

**“From ascending dragons to rocketing sky scrapers – the ‘symbolic ecology’ of Thang Long-Ha Noi“,  
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The “commodification” of space has turned urban land into a highly competitive resource. Within the global system of cities, diverse municipalities compete for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). In order to define the interplay of the economic factors of land, labour and capital and the symbolic languages of ex- and inclusion Zukin (1995: 2 f.) introduces the concept of “symbolic economy”. The “symbolic economy” of a city is its “visible ability to produce both symbols and space”. It is determined by the growth in cultural consumption and its industries. Thus, every effort to restructure urban space ought at the same time also to be seen as an attempt of “visual re-presentation” (Zukin 1995: 10, 24).

In recent years diverse projects corresponding to Zukin’s “symbolic economy” were realised in Hanoi. With rising incomes the demand for both luxury housing and leisure space has increased in Vietnam’s largest cities. Examples are the emergence of New Urban Areas or the planned redevelopment of Thông Nhất Park in Hanoi.

The paper discusses the impact of officials and investors, so-called ‘place entrepreneurs’ (Molotch 1976), on the urban landscape. The production of new spaces and symbols appears to be an uncontested premise of urban planning. Yet, the question remains what happens to traditional urban imageries in the scope of modernisation?