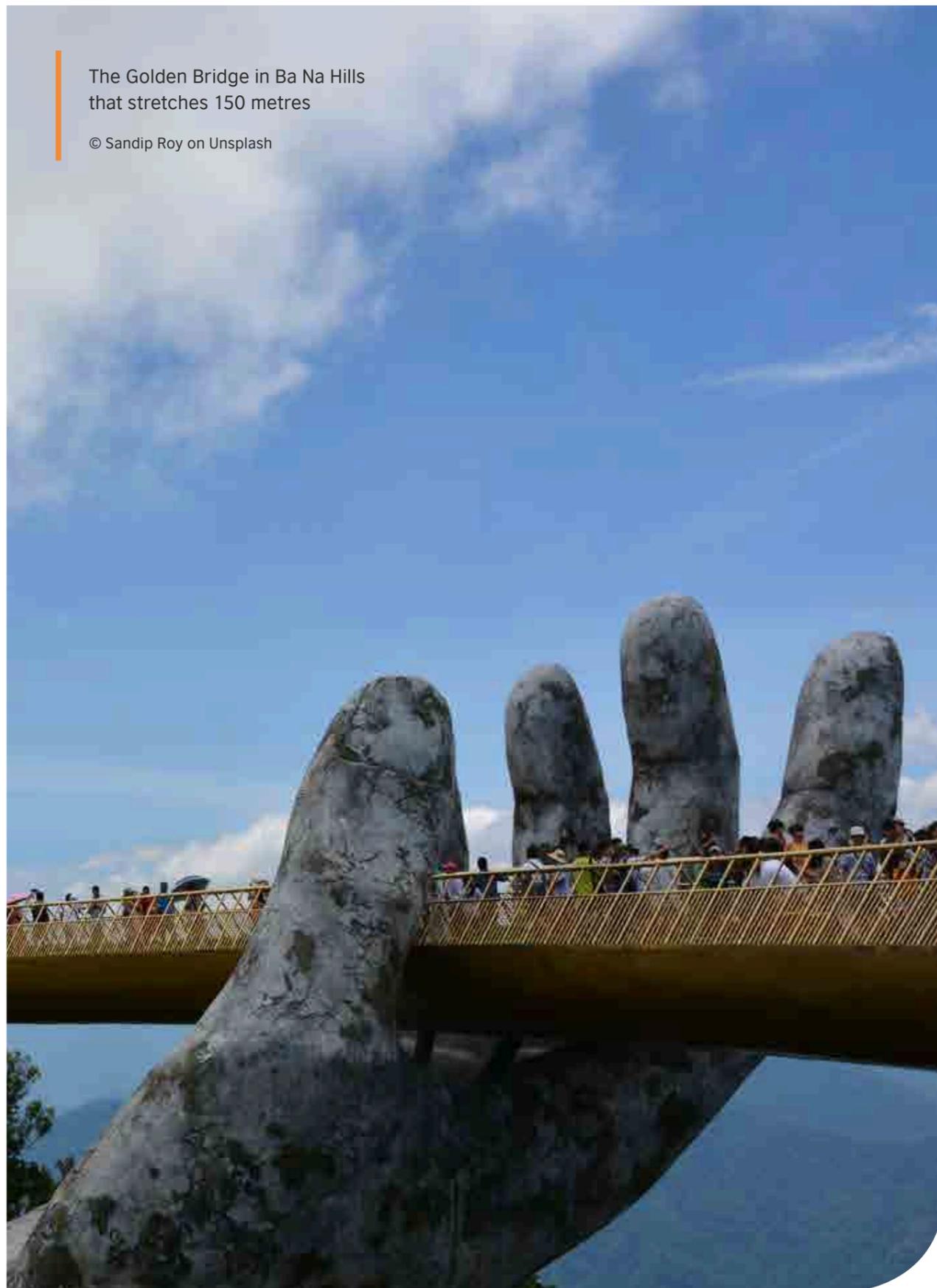
### 4. Opportunities

# Đà Nẵng

Cultural Cities Profile,  
Việt Nam

The Golden Bridge in Ba Na Hills that stretches 150 metres

© Sandip Roy on Unsplash



# Introducing Danang

Stretching across 35km of coastline in central Vietnam, Danang (Đà Nẵng) is one of the most vibrant, youthful and fast-growing cities in the country.

It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city in Vietnam and under the direct administration of central government.

The city has six urban districts (Hải Châu, Thanh Khê, Cẩm Lệ, Sơn Trà, Ngũ Hành Sơn and Liên Chiểu) and two rural districts (Hòa Vang and Hoàng Sa (Paracel Island)).

It combines high rise commercial districts and low-key settlements which string the coast or nestle inland. The city is known for its quality of life, the ease of doing business, and its beautiful setting, with famous beaches and sights such as My Khe beach, Marbled Mountain, and the Son Tra Peninsula which includes the infamous Monkey Mountain and Hai Van Pass.

Danang has an abundance of cultural heritage (both tangible and intangible), a portfolio of traditional festivals, crafts, cultural practices and beliefs; as well as newly-created cultural venues and events like Dragon Bridge, Han River Bridge, Golden Gate Bridge on Ba Na Hill, International Firework Festival. Together these resources have driven the growth of tourism in recent years, with visitors arriving at Danang International Airport also attracted to nearby Hoi'an.

The city's tourism industry saw an average growth of 5.5% in revenue in the 2016 – 2019 period. Tourism also contributes significantly to the city's GRDP (31.4% in 2019) and creates significant employment (50,963 in 2019). Post-Covid, a re-boot of the tourism sector is a major priority for the city.<sup>(1)</sup>

Since 2015, the local authority of Danang has recognised the role of creativity and innovation for future economic development, in addition to the strong tourism focus, they shifted their development approach toward building a startup ecology in the city. Danang Science and Technology Development Fund, Flying Fish Fund, DNES, and the Start-up Network Coordination Council are key players bootstrapping creativity and innovation. The creative ecosystem in Danang is still quite young, kickstarted by the National Strategy on Cultural Industries and the city's increasing attractiveness as a place where culture and technology converge. Since 2015, the city has incubated 137 innovation start-up projects, focusing on areas such as tourism, agriculture, healthcare, education, food, information technology, transportation and environment.<sup>(2)</sup>

Also, in implementing the National Strategy on Cultural Industries, the municipality has widened its focus beyond tourism and digital to sectors such as cinema, performing arts and music. The approach here is one of talent development (skills and capacity building, events and festivals), and infrastructure development (improving the quality of cultural facilities such as theatre, cinema and cultural centres, several creative hubs have emerged in Danang and a growing cohort of artists have chosen Danang to be their new base.

**“Danang is booming. Once seen by travellers as a mere gateway to Hoi An, this laid-back Central Vietnamese city of one million is now demanding time for itself.”**

– Lonely Planet <sup>(3)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> shared Truong Thi Hong Hanh - Director of the city's Department of Tourism at the 22nd Congress of Da Nang Party Committee of the 2020 - 2025 tenure

<sup>(2)</sup> Định hướng đúng cần tập trung nguồn lực. qdnd.vn. Retrieved from <https://www.qdnd.vn/kinh-te/cac-van-de/dinh-huong-dung-can-tap-trung-nguon-luc-641609>

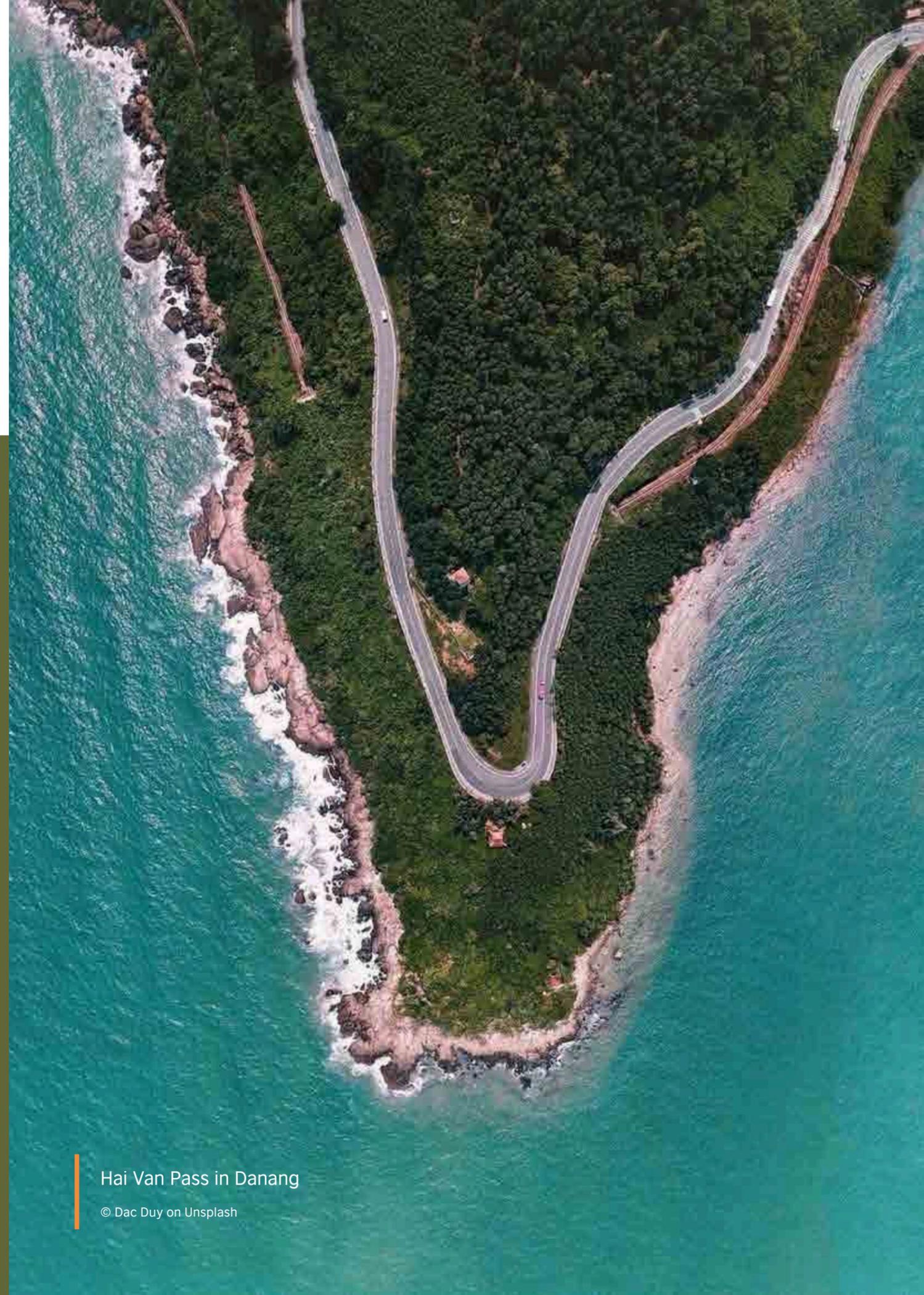
<sup>(3)</sup> <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/two-days-danang>

# City vision mission slogan

Danang's goal is to "build an eco-urban, modern and smart city, a city worth living in". The People's Committee of Danang City recently approved a major programme to establish Danang as a national innovation startup centre for the Central Region / Central Highlands. This will involve the development of a "modern, developed and prosperous city by 2030 and by 2045, to establish Danang as a leading technology and innovation hub in Asia".

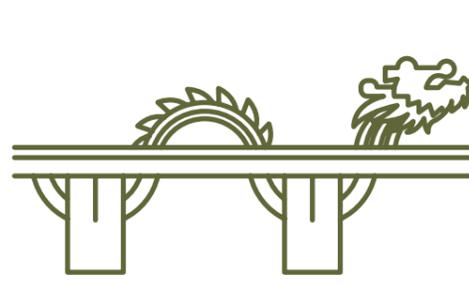
# "the most worth-living city in Vietnam"

– People's Committee of Danang City



Hai Van Pass in Danang

© Dac Duy on Unsplash



# Đà Nẵng in numbers

## Classification of the Cultural Industries

in Danang:  
Cinema, Performance Arts,  
Fine Arts, Photography and  
Exhibition, Advertising;  
Cultural tourism, Architecture,  
Handicrafts, and Design

Danang is the  
**3<sup>rd</sup> largest**  
in Vietnam and 1 of 5  
**1<sup>st</sup> class cities'**  
in Vietnam



Total Area:  
**1,283.42**  
**km<sup>2</sup>**

(Urban districts:  
**242.51 km<sup>2</sup>**  
Rural districts:  
**1,041.91 km<sup>2</sup>**)

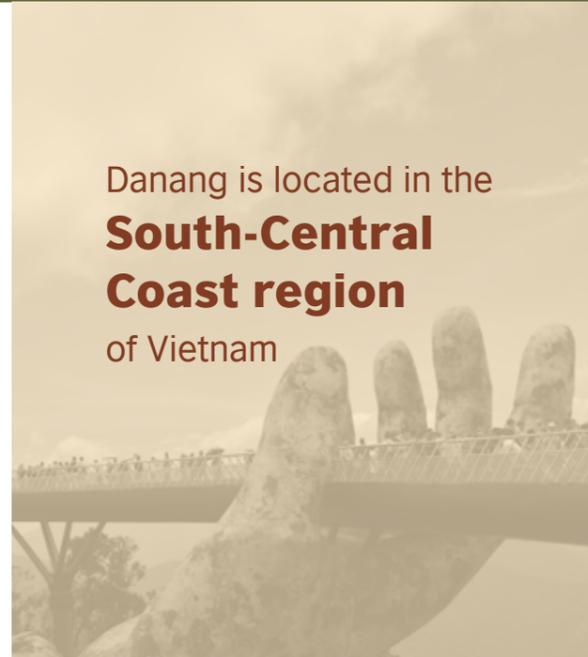


Ambition to be  
the leading  
**technology**  
**hub** in Asia  
by 2030



Average life  
expectancy:  
**75.6 years old**  
in 2020

Danang is located in the  
**South-Central**  
**Coast region**  
of Vietnam



**Danang**  
**Port**  
is the  
**3<sup>rd</sup> largest**  
port in Vietnam



Danang **GRDP**  
per capita  
**USD\$4,434**  
in 2020

**35 km long**  
**coastline**  
with many beautiful  
beaches including the  
famous My Khe beach

# 1. What makes this city unique?

**Danang city plays a vital strategic economic, administrative and cultural role for the central region and at a national level.**

In the mid-16th century, Danang was a small port for goods in transit and ship repair. It gradually developed into a commercial port in the early 18th century and by the early 20th century, the city was developed on a European model focusing on social infrastructure and manufacturing technology. It became one of the important trading centres of the country at that time. Many types of economic activity took shape and thrived, such as agricultural production, small-scale industries, export product processing, ship building and repair, and other services. This development history might help explain Danang's current strengths: industrious, entrepreneurial and youthful.

Danang has maintained its key economic and strategic position in the central of Vietnam. In recent years, the role of culture has come to the fore - as a driver for tourism and a contributor to the city's approach to wellbeing and quality of life. The city's spectacular coastal setting and its proximity to the ancient cities of Hue and Hoi'an, give it a role as gateway and hub for the wider region.

**“Nowhere in Vietnam is changing as fast as Danang. For decades it had a reputation as a provincial backwater, but big changes are ongoing. Stroll along the Han riverfront and you'll find gleaming new modernist hotels, and apartments and restaurants are emerging. Spectacular bridges now span the river, and in the north of the city, the landmark new D-City is rising from the flatlands. Venture south and the entire Danang Beach strip is booming with hotel and resort developments.”**

– Lonely Planet<sup>(4)</sup>

## Location / region

Danang city consists of a land area and an archipelago on the East Sea. On the mainland, its area lies between 15°55' and 16°14' North latitude - 107°18' and 108°20' East longitudes. Danang borders Thua Thien-Hue Province in the north, Quang Nam Province in the South-West, and the East Sea in the East.

Danang is situated in the centre of Viet Nam, 764km away from Hanoi and 964km from Ho Chi Minh City. It lies on the north-south transport axis of land, rail, sea and air routes.

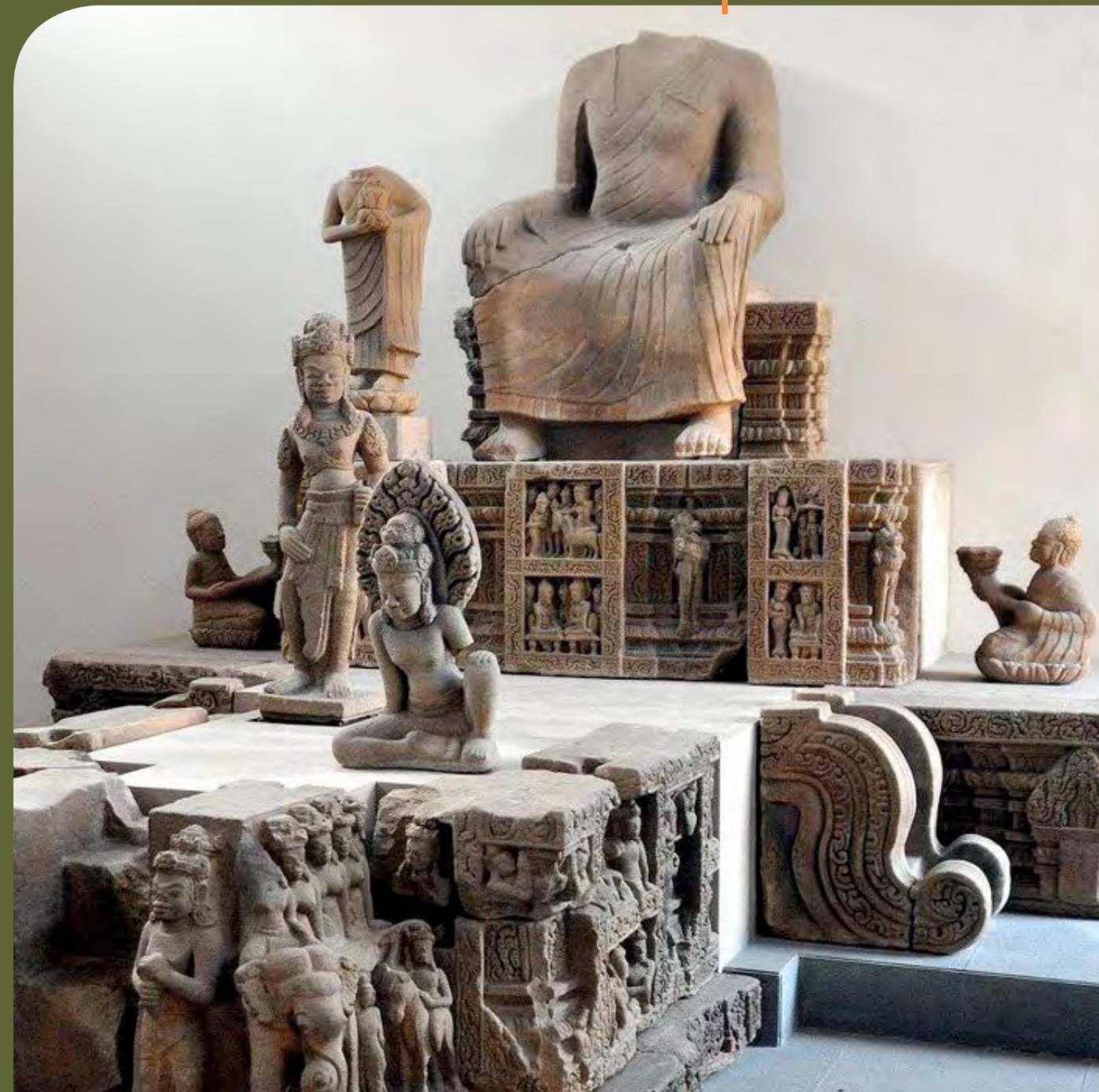
## Ethnic diversity

Kinh people are the majority ethnic group within Danang, at 99.74%.

Other minorities groups include Chinese, Co Tu, Tay, Ede, Muong, and Gia Rai: 0.053%

Museum of Cham Sculpture

© Vietnam Guide



<sup>(4)</sup> <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/a/nar/8cccfd-bd-c64a-4433-8099-87bda876b229/357869>

## Heritage status<sup>(5)</sup>

Danang city may not have the richest mix of cultural heritage assets compared with other localities in Vietnam, yet the city government has been effectively utilised and promoted its cultural heritage assets for the city's tourism development.

Currently, the city has 2 special national relic sites, 18 national listed sites and 51 city-level sites.

The special national scenic relic of Ngu Hanh Son includes 6 limestone mountains with many beautiful caves and many hundreds of years old pagodas such as Tam Thai, Linh Ung. The site preserves many artifacts such as epitaphs and valuable antiques such as Pho Da Son Linh Trung Phat stele in Hoa Nghiem cave. This was carved directly on to the cliff in 1640 by Zen master Hue Dao.

The national site, Historic Thanh Dien Hai, is an important fortress contributing to defeating the French colonial attack on Danang in the years 1858-1860.

Together with cultural and historical sites such as Hai Van Pass, Danang Museum, Museum of Cham Sculpture, K20 Revolution Base Area and Ngu Hanh Son Scenic Area, the city has a portfolio of cultural and historic monuments and sites. Many precious artifacts, antiques and artworks have been kept and displayed at Danang Museum and Museum of Cham Sculpture. These cultural institutions are making efforts to connect heritage to a contemporary creative city and enhance the city's cultural tourism offer.

**“We will create new products that connect city level heritage with national level cultural heritage – to enhance the cultural tourism experience. The role of local communities is critical in safeguarding and promoting the values of these heritage assets.”**

— Mr. Huynh Dinh Phuoc Thien,  
Director of Danang Museum<sup>(6)</sup>

Danang also has a range of assets of intangible cultural heritage, including folk literature, traditional performing arts, traditional festivals, crafts and folk knowledge. Danang City has 6 intangible cultural heritages enlisted at national level, including: Non Nuoc stone carving craft, Quang region's Tuong Art, Whale Festival, Bai Choi singing art, Nam O fish sauce making craft, Quan The Am Festival.

Tuong art is a typical example of Danang's heritage. The Nguyen Hien Dinh Opera House, built in 1967, still maintains weekly Tuong performances for locals and tourists.

Danang Tui's project showcasing local artisans through an augmented reality billboard

© Vietnam Guide



<sup>(5)</sup> <https://vov.vn/van-hoa-giai-tri/di-san-van-hoa-o-da-nang-tai-nguyen-du-lich-hap-dan-856837.vov>

<sup>(6)</sup> Interview by research team

## 2. Culture, arts and civic policy

Danang, in line with the national policies which link culture, economy and sustainable development, has identified a programme of overarching city-level priorities for culture:

- building a healthy cultural life and environment
- developing culture in politics and economics
- improving the quality of cultural activities
- developing cultural industries along with the cultural market
- actively integrating with the international community.

To deliver these priorities, the city has identified a programme of initiatives. These include:

- building a diverse cultural life and cultural infrastructure
- developing human capital that respond to the demands of Industry 4.0 while prioritising the resources for science and technology
- developing an ecosystem for innovation and start-ups, reinvigorating cultural enclaves
- creating vibrant cultural and arts events
- refining museums' identity and concept
- re-establishing and conserving heritage buildings and cultural practice<sup>(9)</sup>

These activities put culture and creativity to the heart of future development.

“Danang converges many favourable factors to develop the information technology industry in addition to geographical factors such as being a coastal city with a temperate climate, and owning an international airport, Danang has an open start-up policy, the tax exemption for IT companies in the first five years of establishment”. These things make Danang become the first choice to ‘live, relax and do Information technology’.”

– Nguyen Phuong Nhi, CEO of DNES<sup>(8)</sup>

### Key policies

#### Project “Develop Danang into a national innovation start-up centre in the Central region – Central Highlands”, 2020

The focus here is to support innovative and creative start-ups in the city via a favorable legal framework, financial incentives, and new infrastructure. According to the People's Committee of Danang City, from now to 2025, the city will step by step complete and develop an innovative start-up ecosystem, underpinned by projects with universities, research institutes, investors and related state agencies. The city will also develop regulations to encourage, support the coordinate cooperation among the components of the innovation startup ecosystem.

#### Plan No. 9585/KH-UBND on 24 November 2017 on the implementation of National Strategy of Cultural Industries Development in Vietnam to 2020, vision to 203 in Da Dang City, 2017

Cultural industries are to be developed in Danang as key service industries – contributing positively to the city's economic growth; responding to the needs of creativity and cultural enjoyment of the people; promoting the image of Danang; promoting progressive cultural values; and encouraging unity and socio-economic development.

### Danang Museum of Fine Arts

© Dinh Vu Nhat Hong



<sup>(7)</sup> Danang Party Committee issued Action program no. 36-CTr/TU, 13th August 2014

<sup>(8)</sup> Interview by research team

<sup>(9)</sup> Politburo's Resolution no. 43-NQ/TW on Building and Developing Danang City to 2030, with a vision to 2045

<sup>(10)</sup> Danang's Plan on Implementation of NSCI. Retrieved from <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Van-hoa-Xa-hoi/Ke-hoach-9585-KH-UBND-2017-thuc-hien-1755-QD-TTg-phat-trien-cong-nghiep-van-hoa-Da-Nang-380393.aspx>.

## Cultural funding

Funding for culture and arts activities in Danang come mostly from the city-budget, both from the annual budget and project-based funding. Public – Private Partnership (PPP) is also available, especially in the areas of IT, innovation start-ups, large scale cultural facilities and events. Private investment can be leveraged through the Danang Development and Investment Fund and Flying Fish Investment fund.

- Examples of PPPs include the DNES Business Incubator, Danang International Firework Festival and several of the city’s cultural landmarks.

Private investment in culture has become more common in recent years, especially for cultural tourism infrastructure – such as Ba Na Hills, Golden Bridge, 9 Blocks<sup>(11)</sup>, Tao Creative<sup>(12)</sup>, EUNOVO<sup>(13)</sup>, and private-run cinemas (e.g. BHD, Lotte, Galaxy).

As contemporary arts and culture is still emergent, most initiatives are self-funded by the artists and / or international cultural organisations such as the British Council and Goethe Institute.

## Culture and wellbeing

As one of the city’s priorities in its development masterplan, Danang has a strong commitment to social protection, inclusion and cohesion. Accordingly, specific action plans to realise these priorities are being developed for a range of public institutions.

Some community-based initiatives have started to use cultural and arts activities as a means to increase local engagement and build a more participatory approach to culture.

## Cultural and wellbeing case studies

### MAI:tri<sup>(14)</sup>, 2018

MAI: tri is an independent virtual space that provides professional art therapy services integrated with holistic mindbodyspirit practices. MAI: tri was established by Nguyen Huong Linh in 2018. Linh is one of the first art therapists in Vietnam qualified with formal accreditation. Currently, MAI:tri provides both in-person and teletherapy sessions. The space also offers special art therapy programs for LGBTIQ and women facing abuse and violence.

### “The Colors of Emotions” Art Exhibition, 2020<sup>(15)</sup>

The exhibition is part of an event series organised by Your Dream 2020 Project with the desire to spread positive messages about Autism Spectrum Syndrome in children. The exhibition consisted of 4 sections: #KNOW - There’s a world you haven’t touched yet; #UNDERSTAND - Just knock, the door will open; #LOVE - Open your heart, receive love; #TIN - Deep love, full news, bright future.

### Project “Community applying creative teaching in preschool – Cities”, funded by VVOB in Vietnam, implemented by Danang City’s Department of Education and Training, 2020 – 2021

The project aims to develop arts in preschool education activities to help reduce the impact of social barriers for the city’s harder to reach communities.<sup>(17)</sup>

**“By 2030, the City aims to bring the highest and best quality of life and living standard for local citizens, for them to become more friendly, happy and creative.”**

—Poliburo’s Resolution no. 43-NQ/TW on Building and Developing Danang City to 2030, with a vision to 2045

## Culture, environment and sustainability

The rapid development of tourism has brought significant pressure on the city’s environment, with some alarming examples of environmental mismanagement. The city authorities have issued several initiatives designed to prevent environmental damage and build toward a more sustainable city. For example:

- “Construction of Danang: Environmental City in the period of 2021 – 2030” towards an ecological city. This focuses on urban solid waste planning, drainage planning, and has a masterplan on biodiversity conservation to 2030. It also includes a new city masterplan to 2030, vision to 2045, implementing Resolution no. 43-NQ/TW of the Politburo. The aim overall is to be an ‘ecological city with sustainable development.’

- Several grassroots activities are actively contributing to awareness raising on environment protection, especially with regard to biodiversity (e.g. GreenViet<sup>(18)</sup>).

## Cultural and environment case studies

### Contest “Photos on Environment and City Biodiversity” in 2020 with the theme “Danang - Action for nature”

The event was held by the Danang Department of Natural Resources and Environment, the Frankfurt Zoology Association, GIZ Project’s Office and Dr Ulrike Simon Streicher. The exhibition showcased photos of endemic, rare and ornamental animals as well as medicinal, endemic and rare plants and trees; along with scenic shots of the eco-systems at Ba Na Mountain, Son Tra Peninsula, Marble Mountains and aquatic ecosystems.<sup>(19)</sup>

### Ba Na – Nui Chua Nature Reserve

The nature reserve is one of the green lungs of Danang City and will soon be developed as a national park with 626 animal species and 793 plant species, including the endangered northern buffed-cheeked gibbon and Edwards’s pheasant.

## GreenViet

GreenViet was established in October 2012 and has operated in the field of Biodiversity Conservation in the Central Region and Central Highlands.

Based in Danang City, the Nature Dance Education Center is a part of GreenViet’s Nature Education programme.

It has run different educational programmes to raise awareness of local people about Son Tra and especially the red-shanked douc langur.

The organisation celebrates community participation and dialogue.

Since 2013, GreenViet has brought more than 3,000 people to visit and study in Son Tra Nature Reserve.

The NGO also has conducted educational activities such as photo exhibitions and talk shows with the theme of Son Tra’s biodiversity for more than 15,000 students in Danang.

**“GreenViet Center was founded and developed to conserve ecosystems and endangered species of flora and fauna in Vietnam.”**

— GreenViet

<sup>(11)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/9Blksvietnam/>

<sup>(12)</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/taocreativevn/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/taocreativevn/?ref=page_internal)

<sup>(13)</sup> <https://enouvospace.com/>

<sup>(14)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/maitrivietnam>

<sup>(15)</sup> <http://jcidanang.com/2020/12/30/nhung-sac-mau-cam-xuc-trien-lam-nghe-thuat-huong-den-tre-tu-ky-cua-du-an-your-dreams/>

<sup>(16)</sup> <http://yourdreamsproject.com/>

<sup>(17)</sup> [https://dpi.danang.gov.vn/de/chi-tiet?id=3332&\\_c=35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44](https://dpi.danang.gov.vn/de/chi-tiet?id=3332&_c=35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44)

<sup>(18)</sup> <https://greenviet.org/en/about-us/>

<sup>(19)</sup> <https://tuoitre.vn/vooc-cha-va-chan-nau-ap-dao-cuoc-thi-anh-moi-truong-danang-20201128141529244.htm>



Community activities

© DNES

## Culture and education

Within the overall development masterplan of Danang to 2030 vision to 2045, education and training is a priority area. The city plans to become one of the education and training centres of Vietnam by 2030, with a focus on skills needs for the 'Industry 4.0 era'. Hence, innovation and start-up knowledge and skills training features across the city's education and economic development programmes. The Danang Centre for Promotion of Human Resources Development (CPHUD) is a key delivery agent.

Cultural and art education and training in Danang is quite limited as the city has only one art training institution: Danang College of Culture and Arts. Several project-based cultural education and training initiatives have been organised, mostly by public institutions like the Department of Education and Training, district People's Committees, and public-run middle and high schools.

## Culture and education case studies

### Danang Centre for Promotion of Human Resources Development (CPHUD)

Established in 2009 by the People's Committee of Da Dang City, the centre has a mission to develop high quality human resources for Danang, including education and training in digital marketing, entrepreneurship, and human resource management in the 4.0 era.

### Project "Bringing Bai Choi singing art into schools"

Since 2018, Ngu Hanh Son district deploys Bai Choi singing art classes for junior high school students in the district in order to preserve and promote this unique art of the South-Central region in line with the national policy to safeguard and promote the intangible cultural heritage values of Vietnam<sup>(21)</sup>.

### Digital Skills Project, within framework of Coding for Future with Google, a free education programme funded by Google and Dariu Foundation in Danang.

Delivered by DNES, the Project aims to equip more than 5,500 young people, student and high school pupils in Danang skills and knowledge in coding and digital skills, help them to have fundamental skills to be ready for a digital career. The Project focuses on the following skills:

- Information & Data Literacy
- Communication & Collaboration
- Digital Content Creation & Media Literacy
- Internet security
- Problem solving & ICT Literacy
- Career-related technologies & Identity<sup>(22)</sup>



Quan Lê Trương thành  
Quê hương của người nông dân

<sup>(20)</sup> <https://cphud.danang.gov.vn/view.aspx?ID=1873>

<sup>(21)</sup> [https://www.danang.gov.vn/de/chinh-quyen/chi-tiet?id=35810&\\_c=3](https://www.danang.gov.vn/de/chinh-quyen/chi-tiet?id=35810&_c=3)

<sup>(22)</sup> <https://sites.google.com/dariu.com/digitalskills/Intro?authuser=0>

# 3. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Cultural and creative infrastructure has not yet played a primary role in the rapid development of Danang. For such a large and dynamic city, the infrastructure landscape is still in the early stages of modernisation and growth. This provides opportunities for international collaboration - in the design, development and content of new or planned infrastructure.

In term of public-run cultural infrastructure, the city has three museums (Danang Museum, Danang Fine Arts Museum, Danang Museum of Cham Sculptures), two theatres (Nguyen Hien Dinh Cinema of Tuong, Trung Vuong Theatre), and one cinema (Le Do cinema with 3 rooms and 342 seats). This is complemented by a growing private infrastructure offer, especially for cinema, with private-run cinemas such as Lotte Cinema, 2 CGV cinemas, Galaxy Cinema, Metiz Cinema and Star Light Danang.

For last 5 years, the city has seen an increasing number of creative hubs and spaces, mostly within the innovative start-up area. To date, there are six business incubators (including two state incubators), two independent creative spaces, ten co-working spaces, ten startup clubs and start-up centres at universities and colleges, and two startup investment funds.

**“It is exceptionally necessary to increase investments in cultural infrastructure. One the major policies of the Party is to have culture as the foundation for the nation’s development. For Danang, we share the view that economic development has to go together with cultural development and preservation, creating a driving force for the city’s socio-economic growth and sustainably developing the city.”**

– Truong Quang Nghia, member of the Central Party Committee, Secretary of the Danang Party Committee, 2018<sup>(23)</sup>

## Cultural institutions

Most cultural institutions in Danang are public-funded and have not yet undertaken processes of reform – e.g. in their approach to audience development, digital technology or links to creative enterprise. They do play an important role in local engagement and tourism development, but their potential is far from being realised and some are in urgent need of modernisation.

**“In coming time, Danang Department of Culture and Sports will support to expand this model in our museums, libraries, cultural centers in order to encourage young people to love and enjoy arts, public to easily access this special exhibition.”**

– Ha Vy, Vice Director of Danang Department of Culture and Sports at the DANANG TUI exhibition 26 May 2018<sup>(24)</sup>

## Cultural institution case studies

### Nguyen Hien Dinh Theatre of Tuong, 1967

Nguyen Hien Dinh Theatre of Tuong in Danang was established in 1967 with more than 50 years of experience in performing Tuong arts. The theatre has supported many generations of renowned artists and performers and has made a significant contribution to safeguarding and promoting Tuong Art. In 2015, Tuong Art of Quang region was enlisted in the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage thanks to the continuous efforts of the theatre’s artists and management board.<sup>(25)</sup>

### Trung Vuong Theatre, 2006

Located at the centre of Danang City, Trung Vuong Theatre regularly organises performances of traditional theatrical arts such as Tuong, Cai Luong and modern theatrical arts such as music, dance, ballet and opera, symphony. The theatre also has an extensive events programme and works with agencies such as youth festivals, contributing to improve the cultural life of Danang.<sup>(26)</sup>

### Danang Museum of Cham Sculptures, 1919

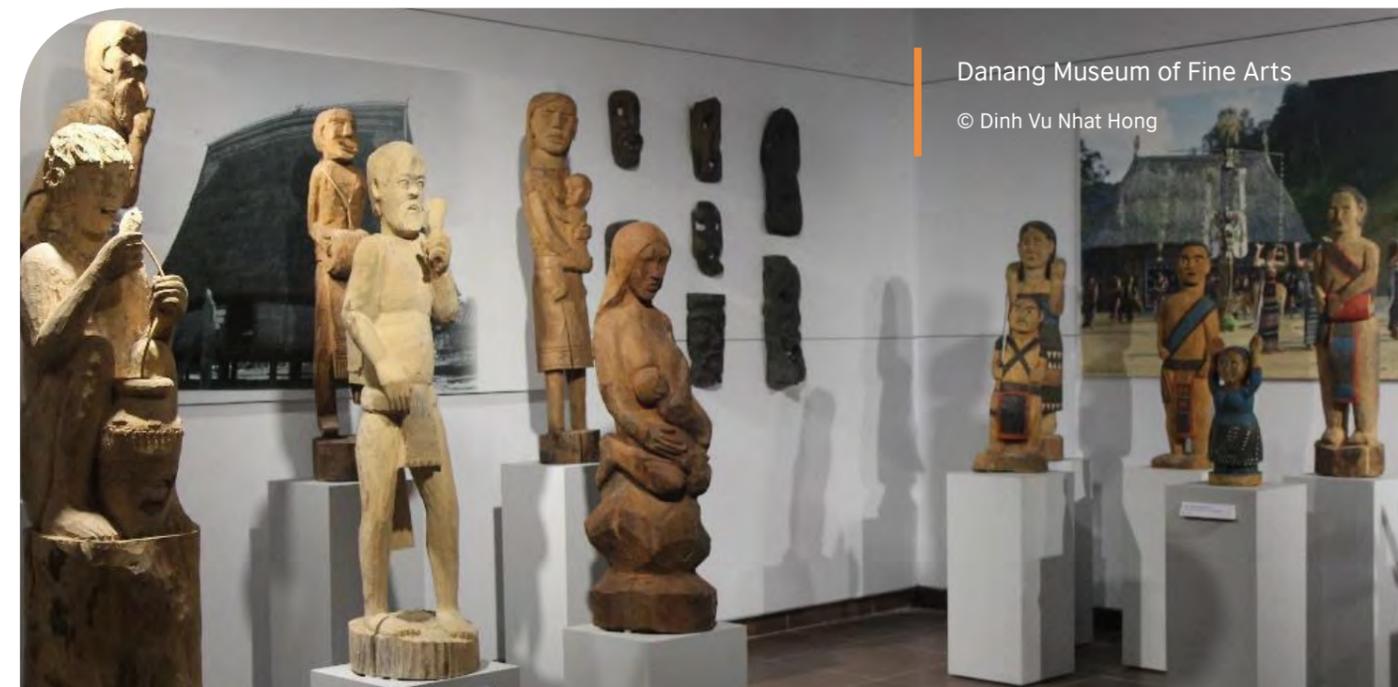
The establishment opened in 1919 to exhibit sculptures collected by French archaeologists of l’Ecole Française d’Extrême Orient. With many Cham sculptures collected in Danang and elsewhere brought to the site, the museum now houses the world’s largest collection of Cham sculptures.<sup>(27)</sup>

It is the only museum in the world that displays Cham’s cultural heritage and arts. Hence it plays a key role in supporting academic research and studies for all scholars and institutes. The Museum has been really active in diversifying their programmes in order to attract more visitors – e.g. a 3D exhibition project (2020), In 2021, Danang Museum of Cham Sculpture was selected as the first museum to appear in the online exhibition of Google Arts & Culture with the theme “Wonders of Vietnam”.<sup>(28)</sup>

### Danang Fine Arts Museum, 2014

Danang Fine Arts Museum was established in 2014 with the mission to preserve, promote and showcase the art heritage values of Danang and its surrounding region.<sup>(29)</sup> Other than its permanent and themed exhibition, Danang Museum of Fine Art recently has an active outreach programme and delivers projects addressing emerging issues such as environment protection, sustainability, gender inclusion, and Covid-19. In 2020, “Danang through the eyes of artists” was an online exhibition while the museum was closed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The museum also has a strong children’s education and outreach programme – e.g. “Christmas – Tet Celebration 2021 with museum” (12/2020), “My Mid-Autum Festival” Exhibition (09/2020), and “Sending the Love” art experience workshop (03/2021).



Danang Museum of Fine Arts

© Dinh Vu Nhat Hong

<sup>(23)</sup><https://baodanang.vn/channel/5399/201806/thiet-che-van-hoa-o-da-nang-can-tuong-xung-voi-phat-trien-kinh-te-bai-2-dau-tu-manh-me-cho-van-hoa-2667300/>

<sup>(24)</sup><https://tuoitre.vn/xem-da-nang-tui-qua-goc-nhin-ban-tre-20180525232355427.htm>

<sup>(25)</sup><https://www.nhahattuongdanang.com/>

<sup>(26)</sup><http://nhahattrungvuong.com.vn/>

<sup>(27)</sup><http://www.chammuseum.vn/>

<sup>(28)</sup><http://www.chammuseum.vn/view.aspx?ID=502>

<sup>(29)</sup><http://dnfam.vn/>

## Creative hubs and marketplaces

Danang has changed beyond recognition as a city of trade, finance and IT, but the creative scene is still emergent. However, given the scale of the city, its role as a hub across many industries, and its relatively laid back and youthful culture, Danang could be the creative city to watch in coming years.

Co-working spaces such as Sông Hàn Incubator, The Hub Danang, V.Startup, Danang Business Incubator – DNES, Danang; plus a rash of new funds and platforms (e.g. Science and Technology Development Fund, the Start-up Network Coordination Council, Flying Fish Fund, Danang IT Park, and National Creative Start-up Centre); are set to propel Danang as a start-up city with a strong creative element.

### Danang Business Incubator DNES, 2016

DNES represents the commitment of local government for the digital economy and is expected to play an important role in the startup ecosystem. DNES is a public-private partnership incubator, the only one of its kind. With 5 areas of activity: Incubation Program (Finc), Co-working Space (DNC), Community Events, Training programmes and Flying Fish Investment Fund (FFI). DNES also offers a variety of courses, workshops and talks in creativity, start-ups, entrepreneurship and IT.<sup>(30)</sup>

**“My journey to embracing creative and cultural projects and the experience accumulated along the way will be valuable to those who aspire to build a hub from scratch.”**

– Hieu Nguyen, Project Manager, Danang Tui<sup>(32)</sup>

### 9Blocks Creative, 2020

9blocks services is a branding, marketing, event, imaging production, art and design consultancy. Founded by Cao Trung Hieu, it is the very first agency in Danang that proposes 360 degrees of brand communication. Other than its creative services, 9Blocks has been working closely with other creative hubs and groups in the city as well in the other city such as CAB Hoian to organise interesting contemporary arts events. In the coming years, 9Blocks is expected to contribute much to the city's creative scene.

### ENOVO

Danang's most modern and cozy co-working space - specially designed for digital nomads, remote workers, freelancers, entrepreneurs and professionals. Since its establishment, ENOVO co-working space is a key facility and creative community builder for the city.<sup>(31)</sup>

### Danang Tui, 2018

“Danang Tui” was set up in 2018 as a multimedia exhibition project displaying contemporary cultural and art landscapes of Danang City, initiated by young and independent creative people. Nghệ Exhibition is Danang Tui's 2nd art and cultural project that showcases 10 artwork collections from 21 local young artists in the city. Artworks are expressed in different mediums, ranging from crafts, watercolor painting to technological art forms such as digital and AR art.

**“I founded 9Blocks so that local artists, artisans and cultural practitioners can connect with art and cultural communities in Da Nang and in the central region of Vietnam, then position Da Nang on the national cultural map.”**

– Cao Trung Hieu, Creative Director of 9Blocks Creative<sup>(32)</sup>

### Old Soul Danang Art Hub, 2020

Old Soul Danang Art Hub is a creative hub of international, national and local artists. The hub was established in June 2020 and became the 1<sup>st</sup> contemporary art space in Danang.

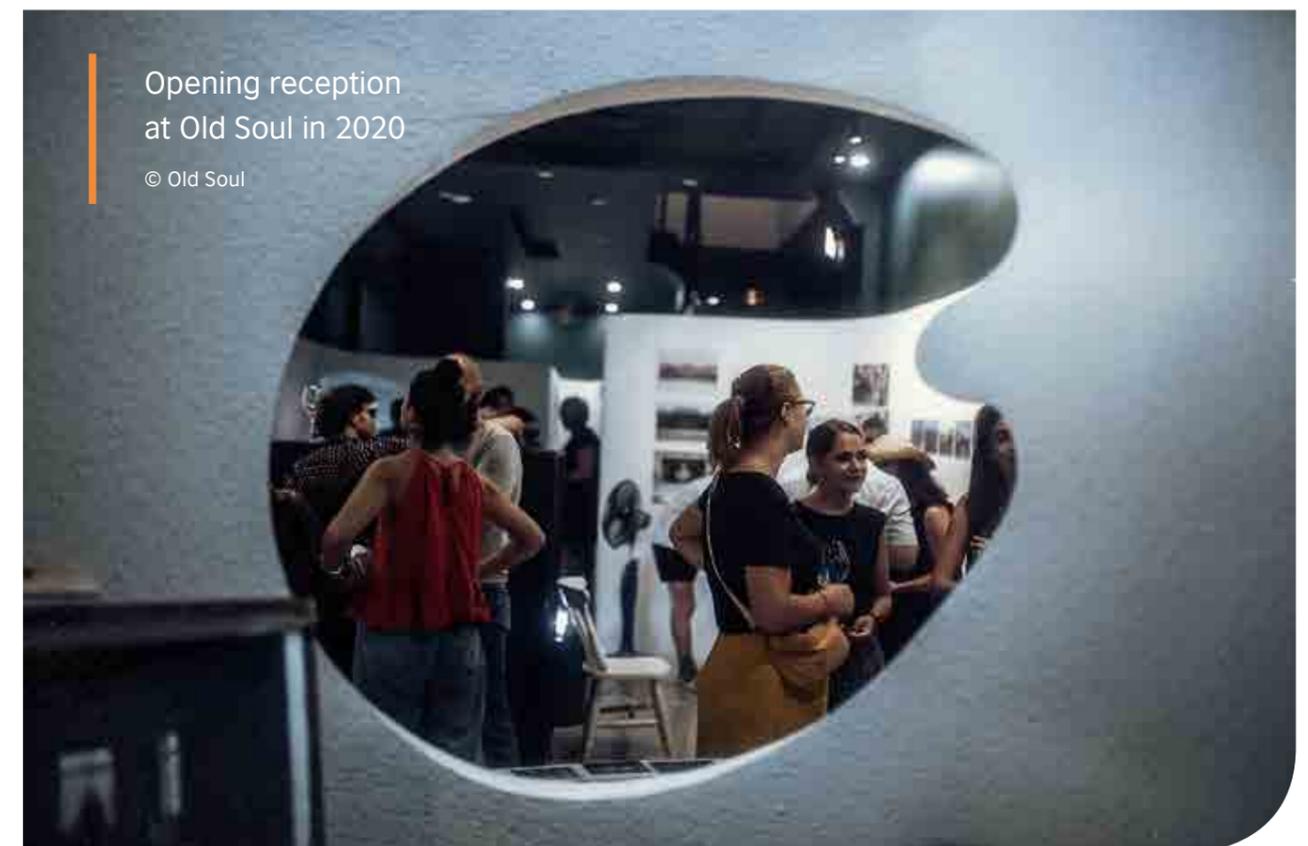
Currently, Old Soul has two missions:

- To provide facilities for exhibition and other art activities such as talks, workshops, reading, and film screenings
- To provide long and short homestay for artists and cultural tourists.

Since its launch, the hub has organised several art activities such as The White Sand in Exile solo exhibition by Xuan Ha; photo workshop by artist Nguyen Dinh Phong; regular movie nights; LIFE IN A BOX art installation. Via Old Soul's programmes, young people in Danang are getting closer access to contemporary arts and a community of ambitious practitioners.

**“The art and cultural activities in the city are in its developmental stage and urgently needs more support. The creative communities largely stayed with their clique while cultural institutions continue with their usual moda operandi. It will be crucial to connect across these different sectors and circles to bring together art and cultural bodies. But with the creation of OLD SOUL or the connection between artists...this situation might change in the future.”**

– Ho Quang Dzung, Strategic Director of ENOVO<sup>(36)</sup>



<sup>(30)</sup><https://dnes.vn/en/about-us/>

<sup>(31)</sup><https://enovospace.com/>

<sup>(32)</sup>Interview by research team

<sup>(33)</sup><https://www.9blocks.vn/about>

<sup>(34)</sup>Interview by research team

<sup>(35)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/danangarthub>

<sup>(36)</sup>Interview by research team

## Festivals

Festivals are playing a starring role in Danang's cultural tourism offer. They also help connect the region's cultural heritage to its contemporary creative life. Traditional festivals co-exist with major events and a distinctive portfolio of activities is programmed, including Tuy Loan Old village festival, Phong Le village's Muc Dong (buffalo herding children) procession festival, Lien Chieu Boat Racing traditional festival, Quan The Am (Kuan Shih Yin, Avalokitesvara) Festival, The Great Whale (Cau Ngu) Festival, and many more.

Most of these festivals are funded by the local People's Committee and by the communities themselves. Some, because of their significant relevance to the city's cultural identity and tourism development, were up-scaled to the city and national level and funded by the city budget.

Danang is also famous for its new cultural festivals such as Danang Cultural Heritage Festival 2020, Danang International Fireworks Festival (2008), and Ba Na Hills Carnival.

## Festivals – case studies

Danang International Fireworks Festival (DIFF), est. 2008 Danang International Fireworks Festival has developed into a world-class cultural and tourist event. Hosted on an annual basis from April to June, the festival attracted 1.5 million visitors to Danang during 2018's edition. Each year, the festival has a different theme, where each 'fireworks team' use fireworks and music to tell stories related to the theme. DIFF 2019 had the theme of "Stories by the Rivers", inspired by the nation's many rivers and two major deltas.

Since 2020, the event has been temporarily cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic yet in the coming years, the festival will be back for sure as one of the biggest cultural events in the region.

**"DIFF 2017 will put Danang on the list of top performing arts cities and festivals in the world"**

– Le Quy Duong, Artistic Director of 2017 Danang International Firework Festival<sup>(37)</sup>

### SURF – Danang Startup and Innovation Festival

Organised by Danang Department Of Science And Technology in partnerships with DNES, Song Han Incubator, Danang Startup Council since 2016, SURF is the largest annual International Startup Conference and Exhibition in Central Vietnam. It includes a conference and exhibition programme and startup pitching competition.

Each season of SURF attracts about 2000 start-ups and international and national experts. In 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic, SURF was organised online and had a strong VR element.<sup>(38)</sup>

### Danang Cultural Heritage Festival 2020

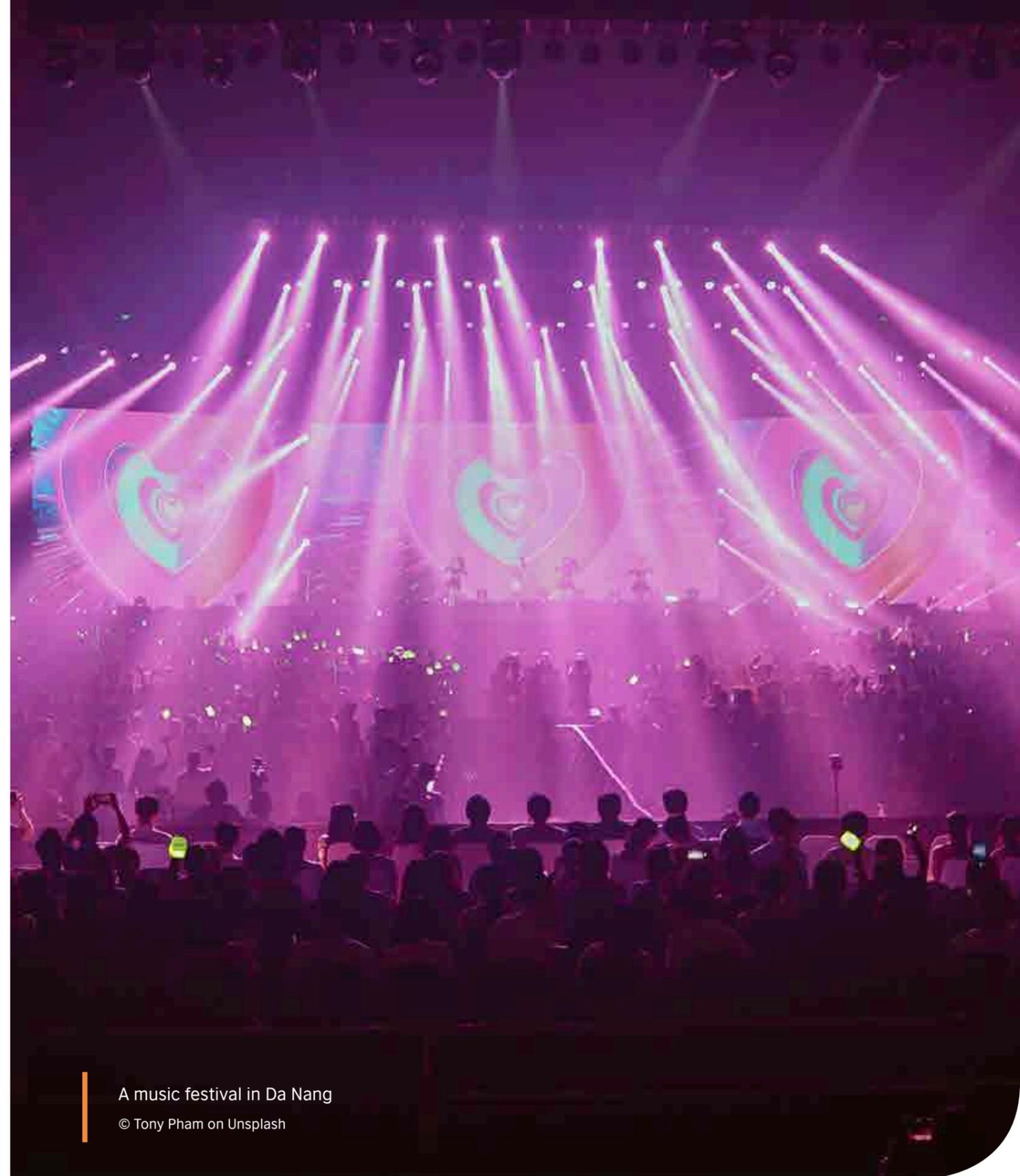
The Festival took place at the Museum of Danang inside the Dien Hai Citadel special national-level relic site in celebrations for the 15th founding anniversary of the National Cultural Heritage Day (23 November). The festival aims to bring cultural heritage closer to local people and to enhance the community's responsibility in preserving and promoting the city's cultural heritage values.<sup>(39)</sup>

### Quan The Am (Kuan Shih Yin, Avalokitesvara) Festival, est. 1960

Quan The Am Festival is a traditional religious festival relating to Buddhism and the Kuan Shih Yin worship belief. Held at Ngu Hanh mountain across three days in February each year (following the lunar calendar), this festival presents rituals of prayer for a prosperous year ahead. This event is also an important moment for Buddhists to achieve a level of peace and a 'good life'.<sup>(40)</sup>

### The Great Whale (Cau Ngu) Festival

Since 2016, the Cau Ngu Festival of Danang was recognised as a national intangible cultural heritage asset. Cau Ngu Festival is one of the most important events in the cultural and spiritual lives of Danang's fishermen, associated with the traditional whale worshipping ritual. Every year, at the mid of the first lunar month, fishing communities organise the festival to wish for their safety and luck in the new fishing season. Cau Ngu festival normally is organised in Man That, Tho Quang, Thanh Loc Dan, Xuan Ha, Hoa Hiep villages in Danang City.<sup>(41)</sup>



A music festival in Da Nang

© Tony Pham on Unsplash

<sup>(37)</sup><https://zingnews.vn/le-hoi-phao-hoa-da-nang-2017-lay-y-tuong-tu-yeu-to-ngu-hanh-post712191.html>

<sup>(38)</sup><http://surfstartupwave.vn/>

<sup>(39)</sup><https://baodanang.vn/english/culture-sport/202011/da-nang-cultural-heritage-festival-offers-fascinating-insight-into-local-cultures-3872870/>

<sup>(40)</sup>[https://www.danang.gov.vn/de/web/danh-thang-ngu-hanh-son/danh-muc/chi-tiet?id=2324&\\_c=94677410](https://www.danang.gov.vn/de/web/danh-thang-ngu-hanh-son/danh-muc/chi-tiet?id=2324&_c=94677410)

<sup>(41)</sup><https://baodanang.vn/english/photo-news/201803/stunning-pictures-from-3-day-cau-ngu-festival-2591630/>

“Currently in Danang, there are many old, abandoned buildings with the potential for reuse and conversion in terms of functionality to become creative hubs. However...public entities haven’t yet shown much interest in this potential. To solve this problem, it is necessary to have enthusiastic people in the industry who love culture and arts and are willing to join hands in developing the city’s cultural scene.”

– Nguyen Phuong Nhi, CEO of DNES<sup>(42)</sup>

## Movers and shakers

With emergent creative hubs and a strong digital and IT sector, Danang is poised for growth as one of Vietnam’s creative hotspots. The arts and wider cultural sector will play an important role in the next phase of the city’s development, with city authorities recognising the need to have a rich cultural offer if cultural tourism is to flourish and if talent is to be attracted for growth sectors such as IT.

### Nguyen Thi Phuong Nhi, CEO of DNES

Founder Google Developer Group Mien Trung and Advisor to the Vietnam Accelerating Programme Digital 4.0, Nhi Nguyen is a leading player in the city’s tech and start-up scene. Nhi is the go-to person to develop start-up and tech transfer projects – e.g. she was a lead participant in the Finnish Vietnam Innovation Programme. She also has 10 years of practical experience in organising events, mobilising networks and connecting key players in the ‘start-up ecosystem’. For example, she has played a dynamic role in projects like SURF, TechFest, and Code for Future with Google. She also works and participates in managing Coworking Space co-working space at DNES Danang Business Incubator. Currently, Ms. Nhi Nguyen is the focal-point and trainer of the Vietnam Cultural and Creative Hub Project in Danang.

### Dr. Vo Duy Khuong, Chairman of DNES and Chairman of Danang Startup Committee

Dr. Võ Duy Khuông is also former vice chairman of Danang People’s Committee. Mr. Khuong is the man behind the idea of Danang having a public private partnership business incubator - DNES. He directly advocated and persuaded businesses and private investors to invest 1/3, together with 2/3 investment capital from Danang Development and Investment Fund. Today DNES is the biggest contributor to the creative startup community in Danang. Mr. Vo Duy Khuong has played a key role in creating, shaping and developing the creative startup community in Danang,, connecting stakeholders and facilitating a strong startup wave in the city.

### Xuan Ha, founder of Old Soul Danang Art Hub

Xuân Hạ (Grandmadeadxh) is a filmmaker, artist and emerging curator currently based in Ho Chi Minh City. Since 2015, she has been actively working with Vietnamese and foreign artists, curating and producing exhibitions that focus on interactive and installation art. Her work takes as its inspiration the multitude of qualities, realities, bodies and identities that simultaneously exist within and around herself, as they do with all the women in her life. She has collaborated with several distinctive art spaces in Vietnam such as San Art (Am I super Women Exhibition, 2020), Galerie Quynh (Familiar Exhibition, 2021), The Factory (I, ME, MINE Exhibition, 2017), Saigon Art Book, The White Sand in Exile (2020). She was the co-founder of the art space Chaosdowntown in HCMC until 2019. Then she returned to her hometown of Danang to found Old Soul Danang Art Hub in close collaboration with A Song. With her active profile in contemporary art practice, both nationally and internationally, Xuan Ha and her space – Old Soul I- will play a key role in the city’s emerging creative scene.

<sup>(42)</sup> Interview by research team

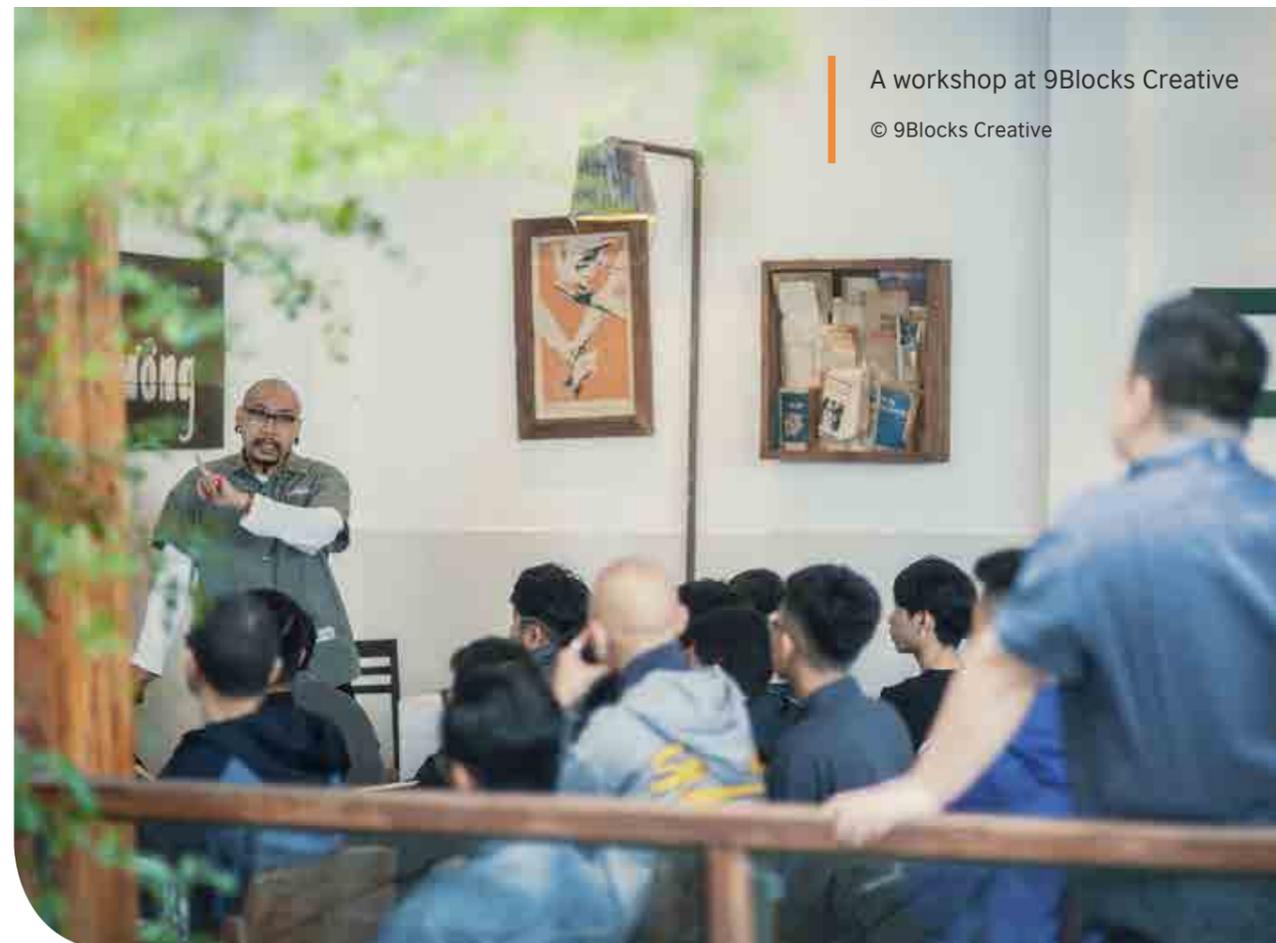


# 4. Opportunities

On 28 September 2020, the Master Plan for Danang's economic development was approved with the Decision No. 3613/QDD-UBND by the Chairman of Danang People's Committee. In this master plan, culture, arts and creative activities are going to be developed and promoted. This includes new investment in 'night art streets', street arts, public art, street music, and festivals and events. The aim overall is to boost tourism and attract trade and inward investment. This will help establish Danang as a city of opportunity for incoming artists, promoters and creative enterprises.

Danang's cultural offer and creative economy is still emergent. But the city's energy, youth, openness, and eagerness to attract co-investment, make it a relatively attractive place for new types of collaboration. In the coming years, international organisations, enterprises and creative practitioners will be able to explore opportunities in areas such as:

- Urban regeneration, with a focus on creating more cultural infrastructure such as squares, parks, cultural venues, creative spaces. Currently in Danang, there are many old, abandoned buildings with the potential for reuse as creative hubs.
- Innovation startup, IT, Digital Technology – a place for R&D, collaboration and acceleration.
- Contemporary cultural and arts development via expertise support, with opportunities to boost the technical and management capacity of the city's cultural and creative industries.



A workshop at 9Blocks Creative

© 9Blocks Creative

Da Nang International Fireworks Festival

© Sang Huynh on Unsplash



# Hội An

## Introducing Hoi An

City vision / mission / slogan  
Creative industries and cultural services

## Hoi An in numbers

### 1. What makes this city unique?

### 2. Context

Location / region  
Ethnic diversity  
Heritage assets and activation

### 3. Culture, arts and civic policy

Cultural funding  
Culture and education

### 4. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Cultural institutions  
Creative hubs and marketplaces  
Festivals  
Movers and shakers

### 5. Opportunities

# Hội An

Cultural Cities Profile,  
Việt Nam

## Distinctive strength

For the last 20 years, the city has focused on cultural heritage preservation and the development and promotion of cultural tourism.

Hoi An Ancient Town has become a resource for the socio-economic development for Hoi An City and Quang Nam Province and, through tourism and service industries, has made a remarkable contribution to increasing the income and improving the quality of life of local people through cultural development and eco-city planning.

### Eco-city

Recently, especially with The Cu Lao Cham-Hoi An Biosphere Reserve designated for protection by UNESCO in 2009, the city's proactive approaches and policies for sustainable development have moved Hoi An's urban planning and development policies towards fulfilling an eco-city model for environmental protection.

### Cultural tourism

- In 2019, pre-Covid-19, Hoi An's economy continued to grow.
- The total economic output was estimated at US\$512.4 million, an increase of 14.34% compared to 2018.
- Tourism accounted for more than US\$ 372.4million of this, up 15.56% compared with previous year. Per capita income has reached USD\$ 2,333.

# Introducing Hoi An

Located in the Quang Nam province, Hoi An (Hội An) is a city on the South Central coast of Vietnam. It is known as a centre for high-value tangible and intangible heritage assets, bold local cultures, and a beautiful riverside location.

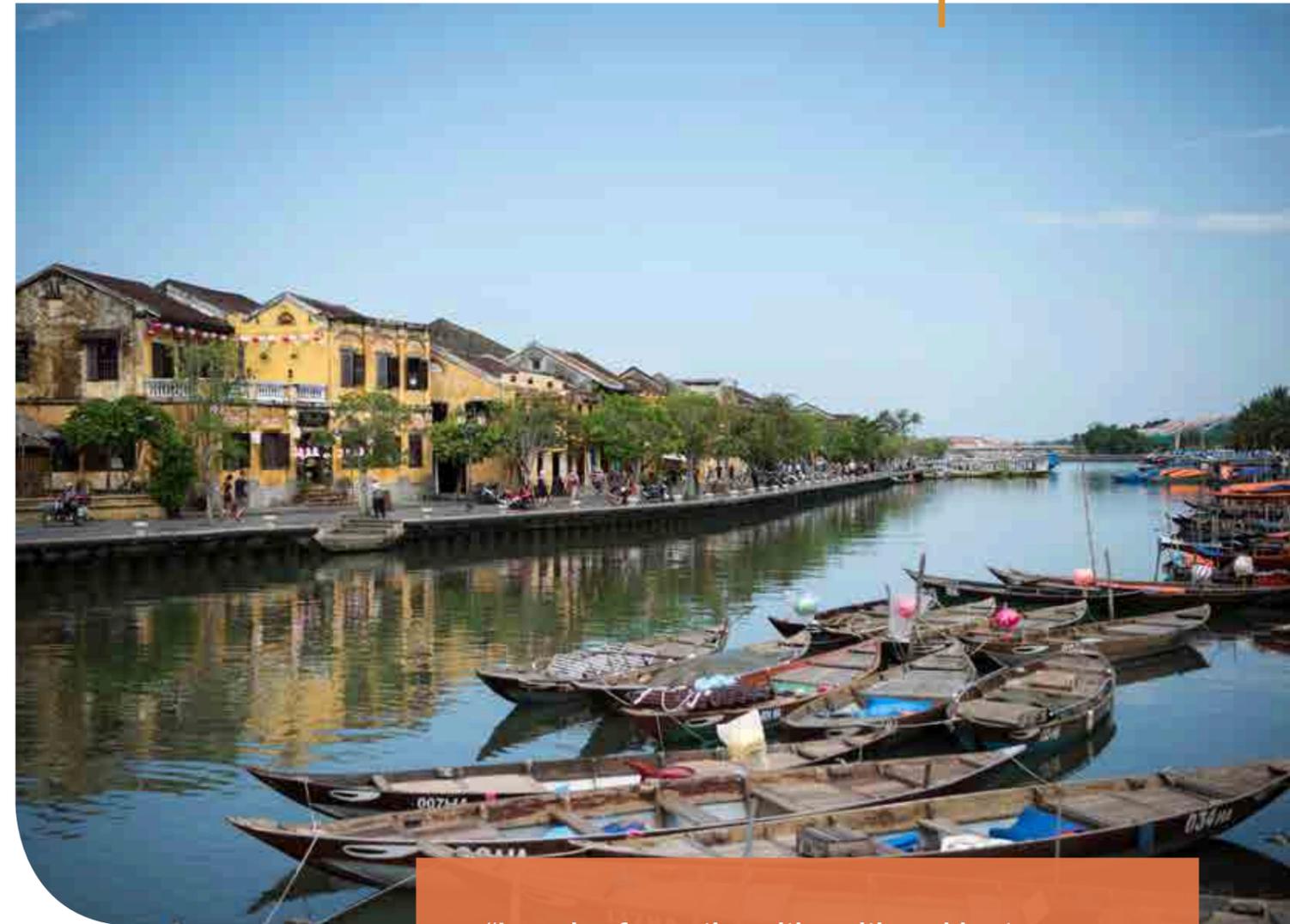
Formed around the 15th centuries, with a favorable geographical position and a relatively stable economic, social and cultural context, Hoi An developed as a trading stop for ships from Japan, China, Southeast Asian countries and a number of European countries. The city became a regional centre for economic exchange and international commerce.

In 1999, based on this history and its well-preserved centuries-old architecture, Hoi An became an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

While other cultural and creative sectors have not been significantly visible within Hoi An's economic structure, it is anticipated that, in the coming years, design, crafts and performing arts will be the next sectors to thrive. Over the last few years, this has been demonstrated by the ongoing influx of talented and contemporary artists from across Vietnam establishing workshops and studios in Hoi An.

Hoi An Ancient Town

© Daniel Klein on Unsplash



**“Learning from other cities with rapid yet unsustainable development, Hoi An is determined to ensure a stable, sustainable growth with respect to its resources. We are striving to preserve and promote both our cultural and natural heritage.”**

– Mr. Tran Anh, the City's Party Secretary and the City People's Council Chairman

# City vision mission slogan

Hoi An aims to become a “ecological – cultural and tourism” city, displaying a rich identity in which ecology and culture are the two values guiding the city’s sustainable socio-economic and tourism development.

“Hoi An needs to take advantage of its resources – to better focus on investment, improve the quality of socio-economic infrastructure, especially with projects which have been promoted for many years but have not yet been completed. Hoi An will urgently prioritise the adjustment of the general planning of the city to 2035, with a vision to 2050 in the direction of building an eco-cultural-tourist city. It will also promptly promote the planning of island communes in Cu Lao Cham to guide the development of marine economy, with a focus on tourism and island services. The city will also accelerate the construction of national OCOP centres in the city.”

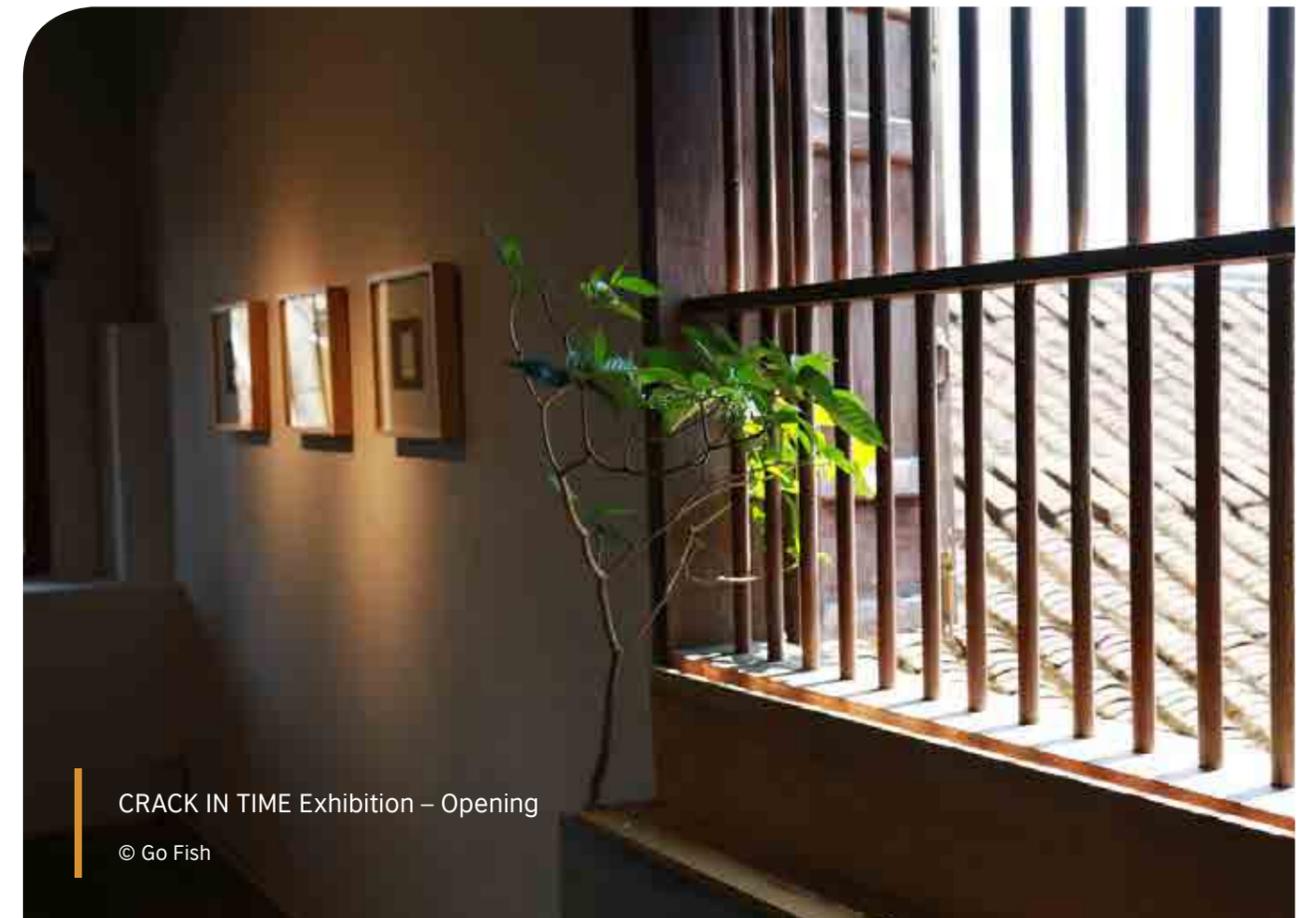
– Phan Viet Cuong, Quang Nam Provincial Party Secretary

# Creative industries and cultural services

Cultural tourism has been the main driver of the creative industries of Hoi An city for many years. Based on the income derived from tourism, local traditional crafts have been revitalised and promoted, including Thanh Ha pottery, Kim Bong carpentry, art lanterns, hat-making, bamboo and rattan weaving, wood carving, lacquer, fabric weaving, and embroidery. Some traditional performing arts from the city, such as Bai Choi (hut) singing, Ba Trao dancing, Tuong and folk songs, have also been safeguarded and promoted.

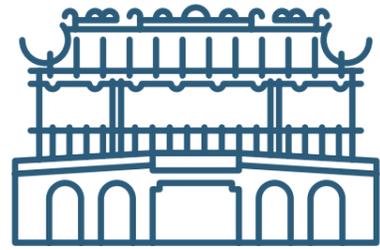
In 2019, the total number of tourists staying in Hoi An continued to increase, estimated at 5.35 million (4 million international visitors), up 5.24% over the same period for 2018. During this period, the City organised 1,337 performances of cultural and artistic activities, sports, and traditional art performances. Hoi An’s Traditional Art Performing House delivered 1,000 performances for 60,457 visitors. Its tourism sector has won many prestigious international awards such as “The world’s most wonderful city”, “Asia’s top cultural city destination 2019” (Travel & Leisure Magazine).

However, being dependent on tourism, cultural activities of Hoi An were heavily impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic. The decrease in visitors and revenue, consequently, has much affected the current heritage preservation and cultural activities of the city, since the larger part of the funding for those activities come from the city’s tourism revenue.



CRACK IN TIME Exhibition – Opening

© Go Fish



# Hội An in numbers

It is dubbed  
**“The world’s most wonderful city”**  
 and  
**“Asia’s top cultural city destination 2019”**

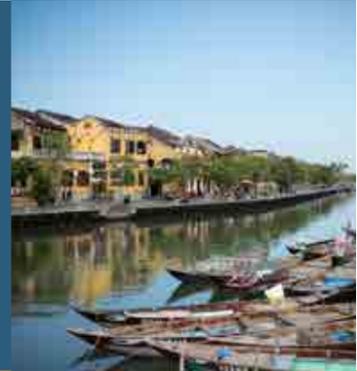
(Travel & Leisure Magazine)

It has  
**2 UNESCO titles**  
 and **1,432 relics**  
 and **historical sites**

Kinh is the majority ethnic group in Hoi An and **Chinese** as a **minority** group has a significant presence

In 2019, the City had organised **1,337 performances** of cultural and artistic **activities**, ports, and traditional art performances

Year of constitution:  
**1471**



Hoi An’s **GRDP** per capital is **USD\$ 2,333** in 2019

It is  
**6,148 km<sup>2</sup>**



Average citizen life expectancy is **73 years old** in 2020

Total city **population** is **98,000** in 2019. Among which, **urban** residents accounted for **75%**

In 2019, Hoi An had **5.35m visitors**. Among which, **74%** are **international** visitors

Hoi An’s **tourism** sector accounted for more than **USD\$372.4m** in 2019

# 1. What makes this city unique?

Hoi An is an embodiment of the provenance and historical development of cities in Vietnam and Southeast Asia. The city was built on a unique combination of local and international influences, embodied by the maritime trade route in silk, spices and ceramics. To this day, the heritage of Hoi An Ancient Town is well-preserved in terms of landscape, architecture and lifestyle, with people still living at the heart of the ancient city with their generations-old traditions and customs.

It has a rich and unique cultural heritage, including architecture, historical relics, archaeological remains and intangible assets including festivals, rituals and beliefs, crafts and traditional arts, which act as cultural resources not just for tourism development but for contemporary arts and creative sectors as well.

The long-standing culture of openness rooted in international exchange in trade, culture and arts dating back to the 15th Century has left an imprint on the architectural aesthetics.

It also benefits from a large market for cultural and arts consumption, based on an international audience of millions of tourists per year.

A constantly-evolving civic framework of policies and approaches for economic development, environment protection, heritage preservation and cultural promotion.

**“Hoi An ancient town is a special example of a traditional trading port in South-East Asia which has been completely and assiduously preserved: it is the only town in Vietnam that has survived intact in this way. Most of the buildings in Hoi An are in the traditional architectural style of the 18th to 20th centuries. They are aligned along narrow lanes of traditional type. They include many religious buildings, such as pagodas, temples, meeting houses, etc, which relate to the development of a port community. The traditional life-style, religion, customs, and cooking have been preserved and many festivals still take place annually.”**

– UNESCO (1998), Evaluation for Hoi An, Vietnam, p.114



## 2. Context

Hoi An was established by the King Le Thanh Tong dynasty following their 1471 defeat of Chiem Thanh. The early villages which were established in Hoi An included Vong Nhi Village, Cam Pho and Hoai Pho Village, with just 750 residents in the 15th Century. By the end of 19th century, Hoi An had 19 villages and communes with around 7,600 residents. Traders and merchants from China, Japan, Portugal, Netherlands, England and France visited for trade, and many then chose to stay in Hoi An.

In 1999, Hoi An was included in UNESCO's World Heritage List as an exceptionally well-preserved example of a South-East Asian trading port dating from the 15th-19th century.

Its buildings and its street plan reflect the influences, both indigenous and foreign, that have combined to produce a unique heritage site of global significance.

### Location / region

Hoi An is part of Quang Nam province. Situated on the North bank of Thu Bon River, the city lies approximately 25 kilometers from Danang to the Southeast, and approximately 50 kilometers from Tam Ky City to the Northeast.

### Ethnic diversity

The majority of Hoi An's population is made up of Kinh people. Hoi An is still home to a sizable ethnic Chinese community, many of whom are descendants from merchants and traders who settled in Hoi An from the 1700s onwards.

### Heritage assets and activation

As a centre of cultural exchange in the past and of today, Hoi An possesses a rich and profound system of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. The city's heritage inventorying programme has identified and classified 1,432 relics, including 28 national and 46 provincial relics, as well as 1,358 others on the protection list.

Key amongst these, Hoi An Ancient Town is an architectural ensemble of communal buildings, private shop-houses, residential houses and religious infrastructure. There are approximately 1,130 relics contained within an area of 1.2 km square. Notable architectural features include bridges, temples, pagodas, mausoleums, assembly halls with decorated timber frames with brick or wooden walls. The city also includes ancient wells and burial sites built with bricks and an adhesive mixture of clamshells.

What's special about these architectural relics is that they represent a "living" heritage, playing an important role in the daily and religious life of people living in the ancient town area.

Apart from tangible cultural heritage values, there are still many more elements of intangible heritage preserved in Hoi An Ancient Town, including festivals, rituals, performing arts, traditional craft villages and cuisine.

Hoi An city is also growing as an attractive venue and hub for young artists and creative people to base themselves, thanks to the city's intrinsic historical and cultural value.

<sup>(1)</sup> Interview by research team

Hoi An Ancient Town

© Minh Bach Thuong on Unsplash

**“The city is very interested in the development of cultural activities. The city wants to focus first on maintaining and promoting the existing values, and the second is continuing to expand relations with other countries and develop cultural exchanges... The priorities for exchange will be firstly on inter-regional connections, then look to those beyond ASEAN countries that share similar cultures. As to the culture and arts, the city will continue to preserve traditional culture of Hoi An in addition to integrating new cultural values, especially that of contemporary arts and culture so that the city can continue to evolve and develop.”**

– Truong Thi Ngoc Cam,  
Director of the Center of Culture – Sports & Radio-Television of Hoi An City<sup>(1)</sup>

# 3. Culture, arts and civic policy

“Hoi An has a strong focus on cultural activities, especially those associated with local culture. Hoi An always wants to organise activities with its own identity and is open to cultural exchange with other countries. The city has festival events held periodically throughout the year such as the Lunar New Year activities or handicraft village festivals. Currently the city is trying to revive the craft village festivals with the direct participation of the local community. Those events are both religious and tourist-friendly. They have a great appeal for cultural tourists, especially those internationally. Past international exchange activities of similar nature have been successful due to the participation of a large number of tourists as well as local people.”

– Truong Thi Ngoc Cam,  
Director of the Center of Culture – Sports  
& Radio-Television of Hoi An City<sup>(2)</sup>

From the 1990s onwards, especially with the nomination of Hoi An Ancient Town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the economic and social development policies of Hoi An town have centred on cultural heritage and tourism development.

The Party Committee and local government developed several important strategies and policies by taking heritage as the foundation for economic development.

This, in turn, contributed to heritage preservation through resolutions on building Hoi An’s profile as a cultural town (1999) and as a city for ecological and cultural tourism (2009).

Additional initiatives included a project to reorganise street vending activities in the ancient town area (2007), a master plan on the conservation, embellishment and promotion of Hoi An ancient town for the period 2012 – 2025 (2012), and most recently, a plan for the management of Hoi An Ancient Town for the period 2020-2025, with a vision to 2030 (2020).

The city has defined three areas for development within Hoi An, including urban, coastal, and rural areas, each of which are connected in order to encourage comprehensive and stable development of the city as a whole.

As a focus of future development, Hoi An aims to become a city of “ecological and cultural tourism”. Ecology and culture are the two values guiding the city’s plans for sustainable socio-economic development.

With this umbrella policy, culture continues to be the main driver for city development, in which heritage preservation and tourism development remain in an important position while craft development and ecological protection add further value to those existing sectors.

## Key policies

### Management Plan of World Cultural Heritage Hoi An Ancient Town for the period 2020-2025, with a vision to 2030, (2020)

This policy aims to protect the integrity and outstanding global value of Hoi An heritage, ensure the unity and harmony between the conservation and promotion of heritage values with socio-economic development, and contribute to creating a balance between the conservation and development of the entire world heritage area, the buffer zone and the surrounding area around Hoi An Ancient Town.

It is expected that the implementation of this policy will continue to ensure the proper protection of the city’s cultural heritage and tourism-based economic development by: developing better strategies and programmes; building stakeholder capacity; increasing the responsibilities and participation of local communities; and integrating heritage and culture into urban planning.

Based on this policy, cultural and arts events, together with creative businesses will have more opportunity to receive public funds for related activities and programmes.

### Development of Hoi An traditional craft villages, 2020

In 2020, the city identified several approaches to developing its traditional crafts villages including: developing human capacity for workers and artisans through education and training; sustaining the natural materials and ingredients needed; developing markets and diversifying funding resources; improving infrastructure and facilities; and measuring their environmental impact.



## Culture and international exchange

As a port city, Hoi An has an enduring legacy in international exchange, specifically with trade and commerce with neighboring nations and maritime European countries. The city's architectural heritage and cultural practices continues to be a testament of such fusions which blends foreign influences with local elements.

Since the 1990s onwards, international exchange has been restored with a focus on heritage preservation and restoration.

The city has cooperated with projects and programmes from governments and international organisations including the Canadian Ambassador Fund, the American Ambassador Fund, the Princess Netherlands Foundation, the JICA Foundation of Japan, DED and GIZ of Germany, Asia America Association, UNESCO Asia-Pacific region, and UNESCO Office in Hanoi.

Each year, **Quang Nam Province** funds heritage preservation and restoration projects with international partners and organisations.

- Examples include the restoration of traditional houses on Nguyen Thai Hoc street with fund from JICA (2001), water quality improvement in Chua Cau, funded by the Japanese government, and restoration projects for Confucius Temple and Hy Hoa Temple sponsored by the Canadian Ambassador's Fund and US Ambassador's Fund.

**Hoi An Cultural Heritage Conservation Management Centre** also welcomes and supports international volunteers and foreign delegations to exchange experiences in the management and preservation of heritage preservation.

## Cultural funding

Funds for culture and arts activities in Hoi An usually come from three main sources:

- Public funds (city annual budget, national and provincial project-based budget),
- Public-private partnership funds, and
- Non-public funds from international or individual sources.

Since 2006, the Hoi An government has been implementing a funding framework for private-owned relic sites, based on the value and location of the relics. This framework has since saved multiple relics from collapsing.

Other than that, the city also has spent much of its budget on the documentation, preservation and promotion of its intangible cultural heritages, helping to restore and revitalise traditional festivals, rituals, and performing arts like Bai Choi singing and Ba Trao dancing. It has also developed new cultural and art events and activities, designed to boost its tourism development.

Public and corporate funds for contemporary arts are still limited. Most of contemporary arts and cultural events are self-funded by artists.

## Culture and international exchange – case studies

### The International Choir Competition, 2019

The International Choir Competition features choirs from around the world. The 2019 event saw the participation of nearly 1000 artists from 22 choirs from 10 countries around the world, including China, Estonia, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Singapore, and the USA.

The 7<sup>th</sup> international Choir Competition will take place in August 2021 in Hoi An with a more diversified programme including choral competitions, Friendship Concerts, Evaluation Performances and Individual Coaching.

### The Vietnam - Japan Cultural Space in Hoi An, 2017

The Vietnam-Japan cultural space was opened in Hoi An city (Quang Nam province) in 2017 by the Quang Nam provincial People's Committee and Nagasaki province (Japan). It is a symbol of the long-term relationship between Vietnam and Japan in culture and heritage preservation.



Hoi An Ancient Town

© Mads Sonne on Unsplash

## Culture and education

For many years, Quang Nam province has been actively integrating heritage and culture into its educational curriculum. Hoi An's local government introduced a textbook set on heritage education for school children from Grade 1 to 6, and has been implementing extracurricular programmes allowing students to explore museums, learn about heritage through library resources, and maintain historical and cultural relics, all contributing to raising their awareness on the values of heritage.

A number of private initiatives have been developed in Hoi An with a focus on art and culture education and training for local people, especially for young people and children.

Examples include Hoi An Art and Craft Manufacturing Workshops, painting classes offered by COL Art Hội An<sup>(3)</sup>, an embroidery workshop of Meo Meo Atelier<sup>(4)</sup>, and classes in hip hop, origami, craft making or painting by CAB Hoi An<sup>(5)</sup>.

## Culture and education case studies

### Free choir class for junior high school students, 2010

In 2010, Hoi An Centre for Culture, Sports and Radio-Television cooperated with the Education Office of Hoi An City to implement a free choir class for the gifted and students who love this art form. It also aimed to find singers to participate in the international choral competition which was first held in Hoi An in 2011.<sup>(6)</sup>

### Free folklore classes and hut singing (Bà chòi) in Hoi An ancient town, 2010

Since 2010, artists and performers working under the Hoi An Centre for Culture, Sports and Radio-Television have run a local club to teach children and young people in Hoi An's traditional music, including traditions such as Hut singing, folk singing, and Quang cheering singing.

### Heritage Education in Schools Project, 2004

Since 2004, Hoi An Centre for Culture, Sports and Radio-Television has worked with schools in Hoi An to develop classes for traditional music and hut singing. This project has trained more than 1000 pupils on traditional music of Hoi An, some going on to become performers for the city cultural and art events.<sup>(7)</sup>

Additionally, The Centre for Cultural Heritage Conservation and the Hoi An Education and Training Department has built a set of documents for first grade students with two themes: "We explore the Cau Pagoda relic", "Love and Protect the Pagoda Relic".

Students were taught in class combined with joining field trips to gain practical experiences.

### Into Tuong<sup>(8)</sup>, 2019

Into Tuong is a regular theatre workshop organised in Hoi An by CAB Hoi An with the expert support from Nguyen Hien Hinh Theatre in Da Nang. The workshop consists of a Tuong Exhibition, the display and discussion on Son Hau's costumes, teaching of Tuong Dance, costume design, and Tuong Performance.

### Hoi An Handicraft Workshop

The Hoi An handicraft workshop maintains 12 traditional handicrafts, including fine arts pottery, carpentry, art lanterns, hat-making, bamboo and rattan weaving, wood carving, lacquer, fabric weaving, and embroidery. Visitors have the opportunity to directly participate in workshops. The workshop also offers craft classes where senior and master artisans teach and train young people how to make these crafts for a living.

<sup>(3)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/ColorOfLifeArtistHoiAn>

<sup>(4)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/meomeoembroidery>

<sup>(5)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/cabhoian>

<sup>(6)</sup><http://www.hoianworldheritage.org.vn/vi/news/Van-hoa-nghe-thuat/lop-hop-xuong-dac-biet-noi-pho-co-hoi-an-1786.hwh>

<sup>(7)</sup><http://www.hoianworldheritage.org.vn/vi/news/Van-hoa-nghe-thuat/bao-ton-am-nhac-truyen-thong-o-xu-quang-miet-mai-uom-mam-the-he-tre-2036.hwh>

<sup>(8)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/events/721479118363677>



Creative workshop in Hoi An

© CAB Hoian



# 4. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Hoi An's cultural ecosystem and infrastructure, together with the city's cultural management framework, is one of the most well-established and well-operated systems in Vietnam.

Funded by the municipal government of Quang Nam province, the city had devoted resource into art and culture by building museums, theatres, cinemas, and cultural and art centres a decade before UNESCO's designation of Hoi An Ancient Town as a World Heritage Site in 1999.

The city is also unique in its national importance in terms of public-run expert units specialising in the fields of: heritage preservation and restoration; culture and arts events; and tourism development. These public institutions and expertise have contributed to the not only the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage but also passing down the know-how for tourism development.

These include Hoi An Centre for Cultural Heritage Management and Preservation (est. 2011), Hoi An Centre for Culture, Sports and Radio-Television, and Hoi An city's Division of Tourism and Trade Management.

Private investment and public-private partnership are becoming more prevalent in cultural and heritage activities. Such a sentiment has resulted in an increase of private institutions, enterprises, and community-led initiatives. Hoi An's cultural scene has benefited and become more vibrant and connected. Key examples of such initiatives include:

- mixed use café COTIC<sup>(9)</sup> and Hub Hoi An<sup>(10)</sup>;
- lifestyle brands Metiseko<sup>(11)</sup>;
- craft and design boutique firms such as Meo Meo Atelier<sup>(12)</sup>, Reaching Out Vietnam<sup>(13)</sup>, handmade soap SAPO Hoi An<sup>(14)</sup>;
- artist collective and studios like CAB Hoi An, MORUA<sup>(15)</sup>, GO FISH STUDIO<sup>(16)</sup>, and
- issue-based organisations and projects such as Hoi An Impression Theme Park<sup>(17)</sup>, Hoi An EcoCity Working Group<sup>(18)</sup>,

**“I think this place [Hoi An] can become a miniature art city like Montmartre Hill, with the potential to gather many artists in residency and creating programs... Because this heritage city has the strengths in tourism, different from Saigon and Hanoi where there is networks and adequate supportive forces for art development. Meanwhile in Hoi An, there is [currently a] lack of [creative] individuals, organisations and art activities. To make Hoi An...an art destination, I think first of all [it needs]...to build a small environment and ecosystem... Developing contemporary art in a heritage city would be more difficult because its traditional foundation. Moreover, this place is mainly promoted for tourism, so investing in practical and experimental arts is extremely difficult. But if you are in a flexible mind, anything is possible.”**

– Chinh Ba, founder of CAB Hoian<sup>(19)</sup>

## Cultural institutions

Currently, Hoi An City has 6 museums (Hoi An Museum, Hoi An Museum of Folk Culture, Museum of Trade Ceramics, Sa Huynh Culture Museum, Museum of History and Culture, Hoi An Museum of Traditional Medicines), one cinema, two theatres (Hoi An Traditional Art Performance Theatre, Hoi An water puppet show), and several “living” museums in forms of old residential houses such as Diep Dong Nguyen Old House, Duc An Old House, Tan Ky Old House, Phung Hung Old House. These cultural institutions are central to the presentation of Hoi An's cultural heritage to visitors.

## Cultural institution case studies

### Hoi An Museum of Folk Culture, est. 2005

The Hoi An Museum of Folk Culture was established in 2005, located at the largest wooden two-storey house in the ancient town. The museum's first floor is dedicated for live performances demonstrating Hoi An's folk cultural values such as crafts and performing folk arts. The second floor features 490 objects, divided into four themes.

By exhibiting pictures, artifacts and performances associated with folk art, the Museum of Folk Culture demonstrates the value of intangible culture, and presents a long history of culture and creativity in the contributions of generations of local people to the history and development of the Hoi An area. More than ten thousand visitors (both domestic and international) visit the museum each year.<sup>(20)</sup>

### Hoi An House of Traditional Art Performance, est. 1996

Since 1996, Hoi An House of Traditional Art Performance has been offering art programmes to local and international audiences. The centre has played an important role in re-introducing Hoi An's traditional performing arts to the wider local public and tourists.

The centre has also provided regular classes and workshops for tourists on request, and to local people and children for free, in order to maintain their love and appreciation of their traditional arts and music.

### Hoi An Centre for Cultural Heritage Management and Preservation, 2011

The Hoi An Cultural Heritage Conservation Management Centre is a special unit operating directly under the Hoi An City's People Committee. Its primary mission is to manage, preserve, restore, and promote Hoi An's cultural heritage, research, collect and archive documents and artifacts, and advise the People's Committee.

Since its establishment a decade ago, the centre has helped protect and restore many architectural sites, archeological remains and historical relics, as well as safeguard and promote the city's intangible cultural elements



<sup>(9)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/COTIC-art-space-cafe-945403515470295>

<sup>(10)</sup><https://www.hubhoian.com/>

<sup>(11)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/Metiseko>

<sup>(12)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/meomeoembroidery>

<sup>(13)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/reachingout.artsandcraftsshop>

<sup>(14)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/handmadesoaphoian>

<sup>(15)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/moruaarts/>

<sup>(16)</sup><https://www.facebook.com/gofishstudiohoian/>

<sup>(17)</sup> <https://hoianimpression.vn/>

<sup>(18)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/hoianecwg>

<sup>(19)</sup> [https://luxuo.vn/culture/nghe-si-chinh-ba-mang-hoi-tho-nghe-thuat-song-gua-long-hoi-an.html?fbclid=IwAR39jU6ASOcipeXdkSKN1ypT8fjdas4zIRY105NisQKC-ScCFs8\\_4w9UYw](https://luxuo.vn/culture/nghe-si-chinh-ba-mang-hoi-tho-nghe-thuat-song-gua-long-hoi-an.html?fbclid=IwAR39jU6ASOcipeXdkSKN1ypT8fjdas4zIRY105NisQKC-ScCFs8_4w9UYw)

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Mixed use venue COTIC offers dynamic programming within its café in Hoi An Ancient Town

© COTIC

<sup>(20)</sup> <http://www.hoianworldheritage.org.vn/en/news/Museum/Hoi-An-Museum-of-Folk-Culture-188.hwh>

## Creative hubs and marketplaces

For the past few years, Hoi An City has become a vibrant hub for contemporary creative practice. This is due in part to the city’s beautiful natural landscape, its profound culture and history, and especially the large audience and market for culture based on the millions of domestic and international tourists who visit Hoi An city each year. A creative ecosystem is emerging, supported by institutions such as the ALLEY - Artist House<sup>(21)</sup>, GO FISH Studio, Exquisite - Cultural Gallery<sup>(22)</sup>, Drawer Studio<sup>(23)</sup>, Hub Hoi An, and CAB Hoi An.

### Hoi An Lune Centre for the Performing Arts, 2009-present

Hoi An Lune Centre is the first and only bamboo theatre in Vietnam. It was built for local art performances, being especially honored as home to the world-renowned Vietnamese Bamboo Circus.

With its capacity of 299 seats, the centre offers live art performances every evening. The show depicts the beauty and cultural richness of Vietnamese rural life through a unique mix of bamboo circus, acrobatic acts, dance, and theatrical visual art<sup>(24)</sup>.

### CAB Hoi An, 2019-present

CAB Hoi An is a space for connecting and exchanging arts and culture. Founded by poetry performer Chinh Ba in 2019, CAB Hoi An aims to build a community of artists, cultural and artistic practitioners and researchers by connecting local cultural values with contemporary approaches. CAB Hoi An has also developed an accommodation space for artists in residency in Ben Tri, Cam Ha ward, Hoi An.

With accommodation, studios, exhibition spaces and a blackbox room, CAB Hoi An has organised several art programmes such as LightOLife Arts Week (2019), The Talks film production (2019), Into Tuổi (2019), dance nights (2019), and CAB ArtsCon 2020, together with arts workshops for children, art residency programmes and artist exchanges.

During last two years, CAB Hoi An has helped artists become more connected to each other, creating a contemporary art community in Hoi An city and bringing contemporary arts and creative practices to local people and visitors.

In 2021, CAB Hoi An launched another initiative called CAB Read with aims to develop a culture of reading and artistic appreciation within the local community.

<sup>(21)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/alleyartisthouse>

<sup>(22)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Exquisite.Vietnam>

<sup>(23)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/drawerhoian>

<sup>(24)</sup> <https://www.luneproduction.com/lune-center-hoi-an>

<sup>(25)</sup> <https://www.rehahnphotographer.com/precious-heritage-museum>

<sup>(26)</sup> British Council Vietnam, Creative Hubs Mapping Report 2018, p.18

<sup>(27)</sup> Interview by research team

### The Precious Heritage Museum and Art Gallery , 2016-present<sup>(25)</sup>

The Precious Heritage Museum and Art Gallery displays hundreds of Vietnamese ethnic portraits, costumes and songs collected by artists over many years, with the aim of presenting the diversity of Vietnamese culture to the world.

### Go Fish Studio, 2017-present

Go Fish studio is a gallery and library for contemporary art and design, inspired by traditional culture. The hub is run by four friends: artist Bui Cong Khanh, designer Nguyen Minh Thai, environmentalist Dang Huong Giang and art teacher Nguyen Phuong Nga. Together they hold exhibitions, art talks, film screenings, art classes for children, workshops for students<sup>(26)</sup>.

### MORUA Arts Project, 2020-present

MORUA Arts Project (MAP) is an independent, non-profit project founded by artist, choreographer Ngo Thanh Phuong in January 2020. Their first initiative is MUARUA - an artist-in-residence programme focusing on performing/performance art. MORUA has partnered with CAB Hoi An in several art projects including CAB Artscon Season 1, and with The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre in Ho Chi Minh City on a contemporary dance programme entitled *X-Project: Metamorphosis of existence*.

“Hoi An’s strength is its vibe [and affordability] that enables a focused collegial environment. The friends in Hoi An who worked with me were just working only with me – I see their focus and concentration. For my colleagues [those I am working with], they are less revenue driven comparing to the situations in other big cities. In bigger cities, people in the arts will have to do more things to make ends meet and it might still never be enough. But in Hoi An, with that income [from dancing] the artists can be self-sufficient – They don’t have any additional needs. And when I work with them it’s very comfortable, they focus on what they are doing, not running here and there. They are very focused and that is Hoi An’s strength.”

– Ngo Thanh Phuong, founder of MORUA<sup>(27)</sup>



Workshop at  
Drawer Studio in 2020

© Drawer Studio

## Festivals

Every year, Hoi An city hosts dozens of cultural and art festivals. There are two types of the festivals in Hoi An.

Traditional events that relate to traditional culture, rituals and local beliefs, such as Death Anniversaries for the founders of crafts, the Whale Worshipping Festival, and calendar events such as the Mid-Autumn Festival, Lunar New Year, and Trà Quế Good Crop Praying.

New cultural and art festivals, and events developed with aims to boost the city's tourism and develop its creative production base. These include Hoi An Lantern Full Moon Festival, Hội An International Food Festival, the International Choir Competition, the Hội An–Japan Cultural Exchange Festival and others.

## Festivals – case studies

### Hoi An Lantern Full Moon Festival, est. 1998

Developed in 1998 as a means to boost tourism in the old town the festival takes place on the 14th day of each lunar month. The old town celebrates the moon deity by limiting electrical lighting and using silk lanterns to illuminate the streets. The festival attracts both tourists and locals and features traditional food, poetry and different events happening throughout the night.<sup>(28)</sup>

Thanks in part to this initiative, many intangible cultural elements including art performances, music, dragon dancing, food and traditional games have been revitalised as part of local culture.

### Hội An - Japan Cultural Exchange Festival, est. 2003

The Hoi An-Japan Cultural Exchange Festival is an annual event initiated by the People's Committee of Hoi An city since 2003, with aims to strengthen the historical relationship between Hoi An and Japan through a series of cultural and arts activities that reflecting the common values and history of exchange between the two countries from the 17th century onwards.

This annual festival normally includes craft and photo exhibitions, Japanese calligraphy teaching workshops, traditional art performances, and street arts such as Yosakoi dance, Shakuhachi flute performance, lantern and origami making workshops, and traditional cultural activities such as Bai Choi singing.<sup>(29)</sup>

### Hội An International Food Festival, 2016

Hoi An's culinary culture has become a great attraction to travel professionals and tourists from around the world. Hoi An has been awarded "Top 25 best culinary destinations in the world" by TripAdvisor. Hoi An's Quang Noodle and Cao Lau are recognised as "food of Asian culinary value", with Hoi An market described as "a culinary paradise".

This recognition led to the establishment of the International Culinary Festival in 2016. The event introduces and promotes Hoi An's local culinary values and culture to both domestic and foreign visitors.<sup>(30)</sup>

<sup>(28)</sup> <https://rove.me/to/vietnam/hoi-an-lantern-full-moon-festival>

<sup>(29)</sup> <http://www.hoianworldheritage.org.vn/vi/news/Le-hoi-su-kien/giao-luu-van-hoa-hoi-an-nhat-ban-lan-thu-17-2019-festival-to-lua-tho-cam-viet-nam-the-gioi-2019-1814.hwh>

<sup>(30)</sup> <https://ngaynay.vn/lien-hoan-am-thuc-quoc-te-hoi-an-noi-hoi-tu-cac-chuyen-gia-am-thuc-hang-dau-the-gioi-post71149.html>

## Movers and shakers

There are numerous individuals who have contributed to revitalisation and growth of Hoi An, particularly in the preservation of the city's cultural heritage and the promotion and development of local tourism. These include politicians, civil servants and the emergent contemporary arts scene.

### Nguyen Su, former Chairman of Hoi An People Committee

Nguyen Su led Hoi An's development for more than 20 years, between 1994 and 2015. He is regarded by many in the city as key to Hoi An's preservation and development during this time, and to its position in the world today.

He took the approach of sustaining Hoi An's values and culture while simultaneously developing tourism as the city's main economic activity, a process represented by bold initiatives and policies such as the re-construction and planning of the old quarter, making the old town free of motor vehicles, and the founding of the Hoi An full moon festival.<sup>(31)</sup>

### Bui Cong Khanh, Artist, GO FISH Studio

Bui Cong Khanh<sup>(32)</sup> is an artist deeply fascinated with social assumptions of cultural heritage. As one of the first local artists to gain an international reputation in the 1990s, with his performances questioning restrictions of individual expression in Communist Vietnam, Bui's multifarious practice has since embraced painting, sculpture, installation, video and drawing with significant showcases across the South East Asian region and beyond. Exhibiting around the world, Bui is a poetically provocative artist, whose art continues to grow with depth afforded by historical research and conceptual methods.

Bui currently lives and works in Hoi An, and founded GO FISH Studio together with three other artists: Nguyen Minh Thai, Dang Huong Giang, and Nguyen Phuong Nga. Through both Khanh's workshop and GO FISH Studio's programming, Hoi An's landscape of contemporary arts and culture has become more visible.<sup>(33)</sup>

### Chinh Ba, Founder of CAB Hoi An<sup>(34)</sup>

Chinh Ba is a former television editor: he first traveled to Hoi An in 2016 and instantly fell in love with the city, deciding to move to Hoi An within just 4 days with the idea of creating a contemporary art infrastructure within the city. He founded CAB Hoi An in 2019, based around three main strands of activity: Cab Studio for contemporary dances and performances; CAB Lab with art workshops for children; and the CAB Residency, providing residency programmes for Vietnamese and international artists coming to Hoi An to work, to create and to collaborate with each other and with local communities.

CABCON 2020 was one of the biggest art events in central Vietnam, and saw the convergence of more than 20 contemporary artists, and presented 50 artworks across genres such as fine arts, photography, performing arts, dance, film, video arts, and visual arts.

In founding CAB Hoi An, Chinh Ba wanted to develop a new platform for art exchange in the city, whilst also making Hoi An's culture more visible to a wider audience. Another key objective is to develop a love and appreciation of art among children in Hoi An, delivered via the numerous dance, theatre and craft classes and workshops held at CAB Lab.

In 2021, he also started CAB Read, which aims to encourage a culture of reading and art appreciation for the local community at large.

<sup>(31)</sup><https://laodong.vn/archived/hoi-an-chua-mot-ngay-vang-nguyen-su-705179.lido>

<sup>(32)</sup><https://san-art.org/vi/producer/bui-cong-khanh/>

<sup>(33)</sup><https://artreview.com/2015-futuregreat-bui-cong-khanh/>

<sup>(34)</sup>[https://luxuo.vn/culture/nghe-si-chinh-ba-mang-hoi-tho-nghe-thuat-song-giua-long-hoi-an.html?fbclid=IwAR39jU6ASOcipeXdKsKN1ypT8fjjdas4ziRYI05NisQKCSccFs8\\_4w9UYw](https://luxuo.vn/culture/nghe-si-chinh-ba-mang-hoi-tho-nghe-thuat-song-giua-long-hoi-an.html?fbclid=IwAR39jU6ASOcipeXdKsKN1ypT8fjjdas4ziRYI05NisQKCSccFs8_4w9UYw)



# 5. Opportunities

With a long history of international cooperation, and recent experience of partnership in heritage preservation, Hoi An has always been open and the city welcomes opportunities for exchange.

This currently covers not just activities associated with cultural tourism, events, and heritage preservation, but also ecological urban planning, green businesses, and smart living. Key opportunities for international collaboration with Hoi An include:

**Knowledge exchange and innovation in tangible heritage preservation** – with a focus on restoration and revitalisation of heritage assets in a dynamic living environment. Hoi An is not a ‘museum city’, it is a living city of heritage, with old buildings actively re-used. The balance of preservation and contemporary life puts Hoi An to the forefront of agendas such as ‘smart cities in heritage contexts’.

**Knowledge exchange and innovation for intangible heritage** – particularly in relation to crafts, textiles, performing arts and music. Hoi An is a city which re-lives its past through its contemporary creative life. It has the potential to be a hub and platform for craft innovation, connecting traditional techniques to contemporary aesthetics and materials.

**Environmental sustainability and green growth:** Hoi An has a delicate existence with regard to its built and natural environment. The city is prioritising creative responses to climate emergency and green and smart city development in its core plans. Recently, Hoi An Innovative Startup Club<sup>(36)</sup> signed a cooperation agreement with Saigon Times Club to promote media cooperation related to start-up activities associated with green tourism initiatives and projects, and safe and sustainable tourism. Hoi An can become a ‘living lab’ for this type of practice.

**Contemporary arts:** residencies, commissions and festival production. Local artists are seeking more opportunities to exchange and partner with international artists and cultural institutions in order to add more contemporary value to this unique historical city. Hoi An’s festivals and emergent creative hubs provide a ‘soft landing’ for creative practitioners from across Vietnam and internationally. As the city recovers post-Covid, international exchange will play a vital role in reanimating the city and building a community of creative practice.

“Funding will not solve all of the problems. What we will need is opportunities to connect and exchange. When it was difficult for Hoi An to reach outside of its network, I joined the Southeast Asia Choreographer Network (SACN). The event was organised online by the Asian Cultural Association in New York in conjunction with Indonesia. If we don’t connect and just stick to your circle and modes of work, it will be very confined and provide no access to new things. The SACN online event was not only about exchange, but also concerning learning from each other. We are grateful for the mentors from Singapore and Indonesia in their support.”

– Ngo Thanh Phuong, founder of MORUA<sup>(35)</sup>

“Hoi An will move toward becoming a green, zero waste destination as a long-term strategy.”

– Nguyen Minh Ly, Vice Chairman of Hoi An City<sup>(37)</sup>

<sup>(35)</sup> Interview by research team

<sup>(36)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/startupforhoian>

<sup>(37)</sup> <https://dantri.com.vn/du-lich/xay-dung-hoi-an-la-thanh-pho-sinh-thai-diem-den-du-lich-xanh-20201212205749362.htm>

# Đà Lạt

## Introducing Dalat

City vision, mission, slogan

## Dalat in numbers

### 1. Context

Location / region  
Ethnic diversity  
Heritage status

### 2. Culture, arts and civic policy

Cultural funding  
Culture, environment and sustainability  
Culture, minorities, gender equality, disability  
Culture and education

### 3. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

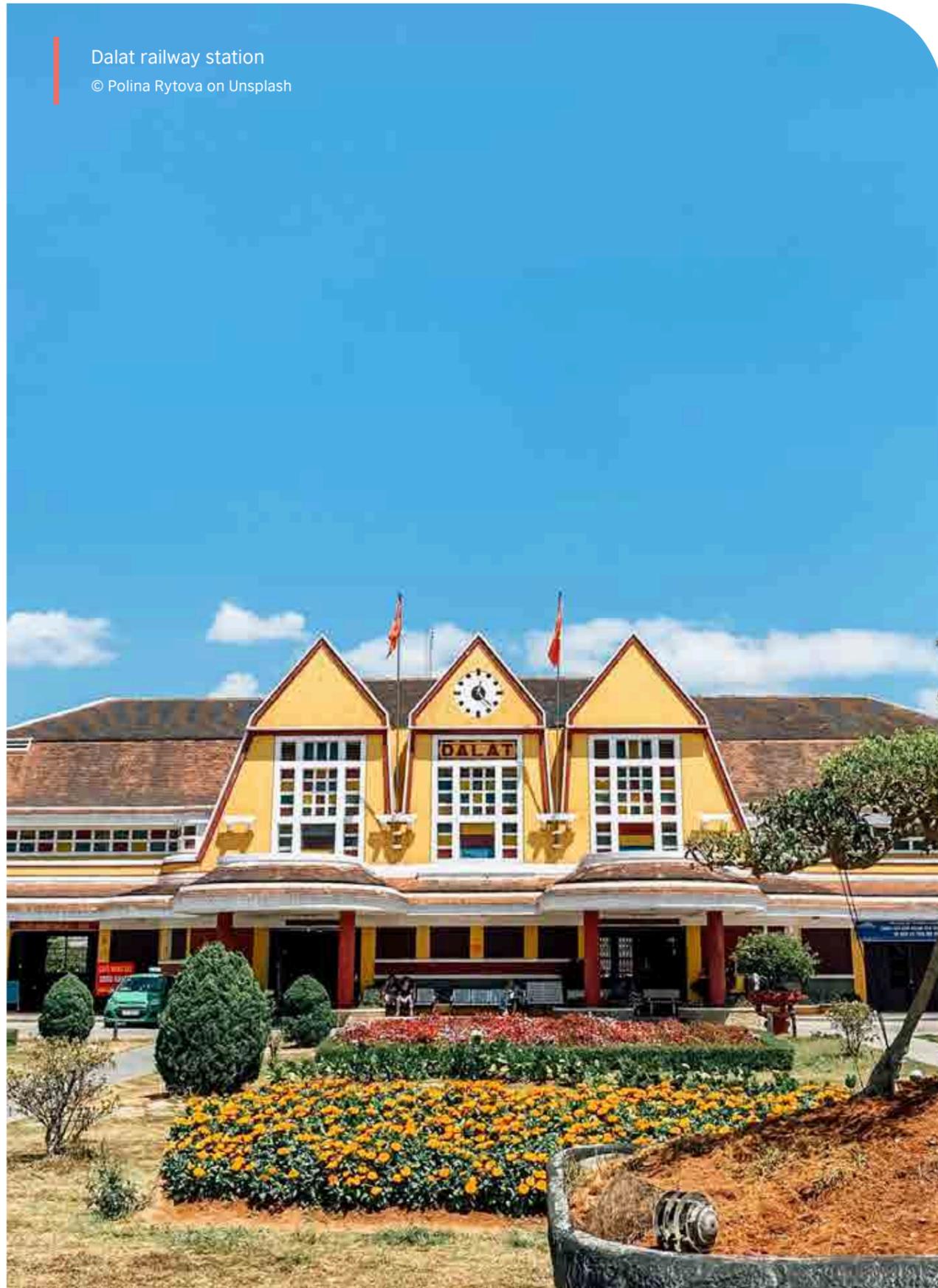
Cultural institutions  
Creative hubs and marketplaces  
Festivals  
Creative movers and shakers

### 5. Opportunities

# Đà Lạt

Cultural Cities Profile,  
Việt Nam

Dalat railway station  
© Polina Rytova on Unsplash



## Dalat's key cultural industries

- Cinema,
- Performance arts
- Fine arts
- Photography and Exhibition
- Advertising
- Cultural Tourism, Architecture
- Handicrafts
- Design

(Source: Plan No.2297/KH-UBND 2017 to implement the National Strategy of Cultural Industries of Vietnam to 2020, vision to 2030 in Dalat)

**“It is necessary to preserve the core values of Dalat, based on the architectural assets and natural landscape, but also to take a developmental approach in order to become a modern city with a rich identity.”**

–Prof. Dr. Hoang Dao Kinh, former Vice President of Vietnam Association of Architects

(Source: Nethome.vn)

# Introducing Dalat

Dalat (Đà Lạt) is the capital city of Lam Dong Province in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Formally established in 1916, Dalat is historically a place for vacation and leisure, thanks to its mild climate and the beauty of its natural surroundings. This ‘city of leisure’ or ‘wellbeing’ and ‘retreat’ is reflected in its architecture – a landscape of villas, religious and public structures which reflect a blend of French and Asian styles. With an enormous and diverse repertoire of French architectural heritage, including the well-preserved French quarter, Dalat lives up to its reputation as a museum of French colonial architecture.

**“It is the natural resources and unrivaled urban architecture that promotes and refines Dalat’s way of life, so to speak, a unique form of urban culture”**

–Prof., Dr. Hoang Dao Kinh, former Vice President of Vietnam Association of Architects<sup>(1)</sup>

Surrounded by beautiful natural landscapes, and with a mild climate and a rich ethnic culture, Dalat has existed as a well-established brand in international and national cultural tourism since the 1900s. The city’s unique ecological and cultural environment is exemplified by the Langbiang Biosphere Reserve<sup>(2)</sup> and UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage: Space of Gong culture<sup>(3)</sup>.

<sup>(1)</sup>Nhân Dân Newspaper, 05 Sept 2020 <https://nhandan.com.vn/di-san/da-lat-va-lo-trinh-tien-toi-do-thi-di-san-615596/>

<sup>(2)</sup><http://www.unesco.org/new/en/natural-sciences/environment/ecological-sciences/biosphere-reserves/asia-and-the-pacific/vietnam/langbiang>

<sup>(3)</sup><https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/space-of-gong-culture-00120>

Dalat (Đà Lạt) is the capital city of Lam Dong Province in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Formally established in 1916, Dalat is historically a place for vacation and leisure, thanks to its mild climate and the beauty of its natural surroundings. This 'city of leisure' or 'wellbeing' and 'retreat' is reflected in its architecture – a landscape of villas, religious and public structures which reflect a blend of French and Asian styles. With an enormous and diverse repertoire of French architectural heritage, including the well-preserved French quarter, Dalat lives up to its reputation as a museum of French colonial architecture.

# An emergent city for contemporary cultural practice

Despite a well-maintained and distinctive urban and natural landscape, Dalat is still an emergent centre for culture and creativity. Currently, there are several initiatives from both public and private sectors, seeking to regenerate the city's cultural landscape through urban regeneration and contemporary arts, as well as the preservation and promotion of architectural heritage and the development of tourism. Contemporary cultural practice, festivals and events, are beginning to reshape and re-energise Dalat, with its heritage landscape providing an ideal backdrop for new types of cultural activity. In 2020, the city hosted 80 art and cultural performances, attracting approximately 80,000 people, and 346 film screenings for over 150,000 viewers.<sup>(4)</sup>

Historically a meeting place for many influential Vietnamese cultural icons, including composer Trinh Cong Son, singer Khanh Ly, poets Han Mac Tu and Bui Giang, and writer Nguyen Tuan, Dalat is now becoming a new and appealing venue for contemporary artists with creative hubs and festivals emerging alongside the city's heritage assets. Coupled with the city's historical qualities – as a summer capital where French-style houses nestle in the cool pines, Dalat is an inspiration for contemporary artists and creative communities.

Bold contemporary art projects and events are now undertaken by Dalat-based creatives such as Pho Ben Doi Creative Studio, Moi Land, Cu Ru Bar, No Cai Bum 2021, Urban Sketchers Dalat, and singers Ha Anh Tuan and May Lang Thang. More evidence that Dalat is growing as a creative hub for artists and practitioners from across Vietnam is provided by the Cù Rú Bar project (which moved from HCMC to Dalat in 2019), MOI Land (est. 2017), the Bicycle Up<sup>(5)</sup> Café, and Pho Ben Doi Creative Studio. Other events include No Cai Bum Contemporary Art Week 2021 (held in Hue City in 2020), a video art exhibition and installation of Vietnamese contemporary artists at Tra Co Factory – Cau Dat Farm (January 2021), and Mây Lang Thang<sup>(6)</sup> live music stage (2021)<sup>(7)</sup>.



# City vision mission slogan

The Lam Dong provincial government and Dalat city authorities, in reviewing the city's strengths and opportunities, are seeking to regenerate the city through ecological tourism. In cultural terms, the city is seeking recognition as an 'urban heritage city'.

In realising this, the authorities are developing a scheme based around the conservation of landscape architecture in Dalat city. The city and its surrounding area are to be developed as a chain of urban districts, linked by a system of waterways and green parks, and connecting with areas for ecotourism, plus forest and agricultural landscapes.

**“Dalat stands on the feet of conservation and development. That means it is necessary to preserve the core values of Dalat that are the architectural fund and natural landscape, but also need a development approach to become a modern city with rich identity. Therefore, it is necessary to have a wise development philosophy or strategy based on continuous development of existing values, which is resort - ecology city and architectural heritages. With this philosophy, in addition to current Dalat that need to be tightly protected, whether a string of small urban areas with their own identity, specific characteristics and functions should be formed”**

– Prof., Dr. Hoang Dao Kinh, former Vice President of Vietnam Association of Architects

<sup>(4)</sup> Report no. 139/BC-SVHTTDL on Culture, Sports, and Tourism in 2020 - Directions and missions for 2021 issued by Lam Dong Province's Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism

<sup>(5)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Bicycleup/>

<sup>(6)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/MaylangthangDalat/>

<sup>(7)</sup> <https://zingnews.vn/den-da-lat-nghe-nhac-o-san-khau-tren-may-post1180512.html>

<sup>(8)</sup> Nhân Dân Newspaper, 05 Sept 2020 <https://nhandan.com.vn/di-san/da-lat-va-lo-trinh-tien-toi-do-thi-di-san-615596/>



# Đà Lạt in numbers

The city  
**has 2,130 accommodation services**  
and  
**44 travel businesses**  
in 2019

Dalat is  
**393.2 km<sup>2</sup>,**  
Its urban districts total  
242.51 km<sup>2</sup>



It has  
**5 palaces**  
with significant historical  
architectural and  
cultural value;

**74 villas**  
with cultural,  
architectural  
and historical value;

and **83 villas**  
registered for  
preservation

Dalat is  
**393.2 km<sup>2</sup>,**  
Its urban districts  
total 242.51 km<sup>2</sup>



Average  
life expectancy:  
**72.9 years old**  
in 2020

**1st tier  
city**  
of Vietnam  
in 2009



Dalat's total City  
**population**  
was **266,578**  
in 2020.  
Among which,  
**87.7%** is **urban**  
population

**Ethnic  
groups**  
in Dalat include Kinh,  
K'ho (Lạch, Chil, Sê),  
and Chinese

Dalat's **GRDP**  
per capital is  
**USD\$2,858**  
in 2020

The city attracted  
**6.3m tourists**  
in 2019 and among these,  
**14%** was  
**international**  
tourists

# 1. Context

In 1916, King Duy Tan decided to establish Dalat town and gave the Governor General of Indochina all rights on Dalat's land. By 1945, after 30 years of construction and development, Dalat city was a summer capital and the creative education centre of Indochina, particularly with the relocation of the College of Indochina School of Architects from Hanoi to Dalat. During this time, other than developing the city's infrastructure and architecture, the city government focused on developing economic and cultural life for the local community.

Dalat is currently a well-known tourist destination, playing a central role in the economic and cultural development of Lam Dong province. Tourism and services are identified as a key economic sector, contributing 67.5% of the city's economic structure. In 2017, Dalat was awarded the "ASEAN Environmentally Sustainable City" by the Association of ASEAN Countries, and then "ASEAN Clean Tourist City" in 2018.

## Location / region

Dalat (Đà Lạt) is the capital city of Lam Dong Province, located 1,500 kilometres from Hanoi, and 320 kilometres from Ho Chi Minh City. Situated on Lam Vien Plateau, Dalat city has an average altitude of 1500m above sea level.<sup>(9)</sup>

## Ethnic diversity

Within Dalat, Kinh people make up the majority population. Other minorities include Hoa and K'Ho ethnicities, including Lạch, Chil and Srê

## Heritage status<sup>(10)</sup>

Dalat is rich and diverse in both tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Dalat is considered a "museum" of French villas and buildings. By 1930, Dalat had 398 grand villas made of concrete. By 1949, the city had more than 1,500 buildings; 1,000 of which were villas, palaces, schools, stations, cathedrals, which were considered archetypes of 19th-century French architecture. What's special is no two villas are alike, each nestled amidst the pine forests with views across the hillside. By 2017, the city of Dalat officially put almost 100 of its architectural buildings including palaces, villas and residences into the city's strict preservation and promotion.

Apart from its French-style architectural heritage, Dalat is also known for its collection of woodblocks from the Nguyen dynasty and various local cultural antiquities of high value.

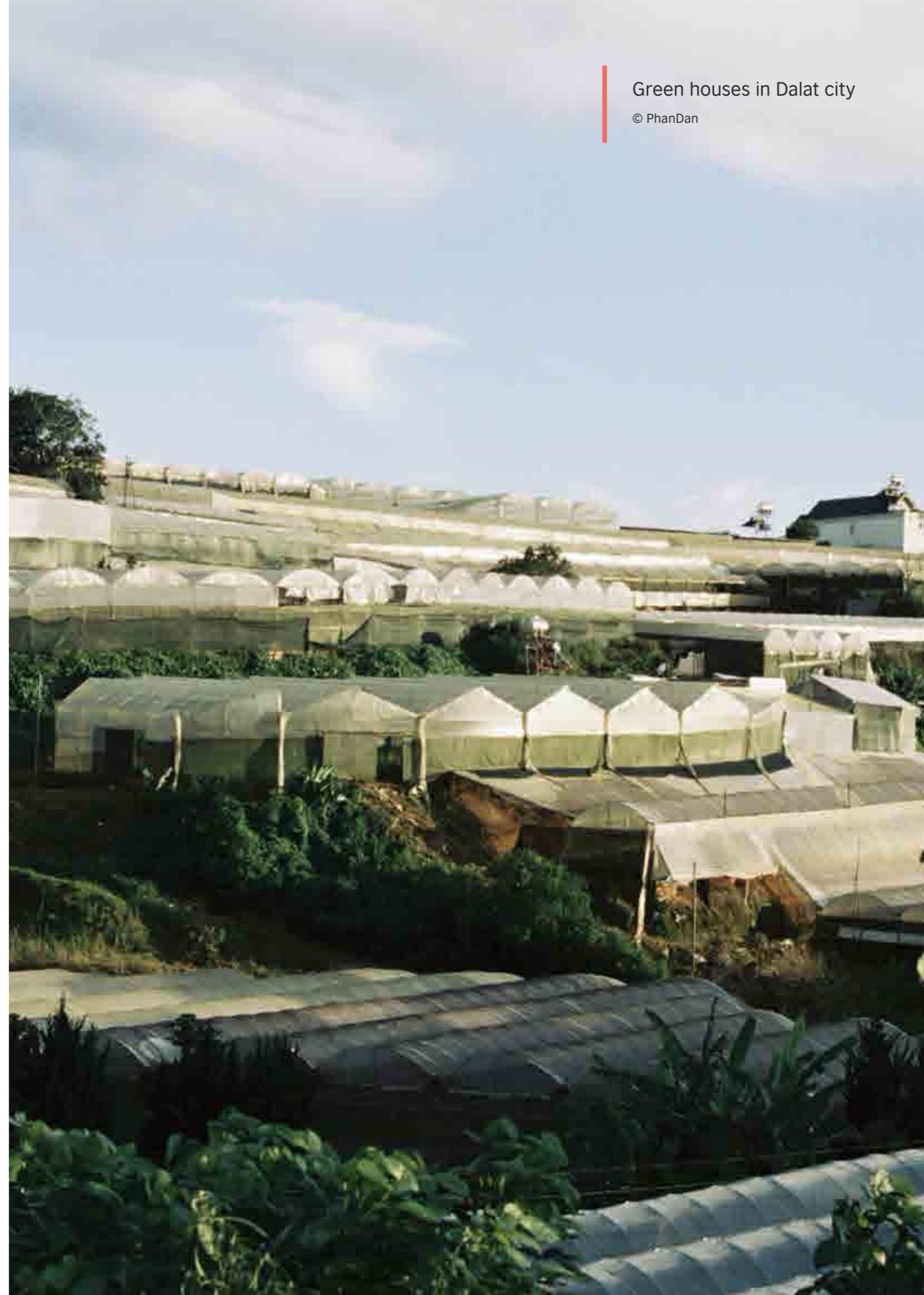
Dalat is also home to more than 20 ethnic groups such as Lach, Chil, Srê of K'ho group, Vietnamese Chinese, Tay, and Nung. Each group has their own traditions, cuisines, festivals, rituals, art practices such as gong and ching playing and ritual, buffalo offering ritual, medicine related knowledge, and rice spirit worship. The city has put much effort in safeguarding the cultural uniqueness of ethnic people and tried to promote those values through education, cultural and arts events and cultural tourism.

<sup>(9)</sup> <http://www.dalat-info.vn/vn/thong-tin-cac-huyen/thong-tin-thanh-pho-da-lat-40914.phtml>

<sup>(10)</sup> <https://vov.vn/van-hoa-giai-tri/di-san-van-hoa-o-da-nang-tai-nguyen-du-lich-hap-dan-856837.vov>

Green houses in Dalat city

© PhanDan



## 2. Culture, arts and civic policy

Dalat is considered a museum of villas, religious and public structures, their architecture a blend of European and Asian styles. For many years, the city government has developed policies to preserve and promote the role of historical architectural heritage. This includes 'Regulations on Preservation, Management, and Usage of State-owned villas in Dalat': an important document classifying the existing villas into categories with specific regulations on preservation or regeneration.

Cultural policy in Dalat also focuses on the preservation and development of cultural heritage for the city's diverse ethnicities – such as Gong culture, K'ho culture and its related art practices and many other forms of tangible and intangible cultural assets. The City has put much emphasis on integrating those cultural assets into its tourism development.

The goal overall is to develop Dalat and its vicinity into a 'world-class urban area by 2030', leveraging the city's unique characteristics in climate, natural landscape, history, culture, and valuable architectural heritage. According to Report no. 139/BC-SVHTTDL on Culture, Sports, and Tourism, 2020 – 'Directions and missions for 2021 issued by Lam Dong Province's Department of Culture, Sports, and Tourism' – in the next five years, the city will focus on the following:

- Increasing cultural participation and engagement in the municipality by providing citizens with arts and cultural products, especially for ethnic minorities
- Improving the administrative process and applying technology in processing applications relating to arts and culture
- Integrating cultural development with socio-economic development
- Strengthening the cultural management system
- Conducting research and acquisitions on tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

Cultural diplomacy activities have helped to improve the city's credibility in Vietnam and internationally. Activities include:

- Foreign Film Week (France, South Korea, Japan);
- The biennial Dalat Flower Festival with participation of approximately 30 diplomatic agencies, associations and organisations from various countries.

### Key city policies

**Decision no. 704/QĐ-TTg issued on 16th November 2011 by the Prime Minister on the Approval for the Adjustment of the General Planning of Dalat City and its vicinity by 2030, with a vision to 2050.**

As stated in this policy, the priority for Dalat into a world-class, green, modern urban centre of tourism, culture and science.

**Decision no. 47/2017/QĐ-UBND issued on Regulations on Preservation, Management, and Usage of State-owned villas in Dalat**

This document regulates in detail the preservation, protection and usage of the public-owned palaces and villas in Dalat. Significantly, in this legal document, the city also allows those buildings to be rented or used by private sector and encourages and assists organisations and individuals to:

- Invest in, restore and embellish damaged or degraded villas for efficient exploitation and use.
- Create favorable conditions for organisations and individuals to rent or buy villas in investing, renovating, repairing, or restoring the original architectural design status of the villa.

This policy is to create public-private partnership and encourage more private investment in the preservation and development of Dalat architectural heritage for contemporary uses.

## An emergent creative hub

**Tra Co Factory – Cau Dat Farm** was established by the French in 1927 in the Indochina era – the only factory at the altitude of 1,600 metres above sea level to produce Arabica coffee beans. Recently in 2019, it is serving a growing role in co-hosting cultural events with Pho Ben Doi creative studio and individual artist to breath new life into the place and turned the factory into a meeting point for young creatives and cultural tourists.

“Dalat itself has potential in arts and culture: rich architectural heritage, high-tech agriculture, amazing local products like tea and coffee, and a pleasant climate... Dalat is both artistic and unique. Unique, because it was one of the first cities in Vietnam to have proper urban planning right from the beginning, with distinctive architecture, and have been under the governance of France then of Vietnam; because of Pho Ben Doi (City on Hills) inspired by the view from my house overlooking the hills. Dalat is also using slogans such as 'city of flowers', or 'city of mist', all evoking a romantic, artistic feel as a narrative for tourism promotion, yet that is not enough.”

– Hien Nguyen, founder of Pho Ben Doi

### Dalat as a Smart City 2018-2025

Utilising IT and other means to improve quality of life and the efficiency of local governmental operations, as well as promoting coherent, sustainable socio-economic development which enhances the city's competitive edge. Activities include:

- Start-up idea and business model competition for the youth<sup>(11)</sup> – to encourage entrepreneurship and diversify the economy
- Competitions for creativity in technology – focusing on innovation and R&D<sup>(12)</sup>.

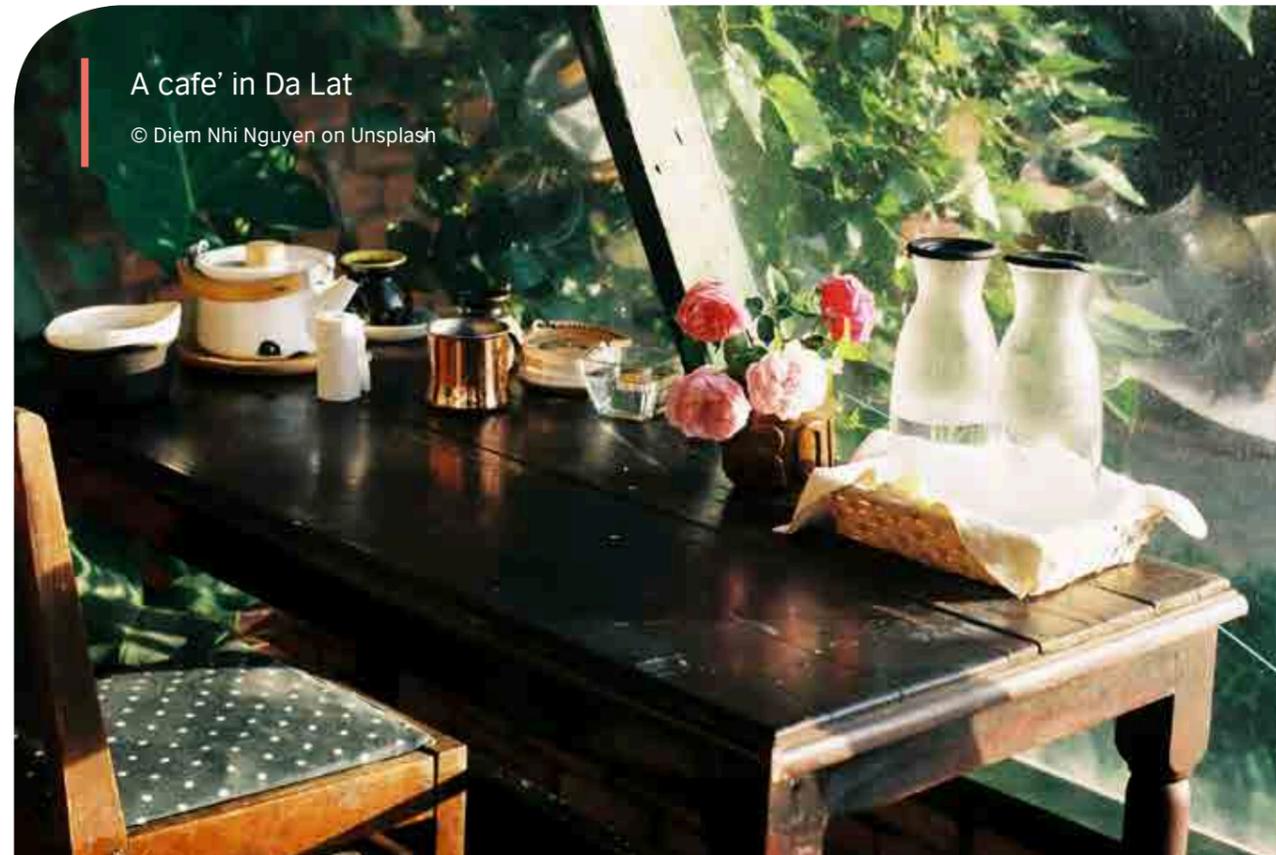
“The goal of the project is to build Dalat city into a smart city through the application of IT - telecommunications and other means to improve the quality of the life, improve the efficiency of government activities, promote comprehensive and sustainable socio-economic development. By 2025, Dalat will basically become a smart and modern city of Vietnam”

– Phan Van Da, Vice Chairman of People's Committee of Lam Dong province<sup>(13)</sup>

<sup>(11)</sup><https://lamdong.gov.vn/sites/tinhdoan/tintuc/tintinhdoan/SitePages/Chung-ket-Cuoc-thi-Y-tuong-va-mo-hinh-khoi-nghiep-sang-tao-tinh-Lam-Dong-lan-thu-III-nam-2020.aspx>

<sup>(12)</sup><http://lamdongtv.vn/tin-tuc-n1316/lam-dong-trao-giai-57-sang-kien-sang-tao-khoa-hoc.html>

<sup>(13)</sup><https://tuoitre.vn/da-lat-chinh-thuc-cong-bo-de-an-tro-thanh-thanh-pho-thong-minh-2018122514061105.htm>



A cafe' in Da Lat

© Diem Nhi Nguyen on Unsplash

## Cultural funding

Cultural funding in Dalat follows the financial mechanism of the central government in which, most of the public run cultural and arts activities, programmes of the city will be funded by the provincial and city annual budget and central government's budget (for large-scale programmes). This includes 137,550 million VND for 19 development projects for the local cultural industries – according to Report no. 147/BC-SVHTTDL on Results on the implementation of Decision no. 1755/QĐ-TTg and Decision no. 88/QĐ-TTg; Resolution no. 150/NQ-HĐND.

In some cases, public-private partnership or private funding are also available, especially with tourism-related programmes such as Festival of Flowers which benefits from private funding via Minh Hanh and the Vietnam Silk Limited Company, public investment from the Tourism Authority of Thai Lan, and external Korean investment.

Independent and community funding for culture and arts is more emergent, but is evident in contemporary arts events and projects such as No C ai Bum Contemporary Arts Week 2021 (artist and crowned funding), and Cau Dat Farm Art Installation Project 2021 (artists' fund with venue support from Tra Co Factory-Cau Dat Farm).

**“As a developing tourist city, if the arts are also strongly developed in parallel with tourism in Dalat, it will upgrade local culture because arts are the very platform to share cultural values, life and many human stories of local people through art forms”**

–Hoang Anh, founder of MOLLand<sup>(14)</sup>



Performance of Mây Lang Thang live music stage in 2021

© Mây Lang Thang

<sup>(14)</sup> [http://baolamdong.vn/bao-xuan-2020/202001/chang-hoa-sy-tre-va-cau-chuyen-ket-noi-2983730/index.htm?fbclid=IwAR18vvhW9rZnZQ\\_37wwwQLv3-0CRo2FJFloVecsKdSI\\_GYyWGx0aKa0x\\_c0#.XyV4nXx-RI4.facebook](http://baolamdong.vn/bao-xuan-2020/202001/chang-hoa-sy-tre-va-cau-chuyen-ket-noi-2983730/index.htm?fbclid=IwAR18vvhW9rZnZQ_37wwwQLv3-0CRo2FJFloVecsKdSI_GYyWGx0aKa0x_c0#.XyV4nXx-RI4.facebook)

## Culture, environment and sustainability

Lam Dong province is piloting a “green urban village” model in Dalat city to 2030, with a vision to 2050. It is expected to improve the quality of life for people, with a synchronised development of infrastructure, the presence of a new rural area in the city, combining with ecological tourism and homestay services. Dalat city and the surrounding area will develop following a chain of urban areas, linked by the beltway and the water landscape axis, with a system of green parks, connecting ecotourism areas, forest landscape areas, and the agricultural landscape. The aim is to nurture “a city in forests, forests in the city”.

At the 14th ASEAN Environment Ministers Meeting and the 15th ASEAN + 3 Environment Ministers Meeting held in Brunei Darussalam in September 2017, Dalat was honored to be the city representing Vietnam to receive the **4th ASEAN City award in environmental sustainability**.

“About Doc Nha Lang 2019 - before when I passed by the village, it was quite a nasty, grungy place. After the renovation however, we can see the visual impact, and most of all those who support the project love their own living space. Previously, I wanted Pho Ben Doi philosophy to be art for all, but after the project, it was changed to art with all, because only by creating art with people, with the local government, and with artists are our works meaningful and impactful.”

– Hien Nguyen, founder of Pho Ben Doi<sup>(16)</sup>

“Dalat needs to protect and promote its three core values: climate and natural landscape, architectural heritages systems and the cultural and human values of Dalat. The combination of these core elements is the basis for building Dalat into a heritage city”

– Doan Van Viet, Chairman of Lam Dong Province’s People Committee<sup>(15)</sup>

## Cultural and environment case studies

### Doc Nha Lang Art Project, 2019

Opened in 2019 in Dalat City as part of the PHO BEN DOI Into art hills 2019 project, hosted by Dalat City’s People Committee and Pho Ben Doi (currently is Pho Ben Doi Creative Studio).

Doc Nha Lang (Nguyen Bieu Street), used to be a grungy area of Dalat. This project kickstarted a process of culture-led regeneration. Today the district is like an open-air exhibition with over 30 wall-paintings curated from hundreds of artworks submitted via an open call.

Since the launch of the Project, Doc Nha Lang has become a hotspot attracting thousands of tourists, local people and art lovers. Meanwhile, the project has also helped to transform the physical area of Doc Nha Lang as well as the attitude of Doc Nha Lang’s dwellers toward their living environment.

### MOLLand chapter 1<sup>(17)</sup>

“MOLLand chapter 1” co-organised by MOLLand and The Married Beans. MOLLand is a group of local artists who connect creative practice to environmental sustainability. This exhibition involved works created from waste such as water pipes and bottles, pieces of wood, dry leaves and roots, with a message that everything has its feeling and human beings should be more environmentally responsible.

<sup>(15)</sup><https://nhandan.com.vn/di-san/da-lat-va-lo-trinh-tien-toi-do-thi-di-san-615596/>

<sup>(16)</sup>Interview by research team

<sup>(17)</sup>[https://www.facebook.com/events/2015401928578294/?active\\_tab=about](https://www.facebook.com/events/2015401928578294/?active_tab=about)



## Culture, minorities, gender equality, disability

Globalisation and international integration is providing opportunities as well as posing challenges to the cultural identities of various ethnicities in Lam Dong province and Dalat City. Addressing this reality, Lam Dong has been working on various solutions to preserve and promote the cultural identities of local ethnicities, propelling socio-economic development in the province. The implementation of ethnic policies has contributed to socio-economic development for minorities by implementing projects to develop production, diversify livelihoods and extend poverty reduction models. Policies on culture, health, education are also focused on improving the quality of life and sustainable poverty reduction in ethnic minority areas. Some specific activities include teaching Gong and Ching art for a young generation of minority groups, financial and technical support to revitalise the K'ho weaving craft in Lac Duong district (closed to Dalat city), creating communal space for ethnic minority communities to practice and introduce their traditional dance to the tourists in order to help them to diversify livelihoods and sustain their heritage.

In the area of social policies, Lam Dong province and Dalat city have implemented several national and provincial policies and initiatives to improve the wellbeing of people with disabilities, women and children, and marginalised people. The majority of people with disabilities in the province of Lam Dong have access to basic social services such as cultural learning, vocational training, job creation, and functional rehabilitation.

## Culture and inclusivity case studies

### Action Month of Gender Equality

The Action Month for Gender Equality 2020 is titled “Ending Violence Against Women and Children”. This took place from November 15, 2020 to December 15, 2020. This involved a programme of dialogue forums, seminars, and training; competitions on the topic of gender equality and gender-based violence, cultural exchange and an overall campaign to promote equality and prevent violence against women and children<sup>(18)</sup>.

### Supporting People with Disabilities

This 10-year-old project covers areas such as cultural education, vocational training, job creation, medical examination, treatment and functional rehabilitation. From 2012 to now, the whole province has trained and introduced 1,325 people with disabilities to enterprises, of which 191 people have accessed loans to start their jobs and access legal and advisory support. The programme has a strong cultural component, with activities in visual arts, sports, music, and performing arts.

## Culture and education

Dalat, which with French influence, was the cultural and educational centre of Indochina, continues to be an important city for learning and culture. Many famous Vietnamese artists chose Dalat as a place of inspiration and distribution of their artworks because of its strong position in education and training and thus its role as a cultural meeting point.

According to Decision no. 704/QĐ-TTg issued on 16th November 2011 by the Prime Minister on the Approval for the Adjustment of the General Planning of Dalat City and its vicinity by 2030, with a vision to 2050, educational and scientific institutions in the locality occupy a total area of 361 hectares. Institutions include Dalat University, Ho Chi Minh City University of Architecture (Dalat Campus), Dalat Biological Research Institute, Institut Pasteur de Dalat, and Dalat Nuclear Research Institute. Together they provide the infrastructural fabric for a range of cultural and creative education activities.

“Dalat is not only a destination for tourism but also education”

– Hien Nguyen, founder of Pho Ben Doi Creative Studio<sup>(19)</sup>

<sup>(18)</sup><http://laodongxahoi.net/lam-dong-trien-khai-thang-hanh-dong-vi-binh-dang-gioi-va-phong-chong-bao-luc-tren-co-so-gioi-nam-2020-1317158.html>

<sup>(19)</sup>Interview by research team

## Culture and education case studies

### Campaign “Heritage and Students”, 2020

The National Archives Center II and the National Archives Center IV under the State Records, the Archives Department together with the Ministry of Home Affairs in coordination with Lam Dong Department of Education and Training, and Dalat City People’s Committee organised the mobile exhibition Woodblocks of the Nguyễn Dynasty for high schools and junior schools in the city in order to honor and raise awareness in the local community regarding UNESCO’s designated Woodblocks of the Nguyễn Dynasty. The event attracted more than 2,000 pupils and teachers to participate.<sup>(20)</sup>

### “Conserve and develop cultural space of gongs of ethnic groups in Central Highlands Lam Dong” Project<sup>(21)</sup>

In Implementing the project “Conservation and development of cultural space of gongs in the Central Highlands of Lam Dong’s ethnic groups to 2020”, on October 27, the Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism of Lam Dong province cooperated with Ethnic Minority high school organised classes to train ethnic pupils on gong playing.

The classes took place for 20 days in which pupils had opportunities to learn about the history and values of gong culture as well as how to play traditional gong. The local authorities also gave the school a set of gongs and chings for them to continue to practice and perform later, together with traditional ethnic costume.



Creative workshop as part of Cultural and Creative Hubs Viet Nam project, Dalat 2020

© Quang Nong

<sup>(20)</sup><https://mocban.vn/>

<sup>(21)</sup><https://lamdong.gov.vn/sites/svhttdl/hoatdongvanhoa/dsvh/SitePages/Khai-mac-lop-truyen-day-cong-chieng-tai-Truong-Pho-thong-Dan-toc-Noi-tru-Trung-hoc-pho-thong-tinh-Lam-Dong.aspx>

# 3. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Dalat is a city which converges a strong cultural heritage with an emergent contemporary cultural scene. It has a strong institutional base, some of which is linked to its universities. Dalat is the base for the Association of Writers, and independent artists including Nguyen Nhu Huy, Nguyen Hoang Anh, Nguyen Kim To Lan, MOI Land, Cù Rú Bar, Nguyen Minh Thanh, The Thong (young artist, also a member of Pho Ben Doi).

Since around 2015-2016, several young creatives from Ho Chi Minh City began to arrive in Dalat to start their F&B businesses and develop their creative practice. Broadly, they care about customer experience, and several coffee shops turned into art spaces and small galleries. Dalat also has prominent local artists like Le Huy Cam, Phuoc Hung, photographer MPK, but they mostly work individually.

## Cultural institutions

### Lam Dong Museum, 1975

Lam Dong Museum<sup>(22)</sup> is a municipal museum with over 15,000 artefacts and many unique collections in the following themes:

- Nature of Lam Dong
- Dalat past and present
- Archaeological discoveries in Lam Dong
- The typical cultural features of indigenous ethnic groups (Ma, K'ho, Churu)
- Lam Dong army and people in two resistance wars against foreign invaders
- Lam Dong people in the work of building and defending the socialist Fatherland.

Lam Dong Museum also displays two stilt houses of Ma and Coho ethnic groups, which have been authentically restored and decorated.

### Dalat Opera House, 2020

Dalat Opera House, opened in 2020, is part of the city's Lam Vien Square development plan. It is expected to be a venue for arts and cultural events, as well as for seminars and conferences. With a modern sound and light performance system at international standards for performing dance, musical and classical music shows, the theatre has a capacity of 825 seats, including luxury salon chairs for special guests.

### Lam Dong Centre for Arts and Culture and Dalat Exhibition House

Both are publicly run cultural structures where most of the cultural and art exhibitions of Dalat have taken place for many years - such as annual exhibition "Dalat cultural memorabilia", "Color of Summer" (2019), "Art photos on Highland" (2017), "Dalat – Valley of Rose Grass" (2017), and "Vietnam cultural heritages" photo exhibition.

As the main and largest art and cultural exhibition space in Dalat city, this institution has played an important role in introducing the culture and heritage of Dalat city, Lam Dong Province to both local communities and tourists.

### Lam Dong Provincial Library

Lam Dong Provincial Library<sup>(23)</sup> was established on the foundation of two old libraries of the former regime. After 1975, with the support from Vietnam National Library, it is now the provincial library for all people in the province.

<sup>(22)</sup> <https://www.baotanglamdong.com.vn/>

<sup>(23)</sup> <http://thuvienlamdong.org.vn/>



Light installation at Cu Ru Bar

© Cu Ru bar

## Creative hubs and marketplaces

As a growing tourist destination, Dalat has become a more viable location for commercial creative practice, with a ready marketplace for new creative products and services. A range of creative hubs and art spaces have emerged in recent years, bolstering capacity and giving the city a fresh and energetic vibe.

### Phố Bên Đồi Creative Studio, 2016

Pho Ben Doi<sup>(25)</sup> is Vietnam's first annual, inter- and multi-disciplinary community art project, with the goal of transforming Dalat into a unique cultural destination of Southeast Asia. Founded in 2016, Pho Ben Doi has been a pioneer in creating a platform to connect resources in the community, in building the brand "Dalat – the City of Arts".

For Pho Ben Doi, contemporary art is a way of expressing urban life, moving toward the future, and developing creative values - which is also a core value of Pho Ben Doi. Each project has a unique theme, expressed and created by artists and experts. The programme's content framework is carefully curated with the professional and creative capabilities of reputable and multidisciplinary organisations and individuals from all over the world. Through contemporary arts, technology, community activities and tourism, Pho Ben Doi encourages the public to raise awareness about urban conservation, environmental protection and sustainable development.

### MOI land, 2017

MOI land is an art organisation founded in 2017, inspired by historical studies on indigenous people of the Lam Vien plateau: K'ho, Churu, Chil, and Lach. It serves as an art station connecting various spaces to support local and international artists living and working in Dalat. The space also aims to connect contemporary cultural developments through activities such as exhibitions, lectures, seminars, and artist talks.

### Cù Rú Bar, 2019

Cu Ru Bar is a project initiated by artists of Studio 240 and Sao La<sup>(26)</sup>, a non-profit and independent art project/ collective based in Ho Chi Minh City, focusing on relationships among artists and the community. By day the space is an art studio, turning into a local wine bar/gallery in the evening.

An overarching goal is to expand opportunities for collaboration between artists and local farmers, engineers, botanists, nature preservationists - exploring the unique combination of qualities available in Dalat. Cù Rú hosts an open residency and exchange programme for artists, curators and researchers. Cu Ru Bar has new exhibition every two months.<sup>(27)</sup>

<sup>(24)</sup> Interview by research team

<sup>(25)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/phobendoi>

<sup>(26)</sup> <http://saolacollecive.weebly.com/about.html>

<sup>(27)</sup> <https://creativehubs.vn/en/cu-ru-bar-h572>

<sup>(28)</sup> <https://www.globalshapers.org/hubs/dalat-hub>

### Global Shapers - Dalat Hub, 2017

Dalat Hub<sup>(28)</sup> is a group of committed to improving the state of Dalat. Dalat Hub requires shapers to be open, air disagreements, test each other's logic and view discovering mistakes as a good thing that leads to improvement and innovation. It is in effect Dalat's 'creative impact hub'.

### XQ Su Quan - Yersin art street

When the XQ company was established in 1996, artists Vo Van Quan and Hoang Le Xuan (born in the royal family in Hue) drew up a new type of practice, combining painting with traditional embroidery.

XQ now involves than 3,000 embroidery workers, including more than 2,000 artisans and 6 domestic and foreign affiliated companies. The work of X-Q's Original Song of 330 x 280cm, embroidered by 9 artisans for 235 days, has become the largest hand-embroidered painting and recorded in Vietnam.

Yersin Dalat Art Street was opened on March 25, 2016. This is an art project implemented by XQ Vietnam company to honor cultural values and typical local cultural products, especially the promotion of the cultural value of Dalat city to tourists.

### The Married Beans, 2015

This is a coffee business in Dalat that cares about supporting coffee farmers in the region. It supports minority communities to improve the quality as well as the value of coffee products from Dalat. The business also works as a meeting place for young people and creatives. It provides studio and exhibition space and has hosted art events such as MOlland chapter.02 - Asian Highway Project or film screening.

**“The strength of Dalat is that the audience does not consist of only Dalat people, but all people. There is always an audience. That is why Pho Ben Doi is in the process of opening Pho Ben Doi Creative Studio. The market here has so much potential.”**

– Hien Nguyen, founder of Pho Ben Doi Creative Studio<sup>(24)</sup>

## Festivals

### Dalat Flower Festival, 2012

Dalat Flower Festival<sup>(29)</sup> is an international cultural and tourism festival, a trademark of the city. Since 2012, Dalat has been officially recognised by the Prime Minister as "Vietnam Flower Festival City".

Each festival normally consists of diversified cultural and art events such as exhibitions, art performances, seminars and conferences. Dalat Flower Festival has a strong public / private partnership dimension, with contributions of many businesses, private organisations and individuals. This has helped to change the brand of one of Dalat's biggest cultural events into a more contemporary and creative one. Through 7 times organising Dalat Flower Festival, Lam Dong province has achieved many successes in the development of the flower industry and Dalat tourism - two strengths of the locality.

# Dalat - the city of thousand flowers

### Kính Cận Music Show 2020, “Make It Count”

This is one of the most special 'countdown events' in Dalat dedicated to the transition to the new year 2021. Kien, The Bao, The Flob, Reddy, B.Yay and other Indie artists had confirmed their participation in the show. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the show was cancelled. The plan to organise an indie-music show in Dalat proves that Dalat is becoming more of a meeting point for young creatives. In 2017, SEE-SING-SHARE, a live music show of Vietnamese pop singer Ha Anh Tuan, attracted large number of music lovers to the city.



Contemporary art survey show MOlland chapter 1 co-presented by artist collective MOlland and creative hub The Married Beans in 2019

© MOlland

<sup>(29)</sup> <https://festivalhoa.lamdong.gov.vn/>

## Creative movers and shakers

Since the 1950s, Dalat City has become the place for many Vietnamese famous artists to come to meet, to create and to distribute their artworks. Today, the attractiveness and the artistic inspiration of Dalat remain. Young and contemporary artists have been drawn to Dalat and together they are kickstarting a new era of cultural dynamism.

### Hoang Anh, founder of MOI land<sup>(30)</sup>.

Hoang Anh, an artist working and living in Dalat, is an outgoing person who always seeks ways to connect and to promote local art to international markets. Having exhibited in many galleries in Vietnam and overseas, Hoang Anh saw that the development of art spaces is essential for Dalat's art scene to grow.

“As a rising tourist city, if the arts can be also strongly developed in Dalat, it will elevate the local culture. An art centre is a place to share cultural values, life stories and many humanist stories of indigenous people through art forms”

– Hoang Anh, founder of MOI land

### Hien Nguyen (Nguyen Trung Hien)<sup>(32)</sup>, founder of Pho Ben Doi Creative Studio

Born and raised in Dalat, Hien studied design at a fine art university and chose to base in HCMC for his career. Hien used to be communication manager for Audi Vietnam. His love for Dalat has always urged him to think about his hometown, the people, the heritage and most of all, its future development. In 2016, together with some young creative colleagues, he founded PHO BEN DOI (City on Hills) in Dalat. Every year since 2016, PHO BEN DOI organised several art and cultural events at different locations in Dalat with the goal to transform Dalat into a unique cultural destination of not only Vietnam but Southeast Asia. Via the hubs' programmes and events, Hien Nguyen also wants to encourage and raise public awareness about urban heritage preservation, environmental protection and sustainable development.

With Pho Ben Doi, Hien is one of the most influential people in the city, changing the cultural landscape of Dalat from a tourism destination into a cultural destination. In 2018, after two years of working independently and with his creative collaborators, Pho Ben Doi was invited to partner with the city government in organising the 125th anniversary of Dalat with the Doc Nha Lang community art project.

### Nguyen Van Phuoc (MPK)<sup>(33)</sup>, photographer

MPK is a well-known professional photographer in Vietnam. He began his photography career in 1983, and in 1993 he showcased his first collection on the occasion of the celebration of 100 years of Dalat's founding. Currently, he is living in Dalat with his family. His whole life and career have been attached to Dalat city. By 2018, Phuoc had held 37 photo exhibitions with thousands of photos about Dalat's nature, culture and people. This includes exhibitions in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, Da Nang, and Vung Tau. Phuoc has hundreds of thousands of social media followers and is an influential advocate for his city.

### Ha Anh Tuan, musician<sup>(34)</sup>

Popular singer and entertainment entrepreneur Ha Anh Tuan is well-known across Vietnam. Having risen to fame through a popular television talent show in 2006, he has gone on to form the Viet Vision Entertainment Company, focussing on musical television production and concert promotion. In 2016, he launched his 'Sing Share' series via his YouTube channel. In 2019, Sing Share 4<sup>(35)</sup> was themed and filmed in the forest environment surrounding Dalat and Ninh Binh, bringing the city and the region to a huge audience across South-East Asia.

<sup>(30)</sup> Chàng họa sĩ trẻ và câu chuyện kết nối. (2020). [http://baolamdong.vn/bao-xuan-2020/202001/chang-hoa-sy-tre-va-cau-chuyen-ket-noi-2983730/index.htm?fbclid=IwAR1NfHO7hwO8\\_m5BqX3hWSD\\_wV9gqExcFEJSNoMWWGILid-jGlu4QSERdY8#.XyV4nXx-Rl4.facebook](http://baolamdong.vn/bao-xuan-2020/202001/chang-hoa-sy-tre-va-cau-chuyen-ket-noi-2983730/index.htm?fbclid=IwAR1NfHO7hwO8_m5BqX3hWSD_wV9gqExcFEJSNoMWWGILid-jGlu4QSERdY8#.XyV4nXx-Rl4.facebook)

<sup>(31)</sup> Interview by research team

<sup>(32)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/hiennguyen.dalat>

<sup>(33)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/MPKDalat>

<sup>(34)</sup> [https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=vi&u=https://vi.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%25C3%25A0\\_Anh\\_Tu%25E1%25BA%25A5n&prev=search&pto=aue](https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=vi&u=https://vi.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%25C3%25A0_Anh_Tu%25E1%25BA%25A5n&prev=search&pto=aue)

<sup>(35)</sup> <https://billboardvn.vn/ha-anh-tuan-khoi-dong-see-sing-share-mua-4-mo-man-cho-chuoi-ke-hoach-am-nhac-hoanh-trang-trong-nam-2020/>

# 4. Opportunities

Dalat is a cultural destination with beautiful historical architectural buildings and a growing centre for artists and creative people across all art forms. The city is an ideal location for artists' residencies and artists working at the interface of environmental sustainability and smart urbanism. It is also a city of heritage renewal, with ample opportunities for public private partnership in reanimating heritage assets. Key opportunity areas include:

#### • Smart city

The strategic priority to develop Dalat into a smart city by 2025 presents opportunities for art and technology collaborations, innovation in urban space and planning, and environmental sustainability. Dalat can be a testbed for emergent practice in this field<sup>(36)</sup>.

#### • Inward Investment and Enterprise

According to a special policy for Dalat, approved by the central government in 2015, Lam Dong Province can directly call for investment in areas of environment, infrastructure, tourism, high tech agriculture, and IT. The creative industries, as a provider of innovation and generator of spillover effects, can thrive in such an environment<sup>(37)</sup>.

#### • Developing creative human capital

The “Start-up idea and business model competition for the youth”, organised by Lam Dong Province's Youth Union, demonstrates a renewed commitment to the cultural and creative industries in the city's economic development. With an emergent creative hub ecosystem and a talent pipeline from the education sector, Dalat can become a meeting point for creative entrepreneurs from across Vietnam and internationally – e.g. as a base for summer schools, residencies and events.



Artwork featured on a resident's house front wall, Doc Nha Lang, Dalat City

© Nga Phan

<sup>(36)</sup> [https://dalat.vn/vi/detailnews/?t=dalat-smart-city-the-city-has-many-advantages&id=news\\_98](https://dalat.vn/vi/detailnews/?t=dalat-smart-city-the-city-has-many-advantages&id=news_98)

<sup>(37)</sup> <https://thuvienphapluat.vn/van-ban/Dau-tu/Quy-ting-1528-QD-TTg-co-che-chinh-sach-dac-thu-phat-trien-thanh-pho-Da-Lat-tinh-Lam-Dong-2015-288923.aspx>

# Hồ Chí Minh City

## Introducing Ho Chi Minh City

City vision / mission / slogan  
Creative industries and cultural services

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## HCMC in numbers

### 1. What makes this city unique?

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### 2. Context

Location / region  
Ethnic diversity  
Heritage status

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### 3. Culture, arts and civic policy

Cultural funding  
Culture, environment and sustainability  
Culture and education  
Culture and digital technology

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### 4. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Cultural institutions  
Creative hubs and marketplaces  
Festivals  
Movers and shakers

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### 5. Opportunities

# Hồ Chí Minh City

Cultural Cities Profile,  
Việt Nam

# Introducing Ho Chi Minh City

“Ho Chi Minh City is a special urban area, a major centre of economics, culture, education, science and technology, a gateway for cultural exchange, the pioneer, the driving force with a great ability to attract and influence in the Southern key economic region, in a position of great political importance in the country.”

– Politburo’s Resolution no. 16-NQ/TW issued on August 10th 2012

Ho Chi Minh City (Hồ Chí Minh City or HCMC, or Sài Gòn) is Vietnam’s biggest city and a dynamic socio-economic hub for the country. Situated between the Southeast Region and the Mekong River Delta, it lies at an international crossroads for South-East Asia, acting as an international gateway through Vietnam’s largest seaport (Saigon Port) and airport (Tan Son Nhat International Airport).

As such, HCMC is a gateway for regional and international cultural exchange. At the same time, this is also a locality with many traditional cultural values and contemporary arts, urban heritage, a well-developed infrastructure and large and growing market for cultural products and services.

The city’s key cultural industries include cinema, performing arts, fine arts, photography, fashion, cultural tourism and advertising. These industries reflect the city’s cultural identity, and for decades have contributed to its cultural and economic development. Initiatives and programmes developed and funded by independent and private sector partners have played a vital role in shaping the city’s approach to cultural entrepreneurship, especially in cinema, performing arts and cultural tourism.

Contemporary arts are well established, and recent years have seen the continued emergence of young, talented artists, art groups and art spaces. Most of this activity is independently driven, but the city has also implemented new policies for cultural development, governance and innovation. HCMC expects its cultural industries to contribute 5% to the GDP by 2025 and 6% by 2030, positioning the city as a cultural centre for Vietnam and the region.

The cultural industries are positioned as part of a wider economic development strategy which prioritises digital transformation and cultural tourism. Digitally driven sectors are expected to contribute 25% of HCMC’s GRDP by 2025<sup>(1)</sup>. The city has acknowledged the importance of developing a knowledge-based economy, evidenced by its strategies for expanding smart city infrastructure, high-tech parks, start-up centres, research and development centres, and information technology infrastructure on a 5G network platform.<sup>(2)</sup>

Nguyen Hue apartment building where each apartment is a coffee shop

© Jet Dela Cruz on Unsplash

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/feature/digital-transformation-to-contribute-25-of-hcm-city-grdp-by-2025-708630.html#inner-article>

<sup>(2)</sup> <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/feature/13th-national-party-congress-hanoi-hcm-city-aim-for-digital-government-708953.html>

# City vision mission slogan

Ho Chi Minh City is aiming to become a major economic, cultural, financial, and scientific centre by building a development strategy for the cultural industries, increasing investment in cultural and sports infrastructure, excellent cultural products and events at regional level.<sup>3</sup> The city has identified three specific targets:

- By 2025: a smart city with a good quality of life, and modern industrial and service development at the forefront of innovation.
- By 2030: the centre of economic, financial, trade, science and culture for Southeast Asia, with GRDP per capita of USD\$13,000.
- By 2045: the economic and financial centre of Asia attracting visitors from around the world<sup>4</sup>, based on sustainable development, a high quality of life, and a GRDP per capita of USD\$37,000.

<sup>3</sup> <https://ttbc-hcm.gov.vn/tphcm-huong-toi-muc-tieu-tro-thanh-trung-tam-van-hoa-hang-dau-ca-nuoc-13687.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://vietnamnet.vn/en/feature/digital-transformation-to-contribute-25-of-hcm-city-grdp-by-2025-708630.html#inner-article>



Saigon by night

© Nguyen Xuan Trang

**“Cultural Industries have developed deep roots in Ho Chi Minh City... With support, our cultural industries will contribute much to the development of the city.”**

– Mr. Nguyen Thanh Phong, Chairman of HCMC’s People Committee<sup>(5)</sup>

# Creative industries and cultural services



© MM-Random bar

Based on the National Strategy of Cultural Industries Development in Vietnam, cultural industries in Vietnam consist of 12 sectors. Of these, HCMC’s own strategy focuses on cinema, performing arts, fine arts, photography, exhibitions, cultural tourism, fashion and advertising, based on the fact that the creative private sector in HCMC is well developed, dynamic and vibrant, hosting most of Vietnam’s biggest creative enterprises in these sectors.

According to the HCMC Statistics Department, in 2019, these 8 cultural sectors employed over 97,000 people, of which the advertising, exhibition, and cultural tourism industries account for the largest proportion. In 2020, HCMC had 17,670 businesses operating in the field of culture, generating over US\$1,5 billion between 2010- 2019<sup>(6)</sup>.

Cinema is one of the key cultural sectors in HCMC. The number of films produced per year has increased from 20-25 films in 2015 to more than 40 films in 2019. However, it is still the case that domestic films still account for only 25% of total film revenue in Vietnam. The city has recognised this situation and is encouraging initiatives such as public private partnership to improve the growth of the domestic film industry. Emergent success is demonstrated by Vietnam’s recent regional high-grossing releases such as I See Yellow Flower On Green Grass (2015), The Girl from Yesterday (2017), Ròm (2020), and Papa (2021).

Performing arts is well-established in the city, with infrastructure and facilities supported and funded by local government. HCMC hosts more than 700 enterprises working in this field, including 12 theatres, and 3 public-run music centres. In 2020, the city’s public run art and cultural organisations organized 827 performances with more than 500,000 participants in its 7 public-run cultural and arts centres and theatres.

Contemporary art has been established in the city for several decades. Currently, the scene is becoming brighter and more vibrant through independent arts spaces such as The Factory, Sàn Art, Salon Saigon, Quynh Gallery, Phu Sa Lab, and Uu Dam Studio, and several creative hubs including Fab Lab, Cspace, Soul Complex, and Coi Viet.

Cultural tourism is also strong, thanks to an abundance of cultural heritage sites, activities and infrastructure. In 2019, HCMC welcomed over 8.6 million international visitors, an increase of nearly 13.5% on 2018. Over the same period, domestic tourists reached 32.77 million, an increase of 13% compared to 2018. Total tourism revenue in 2019 reached over USD\$ 6.1 billion (140 trillion VND), an increase of 10.15% compared to 2018.<sup>(7)</sup>



Performance of Cai Luong opera (traditional southern opera) in Saigon

© Kinergie Studio.

**“Saigon’s special characteristics are a melting pot, where people love to connect quickly. This openness is due to the city’s diversity, and its dynamic progressive culture.”**

– Uu Dam, artist, founder of Uu Dam Studio<sup>(8)</sup>

<sup>(5)</sup> <https://tuoitre.vn/da-co-cong-nghiep-van-hoa-sao-tp-hcm-chua-duoc-nhu-hong-kong-20190311105825076.htm>

<sup>(6)</sup> <https://www.hcmcpv.org.vn/tin-tuc/tp-hcm-lay-y-kien-chuyen-gia-ve-phat-trien-cac-nganh-cong-nghiep-van-hoa-1491875159>

<sup>(7)</sup> <https://vietnamtourism.gov.vn/index.php/items/30921>

<sup>(8)</sup> Interview by research team



# HCMC in numbers

HCMC GRDP per capital is  
≈ **USD\$6,588** in 2019



Average life expectancy:  
**76.2 years old** in  
2015

HCMC had  
**41.37M**  
**visitors**  
in 2019. Among which,  
**20.8%** were  
**international**  
tourists

Total Area:  
**2,095 km<sup>2</sup>**

Cultural industries strengths  
**Cinema,  
Performing Arts,  
Fine Arts,  
Photography,  
Exhibitions,  
Fashion,  
Cultural Tourism,  
Advertising**

The creative industries  
in 2019  
**employed  
97K+  
people**

Year of constitution  
**1674**



**17,670 businesses**  
operating **in** the field of  
**culture**

HCMC has  
**40+ creative hubs**  
and arts spaces

Total population in 2019 is  
**8.9M** with **7.1M**  
**urban** residents (79.23%)  
and **1.8M rural**  
ones (20.77%)

Population  
density is  
**4,100**  
**people**  
**per km<sup>2</sup>**  
in 2019



**94.8%**  
of HCMC  
population is  
**Kinh**

**1 UNESCO**  
**title**

# 1. What makes this city unique?

Within Vietnam HCMC is a hub of dynamism, creativity and boldness. It is both the leading city for economic and social development in Vietnam, and a national cultural centre with its unique characteristics based on the city's history, cultural heritage, and urban development.

HCMC is the city of cultural diversity. As a port town from its beginnings, it has been a crossroads for sea trade and travel. Since the 17th century, it has attracted visitors and residents seeking to explore the Mekong Delta.

The formation of the city's urban area developed through a process of rapid convergence and cultural integration between Vietnamese, Chinese and indigenous peoples including Khmer and Châm. Later additions from both Eastern and Western cultures brought fresh developments in lifestyle, traditions, religious beliefs, cuisine, costumes, festivals, and architecture.

For years, the city has sought to nurture rather than change the unique culture of each community, creating the rich diversity that is 'Saigon culture'. HCMC is also a point of the cultural exchange between the country and the world, which enriches Vietnam's culture in general and the city in particular.

A centre of economics, culture, science and technology, HCMC attracts academics, artists, and journalists from across Vietnam and around the world to settle and make their careers here. The city's creative and academic population makes up one-fifth of the country's total, with over 15,000 researchers, and thousands of people with graduate and postgraduate degrees and academic ranking.

The city's artists and creative workers are very proactive in expanding their audience, changing approaches to the presentation of their artwork and products in order to introduce them to new audiences. One example is Tran Nguyen Uu Dam, who exhibited his recent artworks at the University of Economics HCMC (UEH) in order to reach 40,000 students representing a new and young audience.

Similar approaches have been applied by films and performing arts, supported by the public sector: the city has a specific weekly programme to introduce arts and cultural activities, both traditional and contemporary, by exhibiting in public spaces like Nguyen Hue Walking Street and Bui Vien Street.<sup>(9)</sup>

Street life in Ho Chi Minh City

© Q.I.U

**“Gen Z, according to Nielsen, is the generation that is starting to care about society, about the environment, and feels a sense of responsibility to the community. We see young people becoming more interested and active in creativity – in architecture, design, culture and fashion. They will benefit from direction, inspiration, and guidance.”**

– Hien Nguyen, artist, founder of Pho Ben Doi<sup>(10)</sup>

<sup>(9)</sup> Interview with Tran Nguyen Uu Dam, a contemporary artists and founder of Uu Dam Studio in HCMC

<sup>(10)</sup> Interview by research team



## 2. Context

Ho Chi Minh City (also known as Saigon) was established in 17th century. It is the largest city in Vietnam in terms of population and scale of urbanisation. It is also a key economic, cultural and educational centre in Vietnam.

In 2019, the city's economic growth was estimated at 8.32%. The GRDP per capita in 2019 reached an estimated US \$ 6,400, more than twice the national average. In 2020, the city has GRDP at current prices estimated at 1,372 trillion dong, an increase of 1.39% compared to 2019, accounting for over 22% of national GDP and 27% of the total national budget revenue.

The city has a relatively good transport infrastructure with port, airport, highways, and railways. The city plans to build eight further urban railways, as well as roads and other transport infrastructure. There will also be a new international airport built in Dong Nai province as the biggest airport in Vietnam.

### Location / region

HCMC is located in South Vietnam, on the coast at the mouth of the Saigon river. It shares borders with Binh Duong Province at the North; Tay Ninh at the Northwest; Dong Nai at the East and Northeast; Ba Ria – Vung Tau at the Southeast, and Long An, Tien Giang at the West and Southwest.

### Ethnic diversity

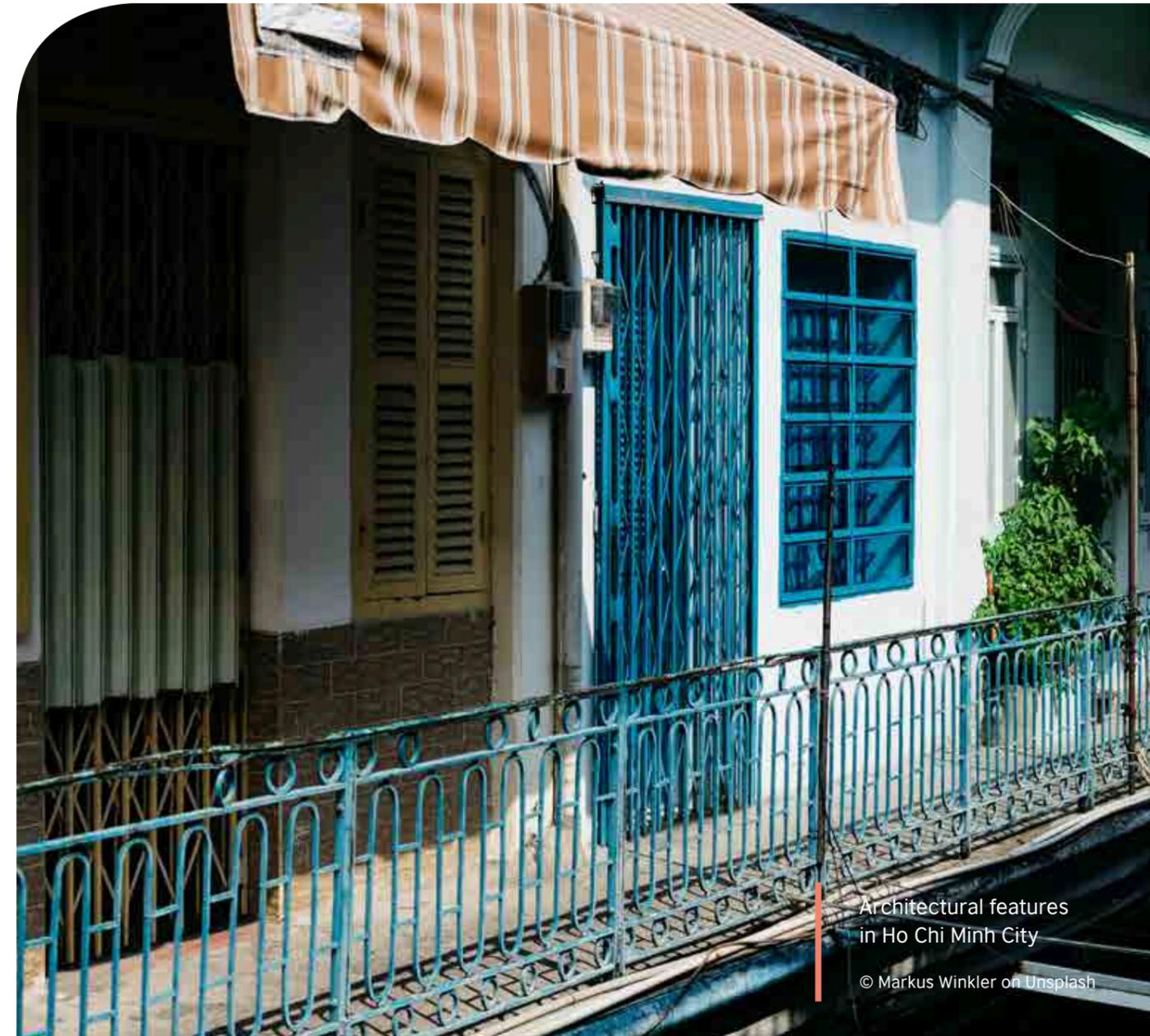
The majority of the city's population is ethnic Vietnamese (Kinh) at 94%. Chăm, Khmer and Chinese are the biggest communities after Kinh<sup>(1)</sup>. As of 2019, HCMC is home to an estimated 52 further ethnic groups, accounting for 5% of the total population of the city.

### Heritage status

The cultural intersection and acculturation of ethnic communities during migration has formed a rich and diverse intangible cultural heritage in HCMC. Most notably, this includes the art of Don Ca Tai Tu Nam Bo, which has been registered by UNESCO as a representative intangible cultural heritage of humanity. Other examples include Cai Luong theatre, Hat Boi singing, Bong Roi Dance and folk arts of ethnic minorities.

Other intangible cultural heritage assets associated with HCMC include traditional handicrafts such as glassblowing, woodcarving (Trung My Tay district); copper casting (Go Vap district); the Mai flower village (Thu Duc district), and events such as Nghinh Ong Can Gio Festival, and Chinese New Year festival.

HCMC's architectural heritage features a mix of Vietnamese traditional architecture, Chinese architecture, architecture of the Indians, Cham, and Khmer, French European-style architecture and a hint of contemporary architecture from the period 1954 to 1975. These each bear the hallmarks of their own styles, typical of their period, using the best architectural designs, materials and construction techniques of that time. HCMC currently has 172 ranked monuments, and 97 listed buildings and locations.



Architectural features  
in Ho Chi Minh City

© Markus Winkler on Unsplash

<sup>(1)</sup> <https://plo.vn/thoi-su/trien-lam-anh-ve-52-dan-toc-thieu-so-song-o-tphcm-869730.html>

# 3. Culture, arts and civic policy

Ho Chi Minh City aims to become a major economic, cultural, financial, commercial, scientific and technological centre for Southeast Asia. To help achieve that, since 2020 the city has focused on implementing a number of cultural policies with the goal of having HCMC's cultural industries accounting for 15% of the city's GDRP by 2030. These policies cover key activities to:

- preserve and promote the value of the city's historical cultural heritage, including urban heritage and intangible cultural heritage, for both public enjoyment and for the development of cultural tourism and city urban regeneration
- develop cultural and art infrastructure, facilities and equipment for both traditional and contemporary arts and culture
- develop human resources in culture sectors
- develop key creative products and services
- intensively encourage the establishment of creative enterprises and startups

Additionally, the city's overall policies for reforming the business environment (investment registration procedure, enterprise establishment procedures, internet business registration) has helped both increase the number of new enterprises and improve their competitiveness, consequently also benefiting the city's cultural and creative sector.

**“The driving force for economic growth from 2020 is private enterprise and foreign investment. For higher growth, the State's investment will work together with the State's planning and policies to play a leading role for private and foreign investment and development.”**

– Mr. Nguyen Thien Nhan,  
Member of the Politburo,  
Secretary of the Ho Chi Minh City  
Party Committee, 2019



Wall painting in the city

© Caitlin Barnes on Unsplash

## Key policies

### Strategy for the cultural development of HCMC by 2030 (2020)<sup>(12)</sup>

This strategy's goal is to make the city a centre of culture, arts, scientific research and human resource training, a leader in art, theatre, cinema and performing arts, and a thriving cultural and entertainment centre of the country.

In implementing this strategy, the city aims to invest in improving the efficiency of its cultural programmes, as well as its cultural institutions and arts spaces, its programmes for heritage preservation and promotion and its festivals and events – both traditional and modern.

With this new strategy, the city's culture and arts landscape will receive greater public and private funding, due to the city's planned improvement of financial and legal management.

### HCMC strategy for cultural industries development in the period 2020-2030 (2021)<sup>(13)</sup>

Focusing on cinema, performing arts, fine arts, photography, exhibition, advertisement and cultural tourism, HCMC expects its cultural industries to contribute 5% to the GDP of the city by 2025 and 6% by 2030, creating sector employment and developing the city into a regional cultural centre. Within this strategy, the city plans to establish a HCMC Centre for Cultural Industries.

With a particular focus on film, the city plans to build a new film studio and pre/post production centre. Other initiatives include developing technology for film production; developing cartoon production associated with products and services such as comics and toys; facilitating the development of private film businesses; attracting foreign investment; organising film markets and increasing the proportion of Vietnamese films in theaters.

For performing arts, the city will focus on implementing a number of key projects such as the 1,700-seat symphony-musical theatre project in Thu Thiem; building a new 2000-seat circus and multi-functional performing arts centre in Phu Tho; renovating HCMC Museum at the National Cultural Historical Park; and establishing a traditional performing arts centre, a fine arts assessment and auction centre, and various exhibition spaces.

<sup>(12)</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/national-strategy-development>

<sup>(13)</sup> <https://www.hcmcpv.org.vn/tin-tuc/tphcm-lay-y-kien-chuyen-gia-ve-phat-trien-cac-nganh-cong-nghiep-van-hoa-1491875159>



## Cultural funding

In recent years, the city's plans for funding culture, arts and cultural industries has intensively mobilised both public and non-public sectors. Public funding for culture has increased, accompanied by a 10-year strategy for diversifying financial resources for arts through private sector funding during 2020-2030. The city has built and established cultural houses at district level in order to create more facilities for local communities to attend and participate in cultural activities.

Similarly, private investment and public partnership for cultural infrastructure development has also increased, with more private-funded theatres and arts centres. Private companies and enterprises have also increased investment in producing films and music videos – key examples include BHD, HKFilm, Galaxy Media & Entertainment, CJ E&M Việt Nam, Thiên Ngân, and Trấn Thành Town.

The growth in independent or community-based funding for arts and culture is evidenced by the recent emergence of contemporary art centres, studios and workshops such as The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre<sup>(14)</sup>, Sàn Art<sup>(15)</sup>, Salon Saigon<sup>(16)</sup>, Toong<sup>(17)</sup>, Small Nest, Duong Chay, and Uu Dam Studio<sup>(18)</sup>. HCMC is now home to dozens of independent theatre groups and artists, and hundreds of private spaces for performing arts.

These alternative hubs and platforms are generating a new, globally connected energy and scene. They are helping to diversify the cultural landscape of HCMC and introduce a more open and progressive approach to intercultural dialogue, environmental sustainability, inclusion and tolerance. This is not without significant on-going friction with the city's authorities, where censorship remains a bight on genuinely free and open cultural expression.

**“Private actors are creating trends and leading in the transformation of the HCMC’s culture scene, providing opportunities for international and domestic individuals to interact with each other, creating creative groups with a specific interest.”**

– Truong Uyen Ly, Hanoi Grapevine Director <sup>(19)</sup>

**“Saigon’s creative trends are not restricted by traditional culture. The city does not have a traditional burden. In terms of creativity, people in Saigon develop freely in a variety of directions.”**

– Uu Dam, artist, founder of Uu Dam Studio<sup>(20)</sup>

<sup>(14)</sup> <https://factoryartscentre.com/en/home/>

<sup>(15)</sup> <https://san-art.org/vi/producer/bui-cong-khanh/>

<sup>(16)</sup> <http://www.salonsaigon.com/en/home/>

<sup>(17)</sup> <https://toong.asia/about-us>

<sup>(18)</sup> <https://www.uudamstudio.com/>

<sup>(19) (20)</sup> Interview by research team



© Giang Pham



## Culture, environment and sustainability

Under the strategy “Green: Environment-friendly city in the period of 2020-2025”, HCMC has set the goals for greening city streets, increasing public urban green space, and transforming polluted areas into parks and gardens for public use. The City Department of Natural Resources and Environment has been coordinating and collaborating with other departments to implement this master plan, with a vision to 2050.

### Cultural and environment case studies

#### Ho Chi Minh City Green Living Festival, est. 2019<sup>(21)</sup>

The Green Living Festival brought together nearly 60 businesses and organisations to introduce around 5,000 visitors to environmentally friendly products, services and technologies associated with green energy, transport and workspaces, sustainable agriculture, sustainable tourism, and biodiversity conservation.<sup>(22)</sup>

#### Ô Hi Show, est. 2020<sup>(23)</sup>

The programme under the project I-Unity at Hoa Sen University uses a variety of traditional and contemporary arts to engage audiences and raise awareness of environmental action. In 2021, the Ô Hi Show is going to have a new environmental programme involving storytelling, vegan cuisine, standup comedy, dance, theatre and singing.



Audience enjoying Co gai va chiec long vu (The lady and the feather) at exhibition of the Dogma Prize 2019

© Ô Hi Show

<sup>(21)</sup> <https://www.vietnamrecycles.com/en/launching-green-living-festival-2019-in-hcmc.html>

<sup>(22)</sup> <https://baotainguyenmoitruong.vn/ngay-hoi-song-xanh-tp-hcm-nam-2019-dien-ra-ngay-2-6-240403.html>

<sup>(23)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/ohishow/>

## Culture and education

In achieving the newly-set development goals for 2019, the city has emphasised the importance of developing high-quality human resources with international qualifications. Many public-run educational institutes offer training and educational programming for future cultural workers, entrepreneurs and artists, including HCMC University of Theatre and Cinema, HCMC University of Culture, HCMC University of Fine Arts, HCMC Conservatory of Music, HCMC College of Culture and Arts, HCMC Association of Photography and the Dong Nai College of Decorative Arts.

Recently, arts and cultural training and education has also been recognised as an important mission for private sector industries as well. Hence, private-funded and community-based educational programmes covering film, performing arts and traditional arts have been developed through initiatives such as Colab Vietnam, Autumn Meeting, and Coi Viet.

## Culture and education case studies

### Develop smart education, est. 2020<sup>(24)</sup>

Applying technologies and pedagogical methodologies to encourage creativity as well as thinking and communication skills, this recent city education initiative is aligned with the city's strategies for sustainable development and building a smart city, in which high-quality human resources and excellent policies and frameworks play an important role.

### 2020 HCMC Youth Union's education programmes<sup>(25)</sup>

This city-wide programme offers cultural and art performances for children in 24 urban and rural districts as well as at Tran Huu Trang Cải lương Theatre in order to provide cultural stimulation and educate them on arts.

### Coi Viet Project, est. 2013<sup>(26)</sup>

Formed in 2013, Coi Viet has become an intermediary organisation between academic institutions and the public, creating a two-way dialogue on traditional arts in HCMC, through free or low-cost educational programmes, free library space, seminars and discussions, and an online library on traditional performance arts of Southern Vietnam.

### Yume Community Art Project, 2018<sup>(27)</sup>

Yume is a community art project founded by Dr. Dao Le Na in 2018. The project provides a series of programmes including courses on aesthetics, philosophy and cultural studies, and creative skills training workshops on literary composition, script writing, soundtrack writing, as well as traditional performance arts such as cai luong. The profit from these courses is put in Yume Fund to support a number of initiatives including: the Yume Kids project teaching arts for children with cancer and children with disabilities; free film weeks for the community; short film or drama projects; art seminars; and supporting the translation and printing of art books.

In 2019, with funds from British Council in Vietnam, Yume ran a project "Continuing the steps of hundred years" offering free training courses in Cai Luong for children and young people in HCMC.<sup>(28)</sup>

### Soul Music and Performing Art Academy, 2012<sup>(29)</sup>

Founded in 2012 by renowned singer/song-writer, Thanh Bui, SOUL Music & Performing Arts Academy operates with four key goals:

- To bring a well-rounded music and performing arts education to every child in order to nurture the next generation of Global Citizens of Vietnam.
- To develop the artistic and academic abilities of all students so that they can achieve their fullest potential in their chosen fields.
- To raise awareness of the importance of music and performing arts education in developing a child's creativity, positive mindset and interpersonal skills.
- To bring an international standard of arts education to the Vietnamese music and performing arts community.

<sup>(24)</sup> Directive no. 01/CT-UBND on Socio-economic development missions in 2020 of the HCMC People Committee

<sup>(25)</sup> <http://english.doanthanhvien.vn>

<sup>(26)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/CongTyTnhhCoiViet>

<sup>(27)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/yumeartproject>

<sup>(28)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/events/2223531467904349/>

<sup>(29)</sup> <https://smpaa.edu.vn/en/>



Performances and Workshops  
by Yume Community Art Project

© Yume

## Culture and digital technology

At a national level, Vietnam has a particular focus on urban development through its Smart Cities programme, which includes HCMC. As part of the city's master development plan, HCMC aims to become a smart city with modern industrial and service development by 2025, and a regional centre of science and technology by 2030. The city authorities anticipate that by 2025, digital transformation will contribute 25% of HCMC's gross regional domestic product (GRDP).

In order to achieve those targets, the city is implementing measures to take advantage of opportunities to drastically develop its digital and knowledge economy, and encourage the production and export of high-tech products, software and digital products. Key infrastructure to support this includes Saigon High Tech Park established in 2002, Qunag Trung Software Park founded in 2000, and an additional software park inside Tan Thuan Export Processing Zone.

HCMC also actively hosts and organises various international symposia in the field of technology, including the 8th International Conference on Computed Data and Social Networks (CSoNet 2019) and international events on artificial intelligence (e.g. International seminar 'International and domestic experiences in research and application of artificial intelligence' 2019; International scientific conference 'Applying artificial intelligence in transportation' 2020).

## Culture and digital technology case studies

### Saigon Hi-tech Park, est. 2002<sup>(30)</sup>

As one of three National Hi-Tech Parks in Vietnam, Saigon Hi-Tech Park (SHTP) was established as a technology and science centre designed to enhance the economic and technological capacity of HCMC and Southern Vietnam, and that will also serve as a model for developing Vietnam's technological and economic capital.

- Between 2016 and 2020, Saigon Hi-tech Park had a total export value of USD\$46.36 billion (with an estimated value of USD\$17.24 billion in 2020). It is seen as a key factor in the development of the highly interactive creative urban area in the eastern part of HCMC, and a hub for attracting investment in science, technology, and high-quality local and international human resources.

**“Ho Chi Minh City has multiple development trends, and through Smart City, the focus now is quality of life of the youth. We chose art and technology [referring to ArtTech Fusion], because 60% of the elements in quality of life are influenced by art; and technology is an obvious trend for young people. ArtTech is not simply beautiful paintings or combining beautiful art, that is only one aspect. We want it to become the tool for the city branding as well as to address urban problems.”**

– Dr. Trinh Tu Anh, Director of Institute of Smart City and Management (ISCM)<sup>(31)</sup>

<sup>(30)</sup> <http://www.saigonsiliconcity.com.vn/about-us/saigon-hi-tech-park>

<sup>(31)</sup> Interview by research team

### SMARTCITY+ ArtTech Fusion 2021<sup>(32)</sup>, 2021

SMARTCITY+ArtTech Fusion 2021 took place in January 2021, and consisted of a series of events and activities around the theme of 'ArtTech Fusion' including the launch of the "ArtTech Fusion for Ho Chi Minh Livable Smart City" art gallery and technology space.

- The event included performances and exhibitions, seminars, expert exchange forums, community projects (campaigns), and applied studies focusing on Smart City solutions and practical projects. The event, held at HCMC University of Economics, was organised by UEH Institute of Innovation (UII), UEH Youth Union and Pho Ben Doi, with further support and collaboration from national and international partners including universities, research centres, businesses, and governmental and non-governmental agencies.

### VNG, est. 2004<sup>(33)</sup>

Founded by investment banker Le Hong Minh, VNG is one of the largest Internet companies in Vietnam.<sup>(34)</sup> Launched as Vinagame in 2004<sup>(35)</sup>, VNG is a regional games leader, but has since grown to position itself as an internet company specialising in online properties ranging from media to social networking.

### Digital Animation and Visual Creativity

Linking Vietnam's burgeoning digital sector with its well-established film industry, Ho Chi Minh City is home to a significant number of digital creatives working in the field of visual effects and technology. Key examples include visual effects agency Red Cat Motion<sup>(36)</sup>, animation studio Colory Animation<sup>(37)</sup>, and creative visual studio The Box Collective<sup>(38)</sup>.



ArtTech Fusion for Ho Chi Minh Livable Smart City, HCMC, 2021

@ Pho Ben Doi

<sup>(32)</sup> <https://m.facebook.com/events/451817455829350>

<sup>(33)</sup> <https://www.vng.com.vn>

<sup>(34)</sup> <https://www.techinasia.com/tag/Vietnam>

<sup>(35)</sup> <https://www.techinasia.com/le-hong-minh-vng-story>

<sup>(36)</sup> <https://www.redcatmotion.com>

<sup>(37)</sup> <http://colory.vn>

<sup>(38)</sup> <https://www.theboxcollective.tv>

# 4. Cultural ecosystem and infrastructure

Ho Chi Minh City has benefitted from a well-developed cultural infrastructure dating back to the French colonial era of 19th century. At that time, Saigon had become a Western-style urban-commercial port, equipped with museums, galleries and theatres. Nowadays, many of these institutions and venues are funded and run by the city government.

Since 1986, the transformation of national policy has encouraged private investment and business in culture and arts: private-run cultural institutions and initiatives started to increase and, subsequently, have come to form the larger portion of the city's cultural landscape in terms of investment, products and services development. This is particularly the case with regard to cinema, music, and performing arts, which are supported through privately-run venues such as Vin Gallery<sup>(39)</sup>, Idecaf Performance Art Theatre<sup>(40)</sup>,

Sai Gon Theatre, New Smile Theatre; Soul Live Project Complex<sup>(41)</sup>, Soul Music & Performing Arts Academy (SMPAA)<sup>(42)</sup>, and cinemas such as Galaxy Cinema, CGV Cinema, HBD Star Cinema, and Dong Da cinema.

To date, independent, artist-run or community-based initiatives for culture and arts in HCMC are mostly small scale. A small number have been financially sustained over the long term, such as The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, Sàn Art, Salon Saigon, Post Vi Dai<sup>(43)</sup>, Craig Thomas Gallery<sup>(44)</sup>, and Gallery Quynh<sup>(45)</sup>. Others, while operating as project-based, artists-initiated, and community-led, are still proactive and dedicated, impacting positively on the cultural and art scene of HCMC, especially amongst younger generations.



<sup>(39)</sup> <https://vingallery.com/>

<sup>(40)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/skidecaf/about/>

<sup>(41)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/soulliveproject/>

<sup>(42)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/smpaa.edu.vn/>

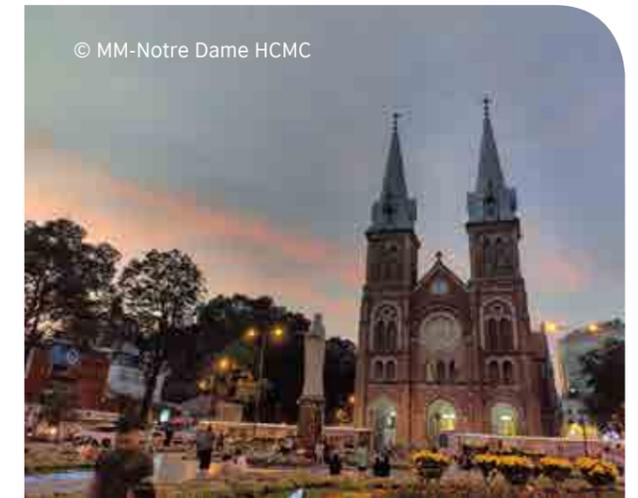
<sup>(43)</sup> <https://postvidai.com/>

<sup>(44)</sup> <http://cthomasgallery.com/>

<sup>(45)</sup> <http://galeriequynh.com/>

## Cultural institutions

HCMC has a number of established cultural and arts institutions including museums, libraries, exhibition centres, cinemas, theatres, and educational institutions, which for a long time have served the cultural and artistic needs of the city. However, many were built before 1975 or date back to French colonial times, and require maintaining. While public funds for these cultural institutions are limited within the city's budget, private investment and public-private partnership has been encouraged by the local authorities in order to improve the operation of these institutions, both in terms of maintenance and programme development.



## Cultural institution case studies

### Ho Chi Minh City Opera House<sup>(46)</sup>

Built in 1898, this iconic building became the Ho Chi Minh City Ballet and Symphony Orchestra in 1994. It is a venue for high-profile performance art events.

With a diversity of programmes in international orchestra, ballet, opera, choral and contemporary performance arts, the House plays a vital role in the cultural and arts landscape of the city as a host to international performances.

### Tran Huu Trang Theatre, est. 2015<sup>(47)</sup>

Formerly as the Tran Hung Dao Centre for Cai Luong, the Theatre was officially renamed in 2015. Dedicated to the art of *cải lương*, the most distinctive performance art of Southern Vietnam, the theatre has been key to the city's recently-initiated programme to introduce Cai Luong to children. Free classes and performances at the Theatre aim to develop appreciation for this traditional art for the city's next generations.

### Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts Museum, est. 1987<sup>(48)</sup>

The museum building, built in 1929, is a blend of Asian and European architecture. It is home to more than 21,000 artifacts divided into two main collections: ancient arts and traditional handicrafts, and contemporary art, featuring paintings of artists from Indochina and Gia Dinh schools. Other than permanent exhibitions, the Museum also organises programmes including research and conferences, and serves as one of the main tourist attractions within the city.

### HCMC University of Cinema and Theatre, est. 1976<sup>(49)</sup>

HCMC University of Theatre and Cinema is an education institution directly under the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. It provides training and education in the fields of theatre, cinema, photography and television at undergraduate and postgraduate levels; and research and experimentation in the fields of theatre, cinema, photography, and television.

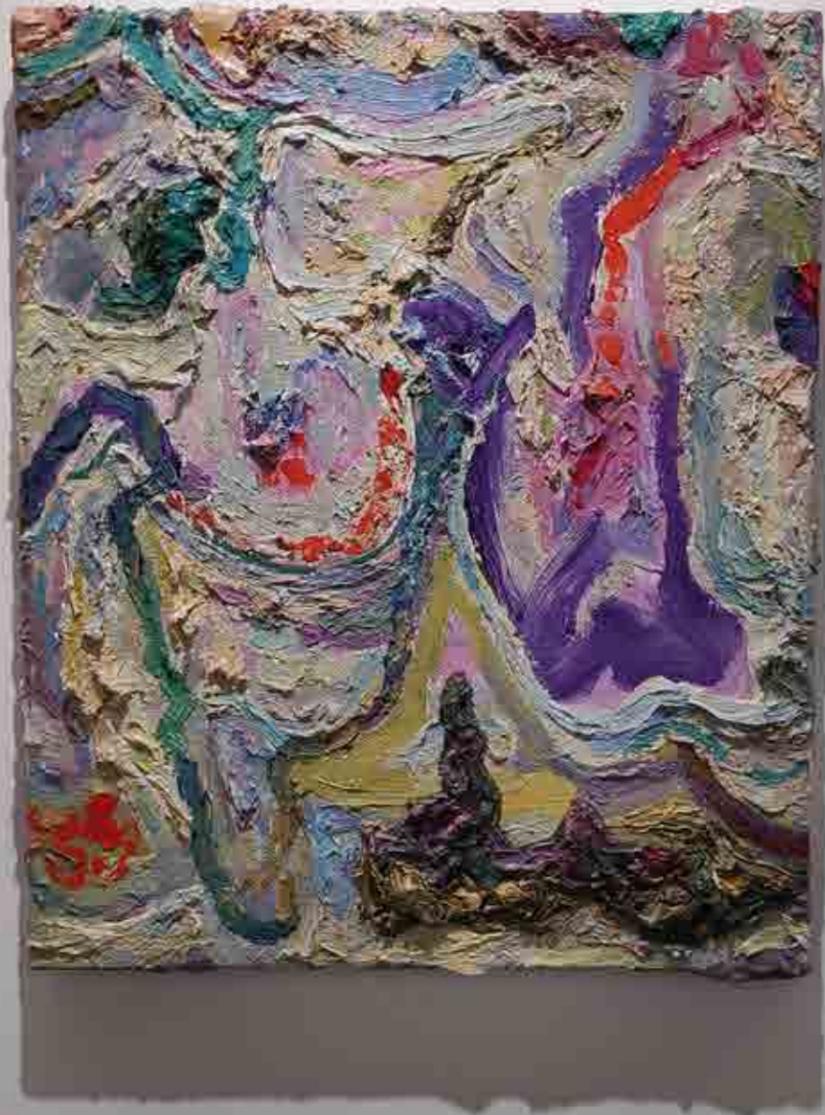
Other than diversified training courses in acting, traditional musical, film directing, costume design, stage design, photography, broadcasting, sound and light techniques, and film criticism, the university also has studio, theatre and cinema as a platform for its students to practice and to introduce their works.

<sup>(46)</sup> <http://www.hbso.org.vn/GioiThieuChiTiet.aspx?CatID=5>

<sup>(47)</sup> <http://nhahatcailuongtranhuutrang.com/>

<sup>(48)</sup> <http://baotangmythuattphcm.com.vn>

<sup>(49)</sup> <http://skdahcm.edu.vn>



An art exhibition at Galerie Quynh

© Galerie Quynh on Hanoi Grapevine

## Galleries

HCMC has a growing number of well-established independent galleries that are playing a key role in providing a platform for Vietnam's young and emerging contemporary arts scene. Many are active in international and regional networks, supporting their artists with opportunities for collaboration, international representation, and cross-cultural exchange and residency programmes.

### Galerie Quynh, est 1996<sup>(50)</sup>

Recognised as a leading contemporary art gallery in Vietnam, for two decades Galerie Quynh has promoted contemporary art practice in the country through exhibitions<sup>(51)</sup>, seminars, performances, concerts, and publishing.

The Gallery is known internationally for its programming, which ranges from drawing and painting to video and installation. Working with a select group of established and emerging mid-career Vietnamese artists such as Tiffany Chung, Tun Andrew Nguyen, Nguyen Phuong Linh, Ha Mah Thang, and Tran Van Thao, the gallery also exhibits the work of distinguished artists from around the world. In keeping with its mission to support education and develop an infrastructure for the arts in Vietnam, the Gallery also collaborates with artists, curators, museums and art spaces locally and internationally to organise talks and lectures as well as to produce publications.

In May 2014 the gallery founded the non-profit educational initiative Sao La. Initiated by artist Nguyen Kim To Lan and Nguyen Duc Dat, Sao La comprises a young diverse group of passionate creatives working loosely as an independent collective.

### Craig Thomas Gallery<sup>(52)</sup>

Craig Thomas Gallery (CTG) was founded in 2009 with the express mission to create a much needed curated gallery space in HCMC focused primarily on the development of young Vietnamese visual artists.

### Post Vidai<sup>(53)</sup>

Established in 1994, Post Vidai is the unique collection that focuses on the development of Vietnamese contemporary art. 'Vidai' in Vietnamese means 'great' or 'monumental', which was used widely in propaganda slogans and posters. The use of this term is a playful way of collecting the artistic gestures after the establishment of 'Doi Moi', Vietnam's 'great' economic reforms of the late 1980s.

Post Vidai is a title that provokes questions of ambition, to imagine a space and time inspired by the past but looking towards a prosperous future in Vietnam. It is also a phrase that reflects the focus of the collection – the post Doi Moi generation, when contemporary art started its practice and discourse in Vietnam. Post Vidai is a growing collection that is housed between Saigon and Geneva.

### Vin Gallery<sup>(54)</sup>

Based in downtown HCMC, Vin Gallery has established an active presence in art fairs across Asia by promoting cross-cultural hybridisation. The gallery aims to bring artists with critical practices to HCMC to share their work with the local art scene, while simultaneously striving to discover and promote promising Southeast Asian artists to the international community.

### Blue Space Art Gallery<sup>(55)</sup>

Blue Space Art Gallery was founded in 1995. Based within Ho Chi Minh Fine Arts Museum, the gallery's main objective is to promote the highest quality of contemporary Asian art by Vietnamese artists to the art world both in Vietnam and abroad.

<sup>(50)</sup> <http://galeriequynh.com>

<sup>(51)</sup> <http://galeriequynh.com/exhibition/>

<sup>(52)</sup> <http://www.cthomasgallery.com/>

<sup>(53)</sup> <https://postvidai.com/>

<sup>(54)</sup> <https://vingallery.com/>

<sup>(55)</sup> <https://www.vietnamartist.com/blue-space-art-gallery/>



An exhibition at San Art

© San Art

## Creative hubs and marketplaces

Based on a mapping of creative hubs undertaken by ViCHI in 2019<sup>(56)</sup>, HCMC has over 40 creative hubs and arts spaces, covering a range of categories including art galleries, co-working spaces, film and photo studios, artists collectives and residency spaces, and initiatives for art education, fashion, music, craft, and library resources.

Most are small-scale, project-based, and community-led. Some have a sustainable business model, but many often rely on financial support from international funds, artists and the community at large.

Through their variety of programmes and projects, these cultural and arts organisations, hubs and spaces have a significant impact on the developing tastes and desire for culture, arts and creativity among the city's young audience of consumers.

Many of the city's creative enterprises and businesses have emerged from this network of creative hubs. The city currently has 17,670 registered businesses operating in the field of cultural and arts production and distribution, thousands of which are associated with the film industry, and more than 700 of which are involved with performing arts.<sup>(57)</sup> These currently comprise a larger part of the city's own cultural investment and outputs, supplemented by private and foreign investment, and supported by city-based organisations such as Saigon Innovation Hub (SIHUB).<sup>(58)</sup>

“In Ho Chi Minh City, the audience is really diverse. In my exhibition at Galerie Quynh in 2019, there were many child visitors, because their parents saw that the installations were very colourful and very understandable - children can easily understand. People brought lots of children to that exhibition, and the levels of engagement with the website and lectures were very positive.”

– Uu Dam, artist, Uu Dam Studio<sup>(59)</sup>

## Theatre and Performing Arts

### Idecaf Performance Art Theatre, est 1997<sup>(60)</sup>

Idecaf emerged in 1997 with the play “Moments of Love” which quickly resonated with city audiences. Within a short period, the Theatre became well known as a familiar place for young audiences who loved drama and supported new and contemporary works.

Over 20 years, Idecaf has produced more than 100 plays and presented over 5000 performances for city audiences, including 30 puppet plays for children, 29 children's musical and musical programmes, and collaborated with HCMC television.

## Film and Photography

### Noirfoto<sup>(61)</sup>

Noirfoto Darkroom-Studio-Gallery, founded in early 2017, is a space to create, share, support, and nurture the values of the art of photography, especially analogue photography, in both professional and community development aspects.

### Future Shorts<sup>(62)</sup>

Since 2003, Future Shorts has created a rapidly expanding network that provides filmmakers with a platform for showing their work worldwide.

<sup>(56)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/vietnamcreativehubinitiative>

<sup>(57)</sup> <https://tuoitre.vn/da-co-cong-nghiep-van-hoa-sao-tp-hcm-chua-duoc-nhu-hong-kong-20190311105825076.html>

<sup>(58)</sup> <http://sihub.vn>

<sup>(59)</sup> Interview with research team

<sup>(60)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/skidecaf/>

<sup>(61)</sup> <https://noirfoto.com/>

<sup>(62)</sup> <http://futureshorts.com/>

## Design

### Kho Muc print studio<sup>(63)</sup>

Newly-established independent print workshop and open studio, providing a space for artists and creatives to experiment with risoprint, an ecologically-sustainable print medium using soybean ink. Activities include commercial and artistic printing, training and practice workshops.

## Contemporary Arts

### Sàn Art, est. 2007<sup>(64)</sup>

Founded in 2007 as an artist-initiated, non-profit art platform, Sàn Art has since become a leading art organisation dedicated to nurturing and challenging common modes of viewing and thinking about visual art through its programme of exhibitions, critical discourse, educational initiatives and residencies. Past projects include Sàn Art Laboratory (2012-2015), an art residency programme, and Conscious Realities (2013- 2016), a series of events and publications on the Global South.

In 2018, Sàn Art developed Uncommon Pursuits—a seminar-workshop for emerging Southeast Asian curators, and opened a new gallery in downtown HCMC with a focus on intergenerational dialogues between modern and contemporary art. In this new chapter in the organisation's history, Sàn Art aims to become a community-driven space where experimental practices and fresh perspectives are fostered and shared among interdisciplinary artists, curators, scholars, cultural workers and audiences in the region.



Sàn Art – Opening Reception of 'Dislocate', a solo exhibition by Vietnamese artist, Bui Cong Khanh, 2016

© Stop and Go Studio

### The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, est. 2016<sup>(65)</sup>

The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre is the first purpose-built space for contemporary art in Vietnam. Established in 2016 by artist Tia-Thuy Nguyen, The Factory aims to be a dynamic destination for art, designing innovative programmes that illustrate the creative vitality of Vietnam today.

With substantial gallery space in which to experiment and a dedicated Arts Department with international curatorial expertise, its programme of curated exhibitions, workshops, live arts, talks and film screenings is driven by the needs of our local community. The Centre is particularly committed to assisting artists in their search for resources, visibility and support.

The Factory was built in response to both the rich culture of the city and the lack of arts and educational infrastructure, with the goal of initiating programmes that connect and develop cross-cultural dialogue. The Centre collaborates with like-minded partners at home and abroad in the creation of quality projects and opportunities designed to further develop artistic production and cultural audiences in Vietnam.

Located 20 minutes east of the centre of HCMC in Thao Dien, District 2, The Factory operates as a social enterprise, whereby all profit from sale of art and business on the property supports the running costs of its art-related programmes.

With 38 exhibitions and a large numbers of public programmes, residency, art exchange projects, The Factory is one of the most prominent contemporary art spaces in Vietnam.

### MoT+++ (MoTplus)<sup>(66)</sup>

MoT+++ is an independent, artist-run space. With a particular focus on sound art, they collaborate with artists to create an experimental environment that encourages artists to push the boundaries of their practice.

### Art Labor<sup>(67)</sup>

Art Labor is an artist collective who work in between visual arts, social and life sciences in various public contexts and locales.

“Saigon’s creative trends are not restricted by traditional culture. The city does not have a traditional burden. In terms of creativity, people in Saigon develop freely in a variety of directions.”

– Uu Dam, artist, Uu Dam Studio<sup>(68)</sup>

## Architecture and Urban Planning

### An Ordinary City<sup>(69)</sup>

An Ordinary City is an urban design consultancy aimed at bridging the gap between citizens and citymakers, and empowering people to make more humane cities. Launched in 2015, they undertake projects and public events to raise awareness about urban issues and vernacular cultures, and help engage communities. By approaching the process and demands of architectural design from different angles, they help translate citizens' needs and demands into more humane planning.

### Tropical Space<sup>(70)</sup>

Tropical Space is an architecture firm based in Ho Chi Minh city, and founded by architects Nguyen Hai Long and Tran Thi Ngu Ngon. They specialise in urban design, architecture, landscape and interior design. With a deep understanding of Vietnamese culture and climate, Tropical Space is committed to the use of environmentally friendly building practices and sustainable materials.

<sup>(63)</sup> <https://www.khomuc.me>

<sup>(64)</sup> <http://san-art.org>

<sup>(65)</sup> <https://factoryartscentre.com/en/home/>

<sup>(66)</sup> <http://motplus.xyz/>

<sup>(67)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/artlaborcollective>

<sup>(68)</sup> Interview with research team

<sup>(69)</sup> <https://creativehubs.vn/en/an-ordinary-city-h382>

<sup>(70)</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/company/tropical-space>

## Festivals

As a centre for tourism both domestically and internationally, HCMC is home to a variety of festivals, both traditional and contemporary. Key festivals associated with the city's communities and traditional culture include Whale Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival, the Ghost Festival, Ba Thien Hau Pagoda Festival, Ky Yen Festival, Mid-Year Festival, and Tet Lunar New Year. These festivals take place annually and are hugely popular.

The city has also organised a range of newer civic and commercial festivals, primarily in order to boost cultural tourism and promote its cultural infrastructure. Key examples include Nguyen Hue Flower Street Festival, the Book Reading Festival, the Southern Fruit Festival, HCMC Tourism Festival, and HCMC Ao Dai Festival.

Vietnam Design Week and the Vietnam Festival of Creativity & Design are both key events associated with the promotion of contemporary creativity, both within HCMC and elsewhere.

## Festivals – case studies

### Vietnam Design Week<sup>(71)</sup>

With the theme of Regeneration, Vietnam Design Week 2020 was organised by the Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS) (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism) in collaboration with Ashui.com, ConsMedia and other specialised partners.

The festival's activities include a series of city-specific exhibitions, workshops and design shows aimed to increase the international and domestic value of Vietnamese products and promote the development of national design industry. The organisers seek to create an annual national event to showcase the creativity of Vietnamese design and establish design as one of the country's spearhead cultural industries.

With the theme "Regeneration", Vietnam Design Week 2020 took place in HCMC, Hanoi and Hoi An, and focused on using materials in an economical, sustainable and optimal way. In Ho Chi Minh city, key VNDW2020 events included the "Regenerative Design & Products" seminar and exhibition at Cspace, the "Designed by Vietnam" Finalist Contest Exhibition, and the Awards Ceremony at Soul Live Complex in November 2020.

### Vietnam Festival of Creativity & Design<sup>(72)</sup>

Vietnam Festival of Creativity & Design is a national event taking place in Hanoi, Hue, and HCMC, and organised by RMIT University Vietnam, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Vietnam National Institute of Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS), and COLAB Vietnam. With contributions from across the creative industries, the festival is an opportunity for creative organisations and individuals to connect and celebrate contributions to creative culture.

The festival helps to build a global brand for Vietnam and develop its local resources through establishing a "belt of creativity" — encouraging the expansion of UNESCO Creative Cities Network in Vietnam with events in Hanoi, Hue and Ho Chi Minh City.

VFCD 2021 will mark the third annual edition of the festival. The programme will be organised with extended partners from public, private and the NGO sectors.

### HOZO – Ho Chi Minh City International Music Festival, 2020<sup>(73)</sup>

Although HCMC has a well-developed performing arts industry, the city has not hosted many large-scale festivals for music or film.

In 2019, the first Hò Đô Music Festival was organised by Vietfest Company, in collaboration with HCMC Centre for Pop Music. Directed by composer Huy Tuan, the festival aims to establish HCMC on the international music map, while also giving Vietnamese artists the opportunity to engage with international bands, and international artists and promoters the chance to interact with the culture, market and artists associated with Vietnamese contemporary music.

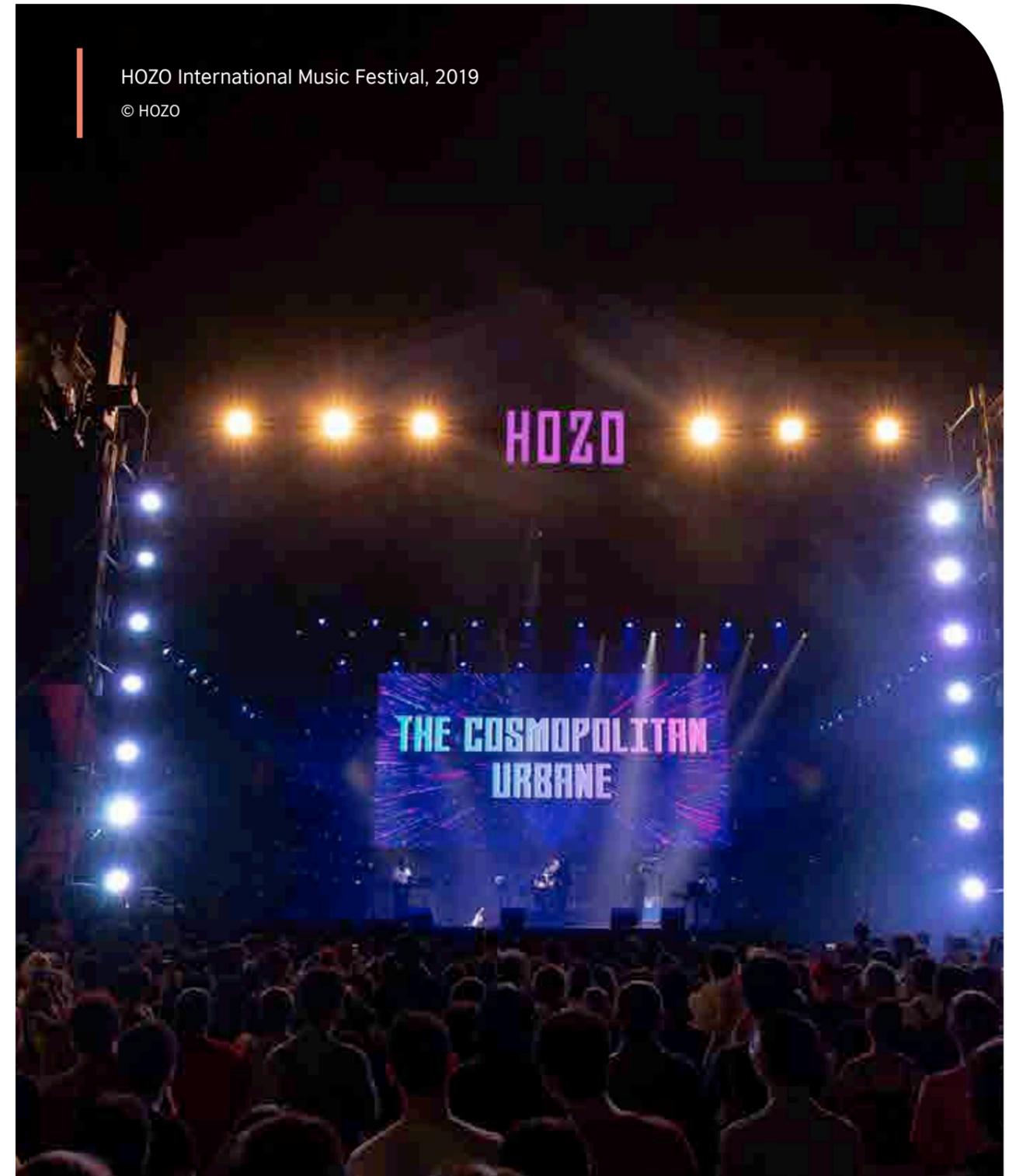
In 2019, the Festival involved the participation of 200 international artists and a total audience of 20,000. In 2020, the Festival was reduced in scale due to the pandemic, but involved the participation of 10 international bands and 7 Vietnamese bands across diverse music genres, and attracted more than 100,000 attendees.

### Street Art Festival, 2021<sup>(74)</sup>

The Street Arts Festival is a programme sponsored globally by the French government, through France's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development. It has been implemented in many countries including the US, Germany, the UK, Japan, China, Malaysia, Thailand and Cambodia to promote cooperation on culture, tourism, and urban arts. The first Vietnamese iteration of the festival is scheduled to be held in HCMC from April-November 2021 with a series of activities including mural painting, street arts exhibitions, youth workshops, and international seminars on street arts and music festivals.

### HOZO International Music Festival, 2019

© HOZO



<sup>(71)</sup> <https://www.vietnamdesignweek.org>

<sup>(72)</sup> <https://vfcd.events>

<sup>(73)</sup> <https://hozomusicfestival.com>

<sup>(74)</sup> <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/first-international-street-art-project-in-vietnam-to-take-place-in-hcm-city/196465.vnp>

## Movers and shakers

Through their commitment and leadership, many individuals in the public and private sectors have contributed to making HCMC's cultural industries and arts landscape more visible, vibrant and resilient. Key individuals include Thanh Loc (vice director of IDECAF), Thanh Bui (musician and founder of Soul Music and Performing Arts Academy), Mr. Huynh Kim Tuoc (CEO of Saigon Innovation Hub), musician Duong Thu (Saturday Café), Tra Nguyen (theatrical writer, director and performer), the curator and art critic Nguyn Nhu Huy (founder and co-artistic director of ZeroStation), and Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran (Art Labor artist collective).

**“I strongly believe that creativity is the new currency of tomorrow's world, and I am passionate in redefining the definition of creativity through the education systems that we are building.”**

– Thanh Bui, founder of Soul Music and Performing Arts School<sup>(75)</sup>

## Media, Film, Digital and Crossovers

### Phan Dang Di Film Director, co-founder of Autumn Meeting<sup>(76)</sup>

Phan Dang Di is a freelance filmmaker and lecturer at a number of universities in Hanoi and HCMC. As president and co-founder of Autumn Meeting, an annual international independent cinema event consisting of film screenings, film skills training workshops, and film pitching. Since 2013, Di and his colleagues have sought to instigate a “Vietnamese New Wave” by establishing a platform where young and exciting film-makers from Vietnam and the region can gather and grow together.<sup>(77)</sup>

### Mr. Huynh Kim Tuoc, Director of Saigon Innovation Hub<sup>(78)</sup>

Huynh Kim Tuoc is an investor and strategist in innovation, technology transfers and renewable energy. He co-founded a number of companies and organisations in these fields, working with a particular focus on international corporation and public-private partnerships. Tuoc is a founding member and director of Saigon Innovation Hub (SIHUB), under the Department of Science and Technology of Ho Chi Minh City.

### Tran Vu Nguyen, Founder and CEO of AI Education<sup>(79)</sup>

Nguyen – informally referred to as “Bung” – was formerly known as CEO of Danang Business Incubator (DNES), and Vice President of Saigon Innovation Hub, two of the first public-private partnerships that Vietnam had to offer the country's emerging creative start-up community. Through AI Education, he offers a wealth of knowledge, skills and training to young creative entrepreneurs in Vietnam. Bung is also one of 6 founders of the Vietnam Creative Hubs Initiative (ViCHI), established in 2019.

### Thanh Bui, founder of Soul Music and Performing Arts Academy<sup>(80)</sup>

Thanh Bui was born 1983 and raised in Australia, is a Vietnamese-Australian singer and composer. He emerged from the Australian Idol Contest in 2008 and, after returning to Vietnam, recognised the potential of the country's creative economy as a new and emergent industry. Seeking to address a perceived lack of training opportunities for creative people and cultural entrepreneurs, in 2012, he founded Soul Music and Performing Arts Academy in HCMC, offering training programmes on musical performance, production, talent and record labels development.

More recently, he founded COLAB with the aim of operating as a bridge between educational organisations and business units in order to build a sustainable ecosystem for the creative industries in Vietnam. COLAB's programmes include the Training Hub, Career Hub, Creative Hub and COLAB Foundation, and have participated in the Vietnam Festival of Creative & Design.

Over the last decade, Thanh Bui's approach and initiatives in creative education and training has contributed to improving the quality of creative human resources in HCMC and Vietnam.



A creative performance in Ho Chi Minh City

© Giang Pham

<sup>(75)</sup> <https://vietnamnews.vn/sunday/inner-sanctum/571269/singer-educator-calls-creative-arts-the-new-currency-of-tomorrows-world.html>

<sup>(76)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/autumnmeeting/>

<sup>(77)</sup> <https://www.britishcouncil.vn/en/programmes/arts/cultural-creative-hubs-vietnam/symposium/speaker-profile>

<sup>(78)</sup> <https://doimoisangtao.vn/ecosystem/huynh-kim-tuoc>

<sup>(79)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/tranbungdi/about>

<sup>(80)</sup> <https://smpaa.edu.vn>

## Fine Arts and Design

### Zoe Butt – Artistic Director of The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre<sup>(81)</sup>

Zoe Butt is a leading figure for the independent arts scene of HCMC and Vietnam. Her curatorial practice centres on building critically-thinking and historically-conscious artistic communities, and on fostering dialogue among countries of the global south.

Currently Artistic Director of the Factory Contemporary Arts Centre, Zoe previously served as Executive Director and Curator, Sàn Art (2009–2016); Director of International Programmes at the Long March Project, Beijing (2007–2009); and Assistant Curator of Contemporary Asian Art at Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (2001–2007). This latter post particularly focused on the development of its Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art.

Her curatorial projects at The Factory include interdisciplinary dialogue platforms such as Conscious Realities (2013-2016), the online exhibition Embedded South(s) (2016), and group exhibitions of Vietnamese and international artists at various international venues. Butt is a member of the Asian Art Council for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York and in 2015 was named a Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum.

### Quynh Pham, founder and director of Galerie Quynh<sup>(82)</sup>

Quynh Pham studied Art History/Criticism at the University of California, San Diego. Prior to returning to Vietnam in 1997, Quynh had been involved in the arts for over 20 years, working in galleries and museums including the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington D.C. and the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego.

In 1997, Quynh returned to Vietnam to research the country's art scene and in 2000 established an online resource of Vietnamese art, followed by a physical gallery space in December 2003.

Quynh has spoken on contemporary Vietnamese art to groups from a number of institutions including the Asia Society, New York, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. She has given private talks and participated in symposiums host by institutions such as the Huntington Beach Art Centre in California, TheatreWorks in Singapore and Osaka University in Japan.

With the presence of Galerie Quynh and its rich art programmes, Quynh Pham has contributed much to the contemporary art scene of not only HCMC but Vietnam as well.

<sup>(81)</sup> [https://factoryartscentre.com/en/artist\\_maker/zoe-butt-en/](https://factoryartscentre.com/en/artist_maker/zoe-butt-en/)

<sup>(82)</sup> <http://artlaborcollective.com/about>

<sup>(83)</sup> <https://www.uudamstudio.com>

<sup>(84)</sup> <https://www.linkedin.com/in/zerostation-vietnam-19a60534/?originalSubdomain=vn>

<sup>(85)</sup> <http://artlaborcollective.com>

<sup>(86)</sup> <https://www.elledecoration.vn>

### Uu Dam, artist and founder of Uu Dam Studio<sup>(83)</sup>

Working with video, performance, photography, sculpture and new media, Nguyen's playfully provocative practice is today one of the leading lights of Vietnamese contemporary art. In 2018, he founded Uu Dam Studio, and recently, he has been active in several public art programs and projects such as Phuc Tan Public Art Project, Vietnam Design Week 2020, and Think Play Ground's projects.

### Nguyen Nhu Huy, curator, art critic founder and co-artistic director of ZeroStation<sup>(84)</sup>

Nguyen Nhu Huy was born in 1971 in Hanoi. He graduated from HCMC University of Fine Art in 1997. Since 2003, Nhu Huy has been co-founder and editor for the Vietnamese independent online art magazine. Nhu Huy is also an independent curator, critical writer, and a poet.

He has written and translated widely on contemporary art and art theory as well as participated in the international art symposiums and conferences. In 2010, he founded Zerostation, a studio space for exhibition and residency creating opportunities for dialogue amongst young artists in this city.

### Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran, curator, writer, and co-founder of Art Labor artist collective<sup>(85)</sup>

Arlette Quynh-Anh Tran is currently a member of Art Labor, and Assistant Curator at Sàn Art. Tran is also a writer on creativity and contemporary art for a number of publications.

### Nguyen Phan Thuy Duong, Managing Editor of ELLE Decoration Vietnam<sup>(86)</sup>

Thuy Duong is Managing Editor of ELLE Decoration Vietnam and Art Director of ELLE Vietnam. She also works as a graphic design lecturer at HCMC University of Architecture, all positions she has held for the past four years and which enable her to contribute to the development of the creative scene in HCMC.

In 2020, she was one of 5 mentors of "Designed by Vietnam" Contest, part of Vietnam Design Week 2020.



© The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre

## Performing Arts

### Merited Artist Thanh Loc, Vice director of Idecaf Theatre<sup>(87)</sup>

Thanh Loc is a Vietnamese theatre and film actor, stage director, and currently Vice Director of the Idecaf Theatre. With over 200 roles on stage and in cinema, Thanh Loc is highly appraised as one of the talented artists of Vietnamese theatre.

### Tra Nguyen, Theatre Writer, Director and Performer<sup>(88)</sup>

Tra Nguyen was Manager of Sàn Art, the longest-run independent art organisation in HCMC from 2012-2019. In 2018, she founded an independent platform, TheRun–A Theatre Project, which engaged local artistic practitioners in a series of collaborative productions and discussions on the possibilities for cross-disciplinary experimental theatre in Vietnam.

### Phan Khac Huy, founder of Coi Viet<sup>(89)</sup>

Coi Viet, established in 2013, is a creative space dedicated to the development and promotion of traditional performance arts and history of the Southern part of Vietnam by providing educational, research and outreach programs for young people in HCMC.

### Nguyen Hong Giang, musician and producer<sup>(90)</sup>

Born in 1991, Nguyen Hong Giang is a music artist and producer. He founded and manages the music recording/production studio "Giang Records", and has collaborated with numerous artists, singers and rappers to produce hit records of million views.



© The Factory Contemporary Arts Centre

### Vu Ngoc Khai, Dancer and choreographer, co-founder of 1648kilomet<sup>(91)</sup>

Dancer and choreographer Vu Ngoc Khai had a successful international career before he decided to return to Vietnam in 2018 to explore the culture of his upbringing. His work always features Vietnamese culture, or uses traditional Vietnamese music.

In 2018, he won the first prize at the International Young Choreographers Award in South Korea, and became the co-founder and art director of 1648kilomet (representing the length of the Vietnamese coastline), an art collective that organises and promotes performance and community activities.

Khai is an active artist who eagerly shares his professional insights with the community, and generously spends time in leading dance workshops for children in special circumstances.<sup>(92)</sup>

<sup>(87)</sup> <http://www.kichidecaf.com>

<sup>(88)</sup> <https://san-art.org/producer/tra-nguyen/>

<sup>(89)</sup> <https://dep.com.vn/phan-khac-huy-lan-toa-tinh-yeu-su-viet/>

<sup>(90)</sup> <https://hanoigravine.com/2021/03/fine-art-nominees-nguyen-hong-giang/>

<sup>(91)</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/1648kilomet/>

<sup>(92)</sup> [https://issuu.com/hanoigravine/docs/hanoi\\_gravine\\_finet\\_2019?fbclid=IwAR3L4GHrae5Ym99mTiTlv1bDNjr\\_eSvCQmGv9F5mYt0Vpbqccq7nDwsCsnew](https://issuu.com/hanoigravine/docs/hanoi_gravine_finet_2019?fbclid=IwAR3L4GHrae5Ym99mTiTlv1bDNjr_eSvCQmGv9F5mYt0Vpbqccq7nDwsCsnew)

# 5. Opportunities

In the next few years, Ho Chi Minh City is focusing on implementing the following cultural programmes:

- Increasing the quality and quantity of cultural and arts activities available to public audiences, with the aim of attracting more public and tourists to experience arts and creative activities
- Improving the city's cultural governance of performing arts, fashion, music, and theatre industries
- Developing more solutions to preserving and promoting the values of traditional arts such as cải lương, đờn ca tài tử, and hát bội, as well as the arts of ethnic groups such as Chăm, Chinese, and Khơ Me
- Encouraging more international cooperation and exchange in culture and arts
- Increasing the inclusiveness in cultural life of people, especially for people living in remote areas, youth, children, and women
- Continuing to improve the quality of human resource in culture and arts in the city

Within this broad framework of support for the creative industries, and the increasing role that state-led representation is playing in encouraging contemporary creative initiatives, there is great potential for collaboration, investment and exchange with cultural and creative agents across Ho Chi Minh City.





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