

Thomas Hobbes' Views on the Notion of Power in "Leviathan" and their Manifestations in Human Settlements in Vietnam

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Abstract

The concepts of state and power in Leviathan were formed under the influence of the English revolution and civil war. Thomas Hobbes, the philosopher of materialism articulated the ideas as they apply to socio-political aspects of human existence. In fact, they manifest in human settlements, both in everyday life and in every situation in which power and politics play a role. Needless to say, the production and habitation of human settlements involve the application and articulation of power through material expressions.

This paper uses a comprehensive method and specific history of dialectical materialism to clarify social contract theory to better understand Hobbes' views on the subject of power. At the same time, It uses analysis, and comparison methods to see Hobbes' views of the subject of power and responsibility of the ultimate manifestation of power in persons: the autocrat. From there, the paper explores Hobbes's suggestions about the nature of power and the responsibility of the government as inherited and applied to politics of human settlements as manifesting in Vietnam today.

In conclusion, the paper points out the values and limitations of Hobbes' view on the subject of power and its manifestations in human settlements particularly in architecture and buildings: through domestic space.

Keywords: *Leviathan*, social contract, power dynamics, built environment, Vietnam.

Introduction

Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) was one of the outstanding representatives of English materialism in the seventeenth century (Duncan, 2021), who "systematized Francis Bacon's materialism" (Marx & Engels, 2004: 196) while applying the principle of mechanism to the socio-political field (Artur Emidio Branco, 2021). In his works on politics, "Leviathan," expresses quite fully the content, and the essence of political thought of Thomas Hobbes (Hobbes, 2019).

The concepts of state and power, as articulated by Thomas Hobbes in his seminal work "Leviathan," were significantly shaped by the backdrop of the English revolution and the civil

war. Hobbes, a prominent advocate of materialism, extended his philosophical ideas to encompass socio-political realms, which find applicability in human settlements across diverse situations. Needless to say, the implications of power and politics permeate everyday life, manifesting in various situations where power dynamics are at play, particularly in human habitats. The built environment is not merely a collection of physical structures; it is a theater of power dynamics, where individuals and groups negotiate control, influence, and authority.

This paper investigates Hobbes' insights into the nature of power and governmental responsibilities, tracing their continued relevance in contemporary human settlements. It first employs a historical analysis of dialectical materialism to elucidate Hobbes' social contract theory, to delineate his perspectives regarding the subject of power. Through textual methods of analysis and comparison, the paper delves into Hobbes' conceptions of power and the associated responsibilities of the ultimate power holder, epitomized by the figure of the autocrat.

Theoretical Basis

To understand the intricate dynamics of power within the built environment, we draw upon Thomas Hobbes' political philosophy. Hobbes posited that individuals in a state of nature cede their autonomy to a sovereign authority, the Leviathan, to maintain peace and order. In our context, 'power' refers to the ability to influence, control, or assert authority over spaces, resources, and individuals within the built environment. It is within this framework that we explore the power relations that shape domestic spaces in Vietnam.

Leviathan and Power

The concepts of state and power, including the subject of power in Leviathan, were formed under the influence of the English revolution and the English civil war. From the loss and suffering caused by the situation of "War of every one against every one", "Man and Man are wolves" caused by civil war, Hobbes established the theory of social contract. That is, in the process of transitioning from the natural state to the civil state, individuals agree to transfer power to the supreme being with incomparable power, in order to ensure peace, stability, and security. The powerful, supreme being was described by Hobbes with the image of Leviathan, a sea monster of incomparable power, described in the Christian Bible. The power, the responsibility of the supreme, the relationship between the supreme and the citizens analyzed by Hobbes in "Leviathan" have so far remained topical, leaving valuable lessons for the formation of reasonable political space for socio-economic developments.

Along with the state, the issue of political power, including the nature and subject of power occupying a central position in the political field of social life has been studied from the ages and from the past to the present from many different angles. In the 17th - 18th centuries, the impact of economic, political and social changes in the bourgeois revolution era on ideological activities have led to the birth of many political theories, which date back to the ancient times, and social contract theory is one of them. For Thomas Hobbes, social contract theory became the starting point in the interpretation of a wide range of political issues, which articulates his views on the state and political power. How did the bourgeois revolution and the civil war affect the content and substance of Hobbes's theory of the social contract? What are the merits and limitations of the "two-state" approach (natural state and civil state) in analyzing the issue of power and the subject of power?

Indeed, how do these manifest in the everyday life of the people in human settlements, who occupy spaces and buildings, which themselves are articulations of power. These are pertinent questions to ask. In this context, this paper aims to throw light on the presence and articulation of power in human settlements and how people negotiate those powers as they manifest as spaces in which some have control and others do not; some have authority, some not, some have freedom to act, some not; some can inhabit and some not; some can flourish and some are impoverished.

Its objectives are as follows.

1. To explore the meanings of power as articulated by Thomas Hobbs through social contract theory.
2. To establish the nature of power relations in built-environments as manifested in domestic environments in Vietnam.

Literature Review

John Habraken's book 'Transformations of the Site' (Habraken, 1988) and its exploration of human settlements provide a unique lens through which to reconsider Hobbes' characterization of the Leviathan as a symbol of tyranny and dictatorship. In doing so, we delve into the potential alignment of Hobbes' ideas with contemporary trends and examine the specter of political conservatism, reminiscent of Plato's experiences. This investigation navigates key dimensions of Hobbes' political philosophy, intricately woven into the fabric of "Leviathan" (Hobbes, 2019), and gains renewed significance within the context of Habraken's site-based analysis.

Considering Habraken's perspectives on human settlements and spatial dynamics, we endeavor to fathom the essence, merits, and constraints of Hobbes' political thought in novel ways. By contextualizing Hobbes' ideas within the context of 'Transformations of the Site,' we unearth fresh layers of insight that offer a symbiotic relationship between political philosophy and spatial arrangements. This scholarly exploration, which intertwines social contract theory, power dynamics, and authority, paves the way for an insightful re-examination.

Habraken's concepts in 'Transformations of the Site,' offers a distinctive angle on Hobbes' portrayal of the supreme being in "Leviathan." Habraken's exploration of human settlements as dynamic entities replete with inherent power structures resonates with Hobbes' symbolism. While Dietz (1990) highlights the dual significance of this image, Habraken's lens encourages the contemplation of how the architectural layout itself influences power dynamics and authority within settlements, potentially augmenting the resonance Hobbes intended. Moreover, within this exploration, Habraken's analytical gaze may uncover previously unexplored dimensions of conservatism underlying Hobbes' political choices.

Habraken's 'Transformations of the Site' opens a doorway to delve into the socio-political and economic tapestry of human settlements. Just as Gauthier (2000) has explored how post-revolutionary English civil war conditions molded Hobbes' political thought. Habraken's insights can be juxtaposed onto this canvas. Habraken's focus on the adaptability of settlements and their responses to changing circumstances resonates with Gauthier's concept of stability and order. The near-absolute power allocated by Hobbes to a supreme entity can now be reconsidered within the malleable context of human settlements and their capacity to adapt, as depicted by Habraken.

'Transformations of the Site' offers a vantage point through which Hobbes' notions in the light of modern-day architectural and spatial dynamics can be understood. Habraken's exposition on the evolution of settlements, informed by individual consent and communal evolution, mirrors Hobbes' emphasis on the voluntary consent of individuals. In fact, Slomp's (2000) exploration of Hobbes' ideas can gain a new dimension when viewed through the lens of Habraken's theories on the historical roots of the head of state's power and its lineage through ages.

Just as Finn (2004) examined the interplay between Hobbes' natural philosophy and political viewpoints, Habraken's theories on site dynamics reveal the intricate dance between architecture and governance. Habraken's insights into how architecture regulates social relations and behavior within settlements can be juxtaposed with Finn's analysis too, adding depth to the historical imprints Finn traced this in the context of England. This lens potentially sheds light on how the Supreme being's role in governing social relations translates into the spatial layout of human settlements.

Mirroring Norberto Bobbio's (1993) contemporary observations, 'Transformations of the Site' can shed light on the enduring influence of Hobbes' political philosophy. Habraken's insights into the lasting relevance of architectural configurations and their impact on social

dynamics can offer fresh perspectives on the resilience of Hobbes' ideas, especially when considering the fluidity of settlements.

Synthesizing these insights within Habraken's framework underscores the continued significance of Hobbes' perspective on power within the context of human settlements. As Habraken's theories resonate with Hobbes' notions of peace, social consensus, and governance, parallels between Hobbes' power paradigm and the dynamic power structures embedded within evolving settlements can be drawn. This study, thus embarks on unraveling the origins of Hobbes' power concept within the tapestry of human settlements, scrutinizing his views on power and ultimate responsibility, and thoughtfully highlighting the strengths and limitations of his power-centric philosophy within the context of architecture and spatial arrangements.

The article "Representation of Power in the Built Environment" by Goverde (1992), published in the *Netherlands Journal of Housing*, explores the concept of power as it is manifested in the physical spaces and structures that make up the built environment.

In this article, Goverde investigates how power is symbolically and practically expressed through architecture, urban planning, and spatial design. The author delves into the ways in which the built environment reflects and reinforces power dynamics within society, addressing questions such as how buildings and urban layouts can signify authority, control, and social hierarchies.

Goverde's research highlights the importance of recognizing the role of the built environment in shaping power relations and how it can be a tool for conveying messages of power, influence, and authority. The article contributes to the understanding of the complex interplay between architecture, urban design, and social power structures.

The search results produce a paper titled "Social Innovation in the Built Environment: The Challenges Presented by the Politics of Space." (Horgan & Dimitrijević, 2021). It discusses the emergence of social innovation as a way to approach society's most intractable challenges, particularly in the built environment, and its close link to concepts of sustainability and resilience. It aims to understand social innovation in the built environment, examining its development over phases, and the barriers that emerge to its success in addressing spatial inequalities. It provides insights on key barriers to social innovation based on ethnographic research. It first provides an overview of research that aimed to identify how social innovation develops through networks, frameworks, and architecture, followed by a discussion on the barriers presented by politics to successful social innovations in the built environment. The second part of the paper uses case studies to illustrate core themes presented in research, how the politics of space has affected development in the places examined. It concludes that social innovation is required to address persistent democratic deficits in the practice of planning and architecture, and that genuine social innovation is required to confront unequal power distribution in decision-making related to the built environment.

These can be seen to manifest in many places including urban management and planning in Vietnam. There, the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam has issued the Resolution 06-NQ/TW in January 2021 (Nguyen, 2022). The resolution No. 06-NQ/TW outlines a comprehensive plan for the planning, construction, management, and sustainable development of urban areas in Vietnam up to 2030, with a vision for 2045. Key points include enhancing local governance structures, decentralization of power, and developing a skilled urban management workforce. It emphasizes the importance of cultural and lifestyle improvements, urban green spaces, reducing environmental pollution and ensuring citizen rights, especially for labor mobility and gender equality. The resolution highlights the need for economic development in urban regions, focusing on service industries, advanced manufacturing and digital economies, while also addressing land use efficiency and financial mechanisms. Furthermore, it calls for revisions to property-related taxation, efficient land use, and effective urban infrastructure investment. Overall, the resolution provides a comprehensive framework for sustainable urban development in Vietnam.

Framed within Habraken's theoretical framework, the literature review takes on a new dimension as it scrutinizes diverse interpretations of Hobbes' political philosophy and his symbolic portrayal of the Leviathan. In harmonizing these viewpoints with Habraken's theories,

this section adeptly sets the stage for the forthcoming research, which strives to meticulously investigate Hobbes' perspectives on power within human settlements. This exploration traces the evolution of these ideas from historical contexts to contemporary implications within architectural contexts. Ultimately, the ensuing analysis endeavors to illuminate the intricate interplay between power, governance and spatial arrangements within societal frameworks, thus underscoring Hobbes' enduring relevance in comprehending the nuanced dynamics of governance as experienced within the tangible realms of human settlements.

Research Methodology

This research uses the methodology of dialectical materialism to study Hobbes' views on the subject of power in many different angles. It scrutinizes the documents "Leviathan" (Hobbes, 2019) and "Transformations of the Site" (Habraken, 1988). The research uses the methodology of the materialist dialectic as a comprehensive principle and a specific historical principle to clarify the systematic views of subject of power from Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke to Rousseau (Aristotle, 1999; Do & Valco, 2021; Do Thi Thuy, 2023). The paper also uses analysis, synthesis, and interpretation to clarify the category of right in the natural state and civic state in the development process. The author describes, analyzes, and synthesizes to explain Hobbes' views of the subject of power and responsibility of the ultimate-the autocrat in comparison with the ideas of other thinkers such as Plato, Niccolò Machiavelli (Machiavelli, 1971; Machiavelli, 1979; Plato, 2013). From the collection of Leviathan's and Hobbes' studies on the subject of power, the research has collected them to synthesize and analyze to review, evaluate and draw the values and limitations of his views today.

To understand the expression of power in the built environment in Vietnam, we conducted an analysis of Resolution 06-NQ/TW of the Politburo of the Communist Party of Vietnam issued in 2022 and followed by a case study (Nguyen, 2022). The research has selected some typical indoor spaces, including traditional houses and modern apartments, in different regions of Vietnam. Detailed fieldwork has been carried out, including tours of these spaces, extensive observations, and collection of architectural plans and photographs.

Findings

"Social contract" theory - the starting point of view on the subject of power

The work "*Leviathan*" (Leviathan or The Matter, Form and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil) occupies a special place in Hobbes' political philosophy. Leviathan is the model for Hobbes to build the symbol of power in the theory of the state. It is the sea monster of unparalleled power, described in the Christian Bible (1998: 1012-1015). The Leviathan in the original Latin consists of four parts, with 47 chapters. When translated into English, there are three remaining parts, which are Part I - Of Man, Part II - Of Common-Wealth, Part III - Of Christian. Although the main theme of "*Leviathan*" is politics, the first chapter deals with ontological and epistemological issues, thereby demonstrating the unity of Hobbes' philosophical worldview. Gauthier states that "Hobbes was a methodological mechanist. He sought to structure a unified science, proceeding from the study of objects in general to specific objects, that is, people, and then objects artificial (body) man-made" (2000: 2).

The seeds of social contract theory have been established since antiquity, especially in the view of the Pythagorean confederacy and the dialectic when it comes to a voluntary association in the community or the role of language in the enforce legal covenants. However, it was not until Hobbes formulated the social contract theory that this theory had a clear content, and a new system was established. Unlike Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626), who advocates establishing an ideal society on a remote island (only in the imagination), as the application of the concept of "knowledge is power" (Bacon, 2009). Hobbes builds on his social contract theory from his political experiences in England and examines ancient to medieval models of state and power. The direct socio-political basis of this theory is the reality of England during the decades of revolution and civil war. Such anarchy and inhumanity are hard to accept, and can only be related to the wild, social, immoral and lawless condition: the natural condition of mankind (Hobbes, 2019). However, even with animals, brutal exclusion is not always the case. Hobbes

writes, "It is true, that certain living creatures, as Bees, and Ants, live sociably one with another, (which are therefore by Aristotle numbered amongst Politicall creatures)" (Hobbes, 2019: 60). Humans, "equipped with more intelligence than animals", behave towards each other worse than animals? Lack of mutual trust, honor, status and lust for glory cause people to often lose control of their behavior. When there is a lack of a common guarantee of security, a public power, people get lost in a state of constant confrontation. In the state of Nature, there is no proper law and no moral standards but only muscle strength in the sense that the strong wins the weak.

Hobbes emphasized that when people live without common power, forcing all to fear, they are in a state called war, which is a "war of every one against every one" (Hobbes, 2019: 43-44). In the state of Nature, everyone has a right, but in fact, it is only a formality because it is a right under the condition of being on guard, and fear of being taken away. Rights, from the right to life to the right to freedom and possession, are not clearly and transparently defined for each individual because instead of a sense of community is the physical, immoral force that governs all. Today someone has the right; tomorrow, the right is taken away. There is only one basic "right" to survive - the right to self-defense, to flee from the stronger. Hobbes pointed out that "the four human abilities are physical strength, experience, reason, feelings (or emotions)," but people use them in a one-sided way then causing those abilities to be wasted in the state of Nature (Hobbes, 1983: 41).

In a state of chaos, war, "Man to Man is wolf," the need for survival has forced Man to consider the possibility of a "contract and agreement by which the main parts of the body value is first created, linked" (Hobbes, 2019: 3). Only then will the human's innate abilities become useful and meaningful beyond the natural state, which is the opposite of the most quintessential value in every human being. It is necessary to overcome that state, not only by reason, but also by desire. Hobbes considered civil war to be inhumane and as horribly absurd as can be imagined. Animosity and fraternal conflict are rife only because of uncontrolled fantasies. From there, he emphasized the need to link people together to transition to a new state when the institutionalization of human abilities and Nature takes place on the basis of the voluntary consent of all. The seemingly simplest need has become the sacred and serious one, prompting people to "legalize" inevitably what has related to the existence and development of Man himself. The desires (passions), which leads people to peace, are the fear of death. Hobbes writes the desire to obtain what is necessary for a good life and hopes to obtain them through diligence. Reason suggests appropriate efforts for peace on the basis of which people can come to an agreement. Such proposals are what is otherwise called the "laws of Nature" (44). What is natural law? Hobbes defines,

"A LAW OF NATURE, (Lex Naturalis,) is a Precept, or general Rule, found out by Reason, by which a man is forbidden to do, that, which is destructive of his life, or taketh away the means of preserving the same; and to omit, that, by which he thinketh it may be best preserved."

Hobbes, 2019: 44

The same understanding of natural law is also emphasized in "De Cive" (1983: 51-52). Hobbes also noted the difference between "jus" and "lex" or right and law. He believes that these two concepts must not be mixed, because the right lies in the freedom to do or not to do, while the law prescribes and forces members to choose one. Thus, clearly different laws and rights, similar to obligation and liberty, have different meanings in relation to one and the same thing.

Thus, transitioning from the natural state to the civil state requires a contract or agreement between people on the basis of acknowledging a supreme power, with the symbol of the sword of justice and the power of the king to maintain peace and ensure the security of each individual. "The mutual transferrin of Right, is that which men call CONTRACT." (Hobbes, 2019: 46) The right to be replaced by law is a necessity in the consent process of each individual. They reduce their own rights and give the subject power to maintain peace and stability, making human abilities be used in a reasonable and directional way.

Thus,

"Right is laid aside, either by simply Renouncing it; or by Transferring it to another. By Simply RENOUNCING; when he cares not to whom the

benefit thereof redoundeth. By Transferring; when he intendeth the benefit thereof to some certain person, or persons. And when a man hath in either manner abandoned, or granted away his Right; then is he said to be OBLIGED, or BOUND, not to hinder those, to whom such Right is granted, or abandoned, from the benefit of it: and that he Ought, and it his DUTY, not to make void that voluntary act of his own: and that such hindrance is INJUSTICE, and INJURY, as being Sine Jure; the Right being before renounced, or transferred. So that Injury, or Injustice, in the controversies of the world, is somewhat like to that, which in the Disputations of Scholars is called Absurdity. For as it is there called an Absurdity, to contradict what one maintained in the Beginning: so in the world, it is called Injustice, and Injury, voluntarily to undo that, which from the beginning he had voluntarily done.”

Hobbes, 2019: 45

Accepting alienation, losing natural rights is a reasonable choice to avoid the situation of "war of all against all". It is no coincidence that the first natural law (of the 19 laws, "The Lawes of Nature are Immutable and Eternall" asserts "the imperative, or general rule of reason", that, "The Passions that encline men to peace, are Feare of Desire of such things as are necessary to commodious living and a Hope by their Industry to obtain them. And Reason suggesteth convenient Articles of Peace, upon which men may be drawn to agreement" (Hobbes, 2019) Hobbes again stressed the need to seek and adhere to peace, because, in the end, stemming from the painful history of mankind as well as that of England, peace, though poor, is still better than war, associated with an irreparable loss.

Thus, it can be said that, in Hobbes' analysis of the social contract, the transfer of power from the formal and meaningless right of each individual to the right of a supreme being or lord (the Right of Sovereign) became a necessity. This transfer of power is the core content of the Social contract.

Hobbes' View of Power and Responsibility of the Ultimate - the Autocrat

When the state was born, the civil state replaced the natural state in order to remedy unrest and maintain peace for the benefit of all. In chapter XVII of "Leviathan" - Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Common-Wealth, Hobbes emphasizes,

“The final Cause, End, or Design of men, (who naturally love Liberty, and Dominion over others,) in the introduction of that restraint upon themselves, (in which we see them live in Common-wealths,) is the foresight of their own preservation, and of a more contented life thereby, that is to say, of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of Warre, which is necessarily consequent (as hath been shewn) to the natural Passions of men, when there is no visible Power to keep them in awe, and the them by fear of punishment to the performance of their Covenants, and observation of these Lawes of Nature”

(Hobbes, 2019: 59).

"Sovereign Power" is awarded, either to an individual or a collective meeting. It must take into account the will of the people, "transferred by the people's agreement" to be valid. Such is Hobbes' message about the art of power built on an understanding of human will. Hobbes expressed his views clearly and consistently. Stemming from the lessons of history- instability from the crisis of slave democracy in Greece and the lack of transparency in the exercise of power between the people and the Senate of the Roman Republic. Next came the unscrupulous domination of the church in the "kingdom of darkness" (medieval), and finally, the tragic practice of England during the Civil War. The foregoing shows that it is necessary to form a centralized and effective power apparatus to maintain peace and stability. The "sacrifice" of each individual's rights to focus on the right of the lord to govern fairly. Expressing the transformation of human rights from the natural state to the civil state to form the state. Voluntary choice through agreement is also an expression of freedom of choice. The logic of the problem lies in the subject

of power. The head of state does not appear spontaneously, nor is it an abuse of power, but is consciously chosen by the individuals. Hobbes writes, "And Sovereign, in every Commonwealth, is the absolute Representative of all the Subjects" (Hobbes, 2019: 78). From here, it can be said that the sense of citizenship in the state, when every citizen's behavior is associated with the survival of the country, each choice must show civic responsibility. It is now a responsibility to the nation through the supreme representative of the supreme being, the lord - Leviathan, because after all, "Therefore when they come to be dissolved, not by external violence, but intestine disorder." (111)

The subject of power has been interesting since the emergence of the state, and the interpretation of the powerful subject often reflects changes in social reality. When the subject of power does not bring into play the effect of state administration and social activities, the replacement of the powerful subject is put in place. Faced with the prospect of a severe crisis of slave democracy, Plato wished to replace it with an aristocratic-republican polity. Philosophers were chosen by him as the head of the state because it was the "golden class", representing the highest value, wisdom and intelligence. He argues that "until the philosopher plays the role of leader of the state, power will not be unified, and the state will not be liberated from evil" (Plato, 2013: 399-400).

More than two millennia later, in the context of Italy falling into a state of fragmentation and interference from the outside, Niccolò Machiavelli (1469 – 1527) established a political view of making the ends justify the means. He determined that the ultimate goal is national unification, territorial integrity, stability and prosperity. In that sense, Machiavelli exalts the role of a Cesare Borgia-type "skillful leader" who chooses to gain the throne by "deviation and wickedness," (Machiavelli, 1979: 103) and, at the same time, compares rulers with wise and decisive qualities to foxes and lions (1971: 135). The determination of the subject of power is epochal and his inheritance. It is not established by chance but based on socio-historical conditions and specific political events. That requires a new approach, beyond the existing, towards what is needed for the common good of the nation. For Hobbes, it is a powerful supreme being, capable of ensuring the effective operation of the state apparatus for the common good of society, not the interests of any group of people. In chapter XXIX of "Leviathan", which discusses the causes of the weakening and disintegration of the state, Hobbes criticizes those who, when they gain power, "That a man to obtain a Kingdome, is sometimes content with less Power, than to the Peace, and defense of the Common-wealth is necessarily required" (Hobbes, 2019: 111).

From the lessons of history and British reality, Hobbes opposed the idea of separation of powers. He argues that the separation of state power is tantamount to destroying it, because such division leads to branches of power "annihilating each other", weakening the state. He declared,

"That all Governments which men are bound to obey, are Simple, and Absolute. In Monarchy there is but One Man Supreme, and all other men that have any kind of Power in the state, have it by his Commission."

Hobbes, 2019: 189

In addition, considering the relationship between the Supreme Being and God, the Supreme Being himself is only the Subject of God, so he must still fully comply with laws, from divine law to natural law.

Highlighting the powerful subject (the autocrat) through the image of Leviathan, Hobbes pointed out the qualities, powers and duties of the head of state. Despite his objection to encouraging "free speech against the supreme government", Hobbes still emphasized that the highest moral quality of a ruler is "trusted by the people". If trust is betrayed, then the government has no place in the hearts of the people; sooner or later, it will be removed from power. He mentioned Julius Caesar (100 – 44 BC) to warn of a case of loss of power by abuse of trust, "unlimited greed." Hobbes and Machiavelli have in common the qualities of the supreme being, as this thinker promotes the image of a politician who is "popular," avoiding being "hated and despised by the people." (Machiavelli, 1971: 139, 164-165)

In chapter XVIII of "Leviathan" - Of the Right of Sovereignes By Institution, Hobbes outlined the right,

“the subjects cannot chance the forme of government, s overaigne power cannot be forfeited, no man can without injustice protest against the, the soverains actions cannot be justly accused by the subject, what soever the soveraigne doth, is unpunishable by the subject, the soveraigne is a judge of what is necessary for the peace and defense of his subjects and judge of what doctrines are fit to be taught them, the riary of making rules, whereby the subject may every man know what is so hn owne as no other subiect can without injustice take it from him, to him also belongeth the right of all judicature and decision of controversies, and of making war, and peace, as he shall think best, and of making war, and peace, as he shall think best, and of choosing all counsellours, and ministers, both of peace, and warre, and of rewarding, and punishing, and that (where no former law hath determined the measure of it) arbitrary, and of honour and order [...]”

Hobbes, 2019: 61-64.

However, the supreme being is only "a subject of God", so the right is not unlimited and arbitrary, but associated with the obligations and responsibilities that are given. Since the Supreme Being, after all, is entrusted with the highest authority, he is responsible before God for ensuring peace and security for the people, as well as their interests and personal needs (Hobbes, 2019: 116). That is the primary responsibility of the Supreme Being (the autocrat).

Second, the autocrat is responsible for promulgating laws to the people and, at the same time, establishing a system of consultants and assistants to explain the laws to the people. People must not be left in a state of not understanding or thoroughly understanding the basic rights and duties of citizenship. Ensure people do not fall into "unfounded fear of punishment" for accidental negligence.

Third, the autocrat seeks ways to improve the people's understanding of government, civic duties before society, the state, the supreme being, and even God - the king of kings (Hobbes, 2019: 118). In other words, the autocrat needs to be the one who enlightens people's minds.

Fourth, the autocrat must naturally have full authority to establish the legal system but must not violate fairness. According to Hobbes, good law must be established on the principle of fairness, for both the rich and the high and the poor and the unpopular. Hobbes wrote, “every Sovereign Ought to cause Justice to be taught, which (consisting in taking from no man what is his) is as much as to say, to cause men to be taught not to deprive their neighbour, by violence, or fraud.” (Hobbes, 2019: 118).

Power Relations in Built-Environments

Theoretical Foundations of Power in Built-Environments

Power relations within built-environments offer a compelling lens through which to observe the practical implications of Hobbesian political thought. This notion finds vivid illustration in the context of domestic spaces in Vietnam. The arrangement and utilization of these spaces become symbolic of power dynamics, where individuals and groups vie for control, influence, and authority, mirroring the core tenets of Hobbes' philosophy.

Inhabiting domestic spaces in Vietnam is, in essence, is indeed a negotiation of power. Within these confines, family members, roles, and hierarchies are established, reflecting the microcosm of a larger social order. The head of the household assumes a Hobbesian-like role, embodying the supreme authority that maintains order, security, and harmony within the domestic realm. Similarly, individuals within the household navigate their responsibilities and autonomy while acknowledging the sovereign's power to arbitrate disputes and ensure the collective well-being.

Architectural elements and the layout of buildings further underscore the manifestation of power relations. The allocation of space, design choices, and access to amenities reflect disparities in freedom and agency. Those with greater influence might shape the spatial environment to suit their needs, potentially relegating others to more confined or subordinate spaces. Thus, architecture becomes a visible representation of hierarchical power arrangements, echoing Hobbes' idea of a sovereign entity with overarching authority.

The built-environment also serves as a canvas for the articulation of power through symbols and aesthetics. Grandiose structures or lavish interiors might symbolize wealth and prestige, showcasing the ability to command resources and assert control. Conversely, more modest or utilitarian spaces may signify constraints on agency or a recognition of the limits of one's power. This physical manifestation of power inequalities is reminiscent of Hobbes' emphasis on the sovereign's role in maintaining order and mitigating conflict.

Power Dynamics in Domestic Spaces in Vietnam

The domestic spaces in Vietnam serve as a microcosm of the larger society, where power dynamics are intricately woven into the fabric of daily life. These dynamics, whether in rural or urban settings, are influenced by the country's historical context, deeply rooted traditions, and evolving socio-economic structures.

a) Historical Context

Vietnam's history is marked by various epochs of colonization, conflict, and reunification. These historical layers have left imprints on domestic spaces. For instance, traditional Vietnamese homes, with their distinctive layouts and spatial hierarchies, often reflect Confucian principles emphasizing filial piety and respect for authority. These principles still influence family structures and power dynamics within the household.

b) Urban vs. Rural Dynamics

In urban areas like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, rapid modernization and urbanization have created new power dynamics. Apartments in high-rises symbolize upward mobility, i.e. Vinpearl Landmark 81 is the highest hotel in Vietnam (Marcus, 2023), while older, communal-style houses represent a more traditional way of life. The allocation of space and access to amenities can reflect disparities in wealth and social status.



Fig. 1: Vinpearl Landmark 81

Source: Marcus, 2023

In rural settings, communal living remains prevalent, and power is often concentrated in the hands of village elders or local authorities. Traditional communal houses are central to village life (Do & Ngo, 2023), serving as spaces for community meetings and decision-making. This can be illustrated with a case study of a rural Vietnamese village.

Case Study: A Rural Vietnamese Village

To illustrate these dynamics, we examine a case study of a rural Vietnamese village – Đường Lâm ancient village (Fig. 2). The village layout, with its central communal house - Mong Phu communal house or Mong Phu village hall (Fig. 3) and surrounding family homes, showcases the intertwining of collective authority and individual autonomy. Mong Phu communal house was built on the central and highest land of the village, about 1,800m². The communal house was built in 1533, during the reign of King Mac Dang Doanh. Later, the

communal house was embellished and repaired several times, but still retained the architectural and sculptural form of the early 19th century (Xuân Mai, 2021).



Fig. 2: Mong Phu communal house in Đường Lâm ancient village
Source: Googlemap, 2023

Decision-making power resides with the village council, which includes respected elders and community leaders. This case study exemplifies how architectural elements and spatial organization reflect and reinforce the power structures in place.

Moreover, the recent trend of rural-to-urban migration has created a dynamic tension between traditional values and urban aspirations, further impacting power dynamics within domestic spaces.



Fig. 3: Mong Phu communal house from the air
Source: Xuân Mai, 2021

In summary, the power dynamics within built-environments, as informed by Habraken's theories, offer a lens through which we can analyze the negotiation of power in domestic spaces in Vietnam. Historical legacies, urban-rural divides, and case studies of specific settings provide a nuanced understanding of how power is manifested, contested, and negotiated in these spaces. Resolution 06-NQ/TW's focus on the sustainable development of urban areas aligns with these discussions, highlighting the need to consider power dynamics when planning and constructing these environments to ensure equitable and inclusive development.

Relevance and Limitations

Hobbes' insights into power dynamics remain valuable for comprehending power structures within human settlements. Hobbes' views on power in human settlements encompass several significant aspects. Firstly, he emphasizes the need for a central authority to maintain order and prevent chaos within these settlements. This clarity of power structure can play a pivotal role in averting conflicts and ensuring efficient governance. Secondly, central to Hobbes' philosophy is the concept of a social contract, where individuals willingly relinquish certain rights in exchange for security and stability. This notion can provide a fundamental basis for establishing rules and fostering cooperation among members of these settlements. Additionally, Hobbes' perspectives underscore the importance of a robust governing body to shield people from the perils of the state of nature. This perspective can serve as a driving force behind the creation of institutions designed to safeguard the well-being of citizens. Lastly, by advocating for the concentration of power within a sovereign authority, Hobbes' ideas promote unified decision-making, resulting in more effective and coordinated responses to the myriad challenges faced by settlements, ultimately enhancing their overall stability and functionality.

However, his views on power in human settlements bring forth several notable limitations. Firstly, his emphasis on a single, absolute sovereign authority raises concerns about the potential for authoritarianism, which could curtail individual freedoms and liberties within these settlements. Secondly, his strong focus on maintaining order and security may inadvertently diminish the significance of individual rights and personal autonomy, risking the emergence of oppressive governance structures. Thirdly, Hobbes' approach may not sufficiently consider the diversity and unique needs of different communities within human settlements, potentially leading to a one-size-fits-all governance model that fails to address specific local requirements. Furthermore, the concentration of power in a sovereign authority, as advocated by Hobbes, may lack the necessary checks and balances, potentially paving the way for abuses of power and corruption. Lastly, an overly centralized power structure could have the unintended consequence of stifling innovation and creativity within human settlements by discouraging dissent and suppressing the emergence of new ideas. These limitations must be carefully considered when applying Hobbes' ideas to real-world governance and urban planning.

In summary, Hobbes' views on power offer the advantage of clear authority and social contract principles for maintaining order, but they also carry the risk of authoritarianism, neglect of individual rights, and stifling diversity and innovation within human settlements. Evaluating these values and limitations is crucial when applying his ideas to real-world governance and urban planning.

Discussion

Thomas Hobbes' "Leviathan" offers valuable insights into power and its relevance in contemporary Vietnam. Despite originating in 17th-century Europe, Hobbes' ideas resonate with modern urban planning and governance in Vietnam, as evidenced by Resolution 06-NQ/TW of the Politburo (Nguyen, 2022), which is self-centered. This discussion explores Hobbes' views on power and their manifestations within Vietnam's human settlements.

Vietnam's historical context, shaped by colonization and conflict, can be viewed through Hobbes' social contract theory. Traditional Vietnamese values rooted in Confucianism prioritize order and authority, aligning with Hobbes' emphasis on a central authority to maintain social harmony. In recent years, rapid urbanization in cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City reflects aspirations for upward mobility. High-rise developments, exemplified by Vinpearl Landmark 81 (Marcus, 2023), highlight the need for governance in managing urban growth and ensuring social order, consistent with Hobbes' concepts. Meanwhile, in rural Vietnam, communal living persists, with power often held by village elders. Communal houses like Mong Phu in Đường Lâm ancient village (Do & Ngo, 2023), reflect the principle of centralized authority, akin to Hobbes' sovereign power for peace and stability. The disparity between urban and rural life leading to tension between rural values and urban aspirations due to rural-urban migration is related to Hobbes's ideas. Migrants bring cultural values into cities that lead to an emphasis on urban

security management. Hobbes' emphasis on sovereign responsibilities aligns with modern governance principles. Vietnam's leaders must ensure essential services, infrastructure, and social stability, reflecting the social contract between the state and citizens. Hobbes' views offer lessons for urban planning and governance in Vietnam: effective urban governance, balancing tradition and progress, and promoting inclusivity and equity.

In sum, Hobbes' insights into power dynamics provide a relevant framework for understanding and addressing contemporary urban planning and governance challenges in Vietnam. Embracing his ideas can enhance efforts to create thriving, inclusive, and orderly urban environments that balance tradition and progress.

Conclusions

Our journey to uncover the multifaceted concept of power within human settlements, guided by the insights of Thomas Hobbes and centered on the domestic environments of Vietnam, has yielded a deeper understanding of power relations in contemporary urban and rural landscapes. With two primary objectives in mind, we embarked on this exploration.

Thomas Hobbes' social contract theory provided the foundation for our quest to understand the meanings of power. Hobbes, through his seminal work "Leviathan," unveiled a profound perspective on power dynamics. His assertion that a central authority is essential to prevent the chaos of the state of nature served as a timeless principle underpinning our investigation. This perspective transcended the boundaries of 17th-century Europe to illuminate power relations in Vietnam's domestic spaces.

Our second objective brought us to the diverse landscapes of Vietnam, a country rich in historical and cultural diversity. In this context, we sought to establish the nature of power relations in built-environments, specifically domestic settings. Vietnam's historical legacies, deeply ingrained Confucian values, and contemporary urbanization challenges served as the backdrop for our analysis. From traditional communal living arrangements in rural areas to the soaring developments in urban centers, we unveiled the spectrum of power dynamics at play. The tension between tradition and progress, rural and urban, and the influence of rural-to-urban migration on power relations provided a multifaceted view of power in action.

As we conclude this journey, it becomes evident that our understanding of power within human settlements is continually evolving. Thomas Hobbes' enduring theories, alongside Vietnam's dynamic landscapes, have enriched our comprehension of power's intricacies. These insights carry significant implications for modern urban planning and governance, serving as guiding principles for architects, policymakers, and city planners.

Hobbes' emphasis on effective central authority, accountability, and the social contract offers a valuable compass for addressing the challenges of contemporary urbanization. Vietnam's unique context serves as a vivid case study, underscoring the importance of governance in maintaining order and harmony, particularly within communal living arrangements.

In conclusion, our exploration of power dynamics within human settlements, illuminated by Hobbes and focused on Vietnam, empowers us to navigate the evolving dynamics of our built environments. Armed with these insights, we are better equipped to shape inclusive, equitable, and harmonious human settlements that seamlessly integrate tradition and progress, ultimately enhancing the quality of life for all residents.

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