

The Politics of Public works in French Indochina in 1940s -Jean Decoux's policy and Architecture-Urban planning

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This paper aims to examine how the politics of Jean Decoux would affect urban space and architecture in Indochina, regarding public works projects undertaken in his rule.

Inaugurated as the Governor-general of Indochina after Vichy regime was established in the metropole, Decoux had to take up colonial governance, countering the stealing Japanese military power. He advocated encouraging of French presence and conciliation of the indigene to protect French interests in Indochina. In his governance, every efforts taken place to develop the land was propagandized as benefit given by the metropole, especially the public works were took new meaning of a political tools to conciliate the indigene as they were tangible results of the "French efforts".

Beside the government established traffic systems such as roads and canals to promote the development of rural area, a considerable number of new institutions were mainly installed in the city to accommodate the Decoux's policy of conciliation of the indigenous elites. These institutions were in the most cases designed in the Modernism style so that they altered the cityscape, which was followed his taste.

Decoux, following his respectful forerunner Lyautey, former Governor-general of Morocco, intended to empower urban planning in Indochina so that he established the responsible division for this work under his direct control in the Government-General office. The office, named Central committee for the urban planning, drew the plans of principal cities in Indochina including Saigon or Hanoi. The exposition of

Saigon held in 1942 had the meaning of experimental land for urban planning. All pavilions were designed in modernized architectural style exhibiting modernity of Decoux's rule. The plan imposed on Dalat, highland city originally inaugurated as a recreational place, showed the ambitious thought to develop the city as the new basement of the federation. The newly developing zone was to be named as "Jean Decoux City" after the Governor- general. Due to restructuring in the governing institution and the reinforcement of concerned division taken by his leadership, urban planning was flourished in Indochina in 1940s.

It was the time when a belief that a single talent could design a whole city was widely accepted. The complicity between politician and planner was resulted in the pile of the drawn plans, which remarks the character of the politics in Indochina in this period.