

HANS-HEINRICH BASS / CHRISTINE BIEHLER / LY HUY TUAN (eds.), *Auf dem Weg zu nachhaltigen städtischen Transportsystemen. Ein deutsch-vietnamesischer Dialog über die Zukunft der Stadt und die Stadt der Zukunft*. München / Mering: Rainer Hampp Verlag, 2011. 269 pages, € 29.80. ISBN 978-3-86618-639-2

This volume deals with one of Vietnam's biggest development challenges, traffic. Traffic volumes have increased dramatically during the past two decades. This is mainly a result of increasing incomes in the course of the successful implementation of market-led reforms in Vietnam, a country still under Communist one-party rule. The rapidly emerging middle class population is presently in the process of switching from motorcycles as main means of transportation to private cars. Vietnamese planning authorities are not able to cope with this dynamic situation, also suffering from adequate funding.

Against this backdrop, the present publication, a tangible result of the German Year in Vietnam 2010, funded by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the German Ministry of Education and Research, has come out at the right time. The fifteen chapters contain contributions from Vietnamese and German scholars, German experts working in Vietnam as well as from German and Vietnamese artists. The scope of disciplines is very wide: It ranges from engineering, political science, spatial planning, political economy, to the arts and social science and transport. The editors frankly admit in their foreword that it was not always easy to find a common language but that is was worth the effort. The reviewer would readily agree.

The first section of the volume deals with Vietnamese perspectives on the current traffic situation and future development strategies. Michael Bose gives the most accurate analysis here: One of his suggestions is that the motorbike as space-efficient means of transport and symbol of the country's economic progress should be included in the exploration of future solutions towards sustainable urban traffic. This attitude is in sharp contrast to the rather modernist and technocratic approach of Ty Sy Sua from the University of Transportation, Hanoi. He reports, for example, that the official transport master plan 2020 for Ho Chi Minh City envisages a drastic decline in the motorcycle share of the total traffic volume from 76,5% to 26.3%. In general, the Vietnamese plans presented seem to be overambitious, they focus too much on high-tech solutions and totally lack details of how to finance such a modern traffic infrastructure. In his conclusion Michael Bose points out rightly that single solutions will not solve the existing traffic problems, what is necessary are a set of integrated strategies for all modes of transportation.

The second section offers German perspectives. The first chapter by Hans-Heinrich Bass from the Institute for Transport and Development of Bremen University gives a solid overview of the importance of transport systems for sustainability, urbanism in Germany and the influence of socio-economic changes. The most interesting part is the discussion of four options for increasing sustainability within the transport sector, namely technical improvements,

organisational innovations, behaviour change and the re-organisation of the use of space to reduce the volume of traffic. Regarding the latter the author cites the good example of the Ancient Quarter of Hanoi where mixed-use neighbourhoods dominate and the combination of living and working generates less traffic. The second and third chapters of this section illustrate the characteristics of the public transport system in Germany with case studies from Bremen and Berlin.

The third section draws comparisons from the international and cultural perspective. The first chapter by Jörg Knieling (HafenCity University Hamburg) compares the regional urban development model of Hanoi municipality with those of Hamburg and Helsinki. He highlights the importance of population growth which influences the pressure on settlement structures and argues for an anticipating integration of urban settlements into the urban transportation system. At the same time, he points to the importance of paying regard to local planning cultures when developing new visions. The last chapter of this section is by the artist Christine Biehler who gives a vivid and inspiring overview of how artists have dealt with questions of mobility and the fetish car over time and space. Coloured photos illustrate how this has materialized into artefacts.

In the final section specific problems and practical solutions are presented. For example, Karl Hans Hartwig introduces the idea of city-tolls and Van Hong Tan et al. present a traffic simulation-based scenario for Ho Chi Minh City, warning of the excessive traffic problems related to a further increase of car use and arguing for a massive quantitative as well as qualitative extension of the public bus service. This is deemed necessary to increase acceptance by the local urban population and promote their willingness for behaviour change.

The last chapter by Christiane Molt deals with the development of the public bus system in Hanoi, which has been far more successful than in Ho Chi Minh City. Similar to Michael Bose, she also pleads for connecting urban development planning more closely with traffic planning. More comprehensive and integrative planning approaches would contribute to a decrease in institutional fragmentation, undoubtedly one of the most severe structural problems in Vietnam.

A concluding synopsis by the editors is missing however. Such a piece should have brought together the heterogeneous approaches and, at best, established a common ground for developing locally adapted recommendations and so leading to more sustainable transport systems in Vietnam. But maybe this is asking too much – there is indeed no “master solution” – and this could be the task of another publication. Assembling so many different views from various scientific and personal backgrounds within one single volume is in itself a considerable achievement. In general, this volume is well worth reading, even if it cannot solve the more structural problems of Vietnam’s traffic landscape, such as lack of financial resources and competent management, enforcement problems or institutional fragmentation. It enriches the international and local discourse. In particular, the envisaged translation into Vietnamese will provide inspiration and contribute to much needed capacity building and hopefully to an

increased awareness of sustainability issues among the relevant stakeholders in Vietnam.

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HUNG HO-FUNG (ed.), *China and the Transformation of Global Capitalism*. (Themes in Global Social Change). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009. X, 212 pages, US\$ 27.00 (pb). ISBN 978-0-8018-9308-7

Most books published over the past years that try to explain China's rise in the 21st century tend to trace the country's development to globalization in a general way. Few of them investigate in-depth the correlation between the expansion of the Chinese economy and the transformation of global capitalism. "China and the Transformation of Global Capitalism" edited by Hung Ho-fung seems to be the first to interpret the "transformation of global capitalism in the late twenty century" (p. 6) as the most important precondition for China's rise.

According to the authors, three main "transformations" (p. 7) have enabled China to embrace globalization and thus paved the way for the rapid and dramatic rise of the country. "The first transformation of global capitalism" is seen in the so-called "new international division of labor in the 1970s". It was this "new round of labor division" that turned parts of the periphery into new manufacturing bases in the global system, initially the East Asian Tigers including South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore, and then Mainland China. The second transformative effects derived, as Hung Ho-fung points out, from "the erosion of the legitimate leadership of the United States over other core economies" (p. 9). The open challenges posed by the "Japanese development state" and "German corporatist capitalism" to "the American model of liberal capitalism" had generated the decline of U.S. hegemony over core powers and eased China's opening and integration in the world economy.

Concurrent with the decline of U.S. hegemony, according to Hung, was the third transformation in terms of "the implosion of most working-class-based, state-power-oriented mass movements that had once effectively constrained the class power of capital across the world system". This "implosion" of the "class struggle" is used by the authors to explain why the Reagan administration and the Thatcher government managed to "dismantle" the Keynesian welfare state and to promote free trade globally, encouraging companies to "go out" (p. 15) to invest in countries with cheaper production costs. Particularly timely, this movement met with a Chinese government under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping who wanted to jump into globalization, but had nothing to offer the world at that time but cheap labor and market perspectives.

The book comprises 10 contributions dealing with topics ranging from China's unique ability to grasp the opportunities generated by the three transformations of global capitalism to its role in reshaping the distribution of