

**Passau Conference: “Small and medium-sized towns in Vietnam”  
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**Abstracts of Presentations**

**Urbanization in Vietnam: The actual state of development and the trend of changing**

**Prof. Dr. Nguyen Quang Ngoc**

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In this paper, I try to state the concept, grading and development orientation of Vietnamese city and town and outline an overall picture of Vietnamese city and town. On the first decade of 21st century, Vietnamese urban system made a very long step forwards, advancing in both quantitative and qualitative aspect with 754 large-scale and small-scale cities distributed relatively equal on a national scale like this. Present urban system makes up 37% of the population; contributing 70% of GDP; actually being political, economic, social and cultural centers of the regions and the whole country, with an economic growth rate of 12 to 15% on average, 1,5 time to 2 times compared with general space. However Vietnamese city and town are revealed again so much of shortcomings and insufficiencies, if it is not overcome in a near future, surely it shall cause deformation and unforeseeable consequences.

In the period of 2010-2025, Vietnamese government should firstly invest intensively to the cities and town which they have classified in different levels; promoting the urbanization process in rural areas; pay more attention into harmonious and alternative development of these cities and town. Vietnam should not invest into building of extremely large cities. Instead, Vietnam should focus all investment in development of the cities and towns of medium and small sizes.

## **A regional pilot study of the labour market and of workaday life in the Vietnamese town of Vinh**

**Prof. Dr. Uwe Blien, Phan Thi Hong Van**  
**Institute for Employment Research**

## **Anthropological research on Vietnam in Germany: Past studies and current directions at the MPI Halle**

**PD Dr. Kirsten Endres**  
**Max-Planck-Institute for Social Anthropology**

In this presentation, I shall give an overview on past anthropological research on Vietnam conducted by anthropologists at the Max-Planck-Institute for Social Anthropology, followed by a brief summary of my own research on spirit mediumship in Hanoi. I shall then outline the main assumptions and aims of my current project in the field of economic anthropology. This research aims at 'disentangling' the complex webs of social relationships of market vendors in Lao Cai City in order to contribute to new insights concerning the role of social support mechanisms in dealing with the risks and insecurities of Vietnam's emergent market-economy.

## **Small and medium towns of Viet Nam in the context of climate change**

**Dr. Ngo Tuan Nghia**  
**Institute of Economics**  
**Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Political and Administration**

This study explores the role of small and medium cities in development of Viet Nam in the context of climate change. Historically, small and medium urban areas in Viet Nam have

been build for many decades. They contribute an important role not only in market development but also in improving social progress and equality.

Viet Nam is believed to be one of the most vulnarable coutry in the world by the extremely negative impacts of clamate change. Concerning to small and medium towns of Viet Nam, impacts of clamate change cause many dificulties to adaptation and mitigation due to most these towns situate in coastal and moutain ereas.

In order that small and medium towns of Viet Nam could be development sustainably in the future in the context of clamate change, many solutions and policies must be implimented. This paper will suggest some posible solutions to contribute development process of small and medium towns of Viet Nam apartmently and Viet Nam country as a whole.

## **New consumers and climate change in Vietnam's metropolis: The potential of energy efficient housing**

**Dr. Michael Waibel**

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This paper discusses lifestyles among a social group often overlooked in the debate about climate change and sustainable urban development: The urban middle-class population. The argument is that the new urban middle classes of emerging economies, the “new consumers”, can be a significant key target groups for sustainability. Thereby, behavioural change seems to be the bottom line for action fighting climate change. On a global scale, the “new consumers” (Myers & Kent, 2003) have already reached 1 billion people in 2000, mostly located in China, India, Brazil, Russia, and various Southeast and East Asian countries. The Economist recently estimated the size of the global middle classes at up to half of the world's population in a special report on the new middle classes in emerging markets published in February 2009. The consumption patterns of the new middle classes will influence the ecological balance of our planet significantly, especially against the background of climate change and the growing need for the protection of resources such as water, soil and biodiversity. The lifestyles of the new consumers are rapidly getting more resource-intensive due to increased food consumption (meat), increased use of energy-intensive home appliances and other prestigious status symbols including (first) car purchases and the choice of new residential locations. Myers & Kent (2003) showed in the

case of India that the per-capita energy consumption of the new consumers has been causing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions 15 times greater than those of the rest of the population. The new middle classes appear to move to newly built peripheral urban areas which implies increased mobility costs and which promotes urban sprawl. The latter has been identified as the most crucial cause for urban-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Some scientists regard the new urban middle classes simply as post-modern consumers. Others regard them as important drivers of civil society towards an increased pluralisation of political systems in the direction of a classic western-model based democracy. Following the historical examples of Britain and America, they are expected to be the dominant force in establishing or consolidating democracy. In contradiction to this, new middle classes in many emerging countries apparently do not want to endanger their newly gained status by being different than the mainstream. Their societal prestige seems to be based on class identity-creation with the emphasis on consumption.

In this context, energy-efficient housing has been identified as very promising field concerning the future reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in Vietnam. In the further course the author will present recent results from a representative survey among the new urban middle classes in Ho Chi Minh City. This survey deals with questions about specific energy consumption patterns, knowledge and potential acceptance of technical solutions in the field of energy-efficient housing and about specific awareness about climate change related risks. Finally, potential policies how to promote energy-efficient housing in Vietnam will be discussed thereby paying regard to existing institutional constraints.

## **Small and medium cities in Vietnam in the face of environmental challenges**

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Vietnam has been witnessing a landmark period in its urbanization history. Over the past 10 years, many rural people become city dwellers and the Vietnam Government expects to have

half of its population urbanized in 2020-30. However, the current spatial and administrative planning for regions and urban areas carried out by the authorities is problematic resulting in a 'mosaic' pattern of new small cities along the country. Among other things, environmental concerns are becoming more alarming. Newly developed cities, which are generally of small and medium size, are facing deficiencies of basic infrastructure, adverse impacts from closely installed industrial facilities, and, ironically untreated wastes from agricultural activities as many of them are upgraded from previously rural populated areas. The rural characteristics of these urban areas make them more vulnerable to environmental risks than larger cities as they are being developed without proper preparation. The prevailing mentality of pro growth development also means that fewer resources are allocated to deal with environmental problems in these cities in coping with environmental challenges.

This paper examines environmental challenges facing small and medium cities in Vietnam and contributes to the warning that such urban development is unsustainable for the present and in the future.

## **Ambivalence of urban modernity: public life and the retreat into intimacy**

**Sandra Kurfürst**

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Urban life is characterised by physical proximity and social distance. Accordingly, Bauman (1997: 205 f.) defines urban life as a life among strangers. Urban life confronts the urban dweller with the ambivalence of danger and liberty. On one hand anonymity favours individualisation, on the other it produces insecurity. This paper seeks to address this ambivalence of urban modernity as represented in the parallel process of the emergence of public spaces on the urban level, and a "retreat into intimacy" (Sennett 1990) on the local level in Hanoi. While official/sacred spaces such as Ba Đình Square and Lý Thái Tổ Square are transformed into public spaces, local public spaces in the former village community of Ngọc Hà appear to be emptied.

# **Closing Development Dichotomy Gaps in Small City of Vietnam**

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The city we choose as a case study is Kon Tum, a poorest one among series of small and medium-sized cities covered by our research thesis in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. The city comprises 10 wards and 11 suburb communes distributed in the area of 43,298 hectare. The total population of the city is 137,662 people among those 38,645 (28.07 percent) belonging to 20 ethnic minorities.

The different dichotomies in development of the city that have been found from our field trips include the ones between the Kinh (majority) and ethnic minorities in access to resources; in patterns of economic activities (forage and production, autarky and market), in income (low and high), in standard of living (the poor and the rich), in social organization (traditional and contemporary); in cultural and religious belief structures (endogenous and exogenous, christians and nonchristians); in urban spacial planning (controlled and uncontrolled, rural and urban).

The proposals raised for closing the gap: i) provide ethnic minorities with property rights; ii) improve urban infrastructures and urban spaces in ethnic minorities' communities, as well as their livelihood (especially private businesses) and access to natural resources, financial sources, information sources; iii) strengthen ethnic minorities' urban way of life, equity of gender and their voice in processes of policy making and policy implementation; support in establishing of ethnic minorities' social services; iv) promote ethnic minorities' civil societies (NGOs, Charities, Private and Public Foundations); v) develop urban institutions in ethnic minorities' communities.

## **Contemporary urbanization affecting changes in the social psychology of inhabitants living nearby Hanoi**

**Bui Van Tuan**

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Along with the development of the country, Hanoi urban state is having a lot of big changes. The process of urbanization and urban enlargement has affected directly the habitant areas nearby, which has caused the change to the face of these areas. Economic social structures have had a lot of changes, technical and social infrastructures have been upgraded and improved considerably, which have contributed to the change of life of habitants living nearby. All mentioned achievements have partly raised the position of Hanoi in general and the areas nearby Hanoi in particular.

One of the reasons for the above great changes is the rapid urbanization which is happening more and more dramatically like an inevitable development law. The high speed of urbanization has brought positive impacts such as production development, the life improvement of all people categories, upgrading and improvement of infrastructures, basic services of urban areas, a better and more modern face of area,... In the same time, it has caused a lot of unexpected social phenomena like unemployment, social differentiations among people categories, social evils, environment pollution... This may cause psychologies of anxiety, worry or different attitudes, psychologies among the community of habitants living nearby Hanoi.

That situation has made the understanding of the real situation and psychology development of community of habitants living nearby under the impacts of urbanization become a necessary topic in both theory and practice in the aspects of social management in general and urban management in particular. This is also an important factor which can help make sure the stable urban development towards areas nearby Hanoi.

Researches about social psychology development of the community of habitants living nearby Hanoi under the impacts of urbanization can help us have a close and overall look about the real situation of this issue. From that we can give some judgements about the social psychology changes of the community of habitants living nearby Hanoi under the impacts of the urbanization and give some solutions to bring into play positive aspects and restrain negative aspects in social psychology changes of habitants living nearby Hanoi under the impacts of urbanization nowadays.

## **Small towns in developing regions as localized interfaces - Findings from field research in Vietnam 2009/2010**

**Hannah von Bloh**

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Studies on small and intermediate urban centres usually apply static criteria such as quantitative benchmarks or the administrative status to distinguish this type of settlement. This presentation proposes a focus on the dynamics in and around the settlements and suggests the combined application of the concepts of *locality* and *social interface* as an analytical tool. Using initial data from research conducted in the two Vietnamese provincial towns Cao Bang and Dong Hoi, the presentation illustrates the possible application of the concepts. In combination, they help to illustrate the two-fold livelihood strategy of residents in small and intermediate urban centres, which includes close and multiplex ties within the settlement on the one hand and wide spread contacts outside the town on the other hand. This in turn has specific implications for the settlements' dynamics, particularly regarding the reaction to external parameters.

## **Appropriating Culture: The politics of intangible cultural heritage in Vietnam**

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This paper analyzes the reification and appropriation of various cultural processes as 'intangible cultural heritage' with reference to local, national-level, regional and international political discourses and to tourist interests in the Vietnamese context. The term ICH was introduced in Vietnam by UNESCO, which in 1994 sponsored two back-to-back 'expert meetings' in Vietnam on the intangible cultural heritage of ethnic minorities and of Hué



culture. It only caught on, however, after the official UNESCO recognition of five sites – the three historical sites of Huế town, Hội An town and Mỹ Sơn temple complex, and the two natural sites of Hạ Long Bay and Phong Nha Kẻ Bàng national park – had resulted in a phenomenal growth in tourist visitors and in national pride. In 2003, *nhã nhạc* court music from Huế was recognized, and in 2005 the gong music [*không gian văn hóa đồng chiêng*] of ethnic minorities in Vietnam's Central Highlands.

The 'recognition' at diverse levels of certain cultural practices as cultural heritage can be analyzed in terms of appropriation, i.e. claiming particular practices as one's authentic property and arrogating to the claiming agency the right to evaluate, 'authenticate' and organize the heritage practices, and use the benefits deriving from those practices. In other words, the recognition as heritage inevitably turns such cultural practices into property, with all the commodifying connotations that entails in connection with material (economic, political) interests seeking to profit from the organization and exploitation of the 'heritage' in question. The claim and recognition of intangible cultural heritage thus claims the cultural practices in question as site of outside intervention in the name of the preservation and revitalization of that heritage, thereby instrumentalizing the people who embody these cultural practices along with their heritage.

In this paper I shall explore the politics of (intangible) heritage claims, appropriation and recognition with reference to diverse agendas and at various levels:

- Locally, as a way to counter localized political demands or – alternatively – to seek the promotion of a region;
- Nationally, as a way to establish political legitimacy for Vietnam's post-socialist and post-secular Communist regime;
- Internationally, as a way to put Vietnam on the radar screen as an old and civilized culture.
- Moreover, at all these levels, considerations of tourist profitability play a role.

Partly because of these political contextualizations, the people who embody these cultural practices are instrumentalized as site of intervention and hence as cultural property along with their heritage.

## **Urban forming as part of the overall spatial development in Vietnam's coastal economic zone through 2030**

**Prof. Dr. Ho Quoc Khanh**

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Vietnam has realized the importance of the sea as a source of economic development in its national strategy, given the long coastline and the vast continental shelf. Sea-based economic development is one of the four pillars in Vietnam's economic development strategy through 2030 to lift the country out of poverty and move towards an industrialized economy. A model for spatial development, however, is being sought, despite Vietnam's policies for sea-based economic growth.

The development of coastal economic zones requires a change in the network, urban form and spatial components of cities along the coast. An integrated function model as part of the overall spatial development in the coastal economic zones is being explored.

This study begins with the concepts of sea-based economy and coastal economic zone (CEZ), and then looks at the existing CEZs in Vietnam from an urban designer's perspective. The study also introduces the development of Vietnam's CEZs through 2030 approved by the Prime Minister, based on natural, economic, cultural and social features of each region and in relation to the existing network of coastal cities.

Finally, the author expects to learn the successful lessons by the German experience in the pursuit of a sustainable urban organization model for the coastal economic zones in Vietnam.

## **Coastal city of Halong: The state and orientation solutions of socio-economic development**

**Prof. Dr. Truong Quang Hai**

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Ha Long City is the administrative and socio-economic center of Quang Ninh province. The city is located on the Ha Long Bay, adjacent to the port city of Hai Phong and 160 km northeast from Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam. The area of Ha Long City is 223.0 km<sup>2</sup> and its population is 207,671 people (2007). Compared to other coastal cities in Vietnam, Ha Long has many advantages in its geographical location and rich natural resources.

Ha Long Bay, famous for its scenic wonders of thousands of islands and Karst caves, has been recognized by UNESCO as a World Natural Heritage (1994) and also acknowledged as

a World Heritage Site for geology and geomorphology (2000). The city has many mineral resources, including large deposits of coal and some building materials such as limestone, clay and kaolin. The sea area of Ha Long Bay has great potential of fishing and aquaculture. Ha Long has favorable environment for multiple economic developments, particularly advantageous in tourism, mining industry, production of construction materials, aquaculture industry, harbor work and marine transportation.

The economy growth of Ha Long city has been greatly accelerated in the period from 2001 to 2007, marking the 15.21% annual growth rate. Per capita income has also increased remarkably, reaching at an average growth rate of 12.92% per year. The economic structure has been shifted towards positive to the effective exploitation of natural and human resources. The total output in industry-construction and services has kept its high proportion in the GDP of the city, 47.1% and 51.17% respectively in 2007.

Despite such achievements, the investment for developing the marine economy of the city has not met with its potential strength and requirements for the development as a coastal municipality. Plannings still have many shortcomings. The use of resources and environmental pollution tend to increase. The implementation of several infrastructure projects has been procrastinated. The travel packages and services are in lack of diversity, and are not attractive for tourists.

The orientation for socio-economic development of Ha Long city was established based on the development strategy of Quang Ninh province and the northern key region. It is also derived from the potential and socio-economic reality of the city. In the process of development and integration today, it should focus on developing advantageous industries strongly while bringing the city into a tourist center on both national and international scale in large as well as transforming the city into industrial, commercial trade and service centers and ports of the region. Socio - economic development plannings should be integrated with a rational use of resources, and the environmental quality should also be improved. The solution on planning, policy, investment and management has been proposed to develop Ha Long city in the direction of sustainability.

## **The impact of administrative reforms and the grassroots democracy decree on urban modernity**

**Tim Kaiser**

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This presentation introduces the theoretical framework of a new research project. Taking Eisenstadt's concept of "multiple modernities" as a starting point, the project sees "modernity" as an ongoing (re-)configuration of social institutions and actors. As major macro- and micro-social trends materialise in urban areas, the field of investigation of this study is Vinh City.

Regarding changes in the institutional setting and the involved actors, two major government-initiated programs are interesting: the Public Administration Reform (PAR) and the process of Grassroots Democratization (GD). These programs were initiated with the goals to alter existing institutions, power relations and channels of political participation, while at the same time stabilizing the existing political regime. Focusing on a joint project of the German Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation and the Association of Cities of Vietnam, the study seeks to understand how involved actors impact on the PAR/GD formulation and implementation.

## **Institutional system of urban management on small and medium towns in Vietnam**

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The medium and small towns are being in the comprehensive development stage with rapid changes in terms of size, speed and functionality, which have been contributing for a new picture of Vietnamese urban nowadays. The instructional system of urban management in Vietnam is being constructed and completed; therefore, it contained many mistakes. For instance, laws of cities are not synchronized and inconsistent, even some important laws have not been formed or not in conformity with Vietnam's urban characteristics. Furthermore, the ability in operating of urban management apparatus has been limited. These have been negative factors affecting urban development.

Based on analyzing about 150 legal documents on urban management, that were issued in Vietnam from 1945 to now, this paper will focus on three issues of Vietnamese urban management's institutions in general as well as small and medium town's municipalities in particular: Firstly, it shows an overview of urban and urbanization in contemporary Vietnam, the roles and characteristics of small and medium towns and the demands for institutional system of urban management. Continuously, this paper will also introduce a preliminary analysis toward institutional system of small and medium town before providing author's arguments and evaluation at the end of the paper.

## **Vietnamese Entrepreneurs as Agents of Social Differentiation**

**Erland Meyer**

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In this presentation I shall enquire how strongly entrepreneurial success is linked to rational economic decision-making as a phenomenon of social differentiation. In other words: Can we discern a correlation between a strict separation of economic, social (or communal) and political spheres on one hand and economic success on the other hand? Drawing on case studies from rural and urban areas dating in part from the early times of doi moi, I observe different kinds of avenues to economic success reveal degrees of embeddedness with respect e.g. to political or to communal ties. Based on these case studies I shall discuss, how these practices fit into patterns of social differentiation and modernisation we can find in Vietnam today.

## **Development orientation for urban space of mountainous city Lao Cai based on GIS application and multiple criteria evaluation**

**Tran Thanh Ha**

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Lao Cai is a third rank city located in Lao Cai province. There locates the international border gate Lao Cai which plays an important role in trade between the northern Vietnam and the southern China. Lao Cai city is an important gateway for Vietnam market to south-western and central China provinces. This advantage has been the reason for the quick development of the city which will still be vigorous in near future. Due to the lack of plateau and natural disadvantages, there exist difficulties for the urban space development. This creates big challenges for the local government in urban management and development.

Here we propose a development orientation for the urban space development based on total assessment of factors which have impacts on the urban space development with GIS technology and multiple criteria evaluation. The assessment finds out spaces with advantages for urban development and those with priority for future urban development.

## **Vulnerability, Proximity to Regional Centres and Rural Non-Farm Employment - Evidence from Vietnam**

**Jürgen Brünjes**

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**Leibniz University Hannover Germany**

In developing countries, the exposure of rural households to different types of covariate and idiosyncratic risks strongly varies between locations leading to spatial patterns of vulnerability. Some types of rural nonfarm employment may be feasible mitigation strategies to reduce these risks. Regional centres are regarded to play a major role in the development of the nonfarm economy and thus in generating employment for rural people. Accordingly, access to risk-reducing nonfarm employment can be expected to depend on proximity to these places although this effect may well differ between provinces. In this paper, spatial patterns of vulnerability and participation in non-farm employment are investigated on the micro level for rural household members in three different provinces in Vietnam\*. The results support the idea that vulnerability is a very space specific phenomenon. However, in proximity to regional centres, rural household members in Vietnam mainly benefit from temporary or low return nonfarm employment while access to permanent or high return jobs largely depends on the general developmental level of the province as well as on individual characteristics.

\* Ha Tinh, Thua-Thien Hue and Dak Lak.

# **Who recovers first? Vulnerability, Shocks, and Recovery Time of Rural Households in Vietnam and Thailand**

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This research work is based on data of the DFG Research Project "Impact of shocks on the vulnerability to poverty: consequences for development of emerging Southeast Asian economies". Six Provinces in Vietnam and northeast Thailand were selected - three in each country - and about 4284 households were interviewed in 2007 and again in 2008. Currently a third wave of interviews is conducted.

This study analyses the exposure of households to various types of shocks as well as determinants of the recovery time after a shock event. Shocks are categorized into agricultural shocks, economic shocks, health shocks and social shocks. Our survey data reveal a severe shock situation among rural households in both countries during the survey years. Of all four shock categories, agricultural shocks especially flooding and drought are the most common shocks followed by health shocks, in particular illness of a household member. Price shocks represent the main type of economic shocks to which Thai households are in general more prone than Vietnamese households. Lastly, social shocks, mainly social obligation such as spending money for a ceremony, form the least frequent shock type.

For identifying determinants of the recovery time the method of survival analysis (Cox Regression) is used. Household characteristics are derived from the first wave (2007) as a point of origin to identify important characteristics for a fast recovery from shocks occurring during the second wave (2008). The results indicate that in contrast to directly income related household characteristics such as income level or income fluctuation, characteristics as education level or female household headship show no significant influence on the recovery time. In general, the severity of the shock event – measured by economic loss and subjective severity – as well as the choice of coping activities have a very high impact on the recovery time of rural households for most shock types.