Cultural Evolution in Vietnam's Early 20th Century Article Review

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The article entitled "Cultural evolution in Vietnam's early 20th century: A Bayesian networks analysis of Hanoi Franco-Chinese house designs" investigates how diverse cultures and religious creeds influenced the architecture of Hanoi in the early 20th century. The paper states that by looking at facades and architectural features of buildings, one may see what influences dominated the city at different periods of Vietnam's history. The article suggests that it is Buddhism that had the most pronounced impact on Hanoi architecture as it frequently found its reflection in the city's design.

The authors are argumentative in presenting their central points. The first research question deals with validity of the chosen approach to study "aesthetics, architecture, and designs of the house façade in Hanoi" as a reflection of cultural evolution within the city (Vuong et al., 2019). Vuong et al. (2019) analyse scientific literature on the subject and find that, according to other researchers, culture has always had a great impact on city architecture. Therefore, the argument that city design can be the reflection of cultural trends is valid. The second research question is how architecture has affected cultural evolution of the Vietnamese over the history. The authors consider the perception of materials and designs by the Vietnamese and people from Western countries and find notable differences. Vuong et al. (2019) link historical events to changes in Hanoi architecture and find correlations between Buddhism and architecture within the city.

To lend credibility to the research, the authors use Bayesian network model to find correlations between culture and facades. The calculations show strong correlation

between Buddhism and city facades; therefore, the authors conclude that Buddhism had the most impact on Hanoi design. Though the argument seems valid there are some minor logical errors in reasoning. Thus, the authors use *the slippery slope* when they speak about the necessity of major repairs of the Buddist facades as part of the renovation plan. Vuong et al. (2019) claim that major repairs of all Buddist facades of the city will put a stop to the culture diversity of Hanoi. In this phrase, a minor event leads to drastic circumstances that hardly correspond to the initial claim.

Another logical fallacy the authors indulge in is *hasty generalization* when they speak about the ways houses are used within the city. Thus, Vuong et al. (2019) suggest that in residential buildings on the ground floor, people have opened cafes or shops that have been rather lively. From this, the authors conclude that Hanoi has been a bustling city over some years, while, in truth, this argument is weak. The fact that the first floors are used by cafes does not necessarily makes a city noisy as a lot depends on what kind of public attends those cafes. Another *hasty generalization* fallacy the authors describe lies in their claim about the impact of Buddhism on city architecture. The authors assert that since many facades have Buddhism features in their designs, all city streets resemble each other. The conclusion is hasty since, apart from façade designs, other factors have to be considered to make such a conclusion.

To counter the above-described errors in reasoning, I would argue that minor events, such as repairs of some facades, cannot lead to comprehensive circumstances like putting a stop to cultural diversity of a city. Moreover, I would say that authors should be careful of making false presumptions as to the connection of the number of cafes on the first floor and city noise since the impact of other factors on noise level should be considered as well. Finally, I would warn the authors against making ungrounded generalizations without proper considerations of all the facts.

Reference

Vuong, Q. H., Bui, Q. K., La, V. P., Vuong, T. T., Ho, M. T., Nguyen, H. K. T.,... & Ho, M. T. (2019). [Cultural evolution in Vietnam's early 20th century: A Bayesian networks analysis of Hanoi Franco-Chinese house designs](). *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, *1*(1), 100001. Web.