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Road System and Urban Recomposition in Hanoi

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City and Projects: Trends

A City in Motion

The millennial city of Hanoi is a new city. This apparent paradox reflects the Vietnamese capital's drastic transformation, in the space of a few years, from a small town into a rapidly expanding metropolis. This is a brief and concise account of that evolution, as observed over a period of several years by an architect interested in its architecture and its neighbourhoods and a geographer-urbanist researcher who has undertaken several assignments in the city since the country opened to market economy in 1986. These observations are based on meticulous data collected *in situ* and supported by numerous interviews with urban property developers and users, investors, and urban planning decision-makers and professionals. The collected data are compared with existing archives and publications and complemented by available censal data which has been refined and revised through periodic visits in the field; sectoral research by architecture students has

also been of great value. These are not the results of inconclusive hard data surveys, but analyses based on an in-depth knowledge of the city, which we have covered time and again on foot, by bicycle and on motorcycle — the most suitable means of transportation for the early twenty-first century Hanoian.

Besides the city's architectural and urban evolution, we will also deal with the motivations that drive both private and official players in the areas of conservation and transformation, the two chief aspects that will determine the growth of the city. Indeed, Hanoi is facing some major and highly topical issues: respect of its urban and architectural heritage, and in particular built heritage and patterns of urban composition; the recognition of vibrant traditional customs practised by both previously established and newly arrived city dwellers; the improvement of living conditions for the general public, housing and appropriation through use of public space; control of urban growth and appearance of extensions, which make Hanoi the hub of an amazingly dynamic urban area. Most significant is the manner in which Hanoians have adapted their culturally ingrained way of organizing their habitat and the use of public spaces near their place of life. Political authorities must take these deeply rooted habits into account. A highly pragmatic approach can thus be observed, whereby social, economic and political forces combine and harmonize through mutual concessions.

In a city where market economy co-exists alongside government policies based on an officially communist ideology and vibrant traditional values, we have chosen to look into the changes and transformation of a historical main road to fully grasp the practical mindset which makes it possible to adapt to such a contradictory context. This road is situated partly on the southern edge of the so-called Old Quarter and of the French-colonial district, and partly on the southern edge of the post-colonial city and the new and fast-expanding districts, which are either already built-up or undergoing urbanization. It offers for analysis a number of situations that bear witness to the confrontation of societal forces at work in Hanoi, where all-conquering urban planning is founded upon a vibrant dynamism.

Our purpose here is merely to introduce a significant sample of the questions facing modern Hanoi. The city currently lacks a clearly defined problematic and is having to re-adapt its land legislation and regulate motorized traffic, which is increasingly subjected to the dictum of individual initiative and of a poorly codified use of urbanized space. The need is being felt for an informed dialogue between the city's policymakers and the multitude of individual initiatives.

Hanoi, a Millennial City

Hanoi has been shaped by the past ten centuries, with the greatest transformations occurring in the past 120 years due to the French presence. The ancient imperial city contained within the walls of the citadel symbolizes power overthrown by the conquering French. It has given way to a military and administrative quarter, while the neighbouring merchant's quarter remains to this day. Indeed, contrary to many conquerors and revolutionaries, the Vietnamese have appreciated, absorbed and preserved the architectural heritage and patterns of urban composition brought by their invaders. Signs of this long history permeate what remains of the old quarter. Although they remain in evidence, they are not always found where one would expect. Naturally, a number of monuments still attest to this past through their architecture and particular history: they are the preserved witnesses of their own role in a bygone age. Very ancient foundations have also recently been found in the middle of the citadel demolished by the French at the end of the nineteenth century.

However, these relics are not the focus of our study. Throughout the last thousand years, an art of living has developed around work and everyday life. This way of life still endures to the present day, like constantly reshuffled sediment carrying within it the elements which intimately constitute it. Their cultural dimension is deeply rooted in the customs of Hanoians, to the point where they remain in use in the current extensions. Though this phenomenon is obviously not unique to Hanoi, understanding its place and significance helps to appreciate the capacity for appropriation of urban space, which reflects the population's undeniable integration. The street and the buildings alongside it are the first indicators of this phenomenon.

Several cities in Southeast Asia uphold a system whereby each trade and each craft is assigned a specific street. This system is a cornerstone of such cities, and expresses the way in which cultural permanence can link together contemporary urban dwellers with a deep acknowledgement of their past.

The street, however, reveals more than an organizational and socially structured dimension. More so in Hanoi than in Ho Chi Minh City, the first and most striking impression when walking in the streets — especially in densely populated areas — concerns the way they are being used. The majority of open public spaces, which extend into buildings and are characterized by the hodge-podge paving of roadways and — except in the case of alleys and *cul de sacs* — by pavements, are taken over by the activities of the inhabitants. Their use varies according to the time of day, from one hour after dawn until four hours after sunset. However, the permanent and integral

presence of people is not limited to the areas equipped for the functioning of the city and the safety of pedestrians; indeed, be it on foot, on bicycle or on motorcycle, inhabitants and passers-by monopolize the roads and intersections. When in motion, this is a population of Centaurs,¹ which tolerates cars as long as they remain discreet. At the start of the twenty-first century, two-wheeled vehicles are like the legendary seven league boots. They act as an extension of the city dwellers, to the point where, during working hours, they are parked on the pavement of narrow streets, which are thus rendered impracticable for pedestrians. At night, they are kept in workshops, restaurants, shops and living rooms.

This description of the current state of things reflects ancient customs perpetuated — though less noisily — through the habits of residents. There is more to the street than can be seen at first glance: residents consider the street and pavement as legitimate extensions of their dwellings or workplace. The pedestrian constantly has to sidestep craftsmen at work, as in the tinsmith street of Hang Thiec — one of the “36 streets” — or avoid housewives washing dishes or cooking a meal. People eat lunch on the pavement in front of their doorstep, where small eateries are set up during mealtimes. Men in reclining chairs take naps or read the newspapers in a doorway wide open onto the street; seated in groups of two or three, they converse or smoke rustic water pipes. Women sit on low stools and busy themselves with commercial or domestic activities unless they are busy chatting. Such behaviour is commonplace and demonstrates that Hanoi’s popular neighbourhoods maintain the same century-old customs. This way of life originates from an urban education passed down through the generations, which promotes a lifestyle based on the neighbourhood. The *dinh* is a prime example of this takeover of the streets and neighbourhoods. Originating from the countryside, the *dinh* has an identity-building role and functions as a communal house for the neighbourhood. It is collectively managed by and belongs to city dwellers who often hail from the same village or district and have settled in the same *phuong* — the city’s basic unit where, traditionally and to this day, each street or street section hosts one specific commercial activity. The *phuong* are places for building and expressing identity and define the boundaries of a turf which has been symbolically as well as physically appropriated. The *dinh*, as well as pagodas, are still common, although they are not clearly visible to the casual passer-by.

Various accounts confirm the customs thus observed and contribute to justifying and explaining their endurance. According to inhabitants who invited us in their home — whether close friends or strangers we briefly

sympathized with — and were kind enough to talk with us at length, certain village customs have been strongly upheld in Hanoi, though they have been subjected to *de facto* constraints. This constantly growing city has long absorbed a flow of newly arrived peasants. The twentieth century brought in such new migrants under the most dramatic circumstances, namely the fifty-year multiform war² which gave birth to modern Vietnam and whose repercussions still run deep — although in the past fifteen years economic reforms have gradually reduced their impact. These peasants consider the exterior access to their lodging to be part and parcel of the individual's and the family's living space, regardless of how much it may encroach on public space. Things have always been this way in their villages and will remain so in the big city they now inhabit. But while there is no lack of outdoor space in the rice paddies, vegetable plots and orchards of the deltas and low-lying fluvial and coastal plains, in Hanoi this much-needed space is, at best, reduced to a small garden or a tiny courtyard, and more often than not to a shared alleyway or *cul-de-sac*. The pavement more commonly serves this purpose. Each household must negotiate the quasi private use they make of it with law enforcement representatives who, fearing women's outspoken animosity towards them, prefer to settle matters quietly with their husbands to assure themselves of an undeclared income. Thus resume many rural traditions on the city pavements, and explains why they are always crowded with motorbikes during the day.

Motorcycles are a social phenomenon with vast consequences on urban life and on the spatial spread of the capital. No family is without a motorcycle or, if they are too poor, a bicycle. It has become a basic essential item allowing greater freedom of movement: one can ride it to work, use it as a work tool or to carry all kinds of supplies, for entertainment, or to settle in the outskirts where housing is cheaper. As a result, it becomes possible to sell an obsolete and cramped city centre property — usually shared by one or more mixed-generation families — and use the available capital to buy modern housing two to three times more spacious, better equipped, and lower maintenance.³ The flipside is its location several kilometres away or even beyond urban limits. This intra-urban migration contributes to the decongestion of old neighbourhoods, which facilitates their — at times merciless — renovation, and enables a more lucrative use of space where restored and renovated old dwellings are put to a new use.

The purpose of some streets and alleys in Hanoi is limited to transit and access to the innermost parts of a system of structures, which distributes and compartmentalizes the most humble of houses, and their most ordinary immediate surroundings. These passageways are narrow corridors often

dozens of metres in length. They travel through low buildings leading to the entrance of a multitude of dwellings and across narrow courtyards. Inconspicuous and protected, these pathways form gradually as the lot densifies. Such linear and concealed distribution can also be identified in the ancient quarters of other cities in Vietnam. These structures are completed by a great number of blind alleys and transverse, labyrinthine passages only accessible to pedestrians, cyclists, and the occasional motorcycle. When they are situated outside, these spaces — semi-private in practice — complete the aforementioned spaces in the street and are deliberately laid out. Where they are situated in areas self-established by Hanoians in search of habitat location and compelled to settle without formal municipal authorization, they are usually the result of a negotiation process.

It is thus fair to say that a great number of city dwellers living modestly in the densely populated areas of a city where habitat is traditionally low-rise — seldom over two storeys — share common spaces which are not necessarily communal. Hanoi is their home. Should urbanism fail to take into account and disrupt such urban expressions of their sociability, spontaneous arrangements would probably arise, which municipal popular authorities would then have to subscribe to. This will be made all the easier if urban planners and their backers are previously aware of the issue.

The area known as the “36 streets” in old Hanoi — as well as numerous houses, streets and alleys built in colonial times which, for half a century after the French departure, continued to colonize farmland in response to unstoppable urban growth — display the above-described characteristics, which we qualify as moral and cultural. This is one of the main aspects of the twentieth-century city’s societal role, together with the more lavishly spread areas created by the French presence. This role will be measured against a new one currently taking shape with the construction of the city.

For a more rigorous analytical perspective, the above observations must be completed by taking into account urban attitudes recently emerging amongst city dwellers in tune with transnational modernity. Such attitudes relate to the new possibilities for housing localization and siting and the uses they entail. New types of city dwellers are appearing. Several factors can influence their behaviour in relation to urban insertion: an above average level of income may favour openness to new and different ways of inhabiting; the possibility for land or real estate speculation may encourage taking advantage of opportunities left open by gaps in urban regulation — supposing such regulations were universally respected; a low income might push the most destitute to overstep traditional taboos such as squatting on former cemeteries or places considered as cursed.

The first group have generally acquired a different lifestyle through circumstances ranging from a long stay abroad, during which they would have experienced a habitat they now feel better corresponds to their personal taste, to a desire to comply with a conception of modern life as popularized by a so-called "Western culture". One must be able to afford such lifestyle choices, and especially the financial means needed to acquire a habitat providing adequate domestic space. The new architectural forms currently being built influence and strongly reinforce such choices. One keeps a different kind of company but chooses friends and peers to reflect the new image, while the overriding importance of the family wanes.

The second group seeks to match a quest for social prestige with a lodging that testifies to their openness to the outside world, connoted as Western. This goes alongside lucrative societal or commercial aspirations or possibilities — one does not necessarily exclude the other. Their homes are often characterized by a garishness common to *nouveau riche* social climbers throughout the world.

The last group are merely after better accommodation than they previously had or would have nearer the city centre. Their decision entails selling their previous lodging and owning a motorcycle, which enables access to any location for purchases, work or services previously available locally, whatever their distance from one's dwellings. This approach has in common with the previous group the desire to leave behind the precariousness of outdated or peasant dwellings and the abundant dust of the central working-class neighbourhoods for access to solid, better equipped, cleaner and glossier housing — in short, to enjoy a "hygienic and high quality" housing, as our informants put it. The current policy of building new developments on the outskirts encourages this trend towards delocalization sustained by the sale with a high capital gain of one's former centrally located — and thus commercially attractive — lodging, and goes alongside the introduction on the market of high quality and affordable collective housing. Such a housing complex policy has already been tested with the *Khu Tap The* (KTT), as this study will later show.

For the time being, the societal importance of the first two types of behaviour is greater than the number of people they actually represent. They function as referents for a trend which is begging to expand. The third type of behaviour, however, justifies the options of a housing policy which soon enough should trigger a redistribution of population densities in the various districts of Hanoi.

The Old City: Altered and Remodelled, Maintained and Expanded

Before 1954

In 1954, before the French departure, the population of Hanoi numbered 380,000 inhabitants over a surface area of 1,300 hectares. It comprised three different types of districts:

The most ancient was originally divided into thirty-six streets: “*at the end of the 15th century, Hanoi was redistributed into 36 streets and corporations which to this day still form the heart of the capital*”.⁴ It is shaped like a triangle whose northern apex is situated to the north of Long Bien Bridge. Its eastern edge is bordered by the dyke which runs alongside and contains the Red River [Song Hong]; to the west, it is edged by the railway line and, more precisely, by the limits of the ancient citadel; to the south, by Hang Bong which turns into Hang Gai then Cau Go. This commercial and residential district is well integrated in urban life and hosts a socially diverse Vietnamese population. It still thrives with a multitude of workshops, stalls, shops and services. Its inhabitants have intimately appropriated its use, including public spaces, which they occupy freely and with a strong presence.

To the west, on the grounds of the ancient citadel, lies the administrative and military district built by the French. Further west, it gives way to a large city park. Its space is very open, and is divided between a self-contained, closed military quarter and adjoining large public edifices built to house general interest administrations. The presidential palace, the Communist Party headquarters, ministries, the National Assembly and numerous buildings housing central administrations can be found there. Handsome art deco or modernist colonial villas are also the seat of several embassies. This district is identical to the French quarter. The Vietnamese have maintained it for two apparent reasons: firstly because, having just reconquered their assets, they had an immediate need for those facilities, and secondly because they decided, controversially, to appropriate the colonial city, which they consider today as the urban jewel of their heritage. This is undoubtedly a more intelligent approach than the destruction of a large part of the remaining ramparts and gates of old Beijing triggered by Mao during the Cultural Revolution. This part of the French quarter stands as a national avatar of the imperial city and the destroyed citadel.

The French quarter where “colonial might was wrought into stone” (Papin 2001) continues to the south on the same mode of spatial composition. A few ministries and central administrations occupy the official buildings

built by the French. Some of the handsome colonial residences with gardens have become the seat of foreign embassies. Similarities to the district described above continue: the functions assigned by the old regime have been maintained: the main Post Office, the Town Hall turned into the People's Committee and schools can be found in the first administrative district created by the French between Hoan Kiem Lake and the river. The district extends to the other side and to the south of the lake, with wide avenues and notably few craftsmen's workshops or merchants' shops. French colonization intended to leave its imprint through the alignment and construction of wide perpendicular avenues lined with opulent villas and imposing public buildings of high quality architectural workmanship. Social housing did not feature in this policy of grandeur.

This typical urban unit based around Hoan Kiem Lake densifies up to the Red River dyke on one side and up to the railway line on the other. It extends to the south along the same strict pattern of orthogonal streets. There are, in addition, a few housing developments initially built as accommodation for colonial public servants. This is the representation of an idea of a tropical city which, although — or is it because? — it draws its inspiration from a republican and French empire, remains a reference of harmony and good taste for the intelligentsia and municipal authorities of Hanoi.⁵

The southern edge of the city as it was then is delineated by what is now Dai Co Viet Road and Tran Khat Chan Road, at the end of a thoroughfare built on a dyke at the entrance to the city and which links Son Tay to the capital. Already in colonial days, Hanoi's entrance and exit ways were populated by a great number of houses where a throng of Vietnamese inhabitants working in the capital lived.

Between 1954 and 1986⁶

During these years, Vietnam underwent a long period of isolation which caused it to steer its economy towards the Soviet Union. Exchanges with this parental figure were constant but also meant that Vietnam had to base its supplies — and especially its food supplies — on a largely self-sufficient socialist economy. After independence, as soon as it was liberated from yet another intolerable foreign presence in its history, Hanoi strove to build the capital of a new country. Besides reclaiming heritage built under the French, the government also had to deal with severe housing shortage. Circumstances led it to take inspiration from the Soviet model, which led to the construction of KTT: collective housing sub-divisions built in rows, usually three to four storeys high and aggregated into large estates. This type

of housing is widespread in Hanoi.⁷ Its implementation offered an opportunity to relinquish the use of traditional materials in favour of reinforced concrete prefabricated materials. KTTs are usually low-rise and built around basic collective facilities sited in their centre, and almost always situated near a village in the surrounding outskirts. Their scale is reasonably human and city dwellers housed or rehoused there experienced a considerable improvement in living conditions.

Deliberate juxtaposition of a village with a KTT sited along a carriageway — asphalted during site development if not previously — has created urban sprawl in peri-urban space. This situation — which existed previously but was less visible — has reinforced the city's tendency to extend through annexation — either illegal or at least uncontrolled — of the unbuilt spaces between such planned site developments and the pre-1954 city. Progressively and inescapably, through such intense pressure, the density of built space and the tightening of urban fabric have joined the former city without interruption to what initially appeared to be semi-rural surrounding suburbs. But uncontrolled housing does not necessarily equate low-quality housing. This can frequently be seen along main streets where plush-looking compartments, usually recessed from the avenue, can be found next to the low-rise houses lining the streets, alleys and *cul-de-sacs*, and replicate a way of inhabiting and organize the *phuong* modelled on the “36 streets”.

Their appearance and layout, as well as the houses' distribution and the siting of their access, would lead to think that such constructions are the outcome of a concerted strategy. However, production owing to informal economy is clearly visible as confirmed by the localization of unbuilt markets.

KTT only differ from the pre-colonial “36 streets” in terms of density — otherwise their rhythm and customs are comparable. The 1986 city — whose customs and built space are strongly appropriated — already reached To Lich River to the west and, to the south of Truong Chinh Boulevard, Minh Khai Avenue, which prolongs the large carriageway running parallel to To Lich River then turns east towards the Red River; a bridge is being planned there according to the latest urban planning master plan.

The Extension of Hanoi after 1986

Independent of urban policy, social forces constantly shape the city's working-class areas and preserve the more ancient ways of occupying space. Their influence is obvious in the abovementioned areas. They are also highly visible through the deep changes which have taken place in the space of one generation in the appearance and organization of some KTT, whose building

facades have been thoroughly altered by successive additions — whether they were DIY or structurally grafted. The impact of such alterations is not merely technical, but also sociocultural: when walking along streets that run parallel or across these housing projects, the different ways of living, of making use of the street at the foot of the buildings, and of carrying out one's craft or trade by occupying part of the collectively used public space, one could easily forget that this is a housing estate.

This also comes across through the localization of Hanoi's permanent markets. Covered markets were built by the municipality whilst outdoor markets usually occupy a street or an intersection and block access to anything but two-wheeled vehicles, which are merely tolerated and can proceed no faster than pedestrians. The representation of markets as a whole offers a telling picture of the entanglement of various types of occupation of urbanized space. The first type is characterized by planned housing policy; the second is either a heritage from residual or more or less maintained village structures, or they are an element of response from rural-to-urban migrants compelled to carve out their own habitat due to demographic or conjunctural pressures. In the latter case, they duplicate housing patterns according to techniques already known to them. The use they make of them — whether they concern the structure of the dwelling or the composition of nearby public space — replicates and adapts to their needs patterns described earlier in relation to the “36 streets”, with similar use being made of the house and street. We have already indicated the strength of this permanence. Though similar in style to the ancient city, the overall impression is not as intense since these urbanized spaces are more spread out. These site developments were imposed under pressure from users subjected to urban economic necessity.

Markets also indicate the different stages of urban growth. They reveal the scattering of collective housing projects — markets were a basic facility in KTT plans and remain so in *Khu Do Thi (KDT)* — as well as the presence of main roads conveying the spread of controlled urbanization; they also testify to the apparent “filling in” of spaces occupied in a less regulated way, which translates into ways of using public land replicating those of the ancient districts. KTT and built markets underline the tendency of planned urbanization to create radial roads spread out in a fan-shaped layout. Outdoor markets give a more muddled impression: on the one hand, they reinforce the representation of the role of major roads; on the other hand, they make it easier to locate areas of very high population density. This also makes the southern edge of the colonial district more visible and probably maps out a peripheral urbanisation front line which would have been poorly

controlled prior to 1954: at that time, itinerant markets formed part of the traditional facilities of nearby villages where rural-to-urban migrants could find low-cost accommodation outside the city perimeter. These villages were later swallowed up by the city. In order to respond to the needs of an expanding — often tenfold — population, they were either altered or partially transformed, or destroyed and recomposed, or else their habitat was densified and reconstructed according to other models. Their markets, however, remained and prospered by diversifying the products on offer.

Although markets are usually fixed points acting as urban markers, more spectacular landmarks have begun to appear across the city in the shape of towers and major building sites, which offer a glimpse of a new dimension in Hanoi's urban planning. Although there has been no clean break with the previous era, the market has been boosted by the country's opening to the outside world and by the State's official endorsement of market economy. Independently managed state enterprises have developed. Trade and private enterprise have been legalized. These days, their dynamism has a deep impact on the landscape and on the management of new extensions, which are characterised by their scope and diversity, large investments and the swift activation of construction: there has been a radical change of scale in the work undertaken in the past few years. There is a huge hunger for construction. In particular, the "new urban housing areas" — *Khu Do Thi* (KDT) in Vietnamese — are currently under construction. However, the newly developed housing estates give a significant place to planned construction of individual houses, which nowadays tend to be paired with collective housing blocks. This low-cost housing is reputed to be better quality than the run-down houses which tens of thousands of people still inhabit. They also grant occupancy status to households who would otherwise be vulnerable to expropriation with no guarantee of compensation. Due to the spread of individual motorized transport, distance from KDT to the city centre is no longer an obstacle to delocalization, which provides better living conditions for individuals and families. The capacity of different neighbourhoods to satisfy the needs of their inhabitants is evolving, such that facilities now combine with integration.

Most innovative is the policy on road infrastructure and other urban networks launched by the state. Its objectives are as follows: a network of radial and transverse roads; two bridges across the Red River in the near future (their construction is part of the new urban planning projects); new luxury residential developments, including "Hanoi New Town" on the road to the airport, which has received extensive media coverage. These new subdivisions implicitly refer to Hong Kong models favouring vertical sprawl,

which is not part of Hanoi's culture. One thing is certain: the Vietnamese capital is discovering its outer suburbs and increasingly tends to become a megapolis whose urbanization movement includes its entire region — and even beyond its administrative boundaries. Since less than five years, new residential areas have appeared on the eastern side of the Red River, where a large industrial zone is also being built. This is the first link in a long, discontinuous chain of factories and industrial cities forming a straight line from Hanoi to Haiphong. Could a new linear conurbation appear as in Germany's Ruhr Valley or Manchuria's Laoyang?

The promotional and speculative aspects of this new situation mean that Hanoi's municipality will have to rethink its public road network rationally, signpost it strictly, enforce the highway code, speed up the implementation of its public transport policy, and change the convivial but undisciplined use of public space, especially of the street. The impact of such unprecedented changes urgently needs to be analysed, and the change in the habits of appropriation of urbanized space, which city dwellers will be subjected to as inhabitants, shopkeepers, craftsmen or service suppliers — and mostly as motorcycle users — will need to be examined. There is no doubt that both urban planners and property developers will need to be open-minded about such issues. A thorough understanding of sociocultural issues is required if we are to avoid spontaneous re-appropriation by Hanoians of the seemingly available space left open by these future housing projects, within the loose mesh associated with the establishment of large-scale new developments. A new land regulation, whose implementation decree is not as yet operational, has recently been drawn up to address the issue. However, a code of urban planning is imperative and should not be based solely on pre-existing models used elsewhere, however remarkable they may be. Hanoi's past way of functioning requires awareness-raising from a multiplicity of perspectives; which should be undertaken with a clear understanding of the issues as well as a solid dose of humility and stringency, not through rigid ideology.

The urban policy currently underway aims to turn Hanoi into a modern, well-functioning capital in tune with the requirements of international trade.

The Urban Context of a Mutating City

Urban transformations in Hanoi today are all more or less linked to the new public road network projected by the master plan to be completed in 2020. Long deprived of means and resources, Hanoi is now carrying out works on a previously unparalleled scale, thus propelling itself into a new phase of its history. The diversity of works undertaken reflects a proactive

and determined modernization policy: industrial zones, a new road system, dredging and development of the lakes, organization of an urban public transport network, new residential areas, major installations, etc., as well as new land regulation. Vietnam's economic situation since its integration in the world market has triggered a change in the scale of financing, implementation and management of new urban projects. The Vietnamese habit whereby individual sectors work in isolation is being altered: these projects are more integrated and bring together new multi-disciplinary teams.

A New Master Plan for the Public Road Network

Analysis of the public road network is based on available maps. Maps of Hanoi for a study on the scale of the conurbation are relatively rare. In addition to the master plan for 2020, only three maps show with reasonable clarity the current public road network or projects currently underway.⁸ The first, dated 1992 and 1:10000 in scale, is published by the Vietnam Department of Geography. It offers a reference overview of the network on the scale of the area urbanized at the beginning of *Doi Moi*. On the second map, published by TRAMOC and IMV⁹ within the framework of the Asiatrans 2002 project, the public road system is represented on the same scale and in its most up-to-date state. But despite its precision, the fact that certain areas of the city are not represented undermines its usefulness. The last map used is the latest tourist map for sale in Hanoi, titled "Where Hanoi" and published by the House of Cartography on a scale of 1:25,000. It includes the city's ambitious road system projects. This particularly meticulous edition was the image map of Hanoi displayed for the 22nd "Seagames" (*Southeast Asian Games*) which took place in the Vietnamese capital in late 2003. As it is first and foremost a tourist map, road proportions are not accurate; however, it does convey the real or desired importance of each street. As for the master plan, it offers an image of the desired city; this 1:25,000 map is primarily a zoning of projected extensions and land use based on the future public road network, whose structure, however, is not easily discernible.

Combined analysis of these maps and of our observations in the field reveals a type of organisation of road network in the conurbation of Hanoi built around a system of ring roads and radial main roads or urban motorways. This pattern outlines a "half spiderweb" centred around the historic city¹⁰ and attached to the Red River. Its circular roads are captioned as "Ring Roads" and other roads directed away from the city centre are captioned as "Main Road". They are presented as urban or suburban boulevards about

fifty metres wide. The trend thus seems to be towards progressive introduction of this type of very wide roads without questioning their traffic efficiency or their alignment.

Flyovers also form part of the works carried out to fulfil the 2020 master plan. So far three of them are operational: the first crosses the Red River dyke and provides access to Chuong Duong Bridge, Gia Lam District and the road to Haiphong; the second, on Highway One, crosses over a street which is due to become Hanoi's second ring road; the third is on the road to the airport and crosses over Cau Giay Boulevard, a major urban motorway at the western entrance of the city.

The construction of these flyovers and the type of new urban boulevards being built essentially takes into account the traffic function of the street; their outward aim is to unblock major congestion in the city centre and improve circulation between the centre and the outskirts.

Due to very high population density in urbanised areas, to city dwellers' high mobility and to an inadequate public road network, traffic problems are making urban and suburban travel increasingly difficult. Traffic congestion at rush hour lasts longer and occurs more frequently, which paralyses circulation.

Observations on traffic trends in Hanoi¹¹

Leaders of the Hanoi People's Committee Management Unit for large-scale urban development projects are concerned about the uncontrolled motor traffic situation on the streets of Hanoi. In order to deal with the issue, they have established a list of priority actions whose cost they estimate at US\$1,333,333 (VND200,000 million in 2003) and requested partial financing from the Japanese bank JIBIC. The execution of these projects will result in 20,000 displaced persons needing to be rehoused. The municipality uses compensation grids, but these are different for public road works, which offer better financial or material compensation as they are considered to be in the public interest. Compensation of dispossessed households is a sensitive issue. There have been instances when its importance was underestimated and became the main reason for axing certain projects. The fact that the authorities are now regulating this issue and including its costs in the financing of projects shows their determination to carry out and complete public road works planned for 2020.

Works on the Water Network

Three of the city's major lakes, Thien Quang, Giang Vo and Thanh Cong which collect wastewater, are currently being cleaned up. Thien Quang is located south of the colonial district. Since the 1940s, the lakeside has been developed into a public promenade integrated within the city. The two other lakes are located within KTT collective housing neighbourhoods in Hanoi's inner-ring suburbs. With these large-scale projects came infrastructure installations: water supply stations and renovation of the lakes in order to provide adequate capacity for drainage of nearby neighbourhoods. However, lack of separation in these sewerage systems has turned the lakes into repositories of wastewater which they are unable to absorb.

The current situation of the water system has resulted in the progressive disappearance of several lakes of various sizes, both in the centre and in the outskirts. Some lakes have nevertheless acquired urban status, thus ensuring their durability. In such instances, the lakeside has been developed and houses along the lake have increased in value.

Moreover, a large-scale project is under consideration for a 200-hectare park to be established in a low-lying area south of the city currently occupied by large lakes. Again, the major part of their expanse would be filled but a few lakes in the centre would be developed.

Some rivers, such as To Lich and Kim Nguu, are having their banks canalized and cemented in concrete and their bed cleaned up. The municipality might consider cleaning up Hoan Kiem Lake. Its symbolic value as the heart of Hanoi encourages the city's inhabitants to pay attention to its environment.

Khu Do Thi: The New Housing Areas

Active production of collective housing began in Hanoi straight after independence. The first reason for this was the influx of new city dwellers come to work for the administration and State enterprises that had to find accommodation in the capital of the new Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Demand was so high that construction of these housing complexes was not even interrupted during American bombing. Following the downfall of communism in the USSR and in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, the economic crisis provoked by the disintegration of COMECON (or MEAC — Mutual Economic Assistance Council) reverberated in Asian brethren countries. The Vietnamese government rapidly withdrew its collective housing programme. Previously built housing was sold as property to the inhabitants under the condition that they should take responsibility for its maintenance.

Only recently has the Vietnamese government rekindled its construction activities through a complete overhaul of its housing policy.

Khu Do Thi were thus created, together with independently managed state enterprises responsible for the new housing programmes. The latter manage their assets so as to make profitable investments in the very short term, as would a private company. As a result, the new residential area programmes differ widely from their KTT predecessors. Flats available in the new high-rise *Khu Do Thi* buildings offer a much larger inhabitable surface than ratios in effect in KTT or in the cramped lodgings of the city's overpopulated central districts. However, the spatial and architectural quality of these flats remains largely questionable.

Most KTT were built for a very specific population — usually government employees, workers or members of the military. Some buildings were reserved for postal or ministry employees, or for the workers of a nearby factory. Such flats were part of the benefits weighed against low wages. Nowadays, priority allocation of housing in KDT is not as efficient and has no ideological or social basis, despite the claims of the companies that build them. Flats are not rented but sold before construction work has even started on the buildings. Although these constructions belong to the public sector, they enter the realm of private speculation as soon as they are first sold. Current demand for housing is such that speculation is taking place around the sale and resale of these flats. As a result, their price quickly increases two- or threefold.

Moreover, despite being devised and implemented by the KDT management company, social equipment and services linked to housing are built after the residential buildings and sometimes even after the inhabitants have moved in. Public enterprises often request inhabitants' financial participation in order to speed up construction, which is usually held back by slowness of payments from the municipality.

These new neighbourhoods are organized around facilities such as parks, nurseries, schools, administrative offices, etc. This is similar to Soviet planning methods, which Vietnamese urban planners acquired when KTT were first conceived. There is nevertheless one non-negligible difference: no markets have so far been planned in the KDT, whereas they were often central to the KTT.

As with social equipment and services, infrastructure installations are conceived by public enterprises after agreement and approval from supervising authorities (Ministry of Construction, Ministry of Finance and municipality). Investment for public road works within the boundaries of the new urbanization area will not be paid for by the municipality as had

initially been planned. As with the KTT, these developments are sited on former farmland declared “new urbanization area” by the municipality, and in districts having recently acquired urban status (*quan* and no longer *huyen*). They are planned near an existing road, which is sometimes widened, or near a newly built road which they are connected to. They form part of the urban sprawl of Hanoi’s suburbs, composed of KTT, former villages, major installations, residual farmland, industry and now KDT.

Some buildings in the earliest such projects (especially in the Dinh Cong *Khu Do Thi*) suffer from numerous faults and defects. Demand is very high, and the additional surface afforded by these flats is enough to convince their future inhabitants, who seem to consider such deficiencies to be minor issues. For instance, inhabitants have to install their own air conditioning. Water management is not collective. The maintenance of collective buildings should be taken care of through inhabitants’ financial participation. Such arrangements remain theoretical, and lack of sufficient management might well result in severe dysfunction in the very short term.

Methods of production are also regulated in theory, but vary widely according to the clients’ requirements.

A municipal decree exists which bans construction of compartments in these new districts.¹² They nevertheless remain the housing model of choice for a large part of the urban population. The decree therefore seems to remain a dead letter considering the number of compartments planned and built in *Khu Do Thi*, not to mention the individual urban dynamism which uses and abuses this type of highly popular construction.

Restructuration of KTT

Certain methods apply the same process as the phased community rehousing programmes commonly used in France in the 1960s and 1970s, when similar issues arose regarding the renovation of low-cost collective housing which had become obsolete. Some viewed these methods as brutal, and they are indeed expeditious. In any case, they testify to the authorities’ intention to renovate, improve and expand working-class housing without displacing the inhabitants. One such project is currently underway in Kiem Lien: the inhabitants of four-storey blocks remain in their current lodgings while two new twelve-storey buildings are being erected; once the latter are completed, the inhabitants of the smaller buildings will be rehoused on the lower floors, in lodgings strictly equivalent in surface to the former. The four-storey buildings will then be destroyed, which will free up new equipped space for the construction of four eighteen-storey and twenty-two-storey towers.

Other Projects

The master plan shows the city extending far beyond the Red River. Although few projects have been implemented so far compared to the provisions of this plan, some of them include:

- the project for “Hanoi New Town” currently under consideration in cooperation with a Japanese investor. This new town is located on the other side of the river, on the road to the international airport, and aims to be pluri-functional, grouping together housing, facilities and services, industries and businesses; different types of housing will be available in each neighbourhood: collective buildings of various heights as well as villas. Existing villages will be integrated into new low-density planned housing areas;
- Gia Lam industrial zone on the road to Haiphong and Thanh Long industrial zone on the road to the international airport both house domestic and international companies;
- The international airport was already expanded in 1999. Work continues as part of a wider development project financed by the Japanese, and will eventually integrate this installation within the nearby industrial and technological zone.

Alterations to De La Thanh Road

After having briefly summed up the stages, conditions, and socio-political and urban characteristics of Hanoi’s urbanization, it would be useful to delve into the history of this dyke rampart. De La Thanh became a city boundary, then an east-west transverse frontage road joining a highly structured city to its more uncertain extensions, before turning, through necessity, into the alignment of a semicircular road, which — besides its function as a link between neighbourhoods — is the dividing line between the twentieth century city, with its culturally internalized architecture and patterns of urban composition, and the decisively oversized twenty-first century city. Construction work on this road — due to become a large boulevard sited in an already highly urbanized environment — will require solving a number of sociocultural and technical issues characteristic of the difficulties raised by the construction of a network of primary roads in Hanoi.

Yet the transformation of this small capital into a large vibrant metropolis rests on the creation of infrastructure for attendant roads and other urban networks. The history of De La Thanh is an example of the urbanistic shock and its social and architectural repercussions which Hanoi must deal

with in order to achieve successful integration into market economy and globalization.

Establishment of a Circular Road on the Former Dyke Road, De La Thanh

Current Situation

De La Thanh Road links the Red River dyke — southeast of the historical centre¹³ — to Cau Giay, the “Paper Bridge” on To Lich River. It then continues as Cau Giay Boulevard, then as the road leading to the international airport. It goes through the urban districts of Hai Ba Trung, Dong Da and Ba Dinh, and leads to Cau Giay, which became an urban district in 1999. Its total length is 7.7 kilometres. Depending on its condition, its width varies between 2.7 metres and 50 metres, as we will see.

Etymology

De La Thanh Road is a road on a dyke (*De* means dyke in Vietnamese, but the word is also used to describe a street or road functioning as a dyke, as the two are often combined in this country of rice paddies). The Red River plain, where Hanoi is located, is organised around this type of infrastructure enabling the irrigation of large polders: control and distribution of water is of prime importance for any agricultural or human facilities in this deltaic landscape.

La Thanh means “outer wall”. The character *La* is used to designate an enclosed or circular space; the character *Thanh* means “fortification” (the same root is found in the Vietnamese word for city: *Thanh Pho*). This terminology is used to describe the early fortifications built on the site of Hanoi, before the capital was settled there in 1010. In 767, Chinese governor Zhang Boyi erected a new citadel north of To Lich River and named it La Thanh. During the Vietnamese Hung kings’ uprising, the Chinese had to rebuild the citadel several times. In 806, another Chinese governor, Zhang Zhou, named the citadel he had just built south of To Lich River — on the final site for the city — An Nam La Thanh (Papin 2001). The term *La Thanh* was then used for the outermost wall. It was presumably called “dyke of the outer wall”, De La Thanh, because it was contiguous with Kim Nguu [golden buffalo] River dyke and thus became an outer wall.

Through part of its alignment, this road forms a point of contact between the colonial city's southernmost edge and the inner-ring suburb urbanized after independence. Throughout the rest of its alignment, it goes through the inner-ring suburb. As a result, it runs through and serves a diversified urban fabric composed of:

- former villages swallowed up by the city (Kim Lien, Trung Tu, Giang Vo, Thanh Cong, Tran Khat Chan);
- extensions of the colonial city between the civil servant district, and Bach Mai university and hospital (former René Robin hospital);
- large KTT collective housing developments: Kim Lien, Trung Tu, Thanh Cong;
- facilities complexes: universities (transport, polytechnic, industrial arts, culture), national television, Russian diplomatic quarter.

There are two reasons for choosing to study this road rather than any other urban road: its transverse position connecting two centres of urban dynamism, and its ambivalent status as a road currently undergoing transformation.

The structure of the public road network, in Hanoi's master plan for 2020, presents De La Thanh Road as an urban boulevard and the first ring road in a system of four to circle the historical centre. As it stands today, the entire road has not yet been turned into this projected circular road. Each stage of its evolution can be observed along its various sections. Because of its length — over seven kilometres — and the methods used to turn it into a boulevard, work cannot be carried out simultaneously over its entire length. Consequently, the successive stages of the road's alteration coexist. Urban recompositions incidental to the road system project are thus easily identifiable.

As it is located near the ancient centre and runs through the inner-ring suburbs, this main road will act as a privileged connection between the southern part of the colonial district and the western part of the inner-ring suburbs. These two areas have been hubs of intense urban dynamism in the past few years. Indeed, in the past four years (1999–2003), four primary network roads have been engineered or widened around the former southern colonial boundary formed by De La Thanh Road; eight towers over fifteen storeys high are under construction and entire districts are being restructured (the areas around Bach Hoa university and Bach Mai hospital; a new park is being developed...) and renovation of two large KTT is being planned. In the second area, west of the inner-ring suburb, new construction also testifies to the scale of changes underway: five major road construction projects have been completed between 1999 and 2003 (the extension of Lieu

Giai Street opened in November 2003); more than ten towers over fifteen storeys high are under construction and six more already exist, as well as ten others between ten and fifteen storeys high built between 1997 and 2000. At present, traffic between the two areas is problematic. One of the issues at stake in the engineering of this ring road will consist in balancing the bipolarity created by those two hubs, with De La Thanh Road acting as the future axis for development.

A Dyke Turned Boulevard

Very early on, despite not being located in the historical centre, De La Thanh Road played a structuring role within the urban system. It is commonly agreed that the city was founded in 1010 under the Ly Dynasty (1009–1225). After a premonitory dream, Emperor Ly Thai To transferred the capital to Hanoi's current site. At the time, the city was composed of the imperial citadel, which included the palaces, and the civilian city, itself composed of quarters dedicated to crafts, trades or agriculture. The new capital's boundaries were set by three rivers: the Red River to the east, To Lich to the north and to the west, and Kim Nguu to the south. The dykes containing these rivers thus became fortifications and were erected alongside trenches filled with water. De La Thanh Road formed the southern edge, part wall and part dyke protecting the city against the waters of Kim Nguu River.

Throughout its history, De La Thanh Road has gone from being a path on a dyke to a colonial road, still within a rural landscape, then progressively became urban and acquired a commercial function as it ran through increasingly structured areas. Today, it is being turned into a boulevard, one section at a time. It may have lost its function as a dyke, but its alignment has remained unchanged throughout its slow evolution.

The Dyke Road Seen through Cartography

The dyke road has been in existence ever since the city was first founded. In order to understand its historical development, we have analysed its representation in the cartography of Hanoi. We restricted ourselves to historical maps contemporary with the major stages of Hanoi's growth.¹⁴

The dyke appears on the reconstituted map of 1470, on which feature the successive city walls: the first walls surround the citadel — the seat of political, military and administrative power; the second walls are much wider and encircle the citadel, villages and their *finage*,¹⁵ as well as significant elements in the landscape such as pagodas and mounds. De La Thanh Road appears as a dyke whose western-most section constitutes part of

the second wall. There are several theories regarding the city's progressive shift to the east. On this map, the outer wall does not yet include the area between the river and the citadel (today's "36 streets"), nor the Temple of Literature, nor other temples and pagodas of prime importance. De La Thanh Road, however, remains a dyke throughout its entire alignment, and thus protects this *extra muros* area. On this map, the entire outer wall is called De La Thanh.

When the French settled in Hanoi in 1873, the dyke connected the "Paper Bridge" [Cau Giay] on To Lich River to the Red River. It features on Pham Dinh Bach's map¹⁶ and is named after the outer wall on which the southern part of its alignment is juxtaposed. This second wall has shifted several times, always according to the dyke's alignment. The centre of Hanoi is particularly detailed on this map, which remains precise for the part that interests us: around De La Thanh Road. The legend shows three gates along this wall: Cho Dua gate (coconut market); Kim Lien gate on the Mandarin Road, with the mention "swamp"; and Cau Ren gate. Kim Nguu River features in the legend Song To Lich as follows: the Mandarin To Lich, sent by the Chinese emperor to be governor of Annam under the Duong, dug a canal around the dyke of the Ly and named it after himself.

As the first master plans of the colonial period were either improvement or development plans, the roads and highways department played an essential part in their elaboration. In 1890, the development plan was mapped out by staff from the roads and highways department under Leclanger's leadership.¹⁷ It has two main points of interest: first, it determines with precision, both physically and administratively, the southern edge of the city on De La Thanh Road, while showing its state in 1890. Secondly, it documents the first developments carried out by the French, and the colonial grid project south of Hoan Kiem Lake, following the direction of Paul Bert Street (current Trang Tien street), the main artery connecting the French concession on the bank of the river to the citadel (turned into the French military quarter). This plan represents De La Thanh Road as the boundary between the city and the countryside. Districts facing the city (Thanh Tri and Thanh Hoai) are designated as *huyen*, the name used for rural districts: four gates located on this border are clearly indicated. Only the villages situated inside the city wall are represented. None of those holding an ambiguous position in relation to the dyke is featured. For instance, the *extra muros* grouping of houses of Trung Tu village, which is represented on the 1873 map, does not appear on this plan. Moreover, there is no indication that circulation might be possible on the dyke. Its

representation near the gates make it look more like a fortification, but at the western end of the city wall, a path (currently Giang Vo) connects to it as it would to a traffic lane.

The 1924 development plan, drawn up by Ernest Hébrard¹⁸ does not seem to include any particular strategy for De La Thanh Road. However, the planned network of public roads connecting the centre to peripheral spaces comprises a series of urban motorways crossing De La Thanh Road. This new network project covers a large part of an area which has not yet been urbanized.

According to this dynamics, during the colonial period, the urbanized area extended progressively towards the south of the Vietnamese city (originally composed of the citadel and the “36 streets”) and reached increasingly close to La Thanh dyke. In the 1940s, the city crossed over the limit formalized by La Thanh dyke. This was the era during which major installations, including the university campus and René Robin Hospital (nowadays Bach Mai Hospital), were built on either side of the Mandarin Road leading to the southern provinces. On this particular site, urban extensions tended to consist more in setting up facilities and equipment which would become anchor points for the new agglomeration centres — and which to this day still mark the landscape — rather than in the development of “suburbs” or in the annexation of village space. The development plan drawn up by Pineau in 1943 fully integrates La Thanh dyke within the city.¹⁹ Since some of its segments are already considered as boulevards, he projected to widen it throughout its entire alignment. But yet again, projected alterations are not specific to this road; they are part of the setting up of a network, together with numerous other roads on the outskirts close to the city centre. Projected alterations to La Thanh dyke are the consequence of its integration and connection into the network of roads as suggested by the architect.

From the end of the Indochina War, the brand new government’s fledgling institutions started drawing up development plans with the declared intention of turning Hanoi into a socialist and modern city.

The development plan drawn up with the assistance of Soviet urban planners, “*Hanoi General Plan of City up to Year 2000*”, and published in the 1984 atlas of Hanoi, envisaged building a series of ring roads around the historical centre²⁰ according to a concentric logic. La Thanh Road would be widened and its alignment altered in places (running north rather than south of Thu Le park, which would be turned into a zoological park) so as to form the first of these ring roads. This plan was not implemented,

and the direction of following master plans corresponds to the existing alignment.

The 1986 plan, mapped out by the Vietnamese department of cartography, is, to our knowledge, the last representation of the city before economic opening, *Doi Moi*, and before the Vietnamese capital entered the realm of world metropolises. It offers an account of the situation before ulterior architectural and urban reconfigurations started taking place. It is thus a reference document for the study of Hanoi's contemporary transformations. It includes in particular the numerous lakes and canals along the dyke road: they can be found near Cau Giay Bridge, in front of Thanh Cong village, near Cho Dua market, between Kim Lien village and the collective housing area of the same name, and partly along Dai Co Viet Boulevard. They are the last remnants of Kim Nguu River, which ran parallel to the dyke. In those days, although urbanisation had largely crossed over to the other side of La Thanh dyke, the latter weaved its way through a heterogenous and low-density urban fabric (alternating between villages, farmland, floodplains, housing projects...). The section between Lenin Park and Tran Khat Chan Street is the only one serving more densely populated spaces, in the exact place where the first peri-urban colonial installations had been developed, near the old Mandarin Road.

De La Thanh Road through the Master Plan

Although successive master plans followed different and sometimes conflicting directions, the development and widening of De La Thanh Road were never questioned. It is one of the recurrent elements in these projects.

In the latest master plan, which maps out the city for 2020, De La Thanh Road is presented as a wide urban boulevard connecting the "Paper Bridge" on To Lich River to the Red River dyke, going from Cau Giay District through the districts of Ba Dinh, Dong Da and Hai Ba Trung. This new circular road is supposed to improve linkage between areas in the centre and the suburban districts, where issues concerning the contemporary city are being played out. As an added benefit, this new road provides a direct connection to the road to the international airport.

The office of Hanoi's chief architect has produced a representation of the 2020 master plan on the scale of each district. It is far more precise than the 1:25,000 map on the scale of the city; however, it is merely a zoning showing functional allocation of land similar to a plan of intention. It offers guidelines and directions regarding the district's future development but no precise information on projects: it displays an image of the future city.

The boulevard's development will take place in stages. The Ministry of Construction is responsible for the project. Work is being carried out by large state or international enterprises through complex financing packages involving local government, the state and foreign capital. The Japanese are actively investing in expensive infrastructure work and — via banks such as JIBIC — financing the construction of bridges, streets, and neighbourhoods for rehousing displaced populations.

Resistance from local government has been a powerful obstacle on certain sections of De La Thanh Road, where work was either slowed down or efficiently opposed. This is still the case for the section where the dyke runs alongside Kim Lien and Trung Tu. Disposessions and compensations, which are often subject to negotiation with the concerned parties, increase the financial cost of such works. As a result, planning of the circular road's execution must remain adaptable so as to avoid creating too many tensions with the inhabitants. Flexible planning is needed in addition to flexible finances.

Conclusion

Hanoi is a city with a long history, whose population has always displayed a strong attachment to its customs and traditions, as well as an enterprising and undisciplined spirit. Such personality traits are deeply rooted in city dwellers' behaviour and were perpetuated under colonial rule and through half a century of anti-colonial, civil and international war. They live on in the lifestyle of today's city.

Attachment to tradition and the ability to integrate outside influence have enabled the preservation of the commercial part of the ancient imperial city, even though it has been much altered and densified through the decades. Its way of life endures and its heritage is now listed. The patterns of urban composition, the conception of housing, and a particular way of inhabiting remain sturdy referents in many of the neighbourhoods scattered on the outskirts of the colonial city; they infiltrate villages swallowed by urban expansion, penetrate collective housing projects — the oldest of which are half a century old — and are sometimes reproduced in the recent extensions. Attachment to traditions has also engulfed the French urban legacy, which today is well integrated and claimed as national heritage.

Demographic pressure has resulted in the extension of the city's urban perimeter from the first days of the country's independence in 1954 and

even under American bombing. The driving force of this new phase of urbanization, which took place under emergency conditions and with very limited means, was the development of KTT, large collective housing projects built around facilities essential to their functioning and to the need of their inhabitants. The public road network was rationally extended to serve the KTT. This also enabled access to a multitude of villages on the outskirts which had already begun to accommodate a migrant working population before 1954. The Vietnamese enterprising spirit was thus put into practice through a very empirical type of urbanism, on which models imported from the USSR also exerted a strong influence.

Doi Moi has given free rein to the entrepreneurial spirit of a population who has been quick to adapt to the rules of capitalism as implemented in the officially socialist republic. State enterprises managed with relative freedom have started up a new urbanism of networks, covered by an all-conquering road system and signalled by buildings of varied workmanship coming out of the ground along the options of a master plan which, for the time being, looks like its objective is to create intensive urban sprawl in the spaces opened to concentric urbanization. Widespread construction fever is erecting a new generation of compartments borne of the private initiative of a multitude of small property developers. They exist alongside and compete with *Khu Do Thi*, the new generation of low-cost housing areas. Finally, separate suburbs seem to be in the making through massive intervention from a few big companies. And let us not forget the projected bridges and motorways reaching beyond the city of Hanoi, forerunners of the Red River Delta's forthcoming urban organization.

We have kept to describing the current situation: the importance of the urban transformation underway, the resistance of populations inconvenienced by these changes, the Hanoian population's ability to maintain its customs, as well as the trends of an affluent generation which is taking shape and opening up to the rest of the world. Our approach has been very down-to-earth. It is obvious to us that the streets and dwellings they serve or sustain have made, and will continue to make, Hanoi. It is also obvious that intimate appropriation of the use of urbanized space by city dwellers — both as individuals and as a whole — acting to maintain the usage of a firmly cultural everyday life, is the *sine qua non* condition which will allow the project-based urban planning currently at work in Hanoi to result in an actual improvement of living conditions. The new city currently emerging is not guaranteed to keep the promise of social and economic development under control.

Notes

- ¹ Mythical being, part human and part horse, which according to legend lived in Thessalia in ancient Greece. The Centaur symbolizes the strength of the warrior and the horse's velocity. The motorcycle seems similarly grafted onto the modern-day Hanoi, who cannot go further than a few steps without riding his rickety mount.
- ² From 1940: Japanese Occupation; 1946–54, Indochina War; 1964–75, Vietnam War; 1978–79, conflict with Cambodia; 1979, armed conflict with China; 1991, peace agreement with Cambodia and normalization of relations with China.
- ³ This is especially the case in the working-class but commercially attractive neighbourhoods of old Hanoi.
- ⁴ This is a quote from Le Ba Thao (1997, p. 300). For data regarding the ancient part of Hanoi, we mostly refer to the edition of *Docteur Hocquard* (1999) with an introduction and notes by Philippe Papin of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient [French School of Asian Studies]. We have also used various maps published in a special issue of the *Cahiers de l'IPRAUS* (Clément et al. 2001).
- ⁵ We came to this conclusion through our discussions with several senior officials and Vietnamese university professors during informal, non-protocolar meetings. This is also corroborated by the *Cahiers de l'IPRAUS* on Hanoi published in 2001 during the French Architecture Institute exhibition.
- ⁶ The Renovation, *Doi Moi*, was proclaimed in 1986, but only started being implemented at the beginning of the 1990s.
- ⁷ Incidentally, this type of housing is not specific to socialist countries.
- ⁸ Because of Hanoi's extraordinary vitality, maps and plans are constantly being altered.
- ⁹ TRAMOC is Hanoi's public transport company and IMV is the Cooperation Centre for Urban Development (Institut des Métiers de la Ville), the outcome of a cooperation between Hanoi People's Committee and the Ile-de-France region.
- ¹⁰ Composed of the "36 streets", the citadel and the old colonial quarter.
- ¹¹ These observations are based on a November 2003 interview with Duong Thi Vuong, acting chief of the Department of Category 1 Projects, Hanoi management unit for large-scale urban development projects, Hanoi People's Committee.
- ¹² Decree no. 123/2001/OD-UB, signed 6 December 2001. Section 7 states that new neighbourhoods (*Khu Do Thi*) should comprise 60 per cent collective buildings over nine storeys, and 40 per cent villas with garden. The second paragraph of this section stipulates that there should not be any construction of compartments in these new neighbourhoods. ("Compartments" are typical penetrating contiguous houses widespread in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City).
- ¹³ Historical centre: see note 10.
- ¹⁴ We have used the inventory of maps of cities of Asia Pacific established by Nathalie Lancret at IPRAUS; and in particular, the 2001 CD-ROM "Hanoi, The City In Maps, 1873–1943", in collaboration with the French Centre of Overseas

Archives [Centre des archives d'Outre-Mer] and the archive centre of the French Architecture Institute.

- ¹⁵ *Finage*: this French geographical term describes the area within the boundaries of a jurisdiction or parish territory.
- ¹⁶ This map represents the city in 1873. It was published by the Indochina Geographical Department in 1916. Original document, 1:25,000 (no graphic scale), on paper, colour representation, northwest orientation, note "approximate scale 1:25,000", the legend includes four categories: Gates (1-16), monuments (17-74), concessions (a-g) and citadel (A-R), two sheets (map and legend), dimensions: 68 x 65 cm.
- ¹⁷ Plan of the city, 9 April 1890, mapped out by Leclanger, head of the municipal roads and highways department, republished in November 1924 by *l'Éveil économique de l'Indochine*. Original document, 1:10,000 (graphic scale included), on paper, colour representation, north-east orientation, note: "in conformity with the general alignment plan approved on 9 April 1890". The legend includes information on constructions pertaining to the colonial order (1-50), brick constructions and thatched huts, public and religious buildings, road and water networks, as well as the site's geographical characteristics. Dimensions: 77 x 63 cm.
- ¹⁸ Ernest Hébrard was chief architect of Civilian Buildings and National Palaces and the first chief architect of the French Central Department of Architecture and Urbanism in Indochina in 1923.
- ¹⁹ Louis Georges Pineau was a first class architect of Indochina's Public Works Department from 1930 to 1945 and assistant director of the French Central Department of Architecture and Urbanism in Hanoi in 1941 and 1942.
- ²⁰ According to this layout, the historical centre spread far to the north and included Tay Lake.

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Cover photo:

Eastern area of Hoan Kiem District in Hanoi, on the right bank of the Red River. This area was built beyond the dyke (seen here surmounted by the wide Tran Quang Khai Street) and is easily inundated during the flood season. "Compartment" houses mix with collective housing buildings. Both of Hanoi's central bridges are visible: Chuong Duong Bridge, which is used by motorized vehicles and Long Bien Bridge in the background (formerly Doumer Bridge). The latter was built between 1898 and 1902 by the company Dayde & Pille from Creil, and by Vietnamese workers, according to plans by Gustave Eiffel; it is 1,682 m long and its metallic armature contains nineteen spans. The bridge was considered a technical and architectural feat at the time. It suffered severe damage from American bombing between 1967 and 1971. Today, a railway track still crosses the bridge, which is also used by cyclists and pedestrians. Restoration work is planned. On the other side of the river, on the left bank, is Long Bien District (formerly Gia Lam) (*Photo: Patrick Gubry, November 2005*).

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