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- ◀ THE SWALLOW CAVE WONDER
- GOOD GREEN GOVERNANCE ▶



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DR. ALMUTH MEYER-ZOLLITSCH

Chào mừng các bạn đến với TP. Hồ Chí Minh, thủ đô kinh tế sôi động nhất và thành phố lớn nhất Việt Nam. Sách này muốn mời bạn cùng lướt qua những phần đã biết và chưa biết của thành phố hấp dẫn này và muốn để bạn cùng cảm nhận sức sống mãnh liệt và năng động của nó. Bạn hãy cùng tham gia vào dòng chảy không ngừng của giao thông, có đôi chút lộn xộn nhưng luôn tiến lên phía trước của TP. Hồ Chí Minh.

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TP. HỒ CHÍ MINH: MEGA CITY / PHOTO BOOK

MICHAEL WAIBEL, HENNING HILBERT

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## GOOD GREEN GOVERNANCE

Following his two books which trace the development of Hanoi and HCMC, Dr. Michael Waibel from the Department of Human Geography, University of Hamburg, is working on a similar project about the central city of Danang together with local and foreign partners. In this interview, Dr. Waibel talks about these projects.

### Q: What feedback have you received following your two books?

A: Regarding both the photo books “TP. Hồ Chí Minh: MEGA City” in 2014 and “Hà Nội: CAPITAL City” in 2015, the feedback was generally enthusiastic. In particular, two chapters of these books were praised. In the book about HCMC, the chapter “Change over Time” illustrates the high dynamics of urban development in the course of the past 10-15 years, whereas the chapter “People in the City” exhibits city inhabitants in their private living environment. Astrid Schulz, a professional photographer based in London, took the photos of the latter chapter. Furthermore, the drone photos within the “Views from Above” chapter of the Hanoi book received very positive feedback. Those photos were taken by Philippe Le, a French architect.

### In what ways do you think such feedback can be used to improve urban development in the two cities?

The photo books are showing the city from a comprehensive spatial and social perspective. Readers should learn about the various facets of the city they live in. Of course,

I would like to show the inherent beauty of the city, but at the same time I don't want to negate problems such as poverty, environmental pollution or loss of beautiful colonial architecture. Ideally, I would like city dwellers to identify more with the city they live in. My position is that people who are more aware of their city behave in a more responsible way and contribute to sustainable urban development.

### You are conducting a similar project on Danang. Could you explain your choice?

It will probably be called “Đà Nẵng: GREEN City” and will be out in early 2016. Danang City is an obvious choice because it is the most important city in the central region of Vietnam, which is expected to develop economically in a very dynamic way in the near future. By means of this publication, I also want to contribute to putting Danang City on the map of international and regional investors.

### What are pros and cons in Danang City that you see?

First of all, it has to be highlighted that Danang is a beach city. It has tremendous assets in terms of leisure

value not only because of the extensive beach strip and the availability of many five-star hotels, but also due to its close vicinity of major cultural destinations such as Hue, the former imperial capital, the ancient town of Hoi An, the Marble Mountains and the My Son Holy Land. The airport is very close to the city center, which makes it convenient for business travelers as well. Life is more relaxed than in hectic Hanoi and HCMC, and people are said to be friendlier. There is always a fresh breeze from the sea, the environmental pollution is significantly less than in the two cities, there is little traffic congestion and there is excellent transport infrastructure with many beautiful bridges, wide boulevards and palm trees. The seafood restaurants along the beach strip are certainly among the best of the entire Southeast Asia.

On the downside, it may be said that there are few cultural entertainment opportunities, such as theaters. The academic level of the universities might still be a bit lower compared to Hanoi and to HCMC. This may deter potential investors from knowledge-based industrial companies, which Danang urgently wants to attract.

The increase of extreme weather

hơn thời tiết  
đang views to  
and years.

Chúng tôi muốn nói với bạn rằng cuộc đời chỉ đầy những niềm vui  
và nỗi buồn được các góc nhìn của bạn nhìn thấy - lại ảnh hưởng đến  
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sẽ lớn.

Dr. Alnoth Meyer-Zalutsch  
Director of Center for Urban Vietnam  
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HANOI: CAPITAL CITY PHOTO BOOK

MICHAEL WAIBEL

# Hà Nội CAPITAL CITY



## EXPAT LIFE LIVING

industries. This development is just at the beginning, though.

### In your opinion, what are most prominent values of Vietnam?

The biggest asset of Vietnam is that its population is young, well-educated, energetic and generally optimistic. The country is very diverse in terms of climate, topography and culture, which makes it a fascinating travel destination. The cities offer a good quality of life with potential to do even better in the future. I am looking forward to the development of metro lines in the future and the further dissemination of e-mobility. All in all, I think that Vietnam has a bright future.

### And how about room to improve in terms of urban development?

In my opinion, the biggest problem of Vietnam's big cities is environmental pollution. Particularly in Hanoi, air pollution is endangering the quality of life of its urban population. Those environmental shortcomings can only be confronted by crosscutting comprehensive efforts avoiding purely technocratic sector approaches. The prevalent institutional fragmentation and silo mentality of specific departments should be minimized. Promoting sustainable development and socially inclusive green growth and energy-efficient urban structures are the key strategies to deal with shortcomings. There is not so much a lack of technological knowledge, but of implementation knowledge. We will need to identify new alliances between state, economy and civil society. Thereby we should be aware of the fact that good governance is more than just good government. Environmental approaches should not only be implemented in a top-down way but should, for example, integrate bottom-up initiatives driven by civil society.

### What are your future plans related to Vietnam?

In the future, I would like to continue to observe, document, research and consult urban development in Vietnam to contribute to more sustainable development and to what I call "good green governance."

Reported by Trung Chau

events related to climate change may endanger the livability of the city. Along with being frequently hit by typhoons, many new urban areas have recently been erected on the periphery of the city. Most of them are pretty much empty but those areas formerly served as natural retention areas. The loss of those spaces may increase the danger of urban flooding in the future.

### As Danang is smaller than Hanoi and HCMC. Should it look to Singapore when it comes to urban identity?

I consider the smaller size of Danang as an advantage because it makes urban governability easier. In this case less is more. Singapore seems to be the favored role model of economic development for cities all across Southeast Asia. It has been highly successful and the income of Singa-

pore residents is now higher than that of most Western countries. But Singapore is a strictly regulated city-state, guided by a visionary but strict leader for decades. It has a diverse ethnic mixture with the Chinese as major population and a very efficient urban administration inherited from the British Empire. It has the second biggest container port in the world and a hinterland significantly less developed which allows for relocation of cheap labor manufacturing. Therefore, the situation there cannot easily be compared to other cities. Each city has to find its own path toward economic prosperity; each city has to find its own urban identity.

### What are striking similarities and differences between Hanoi, HCMC and Danang City after your recent research?

In my opinion each city has its own, very specific identity and that is a good thing. To put it simply: Hanoi is the epicenter of the Vietnamese urban civilization offering a rich cultural heritage, excellent institutions of higher education and a unique blend of architecture from various periods. It has Hoan Kiem Lake and the surrounding park area as true heart of the city. HCMC and the vibrant harbor city and the economic hub of the whole country. It is the first mega city of Vietnam and the lifestyles there are much dynamic. Danang City is promoting itself as green, or livable, city. It is the most important city of the central region offering a more relaxed lifestyle, little environmental pollution, fantastic beaches and world-class cultural and tourist sites in the surroundings. It has the potential to develop into the Silicon Valley of the whole of Vietnam with abundant knowledge-based

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Dr. Michael Waibel