



## Research Article

# THE CURRENT TREND OF CULTURAL CHANGE IN HANOI SUBURBAN VILLAGES (FROM 2008 TO 2020)

*Dao Anh Duong*

*Academy of Politics Region I, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, Hanoi, Vietnam*

*Corresponding author: Dao Anh Duong – Email: [anhduongdaovn@gmail.com](mailto:anhduongdaovn@gmail.com)*

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## ABSTRACT

*Cultural change is inevitable, including changes in village culture. During urbanization, industrialization-modernization, and the development of a socialist-oriented market economy (market economy), village culture has changed dramatically, especially in the suburbs of cities, including Hanoi. The trends of village culture changes are mainly positive, but there are also negative manifestations affecting the development and promotion of good values of the village culture. This research identifies emerging issues, proposes recommendations, and suggests appropriate solutions for urgent problems of village culture change in the current context through a case study surveying the villages in An Thuong and An Khanh commune, Hoai Duc district, Hanoi city.*

**Keywords:** industrialization-modernization; socialist-oriented market economy; urbanization; village culture; village culture change

## 1. Introduction

Over the past decade since 2008, when the entire province of former Ha Tay and some neighborhood districts were merged into Hanoi city, the village culture in the suburbs of Hanoi tended to change rapidly, causing complicated phenomena. They require a thorough understanding and strict management to correct deviations and promote the traditional village's good cultural values. Village culture, according to Hoang Anh Nhan, can be understood in the most general way as the village's own identity, which is the whole life of the village with traditional characteristics from eating, living, travelling, all activities, organization, conventions, behaviors, customs, practices, religions, beliefs and even the psychology of every member of the village (Hoang, 1996). From that point of view, the village culture change is the transformation of values created by the villagers in practical

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activities, receiving new values, and eliminating the deviant and outdated elements to adapt to the new living conditions of the village.

In the process of Renewal, the development of the socialist-oriented market economy, urbanization, and industrialization - modernization, especially the application of State policies over the past ten years (from 2008 to 2020) in the area, the villages in Hoai Duc have significantly changed to adapt to the new context of a natural and social environment. The urban lifestyle and industrial manner of working also influence the agricultural lifestyle of traditional villages. The article investigates the village culture change reflected in terms of village's landscape, people's material life, and spiritual life.

Besides providing an overview of the current trend of cultural changes based on a case survey of three villages of Van Lung, Lai Du, and Ngu Cau in Hoai Duc district, the author argues that, a) how the cultural changes occur based on the theories of cultural changes; b) what issues, emerging from both positive and negative respects distinguished in the village cultural change need to be solved; and c) accordingly, what to do to promote the cultural change in Hanoi suburban villages towards progress and civilization.

## **2. Methodology and research methods**

On the principles of dialectical materialism, Ho Chi Minh's thought, and Vietnamese Communist Party's views on culture and development, this research paper employed the approach of cultural studies. Cultural change has a broad meaning like the concept of culture itself; therefore, this research fundamentally depends on and applies a combination of the cultural change theories. They are the theories of evolution, acculturation, structure–function, and conflict (Podolefsky, Brown & Lacy, 2013). First, according to Morgan, White, and Steward, the evolutionary theory describes the process of movement, continuity, and evolution through stages of development, both in the unilineal or multilinear. Second, acculturation theory shows that culture change is the process of transmission and absorption. Herskovits claimed that the acculturation process often entails reformatting the borrowed elements to fit them into the pre-existing cultural order of their existence. Third, the structural-functional theory defines cultural change as the process of adapting to keep a specific function stable at the change in environment. Within the argument about the full function of maintaining a system by Malinowski (1954, Trobrian Islands), Brown added the function to stabilize the structure of system. Fourth, the contradiction (conflict) theory by Marx and the Marx-influenced emphasizes the conflicted relationship and explains that the change in practice is the resolution of conflicts creating a driving force for development.

Over the past 30 years, there have been a lot of studies on the village culture change in many aspects by scientists both at home and abroad. Firstly, studies on the change in village culture are diverse in various aspects. By comparing, Nguyen Thi Phuong Cham implies the cultural change expressed in four aspects of the village landscape; relics, belief, and festivals; customs and practices; and access to information and entertainment (Nguyen,

2009). Vu Thi Phuong Hau showed five typical forms of cultural expression, including aspects of family, clans/tribes, festivals, beliefs, and conventions (Vu, 2017).

Second, the studies consider the change of village culture from the cultural elements to expose the nature of the transformation process. The change includes the restoration of traditional culture, the restructuring of cultural elements to meet the adaptation of modern society; the tendency to look back at the original source and for spiritual value; and the trend of restructuring and integrating new cultural elements. Village culture change in the process of industrialization and modernization, stated by Le Quy Duc regarded as a regulatory system for a community organization is the spiritual foundation, goal, and driving force of development for the country, including rural areas in the Red River Delta (Le, 2005).

Third, the group of studies has an overall approach but considers factors that vary a little (static) and a lot (dynamic). According to Phuong Hau, the aspects are gathered into two groups of factors. Static factors change more slowly than dynamic ones (Vu, 2017). It can be seen as rigid” or “redundant and repetitive” one by Stanley Tambiah in A performative approach to Ritual (Tambiah, 1979). Vietnamese villages face the future and revive the past with the “immutable elements” that can be hidden from time to time as the dominant role of village relationships, “traditions kept from generation to generation” (John, 1999, p.9). The results of previous scientific works are important reference sources for the overall picture of village cultural change; they give a methodological guide to conducting the research in the right direction. Through a focus on a case study of village cultural change in three villages of Van Lung, Lai Du, and Ngu Cau of Hoai Duc district, Hanoi city, the author argues: a) based on theories and previous scientific works, the change of village culture is) a process of cultural creation, which has dynamic aspects or static aspects (dynamic change in landscape and material life); b) the change has many positive aspects, but also negative aspects, emerging many issues to be solved; c) it is necessary to have many synchronous solutions to promote good values, receive new values and eliminate deviant and outdated factors in the current transformation of the village culture.

The case study is a specific application method in selecting a typical case to prove a hypothesis. It is also an intermediate step in finding the commonalities; therefore, the combination of research methods in a certain context is necessary.

The author read and evaluated the authenticity and accuracy of source materials and systematized them to have a general vision of cultural changes, the factors of influence and government policies. They include books, research works, theses, journals, statistics and reports, legal documents, and regulations of the cultural village. The comparative method was also used to indicate the changes in cultural life in specific aspects. Observation helps to build a profile of daily life, production activities, rituals, and practices (funerals, weddings, festivals, etc., in these three villages).

Besides, the author applied the interdisciplinary research approach to avoid a split view in research and to have an overview of village culture. In-depth interview method plays a vital role in exploiting information from important people (leaders and managers), and people's opinions (in various ages) help reinforce arguments.

Particularly, we conducted a sociological survey of 300 Anket questionnaires with 20 questions for these villages selected as representative examples in the current period. The criterion for choosing sites is that Van Lung village is located adjacent to the urban areas while Lai Du and Ngu Cau villages are on the western edge and outside the urban areas, respectively. The research sites are original villages with a long cultural history that ensure accuracy. The representative sample was selected at random to ensure objectivity. They were distributed according to the size of village population in Van Lung, Lai Du, and Ngu Cau (1,108 households/4,070 people, 324 households/1,437 people, and 1,043 people, respectively 120/60/120), and 272 valid ones were collected (August 2020).

The analytical and synthesis methods were used to analyze and process information and data collected from the survey to generalize and assess the changes in village culture.

### **3. Results and discussions**

#### **3.1. *The positive changes***

Hoai Duc undergoing major changes is an area of village cultural transformation over the past decade. The villages of Van Lung, Lai Du, and Ngu Cau were selected as representative examples in the current period. Van Lung village in An Khanh commune is located adjacent to the urban areas while Lai Du and Ngu Cau villages in An Thuong commune are on the western edge and outside the urban areas, respectively. The research sites are original villages with a long cultural history that ensure accuracy. The representative sample was selected at random to ensure objectivity. Other villages are also compared for generalization.

The conversion degree of land use and changes in socio-economic structure is the most important criteria for sample selection. They are the main factors causing the change of village culture. Since becoming a district of Hanoi, the villages in Hoai Duc have a modern transport system connecting. They have transformed the coop model, modernized the infrastructure of electricity, fresh water, and telecommunications. A lot of development policies are prioritized for implementation in the area (Resolution 15/2008/QH12 on adjustment of administrative boundaries; Decision No. 1259/QD-TTg on the construction of Hanoi Capital; Decision No. 563/QD - People's Committee of Ha Tay province on allocation agricultural land to implement Nam An Khanh new urban project; National target program on the new countryside; Decision No. 491/QD-TTg on the new countryside; Law on cooperatives).

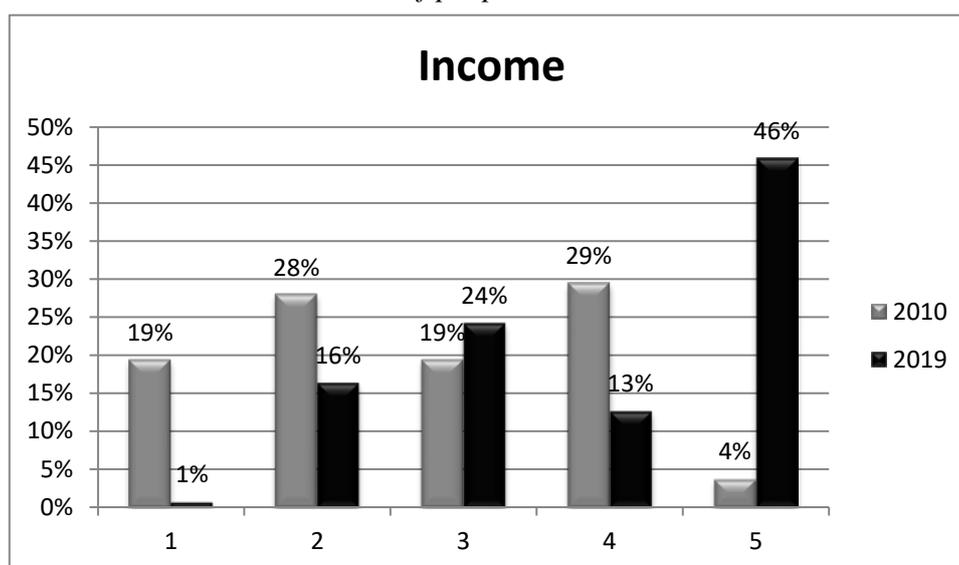
These three villages represent the three groups of villages. First, they are purely

agricultural villages. Urbanization and industrial zone planning made the agricultural land acquired, directly affecting farmers' lives (An Tho, Phu Vinh, Yen Lung). Representing this group is Van Lung village. Second, villages have acquired most of their agricultural land. Village farmers still rely on agriculture for a living. However they are divided into different occupations (An Ha, Dao Nguyen, Ngai Cau). Representing this group is Ngu Cau village. Third, villages have not had their land acquired, developed towards a modern and transformed model of agricultural production. They do not rely on traditional pure agriculture. Representing this group is Lai Du village.

As a result, the change of village culture here is a creative process to adapt, exploit resources, and ensure life in the new environment context.

Firstly, the change is in the direction of re-ordering cultural elements and prioritizing development. The material values are prioritized in the basics of economic growth thanks to the transformation of livelihood culture. The self-sufficient economic thinking has changed to promote the new thinking of emphasis on the value of time, money, and exchange possibility. The household economy is no longer confined to the village but a part of the social economy. The production models and methods have shifted in prioritizing the new livelihoods and new countryside. The temporary jobs became the key careers (making bamboo blinds in Van Lung, rice paper in Ngu Cau, rice noodles in Duong Lieu). The small-scale production becomes the large-scale one (pig, chicken for meat and eggs; industrial crops of Long'an/late ripening fruit). The process of urbanization and market economy create diverse sources of income for people; passive income sources gradually become popular and are exploited quite effectively.

**Table 1. Income of people in Hoai Duc District**



( ① 0,7-1 million; ② 1-1,5 million; ③ 1,6- 3 million; ④ 3- 4,6 million; ⑤ > 4,6 million)

Unit: Vietnam Dong

In Hoai Duc district, in 2019, compared to 10 years ago, the rate of people with high incomes (over 4.6 million dongs/month) increased sharply, accounting for nearly 50%; the percentage of people with low income (from 0.7- 1 million dongs/month) decreased from 19% to 1%). The district's economic structure has changed dramatically in the direction of reducing the proportion of agriculture and increasing one of services. Ten years after merging with Hanoi, in 2017, agriculture decreased from 12.6% to 6.78%, industry from 45.4% to 45.28%, and services increased from 42% to 47.94% (Tran, 2018). According to AnThuong, An Khanh commune, Hoai Duc district statistics, the percentage of relative well-off and wealthy households in the area increases year by year, especially the rate of poor families decreases significantly, by 2020, in the whole commune, there is no longer poor households (People's Committee of An Khanh Commune, 2020).

The value of material life achieved in adapting to new conditions appears in the culture of the village landscape (modern traffic system connecting to Thang Long freeway in 2010), village architecture, home amenities, and technological equipment for modern civilized life, health care, and beauty.

Regarding home equipment, modern houses have complete systems of electricity, water, and network cables. For running water, pipes are installed in each hamlet for households to connect. By July 1st, 2020, An Khanh commune has 4,533 households using tap water. Regarding electricity, 100% of households have access to the national electric grid. Regarding the telecommunications network, Internet gateways are available for the village people to subscribe to buy services. Regarding the habit of using modern appliances, (“electric fans, steam”, “washing machines,” and “air conditioners”) the “regular” frequency has a high rate (86%, 79%, and 54%). “Rarely” and “never” use coal, and firewood to heat account for a high percentage (90%). The frequency of regular use of TVs and computers connected to the network is relatively high (69%), and 74% is the rate of smartphone use (People's Committee of An Khanh Commune, 2020).

Regarding the application of virtual technology (internet), the village's virtual market on apps is unprecedented for the village. “Ngu Cau Market, Ngai Cau Market, Van Lung Market” are virtual market addresses on Zalo and Facebook. Thanks to modern tech, the rural villages are not only visible in the real world but also in the virtual world of cyberspace. However, negative effects, addiction to video games, detachment from reality, and confusion of virtual life in the game with real life show clear wearisomeness.

Secondly, the tendency to adopt new values is to add the missing values. *First*, it is the spirit of freedom and democracy in obedience to the law. This is a vast content, but for the village culture, the focus and prominence are pretty clear in the village's convention (Huong uoc). The village convention is the old name; the convention of the cultural village is the present name, built based on the village convention, distilling the traditional beauty of unity and order of the village. The cultural village convention is a standard, a set of rules and

measures of behavior in the village that adds to the new era's values. The convention is aimed at protecting people's rights, eliminating bad practices/customs, repelling superstition, and creating democracy and solidarity. For example, families in mourning may not make a paper crematorium, do not leave the coffin for more than 48 hours, and must not be reburied for less than 36 months (*Article 10*) (Commune, 2002). The convention also states that, "The family has a wedding, the wedding must strictly comply with the *Law on Marriage and Family* and further adds that "no smoking," no singing, musical performance exceeding 11:00 p.m." (*Article 9*). It is implemented based on self-discipline, and high self-governance for each family without contravening the law. The convention built by the villagers themselves is placed under the supervision of the local People's Committee according to the process: Drafted by the village, submitted by the commune, and approved by the district (*Quy ước làng văn hóa-Village culture convention*).*Second*, the scientific and technological values received are heading towards modernization. The development of information technology, specifically smart phones, has made a "revolution" for rural farmers in a short time. The folk knowledge is re-identified for development; the new knowledge of the era applied complements the "shifting empiricism" about fertilizers, seedlings, and weather. The calculation method of estimation gradually reduced its role to move towards scientific accuracy. The improvement of production facilities (such as rice paper machines invented by farmers; bamboo splitters, plucking machines, bamboo blinds knitting machines) aimed at optimizing use values, improving tools, and improving productivity.

### 3.2. *Related issues*

The trends of village culture change in Hoai Duc district over the past decade, the reality is also revealing both problems and limitations that need to be solved, overcome, and adjusted.

*First*, the conflict of socio-economic relations manifests itself in many points, including the haste of the people in converting the model of production, and setting up of workshops/mills in conflict with the land management (the typical case of mills built on the paddy rice land in Lai Du village). The construction and land planning also affect the environment conflicting with the interests of farmers when their adjacent plots of land are not suitable for production. It is also the conflict between immigrants and local people, such as the manifestation of localism, for example, the right to bury in the village cemetery of Van Lung (6 million VND per tomb, not applied for the immigrants, in 2020<sup>1</sup>).

*Second*, the traditional relationship accordingly tends to be separate. For example, in the scope of neighborhood alleys, the neighbor link is somewhat tenuous when the villagers build their houses with "high walls and closed gates" (*kín cổng cao tường*). In the scope of the village, the phenomenon of occupying and encroaching on the communal land is

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<sup>1</sup> Nguyen Huu Can, the chief of Van Lung village

common such as in cemeteries, shared paths, and alleys. And in the scope of the family, the household size tends to be a nuclear family, and personal space is relatively separate between parents and children in multi-room high-rise buildings (4070 people/1108 households in Van Lung in 2020).

*Third*, the investment in cultural institutions and public spaces is still not flexible, not close to reality. It is often a lack of space, electricity, water equipment, and means of hearing, and seeing. Although some of them do not belong to the construction items of cultural institutions, they are essentially invested in serving cultural and entertainment activities, especially in the context of villages' increase in population due to immigration (An Khanh commune from 17,351 people in 2010 to 43,994 people/12,503 households in 2020) (People's Committee of Hoai Duc District, 2020). All these villages' cultural houses with a similar space (Thanh Quang village 175m<sup>2</sup>, Lai Du village 145m<sup>2</sup>) have not met the criteria of the square under the State's regulation.

*Fourth*, the issue of villagers' awareness in general needs to be on par with development. It is the perception of the process of urbanization, modernization, and industrialization. This is not the annihilation of agriculture, but rural agriculture always plays an important role in economic development and social stability. It is also an awareness of the spirit of secularization and sanctification. Both are parallel to help to reduce many cumbersome procedures due to scientific explanations (in the wedding and mourning customs) and to balance the practically spiritual life (in the circumstances of being broke, ill, and accidental damage).

*Fifth*, the issue of taking advantage of the ethical problems for personal gain needs adjusting. For example, it includes those from wasteful use of financial resources from people's donations for the restoration of monuments, relics, and festivals (continuously annual restoration of villages' relics in An Thuong from 2019 to 2021; 120 million VND donated by only one group born in 1980 for Ngu Cau village festival in 1996) to the lack of management of profitable activities from the shared resources (the lease of village cultural houses, public land and area: 2,5 millions VND per wedding; 5 millions/Viettel station placed on the public land of Ngu Cau village<sup>2</sup>). It is also the phenomenon of taking advantage of accidental damage, of ignorant children to engage in harmful activities when families have large sums of money from transferring land use rights. Eventually, the issue also lies in the livelihoods and psychological disturbances in the early stages of arable land acquisition.

### 3.3. Recommendations

From the practical issues (negative trends) posed in reality, to make the village culture change in the suburbs of urban areas, including Hoai Duc district of Hanoi city to develop

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<sup>2</sup> Nguyen Thi Doai, Ngu Cau village staff

towards progressive civilization, the legislative, the executive, and cultural creators themselves need to take specific, realistic and timely actions.

Firstly, for the legislative body, the City People's Council, directly the People's Council of Hoai Duc district need to strictly comply with the Planning Law (in force from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019) to ensure that enough functional areas and reserved land funds to avoid the additional planning, lack of uniformity. The planning and implementation should be definitively and promptly carried out to prevent the nearby areas of arable land being divided and unfit for production. It is important to consider the urban model of the agricultural belt: the belt of villages for agriculture of intensive farming associated with a direct market, which is the adjacent metropolitan residential area.

Secondly, for the executive body, the local government agencies need to build movements such as “All people unite to build cultural life”, “Cultural family”, “Cultural village; advanced residential area”, and “All people protect national security”. These should be considered as fundamental factors in creating a progressive cultural environment. For the local villagers, it is vital to further promote the good deeds and actively participate in movements and club activities, especially in sports training and keep fit. Each person needs to raise the awareness of building a healthy lifestyle, fighting against negative factors and deviant ways of life, and cooperate to help each other in difficulties such as in the period of epidemic of Covid -19.

Thirdly, it is necessary to perfect the system of cultural institutions and facilities to serve the people's life. The villages that do not have enough cultural houses, and public areas for sports should be considered in planning and investment, and at the same time, strengthen supervision of the projects approved. And it is vital to socialize the activities of investment in items of cultural institutions and to create an autonomous mechanism in accordance with the spirit of the State's Law in the operation of cultural institutions (Government, 2015).

Fourth, in terms of people's awareness, the management agencies at the commune level need to deploy propaganda and dissemination of the State's policies and laws to the villages, such as environmental protection, documents about planning, and models of safe, green, and clean production. It is essential to popularize and encourage appropriate burial forms, and gradually abolish outdated customs and practices of unhygienic burial to protect the environment. The orientation of the migration process must be strengthened with equal rights, households, temporary residence registration, and fight back against social evils and lifestyles that cause social disorder.

For the people, everyone in the village community is both a cultural creator and a beneficiary of culture and needs to realize that achievements in life have a scientific basis, not just random luck. The disease risk is mainly due to a polluted living environment, indiscriminate use of chemicals and unscientific living habits. The lack of legal knowledge, financial management skills, and indulgence easily make children spoiled. Therefore, it is

necessary to uphold the spirit of studying, understanding the law and strengthening the family's moral foundation. In the family, it is important to set an excellent example for the elderly to promote their role, and unite generations of descendants.

Fifth, the management agencies at the commune level strictly handle management activities such as land use, investment in restorations, cultural services (public cafes' internet), and environment (chemical abuse in farming and preservation of agricultural products). In terms of local staff at the grassroots level, the provincial government should pay special attention to cadastral staff, police, and village chief. The regular security forces are available at the commune level and in villages, especially villages with a population of some 3-4 thousand people.

In addition, people need to strengthen their use of the right to know, discuss and decide and promote the right to supervise and participate in social management in accordance with the provisions of the law. At the same time, in the current development process, villagers should maintain multiple forms of service delivery such as village markets, especially “the villages' virtual market” (online sales) created during the Covid-19 epidemic) going towards the development of the technology era.

#### **4. Conclusion**

To sum up, this study aims to generalize the change of village culture in the suburbs of Hanoi, like Hoai Duc district, in several prominent aspects in the new current context, forming the villages no longer traditional villages but not a new countryside nor a modernized city. These are villages in transition, the new type of village which appeared in the process of socio-economic development of our country at present, including big cities like Hanoi.

Therefore, it is necessary to do well the preparation and thoroughly handle the negative manifestations. It is vital to steer the village culture change in the right direction in the spirit of the Resolution by the Communist Party of Vietnam: Building and developing Vietnamese culture and people to meet the country's sustainable development requirements in the current period with the linking role of Vietnamese villages in the traditional Vietnamese house-village-country structure. The villages can be the ones of new countryside promoting the excellent values of a traditional village, making a sustainable belt of villages for central urban areas. They can be the parts of modern urban areas in the process of modernization.

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**XU HƯỚNG BIẾN ĐỔI VĂN HÓA LÀNG  
Ở NGOẠI THÀNH HÀ NỘI HIỆN NAY (2008-2020)**

**Đào Ánh Dương**

*Học viện Chính trị khu vực I, Học viện Chính trị Quốc gia Hồ Chí Minh, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

*Tác giả liên hệ: Đào Ánh Dương – Email: anhduongdaovn@gmail.com*

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**TÓM TẮT**

*Vận động biến đổi văn hóa là tất yếu, trong đó có biến đổi văn hóa làng. Trước tác động của tiến trình đô thị hóa, công nghiệp hóa, hiện đại hóa và phát triển kinh tế thị trường định hướng xã hội chủ nghĩa, biến đổi văn hóa làng đang diễn ra mạnh, nhất là các vùng ven đô thị trong đó có Hà Nội. Biến đổi có xu hướng tích cực là chủ yếu song cũng nảy sinh theo nhiều biểu hiện tiêu cực đang làm ảnh hưởng tới quá trình phát triển và phát huy các giá trị tốt đẹp của văn hóa làng. Bài viết nhận diện vấn đề, đưa ra khuyến nghị và đề xuất những giải pháp phù hợp với các trường hợp cấp thiết của biến đổi văn hóa làng trong bối cảnh hiện nay qua khảo sát trường hợp các làng ven đô của Hà Nội thuộc xã An Thượng và xã An Khánh, huyện Hoài Đức, thành phố Hà Nội.*

**Từ khóa:** biến đổi văn hóa làng; công nghiệp hóa hiện đại hóa; đô thị hóa; kinh tế thị trường định hướng xã hội chủ nghĩa; văn hóa làng