

Influences of „international best practices“ and foreign aid on urban modernity in Vietnam

Putting the term “modernity” into a wide perspective, this presentation looks at changing institutional settings through which different visions of modernity are brought about in Vinh City, Nghe An Province.

Having been totally destroyed in the American War, Vinh was rebuilt with the assistance of the German Democratic Republic. Socialist style, communal living areas such as the Quang Trung quarter were designed as showcases of a new way of life and as the result of what international solidarity can achieve. In that time, cold war politics opened up channels through which a socialist vision of modernity was concretized in Vinh. On the other hand, the details of this cooperation and the interactions of the involved actors produced a very localized “modernity”.

With a changing political environment, the actors and institutional settings of urban governance also changed. International donors, aid agencies and political actors nowadays impact on the urban administration, and in that way also on the results of urban planning, through training courses, capacity building, etc.. Vinh City is involved in projects of GTZ-DED, the Konrad-Adenauer Foundation, the Locale Agenda 21, and others. To understand how these projects actually influence the processes and outcomes of urban administration and planning, further research needs to be conducted. I thus hope to discuss initial results of my research with the participants of this conference.