

Dossier

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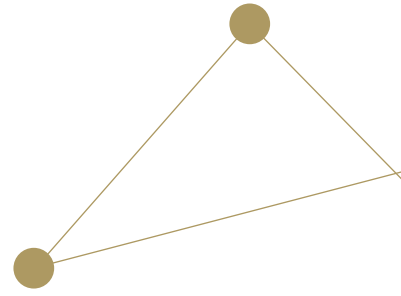
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Happy 1000th, Hanoi!
CHÀO MỪNG HÀ NỘI 1000 NĂM!



HANOI

Hanoi is booming Heading **West**



As it develops into a modern business metropolis, Hanoi is drawn westwards. Entire provinces are being absorbed by the growing city. Luxurious housing estates, high-tech parks and skyscrapers are being built. Hanoi's cultural identity might be eradicated as it expands westwards, fears Michael Waibel.



“Linh Dam New Urban Area”: Hanoi's middle-class is drawn to new areas at the city's periphery. Their houses seem to combine the style of French colonial villas with the narrow elegance of tunnel houses. Solar panels, such as the ones seen on one of the roofs, are not very common. The growing economy has resulted in increasing demand for energy.



Brick shells in Viet Hung, the new building area. The houses often remain empty for several years before a buyer is found.



The more rural surroundings of Hanoi.



Hanoi is one of the most beautiful metropolitan cities in Southeast Asia. Various historic influences mix there and form an inspiring mélange of different architecture: relics of stately grandeur from the imperial era; the lavish boulevards, lined with trees, from French colonial rule; ostentatious villas in quiet gardens; numerous peaceful pagodas; uncountable representative buildings from the peak of socialist planned economy; and new buildings signaling the capitalist economy, growth and *Đổi mới*. Several of these new buildings conform to the often uniform requirements of the real-estate market and the growing middle-class. The City Council has ambitious plans: its goal is to develop Hanoi into a modern, globally competitive metropolis and Greater Hanoi should become Asia's first sustainable capital by 2030.

The city has almost reached this goal. PricewaterhouseCoopers ranks Hanoi first in a list of 151 metropolises based on its economic growth of seven percent up to 2025, ahead of cities in China and India. This is thanks to the economic renewal process (*Đổi mới* 1986) initiated by the one party government of Vietnam's Communist Party, which is still in place today. Following *Đổi mới*, average per-capita economic performance has quadrupled within only two decades. This can be seen most clearly in the two major cities: Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi.

Hanoi is growing not only economically, but also geographically. Hà Tây, the former neighboring provin-

ce west of the city, and other smaller provinces around Hanoi have been absorbed into the metropolis since 2008. The city's area has tripled to almost 3,250 km², of which 190 m² is urbanized. The 6.5 million inhabitants of Hanoi almost equal the number of people living in Ho Chi Minh City, the business capital situated in southern Vietnam and perpetual competitor of Hanoi since colonial times. Hanoi's expansion towards the west is expected to connect the representational buildings of the periphery, such as the National Congress Center, Hanoi Museum, and the new stadium, as well as several surrounding residential areas, to the city center and help integrate them into the city. However, these ambitious plans, expected to be finished by 2030, to become "Asia's most sustainable capital" require enormous investments by third parties. The Korean-American consortium, which has developed a master plan, is still looking for local and foreign investors. A total of 52 billion US dollars will be needed.

On the western outskirts of Hanoi a new city center is being built. This area also houses the architecturally impressive National Congress Center, which was finished in a record time of only two years for the 2006 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit. Vietnam joined the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation in 1998. The Congress Center and the new district stand for economic openness, the Western world as a model and the expected emergence that will be symbolized »



Luxury and subsistence meet at Hanoi's periphery.
Cows in front of the Manor Estate, a luxurious residential area.

» by the Keangnam Hanoi Landmark Tower, Vietnam's tallest building in the future. The building will reach 336 meters skywards by 2011. It will house 300 apartments and hotel rooms, as well as offices on 71 floors. The new construction areas in the urban periphery are mostly developed by major companies that carry out everything from project development to construction. These large enterprises are partially owned by national ministries, such as the Ministries for Construction or Finance, or are spin-offs of Hanoi City Council.

The new development areas Linh Dam, Trung Hoa and Viet Hung are examples of this system. These areas are designed to house middle-class families. The shells of the buildings often remain empty for several years until buyers are found for the imitation French colonial style exterior. The buyers are then allowed to choose the paint they want. Joint ventures are still very rare.

The Indonesian company Ciputra has built the luxury quarter Ciputra Hanoi International City, which is reminiscent of a gated community. The Korean firm Posco has built the gigantic area Splendora, directly at the new central development axis to the west towards Hoa Lac, in cooperation with



Vietnam's largest building company Vinaconex. An exception is the Manor estate with its historic architectural style. It was developed by Vietnamese private company Bitexco, which is said to have very good contacts to

the family of the former Prime Minister. The expansion to the west of Hanoi is designed to improve the use of economic potential and provide better positioning as a global business location. The city's planning authorities intend to manage the real estate as efficiently as possible – particularly, as land prices in Hanoi are already higher than those in Ho Chi Minh City.

However, this is not the only reason. The political and economic elites in the capital understand rural areas as precious building land. The surrounding land is in jeopardy of becoming the subject of land speculation. The rural infrastructure and economy, which still provides Hanoi with agricultural products, is under threat. Many street vendors commute to the city to sell their wares on a daily basis. The City Council has an ambiguous relationship with this kind of informal trade. Laws were passed to confine this sort of business to certain streets. On the other

MY HANOI



"My home is Quỳnh Lưu (Nghệ Tĩnh). I came to Hanoi to earn a living. To us, Hanoi is a hot and cramped location for migrant workers. If I manage to earn a bit more money I will visit all the famous sights in Hanoi with my wife to learn more about the city.

After all, I am working in the capital!" *Le Sy Dao, builder at Keangnam*



Rice field



The Indonesian building company Ciputra is responsible for this version of the Trevi Fountain in suburbia.



At Hoa Lac - Highway

hand, it could also be this traditional image that bothers city planners. The conical hats are a symbol of the rural Vietnam that should be left behind. Vietnam also wants to get away from its role as an "extended workbench for foreigners" and is planning to reduce its dependency on exports. One goal is to restructure the country's economy: high-quality services and industrial products instead of T-shirts for multinational textile companies.

Hoa Lac High-Tech Park, thirty kilometers from Hanoi's inner city, was founded in 1998. This area, designed as a kind of Art Green Cyber City, is expected to become a cluster for knowledge-based economy – "Hanoi's Silicon Valley" – and attract international investors from the appropriate industries, according to central government plans. Some faculties of Hanoi's Technical University will be relocated to the High-Tech Park to facilitate university spin-offs and provide firms

with qualified staff. To connect the region to the city, the Ha Lac road has been widened to 140 meters for private vehicles recently. Hanoi's growth and economic development is at a crossroads. How can Hanoi position itself as a modern metropolis in global competition without giving up its rich cultural and urban-architectural heritage? The city has to live up to the demands of the higher living standards of its citizens; has to cope with the constant migration of the rural population to the city; overcome its traffic problems and, last but not least, provide an attractive location for international investors and knowledge-based industries, as well as basic services. The charms of the inner city could be an attraction to the much-wooded creative classes that should not be underestimated. The first signs can already be seen. It would be nice, if Hanoi could manage to build on its uniqueness under global competition, instead of just falling back on it. —



"The first time I came to Hanoi in 1996, I fell in love with the city."

Michael Waibel is an economic geographer at the University of Hamburg. He has visited Hanoi more than 40 times since then. At present, he is a partner in a project on strategies to adapt to climate change in Ho Chi Minh City. The project is funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).