

# Chapter 8

## Urban Exclusion: Theoretical Approaches and Emerging Trajectories for Vietnam



Nguyen Dang Dao

**Abstract** There are only a few research projects focusing on the effects of urbanization on Vietnamese society, particularly social exclusion and inclusion, while urban exclusion is one of the most pressing matters in Vietnam nowadays. Thereby, it leads to many sustainable development issues that attract the attention of social science researchers and policy-makers. Among sustainable issues related to urbanization such as urban-rural relations, urban conflicts, and environmental justice, urban exclusion has received the least attention, although it is currently one of the research centers of urban studies in anthropology, sociology, economics, and development studies. This paper aims to gather comprehensive theoretical approaches and case studies from the works of Robert Park, Jehoel-Gijsbers, Loïc Wacquant, Philippe Bourgois, and other scholars. After building a theoretical framework, this paper examines studies in Vietnam, explains similarities, differences, or complementary to world studies, identifies research gaps, and suggests suitable research directions for the upcoming research projects. The result suggests that it is worthwhile to strive for high-quality research about the urban exclusion of vulnerable groups regarding Vietnam's evolving efforts toward sustainable development.

**Keywords** Urban Exclusion · Urbanization · Social Exclusion · Theories · Sustainable Development

### 1 Introduction

This paper evaluates existing research documents that focus on urban exclusion in various cities in the world. Exclusion (or social exclusion) is a process, a condition, and a result of a combination of social inequality, economic and power disadvantages, relegation and denial of systematic personal or community rights,

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N. D. Dao (✉)

Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam

opportunities, and resources. In developing countries, which are experiencing the rapid growth of urbanization, new social issues have emerged and vulnerable groups have been increasingly excluded from the mainstream groups. This requires social science scholars, including economics, sociology, anthropology, urban studies, and development studies, to develop a theoretical framework that can be applied to field research in the Global South.

### ***1.1 Urban Exclusion: An Overview***

In the early years of the twentieth century, French Sociologist Émile Durkheim started to evaluate how social order and stability could be sustained in a society where social distortions and a transition from a peasant society to industrial and modern society happened simultaneously. This concept first appeared in policy discourses in France, and the application of other European countries later had an increasing impact on the analysis of social disadvantages in Europe in the few past decades (Aasland & Fløtten 2001). Social exclusion is then used in policy analysis and planning in developed countries—where the process of urbanization, globalization, and migration was underway (Francis, 1997).

The origin of urban social exclusion, thereby, is considered as a consequence of economic restructuring and globalization in the world. The structure of urban labor, therefore, has changed. As the needs for manual workers reduced, while the demand for service workers soared up, unemployment, social exclusion, and marginalization appeared (Mustered, 1998). There were some dwellers who benefited from these changes; however, the rest had not fully been involved in the cultural, social, and political system (Sassen, 1991).

### ***1.2 Urbanization in Vietnam***

In Vietnam, for the past 20 years, not many researchers have been interested in urban exclusion. It was only when the process of industrialization and modernization led to a prominent urbanization trend, the interest of researchers shifted to study the issues of the cities in the cities. Vietnam is currently experiencing one of the most powerful urban transformation processes in the world. This is closely related to the socioeconomic reforms established in the 1980s, which gradually liberalized the economy and accelerated the rapid transition to the urban society through the processes of urban-rural migration combined with the transfer from the agricultural sector to industrial and service sectors. Over the next 25 years, cities and towns are expected to grow at an average rate of 6% per year, soaring the rate of Vietnam's urban population from one third to half (OECD, 2018).

The city, in the twentieth century, was not the center of socioeconomic life as the majority of Vietnamese people were farmers and they primarily lived in rural areas. As such, the process of urbanization has led to the demographic and social change and affected the rural-urban relationship with the trend of civilization and modernization of life. The scale of migration from rural to urban areas has been expanding day by day and thereby attracting the attention of researchers, especially in big cities like Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Da Nang, and Can Tho (Danielle, 2010)

Urban development was initially not a priority in the government agenda, yet gradually narrowing the development gap between rural and urban areas and relocating population from crowded cities to new economic zones in rural and mountainous areas have become an important strategy. In the late 80s of the twentieth century, the rapid development of urbanization caused the rapid flow of rural to urban migrants. Along with the urbanization process, the relationship between rural and urban areas has become inseparable and moving from rural to urban areas has become the survival strategy of many farmer households.

Before the Doi Moi period, the pace of urbanization in Vietnam was slow. Yet, the situation changed from 1999 after the Doi Moi took place. Until 2015, Vietnam has 629 cities, and this number has increased to 755 in 2010, including 2 cities, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh (Pham, 2013).

According to research named “Facing The Urban Transition in Hanoi: Recent Urban Planning Issues and Initiatives” of the Center for Cultural Studies—Urbanization and the Academy of Social Sciences, the process of urbanization of Vietnam, although taking place in many forms, can be divided into two main categories:

- Communities experience a planned urbanization process;
- Communities experience spontaneous urbanization (often referred to as slums).

Since the 2000s, the government has embarked on a large-scale urbanization plan with the aim of promoting economic development and urbanization. This means that policy-makers tend to revolve around converting agricultural land to urban land for industrial development, and residential building, as well as replanning slums by relocating slum dwellers into public housing quarters. In all cases, people face many challenges, namely, (1) seeking new means of living, such as employment, food access, new family time management habits, and travel patterns; (2) competing on scarce resources between rural households and land use rights; and (3) adapting to rapid change of land use, development models, infrastructure, and legal framework.

In particular, the areas in transition, or periurban areas, are potential sites for researchers to learn about Vietnam’s economic, political, social, and cultural changes. Serving as a bridge between the traditional rural environment that once dominated the economic and sociocultural history of the country and the urban environment, this suburban interface allows researchers to discover the urban integration (Luong, 2018).

## 2 Methodology

**Secondary research:** summary and collation of existing academic materials to find the research gap and build a theoretical research. Combine and compare the approach of academics in the U.S., the U.K., and Europe.

Source:

Information from the Internet (newspaper, online library).

Books.

Information obtained from government research institutes.

A Theoretical Framework and different approach for urban exclusion.

According to the study of Gerda Jehoel-Gijsbers in the study “Explaining Social Exclusion: A theory model tested in the Netherlands” of the Dutch Institute for Social Studies, social exclusion can be related to nonmaterial characteristics (relationship dimensions) and material aspects (distribution dimension) (Jehoel-Gijsbers, 2007). The causes of social exclusion may lie at the collective level, but individual characteristics and behavior also contribute to the theoretical framework. Social exclusion is often divided into two main dimensions:

Economic-structural exclusion: focus on a distributional dimension with an Anglo-American approach.

Socioculture exclusion: focus on the aspect of the relationship with the French school approach.

As for the first approach, American scholars focus on two factors, which are material (income and goods) and nonmaterial (social rights). This approach stems from material deprivation, especially basic and material needs, debts and payments for housing fees, living expenses, etc. Besides, the social exclusion also involves inadequate access to government services such as health care, education, housing, and legal aid, management, social services, debt subsidies, employment, social security, and some social services such as banking or insurance.

The second approach focuses on two factors, namely, social integration, including social relations and social networks, and cultural integration, including values and norms. Nonsocial inclusion refers to the lack of participation in formal and informal social networks, including recreational activities and inadequate social support (Table 8.1). Combined with the risk factors mentioned above, Jehoel-Gijsbers theorized social exclusion through the following table (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman, 2004):

Learning from two abovementioned approaches, researchers focusing on urban social exclusion have developed their own theoretical framework for social exclusion in the cities. In the context of overloading of theories, policy analysis, and practice, empirical studies on urban exclusion can be divided into two trajectories. The first one is the Human-based and location-based approach. This human-based approach focuses on the impact of policies on the living conditions of disadvantaged groups, regardless of their geographical location. It concerns multidisciplinary issues such as equal access to everyone and the ability to benefit from equal legal, education, training, health, and market systems. Besides, the location-based

**Table 8.1** Factors of Social-Culture exclusion

Microlevel (individual and household)			Macrolevel		Intermediate level
Background (Fixed)	Background (changeable)	Characteristics of social exclusion	Social Development	Government	Government agencies, businesses, and citizens
Gender, age, civil status, family composition, social context, and ethnicity	Adaptability, health, education, position in the labor market, and income	Economic/ structural shortcomings and cultural/ social shortcomings	Economic recession, individualism, bureaucracy, <b>urbanization</b> , emigration, and aging of the population	Policy gaps, supply gaps, access gaps, and getting supplies	Ineffective policy implementation, waiting times, financial barriers, risk-taking options by employers or banks, and discrimination

approach also studies the issues mentioned above and considers spatial change. This means that while analyzing any issue, academics have to acknowledge that disadvantaged groups in different parts of the world will be affected in various ways (Atkinson, 2000). Although theoretically, these two approaches are similar in many ways, in fact, the human approach recognizes exclusion from a human-based viewpoint, while the location-based approach emphasizes more on the interaction between exclusion and urban space. The second approach called the Area effects approach. Associated with a location-based approach is the debate around regional and neighborhood influences on urban exclusion. This debate focuses primarily on recognizing the size of the neighborhood as the primary analytical scale and research on how the location affects the conditions and opportunities of residents (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2001). This school argues that living areas can be the main cause or at least a decisive factor that contributes to various forms of exclusion (Galster & Hedman, 2013).

Based on the proposals and evidence contained in various studies, Atkinson has distinguished six types of area effects (Table 8.2). In each of these types of influences, specific mechanisms that link individuals/households to the region have been pointed out (Atkinson, 2000).

### 3 Result

Research on marginalized and excluded groups in urban Vietnam is still limited as urban researchers currently are focusing on Urban Migration, Urban Poverty, and Marginalizations. Thus, in Vietnam, there is a huge research gap for social sciences and humanities researchers.

**Table 8.2** Six types of effects in Area effects approach

Area effects	Mechanisms
Concentration	– Focus on service
	– Many households live together
Location	– Labor market
	– Housing market
	– Public housing allocation and accessibility
	– Geographical isolation
Milieu	– Social network
	– Communication and context leading to deviations and mistakes
	– Associated activities
Socialization	– Aspects of daily life
	– Education
	– Childcare
	– Friendship
	– Isolation
Physical	– Division
	– Environment build
	– Housing quality
Service	– Quality of public areas, for example, parks
	– Education
	– Receive and deal with people who have problems in problem areas

### ***3.1 Urban Exclusion in the World: A Literature Review***

#### **3.1.1 Urban Migration**

In order to understand urban studies and urban migration in specific, conducting a literature review of research of Robert Park is necessary. Robert Park lived in a society where the transformation from traditional to modern, from culture to civilization, and from rural areas to urban density occurs simultaneously. Migration at that time was considered as the primary way to move forward modern and civilization. The origins of urban anthropology, as well as urban sociology, began with Park's observation of the transition from rural to urban areas with the rate of urbanization increasing seven-fold of the US after the Civil War in 1865. Park, when analyzing the two trends of urbanization and migration, said that at that time, the United States had only two types of people: those who went to the city and those who had not (Park, 1937). Nearly a decade after introducing "The Marginal Man", Robert Park emphasized that marginalized people often suffer from negative circumstances, such as inconsistency, insecurity, and emotional instability. However, Goldberg argues that not all marginalized people suffer from the same negative consequences. According to him, they could avoid being excluded by developing

and engaging in a marginal culture created by people who share the same situation. In a new subculture, marginalized people will no longer be marginalized, and they will become normal (Goldberg, 2012).

### 3.1.2 Urban Poverty

Jonathan Greene in “The Contradictory Dynamics of Urban Poverty Management study: Homelessness, the State, and Struggles for Social Inclusion” also affirmed that since the 1990s, urban scholars have begun to focus on analyzing punitive practices introduced by local authorities to eliminate homelessness and other obvious manifestations of poverty and marginalization in city streets.

Although poverty can be observed in many different forms and caused by various factors, all forms of poverty are able to be described through the concept of exclusion. A poor person will always be disadvantaged in one or more dimensions, while the sociocultural context and personal awareness will determine in what circumstances and how many dimensions a person will be excluded (Franz, 2013).

Oscar Lewis introduced an important theory of “poverty culture” in the 1950s. It highlighted the social exclusion situations of the poor people at that time. Also, in this study, he examined the daily activities, behaviors, and thoughts of the poor and argued that the poor have their own culture, poverty culture. Poverty culture emerged from the following series of conditions that Lewis classified according to three levels. (Lewis, 2002)

At the individual level: poverty culture includes a strong sense of marginalization, hopelessness, laziness, impotence, feeling of inferiority, and dependence;

At the family level: poor culture represents the absence of childhood; early start of sex or marriage, high rates of abandonment of wives and children, a tendency for families to lack privacy, competition for limited quantities of goods, and attention from mothers;

At the community level: lack of participation and effective integration with larger social organizations, low wages, chronic unemployment, lack of jobs, no savings, no wage reserves, and real in-house.

### 3.1.3 Urban Marginalization

In order to comprehensively understand where social exclusion originated from and in what form does social exclusion occur in cities, it is crucial to understand the process of marginalization. Although marginalization is often applied in the field of urban research, researchers have not found a suitable methodology to fully measure and analyze urban marginalization (Dunne, 2005).

The concept of marginalization was also first introduced in 1928 with an article by Robert Park titled “Marginal Man”, in which Park describes the struggles of migrants to adapt to dominating cultures. (Park, 1928). While debates initially focused on issues of race and ethnic relations, this concept was later extended to

career, gender, and scientific innovation (Goldberg, 2012). Other scholars also sought to expand this concept to include anyone excluded from one or more social groups. For example, Deegan defines a marginalized person as a person who is self-aware of his/her culture, identity, status, and experiences in the world and has access to resources but cannot socialize and become a part of the mainstream. Marginalized individuals or groups are people standing on the sidelines of social, political, economic, ecological, or physiological systems. They are not able to access public services and resources and have freedom of choice (Gatzweiler, 2011).

However, there are also scholars who have pointed out that entering individual groups in similar marginalized situations can share a common culture or identity. Goldberg is the first to argue that individuals who are marginalized or excluded from society can develop a marginal culture/subculture. Therefore, a subculture may be marginalized, but individuals may not feel marginalized in this new subculture. (Goldberg, 2012) In some cases, in fact, a group may choose to stay out of the culture to preserve their own identity and independence (Scott, 2009). A case study of the Haitian community in Guadeloupe, Brodwin pointed out that a group's self-creation is shaped by the experience of marginalization in a specific time and place, such as the culture of urban poverty or culture of slums and neighborhoods (Brodwin, 2003).

### ***3.2 New Trajectories for Urban Exclusion Studies in Vietnam***

By evaluating the literature review and the current situation of urban areas in Vietnam, it can be witnessed that the research on urban exclusion in Vietnam still has many gaps to be filled. New research directions that social science researchers include economics, sustainable development, anthropology, and sociology can focus on are Urban Everyday Politics, Ruralization Urban, and Urban Policy.

#### **3.2.1 Urban Policy**

The dominant research direction in Vietnam is the study of the impact of urban policies on vulnerable groups, including rural-urban migrants, slum-dwellers, people living in the suburbs, and the urban poor. For example, Erik Harms, after living in the most famous metropolis in Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City, finally came up with these two books, namely, *Saigon's Edge* and *Luxury and Rubble*. For *Luxury and Rubble*, he analyzed Ho Chi Minh City's development master plan based on 17 months of fieldwork in Phu My Hung and Thu Thiem. If Phu My Hung represents esthetics, wealth, and affluence, Thu Thiem is the area with 14,600 households being dismantled to serve the government's urban development plan. Erik focuses on the impact of how the urbanization process has affected the vulnerable group in Thu Thiem when their houses are removed and replaced by commercial centers and villas. Nevertheless, the main conflict in his book is not about the people at Thu



Thiem who oppose the government's urban development idea, instead, people who are very supportive and eager to see the development of Ho Chi Minh city. The Thiem residents felt that they were being controlled and there was an injustice in distributing the compensation, which resulted in a much smaller amount of money they should have been received. Although they support the idea of a civilized, polite city, real estate companies and governments did not engage them in the grand plans and policy (Harms, 2016). Likewise, by evaluating various urban policies in cities of Vietnam, academics like Erik Harms can find the shared pattern and point out the differences.

### 3.2.2 Ruralization Urban

Another direction for Vietnamese researchers is ruralization urban process. There are many studies on social groups in cities that demonstrate the importance of family networks, kinship, and close and personal links between people living in cities and their hometown (Pocock, 1960). Oscar Lewis noted that when looking at the relationship between rural and urban areas, especially in countries in the Global South like Vietnam, it must be noticed that this relationship is interrelated and interdependent. Furthermore, difference between urban and rural areas, cities, suburbs, and rural areas has been gradually disappearing due to the inner migration flow and the lifestyles of migrants. The line between the rural lifestyle and urban lifestyle is being blurred. This phenomenon possibly leads to excluded situations for rural-to-urban migrants. They can be excluded by the city dwellers who live in the same neighborhood because of differences in cultures and lifestyles.

### 3.2.3 Urban Everyday Politics

The third research trajectory that is suitable for cities in Vietnam is urban everyday politics. Benedict Kerkvliet, with "Daily Politics in Our Rural and Social Societies", is one of the leading researchers that set the foundation for this trajectory. Politics is the act of control, distribution, production, and use of resources, including power, money, land, and education. Collaboration, cooperation, bargaining, agreement, conflict, or competition are acts related to production, distribution, and use of resources. It recognizes the fact that politics can emerge and exist in all areas and aspects of life. Different from the Official politics that focuses only on a small part of politicians, leaders, and policymakers and the way they organize, implement, and adjust fiscal policies, everyday politics refer to the way normal citizens accept, comply, adjust, and protest against standards, regulations, powers, production, or allocation of resources (Benedict, 2008). Everyday politics, thereby, often refers to individual behaviors, which can take place everywhere and moreover, done by people who do not consider their actions to be political. Hence, it also intertwines in the activities of living, producing, and distributing resources of individuals and small

groups and in the interaction between them and those of the same class or classes (Ball & Guy, 1993).

Everyday politics can exist in many different forms, but generally scholars classify them into four categories: support, submission, adjustment—avoidance—and resistance. Almost most studies of urban exclusion today focus on daily resistance. Everyday political research will highlight the social exclusion of urban residents with common activities and policy making in Vietnam. Marginalized and excluded group in urban areas in Vietnam often chooses their own forms of resistance in accordance with the law in Vietnam. Therefore, Vietnamese researchers could concentrate on the resistance of city dwellers who are excluded from mainstream groups in Vietnam.

## 4 Conclusions and Discussion

The study of urban social exclusion has emerged since the nineteenth century in Europe when the process of urbanization began to appear and thrive in the wealthier countries in the Global North. There are many theories and approaches to urban exclusion coming from different schools in England, America, and France, and these theories can be applied to studying cities in the Global South. However, in Vietnam, research on urban exclusion has not yet really developed, as social science researchers, especially scholars in anthropology and sustainable development studies, pay more attention to primitive communities living in remote areas. Therefore, this article suggests three new research directions for researchers in Vietnam, including urban policy, ruralization urban, and urban everyday politics. Those directions are among the most suitable to the context of urbanization in Vietnam.

Given the above analysis and suggestions, it can be seen that the theoretical framework of urban exclusion still has not been constructed in Vietnam. Urban exclusion combines urban studies and social exclusion, and it requires a separate approach and framework. At the same time, Vietnam's urbanization rate is very fast, reaching 40% in 2019, with 50% of the population living in urban areas (Kiet, 2019). New issues in urban areas of Vietnam have been appearing consistently in the past few years and many more will attract the attention of academics. Therefore, the research gap will be increasingly expanded and the author would like to invite more academics to contribute to the debate on urban exclusion in Vietnam.

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