



## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH REPORT FOR RESEARCH GRANTS

TRYHANOI YEAR 4 (2020-2021)

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**\* Project title:**

“Identifying and assessing the role of informal public spaces on the physical and spiritual life of the university students - A case study at university cluster in Hanoi (Hanoi University of Science and Technology - HUST, National University of Civil Engineering - NUCE and National Economics University-NEU)

**Applicant's name and status:**

1. Le Minh Hieu – Class 61KD2 – student ID: 2012961
2. Vu Ngoc Tien - Class 61KD2 – student ID: 2034361

**\*Supervisors:** Dr. Ta Quynh Hoa, Ma. Doan The Trung, TRYSPACE researchers/Senior lecturer at National University of Civil Engineering - NUCE , Hanoi, Vietnam

**\* City where my activities take place:** Ha Noi

**Keywords:** Informal public spaces, students, Ha Noi

### **I. Introduction**

#### **1. The reason for choosing the topic**

The evolution of urbanization in major cities in Vietnam is very complicated. This leads to a lack of formal public spaces serving the community and specific groups such as students and young people. In areas with a high concentration of universities with a large number of students such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the ratio of formal public space per capita is very low and lack of impact on student's physical and mental life. However, a very clear feature in these areas is the presence of informal public spaces and the obvious impact of various types of informal public spaces on students' living and learning life. There is a dialectic relationship between students and the formation and development of informal public spaces around university clusters in urban areas in Vietnam.

#### **2. Research objectives**

- Studying the impact of students on flexible changes in use functions of informal public spaces around universities.
- Studying the impact of the informal public spaces on the spiritual life of students, helping them to exchange, share and integrate with the community.
- Research on the impact of the informal public spaces on surrounding communities

### 3. Research subjects

Students ( 17 - 24 years old ) of Hanoi University of Science and Technology ( HUST ), National University of Civil Engineering ( NUCE ) and National Economics University ( NEU )

### 4. Research limit

- Range of research

Informal public spaces around Hanoi University of Science and Technology ( HUST ), National University of Civil Engineering ( NUCE ) and National Economics University ( NEU )

- Location

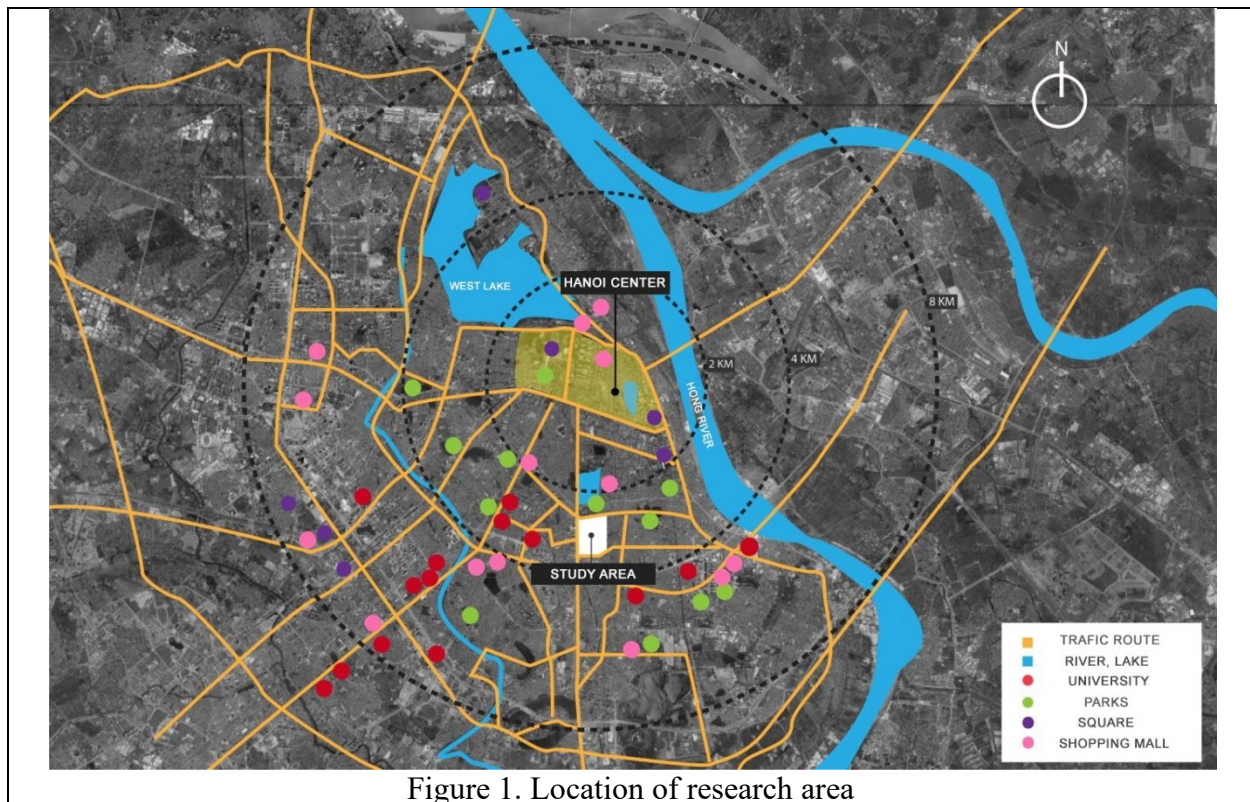
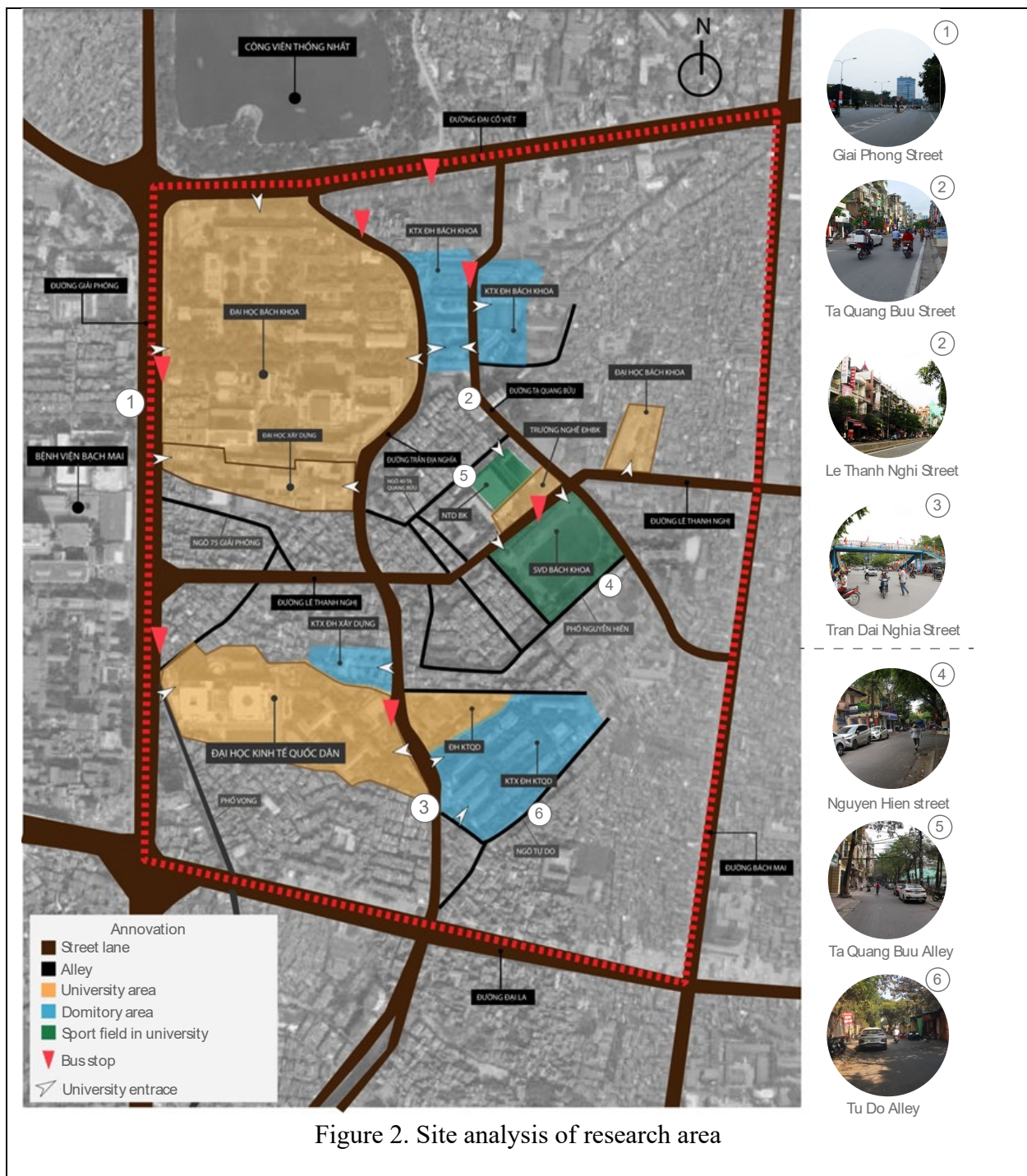


Figure 1. Location of research area



Area: 95ha

Population: 115.000 people

Population density: 29675 people/ km<sup>2</sup>

District: Hai Ba Trung

Ward: Bach Khoa, Dong Tam, Truong Dinh, Bach Mai, Cau Den, Thanh Nhan

## **5. Research methods**

- Survey method, status assessment, marking points, overlapping layers, sketch.
- Methods of synthesizing, analyzing and processing data.
- Methods of sociological investigation: In-person interview, online interview, survey questionnaire distribution.
- Methods of collecting information: The researched, the relevant statistics

## **6. Research question**

- What are the characteristics of informal public spaces ? (spatial characteristics, type of activity, form of activity, ownership)
- What is the relationship between the informal public spaces and the students?
- How does the informal public spaces impact on students life ?
- How does the informal public spaces affect the lives of surrounding residents?

## **II. Research results**

### **1. Informal public spaces concept**

#### **1.1 Informal public spaces concept**

The informal public space is a public space that serves the needs of many people, but the use function is not in the state planning or recognized by the government.

#### **1.2. How are the informal features is manifested in public spaces ?**

The "informal" feature here is the illegality in terms of the functional use of space. The cause of this phenomenon comes from the difference between the urban planning results of the government and the actual demand for space of the people. The "informal" phenomenon occurs when public space is occupied by people or certain communities, they re-shape the space to suit their own needs. Therefore, the informal public spaces of an area naturally reflect the daily life as well as the cultural life of the community in that area.

In the study area, the informal public spaces is mainly restaurants and beverages, which encroach on sidewalks by small business households, and students pay to use the space.

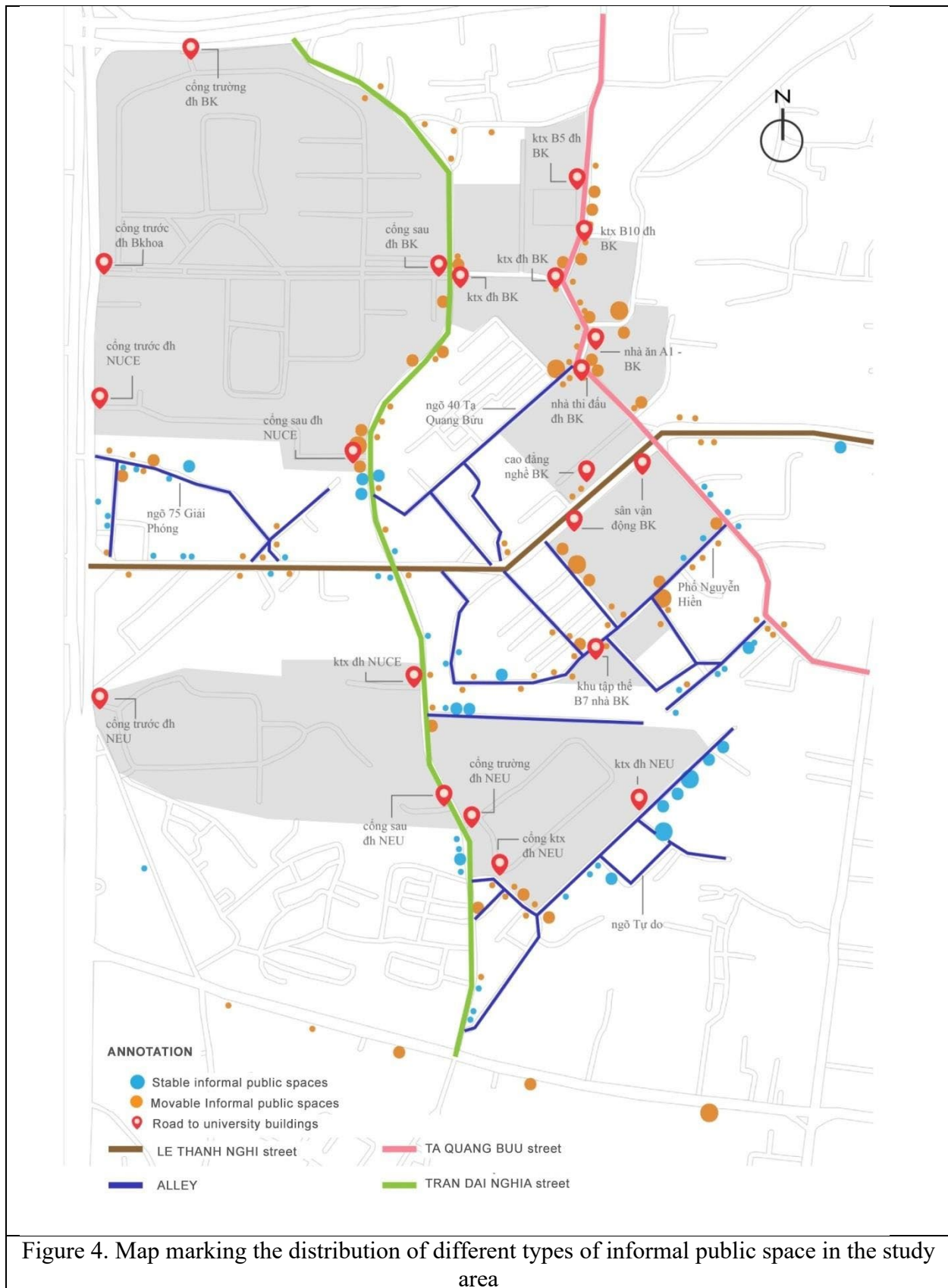


### 1.3 Types of informal public spaces in research area

- Stable: function of informal public spaces is associated with the spatial function inside the building, it means the tenant or owner of the building encroaches on the pavement of the sidewalk to serve their own purposes.
- Mobility: a type of space whose function is independent at the sidewalk, easy to display and clean, and some are also able to move in motion.



Figure 3. Two types of informal public spaces in research area



## 1.4 Functions of the informal public spaces in the research area

Meals: serving main meals of the day such as rice, pho, and noodles.

Snacks: serving snacks, junk food, meals during the day such as ice cream, spring rolls, sour meatball, etc. This space is a place to meet friends after a lesson or have a group meeting while out

- Refreshments: serving refreshment needs such as iced tea, lemon tea, soda etc.



## 2. The relationship between areas with large numbers of students and the formation of informal public spaces:

### 2.1 Spatial factor

There are two characteristics in the area where there are many informal public spaces: (1) the intersection between the university and the outside; (2) a location with a large amount of student travel

(1) At the important intersections in the university area such as the front gate, the back gate, the school dormitory gate will appear most concentrated in the public security space, the further it spreads, the number will decrease. The majority of users are students. The informal public spaces in here will appear mostly during the day (when students go to school) and gradually decrease in the evening (when students are off).

(2) On roads with frequent traffic of students such as Ta Quang Buu street, Tran Dai Nghia street, there will be many informal public spaces. Universities are largely located on these routes so student are going back and forth often, the frequency of operations of the informal public spaces here is more stable than the points near the school gate.



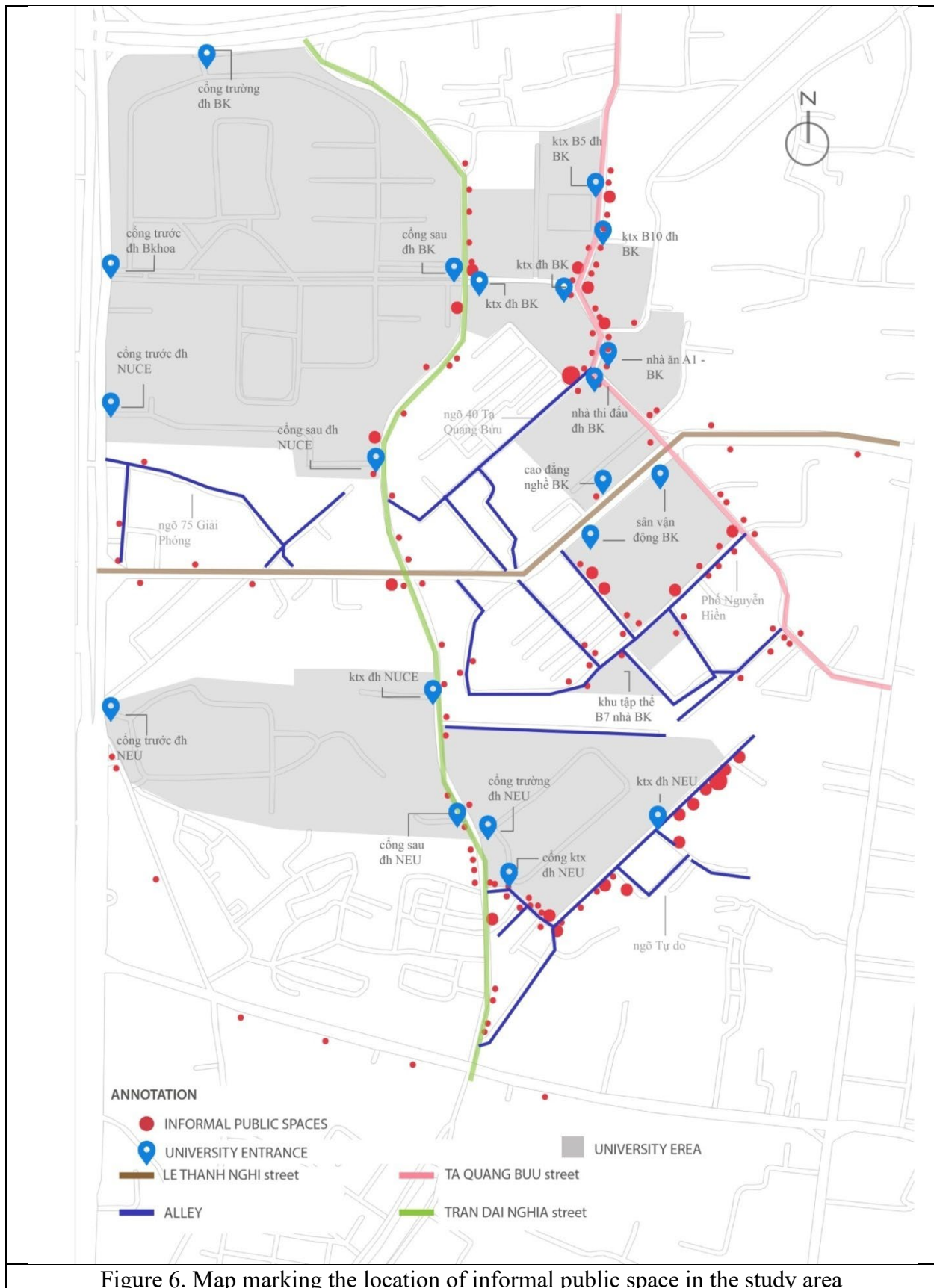


Figure 6. Map marking the location of informal public space in the study area

- Most of the students using the informal public spaces are located relatively close to using the informal public spaces

The majority of students' places to live using the informal public spaces are 1-3km from the the informal public spaces. Although the public security spaces are very close to the crowded student areas such as dormitories, residential areas near the school, the majority of users of the public security space are not students in these areas but further away.

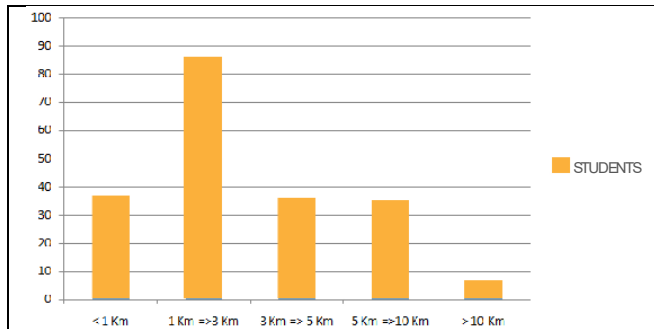


Figure 7. Chart of distance from student's residence to the informal public space

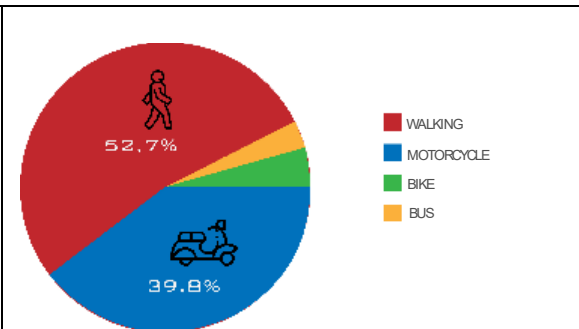


Figure 8. Chart of transportive that students use to access informal public space

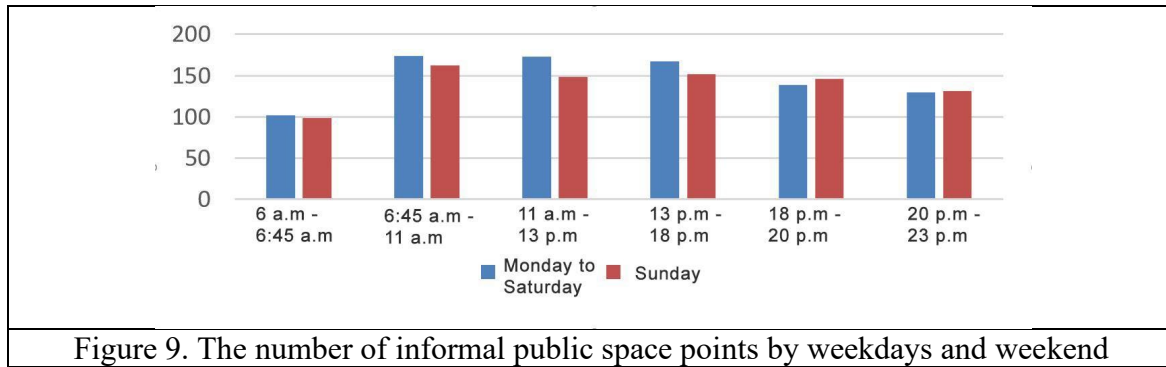
=> The object used that the informal public spaces attracts has a certain universality and attraction to students. Students whose homes are 3km away are still ready to come to use the informal public spaces.

## 2.2 Time factor

- School days and weekends affect the informal public spaces

The number of informal public spaces at weekends has a slight decrease compared to the days when students go to school during the day.

On the weekend night (when students have more time to have fun with their friends), there is not much difference, even the space with entertainment functions such as " refreshments" and " snacks", the quantity is even more than weekdays.



### - The student's shifts affect the informal public spaces

The number of informal public spaces changes according to the shifts in the day and the spatial function changes to suit the needs of students at that time.

In the morning, the quantity is not much, the main function is to serve meals when students need energy to study and work.

At noon, the number of informal public spaces services serving meals is very much, along with the type of refreshment

From noon to the afternoon, the informal public spaces sells more snacks and beverages, and less food is served at the restaurant

In the evening, there are mainly snacks and refreshments.

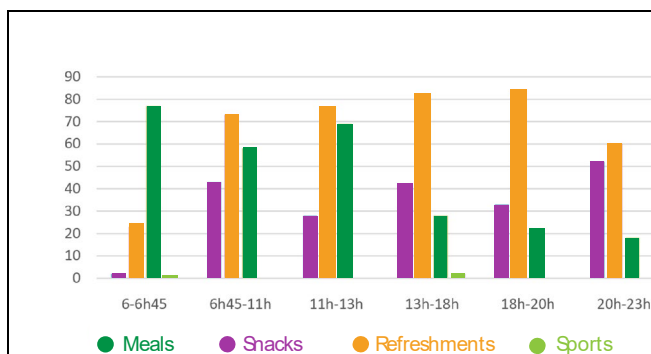
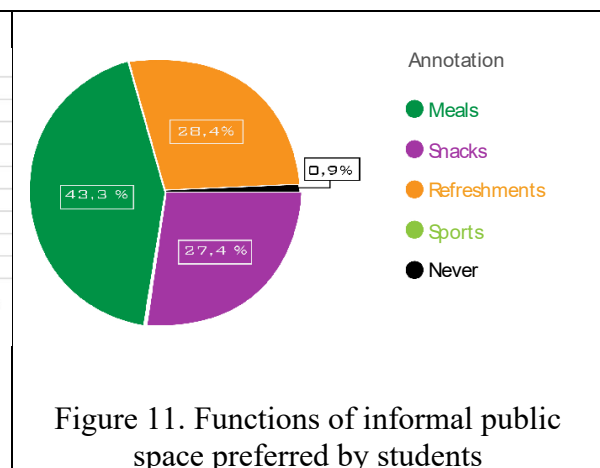


Figure 10. The functional variation of the informal public space during the day



=> The informal public spaces in here is largely privatized, being used mainly for the purpose of generating more income for the occupants. The form of the informal public spaces is the kiosks serving food

The informal public spaces is mainly used by students. Students are also the service subjects that business households focus on

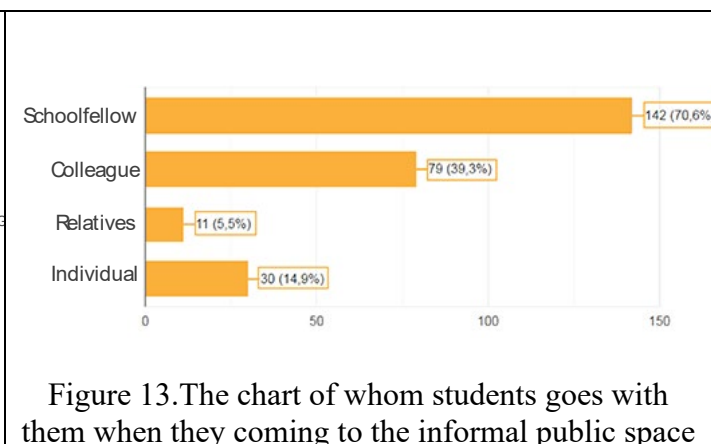
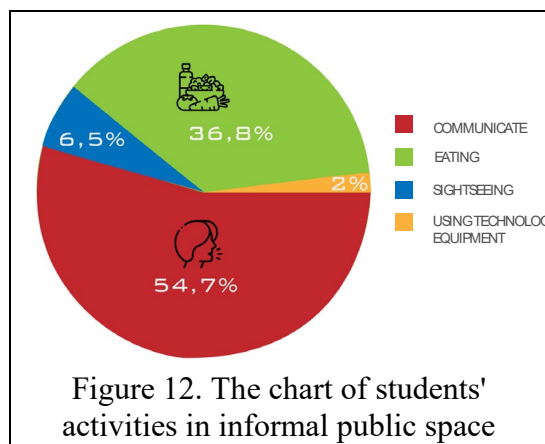
The informal public spaces have strong adaptability and flexibility. The informal public spaces appear in a crowded student area. The informal public spaces function also changed to suit the needs of the students at that time.

### 3. The impact of informal public spaces on student life

#### 3.1. Physical factors:

Provide space to serve the needs of students

- **The need for a place to stop, rest, and relax:** During free time or when the class ends, students need space to linger after stressful time, the informal public spaces often operate under the shade of trees and comes with amenities such as seats, fans, and canopy, so it can meet the above demand.
- **The need for eating and drinking:** Depending on the time of day, the needs of students to eat and drink change. During the day, students need nutritious meals to study, in the evening, they need snacks and soft drinks to relax. The functions of the public security space are always changing to promptly meet the above needs. The prices of dishes at the Public Security Center are cheaper than other eateries, very reasonable with the student's affordability, so they prefer to use them.
- **Needs to share and communicate:** According to the group's interview results, students have a very high need to share and chat with their friends and relatives - at the same time they also want that chat space to be accessible and comfortable. The informal public spaces are very close to educational centers and student concentration areas because students often choose a meeting space to chat with Schoolfellow, Colleague and Relatives



- **The need to satisfy the physical activity games:** After school, students have the need to organize physical games with friends such as shuttlecock, badminton, etc ... Because of convenience and pavement space, they will use the sidewalk as a sports field.
- **The need for space to organize social and cultural events organized by students:** Some clubs and student organizations in the university need space to organize their annual events such as blood donation events, fundraising sales etc. In situations where the university does not allow or other difficulties, so it is impossible to organize on campus, groups of students will take advantage of the large pavement gaps as their event venue.





Figure 14. Informal features provide space to serve the needs of students

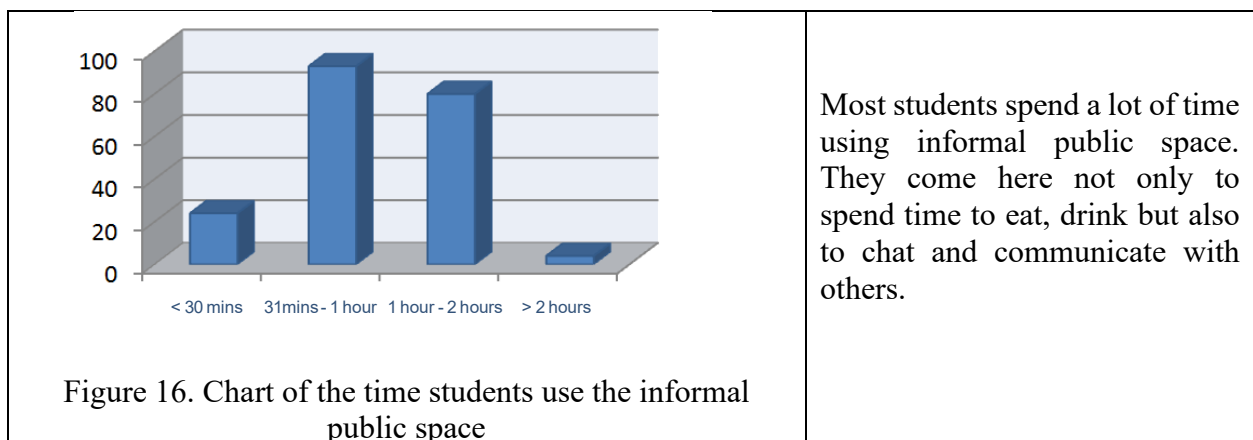
### 3.2. Spiritual factor

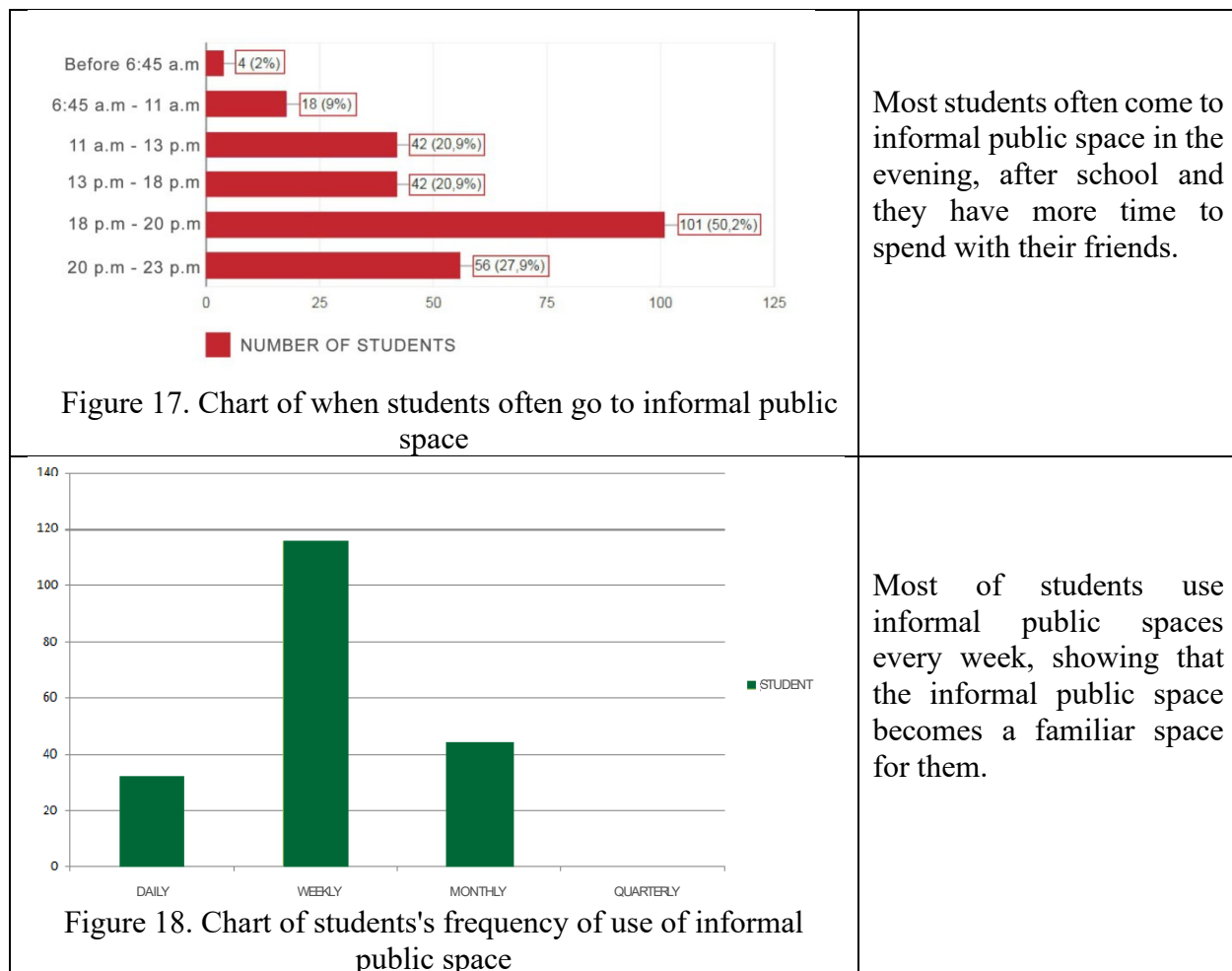
- **Feeling of sociable, not isolated:** Students in universities are mainly young immigrants from other localities in the country (most of them in countryside). Therefore, when moving to a cramped urban environment, it will bring a strange feeling, the cultural and lifestyle gap will make them feel isolated. The informal public spaces are spontaneous by nature, so they bring many features that are close to them. Therefore, this is a suitable environment for getting to know and meeting friends. During the survey, we found that the groups of users of informal public spaces have a rich diversity in regions, the sex ratio is also very balanced, everyone happily chatting.

- **Feeling comfortable and dynamic:** the informal public space is adaptive on a variety of terrains and locations, as long as it is close to a crowded student area. Because of the variety of types, it creates very new sitting and viewpoints, bringing a comfortable and dynamic experience for students to use. According to the interview results, some of the places students gathered to use before were occupied by business households, these places were very unique and novel like on the pedestrian bridge. During the interview, we found that the students were very interested in these spaces, not because of the quality of the drinks, but because of the new sense of comfort at the key public spaces.



- **The feeling of being listened to, expressing themselves:** students always come to use the informal public space as a group, the majority are classmates and then club friends, colleagues, rarely come alone. Using the space with people they are familiar with will make it easier for them to talk, share about themselves and be heard. Their frequency of using this informal public space is very high.





- **High community identity:** "Community identity" here is to bring many characteristic elements of students in that area. Some informal public spaces in the area have also become place with nicknames associated with those universities, appearing on many forums and social networks such as "economic lemon tea", " Science and Technology's snack paradise" etc. A special thing is that thanks to that, more diverse users of the public domain come to these informal public spaces, while still using many students in the university.

#### 4. The impact of informal public space on people living in the vicinity

##### 4.1 Positive impact

- **Creating jobs for the surrounding population:** The informal public space is mostly occupied by neighboring family businesses. According to the results of direct interviews, some families on the road surface or in the alley have the main source of income to rent out the first floor as a place of business or take advantage of the business in the house and expand the sidewalk. Others often open small kiosks and beverages at night on the sidewalk to earn additional income when the offices and commercial stores are closed.





Location: Ngo Tu Do alley

The restaurant opened from the inside and encroached on the sidewalk

Time: 12:30 May 15 2020



Location Arena of Technology University of Technology

Time 17h30 August 15 2020

Figure 20. Some residents use sidewalks as a place of business



- **Provide utilities to serve residents around:** the informal public space spaces provide a variety of service items, a variety of forms and locations, so residents can easily access them.

#### 4.2. Negative impact

- **Unsanitary:** This is the result of lack of supervision and poor awareness among the people. Some garbage spilled straight into the street. According to the results of interviews in some areas, people around that morning have to clean, collect and then dump garbage. Many frustrated people also put sanitary equipment in that area for users to easily clean but to no avail.

- **Disorder security:** The informal public spaces mainly open until late at night, the users at that time are also very complicated, the area that the government has to manage is very wide but the management capacity is still weak. In fact, the locality prohibits all forms of business after 11pm, but due to the need of students to use it, the owners of the shops still find ways to operate. In some areas, users are unconscious, causing noise and disorder, bringing feelings of anxiety and discomfort from surrounding people.

- **Obstructing traffic:** Informal public spaces operates on sidewalks, so they partly obstruct the traffic of surrounding residents, the more area there is, the more difficult it is to pass by, many places always have congestion. , people have to go to the roadway to walk. Some informal public spaces have existed for a long time according to the needs of the people, so it is very difficult for the authorities to relieve them. In fact, the locality has had many strong treatment phases but the plan is ineffective. There should be control measures to balance interests between the parties.



Unsanitary



Disorder security



Obstructing traffic



Obstructing traffic

Figure 21 Negative impact in the informal public space

=> Informal public space is formed based on the needs of the people, so it is inevitable. However, because the informal public spaces appear spontaneously, do not integrate with the construction planning, the awareness of the part of the people is poor and the management capacity of the government is still limited, in addition to some positive impacts, the informal public security space reveals many shortcomings. Forcing the abolition of unofficial public space is not a reasonable solution. The government should have a way to manage, control and raise awareness of both service providers and users of services and utilities at informal public spaces.

## 5. Solution

### 5.1. User opinion

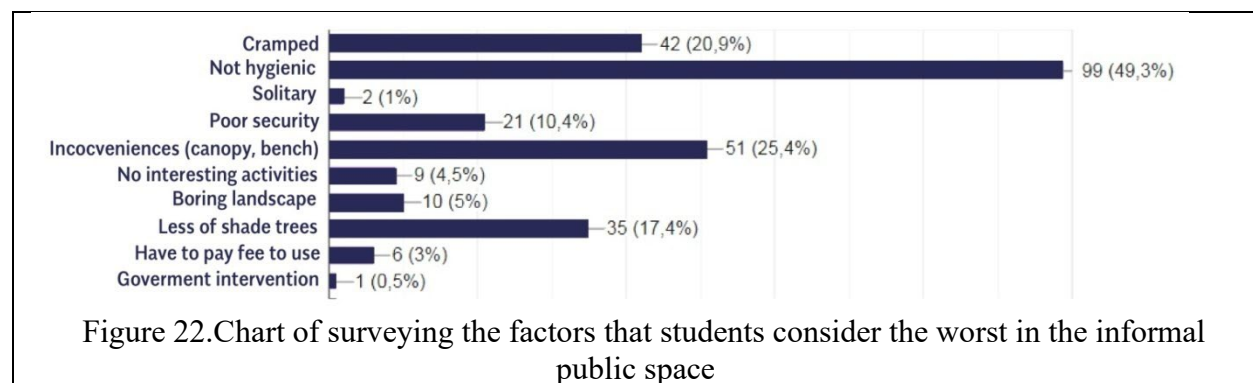
#### - Student's opinion on the quality of the informal public spaces

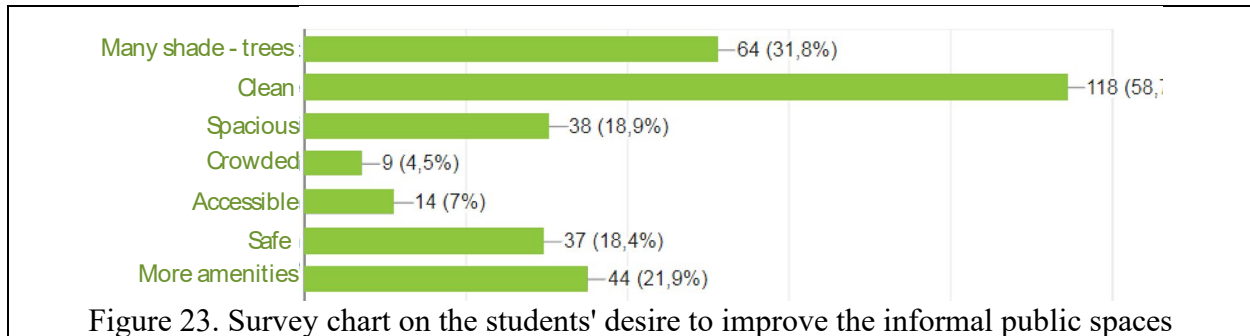
+ Cramped, lack of shade of trees: students really need areas for stopping and resting, but places with lots of shade trees are occupied by small businesses, if they want to use students, they must pay.

+ Dirty, not clean: The public security facilities are located on the road surface, with almost no measures to cover, the safety and hygiene issues are not paid attention to by business households.

+ Inconveniences: Regional facilities are quite poor, most facilities come from household businesses. The most common problem is poor waste management: the trash is too full, the trash is littered on the sidewalk.

+ There are a number of disadvantages to the experience when the authorities take measures to prevent the operation of the informal public spaces.





## 5.2 Propose

### - Design related impact plan

- + Maintain the original function of the pavement: the sidewalk must keep the purpose for smooth walking traffic, without obstacles, not being entangled and encroached by other activities, minimum width of 2m so that two people can walk side by side or two people walking in the opposite direction do not touch each other.
- + Add green spaces, shade shielding, cheap utility equipment in the public security space: combine tree stumps with pedestals, resting chairs, save space and create opportunities to stop under the shade for people walk
- + Improving the hygienic quality of the space: adding garbage cans, cleaning tools at reasonable locations so that users can easily access the equipment.
- + Improving the landscape on the sidewalk: We can reserve a part of the landscape for motorbike parking, arranged into sections for motorbikes interspersed with trees. For example, with a distance of 10 planting a shade tree, we can also use about 5 - 7m for motorbike parking between the trees and the lawn.

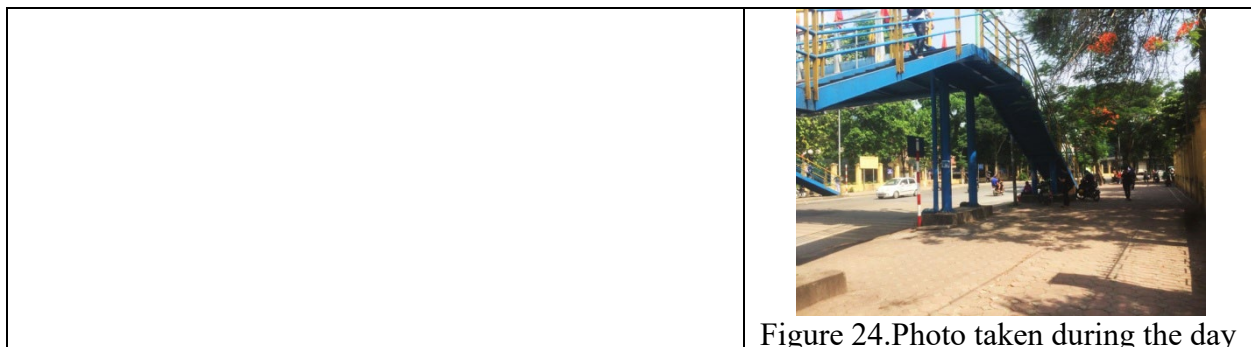






Figure 25. Renovation site



Figure 26. Photo taken at night

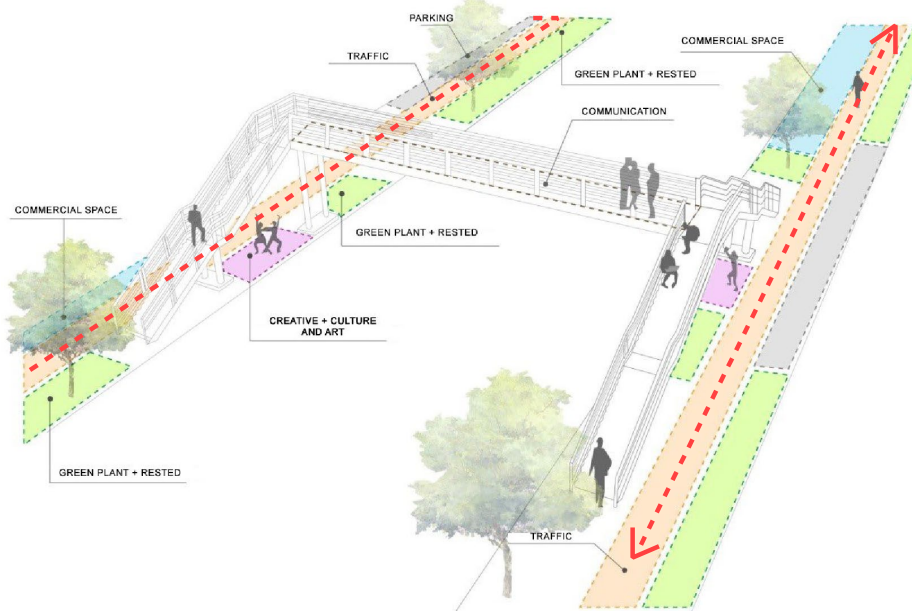


Figure 27. Diagram for renovation





Figure 28. Renovation space combined with design measures

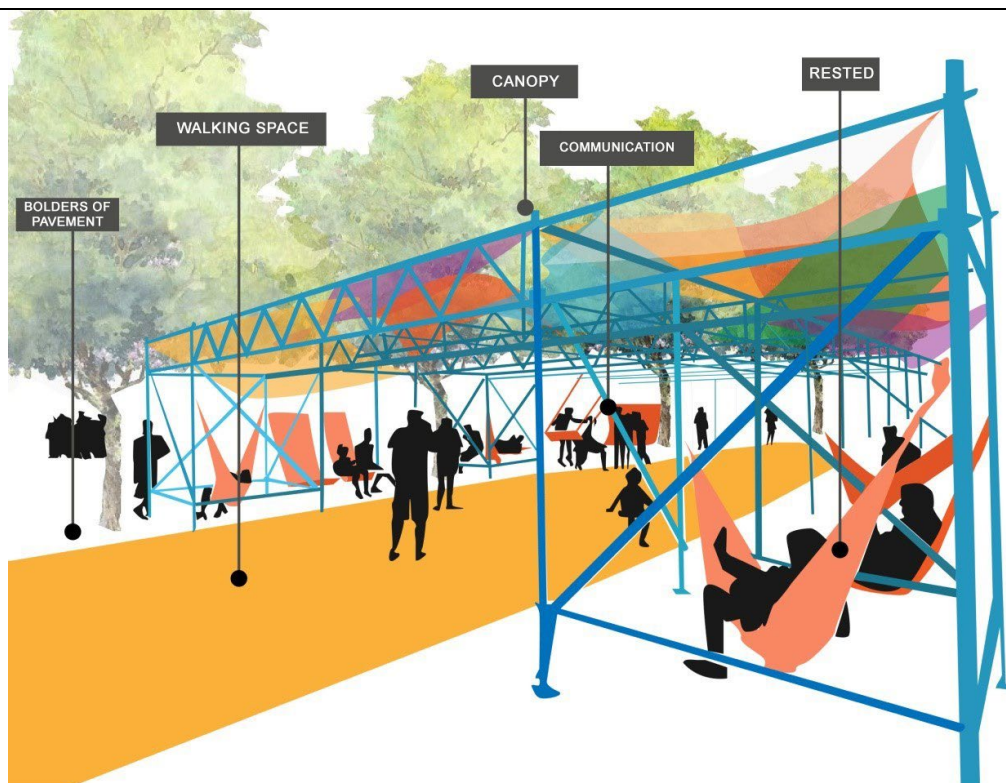


Figure 29. Perspective

### **- Management and supervision (by local authorities)**

+ The management to balance economic, urban aesthetics and student needs: spatial planning of urban streets, clearly identifying and building clear and thorough regulations for main street, crowded at rush hour. Secondary and tertiary roads (niches) may allow street vendors to serve urban dwellers, but control the way of doing business (for quality, timing, and type control). products...) and the area using pavement space.

## **.III. Conclusion**

### **1. Main results achieved**

- Synthesize, identify, and evaluate the characteristics and situation of the informal public space in areas near the university.
- Evaluate the student's relationship to the changes of the informal public space near the university; Draw out the shortcomings around the informal public spaces in the area near the university.
- Find out the students' habits of using the informal public space in the area; the student's need to use informal public spaces.
- Find out the impact of the informal public spaces on the cultural and spiritual life of students.
- Find out about the impact of the informal public space on the lives of neighboring residents
- Proposing measures and principles to improve, maintain informal public spaces structures

### **2. Issues discovered when studying on the informal public space**

- **Space quality**: Because of the temporary nature of informal public spaces, although highly flexible in mobility, in general, the quality of the space is worse than other public spaces. The quality of the informal public space depends a lot on the surrounding environment such as weather, temperature, traffic flow etc. The functions of the informal public space are quite simple, serving only food and drink, but there are no forms of creative promotion, abundant collective activities.

- **Negative impacts on the environment**: Some informal public space reduce the quality of environmental sanitation, adversely affect the urban landscape such as chaos, disorder, obstruction and traffic congestion.

- **Management method to improve quality**: need to harmonize livelihood needs, social needs in an orderly manner, not "obstruct" other functions of the pavement. The government can allow the organization of street vendors to serve urban residents but control the way of doing business

(in order to manage the quality, time, and type of products ...) and the usable area of pavement space. . Along with that, there should be an appropriate way to manage, control and raise awareness of both service providers and users of services and utilities at informal public spaces.

### **3. Limitations of the study**

- **Number of questionnaires:** The research team interviewed a small number: 210 students of 3 universities (70 students each university ), the number of sexes was balanced but we didn't go into other categories such as age, immigration calculation. Some of the results of the interview have not been fully exploited. The results of interviewing the surrounding people are just in-depth interviews with a few people, not clearly classified into the population.

- **Methods of investigation:** The informal public space is temporary, the research area is very large, so the time for the informal public space survey is long because the group has to survey new points and check the authenticity of the old results have changed or not.

- **Covid translation is interrupted:** When the covid epidemic broke out, all informal public spaces stopped working for a long time, the research process also stopped. A few months later the group resumed their research, almost investigating from the start, so the data collection process became cumbersome. Because of Covid's influence, 70% of the interviewees were online, the potential of exploiting information from there was also reduced.

- **Weather:** The informal public space is greatly influenced by the weather. In times of bad weather such as hot weather, heavy rain, and storms, there is almost no informal public security space, and it becomes difficult to observe research.

### **4. Important contributions of the research to the next research**

- Provide reliable survey data for in-depth research on public spaces of TRYSPACES.
- Create a premise for further studies or studies related to informal public space
- Propose suggestions on spatial organization and appropriate solutions to enhance the efficiency and attractiveness of informal public space

### **References**

- Construction Planning Regulation 2008: Chapter II, Section 2.3; Section 2.4; Section 2.4.2; 2.5 Planning on the system of urban service works
- Decree on management of urban space, architecture and landscape No. 38/2010 / ND - CP

Supervisor

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Dr. Arch . Ta Quynh Hoa

Dean of International Education Faculty

Lecturer of Architecture and Planning Faculty