

Introduction

Since 1986, in the context of national endeavours for socio-economic renovation, with a special emphasis on industrialization and modernization by such means as focusing on spearhead industries and establishing economic zones to serve as engines for growth, Vietnam in general has been witnessing considerable economic and social growth and its cities in particular have been experiencing dramatic changes.

These changes can most evidently be felt in physical as well as social infrastructures, and, inevitably, in human and humanistic aspects, all geared towards an increasingly more civilized and modern urban landscape and higher living standards. The transformations can be said to be very fundamental, or, more precisely, to be underlying the ongoing process of urbanization.

Urbanization is a complicated process of socio-economic transformation with inherent controversies. Due to its huge and irreversible impacts, it necessitates preemptive and proactive approaches. The process has turned agriculture-based rural areas with a significantly weak urban component into rapidly urbanized ones. Strong and rapid development has led to the emergence of new industrial estates, upgraded infrastructures, shifts in rural land use to non-agricultural purposes, more employment created giving rise to city-bound flows of migration, and urban lifestyles and culture encroaching on their rural counterparts. Are these consequences aspects of periurbanization?

Urbanization as a global trend affects overall demographic and economic patterns, while periurbanization is more localized and tangible, simultaneously decimating rural structures and creating and reinforcing urban structures. Periurbanization is highly diversified and varies from one location to another. Individual periurbanization models assume idiosyncratic parameters determined by, e.g., the affected area's location, the distance to the city core, the timing, its economic growth rate, its potential expansion.

Periurbanization is a phenomenon that can lend itself to rich interpretations to get a good grasp of challenges facing cities in the future, providing hands-on information for the formulation of future urban management, as the per urban being urbanized today will definitely turn itself into the urban in some time to come. To put it bluntly, fringe communities endowed with poor infrastructures and urban services will become an obstacle to future sustainable urban development or a burden for local budgets.

Although periurbanization is often perceived as a city's physical expansion in various forms and at different rates under particular geo-topographical conditions, what most characterizes an instance of periurbanization is the economic growth rate and population. Periurbanization thus not only *mirrors a locality's development* but can also be seen as the driving force for national growth and the development of relationship between a country and the global economy.

To gain deeper insights into the phenomenon, it is time we opened the “black box” of recorded first-hand data. It is worth noting that not all cases of periurbanization even with similar objectives and at comparable rates will necessarily result in similar patterns or growth outcomes. On the other hand, instances of periurbanization at different rates may turn out to share identical patterns.

The study of periurbanization calls for broad-based professional participation, where urban planners, experts, public delegates, sponsors and researchers themselves can contribute their best to the understanding of the concept.

With that in mind, the Ho Chi Minh City-based Centre for Urban and Development Studies (CEFURDS) and the French Joint Research Unit 151 IRD-Université de Provence “Laboratoire Population Environnement Développement”-IRD decided to co-organize the regional conference “Trends of Urbanization and Suburbanization in Southeast Asia” where it was hoped scientists, managers, decision-makers, and civil organizations could meet and discuss different conceptual aspects to see how much they fit the reality and then make recommendations for implementation in the Vietnamese context. The initiative was welcomed by the people concerned from France, the United States, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Indonesia, as well as by Vietnamese urban researchers and managers from different provinces and cities, who all together convened in Ho Chi Minh City for three days, December 9-11, 2008.

The Conference was granted valuable financial supports from the Agence Française de Développement (**AFD**), the Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (**IRD**), the Projet sur Fonds de Solidarité Prioritaire (**FSP**), the French Rhone-Alpes – based **PADDI** (for urban forecasting and studies), the Hanoi-based Project for Urban Training (**IMV**), and the University of Hong Bang (HCMC).

This publication, *Trends of Urbanization and Suburbanization in Southeast Asia*, a collection of contributions made by the conference’s attendants, who are devoted scientists and urban managers, may, hopefully, provide readers with some insight into the issue of periurbanization.

Ho Chi Minh City - Marseille, September 2010
Tôn Nữ Quỳnh Trân (CEFURDS) and Claude de Miras (IRD)



TRENDS OF URBANIZATION AND SUBURBANIZATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA



Edited by

Tôn Nữ Quỳnh Trân

Fanny Quertamp

Claude de Miras

Nguyễn Quang Vinh

Lê Văn Năm

Trương Hoàng Trương



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Centre for Urban and
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UMR 151 IRD
University of Provence

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Cover photos:

Photo 1 (above): Trương Hoàng Trương, industrial area, Vinh Loc A, Binh Chanh district, Ho Chi Minh city, May 2006.

Photo 2 (below): Patrick Gubry, new urban area, district 2, Ho Chi Minh city, November 2008.