

# Pacific Geographies

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Perspectives of indigenous and non-indigenous guides

## **The Yi and the Internet**

Promoting Ethnicity in Chinese Virtuality

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Between the devil and the deep blue sea



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# EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

As you know, we have used the editorial to communicate changes to the format of *Pacific News* in the past, and this is another such occasion. The journal name *Pacific News* reflected the nature of articles and research notes in the earlier years of the journal, but it is not appropriate to its current scientific nature anymore. For this reason, we have decided to publish as *Pacific Geographies* from this issue onwards. The new title retains the regional focus but it also reflects the conceptual nature of many of the articles. We believe that the new title is not only a more accurate representation of the journal's aims and content but also more attractive to potential readers and authors.

It is fitting, then, that this issue of *Pacific Geographies* covers a wide range of locales in the Pacific Rim as well as a wide range of academic fields. Trisha Dwyer and Andreas Holtz take social scientific approaches to discussing their Polynesia-based research, whilst urban Asia is the focus of Liang Yang's and Catherine Earl's work. Social developments both online ("Chinese Virtuality") and offline (migration) are discussed in essays by Olivia Kraef and Antje Missbach.

Issue 40 of *Pacific Geographies*, to be published in July 2013, will be a Special Issue on "Environmental Politics in the Asia-Pacific region". Dr Jan Mosedale, University of Sunderland, will act as the guest editor. Jan has been a member of our Scientific Advisory Board since its inception in 2009. If you would like to contribute to the Special Issue on Environmental Politics in the Asia-Pacific Region, please contact [jan.mosedale@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:jan.mosedale@sunderland.ac.uk). We also invite you to contribute on other topic areas relevant to *Pacific Geographies*, please contact us with any enquiries or articles that you wish to submit.

We hope you enjoy this new issue of *Pacific Geographies*.

Dr. Michael Waibel and Dr Julia N. Albrecht

## Pacific Geographies

*Pacific Geographies* (PG), ISSN (Print) 2196-1468 / (Online) 2199-9104, is the peer-reviewed semi-annual publication of the Association for Pacific Studies. From 1992-2012 it was labelled *Pacific News* (ISSN 1435-8360). It is published through the Department of Human Geography of Hamburg University, Germany.

The PG provides an interdisciplinary platform for an academic discussion of social, cultural, environmental, political and economic issues in the Asia-Pacific region. In order to uphold scientific standards, the PG is implementing a peer-review process. Articles marked as „scientific papers“ have been peer-reviewed by two external reviewers. Articles marked as „research notes“ have been peer-reviewed by one external reviewer and a member of the editorial board. All other articles have been reviewed by the editorial board.

APSA-Members receive the *Pacific Geographies* at no cost as a membership benefit.



The Association for Pacific Studies (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Pazifische Studien e.V., APSA) was founded in 1987 at the Department of Geography of the University of Technology in Aachen. Activities include workshops, conferences, public lectures and poster exhibitions. The book series *Pazifik Forum* was initiated in 1990. In 1992, it was complemented by the publication of the journal *Pacific Geographies*. The latter has developed into the major activity of APSA in recent years.

The APSA sees itself as one of the largest scientific networks in Germany for academics and practitioners with an interest in the Asia-Pacific region as well as academic exchange.

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### COVER PICTURE

**Shane Te Ruki of Ngati  
Maniapoto, National  
Museum of China**

© 2012 Image Courtesy of Te Papa  
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The title image shows Shane Te Ruki of Ngati Maniapoto during the opening event of the "Kura Pounamu: Treasured stone of Aotearoa New Zealand" Exhibition in the National Museum of China. The exhibition marks the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and New Zealand. It explores the significant role pounamu (New Zealand Greenstone) has in building and maintaining personal and political relationships.



# Interpretation in Maori cultural tourism in New Zealand: Exploring the perspectives of indigenous and non-indigenous guides

Trisha Dwyer

*Abstract: Control over representation to ensure cultural integrity is a key issue in indigenous tourism. This article highlights the importance of the role of the guide and the influence of the guides' characteristics in managing Maori cultural tourism experiences. Drawing on findings from qualitative research at Te Puia (New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute) in Rotorua and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington, key factors identified in managing interpretation include the source of information, the relevance of tribal diversity and whose perspective is being shared, and the personal experiences and meanings communicated by the guides. The way information is presented is found to be dependent not only on the guide's knowledge of Maori cultural heritage, but also on the guide's understanding and perception of visitors. The characteristics of guides, the diversity of tribal and ethnic identities of Maori and non-Maori guides, and their upbringing and socio-cultural contexts clearly influence how Maori culture is shared with international visitors.*

**Key Words:** New Zealand; Maori tourism; cultural tourism; interpretation; guiding

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Cultural tourism experiences provide opportunities for cultural exchange between the host culture and visitors. With growing interest in indigenous tourism, the extent of indigenous control over cultural content and representation becomes increasingly important. In managing interpretation processes, guides have an influential role in facilitating understanding and appreciation in visitors, thereby fostering respect for indigenous cultural heritage. In a guided tour this exchange is facilitated by the tour guide who needs to consider the diversity of the visitors' characteristics. By taking a visitor-centred approach to guiding and interpretation, guides adjust the way the experience is managed so that it is interesting, meaningful and relevant.



Source: Trisha Dwyer

An interpreted visit to the carving school at Te Puia is part of the guided visit of the attraction

Drawing on primary research, this article explores the significance of the role of the guide and the influence of the guide's characteristics on managing interpretation in Māori cultural tourism experiences for international visitors to New Zealand. First, there is an overview of tourism to New Zealand, of the key themes in the literature on indigenous tourism and Māori cultural tourism, as well as literatures on guiding and interpretation of indigenous cultural heritage. This is followed by a description of the research method and key findings from the study, in particular the influence of the guide in managing interpretation. Finally, the implications for management and training in Māori tourism are discussed.

### **Maori tourism in NZ**

The indigenous Māori people of New Zealand have long had involvement in tourism as entrepreneurs, guides, and performers. In the 1870s, Māori guides from the Te Arawa tribe were already involved in tourism, initially hosting international visitors at the Pink and White Terraces prior to their destruction in 1886 and also in the Whakarewarewa geothermal valley where guiding continues today (McClure, 2004; Tourism New Zealand, 2001). Today, 6% of international visitors participate in Māori cultural activities, making up the majority (76%) of Māori cultural tourists (Ministry of Tourism, 2009a). In addition, museums provide opportunities for Māori cultural tourism and are visited by 27% of international visitors (Ministry of Tourism, 2009b). Visitor markets are becoming increasingly diverse and although Māori cultural tourism is not the main reason for visiting New Zealand, it is an important part of the visitor experience (Colmar Brunton, 2004).

### **Indigenous tourism, guiding and interpretation**

Issues of ownership, control, and representation are highly relevant in indigenous cultural tourism. The level of indigenous control influences the extent to which culture is controlled or dispossessed (Hinch & Butler, 1996). Cultural heritage is cultural property, and tourism can conflict with traditional protocols (Bunten, 2010). According to Ryan and Huyton (2002), cultural integrity in indigenous tourism relates to control over content in terms of what is being shared,

whose cultural perspective it is and on whose authority. Empowerment may be achieved through ownership of the political and social aspects of heritage (McArthur & Hall, 1996) and in indigenous tourism experiences there is an opportunity to challenge stereotypes and change attitudes (Bunten, 2008, 2010; Howard et al., 2001).

In Māori tourism, ownership and control are key issues. Tourism for Māori may be considered as a way to empower and to achieve legitimacy (Ryan & Crofts, 1997). The involvement of Māori in the control and management of tourism is important not only in terms of generating employment and economic benefits but also for ensuring cultural integrity and control over representation. Key management strategies identified in a study of successful Māori tourism attractions (Hinch, McIntosh & Ingram, 1999) included management guided by Māori traditions, promoting cultural pride among employees and empowering them to speak with authority. Bunten (2010) found that Māori employees enjoyed sharing their culture and that their personal experiences added value to the Māori cultural tourism products. With importance placed on Māori values, cultural integrity, and honesty (Hinch et al., 1999; McIntosh, Zygadlo, & Matunga, 2004), consultation with Māori elders over which aspects of culture can be shared may be required to ensure control over cultural content (Amoamo, 2007). Representation and recognition of tribal identity and diversity is still a current issue in Māori tourism (Amoamo, 2007; Amoamo & Thompson, 2010).

In cultural tourism experiences the tour guide is a cross-cultural mediator, responsible for connecting the visitors to the resource and facilitating understanding. In face-to-face interpretation guides have the opportunity to adapt to the characteristics and needs of the visitors. In indigenous tourism, the guide's background and ethnic identity is considered important in terms of representation and sharing indigenous perspectives (Bunten, 2008, 2010; Howard et al., 2001). In order to maintain cultural integrity, challenging stereotypes and changing attitudes is the guide's resource management role (Howard et al., 2001). Guides may engage in a sophisticated style of manipulation as part of a strategy of resistance (Bunten, 2008). Interpreta-

tion, therefore, may be employed to achieve organisational goals in indigenous tourism (McArthur & Hall, 1996; McKercher & du Cros, 2002) and maintain cultural integrity. Although there is extensive literature on Māori tourism, the lack of research on tour guides highlighted a gap in understanding their role as cultural mediators managing Māori tourism experiences.

### **Method**

Qualitative case study research was carried out in order to gain insights into the guide's role in managing Māori cultural tour experiences for international visitors. Furthermore, the study compared and contrasted the perspectives on and approaches to guiding and interpretation of Māori and non-Māori guides. Case studies were selected from attractions offering guided Māori cultural tour experiences for international visitors and organisations with internal training programmes for guides. In addition, Māori cultural heritage is central to the purpose and function of two organisations selected. Te Puia (New Zealand Māori Arts and Crafts Institute) is a Māori organisation located in the Whakarewarewa geothermal valley in Rotorua where there is a long history of Māori tourism (Images 1 and 2). All of the guides at Te Puia are Māori, the majority being from the local tribe and part of a guiding legacy dating back over five generations. Te Papa (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa) is a bicultural organisation with Māori and non-Māori guides (Image 3).

A total of 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted, with 14 Māori participants (identified by an asterisk\*), including a manager from each organisation, and 7 non-Māori guides. Although a pseudonym could be chosen for confidentiality, many participants chose to use their own names. A social constructivist approach to the research allowed multiple voices and multiple perspectives to be reflected. The subjectivity of the non-Māori researcher is also recognised, being an insider to guiding and the cross-cultural dimensions of interpretation yet an outsider to Māori culture.

### **Narrative and voice**

In managing information, it is acknowledged that there are multiple sources and a diversity of narratives

which may reflect different perspectives. The importance of consultation with knowledgeable people, mentoring, and building knowledge and understanding through on-going learning, whether formally or informally, was identified by managers and guides from both organisations.

“If you don’t really know and you’re going to find out, make sure the source is reliable. (...) And there’s nothing better than going back to the source you came from, you know from within your own family.” (Hapeta\*-TePuia)

Information may be verified by knowledgeable people both within and outside the organisation, including consultation with Māori elders (Amoamo, 2007).

“This is why we have people like kaumātua, other kaumātua [Māori elders], which we can discuss things with and talk about things, and look at differences. But we’re there, I’m also there as a safety net if you like for some of our non-Māori guides.” (Rangimoana\*-TePapa)

Tribal diversity adds to the complexity of interpretation. In some cases, the source of information and whose perspective is being shared may be of personal relevance and meaning for the guides, in particular when sharing their own tribal perspectives. Even though there may be a tendency to provide general information about Māori culture during tours for international visitors, both Māori and non-Māori guides also need to develop an awareness and understanding of tribal differences.

At Te Puia, narratives of the local tribe are linked to the landscapes which are a key aspect of the visitor experience. At Te Papa, as the national museum, information about Māori culture and tribal narratives may be viewed through a bicultural framework and the historical context of New Zealand. The influence of Māori culture on New Zealand as a nation is presented, as well as the impacts of social and political processes on Māori.

### Guide background

Little attention has been paid to how guides contribute and share an understanding of contemporary Māori culture and the way in which their diverse

combinations of ancestry, heritage, and upbringings may influence cultural tourism experiences. The information about Māori culture provided by guides may be general, or shared at a level of personal meaning.

“I look at the generalness of being Māori. (...) I believe that what I say is very common. It might change with different iwi [tribal group] that we have because of slightly different influences. I believe I represent my people first and foremost, my iwi [tribal group], and then my entire people second.” (Shane\*-TePuia)

In addition to tribal narratives and family stories, guides may include their own perspectives. Managers at both Te Puia and Te Papa emphasised the importance of the personal qualities and individualised interpretation of guides, as well as the contribution of the guide’s own stories.

“I know that hosts have to draw on their own experience in order to be sincere and genuine. The visitor does not want carbon-copied interpretation on the floor.” (Jay\*-TePapaManager)

For many of the guides at Te Puia the narratives of the local tribe about the geothermal area were learnt as children growing up in the area.

“On the marae [Māori village] – that’s where I started learning (...) I’m not a fluent speaker (...) I was brought up here so I only know one side, one tribal side. (...) my father is from another area so I’d like to know about that side. (...) So with the myths and legends, I only know of the ones here.” (Ryl\*-TePuia)

For guides of mixed tribal ancestry, their understanding and awareness of tribal differences may depend on their own upbringing and learning experiences. Guides from different regions and tribes may bring their own stories and understanding, sharing a range of tribal perspectives with visitors. In addition to diversity in tribal ancestry, many of the Māori guides mentioned combined heritage, such as European ancestry, and may choose to share an understanding of this with visitors.

“It should always be positive, you know. (...) But I’m not biased, I’m also positive within the Pūkehū-Māori

[New Zealand European] within me as well – which they are interested in. So I’m not biased to one part, I bring the whole package in.” (Kiri\*-TePuia)

Personal accounts shared by Māori and non-Māori guides of different characteristics may reflect some of the diversity of experiences and perspectives found within contemporary society.

“Because we cover a little bit about urban Māori and the effect of European colonisation, and I talk a bit about my own experience growing up without Te Reo and having to learn it as an adult and how that’s impacted my life and things. They can have more of a, I suppose a personal perspective from me.” (Maraea\*-TePapa)

Although non-Māori guides may endeavour to share an understanding of Māori culture, most pointed out that it is not possible to speak from a Māori perspective. However, a personal perspective from a non-Māori guide may still contribute to an understanding of a shared history with Māori in New Zealand.

“I can’t speak as a Māori, I’m a Pūkehū (...) I’m talking to them as a person who has this place as their heritage and their home. And, as I say, the Treaty is my story as well.” (Joe, non-Māori -TePapa)

Similarities identified within the guide’s own upbringing and cultural background may, in some cases, facilitate understanding and appreciation and be a source of personal meaning.

“Well I think through my upbringing, the values are similar to Māori culture. The Chinese people they believe in hospitality, welcoming people (...) but also having respect for our elders – Māori culture does so.” (Basil, non-Māori -TePapa)

These insights into the resource management role (Howard et al., 2001) of non-indigenous guides and the similarities and differences in their approaches to enhancing understanding and appreciation of indigenous cultures provide a key contribution, yet to be discussed in the literature on indigenous tourism. Whilst there is a belief that communication by guides should be individualised and



Source: Julia N. Albrecht

During a small group guided tour at Whakarewarewa: The guide explains the long guiding heritage of her extended family.

that guides should share personal perspectives (Beck & Cable, 2002), there is also a concern that tour guides may have their own agendas based on their socio-cultural, historical, political and economic contexts (McArthur & Hall, 1996; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). In some cases, exclusion of a sincere personal viewpoint may be required, particularly when discussing potentially sensitive issues.

“Also a perspective that’s not coloured by my own views too (...) especially when you get into speaking about politics. But I try and give an unbiased view as much as I can.” (Maraea\*-TePapa)

Interpretation is subjective and guides make decisions about which information and whose perspectives to include or exclude and how to frame the presentation for visitors. Although guides are encouraged to include their own stories and experiences, there may be boundaries regarding sharing personal viewpoints.

### Visitor-centred interpretation

In order to select appropriate tour content, guides may try to find out about visitors and their requirements. Interpretation, as a communication process, is a way of connecting visitors to the resource and should be a visitor-centred process (Beck & Cable, 2002).

“You can find out what they’re specifically wanting, you can even get an idea of what their viewpoints may be, where their prejudices may lie (...) so you can store that up and think right, I’m going to do this interpretation in this way so I’m going to bring out these things.” (James, non-Māori -TePapa)

For relevant and meaningful connections, guides take into account the characteristics of visitors, such as their prior knowledge and experience. Face-to-face interpretation can be powerful as it is possible to adjust to the visitors’ characteristics and needs (McArthur & Hall, 1996). Guides may reframe the interpretation and presentation of information depending on who is standing in front of them.

“But we find that other nationalities, quite often there are commonalities in our histories, in our societies and in our structures, our social structures. Once we find those, we connect and we’re away.” (Taparoto\*-TePuiaManager)

“When we come to the Treaty [of Waitangi] area it causes lots of questions, particularly for people from Australia, United States, and Canada where they’ve had experience of indigenous culture’s development in various ways, not normally as positive as our history. So they bring up questions about that.” (James, non-Māori -TePapa)

Visitor experiences are subjective and influenced by personal backgrounds and agendas, and McIntosh (2004) points out that prior knowledge and personal meaning can influence how cultural experiences are understood. Cultural understanding may be hindered by differences in the ways visitors understand experiences (McIntosh & Johnson, 2004). Whilst there may be similarities which draw people closer, differences between cultures and cultural contexts may lead to a diversity of attitudes and perspectives.

“So when people arrive here with different views or opinions, I have to listen to it and try to see where it’s coming from.” (Shane\*-TePuia)

“We try never ever to say ‘that is wrong’. Because that’s the way they’ve been brought up.” (Rangimoana\*-TePapa)

Guides choose how to share and frame information in order to mediate visitors’ attitudes and facilitate understanding. The awareness guides have of potential differences in viewpoints, and the understanding of visitors’ beliefs may influence how the interpretation is managed. Importantly, in their approaches to challenging stereotypes and misconceptions, guides need to maintain a good relationship with visitors in order to facilitate a positive visitor experience.

## Conclusion

For face-to-face interpretation without a fixed script, no two tour guides can ever be the same. How guides share Māori cultural heritage is influenced by the guide's own background, understanding, and personal meaning. Furthermore, the way guides present information and manage the tour experience also depends on their understanding and perception of the visitors.

First, the interpretation of Māori cultural heritage stems from the choice of the source of information, and whose story and perspective is being shared. For Māori guides, their understanding of Māori cultural heritage may be influenced by their upbringings, tribal heritage, and life experiences. The diverse background characteristics of Māori and non-Māori guides may lead to different types of knowledge, understanding and personal meaning. Management may need to consider to what extent guides have the capacity to facilitate an awareness and understanding of information from different sources and diverse perspectives. In addition to consultation with elders (Amoamo, 2007), a collaborative approach to interpretation training acknowledging the diversity of the characteristics of the guides and the contribution of the guide's own knowledge may be valuable.

Second, in face-to-face interpretation the guide and the guide's connection to Māori cultural heritage and the contribution of their own stories and experiences may make the interpretation more meaningful and sincere. However, in some cases viewpoints on potentially sensitive or topical issues may need to be suppressed. Guides may be faced with the challenge of maintaining cultural integrity and personal integrity, whilst endeavouring to facilitate a positive visitor experience. Management need to consider the balance between the value of sincere and honest interpretation resulting in positive visitor experiences, and the potential negative implications of guides sharing their viewpoints openly and pushing their own agendas (McArthur & Hall, 1996; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006).

Third, the guide's cross-cultural understanding of the visitors also influences the way the experience is managed. A key consideration for management is that the guide's decisions on how to frame the interpretation, identify relevant and meaningful links, and manage attitudes may be influenced by the guide's understanding and perception of the visitors and their cultural contexts. Effective interpretation depends on the guide's knowledge of the visitors and determining in what ways Māori culture may be significant and meaningful to the visitors (Gross & Zimmerman, 2002). Furthermore, having a more in-depth understanding of visitors' beliefs and viewpoints may enable guides to effectively perform their resource management role, by challenging misconceptions and facilitating a positive change in attitude about Māori culture.

For recruitment and training, organisations should consider the value of prior knowledge and experience, and the importance of on-going learning for guides in order to share and build knowledge and understanding both inside and outside the organisation. Tour guides can play a valuable role in enhancing the understanding and appreciation of Māori culture by drawing on their own knowledge and experience to facilitate meaningful visitor experiences. The influence of the guide's characteristics in Māori cultural tourism experiences is clearly a key consideration for management.

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# Water supply risks and urban responses under a changing climate: A case study of Hong Kong

Liang Yang, Chunxiao Zhang, Grace W. Ngaruiya

*Abstract:* Hong Kong is often portrayed as a water abundant city because of its location in the subtropical zone. However, Hong Kong currently imports large volumes from the Dongjiang-Shenzhen Water Supply Project (DSWS Project) due to low local freshwater availability. The water situation is becoming more complicated with the population growth, economic development and difficulties in response/management. In addition, studies show that climate change is likely to increase rainfall variability, flood and drought events and damage water supply infrastructure in Hong Kong. Hence, ensuring sufficient freshwater availability is the major water management challenge for Hong Kong. This article discusses the issues in the current water supply system and also highlights the six interrelated risks within the context of climate change, namely: drought, rainstorm/flood events, sea-level rise, water pollution, social management and policy gaps in Hong Kong. In conclusion, it suggests that for a sustainable future, Hong Kong needs to invest in improving water self-sufficiency, diversify water sources and conduct aggressive public awareness to increase individual adaptation to predicted climate change impacts.

*Keywords:* Water supply, water risk, climate change, response measure, Hong Kong

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Hong Kong, located in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) in southern China, is often portrayed as a subtropical area with abundant water resource. However, this is only a part of the full picture of the complicated water issues. Theoretically, Hong Kong has access to water resources as it is surrounded by the South China Sea and the city receives high annual rainfall amount. However, Hong Kong had to limit water supply in 1960s because of a serious drought creating a water shortage (Liang, 1997). Although the current water supply system supports the water demand effectively, water shortage in Hong Kong is still a concern (Woo, 1992; Lai & Tao, 2003). Furthermore, global climate change adds new challenges from another dimension (Du, 2009), together with population growth and development activities, rendering the water issue even more complex.

Water system management is both complex and politically difficult, requiring expert knowledge available for decision-making (Hunt, et al. 2007). In order to enrich the response capacity in Hong Kong, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of water supply system and related risks. This article aims to draw a wide, although not exhaustive, picture of the water supply challenges in the context of climate change in Hong Kong. Section 2 gives a brief description of the research methods used and the type of data collected. Secondly, a discussion on the challenges facing water harvesting in Hong Kong is given in section 3. Section 4 deals with climate change trends and its predicted influence in the Hong Kong water supply system. Then, a description of how water supply is managed in Hong Kong is presented in section 5. This enables us to identify the shortcomings in current water supply system which are most likely to trigger risks, in particular in the context of climate change. Then, we suggest. Followed we suggest a framework that analyses the water supply risk elements with their corresponding pathways in section 6.

## Method and Data

This paper is based on a field trip to Hong Kong in December 2011 and as well as on secondary literature. Empirical analysis and literature review were taken through the whole work of this paper. Primary data was collected from expert discussions with academic staff, relevant institutional officials and field visits to the study sites. Secondary data was obtained from journal articles and government publications. Data used for climate change trend were derived from the Hong Kong Observatory (HKO), while information on water issues were provided mainly by the Water Supply

Department (WSD) of Hong Kong Government.

## Current water supply issues in Hong Kong

Even though there are many aspects in dealing with water supply, we chose five main points that are related to the climate change agenda to give an accurate overview of the challenges facing efficient water harvest in Hong Kong.

**Abundant but hardly usable rainfall:** Hong Kong is located in the subtropical monsoon zone with abundant annual rainfall. The average annual precipitation during 1981-2010 was 2398.5mm in HKO's records, which equals an average annual rainfall of 2648 million cubic meters for the whole Hong Kong area. With an actual water consumption of 1206 million cubic meters in the year 2010 (WSD, 2012a), it would appear that Hong Kong could theoretically satisfy its water demands with rainwater. However, it's impossible to collect that high proportion of rainwater in practice because of technical difficulties at the city scale. Another reason is the uneven inner-annual rainfall distribution. 80% is received between May and September while 20% is received in the dry season from October to April (HKO, 2012). Thus, it is a considerable level that current Hong Kong rainwater collection has reached around 10% (WSD, 2012a). Nevertheless, this calls for more focused efforts in efficient rainwater harvesting.

**Poor conditions for water storage:** The landscape of Hong Kong is made up of several peninsulas and a group of small islands, of which about three quarters are covered by hills and another quarter by urban facilities. Due to the small area involved, rivers rise and

end quickly, such as the Shing-Mun River and Shek-Sheung River (less than 5 km). Thus the runoff comprising mainly of surface rain water cannot be used after it drains to the sea. Furthermore, Hong Kong has few and small natural reservoirs, and it lacks underground water storage capacity due to the granite and volcanic rocks (Su, et al., 2008). Therefore, Hong Kong has unfortunate nature conditions for water storage, which gives another reason why the abundant rainwater is hardly usable. Despite these challenges Hong Kong has several artificially constructed reservoirs which play a very important role (see section 5).

**High dependence on freshwater import:** Hong Kong started to import freshwater from Shenzhen in the Guangdong Province in 1960. This was further developed into the Dongjiang-Shenzhen Water Supply Project (DSWS Project) that transfers Dongjiang water to Shenzhen and then to Hong Kong. Currently, this DSWS Project supplies more than 70% of the freshwater demand in Hong Kong (WSD, 2012a). Implementation of the Dongjiang Water distribution plan by the Guangdong authorities makes this activity sustainable and mitigated the contradiction between freshwater supply and demand in Hong Kong. Even though this water has contributed significantly in rapid development of the city for the past 50 years, it also shows the high overreliance of Hong Kong on the Dongjiang water.

**High water demand:** The two main water consumers in Hong Kong are the domestic and service sectors like tourism. These sectors consumed 79.7% of the total freshwater in 2010 (WSD, 2012a). Continual population growth has increased water consumption significantly in the last three decades (Figure 1). The graph depicts that the water consumption has increased at a greater rate (2.9%) than population growth (1.1%), suggesting that water use pattern has changed (increasing consumption per capita). Alongside economic development, tourism has also increased, rising further the already high water demand. Records show that in 2011, a total of 41.9 million persons visited Hong Kong, of which 22.3 million are overnight visitors and their average stay is 3.6 nights (TDHK, 2011).

Resident numbers for Hong Kong are high, and they are increasing

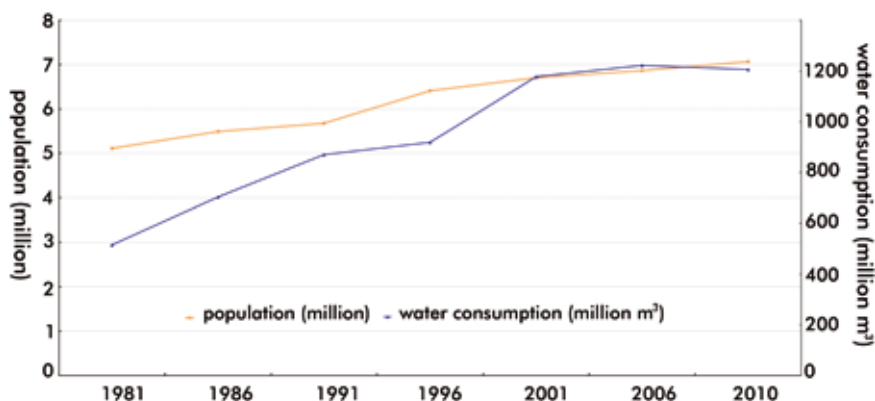


Figure 1 Population and water consumption of Hong Kong in 1981-2010

further. Future population projection shows that the Hong Kong resident population will increase to 8.47 million in the year 2041 (CSD, 2012). Thus, a much higher water demand could be expected in the future and calls for urgent water supply initiatives.

Poor leakage and maintenance management: Although Hong Kong has a complete water supply system, operational effectiveness is lacking. The major problem is the annual 20% water loss from the aging water pipe network (WSD, 2012a). This network, comprising underground arterial pipes of about 8000 kilometers in length, is subject to internal water pressure and harsh external influences such as road traffic and ground movement/subsidence and is vulnerable to damage. In addition, natural hazards, like flooding and landslides that often occur in heavy rainfall or storm, occasionally damage water supply infrastructures and result in water loss/outage. Whilst upgrading existing mains is critical in the reduction of water loss along major water mains, this could also be strengthened using district monitoring and pressure management technologies.

### Impacts of climate change on Hong Kong's water supply

Climate change poses a significant challenge to water resources in numerous regions. Studies have shown that concentrated areas of human society development such as cities are among the most vulnerable regions to climate change impacts (Stern et al. 2006; IPCC 2007). This section gives an overview of climate change and its effects on freshwater resources in Hong Kong.

Precipitation increased by 36 mm per decade for 65 years after World War II (HKO, 2012) (Figure 2). The notable interannual variability indicates that extreme precipitation events occur frequently in Hong Kong during this period (Ginn, et al. 2010). Between 1954 and 2011, the average sea level showed an average increase of 2.8 mm annually at Victoria Harbour (Figure 2). Precipitation projection results indicate that annual rainfall in Hong Kong is expected to rise by the end of the 21st century, and heavy rain events from year-to-year are becoming more frequent (Ginn, et al. 2010). But considering the situation of Hong Kong, more rainfall does not

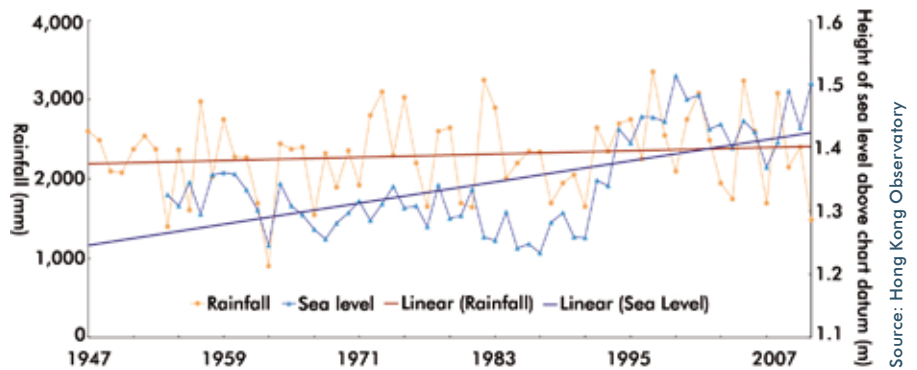


Figure 2 Changes of precipitation and sea level in Hong Kong

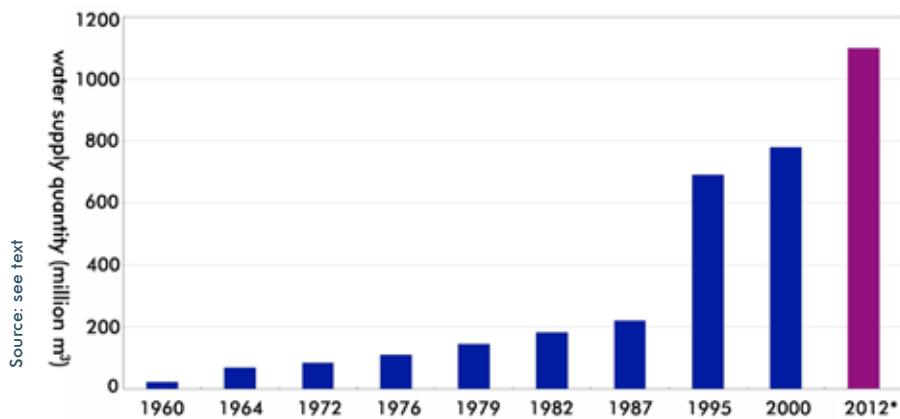
mean more usable water. Without proper management, heavy rainfall would even damage the existing water supply system. Furthermore, future sea level rises near the Pearl River Estuary would exacerbate storm surge flood and the incursion of salty water into fresh water (Wong, et al., 2010).

Apart from the general trend of climate change in Hong Kong, extreme weather events (e.g. rainstorms, ty-

phoons and landslides, drought, high tides) have even more impacts on the water supply system (Wong, et al. 2011). According to the HKO reports, the increasing frequency of extreme weather events would lead to increased flood probability (Ginn, et al. 2010). Water infrastructure is particularly at risk in some low-lying and poorly drained areas near rivers that are marked as flood-prone areas (Chan, et al. 2010).



Figure 3 Brief outline of the Dongjiang river system highlighting the DSWS Project



**Figure 4 Amount of water supply to Hong Kong by DSWS Project**  
 \*The value in 2012 is not the actual water supply value, but the maximum capacity of the DSWS project

This is even more likely to be the case during cyclones when seawater is forced up the rivers, invading freshwater systems or damaging engineering facilities. These disasters intensify water risks in Hong Kong and make water management more complicated. In addition, high evaporation in the subtropical region contributes significantly to water losses (Liang, 1997). This should be in concern if we aware that the average temperature per decade increased from 0.15°C between 1947 and 2011, to 0.23°C between 1982 and 2011 (Hu, et al. 2011), and the trend will continue in the 21st century (Ginn, et al. 2010).

### Aspects of water supply management in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Government has implemented a series of measures to address this water predicament, achieving remarkable success. However, some challenges still exist, which will be elaborated while we introduce the measures in this section.

The Dongjiang–Shenzhen Water Supply Project (DSWS Project): Dongjiang (East River) originates in the Xunwu County of Jiangxi Province, flows through Heyuan city, Huizhou city, Dongguan city of Guangdong Province and drains into the sea. Several branch streams flow from Shenzhen to the mainstream (Figure 3). The DSWS Project starts from Qiaotou town of Dongguan. Water is pumped and pipelined 46 m higher, backwards along the Shima River (a branch of Dongjiang) to the Shenzhen Reservoir and then to Hong Kong.

The water supply to Hong Kong has been increasing in the last 50 years (Figure 4) with a corresponding change in the agreement. The significant increase around 1990 can be attributed to population growth and eco-

nomical development after adoption of the “Sino-British Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong”. The second extension of the DSWS Project in 1987 and the third in 1994 supported this increase in time. Currently, the actual water supply to Hong Kong is 800-900 million m<sup>3</sup> annually, which is nearing the maximum capacity of the project (1100 million m<sup>3</sup> per year) (Hong Kong DNPC, 2011).

However, the project faces significant challenges due to social and economic differences between the cities in the river basin. Economically, the upper cities (Heyuan, Huizhou) have far lower development level (consider GDP per capita and urbanisation rate) than the downstream cities. That means these upper cities are poor, underdeveloped, and have less economic power. The region is also politically complicated. Normally there are four administrative levels (nation, province, city and county), but Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region between the level of nation and province, and Shenzhen is a Special Economic Zone between the level of province and city. Higher administrative levels have stronger political power. Thus interestingly the Dongjiang water flows down from Xunwu, Heyuan to Huizhou, Dongguan, and is then pumped to Shenzhen and Hong Kong, while the political-economic power goes up in the same city sequence. This means that water resources from the upper area are traded for money or other benefits from the downstream cities, with strong political tint. This system of trade appears to be balanced. But this balance depends highly on both sides’ resource quantity (water in the upper cities and money of the downstream cities) and trade intention (whether they would like to ex-

change). It could easily be broken by a drought or pollution that reduces the available source water, or a change in social /economic field that raises the unwillingness on trade. Thus, should climate change affect the water supply either in terms of quality or quantity then this will affect the relationships between stakeholders.

Increased rainwater harvest: Hong Kong has always looked for more effective uses of its rainwater resources. An ongoing project is the construction of diversion channels on hillsides, which channel precipitation and mountain streams into reservoirs. So far, rainwater is diverted to 17 reservoirs in a third of Hong Kong area. For example, the High Island Reservoir has the largest storage capacity and Plover Cove Reservoir has the largest area. These two large bay reservoirs account for 87 % of total reservoir capacity (5.86 x 10<sup>8</sup> m<sup>3</sup>) in Hong Kong (WSD, 2012b). In addition to saving collected rainwater, the reservoirs also play a role in regulating and storing the water from the DSWS Project.

To further increase rainwater harvest, one proposal is to expand the rainwater catchment’s area and storage capacity of reservoirs in Hong Kong. However, this proposal is not favored by the city because land development in the catchment area would be restricted (Ku, 2003). Actually, one-third of the land has been protected as rainwater catchment area in Hong Kong. And, this plan has a complication in that a larger water catchment area could increase surface contaminants flow into the reservoirs. So the proposal is not a prior option in the near future. Recently, a feasible plan initiated by Hong Kong Government is to identify a number of parks and public buildings to collect rainwater for flushing and irrigation. The plan would be spread if the preliminary experiment works effectively.

Seawater desalination and utilization: Hong Kong established a desalination plan in 1971. Six groups of desalination equipment were built with the production of 30.3 thousand m<sup>3</sup> fresh water per group per day (WSD, 2012c). However, after only operating from 1976 to 1982, it was deconstructed in 1992 due to high running costs and the cheaper and constant water supply by DSWS Project.

Besides desalination, seawater is used for flushing toilets, an activity done from 1950. It is now a major

feature of the urban water supply in Hong Kong. The seawater flushing system has a separate water distribution pipes, pumping stations and service reservoirs. Seawater is pumped and filtered through grids to remove the larger impurities. It is then disinfected to standard quality requirements and distributed to households. Currently the annual consumption of seawater in Hong Kong has reached over 200 million m<sup>3</sup>, which saves the same amount of fresh water and accounts for about 18 % of the total water consumed (WSD, 2012b). Since about 80% of the residents use seawater for flushing, this percentage is expected to increase to 90 % in future (WSD, 2012a). In some areas of Hong Kong, seawater has also been used as the municipal fire-fighting water.

**Wastewater treatment and reuse:** Increasing freshwater production inherently results in increased pressure on wastewater treatment and disposal infrastructure. The Hong Kong Environmental Protection Department issued a “Water Quality Indicators of Wastewater Treatment for Landscape Irrigation” guide in 1994. This contained regulations and methods to promote and inform stakeholders on water reuse in irrigation. However, few treated water reuse projects have been launched in Hong Kong presently, one of them being a project of Hong Kong’s new airport on Lantau Island, in which part of the drainage is treated and reused for irrigation. One reason for the low uptake of water reuse initiatives is the absence of water scarcity due to the constant supply by the DSWS Project and seawater flushing. The situation reflects that Hong Kong’s strategy of increasing the sources of freshwater does not address wastewater issues in an integrative way. This might change should the water status change with increase in climate change impacts.

**Water demand management:** Hong Kong uses a multi-level water charging system to promote water conservation. The payment system has several levels of water consumption levels with corresponding increasing prices. Thus, the water cost per household differs according to their consumption in a certain period. The higher the consumption, the higher price charged by the supplier. This payment strategy enhances public awareness of water conservation by reducing waste

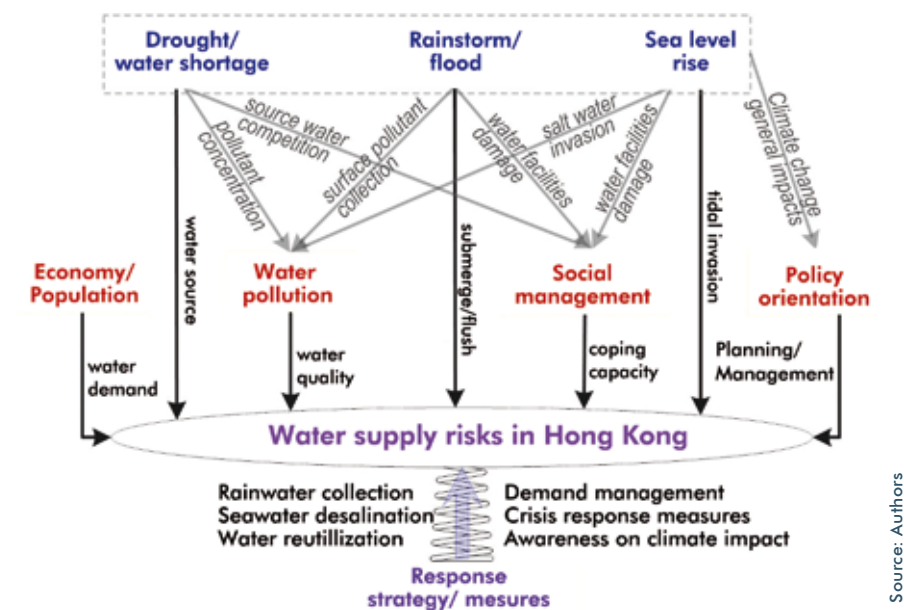


Figure 5 Framework of water supply risks in Hong Kong

Source: Authors

and in turn reducing household water demand.

Furthermore, the Hong Kong WSD has also developed a number of other water-saving provisions, such as changing water from swimming pools once a year, using water-saving faucets at public places, which all have further contributed to water conservation and reducing water consumption.

### Discussion of risks to water supply in Hong Kong

As discussed previously, the water supply situation in Hong Kong faces various challenges from both climate impacts and social activities. Apart from the pressure of increasing water demand by population growth and economic development, we have discussed six major but interrelated risks, namely: drought, rainstorm/flood events, sea-level rise, water pollution, social management and policy (Figure 5). Figure 5 also shows the pathways or area to be addressed for every risk described.

**Drought in the water source area:** Given the fast development and growing water demand of the upper cities, competition for Dongjiang water is expected to increase. Despite that Hong Kong gets the water supply guarantee by DSWS Project, should there be a significant drought in the Dongjiang River basin (has occurred in 1963) the effects would be severe and might cause tension between upper stream cities and the downstream cities. Even a moderate drought would have a ripple effect in the system, whereby

less flowing water would be more vulnerable to pollutants and would result in an increase in pollutant density. Lower reserve volumes would also make water pumping more expensive due to higher electricity consumption which in turn would increase consumer water prices. Thus, additional water sources need to be introduced into the system as a backup measure.

**Rainstorm/flood events:** The anticipated increases of rainfall amount from climate change might overload the storm water prevention system and increase the number of flood disasters in Hong Kong. Flood from the rainstorms may not only collect surface pollutants and bring them to freshwater but also damage water supply pipe network through associated landslides or soil erosion. Thus there is need to invest in flood alarm and prevention, e.g. regular drainage checks to remove blockage and enhance flow.

**Sea-level rise:** Hong Kong is a highly urbanized city with significant artificial facilities that are threatened by natural riverbed siltation and climate related sea-level rise. In case the sea water entry into the urban system it would threaten water infrastructure through erosion from the salts and flood flushing. The two largest freshwater reservoirs are especially more vulnerable if offshore pollutants along with salty sea water flow into it. Another suggested course of action includes regular checks in tidal flows and drainage of sea water from the system.

Water pollution: Cities in the upper reaches of Dongjiang River Basin, Huizhou and Heyuan, have accepted setting up of many of the transferred industries from the Pearl River Delta. This combination of industrial contamination, agricultural pollution and dispersive rural sewage is making the water quality of Dongjiang River worse and threatens the supply to Hong Kong and other downstream cities (Liu, et al. 2012). To control water pollution at the source, the upstream cities are restricted in their land development, sewage emission and use of pesticides, which therefore restrict the development of industry and agriculture. Also, Shenzhen and Dongguan demand more water from the DSWS Project but continue to discharge sewage to the Dongjiang River, which makes the situation much more complicated. Even though the upstream cities ask for economic compensation for restricted development and the downstream cities might be willing to compensate them, specific agreement is hardly reached and no comprehensive compensation mechanism exists (Zhou, 2008; He, et al. 2009), partly due to the complexity of this issue. Another pollution risk for Hong Kong water resource is from the surface ground pollutants that may be transported into reservoirs along rainwater. In such complicated situations on pollution, a multidimensional solution is needed to adequately address all sources of pollution.

Social management aspect: Although Hong Kong returned to mainland China 15 years ago, social and cultural conflicts between the two still exist although at low intensity. Hong Kong is highly dependent on fresh water, electricity and food from the mainland, but its citizens used to complain about the air pollution from the Pearl River Delta cities in the mainland (Lu, 2007). On the other hand, many mainland people go to Hong Kong for high quality medical care, education or shopping. Some Hong Kong citizens dislike this movement and view it as a reason for the reduction in Hong Kong's public resources. While the mainland people view this attitude as discrimination. These low level societal tensions could be the beginning of large-scale resources conflicts in the future and need to be addressed soon. Another side of social management is to cope with emer-

gency events efficiently and effectively, for example, in a severe water outage or pollution event, which has been discussed in section 2.

Policy risk: Due to the abundant Dongjiang water, Hong Kong has not seriously invested in self-sufficiency water supply mechanisms in the latest years apart from the experimental seawater desalination. Also, climate security consciousness is still in its infancy in Hong Kong and there has not been an integrated "climate response" policy between urban development, water supply and climate impacts. Even though the public knows about climate change they lack deeper awareness of possible water supply risks under climate impacts. Thus, many options are available but are not implemented because they are not taken seriously. It would be a potential risk for the city if this policy gap continues as it would bring down the public awareness of risk and reduce measures for precaution.

Researchers suggest that the main goal of all adaptation strategies should be to improve local resilience, or the ability of a community to bounce back quickly from climate impacts (CCAP, 2009). Thus to reduce potential water supply risks, the city needs to implement relevant response measures. The response strategy may be done in two ways. One is to improve the self-sufficiency rate of water supply, which is possible by extending the reservoirs' capacity or seawater desalination. The other is to diversify water source options, for example, water treatment and reuse. These will reduce over-reliance on imported water which is the biggest potential risk. Apart from these, possible strategies to increase resilience include options of demand management technology and crisis response measures. Also, public awareness campaigns on climate change impacts and response strategies need to be undertaken so that people in Hong Kong can prepare for climate change impacts. Finally, further research on urban responses to climate impacts will support decision making to mitigate potential water risks. Following this paper, a risk assessment of the Hong Kong water system is undertaking, and a simulation on the urban responses to climate impact and water risk in the Pearl River Delta has also been proposed using multi-agent model.

## Conclusion

Hong Kong is a city with sufficient average precipitation, but it still suffers from water shortage because of natural and social conditions. Most of the drinking water is transferred by DSWS Project from Guangdong, sustained by political and economic power in a water supply agreement. However, should conditions change, like a severe drought or pollution in the Dongjiang River basin, it could become a potential social security problem. In addition, although urban development and water supply-drainage systems are well designed and planned in Hong Kong, natural hazards like extreme weather events could destroy water related infrastructures, especially in the context of global climate change. Lack of public awareness on climate impacts has also made the government take few measures to deal potential climate risks. It's clear that ensuring sufficient freshwater availability is the major water management challenge for Hong Kong. To reduce risks in the future, it's absolutely crucial for Hong Kong to improve its self-sufficiency rate of water supply and diversify water sources

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Sunset View of Hong Kong Skyline

# CHINAS METROPOLEN IM WANDEL

# CHINA TIME

Die Zweite Transformation



Alle Poster der Ausstellung auf flickr



## Poster- und Fotoausstellung

China steht vor der Herausforderung der sogenannten „Zweiten Transformation“. Darunter versteht man die Abkehr von einem rein quantitativen Wirtschaftsmodell basierend auf niedrigen Arbeitskosten hin zu mehr qualitativem Wachstum basierend auf der Produktion beziehungsweise der Bereitstellung von Waren & Dienstleistungen höherer Wertschöpfung. „Made in China“ soll im Zuge der Zweiten Transformation zu „Created in China“ werden.

Chinas Metropolen sind Motoren diesen tiefgreifenden Wandels. Hier findet Auf- und Umbruch statt. Urbane Räume wirtschaftlicher Restrukturierung stellen u.a. ehemalige Fabrikareale dar, die eine Konvertierung hin zu Kultur & Kreativität erfahren. Die bekanntesten Kunstdistrikte in Beijing und Shanghai sind mittlerweile auch Teil städtischer Vermarktungsstrategien geworden.

Die Ausstellung zeigt insgesamt 50 Themen- und Fotoposter im DIN A1-Format. Neben ausdrucksstarken Bildern illustrieren zahlreiche aufwendig gestaltete Karten und Diagramme die aktuellen Veränderungen in diesem hochdynamischen Land.

Für Lehrer/-innen besteht das Angebot, diese Ausstellung an ihre Schule zu holen. In der Regel wird dies mit einem dialogorientierten Einführungsvortrag kombiniert. Interessierte wenden sich bitte an:

Dr. Michael Waibel [waibel@geowiss.uni-hamburg.de]

Konzept:



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# Research Note: On the energy footprint of a Vietnamese middle-class household

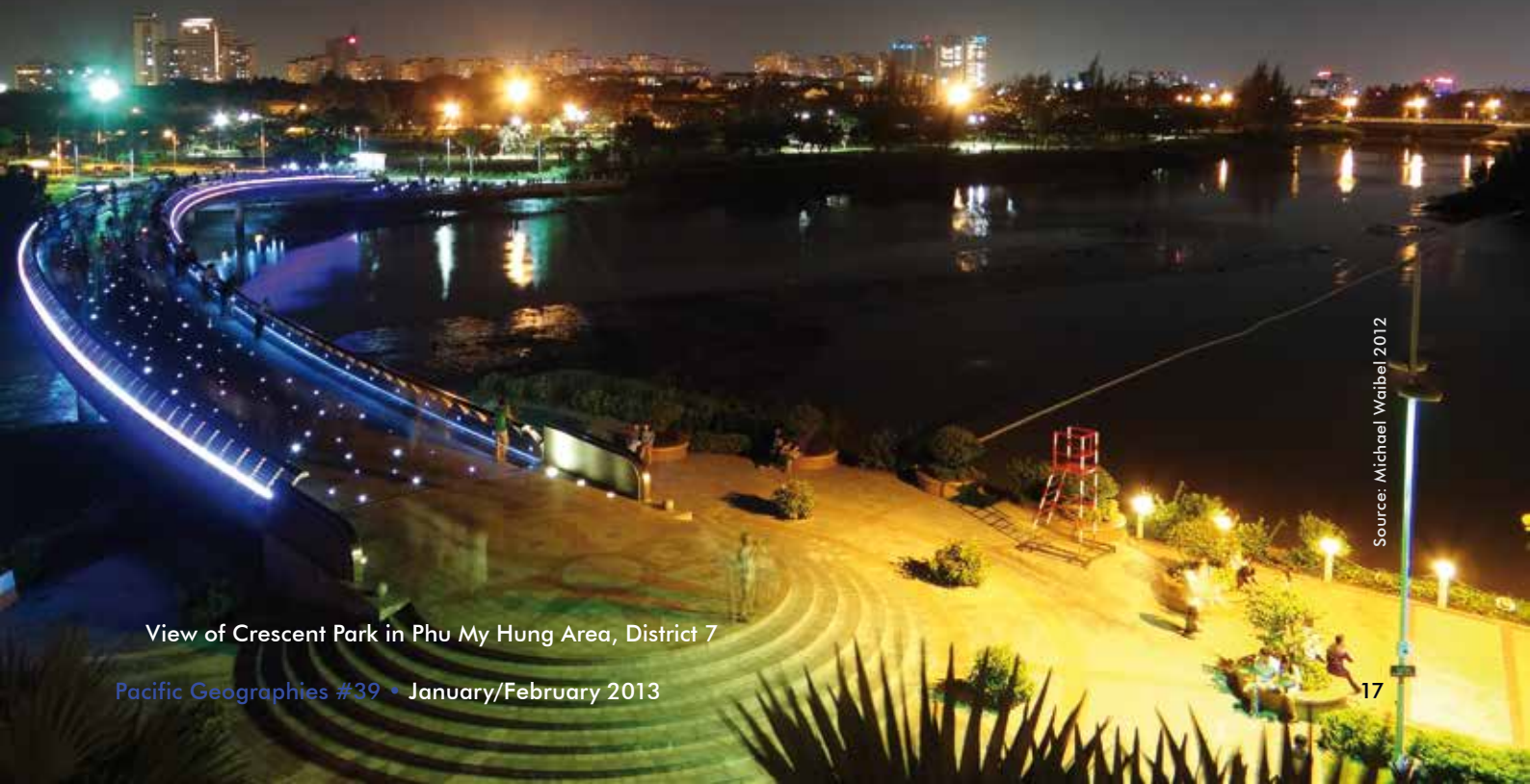
Catherine Earl

*Abstract: Environmental sustainability and climate change adaptation in Vietnam have become pressing issues for researchers and policy makers. At the same time Vietnam's re-emerging middle classes are beginning to gain attention. HCMC's middle classes express their relatively better social positions through the material markers of a high standard of living, which produces status that is locally valued. The power they now wield as consumers and trend-setters is recognised as a potential source for stimulating social change towards sustainable urban development (Waibel 2009: 3). But the urban environment is diverse. Unlike development in the peri-urban fringe, residents in the densely-populated inner city adapt their living practices to the constraints of the built environment and their household resources. Further, with so many of HCMC's new middle classes being first-generation migrants, many are familiar with economical and provincial practices of energy conservation, recycling and reuse.*

*Keywords: Vietnam; urban migration; middle classes; household energy use; environmental sustainability*

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In Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Earth Hour 2012 was advertised on banners in the city centre where expatriates and affluent Vietnamese worked or socialised. But it was not publically observed. Instead, on the evening of 31 March 2012, I had accepted an invitation from acquaintances to attend a live music concert in Phu My Hung (PMH), the newly urbanised and extremely affluent area in District 7 on the fringes of HCMC that is sometimes dubbed 'Saigon Singapore'. It is an area that exclusively houses Vietnam's very rich and expatriates (Douglass & Huang 2007: 26). We gained entry to the gated community by showing a text message invitation from PMH residents to the private security guards at the checkpoint.



Source: Michael Waibel 2012

View of Crescent Park in Phu My Hung Area, District 7

By 8.30 pm, the time when Earth Hour was due to commence, our group was part of a crowd of 20,000 in PMH's Crescent Park enjoying a high-tech production that marked the 11th anniversary of the passing of Vietnam's most beloved composer and musician *Trịnh Công Sơn* (Tuổi Trẻ 2012).

All available technology had been employed. The voices of the MC and performers blasted from sky-high banks of speakers; their faces were illuminated by an elaborate computerised lighting system mounted around the stage; six projection screens that dwarfed the stage displayed archive film footage of the composer; broadcast cameramen hung above the crowd on crane-like platforms filming the event; and 'Hollywood' lights beamed up to dance on the clouds above the park.

At approximately 8.40 pm a short blackout drew sighs of disappointment from the crowd, but also revealed that surrounding the park on all sides the lights in the windows of the high-rise apartment buildings of PMH shone brightly.

Needless-to-say, in this affluent urban area no one - neither the event organisers nor the crowd - was paying attention to sustainability. Spending Earth Hour 2012 in PMH's Crescent Park highlighted the ease with which Vietnamese middle classes can disengage with global issues when faced with local happenings. Yet, they are potentially a source for stimulating environmental social change.

Moments after the blackout, unseasonal rain interrupted the concert and dispersed much of the crowd. Our group also left. We collected our motorbike, left the high rises of PMH and returned to the densely populated heart of HCMC.

### 21st century HCMC

Raising awareness of energy consumption in Vietnam's densely urbanised cities perhaps has not been an obvious need when national policy and development goals have focused on poverty alleviation incorporating measures such as extending access to electricity and resources across Vietnam rather than concern for how energy is being used in cities. Indeed, Vietnam's approach to addressing climate change is oriented to a national level, not specifically targeting urban populations (Waibel 2008: 27).

Yet, Vietnam's urban populations are growing rapidly in size and wealth. In the Southeast, including HCMC, well over half (57.1%) of the population is now urban (GSO 2011: 63). In the urban Southeast, households are smaller, couples marry later and they have fewer children (GSO 2011: 13). High standards of living (determined in terms of housing type, construction materials, and access to hygienic toilet facilities and safe drinking water) are characteristic of the densely crowded stable neighbourhoods of HCMC's inner city, with relatively lower standards of living

in the recently settled suburban areas of the outer north and west (Gubry, et al. 2010: 75).

### Resource-intensive lifestyles

In urban Vietnam a high standard of living goes hand in hand with a resource-intensive lifestyle. Across Vietnam, almost all urban households own at least one television set (91.4%) and at least one motorbike (83.3%). Every second urban household (57.5%) owns a refrigerator, more than one in three (36.1%) owns a washing machine, and one in six (16.3%) have air-conditioning (GSO 2011: 87).

Supporting resource-intensive lifestyles with current energy technology and usage practices has consequences for the environment. This is especially so in HCMC where estimates suggest that households account for 35-40% of the city's energy use (Waibel 2009: 3). Indeed HCMC residents possess more luxury gadgets; 100% of households have television, 80% have cable television, 70% own a mobile phone, and 50% own a computer (Ruwitch & Szep 2011: 5). Air-conditioning use in particular is three times higher in major cities, including HCMC, than other urban areas (GSO 2011: 87). A very high use of air-conditioning has further increased the problem of urban heat islands against the background of climate change (Eckert & Waibel 2009: 18).

However, urban lifestyles across HCMC are diverse. Footprints for living in exclusive gated communities of PMH or the architecturally designed villas of the suburban fringe are qualitatively different to the expensive but cramped properties of the densely populated inner city where residents adapt to their environment.

### Inner-city HCMC

Returning from the concert in PMH's Crescent Park, we made our way into my inner-city neighbourhood by motorbike. Parting ways on the local street, I continued on foot into the network of local laneways, the first just wide enough for a small car to enter and the second just wide enough for a motorbike.

Inner-city living in the residential lanes of HCMC's Districts 1 and 3 is more like the lifestyles of Hanoi's Old Quarter than in the gated communities and newly urbanised suburbs of the Southeast. Firstly, households are smaller in size and the inner-city population density is typically about 19,000 people



Inner-city laneway

Source: Catherine Earl 2012



Source: Catherine Earl 2012

Evening rush hour Phạm Hồng Thái Street, District 1

per square kilometre (Dang 2008: 205). Secondly, inner-city neighbourhoods are not commuter suburbs. Rather they are akin to villages that centre around a wet market and place of worship. Thirdly, inner-city neighbourhoods were established in the mid twentieth century or earlier, and support a relatively stable population (Hy 2009: 2). In post-reform urban Vietnam, a soaring cost of living is among the factors that generate new and less sustainable modes of living in small laneway houses of the inner city.

### A small laneway house

For three months in 2012 I lived with a Vietnamese family in a 'small laneway house' in central HCMC. It was the permanent residence of a migrant family who originated from the Mekong Delta. The parents, both of whom had been salaried professionals, had recently retired. The salary of one university-educated child working in a private company supported both parents and two siblings studying at university. In order to make ends meet, the family decided to supplement their income by renting rooms to three tenants, preferably foreign students. With this decision, the household expanded to eight adults.

This household is a 'new' middle-class household (Hsiao & Wang 2001: 5-8; see also King 2008). Crucially, the family is not only new middle class but also first-generation urban migrants (Earl 2008). Having had direct experience of village life - at a time when energy and resour-

ces were precious, rationed and conserved - can be understood as growing up 'green', or at least greener than city life. Consequently, the energy footprint of the household had been modest prior to the installation of air conditioning after the retirement of two wage earners and tenancing of three rooms.

### Housing design

The layout of the house was typical of small laneway houses. It was about three stories high but internally comprised seven split levels, with two rooms and a terrace at the front and three rooms and a terrace at the back. The levels were connected by a central staircase.

The ground floor was open plan. The front area housed five motorbikes, which were used for transport in the city. The back area housed the western-style kitchen with high bench tops, wooden cupboards and a dining table. The kitchen facilities were typical of a middle-class household and included a portable gas burner, microwave, full size refrigerator, chest freezer, automatic washing machine, cordless landline telephone, a generator and a small bathroom.

The two bedrooms at the front of the house (on the second and fourth levels) were each approximately ten square metres in size and contained the family's sleeping mats. Both rooms had an external window and a newly installed air conditioner, which vented into the internal staircase. One room had a study desk with a computer and wifi router,

the other had cable television.

The three bedrooms at the back of the house (on the first, third and fifth levels) were larger at approximately twelve square metres in size. Each was furnished with a bed, desk and wardrobe. These three rooms were rented to tenants. All three rooms had a new air conditioner venting into the internal staircase and two had an external window. Each room also had a small bathroom containing a flush toilet, a cold water tap and an electric hot water machine.

The internal staircase led to two rooftop terraces. A semi-enclosed front terrace (on the sixth level) housed the family altar, potted plants and unused furniture. A sunny back terrace (on the seventh level) had a clothesline and the household water tank. The staircase was covered by a temporary roof, which usually kept the stairs dry. However, during the three months I stayed in the house (in the dry season), heavy rain caused three minor floods. The staircase was lit 24 hours a day on each level by compact fluorescent lights and fluorescent tubes were fitted in the rooms.

### Energy

Since their retirement, the house was almost continuously occupied. In the three months I stayed, I noted one afternoon when no one had been inside the house. The family practised energy conservation and had made energy saving measures concerning lighting which was required as the house received little



New luxury Shopping Mall in HCMC Central Business District

natural light. Minimising natural light and the heat it created through tinting external windows was another energy saving measure.

In the kitchen, a refrigerator and freezer consumed significant electricity. The washing machine was used almost every day and one cycle lasted two hours. Of course, clothing was dried outside on the terrace and under a small awning if there was rain. Although some middle-class households have switched to electric induction cook tops, which are considered to be more modern and safer, the family continued using bottled gas for cooking. Vietnamese meals require considerable preparation but little cooking time and this was undertaken in the early morning.

The installation of air conditioning had a large impact on energy consumption and cost. Insulation was poor with doors and windows ill-fitting and the cable television line entering through a partially open internal window. Running all the air conditioners at the same time caused a blackout in the house. In general the family's energy conservation practices reflected their adaption to the built environment.

### Food

The house design incorporated roof top terraces where edible plants could be cultivated. On the back roof terrace a lime tree, tomatoes, eggplants, leafy green vegetables and herbs were grown, but the majority of food was purchased at a nearby supermarket. The family preferred to shop at the super-

market rather than the local wet market which they considered to be unhygienic. This involved travelling by motorbike rather than walking and involved using plastic bags rather than a reusable basket. At the supermarket the family purchased fresh fruit and vegetables packaged in polystyrene and plastic. Many of the products were imported, including fresh fruit, household cleaning products and cosmetics from Thailand and packaged goods from China. Local food included rice, tea, processed cakes, soft drinks, ice cream, and some frozen goods such as pre-prepared spring rolls. Some household members also regularly bought street food from local stall holders. The family's food choices were balanced between local and imported, fresh and processed goods.

### Goods and services

In general the family's spending was frugal and within their means. Any product that could be recycled or reused was either used within the household or sold to a recycler, usually an individual who walked the neighbourhood laneways trading second-hand items. In particular, PET bottles, glass, cardboard, white paper, newspaper, school books, wood, metal including old pots and pans, and broken appliances were sold to peddlers. Even an umbrella was repaired by a passing peddler. It is worth noting that prior to renting rooms to tenants, the household waste did not include PET bottles as the family drank boiled tap water and reused the few PET bottles they did acquire. Other goods were sent

to relatives in the countryside for reuse. Reclaimed materials were reused for house repairs and extensions such as a new room built into the front terrace and a new bathroom built on the back terrace. Most of the family's clothing and shoes, however, were new, mass produced and usually imports from China or Thailand that were considered to be higher quality than local products.

### Conclusion

The rise of urban middle classes in Asia has roughly coincided with an increasing awareness of energy consumption and sustainability globally. But they do not necessarily go hand in hand. The most resource-intensive lifestyles in Vietnam are led by urban middle classes who are able to generate incomes sufficient to support them. Relationships between social mobility and sustainability among urban middle classes, however, are more complex. Urban lifestyles differ somewhat in the crowded inner city in contrast to those in high-rise gated communities or suburban villas on the peri-urban fringe.

Importantly for Vietnam's Southeast is the influence of rural-urban migration on urban living. It has been argued that the relocation to an urban environment to pursue opportunities for upward social mobility does not necessarily erase sustainable lifestyle practices among migrants, particularly when they remain in regular contact with relatives in villages, although a village lifestyle continues to be understood in popular discourse in HCMC as backward, underprivileged

and generally undesirable in contrast to the comforts of urban living.

Further, acquiring the technological conveniences of modern city life acts as a status marker and differentiates successful people from others as they move up the social ladder. Currently, a desire to achieve locally-valued status outweighs a desire to achieve globally-valued sustainability. Yet, as Waibel (2009: 3) suggests, if HCMC's new urban middle classes were appropriately educated and resourced they could serve as models for sustainable urban living.

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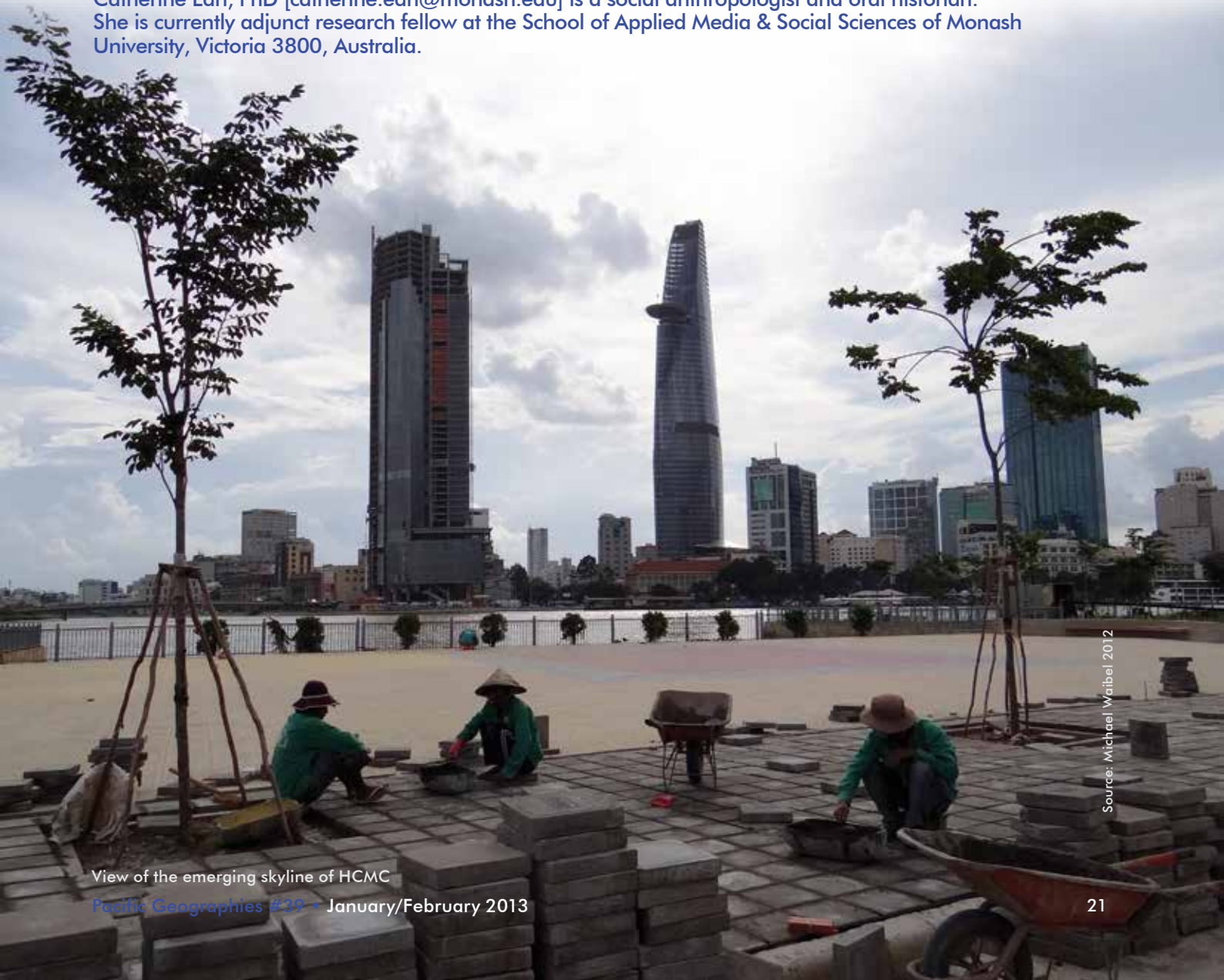
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# Still alive: Samoa's half century

Andreas Holtz

**Abstract:** In 2012 Samoa celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence. The then independent state is classified as an insular microstate. Its isolated location far away from the major markets, its limited economy, and its general vulnerability were considered to be the worst possible prospects for gaining independence. Despite these poor starting conditions Samoa is now considered as Oceania's model state. The main reason for this positive development is Samoa's political stability as a modern state. This stability results mainly from a successful incorporation of traditional regulatory mechanisms into the modern state of Samoa.

**Keywords:** Samoa, Independence, Vulnerability, Political and Economical System

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In 2012 Samoa celebrated its 50th anniversary of independence. On January 1, 1962, Samoa became Oceania's first independent state from New Zealand. The original name Western Samoa was changed to Samoa in 1997 to emphasize that there is only one Samoan nation despite there being two Samoan political units. At the time of independence, no more than 110,000 people (1) populated the nine (Western) Samoan islands which cover a land area of only 2,831 km<sup>2</sup>. The new independent state is classified as an insular microstate. Its isolated location far away from the major markets, its limited economy, and its general vulnerability were considered to be the worst possible prospects for gaining independence. The question arose as to whether a state with Samoa's structural determinants could be considered sustainably viable. The following text tries to reflect Samoa's shift from a divided dot in the ocean to becoming Oceania's model state.



Pacific Geographies Cartography: © C. Carstens 2012

All photos © Andreas Holtz



Samoa's Parliament building in Apia, Western Samoa

## Small States and Power: A Contradiction?

Based on Max Weber's classical characteristics (see Weber 1980: 822), a state consists of a state territory, its people and "is an entity that claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence" (Dubreuil 2010: 189). As Ghani et al. (2005: 6-9) point out, ten basic state functions are fundamental to a modern state: a) a legitimate monopoly on the means of violence, b) administrative control, c) management of public finances, d) investment in human capital, e) delineation of citizenship rights and duties, f) provision of infrastructure services, g) formation of a market, h) management of assets, i) capability to maintain international relations, j) rule of law. These ten functions can be summarised in four core values, which are security, rule of law, democracy and welfare. These ones again are fundamental to good governance in all states including small states.

Within these core values, security is considered to be the most important one. The capacity of a state to guarantee security depends on its capabilities of power. "Power" in this sense does not only mean material or hard power, but also soft power as this kind of power is used to convince (see Noya 2005: 3). It is the power of attraction. Again, the power of attraction depends on how a state is acknowledged by its own citizens. If there is no domestic backing, the attraction of a state is negative. In this sense the only source of power is coercion, i.e. hard power. The term backing reflects the importance of state-related identity framed by well-functioning nation-building.

Backing also means that power without legitimation is fundamentally not possible. In this sense a government must be acknowledged. Such an acknowledgement by the people as the natural sovereign, which means the transformation from natural sovereignty to the sovereignty of a state, depends on a special cultural framework of shared norms and values. Within this framework, the state and its people create a coherent and homogeneous unit. This kind of legitimised homogeneity is a source of attraction and, with it, a source of power. Furthermore it is also a more or less perfect framework for sustainable political stability. Power and small states are not to be considered as a contradiction in terms.



Tourism is important for Samoa's economy

## Society, Power and Stability

In Samoa's case, homogeneity is present. Beyond this, Samoa's customs and traditions of a traditionally stratified society created a state-like organisation, and this also extends back to pre-European times. From a western point of view, so-called pre-modern regulatory mechanisms were transformed into the modern state of Samoa. The state as an institution is merely another relatively new kind of organisation. The state and its political and social relations are acknowledged by the people. In contrast to the Melanesian states, the Samoan state and Samoan state-building are not seen as artificial but natural (see McLeod 2008: 8). Solid evidence for the closed connection between the Samoans and their state is reflected in relatively high voter turnouts of almost 90% as was seen during the last elections in 2011 (2). Against the background of cultural homogeneity, it is not surprising that Samoa's party system is not differentiated. Only two parties and several independents fight for votes. This firm party system sums up Samoan state-building which in combination with the ubiquitous and stabilising Christian church is geared towards stability (see Fraenkel 2010: 2). Clearly, social and political stability are a precondition for Samoa's success even as a limited insular microstate.

Stability is also reflected in its functionality as a modern state. Following the World Bank's annual ratings of governance indicators, Samoa's assessment is relatively good when compared to other Pacific states (see figure 1; best assessment +2.5, worst assessment -2.5).

## Samoa's Economy

Stability also means the presence of a solid framework for economic development. Despite Samoa's geographical isolation, which is a handicap for most insular microstates, the country is trying hard to leave the group of agricultural subsistence economies. Besides fishery and a growing tourism industry, Samoa's economy is determined by the automotive supplier industry. As Samoa's biggest private employer, Yazaki Eds Samoa provides jobs for more than 900 Samoans, of whom 60% are women (Pacific Trade and Investment Commission 2009). The company produces automotive components for Toyota Australia.

However, the fact that Samoa's economic performance is much better than in other Pacific island states should not conceal Samoa's pronounced vulnerability. For example, Yazaki constitutes the most important social and financial contributor to the future prosperity of the country. This therefore represents a very high degree of dependence. Yazaki produces almost 90% of Samoa's export goods with a corresponding proportion of turnover. The tsunami and earthquake crises in Japan had a direct impact on the Samoan economy: "The disaster in Japan has dramatically reduced the demand for wire harnessing from Toyota Australia which Yazaki Samoa Eds supplies" (Islands Business 2011). Besides its economical vulnerability, Samoa also suffers from ecological vulnerability (see UNCTAD 2006). During the last Tsunami in 2009 some 143 people were killed and 25% of Samoa's extremely important tourism infrastructure



The church is still an influential factor in Samoa

was damaged or even destroyed (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2012). In 1990 and 1991, two cyclones displaced over 10,000 Samoans. Three years later the serious plant disease Taro Blight destroyed almost the entire taro crop. Before the outbreak of that disease, the import to export ratio was 3 to 1. Following the disease, the situation deteriorated considerably to an import-export ratio of 14 to 1 (see Grynberg 1996: 5).

An additional serious difficulty for Samoa as an insular microstate is undoubtedly its small domestic market in general and its small domestic job market, both of which are considered the main reasons for emigration from Samoa. In contrast to other Pacific states, Samoan citizens are allowed to work in New Zealand or in the USA via American Samoa. Samoa's net migration rate is -10.81/1000 (3). Samoa depends on the remittances of the Samoans abroad which constitute around 25 % of its GDP. Official deve-

lopment assistance makes up another 25% of Samoa's GDP. These figures reflect Samoa's situation as a so-called MIRAB economy which is an acronym for an economy based on **m**igration, **r**emittances, **a**id and **b**ureaucracy (see Bertram/Watters 1985: 497-519).

### Samoa's Political System

Samoa's politics and its political system are deeply rooted in the country's societal tradition. Samoa's traditional leaders bear the title Matai. Currently there are around 25,000 Matai in Samoa, of whom only five percent are women. Traditionally a Matai is determined by the extended family (aiga). The Matai are separated in two sub-groups (ali'i and tulafale) which balances out their power. This kind of balance of power is typical for Samoan politics, while Samoa's state-building is also seen as a good combination of modern and traditional elements. This becomes most obvious in the Samoan election system. In 1962 the Samoan

people decided to disclaim their right to vote and stand as a candidate. Only the Matai were allowed to vote and to be voted. In another referendum held in 1990, this was changed to grant everyone a general right to vote. However, the right to stand as a candidate for the Fono, the parliament of Samoa, is still an exclusive right for the Matai. This system solves the otherwise typical contradiction between traditional and modern systems, by merging both tradition and modernity into one unique and unitary system which is the main guarantee of stability in Samoa.

However, critics of this system emphasize that this process of democratization does not aim to improve democracy but to maintain the power of the Matai. Since 1969 it is possible to bestow one title upon different persons. This has led to a real inflation of title holders which in turn reduces the power of the already established Matai. Within this context, democratization merely serves to protect traditional hierarchies.

Domestic stability is also a solid basis for sustainable action on an international level. Samoa is acknowledged as a reliable partner within the regional institutions like the Pacific Islands Forum. Samoa is aware of its weakness to most other states and does not consider itself a player in global politics. On the contrary, the country has in fact transferred important parts of its sovereignty to New Zealand. Following the 1962 treaty of friendship between New Zealand and Samoa, Wellington is responsible for Samoan security and its defense policies: "(...) to consider sympathetically requests from the Government of Western Samoa for technical, adminis-

Source: Kaufmann/Kraay/Mastruzzi: 2012

	Ø Pacific	Cook Islands	Fiji	Kiribati	Marshall Islands	Micronesia	Nauru	Palau	PNG	Samoa	Solomon Islands	Tonga	Tuvalu	Vanuatu
Voice & Accountability	0.46	-0.30	-0.99	0.69	1.07	1.04	1.04	1.24	0.07	0.46	0.12	0.30	0.75	0.50
Political Stability/ Absence of Violence	0.96	1.45	-0.15	1.48	1.22	1.22	1.52	1.52	-0.85	0.99	0.45	0.76	1.48	1.40
Government Effectiveness	-0.68	-0.85	-0.74	-0.85	-1.28	-0.79	-0.58	-0.87	-0.75	-0.06	-0.95	-0.34	-0.49	-0.27
Regulatory Quality	-0.56	-1.38	-0.68	-1.29	-1.00	-0.91	1.06	-0.89	-0.54	-0.27	-1.18	-0.54	1.17	-0.78
Rule of Law	-0.04	-0.90	-0.90	0.07	-0.27	-0.08	0.41	0.74	-0.93	0.65	-0.70	0.09	1.02	0.25
Control of Corruption	-0.36	-1.14	-0.91	-0.05	-0.36	-0.13	0.01	-0.50	-1.14	0.13	-0.46	-0.31	-0.22	0.35

Figure 1: World Bank's ratings of governance indicators



trative, and other assistance, and also, (...), to help, when requested, in the conduct of Samoa's international relations" (New Zealand 1962: 5f). Samoa maintains diplomatic relations to 56 states and institutions (Samoa 2012) (4) organised by only eight embassies and consulates. Samoa's treaty of friendship appears as a blueprint for what Randall Schweller called bandwagoning for profit (Schweller 1994:72-107) and Robert Keohane already described in 1969 as a system-infected small state (see Keohane 1969: 295f).

Domestic stability, reserved behavior in an international context, and delegation of cost-intensive realms to regional major powers seems to be the key for Samoa as a successful Pacific insular microstate. Ironically, this success has its price. Samoa was uplifted from the group of the least developed countries (LDC) what, for example, makes it more difficult to obtain loan financing. Within this context, Samoa tries to play its card of microstate vulnerability: "(...) our LDC status (...) is a consequence of our being a small island developing state, and not the other way round" (Elisaia 2012: 2).

In reality, this formal state of no success equates to an improvement for Samoa.

## Endnotes

(1) According to the CIA World Factbook currently (2012) around 194,000 people live in Samoa (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ws.html>, 11.11.12).

(2) Voter turnouts in **Polynesia** (in brackets: last election, e.g. last assessable data): Cook Islands 82.81% (2010), Fiji 64% (2006), Samoa 90% (2011), Tonga 90.85% (2010), Tuvalu 79.99% (2002); Voter turnouts in **Melanesia** (in brackets: last election, e.g. last assessable data): PNG 64.74% (1997), Salomon Islands 52.36% (2010), Vanuatu 70.38% (2008); Voter turnouts in **Micronesia** (in brackets: last election, e.g. last assessable data): Kiribati 67.54% (2007), Marshall Islands 50.07% (2007), Micronesia 52.58% (2007), Nauru 92.69% (2010), Palau 42.66% (2008) (Sources: <http://www.idea.int/>, <http://www.ipu.org/english/home.htm>, 11.11.12). In this approach a trend appears which shows that the ethnical heterogeneous



Tourist attraction besides the beaches

and egalitarian states of Melanesia as well as the geographical fragmented states of Micronesia (with Nauru as an exception) have worse outcomes of democratic participation than ethnical homogenous and socially stratified Polynesian states (exception: Fiji with its biethnic population after the last politically contested election. Fijian turnout 2001: 81.05%).

(3) Source: see EN 1.

(4) See Samoan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade: <http://www.mfat.gov.ws/embassies.html> (11.11.12).

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# Essay: The Yi and the Internet

## Promoting Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity in Chinese Virtuality

Olivia Kraef

*Abstract: Since the turn of the century China has witnessed an unparalleled development of internet sites, blogs, chat forums, and corresponding virtual communities. These virtual platforms have become important nodes for information and networking, especially in light of economic and intellectual migration and the corresponding trans-local quality of relationships and networks, and contribute to a further diversification of China's cultural landscape. China's ethnic minorities, too, have been employing internet platforms as a means to promote, and to reflect on, their own culture. For some groups these platforms signify an extension of early, non-virtual ethnic networks and platforms in urban contexts, which provide a renewed incentive for the affirmation of ethnicity/ethnic identity by engaging netizens in an ongoing dialogue on ethnic cultural contents, which transcends physical space. The article introduces two major internet platforms of the so-called Yi minority, [www.yizuren.com](http://www.yizuren.com) and <http://yizucn.com>, and probes into their potential for ethnic identity promotion, and into general parameters of the relationship between the Yi and the internet.*

*Key words: China; Yi; ethnic minorities; internet; ethnic identity*

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The past ten years have witnessed an unparalleled development of Chinese websites and chat forums via institutions (government and related organizations) as well as non-institutional incentives. Moreover, infotainment providers such as Sina.com and Sohu.com have created virtual networks and communities via their individualised blog platforms. Chat forums, most notably China QQ (tencent.com), which is by far the most popular chat room in China, have created extensive communication networks for their users via online chat and personalised user profile (for instance qzone.qq.com) functions.





Screenshot of www.Yizuren.com

## Ethnicity & Internet in China

This steadily increasing array of websites, chat forums, virtual game sites, blogs and microblogs plays an important role in informing and interconnecting internet users and public opinion. Also, these sites have contributed substantially to the remapping and forging of new, local and ethnic identities. (See also Giese 2006; Tamang 2008) These identities are not only virtual in content and format, but increasingly reflect back into concrete, and even new social contexts within Chinese society. One example for such a process of identity (re-affirmation) is the virtual presence of Chinese ethnic minorities on the internet. Ethnic minorities in particular have been making increased use of the different functions and options of Chinese virtual platforms and have thus moved from being (merely) 'represented' to playing an active vocal and visual role in mass media self-representation. The Yi minority has been part of this development.

### From Yi urban community to virtual unity?

The so-called Yi ethnic minority ranks sixth in size among the officially recognized 55 ethnic minorities of the China (MOFCOM 2009), and demarcates a culturally and linguistically heterogeneous group, which consists of different branches that spread across the southwestern provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou, Sichuan and Guangxi. Diasporic communities of different Yi groups have been present in China's large urban city centers for over half a century now. As with other ethnic groups in Beijing, the Yi group consisted until the early 1990s almost exclusively of academic personnel and poli-

ticians. Many Yi students at the Minzu University of China (Zhongyong Minzu Daxue, formerly Central University for Nationalities (CUN), for example, were later absorbed into state institutions such as the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Until the late 1990s the Beijing urban community was dominated by Yi groups from Yunnan. This is due to the size of the Yi group in Yunnan Province as well as to a larger degree of academic mobility than other branches, such as the Nuosu of Liangshan Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

Since 2004 Yi academic personnel/scholars from different parts of China have played an important, both direct and indirect (catalyst) role in the launching, proliferation and popularisation of specific, Yi-geared websites and virtual networking tools. The Yi, though, were not the first ethnic minority to launch its own websites: . The Miao site Hmong in China/Miaozu/Hmoob (Sanmiaowang – Miaozu Lianhewang, <http://www.3miao.net/>), launched in 1999, was perhaps the earliest such site and may have even triggered all other, similar sites. Between 2002 and 2004 more and more ethnic groups started presenting themselves online. In the case of the Yi, institutions catering to ethnic minorities, such as Minzu University of China and the Southwest University for Nationalities (Xinan Minzu Daxue) in Chengdu have served as hotbeds for a generation of young academics, who initiated some of these web pages to satisfy their own need for information and to express themselves culturally. Young, educated Yi have been using these web platforms for the promo-

tion and discussion of their respective culture. Yet these websites are not merely the result of the general, rapid development of the Chinese internet. Like their makers, who originally emerged from the presence of Yi diasporic communities in large Chinese cities, Yi virtual platforms, are a direct extension, both culturally and financially, of earlier, urban and non-virtual networks and social events. The web site founders have received substantial in-kind and financial support from renowned members of the urban/translocal diaspora, including Yi (Nuosu) pop musicians such as Shanying Zuhe (Mountain Eagle), who fulfill an important function in cultural in-group cohesion, and Yi urban academia and political circles. Other Yi public figures, too, continue to fulfill an important function in the coordination of activities, which are linked to these sites, and which are geared towards the national promotion of Yi culture, and the dissemination of related information.

### www.Yizuren.com

Despite a steady and fast increase in Yi-related websites, quite a few have proven to be short-lived. Reason for this is primarily lack of funding and issues concerning operation and management. There are quite a few Yi-related websites by now, few of which were founded on 'non-governmental' incentives, and few of which have survived due to financial and operational reasons. The oldest and most popular and persistent of these websites are, by far, [www.yizuren.com](http://www.yizuren.com) and <http://yizucn.com>. Yizuren.com is the first and by far most comprehensive site for Yi people of and in China. The site was officially founded in 2004 but

has its beginnings as a private initiative of Huang Pingshan, an Yi from Shilin, Yunnan, in 2001. Huang was soon joined by Mao Fahu, an Yi from Yunnan's Chuxiong County, who had just graduated from the department for ethnic theory and policy at Minzu University of China, and who is now one of the major driving forces behind the site. As Mao related in interview with the author in Beijing in 2006, he came across Huang's site while searching the web for information on the Yi. Together, they began sourcing more information on the Yi of China beyond those of Shilin, to feed into a platform for the comprehensive promotion of greater Yi culture. Mao related in interview in Beijing in 2006 that it had been his and Huang's joint intention to create a platform by the Yi for the Yi. In January 2002 they added Yizuren.com's own chat platform, Yiren luntan. (<http://bbs.yizuren.com/>) to their site. (The Chinese bbs, lit. Bulletin Board System, is a virtual bulletin board format, which emerged in the mid-1990s and continues to enjoy great popularity among Chinese internet users for information exchange.) Their initiative soon gathered momentum, when more and more Yi from Beijing's Yi community, became aware and willing to contribute materials and funding for the maintenance of the site. Yizuren.com has since been continuously expanding, and has also witnessed several major makeovers. In 2004 Mao was joined by Pu Zhongliang, a Yunnan-Yi CASS (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) scholar, who, like Mao,

is very active on behalf of Yi cultural promotion, both on- and offline

In its current format the website contains at least thirteen different major sections, which are all related to different aspects of Yi culture and community, and range all the way from 'people' to 'travel' to 'Yi studies' to 'music'. Each section contains articles, features, and photographs, which are inter- and cross-linked with other sections. Older entries are maintained after every makeover, so that users can refer back to older pieces, much like in an online archive. A central position on Yizuren's home page is reserved for its bbs forum. Many young urban Yi consider <http://bbs.yizuren.com/> to be the main Yi platform for information exchange and discussion.

The most recent remake has generally maintained the character of the original site but features a great plus in categories and topics. One of the most important and interesting features of the new website is the category of important Yi (or friends of the Yi) individuals, which presents excerpts from and in most cases also links directly to their blogs and/or websites. This feature reads like the 'who is who' in Yi circles (includes scholars, politicians, poets, etc.). This innovative section offers direct insights into the lives of ordinary and not so ordinary Yi and offers fans and interested readers a direct link to the blogs or websites of these individuals. This enhances, and motivates user traffic to and on these sites. Introductions and links to the blogs of the major Yi pop musicians, such

as Jike Qubu, direct fans to new songs and event details. The long-standing support of Yizuren.com through the Nuosu-Yi pop band Shanying Zuhe (Mountain Eagle) is also apparent in the individual link to a separate fan page hosted by Yizuren. Yi music, and pop music in particular, continues to play a vital role for Yi netizens. (Kraef 2005; 2012) Yizuren was the first Yi-related site of its kind to provide (contemporary) Yi musicians with a platform for self-promotion, which would later evolve into the launching of independent (and mainstream) artist blogs. (Ibid.) A special feature of Yizuren.com, which further points to the importance Yi pop music plays for Yi ethnic identity and cohesion is its own music site, Ethnic Audio, at <http://music.yizuren.com/>. (Ibid.)

### Yizucn.com

In 2007 the popular Yi internet forum <http://yizucn.com/> ("The Chinese Yi's Net for Any Yi's People") was launched by young Yunnan Yi Suyue Feiyang, also a graduate of Minzu University of China (department for ethnic literature), as a "comprehensive work of ethnic culture" and to "impel ethnic cultural exchange and promote the further development of a 'harmonious society.'" (<http://hi.baidu.com/syfyang/blog/item/dc324b23c375e3519922ed79.html>. Last accessed November 22, 2012.) The popularity of this site among young Yi lies in its various applications, and in its separate chat forum (formerly <http://yizucn.com/bbs/>, now



Screenshot of www.Yizucn.com

<http://www.yizucn.com/forum.php>). Unlike the chat service QQ Yizucn.com/bbs does not only function according to groups but offers different sections, such as a separate chat forum for Yi music (<http://yizucn.com/bbs/index.php?gid=34>). Yizucn also offers a separate blog site at <http://blog.yizucn.com/>, where young users can entertain a custom-made blogspot. This feature provides more opportunities for personalisation and interaction (similar to QQ's qzone.com). Blog and bbs topics are interlinked.

Although Yizuren and Yizucn do not officially cooperate, and may in fact even compete in terms of chat forum user frequency and contents, they share many inter-personal and inter-topical connections. Also, a large percentage of young Yi users of both sites appears to be congruent. A recent comparison of daily fluctuation of both bbs sites illustrates a greater interest of netizens in Yizuren's chat forum. This may be due to its major expansion and revamp in 2009. Like Yizuren Yizucn launched an own music site, Yizucn Music (<http://www.yizucn.com/mp3/>), in 2010 (present format); this site can be accessed via a link in the top left corner of the Yizucn home page. Overall layout, design and content are much more simple than that of Yizuren's Ethnic Audio site and stand in stark contrast to the rather 'commercial' layout of the Yizucn home page. Much more developed are Yizucn's other special features, for ex. its microblog site, Yizucn Weibo (Chinese term for microblog) at <http://www.yizucn.com/t/> and its own video site at <http://www.yizucn.com/mv/>.

Yizuren and its operators and supporters cluster around the political and academic Yi urban diaspora in Beijing. Contents and layout adhere to its founders' original intention to create an information platform for all things Yi. This motivation is highlighted by the website's immediate vicinity to Minzu University; also, one of its current main operators is a CASS-scholar. Despite being a graduate of Minzu University, Yizucn's Suyue Feiyang maintains a very different relationship to the university and the social networks, which feed information and provide financial support to Yizuren.com. Suyue's approach is rather commercial, his site features more of an interactive, di-



Promoting ethnicity through the internet and the fusion of translocal Yi communities?

rect approach, which is also underlined by the very "flashy" character of Yizucn's home page.

### Outlook: A 'distinctly Yi' virtual culture?

The question remains how effective the two Yi websites will prove to be in the long-term maintenance and propagation of Yi culture and identity. So far, they successfully trigger and promote an interest in the use of websites as a means for exchange and for channeling interest in topics and (charity) projects for the Yi. They have also become a mirror for trends in cultural development, academic research, and policies in different Yi areas, as well as an emotional mirror for self-perception for young Yi with internet access in rural and urban contexts. Yizuren in particular has managed to maintain a distinct online personality with distinct features and to create and hold a balance between academic, semi-academic, and governmental information on the Yi and Yi culture on the one hand, and infotainment and networking that attracts and holds young netizens' attention on the other.

The two sites are generally characterised by a long-term, strategic development, which their operators seek to achieve via regular updates (more user-friendly design and new or reworked categories for materials and articles). Secondly, they structure, filter and channel usage via their heavily frequented chat forums (bbs). Both sites also feature regular posts by affiliated users and members of translocal Yi circles. Moreover, both sites, especially Yizuren, promote and proliferate certain personal markers for ethnic identification, who they designate as carriers of Yi culture. Similarly, both sites also promote non-virtual, social events for Yi culture, charity work, etc., which often intersect with the featured carriers of Yi culture. Also, both sites acquire and promote the support of other, related sites through direct or cross-links (especially Yizucn), and thus draw more Yi-related information together under their banner. Last but not least, the operators, agents and administrators of both sites consist of a highly motivated group of young Yi with a university background, who have a pronounced interest in the proliferation of informa-

tion for the advancement of their culture and their people (or their own personal definition thereof).

The functions of these websites as platforms for information and exchange fulfill a vital role for the Yi as a large, heterogeneous ethnic group, as it is becoming increasingly translocal. The sites connect and bind these Yi, especially those living in large city centers and who have no direct access to Yi culture, into social networks, which are at once local, and geared to local community events, and translocal in character. By providing these platforms, or new, virtual “performative” stages the internet is gradually replacing the meanings and symbolic stamina of the physical stages of the Beijing Yi diaspora, which have fulfilled a crucial function in gathering and uniting the urban Yi over the past 30 years. Yet this does not imply that virtual stages for ethnic identity will completely replace physical stages. Rather, virtual platforms are vital extensions of these physical stages, as well as of the individuals and institutions, which have carried, promoted and supported these in the first place. This shows for example in their efforts to create long-term, substantial interfaces for the dissemination of governmental and “non-governmental” information, such as charity projects. Also, posts on these sites promote and create an awareness for issues such as Yi language classes, copyright in music, and intangible cultural heritage protection in China (ICH) and its potential for promoting Yi culture. Last but not least increased efforts to create umbrella organisations for Yi interests and (cultural) funding, such as the Association of Yi Entrepreneurs (Yizu Qiyejia Xiehui) have been allocated a greater presence within the public, virtual realm, in order to generate both support and recognition, and perhaps also for the motivation for group action in the economic realm.

These efforts notwithstanding I would question how effective virtual platforms can be in generating a concept of “Yi identity” within a cultural and social context, which remains, by definition, fragmented. Cultural, linguistic, and economic heterogeneity

continue to dominate and may even undermine the efforts of the young generation of visionary website operators to create unity in diversity and act in light of a common cultural and social cause. In early July 2010 I was told by an individual actively involved in one website that attempts were being made to draw all Yi-related virtual platforms together to create, if not a single web identity at least some order within the chaos of the many, and often individually tainted, thematically one-sided, and often short-lived sites. Despite many existing cross-links between these sites (especially Yizucn), though, this plan has not yet materialised.

There are other challenges, such as finances and content, e.g. maintaining a healthy balance between information, academia, chat and other entertainment gadgets. As I was told by Mao Fahu in 2006, although censorship does take place via the operators of the sites (according to state rules and regulations), and mainly on the chat forums, this usually does not affect the diversity of quality of the materials presented. Another question is whether or not the content of the two websites as well as the ways in which they are structured and used, could be identified as being ‘specifically Yi’? This is difficult to determine and would require an in-depth study on user profile and modes of thinking and interest, as well as a comparison with similar websites of other ethnic groups in China. The real question rather, how and why operators gear specific information towards specific user groups, and how and on what grounds pieces of information are clustered together and promoted as a cluster. By building on earlier, ‘real’ networks these websites have successfully woven existing networks and platforms into more potent patterns of (virtual) Yi ethnic identity and cultural awareness. It remains to be seen how potent they can be for the further, and “non-governmental” promotion of Yi culture, as well as for the cohesion of a collective ‘Yi’ ethnic identity.

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- [www.yizuren.com](http://www.yizuren.com) (彝族人网)
- <http://music.yizuren.com/> (彝族人网民族音像, Ethnic Audio)
- <http://yizucn.com> (中国彝族网—网聚中国彝族)
- <http://yizucn.com/bbs>, <http://www.yizucn.com/forum.php> (彝人论坛)
- <http://blogyizucn.com/> (彝人博客)
- <http://www.yizucn.com/mp3/> (Yizucn Music)
- <http://www.yizucn.com/mv/> (中国彝族视频网)
- <http://222.210.17.136:81/zgyc/> (彝学网)
- <http://www.yizuge.com/> (中国彝族音乐网)
- <http://t.qq.com/nuosuwww> (彝族人网QQ微博)
- <http://yi.people.com.cn/> (人民网, Yi)

## Other:

- [www.25xz.com](http://www.25xz.com) (中国藏族音乐网)
- [www.3miao.net/](http://www.3miao.net/) (三苗网—苗族联合网)
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# Essay: Transit migrants in Indonesia between the devil and the deep blue sea

Antje Missbach

*Abstract: Rahim (not his real name), a young Iraqi man, has been living in transit in Indonesia for more than nine years. Retracing both his journey to the archipelago and his failed attempts to leave again – as his stated intention is to find permanent protection in Australia – frame a difficult time in his life marked by uncertainty, vulnerability and despair. Highlighting Rahim’s destiny sheds light on the general legal and political conditions in Indonesia faced by several thousands asylum seekers and recognised refugees. As many of them cannot return to their conflict-ridden home countries while local integration into the Indonesian society is legally not permitted and resettlement options to safe third countries are only available to very few, they become stuck between “the devil and the deep blue sea”.*

*Keywords: transit migration; asylum seekers; Australia, Indonesia*

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This is the second time I am trying to talk to Rahim. We have both taken shelter from the pouring afternoon shower in a NGO office I came to visit earlier in the day hoping to meet a number of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan. In the afternoons, they usually play badminton in the backyard. I have played with them a few times, and more than often lost. But today, something must have prevented them from coming in. While waiting, I chat with the Indonesian NGO staff, who have been working in the refugee centre for years. A handful of Iraqi and Tamil women are making cakes for the upcoming refugee day celebration. Rahim is sitting at one of the computers, reading online newspapers. Taking a glimpse, I can see photographs of Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, the former and current Australian Prime minister. I am a bit surprised to see Rahim reading Australian online news, rather than the news from his homeland.

Shunning eye contact, I sense that Rahim is not very keen to talk to me this time either. A friend from an international migration organisation has recommended I meet Rahim as he is one of the long-stayers among the Iraqi refugees here in Indonesia, arriving in the early 2000s. So far, I know that Rahim has been waiting for more than nine years for resettlement after the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) found him to be a genuine refugee. In early March 2010, upon our first encounter in one of the many scattered kampung in the mountainous area near Jakarta (Indonesia), Rahim refused to talk to me after just a couple of introductory sentences on my part. For the sake of simplicity, I had explained to him that I would like to meet some “stranded boat people” who had been on their way to Australia. But my choice of words really upset him. Immediately, he cut me off putting it straight that he was a refugee, not “boat people” – an expression that to him carried the notion of barbaric invaders and thoughtless daredevils. He let me know that he thought very little of the journalists who used this pejorative term to stir up public anxieties in Australia over the “forthcoming waves of illegal migrants”. I apologised but he walked out on me, saying that his support for all the other “rubbernecks” had caused him nothing but trouble.

Source: Antje Missbach



Boats at the sea close to Kupang, West Timor, Indonesia

## Rahim's story

Getting slightly bored of waiting for the Afghani youngsters, I try to get him into a conversation once again by making comments about the rainy season in Indonesia and also asking a silly question about the weather in Iraq. Until now I only knew some basic facts about his origin. Back in Iraq under the regime of Saddam Hussein, Rahim faced triple persecution; not only because he is a Kurd, but he also belongs to the minority group of Feylis and is a Shi'ite. As expected, my weather chat is not going to spur his interest in talking. Thus, I opt for a slightly more confrontational approach and ask him directly about his negative experiences with journalists, not without reassuring that I am not one of them. Without delving into much detail, he retorts that if he had never cooperated with them, he "might be in Australia for long by now and working in his real job, not having married a local woman here and not having wasted all his time waiting for something to happen". Back in 2001, in the wake of several maritime incidents that cost many people their life, international news reporters turned to Indonesia to investigate the whereabouts of further potential "boat people". Assuming that giving insights about his misery and that of other asylum seekers would help them to get resettled sooner in a safe country – something Indonesia was not – Rahim had shared his story with the reporters and answered their many questions on where? what? and why? with good grace. He also allowed them to take pictures of him and his immediate environment. Soon after that he started to fear that he had revealed more than what was advisable. While most of his fellow country people have been resettled in Australia by now, Rahim is still waiting for the results of his health clearance. He passed his security clearance a while ago, but given his exposure, he keeps blaming the media for his protracted stay in limbo. Then he shrouds himself in silence again.

Rahim makes preparations to leave as dawn is approaching. Outside the weather is becoming worse. Power outage. One of the women brings a candle and lights it for us. Undecided whether to brave the rain or not, Rahim sits down again. He starts to talk more. After all, what does it matter if he sits around here or in his house? There is

nothing much for him to do. That is why he vehemently laments being here. Staying in Indonesia was never his intention. Worst of all Rahim finds the boredom he faces from day to day debilitating. Here, he is not even allowed to work legally. Although the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) covers his housing costs and pays him a small allowance, it is insufficient to make ends meet. Thanks to his siblings overseas, who send him money whenever they can afford, he muddles through. Legally restrained from work, most people in transit live on their own savings or remittances. Some have sold all their belongings back home, some families have gone deeply into debt to finance the flight of at least one of their members. The longer they stay, the less money is left.

When his family in Iraq had to flee, each sibling decided to approach a different country. One sister married an Iraqi in Canada. One brother applied for asylum in Great Britain, another brother for asylum in Germany, but is still living in a home for asylum seekers awaiting the final outcome of his application. Knowing that the European Union sealed its external borders and that smugglers ask for enormous sums to clandestinely bring people in, Rahim opted for Australia. Rahim imagined Australia to be a country, which was less racist, given its history as a nation shaped through immigration, a country that followed basic humanitarian principles and that would offer him a fair go. Listening to his words makes me wonder how much of his hope is still left. Rahim's despair does not stem from the long and hazardous journey, but from the sheer endless time in waiting, when he thought Australia was already so near. After having travelled to Syria, Jordan and then by plane to Malaysia, Rahim reached Indonesia by boat. Indonesia's geographic position, its accessibility and the relative political stability in the last decade attracted thousands of transit migrants from Iraq, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. In fact, the Indonesian archipelago became a starting point for hundreds of self-organised voyages to Australia.

## Transit migration

While I watch the rain drip down the window pane, I cannot help but think that while globalisation has spurred a cheaper and faster internati-

onal exchange of goods and ideas and brought metropolitan cities closer together; human movement, paradoxically, has been restricted – at least for the largest part, the movement of the 'non-privileged masses' outside the 'developed world'. And how comes, that the flourishing debates on worldwide 'irregular' migration have flourished over the last decades, but have somehow seemed to ignore what is going on in Southeast Asia? Most researchers and of course the policy makers focused on the Eastern European transit zones and the Maghreb states, which are both considered to be main gateways for 'irregular migrant flows' into the European Union and in particular, the Western European states. Beyond that, research on the US-Mexican border is also plentiful. However, Southeast Asia has gone slightly by the wayside, ever since the Vietnamese boats stopped coming. While much attention has focused on immigration policies in the receiving countries and to a far lesser extent, the political and economic conditions in the home country that caused people to leave, intensive study about the spatiality of the journey itself remains absent. Until recently we have known little about how externalised security policies, border protection measures and more restrictive immigration policies influence the national migration policies within states like Indonesia. On top of this, we know even less about how transit migrants deal with illegality, economic deprivation and the need to develop temporary survival strategies. After all, being in transit is a process, not a status. Broad-brush, it comprises the time after the arrival in a country, which is not seen as a permanent host country, and the departure onwards from that country to a more promising host country or return to the country of origin. This said, people can enter and stay at several places of transit, depending on many specific circumstances. A binding definition of transit migration in international policy or international law is still missing despite the fact that the IOM has been urging its member states since the early 1990s to recognise transit migration as an important matter in international migration and in particular in irregular and asylum migration.

Transit migration can be a "chaotic, disordered process with tremendous uncertainty and extreme material dis-





Source: Antje Missbach

Graffiti in one of the shabby hotels where asylum seekers live

comfort or danger at every stage”, writes Michael Collyer (2007). The main trouble of transit migration, however, is being trapped in it, when one’s mobility becomes restricted so that neither returning nor moving forward is an option. For Rahim, voluntary return is unimaginable. Going back to Iraq is not an option at all. Even if he accepted the IOM repatriation offer to cover his return flight and provide him with some kind of start-up package to help manage the first months, he would lose out. Why would he return to a country still afflicted with random bomb attacks that cannot be prevented by the occupying forces who for the last years have tried hard to teach the Iraqis the meaning of love for democracy? And what exactly would Rahim return to? His brothers are dispersed all over the globe. His parents are dead. All family assets had been sold off in a rush before leaving. Contact with friends who remained in Iraq have diminished over the years; links with those who also took off are only slowly being re-established through various internet-based portals. Rahim is stuck. Although leaving the archipelago might still be easier than entering the ‘lucky island’ that rules out welcoming unwanted migrations through restrictive immigration and visa schemes. But even moving on from Indonesia is easier said than done. As with many

other sought-after destination countries in the West, Australia has shifted responsibilities to its neighbouring countries to impede irregular border crossing. Not only are Australian migration officers based on the main sea and airport to keep an eye on passengers’ papers, but Australia has also provided the Indonesian Maritime Police with new vessels to patrol its borders. To make matters worse for Rahim, staying in Indonesia for good is also out of the question.

In other transit countries, like Morocco or Libya, transit migrants settle down and become de facto citizens, either because they run out of money, face insurmountable barriers to onward migration or life in transit is simply bearable. In the case of Indonesia, however, resettlement is about the only option. Integration into society is neither desired nor legally permitted. Home of nearly 240 million people of whom more than a tenth live below the poverty line, Indonesia has got its hands full. In its recent past, Indonesia has been confronted with hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people triggered by regional turmoils. So, why would 5,000 to 6,000 officially registered asylum seekers carry much weight? Fearing being held accountable, the government of Indonesia has never signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and its

1967 Protocol. Consequently Indonesia lacks the legislative framework to protect refugees and asylum seekers. Yet, Indonesia allows them to remain until the UNHCR has found durable solutions for them. The reason being is not compassion, but that the cost of deportation is deemed too expensive. Compared to neighbouring Malaysia, where people without an adequate visa and resident permit face heavy fines, detention, corporal punishment and eventually deportation, Indonesia seems like paradise. At first glance, at least.

Refugee resettlement to safe third countries takes place very slowly. Leading migration expert Stephen Castles calculated that given the recent annual resettlement numbers around the globe, it would take about 90 years to resettle those refugees who have been waiting for five years or more. Notwithstanding all those, who might apply for asylum in the meantime. A handful of Western countries have specific annual acceptance rates for refugees. So far Australia, for example, accepts about 12,000 refugees per year. Given the 10.55 million refugees under UNHCR protection, this appears like a drop in the ocean. Nevertheless, Rahim, like most other asylum seekers, did apply for resettlement with the UNHCR. However, both countries where his brothers reside turned him

down. As it turns out, people smugglers also have integrated the services of the UNHCR as an indispensable part of their 'package deals'. While organising the next leg of the trip, a protection letter from the UNHCR comes in handy, saving those preparing for a clandestine boat trip to Australia much trouble with the police. Following the downturn of the small-scale fishing industry, people smuggling creates meagre opportunities for Indonesian fishermen and their underused, often poorly maintained boats. Going by boat seems like the cheapest form of transport, with journeys from Indonesia to Australia costing anything between \$US 2,000-10,000 per person. But hundreds have paid for the trip on these unseaworthy barges with their life.

### Death at sea

Somewhat surprised that Rahim would now talk so freely, I cannot refrain from asking whether he has ever considered such an attempt. He stalls, then takes a deep breath and continues. When he was still new to Indonesia, he had tried to continue his journey seamlessly. The smuggler who had helped him enter Indonesia got him in contact with an associate who took Rahim to Flores. From there, he and a group of people got on a boat and set sail. Fortune did not smile on them. A very low ebb caused their boat to run aground on a reef while they could still see the lights onshore. Apart from that they did not see a thing. The night was pitch-dark, the moon had not risen yet. Taking cover in the darkness, the captain and his small crew abandoned their passengers immediately swimming back to the beach. Unaccustomed to the sea and unable to swim they all nonetheless disembarked, walking towards the lights and hoping to reach the land. But they could not, as a trench blocked their way. They tried to get back onto the boat, but could no longer find it. Had it drifted away? Panic broke out, people were screaming, cursing, praying. A blessing in disguise, two fishermen on an outrigger canoe happened to come by. Taking in a few children and bringing them to the beach. They kept coming back to fetch the others while the waters started to rise again. Back at the beach the police were already there to arrest them. As they counted the crowd it was found

that a four-year old girl was missing. She must have fallen off the canoe without anybody noticing. After spending five months in a detention centre on Lombok Island, Rahim was relocated to Java. He had to register himself at a local neighbourhood council that would then report his presence to the local police. If the police caught him outside his allotted residential area or even on a boat in the Indonesian water, he would be imprisoned again in a detention centre. From what Rahim knows about Indonesian jails, he prefers to avoid them like the plague. Even though he once met a police officer, who offered him to arrange another attempt to go to the Lucky Island.

### Old & new responses

In response to the rising numbers of people trying to reach Australian outposts (Christmas Island, Ashmore Reef) by boat since the late 1990s, Australia opted for very restrictive measures to stem the unwanted influx. With the enactment of the Border Protection Bill in 2001 Australia not only tightened its border control, but the navy also took preventive steps to detect, pursue, intercept and search boats carrying so-called unauthorized arrivals. In line with this, the navy was allowed to remove any ship in the territorial waters of Australia and use reasonable force to do so. Under Prime Minister John Howard's so-called Pacific Solution many small islands were excised from Australia's migration zone. So, even when reaching – say one of the Cocos Islands – safely, asylum seekers could no longer apply for protection in Australia. When intercepted at sea, they were taken to Pacific island states, such as Nauru, for status determination. In addition to disrupting the flow of people en route down under, the Australian government targeted people-smuggling syndicates operating overseas. As a result of reinforced bilateral collaboration with Indonesia, Australian officials were posted at international airports to survey smuggling activities and identify fraudulent documentation of travellers attempting to come to Australia. Moreover, Australian Intelligence helped their Indonesian counterparts to arrest local and foreign people smugglers. Also, similar to Italy in Libya, Australia provided millions of dollars to the Indonesia government to improve their

detention facilities. Last but not least, both the UNHCR and IOM received substantial funding to carry out their tasks aimed at preventing refugees from crossing unhindered into Australia and repatriating those who were desperate enough to do so.

While my thoughts are still with the nocturnal drama in Lombok, Rahim interrupts my wandering mind. He wants to know what will change for him and other refugees stuck in transit now that Gillard has taken over the lead in Canberra. Under the Rudd government, the Pacific Solution came to an end and the number of boats heading to Australia went up. The Rudd government stopped some of the worst elements of Australia's refugee policies, such as mandatory detention for unauthorised arrivals. It also closed down the extra-regional refugee processing centres in Manus Island and Nauru. But even though Rudd took a more humane approach to refugee protection, he did not raise the annual intake of refugees. What mattered to him, just as much as to his predecessors, was the protection of borders rather than refugees. In order to reduce the number of asylum seekers opting for a risky journey on a leaky boat, in October 2010, Rudd approached President Yudhoyono with his ideas for an Indonesian solution, which basically aimed at extending Indonesian detention and processing facilities for unwanted asylum seekers. Bilateral relations soured after the Australian Customs Service vessel *Oceanic Viking* intercepted 78 Sri Lankan refugees after a rescue call in Indonesian waters and escorted them back to the Indonesian mainland. Following a personal plea by Rudd, Yudhoyono agreed that the asylum seekers would be processed in Indonesia for humanitarian reasons. However, Ismeth Abdullah, the governor of the province of Riau, then stated to the media that he would not allow the Australian vessel to anchor at Port Kijang as he did not want Indonesia to become a "dumping ground" for irregular migrants. Other senior government representatives supported his stance urging Australia to find its own solution instead. Even though Indonesia and Australia had signed a number of bilateral agreements, such as the Lombok Treaty in 2006 that sought to strengthen cooperation between relevant institutions and



Source: Antje Missbach

This painting of drowning people was circulated in facebook (early January 2012) shortly after one of the worst maritime disaster involving mainly Afghani asylum seekers

agencies to prevent people smuggling, it cannot go unnoticed that Indonesia leans toward perceiving the people smuggling problem first and foremost as Australia's problem. When Julia Gillard took up the Prime Minister's office in June 2010, everybody expected her to take a stricter stance against refugees that self-organised their resettlement. However, her plan to send back irregular asylum seekers to Malaysia in order to deter future arrivals was stopped by the Australian High Court in 2011. Ever since the numbers of asylum seekers coming to Australia by boat kept increasing. Nobody could have foreseen her trying out a number of regional solutions that echoed at their core the principle the original Pacific solution. Rahim and I might have had a good laugh seeing the East Timor, the Malaysia, the Nauru and the Manus solution coming and going. But at this very moment we did not feel like laughing at all.

Rahim gets up and we wish each other all the best for the future. Inundated by the stories I have just heard, I keep sitting there on my own. As the last reverberations for the evening prayer call fade away, a young Tamil man en-

ters the centre bringing news about a boat that has taken off. As rumour has it, nobody has seen the Afghani youngsters since early this morning.

### Epilogue

Two years later, I meet Rahim again, this time in Sydney. Eventually, he, his Indonesian wife and their son had been resettled. Rahim is still unemployed, his former training as doctor is not recognised. Having much spare time at hands, Rahim could follow the political developments on asylum seekers issues meticulously, but overcome by disappointments he no longer wants to hear about the latest decision by the government.

By late July, more than 128 boats carrying more than 8,000 people have made their way to Australia. Even though such numbers remain negligible compared to asylum seekers currently in Yemen or Pakistan, the government under Gillard opted for drastic changes. Unfortunately, the new solution very much resembles the old policies under Howard. Not only will the former detention centres in Nauru and Papua New-Guinea be reopened, but the government also plans to limit the access of humani-

tarian entrants to family reunion provisions. Once more, asylum seekers intercepted by Australian authorities risked being processed offshore. Despite the boosted intake of 20,000 instead of 13,000 refugees per year, the government plans also to restart its negotiations with Malaysia to realise its people swap deal.

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**Photo Shooting in Hanoi:  
Drug Awareness Campaign**

