

Pacific Geographies

Research | Notes | Current Issues from the Asia-Pacific Region

The Seedbeds of Active Citizenship?

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Interview

Beijing - the Grey Capital

Essay





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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

This issue of *Pacific Geographies* covers a wide range of topics, again, which will hopefully find your interest. Among others, it includes two essays, one more personal and one more academic reflection about Beijing respectively about Hanoi. Both essays were written by long-time residents who have left those fascinating cities in the meantime and now throw a look back.

Further, we glad to announce, that Matthias Kowasch has recently reinforced our editorial team. Since January 2014, he has been working as a lecturer at the Department of Geography at University of Bremen. Matthias hold a PhD in human geography about the participation of the indigenous Kanak people in the development of the nickel sector in the French overseas territory New Caledonia. In this context he did extensive fieldwork in Kanak villages. His research interests are resource exploitation, governance, indigenous people's issues and textbook research. Before arriving in Bremen, Matthias worked at the University of New Caledonia and he was a postdoc at the Institute of Research for Development (IRD) in Noumea. In addition to his work at University of Bremen, Matthias is teaching in a high school near Bremen. Matthias will particularly contribute to the development and the internationalization of our journal and is looking forward to receiving submissions - particularly dealing with Oceania.

The next issue shall cover again a specific topic. In case you are interested in guest editing a Special Issue of *Pacific Geographies*, please let us know your topic suggestion as soon as possible.

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

Dr. Michael Waibel, Dr Julia N. Albrecht & Dr. Matthias Kowasch

Pacific Geographies

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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

Enjoying the moment

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The photo shows a Beijing security
volunteer at Dashilar Street (大柵
欄街), Xicheng District, Beijing, the
ancient business and entertainment
center of the Chinese capital. The old
men is sneakily drinking what looks
to be tea, but really is baijiu (白酒), a
strong Chinese liquor from a tea-set.



Predicting Potential Soil Loss in Pacific Islands: Example in Tahiti Iti – French Polynesia

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Abstract: Soil erosion by water has become a serious problem in Pacific Islands mainly due to the tropical natural conditions and to the progressive and continuous human pressure (agricultural practices, bush fires, mining activity...). In the current study, an effort to predict potential annual soil loss has been conducted in Tahiti Iti island in French Polynesia. For the prediction, the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) has been applied in a Geographical Information System framework. RUSLE-factor maps were made. The R-factor was determined from the average annual rainfall data. The K-factor was estimated using soil map available and granulometric analysis of samples of soils. The LS-factor was calculated from a 5 meters digital elevation model. The C-factor was calculated using remote sensing techniques and particularly supervised classification methods based on SPOT 5 satellite images. The P-factor in absence of data was set to 1. The mean annual soil loss predicted by the model is 2.4 t/ha/yr. The results show that some 85% of the region of interest has a potential erosion rate of less than 5 t/ha/yr but an extended part of the area is undergoing severe erosion with a potential soil loss up to 50 t/ha/yr, demanding the attention of local land managers.

Keywords: Soil erosion, Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE), Geographic Information System (GIS), Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), Tahiti

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Soil erosion and related degradation of land resources are significant environmental and socio-economic problems in a large number of countries throughout the world (Millward and Mersey, 1999; Hoyos, 2005). Soil erosion occurs naturally and its importance to humanity depends on a host of factors, including the nature of soil, climate, topography and land cover but most importantly the nature of human activities. Soil loss is particularly associated with farming practices that do not conserve soil in situ, for example ploughing against the contours, rapid ground cover removal, overgrazing and deforestation - these are entirely natural and indeed needed for many semiarid and Mediterranean systems. Also important can be mining activities, construction and urbanization that does not consider hydrological conditions.



Figure 1: Tourism is an important source in income in Tahiti

In the South Pacific region, the high tropical islands are most vulnerable to soil loss and land degradation. They have steep slopes, tropical storms and cyclones with extremely heavy rainfall and high natural erosion rates due to rapid soil weathering. Moreover, most of the islands in this part of the world have an important and fast growing population and therefore a strong pressure on natural resources. The vast majority of rural Oceanian peoples practice subsistence farming and artisanal fisheries. Excessive soil erosion threatens sustainable agricultural production by decreasing the fertility of agricultural soils with a loss of soil rich nutrients. Streams in tropical areas have up to 15 times the natural sediment load compared to those in temperate areas (Simonett, 1968). But water quality is affected by increased sedimentation in rivers with large volumes of terrigenous runoff.

Moreover, downstream of the watershed, the degradation of lagoon biodiversity and fringing reefs during cyclonic floods, due to sediment transfer, can be serious (Fabricius, 2005; Jones and Berkelmans, 2014). For the Pacific islands that comprise nearly 25% of the world's coral structures, biodiversity and landscape preservation are important concerns for tourism. The effect of soil erosion on agricultural land is also a concern, although the region's inhabitants have a fine array of traditional farming techniques that avoid its worst effects.

An attempt to assess the erosion hazard and quantity of sedimentary material carried toward Pacific island lagoons will aid in planning for high level of soil erosion, especially where Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) is being applied. In this article the aim is to map the erosion process on Tahiti Island in French Polynesia, and to highlight the watersheds that are most affected. An empirical soil loss model for Tahiti Island is developed and presented.

Geography of Tahiti Island

Tahiti island, located in the archipelago of the Society Islands in the central Southern Pacific Ocean, is part of an overseas collectivity of the French Republic. This highest and largest island in French Polynesia (covering an area of 1045 km²) was formed from volcanic activity (around 1.4 Myear ago). Tahiti consists of two round por-

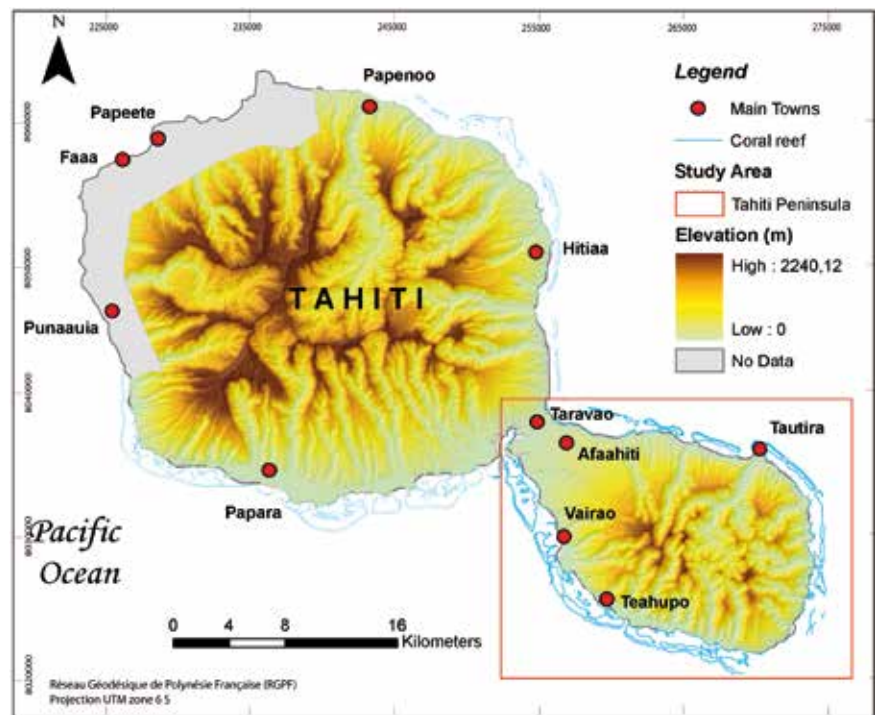


Figure 2: Tahiti consists of two high islands formed by young volcanic mountains

tions centred on volcanic mountains: the bigger, northwestern part Tahiti Nui (around 30 km in diameter) and the smaller, southeastern part Tahiti Iti (around 15 km) (Figure 2).

These two parts are connected by a short isthmus named after the small town of Taravao. The island is surrounded by modern discontinuous fringing reefs grading into a chain of barrier reefs, commonly interrupted and locally enclosing a narrow lagoon. The island is volcanically inactive and is deeply dissected by erosion (Hildenbrand et al., 2008). The spatial distribution of the rainfall depends mostly on the topography and most particularly with exposure to prevailing winds: from 8000 mm/year on the east coast hit by Tahiti trade winds, to 2000 mm/year on the west coast (Figure 2). The two sub-islands are basaltic edifices, which over the millennia have eroded to form mainly laterite soils. Four main forms of terrain topography are identified: the coastal plain has a slope of less than 2°, the plateaus and riverbeds with a slope of between 2° and 15°, the planezes between 15° and 47° and the incised valleys have more than 47° slope (Ye et al., 2010). In 2012, the population was 184000 inhabitants making it the most populous island of French Polynesia (68.5% of its total population) focus in majority on Tahiti Nui. With 20000 inhabitants, the population density of Tahiti peninsula is 80 inhabitants /

km². However, this population is concentrated exclusively near the coast and in the region of Taravao, where density reaches 350 inhabitants/km² leaving the central part of the island uninhabited.

Erosion modeling: material and methods

In order to spatialise and quantify the erosion hazard on the Tahiti Iti Peninsula, we choose an approach based on modeling. The Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation was used, (RUSLE, Renard et al., 1997), an empirically based model founded on the Universal Soil Loss Equation, USLE (Wischmeier and Smith 1978). These mathematical models are the most widely used through the world for prediction of water erosion hazards and for the planning of soil conservation measures. RUSLE predicts only the amount of soil loss that results from sheet or rill erosion on a single slope and does not account for additional soil losses that might occur from gully, wind or tillage erosion. It estimates long-term average annual soil loss rate using a factor-based approach with rainfall, soil, topography and land cover and management as inputs. These five major factors are used in USLE/RUSLE for computing the expected average annual erosion through the following equation:

$$A = R \times K \times LS \times C \times P$$

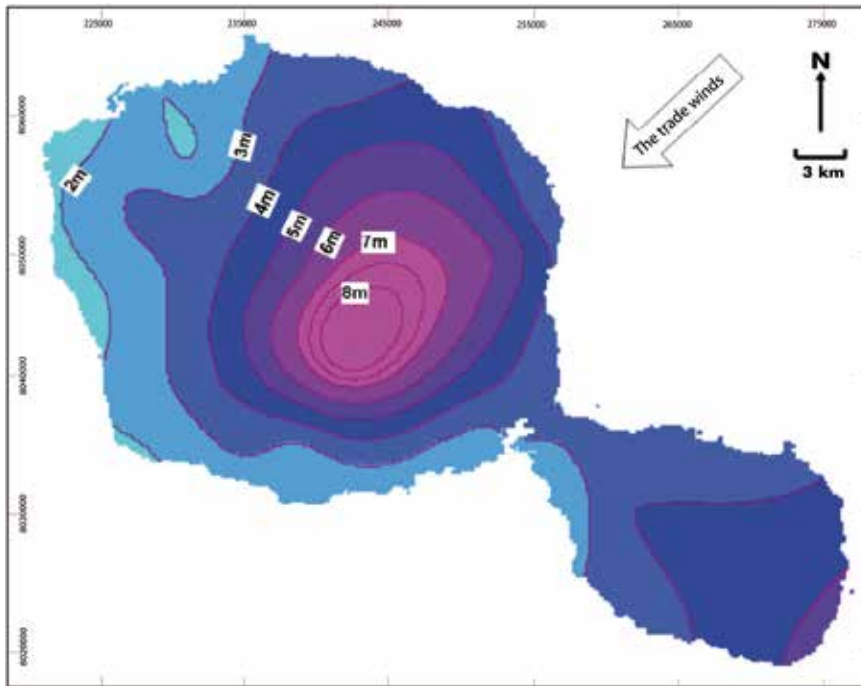


Figure 3: The spatial distribution of the annual rainfall (Ye et al. 2010). The East coast, subject to the trade winds, receives more rainfall than the West coast. The rains are more abundant during the warm season (October to April).

Where A is the computed spatial average potential soil loss and temporal average soil loss per unit area (t/ha/yr), R the rainfall-runoff erosivity factor [MJ mm/(ha h year⁻¹)], K the soil erodibility factor [t ha h/(ha MJ mm)], L the slope length factor, S the slope steepness factor, C the cover management factor, and P the conservation support practice factor. The RUSLE was applied in a Geographical Information System (GIS) environment, where every factor was calculated and spatialized as a raster/grid. Raster models are cell-based representations of map features, which offer analytical capabilities for continuous data and allow fast processing of map layer overlay operations (Fernandez et al., 2003). In this case, a pixel value of each grid square is equal to a level of sensitivity to erosion for the factor in question.

Rainfall erosivity factor (R)

This factor, by definition, is the sum of individual storm erosivity value, EI₃₀, for a year averaged over long time period (> 20 years) where E is the total storm kinetic energy and I₃₀ is the maximum 30 min rainfall intensity. Because of the lack of available data from weather stations in French Polynesia, the World Climate database, developed by Hijmans et al. (2005) was used. WorldClim is a set of very high resolution interpolated climate

surfaces for global land areas. These data available for 1950-2000, expressed in monthly average on a 1km scale, has been corrected in GIS environment to match the spatial resolution of the digital elevation model and compiled to obtain results in the year for use in RUSLE. With these data it was not possible to compute longterm rainfall intensity data in study area, so we applied the simplified formula developed by Roose (1975):

$$R = 0.5 * P * 1.73$$

With P is the average annual rainfall, 1.73 the index conversion between US unit and metric unit, and 0.5 an index of climatic aggressiveness that expresses the relationship between an index of average annual rainfall and the height of the average annual rainfall. The spatial distribution of the factor R obtained follows the variations of the rainfall and topography (Figure 7a). It ranges from 1.478 to 2.465 MJ.mm/ha.h.yr in Tahiti Peninsula.

Soil erodibility factor (K)

The soil erodibility factor (K) represents both susceptibility of soil to erosion and the rate of runoff. This factor reflects the resistance of soil to erosion caused by the force of precipitation. A simpler method to predict K was presented by Wischmeier et al. (1971) which includes the

particle size of the soil, organic matter content, soil structure and profile permeability. If this information is known, the soil erodibility factor K can be approximated from an equation (Wischmeier and Smith 1978), which estimates erodibility as:

$$K = 2.1 \times M^{1.14} \times 10^{-6} (12 - MO) + 0.0325 \times (b - 2) + 0.025 \times (c - 3)$$

Where M = (%silt+%very fine sand) (100-%clay), MO is the percent organic matter content, b is soil structure code and c is the soil permeability rating.

In this study, soil erodibility was estimated with the help of the soil map provided by Jamet (1990) from IRD (Institute of Research and Development) at a scale of 1:40 000. This soil map has been digitalized and 13 major soil types were identified (tropical eutrophic brown soils, ferrallitic soils...). A field campaign took samples of soils for each type of soil across Tahiti Iti. A granulometric analysis of these samples using the gravimetric method, and organic matter determination using the loss on ignition method was conducted for each soil type, allowing us to determine the percentage of sand, silt, clay, and organic matter content. From these values and using the texture triangle of the United States Department of Agriculture (Figure 3), the soil texture of each type soil was identified (Brown, 2003). Most of soils in the region of interest (mainly covered by ferrallitic soils) have relative proportions of sand, silt and clay similar (with a percentage of sand superior to 80%). They are thus characterized by the same texture, which explains the low spatial variability of this factor (Figure 4b). Then the table of correspondence between the standard textures and the K factor (Table 1) was used (Stone and Hilborn, 2000). In the study area the values of the K factor range from 0.0026 to 0.0171 t.ha.h/ha.MJ.mm.

Slope-length (L) and slope steepness (S) factors

The L and S factors in the model represent the effect of topography on erosion. It has been demonstrated that increases in slope length and slope steepness can produce higher overland flow velocities and correspondingly higher erosion (Haan et al., 1994). Slope length is defined as the horizontal distance from the origin of overland flow to the point where

either the slope gradient decreases to a point where deposition begins, or runoff becomes focussed into a defined channel (Foster and Wischmeier, 1974). The common equation used for calculating LS is an empirical equation provided by the USDA Agriculture Handbook (Wischmeier and Smith, 1978):

$$LS = \left(\frac{\lambda}{22.13} \right)^m \times (65.41 \sin^2 \theta + 4.56 \sin \theta + 0.065)$$

where λ is the slope length in meters; θ is the angle of slope in degrees; and m is a constant dependent on the value of the slope gradient: 0.5 if the slope angle is greater than 2.86°, 0.4 on slopes of 1.72 to 2.85°, 0.3 on slopes of 0.57 to 1.72°, and 0.2 on slopes less than 0.57°.

A limitation of using at regional scales the USLE/RUSLE soil-erosion models has been the difficulty in obtaining an LS factor grid suitable for use in GIS applications. Different models and methods have been tried to solve this problem (Hickey, 2000). Thus, the algorithms adopted in the current work to estimate the LS factor were the raster grid cumulation and maximum downhill slope methods, which were developed by Van Remortel et al. (2001). A digital elevation model (DEM) at 5 meters spatial resolution from the Urban Planning and Development Service of French Polynesia, and an AML (Arc Macro Language) program under ArcInfo software based on the equation of Renard et al. (1997), were used for the calculation of the LS factor. As a result, each 5 m cell of the grid surface of each one of the study area was assigned an LS value (Figure 4d). The topographic factor ranges from 0 in the flat zones to 116

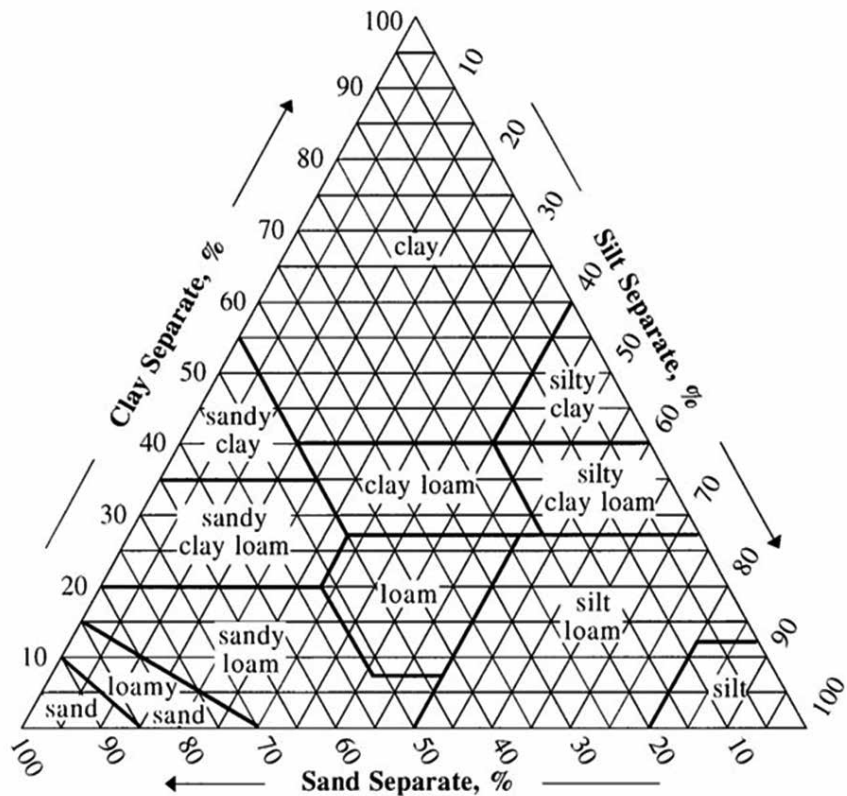


Figure 4: Texture triangle of the United States Department of Agriculture

at the many steep slopes in the central watersheds of Tahiti Peninsula, with an average value of 12.8. Most of the values of the LS factor are under 5, and are the flatter plains and coasts. High values (superior to 20) are important in this part of Tahiti, representing 22% of the total area.

Cover management factor (C)

According to Benkobi et al. (1994), the vegetation cover factor together with slope length and steepness factors is most sensitive to soil erosion. C factor represent the effects of cropping and management practices on soil erosion rates in

agricultural lands and the effects vegetation canopy and ground covers on reducing the soil loss in forested regions (Renard et al., 1997). As the vegetation cover increases, the soil loss decreases. Usually, the vegetation cover C factor is based on empirical equations with measurements of many variables related to ground and aerial coverage collected in sample plots (Wischmeier and Smith 1978). This method only provides point values for limited locations. The C factor values at non-sampled locations are estimated through spatial interpolation techniques. But, to compute C factor for the scale of large watersheds, it is

Source: United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)



Figure 5: Pineapple fields near Taravao



Figure 6: Deforestation on steep slopes

Source: Pascal Dumas

Soil texture	K factor (t.ha.h/ha.MJ.mm)
Sand	0,0026
Loamy sand	0,0053
Coarse sandy loam	0,0092
Fine sand	0,0105
Loamy fine sand	0,0145
Sandy clay	0,0158
Sandy loam	0,0171
Fine sandy loam	0,0237
Sandy clay loam	0,0263
Clay	0,0289
Silty clay	0,0342
Clay loam	0,0395
Loam	0,0395
Organic	0,0395
Silty clay loam	0,0421
Silt loam	0,05

Table 1: K factor for different soil texture in US units

very difficult or impossible to measure every plot to obtain C-factor values. The interpolation results based on the C factor point values could be poor due to the limited number of sample plots in complex environments (Wang et al., 2002). Therefore, remotely sensed data have been used to estimate the C factor distribution based on land-cover classification results (Millward and Mersey, 1999; Lu et al., 2004), assuming that the same land covers have the same C factor values. In our case, we used remote sensing techniques and particularly supervised classification methods based on SPOT 5 satellite images taken with a 5 m resolution for obtain a land cover map of the area of interest. Unfortunately, a part of the image is covered by clouds and their shadows. Three main types of vegetation were mapped in the peninsula: crops, mainly in the plateau of Taravao or near urban areas along the coast and low slopes, savannah on low hills, and forest, the main type of vegetation, particularly in the mountain zones. For each type of vegetation and land use, a C factor value was adopted based on some research papers. Cover factor ranged from 0.003 to 1. Bare lands, bare soils (construction sites), representing the greatest sensitivity to erosion, have the highest coefficient (1) while the areas covered by mixed forest, limiting erosion, have a low coefficient (0.007) (Ma, 2001). About C value over urban areas (residential and built-up land and not totally covered by buildings

and roads) mainly localized on the coast, previous papers in the literature have proposed a value between 0.0001 and 0.38 (Rosewell, 1993; Jabbar and Chen, 2005). For Tahiti, we retain a C value of 0.003 (Zaluski et al., 2003) as the typical housing style is the small creole cottage surrounded by gardens (Ye et al., 2010). For crops areas mainly include banana and pineapples crops, C factor is 0.3 (Roose, 1975) and 0.04 for savannah. With this method we obtain a GIS layer for factor C (Figure 7c).

Soil conservation practice factor (P)

The erosion management practice, of P value, is also one factor that governs the soil erosion rate. The P value ranges from 0-1 depending on the soil management activities employed and anti-erosion measure in place. Cropping in alternating strips or terracing, agroforestry integration on bench terraces, mounding and ridging are the most effective practices for soil conservation (Juo and Franzluebbers, 2003). Because of a lack of information on anti-erosion practices at the scale of Tahiti peninsula (no spatial data and no map), we choose to adopt $P = 1$ over the area of interest. It's also important to consider that agricultural practices are mainly localized in Taravao region and on the coast around the small villages (the central part of the island and the south are not inhabited). So the P factor is not need to be taken in account in a large part of the study area. This factor will not impact the final product but soils loss will be slightly overvalued in relation to reality.

Potential soil loss in Tahiti Iti

All the individual GIS layers, created for each factor in the RUSLE are combined by cell-grid modeling (the size of pixels is 5m x 5m). The result is a spatial distribution of erosion, where each pixel represents a quantity of potential soil loss (Figure 4e). On Tahiti Peninsula, the values obtained range between 0 and 3,126 t/ha/yr, with an average of 2.4 t/ha/yr corresponding to 0.16 mm of soil loss for 1m² in one year. Some 85% of the region of interest has a potential erosion rate of less than 5 t/ha/yr and this corresponds to areas covered by dense vegetation, in forested and the flatter parts of the catchment. Only 0.8% of the area has

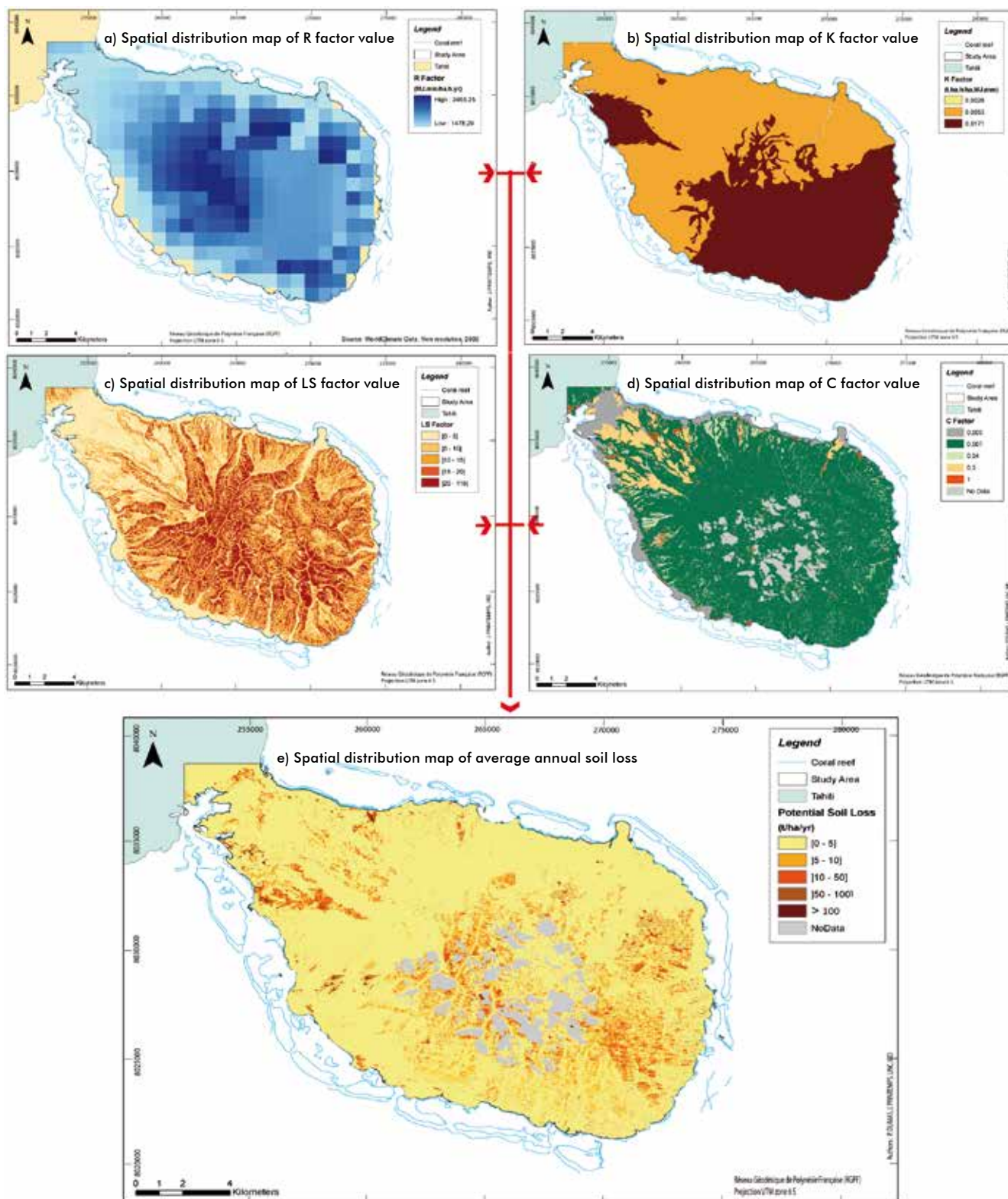
a potential soil loss superior to 50 t/ha/yr and this largely has bare soils (including construction sites) or at areas where crops are grown on steep slopes. Thus, the croplands located in the Taravao region represent one of the areas most impacted by erosion risk in Tahiti-Iti.

These results may be compared with other studies. On Tahiti Nui Island, erosion plots without vegetation cover reveal a soil loss above 35 tons per hectare only for 423 mm a month of rainfall during the wet season (Servant, 1974). On the west coast of the same island in areas subject to spreading urbanization, potential losses in excess of 75 t/ha/year were calculated (Ye et al., 2010). In the Pacific region, estimations using RUSLE from instrumented parcels are in the same order of magnitude, with for example in the Fiji Islands where Liedke, in 1989, found soil loss rate between 16.6 and 80 t/ha/yr near Lautoka and Morrison, in 1981, found soil loss rate around 36.7 t/ha/yr under sugar cane near Nadi.

Discussion and conclusion

This study has used a comprehensive methodology that integrates the RUSLE model and Geographic Information System techniques to determine the soil erosion vulnerability of many watersheds, on the island of Tahiti Iti in French Polynesia. The spatial pattern of annual soil erosion rate was obtained by integrating geo-environmental variables, including rainfall, erosivity, soil erodability, slope length and steepness and vegetation cover, in a raster based GIS method. The estimated soil losses are significant, but similar to other results of erosion rates found for mountainous tropical islands with steep slopes (Liedke 1984; Dumas and Fossey, 2009).

Nonetheless, the values for soil loss from RUSLE should be considered as an order of magnitude and not as absolute values. One of the limitations of USLE, originally developed for mild slopes in agricultural areas, can be its applicability in young mountain areas, and especially in areas with slopes higher than 40 % (Roose, 1996). In this case the runoff is a greater source of energy than rainfall, and additionally, soil creep and slumping is important on such slopes. Nevertheless, Liu



Source: Pascal Dumas

Figure 7: Implementation of RUSLE model with GIS for predicting soil loss in Tahiti Iiti

et al. (2000) showed the RUSLE model can be successfully applied on slopes up to 60 %. The quality of data sources implemented in the model may introduce uncertainties in soil erosion estimates. In the present study, the spatial scale of rainfall data sources or the soil maps are not really adequate, although the other factors are more precise. The methods of

interpolation of these data only allow crosscutting the different layers of the model. It is necessary to have more detailed land use data, with an agricultural land use typology subdivided into specific crops.

However, in many situations, policy makers and land managers are more interested in the spatial distribution of soil erosion risk than in absolute

values of soil loss. The model leads to better understanding of spatial distribution of the erosion hazard. Moreover, a comparison with a multi-criteria method (an expert approach) demonstrates that the results from an RUSLE model in term of spatial variation are similar (Dumas et al., 2010).

The map of soil loss obtained

constitutes a document which can be used as a decision tool for better land management planning and for sustainable agricultural practices (such as terraces on the steep slopes to reduce the slope lengths, which will slow down runoff velocities). It is also the first step to obtain an initial ranking of the watersheds most responsible for terrigenous sediment production. After taking into account the areas of deposition/delivery, this model could lead to the assessment of contributions in terms of terrigenous inputs in the hydrographic flow and identify watersheds which should be classified as priorities for land management efforts, in order to limit their impacts on the marine environment. Studies such as this have relevance for the framework of Integrated Coastal Zone Management for Pacific countries.

It's also important to note that the implementation of a model such as RUSLE is more suitable for the type of geographical environments found on Pacific islands, than others approaches based on the modelling of sediment transfer processes (as SWAT: Soil and Water Assessment Tool or WEPP: Water Erosion Prediction Project) designed for limited areas and that require complex data, and many field measurements for their calibration, not available in this region. A combination of remote sensing, GIS techniques and RUSLE provides the potential to estimate soil erosion loss and its spatial distribution at a scale that is feasible, with reasonable costs and better accuracy over larger spatial scales.

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Silent Politics

How local chambers of commerce in the Philippines fail to foster democratisation

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Abstract: Philippine democratic consolidation stagnates despite a vibrant civil society. A comparative exploration of three local chambers of commerce in the Visayas and Mindanao reveals that, contrary to established typologies, it is the decidedly non-confrontational stance towards government that keeps the chambers as civil society actors from contributing to democratic consolidation. Further, it becomes apparent that working within the existing clientelistic political structures is the most efficient strategy for interest groups to achieve political goals, while publicly confrontational strategies, which may be most conducive to democratic consolidation, can result in heavy political and economic costs.

Keywords: Philippines, civil society, interest intermediation, democratisation, clientelism

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“Democracy in the Philippines is a paradox” (Dressel, 2011). On one hand, the country possesses a complete set of formal institutions, its citizens are enthusiastic about politics, voter turnout is correspondingly high, and civil society is vibrant. On the other, the political system displays weak implementation capacities, a tendency towards elite capture, and entrenched informal political arrangements. However, conventional wisdom in political science invariably holds a strong civil society to facilitate democratisation (Mercer, 2002). Nonetheless, the Philippines’ democratisation stalls at a clientelistic “halfway house” democracy (Case, 1996) despite a “strong and vibrant” civil society (Quimpo, 2005).



Figure 1. Lively business at Blumentritt Market in Manila

One of civil society's major functions in democratic consolidation is the institutionalisation of informal politics, specifically intermediation of interest, in a democratic way. However, Philippine civil society has so far failed to fulfil this role: "Specifically, one of the most important questions for research on Philippine politics and for the broader literature on civil society and democratization more generally is whether new actors in civil society can effectively challenge traditional actors in political society in ways that lead to democracy's consolidation" (Eaton, 2003).

The objective of this paper is to shed light on the alleged failure of Philippine civil society to catalyse democratic consolidation. To this end, I first contextualise my research with a brief exposition of the economic and political elites and civil society in the Philippines. Secondly, I present a theoretical framework of the role of civil society in democratisation. This is then applied to three case studies of the political behaviour of local chambers of commerce and industry as examples of Philippine civil society. Thus, I attempt to answer my overarching research question: How does civil society contribute to the Philippines' democratic consolidation?

Context: Elites, democracy, and civil society in the Philippines

The Philippine democratic system is typically described as "deeply flawed" (Putzel, 1999) as it is an instrument dominated by elites. The Philippine elite consists of extended families that control "large, diversified, family-based conglomerates" (Kang, 2002) and constitute an additional layer of politics, whose patterns of loyalty, patronage relations and shifting alliances interweave formal politics as well as civil society. This "national oligarchy" had already emerged under American colonial rule in the early 20th century, and has successfully co-evolved with the development of democratic governance in the Philippines over the last hundred years (Hutchcroft, 2000).

Due to their economic prowess, this elite wields impressive political influence (Pacific Strategies & Assessments, 2013). At the municipal and provincial level, political offices are typically manned by members or

affiliates of local important families (Yilmaz, 2013). From campaign donations to the far-reaching political connections of the extended family networks, support from one of the competing camps of the 'oligarchy' is almost indispensable for Philippine politicians. In the Philippine Congress, more than 60 percent of the representatives have relatives within congress or lower levels of government across up to three generations (Mendoza, Beja, Venida, & Yap, 2011). In this regard, the Philippines' democracy is actually a vehicle for dominance of the elite class, as political dynasties compete for power within the formal institutions (Hedman, 2010). However, in comparison to other Southeast Asian nations, the Philippines' dynasties are too numerous and fragmented to capture the state in a structured way (with the exception of the Marcos years). They rather keep each other in check within the existing political system (Kang, 2002). This stabilises the existing system, but also prevents further democratisation (Putzel, 1999).

Over their long history of democratic governance, the Philippines has developed a full landscape of relatively functional democratic institutions and a free society with deeply held democratic convictions (Dressel, 2011). However, as a result of a weak party system, "democratic institutions remain a stronghold and guarantee of oligarchic dominance" (Croissant, 2004). Hopes to break open patronage-based informal institutions in Philippine politics have typically been pinned to civil society, which is among the strongest and most diverse in the region and has enjoyed considerable respect since its crucial role in the People Power Revolution of 1986 (Abella & Dimalanta, 2003; Rodan & Hughes, 2012). Accordingly, the new constitution assigns a strong role to civil society e.g., by requiring its representation in local special bodies like the Local Development Councils (Capuno, 2005). However, after toppling Marcos in 1986, civil society has 'normalised' and intensified its relations with government to access funding and pursue particular interests. Beyond political neutrality, CLARKE as well as LOEWEN argue that most civil society organisations have now embraced clientelistic strategies to the detriment of democratic principles

(Clarke, 2012; Loewen, 2005).

In conclusion, the Philippines' formal democratic system is superimposed on traditional, informal institutions dominated by elites. The historical perseverance of these informal systems of interest intermediation within and outside formal democratic institutions is the main obstacle to deepening democracy. As the key role in democratising these informal institutions falls to civil society, an analysis of the Philippines' stagnating democratic consolidation has to address the question as to why civil society largely fails to live up to this task.

Theoretical framework: Ambivalent civil society in democratisation

MERKEL distinguishes four major functions of how civil society contributes to democratisation (Merkel, 2004):

The *Tocquevillian function* refers to the idea of democratically organised associations as 'schools of democracy' where democratic practices are learned and new politicians emerge. This function highlights the importance of the internal politics of civil society organisations.

The *Lockean function* centres on the idea of civil society as a watchdog that holds government accountable e.g., by following up political promises as well as gathering and publicising information about state activities.

The *Montesquienian function* focuses on civil society as a balancing intermediary between the state and its citizens. On the one hand, civil society limits the reach of state authority through self-government of certain spheres of society. On the other, it also mediates the rule of law towards the citizens and thus stabilises state authority.

The *Habermasian function* takes up the notion of a pre-parliamentary public sphere where political questions are discussed. Here, civil society organisations first aggregate and articulate group interests and then possibly negotiate balances of interest.

However, civil society can also have a 'dark side', reinforcing non-democratic norms through its external and internal politics. Following this idea, LAUTH proposes four ideal types of civil society (Lauth, 1999): *Strategic civil society* which holds few democratic values but represents its interests

strategically. This is especially prevalent during the liberalisation phase of democratisation i.e., the initial breakdown of autocracy. During the institutionalisation phase of a new democracy, there is often the type of *constructive civil society* that may lack internal democracy and representativeness, but plays a constructive part in stabilising society by integrating social conflicts and establishing democratic processes, especially by serving as an intermediary. In the final stage of democratisation i.e., democratic consolidation, civil society can manifest itself in two different ways. As a *reflexive civil society*, it is fully aware of its role in democratisation and democratic governance and heeds those principles in its internal and external politics, thus contributing positively to democratic consolidation. Alternatively, as *ambivalent civil society*, it is neither in its internal nor external politics democratically inclined, and takes a purely obstructive stance towards government, effectively preventing the establishment of democratic informal systems of interest intermediation.

Research design

The study followed an exploratory multiple-case design. Data was collected and triangulated predominantly through semi-structured interviews with trustees, elected officers, and the administrative staff of the chambers of commerce, ordinary chamber members, non-member local businesspeople, and local representatives of the political-administrative system who are regular counterparts to chamber advocacy.

Cases were selected from an initial population of all chambers in the Philippines' Visayas and Caraga region, where access could be facilitated by the Philippine German Chamber Cooperation Program. To ensure comparability and representativeness of my case studies, I homogenised my sample according to the following criteria: a membership base of around one hundred members, a secretariat with no more than five staff, political activity, current or former beneficiary of international capacity building programmes, and roughly similar socioeconomic environments. Based on initial expert interviews, I selected three chambers

Indicators	Strategic CS	Constructive CS	Ambivalent CS	Reflexive CS
Phase	Liberalisation	Institutionalisation of democracy	Democratic consolidation	Democratic consolidation
No conflictive structure of civil society	yes	yes	no	unclear
Organisations span social cleavages	yes	yes	no	yes
No pronounced hierarchies	no	unclear	no	yes
Importance of civic virtues	no	unclear	no	yes
Low relevance of particular interests	yes	yes	no	yes
Internal democratic structure important	no	unclear	no	yes
Social representativeness apparent	yes	unclear	no	yes
Delivers government services	no	no	unclear	yes
Recruits political personnel	no	yes	no	yes
Involved in shaping the political order	no	yes	no	yes
Holds government accountable	yes	yes	unclear	yes

Figure 2: LAUTH's ideal types of civil society and their indicators (own translation and adaptation based on Lauth, 1999: 117) - CS = civil society

for phenomenal variation in strategic political behaviour.

Through the case studies, I explored and compared the chambers' internal decision-making processes, their preferred advocacy strategies, and their rationale for choosing specific political strategies. As the case studies touch upon sensitive political issues, they are anonymised.

Case studies: Chambers of commerce in the Philippines

The chambers of commerce and industry in the Philippines are private voluntary organisations of varying size and professionalism. They provide services such as training, trade fairs, business conferences, trade missions, shared-service facilities, business matching, financing, and political advocacy. The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) is a national apex organisation, but the chamber of commerce landscape is fragmented. Often, several overlapping chambers coexist and business-sector associations may or may not be associational members of the chamber. However, as a result of PCCI guidelines, all chambers have formal democratic procedures. The general assembly elects a board of trustees (usually consisting of approximately 12 members) and a chamber president for terms of generally one to three years. Additionally, many chambers form internal committees for specific

sectors or issues to engage more members in their work.

Chambers are especially instructive on the role of civil society in shaping the Philippine system of interest intermediation. On the one hand, the local government reform of 1991 grants them preferred (sometimes even mandatory) access to government and, as the voice of business, the chambers hold political bargaining power. On the other hand, chamber officials typically have personal ties with local politicians and high-ranking civil servants, allowing for clientelistic strategies to pursue the chambers' interests. The chambers' choices of advocacy strategies thus contribute to shaping informal systems of interest intermediation in a more or less democratic way.

Chamber I: Carefully collaborating with government

After a traumatic experience with less than transparent leadership that almost led to the chamber's bankruptcy, Chamber I has embraced democratic principles and is trying to move towards more inclusive internal processes. This break with its previously president-centred decision-making process is only slowly taking hold among the membership and chamber officers as many structural changes e.g., activating the largely dysfunctional chamber committees, are still pending. While there seems to



Figure 3: Plaza Miranda in front of Quiapo Church in Manila

be a bias towards electing individuals from well-known families, there are also rather vocal 'outsiders' on the board. In this respect, the Chamber I is beginning to function in keeping with the Tocquevillian school of democracy.

Chamber I is represented in different local special bodies and, after an electoral change in local government, has a good working relationship with the city government. Despite its rather weak representativeness, the chamber is consulted on all business-related decisions by city government and has assumed an active role in investment promotion. In this Montesquieuian sense of participatory government, Chamber I has begun to bring policy fields under the self-government of the private sector. By mostly staying within the formal political processes of local special bodies, consultations and open resolutions, the chamber also strengthens these institutions. Nonetheless, personal contacts and family affiliations are seen as the most efficient way to speed up and ensure a favourable outcome to these formal processes, therefore reproducing patterns typical of the Philippines' democracy, which is dominated by the elite.

The chamber shies away from public confrontations with politicians to avoid possible retribution e.g., denied business or building permits, or possibly souring relations and losing influence. However, as a consequence, Chamber I loses its capacity to hold government accountable to the public and bring its viewpoints into the public sphere, therefore largely failing its Lockean and Habermasian function.

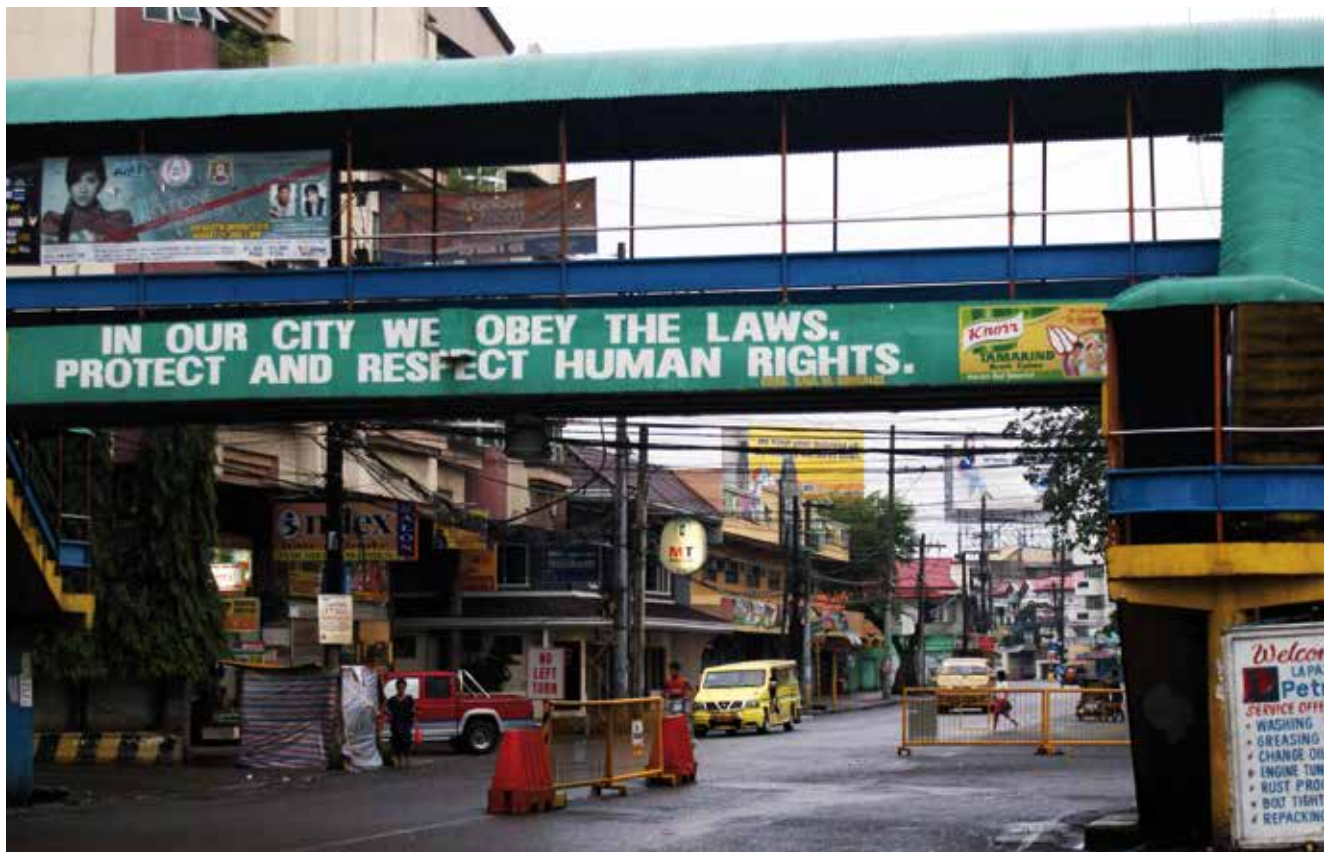
Chamber II: Embracing government

In expert interviews, Chamber II is presented as a very 'traditional' chamber with rather transparent internal processes and close relations with the local government based on strong informal ties. In effect, Chamber II acts as an apex organisation for business associations in the province, which significantly increases the chamber's representativeness and its legitimacy as the voice of business, but also entails a strong concentration of power in the president. With this focus on inter-associational negotiations, the chamber only partly fulfils its Tocquevillian function as a school of democracy. While interest aggregation among business associations certainly has its democratic value, democratic

decision-making within the chamber appears only to be a low-level priority. This is aggravated by a pronounced internal hierarchy with a strong focus on the chamber president who monopolises all external relations.

Chamber II's extreme inside strategy, which stretches from its non-adversarial stance towards the city government to grooming personal relations with senior officials and even running on the ruling party's ticket, is chosen not only because it seems the most efficient, but also because of the danger of retribution from politicians. Rather than restricting the reach of government in a Montesquieuian sense, the chamber seems to aim for greater integration with the government apparatus. While this maximises the chamber's influence on the government, the Lockean function of holding government accountable and the Habermasian function of creating a public sphere of political discourse cannot be fulfilled.

In conclusion, the chamber's role in democratisation appears highly ambivalent. Its internal as well as external politics reflect a strong orientation towards personalistic strategies, reproducing typical patterns of Philippine hybrid democracy. While the



Source: Jens Marquardt

Figure 4: Pedestrian overpass in Iloilo City on the island of Panay

chamber's non-conflictive inside strategy seems to be the rational approach to protect and promote the interests of business, it renders the chamber a part of the ruling establishment that cannot act as a controlling influence on the development of democracy.

Chamber III: Antagonising government

Chamber III is well known in the regional chamber scene for its long-standing conflict with local government. Internally a professional organisation, the chamber is extremely vocal in its external politics to the degree that any hope of collaboration with the city government is out of the question at the moment.

Although Chamber III is run professionally with decentralised hierarchies, and has several feedback mechanisms between board and general membership, it remains doubtful whether it acts as a Tocquevillian school of democracy. The board is dominated by a core "junta" of relatives and friends that rather seem to reproduce patterns of elite dominance than democratic and inclusive decision-making.

The confrontational relationship with local government, firmly rooted

in local family politics, prevents the chamber from acting as a constructive intermediary between government and the business community in the Montesquieuan sense. It can neither successfully present proposals to the government nor is it able to take over sectoral self-government responsibilities, as both require collaboration. However, as obstructing government policies and being very vocal in the media are the only strategic choices left to the chamber, it scores well in the Lockean and Habermasian functions of civil society.

Results of the cross-case analysis

When comparing the cases, common strategic rationales and environmental factors can be identified.

Evolving internal democracy: The case studies show different stages of internal democracy. Chamber II relies on a traditional president-centred system of decision-making. Chamber III has more devolved hierarchies and feedback mechanisms, but is effectively controlled by a small group. Chamber I tries to move from a president-centred system to more inclusive decision-making processes. Nonetheless, in all three cases, the chamber seems

to work successfully in the common interest of its members and even the business community at large, dissipating doubts about them being mere vehicles for the particular interests of specific companies and groups.

Weak representativeness: All three chambers have weak representativeness based on membership numbers, enfranchising only about 2 percent of registered businesses, and associational membership of business sector associations is still vague. As a result, chambers have to rely on the local government's goodwill to be acknowledged as legitimate political actors. For example, Chamber III is easily denied access by local government by highlighting its low representativeness.

Vertical orientation towards government: None of the chambers sustain strong horizontal links with civil society actors outside the business community. Rather, the chambers focus on vertical links with government, typical for clientelistic systems and a logical result of the dominance of inside strategies towards city government over pressure-based external strategies (Brinkerhoff & Goldsmith, 2002).

Informal institutions and elite politics: All three chambers reinforce existing

patterns of informal interest intermediation. Chambers I and II use family ties and informal inter-elite contacts as a cost-effective means to further the political agenda. On the other hand, Chamber III is politically incapacitated because of family politics. Therefore, working the framework of elite politics to their advantage seems a more rational strategy for chambers to achieve policy results than trying to disrupt elite politics.

“Silent politics” and collaboration with government. In all case studies, the danger of retribution from city government as a result of open confrontation was stressed. Chamber III is not only denied collaboration with government, but the businesses of chamber officials have been actively harassed. Hence, “silent politics” – avoiding public criticism and resolving disagreements privately – is the preferred strategy. While efficient in producing policy results and securing long-term access to political decision-makers, silent politics prevent the development of a public sphere in the Habermasian sense. Accordingly, the incentive is to work as closely with government as possible, maximising an inside strategy for advocacy as is apparent from Chamber II.

Conclusion

The original puzzle of this thesis is the Philippines’ stagnating democratic consolidation despite a vibrant civil society, which fundamentally contradicts the established axiom of democracy-facilitating civil society. From the analysis of the chambers’ internal and external politics, the reasons for this failure have become quite apparent: while the degrees of internal democracy – and thus the capacity to act as Tocquevillian schools of democracy – seem to vary individually from chamber to chamber, a clear pattern has emerged for the chambers’ external politics. As the chambers understandably shy away from vocal outside strategies and prefer non-confrontational, ‘silent’ inside strategies, the chambers

not only fail to fulfil the Lockean and Habermasian functions of civil society but also reproduce the established pattern of personalistic and clientelistic informal politics.

Thus, my findings back LOEWEN’S and CLARKE’S suggestion that Philippine civil society has embraced the established political system and is, therefore, unfit to change it. In this regard, the institutionalisation of civil society participation in local government through the 1991 local government code may actually have been detrimental to furthering democratic consolidation.

As a theoretical implication, it has become apparent that it is not just an overly confrontational civil society that can have ambivalent effects on democratisation, as suggested by LAUTH. Rather, the case of the Philippines suggests that an overly collaborative civil society can lose its democratising edge, as well.

In conclusion, the case of Philippine local chambers of commerce clearly illustrates that civil society does not axiomatically facilitate democracy. Especially in clientelistic systems similar to the Philippines, strategic rationales based on the logic of influence rather than civic virtues can lead civil society to become part of ‘undemocratic’ informal systems of interest intermediation rather than breaking them up.

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The Seedbeds of Active Citizenship?

Community Gardens in Kampung Tugu Selatan, Jakarta

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Abstract: This article seeks to contribute to the scholarly documentation on Jakarta's spatial transformation. It does so by discussing one of the kampungs, settlements that could be seen as marginalised due to a loose association between the communities and urban citizenship. In kampungs, the idea of 'state' as the key actor to ensure universal and equal access to basic infrastructure services has eroded. This article situates such settlements under the terminology of 'grey settlements,' following Yiftachel's 'gray spaces' (2009). The grey settlements of Jakarta have been disintegrated from the formal infrastructure provision system, but to a certain extent they have also been integrated with many state-led political institutional processes. Such ambiguity brings advantages and disadvantages to different actors. This article specifically looks at the collective efforts to develop community gardens despite limited infrastructure conditions. The case study exemplifies the phenomena in which good initiatives emerge from crises. Such phenomena also call for a new conceptualisation of citizenship.

Keywords: citizenship, community gardens, social innovation, neighbourhood infrastructure

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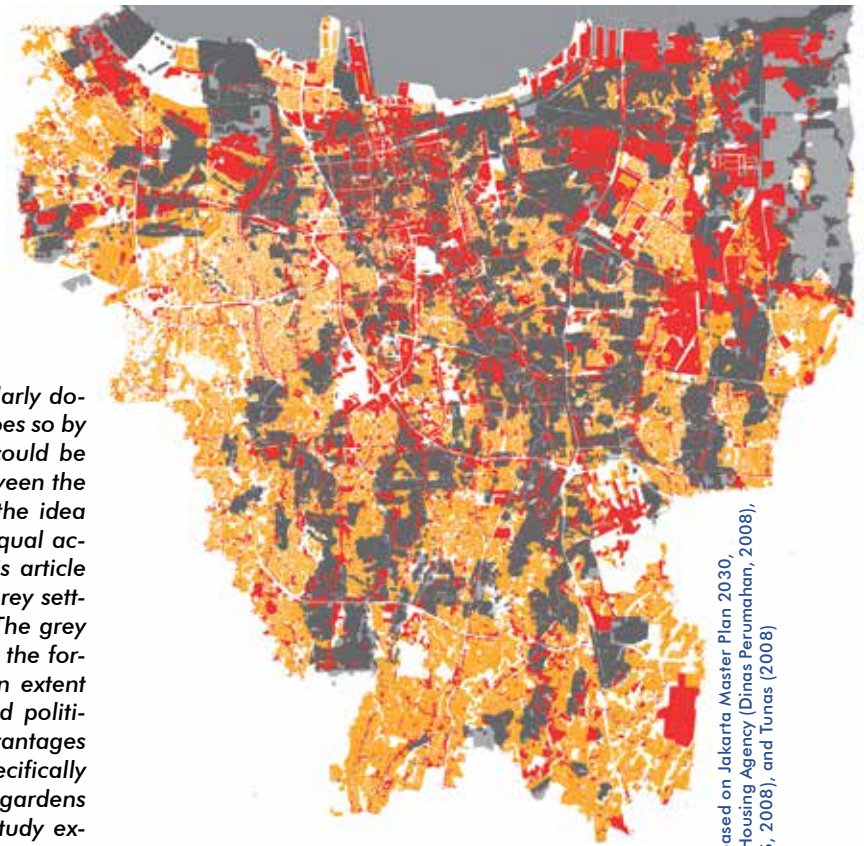


Figure 1: Jakarta's Spatial Fragmentation

- Kampungs that are categorised as slums by the Jakarta provincial government (data 2008)
- Cleared slums (vacant areas in Master Plan 2030)
- Planned settlements and improved kampungs
- Industries, offices, commercial functions and high-rise apartments

Source: redrawn by author based on Jakarta Master Plan 2030, data and maps from Jakarta Housing Agency (Dinas Perumahan, 2008), Jakarta Statistic Agency (BPS, 2008), and Tunas (2008)

Jakarta has poor environmental sanitation conditions as the management of its solid waste, wastewater collection and treatment systems are low. Moreover green open space is lacking, especially in areas with informal settlements. These factors all together reduce Jakarta's spatial quality and continuously harm public health. While in private housing estates most of the middle-class households can enjoy premium services of water, sanitation and leisure facilities, it remains a great challenge to meet such needs for lower-income community groups. The main reason is that the capacity of state service provision system might improve but with much slower pace compared to the increase of population growth and expansion of sprawl.

Responding to increasing environmental issues, some lower-income communities have been undergoing collective actions. This article exemplifies such actions and discusses the impacts. It shows how marginalised community groups could turn their deprived socio-ecological conditions into opportunities for improving urban spatial quality. It is increasingly difficult to ignore that such actions have been complementing state initiatives in development, but instead of solely being a matter for fulfilling short-term needs, such coexistence should also be effective to improve urban governance as a whole and open up a way for an active citizenship (see Allen et al., 2006; Moulart et al., 2010a).

This article is drawn on a case of a kampung in Jakarta. Following this introduction, a section explains what a kampung is and how this article situates its socio-ecological conditions. It then discusses a development of community gardens in Kampung Tugu Selatan. The last section further discusses the kampung experience to reflect on urban citizenship. As part of a two-year empirical work in Jakarta for a doctoral research, this case study is written mainly based on the author's field visit in May 2011, in which some group discussions with community members were undertaken.



Figure 2: A community garden in RW 2, Kampung Tugu Selatan

Urban Kampung: the Grey Settlements of Jakarta

The *kampung* is one type of 'informal settlement' built by communities as active urban settlements, like the *favela* in Brazil, *barrio* in Venezuela, *cal-lampa* in Chile, *katchi abadis* in Pakistan or *colonia proletaria* in Mexico (see Hasan et al., 1999; Ward, 1976). But, there is no single definition of kampung in Jakarta, a city with a population of over ten million. In colonial times, the indigenous word 'kampung' was used to label non-European and non-Chinese settlements. Today, a kampung is a socio-spatial entity embedding an economic production and settlement system that encompasses a broad range of informal income generating activities. However, it is not merely a spatial manifestation of the 'informal economy'. Kampung are neighbourhoods where blue-collar workers from the formal sector and workers of the informal sector live together and their co-existence has been supporting the economy of the city as a whole. Moreover, many small business activities in kampung are part of larger business operations and often the local entrepreneurs are highly dependent on bigger economic players.

Kampung can fall under the categorisation of 'gray spaces,' a term

coined by Yiftachel (2009). In such spaces, communities are only partially included in the urban polity, not integrated but not eliminated; their existence is socio-politically important but their living characteristics do not always comply with the idealised norms of urban life set by the government and the private sector. The territories of grey spaces are maintained 'from above' by a "politics of unrecognition" accompanied by marginalising indifference' (Ibid., 2009, pp. 89-92). But these are also spaces that are formed 'from below,' involving governance modes that incorporate several non-formal institutions for mediation and negotiation (see Chatterjee, 2004, pp. 53-78; Simone, 2012). Hence, a kampung is not a passive physical container. It is a form of dynamic socio-spatial organization in which different spatial strategies from different actors are continuously being contested (see Massey, 2005). In kampung, social networks of each actor are not isolated in such localities. They are linked with wider territorial dynamics (see also Van Dyck & Van den Broeck, 2013).

No one knows (nor may ever know) the exact number of people living in kampung or the total area of kampung in Jakarta although the govern-

ment of Jakarta has data of the total area and spatial distribution of slums. In 2008, the Public Housing Agency of Jakarta, *Dinas Perumahan*, reported the presence of around five thousand hectares of slums, forming almost 12 per cent of the total housing area in the city (Dinas-Perumahan, 2008). 'Slum' has been used by the state as a term to refer to the physical quality of settlements that are lagging behind in certain health and architectural standards, but this categorisation does not represent the real characteristics of a 'kampung'. There is other data about the spatial distribution of poverty (e.g. Mercy-Corps, 2008), but these also do not explain the characteristics of 'kampung' in a comprehensive way. Figure 1 on page 9 shows a sketch of kampung spatial distribution within the spatial fragmentation of Jakarta.

The labelling of kampung as grey settlements in this paper has more than a metaphorical value; grey also describes the bio-physical condition. Kampung can be termed 'grey settlements' for their continuously deteriorating sanitary conditions – lack of access to water supply, blocked drainages, unmanaged solid waste and untreated wastewater – as well as the lack of open green spaces.



Source: Author, 2011

Figure 3: A community garden in RW 3, Kampung Tugu Selatan

Community Gardens in Kampung Tugu Selatan

Kampung Tugu Selatan is located in North Jakarta Municipality, in Tugu Selatan Sub-district (or *Kelurahan*). A sub-district is the lowest state administrative level that consists of two levels of neighbourhood units, the larger Rukun Warga (RW), and the smallest one called Rukun Tetangga (RT). Tugu Selatan Sub-district consists of six units of RW, of which five form the Kampung Tugu Selatan while one is part of a large gated housing estate named Kelapa Gading.

The presence of the two neighbourhood units is legally regulated as they have been part of the controlled political sphere established by the state since the Japanese colonial era (see Kusno, 2006); these units, together with sub-district and district, are mentioned in every citizen's official address. Although their presence is regulated by law, RW and RT have a certain degree of autonomy and the involvement of community members in their daily activities is voluntary-based (see Dwianto, 2003; Kusno, 2006). How these neighbourhood units operate depend on how the (preceding) socio-political configurations have been (trans)forming at the very local levels (see Dwianto, 2003; Logsdon, 1978).

Compared to some other kampungs in Jakarta, Kampung Tugu Selatan is relatively young. According to one community leader, even in the 1980s, there were still empty lands in this neighbourhood; in the early 1990's many households who mostly had lived in other parts of Jakarta began to occupy this area after purchasing lands from the local Betawi families (an interview with a community leader). The kampung of Tugu Selatan does not have a traditional name, which is typical for the kampungs which began to densify from the 1980s onwards. Hence, communities refer to the RW number and the name of the Kelurahan (sub-district).

The community in Kampung Tugu Selatan suffered from the extreme flooding that hit Jakarta in 2002. After being categorised as a 'slum' community, the Kampung Tugu Selatan was included in the 2005 to 2008 'Program Perbaikan Kampung Terpadu' (Integrated Program for Kampung Improvement – a variant of the Kampung Improvement Program first introduced in 1969) administered by the Public Housing Agency of North Jakarta Municipality. Many officials have confirmed that this neighbourhood has been greatly upgraded, and has continued improving even after the programme was concluded.

One tangible improvement is the

presence of community gardens that produce various types of herbs, vegetables, fruits and fish for local consumption (see Figure 2). Towards the end of 2009, the governor of DKI Jakarta made an official visit to a programme called 'Rumah Sehat' (Healthy House). When the visiting team passed through a vacant plot in RW 2 that had been used for solid waste dumping, it was suggested that this land could be developed as a community garden. Around a year later, the community started constantly mobilising local labour power to deal with the large volume of garbage and make space for cultivation. However, after several attempts using simple tools, the works did not bring satisfying results. The community members finally decided that it would require too much time and energy to remove all layers of solid waste; instead, they added a new layer of soil on top of the garbage pile. Work on this project began in January 2011 and, by the author's visit in May 2011, the land had been turned into a beautiful green open space that has also been used for community gathering. Within a relatively short-term period, the community managed to organise collective efforts to develop the gardens.

Apparently it was the crises caused by regular flooding in Jakarta that encour-



Figure 4: Green alleys in Tugu Selatan

raged the community to address their solid waste management issues. Using the vacant land for a community garden has been effective in preventing garbage dumping in Kampung Tugu Selatan. The community garden model has been replicated in other units of RW (see Figure 3). RW 2 even has another communal garden also created on previously unused land. Other activities also address the problems of solid waste management, for example the project of 'one composter for every ten houses,' and some women's groups which produce crafts from plastic waste.

Tugu Selatan has been touted as a successful example of the most recent version of Kampung Improvement Program (hereafter KIP) in Jakarta; it is the pride of both the local government and community members. Nevertheless, there was nothing particularly extraordinary about the four-year KIP in Tugu Selatan. In many other places, including in Kampung Kojan where the modular septic tanks were introduced, similar interventions have also been implemented, notably to build drains and roads, as well as wells to promote artificial groundwater recharge and to reduce surface runoff. Earlier generations of KIP, notably those carried out from 1969 to 1979, also delivered this kind of physical development, but various particularities specific to Tugu Selatan led to on-going development practice. One of the local characteristics is a higher social cohesiveness of the community groups in the Kampung Tugu Selatan compared with two other kampongs in Jakarta as researched by the author during the same period. Community members were motivated to organise

contributions among themselves and to seek assistance from others to keep pursuing a better living environment. Such characteristics have become the foundation for what can be called 'socially innovative actions' in development; these are actions with an immediate goal of fulfilling the basic needs of local communities, but also a long-term goal of institutional innovation involving cultural emancipation, improved social relations and better decision-making processes (Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005). The land is actually owned privately, and an agreement was reached that allowed for its public use. While most of the construction materials were provided by community members, seeds and young plantations were donated by the national government.

Community members and leaders were highly motivated throughout the four-year KIP project, during which an organisation called 'Masyarakat Peduli Lingkungan' (hereafter MPL) was formed in the kampung, and later partnered the sub-district government on some other development initiatives. MPL's leader encouraged community members to create a common vision of their neighbourhoods, defining ecotourism activities within the kampung. Apparently, it is this vision that encouraged community residents to continue playing an active part in development processes. Developing the community garden strengthened the feeling of belonging to a shared community.

This community includes many pensioners who actively dedicate themselves to community activities. As former blue-collar workers or military personnel, they are the most educated inhabitants within their age group. From the

author's observation, they seem to be quite influential within the local political constellation. Some of them own rooms that they rent out to factory workers working in the surrounding industrial sites. The kampung is dominated by houses with rental rooms. The presence of many neighbourhood green spaces makes this type of worker housing appear more comfortable. Some alleys in Kampung Tugu Selatan are also decorated with greeneries (see Figure 4).

Apart from the social composition of the community that allow many collective initiatives from within the community, on-going environmental quality improvement in Kampung Tugu Selatan is also driven by many other joint initiatives from the government, private sector and NGOs channelled to Tugu Selatan Sub-district. The national government has even acknowledged the kampung's contribution to restoring green spaces to the city. Consequently, the initial success attracted other initiatives. A project funded by a paint company enabled the community to create murals along the main alley (see Figure 5), and this artistic project has also lifted the pride of the inhabitants.

Despite all of these visible improvements, Kampung Tugu Selatan has no proper wastewater management system. Moreover, Kampung Tugu Selatan has to face an additional problem: drains are often blocked due to, according to the community leader, it being located a higher altitude. These neighbourhoods are thus at risk of flooding during naturally occurring calamities. This is a serious problem requiring a larger-scale approach to water management that is beyond the capability



Source: Author, 2011

Figure 5: Murals along a green alley in Tugu Selatan, panacea for blocked drainages?

of the community and the scope of neighbourhood planning.

Cultivating an Active Citizenship?

Perhaps the community dynamics in Kampung Tugu Selatan represent the very basic idea of citizenship as a mark of belonging and commitment to a specific place (see Desforges et al., 2005). An active meaning of community is embedded in such concept of place-based citizenship; community members are enablers of citizenship rights (political, social, and basic needs) while recognising and bearing citizens' responsibilities (see also Hofmann, 2011; Moulaert et al., 2010b). The concept of an active community rejects the 'conservative' definition of 'community' as a group based on the politics of identity such as religion, ideology, profession or ethnicity (Moulaert et al., 2010b). In fact, as shown in many case studies, innovative collective actions have emerged within socio-culturally heterogeneous neighbourhoods ('spatialised urban communities') and from mechanisms of crisis and recovery (Moulaert et al., 2010a; Van Dyck & Van den Broeck, 2013).

While there are limited basic services from the state, different governing practices emerge performing citizenship that has been re-scaled within a more local context, allowing the more contemporary conceptualisation of 'active citizenship' in accordance with the recent transition in governmentality to give more space to community participation (see Desforges et al., 2005; Ghose & Pettygrove, 2014). In the Kampung there were certain mechanisms to set rights and obligations

during the development of community gardens and the process of defining 'needs' has accommodated people aspirations.

It is often the case that the government already set certain forms of infrastructure development, whether it provides better pavement, water supply or drainage. Within such top-down approach, many urgent needs according to community members are often left behind. In the case of the Kampung Tugu Selatan, it was the community themselves who formulated the needs and assess their capacity. From the problem of solid waste, creativity has emerged to proceed an integrated solution at the very local scale, to also addresses the problem of household food resource and the lack of open space.

Indeed, the meaning of place-based citizenship should not be reduced in such localities. As we have seen above, there are many problems that need solutions on a larger scale which means that such citizenship also needs to be meaningful in advocating local needs at the metropolitan level. The processes of advocating local problems to be part of the planning agenda at the metropolitan scale also constitute the processes to redefine what a kampung is and in particular to envision the community identity in Kampung Tugu Selatan. Certainly many grey institutions and procedures within the existing development processes in Jakarta need further clarifications for communities to hold commitments internally as well as from district governments and other stakeholders together so that community as groups could reframe their short-term and

long-term goals in developing their neighbourhoods.

The success of community gardens in Kampung Tugu Selatan not only lifts the group's identity and confidence but also the level of ownership. It is certainly increasing the bargaining power of the community over decision making processes at the metropolitan level. The gardens also function as green open space that if replicated in other areas would form the green lung of the city and improve the spatial quality of the city as a whole. Forced evictions of kampung communities have been going on in Jakarta from time to time and this has been going on to give more room for private-sector-led spatial development strategies (see Harjoko, 2009). Like in other contexts within the region (see also for example Talocci & Boano, 2015), many communities performing different forms of informalities have become the subjects of evictions as they live in central areas of the city. Their presence at the heart of the city gives proof to the durability of different networks of productive-reproductive activities supporting the economy of the city as a whole (see Simone, 2010; Simone, 2012). Kampung communities provide cheap housing and services for workers, and often also different domestic helps for the middle class living in the surrounding housing estates (see again Figure 1, the spatial distribution of kampungs in Jakarta among commercial areas and planned housing estates). The story of the community gardens has lengthened the list of contributions from the kampung communities to the city.

This article has shown that the idea of place-based citizenship is promising

for enabling community participation in development, but it remains a great challenge to create space for transformative participation in which citizens' empowerment could take place and communities should not be seen as clients or consumers relying on decisions of powerful others in solving greater environmental problems affecting their daily environments (see also Allen et al., 2006; Hickey & Mohan, 2005). While there are potentials and challenges beyond the Kampung scale, progressive NGOs and civil society organisations are needed to partner with the community for enhancing their local characteristics while securing their longer term development goals.

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Conclusion

This research note has presented a single case study which provides both empirical and conceptual contributions. It shows the heterogeneous condition of urban Jakarta and its spatial fragmentation. Further, it zooms in on the local dynamics of one of its kampungs. As kampungs are spread over the metropolitan area, addressing kampungs as units of collective actions seems to be an effective approach to improve Jakarta's spatial quality as a whole. Situating the kampung within the dynamics of urban governance opens up scholarly debates to reflect on issues of citizenship


in Jakarta. This article helps ground the broad concept of citizenship within a local context by discussing the actual meaning of active community involvement in development. What remains important to debate is the role of the state for long-term development processes and calibrating active community participations in larger-scale development initiatives.

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Essay

Hanoi

The City that is Continuously 'Becoming'

Monique Gross

Hanoi is an incredibly visually stimulating city. Street after street is crammed with more details than a pair of human eyes is capable of registering at one time. Laser printed banners screen the facades of buildings, trees are hung with all sorts of objects, sidewalks are covered to the centimeter with food options and vehicles... Everywhere you turn your gaze it is immediately filled. And all the forms, colors, graphics, shift on a daily basis, from the array on the footpath, to the window displays, to the signs advertising merchandise and services.



Drone photo of typical highly-densely built residential neighborhood, Ngoc Ha block looking towards West Lake, Ba Dinh District

Photo Credit: Philippe Lê 2014 (excerpt from the photo book "Hà Nội: CAPITAL City")



Source: Khổng Việt Bách

Khổng Việt Bách from series In/exterior 2013

Taking in the visual experience, the mood, whether at motorbike or bicycle or walking speed, makes for a visually saturating pleasure. Birdcages, plants, laundry hung out on a sunny day, vendors on bicycles or on foot, *giải khát* (refreshments) stands with an assortment of plastic stools in the shade of a tree or under a found piece of striped tarpaulin propped up with poles. A different street seems to appear depending on the time of year, the time of day, the light that day.

What is it in the Vietnamese character that enables this creative use of space and constant renewal? Each citizen, inhabitant of the city, seems to have claimed the space in front of their residence or work place or the place where they are sitting at that moment, creating a fluidity between the private and public, inside and outside, perpetually sharing with the community.

A slight deviation from the main road leads to the tangle of alleys making up the authentic heart of the city. The inner streets of many neighborhoods appear to have five "seasons" each day, which correspond to the five 'meals' being sold. In the morning the rice cake seller and pineapple seller pull up their bicycles and squat beside their baskets waiting patiently for customers. Later on a woman carts in fixings, bowls and stools and serves chicken soup. She is replaced in the afternoon by a man selling buns, followed by a duck and noodle seller later in the evening. All on the same two meters of walkway.

The effervescent dynamism of Hanoi extends to the 'previously' factor.

In neighborhoods that not so long ago were villages linked to the city by dirt roads, it is common to see a building torn down and a new one built, all in the course of three to six months. What is now a brand new serviced apartment or private house was three months previously a café specializing in organic weasel coffee that rented spaces upstairs to freelancers and three to six months before that it was a clothing boutique or a tailor shop. These changes have accelerated since the building boom in the early 2000s. In a well-researched article¹ mapping the historical development of Hanoi, Emmanuel Cerise, an architect and the

current director of Institut des Métiers de la Ville de Hanoi (IMV), writes about the rambling arrangement of a city that was once a series of villages before they were absorbed by the ever-extending city in a process of organic spreading rather than rigid structuring. The visual contrast of these older surviving buildings in Hanoi with modern high rises is stunning.

Architect turned visual artist Khổng Việt Bách's photo-series² captures 'ordinary people' hawking their wares in front of private development posters, present-day reality in front of a distant dream³, a juxtaposition at once amusing and heart-wrenching.



Tây Sơn Road

Source: Monique Gross 2015



Source: Khổng Việt Bách

Khổng Việt Bách from series In/exterior 2013

In a city that is vigorously in development, the layout of the roads often undergoes some fundamental shape-shifting: a road clogged with traffic can become a wide thoroughfare two seasons later, the change coming at the cost of a neighborhood that included ancient houses and a wet market that were on the itinerary of some insider tour groups. Adaptability, or persistence, characterizes the Vietnamese spirit.

During the roadway modification the city authorities installed a several large posters of Hanoi's landmark monuments along a stretch of road being altered, a set of visual focal points to

screen a visual disarray⁴. Five meters high, and 5 to 10 meters wide, these impeccable photographs of the Temple of Literature, the One Pillar Pagoda and the Imperial City, were meant to impart feelings of national pride, reverence for the past and the promise of an iconic future. But the posters were still too small to screen what was going on behind, namely the tear-down of the buildings lining these streets to make way for the development of a smoother traffic artery which integrated with public transportation lines, and the iconic symbols appeared like a comical gesture that made me blush with embarrassment.

When bulldozers and laborers expose the second layer of the densely packed street block new, if ephemeral, opportunities are created for those previously hidden in the labyrinth of streets. A gutted building with a torn off façade could become a pop-up motorbike repair and service shop. In the rubble from the demolished buildings is an opportunity for tea sellers and birdcage merchants to trolley over their set-up and make a little cash from the passers-by, despite the dust and debris from the jack-hammers.

The elements that make Hanoi so visually alluring constitute an un-ignorable articulation by its citizens proclaiming their existence and expressing their own style.

What some look upon as bird-cage buildings reflect the needs, and means, of the residents. Add-on extensions not designed as part of the original plan (and maybe not considered supportable by the original structure) make us a little suspicious that they were built surreptitiously and in flagrant disregard for building codes. Stephanie Geertman, an independent urban researcher who has lived in Hanoi for many years, has been investigating this question and explains⁵ that what appears to be 'informal' does not necessarily mean 'illegal.' It also doesn't mean that it works from the top down. Residents of Khu tập thể (KTT – collective housing), initially highly formal structures set in place by the former socialist city planning practices of the government, evolved their spaces over time into what now appears to be 'in-



Source: Monique Gross 2015

Tây Sơn Road



Source: Michael Waibel 2014

Hanoi's architectural heritage in a state of neglect (excerpts from the photo book "Hà Nội: CAPITAL City").

formal' (but now largely legal) buildings that expose the individual tastes of the residents who, after 1986, were able to buy their flats from state and in this new era are a visual symbol for residents that have found a means in their building practices to operate autonomous of the state and its institutions. These residential 'quarters' have become 'reformatted,' as residents re-adapt to formal rules, negotiating with formal government representatives in the form of a mediator official, who also mediates to resolve conflicts. This neighborhood process where a *tổ dân phố*, a residential organization representative, and smaller unit of governance for the 50-60 households making up a commune, has its roots in the former village communities. Many adaptations are tolerated and add to Hanoi's visual flavor.

Pham Thai Son, an architect and university professor, painstakingly interviewed and analyzed⁶ the social practices of inhabitants who apply what he refers to as 'alternatives' to technical options and social practices and described the effects on the mor-

phology of urban spaces and development. This direct participation impacting public space is fascinating in the visual raucousness that results.

Architectural heritage is undervalued in Hanoi, a city that is pre-occupied with 'catching up.' However, what may appear as a jagged discontinuity from one architectural value to the next actually articulates or develops out of fluctuating in values and alliances⁷. The problem of maintaining an identity while a city, especially a capital, develops isn't unique to Hanoi. Most developing cities have to deal with this issue in some form. But Hanoi's desire to be modern unfortunately appears to be equated with building new high-rises at the expense of historical assets. Historical assets are left to rot, or are torn down, and replaced with atrocious monstrosities styled in a pastiche of archaic European grandeur. And yet in the smaller spaces of the narrow alley neighborhoods something else is going on which Philippe Lê, an architect who lived for four years in Hanoi, observes⁸ as the crystallization of social /societal relations. He associ-

ates it with a sort of natural selection where certain hybrids create surprising volumes, spaces and forms that would not have been thought up or designed by an architectural firm or master plan committee whose goals and aims would be motivated by the same needs as those who already live and/or work in the setting and experience the chain of events motivating and generating the accidental innovations.

Hanoi will hopefully never become a tidy, ordered and blandly International city. The sparks of brilliance that flicker amidst the seeming visual chaos are exciting and inspiring. The embarrassing attempts at poetic inflection seem as relevant as the truly poetic and graceful moments. As it evolves, Hanoi would gain an advantage by recognizing the immense value of the historical assets that form its heritage.

Endnotes

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² Khổng Việt Bách from the series In/ exterior presented in Autopsy of Days, group exhibition at Goethe-Institut, Hanoi, Spring 2013.

³ Nick Davies, "Vietnam 40 years on: how a communist victory gave way to capitalist corruption," *The Guardian*, 22, April 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/apr/22/vietnam-40-years-on-how-communist-victory-gave-way-to-capitalist-corruption>

⁴ Photo by Monique Gross, Hanoi, March 2015

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Essay

Beijing

The Grey Capital

Britta Schmitz

I lived in Beijing for nearly 8 years – from 2007 to the end of 2014. At first I did not like this city. The story of me and Beijing did not start with “love at first sight.” But with the dynamic developments in the course of the preparation for the Olympic Summer Games 2008, the “fear of losing the old Beijing” and the revitalization of the old hutong-quarters I became more and more fond of the Chinese capital and now call it my second home town.

**Modern Beijing:
The Galaxy SOHO
building along the
East 2nd Ring Road**

Picture source: Stefan Larsson

The first time I travelled to Beijing was 1998 and I don't remember much of it. What I do remember is that it was one of those incredibly hot and humid summer days in China's capital. My friends and I were visiting the Forbidden City – sweating and trotting from one stone-paved courtyard to the next. At that moment this magnificent monument of Chinese architecture seemed to me like a never ending row of stones and tiles. It totally eluded me that the Forbidden City was actually called “the purple forbidden city” in Chinese or that its walls and doors were painted red, not even to mention the yellow-glazed roof tiles. What left an imprint in my brain was the grey colour of those millions of paving stones, and then outside of the palace there was even more grey: the roads, the asphalt and the concrete walls of thousands and thousands of apartment blocks. And last but not least the overwhelming grey of Beijing's hutongs and their maze of endless brick walls. Beijing and me - this was not love at first sight. And whenever I was asked about my thoughts about China's capital after this trip, my answer would be “it seemed so very grey to me.”

It was not until autumn 2007 that I actually moved to Beijing. My first months in the capital were the winter ones. Gone were the green leaves and summer flowers and most of the days the sky had the impenetrable, dull colour of lead. I moved into an apart-

ment right next to Dongzhimen, in the center of Beijing. The neighbourhood consisted mostly of uninspiring apartment blocks from the 1970s and 1980s and if they were not painted grey from the very first, then the dust and pollution from coal heating, the millions of cars and the Eurasian steppe would cover them completely and give them a distinct ashen tone. One of Beijing's hutong quarters was just around the corner. But while I was interested in the city's history, I failed to see the beauty of these traditional alleys. At that time the majority of the traditional courtyards were in a state of disrepair and the originally spacious homes were subdivided and disfigured by informal construction and tacked on additions.

The following year brought the Summer Olympics to the Chinese capital and with it came changes over changes in Beijing's cityscape: A brand-new airport terminal designed by Norman Foster, the opening of a new high-speed railway station, the doubling of subway lines and its capacity, the opening of uncountable brand-new five star hotels, shopping malls, office towers and much more. But the city changed even on a very small level – sometimes overnight. I remember waking up one morning and looking out of my window onto a park, which literally had just popped out of the ground. Construction workers had rolled out lawnmats and transplanted full-grown trees. All of this happened literally overnight.

Bold new buildings in bright colours and futuristic shapes appeared – and immediately got cheeky nicknames by the Beijing locals. There is the Olympic stadium - the “bird's nest” illuminated in bright red during nighttime, and just next to it the “water cube” the National Aquatics Center in shiny blue. Then you have the National Center of Performing Arts (“巨蛋 = the giant egg”), the China Central Television headquarters (thanks to its extraordinary shape often referred to as “大裤衩 = the big pants”), as well as all the “SOHO” real estate projects, many of them with a visionary design, and all over the city you can now find scores of ‘innovative’ shopping malls like Sanlitun village (the term “innovative” only referring to the design - the retail chains inside those shiny cathedrals of consumption are the same as everywhere else in the developed world).

Suddenly nothing seemed to be impossible regarding the shape, colour and structure of the new Beijing landmarks. But while the architecture of the new Beijing got more and more adventurous, the soul – the essence of Beijing being Beijing – was still to be found in the hutongs. And maybe it was the rapid speed of Beijing's modernization and the fear of losing the old Beijing, which made me and others long for the simple, more “traditional” things. We were more and more looking for the hard to describe “Beijing-feeling” with its make-shift-barbeque grills selling the famous

Grey Beijing:
Traffic along 2nd Ring Road

Source: Stefan Larsson



“Chuanr” (串 = meat skewers), the distinct sound of the local language “Beijinghua” (北京话) with its r-coloured vowels. Men walking around in the hot summer months wearing muscle tank shirts half rolled up exposing their bellies, groups of old aunties singing and dancing in the evening hours, stacks of cabbage piled up in front of those typical Beijing brick walls. All those are things we long-term foreigners in Beijing would describe as “typical Beijing”. With this in mind the Beijing-grey suddenly seemed to be like a canvas or the perfect backdrop for the colourful scenes of everyday life in the capital.

Alleys, pavements, parks and other public or semi-public spaces are the places where the better part of the actual life of many Beijingers takes place. And there are thousands and thousands of such places for everyone in Beijing. Go to any Beijing park in the early morning or evening hours and you will find people enjoying all kinds of sports, hobbies and entertainment. A Beijing park, and the people, who meet there, has something to offer everyone. Just have a look around and you will see Mrs. Xu’s group of fitness enthusiasts, practicing Taiji every day at the crack of dawn. Or Uncle Chen, who will stand somewhere in a quiet corner by himself, writing Chinese calligraphy with a gigantic paintbrush dipped in water directly on the pavement - no need for a desk, ink or paper. And of course you will not miss

the choir, singing love songs in Russian every night at eight or the group of grandfathers playing Chinese chess under some trees.

But it does not need to be a park, really. Any open (or quasi-open) space would do. There was a time, when my bus to work would pass a certain traffic island at the second ring road and every morning at seven there was a man standing there in the midst of this six-lane-road practicing his trumpet.

Just in front of the Beijing Worker's Stadium is the meeting point for a group of dance buffs, who practice their ballrooms moves several times a week. One night I was standing right next to them, waiting to flag down a taxi, when one of them approached me. He introduced himself as Lao Chen and then asked me if I would not like to join. His female dance partner had not showed up that night. I declined politely, but this example shows that it is easy to become part of one of the groups and join their activities. After all, everything is taking place in public and most of it is for free.

But while the open-air activities are for many Beijingers a much-loved part of their daily routine and a way to connect to each other, there are others who see them as annoying and backward. For many white-collar Chinese the groups of middle-aged “damas” (= 大妈, literally meaning “big mamas”) dancing their way through Gangnam-Style or Michael-Jackson-songs coming from homemade sound systems,

are often a mere nuisance. During the recent months, domestic and foreign newspapers and websites reported repeatedly about protests against amateur dance groups in Chinese cities. On the one hand there are the groups of mostly retired, elderly folk with a lot of time but too little money to spend it in fancy indoor sport facilities; their values mostly shaped by the collective ideals of the Mao-era. On the other hand you have the younger, hard-working or studying city-dwellers, who grew up with more individualistic ideas and a sense of personal space. To put it bluntly: the conflict of residents versus dancing aunties can be seen as a clash of generations, with China’s generational cohorts comprising only 10-15 years and each of them showing huge differences in regards to upbringing, opinions, values.

The growing complaints about noise pollution even led the Communist Party to action. Plans were voiced in March 2015 for restricted dance times and a stricter control of the volume in parks and open-spaces. “Square-dancing represents the collective aspect of Chinese culture, but now it seems that the overenthusiasm of participants has dealt it a harmful blow with disputes over noise and venues. So we have to guide it with national standards and regulations,” Liu Guoyong, chief of the General Administration of Sport of China’s mass fitness department said to China Daily (“Time for square-dancing to face the music” by Sun





Traditional Beijing

Xiaochen, China Daily, 24.03.2015). According to the newspaper China Daily, the government has even ordered a panel of experts to work out unified choreographies for the dancing aunties.

But will this stop the “damas” or anyone else from their open-air activities? No, I think they will continue dancing wherever and whenever they want. During all my years in Beijing, I have seen a lot of political actions against many of the Beijingers’ favorite outdoor activities: The bans against BBQs, kebab-stalls and street foot hawkers? Not effective at all. The standardization of breakfast stands? Barely a lukewarm success. And even the “chengguan” (represents of the local law enforcement agency infamous for their aggressive behavior) can’t stop people from selling everything from clothing to calligraphies on Beijing’s streets.

Even the extreme smog in the last years did not stop a lot of Beijingers from living parts of their lives outside. Sadly, the smog stands for another kind of grey dominating the Chinese capital. While the government succeeded to drastically reduce the pollution during the time of the Olympic Summer Games by closing factories and coal-fired power plants, introducing strict driving bans and exchanging old buses against more environmentally-friendly ones, the pollution returned soon after the games ended. Since 2009 the air quality in Beijing and whole Northern China started to considerably deteriorate again and pollution became an everyday topic of conversation. In the years before the Olympics talking about air pollution had been a kind of taboo – the smog being euphemized

as “the typical China fog”. People started discussing the unhealthy air conditions with their friends, neighbours and coworkers. Even for the government, it became more and more difficult to publicly deny the seriousness of the situation. People compared their memories of clean air during the Olympics with their new reality of near-daily smog. The American embassy installed an air quality-monitoring device and began tweeting about pollution’s severity, but the official measurements of the Chinese Ministry of Environmental Protection (the former State Environmental Protection Administration, SEPA) often showed different, lower levels. In 2010 it became official that the capital’s air pollution levels were “crazy bad” when the pollution exceeded the embassy’s index. Today, most Beijingers start their day checking special apps on their smart phones to see if they have to deal with another “airpocalypse”, forcing them to wear their face masks or if they can enjoy one of the not too many “blue sky days.”

Smog and traffic situation aside, I fell more and more for the charm of Beijing. With the ever increasing modernization, I began longing and looking for this special and hard-to-describe “hutong feeling,” and I was not alone: Suddenly more and more Chinese youngsters started to fall for the charm of Beijing’s old town. What was once regarded as backwards became trendy. Small cafes styled in cozy retro designs popped up in the old parts of town. Young owners opened new little shops in the courtyards – selling tea, art, handicrafts, stationery or just nostalgic items from 1950s and 60s China

– comfort objects for the uprooted Chinese youth. But one also has to admit the downsides of this rapid hutong-boom which are of course the over-commercialization of traditional neighbourhoods, exploding real estate prices in the old town as well as the tearing down and rebuilding of old structures, and a decrease of community feeling.

So, what is it that I am missing about Beijing after I left last year? First of all the food – and I am sure every Chinese living abroad will agree with me on this. But it is not only the food itself, it is the many different possibilities of eating and drinking out in Beijing – from fancy restaurants to sitting on tiny folding chairs next to a busy street drinking local Yanjing-beer and eating donkey burgers. To put it more generally, I miss the stark contrasts of tradition and modernity, rapid development and down-to-earth daily life, high tech and history. These contrasts and the dynamics stemming from Beijing being one of the biggest cities in the world make the life there so exciting and also challenging. I am convinced that one can only survive in China’s capital with a lot of flexibility and optimism - the two character traits I love and admire most in the typical Beijing inhabitant.

Looking back on my first impression of Beijing being the big grey city, I can see now that the essence of what I miss from Beijing – the “soul of Beijing” – is to be found in the hutongs and in between their grey walls. And if I now call Beijing the grey capital, then I say it with affection, because I know now that this is an elegant grey, which helps us to see the savvy in the ordinary and mundane.

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40 Years after the end of the Vietnam War

Interview with historian Andreas Margara



Andreas Margara at Điện Biên Phủ, 2014

The 30th of April marked the 40th anniversary of the fall / liberation of Saigon which was the end of what we call the Vietnam War, the longest military conflict in the 20th century and the first military defeat of the U.S. How has this been celebrated in Vietnam?

Contrary to the western perspective where April 30th is commonly considered to be the date marking the Fall of Saigon, Vietnam officially commemorates a day of victory in the defeat of the biggest military superpower in the world: the U.S. Army.

This year, the 40th anniversary of the triumph has been celebrated with grand military parades and traditional performances in Saigon, the city that formally changed its name to Ho Chi Minh City after the reunification of Vietnam in 1976.

In the presence of numerous government representatives, members of the communist party of Vietnam and war veterans, more than 6,000 people took part in the historical re-enactment of the arrival of the northern troops and the liberation of the city in 1975. For the victory festivities, the whole city was blanketed in red banners and the flags of the communist party.

Vietnam is a very young country. Most Vietnamese living today in Vietnam were born after the end of the war. How is this young generation dealing with the memory of war?

Today, more than two-thirds of Vietnam's young population has been born after 1975 and does not have vivid memories of the American War. Although Ho Chi Minh still is respected as the father of an independent Vietnam and is popular among the young generation, successful businessmen like Bill Gates are more often considered as role models.

Since the economic renovation Doi Moi in 1986 and the first efforts to open up the country for internatio-

nal tourism in the 1990s, young people look into the future with confidence. They live by the motto "song voi" which means live for today. The hardships of the past and the elder generation's sorrows of war are often left behind on the way to self-fulfillment in the new consumerist society of Vietnam.

Some of the historical sites of the war have become profitable tourist attractions today. There, the war is nothing more than a commercial issue. At the famous Cu Chi tunnels near Ho Chi Minh City, for example, Vietnamese tourist agencies sell real life war experiences to westerners. For a few U.S. Dollars, visitors can shoot AK-47 and dress as Vietcong guerrillas during guided tours. As souvenirs, the visitors can keep the bullet casings.

The legacy of the war however is still present as the U.S. left Vietnam in a state of physical ruin. Roads, rails and bridges were devastated by B-52 bombings. In rural areas mostly children still suffer from unexploded explosives. During the war, several million hectares of forest had been stripped of life by high explosives and toxic chemicals such as Agent Orange and Agent Purple. The long-term impact of herbicidal warfare continues to effect health and ecology. Inevitably, the young generation still has to deal with the legacy of war.

The Vietnam War was also a civil war to some extent. Have there been efforts made to reconcile the different parties? I am thinking of the political efforts to reconcile the French and the Germans after WW II. How are the relations between the people in the South and the people in the North today, in general?

One of the key problems of reconciliation is that most of the high-ranking South Vietnamese officials escaped to the U.S. or committed sui-

cide after the war. The lack of southern representatives, who might be responsible spokespersons for the concerns of the South, makes it hard to enable prolific negotiations between the different parties.

The relationship between the people of the North and the South is difficult. Both sides have very different mentalities. After the reunification, prejudices and resentments predominated – similar as in Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Germans of two different political systems also had to learn to grow together, however the GDR and FRG never stood against each other in an armed conflict.

In some way the Doi Moi reforms, which combine parts of the free market system with the leadership claim of the communist party, can be seen as progress in rapprochement of North and South.

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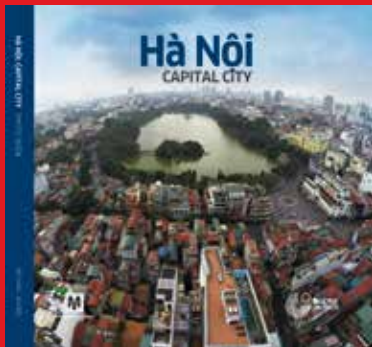
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Excerpt from greeting of the Director of Goethe-Institut Vietnam, Dr. Almuth Meyer-Zollitsch:

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