Assessment of geographical location and population characteristics of Thu Dau Mot city in the past and present

Avaliar a localização geográfica, os recursos e as características demográficas da cidade de Thu Dau Mot no passado e no presente

Evaluar la situación geográfica, los recursos y las características demográficas de la ciudad de Thu Dau Mot en el pasado y en el presente

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ABSTRACT
Before becoming a first-class urban area, the administrative, economic, cultural, and educational center of Binh Duong province, Thu Dau Mot was considered the "capital" of the Southeast region in many historical periods. This geographical location has brought together many important resources for the socio-economic development of the locality and the region. This article analyzes two development resources of Thu Dau Mot: natural resources (geographical location - the central hub of the Southeast region) and social resources (people in terms of harmonious relationships in the development of a region). From analyzing these two resources, the article discusses issues that need attention in building strategic directions to ensure Thu Dau Mot city continues to uphold its central position in the Southeast region, integrating the city regionally and internationally in terms of economy, society, and culture.

Keywords: economy, resources, strategy, society, Thu Dau Mot city.

RESUMO
Antes de se tornar uma zona urbana de classe I, centro administrativo, econômico, cultural e educativo da província de Binh Duong, a cidade de Thu Dau Mot ocupou a posição de "capital" da região sudeste durante muitos períodos históricos. Esta localização geográfica permitiu à cidade de Thu Dau Mot reunir muitos recursos importantes para o desenvolvimento socioeconômico local. Este artigo analisa dois recursos de desenvolvimento de Thu Dau Mot: os recursos naturais (a localização geográfica - o centro da região sudeste) e os recursos sociais (as pessoas ao nível das relações humanas no desenvolvimento de um território). Com base na análise destes dois recursos, o artigo aborda as questões que requerem atenção na construção de uma direção estratégica para o funcionamento da cidade de Thu Dau Mot, digna de continuar a sua posição central na região Sudeste, transformando-a numa cidade. A cidade está integrada regional e internacionalmente a nível econômico, social e cultural.
Palavras-chave: estratégia, economia, recursos, Thu Dau Mot, sociedade.

RESUMEN
Antes de convertirse en una zona urbana de clase I, centro administrativo, económico, cultural y educativo de la provincia de Binh Duong, la ciudad de Thu Dau Mot ocupó la posición de "capital" de la región del Sureste durante muchos períodos históricos. Esta situación geográfica ha permitido a la ciudad de Thu Dau Mot reunir muchos recursos importantes para el desarrollo socioeconómico local. Este artículo analiza dos recursos de desarrollo de Thu Dau Mot: los recursos naturales (la situación geográfica - el centro de la región del Sureste) y los recursos sociales (las personas en el plano de las relaciones humanas en el desarrollo de una tierra). A partir del análisis de estos dos recursos, el artículo aborda las cuestiones que requieren atención en la construcción de una dirección estratégica para el funcionamiento de la ciudad de Thu Dau Mot, digna de continuar su posición central en la región del Sureste, convirtiéndola en una ciudad. La ciudad se integra regional e internacionalmente tanto económica como social y culturalmente.

Palabras clave: estrategia, economía, recursos, Thu Dau Mot, sociedad.

1 INTRODUCTION

Vietnam is among the developing countries, with a newly formed industrial base, where the Human Development Index (HDI) and per capita income are still low (IMP, 2018; ISGE, 2020). During the industrialization process, Vietnam has always focused on mobilizing resources for economic and social development. Natural resources (geographical location, natural resources) and social resources (people, capital, market, history, culture, etc.) are all mobilized and exploited from the development perspective (Nguyen Trong Chuan, 2021).

The viewpoint of mobilizing resources based on geographical location and population potential to serve economic and social development is applied in all localities and regions nationwide (Dang Van Phan, 2021). Thu Dau Mot is a city in Binh Duong province, one of the successful localities in mobilizing resources for economic and social development in the renovation process. The summarized lessons of experience in mobilizing resources for socio-economic development in Thu Dau Mot city will contribute to the continued development strategy for Thu Dau Mot in the future. Moreover, it also serves as a lesson for other localities in Vietnam to refer to and learn from.

This article analyzes the geographical location resources and population potential of Thu Dau Mot city in relation to the goal of maximizing resources for the local
economic and social development. Based on examining the geographical location resources and population potential through historical processes, the article also contributes to identifying the achievements of the city in its construction and development process. It also implies policy implications for developing strategies that match its position. The focal point of the article's discussion is on two main points, representing two types of development resources: geographical location (natural resources), highlighting its central position in the Southeast region, and population resources (human resources in terms of harmonious relationships in the development of a locality).

2 OVERVIEW AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In recent years, the topic of resources for socio-economic development of the country in general, and of specific localities, has drawn attention from Vietnamese academia. There have been numerous publications on this subject, covering both theoretical and practical aspects. In terms of theoretical research, some publications have presented methods and methodologies for economic and social geography research, addressing fundamental issues regarding principles, procedures, and main techniques in studying economic and social resources. Nguyen Kim Hong (2010) designed a basic method for economic-social geography research with techniques for research process operation, problem setting, preparation, data collection, processing, explanation of economic-social geographic information, and presentation of research results. Dang Van Phan (2021) clarified the research objectives and tasks in Vietnamese economic-social geography, emphasizing research methods for economic-social development resources in Vietnam. Phan Huy Xu (2006) presented research methods for economic sectors and economic development in various regions, including the Red River Delta, the Central Coastal region, and the Central Highlands.

In terms of practical research, there are many publications evaluating the economic and social development resources of different localities, such as the economic-social development resources of Dong Thap province (Pham Thien Nghia, 2021), the economic-social development resources of Hoang Hoa district - Thanh Hoa province (Nguyen Dinh Hieu, 2008), the effective mobilization and utilization of economic-social development resources in Thua Thien - Hue province (Nguyen Van Phuong, 2022), and the role of cultural resources in the process of economic-social development (Nguyen Trong Chuan, 2021).
Regarding Thu Dau Mot city, although there are no in-depth publications discussing and analyzing the topic of economic and social development resources, recent studies on Binh Duong province in the renovation process have indirectly or directly addressed issues related to the city's development resources in the past and present. Notable examples include articles from the seminar "Industrialization and urbanization through the practice of Binh Duong province" (Central Theoretical Council, 2015), "Binh Duong residents - planning and development" (Nguyen Van Hiep, 2022), and some basic topics in Southeast region studies (Nguyen Van Hiep, 2023).

Drawing from these valuable sources, this article will focus on evaluating the position of Thu Dau Mot city, with its geographical advantages as a factor contributing to the success of a region and the harmonious development of its population. It will emphasize the outstanding advantage of Thu Dau Mot city's population in its development process, from the past to the present and the future.

3 RESULTS

3.1 THU DAU MOT - THE CENTRAL GEOGRAPHICAL ADVANTAGE OF THE SOUTHEAST REGION

According to provincial gazetteers of Song Be (CPVSB, 1991) and the history of the Communist Party in Binh Duong province (CPVBD, 2012), before becoming Thu Dau Mot town and later Thu Dau Mot city, this area was the administrative and economic center of the Southeast region of Vietnam. Centuries ago, even before the Vietnamese settlers arrived, ancient inhabitants of Thu Dau Mot strategically positioned it as a transit point for goods from the forests of the Southeast region and the southern Truong Son Mountains to the Mekong Delta. With its abundant forests, Thu Dau Mot gathered valuable timber such as Merawan, Pachyloba, Dalbergia odorifera, Narra Padauk, and Dipterocarpus alatus Roxb, along with many other precious products from the region, supplying downstream areas.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, as the Vietnamese began to explore the lands of Dong Nai - Gia Dinh, the potential of a central economic hub was recognized by early settlers. Particularly, during the Nguyen dynasty's establishment of administrative units and governance across the Southern region, economic development accelerated. Villages became prosperous, and markets flourished everywhere (Nguyen Van Hiep, 2022). In
areas specializing in forestry like Thu Dau Mot, products ranging from houses to furniture, weapons, and shipbuilding timber were produced and exchanged abundantly.

The production, exchange, and trade of forest products established Thu Dau Mot as the "capital" of the Southeast region three centuries ago. The architectural heritage, including ancient houses and temples built with various durable timbers, still preserved in Thu Dau Mot today, is convincing evidence of its economic development and role as the socio-economic center of the Southeast region from the beginning.

Not only did Thu Dau Mot establish itself as an economic center of the Southeast region as a natural consequence, but it also “took on the responsibility” of being an administrative and cultural center for the entire area. When the Nguyen dynasty established the Binh An General with vast territory (bordering the Song Be and Dong Nai rivers to the east, the Sai Gon and Thi Tinh rivers to the west, and Cambodia to the north), it designated four major forts: Thu Thiem, Thu Duc, Thu Dau Mot, and Thu Bang Bot, with Thu Dau Mot chosen as the military garrison - also the first political and administrative center of the Binh An General. Subsequently, when the Binh An General was elevated to Binh An district, the district seat was located in Phu Cuong village. In 1832, when Minh Mang ascended the throne, Nam Ky was divided into six provinces (known as the Nam Ky six provinces: Bien Hoa, Gia Dinh, Dinh Tuong, Vinh Long, An Giang, Ha Tien), and Binh An district was divided into two districts: Binh An (Thu Dau Mot) and An Ngai (Thu Duc). Thu Dau Mot remained the administrative center of Binh An district. During the French colonial period, the colonial administration also frequently divided, merged, or adjusted administrative boundaries in the Southern region. Thu Dau Mot experienced periods such as the Binh An inspectorate (1867), the Thu Dau Mot inspectorate (1876), and later the Thu Dau Mot province (1899). For over 80 years under French rule, Thu Dau Mot continued to function as a provincial capital, the administrative center of a large province (Nguyen Van Hiep, 2023).

Following the success of the August Revolution (1945), and subsequent resistance wars against the French and the Americans, Thu Dau Mot continued to undergo division and merger by both authorities. The Republic of Vietnam government divided Thu Dau Mot into Binh Duong, Binh Long, and Phuoc Long. The Republic of Vietnam government united Thu Dau Mot and Bien Hoa into Thuy Bien province; at another time, it split Thuy Bien into two provinces: Thu Dau Mot and Bien Hoa, and established additional provinces of Phuoc Thanh, Binh Long, and Phuoc Long according to the administrative structure of the Saigon government. At any point in time, Thu Dau Mot remained the
primary administrative center of the province. After the liberation of the South, Song Be province was established, encompassing the entire area of the former Thu Dau Mot province. Thu Dau Mot town became the administrative and economic center of Song Be province and has been the administrative, economic, cultural, scientific, and educational center of Binh Duong province from 1997 to the present (CPVBD, 2012).

The land of Thu Dau Mot has always held a strategically important position for the entire Southeast region of Vietnam since its inception. Despite various administrative changes (mergers or divisions), Thu Dau Mot has experienced ups and downs but has always been intertwined with every historical transformation of the Southeast region. Throughout its historical timeline, Thu Dau Mot has consistently played the role of an economic, cultural, and educational center of the Southeast region. Just counting from 1997 until now, for 20 years as the administrative, economic, and cultural center of Binh Duong province, Thu Dau Mot has not only become bustling with the concentration of numerous provincial agencies, cultural institutions, and social facilities but also serves as a hub for various economic, commercial, service, banking, educational, scientific, and technological activities in the Southeast region. In this way, Thu Dau Mot has continued the mission entrusted by its predecessors. Reflecting on the development process of Thu Dau Mot in relation to the region's development, we can observe a societal development law: despite different characteristics at different times, the geographical location and natural circumstances of this land always maintain its position as the economic, cultural, and social center of the entire Southeast region. This is clearly an important resource that needs to be exploited and utilized both now and in the future.

3.2 THE PEOPLE OF THU DAU MOT - HUMAN RESOURCE IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of Thu Dau Mot from the past to the present, alongside the significant efforts of various governments, cannot be separated from the contributions of the people. They have stood together, struggled, endured hardships, and been innovative in production labor. Looking at the contribution of the people, the viewpoint of Thu Dau Mot's human resources has many interesting points that need attention, providing intriguing suggestions for building development strategies.

Historically, Thu Dau Mot has been a place of convergence for many centuries, welcoming diverse populations including Vietnamese, Chinese, Cham, and Indian
people. Vietnamese people, in particular, are diverse, with representatives from the North, Central, and South. Throughout the process of construction and development, all have cooperated, united in harmony with favorable conditions to create real values for life. Not only a place of convergence, Thu Dau Mot is characterized by its attraction to the elite of society, sensitive in approaching new trends. Since becoming the "capital" of the Southeast region three centuries ago, alongside the trade and exchange of goods, Thu Dau Mot has attracted a large number of skilled carpenters from all over the country, renowned for their craftsmanship and creativity. The French, when they came to rule Thu Dau Mot, early recognized this characteristic. The School of Fine Arts in Thu Dau Mot was established very early, showing their integration of science and technology into production to leverage the "human resource" advantage. This can be seen as a breakthrough, laying the foundation for the pottery, lacquer, and sculpture industries of Thu Dau Mot, which soon became famous not only domestically but also in high-end markets abroad. This is clear evidence of the choice and development of the human resource position for a region with little potential for agricultural production but has been innovative in development since centuries ago.

In the modern socio-economic transformation, the human resources of Thu Dau Mot are truly in their prime. Over nearly 40 years of implementing renovation, industrialization, the labor force of Thu Dau Mot has been impressively developing. The "human capital" of the city today not only carries the common traits of a rapidly industrialized province, with the characteristics of being populous and diverse, but also brings new nuances. Firstly, the number of entrepreneurs is increasing, participating in many aspects of social life that are changing. Entrepreneurs are not only involved in investment, production, and business but also engage in political, cultural, and social activities. Secondly, the intellectual class of the city is developing rapidly. Perhaps the position of the intellectual class of Thu Dau Mot has never been as strong as it is now. The intellectual class has been and is present in many economic and social organizations, participating in various activities of life (teaching, research, business, participating in activities of the Party, government, fronts, and mass organizations). The high-level technical professional workforce (leaders and managers) working in various sectors, levels, enterprises, service organizations, holding positions, having management authority, command, and control, accounts for a high and growing proportion in recent years, contributing to profound changes in the population structure, labor, creating Thu Dau Mot's new position as a potential labor market (Nguyen Van Hiep, 2022).
It can be said that the human resources of Thu Dau Mot today are an important prerequisite for the application of science, technology, and innovation in economic and social development. Sketching out some major characteristics of this, it is evident that Thu Dau Mot has enough potential to make a strategic breakthrough in implementing growth model transformation, paving the way for rapid, efficient, and sustainable development. Efficient exploitation of the city's human resources will not only enhance the city's capacity but also contribute to strengthening the province's power and participating in building and developing in the context of deeper economic integration into the international economy.

4 DISCUSSION

Defining the roles of administrative, economic, educational, and technological center of Binh Duong province, aiming to become the economic, cultural, and educational center of the Southeast region. Thu Dau Mot is the administrative, economic, and educational center of Binh Duong province, which is natural given its historical mission dating back centuries. When strategizing for the city's development today, it's crucial to have a comprehensive perspective on how Thu Dau Mot can contribute to Binh Duong province and the Southeast region as a whole. The integrated industrial, service, and urban development approach is a suitable choice given the current trends. The challenge lies in converging and connecting ideas for high-tech development that meet international standards, creating an urban landscape and high-quality industrial types linked with supportive services for development. To fulfill this mission, the city needs a superior strategic plan that caters to all future residents' needs. Thu Dau Mot needs to create the most favorable conditions to attract entrepreneurs, technicians, scientists, and cultural activists. It should provide them with conditions to reside and operate effectively. The city requires luxurious, prestigious residential areas to attract international organizations, commercial and cultural institutions, high-income groups, and opportunities for employment in creative fields, thus attracting significant financial resources. It also needs civilized, sophisticated urban areas that are compatible with the cultural and social landscape to provide various population segments with a quality living environment, making the city more prosperous. Thu Dau Mot also needs to address issues such as spontaneous urbanization and violations of urban planning, while preserving green spaces and traditional cultural values.
Role as a Core Hub in Building a Smart City in Binh Duong. Binh Duong province has been making efforts to implement the smart city project with several major directions: urban planning, technical infrastructure, transportation, innovative cultural development, comprehensive and balanced economic growth, digital transformation, Industry 4.0, and attracting human resources. Thu Dau Mot city plays a central role in this project. Therefore, clear and specific policies need to be established for this goal. Given its position, Thu Dau Mot should focus on service economy with a vision towards the criteria of world-class commercial centers, building high-class brands and reputation, developing quality education and training services linked with scientific research and innovation. Residents will benefit greatly from the synchronized development of modern infrastructure, which will accelerate the socio-economic development process of the city.

Preserving and promoting the traditional economic strengths, which are the characteristics of Thu Dau Mot city, is crucial. Pottery, lacquerware, and wood carving have been the city's forte, bringing prosperity and renown to the city in the past. The lacquerware and wood carving products of Thu Dau Mot were once famous in both domestic and international markets. An interesting point to note is that these products used to belong to the luxury segment. Owners of these products valued not only their utility but also their elegance and distinctiveness. Altar cabinets, lacquer paintings, and wood carvings added a touch of luxury and sophistication to homes. However, there was a time when, with the "fast, cheap, good" mentality, producers mass-produced these items, making them accessible to the general public. With the development of modern technology, the pottery, lacquerware, and wood carving industries need to be preserved and developed according to their economic laws. Encouraging innovation is essential to produce pottery, lacquerware, and wood carving products that meet the needs and aesthetics of the business community and the middle class, both domestically and internationally.

Building a Culture and Workforce for the New Era. The construction of culture and workforce is of paramount importance, not only determining the success of policies and initiatives but also reflecting the spirit of the times, especially regarding human resource strategies, as this requires innovative, superior, and long-term policies. In the current context, to meet the requirements and tasks, Thu Dau Mot city needs to develop a strategy to reach ASEAN-level human resources standards, establish labor standards in line with International Labor Organization (ILO) standards, develop high-quality human resources suitable for the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era, who can participate in the regional
and global labor market, increase high-quality employment opportunities and incomes for workers, and maximize the activities of universities, colleges, and vocational schools to create, develop, and utilize intellectual human resources for the city's development. In terms of tasks and solutions, the city needs to study and apply international labor standards suitable for local conditions, anticipate and address labor issues according to international practices, implement sustainable employment programs, focus on labor market forecasting, occupational safety, and labor inspection, and have plans to invest in nurturing entrepreneurial creativity among young people.

5 CONCLUSION

The entire intellectual capital of Thu Dau Mot is facing a great mission: the historical responsibility and the pace of the times. The historical responsibility is to operate the city as a worthy successor to be the economic, administrative, cultural, and social center of the province, reaching the position of the Southeastern region. In terms of the pace of the times, the city must integrate into the regional and international community economically, socially, and culturally. In the current context, unity and selfless effort are important, but they cannot replace the scientific and technological knowledge of the new era. Equipping and investing in current knowledge is equipping and investing in creativity, daring to think, daring to do, daring to change, and even overcoming outdated economic and social management mechanisms and policies. Grasping the level of natural sciences, technology, and the trends of the times, courageously facing the truth to bridge the gap between the tasks and the capabilities of officials at all levels and in all sectors is the key to Thu Dau Mot expanding its industrialization trajectory, preparing to master the trends of innovation in the 4.0 era, and opening the door to integration with the modern world. This is not only a continuation of the glorious tradition of hundreds of years but also the most heroic answer, the deepest gratitude to the generations of predecessors who have built Thu Dau Mot today.
REFERENCES


